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Let’s Talk ADUs (Part IV): Can an Accessory Dwelling Unit Be Big Enough for Me?

This is the fourth installment of a monthly series about one of the hottest topics in real estate: Accessory Dwelling Units. ADUs have gotten a lot of attention recently as a housing option. My thanks to John Phillips of Verdant Living for helping with the research on it.

ADUs — detached accessory or additional dwelling units, also called mini homes — are a wonderful idea. They use an existing piece of residential real estate and create a separate living space. They are often used for intergenerational housing (aging parents, twenty somethings just starting out, etc.) and have long-term value as rental property and add to the value of the real estate.

ADUs are smaller living spaces. Are they too small? Is the living space comfortable? Beyond that, are there benefits to consider?

For many, they are not too small. The living space is comfortable, not substantially different from the space actually used in a larger home. Is an ADU right for everybody? Of course not. For large families and those who entertain a lot, among others, an ADU may not be the right way to go.

I have personal experience with a smaller living space. Rita and I now live in a 3-bedroom apartment, having sold our 4,000-square-foot home in Golden. Back then, we really only used the eat-in kitchen, the living room, the primary bedroom/bathroom, and the office. The basement was filled with stuff we didn’t use, except for a ping pong table that we used a couple times a year and a portable sauna that we used a half dozen times. Our second bedroom was used only occasionally by a guest.

Now, in our 1,200-square-foot apartment, our life hasn’t changed much. We eat next to our kitchen, which is part of the living room. One bedroom is my office, and we have a guest bedroom that we’ve only used twice, but it’s nice to have. True, we have no room for a piece of exercise equipment that I’d like to buy, but there is a fitness center on the main floor which has more equipment than I need. The apartment has all we need for daily life — sort of like an ADU.

Smaller living spaces are part of a minimalist movement (having only what you

really/actually need and use). In residential housing, these include tiny homes (sometimes as small as 100 square feet), recreational vehicles, mobile homes, park models (higher quality mobile homes), small condos, smaller residential dwellings. ADUs fit in this category as a permanent, comfortable, high quality addition to a larger dwelling unit.

Those who live in smaller homes don’t see them as limiting, referring to them with words like elegant, homey, welcoming, private, and friendly. Those preaching minimalism like to say it reduces stress, improves mental well being, and promotes a better life flow. They talk about living in smaller homes as “freeing”.

One of the biggest benefits is financial. An ADU costs far less than most homes. A good application might involve intergenerational housing. Older homeowners who have significant equity in a residence could sell their home, pay for an ADU on their children’s property, and have resources left for other lifestyle desires. As a bonus, an ADU has smaller utility bills, less maintenance, less tax. Mini homes are seen by many as a solution to the need for affordable housing.

Below is a floor plan for a typical one-bedroom ADU; it has all the things people use day to day in a comfortably sized dwelling. It is 42 feet by 13.4 feet.



Would you like to see how smaller living spaces work? A company named Tiny Home Tours, which promotes the benefits of living in smaller spaces, has a YouTube channel with a collection of over 1,200 videos which includes not only visuals but testimonials of the owners.

To help those interested in Accessory Dwelling Units, Verdant Living has published a buyers guide, BuyersGuideColoradoADUs.com. A good place to begin is the Verdant Living website, VerdantLiving.us,

or call John Phillips at 303-717-1962.

Cindy Schroppel of Tiny Home Tours and her husband own their own tiny home and submitted the following comment for this article: “Tiny home life offers me the freedom of time. I love that my tiny home takes me 30 minutes to clean from top to bottom. Because I’m not enslaved to cleaning and the upkeep of a 2,400-sq.-ft. home, my previous home. I have more time to do what I choose to do. I’ve been

able to travel more, spend time with my grandchildren and serve at my church. My husband loves the fact that I spend less time shopping because I don’t have space to put things.”

Find the prior three installments of this series, future installments and more online at <http://RealEstateToday.substack.com>.

Next month: The modular (built off site) option

Price Reduced on Home Below Golden’s “M”

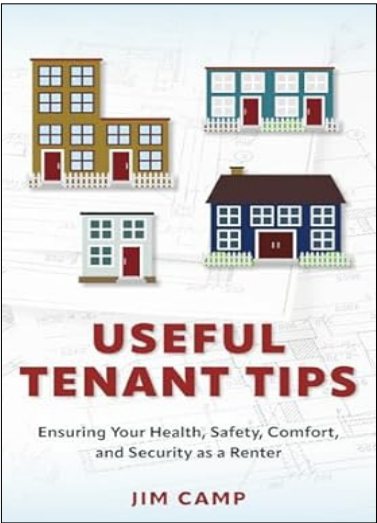
Beverly Heights is that quiet residential community on the other side of Highway 6 from the Colorado School of Mines, which is why so many CSM staff and their families live there. Indeed, the husband of the couple selling this home at 1945 Sage Drive is himself a retired professor of geochemistry. Tucked at the foot of Mt. Zion with its iconic “M” on the mountainside, this community is so loved that homes like this come on the market rarely and get snapped up quickly. A lovely pocket park is nearby, and this home is on a 1/4-acre fenced and landscaped lot with a garden and RV parking, and it has several features that home buyers like. It has hot water baseboard heat provided by a newer high-efficiency boiler. The seller-owned solar PV system keeps the monthly utility bill low, too. The sellers added a cozy sunroom with skylights and a flagstone floor. A classic wood cook stove is the centerpiece of their huge kitchen, and the wrap-around tree-shaded deck is a peaceful retreat most of the year. View a narrated video tour of this home that I posted on its website, which you can get to at www.GRElistings.com, then come to the open house TOMORROW, Aug. 3rd, 11 to 1.



My Favorite Inspector Has Published a Book

For over 20 years now, Jim Camp, an inspector operating as the owner of Metropolitan Home Inspections, has been my preferred referral to buyers for inspecting the home they are purchasing. I first met Jim when I was a new Realtor attending the weekly marketing sessions at the Jefferson County Association of Realtors. Jim would make presentations, using pictures, demonstrating unusual inspection issues that he had uncovered for clients. Right away, I knew he was the inspector I should recommend to my buyer clients, and he has never let me or them down.

Now he has published a book Useful Tenant Tips, which you can find on Amazon for \$9.95. In his usual thorough way, Jim covers every aspect what a renter should know and do before signing a lease. Although it doesn’t pertain to me, I read it, and I can recommend it to any readers who are in the rental market.



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The articles in this ad are posted at RealEstateToday.substack.com.

Two decades of these columns are archived at JimSmithColumns.com.



Price Reduced on Centennial Condo

This updated 2-story condo at 5555 E. Briarwood Ave. #706 has a finished basement and is located in the heart of the Summerhill neighborhood. It’s now only \$459,900. The main level is ideal for entertaining with its family room with a wood-burning fireplace. It flows into the formal dining area and opens to a private patio. All appliances in the updated kitchen are included. See more pictures and take a narrated video tour at www.GRElistings.com. Then call listing agent Chris Sholts at (320) 491-6494 to request a private showing.

