

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE WORCESTER ZONING ORDINANCE ADOPTED
APRIL 2, 1991, RELATIVE TO ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS**

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Worcester as follows:

SECTION 1: The City of Worcester Zoning Ordinance, adopted April 2, 1991, be and is hereby amended by deleting the existing definition of “Dwelling Unit, Accessory (ADU)” in Article I, Section 2 – General Provisions, Definitions and inserting the following updated definition in lieu thereof:

DWELLING UNIT, ACCESSORY (ADU): An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a self-contained housing unit, inclusive of sleeping, cooking and sanitary facilities **on the same lot as a Principal Dwelling**, subject to otherwise applicable dimensional and parking requirements, that maintains a separate entrance, either directly from the outside or through an entry hall or corridor shared with the Principal Dwelling, sufficient to meet the requirements of the Building Code and Fire Code for safe egress. An ADU is not to be considered when determining the use classification of a lot for zoning purposes.

SECTION 2: The City of Worcester Zoning Ordinance, adopted April 2, 1991, be and is hereby amended by deleting Section 8(G), “Accessory Dwelling Units,” in Article IV- Use Regulations, in its entirety and inserting the following updated Section 8(G) in lieu thereof:

G. Accessory Dwelling Units

1. Purpose and Intent

The purpose of this Section is to advance the public good by enabling the creation and expansion of new, diverse housing opportunities intended to increase the supply of healthy, accessible, affordable, and sustainable living spaces that address varied housing needs. Accessory Dwelling Units provide flexibility for diverse housing types and enable more opportunities for intergenerational living environments and provide rental income for homeowners while encouraging the efficient use of the existing housing stock and infrastructure and preserving the character of the neighborhoods.

2. Definitions

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU): An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a self-contained housing unit, inclusive of sleeping, cooking and sanitary facilities **on the same lot as a Principal Dwelling**, subject to otherwise applicable dimensional and parking requirements, that maintains a separate entrance, either directly from the outside or through an entry hall or corridor shared with the Principal Dwelling, sufficient to meet

the requirements of the Building Code and Fire Code for safe egress. An ADU may be detached, attached, or internal to the Principal Dwelling. An ADU is not to be considered when determining the use classification of a lot for zoning purposes.

PRINCIPAL DWELLING: A structure, regardless of whether it, or the Lot it is situated on, conforms to zoning, including use requirements and dimensional requirements, such as setbacks, bulk, and height, that contains at least one Dwelling Unit and is, or will be, located on the same Lot as an ADU.

GROSS FLOOR AREA (GFA): The sum of the areas of all stories of the building of compliant ceiling height pursuant to the Building Code, including basements, lofts, and intermediate floored tiers, measured from the interior faces of exterior walls or from the centerline of walls separating buildings or dwelling units but excluding crawl spaces, garage parking areas, attics, enclosed porches and similar spaces.

3. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in Article IV, Section 8A-F, Article V, or Article XVI, Section 4 of this Ordinance, Accessory Dwelling Units shall be allowed by right, as an accessory use, in all zoning districts as determined by Table 4.1, in accordance with the requirements set forth herein.

4. Use Regulations

- a) The Principal Dwelling and the ADU shall remain on the same Lot.
- b) ADUs shall not be a “Short Term Rental” as defined in M.G.L. c. 64G sec. 1.
- c) The owner of a lot proposing an ADU shall submit to the Building Commissioner, as part of a building permit application, in accordance with Article II, Section 2B of this Ordinance, the following:
 - i. A to-scale architectural plan, depicting the location and gross square footage of the Principal Dwelling unit(s), the location and gross square footage of the proposed ADU, and the location of all ingress and egress points from the ADU and the Principal Dwelling.
 - ii. A to-scale site plan, prepared and stamped by a Massachusetts registered professional land surveyor, depicting the required setbacks.
- d) ADUs shall obtain a certificate of occupancy prior to commencement of use.
- e) ADUs shall not require definitive site plan approval.

5. Dimensional Regulations

There shall be no more than one (1) ADU per lot, in accordance with the following dimensional requirements:

- a) Size: The gross floor area of an ADU shall be no greater than nine hundred (900) square feet.
- b) Setback and Height:

- i. ADUs shall not have more restrictive dimensional standards than those required for the Principal Dwelling; a Single-Family Detached Dwelling (Article IV, Section 4, Table 4.2: Permitted Dimensions by District), or; an Accessory Structure (Article IV, Section 8, B. 4 & 10) within the same zoning district, whichever results in a more permissive regulation.
 - ii. ADUs proposed within existing buildings, to which no expansion or addition is proposed, shall be exempt from the requirements of Table 4.2 related to height.
 - c) ADUs shall not be permitted within the front-yard, unless approved by the Building Commissioner through a reasonable analysis in accordance with the requirements of 760 CMR 71.03 (3).
 - d) ADUs shall be permitted within, or on a Lot with, a Pre-Existing Nonconforming Structure so long as the ADU can be developed in conformance with the Building Code, 760 CMR 71.00, and any expansions or additions are subject to the otherwise applicable dimensional requirements.
 - e) ADUs shall be exempt from any required finding under Article XVI, Section 4. (M.G.L. c. 40A §6).
 - f) ADUs shall not be considered when calculating Floor to Area Ratio.
6. Parking: ADUs shall not require additional off-street parking spaces. However, the addition of an ADU shall not eliminate existing parking spaces that are otherwise required by this Ordinance from a lot (e.g., if an ADU is constructed in an existing parking facility).
7. Where the standards listed above in this Section 8(G)(5)(a) through (d) related to dimensional regulations and Section 8(G)(6), related to parking, are not met, the Planning Board may approve modifications through a Special Permit in accordance with the requirements set forth in Article II, Section 6 of this Ordinance.

In City Council January 13, 2026

Passed to be ordained by a yea and nay vote of Eleven Yeas and No Nays

A Copy. Attest:

Nikolin Vangjeli



City Clerk