



Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Guide

A guide to help Massachusetts homeowners understand and apply for an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) permit under the Affordable Homes Act, effective February 2, 2025:



Massachusetts ADU Client Guide (2025)

What You Need to Know to Build a Legal ADU on Your Property



What Is an ADU?

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a small, self-contained living space located on the same lot as a single-family home. It can be:

- Internal: Basement or attic conversion
- Attached: Garage conversion or home addition
- Detached: Backyard cottage or standalone unit



Key Rules Under the New Law

By-Right Construction: No special permit needed if your ADU is:

1. In a single-family zoning district
2. ≤ 900 sq ft or ≤ 50% of the main home's gross floor area (whichever is smaller)
3. Separate Entrance: Must have its own entrance (direct or via shared corridor)
4. No Owner-Occupancy Requirement
5. No Minimum Lot Size
6. Short-Term Rentals: May be restricted by your town
7. Parking: Only one space required; none if within ½ mile of transit



Steps to Apply for an ADU Permit

1. Check Local Zoning

- Visit your town's planning or building department website
- Confirm your property is in a single-family zoning district
- Ask about any local restrictions (e.g., historic districts, flood zones)

2. Prepare Your Plans

- Hire a licensed architect or designer
- Create:
 - Site plan showing existing structures, setbacks, and proposed ADU
 - Floor plan with dimensions, egress, and fire separation details
 - Foundation plan (for detached ADUs)

3. Health & Safety Approvals

- Board of Health: Approval for septic systems (if applicable)
- Building Code Compliance: Ensure fire-rated walls, safe egress, and structural integrity

4. Submit Building Permit Application

- Submit at your local building department:
 - Completed building permit form
 - All plans and drawings
 - Any required fees
 - No need for zoning board approval if ADU meets “by-right” criteria

5. Schedule Inspections

- After approval, begin construction
- Schedule inspections at key stages (foundation, framing, electrical, plumbing, final)

 Estimated Costs

ADU Type	Size Range	Cost Range	Build Time
Internal (Basement/Attic)	300–700 sq ft	\$75K–\$165K8	18 weeks
Attached (Garage/Add-on)	400–900 sq ft	\$150K–\$350K	12–26 weeks
Detached (Cottage)	600–900 sq ft	\$250K–\$500K+	20–32 weeks

 Benefits

- Rental Income: \$1,500–\$2,000/month potential
- Multigenerational Living
- Increased Property Value
- Flexible Use: Long-term rental, guest suite, home office