

Portsmouth, NH – Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) at a Glance

What’s an ADU—in plain English

A small, self-contained apartment on the same lot as—and legally tied to—your single-family home. It has its own kitchen, bath, sleeping area and entrance, but it cannot be sold separately.

Can my lot qualify? Quick checklist

- Zoning: You must already have a single-family house on the lot.
- Size: Up to 750 ft² (attached or detached), max 2 bedrooms.
- Parking: Provide one extra off-street space.
- Height & Look: Detached units ≤ 22 ft and visually subordinate.
- Owner-occupancy: You live in either the main house or the ADU.

Two approval tracks—pick the one that fits

If your ADU...	Permit Route	Typical Timeline
Inside existing structure & code-conforming	Administrative Approval (staff)	≈ 30–45 days
New footprint/height or needs relief	Conditional Use Permit + possible ZBA variance	≈ 60–90 days

Five-step action checklist

- Book a free 15-min consult with Planning & Sustainability (603-610-7216).
- Create an OpenGov account and upload plans + pay fee.
- Post the orange sign for public notice (30 days or until hearing).
- Sign & record the Owner-Occupancy Affidavit after approval.
- Pull building permits, pass inspections, get Certificate of Occupancy.

Cost & financing pointers

- Ballpark build costs: \$200–\$350 per ft² (basement conversion < backyard cottage).
- Local banks offer ADU-specific Home Equity Line Of Credit (HELOC)—compare rates before you sign with a contractor.

Keep it legal—annual check-in

Each spring the City emails you through OpenGov. Confirm owner-occupancy to keep your Certificate of Use active.

Find every form and the full 46-page handbook at: Planning & Sustainability → “Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)” page.

Last updated: June 2025 – verify fees & rules before filing.