
Sec. 28-151. Accessory dwelling units.

- (a) *Description.* This section authorizes the installation of accessory dwelling units in owner-occupied, single-family houses. An accessory dwelling unit includes separate cooking and sanitary facilities and is also a complete, separate housekeeping unit. Accessory dwelling units may be dedicated as an affordable housing unit, for a caretaker, or for family members as an accessory family dwelling unit. Accessory family dwelling units shall only be occupied by family members. Family members, as defined in this chapter shall be limited to persons related by blood, marriage, or other legal means. An affordable housing accessory dwelling unit may be occupied by family members or nonfamily members and shall be restricted by deed and must qualify as a low to moderate income housing unit as defined in RIGL Tit. 45, Ch. 53.
- (b) *Purposes.* The purposes of permitting accessory dwelling units include:
- (1) Preserve and protect the family in American life by enabling multiple generations of family members to live together and care for one another while maintaining a degree of privacy and individual dignity through separate dwelling units.
 - (2) Protect stability, property values, and the residential character of a neighborhood by ensuring that accessory dwelling units are installed only in owner-occupied houses and under such additional conditions as specified herein.
 - (3) Provide for the development of low- and moderate-income housing within the Town of Bristol in accordance with the state mandate and to provide for a full range of housing choices throughout the town for households of all incomes, ages and sizes.
 - (4) Provide for public safety by ensuring that accessory dwelling units are created legally, and in accordance with all applicable local and state codes.
 - (5) Implement the Affordable Housing Production Plan.
- (c) *Where allowed.* Accessory dwelling units shall be allowed as follows:
- (1) *Existing dwellings.* For an owner-occupied, single-family dwelling which was completed before June 26, 1996 an accessory dwelling unit is permitted in accordance with the following:
 - a. Where there are no exterior changes proposed to the structure, an accessory dwelling unit shall be permitted, pursuant to the provisions of this section, in accordance with subsection 28-151(e)(1) if, and only if, all of the requirements and standards of this section are met.
 - b. Where exterior changes to the structure are proposed, an accessory dwelling unit shall be permitted if, and only if, all of the requirements and standards of this section are met; and shall also require development plan review approval from the technical review committee pursuant to subsection 28-151(e)(2) and the town subdivision and development review regulations in order to ensure that the requirements and standards of this section are met.
 - (2) *Dwellings completed after June 26, 1996.* An accessory dwelling unit shall be permitted for owner-occupied, single-family dwellings which were completed after June 26, 1996 if, and only if, all of the requirements and standards of this section are met; and, shall also require development plan review approval from the technical review committee pursuant to subsection 28-151(e)(2) and the town subdivision and development review regulations in order to ensure that the requirements and standards of this section are met.
- (d) *General requirements and standards.* The following general requirements and standards shall apply to all accessory dwelling units:

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- (1) Only an owner, who is also an occupant, of a single household dwelling may apply for, and maintain, an accessory dwelling unit.
 - (2) Only one accessory dwelling unit shall be created on a lot.
 - (3) The owners of the residence in which the accessory dwelling unit is created shall occupy one of the dwelling units, except for bona fide temporary absences not exceeding 90 consecutive days nor 180 days in any single year.
 - (4) The accessory dwelling unit shall be designed so that the appearance of the structure remains that of a one-family residence. If possible, no additional exterior entrances should be added. If additional exterior entrances are required, they shall generally be located in the rear or side of the structure.
 - (5) The house size shall be at least 1,200 square feet. The accessory dwelling unit shall be a minimum of 300 square feet, but shall not occupy more than 33 percent of the gross floor area (as defined by this chapter) of the entire structure, including the accessory dwelling unit. The accessory dwelling unit shall have no more than two bedrooms.
 - (6) The design and size of the accessory dwelling unit shall conform to all applicable standards, including health regulations, building code requirements, and all other federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations, including the provisions of this chapter.
 - (7) A minimum of two off-street parking spaces (one off-street parking space in the W and rehab land development project zones) shall be provided and designated for the accessory dwelling unit, in addition to the off-street parking required for the principal dwelling unit. The parking requirements may be modified by the permitting authority, if the applicant can satisfactorily demonstrate in writing to the permitting authority that the resident of the accessory dwelling unit will not have a vehicle.
 - (8) The accessory dwelling unit shall be within or attached to the principal dwelling unit structure. There must be an interior connection between the units.
 - (9) The utilities for both the principal dwelling unit and the accessory dwelling unit shall be common to both (i.e. one electric service, one gas service, one oil tank, one water connection, and one sewer hook-up for the structure).
 - (10) On lots of less than 20,000 square feet, both the principal dwelling unit and the accessory dwelling unit shall be connected to both public sewer and water.
 - (11) On any lot serviced with an individual sewage disposal system (ISDS), if the accessory dwelling unit results in an increase in the total number of bedrooms, the applicant shall have the existing or any new system approved by RIDEM. If no increase in bedrooms results from the accessory dwelling unit, then the applicant shall be required to submit evidence furnished by a qualified professional that there is no visible evidence of failure of the existing ISDS system, and that such system qualifies for the use including the accessory dwelling.
 - (12) A certificate of occupancy shall state on its face that its validity is limited to the named owner/occupants only and that any change or subsequent owner or occupant shall be required to apply for a new certificate. Once the family member or members or qualified low to moderate income tenant departs the premises, the accessory dwelling unit shall cease to exist, unless further application is made to qualify under this section, pursuant to subsection 28-151(e)(4).
 - (13) Applications for accessory dwelling units must meet all requirements for the zoning district in which it is located, including all of the provisions of this section.
- (e) *Application procedures.* The application procedures shall be as follows:
- (1) An owner, who is also the occupant, of an existing single-family dwelling, pursuant to subsection 28-151(c)(1)a. where no exterior changes are proposed, may apply for an accessory dwelling unit permit.

The application shall be made to the zoning enforcement officer who shall grant the permit providing all of the requirements set forth in this section are met.

- a. *Notice requirements.* Upon receipt of a complete application, which is in compliance with the standards set forth herein, the zoning enforcement officer shall notify the abutting property owners by certified mail. Such notice shall indicate that an accessory dwelling unit permit will be granted unless written objection is received within ten days of the mailing of such notice.
 - b. *Referral to technical review committee.* If written objection is received within ten days, the application for the accessory dwelling unit shall be referred to the administrative officer for review by the technical review committee pursuant to subsection 28-151(e)(2).
 - c. *Decision.* If no written objection is received within ten days, the zoning enforcement officer shall grant the accessory dwelling unit.
- (2) An owner who is also the occupant of an existing single-family dwelling where exterior changes are proposed, pursuant to subsection 28-151(c)(1)b. or a new single-family dwelling pursuant to subsection 28-151(c)(2), may apply for an accessory dwelling unit permit. The application shall be made to the administrative officer for development plan review approval by the technical review committee in accordance with section 3.2 of the town subdivision and development review regulations, with a copy to the zoning enforcement officer. Public notice for the technical review committee meeting is required and shall be given at least seven days prior to the date of the meeting in a newspaper of general circulation within the town. Postcard notice shall also be mailed by the town to the applicant and to those in the notice area not less than ten days prior to the date of the meeting. The notice area is set forth in section 8.5C(3) of the town subdivision and development review regulations. The cost of all such notice shall be paid by the applicant.
- (3) All applications shall include:
- a. A sworn and notarized declaration from the owner stating that the owner of the property:
 - 1. Will continue to occupy one of the dwelling units on the premises on a year-round basis;
 - 2. Acknowledges that any monetary investment made as a result of the granting of a permit shall not be claimed as a hardship in any future applications to the zoning board of review;
 - 3. Acknowledges that the right to use the accessory dwelling unit terminates upon transfer of title unless the unit is reapplied for; and
 - 4. Identifies the family members who will occupy the accessory family dwelling unit.
 - b. An overall floor plan of the entire structure, which need not be drawn to scale, including the dimensions and descriptions of all of the rooms in the entire structure.
 - c. A detailed floor plan, drawn at a scale of one-fourth inch to the foot, showing the floor(s) where the changes are proposed.
 - d. A site plan drawn to scale, showing structures, landscaping, and driveway/parking area.
 - e. An exterior elevation of the building facade from all sides.
 - f. A plan for integration of the accessory dwelling unit back into the primary dwelling.
 - g. A copy of the tax assessor's property card.
 - h. An application for certificate of occupancy.
 - i. Application fee per the fee schedule.
 - j. A list, with mailing labels, with the names and current addresses of abutting property owners.

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- k. Application to the technical review committee shall include a list, and mailing labels, with the names and current addresses of property owners within the notice area as provided in section 8.5 C(3) of the town subdivision and development review regulations.
- (4) *Reapplication.* Where a permit for an accessory dwelling unit has been granted and the only change is a change in either the owner/occupant(s) of the principal dwelling or the owner/occupant(s) of the accessory dwelling unit, then the ZEO may issue a new accessory dwelling unit permit and the building inspector may re-issue a certificate of occupancy upon receipt and recording of a declaration pursuant to subsection 28-151(e)(3)a. which must be filed within 30 days of the transfer of title or occupancy.
- (f) *Recording.* Upon issuance of a permit, the applicant shall record the permit and the declaration in the land evidence records. A copy of the permit shall also be placed on file with the zoning enforcement officer and the building official. A permit shall not be valid until recorded. An accessory dwelling unit permit shall expire if a building permit is not filed within one year from the date of issuance of the accessory dwelling unit permit.
- (g) Reserved.
- (h) *Failure to comply.* Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section is considered a violation of this chapter, pursuant to section 28-407. In the event the zoning enforcement officer determines that the owner has failed to comply with any of the provisions hereunder, notice shall be first sent to the owner describing the noncompliance. In the event the owner does not cure such defects within 20 days following the date of such notice, the building official shall immediately revoke any certificates of occupancy or building permits and shall cite the property for a violation of this chapter.
- (i) *Public records.* The zoning enforcement officer and administrative officer shall keep as public records all applications for accessory dwelling unit permits, and all permits issued or denied.
- (j) *Technical review committee.* For the purposes of this section, the technical review committee shall include the building inspector who may also substitute for the planning board engineer.
- (Amend. of 1-27-21)

Note(s)—Without separate cooking and sanitary facilities, such unit is not a dwelling unit and does not come under the jurisdiction of this section.