

# GLOSSARY

This book uses a few key technical terms that relate to the construction of ADUs (and housing generally).

## **Principal Building**

A principal building is the structure on a lot that contains the primary use of a lot. For housing, the principal building is the structure that contains the main living areas.

## **Accessory Building**

An accessory building is any structure on a lot that contains uses other than the primary use of a lot. For housing, this often includes a garage or shed for use by the lot's residents.

## **Efficiency Dwelling Unit**

An “efficiency dwelling unit” is the technical definition of a small residential unit within the International Building Code (IBC), a set of regulations focused on life safety. The efficiency dwelling unit regulations are separate from and sometimes different from the Boston Zoning Code's ADU regulations. In many cases, the efficiency dwelling unit regulations will determine how small an ADU can be and what facilities it must include.

## **Gross Square Feet**

The amount of area used by the ADU. This excludes the main unit, common areas, and exterior space. The gross square feet is measured from the exterior face of the ADU wall or thermal envelope and along the centerline of demising walls (walls that separate the ADU from the main unit), if applicable. Gross square feet is useful for owners to understand the general scale and cost of the project, the feel of the ADU relative to their main structure, and the types of households an ADU might accommodate.

## **Demising Walls**

Walls that separate dwelling units from other dwelling units or common space.

## **Means of Egress**

A clear path that allows people to leave a building. The egress includes the part of the building (like a hallway) that leads from the housing unit to the exit, the door or staircase leading outside, and the path that leads from the exit to the street (such as an exterior walkway). Means of egress are important for life safety, are regulated by the Building Code, and impact the sprinkler requirements for an ADU project.

## **Half Story**

A half story is living space within the area under a building's pitched roof and above the uppermost full-height story. Some half stories include dormer windows, which make the half story more livable. For zoning purposes, half stories are defined in Article 2 of the Boston Zoning Code.

## **Public Right of Way**

Any street, avenue, boulevard, road, highway, sidewalk, alley or easement that is owned, leased, or controlled by a governmental entity.

## **Yards**

A yard is the area of a property between the structure and the property line. On a typical rectangular lot residential property, the front yard is the area between the front of the principal building (home) and the lot line on the main (addressed) street. The rear yard is the area between the back of the principal building and the lot line farthest from the main (addressed) street, which may abut other property lines or an alley. The side yards are typically the areas between the sides of the principal building and the lot lines perpendicular to the front parcel line. Rear and side yards may contain accessory buildings, like a garage or shed. While this breakdown of front, rear, and side yards are typical, homes on corner lots or with non-rectangular lot shapes may have to define their yards differently for the purposes of zoning.