

Can I add an additional dwelling to my property?

Oftentimes, property owners in the R2 and R3 zone districts see the benefit of adding an accessory apartment on their property. Other owners want to redevelop a property and construct two or more multiple buildings. This brochure provides some basic information to owners about the criteria and standards for adding dwellings in residential areas with R2 or R3 zoning. After reading this brochure, owners should contact the Golden Planning and Development Department at 303-384-8097 to discuss specific parcels.



WHAT ZONING DO I NEED?

The first step in deciding if you can add a dwelling unit is to determine the zoning on the property. Zoning is a set of regulations enacted by the City that determines what uses can occur on property in Golden. If you have RE, R1, or R1A zoning, you may be able to create an accessory dwelling unit or “secondary suite” on your property, provided that you are in compliance with Chapter 18.28.240 of the Municipal Code. Please see a different brochure entitled “Adding a Secondary Suite to your Lot” for more details. If your property falls within the many PUDs in Golden, you will need to check directly with the Planning Department to determine what land uses and lot sizes are required.

If you happen to own property that falls within the R2 and R3 zone districts, you may be able to add an additional dwelling; however, there are many factors that affect this determination. If you are unsure about the zoning of a specific property contact the Planning Dept.

HOW BIG OF A LOT DO I NEED?

The minimum lot size for any use in the R2 or R3 zone districts is 7,000 square feet, and the minimum street frontage is sixty (60) feet. If your lot is 7,000 square feet or greater and has at least sixty (60) feet of street frontage on a public street, then you have enough lot area and frontage for up to two (2) dwelling units on the parcel. You must have at least 9,000 square feet of area to add a third unit. Speak directly to a representative of the City Planning Department if your lot is 9,000 square feet or greater.



WHAT IF MY LOT IS UNDERSIZED?

Occasionally over the years, an R2 or R3 parcel was purposely created having less than the required lot area or frontage. Many of these parcels were created prior to zoning limits established in the 1950s. For these parcels, the maximum use is one single household dwelling and an ADU, if all other requirements are met, provided that for an R2 or R3 lot or parcel less than 5,000 square feet in area, no dwelling may be constructed unless a variance is granted. In the event of a recently created undersized lot or parcel, contact the Planning Department to identify the areas of violation to be addressed.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MY LOT SIZE?

Most lots in Golden are part of subdivisions, and are also known as “platted” lots. To find out the lot size of a platted lot, you can review the original subdivision plat at the City Planning Department offices. For subdivisions dating after 1950, the dimensions are shown for each lot, and the lot sizes shown are considered accurate. There are some older plats where individual lots and blocks were not dimensioned and while it was assumed that all lots were 50 feet wide by 140 feet deep, in actuality, some lots are not really as large as was assumed. Because of these survey issues in the older parts of Golden, anyone wanting to add a unit or seeking a written commitment from the City for lot area compliance, for an unplatted lot or a lot in a subdivision before 1950, will be required to secure an Improvement Location Certificate (ILC) to verify the dimensions, area, and lot frontage of the parcel. Contact any surveyor to get more information about the costs and timing of getting an ILC.

WHAT IF I OWN ONE OF THE OLDER LOTS THAT ARE 7,000 SQUARE FEET, BUT ONLY FIFTY (50) FEET WIDE?

If you have a lot that meets the minimum 7,000 square foot lot size but not the sixty (60) foot wide frontage requirement, you may use the parcel for one main dwelling and you can likely add an accessory unit (or secondary unit) subject to the same limitations and restrictions that apply to the single family zones. However, you may not add a second main dwelling unless you secure a variance for the lot frontage requirement. There are two tests for a variance of this type: legal hardship and neighborhood compatability. Consult with the Planning Department staff for a determination of whether the City Staff will support your variance request. The criteria for neighborhood compatability may vary from one neighborhood to another, but generally include designing the architecture and bulk size of the building to be similar to other structures in the neighborhood.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Contact the Planning & Development Department at:

303-384-8097

1445 10th Street
Golden, CO 80401

www.cityofgolden.net

WHAT IF MY LOT WAS ASSUMED TO BE 7,000 SQUARE FEET IN SIZE, BUT THE ILC SHOWS THAT IT IS SMALLER?

Over the years, City Staff has found that some of the lots in the old city plats are not really 50' x 140' as they were assumed to be. If your lot is less than 7,000 square feet in area, you can add an accessory unit (or secondary suite) subject to the same limitations and restrictions that apply to the single family zones. However, you may not add a second main dwelling unless you secure a variance for the lot area with a complete variance review. The staff position on the variance, if required, will depend on the two criteria discussed above.

OK, SO I HAVE THE REQUIRED LOT AREA AND FRONTAGE (OR A VARIANCE) NOW WHAT CAN I BUILD?

City codes allow you a couple of options for adding a second main dwelling if you meet the lot area and frontage requirements. You may convert a single family home into two dwellings (such as by adding a basement apartment), provided you meet all building code requirements. You may also add on to a structure or remove the structure and build a duplex, provided you meet the setback, height, access and building code requirements. You may also be allowed to build a dwelling in a separate building if you meet the following requirements:

- The second dwelling is considered an accessory building. According to city code, the total lot coverage of all accessory structures must not exceed 10% of the lot area. For a 7,000 square foot lot, that means the aggregate footprint of all accessory structures can be no more than 700 square feet.
- The maximum height of an accessory structure in the R2 zone is twenty (20) feet; the maximum in the R3 zone is 25 feet. You may construct a two story building, but must design it carefully.
- You may not construct two separate principal or "main" buildings on a single lot.

CAN I SELL ONE OF THE UNITS?

The process of splitting a parcel is known as subdivision. Generally when two units are developed on a 7,000 square foot lot, it is for the intention of a single ownership and a rental unit. The City does not permit subdivision of such parcels, and does not support or recommend attempts to create condominium ownership. The only exception where a subdivision is permitted is for a traditional "side by side" duplex where each half has at least 3,500 square feet of lot area and thirty (30) feet of frontage. If you want to check into the possibility of a subdivision, speak to a Planning Department representative.

