

HOW TO

CREATE AN

ADDITIONAL DWELLING UNIT

ON YOUR PROPERTY

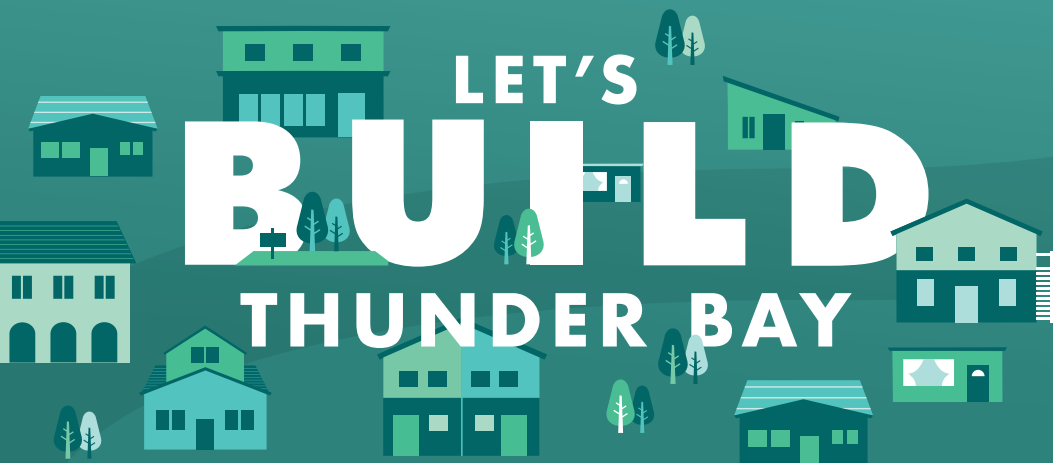


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What is an Additional Dwelling Unit (ADU)?

An Additional Dwelling Unit generally describes adding another separate living space to the home you already have. They can be built inside the house, onto the house, or in the yard. Depending on the size of your lot, an ADU is allowed in most urban residential neighbourhoods.

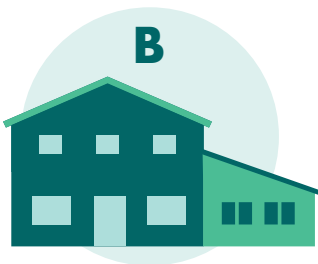
Types of Additional Dwelling Units

There are three types of ADUs:



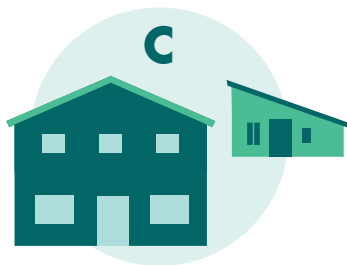
Type A: Interior Alteration (Built IN)

These homes are built inside the existing building. An example would be a basement apartment, but they can also be on the main or upper floors.



Type B: Addition (Built ON)

These homes are built as an attached addition to an existing building.



Type C: Accessory Building (Built OFF)

These homes are completely separate from the existing house or main building on the property. They also go by “Backyard Homes” or “Laneway Houses”.

Step 1: Determine if your lot can support an ADU

A) Confirm your zone and lot size requirements

Does my zone allow for an Additional Dwelling Unit?

ADUs are allowed in the Urban Low-Rise (UL) and Urban Mixed-Use (UX) zones on lots with municipal services up to the current City standards.

What you can do:

- Use the [Interactive Zoning Map](#) to see what zone your property is located in, or
- [Contact Planning Services](#) for more information.

Is my property large enough for an Additional Dwelling Unit?

A key aspect of determining how many homes you can build is the size of your lot. Lot size is the frontage of your lot and its area. An example of how lot size affects the number of homes you can build in the Urban Low-Rise zone is below.

Number of Homes Allowed	2 Homes	3 Homes	4 Homes
Lot Frontage	10.0m	13.5m	18.0m
Lot Area	300m ²	405m ²	540m ²

Zoning Regulations and Type of ADU

Depending on what kind of ADU you are interested in, other zoning rules could impact how you design the project. Examples of these rules are: Maximum lot coverage, minimum parking, building setbacks, and the landscape and amenity space.

Age of Your House

Knowing the age of your house is important because houses that meet the definition of a Converted House have reduced zoning requirements including no minimum lot frontage and area, and less required parking. A Converted House is a residential building constructed before January 1, 1945 as a detached house with no more than one (1) home that has since been renovated to include additional homes.

For more information, contact Planning Services.

What to do if you can't meet a zoning requirement

If the project you would like to do does not meet one or more Zoning By-law regulations, you can apply for a Minor Variance to the Committee of Adjustment. If the Committee approves your application, you can gain relief from those parts of the Zoning By-Law. You can find out more by visiting the [Submit a Planning Application](#) page on the City website.

B) Confirm your Water and Sanitary Sewer Services

Do my services meet current city standards?

Properties must be serviced with both City water and sanitary sewer services to develop an ADU.

If your water service line is lead, a complete replacement will be required, regardless of size. Please visit the [Lead in Drinking Water](#) page or contact the Environment Division for more information 807-625-2195.

Is my water service large enough?

Contact Engineering Services, 807-625-2266 to confirm what size your service is. If your water service is smaller than 20.0mm (¾ inch), you will most likely need to upgrade to a larger water service.

Step 2: Decide what kind of ADU you would like to build

Once you know your property can support an ADU, you should figure out what type (or types) you would like to build. If you plan to build outside the existing house, such as an Addition or Backyard Home, zoning regulations will need to be considered such how far the build would be from lot lines. If you plan on doing a renovation to add a home inside your existing house, there are other construction and Building Code requirements that you have to meet.

A) What you need to know no matter what ADU type you make

Parking requirements

All ADUs will have some kind of parking requirements. If your building has 1-4 individual homes you need to have 1 on-site parking space per home. These spaces must be located on the property and meet the requirements in Section 11.6 of the Zoning By-law. Parking on the street or boulevard does not count toward meeting your parking requirement. If your property has a travelled back lane, you can use it to access parking if your property has up to 2 homes.

Landscaped areas and amenity space

All ADUs will have landscape requirements.

B) Building an ADU inside your existing house.

Building an ADU inside your house means making sure you meet the required municipal and utility services requirements. Working with a certified professional designer and professional contractor can be a great help with making sure your ADU meets all required standards. If you have any questions or there is an existing ADU in your home that needs to be legalized, you can contact Building Services for more help.

C) Building an ADU as an addition to your house or a Backyard Home

Building Height

Height limits are set by the zoning by-law. If you want to build an addition or backyard home, the maximum height you're allowed to build is something you need to know.

Lot coverage

If you want to build an addition on to your existing building or you would like to build a new building on your property, you need to know how much space your lot has to build based on what is already there.

The key things to know are: the maximum gross floor area (GFA), and the maximum lot coverage.

The maximum GFA applies to the amount of space taken up by the existing buildings on your lot. This is measured by the footprint and floor area of each storey. The maximum GFA for your zone can be found in a height and location requirements table of the Zoning By-Law.

The maximum lot coverage is the amount of space that the existing buildings/structures AND the buildings you would like to build take up on your lot, divided by the area of your lot. To change that number into the percentage, just multiply by 100.

Maximum lot coverage is found in the density standards table for your use (such as detached house) and the zone your property is in. *Note. For the purposes of calculating coverage, eaves that extend more than 0.6 metres are included in the building footprint.

For more information you can visit the [Check Before You Build](#) page of the City of Thunder Bay's website and look at page 10 of the "[Before You Build Guide](#)".

Building setbacks

If you are constructing an addition (Type B) or a new accessory building for a backyard home (Type C), you will need to consider the minimum and maximum distances that the buildings can be from your lot lines (setbacks). This information can be found in the location and height requirements table for your zone.

Backyard home requirements

A backyard home may not be located within any front setback or exterior side setback, or on an inside potential lot of a townhouse. They must be in the back yard of a lot.

- A backyard home is only permitted on lots with both municipal water service and municipal sewer service.
- A prefabricated building may be used as a backyard home if it is placed on a permanent foundation.
- A backyard home is not permitted on an undersized lot or on a lot with a legal non-conforming main use.
- They have to have a walkway at least 1.5m wide that provides direct access from the door of the home to the street allowance
- The floor of a backyard home is not permitted to be below grade.

Backyard homes must also meet the accessory building height, location, size, and lot coverage requirements in your zone. Identify any constraints.

Step 3: Getting your project ready

A great general resource is the [Check Before You Build](#) page on the City website.

Locate your property lines

The best way to confirm the boundary of your property is by using a survey prepared by an Ontario Land Surveyor or by seeking a surveyor's assistance of a survey relocation. You may have received a copy of legal survey or building location survey when you purchased your property. If not, contact Planning Services to find out if there is a copy in our property file. You may need to rely on other features such as an iron survey bar. Your neighbours may also be able to help you locate your shared property lines and to find surveyor established iron bars.

Be aware of any easements

An easement is a defined area where someone else has a right to cross or otherwise use your land for a specified purpose. These typically allow the City or a utility provider to maintain and repair their infrastructure above or below ground. You cannot place a permanent structure on any part of an easement – this includes below-grade (underground) portions of foundations and roof overhangs. You can get this information by accessing the land registry database [provincial ONLAND application](#).

Note the location of any overhead wires

If your current house gets power from overhead electrical lines, you should make note of their location. There are minimum distances between the wires and overhead wires. Review the following Building Code provisions for more information: Division B - [9.1.1.5](#). and [3.1.19](#).

Apply For Planning Approvals and Other Agencies

If you are not allowed an ADU in your zone, you may need to apply for a planning approval. You can do this by setting up a pre-consultation with Planning Services for more information. Planning Services may also help you learn if there are other approvals you may need as part of your ADU project.

Coordinate with utility providers

Call Before You Dig

If your project involves any digging on your property, please make sure you get locates to identify any underground services before you start work.

Contact Ontario One Call to locate existing infrastructure by calling 1-800-400-2255 or visiting the [Call Before You Dig website](#)

Utility and Service Connections

You are responsible for contacting your utility providers and arranging for servicing connections.

- Electrical Servicing - contact Synergy North at (807) 343-1111
- Natural Gas – contact Enbridge Gas at 1-866-772-1045
- Telecommunications – contact your provider
- Municipal Sewer & Water - contact Engineering Services at 807-625-2266.

Building Permit Applications

All ADUs need to comply with the Building Code and need to have a building permit on file. What you need to submit to obtain a building permit will depend on a number of things such as: the size and location of servicing of the lot, whether it's a renovation, addition or newly constructed building, the age of your existing house and the size and height of the building as well as many other considerations.

The owner or authorized agent of the owner is responsible for obtaining a permit and can apply for a building permit using our [online service](#).

Building Inspections

Once your building permit is issued, City inspectors need to inspect your project at key stages of construction to make sure the work is following the Building Code. You or your agent are responsible for contacting the inspectors when the different stages are ready to be inspected. Examples of stages include: framing, insulation, plumbing, interior finishes, fire separations/protection, exiting and other items as outlined in the Building Code. You or your agent are responsible for informing the inspector when different stages of construction are ready for inspection.

Building Code Considerations

The Ontario Building Code sets out [minimum construction standards](#) for how to build an ADU. These standards exist to ensure public health and safety, fire protection and the structural integrity of buildings. While the minimums are what MUST happen, you may want to build higher than the minimum requirements of the Building Code. This can provide many advantages such as greater occupant comfort, better accessibility, higher energy efficiency, and amenities that can make your ADU a nicer place to live.

Hiring a professional (registered) designer to prepare your building designs ensures Building Code requirements are followed. These professionals will also very likely have experience obtaining a building permit from the City. You, as the owner of the property, are responsible for making sure all Building Code requirements are met and the steps of the permit process are followed.

Age of Your House

When looking to do a renovation to add an ADU to your existing house, its age plays a large role in what Building Code rules will apply to the project. If the house is greater than five years old it's classified as an existing building and you have more flexibility under the Building Code for your renovations.

If your house is less than five it's classified as a new building. This means it will generally need to meet the requirements for new construction.

Ceiling Heights

The ceiling inside your house has requirements for how high it needs to be, so choosing the location of your ADU needs to be done with care as these height requirements are different for different parts of the house such as attics and basements. If you plan on doing an addition to the house, it needs to meet the new construction requirements of the Building Code.

Room Sizes

Rooms in a home also have to be a minimum size according to the Building Code. The size is different depending on whether the room will be divided by walls or if it's open concept. For new additions the size of rooms needs to meet the new construction requirements.

Doors

All homes need to have safe exits. To be an exit door, the door must swing on hinges around the vertical (tall) axis, for example, a sliding door would not be allowed to be an exit. Doors also have to meet a minimum size according to the Building Code.

Windows

Windows are required in all homes and the size of your ADU project plays a large role in the size and number of windows you need to have. Generally the larger your ADU the larger your windows will need to be, or you need to have more of them. The size of the windows will also depend on the type of room they're in. In basements, the windows need to be large enough to allow a person to exit the home in an emergency. These windows must also be able to be opened without any tools.

Safe Exits (Access/Egress)

All homes need to have safe ways to get into and out of them. Exits have different rules depending on where the ADU is located inside the house, or if it's a new addition to the house. A separate exit is better to have but not always possible depending on the layout of your project. Fire separation may be needed in your project along with egress windows (like above). A registered designer can be a great resource to make sure your project follows the Building Code rules.

Fire Safety and Sound

Fire safety is very important. You need to have a fire separation, such as specific drywall, between your new ADU and the rest of the house. These separations act to physically slow the spread of a fire from one part of the house to another. They need to be continuous and include fire-rated closures in openings. Adding sound insulation in these fire separations also help to meet the needed protection from noise – making the sound between the ADU and rest of the house quieter. There are different rules based on the types of renovation or addition you do and your registered designer can help make sure you meet them all.

Smoke Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Smoke alarms must meet the CAN/ULC S531 performance standard and you can see if they do by looking at the label on the alarm. They also need to have a flashing light when they turn on and need to be placed properly according to the Building Code.

Carbon Monoxide detectors are also required if your home is heated by burning fuel and if it has an attached garage. They also need to be placed properly according to the Building Code.

Heating/Ventilation

According to the Building Code, a house with an ADU can have a single furnace and common ducting. If your project will share a heat source, you need to have duct-type smoke detectors that will shut the furnace off to prevent the spread of smoke.

While you only need to have a single furnace, you may want to think about having a separate furnace and ducting when adding your ADU, as you may need to do this if you do an addition to the house. This will separate the homes from cooking smells, recreational smoke and other odors. It also helps to reduce noise that may travel through the ducts from one home to another. Another benefit is being able to control temperatures in each unit separately, which may become an issue for the people living in each home.

Electrical and Lighting

The Building Code says that homes must have adequate lighting. The home needs to have a lighting outlet and switch in each room, a switch at the top and bottom of stairs, and exterior lighting at exits.

Before you build your ADU you should consult a qualified electrician to check your existing electrical service to see if it will support your project or if work will need to be done and how much that work may cost. The Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) produces the Electrical Safety Code and has rules you need to follow with your ADU project. You need a separate electrical permit to do the electrical work, and the ESA will need to inspect the electrical work, which is why having a licensed electrician is strongly recommended.

Lot Grading and Drainage

When you build a new building, such as a Backyard Home, or build an addition onto your existing house, you must submit a lot grading and drainage plan with your permit application. The lot grading and drainage plan shows how surface water will drain from your property. To show how the water will move you need to include elevation changes of the land and the location of your downspouts.

Water and Sanitary Sewer Service

As mentioned in the Plumbing Considerations section, all properties need to be serviced with both City water and sanitary sewer services to build an ADU. Only one sewer (sanitary/storm each) and one water service and meter is permitted per property (as per the Waterworks By-Law)

Servicing for backyard homes

All sewer connections must be made outside the foundation of the primary dwelling

The water service for the backyard home must be taken after the meter within the primary dwelling

Tax Implications

Lastly, constructing your ADU project could mean your assessment and property taxes change. Please visit [Property Taxes – Supplementary & Omitted Tax bills](#) for information and to estimate the applicable taxes.

Step 4: Applying for your building permit

Visit the [Apply for a Building Permit](#) webpage for a full list of submission requirements.

Visit the [Property and Permits portal](#) to apply for your building permit online.

Building Permit applications can be technical in nature. Please contact one of our Residential Building Technicians at (807)625-2574 to discuss your proposal.



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