

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) Quick Guide

Learn more at cob.org/adu

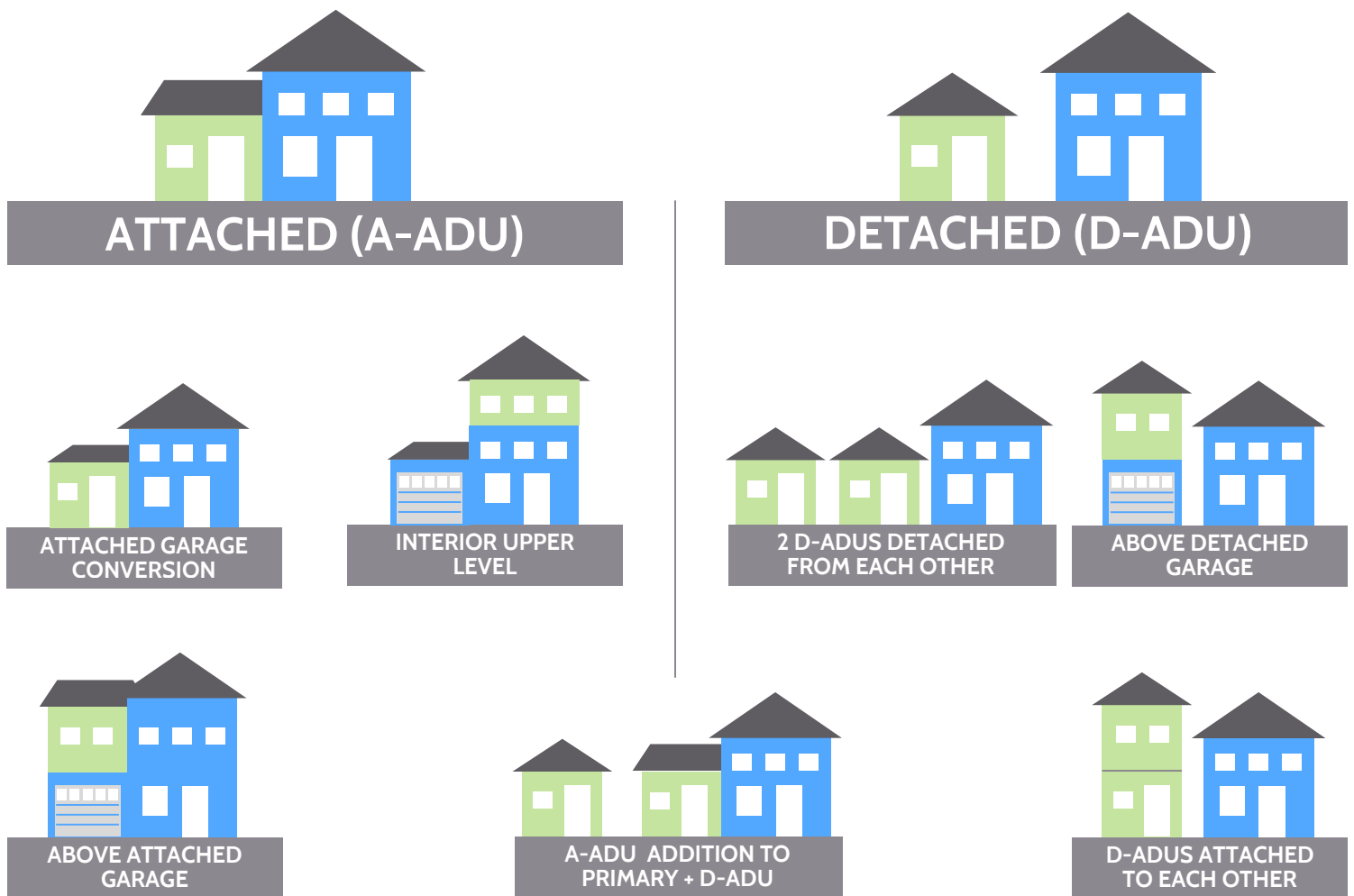


Planning and Community Development Department

What is an ADU?

An ADU is a separate, self-contained residential unit located on the same lot as a primary home, including single family, duplex, triplex, fourplex, townhome, or other principal unit. An ADU has all the basic facilities needed for day-to-day living independent of the main home, including a kitchen, sleeping area and a bathroom.

Example ADU Configurations



The diagrams shown above are just some examples of possible ADU configurations. Many configurations are possible. Different building codes may be applicable (IBC vs IRC) depending on the design and configuration. Please consult with the Permit Center to discuss the feasibility of your project.

ADU Regulations at a Glance

For additional details, refer to [Bellingham Municipal Code 20.10.036](#). To discuss feasibility of your project, please contact the Permit Center at (360) 778-8300 or permits@cob.org.

	Attached ADU	Detached ADU
Where are ADUs allowed?	All areas that allow residential development (except for the Lake Whatcom watershed)	Same as Attached ADU
Permits required	Land Use and Building ; must have an approved land use permit prior to building permit issuance	Same
Site layout	Allowed on a lot with a single-family dwelling unit, duplex, triplex, fourplex, townhome, or other principal unit	Same
Number per lot - max	2	Same
Size - max	1,000 sq/ft	1,000 sq/ft *
Height - max	35' under height definition #1, or 20' under height definition #2 (see definitions at cob.org/building-height-calculation)	24' under height definition #1, or 12' under height definition #2 (see definitions at cob.org/building-height-calculation)
Setback from property line - min (see diagrams on following pages)	Front: 10' Rear: 10' (if alley, then 0') Corner lot side flanking: 10' Interior lot side: 5' (if alley, then 0')	Front: 10' Rear: 0' Corner lot side flanking: 10' Interior lot side: 5' (if alley, then 0'), and a DADU may be located in the rear 32' without a side setback in that section
Parking - min**	None	Same
Open space - min	30% of lot	Same
Process**	A Type I permit process is used for the majority of ADUs (see when other processes would be used instead at cob.org/adu).	Same
Owner occupancy	Not required	Same
Sales	May be sold as a condominium unit independent of the principal unit	Same
Subdivision of land	Not allowed	Allowed under specific circumstances***

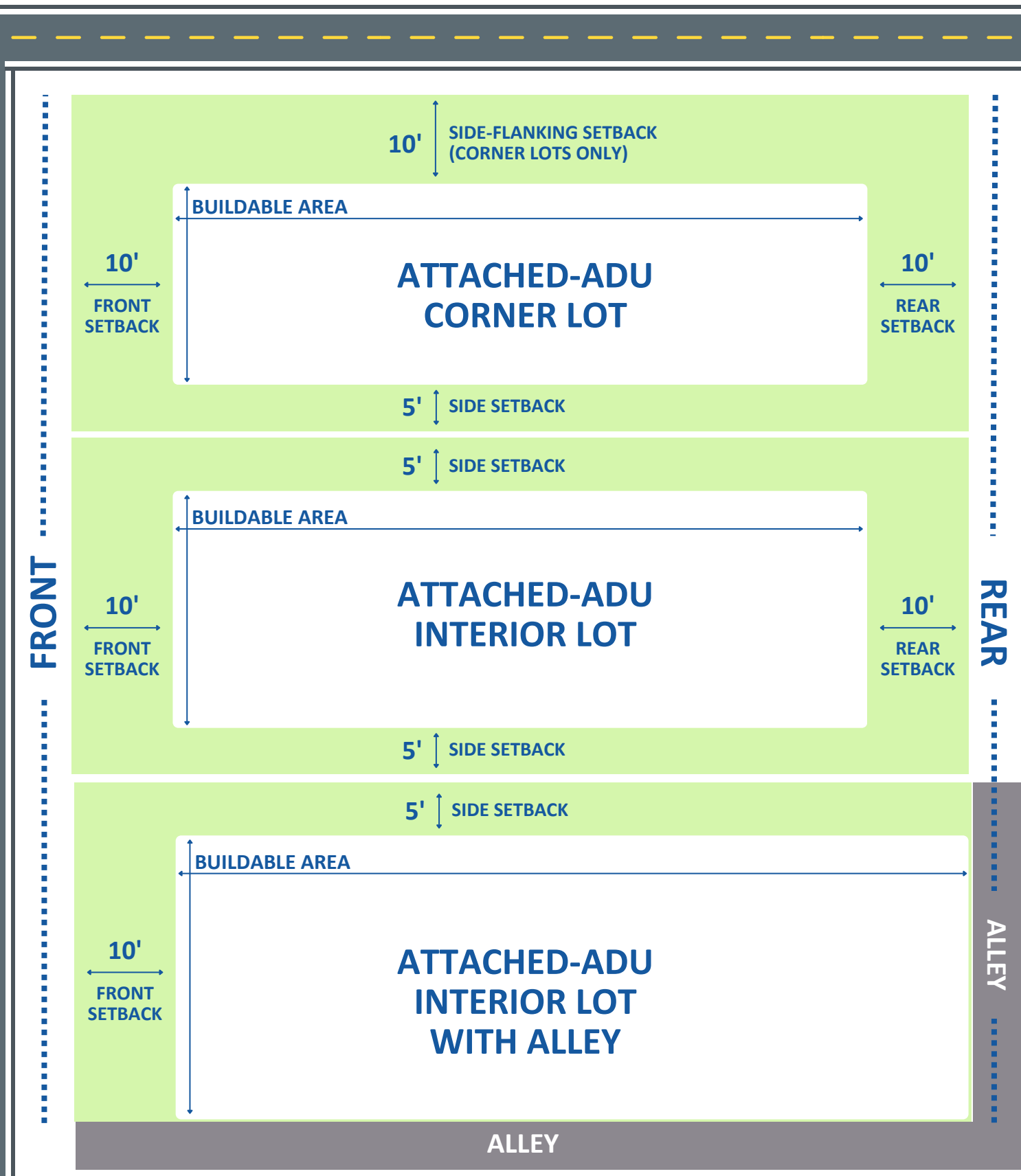
*Up to 800 sq/ft of ancillary space (garage, workshop, garden shed, storage shed, etc.) that is directly accessible to the outside by a person door is allowed to be attached to one DADU.

**Parking added electively must meet development standards per BMC [20.10.036\(B\)\(9\)](#) and [20.12.010](#).

***May be subdivided onto lots separate form the principal unit if the lots the DADUs are on are deed restricted to provide affordable owner-occupied units.

Setback Requirements - Attached-ADUs

This diagram shows the minimum distances A-ADUs must be set back from property boundaries.



Setback Requirements - Detached-ADUs

This diagram shows the minimum distances D-ADUs must be set back from property boundaries.

