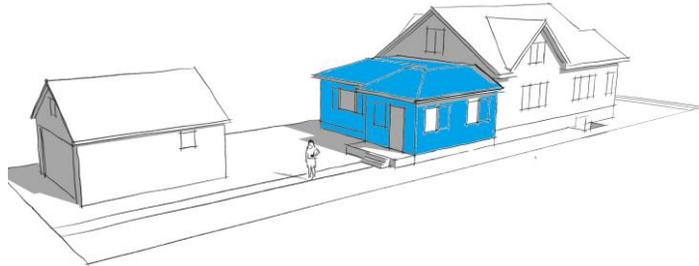




LEGALIZING AN ATTACHED GARAGE OR UNPERMITTED ADDITION INTO AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT



This category of ADUs includes converted attached garages and unpermitted additions built onto existing homes. Depending on the quality of the construction and to what extent it meets code requirements, legalizing these types of additions may be difficult or relatively straight forward. If the ADU is newer and was built according to code at the time of construction, then legalizing this type of unit will be simpler. However, older ADUs not built to code, or built when code requirements were much different, may need substantial improvements. 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. Unpermitted additions may violate zoning setback requirements, and if so will require a variance permit to be legalized. Building staff will review plans to verify that code requirements for safe, sanitary housing are met, and will identify necessary changes. A fire rated separation is required between the ADU and the original home, and improvements will be required to create such a separation if one is not present.

After a building permit is issued, a County inspector will inspect the unit to verify proper construction. Some of the items to be inspected include the framing and foundation, the 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.