



# HOW-TO GUIDE: Accessory Dwelling Units

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# 1 Introduction

## What is an ADU?

An **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)**, also known as a carriage house, garden suite, lock-off suite, or secondary suite is an independent living space that is situated on the same lot as a principal dwelling. ADUs are typically located in the backyard, above a garage or as a separate living unit within the principal house, and are intended to seamlessly fit into the surrounding neighbourhood.

## Benefits of Building an ADU?

Building an ADU presents a compelling opportunity for homeowners due to its various applications and advantages, such as potential financial benefits and adaptability to changing family housing requirements. ADUs allow for multi-generational living space, they increase your property value, they create rental units and in turn can provide you with additional rental income.

By increasing the availability of housing options within established neighbourhoods, ADUs promote sustainable infill development and assist in meeting a wide range of housing demands.

## Types of Accessory Dwelling Units



**Carriage House** is an ADU located on the second story of an accessory building over top of a garage, storage building, or similar that are detached from the principal dwelling on the same lot.

**Garden Suite** is a one-story detached accessory dwelling unit within the side or rear yard of a lot.



**Lock-Off Suite** is a separate, self-contained dwelling unit within a duplex or a townhouse unit which can be separated from the principal unit by an exterior or interior door.

**Secondary Suite** means a separate dwelling unit that is completely contained within a single family dwelling. These units must meet the requirements of the BC Building Code.



## Can I operate a short-term vacation rental business within an ADU?

Under the Village's Zoning Bylaw, short-term vacation rental is permitted in a lawful dwelling unit that is a detached dwelling, secondary suite, or detached accessory dwelling unit that are located on the same lot as a principal residence. The operation of a short-term vacation rental requires a business license from the Village of Pemberton. The number of business licenses issued for the purpose of short-term vacation rentals is limited to 5% of lots in each neighbourhood, with some exemptions available. Please contact Village staff for more information.

# 2 Planning & Building an ADU



## Step-by-Step Guide

A comprehensive guide to assist you in planning your ADU project.

### STEP 1 Can I build an ADU?

First off, you will need to determine if your zone permits an ADU.

**ADU's are permitted in the following zones:**

- Residential 1 (R-1)
- Small Lot Residential 2 (R-2)
- Duplex Lot Residential 3 (R-3)
- Residential Amenity 1 (RSA-1)
- Residential Amenity 2 (RSA-2)
- Residential Amenity 3 (RSA-3)
- Residential Townhouse Amenity 1 (RTA-1)
- Residential Townhouse Amenity 2 (RTA-2)
- Comprehensive Development Zone 5 (CD-5)  
\* Area 2 and 3 only

To find your zone, enter your address into our [interactive GIS system](#), click on your parcel and a small window will appear with the third row establishing your zone.

### STEP 2 Review Bylaws

Second, you must ensure that your site and building plans comply with the relevant Village of Pemberton bylaws and the BC Building Code. The zoning bylaw and land use regulations are summarized in **section 3** of this document, and application links are within **section 4**. The Village plans on introducing pre-approved plans for applicants to apply with later in 2025.

### STEP 3 Cost Considerations

The cost of constructing an ADU is highly variable depending on topography, location, design, size and material choices.

To estimate your construction costs, use the fee table on the next page. The maximum size of an ADU permitted is 968 sq ft.

**Post-construction costs to consider:**

- Adding an ADU will increase property taxes as a result of increased property value.
- Insurance costs for rental unit.
- You may see increases in annual water, sewer and hydro rates.

### Financial Incentives

The province has introduced the Secondary Suite Incentive Program to help homeowners create affordable housing in their communities. The program will provide money to help homeowners create a new secondary suite or ADU on their property to be rented out for below market value for a required period of time.

Learn more at [BCHousing.org](http://BCHousing.org).



### Need Help?

Applicants are encouraged to discuss their plans at an early stage with our staff.

For land use email:  
[developmentsservices@pemberton.ca](mailto:developmentsservices@pemberton.ca)

For Building and Code Inquiries:  
[nsegovia@pemberton.ca](mailto:nsegovia@pemberton.ca)

# Deciding on a Builder

Applicants may choose to work with a Licensed Residential Builder, or other professionals with experience in home building/design to take care of the application process.

Visit the [Architectural Institute of BC](#), the [BC Association of Building Designers](#), or [BC Housing License Registry](#) for online directories where you can search for residential design and building professionals within the area. Builders and businesses local to the Sea to Sky region may be discovered in the [2024/2025 Contractor's Guide](#).

## Owner Builder

If you wish to build an ADU yourself, provincial regulations require that you pass the Owner Builder Exam offered through BC Housing. This is required even if you plan to subcontract parts of the project.

Learn more at BC Housing: [bchousing.org/licensing-consumer-services/owner-builder](https://bchousing.org/licensing-consumer-services/owner-builder)

Item	Cost Estimate	Details
Water & Sewer Connection	\$200.00 for an additional dwelling unit that is not already constructed. Fees may vary depending on existing connections	No connection charge if there is already a residential dwelling on the property and you are adding a suite to the existing unit. Applicants are responsible for any necessary construction costs to extend the servicing lines or increase water line size.
Hydro Connection	Rates Vary	Service extension may be required; the costs for this are highly variable. Contact BC Hydro for a quote.
Building Permit Fee	\$10.00 per \$1,000 of cost of construction or up to \$100,000 and then \$7.00 / \$1,000 of cost of construction in excess of \$100,000	If your cost of construction was \$250,000 the base permit fee would be \$2,050.00.
Plumbing Permit	\$15 per fixture	minimum \$90.00 permit fee
Excavation Permit	\$250.00	Required if doing additional excavation to the lot.
Woodstove Permit	\$75.00	For the addition of a solid fuel burning device.
Sprinkler System	\$3 per fixture	minimum \$75.00 fee Sprinkling information can be found in Section 3.
Title Search	\$21.00	Required for all properties.
Covenant Registration	\$100	+ legal costs + 10% Administration fee

\*For a full table of Fees please see Schedule T of [The Village of Pemberton Fees and Charges Bylaw](#)

## STEP 4

### Obtaining Permits

An ADU may require both a development and building permit. To reduce processing time, you may apply concurrently for these permits. Our applications are processed online via Cloudpermit. A link to apply can be found in **section 4** of this document.

#### Development Permit

While unlikely, if your property is within a development permit area, planning staff will review your plans to verify alignment with the guidelines outlined within our [Official Community Plan](#).

#### Building Permit

A building permit is required to construct the new ADU or renovate an existing building. If a development permit is required, the building permit is not issued until the development permit is approved.

Building permits are handled through our online software Cloudpermit. The system will provide you with a digital checklist of what items are required to be submitted. You cannot submit a permit until you have uploaded all the necessary information. Find the link to apply and supporting guides in **Section 4** of this document.

If you are constructing an ADU in the flood plain, a s219 Flood Covenant must be registered on title to ensure that the unit is constructed in a safe manner in relation to the flood plain. More details regarding this can be found on **page 9**. A building permit will not be issued without the registration of this covenant if required.



## STEP 5

### Construction of the ADU

Once your building permit has been issued and paid for, you can commence construction. Inspections are conducted at various stages of construction to ensure compliance with bylaws and the BC building code. Service connections will also be established at this time if required.

## STEP 6

### Occupancy of an ADU

Occupancy is given once all inspections and service connections have been completed and the necessary documentation for occupancy has been submitted. Once occupancy has been issued, your permit is complete, and you may legally occupy or rent the ADU.

## Existing Buildings

#### Adding a Secondary Suite

Secondary suites are also considered ADU's and may be added to existing dwellings. While these permit applications are more simple than building a new ADU, BC Building code and applicable bylaws must be adhered to. Suites must be above the flood plain.

#### Conversion of Existing Accessory Buildings

Do you have an existing accessory building or garage on your property? It may be possible to convert an existing permitted structure such as a garage or shop into an ADU. This process differs from building a new ADU and would require a change of use permit as well as review of the existing structure to ensure it complies with Zoning and Building bylaws.

#### Conversion to a Multiplex

In some cases it may be possible to turn an existing house into a multiplex with two, three, or four separate housing units. These additional units may be used as rental units or stratified to create separate titles that could be sold to new owners. Improvements would be required to meet current standards in the BC Building Code and, if applicable, the criteria in the Strata Property Act for previously occupied buildings.

Please contact [developmentsservices@pemberton.ca](mailto:developmentsservices@pemberton.ca) to discuss the conversion of existing accessory buildings.

# 3 Land Use



## Design Regulations

### Siting

Siting refers to where the ADU will sit on the lot. The Zoning Bylaw specifies the distances an ADU must be from each property line. In addition to these setbacks, ADUs must be situated at least 3 meters away from the principal dwelling on your property (see Figure 1).

Section 6.8 of the Village's Zoning Bylaw contains additional regulations regarding Small Scale Multi-Unit Housing Options. Further information can be found in your specific zone. If an ADU does not work for your property there are other options to consider providing rental units such as lock-off suites, garden suites and or multiplexes.

### Size

The maximum gross floor area<sup>1</sup> of an ADU is 40% of the total floor area of the detached dwelling unit, excluding the garage, to a maximum of 90 sq. m (968 sq. ft.). An ADU also cannot contain more than 2 bedrooms.

Ensure that the ADU, in addition to the existing buildings on your property, does not exceed lot coverage<sup>2</sup> or floor area ratio<sup>3</sup> limits. Although there is no minimum floor area requirement, the ADU must adhere to the standards of the BC Building Code.

### Design Guidelines

The Village does not regulate form and character of ADUs through a typical development permit. It is encouraged that any new ADUs are designed to fit with the character of the neighbourhood. Where necessary, building exteriors and landscaping may be appropriate to minimize disruption for your neighbours.

### Height

The maximum height of an ADU depends on what is being constructed. Carriage homes cannot exceed two stories, while garden suites cannot exceed one story.

Height is calculated from average natural grade to the highest point of the building (see Figure 2).

#### Definitions

##### <sup>1</sup> Gross floor area

Total area of all floors, measured to exterior of building walls (exclude unfinished basement area/crawlspace)

##### <sup>2</sup> Lot coverage

Percentage of the lot that is occupied by buildings/ structures (ie. divide total building footprint area by lot area)

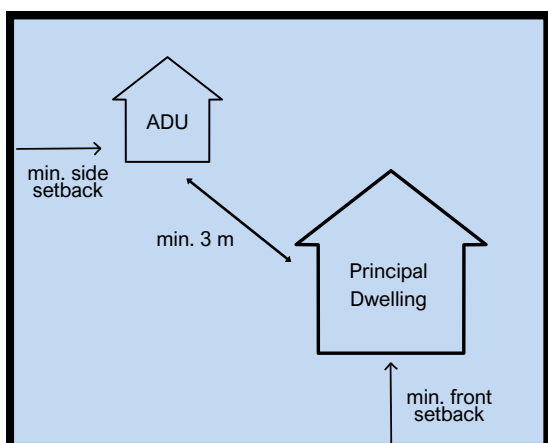
##### <sup>3</sup> Floor area ratio (FAR)

Gross floor area of all buildings on the lot relative to lot size (ie. divide gross floor area by lot area)

##### <sup>4</sup> Average natural grade (ANG)

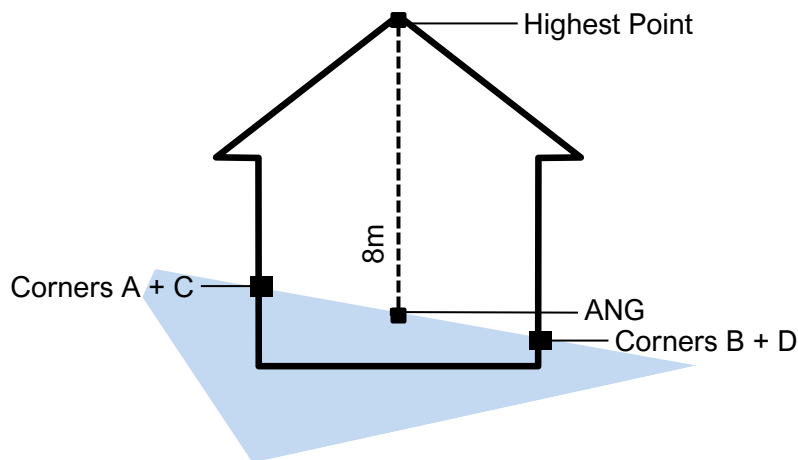
Undisturbed ground elevation measured at each building corner (ie. corner A+B+C+D = ANG)

Figure 1.



ADU must meet all required setbacks per zone.

Figure 2.



## Additional Requirements

When planning the location of your ADU, also consider the following factors:



### Covenants / Easements

Review any existing covenants or easements on your property title, as they may impose additional restrictions or requirements affecting the placement of your ADU.



### Statutory Building Schemes

Check for any applicable statutory building schemes that may outline specific guidelines or restrictions regarding the design and location of structures on your property.



### Development Permit Areas (DPAs)

Identify if your property falls within a DPA as per the Official Community Plan, as this could require additional approvals or adherence to specific guidelines, for example environmentally sensitive areas. You can find this information using our [online GIS web maps](#).



### Off-street Parking

Assess off-street parking requirements to ensure there are enough stalls for vehicles. Section 8.3 of the Zoning Bylaw contains parking requirements. One off-street parking space is required for each dwelling unit (ie. 2 spaces if there is an ADU plus an existing home). See section 8.3 Residential Off-Street Parking Requirements of the zoning bylaw for more detailed requirements.

A standard parking space is 6m x 2.5m (20' x 8'). Maximum driveway width is 7m. See section 8.11 Off-Street Parking Design Criteria, Development and maintenance of the zoning bylaw more detailed regulations.



### Emergency Access and Fire Safety

Plan for access to the ADU to meet safety requirements and facilitate emergency response if needed. Overhead clearance must be maintained, and any stairs or ramps along the pathway must also adhere to the BC building code.

ADU Design must also consider [Spatial Separation Requirements](#) when fire department response time is more than 10 minutes.





## Other Considerations



### Civic Address

Civic addresses are supplied to ADUs by using the letter A. For example, 7400 Prospect Street is the principal dwelling, 7400A Prospect Street becomes the ADU address.

If a secondary suite already exists on the property, the ADU would be labelled “B”. Addresses must be easily visible from the street.



### Bare Land Applications

ADU's may be constructed on bare lots, however, a building permit for the principal residence must be issued simultaneously or before the ADU building permit.

If the principal building permit is issued, the ADU may be built and occupied before the principal residence is constructed. Homeowners are encouraged to discuss the sequence of construction with staff.



### S219 Flood Covenant

A section 219 Flood Covenant is required to be registered on Title of the property when the ADU exists within the Village's flood plain. Properties on hillsides are typically exempt from this requirement. This is a legal document that runs in perpetuity of the land.

A geotechnical engineer will determine a safe geodetic level for the ADU to be placed. The geotechnical report will become an appendix to the covenant. Fees are outlined in Table on page 5 of this document.



### FireSmart Principles

The Pemberton area experiences significant risk of wildfires due to its location and changing climate. While participation is voluntary, the Village of Pemberton encourages all new developments to consider implementing FireSmart principles in the construction of new buildings.

For more information, consult the [FireSmart Guide](#) or contact the Pemberton FireSmart Team at [firesmart@pemberton.ca](mailto:firesmart@pemberton.ca).

# 4 Resources

## Building & Land use

- [BC Building Code](#)
- [Official Community Plan](#)
- [Village of Pemberton Building Bylaw](#)
- [Village of Pemberton Zoning Bylaw](#)
- [Village of Pemberton Fees & Charges Bylaw](#)

## Directories

- [Architectural Institute of BC](#)
- [BC Association of Building Designers](#)
- [BC Housing Licensed Home Builders](#)
- [Association of BC Land Surveyors](#)
- [Sea to Sky Contractors Guide](#)
- [Village of Pemberton Business License Directory](#)

## Housing Resources

- [Landlord BC](#)
- [Housing & Tenancy](#)
- [Home Suite Home Guide](#)
- [Secondary Suite Incentive Program](#)
- [Becoming an Owner Builder](#)

## Apply for a Permit

- [Building Services](#)
- [Development Services](#)
- [Cloudpermit \(Submit a permit\)](#)
- [Cloudpermit Support Portal](#)
- [How to Submit a Permit Guide](#)



## Have Questions? We're here to help!



**Village of Pemberton Administrative Office**  
Monday to Friday, 9:00am - 4:00pm \*closed  
between 12pm - 1pm

Phone: (604) 894-6135  
Email: [admin@pemberton.ca](mailto:admin@pemberton.ca)



### Planning

For land use questions or development applications, contact:  
[developmentsservices@pemberton.ca](mailto:developmentsservices@pemberton.ca).



### Building

For building code questions, building permit applications and service connection information, contact Nikki Segovia, Building & Planning Clerk:  
[nsegovia@pemberton.ca](mailto:nsegovia@pemberton.ca).

## Looking for property records?

Request to view building files may be submitted to [admin@pemberton.ca](mailto:admin@pemberton.ca) using the [Request to View Files form](#).