Accessory Dwelling Unit Update

July 2020
What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)?

A secondary housing unit on a residential lot with a separate kitchen, sleeping area, and bathroom.
Housing Demand

~3,350-3,906
Low income senior households (65 and above at/below 60% AMI)
ACS, 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

~6,132
Seniors (65 and above) living alone
ACS, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018

3,650
# of Homeowners w/incomes up to $75,000 who spend more than 30% of income on housing
ACS, 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

Cost burden among renter households with incomes less than $75K

Spend => 30% of income on housing (at the expense of healthcare, education, daycare, and savings)

15,077 households
ACS, 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018
Current City rules do not allow ADUs

• Only one family may occupy a dwelling unit
  • Family generally defined as a group of people living together as a single housekeeping unit

• Generally, only one dwelling unit may occupy a lot except for:
  • Properties in commercial zones with ground floor commercial uses can have multiple dwelling units above the ground floor as “accessory apartments”
  • Two family “stacked” units in non single-family residential zones
  • Multifamily buildings (apartments and condos)
Guest Houses

**Guest houses** are currently permitted in all zones as an accessory use to a single-family dwelling provided:

- It is used by temporary guests or occupants of the main residence
- It does not have a kitchen
- It is not rented or otherwise used as a separate dwelling
Current City rules related to short-term rentals (AirBnb, etc.)

- Short-term rentals are permitted throughout the City
  - City Council approved short-term rental registry in November 2017
  - Operators must register with the City
  - Guest houses cannot be used for short-term rentals
What we heard from you after the first presentation
Who filled out the feedback form?

240 responses received
Key topics

Size limits/Floor Area Ratio Requirements

Setbacks

Traffic and parking

Environmental impacts

ADU policy in other jurisdictions

Density

Neighborhood impact

Expanded housing options
Specific feedback and questions about ADUs

ADUs increase desirable housing options

How would ADUs change my neighborhood?

ADUs provide needed flexibility for the elderly and for persons with disabilities

What impact would ADUs have on the environment?

How would ADUs impact density?

ADUs provide an efficient and low-impact use of existing land and buildings

How would ADUs impact traffic and parking?

ADUs allow for closer and safer social contact during pandemics

How do other cities regulate ADUs?
ADUs in other jurisdictions
# ADU numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select Cities/Counties</th>
<th>Arlington, VA</th>
<th>Bloomington, MN</th>
<th>Boulder, CO</th>
<th>San Francisco, CA</th>
<th>Portland, OR</th>
<th>Washington, DC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pop. 236,842</td>
<td>Pop. 82,893</td>
<td>Pop. 97,385</td>
<td>Pop. 881,549</td>
<td>Pop. 583,776</td>
<td>Pop. 705,749</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of ADUs</th>
<th>Arlington, VA</th>
<th>Bloomington, MN</th>
<th>Boulder, CO</th>
<th>San Francisco, CA</th>
<th>Portland, OR</th>
<th>Washington, DC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45 between 2009 and 2020</td>
<td>1 permit</td>
<td>230 permits</td>
<td>884 permits</td>
<td>3,464 permits</td>
<td>151 permits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 and 2020</td>
<td>between 1983 and 2018</td>
<td>between 2015 and 2018</td>
<td>between 2000 and 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADUs as a Percentage of Total Housing Units</th>
<th>Arlington, VA</th>
<th>Bloomington, MN</th>
<th>Boulder, CO</th>
<th>San Francisco, CA</th>
<th>Portland, OR</th>
<th>Washington, DC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.03%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.51%</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
<td>1.23%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Whitehead (2017); Maxable (2018); City of Bloomington; City of Boulder; City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors (2019); Peterson (2019); and ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates
ADU policies in other jurisdictions
## ADU policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected policies</th>
<th>Arlington VA</th>
<th>Bloomington MN</th>
<th>Boulder CO</th>
<th>San Francisco CA</th>
<th>Portland OR</th>
<th>Washington DC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By right development</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum lot size</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupancy requirement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking requirements</td>
<td>No*</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term rentals permitted</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*parking for ADU only required if site has no off-street parking and on-street parking is in high demand

Source: [Whitehead (2017); Maxable (2018); City of Bloomington; City of Boulder; City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors (2019); and Peterson (2019) ]
# ADU policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected policies</th>
<th>Montgomery County, MD</th>
<th>Fairfax County, VA (proposed rules)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By right development</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, within a home. Detached requires special approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum lot size</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupancy requirement</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking requirements</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, one designated space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term rentals permitted</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*unless within one-mile of a metro station

Source: [Whitehead (2017)](#); [Maxable (2018)](#); [City of Bloomington](#); [City of Boulder](#); [City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors (2019)](#); and [Peterson (2019)](#)
Size
Limits/Floor Area Ratio (FAR) Requirements

- All policies specify distinct size and height limits for ADUs. These requirements are meant to ensure that ADUs are compatible with and accessory to the main house
- Size limits are set either proportional to the size of the main house and/or a square footage maximum

**Floor to Area Ratio** (FAR) is the total floor area of a building divided by the area of the lot
Required Yards/Setbacks establish the minimum distance necessary between a building and a lot line.

- Yard requirements vary and are generally smaller than those required for the primary dwelling.
- For example, Portland has developed a tiered approach where setbacks are dependent on ADU height with detached structures less than 15 feet tall requiring no setbacks and taller structures requiring five-foot setbacks.
- In order to protect neighbor’s privacy, windows and doors are sometimes only allowed on sides of the ADU that are further than five feet from the property line (Peterson 2018).
- Smaller setbacks for detached ADUs allow them to be put in places where more traditional detached structures are located (garages, sheds, and others). This allows them to be located in less-impactful locations.
Short Term Rentals

- Can limit the flexibility appeal from ADUs for homeowners
- Can make financing an ADU in the short term challenging

What some other jurisdictions have done to regulate STRs:
- Waive fees for all ADUs except those that are registered as short-term rentals
- Cap the number of days a unit can be used as a short-term rental
- Make regulations comparable to other residential housing forms in the city

Some cities set limitations on using ADUs for short-term rentals (like Airbnb)
Density and Neighborhood Impacts
Size restrictions ensure that detached ADUs remain subordinate to existing dwellings, limiting their impact on the neighborhood.

ADU numbers in other jurisdictions represent small percentages of total housing numbers. These numbers show that ADU policy gradually increases density over time with minimal impact to neighborhoods.

Smaller setbacks for detached ADUs allow them to be placed where traditional detached structures are located (garages, sheds, and others). This allows them to be located in less-impactful locations, again limiting their impact on the neighborhood.
Traffic/Parking and the Environment
Traffic/Parking

- The City of Alexandria has an existing Residential Parking Permit Program that residents can use to help preserve parking access for residents. New Residential Parking Permit Districts can be created by filing a petition with the City.

- New off-street parking increases impervious surfaces and can take up otherwise desirable open space

- Off-street parking costs – typically $3,000-$5,000 per space
Environment

An ADU’s smaller size requires less lumber and carbon-producing materials than other housing types.

Internal ADUs do not increase impervious surfaces.

An ADU’s smaller size requires less energy to heat/cool than other housing types.

Staff does not intend to create additional floor area exclusions for ADUs.
Q&A

Q: "Does saying yes to ADUs allow people to knock down houses and build townhomes in their place? This is what I keep hearing from those against ADUs."

A: No. Allowing ADUs would not allow for townhomes in areas zoned for single family detached homes.

Q: "Are the ADUs going to be required to be rented to bring in additional tax income?"

A: No. ADUs would not be required to be rented.

Q: "What's the impact on schools/public services with more ADUs in a neighborhood?"

A: ADUs are anticipated to bring very incremental change. Staff will coordinate with ACPS, Code Administration, T&ES and other City agencies to ensure they are kept aware on a regular basis of the number of permits being requested.

Q: "Are there any measures that the city will take so that ADUs do not destroy the character of my neighborhood?"

A: Yes. ADUs will have height, FAR, and setback requirements to ensure compatibility.
Other Questions to be Addressed through Study

Q: “Will the uses be only residential? Could I use an ADU as a home office, for example?”

Q: “What are some financing options for interested homeowners?”

Q: “Will regulations differ by zone?”

Q: “How to handle conflict between local zoning and restrictive covenants of subdivisions? How will HOAs be affected? Will they be able to establish their own rules?”

Q: “Any tax incentives from the city for those considering to build these?”

Q: “Will properties with ADUs be charged double the refuse fee and double the Stormwater fee?”
Now, we want to hear from you!

Tell us what you think using this link:

https://urban.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1QSRYTIn20qic6N
What’s Next

**July 24** comment period on second presentation closes

**Early August** release of draft recommendations, request for feedback

**Mid August** virtual open house

**Fall 2020** Planning Commission and City Council

You can provide feedback... ...at any time during this process!
For more information

Visit: alexandriava.gov/113872

Contact: Sam Shelby, Project Manager
Planning & Zoning
Sam.Shelby@alexandriava.gov