

# Integrating Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in Historic Communities: Policy, History, and Practice

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# Mass. Affordable Homes Act (2024)

- **State estimates 220,000 additional housing units needed by 2035**
- New Mass. statewide Accessory Dwelling Units) ADU policy-- ADUs up to 900 square feet by-right (no special permits or variances required) in single-family zones
- Towns can establish dimensional regulations & can go higher than 900 square feet: Newton – 1,200 square feet
- ADUs can be attached or detached



Winchester

- ADUs must have separate exterior entrance
- No relative residency restrictions
- Towns can prohibit short-term rentals (AirBnb)

# Traditional Historic Cape Cod House Extensions – Yarmouth



Half Cape



Three-Quarter Cape



Full Cape



# Traditional Historic Cape Cod House Extensions



1760 House, W. Barnstable



1795 House, Centerville

# Victorians – Newton



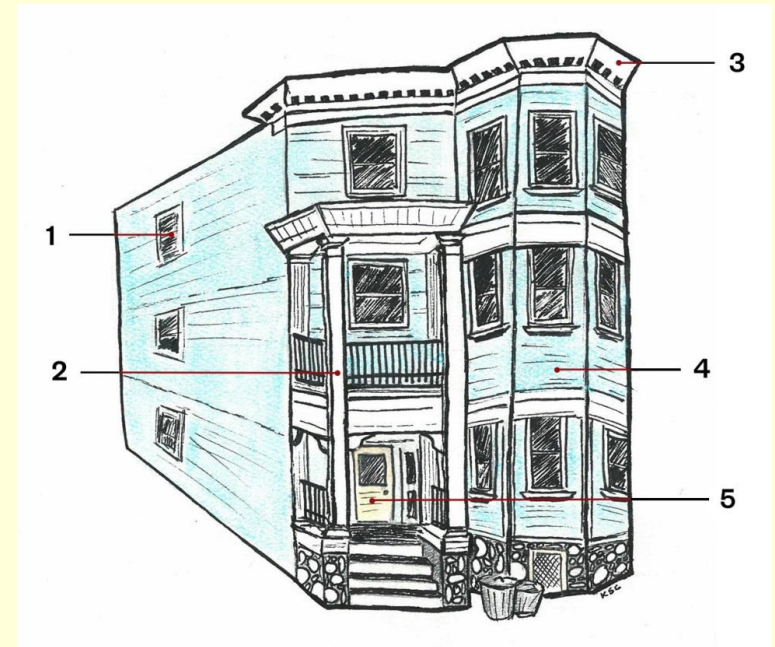


# Victorian Carriage Houses as ADUs



Newton

# Three-Deckers, 1870-1930 (majority built 1900-1918)



16,000 three-deckers in Boston alone; facilitated by central heating, plumbing, electricity



# Zoning & Tenement House Act, 1912



- Mass. State Housing Committee (1911): three-decker was "flimsy fire-trap and a menace to human life" because of wooden balloon framing
- Tenement House Act curbed height at 2 ½ stories; more than two families, needed fireproofing
- Belmont was first town to adopt restriction



# Post-World War II Suburban Boom & Restrictive Single-Family Zoning

- Restricted single-use zoning
- 1920s, 36 towns prohibited three-families & several prohibited two-families
- Boston stopped building three-deckers 1930s



# Post-World War II Suburban Boom & Single-Family Zoning





# Late 1970s-1990s Growing Allowance of ADUs

- Newton, early ADU by-law, 1987 (several revisions through 2017; amendment for state law consistency, 2025)
- Not leading to many new units, but growing awareness of their advantages
- Early by-laws require rigorous special permits; relatives must live in ADUs
- Rediscovery of three-deckers with gentrification



Lee, MA

# Attached ADUs – Concord





# Adding Basement ADU



# Detached ADUs



Winchester ADU above garage



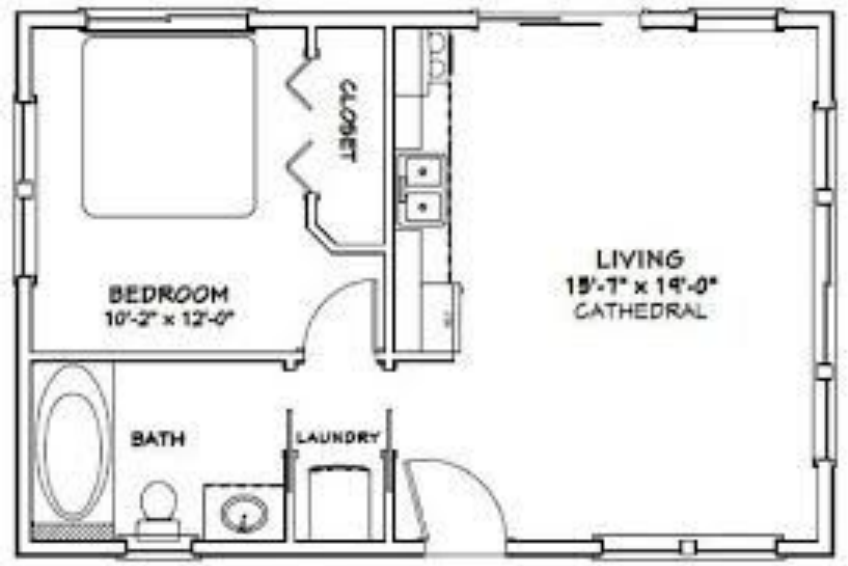
Great Barrington Detached ADU



# ADU Interior Layouts



900 sf ADU



600 sf ADU

# Mass. Overall Housing Strategy

- ADUs are one piece of housing strategy, to produce 220,000 new units by 2035
- Besides apartment buildings, key piece is “middle housing” – housing between single-family homes & large apartment buildings, including, townhouses, courtyard buildings, two- and three-families

