



Town of Orleans
Office of the Building Department
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Information on Accessory Dwelling Units ('ADU's):

Definitions:

ADU: A separate dwelling unit from the primary dwelling (attached or detached) with sleeping, cooking, and sanitary facilities.

Guest House/Studio: Habitable space similar to an ADU but containing only one or two of the three items listed above.
(These are treated the same as an ADU for zoning and building code purposes.)

Setbacks: Horizontal distance from the outermost extent of a structure to a property line.

Septic Capacity: The capacity of your septic system, on file with the Orleans Health Department.

Sewer Flow: If connected to the sewer system, the amount of septage flow allotted to your property.

Requirements:

- ADU's are limited to 1200 square feet of habitable (finished, conditioned) space. This does not include exterior stairs, decks & landings, exterior porches, or unfinished storage areas or garage bays.
- ADU's can be rented, but for periods of not less than 90 days. Rental registration is required.
- Any bedrooms (up to 2 if allowed) added as a result of the ADU must be accommodated in your septic system's capacity. Please speak with the Health Department if you have questions.
- If your property is currently or is to be connected to the municipal sewer system, you must apply to the Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners for the additional flow resulting from the ADU's bedroom(s).
- ADU's must meet all zoning requirements such as setbacks and total lot coverage.
- An ADU may be occupied by either a tenant or the property owner.
- ADU's are defined by the fact that they are fully separate dwelling units. In other words, if you wish to add more living space to your existing home (finished basement, new addition, finish existing space such as over a garage) *but the proposed space is fully open to and connected to the rest of your home*, it is not considered an ADU, even if you are installing kitchen facilities. It is considered an addition to the primary dwelling unit.
- All proposed ADU's must meet current Building Codes, including the 2023 MA Stretch Energy Code.
- One additional parking space must be added for each ADU.
- A full building permit, wiring, plumbing and gas (if applicable) permits are required.
- ADU's must be 25 feet minimum from all property lines and from the primary dwelling unit, unless connected to the primary dwelling unit by a permanent roofed structure and permanent walkway.
- Emergency escape rescue openings (EERO) in each bedroom as well as two means of egress are required per MA Building Code for all dwelling units including ADU's.

Other Considerations:

- Proximity to nearby Wetlands, whether located on your property or not, may require Conservation approvals.
- If your property is located in the Old King's Highway Historic District (all properties West of State Hwy. Rt. 6, you must apply for approval by the OKH HDC prior to a building permit being issued.
- Lot Coverage: Total roofed coverage must not exceed 15% of the total area of your lot; otherwise, a Special Permit may be required.
- Maximum Roofed Coverage: A Special Permit is required if 4000 square feet is exceeded on your lot.
- 'Tiny Home' designs must be pre-approved by the state through their modular home program.