

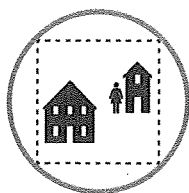
TOPICS OF REFORM

Accessory Dwelling Units [ADUs]

Accessory dwellings can reduce the cost of housing for the property owner as well as potential renters. An additional option for aging in place would be for the owner to move into the smaller dwelling over time. All of the suggestions below increase the effectiveness of existing ADU bylaws and are appropriate in village centers and neighborhoods adjacent to town and village centers.

Stage 1: Short-term fixes

1. Allow the owner to occupy an accessory dwelling unit.



Some municipalities require the primary residence to be owner-occupied. This requirement has no benefit to density, parking, or neighborhood character and can be removed through a very simple amendment to the regulations. Owners of accessory units would then be allowed to age

in place while increasing income by renting the larger residence, should they desire to do so.

2. Increase the allowable size of accessory units.



Many municipalities have strict limitations on the size of accessory dwellings, or limit them to an efficiency apartment or a single bedroom. When viewing the primary home from the street, the depth of the building isn't perceived, making square footage a misleading measure of visual impact.

Instead, where feasible the size of an accessory dwelling should be regulated by proportionality to the width and height of the primary home, not by simple square footage. Accessory unit size limits should also consider historically small lots; for example, on 25-foot-wide lots such as those in Burlington, at least half of that width is needed for a habitable accessory unit. A reasonable proportion is to limit the accessory dwelling to 60% of the width and 80% of the height of the primary building, however waivers of proportional percentages for constrained circumstances where the principal building or lot limits compliance with these proportions should also be allowed. Additionally, pre-existing buildings, such as carriage houses and garages, should be allowed to be converted to an accessory dwelling even if they do not meet these proportion limits.

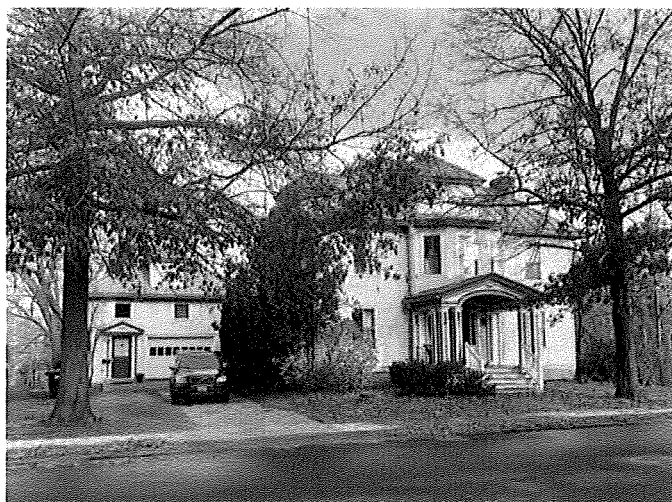
Stage 2: Mid-term fixes

1. Minimize or eliminate parking requirements.



Many Vermont villages and towns require two on-site parking spaces for each new residence. Older lots often do not have room for four parking spaces, and even when they do, the loss of garden space and the additional impervious surface is not desirable. Since ADUs are very small residences, no extra

parking needs to be required, or if it is, one additional space should be adequate, and interior garage spaces or stacked driveway spaces should be allowed toward this requirement. In some communities, parking shortages may be a significant problem, requiring a more complex solution for accessory dwellings, but this determination should be made based on a study of actual parking need.



An example of a naturally-occurring ADU in Montpelier, image credit: Susan Henderson