

C4. Historic Preservation of Smaller Houses and Accessory Buildings



Preserving smaller, historic houses and accessory buildings is important on many levels in addition to historic preservation: These buildings are relatively more affordable, their embodied energy makes them greener, and their small size could make aging in place more affordable and allow neighborhoods to evolve in an organic, contextual way. This tool suggests creating additional incentives for owners of historic properties to preserve, rather than demolish, their smaller buildings through the city's landmarking process.

Key Issues:

- Historic small homes and accessory buildings are being demolished and replaced with larger structures at a rapid rate, especially in Boulder's central core.
- Preservation of smaller, historic homes advances city goals for retaining the historic character of our central core.
- Removing current barriers to subdivision and designation of ADUs and OAU in exchange for landmarking (concentration, parking, size, occupancy, permitting, etc.) merits reconsideration.
- Smaller homes, ADUs, and OAUs provide additional affordability options in existing neighborhoods with amenities and access to services.
- Senior homeowners may be able to stay in their neighborhoods and downsize by moving into an ADU or OAU while renting the primary residence to a larger family.
- Historic smaller homes, ADUs, and OAUs use land efficiently and advance many city sustainability goals.
- Subdivision of large lots that contain small historic houses will allow a small, scattered increase in housing diversity in neighborhoods without blanket rezoning or other dramatic changes.

Background:

- ADUs are a "separate and complete housekeeping unit within a single family detached dwelling unit." They are currently only allowed in zones RL-1, RL-2, RE, RR-1, RR-2, A, or P, and there cannot be more ADUs than 10% of the single-family homes in a given neighborhood area.
- OAUs are "separate and complete housekeeping unit[s] within a single family detached dwelling unit," but may be located within a detached accessory structure. They are currently only allowed in zones RR, RE, and RMX and are limited to 450 sq. ft. in size.
- Subdividing lots to allow an owner to preserve a small home while constructing a second house on the site is not allowed for lots smaller than 6,000, 7,000, 15,000, or 30,000 square feet for RMX-1, RL-1, RE, RR-1/RR-2, 2, respectively.

Implementation Options:

1. Allow ADUs and OAUs in lower density zones.
2. Remove the "10% saturation rule" restrictions for landmarked ADUs.
3. Allow detached OAUs that exceed 450 square feet if the site is landmarked.
4. Allow exception of the minimum lot size limitation of 6,000, 7,000, 15,000, or 30,000 square feet for RMX-1, RL-1, RE, RR-1/RR-2, respectively, for subdivisions.
5. Relax parking requirements.
6. Allow subdivision of property into multiple small, non-conforming lots or create a Planned Unit Development (PUD) with multiple units on one lot to preserve an existing historic house or accessory building.
7. Allow relief from Maximum Building Coverage requirements for accessory buildings in rear yard setbacks in exchange for landmarking all of the structures on the site.

Goals Addressed Through this Tool:

Strengthen Our Commitments

✓ **Maintain the Middle**

✓ **Create Diverse Housing Choices in Every Neighborhood**

Create 15-Minute Neighborhoods

Strengthen Partnerships

✓ **Enable Aging in Place**