

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): Frequently Asked Questions

Does the homeowner need to live on the property?

No, the owner does not need to live on the property.

How do I register a new address for my ADU?

Submit a plan to Public Works showing the main access door along with a letter requesting the address. The City will generate an address considering the properties in similar blocks and the new address will be sent for review to multiple divisions. After review and approval, the City will generate a new address letter that will be circulated to all the concerned parties including the post office and various City departments.

If I want to rent out my ADU, what do I need to know about being a landlord and property management?

To rent out your ADU, you will need to [register your new rental unit](#) with the City of Evanston. Visit the City's [Landlord & Tenant Resources page](#) for more information. If you want your tenant to pay their own electricity bill, then the ADU will need to have its own meter.

Can I run my home business out of my ADU?

Yes. ADUs are considered part of the principal dwelling unit for home-based business purposes and follow the same regulations (home occupation regulations can be found [here](#)). Find out how to register your business [here](#).

Will my property taxes go up?

Yes, but the original home on your property will not be reassessed immediately, which means the property taxes on your principal residence will stay the same until the next scheduled reassessment. Learn more about your property taxes on [the Cook County Assessor's website](#).

Do ADUs have to be set at an affordable rent?

No, there is no set rent for ADUs.

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What are the requirements for water and sewer service for a detached ADU?

The ADU water service must be connected to your main residence, and it cannot connect directly to the street. An upgrade is required if the main residence does not have sufficient capacity for your new attached or detached ADU. This can be an additional cost.

Are there building or fire code issues I should know about?

If you are building a new structure, fire sprinklers are required. These typically require you to upgrade your water service to your main home and extend it to your detached ADU.

If your ADU project is a conversion of an existing structure, no new fire sprinklers are required. Egress windows with direct exits, minimum ceiling heights, and the wall separating the ADU and main house must meet fire code requirements.

There's a pole with power lines near my property that might be near a 2-story ADU. How does this affect my project?

Depending on your project, one common option is to work with an electrician and the utility company to relocate the utility pole or bury the power lines. ADUs need to meet certain clearance requirements from overhead electric lines, so an alternative is to design a structure that meets these requirements. Reach out to the City of Evanston or ComEd to figure out what you can build on your property in these cases.

You will also want to look for “easements” on your property, which can be found in your deed, and by contacting the relevant utility company. These are agreements that can allow utility companies or neighboring property owners to take up certain parts of your property, for electric lines or water pipes. If you need to move a power line, you may need to engage a local real estate attorney to determine the best path forward.

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Do I need to lay a new concrete foundation?

Potentially, depending on the type of project. If you are building a two-story ADU in a space that previously had an existing one-story garage, the answer is likely yes.

If you have an existing one-story garage, it is possible that the existing foundation will not support another level. To add two stories, it's possible that you would need to tear down your existing garage to lay a new foundation. If building lot coverage allows it, perhaps an attachment to your existing garage would be less costly.

How should I think about plumbing?

The line must be connected to main house; it cannot go straight to the street. An upgrade is required if the main house does not have sufficient capacity for attached or detached ADU (which can be costly).

How do entrances work? Where can I put them?

There can only be one entrance on the front-facing side of the property, and there must be a separate entrance for the ADU. Any exterior stairs must be on the rear or side of the property.

How can I build a more “green” ADU?

To develop an eco-friendly ADU, consider: an all-electric structure; HVAC systems and an insulated building envelope that require less energy to heat & cool the building (and lower your utility costs!); assessing opportunities for solar (or geothermal); or installing an EV charging station.