



Accessory Dwelling Units: A Tool for Aging in Place within Tompkins County

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Introduction

America's population is rapidly aging. By 2030, an estimated one in five Americans will be 65 or older¹. This trend is pronounced in rural areas, especially in New York, which has the fourth-largest population of older adults in the United States^{2,3}. With these demographic changes comes a growing movement for "aging in place," the practice of older adults choosing to remain in their community during their later years⁴. This often involves residing in the home where they spent the majority of their adulthoods or downsizing to a smaller home in the same community. This preference is widespread, with 77% of adults over 50 expressing that they would prefer to age in place⁵.

Aging in place offers many benefits, including autonomy, social connectedness, reduced loneliness, and cost savings⁴. Aging in place allows older adults to maintain their autonomy and independence by continuing to make decisions about their living space and lifestyle. Remaining within their community also allows older adults to preserve the social connections that they have built over many years. This can benefit older adults, as neighborhoods with greater social cohesion are associated with reduced feelings of loneliness among older adults⁶. Social isolation and loneliness are associated with adverse health outcomes, including high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease, and an overall increased risk of mortality⁷. Additionally, aging in place can be more cost-effective than alternative options such as assisted living or nursing homes⁸. In-home care, although not without its expenses, can still be a cheaper alternative than institutionalized care provided in nursing facilities.

Though there are many benefits to aging in place, there are many barriers that make it challenging to do so. Major challenges include safety and accessibility, as only a small fraction of homes in the United States are designed to accommodate the needs of older populations. An "aging-ready" home is defined as having a step-free entryway, a bedroom, and a bathroom on the first floor, and at least one bathroom accessibility feature. In the Mid-Atlantic region, only 5.8% of homes are "aging-ready"⁹. Another barrier to aging in place is affordability. The United States is also experiencing a severe housing shortage, which has led to rising housing costs, posing a burden on older adults who are carrying more mortgage debt^{10,11}. The share of homeowners over 65 with housing debt has doubled from 21% in 1989 to 42% in 2019 and the median outstanding balance has increased from \$18,000 to \$86,000. The number of cost-burdened households has also significantly increased, with a high of 10.2 million older adult households spending more than a third of their income on housing in 2019. Further challenges include providing care and assistance to older adults living on their own. Many older adults may lack reliable transportation, making it difficult for them to attend doctors' appointments, pick up prescriptions, and access other healthcare services¹². They may also require assistance with daily activities, including bathing, dressing, and eating¹³.

In the face of these challenges, a solution has been gaining popularity: Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). ADUs, also known as granny flats, accessory apartments, secondary suites, or in-law suites, are smaller, independent residential units located on the same property as a single-family home^{14,15}. ADUs are independent living spaces that have their own kitchen/kitchenette, bathroom, and sleeping area. ADUs come in various forms, including detached, attached, and interior units¹⁶.



Figure 1: Types of Accessory Dwelling Units

Background

ADUs are not a new form of housing. ADUs were common until the post-World War II era when suburban developments and zoning codes reduced their presence¹⁷. However, with their potential to address housing crises and support aging in place, ADUs are now experiencing a resurgence in popularity. ADUs can help facilitate aging in place by providing a place for family members or caregivers to reside on the same property while having their independent living spaces¹⁸. This would allow older adults to maintain their independence while remaining close to those who could offer assistance. ADUs can help make housing more affordable. If older adults choose to remain in their homes, they could generate rental income to help cover their mortgage payments. Alternatively, they could choose to move into an ADU nearby, which could serve as a cheaper housing option. ADUs can also be a safer alternative for older adults, as they can be designed to be accommodating and “aging friendly,” with features like wider doorways, grab bars, and step-free entryways. Overall, the idea of ADUs is well-received by older adults. 70% of adults over 65 reported that they would

consider living in an ADU if they needed help with everyday activities, and 62% reported that they would consider building an ADU for their loved ones, relatives, and friends¹⁹.

Though ADUs may help facilitate aging in place, several barriers exist²⁰. Regulatory barriers in the form of zoning ordinances pose a major obstacle to ADUs. Zoning ordinances can vary significantly from one area to another, making it extremely restrictive or impossible to obtain approval for an ADU. Even if ADUs are allowed, restrictions on parking, lot size, and setbacks can also render ADU construction impossible on many lots. Procedural barriers in the form of local permitting processes and development requirements can also pose another obstacle. Navigating local permitting processes and development requirements can be complex and frustrating. Some homeowners may choose to hire design and construction professionals to manage the process but many attempt to navigate it themselves. This can be a stressful process and acts as a significant deterrent to ADU construction. Financial barriers in the form of planning and designing costs, construction costs, and development fees can be another barrier. Costs for architectural and engineering designs, permits, building materials, labor, site preparation, landscaping, inspection fees, development impact fees, and utility connection charges can be substantial, making ADU construction unfeasible. Lastly, gaining acceptance from the greater community poses barriers to construction. One significant concern regarding ADUs is the use of ADUs for short-term rentals like AirBnBs, as short-term rentals can have negative impacts on housing stock, lead to neighborhood changes, and hurt the local hospitality industry.

Successful ADU reforms in other cities can offer valuable insights into how to support ADU growth in Tompkins County. In California, legislation aimed at addressing the housing crisis through ADUs was passed in 2019²¹. Senate Bill 9 helped overcome procedural barriers by ensuring a more streamlined and timely permitting process, mandating that ADU projects be approved within 60 days. Additionally, Assembly Bill 671 helped place greater attention on ADUs by compelling cities and counties to incorporate plans for increased ADU construction as part of their broader housing strategies. Assembly Bill 68 took a step further and helped increase flexibility in ADU construction by barring local governments from implementing minimum lot sizes. Finally, Senate Bill 13 eliminated impact fees for ADUs smaller than 750 square feet and temporarily prohibited owner occupancy rules for 5 years after implementation. Combined, these reforms proved successful, and following these legislative measures, the number of ADUs grew by 88% from 2019 to 2022.

Meanwhile, in Seattle, Washington, similar efforts were made to help promote ADU development²¹. Legislation was passed in 2019 to authorize up to 2 ADUs per lot, eliminate existing owner occupancy rules, reduce the minimum lot size, and remove ADU parking space requirements. Collectively, these changes helped contribute to a 253% increase in ADU permits from 2019 to 2022.

The city of Portland, Oregon, saw similar growth in ADUs following related measures²². Measures included eliminating owner occupancy requirements and parking requirements, relaxing age restrictions for

primary dwellings, and waiving the “system development charge,” a costly, one-time fee that was previously associated with building an ADU. To address concerns related to short-term rentals, Portland did not waive the “system development charge” for homeowners intending to build an ADU for short-term rental use.

Additionally, changes in zoning ordinances and initiatives to educate homeowners and builders about the ADU process and help owners finance construction were implemented. This policy could help alleviate similar concerns regarding the use of ADUs as short-term rentals in Tompkins County, ensuring that ADUs are used for their intended purposes. Portland further expanded ADUs beyond housing for older adults and marketed ADUs as a viable low-cost option for any renters. As a result of these many efforts, the number of yearly permits for ADUs rose from 25 in 2009 to 372 in 2018.

Methods

To understand how ADUs could help facilitate aging in place within Tompkins County, a literature review, key informant interviews, and an analysis of zoning ordinances in each municipality within Tompkins County was conducted. Journals, government publications, and reports were gathered and systematically reviewed to gain insight into the historical context, trends, challenges, and success related to ADUs. This literature established a foundational understanding of ADUs and the associated policies and regulations, providing a theoretical framework for the later analysis of ADU policies.

Additionally, key informant interviews were conducted with Susan Thering, PhD, Executive Director of the Design Coalition Institute, and Joan Jurkowich, Tompkins County Planning Administrator. These interviews were intended to gain expert insights into the practical aspects, challenges, and successes involved with ADUs. Open-ended questions were created to collect qualitative data on historical context, the impact of regulatory frameworks, and best practices employed in promoting ADUs.

Lastly, a careful analysis of zoning ordinances in each municipality within Tompkins County was conducted. Zoning ordinances were obtained from official municipal sources and systematically reviewed to identify specific regulations, such as size regulations, parking requirements, owner occupancy requirements, and any other relevant restrictions. This comprehensive analysis of ordinances aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the legal landscape regarding ADUs in Tompkins County, so that appropriate recommendations could be made.

Findings

In a key informant interview, Dr. Susan Thering, Executive Director of the Design Coalition Institute, shared key considerations when examining a zoning ordinance and best practices in creating an ADU-friendly policy. Dr. Thering shared that when evaluating ADU ordinances, traditional considerations such as size,

shape, height, and bedroom specifications are not the most critical factors. Instead, Dr. Thering identified overly stringent parking regulations and strict design mandates as two deterrents to ADU development. She also emphasized the importance of examining whether ADUs were allowed on lots with duplexes, as restrictions against ADUs on multi-family lots can also hinder ADU growth. Dr. Thering shared the importance of having clear and distinct definitions, stating that having some language is good because it can help guide while having no language at all is bad because ambiguous language could result in misinterpretation. In place of strict design mandates, Dr. Thering proposed design guidelines, as guidelines offer valuable direction while mandates can be restrictive and counterproductive. She emphasized the importance of allowing for flexibility in designing ADUs, as each homeowner has unique needs and preferences. In regards to best practices, Dr. Thering advocated for flexibility in determining the permanence of ADUs and eliminating blood relationship requirements between the ADU occupant and the primary dwelling owner. Overall, Dr. Thering summed her perspective as more regulations equate to fewer ADUs. Her interview indicated that to successfully facilitate ADU construction, a balance between regulation and flexibility must be established. To help, Dr. Thering proposed the idea of training seminars for local zoning officers, aiming to equip officers with the knowledge necessary to create ADU-friendly ordinances and promote ADUs in their communities.

In a second key informant interview, Joan Jurkowich, Planning Administrator for Tompkins County, shared insights into the history of ADUs and related housing strategies in Tompkins County. Ms. Jurkowich spoke about the Elder Cottage Housing Opportunity (ECHO) program, previously offered by the Better Housing program. The ECHO program rented one-bedroom, wheelchair-accessible modular homes for older adults who wanted to remain independent but be near supportive loved ones. ECHO units were removable so that when they were no longer needed by an older adult, they could be relocated for use by another older adult. This program received funding from the New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal and was well received by local governments, older adults, and the overall community. According to Ms. Jurkowich, there was a push to modify zoning ordinances to allow for ECHO housing and Better Housing created a code that municipalities incorporated. There was also a waiting list of older adults hoping to rent the units. Overall, the community supported the program because they were comfortable with the temporary aspect of the housing. Based on this, Ms. Jurkowich suggested that one challenge to introducing ADUs to Tompkins County may be getting the community to be more accepting of permanent housing.

From a careful analysis of zoning ordinances in Tompkins County, it was found that not all municipalities have ADU ordinances, and among those that do, there is considerable variation in their content and restrictions. The Towns of Caroline, Enfield, and Newfield do not have zoning at all, while the Villages of Freeville, Dryden, and Lansing possess codes but lack explicit codes about ADUs. Among the municipalities

with explicit ADU ordinances, there was variation in the terminology used, with some municipalities referring to ADUs as “accessory apartments,” while others referred to ADUs as “elder cottages,” “care cottages,” and “mother-in-law apartments.” Some municipalities, including the Towns of Dryden and Ulysses, had separate policies for ADUs and elder cottages, while the remaining municipalities only had policies regarding one or the other. There was also variation between municipalities in regulations regarding allowed zones, floor area, operating permits, owner-occupancy, appearance and design, parking, and room count.

Analysis of all available zoning ordinances identified some relatively restrictive policies. For example, the City of Ithaca, Town of Ithaca, Village of Cayuga Heights, and Town of Dryden, all had some form of an owner-occupancy policy, requiring that owners of the primary dwelling live on the property. This policy may pose a deterrent for those who may be interested in building an ADU but do not live full-time in Tompkins County. Meanwhile, the Village of Trumansburg, Village of Groton, Town of Groton, and Town of Danby all had policies that required a relationship between the occupants of the primary residence and the ADU, whether it be by blood or marriage. Requiring the occupants of the primary residence and the ADU may hinder the widespread adoption of ADUs, as it may prevent those who do not have families from building ADUs. Parking requirements were also found in the zoning ordinances of the City of Ithaca, Town of Ithaca, Town of Dryden, Town of Groton, Village of Groton, Town of Lansing, and Village of Trumansburg. As Dr. Susan Thering mentioned, requirements for off-street parking can be difficult to meet and often hinder the development of ADUs. Lastly, it was found that some communities, specifically the Town of Dryden, Town of Groton, and Village of Groton required these units to be removable. Requiring the units to be removable may discourage ADU construction, as ADUs can be expensive to build, and requiring that they be removed can seem wasteful.

However, some zoning ordinances contained ADU-friendly aspects. For example, the Town of Dryden and the Town of Groton have design guidelines, not mandates, as Dr. Thering suggested. Both suggest that the design should resemble single-family dwellings, but do not pose any strict requirements. This can help guide prospective ADU builders when designing their ADUs without being overly strict. The Town of Lansing also includes design guidelines, not mandates, suggesting that barrier-free design for those with disabilities or limited mobility be considered if feasible. Lastly, of all the municipalities that had zoning ordinances about ADUs, all had explicit definitions, which is better than no language at all. Below is a table summarizing the key points of each city, town, and village’s zoning ordinances.

Figure 2: Summary Table of ADU Policies in Tompkins County

	ADU Ordinance	Allowed Zones	Floor Area Limitations	Operating Permit	ADUs per lot	Owner Requirements	Occupant Requirements	Additional Requirements
City of Ithaca	Yes; "Accessory Apartment"	Not specified	< 33.33% of principal dwelling unit floor area	Special permit required	1	Property owners must maintain at least one of the dwelling units as their full-time residence, with temporary absences not exceeding 18 months cumulatively in any 5 year period.	Each dwelling unit (main and accessory) can be occupied by a family or individual plus one unrelated occupant. Minor dependent children in the care of a parent or relative are not counted as unrelated occupants.	Each accessory apartment can have a maximum of two bedrooms. One additional off-street parking space is required for an accessory apartment.
Town of Ithaca	Yes	Conservation, Agricultural, and Residential Zones	< 800 sq ft or 70% of principal dwelling unit floor area, whichever is less	Mandatory for rentals past 30 days. Owners responsible for application and maintenance.	1	Varies by zone; No requirement for high density residential zone and preexisting ADUs; otherwise one of the dwelling units on a lot containing an ADU must serve as principle residence for at least 1 property owner who lives there for a minimum of 185 days/year	Primary residence and accessory apartment can only be occupied by: one family with a maximum of three unrelated occupants, OR one family in each unit with no additional unrelated occupants, OR in cases where there is no family, it can be occupied by no more than four unrelated occupants.	If the front of the building containing a detached ADU is visible from the street line, at least 20% of that facade must have window or door openings. Minimum required roof pitch of the structure containing a detached ADU is 4:12.
Village of Cayuga Heights	Yes; "Accessory Apartment"	Residence Zone	<50% of primary dwelling floor area but minimum 350 square feet	Required for short-term rentals	1	Owner occupancy required for short term rentals (maximum 28 days)	N/A	Accessory apartment must be subordinate in location and appearance.
Town of Caroline	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Town of Groton	Yes; "Elder Cottage"	Rural/ Agricultural, Low Intensity, Mid Intensity 1, Mid Intensity 2, Highway Commercial/ Industrial zones	Minimum 250 square feet for 1 person, and 500 square feet for 2 people. Maximum 900 square feet	Site plan approval and building permit required.	1	Owner or occupants of principal dwelling must be related to at least one elder cottage resident.	Maximum occupancy of 2 persons. Occupants must be either 62 years of age or older and have a doctor's statement indicating an inability to live independent. At least one occupant must be related by blood, marriage, or adoption to the owners of the occupants of the principal dwelling.	They cannot be located in the front yard. They must be single-story and not exceed 20 feet in height. Elder Cottages must complement the principal dwelling in appearance. They should be constructed for easy removal, with removable foundations. Adequate utilities, sewage disposal, and parking must be provided. ite Plan Approval terminates 90 days after specific events, such as the death of occupants or non-compliance with occupancy requirements.
Village of Groton	Yes; "Elder Cottage"	Low-Intensity, Medium Intensity, High-Intensity, and Single-Family Residence Districts	< 750 square feet	Site approval from planning board and special permit required	1	There must be a blood, marriage, or adoption relationship between at least one cottage occupant and the owners/occupants of the main dwelling.	There must be a blood, marriage, or adoption relationship between at least one cottage occupant and the owners/occupants of the main dwelling.	Elder cottages are only permitted on lots with existing one- or two-family dwellings. Elder cottages are limited to a single story in height, with a maximum total height of 20 feet. They cannot be located in the front yard of any lot. Elder cottages should have an exterior appearance that is in harmony with the main building. The cottages must be constructed to be easily removable, with removable foundations to restore the lot's original appearance. Adequate parking space must be provided if the occupants have cars.

Town of Dryden	Yes; "Accessory Dwelling Unit"	Not specified	Must be smaller than principal dwelling unit	Application required	1	Property owner must live in either the principal or accessory dwelling unit as their primary residence.	Limited in occupancy as a single-family dwelling.	If the ADU is in a detached accessory structure, it must meet yard setback requirements. The ADU should have a separate entrance, usually on the side or rear, or a front entrance on a separate plane from the single-family dwelling. Exterior stairs and fire escapes should be at the rear or side of the structure. The exterior appearance of the ADU should resemble a single-family dwelling, if feasible. Off-street parking must be provided following local regulations.
	Yes; "Elder Cottage"	Not Specified	Minimum 250 square feet, Maximum 850 square feet	Application required	1	N/A	Occupants must be 55 years of age or older. Maximum 2 occupants.	The cottage must not exceed one story in height, and the building height should not exceed 20 feet. Elder cottages must be located on lots with existing single-family or two-family dwellings. They cannot be situated within the front yard of any lot. Elder cottages are not allowed on nonconforming building lots. The placement of elder cottages should conform to other provisions of the local code, including lot coverage, and side and rear yard setbacks. Elder cottages must be clearly subordinate to the principal dwelling on the lot and maintain harmony with its exterior appearance and character. Elder cottages must be designed for easy removal, with foundations made of removable materials.
Village of Dryden	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Village of Freeville	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Town of Enfield	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Town of Lansing	Yes; "Mother-in-law/accessory apartment"	Lakeshore, Residential, Commercial, and Industrial/Research	< 750 square feet	Zoning Permit Required	1	N/A	N/A	The accessory apartment can have up to two bedrooms. Adequate off-street parking must be provided. Barrier-free design for persons with handicaps or limited mobility should be considered if feasible or required.
Village of Lansing	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Village of Trumansburg	Yes; "Care Cottage"	Residential Zone	Minimum 600 square feet, Maximum 750 square feet	Speical use permit required	1	Owner of principal dwelling must be related to at least one care cottage resident.	Maximum of 2 related individuals (by blood or marriage). Occupants must be older than 55 or have a health condition. At least one occupant must be a parent, grandparent, legal dependent, or next of kin to the owners of the principal	Care cottages can only be located on lots with one-family or two-family dwellings. Maximum height is one story and 20 feet. They cannot be placed in the front yard.

							dwelling.	
Town of Danby	Somewhat	Hamlet Neighborhood and Center Zones	N/A	N/A	N/A	Primary residence must be occupied by a family member	Accessory use only permitted for family adult care.	No accessory buildings shall occupy required front yard space. Side and rear lot distances specified based on accessory building side.
Town of Newfield	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Town of Ulysses	Yes; "Accessory Dwelling Unit"	Agricultural/Rural, Residential, Hamlet Neighborhood, Lakeshore, and Conservation Zones	1,200 square feet	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	Accessory dwelling units should be subordinate to the principal residence on the lot. Required yard setback and must not exceed the maximum height permitted in the zone. Accessory buildings smaller than 120 square feet may be located as close as 10 feet from side and rear property lines but cannot be placed in the required front yard area. On lots smaller than two acres, no accessory building, whether attached or detached from the main building, can be located in the required front yard space or setback area. If the front of the building containing a detached ADU is visible from the street line, at least 20% of that facade must have window or door openings.
	Yes; "Elder Cottage"	Not specified	Minimum 560 square feet, Maximum 750 square feet	Special Permit required	N/A	N/A	At least one occupant of the elder cottage must be at least 55 years old and related by blood, marriage, or adoption to an occupant of the main dwelling on the same lot.	Must be at least 22 feet wide. The occupants of the elder cottage must be listed on the special permit application, and no other individuals can occupy the cottage. The elder cottage must be designed for easy removal from the premises, including its foundation. At least one parking space must be provided. The elder cottage is considered an accessory structure and must be subordinate to the principal residence on the lot. Elder cottages cannot exceed one story in height. The elder cottage must be removed from the property within 120 days of being vacated, and the site must be restored to its original state.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As the American population ages, particularly in areas like New York, there is a growing desire to “age in place.” While aging in place holds numerous advantages, including autonomy, social connection, reduced loneliness, and cost savings, there are significant barriers, including safety, affordability, and accessibility. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) may serve as a potential solution to these challenges, offering independent living spaces on the same property as another home. To understand the potential of ADUs in Tompkins County, a literature review, key informant interviews, and careful analysis of all available zoning ordinances were performed. Insights from Dr. Susan Thering, Executive Director of the Design Coalition Institute, and Joan Jurkowich, Tompkins County Planning Administrator revealed important considerations when examining ordinances, best practices for creating ADU-friendly policies, and the historical context within Tompkins County. Analysis of zoning ordinances across Tompkins County revealed a diverse range, with some municipalities lacking explicit ADU ordinances and significant variation among municipalities with ADU ordinances.

To reproduce the successes seen in the adoption of ADUs in California, Oregon, and Washington, streamlining the permitting process and mandating timely approvals can help reduce procedural barriers and expedite ADU construction. Municipalities within Tompkins County should be encouraged to adopt flexible zoning ordinances, similar to when municipalities were encouraged to adopt ordinances to allow for ECHO housing. Flexible ordinances should eliminate restrictive elements, such as parking, lot size, and setbacks. In place of restrictive mandates, communities should have guidelines, to help facilitate but not hinder ADU construction. Like Portland, Oregon, Tompkins County could help provide financial incentives and support to help alleviate the costs associated with ADU development. Education initiatives could help local governments create more ADU-friendly policies and within the community, education initiatives could help increase awareness and acceptance of ADUs.

If successful, ADUs could even be expanded beyond their use for aging in place to address Tompkins County’s broader housing shortage. Low vacancy rates in Tompkins County suggest that there is a housing shortage for both renters and homeowners. This shortage is also demonstrated by shorter “months supply of inventory,” (the number of months it would take for the current inventory of homes on the market to sell given the current pace of sales) which declined from an already low figure of 2.6 months in 2019 to 0.8 months in 2022²³. These shortages can cause the cost of housing to rise, and according to the 2022 Housing Snapshot, the Tompkins County for-sale housing market is significantly more expensive than those of neighboring counties. For reference, in 2022, the median home sales price in Tompkins County was \$325,000, while the median home sales price in the next most expensive county, Schuyler County, was only \$220,797. The adoption of

ADUs in Tompkins County may not only help facilitate aging in place but also address these broader housing challenges, offering affordable housing for all.

Appendix

1. The City of Ithaca refers to accessory dwelling units as “accessory apartments”²⁴. Accessory units are permitted, provided they meet certain criteria. The owner(s) of the property must occupy and maintain at least one of the dwelling units on the lot as their full-time residence, with temporary absences not exceeding 18 months cumulatively in any five-year period. Each dwelling unit (main and accessory) can be occupied by a family, or an individual plus one unrelated occupant. The City of Ithaca only allows one accessory apartment per lot and the floor area of the accessory apartment and each accessory apartment can have a maximum of two bedrooms and each accessory apartment must have 1 additional off-street parking space. The City of Ithaca limits floor area of the accessory apartment to 33.33% of the total habitable floor area of the principal dwelling, but other area requirements, including setbacks and yard requirements are flexible and can be waived if they do not negatively affect surrounding properties.
2. The Town of Ithaca permits accessory dwelling units in conservation, agricultural, and residential zones²⁵. Only 1 accessory dwelling unit is permitted on a lot. The accessory dwelling unit cannot exceed 800 square feet or 70% of the floor area of the principal dwelling unit, whichever is less. The Town of Ithaca requires operating permits for units rented for more than 30 consecutive days. There are no owner occupancy requirements for properties in high density residential zones, but in all other zones, owner(s) must reside in the dwelling for a minimum of 185 days per year. There is a 1 year exemption from the owner-occupancy requirement one every 5 years. Other limitations set by the Town of Ithaca include facade visibility and roof pitch. If the front of a detached accessory dwelling unit is visible from the street line, at least 20% of that facade must have window or door openings. Accessory dwelling units are required to have a minimum roof pitch of 4:12.
3. The Village of Cayuga Heights refers to accessory dwelling units as “accessory apartments.”²⁶ Accessory apartments are permitted only in residential zones. Only 1 accessory unit is permitted per lot and the accessory apartment must be a minimum of 350 square feet but not occupy more than 50% of the primary dwelling’s floor area. A single-family residence with a separate accessory apartment can only be occupied by one family plus three unrelated occupants, or one family in each unit with no additional unrelated occupants, or in cases where there is no family, no more than four unrelated occupants. The Village of Cayuga Heights allows for dwelling units to be used as a short term rental,

only when the primary dwelling unit is occupied by the owner. The accessory apartment can only be rented out for a maximum of 28 days per calendar year and only if the owner is present during the stay. To rent the accessory apartment, the owner must obtain a registration permit from the village.

4. The Town of Danby permits accessory dwelling units in the hamlet neighborhood and hamlet center zones, provided that the accessory dwelling unit does not occupy front yard space²⁷. The Town of Danby does not establish any policies regarding floor area limitations or the number of accessory dwelling units per lot. However, the Town of Danby does establish side and rear lot distances based on accessory dwelling unit size. Accessory dwelling units smaller than 144 square feet must be at least 5 feet from side and rear lot lines. Units larger than 144 square feet but smaller than 1000 square feet must be at least 10 feet from side and rear lot lines and units larger than 1000 square feet must be at least 50 feet from side and rear lot lines.

5.
 - a. The Town of Dryden permits accessory dwelling units²⁸. Accessory dwelling units require that the property owner occupies either the principal or accessory dwelling unit as their primary residence. Only 1 accessory dwelling unit is allowed per lot and accessory dwelling units must be smaller than the primary dwelling unit. The unit's occupancy is limited in occupancy as a single-family dwelling. The unit should have a separate entrance from the single-family dwelling and any exterior stairs and fire escapes should be located at the rear or side of the structure. The Town of Dryden requires that the exterior appearance of the ADU resemble a single-family dwelling and that off-street parking be provided following local regulations.
 - b. The Town of Dryden also permits elder cottages, provided that an application is completed. Elder cottages cannot be occupied by more than 2 people and both occupants must be 55 years of age or older. The Town of Dryden requires that the elder cottage be more than 250 square feet in floor area but no greater than 850 square feet. The elder cottage must be one story and the building height cannot exceed 20 feet. Elder cottages can only be located on lots with existing single-family or two-family dwellings. They are not allowed to be in the front of any lot and must clearly be subordinate to the principal dwelling. The Town of Dryden also stipulates that elder cottages must maintain a similar appearance and character with the principal lot. The elder cottage must be designed for easy removal, with foundations made of removable materials. Sufficient parking is required, but not defined.

6. The Town of Groton permits elder cottages on properties with one-family and two-family dwellings in Rural/Agricultural, Low-Intensity, Mid-Intensity 1, Mid-Intensity 2, and Highway Commercial/Industrial zones²⁹. Only 1 elderly cottage is allowed per lot and they cannot be located in the front yard. Elder cottages cannot exceed 900 square feet in floor area, must be single story, and cannot exceed 20 feet in height. The Town of Groton limits the occupancy of elder cottages to two people. Cottages with one occupant must be a minimum of 250 square feet and cottages with two occupants must be a minimum of 500 square feet. Elder cottages must complement the principal dwelling and should be constructed for easy removal, with removable foundations. Elder Cottages require Site Plan Approval from the Planning Board.

7. The Village of Groton allows for elder cottages to be built in single-family residence and low, medium, and high intensity districts³⁰. Only 1 elder cottage is allowed per lot and cottages must not exceed a total floor area of 750 square feet. Elder cottages must be single-story and can have a maximum height of 20 feet. The cottage cannot be located in the front yard and must have an exterior appearance that resembles the main building. The elder cottage must be constructed to be easily removable, with removable foundations to restore the lot's original appearance. Providing adequate parking if the occupants have cars. The Village of Groton also restricts occupancy to a maximum of two people per elder cottage. At least one occupant must be 62 years of age or older and must have a doctor's statement indicating an inability to live independently. The Village of Groton requires there be a blood, marriage, or adoption relationship between at least one cottage occupant and the owners/occupants of the main dwelling. Additionally, site approval and a special permit must be obtained from the Planning Board and the Code Enforcement officer, respectively. The permit expires 90 days after the elderly occupant dies or moves away and the elder cottage must be removed once the permit expires.

8. The Town of Lansing refers to accessory dwelling units as "mother-in-law" or "accessory apartments."³¹ 1 accessory unit is allowed per lot and units are permitted in the Lakeshore, Residential, Commercial, and Industrial/Research zones. The unit must not exceed 750 square feet in floor area and cannot have more than 2 bedrooms. The Town of Lansing also requires that adequate off-street parking be provided. The ordinance states that barrier-free design should be considered for those who are handicapped or have limited mobility, but does not mandate this.

- 9.

- a. The Town of Ulysses allows for accessory dwelling units in Agricultural/Rural, Residential, Hamlet, Neighborhood, Lakeshore, and Conservation zones³². Only 1 accessory dwelling unit is permitted on each lot and the Town of Ulysses requires that accessory dwelling units be subordinate to the principal residence on the lot. The floor area is restricted to a maximum of 1,200 square feet and if the front of a detached accessory dwelling unit is visible from the street, at least 20% of the front facade must have window or door openings.
 - b. The Town of Ulysses also permits elder cottages. Elder cottages must be at least 560 square feet in floor area but no larger than 750 square feet. Elder cottages may be manufactured housing, but they must be at least 22 feet wide. Elder cottages should be designed for easy removal from the premises and require a permit from the Department of Zoning and Code Enforcement. The cottage must be subordinate to the principal residence and cannot exceed 1 story in height. Additionally, one parking space must be provided. The Town of Ulysses also requires that at least one occupant of the elder cottage be at least 55 years old and related by blood, marriage, or adoption to an occupant of the main building on the same lot. After the elder cottage is vacated, it must be removed from the property within 120 days.
10. The Village of Trumansburg permits “care cottages” on lots with one-family or two-family dwellings³³. 1 care cottage is allowed per lot and care cottages must be a minimum of 600 square feet in floor area but no more than 750 square feet. Care cottages can only have one story and be a maximum of 20 feet high. They cannot be placed in the front yard and must be visually compatible with the principal building. The Village of Trumansburg requires that care cottages be constructed for easy removal, with removable foundations and utility hook-ups. The Village of Trumansburg also requires that parking and accessibility for wheelchairs and stretchers be provided. Special use permits are required. Additionally, the Village of Trumansburg limits occupancy of care cottages to no more than two related individuals, either by blood or marriage. All occupants must be at least 55 or have a disability/infirmary and at least one occupant must be a parent, grandparent, legal dependent, or next of kin to the owners of the principal dwelling.
11. The Towns of Caroline, Enfield, and Newfield do not have zoning. The Villages of Freeville and Lansing and the Town of Dryden have zoning codes, but do not have any established provisions regarding accessory dwelling units.

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