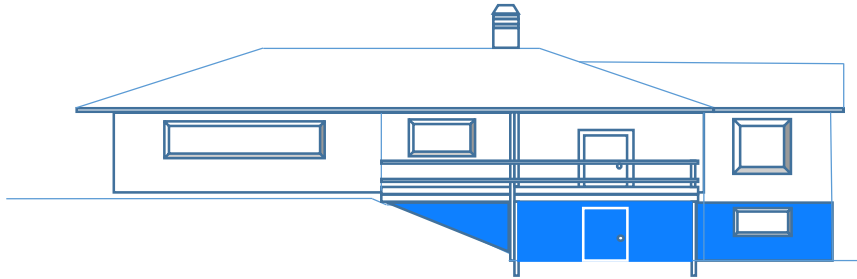




LEGALIZING AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT WITHIN THE FOOTPRINT OF AN EXISTING HOME



This category of ADUs includes conversions of existing rooms within a permitted single-family residence, and conversion of an attic or a basement area into an ADU. Legalizing the conversion of already existing rooms within a legally permitted home to an ADU can often be straight forward because the space was originally constructed with a building permit. Legalizing the conversion of attic or basement areas into living space is more complex, as it involves air, thermal, fire, and moisture barriers which may or may not have been properly constructed. The building code allows for meeting the intent rather than the letter of the law. In order to minimize alterations required to existing construction, County staff will consider reasonable alternatives that meet the intent of code requirements.

The property owner will be required to provide accurate plans. Often, these may be drawn by an unlicensed designer. Sometimes, however, plans from an engineer or architect are required. Planning staff will use the site plan to verify the ADU's location in relation to property lines. Building staff will review plans to verify that code requirements for safe, sanitary housing are met, and will identify necessary changes. Converting either an attic or basement area into a separate living unit brings specific challenges. A fire rated separation is required between the ADU and original home, and since the home's floor or ceiling was not originally fire rated, creating this separation can be difficult. Basement areas must comply with requirements for managing moisture from the ground, and attic conversions require attention to requirements for insulation and ventilation.

After a building permit is issued, a County inspector will inspect the unit to verify code requirements are met for the framing and foundation, and for its plumbing, mechanical, and electrical systems, moisture control, heating, sanitation, and cooking facilities. Staff will also need to verify safety measures in case of fire, including an appropriate exit door and path, windows, and smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Inspecting completed construction work is typically more difficult than inspecting while construction is underway, and may require opening up finished areas to confirm code compliance. Staff will attempt to minimize such disruptions during the inspection process.