

Planning your **Additional Residential Unit (ARU)**

ARUs in Private or Partially Serviced **Rural Areas**

*Non-urban Residential (SR & RH),
Agriculture (A), & Rural Residential (RR)*

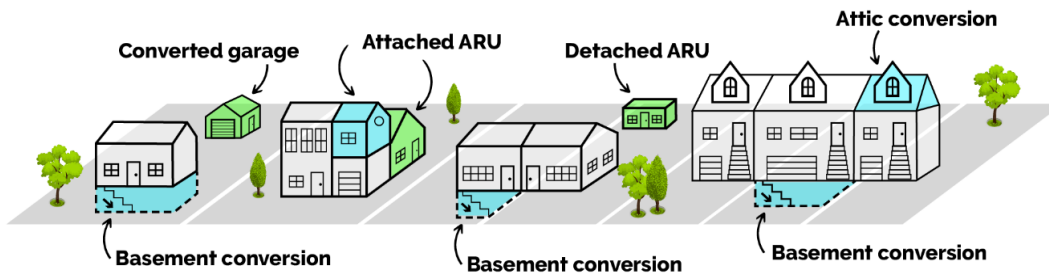


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What is an Additional Residential Unit?

An Additional Residential Unit, or ARU, is a type of dwelling unit that is provided as a self-contained dwelling unit on a property where there is already a primary dwelling. ARUs can be inside an existing dwelling, added on, or located in a detached accessory structure. These come in many shapes and sizes, and are commonly referred to as basement apartments, granny flats, coach homes, in-law suites, tiny homes, garage lofts, and more. All ARUs must qualify for a building permit and meet the necessary standards for residential occupancy.



Why build an Additional Residential Unit?

ARUs support a gradual increase of homes in the County by adding housing within existing low-density areas where services already exist, and by allowing growth in rural and agricultural areas without impacting key farmland. For homeowners or possible ARU-renters, this type of housing offers the following benefits:

- **Age-in-Place:** Space for caregivers or older family members.
- **Financial Gains:** Help off-set mortgage or maintenance costs.
- **Flexibility:** Supporting young-adult children, hosting guests, etc.
- **Property Value:** An ARU can increase the value of the property.

Do I qualify for an Additional Residential Unit?

There are several factors that determine if your property qualifies for one or multiple ARUs. All ARU proposals will need to be reviewed by County of Brant staff. Additionally, your ARU must meet all the requirements of the Ontario Building Code and Ontario Fire Code and requires an approved Building Permit to be established. Please complete the Additional Residential Unit Planning Worksheet at the end of this guide to help provide all relevant property information for review.

1. Servicing



To see if your property qualifies for an ARU, the main factor that will need to be addressed is the type of sanitary and water servicing that is available to the property. If you are on well and/or septic (private servicing), we need to make sure your property's size and services can handle any additional usage with any new ARUs. Properties with partial servicing from the County will need to verify that the servicing capacity of the area will be able to handle the ARU and may require a hydrogeological assessment to ensure no long-term impact.

A well and septic report is required to accompany a Building Permit application to verify that any additional water/sewage capacity and usage will be supported on the lot.

2. Zoning

The County of Brant's Zoning By-law helps lay out what uses are permitted on your property and where structures can be placed. The zoning will help you figure out what requirements will apply to your ARU project for things like maximum floor area, height, and required setbacks from your property lines. Listed below are the common zone categories that will allow for one or multiple ARUs:

- ***Agriculture (A)***
- ***Rural Residential (RR)***
- ***Non-urban Residential (SR & RH)***

→ Setbacks and Property Size

To build an ARU, your property must be at least 0.4 hectares in size. The location and placement of your ARU will depend on several factors, including the zoning category of your property and whether the ARU is attached or in a detached structure. Additionally, ARUs must:



- Be located within the existing building cluster. If no cluster exists, it must be within a distance from the primary dwelling that is equal to or less the property's minimum frontage.
- Be located within 40.0 metres of the closest portion of the primary dwelling.
- Meet Ontario's ***Minimum Distance Separation (MDS)*** setbacks for compatibility between livestock facilities and sensitive land uses.

Setbacks from property lines, as well as the location of your well and septic system, may affect the size and layout of your ARU.

→ Building Height and Size

The maximum size and height of your ARU will be dependent on whether you are planning an ARU that is inside/attached to your primary dwelling (such as a basement apartment), or if it will be detached from your primary dwelling. Attached or detached, your ARU must not exceed a development area of 450 square metres.



- **Inside or Attached:** To determine the maximum size you can build, you'll have to add the footprint area of your existing dwelling and any accessory structures with the size of your proposed ARU to make sure it doesn't exceed the maximum coverage percentage of your lot area.
- **Detached:** To find the maximum size of your detached ARU, first add the area of all existing accessory structures such as uncovered decks over 2 feet above grade, detached garages, sheds, and gazebos. Subtract this total from the maximum allowed in the table below to find the ARU size you can build.

When calculating lot coverage, remember that your property also meets the maximum coverage limit for all structures, including the main dwelling. In most cases, the floor area limit is reached before the lot coverage limit (applicable for RR, SR, & RH zones).

ARU height limits will also depend on its location and whether it's attached or detached. Please see the tables in the following sections to determine your possible ARU height. Any rooftop amenity space above a detached ARU is prohibited unless it is below maximum height for accessory structures.

→ Parking and Access



Each ARU must have one additional parking space in addition to the two required spaces for the primary dwelling in accordance with Section 5 of the Zoning By-Law.

To ensure safe access, ARUs must have unobstructed access, free from issues posed by flooding or erosion hazards, via the street or a shared driveway. Driveways are required to be shared outside of settlement areas.

→ Environmental Constraints



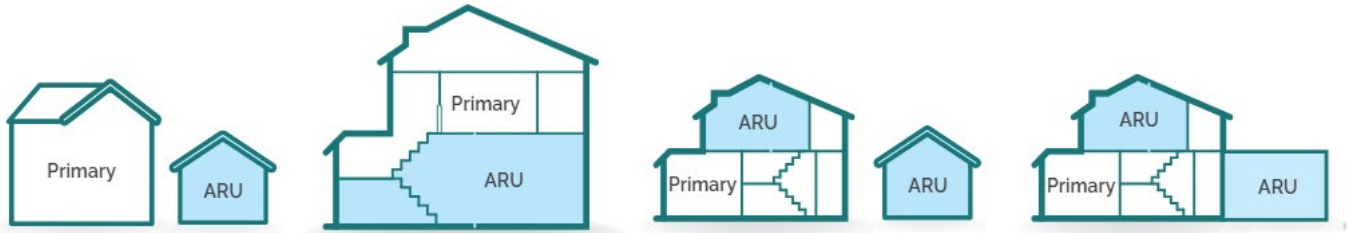
When planning your ARU keep in mind that there may be environmental constraints. ARUs and related uses such as access and septic systems are not permitted within or next to natural areas. ARUs must be setback a minimum of 10 metres for woodlands, with 30 metres for wetlands.

To protect life and property, ARUs must be located away from flooding and erosion hazards. They are prohibited in flood plains, within 10 metres of a valley or steep slope, or where safe emergency access from a public road cannot be provided without crossing a flood plain or steep slope. For example, an ARU will not be permitted if access is proposed through a flood plain.

Additionally, in some locations, sediment and erosion control fencing may be required during construction to protect nearby natural areas. For more information about possible environmental constraints, please contact the Environmental Planner at policy@brant.ca. The applicable Conservation Authority may also need to be contacted.

→ Number of ARUs Permitted

Where ARUs proposed on partial or private servicing and a primary dwelling is permitted, up to two ARUs may be allowed per lot. If two ARUs are proposed outside of a settlement area, at least one must be located within or attached to the primary dwelling unit. The following are



What zoning regulations apply if...

→ My ARU will be inside or attached to my primary dwelling

	Street Setback	Minimum Interior Side Yard Setback	Minimum Rear yard Setback	Maximum Lot Coverage (all structures)	Maximum Building Height
Agriculture	10.0 metres	4.0 metres	10.0 metres	30% of lot area	10.0 metres
Rural Residential	20.0 metres	5.0 metres	15.0 metres	30% of lot area	10.5 metres
Non-Urban Residential	7.5 metres	1.5 metres	7.5 metres	30% of lot area	10.5 metres

→ My ARU will be detached from my primary dwelling

	Street Setback	Minimum Side and Rear Yard Setbacks	Maximum Floor Area (all accessory structures)	Maximum Lot Coverage (all accessory structures)	Maximum Building Height
<i>Agriculture</i>	10.0 metres	3.0 metres	-	5% of the total lot area	7.0 metres
<i>Rural Residential</i>	20.0 metres	1.5 metres	140 square metres	15% of total lot area	5.0 metres
<i>Non-Urban Residential</i>	7.5 metres	1.5 metres	140 square metres	15% of total lot area	5.0 metres

*Please note that any openings such as windows and doors may impact the location of an ARU. These details are governed by the Ontario Building Code.

Unsure of your zoning? Contact us!

Please note that the information above is a general summary and individual properties may have specific requirements not listed here. Factors such as zoning, setbacks from property lines, and distance from wells or septic systems can affect what you're allowed to build. To find out your property's zoning, visit brant.ca/zoning, or contact Development Planning Staff (planning@brant.ca) for assistance. This information is intended to give you a solid starting point, and staff will help confirm the exact requirements during the review of your proposal.

I don't quite qualify, so what can I do?

If your property or project doesn't quite meet the requirements, you may contact staff to discuss solutions that would meet ARU requirements. If there is no solution and if the proposed variations are minor, you may be able to pursue a minor variance to ask permission from our Committee of Adjustment to have your ARU project move forward. Depending on what requirement(s) your project doesn't quite meet, you'll need to show that your project will not have negative impacts on things like parking, water quality and quantity, woodlands and wetlands, agricultural uses, septic attenuation, the character of the neighbourhood and the privacy of neighboring properties, and will not cause a risk to life and property due to flooding and erosion hazards. To provide this justification you may need assistance from a hired professional planner and/or engineer to help you prepare your application.

The variance process will take a bit of time and extra money, but it will help us ensure that your project is done safely and can meet the intent of the policies in place. This is a public process that allows a neighbourhood to get involved and have their input on whether they think an application is suitable or not. The Committee of Adjustment will make the decision on the application and consider granting a variance if the criteria of the 'four tests of a minor variance' (as outlined within *The Planning Act*) can be met. These criteria are as follows:

1. The application is minor in nature,
2. The variance will be promoting the appropriate development or use of the property,
3. The general intent and purpose of the municipal Zoning By-Law is maintained, and
4. The general intent and purpose of the municipal Official Plan is maintained.

If the proposal does not meet the criteria above or could have a negative impact, a zoning by-law and/or official plan amendment may be required. It is important to ensure that any proposal meets both the intent of municipal and provincial planning policies. If you are considering applying for a Planning Act application for your project, it is best to talk to your neighbours to hear their feedback and address any concerns they may raise before spending the money needed to have your application go before the Committee of Adjustment or Council.

It is also best to contact and meet with Planning staff about your application to learn more about the submission requirements, application process, timeliness, fees, and policy requirements before applying for a variance. For more information, please contact the Development Planning Division at planning@brant.ca or 519.44BRANT.

What will impact my budget?

→ Development Charges

To encourage the creation of additional housing, the Province of Ontario exempts certain ARUs from Development Charges and parkland dedication requirements from the *Development Charges Act, 1997*. For full details and to confirm eligibility, please contact the County of Brant Building Division. The following check marked ARUs may be exempt from Development Charges:



→ Building Permit Fees

Building permit fees for a detached ARU are based on the finished floor area of the building. Building permit fees for renovations and additions to create an ARU are based on the construction value of the project. Application and permit fees may vary depending on your vision. These fees can be found on the County of Brant Website at [Brant.ca/fees](https://brant.ca/fees) or by contacting our Building Division directly at building@brant.ca or 519.44BRANT (519.442.7268) | 1.855.44BRANT.

*As building permit fees are subject to change, please verify any fees and charged with County of Brant Staff before preparing payment for your application.

How do I get a building permit?

A Building Permit is required to establish your ARU. There may be different Ontario Building Code requirements for your project depending on whether you are renovating a dwelling to create the new unit, if you are putting an addition on your dwelling, converting an accessory structure, converting an established garden suite, or building a completely new detached accessory structure. Different properties and building types may have different submission requirements and fees.

Find a checklist of what will be required to apply at brant.ca/ARU in the specific ARU Building Permit Packages catered to those building an interior/attached or detached ARU.

If you need assistance with your building permit application, please contact our Building Division at building@brant.ca or **519.44BRANT** (519.442.7268) | 1.855.44BRANT.



ARUs increase housing supply and support affordability across Ontario.

To convert an existing Garden Suite, a Building Permit may not be required if one was previously issued. Please verify any requirements for your Building Permit submission with staff in advance. Contact our Building Division directly at building@brant.ca or 519.44BRANT (519.442.7268) | 1.855.44BRANT.



→ Lot Grading Plan

Depending on the location of the ARU, a Lot Grading Plan may be required to ensure the County of Brant Development and Engineering Standards are being met. The purpose of a Lot Grading Plan is to confirm drainage is directed away from the building and to ensure the project does not cause drainage issues or damage to neighboring properties. This may include the addition of items such as swales, slopes, or infiltration galleries, as determined by a qualified professional. Determination of the requirement for a Lot Grading Plan will take place at the time of application for building permit.

Frequently Asked Questions about ARUs

Does my ARU need a separate address? Yes, please contact planning@brant.ca to have an address assigned to your ARU or visit www.brant.ca/civicaddress to request an address through our website. This address will be assigned as a secondary address to the property to ensure the safety of the people residing in both dwelling units.

Can an ARU be severed and sold separately?

The intent of the ARU program is to provide an additional unit on a property where a primary dwelling unit already exists. However, there may be opportunities for severances in settlement areas where the proposal can meet the appropriate policy framework. For those looking to sever an ARU, please note there may be additional costs related to servicing as an ARU must connect to the primary dwelling's water and wastewater. We evaluate on a case-by-case basis; contact planning@brant.ca with further questions.

Do I need insurance on my ARU?

Yes. You will need to contact your individual insurance provider for quotes and information on coverage for your Additional Residential Unit.

How do I connect my ARU to proper services?

In most cases, you'll need to connect your ARU to water and wastewater services through the existing dwelling. While you can have your services metered separately between the primary dwelling and the ARU, your services will likely be provided through the existing services to your property. You will need to contact the appropriate service providers, and in some cases, a qualified professional that can advise if your current service connections can accommodate the increase in service use, or if you will need to pay to have your services upgraded. Listed below are the common service providers in the County of Brant and who should be contacted for more information:

- **Municipal Water & Sanitary Services:** County of Brant Public Works Division, 519.44BRANT (519.442.7268)

- **Hydro Services:** Energy Plus (519.442.2215 or www.energyplus.ca) or Hydro One (1.888.664.9376 or www.hydroone.com)
- **Well and Septic Services:** Please contact a qualified plumbing and/or septic professional
- **Natural Gas Services:** Enbridge / Union Gas (1.888.774.3111 or www.uniongas.com)

Will Minimum Distance Setbacks (MDS) apply to my ARU?

Minimum Distance Separation setbacks are required for ARU proposals. Applicants are required to provide the information necessary for County of Brant Planning staff to review a Minimum Distance Setback calculation. It may be helpful to hire a land-use planning consultant or a nutrient management consultant to undertake the calculation on your behalf.

Will an ARU affect my property taxes?

Yes, your property taxes will increase because you're adding value to your property through renovations and construction. This typically leads to a reassessment of your property and a higher property value. For more information about how this affects your taxes, please contact the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) at www.mpac.ca, or reach out to the County of Brant Tax Division at tax@brant.ca about your tax bill.

ARU Worksheet

An ARU worksheet can assist you with calculating the size, height, and setbacks of your ARU. It will also help staff review your proposal to provide you with any requirements you might need to get your building permit.

For preliminary review of your proposed Additional Residential Unit, submit the applicable worksheet below and detailed site plan to the Building Division for comments:

- [ARU Worksheet - Interior Unit or Addition - Fillable \(PDF\)](#)
- [ARU Worksheet - Detached \(PDF\)](#)

Additional Resources

- [County of Brant Official Plan – A Simply Grand Plan \(2023\)](#)
- [Four Units As-of-Right By-law](#) passed in May 2025
- [County of Brant Comprehensive Zoning By-law \(2024 Consolidation\)](#)

Disclaimer: The information contained in this guide was compiled based on information available at the time this guide was produced from the current Official Plan – A Simply Grand Plan (2023) and the current Comprehensive Zoning By-law (2024 Consolidation) and related Four Units As-of-Right By-law (2025). While this guide can be used as you plan your ARU project, the information herein, including regulations and costs, is subject to change and it is in the best interests of property owners and applicants who wish to pursue an ARU project to confirm all information in this guide prior to proceeding. For more information or assistance with your project, please contact the County of Brant Development Services Department.