



Is your property
ready for ADU-over?



A step-by-step design and development
guide to Additional Dwelling Units on your property

How to read this document



This guide on Additional Dwelling Units (ADUs) outlines the applicable regulations and considerations for those interested in building an ADU. This guide is intended to help inform homeowners, applicants, designers and builders in their ADU journey. This is a non-statutory document and should be read in its entirety with the City of Guelph's Zoning Bylaw.

Contact and resources

- For questions about the Ontario Building Code (OBC) and permits, contact building@guelph.ca.
- For questions about the Zoning Bylaw contact zoning@guelph.ca.
- You can also reach out to Building Services at 519-837-5615.
- For additional resources related to ADUs, visit our website at guelph.ca/adu.

Contents

1. Explore the possibilities.....	4
2. Why build an ADU?.....	5
3. Key ADU development principles.....	6
4. Answers to the questions you may have	7
5. Plan your project	9
Understand applicable zoning	10
The Ontario Building Code.....	17
Other considerations	18
Prep for your project	20
Permits and registration	21
Finalize your ADU.....	23





1. Explore the possibilities

The City of Guelph wants to help those looking to build an Additional Dwelling Unit (ADU) on their property. ADUs are an innovative type of housing and can have a diverse range of options when it comes to design and feel. This ADU guide will outline zoning requirements, what design options you can explore, and other steps of the process that you may not have considered.



What is an Additional Dwelling Unit?

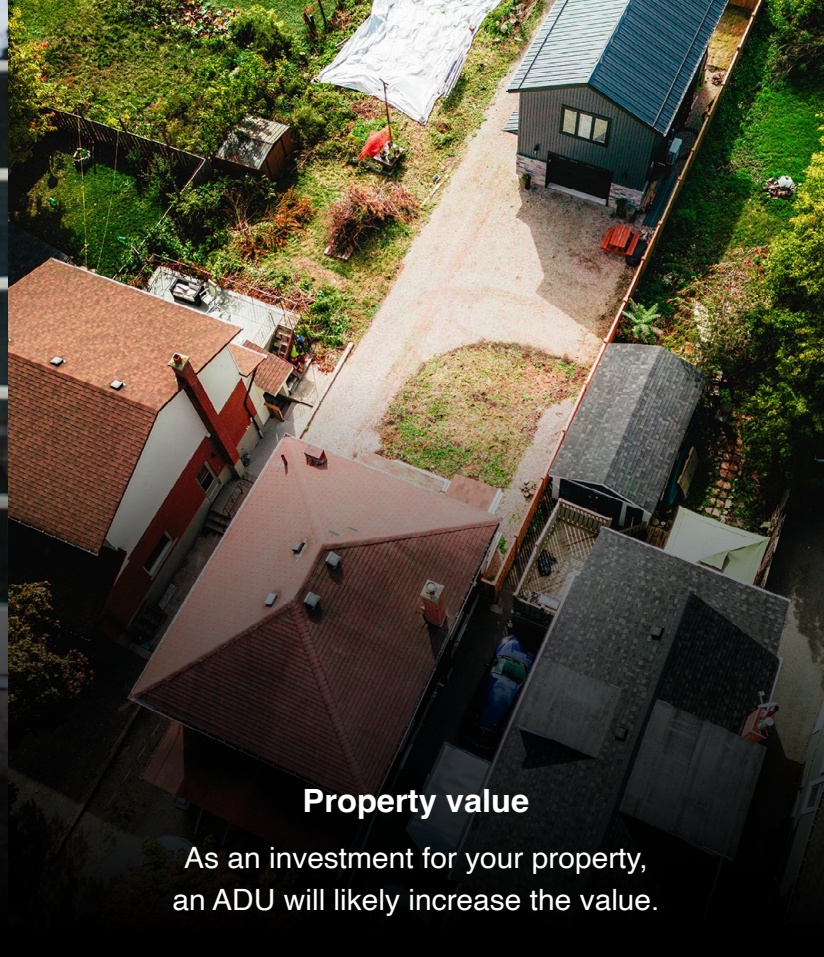
An Additional Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a dwelling unit that is self-contained and subordinate to a single detached, semi-detached, or on-street townhouse unit, and that is located either within the building of the primary dwelling unit or in a separate building on the same lot. Below are just a few examples of how you could add an ADU on a lot.

<p>Attic ADUs</p>  <p>Basement ADUs</p> 	<p>ADU in an existing home</p> 	<p>Separate ADUs</p> 
<p>Internal</p>	<p>Attached</p>	<p>Detached</p>
<p>Situated within the primary dwelling unit's structure, they optimize existing space, and are ideal for those looking to expand without extensive construction.</p>	<p>Connected to the home, this ADU type includes over garage units and house additions. These units offer additional space while maintaining physical connection to the main residence.</p>	<p>These ADUs are independent structures on your property, such as a backyard cottage or units positioned above freestanding garages. They provide complete autonomy and often come with a higher construction cost due to their standalone nature.</p>



Lifestyle flexibility

ADUs offer flexibility outside of the standard single-family dwelling. ADUs can accommodate multi-generational living, aging in place in a smaller home on the same property, space for caregivers, or guest arrangements while maintaining privacy and independence.



Property value

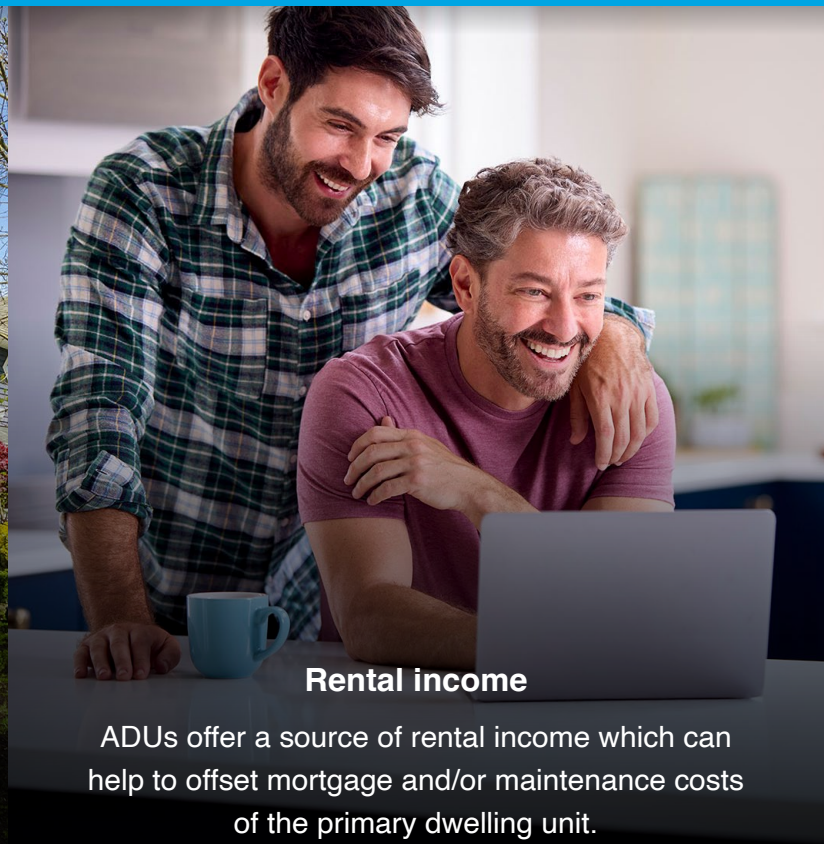
As an investment for your property, an ADU will likely increase the value.

2. Why build an ADU?



Increased housing supply

ADUs can help increase the City's housing supply while reducing the need for urban sprawl by making use of the space that already exists.



Rental income

ADUs offer a source of rental income which can help to offset mortgage and/or maintenance costs of the primary dwelling unit.

3. Key ADU development principles

Support affordable and diverse housing options

ADUs facilitate urban growth and land use patterns that support community needs by increasing housing supply and availability in established and transit-oriented neighbourhoods. ADUs also support a diverse range and mix of housing options that accommodate the needs of different household sizes and incomes. ADUs can also contribute to the supply of affordable rental accommodations in the city.

Accessory to the primary dwelling unit

ADUs are accessory and complementary to the primary dwelling unit and must be smaller in scale and function. Detached ADUs cannot be severed to create a separate lot.

Existing infrastructure connection

Existing infrastructure will be utilized by the ADU. This includes community services, road access and municipal water and wastewater service. When municipal servicing is available, ADUs will need to be connected to the primary dwelling unit's water and sanitary sewers.

Neighbourhood intensification

ADUs contribute to housing development while supporting neighbourhood intensification on existing low-density residential properties. This type of infill development contributes to creating compact neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood integration

ADUs offer a form of housing that is easily integrated into existing neighbourhoods and can enhance and protect the distinct character of the city. Design should be compatible with the built form of the primary dwelling unit, maintain privacy, and respect the character of the streetscape while ensuring negligible visual impact. Existing regulations ensure that ADUs do not negatively impact neighbouring properties.

Landscape and vegetation

When designing and building a detached ADU, efforts should be made to preserve existing trees and landscaping while being integrated within existing topography. If the proposed development impacts trees, the proposal must comply with the City of Guelph's Tree Bylaw.



4. Answers to the questions you may have

Can I build an ADU on my property?

When exploring your ability to build an ADU on your property there are three main factors to consider:

1. An ADU is permitted on the same lot as a single detached, semi-detached, or on-street townhouse. Check the zoning of your property to ensure an ADU is permitted.
2. Your property must have the servicing capacity (water and wastewater) to accommodate an ADU. All ADUs must be connected to municipal services if municipal services are available. Contact the City's Engineering Services at engineering@guelph.ca or 519-837-5604 for questions about municipal services.
3. The lot must be able to support all zoning requirements for ADUs as outlined in the City of Guelph Zoning Bylaw.

What if I don't qualify to build an ADU on my property?

Not all properties will meet the zoning requirements to build an ADU, but you may be able to apply for a minor variance to move forward with your project. For more information regarding the process and fees, visit guelph.ca/cofa or contact the City's Committee of Adjustment Services team at cofa@guelph.ca or 519-822-1260 extension 2524.

Will an ADU affect my property taxes?

Your property taxes will likely increase alongside the value of your property. However, the City does not assess property values. Property assessments are done by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC). Visit MPAC.ca or contact 1-866-296-6722 for more information.

How many ADUs can I have on my property?

A maximum of two ADUs are permitted on a lot; one within the same building as the primary dwelling unit and one located in a separate building on the same lot, or two ADUs within the building of the primary dwelling unit.

Current regulations allow one primary dwelling unit and two ADUs (three units as-of-right) per lot. As-of-right means that the property's zoning already permits this use and a zone change is not necessary, though any proposed development will still need to conform with servicing, zoning regulations, and building code requirements.

While current policy permits two ADUs per lot, the City is exploring ways to increase housing supply, including increasing the number of ADUs permitted per lot to three. In the following page, there are a few examples of how two ADUs could be accommodated on an existing property.

Find more details [online!](#)

Examples of two ADUs on a property

The following are a few examples of ADU configurations on a property. Current regulations allow one primary dwelling unit and two ADUs (three units as-of-right) per lot.



Two internal ADUs

(One in the basement and one over a garage)



One internal ADU and one attached ADU

(One in the basement and one in an addition)



Two attached ADUs

(Both above the primary dwelling unit)



Two internal ADUs

(One in the basement and one in the attic)



One attached ADU

One detached ADU
(Over a garage)



One internal ADU
(In the basement)

One detached ADU

5. Plan your project

The journey to building your ADU involves several key steps. Let's walk through a checklist that can allow you to understand the various aspects of the process of creating your ADU from determining your options to moving in!

A



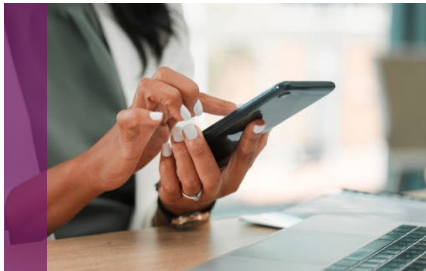
Understand applicable zoning regulations and building code requirements

B



Other considerations

C



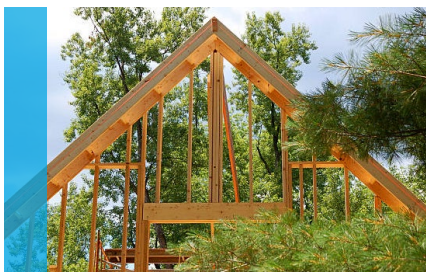
Prep for your project

D



Permits and registration

E



Finalize your ADU

Understand applicable zoning

The City of Guelph's Zoning Bylaw outlines provisions and regulations that all development must adhere to within the city boundary such as setbacks, height, size, parking regulations, and access requirements. This guide outlines key zoning regulations as they pertain to ADUs and is intended to be read alongside the regulations set out within the City's Zoning Bylaw. Please refer to the key, but not comprehensive zoning requirements in the following sections.

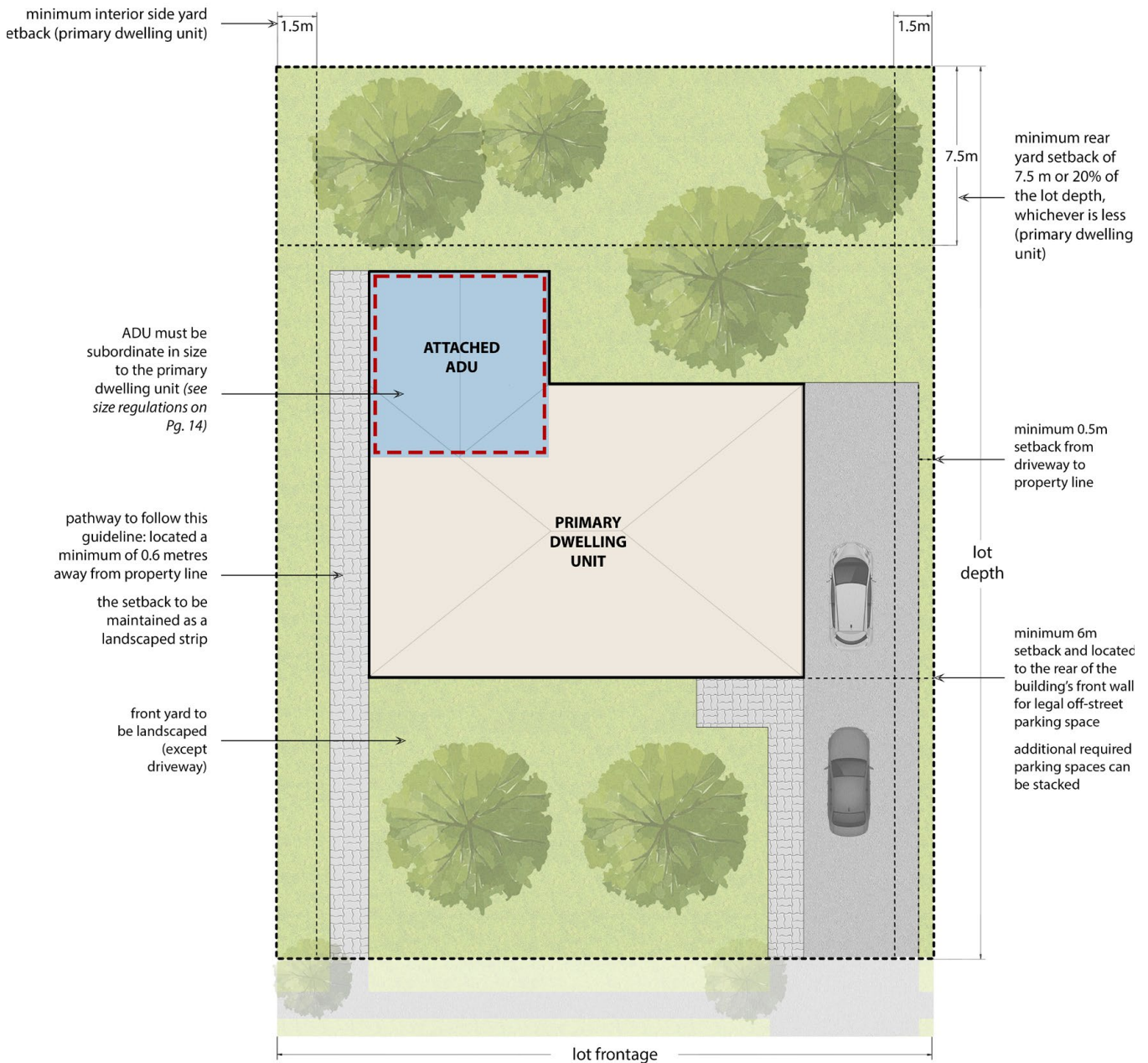
The City's 2023 Zoning Bylaw is in effect, though some items are still under appeal. When appealed items have a corresponding regulation in the previous 1995 Zoning Bylaw, the more restrictive of the two is in effect until the appeals are resolved.

The following sections provide an overview of the zoning regulations that your ADU will be required to conform to. Please read through this guide's overview as well as the Zoning Bylaw to ensure you comply with all zone-specific regulations.



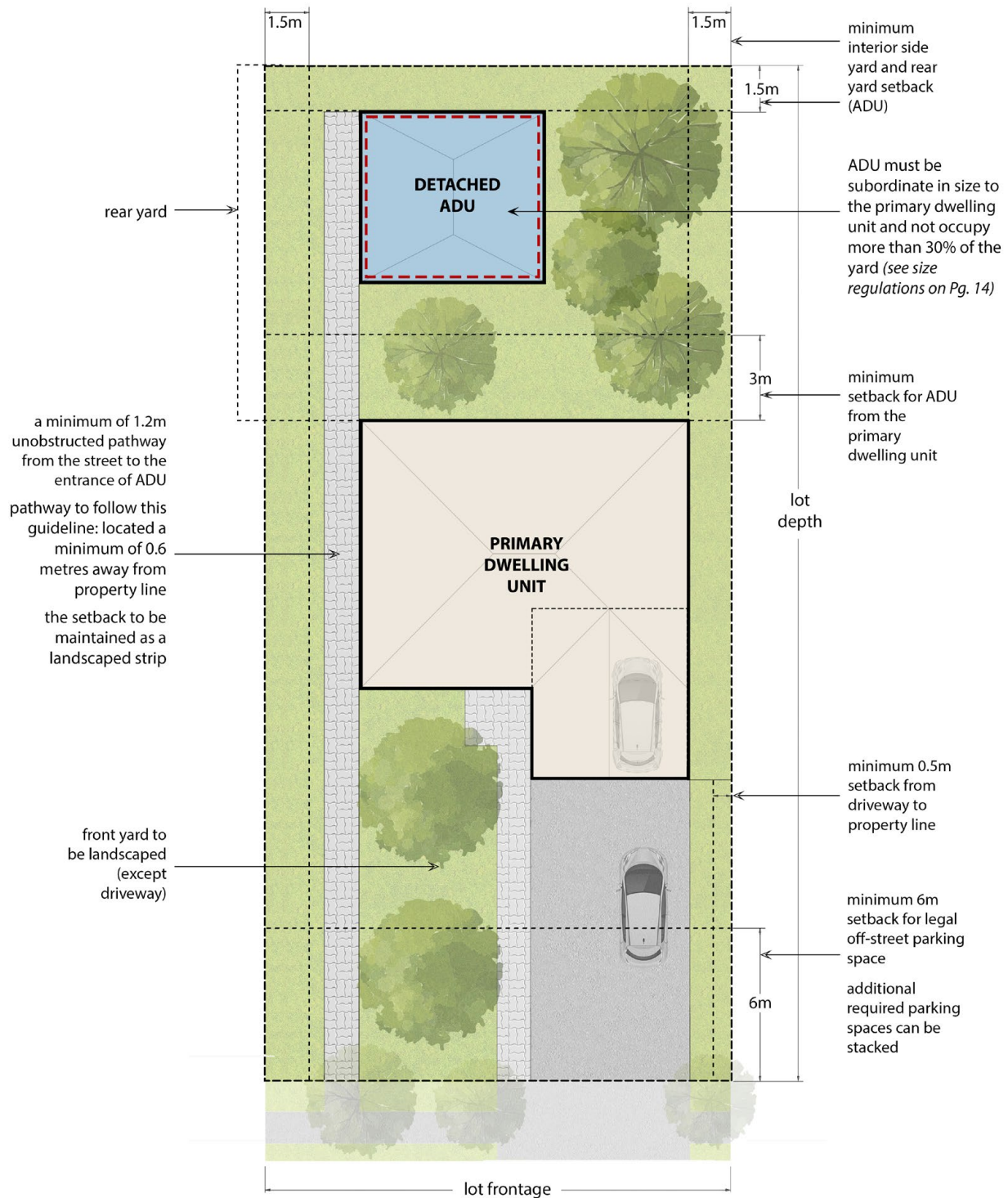
Overview of zoning regulations

The following illustration indicates some of the key zoning regulations that are applicable to an **attached and internal** ADU. This is an example only; with only one ADU, your site plan will look different. The zoning regulations specific to ADUs are discussed in further detail on the following pages.



**Graphic represents an internal and attached ADU for a single-detached dwelling in a RL.1 zone. Your zone may have varied requirements. Setbacks for corner and through lots may also vary. Please review the Zoning Bylaw prior to creating your site plan.*

The following illustration indicates some of the key zoning regulations that are applicable to a **detached** ADU. This is an example only; with only one ADU, your site plan will look different. The zoning regulations specific to ADUs are discussed in further detail on the following pages.



**Graphic represents a detached ADU for a single-detached dwelling in a RL.1 zone. Your zone may have varied requirements. Setbacks for corner and through lots may also vary. Please review the Zoning Bylaw prior to creating your site plan.*

Site design & layout for detached ADUs

Site layout – A detached ADU may be built in the rear yard or interior side yard.

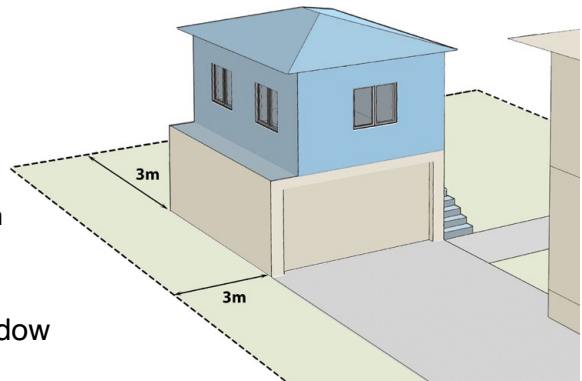
Rear and side yard setbacks – Detached ADUs shall have minimum interior side yard and rear yard setbacks consistent with the interior side yard setback required for the primary dwelling unit based on the property's zoning. If you are proposing an attached ADU to your primary dwelling unit, any additions into the yard must be consistent with your zoning setbacks.

Two storey detached ADUs shall have a minimum three metre interior side yard and rear yard setback where a window is adjacent to the property line. See graphic A.

Setback from the primary dwelling unit – A detached ADU is required to be located a minimum of three metres from the primary dwelling unit. A minimum interior side yard setback of 1.2 metres is required for the primary dwelling unit on the side closest to the pedestrian access unless access to the ADU is provided directly from a street or lane.

*Different setback requirements may apply depending on the configuration of your lot. Please see the City of Guelph's Zoning Bylaw for additional information.

Minimum rear and interior
side yard setback is 3m

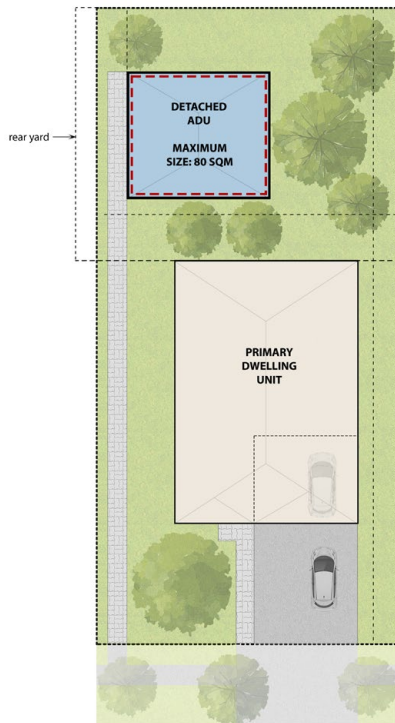


A. Setbacks for a two storey detached ADU where a window is adjacent to the property line

Access

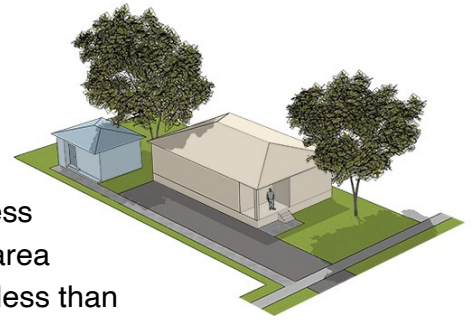
For an ADU that is located in a detached structure, unless access is directly provided from a street or lane, a pedestrian pathway of 1.2 metres is to be provided to the main access of the ADU. The pathway should follow the guideline of being located a minimum of 0.6 metres away from the property line. The setback should be maintained as a landscaped strip. Corner lots may have different requirements.

For internal and attached ADUs, interior access is required between floor levels and between the ADU and the primary dwelling unit. Interior access means there must be a connecting passageway between units. This can be in the form of a door leading from one unit to another, a door leading to stairs that connect one unit to another, or a shared foyer.



Example A: Building a smaller sized detached ADU may look like this...

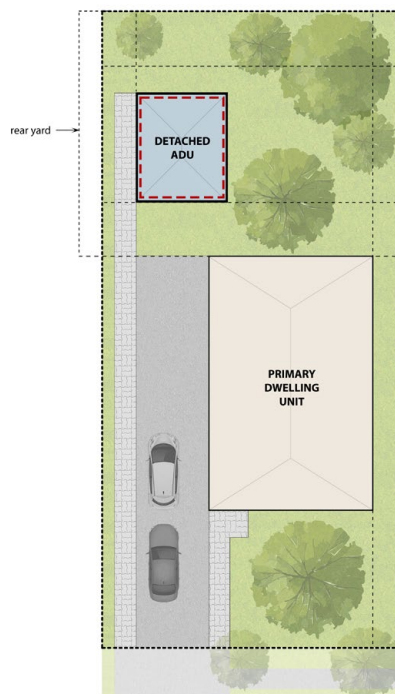
This example shows an ADU that is less than 45 per cent of the total net floor area of the primary building, and occupies less than 30 per cent of the yard.



Size

The Zoning Bylaw sets the following maximum size requirements for ADUs:

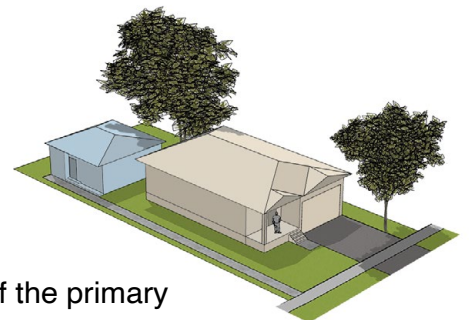
1. Attached and internal ADUs shall not exceed 45 per cent of the total net floor area of the building, unless the ADU is located within the basement, in which case it may take up the entirety of the basement.
2. Detached ADUs shall not exceed 45 per cent of the total net floor area of the building the primary dwelling unit is located in or a maximum of 80 square metres, whichever is less.
3. The detached ADU shall not occupy more than 30 per cent of the yard, including all accessory buildings or structures. The ADU shall not contain more than two bedrooms.



“Total net floor area” means the total floor area of the building measured from the interior walls, including cellars and basements with a floor to ceiling height of at least 1.95 metres. Total net floor area does not include stairs, landings, cold cellars, garages, carports, and mechanical rooms.

Example B: At the maximum size a detached ADU may look like this...

This example shows an ADU that is 45 per cent of the total net floor area of the primary building, or a maximum of 80 square metres, whichever is less, and occupies a maximum of 30 per cent of the yard.



Parking

One additional parking space will be required per ADU. For example, if you add two ADUs to your property then you will need to provide two additional parking spaces, one for each ADU.

The required off-street parking space for an ADU may be stacked behind the required off-street parking space for the primary dwelling unit, in the driveway. See graphic A.

If no legal off-street parking space can be provided for the primary dwelling unit, no parking spaces are required for any ADUs. For example, if your property does not have a parking space for the primary dwelling unit then you do not have to provide a parking space for each ADU.

The minimum parking space dimensions are:

- 2.5 by 5.5 metres for exterior parking spaces,
- 3 by 6 metres within a garage or carport.

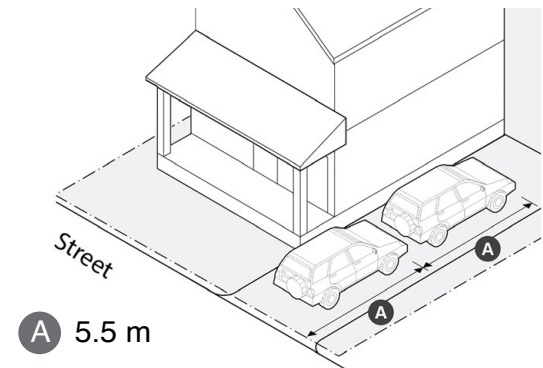
The legal off-street parking space for the primary dwelling unit must be set back 6 metres from the street line and to the rear of the front wall of the main building, and the driveway must be setback 0.5 metres from the lot line. See graphics B and C.

Additional required parking spaces for ADUs can be stacked in the driveway. See graphic A.

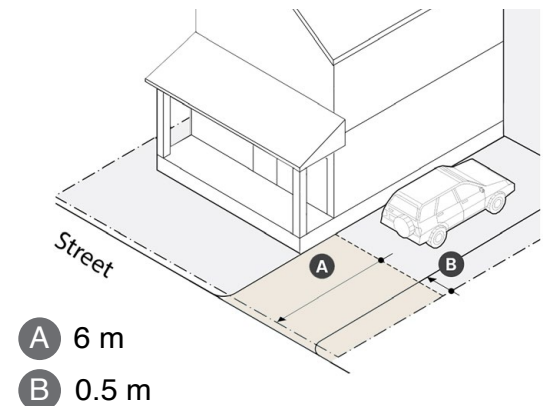
If your property is located within the Downtown Secondary Plan boundary, no parking is required. Please see the City's Official Plan for a map of this area.

There may be additional requirements or exemptions for parking spaces that apply to your property. Please see the City's Zoning Bylaw for further information.

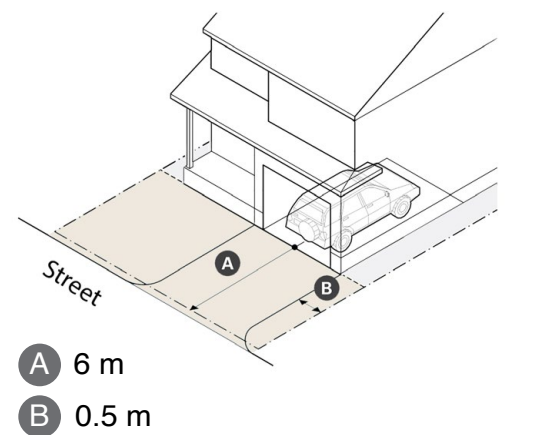
A. Stacked parking spaces



B. Exterior parking space



C. Interior parking space



Height

For an ADU located in a detached structure, the maximum height shall be five metres and shall not exceed the overall height of the primary dwelling unit. See graphics A and B.

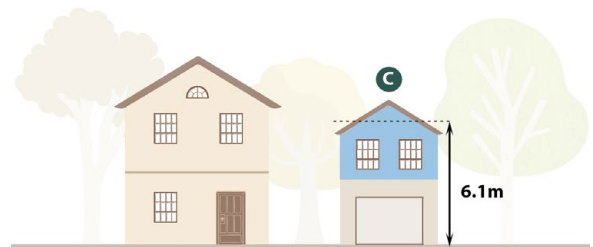
When an ADU is located above a detached garage containing a vehicle parking space in accordance with zoning regulations, the maximum total building height shall be 6.1 metres and shall not exceed the building height of the primary dwelling unit. See graphic C.



A. Flat roof height



B. Slope roof height

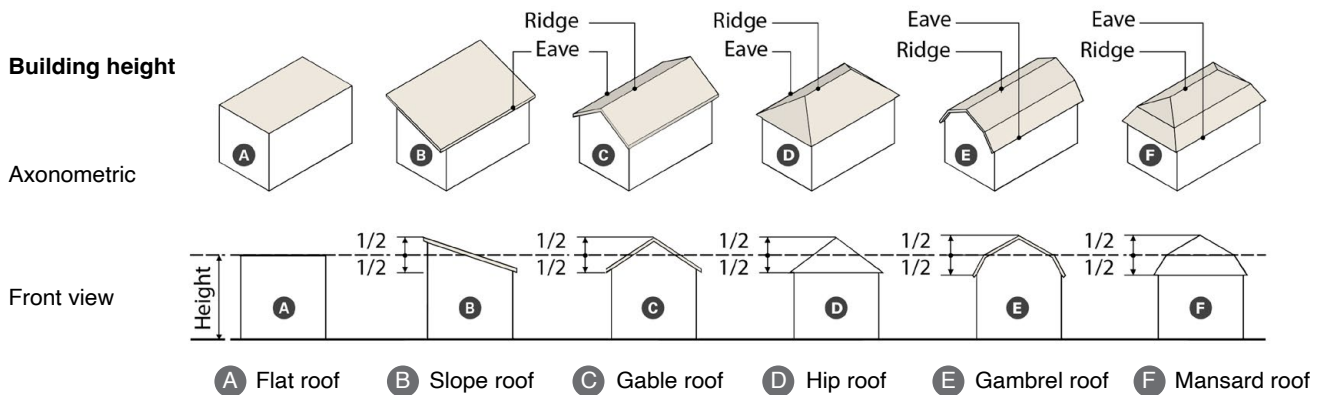


C. Gable roof height for above garage ADU

“Building height” means the vertical distance between the average finished grade of a building and the top of such building.

The top of the building is considered:

1. In the case of a flat roof, the highest point of the roof’s surface or parapet, whichever is greater;
2. In the case of a mansard roof, the deck roof line;
3. In the case of a gable, hip, gambrel or one-slope roof, the average height between the eaves and ridges; or
4. Where an exterior wall, other than a required fire wall, extends above the top of the roof of a building, the topmost part of such exterior wall.

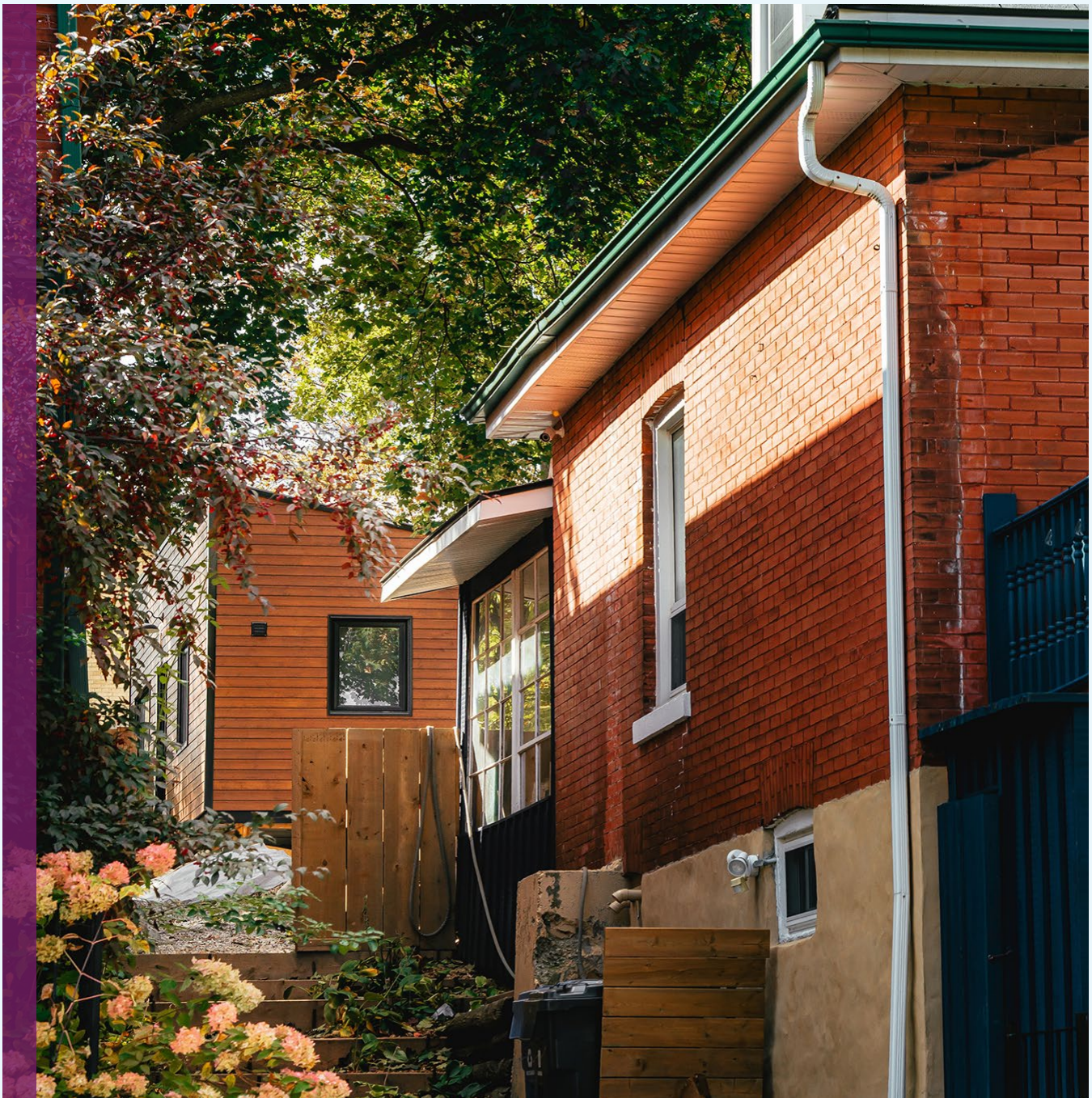


“Finished grade” means the average elevation of the finished surface of the ground, excluding any artificial embankment, immediately adjoining the base of the exterior walls or supports of a building or structure.

The Ontario Building Code

The construction of an ADU must conform with the Ontario Building Code (OBC). The OBC sets out specific requirements for building construction in the Province of Ontario to ensure design and construction adhere to health and safety standards.

Further information about building code requirements for ADUs can be found on the City's website: guelph.ca/adu. Please reach out to Building Services at building@guelph.ca or call (519) 837-5615 if you have any questions about complying with the OBC.



Other Considerations

The following pages outline additional considerations to think about when designing your ADU. This information is provided to help inform your design process.



Environmental considerations

When putting an addition on an existing house, or building a new structure to accommodate an ADU, preservation of existing natural features should be taken into consideration.

If during construction it is necessary to alter or remove a tree on your property, please refer to the City's Tree Bylaw to determine if a tree permit is required. If your project has the potential to impact trees on the property line or neighbouring properties, permission from your neighbour would be required.



Built form considerations

Privacy - Will the orientation of the ADU allow for optimum privacy for occupants of the ADU, primary dwelling unit, and neighbouring properties?

Amenity areas - Will your ADU have communal or private outdoor use areas? How will this be designed and landscaped?

Exterior design & finishes - Will your ADU's exterior finish complement the primary dwelling unit and surrounding neighborhood?



Sustainable design

Embracing eco-friendly designs can reduce your ADU's environmental footprint. Incorporating energy-efficient materials, renewable energy sources, green roofs, and sustainable landscaping can help reduce utility costs and create a greener living space.

ROOF TYPOLOGIES TO CONSIDER



Slope roof



Gable roof



Flat green roof (by [herbidacious](#))

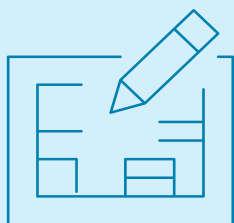
Prep for your project

Develop a budget

When building an ADU there will be costs associated with the various phases of the project, including operation and post construction. Creating a budget plan can help ensure you anticipate the costs involved in bringing your vision to life. Here are some budget considerations:

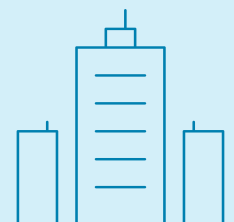
- **Design and construction** are an expensive aspect of this type of project; consider costs such as materials, labour, and equipment.
- **Application and permit** fees may vary depending on your vision. Please refer to the fee schedule at guelph.ca/building.
- The City's **Development Charges** Bylaw provides that currently, up to two ADUs per property be exempt from development charges. This applies to both ADUs built on lots containing existing dwellings as well as vacant lots where a new residential building is proposed.
- The City also administers the development charge programs on behalf of the School Boards, which have different rules. Education development charges are not exempt for ADUs in new residential buildings or for any detached ADUs.
- Depending on the details of the project, development charges might be applicable. Please reach out to the City's Finance Department at finance@guelph.ca or 519-837-5610 to confirm charges.
- **Servicing** (water service and sanitary sewer) are not always equipped to handle ADUs on the property. It is the property owner's responsibility to ensure the servicing on private property complies with the OBC. Keep in mind that the onus may be on the property owner to upgrade the servicing up to the property line as well. Contact the City's Engineering Services at engineering@guelph.ca or 519-837-5604 to determine your property's servicing.

Plan your team



Will you enlist a designer or architect?

You may consider hiring a professional when designing your ADU. Hiring a professional will not only help transform your ideas into drawings, but may also help make the permit process easier to navigate and potentially save you money in the long run.



Ask the City's team

City staff are here to support and guide you. We can answer your questions and provide guidance on ADU regulations and even do a high-level preliminary review of your site plan. Contact us at zoning@guelph.ca or 519-837-5615. We're here to help!

Permits and registration



The permitting process begins with the preparation and submission of an application for a building permit. Documents that are required to be submitted at the time of application include but may not be limited to: a survey or site plan, overall floor plans of all floor levels, Schedule 1: Designer Information Form, and an Additional Dwelling Unit (ADU) Registration Form. Further information about ADU permit applications and requirements can be found at guelph.ca/adu.

The City will review your application to determine if it:

- conforms to the Zoning Bylaw requirements;
- complies with the Ontario Building Code (OBC);
- complies with other applicable laws in the OBC; and,
- has enough servicing capacity to support all dwellings.

Building permit fees are determined once a building permit application is deemed complete. For further information on permit fees, please refer to the City's fee schedule at guelph.ca/building.

Revisions

Be prepared for the possibility of revisions during the permitting process. This may involve modifications to your project plans to align with regulatory requirements.

Registration

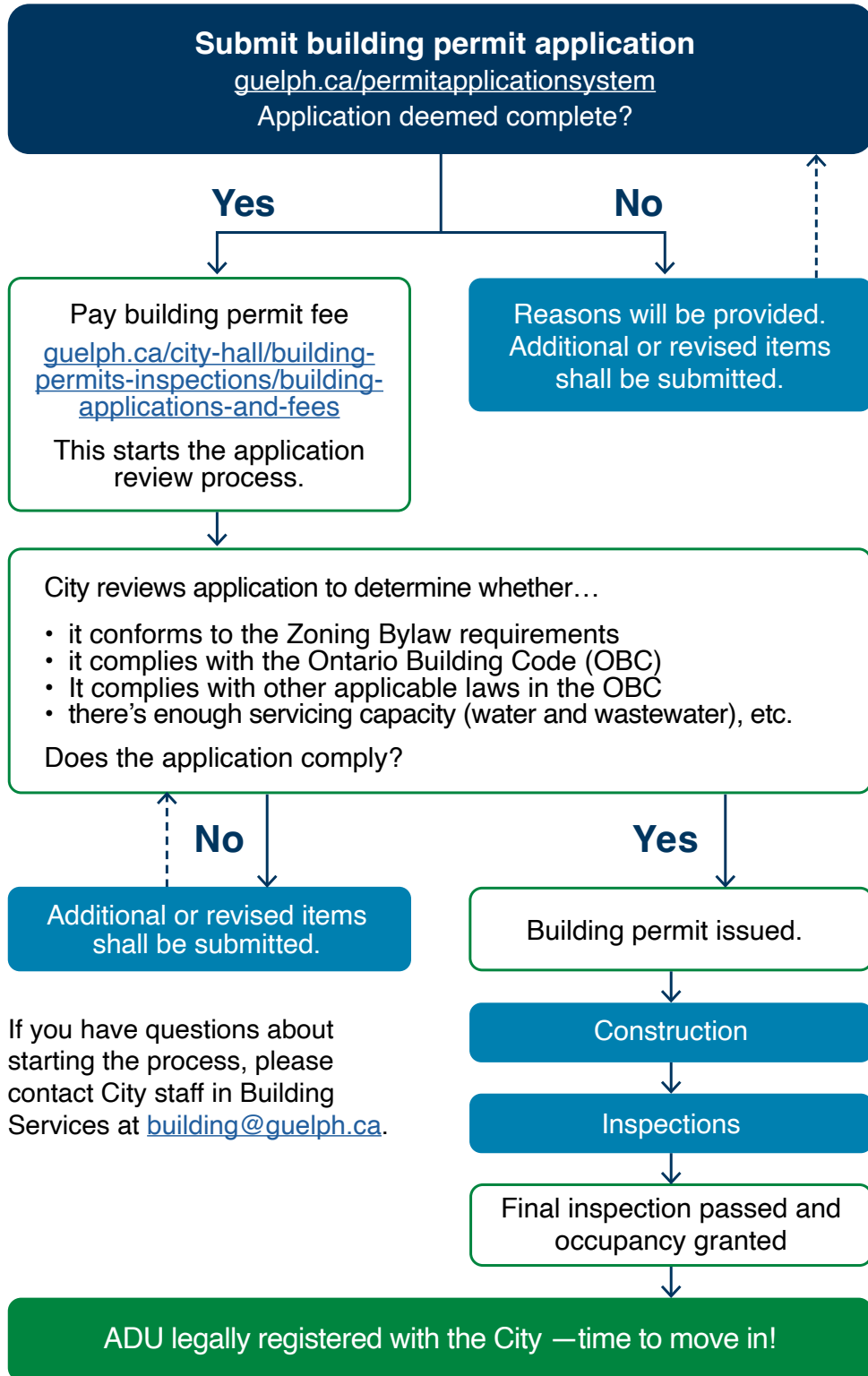
All ADUs are required to be registered with the City as per the Small Multi-Unit Residential Properties Bylaw. More information can be found at guelph.ca/adu.

Inspections

Once the building permit has been issued, construction can begin. The required inspections are identified on the building permit.

Occupancy - Once the final building inspection has been passed the unit can be occupied.

Guelph's ADU Permit Process



Finalize your ADU



Construction

Whether you have never touched a hammer before, or you are a seasoned pro, it can be helpful to enlist the help of a contractor or builder. This will offer you more design flexibility and assurance that your ADU is built correctly.

Going the DIY route means that you will manage and complete all aspects, from design to construction. This may be a costs-saving option that can offer you full autonomy over the project but be mindful that it does require a deep understanding of codes, regulations and project management.

Move in!

Whether you intend to welcome in tenants or family members into your newly built ADU, it is essential to be well-informed and fully equipped to make this transition go off without a hitch!

Renting your unit

If your intention is to create a rental out of your ADU ensure that you understand both landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities, rent control, and safety standards. As a landlord, you should ensure regular maintenance and have a proper emergency plan in place.



Ready for ADU-over?



City of Guelph Staff are here to help you through the process.

Learn more about Additional Dwelling Units and the requirements for buildings in the City of Guelph at guelph.ca/adu or scan the QR code.



Accessible formats available by contacting 519-822-1260 extension 3536 or TTY 519-826-9771.

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