

# Could Accessory Dwelling Units Be a Solution, Albeit Small, to Housing Shortage?

An increasing number of jurisdictions, including Denver, Englewood, Boulder, Golden and Arvada, are allowing the construction of a second dwelling unit for homes zoned for single-family. The common term for them is "Accessory Dwelling Unit" or ADU. Golden, unlike the other cities, allows an ADU on properties zoned for either one or two dwelling units.

The ordinances that allow such units include rules that distinguish a home with an ADU from, say, a duplex. For example, they cannot have their own legal description and can't have separate water and sewer connections.

Sixty-two ADUs have been approved under Golden's 2009 ADU ordinance. Denver has permitted 263 ADUs just since Jan. 1, 2016.

Arvada had Jefferson County's first ADU ordinance, enacted in 2007. Its key points were:

- ◆ The property owner must live on site, in either the main house or in the ADU.
- ◆ The ADU is limited to 800 SF, or 40% of main home's size. Minimum size is 200 SF.
- ◆ No more than 1 bedroom is allowed.
- ◆ No more than two persons may live in a unit up to 600 SF, or three persons in a unit between 600 and 800 SF.
- ◆ One on-site parking space is required.
- ◆ The ADU's design must be consistent with that of the principal unit, and the entrance, if visible from the street, must be clearly subordinate to the primary home's entrance.

These are only some of the requirements with which a homeowner must comply when adding an ADU to his or her property.

The cities differ in some of their requirements. For example, Arvada forbids a home business in an accessory dwelling unit, but Golden's code does not reference that usage.

ADUs can be within the primary structure (such as a walk-out basement) or in a separate structure, either above a detached garage or as a standalone structure.

There are many uses for ADUs. One use is to create a rental unit, helping homeowners with their ownership costs. Another is to provide a "mother-in-law" unit that provides an elderly family member with independent living but in close proximity to family. Conversely, an elderly homeowner might use an ADU to provide living quarters for a caregiver who needs to be close by. Ditto for a family which has hired a nanny for their young children.

In Golden, each ADU requires an allocation under Golden's 1% growth limitation. Only Boulder, among the other cities that allow ADUs, has such an ordinance.

California, with its high housing costs, appears to be the national leader in the adoption of ADUs. Here's some useful information from an article I found online from the New York and Michigan Solutions Journalism Collaborative:

*Parts of California have welcomed ADUs for*

*decades while others operated under much stricter rules. This created a complex patchwork of local regulations that was difficult for residents and builders to navigate. The new laws relaxed regulations around setback requirements, minimum lot sizes and other elements that previously made building ADUs difficult in some areas.*

*Legislative changes at the state and local levels appear to have opened the floodgates for ADU permits in parts of California, including San Jose, where ADU permits issued per year went from 192 in 2018 to 416 in 2019, according to [www.BuildingAnADU.com](http://www.BuildingAnADU.com).*

*In Redwood City, a smaller city in the Bay Area, ADU permit issuance doubled during the same period.*

*The idea appears to be popular among older homeowners: 84 percent of people 50 and older would construct an ADU in order to provide a home for a loved one in need of care, and according to a 2018 study on ADUs by AARP.*

*The federal government backed the idea of accessory dwellings in the 1990s, with a Task Force on Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing recommending removing restrictions on accessory apartments to enable elders to age in place, according to 2008 research in the Journal of Aging and Policy.*

*Data on the effectiveness of ADUs for caregiving families is scarce, beyond anecdotal evidence and numbers illuminating their popularity in cities where they're legal and encouraged.*

*California's openness to ADUs is part of the state's strategy to tackle its crushing housing market, which with runaway prices and low housing stock threatens to shut out residents who've been living in Bay Area cities like San Francisco or San Jose for decades.*

I have become familiar with a local company, Verdant Living, that specializes in the construction of ADUs, or "backyard bungalows." Their website is [www.VerdantLiving.us](http://www.VerdantLiving.us). Owner John Phillips pointed me toward another useful website, [www.AccessoryDwellings.org](http://www.AccessoryDwellings.org).



## 2-Story Home in Golden's Stonebridge Subdivision

Stonebridge at Eagle Ridge is a 232-home subdivision at the foot of Lookout Mountain. This home at **808 Brown Squirrel Lane** is near the end of one of three cul-de-sacs that end with a trailhead into Eagle Ridge Park. Only three other homes are between this home and a trailhead leading to the playground and picnic area. Upstairs, two guest bedrooms have views of Lookout Mountain, and the master bedroom features a view of the hogback and Green Mountain. The 14'x16' loft overlooking the family room could easily become a 4th upstairs bedroom. In the basement is a 2nd family room and home theater plus another bedroom with en suite bathroom. Underneath the full width main-floor deck is a concrete patio with a hot tub, which is included. Listing agent Jim Smith lives in this neighborhood (two blocks away) and loves it here, and so will you! Take Jim's narrated video tour online at [www.StonebridgeHome.net](http://www.StonebridgeHome.net), then come to the **open house Saturday, 11am-2pm**.



## Just Listed: Updated Bungalow in North Golden



This updated bungalow at **305 N. Columbine Street** has 3 bedrooms and 2 baths, including a spacious master suite. The floors are beautiful tile and original hardwood. The back porch has been enclosed and heated and has a vaulted pine ceiling. The backyard has a large patio for entertaining. There are two parking spaces off the alley, where you could build a 2-car garage. Next to the parking spaces are a gardening shed and a cinder block shed that once served as a well house. This home is within walking distance of Clear Creek and downtown Golden, as well as hiking and biking trails and all that Golden has to offer. Visit [www.NorthGoldenHome.com](http://www.NorthGoldenHome.com) to view a narrated video tour, then call your agent or **Jim Smith** at **303-525-1851** for a private showing, which begins soon.



### Jim Smith

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