

# Accessory Dwelling Unit

# HANDBOOK

Prepared for



City of  
**Santa  
Monica**

with funding from



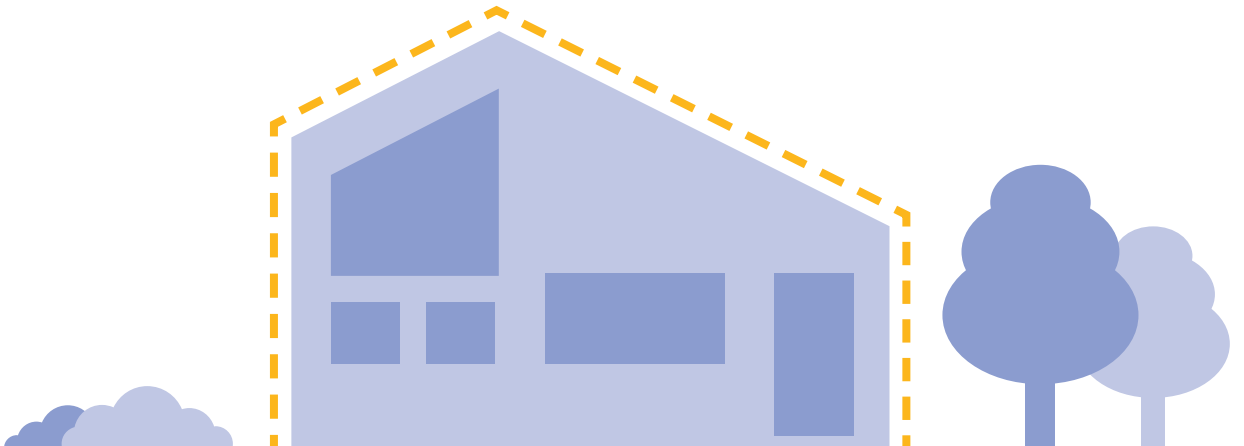
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# Contents

This handbook will walk you through everything you need to know about building an ADU in Santa Monica – the rules governing ADUs, how to evaluate your property for an ADU, cost estimates for various ADU types, and detailed steps of the design, permitting and construction process.

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# 1 Introduction

## What are ADUs?

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are legal secondary units allowed on residential and mixed-use properties with either at least one existing or proposed single-unit dwelling or an existing multiple-unit development. Also known as granny flats, carriage houses, or backyard homes, ADUs can be used for rental housing.



**Example of detached one-story new ADU**

Photo Credit: Office of Office



**Example of detached one-story ADU conversion**

Photo Credit: Building Blocks

1. California Department of Housing and Community Development, data analysis by Kol Peterson. <https://www.buildinganadu.com/adu-blog/california-adu-charts>

2. Solomon, A. (2021). What's Blocking an adu Boom? American Planning Association. <https://www.planning.org/planning/2021/summer/whats-blocking-an-adu-boom/>

## The evolution of ADUs

ADUs have been permitted in Santa Monica since the 1980s, but restrictions on ADUs (such as a 1996 ordinance which prohibited them in R-1 zones and elsewhere, required owner-occupancy, required a conditional use permit, established a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet, and established maximum size of 650 square feet) posed significant barriers to ADU production. As a result, very few ADUs were permitted in Santa Monica – only 13 between 2012- 2016.<sup>1</sup>

Starting in 2017, and further amended in 2019, California ADU law was expanded to provide basic standards for ADUs that cities and counties must follow with the goal of increasing production of ADUs (see next page for CA ADU Law). Today, you are allowed to build up to two ADUs on your single-unit dwelling property—one new construction ADU or conversion attached or detached ADU and one conversion of an existing space within the primary home (Junior ADU or JADU). Following the change in state law, ADU permits issued across California increased from approximately 9,000 in 2018 to 12,392 in 2020,<sup>2</sup> and in Santa Monica:

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Applied	43	77	94	141
Issued	16	51	37	68
Finalized	1	15	33	33

City of Santa Monica ADU permits through November 2021

ADUs are a cost-effective opportunity for homeowners to increase housing supply to meet the needs of family members, students, the elderly, in-home health care providers, people with disabilities, and others; create property value; and generate rental income.

# 2 California ADU law

## 🔍 Legislative intent

*(a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:*

*(1) Accessory dwelling units are a valuable form of housing in California.*

*(2) Accessory dwelling units provide housing for family members, students, the elderly, in-home health care providers, the disabled, and others, at below market prices within existing neighborhoods.*

*(3) Homeowners who create accessory dwelling units benefit from added income, and an increased sense of security.*

*(4) Allowing accessory dwelling units in single-family or multifamily residential zones provides additional rental housing stock in California.*

*(5) California faces a severe housing crisis.*

*(6) The state is falling far short of meeting current and future housing demand with serious consequences for the state's economy, our ability to build green infill consistent with state greenhouse gas reduction goals, and the well-being of our citizens, particularly lower and middle-income earners.*

*(7) Accessory dwelling units offer lower cost housing to meet the needs of existing and future residents within existing neighborhoods, while respecting architectural character.*

*(8) Accessory dwelling units are, therefore, an essential component of California's housing supply.*

*(b) It is the intent of the Legislature that an accessory dwelling unit ordinance adopted by a local agency has the effect of providing for the creation of accessory dwelling units and that provisions in this ordinance relating to matters including unit size, parking, fees, and other requirements, are not so arbitrary, excessive, or burdensome so as to unreasonably restrict the ability of homeowners to create accessory dwelling units in zones in which they are authorized by local ordinance.*

Excerpt from California Government Code (CGC) 65852.150 declaring that California is facing a severe housing crisis and ADUs are a valuable form of housing.

In 2017 the State Legislature passed a series of bills that allowed ADUs by-right\* and created statewide development standards for ADUs that regulate size, setbacks, height, and parking requirements (amongst other things) for ADUs in all California cities. For cities without a local ADU ordinance or those with ordinances conflicting with State law, State law takes precedence. Essentially, there is a Statewide ADU standard which all cities must follow. Individual cities may adopt standards different than those in State law but they cannot be more restrictive. The 2019 legislative updates further removed barriers to ADU production through changes like prohibiting minimum lot sizes, introducing JADUs in single-unit developments, and allowing ADUs in multi-unit developments.

Cities with their own ADU ordinances must ensure that they are complying with all aspects of State law, and not unduly hindering the development of ADUs. Cities must submit local ADU ordinances to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) once adopted or amended.

*\*Allowing something 'by-right' means that projects complying with zoning and regulations can be approved without the need for special permits, hearings, or conditions. By-right approvals are also known as being processed ministerially, or administratively, meaning without the need for discretionary approval.*



**CASITA-L.A.**

Photo Credit: Alexis Navarro Design

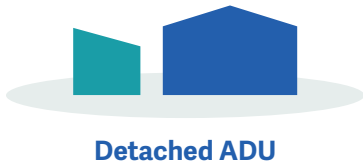
## Summary of Recent State ADU Legislation

<b>(SB 1069, AB 2299, AB 2406)</b>	<b>(SB 13, AB 68, AB 881, AB 670)</b>
<p>In 2017, the State Legislature established a standard definition of ADUs and JADUs and created statewide standards for approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishes a maximum size of 1,200 square feet for detached ADUs</li> <li>Establishes a maximum size of 50 percent of the existing main dwelling living area for attached ADUs</li> <li>Maximum of one parking space per ADU</li> <li>Prohibits parking requirements for ADUs within 1/2 mile of transit</li> <li>Eliminates setback requirements for conversions of existing garages into ADUs</li> <li>Limits certain impact fees that can be charged</li> <li>Limits certain requirements to separately connect ADU to utilities</li> <li>Allows local jurisdictions to establish a new type of ADU, the Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU) which is up to 500 square feet in size and a conversion of an existing attached space</li> </ul>	<p>In 2019, the State Legislature refined guidance on ADUs and JADUs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prohibits minimum lot sizes</li> <li>Eliminates owner-occupancy requirements for ADUs approved between January 1, 2020, and January 1, 2025</li> <li>Prohibits jurisdictions from setting maximum ADU sizes of less than 850 square feet (sf) for studio and one bedroom units and 1,000 sf for two+ bedroom units</li> <li>Allows ADUs on properties with existing multiple-unit developments</li> <li>Requires approval of a permit to build an ADU of up to 800 sf by-right</li> <li>Prohibits replacement parking for the primary residence when ADUs are created through the conversion of a garage, carport or covered parking structure</li> <li>Requires local jurisdictions to act on an ADU application within 60 days on a ministerial CEQA-exempt basis</li> <li>Exempts ADUs up to 750 sf from impact fees and fees must be proportional to the primary dwelling unit size for ADUs 750 sf or larger</li> <li>Authorizes HCD to notify local jurisdictions if HCD finds local ADU ordinances do not comply with State law</li> <li>Permits JADUs even where a local jurisdiction has not adopted an ordinance expressly authorizing them</li> <li>Requires housing elements to include a plan that incentivizes the creation of affordable ADUs and allows ADUs to count towards a jurisdiction's Regional Housing Needs Allocation</li> <li>Prohibits covenants or other restrictions that would prohibit ADUs</li> </ul>



# 3 ADU types

ADUs come in various sizes and configurations (“types”), including detached and attached ADUs and Junior ADUs (JADU). These types allow flexibility in design, construction cost/approach, unique site conditions, and living arrangements. Santa Monica-specific examples of relevant types are included under ‘ADU Type Design Options’ in Section 8, Resources and tools.



## ADU types explained



**Detached ADU**

*Photo Credit: Bunch ADU*



**Attached ADU**

*Photo Credit: Murray Lampert*

**Detached ADU.** The unit is physically separated from the primary dwelling(s), but may be attached to other detached accessory structures on the property, such as a garage or recreation room. This is the classic ‘backyard home’ that most people are familiar with. It is the most flexible and allows the greatest range of design options, given that it is essentially a new freestanding home. However, it is also the most expensive of the types when newly being constructed and typically has more complexity during permitting and construction.

**Attached ADU.** The unit is attached to the primary dwelling or attached garage or accessory structure. While construction costs are comparable to a detached ADU (when it is new construction), these units typically provide cost savings with utility connections which can be connected directly through the primary residence (versus creation of new water, sewer, and electrical connections to the street and/or overhead power lines). Attached ADUs are also typically limited in size to 50% of the area of the primary dwelling, which can reduce design options.

## ADU types explained (continued)



### JADU

Photo Credit: Office of: Office



### Conversion

Photo Credit: ShinShin



### Legalization

Photo Credit: Byben

**Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU).** A smaller type of ADU which is limited to 500 square feet and must be a conversion of existing space that is contained entirely within an existing or proposed single-unit dwelling. Garages and accessory structures may be converted to a JADU, if they are attached to the primary residence. JADUs are allowed in addition to ADUs, therefore it is possible to build two additional units on one property.

In addition to newly constructed ADUs and conversion JADUs, spaces can be converted and legalized to create ADUs:

**Conversion.** Homeowners may convert an existing space—such as a garage, accessory structure, or portion of the existing development—into an ADU. This is the most cost-effective approach to designing, permitting, and building an ADU, because you can typically use existing foundations, framing, roof systems, and plumbing/electrical systems and permitting fees are generally lower. Conversions are limited to the size/configuration of the existing structure or can be expanded if the new portion conforms to code. Therefore design/layout options can be more limited than in new construction.

**Legalization.** Prior to the State ADU Law taking effect, many homeowners had built ADUs without permits. These unpermitted ADUs had a range of levels of quality and adherence to building codes. Some, for example, were built by professional contractors, followed standard construction practices, and were built exactly as they would be with permits. In other cases, unpermitted ADUs were not built to code requirements. Often, homeowners inherit unpermitted ADUs from prior owners and may not even be aware that the units are unpermitted. ADU law allows for the legalization of these units to ensure safety and habitability.

# 4 ADU regulations

In Santa Monica, ADUs are allowed on any property in the city that includes an existing or proposed single-unit or existing multiple-unit/mixed-use development. These regulations can be found in [Section 9.31.025 of the Zoning Code](#).

There are a multitude of ADUs types and pathways to create them, so Santa Monica has created the following regulation guides by ADU type and whether it is a new construction or a conversion. These guides listed below can be found in Section 8, ADU resources and tools, on page 25.

## ADU regulation guides

- Newly Constructed Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with an Existing or Proposed Single-Unit Dwelling
- Newly Constructed Attached Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with a Proposed Single-Unit Dwelling
- Newly Constructed Attached Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with an Existing Single-Unit Dwelling
- Newly Constructed Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit(s) in Conjunction with an Existing Multiple-Unit/Mixed-Use Development
- Conversion of Existing Floor Area to an Attached Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with an Existing Single-Unit Dwelling
- Conversion of Existing Legal Detached Accessory Structure to an Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with an Existing or Proposed Single-Unit Dwelling
- Conversion of Existing Floor Area to an Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with an Existing Multiple-Unit/Mixed-Use Development
- Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit



# 5 Process overview

There are several stages in the process of building your ADU. This section outlines the various stages of that process including timelines, various steps, and contact information. The Santa Monica ADU Process Diagram/Checklist in Section 8, Resources and tools, summarizes the key steps and information needed. Process-related contacts for the City and utility providers are included at the end of this section on page 19.



## Decide

The first step in building an ADU is to determine the feasibility of an ADU on your property. There are three aspects of feasibility to consider: zoning feasibility, physical feasibility, and financial feasibility. The information on the following pages is a simple 'do-it-yourself' feasibility assessment, to help you understand which ADU would be most appropriate for your property.

### ADU feasibility summary

	New construction	Conversion
<b>Zoning</b>	Follow setbacks, height limits, minimum distance from primary unit, and maximum size	Allowed 'as is' if converting legal structure
<b>Physical</b>	Assess site conditions such as slope/drainage, fire hazards, and hillside requirements	Have a general contractor perform inspection of existing space
<b>Financial</b>	Cost is straightforward, based on size, type of utility connections, and quality of fixtures and finishes	Cost may fluctuate during construction due to discovery of unanticipated conditions

## Zoning feasibility

### What is allowed and where?

In Santa Monica, ADUs/JADUs are allowed on any residential parcel that has a proposed or existing single- or multiple-unit development, and are limited in size, height, location, and configuration. For details, review the [development standards](#) in Section 9.31.025 of the Zoning Code and refer to the ADU Regulation Guides in Section 8, Resources and tools for details. [Direct any questions](#) to the Planning Division.

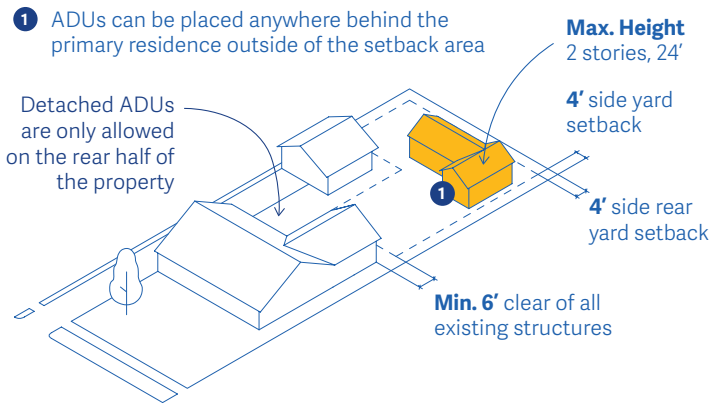
The diagrams on the right illustrate where and how **new construction, conversion, and legalization** ADUs/JADUs can be built.

For conversions of an existing space, zoning feasibility is very simple: as long as the space to be converted is permitted it is allowed. There are no size limits for converting an existing accessory structure.

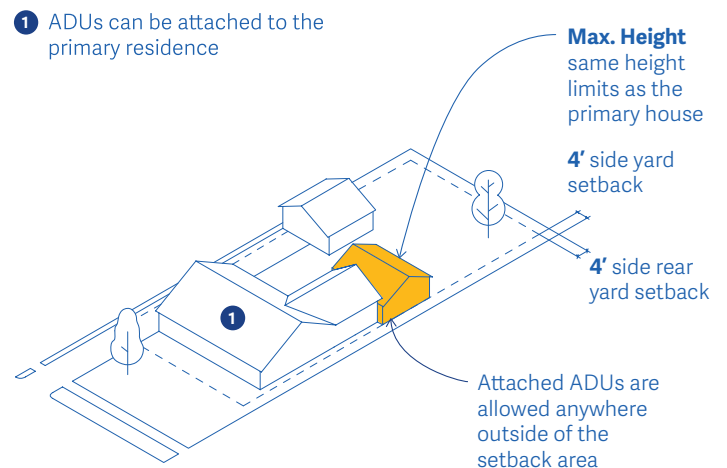
Related to conversions and legalizations, do not assume the permitted status of any structure—always obtain written verification from the Santa Monica Building and Safety Division. In some cases the current existing condition/use of the structure might be different than what is recorded in the official permit on file. You can [search for pre-existing building permits and certificates of occupancy](#), looking for unpermitted work to determine that the structure was legally permitted.

Location in special zones such as hillside, liquefaction, historic preservation, or the [California Coastal Zone](#) may add regulatory constraints. You can make an [appointment](#) with the Planning Department to identify any potential issues with your ADU concept. See “Coastal zone approvals” on the next page.

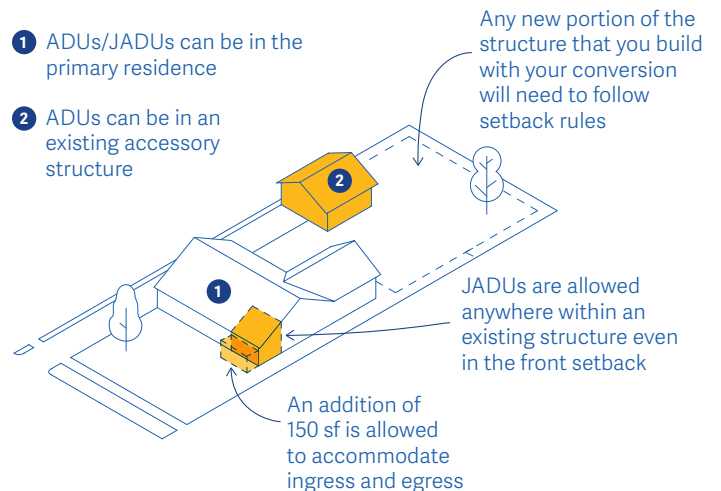
### New Construction - Detached



### New Construction - Attached



### Conversions and Legalizations



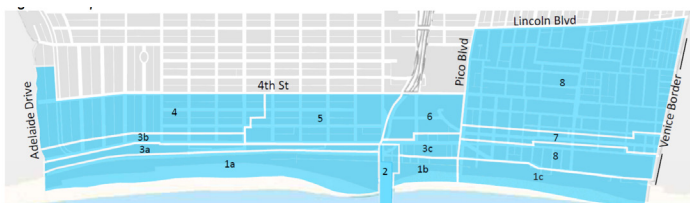
Note: Building Code will not allow a window or door within 3' of a shared property line, even for conversions/legalizations.



## Coastal zone approvals

If your ADU is located within the coastal zone, you'll need an approved Coastal Development Permit (CDP) from the California Coastal Commission (CCC) before submitting for building permits.

- The coastal zone in Santa Monica generally runs from the beach to 4th Street (north of Pico) and from the beach to Lincoln Boulevard (south of Pico). The Coastal Zone includes 1. Santa Monica State Beach, 2. Santa Monica Pier, 3. Ocean Avenue and Palisades Park, 4. North Side Residential, 5. Downtown, 6. Civic Center, 7. Main Street South of Pico Blvd, and 8. Ocean Park in the image below.
- Check if your property is in the coastal zone at [gisdata.santamonica.gov](https://gisdata.santamonica.gov).
- Appendix B of the CDP application requires City of Santa Monica review. Contact the Planning Division to attain cursory review and Appendix B sign off. For more CDP information, see [coastal.ca.gov/cdp/cdp-forms](https://coastal.ca.gov/cdp/cdp-forms).
- Contact info for the Santa Monica City Planning Division and CCC is on page 20.



Santa Monica Coastal Zone Subareas

## Physical feasibility

### What are the existing conditions of my property that affect building an ADU?

For **new construction**, if your site is flat, there are typically no significant physical constraints. However, sloping sites (particularly hillsides) can pose design constraints, such as structural stability and drainage during rain events. On these properties you may need to have additional analysis performed such as:

- Soils analysis. This is prepared by a professional geotechnical engineer and will determine soil types, level of soil compaction, and extent of disturbed soils. This information is important for the structural engineer to evaluate when designing the foundation of the ADU.
- Structural Engineering. Depending on the results of the soils analysis, additional engineering may be required. The structural engineer will design a standard set of plans/calculations, but will also need to address the specific soils conditions, which increases cost (fees to engineer as well as additional construction costs).
- Site Drainage. To ensure that water will drain from the property during a rain event, in some cases a civil engineer may need to design a drainage system based on the site elevation and slope. This would be an additional cost, for both the civil engineer's fees as well as costs to construct and maintain the system.

For **conversion**, because you will be building within the existing structure, you should have the structure evaluated for feasibility of re-use:

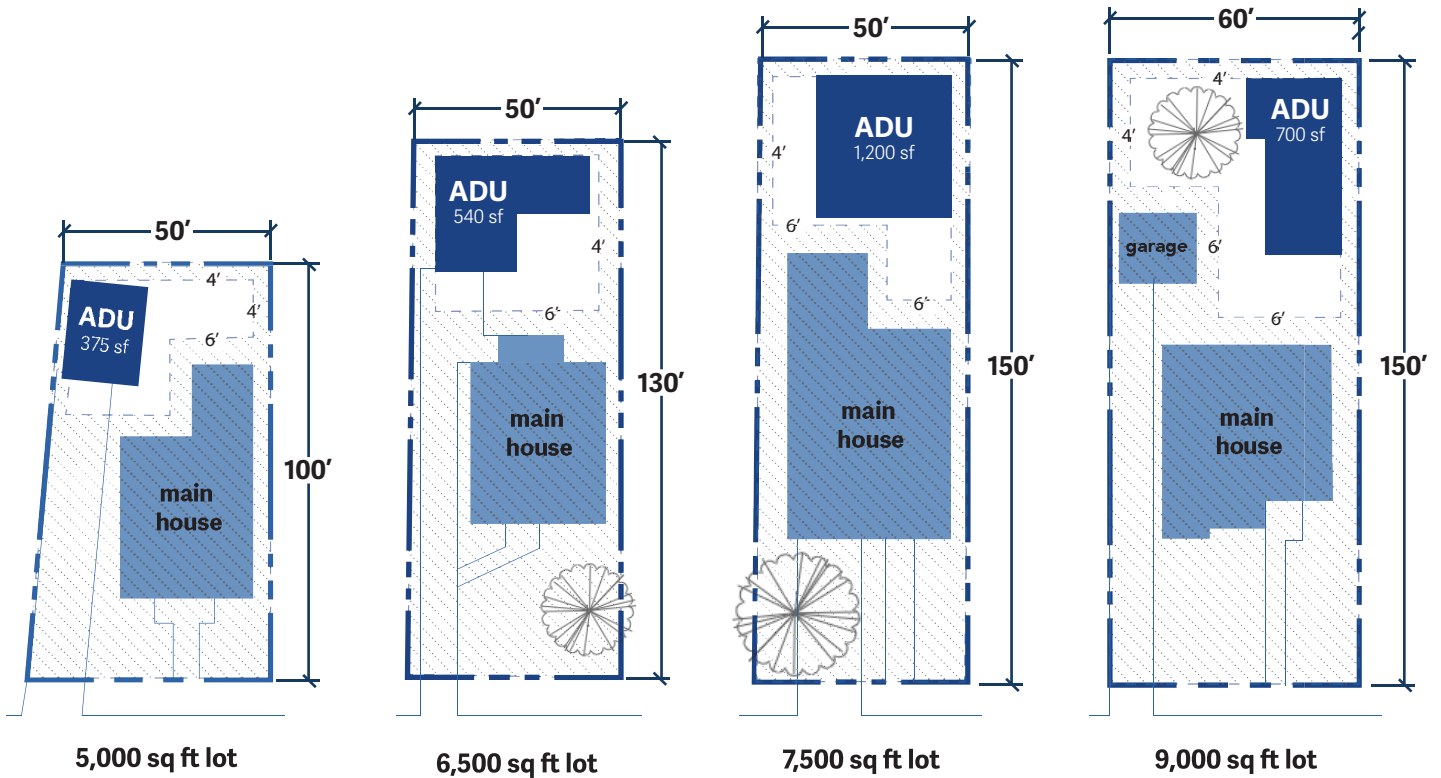
- Framing: is the framing built to code and salvageable?

- Roof system: Are the roof rafters, deck, waterproofing, and roof materials (shingles, tiles, etc) in good condition?
- Foundation: Is the foundation suitable for an ADU? Are there any significant cracks in the slab? Are the footings sufficient?
- Plumbing/Electrical: Does the space have existing plumbing/electrical and if so is it code-complaint and of sufficient service for an ADU?
- Utilities: Is the structure connected to water, power, and sewer?

- Ingress/Egress: Are there sufficient windows/doors to allow ingress/egress, including emergencies?

If the space to be converted is already habitable (such as a permitted bedroom or recreation room attached to the main house), most of these systems will be in place.

If the space to be converted is not already habitable (such as a garage), a closer inspection is necessary to evaluate the existing conditions and feasibility for re-use. Some exploratory work (e.g., removal of drywall to observe electrical/plumbing, use of sewer cameras, and excavation around foundation footings) may be necessary to provide a full picture of existing conditions.



**Legend**

- property line
- - - setbacks
- ▨ non-buildable area

The diagrams shown above illustrate typical site conditions found in neighborhoods across Santa Monica. The buildable area in each site is shown outside of the side, rear, and building setbacks in the non-hatched area in each backyard. A variety of ADU footprints are drawn on each site plan to highlight the variation of buildable area across different properties, and demonstrate potential ADU locations for typical lot sizes and conditions.



It is unlikely that the inspection would reveal 100% of the state of the existing conditions and it is common during construction to encounter unanticipated conditions which can affect time/cost of construction.

In either case (new construction or conversion) you should have a licensed General Contractor perform the inspection and prepare a written report documenting observations.

For **legalizations**, you will need to approach the project as if you were converting the existing approved use (for example, a garage) into an ADU, such as exploring feasibility, developing plans, and permitting those plans. The City typically assumes, for the purposes of permitting, that the existing structure is that which is already permitted (e.g. a garage), versus that which physically exists (e.g. an ADU). So, the plans must be to ‘convert’ the existing structure to the existing use. You can also take the opportunity to modify the existing ADU—such as adding/moving windows, moving walls, and so forth.

## Financial feasibility

### How much will the ADU cost, based on its location/size/configuration?

Based on the results of your analysis in the steps above, you should estimate the cost to design, permit, and construct the ADU.

More detailed cost estimates are provided in Section 6, ADU cost estimates, but here are some rules of thumb to follow:

- New construction is about 125% more expensive than conversions (assuming the structure to be converted is in good physical condition).
- The bigger the ADU, the more expensive—but less expensive on a per square foot basis. In other words, each additional square foot you add has a marginally decreasing cost.

- The higher quality the fixtures and finishes, the more expensive the ADU.
- Separately metered utilities (water, electrical, gas) cost more than using existing utilities.
- Building on slopes or hillsides adds significant additional cost.
- New construction detached ADUs are required to have solar systems, which should be considered in overall project costs.

As with any building project, there are upfront due diligence costs that are necessary to understand your project’s feasibility. Doing due diligence at the outset will ultimately help you make an informed decision on whether to move forward. Making informed decisions will help to reduce the risk of unexpected problems or costs arising, as the project moves forward.

Rigorous due diligence is extremely important but does not eliminate the possibility of additional issues and costs during the design, permitting, and construction process.

## Design

### Finding professionals

In this phase, you will work with a designer to prepare a set of plans. These plans serve two purposes. First, they are the plans that will be submitted to the City for building permit issuance. Second, they are the ‘instructions’ to the contractor on how to build the ADU.

One of the best ways to select a designer is through referrals. You may know a friend, family member, or neighbor who has worked with a designer before. Talk with at least three potential designers and ask them the following:

- How many ADUs have you designed and permitted in Santa Monica?

- Can you provide examples of past work and references? Call those references and ask:
  - What was the overall quality of their work?
  - How professional were they?
  - How did they handle questions/ disputes with the contractor during construction?
- How will payments be handled?
- Do they have a list of surveyors (new construction only), structural engineers, and Title 24 consultants (to verify your project is energy efficient) that they work with?
- Do you have experience developing projects in a hillside locations? If your property is on a hillside, it is strongly recommended the designers have related experience.
- Is permitting in their scope? It should be, unless you have an owner’s representative to assist.
- Is bidding assistance and construction management in their scope? It should be, unless you have an owner’s representative to assist.

### Define your project goals

Each ADU project has different site conditions, budget, and design goals. These goals can help you communicate your priorities to your designer and can be used to guide the final design of your ADU. If you are building an ADU consider the following questions to assist you in defining the project goals towards your design vision:

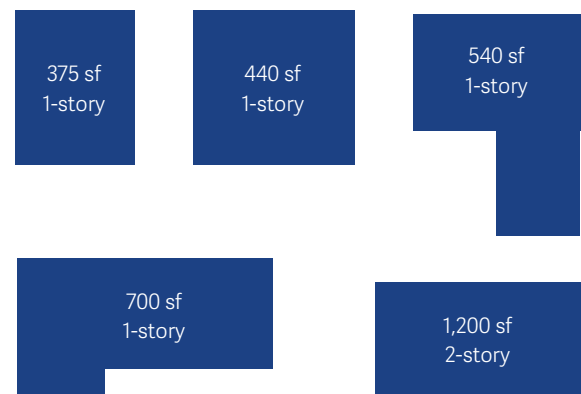
- Who do you envision living in the ADU? What do they need in terms of space, privacy, and comfort?

- What spaces or rooms do you want to include in the ADU? What are the “must-haves” and what are less important?
- What are your long term plans for the ADU? Do you plan on moving into the ADU at some point or continue renting it? Do you plan on selling your property?
- How much do you plan on budgeting for the ADU, and is does it align with the financial feasibility of your project goals?

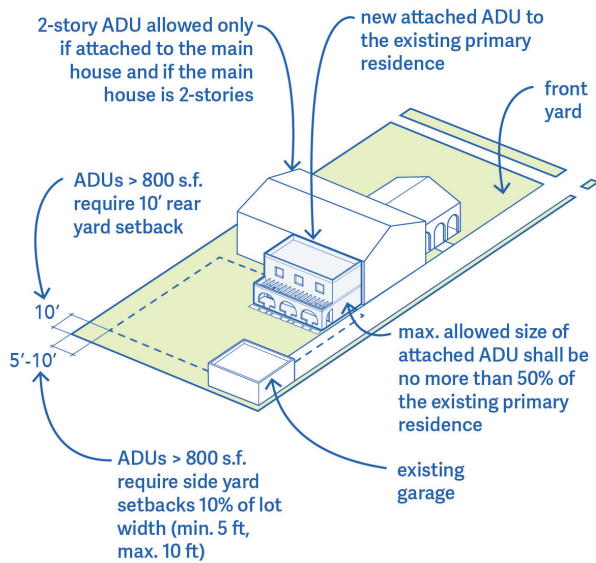
### Design considerations

Once you’ve set your project goals and have an understanding of your site conditions, consider utilizing a variety of design strategies when designing your ADU to help you meet your design vision. A few design considerations to keep in mind as you design your ADU are provided on the next page.

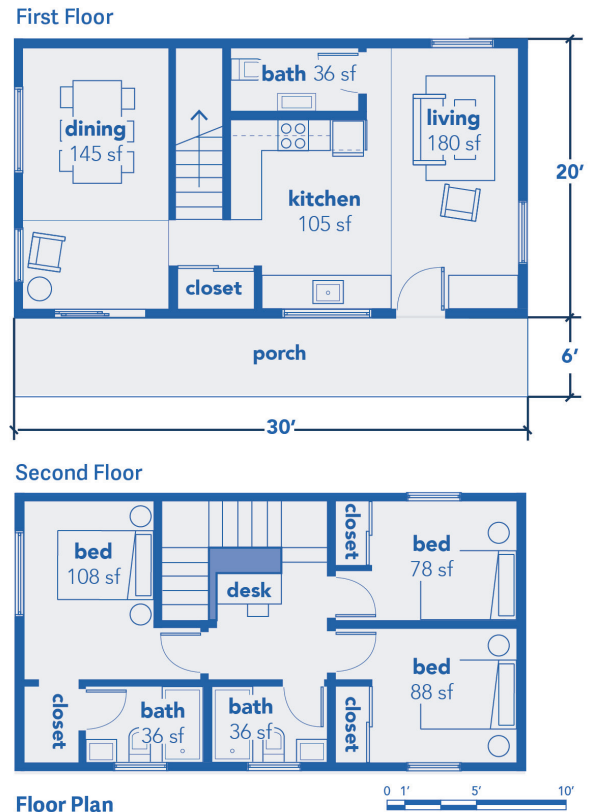
- Increase the function of spaces within the ADU



The diagrams above show different footprints of conceptual ADU designs to illustrate the possibilities of various ADU sizes and layouts. An example site layout and floor plan is shown on the next page of the 1,200 sf 2-story ADU footprint. For more examples, see ‘ADU Type Design Options’ in Section 8, Resources and tools.



Sample Site Layout



Floor Plan

Example site layout and floor plan illustrating a new construction detached ADU design for a 2-story, 3-bed, 2.5-bath unit. For more ADU design examples, see 'ADU Type Design Options' in Section 8, Resources and tools.

- Integrate built-in or storage solutions within hallways, entries, and eating nooks
- Design rooms with multiple uses in mind, including dining rooms that can become sleeping spaces
- Create a thoughtful relationship between/ around each dwelling unit
  - Depending on your goals, plan for shared and/or private outdoor spaces for both the primary unit(s) and ADU
  - Utilize setback space for outdoor activities such as a small patio area, dog run, or trash/recycling bin storage
- Invest in a landscaping budget to create a feeling of completeness on the final project, and visually integrate your property
- Incorporate design strategies to make small spaces feel larger
  - Include lofted ceilings and skylights to create an expansive feeling and increase natural light in garage conversions and new ADUs
  - Include 9' tall ceilings when possible to open up the space
  - Add large sliding or French patio doors to create an indoor/outdoor connection and increase light and air flow

- Use horizontal casement or slider windows to allow light into the ADU while maintaining privacy and allowing wall space for art/furniture

### Site considerations

When designing your ADU, remember to take into consideration existing site conditions.

Key considerations include:

- ADU must be designed within the maximum size, height limit, and setbacks
- ADU should have sufficient distance from any overhead power lines (see above diagram and 'Utility easements and power lines' in the 'Build' phase for more info)

Before applying for permits, ensure you have taken these steps:

- Consult the City's [plan submittal guide](#) and use [Santa Monica 311](#) to ask related questions
- Obtain a site survey including building corners and applicable elevation points needed for building height calculations

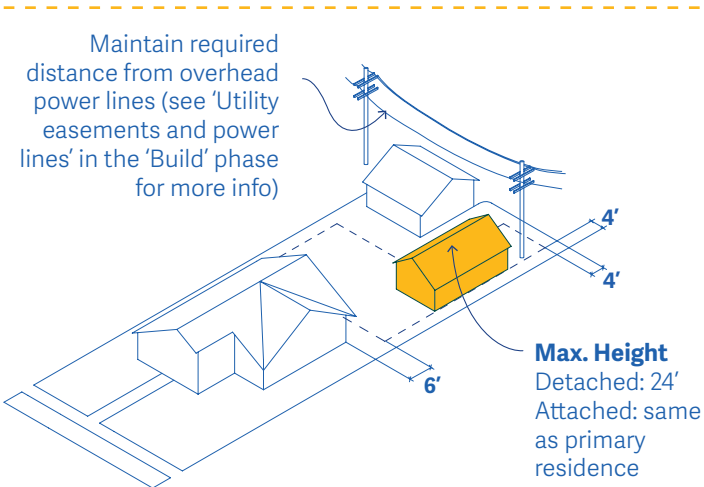


Diagram illustrates key site considerations discussed.

- Prepare architectural drawings (site plan, elevations, floor plans, roof plans, others), as required
- Prepare structural plans and calculations
- Prepare Title 24 energy calculations
- Prepare other plans/documents as required (Mechanical, Plumbing, Electric, Soils Report, etc)
- Retain required California Coastal Commission approvals (see 'Coastal zone approvals' on page 11 for more information)

### Permit

Once you have a complete set of drawings, the next step is to apply for a building permit. A professional, such as your designer or an ADU owner's representative, may assist you with this process.

#### Step 1: Submit plans and pay fees

Santa Monica offers an entirely online plan submittal and review process called EPR (Electronic Plan Review). EPR requires use of the following two websites as part of the plan review process:

- [Citizen Access](#) - The website for creating a new building permit application and for making online fee payments
- [ProjectDox](#) - The website for the upload and review of project plans and supporting materials. Applicants use ProjectDox to view and receive project corrections, and track project status

For detailed instructions on how to submit for a permit, to go [santamonica.gov/process-explainers/how-to-submit-a-building-permit-application-for-plan-review](https://santamonica.gov/process-explainers/how-to-submit-a-building-permit-application-for-plan-review).



## Step 2: City issues corrections and clearances

City staff review project plans for compliance with standards and regulations, and issue corrections as needed. They will also issue a list of approvals needed from different departments, called clearances.

## Step 3: Revise plans per City direction

Designer revises plans per City-issued corrections and contacts necessary departments to discuss plans and obtain necessary clearances. Sometimes feedback from various departments conflicts and must be reconciled. Additional fees may be necessary during this process. Continue discussions/corrections with City staff until all departments are satisfied.

- Use [Project Dox](#) account to retrieve plan check comments
- Make any necessary corrections to plans
- Satisfy required City department clearances (e.g., Fire, Engineering, Planning, and Building & Safety); revise and resubmit as needed
- Re-submit corrected plans to City

## Step 4: Permit-ready / hire a contractor

Plan review is approved and building permit is ready to be issued once all City staff and departments have issued approvals. It is recommended that a general contractor (“GC”) is secured prior to building permit issuance so that the building permit is issued to the GC.

- Deciding on a GC:
  - You may pull the permit as an [owner-builder](#) acting as your own GC to do the work yourself and complete

construction, and/or hire licensed subcontractors

- If you are hiring a licensed GC to construct your ADU, refer to the Contractor Selection & Management Guide in Section 8, Resources and tools, for more helpful information
- To verify the GC you are hiring is licensed, search their information [online at the Contractors State License Board](#)

## Step 5: Permit issued

You now have permission from the City of Santa Monica to construct your ADU. Use the [Citizens Access](#) portal to pay all permit, inspection, and impact fees and obtain and post the building permit once plans are stamped by the City.

## Build

### Key steps in the ‘build’ phase

- Start construction
- Request course-of-construction/milestone inspections [online](#) for foundation, framing, roofing, rough electrical, etc.
- Complete construction and receive final inspection approval
- Connect all utilities
- File for and obtain the certificate of occupancy

## Utility connections

Your ADU will need electricity, water, sewer, and potentially gas service. That means you'll need to work with your contractor to provide connections to the ADU from either the existing residence or the utilities' lines (for example, direct to an overhead power line or a trench to the city's water service line).

You may elect to have separately metered electricity, water, and gas. The advantages of this approach are that the tenant must establish and pay for service in their name, which helps reduce resource consumption and avoids the hassle of 'passing through' utility costs to tenants. However, this option is more expensive; in addition to permits and connection fees, separate utility connections often have significant costs for plumbing and electrical to install proper overhead and underground lines for utilities.

Given their smaller size, most ADU plans do not include mechanical, engineering, or plumbing system plans ("MEP plans"), which detail the size, location, and type of those systems. In other words, the plans are silent on how those systems are run throughout the house, and how those utilities are connected. However, the designer should indicate on the plans the locations of the following:

- Kitchen appliances/fixtures
- Bathroom appliances/fixtures
- Electrical outlets/fixtures
- Water heater
- AC condenser
- Electrical service panel
- Solar panels (if any)



*Examples of backyard excavations for sewer, water, and electricity*

If there are no MEP plans (as is typical), your contractor will need to make utility connections based on field conditions, which can't be fully known until construction begins.

Additionally, the routing of the utility connections will be based on location of existing utility connections and must follow certain rules related to location/route. Therefore, you may not always be able to designate where the trenches for the utilities will be dug. These excavations can result in disruption to hardscaping/ landscaping in existing front, side, and rear yards.

Below are the utility providers in Santa Monica. You will need to work with these entities to determine the existing location of utilities and in some cases approve the location/size of your connections.

- **Water/sewer:** City of Santa Monica  
Department of Public Works, Water Resources Division
- **Electricity:** Southern California Edison
- **Gas:** SoCalGas

## Permitting contacts

### City of Santa Monica

Santa Monica 311  
311@santamonica.gov

Planning: 866-311-7266  
Building and Safety: 310-458-8355  
Water Resources: 310-458-8531  
(after hours: 310-434-2672)

### California Coastal Commission

SouthCoast@coastal.ca.gov  
562-590-5071  
coastal.ca.gov/cdp/cdp-forms.html

### Southern California Edison

800-655-4555  
sce.com/partners/consulting-services/localplanning

### SoCalGas

NewBusinessProcessTeam@socalgas.com  
877-238-0092  
socalgas.com/about-us/contact-us

### Utility easements and power lines

Local utility companies, be they private or public, have rules and regulations regarding how close an ADU can be located relative to high voltage overhead wires. These rules include how close an ADU can be to high voltage wires, and how close construction workers can be to high voltage lines. Generally, one-story ADUs do not have conflicts with high voltage lines, however, two-story ADUs often have smaller clearances and will need special review and approval SCE. For example, the California Public Utilities Commission [Rules for Overhead Electric Line Construction \(General Order 95\)](#) Table 1 outlines minimum clearances (see page III-23 of GO 95).

It's best to reach out to SCE's Planning Department as soon as you start your project to [request a project consultation](#) and identify possible clearances or encroachment issues that may arise during construction. Contact information is located in "Permitting contacts" on page 19.

### Solar and electrification

ADUs that are newly constructed, non-manufactured, and detached are required to have solar systems. The panels can be installed on the ADU or on the primary dwelling unit. Conversions and attached ADUs are not subject to the Energy Code requirement to provide solar panels.

New advances in consumer products and technology have made the transition to electricity-only easier. For example, electric heat-pump water heaters are cost-effective and efficient and are readily available in the market. Similarly, heat-pump cooling and heating systems (mini-split systems) are also highly energy-efficient and great for ADUs. Finally, electric induction cook tops are a vastly improved cooking technology. There is a strong case for electric-only ADUs, which eliminates connection permits or costs from the local gas utility and the cost of installing a new gas line.

### What's next?

Congratulations, you've built your ADU! For resources on how to manage and rent your new unit see the "Guide to Renting an ADU" in Section 8, Resources and tools.



# ADU cost estimates

The below table represents sample project budgets for typical conversion and new construction ADU projects with estimates prepared as of August 2022. It is intended to give homeowners a rough idea of what projects may cost on the low and high end, including design fees, City permitting fees, and construction costs. These estimates are averaged and are for the purposes of feasibility assessment only. Actual fees will be determined with City staff based on the fee schedule in effect at the time of submittal, and project-specific factors such as valuation.

	<b>Conversion</b> Assumes a 440 sf ADU		<b>New Construction</b> Assumes a 700 sf ADU	
<b>Design fees</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
Survey	N/A	N/A	\$1,800	\$3,000
Architect/designer Fees	\$6,500	\$14,000	\$6,500	\$14,000
Title 24 Energy Calculations	\$500	\$1,000	\$500	\$1,000
Structural Engineering	\$1,500	\$4,500	\$1,500	\$4,500
Project management + entitlements*	\$8,000	\$12,000	\$8,000	\$12,000
<b>Design Subtotal</b>	<b>\$16,500</b>	<b>\$31,500</b>	<b>\$16,500</b>	<b>\$31,500</b>
<b>City fees</b>				
Plan review	\$2,045	\$2,045	\$3,212	\$3,212
Building permit fees	\$4,429	\$4,467	\$6,488	\$6,549
<b>City Fees Subtotal</b>	<b>\$6,474</b>	<b>\$6,512</b>	<b>\$9,700</b>	<b>\$9,761</b>
<b>Construction Costs**</b>				
<b>Construction Costs Subtotal</b>	<b>\$165,000</b>	<b>\$198,000</b>	<b>\$228,000</b>	<b>\$273,600</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$187,974</b>	<b>\$236,012</b>	<b>\$254,200</b>	<b>\$314,861</b>

\*Project management and entitlements are an optional service and are often performed by the architect/designer.

\*\*Assumes \$200-\$375 per square foot for conversions and \$450-\$650 per square foot for new construction. This is based on a standard quality level of finish and includes appliances, utility connections, and construction costs. The high low range is based on the complexity of the project.

# 7 FAQs

## General

<p><b>Where can I find the most updated information about current rules in Santa Monica?</b></p>	<p>All regulations can be found in the <a href="#">Santa Monica Zoning Code Section on ADUs</a>. Refer also to the ADU Regulation Guides which can be found in Section 8, ADU resources and tools, on page 25.</p>
<p><b>Who can I talk to for ADU-related planning questions?</b></p>	<p>Set up an appointment with a City Planner on the <a href="#">City's Outlook booking calendar</a>.</p>
<p><b>What does the permitting process look like in Santa Monica and what does it cost?</b></p>	<p>Refer to Section 5, Process overview, Section 6, ADU cost estimates, and the process diagram/checklist in Section 8, Resources and tools, for related process and cost information.</p>
<p><b>Does Santa Monica require me to provide parking for the ADU?</b></p>	<p>No parking for the ADU is required if your property is within 1/2 mile walking distance of public transit. No replacement parking is required if converting a garage into an ADU.</p>
<p><b>Do I need to live on the property to build an ADU?</b></p>	<p>There is no owner-occupancy requirement for an ADU. However, there is an owner-occupancy requirement for JADUs.</p>
<p><b>There is an existing unit on my property that was built without permits. Can it be legalized?</b></p>	<p>Yes, the City encourages legalization to reduce risks to occupants, reduce property owners' liability, increase property values, and gain peace of mind. The City will assume that the only structures that exist are what was previously permitted. You must prepare plans as if you were converting (or building) an ADU. If converting, the existing work may not be built to City standards and may need to be reconstructed. You can look up pre-existing building permits for unpermitted structures and certificates of occupancy at <a href="http://publicdocs.smgov.net/WebLink/CustomSearch">publicdocs.smgov.net/WebLink/CustomSearch</a>.</p>
<p><b>Do I need to notify my neighbors or have my ADU reviewed at a public hearing?</b></p>	<p>No public meetings or hearings are required.</p>
<p><b>Will adding an ADU raise my property taxes?</b></p>	<p>ADUs/JADUs will be assessed by Los Angeles County at their current valuation. However, existing square footage which is not touched by the project will not be re-assessed.</p>

## Design and construction

<p><b>Can I build more than one ADU?</b></p>	<p>Yes. On a property with a single-unit dwelling you can build one ADU and one JADU, for a total and maximum of two new units. On a property with a multiple-unit developments, one or more ADUs may be permitted. See <a href="#">Zoning Code Section 9.31.025 G2</a> for more information.</p>
<p><b>What's the difference between an ADU or JADU?</b></p>	<p>An ADU is a unit of housing that is either new construction or conversion of existing space, and has a full kitchen and bathroom. A JADU is a unit of housing that can only be converted from within a single-unit residence, including an attached garage, and have a kitchenette, but can share bathroom facilities with the main house. JADUs have an owner occupancy requirement while ADUs do not.</p>
<p><b>Are there any design standards that apply to my ADU or JADU?</b></p>	<p>Yes. See <a href="#">Section N in the ADU Section of the Zoning Code</a>.</p>
<p><b>Does Santa Monica provide a list of suggested architects/designers or contractors?</b></p>	<p>No. See Section 5, Process overview, for guidance on selecting an architect/designer and the Contractor Selection &amp; Management Guide in Section 8, Resources and tools, for selecting a general contractor.</p>
<p><b>Am I required to install solar on my ADU?</b></p>	<p>Solar is required for new construction projects. If you have an ADU conversion more than 800 square feet, solar may be required.</p>
<p><b>How do I know where my current utility lines run?</b></p>	<p>Contact the utilities listed in Section 6, Process overview. Contact information can be found on page 19.</p>
<p><b>Can I build a two-story ADU in Santa Monica?</b></p>	<p>Yes, but it shall not exceed 2 stories or 24 feet in height.</p>

## Financing

<p><b>What financial assistance is Santa Monica offering for ADU homeowners who want to rent their ADUs to low-income neighbors?</b></p>	<p>No financial assistance is currently offered. The City continues to explore potential financial assistance programs and will provide updated information as available.</p>
<p><b>What sort of rent levels can I expect in Santa Monica?</b></p>	<p>Rents are generally at fair market, which can range from roughly around \$2,500 for a studio ADU up to \$4,000 for a two plus bedroom ADU.*</p>
<p><b>Do residential impact fees apply to ADUs?</b></p>	<p>Any ADU less than 750 sq ft shall not be charged residential impact fees. Any impact fees charged for an ADU of 750 sq ft or more shall be proportionate in relation to the size of the primary dwelling unit. Impact fees include those from the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District.</p>

*\*This estimate is based on May 2022 Rentometer data, an online service that uses proprietary technology and data to provide thorough rent comparison analysis.*

## Renting and landlord information

<p><b>What resources are there to help me understand what's needed to be an ADU landlord?</b></p>	<p>See the "Guide to Renting an ADU" in Section 8, Resources and tools, to find helpful information on being an ADU landlord.</p>
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# 8 Resources and tools

## Resources

The following external resources provided added information to help you navigate the ADU process:

- **City of Santa Monica ADU Website**
  - The City ADU information web page
- **ADU Handbook**
  - Published by California Housing and Community Development Department
- **Casita Coalition**
  - A coalition of ADU builders, designers, and policymakers
- **Accessory Dwellings**
  - A clearinghouse for ADU trends, data, and best practices
- **California Housing Finance Agency (CalHFA)**
  - A state agency providing ADU grants via third-party lenders
- **Cost to Build an ADU**
  - A cost estimator for an ADU provided by Maxable

## Tools

The following tools, attached to this handbook, are intended to help you navigate the ADU process:

- **ADU Regulations Guides**
  - The City's guides to regulations by ADU type, including for new construction, conversions, single-unit, multiple-unit/mixed-use, and JADUs
- **ADU Type Design Options**
  - A package of five ADU design options to help homeowners get a basic understanding of ADUs and what plans may include based on past trends in the city, neighborhood and site considerations, regulatory conditions, and compatible ADU types
- **Santa Monica ADU Process Diagram/ Checklist**
  - A quick snapshot of the ADU permitting process in Santa Monica
- **ADU Application Form Supplement**
  - A supplement to the City's existing building permit form with ADU-specific information
- **Contractor Selection & Management Guide**
  - Helpful tips on how to select and manage a general contractor
- **Guide to Renting an ADU**
  - A quick guide on where to find helpful information on being an ADU landlord

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*Coming soon! Santa Monica Online ADU Cost Estimator*

- Based on Santa Monica site specifics and types included in the ADU Type Design Options to give homeowners a rough idea of project design, permit, construction, and utility connection costs.



# ADU Regulation Guide

## Newly Constructed Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with an Existing or Proposed Single-Unit Dwelling

(as of 11/1/21)

A newly constructed detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in conjunction with an existing or proposed Single-Unit Dwelling (SUD) shall be subject to all standards set forth in SMMC Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit, as summarized below. A newly constructed ADU that is entirely within a free-standing building or attached to an existing or proposed accessory structure, shall fall within this category of ADU.

Standard	Requirement
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All ADUs shall be approved ministerially.</li> <li>No design review is required.</li> <li>California Coastal Commission - If the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, Coastal Commission approval is required prior to building permit approval.</li> </ul>
Parcel Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No minimum parcel size.</li> </ul>
Maximum Number of ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One detached ADU is permitted on a parcel that does not already have a proposed or existing attached ADU. However, a Junior ADU is permitted in addition to a detached ADU.</li> </ul>
Permitted Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required to be located on the rear half of a parcel, subject to setback requirements.</li> <li>Required to be located a minimum of 6 feet from the existing or proposed SUD, as measured between exterior walls.</li> <li>Permitted to be attached (e.g. share a wall or located above) to existing detached accessory structure.</li> <li>On a through parcel, the rear half of a parcel is determined by the street primarily used as frontage by the majority of neighboring parcels.</li> <li>Use or conversion of existing floor area is prohibited.</li> </ul>
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Minimum Size</b> – 220 square feet of floor area.</li> <li><b>Maximum Size:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Studio/1-bedroom – 850 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>→ 2 or more bedrooms:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parcels less than 10,000 square feet – 1,000 square feet of floor area;</li> <li>▪ Parcels 10,000 square feet or greater – 1,200 square feet of floor area.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Floor Area is determined pursuant to <u>SMMC Section 9.04.080, Determining Floor Area</u>.</li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Parcel Coverage/ Floor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exempt from parcel coverage and floor area calculations.</li> <li>● Areas below a second-story ADU cantilever will not be calculated towards parcel coverage or floor area.</li> </ul>
Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Front</b> – Not permitted within the required front setback as set forth per the subject zone district (must be located in rear half of parcel).</li> <li>● <b>Side &amp; Rear</b> – 4 feet except if a smaller side and/or rear setback is permitted for the SUD, the ADU may have an equivalent side and/or rear setback.</li> </ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2 stories</li> <li>● 24 feet</li> <li>● Building height shall be measured starting from one of the three elevation datum points set forth in <u>SMMC Section 9.04.050, Measuring Height</u>.</li> </ul>
Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The exterior design, including building forms, materials, colors, exterior finishes, and landscaping, shall be compatible in size, location, and appearance with the SUD on the parcel.</li> <li>● Independent exterior access is required.</li> <li>● No interior access between other detached accessory structures is permitted.</li> </ul>
Upper-Story Outdoor Space <i>(e.g., first-story roof decks, landings, upper- level walkways, and balconies)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Maximum Aggregate Size:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ R1 District – 35 square feet per ADU.</li> <li>→ All other districts – 60 square feet per ADU.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Locational Requirements:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Shall not be located on the side elevation closest to a side parcel line, unless that side parcel line is adjacent to a public right-of-way or alley;</li> <li>→ Shall not be located on the rear elevation unless the ADU is located outside the rear setback area required for the SUD;</li> <li>→ When located on a permitted elevation, upper-story outdoor spaces shall be set back from the side parcel line the same distance as the minimum side setback requirement for the SUD on the parcel and shall be a minimum 5' from the rear parcel line;</li> <li>→ Roof decks above the second story are prohibited.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Living Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The following independent facilities must be provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Kitchen that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, refrigerator, and a stovetop and/or oven;</li> <li>→ Bathroom that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, toilet, and a shower and/or bathtub.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-site parking is not required; however, if the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, please contact the California Coastal Commission regarding parking requirements.</li> </ul>
Owner Occupancy, Lease Terms, and Separate Sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Owner occupancy not required.</li> <li>Short-term rentals (30 days or less) are not permitted.</li> <li>Not permitted to be sold separately from the SUD.</li> </ul>
Exemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No development or design standard shall preclude an ADU from achieving a size of 800 square feet of floor area with side and rear setbacks of at least 4 feet and a height of no more than 16 feet.</li> </ul>

*For questions regarding these standards, please submit through the City's [311 System](#).*

# ADU Regulation Guide

## Newly Constructed Attached Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with an Existing Single-Unit Dwelling

(as of 11/1/21)

A newly constructed attached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) that is an addition to an existing Single-Unit Dwelling (SUD) shall be subject to all standards set forth in SMMC Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit, as summarized below. For purposes of this category of ADU, **no conversion of any existing floor area may occur.**

Standard	Requirement
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All ADUs shall be approved ministerially.</li> <li>No design review is required.</li> <li>California Coastal Commission - If the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, Coastal Commission approval is required prior to building permit approval.</li> </ul>
Parcel Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No minimum parcel size.</li> </ul>
Maximum Number of ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One attached ADU is permitted on a parcel that does not have a proposed or existing detached ADU OR Junior ADU.</li> </ul>
Permitted Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be located anywhere on the parcel, subject to setback requirements.</li> </ul>
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Minimum Size</b> – 220 square feet of floor area.</li> <li><b>Maximum Size:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Studio/1-bedroom – 850 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>→ 2 or more bedrooms:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parcels less than 10,000 square feet – 1,000 square feet of floor area;</li> <li>▪ Parcels 10,000 square feet or greater – 1,200 square feet of floor area.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>The floor area of an ADU shall not exceed 50% of the floor area of the SUD, except at least 800 square feet is guaranteed.</li> <li>Floor Area is determined pursuant to <u>SMMC Section 9.04.080, Determining Floor Area</u>.</li> </ul>
Parcel Coverage/ Floor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exempt from parcel coverage and floor area calculations.</li> <li>Areas below a second-story ADU cantilever will not be calculated towards parcel coverage or floor area.</li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Front</b> – Not permitted within the required front setback as set forth per the subject zone district.</li> <li>● <b>Side &amp; Rear</b> – 4 feet; however, a reduced setback is permitted in the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ If the SUD is permitted to have a side and/or rear setback of less than 4 feet, the ADU may have an equivalent side and/or rear setback.</li> <li>→ A reduced side and/or rear setback may be granted if permitted by fire and safety codes (Please contact Building &amp; Safety for more information).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shall comply with the height limitations for the SUD per the subject zone district.</li> </ul>
Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The exterior design, including building forms, materials, colors, exterior finishes, and landscaping, shall be compatible in size, location, and appearance with the SUD on the parcel.</li> <li>● Independent exterior access is required.</li> <li>● No interior access between the ADU and proposed SUD is permitted.</li> </ul>
Upper-Story Stepbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Within the R1 District, an ADU located entirely or partially on the second story of an existing SUD shall comply with all applicable stepback requirements set forth in <u>SMMC Section 9.07.030, Development Standards</u>.</li> </ul>
Upper-Story Outdoor Space <i>(e.g., first-story roof decks, landings, upper-level walkways, and balconies)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shall conform to all standards set forth for the SUD per the subject zone district.</li> </ul>
Living Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The following independent facilities must be provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Kitchen that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, refrigerator, and a stovetop and/or oven;</li> <li>→ Bathroom that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, toilet, and a shower and/or bathtub.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● On-site parking is not required; however, if the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, please contact the California Coastal Commission regarding parking requirements.</li> </ul>
Owner Occupancy, Lease Terms, and Separate Sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Owner occupancy not required.</li> <li>● Short-term rentals (30 days or less) are not permitted.</li> <li>● Not permitted to be sold separately from the SUD.</li> </ul>



Standard	Requirement
Exemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="527 239 1430 361">• No development or design standard shall preclude an ADU from achieving a size of 800 square feet of floor area with side and rear setbacks of at least 4 feet and a height of no more than 16 feet.</li></ul>

*For questions regarding these standards, please submit through the City's [311 System](#).*



Community Development Dept.  
City Planning Division

# ADU Regulation Guide

## Newly Constructed Attached Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with a Proposed Single-Unit Dwelling

(as of 11/1/21)

A newly constructed attached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in conjunction with a proposed Single-Unit Dwelling (SUD) shall be subject to all standards set forth in SMMC Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit, as summarized below.

Standard	Requirement
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All ADUs shall be approved ministerially.</li> <li>No design review is required.</li> <li>California Coastal Commission - If the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, Coastal Commission approval is required prior to building permit approval.</li> </ul>
Parcel Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No minimum parcel size.</li> </ul>
Maximum Number of ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One attached ADU is permitted on a parcel that does not have a proposed or existing detached ADU OR Junior ADU.</li> </ul>
Permitted Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be located anywhere on the parcel, subject to setback requirements.</li> </ul>
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Minimum Size</b> – 220 square feet of floor area.</li> <li><b>Maximum Size:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Studio/1-bedroom – 850 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>→ 2 or more bedrooms:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parcels less than 10,000 square feet – 1,000 square feet of floor area;</li> <li>▪ Parcels 10,000 square feet or greater – 1,200 square feet of floor area.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>The floor area of an attached ADU shall not exceed 50% of the floor area of the SUD, except at least 800 square feet is guaranteed.</li> <li>Floor Area is determined pursuant to <a href="#">SMMC Section 9.04.080, Determining Floor Area</a>.</li> </ul>
Parcel Coverage/ Floor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exempt from parcel coverage and floor area calculations.</li> <li>Areas below a second-story ADU cantilever will not be calculated towards parcel coverage or floor area.</li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Front</b> – Not permitted within the required front setback as set forth per the subject zone district.</li> <li>● <b>Side &amp; Rear</b> – 4 feet; however, a reduced setback is permitted in the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ If the SUD is permitted to have a side and/or rear setback of less than 4 feet, the ADU may have an equivalent side and/or rear setback.</li> <li>→ A reduced side and/or rear setback may be granted if permitted by fire and safety codes (Please contact Building &amp; Safety for more information).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shall comply with the height limitations for the SUD per the subject zone district.</li> </ul>
Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The exterior design, including building forms, materials, colors, exterior finishes, and landscaping, shall be compatible in size, location, and appearance with the SUD on the parcel.</li> <li>● Independent exterior access is required.</li> <li>● No interior access between the ADU and proposed SUD is permitted.</li> </ul>
Upper-Story Stepbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Within the R1 District, a ADU located entirely or partially on the second story of a proposed SUD shall comply with all applicable stepback requirements set forth in <a href="#">SMMC Section 9.07.030, Development Standards</a>.</li> </ul>
Upper-Story Outdoor Space <i>(e.g., first-story roof decks, landings, upper-level walkways, and balconies)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shall conform to all standards set forth for the SUD per the subject zone district.</li> </ul>
Living Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The following independent facilities must be provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Kitchen that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, refrigerator, and a stovetop and/or oven;</li> <li>→ Bathroom that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, toilet, and a shower and/or bathtub.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● On-site parking is not required; however, if the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, please contact the California Coastal Commission regarding parking requirements.</li> </ul>
Owner Occupancy, Lease Terms, and Separate Sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Owner occupancy not required.</li> <li>● Short-term rentals (30 days or less) are not permitted.</li> <li>● Not permitted to be sold separately from the SUD.</li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Exemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="527 239 1430 359">• No development or design standard shall preclude an ADU from achieving a size of 800 square feet of floor area with side and rear setbacks of at least 4 feet and a height of no more than 16 feet.</li></ul>

*For questions regarding these standards, please submit through the City's [311 System](#).*

# ADU Regulation Guide

## Newly Constructed Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit(s) in Conjunction with an Existing Multiple-Unit/Mixed-Use Development

(as of 11/1/21)

A newly constructed detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in conjunction with an **existing** multiple-unit/mixed-use development (MUD) shall be subject to all standards set forth in SMMC Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit, as summarized below. A newly constructed ADU that is entirely within a free-standing building or attached to an existing detached accessory structure and/or another ADU, shall fall within this category. This category of ADU may be established in addition to the conversion of existing portions of a MUD not used as livable space to an ADU (see separate guide).

Standard	Requirement
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All ADUs shall be approved ministerially.</li> <li>No design review is required.</li> <li>California Coastal Commission - If the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, Coastal Commission approval is required prior to building permit approval.</li> </ul>
Parcel Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No minimum parcel size is required.</li> </ul>
Maximum Number of ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No more than two new detached ADUs are permitted on a parcel.</li> </ul>
Permitted Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permitted to be located anywhere on a parcel as long as it meets setback requirements.</li> <li>Required to be located a minimum of 6 feet from existing primary dwellings, as measured between exterior walls.</li> <li>Permitted to be attached (e.g., share a wall or located above) to existing detached accessory structure or another ADUs.</li> <li>Use or conversion of existing floor area is prohibited.</li> </ul>
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Minimum Size</b> – 220 square feet of floor area.</li> <li><b>Maximum Size:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Studio/1-bedroom – 850 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>→ 2 or more bedrooms:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parcels less than 10,000 square feet – 1,000 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>○ Parcels 10,000 square feet or greater – 1,200 square feet of floor area.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Floor Area is determined pursuant to <u>SMMC Section 9.04.080, Determining Floor Area</u>.</li> </ul>



Standard	Requirement
Parcel Coverage/ Floor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exempt from parcel coverage and floor area calculations.</li> <li>• Areas below a second-story ADU cantilever will not be calculated towards parcel coverage or floor area.</li> </ul>
Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Front</b> – Not permitted within the required front setback as set forth per the subject zone district.</li> <li>• <b>Side &amp; Rear</b> – 4 feet except if a smaller side and/or rear setback is permitted for the MUD, the ADU may have an equivalent side and/or rear setback.</li> </ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 stories</li> <li>• 24 feet</li> <li>• Building height shall be measured starting from one of the three elevation datum points set forth in <u>SMMC Section 9.04.050, Measuring Height</u>.</li> </ul>
Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The exterior design, including building forms, materials, colors, exterior finishes, and landscaping, shall be compatible in size, location, and appearance with the MUD on the parcel.</li> <li>• Independent exterior access is required.</li> <li>• No interior access between a detached accessory structure or another ADU is permitted.</li> </ul>
Upper-Story Outdoor Space <i>(e.g., first-story roof decks, landings, upper- level walkways, and balconies)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maximum Aggregate Size:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ R1 District – 35 square feet per ADU.</li> <li>→ All other districts – 60 square feet per ADU.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Locational Requirements:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Shall not be located on the side elevation that is closest to a side parcel line, unless that side parcel line is adjacent to a public right-of-way or alley.</li> <li>→ Shall not be located on the rear elevation unless the ADU is located outside the rear setback area required for the MUD.</li> <li>→ When located on a permitted elevation, upper-story outdoor spaces shall be set back from the side parcel line the same distance as the minimum side setback requirement for the MUD on the parcel and shall be a minimum 5' from the rear parcel line.</li> <li>→ Roof decks above the second story are prohibited.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Living Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The following independent facilities must be provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Kitchen that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, refrigerator, and a stovetop and/or oven.</li> <li>→ Bathroom that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, toilet, and a shower and/or bathtub.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-site parking is not required; however, if the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, please contact the California Coastal Commission regarding parking requirements.</li> <li>When a surface parking area is used to construct new detached ADUs, the eliminated parking is not required to be replaced. However, please contact the Rent Control Department regarding possible rent adjustments if the eliminated parking was an amenity for a rent-controlled unit.</li> </ul>
Owner Occupancy, Lease Terms, and Separate Sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Owner occupancy not required.</li> <li>Short-term rentals (30 days or less) are not permitted.</li> <li>Not permitted to be sold separately from the MUD.</li> </ul>
Exemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No development or design standard shall preclude an ADU from achieving a size of 800 square feet of floor area with side and rear setbacks of at least 4 feet and a height of no more than 16 feet.</li> </ul>

*For questions regarding these standards, please submit through the City's [311 System](#).*

# ADU Regulation Guide

## Conversion of Existing Legal Detached Accessory Structure to an Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with an Existing or Proposed Single-Unit Dwelling

(as of 11/1/21)

Floor area of an existing legal detached accessory structure in conjunction with an existing or proposed Single-Unit Dwelling (SUD) may be converted wholly or partially to an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), and shall be subject to all standards set forth in SMMC Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit, as summarized below. For the purposes of this category of ADU, a legal detached accessory structure includes, but is not limited to, garages, carports, storage sheds, greenhouse and garden structures, workshops, and pool houses.

Standard	Requirement
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All ADUs shall be approved ministerially.</li> <li>No design review is required.</li> <li>California Coastal Commission - If the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, Coastal Commission approval is required prior to building permit approval.</li> </ul>
Parcel Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No minimum parcel size.</li> </ul>
Maximum Number of ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One detached ADU is permitted on a parcel that does not already have an existing attached ADU. However, a Junior ADU is permitted in addition to a detached ADU.</li> </ul>
Permitted Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be established by converting floor area within a <u>legal</u> existing accessory structure or by reconstructing the ADU in the same location and to the same dimensions as the original structure.</li> <li>May expand the existing accessory structure footprint only if the addition or enlargement is made to conform to all current standards outlined within this guide and is a minimum of 6 feet from the existing SUD, as measured between exterior walls.</li> <li>If the existing accessory structure is located in the front setback, the existing footprint may only expand up to 150 square feet into the front setback to accommodate ingress and egress. On a through parcel, the front setback is determined by the street primarily used as frontage by the majority of neighboring parcels.</li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The full or partial conversion of an existing legal accessory structure to an ADU is not subject to the maximum size limitations referenced below. However, if the new established ADU exceeds the maximum size limits, only an expansion of no more than 150 square feet is permitted beyond the existing footprint.</li> <li>● <b>Minimum Size</b> – 220 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>● <b>Maximum Size:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Studio/1-bedroom – 850 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>→ 2 or more bedrooms:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parcels less than 10,000 square feet – 1,000 square feet of floor area;</li> <li>▪ Parcels 10,000 square feet or greater – 1,200 square feet of floor area.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Floor Area is determined pursuant to <a href="#">SMMC Section 9.04.080, Determining Floor Area</a>.</li> </ul>
Parcel Coverage/ Floor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exempt from parcel coverage and floor area calculations.</li> <li>● Areas below a second-story ADU cantilever will not be calculated towards parcel coverage or floor area.</li> </ul>
Setback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Front</b> – Not permitted within the required front setback as set forth per the subject zone district; however, when converting floor area within an existing legal accessory structure located in the front setback, an ADU may expand the footprint up to 150 square feet only to accommodate ingress and egress within the required front setback.</li> <li>● <b>Side &amp; Rear</b> – A nonconforming side and/or rear setback may be retained; however, the following shall apply:       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Any new addition or enlargement must provide a side and/or rear setback of 4 feet, unless:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If the SUD is permitted to have a side and/or rear setback of less than 4 feet, the new expansion may have an equivalent side and/or rear setback.</li> <li>○ An expansion for ingress and egress purposes only that is no more than 150 square feet may have a reduced side and/or rear setback less than 4 feet if permitted by fire and safety codes (Please contact Building &amp; Safety for more information).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2 stories</li> <li>● 24 feet</li> <li>● Building height shall be measured starting from one of the three elevation datum points set forth in <u>SMMC Section 9.04.050, Measuring Height</u>.</li> </ul>
Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The exterior design, including building forms, materials, colors, exterior finishes, and landscaping, shall be compatible in size, location, and appearance with the SUD on the parcel.</li> <li>● Independent exterior access is required.</li> <li>● No interior access between other detached accessory structures is permitted.</li> </ul>
Upper-Story Outdoor Space <i>(e.g., first-story roof decks, landings, upper-level walkways, and balconies)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Maximum aggregate sizes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ R1 District – 35 square feet</li> <li>→ All other districts – 60 square feet per ADU</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Locational Requirements:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Shall not be located on the side elevation closest to a side parcel line, unless that side parcel line is adjacent to a public right-of-way or alley;</li> <li>→ Shall not be located on the rear elevation unless the ADU is located outside the rear setback area required for the SUD;</li> <li>→ When located on a permitted elevation, upper-story outdoor spaces shall be set back from the side parcel line the same distance as the minimum side setback requirement for the SUD on the parcel and shall be a minimum 5' from the rear parcel line;</li> <li>→ Roof decks above the second story are prohibited.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Living Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The following independent facilities must be provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Kitchen that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, refrigerator, and a stovetop and/or oven;</li> <li>→ Bathroom that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, toilet, and a shower and/or bathtub.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● On-site parking is not required; however, if the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, please contact the California Coastal Commission regarding parking requirements.</li> <li>● When a garage, carport, or covered parking structure is demolished and rebuilt OR converted to an ADU, the eliminated parking is not required to be replaced.</li> </ul>



Standard	Requirement
Owner Occupancy, Lease Terms, and Separate Sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner occupancy not required.</li> <li>• Short-term rentals (30 days or less) are not permitted.</li> <li>• Not permitted to be sold separately from the SUD.</li> </ul>
Exemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No development or design standard shall preclude an ADU from achieving a size of 800 square feet of floor area with side and rear setbacks of at least 4 feet and a height of no more than 16 feet.</li> </ul>

*For questions regarding these standards, please submit through the City's 311 System.*

# ADU Regulation Guide

## Conversion of Existing Floor Area to an Attached Accessory Dwelling Unit in Conjunction with an Existing Single-Unit Dwelling

(as of 11/1/21)

An attached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) may be established by converting floor area of an existing Single-Unit Dwelling (SUD), and shall be subject to all standards set forth in SMMC Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit, as summarized below. For the purposes of this category of ADU, any existing floor area of a SUD, including an attached garage, may be used for the establishment of the subject ADU.

Standard	Requirement
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All ADUs shall be approved ministerially.</li> <li>No design review is required.</li> <li>California Coastal Commission - If the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, Coastal Commission approval is required prior to building permit approval.</li> </ul>
Parcel Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No minimum parcel size.</li> </ul>
Maximum Number of ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One attached ADU is permitted on a parcel that does not have an existing or proposed detached ADU <i>or</i> Junior ADU</li> </ul>
Permitted Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be located anywhere on the parcel and may retain any existing nonconforming setbacks.</li> <li>When an expansion of the existing SUD footprint is proposed in conjunction with the conversion of existing floor area, the following limitations shall apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ When located in the front setback, the existing footprint may only expand up to 150 square feet into the setback to accommodate ingress and egress. On a through parcel, the front setback is determined by the street primarily used as frontage by the majority of neighboring parcels.</li> <li>→ When not located within the front setback, the ADU may expand the footprint of the existing SUD beyond 150 square feet up to the total size permitted as long as the addition or enlargement is made to conform to all current standards and is a minimum of 6 feet from any existing or proposed accessory building, as measured between exterior walls.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Minimum Size</b> – 220 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>● <b>Maximum Size</b> – 50% of the floor area of the SUD, except at least 800 square feet is guaranteed.</li> <li>● Floor Area is determined pursuant to <u>SMMC Section 9.04.080, Determining Floor Area.</u></li> </ul>
Parcel Coverage/ Floor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exempt from parcel coverage and floor area calculations.</li> <li>● Areas below a second-story ADU cantilever will not be calculated towards parcel coverage or floor area.</li> </ul>
Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Front:</b> Not permitted within the required front setback as set forth per the subject zone district; however, when converting existing floor area located in the front setback, an ADU may expand the footprint up to 150 square feet only to accommodate ingress and egress within the required setback.</li> <li>● <b>Side &amp; Rear:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Any existing nonconforming side and/or rear setback may be retained; however, the following shall apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Any new addition or enlargement must provide a side and/or rear setback of 4 feet unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If the SUD is permitted to have a side and/or rear setback of less than 4 feet, the expansion may have an equivalent setback; or</li> <li>▪ A reduced side and/or rear setback for the expansion is permitted by fire and safety codes (Please contact Building &amp; Safety for more information).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shall comply with the height limitations for the SUD per the subject zone district.</li> </ul>
Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The exterior design, including building forms, materials, colors, exterior finishes, and landscaping, shall be compatible in size, location, and appearance with the SUD on the parcel.</li> <li>● Independent exterior access is required.</li> <li>● No interior access between the ADU and existing SUD is permitted.</li> </ul>
Upper-Story Stepbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Within the R1 District, an ADU located entirely or partially on the second story of a proposed SUD shall comply with all applicable stepback requirements set forth in <u>SMMC Section 9.07.030, Development Standards.</u></li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Upper-Story Outdoor Space <i>(e.g., first-story roof decks, landings, upper-level walkways, and balconies)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shall conform to all standards set forth for the SUD per the subject zone district.</li> </ul>

*For questions regarding these standards, please submit through the City's [311 System](#).*

# ADU Regulation Guide

## Conversion of Existing Floor Area to an ADU in Conjunction with an Existing Multiple- Unit/Mixed-Use Development

(as of 11/1/21)

Portions of an **existing** multiple-unit/mixed-use development (MUD) not used as livable space may be converted to an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), and shall be subject to all standards set forth in SMMC Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit, as summarized below. This category of ADU may be established in addition to two newly constructed detached ADUs (see separate guide).

Standard	Requirement
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All ADUs shall be approved ministerially.</li> <li>No design review is required.</li> <li>California Coastal Commission - If the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, Coastal Commission approval is required prior to building permit approval.</li> </ul>
Parcel Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No minimum parcel size is required.</li> </ul>
Maximum Number of ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least one ADU, or up to 25% of the existing on-site total primary unit count, whichever is greater, may be established by converting floor area within an existing MUD.</li> <li>Fractions of one-half (0.5) or greater shall be rounded up to the nearest whole number, and fractions of less than one-half (0.5) shall be rounded down to the nearest whole number.</li> </ul>
Permitted Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permitted to be established within portions of existing MUDs that are not used as livable space and are enclosed on at least three sides, such as storage rooms, boiler rooms, passageways, attics, basements, or garages, if each converted ADU complies with State building standards for dwellings. However, the following areas are not permitted to be converted to ADU floor area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Essential building operational spaces related to public health and safety, such as loading zones and trash rooms; and</li> <li>→ Areas of a building not permitted for residential use pursuant to the subject zone district, such as portions of the ground floor required for commercial uses.</li> </ul> </li> <li>No additions to or enlargements of the existing MUD footprint shall be permitted.</li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Minimum Size</b> – 220 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>● <b>Maximum Size:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Studio/1-bedroom – 850 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>→ 2 or more bedrooms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parcels less than 10,000 square feet – 1,000 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>▪ Parcels 10,000 square feet or greater – 1,200 square feet of floor area.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● <i>Floor Area is determined pursuant to <u>SMMC Section 9.04.080, Determining Floor Area.</u></i></li> </ul>
Parcel Coverage/ Floor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exempt from parcel coverage and floor area calculations.</li> <li>● Areas below a second-story ADU cantilever will not be calculated towards parcel coverage or floor area.</li> </ul>
Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No expansion to the existing footprint is permitted. Existing setbacks may remain.</li> </ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No expansion to the existing building envelope is permitted. Existing height and story count may remain.</li> </ul>
Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The exterior design, including building forms, materials, colors, exterior finishes, and landscaping, shall be compatible in size, location, and appearance with the MUD on the parcel.</li> <li>● Independent exterior access is required.</li> <li>● No interior access between a primary unit or another ADU is permitted.</li> </ul>
Upper-Story Outdoor Space <i>(e.g., first-story roof decks, landings, upper-level walkways, and balconies)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No new upper-story outdoor spaces are permitted, unless required for ingress and egress purposes only.</li> </ul>
Living Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The following independent facilities must be provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Kitchen that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, refrigerator, and a stovetop and/or oven.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Bathroom that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, toilet, and a shower and/or bathtub.</li> </ul>



Standard	Requirement
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-site parking is not required; however, if the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, please contact the California Coastal Commission regarding parking requirements.</li> <li>When existing garage space is converted to an ADU, the eliminated parking is not required to be replaced. However, please contact the Rent Control Department regarding possible rent adjustments if the eliminated parking was an amenity for a rent-controlled unit.</li> </ul>
Owner Occupancy, Lease Terms, and Separate Sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Owner occupancy not required.</li> <li>Short-term rentals (30 days or less) are not permitted.</li> <li>Not permitted to be sold separately from the MUD.</li> </ul>
Exemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No development or design standard shall preclude an ADU from achieving a size of 800 square feet of floor area with side and rear setbacks of at least 4 feet and a height of no more than 16 feet.</li> </ul>

*For questions regarding these standards, please submit through the City's [311 System](#).*



Community Development Dept.  
City Planning Division

# ADU Regulation Guide

## Junior Accessory Dwelling Units

(as of 11/1/21)

A Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU) may be constructed within the footprint of a proposed Single-Unit Dwelling (SUD) or established by converting floor area within an existing SUD and shall be subject to all standards set forth in SMMC Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit, as summarized below. JADUs are only permitted when in conjunction with a SUD, regardless of zone district.

Standard	Requirement
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All JADUs shall be approved ministerially.</li> <li>No design review is required.</li> <li>Deed Restriction – Prior to issuance of a building permit for a JADU, a deed restriction must be recorded against the title of the property in the County Recorder’s Office and filed with the Community Development Director. The deed restriction shall run with the land and bind all future owners.</li> <li>California Coastal Commission - If the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, Coastal Commission approval is required prior to building permit approval.</li> </ul>
Parcel Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No minimum parcel size is required.</li> </ul>
Maximum Number of JADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One JADU is permitted on a parcel that does not have an existing or proposed <b>attached</b> ADU. However, a parcel is permitted to have both a JADU and one <b>detached</b> ADU.</li> </ul>
Permitted Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required to be incorporated within the footprint of a proposed or existing SUD and may be located anywhere on a parcel as long as setback requirements are met.</li> <li>When converting floor area of an existing SUD, a JADU may only expand the footprint of the SUD up to 150 square feet to accommodate ingress and egress. No expansion shall result in a JADU that exceeds 500 square feet.</li> </ul>
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum Size – 220 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>Maximum Size – 500 square feet of floor area.</li> <li>Floor Area is determined pursuant to <u>SMMC Section 9.04.080, Determining Floor Area</u>.</li> </ul>
Parcel Coverage/ Floor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exempt from parcel coverage and floor area calculations.</li> <li>Areas below a second-story JADU cantilever will not be calculated towards parcel coverage or floor area.</li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Front:</b> Not permitted within the required front setback as set forth per the subject zone district; however, when converting existing floor area located in the front setback, a JADU may expand the footprint up to 150 square feet only to accommodate ingress and egress within the required setback.</li> <li>● <b>Side &amp; Rear:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ <b>Established within the Footprint of a Proposed SUD:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A side and rear setback of 4 feet is required; however, a reduced side and/or rear setback is permitted in the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If the SUD is permitted to have a side and/or rear setback of less than 4 feet, the JADU may have an equivalent side and/or rear setback.</li> <li>▪ A reduced side and/or rear setback may be granted if permitted by fire and safety codes (Please contact Building &amp; Safety for more information).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>→ <b>Established by Converting Floor Area within an Existing SUD:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ An existing nonconforming side and/or rear setback may be retained; however, the permitted expansion up to 150 square feet shall provide a side and/or rear setback of 4 feet unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If the SUD is permitted to have a side and/or rear setback of less than 4 feet, the expansion may have an equivalent setback; or</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● A reduced side and/or rear setback for the expansion is permitted by fire and safety codes (Please contact Building &amp; Safety for more information).</li> </ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shall comply with the height limitations for the SUD per the subject zone district.</li> </ul>
Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The exterior design, including building forms, materials, colors, exterior finishes, and landscaping, shall be compatible in size, location, and appearance with the SUD on the parcel.</li> <li>● Independent exterior access is required.</li> <li>● Interior access may be provided between a JADU and SUD.</li> </ul>
Upper-Story Stepbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Within the R1 District, a JADU located entirely or partially on the second story of a proposed SUD shall comply with all applicable stepback requirements set forth in <u>SMMC Section 9.07.030, Development Standards</u>.</li> </ul>

Standard	Requirement
Upper-Story Outdoor Space <i>(e.g., first-story roof decks, landings, upper-level walkways, and balconies)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shall conform to all standards set forth for the SUD per the subject zone district.</li> </ul>
Living Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shall contain an efficiency kitchen that includes the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Cooking facility with appliances;</li> <li>→ Food preparation counter and storage cabinets that are of reasonable size in relation to the size of the JADU.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• May have its own bathroom or share a bathroom with the SUD.</li> </ul>
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-site parking is not required; however, <i>if</i> the subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, please contact the California Coastal Commission regarding parking requirements.</li> <li>• When an attached garage is converted to a JADU, the eliminated parking is not required to be replaced.</li> </ul>
Owner Occupancy, Lease Terms, and Separate Sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject to owner occupancy requirements.</li> <li>• Short-term rentals (30 days or less) are not permitted.</li> <li>• Not permitted to be sold separately from the SUD.</li> </ul>

*For questions regarding these standards, please submit through the City's [311 System](#).*



# ADU Type Design Options

This set of prototype design options for Santa Monica is intended to help homeowners get a basic understanding of ADUs and what plans may include based on past trends in the city, neighborhood and site considerations, regulatory conditions, and compatible ADU types.

These options are intended to give an overall concept of what is possible for building an ADU and give an understanding of the basic concepts around potential unit size, layout, placement on a lot, and access. They are not intended to be used as preapproved plans for individual projects for use by homeowners. There are certain limitations to these options as they are not based on particular properties which may introduce factors to individual homeowners' considerations as they start the initial research into building an ADU.

- A. 1-story studio 1-bath, 375 sq ft
- B. 1-story 1-bed 1-bath, 440 sq ft
- C. 1-story 1-bed 1-bath, 540 sq ft
- D. 1-story 2-bed 1-bath, 700 sq ft
- E. 2-story 3-bed 2.5 bath, 1,200 sq ft

375 sf  
1-story

440 sf  
1-story

540 sf  
1-story

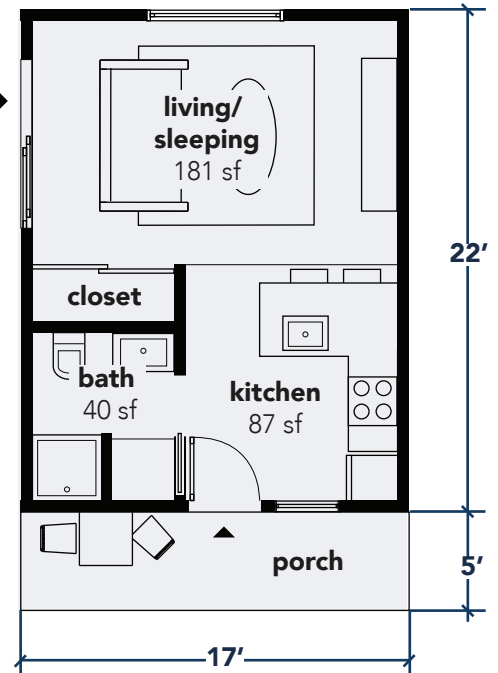
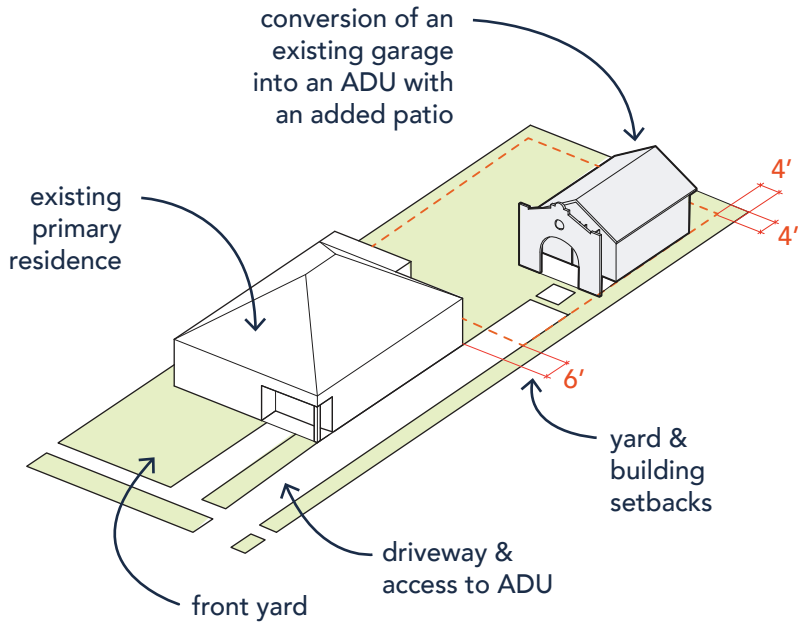
700 sf  
1-story

1,200 sf  
2-story

# Conceptual Unit Designs

## 1-story, studio 1-bath

### 375 sq ft



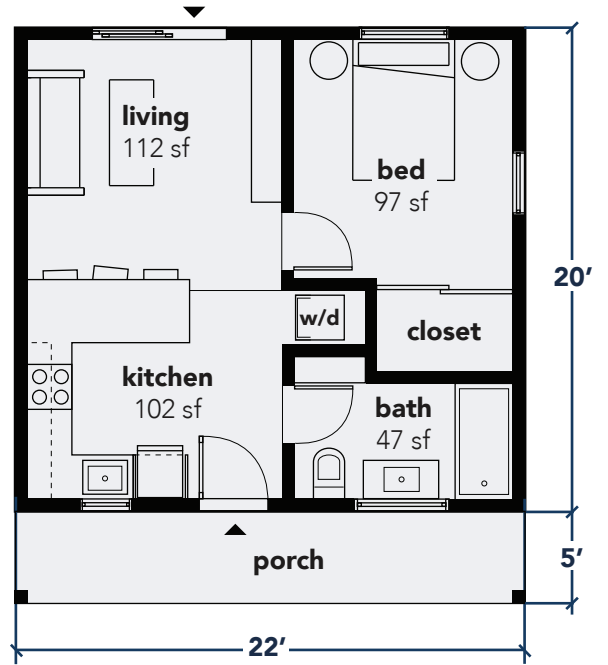
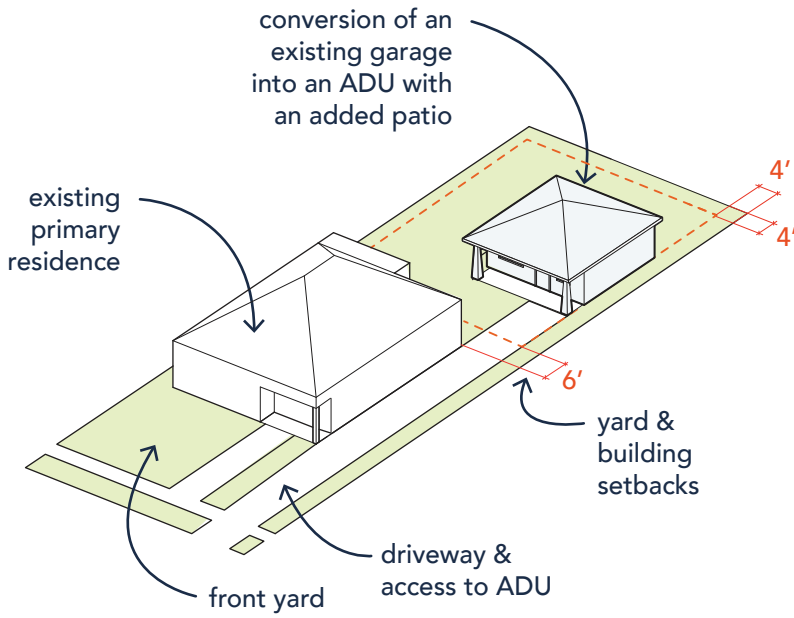
Sample Site Layout

Floor Plan





Conceptual Unit Designs  
**1-story, 1-bed 1-bath**  
**440 sq ft**



Sample Site Layout

Floor Plan

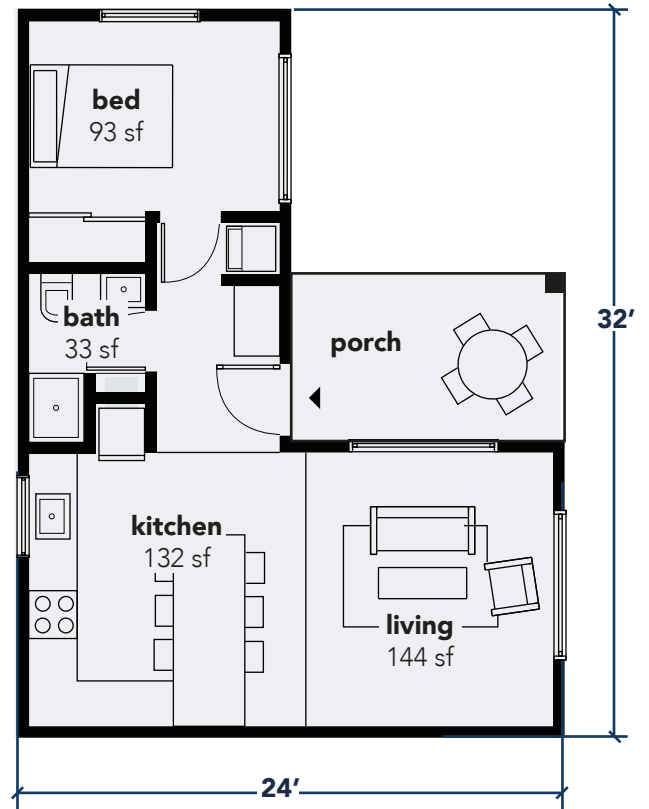
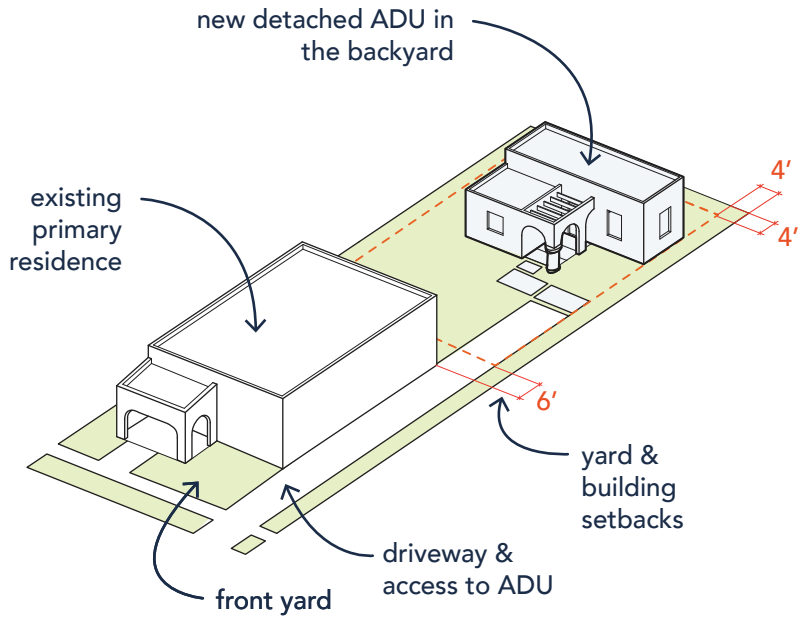


Unit Perspective - Detached ADU | Craftsman Style Exterior

# Conceptual Unit Designs

## 1-story, 1-bed 1-bath

### 540 sq ft



Sample Site Layout

Floor Plan

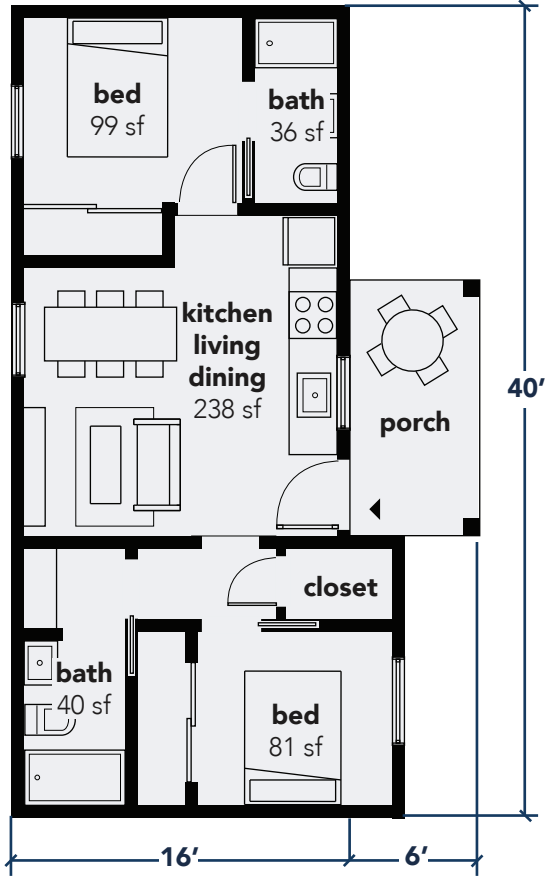
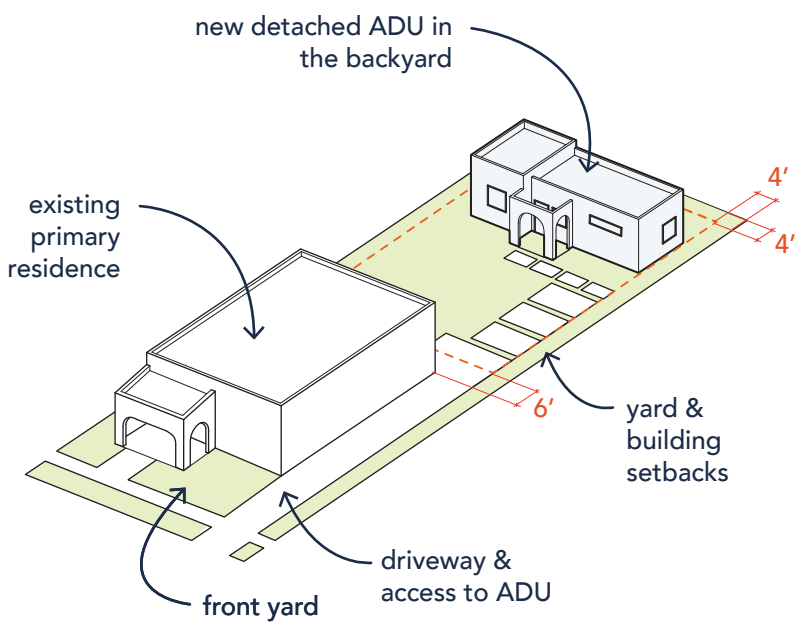


Perspective - Detached ADU | Spanish Style Exterior

# Conceptual Unit Designs

## 1-story, 2-bed 2-bath

### 700 sq ft



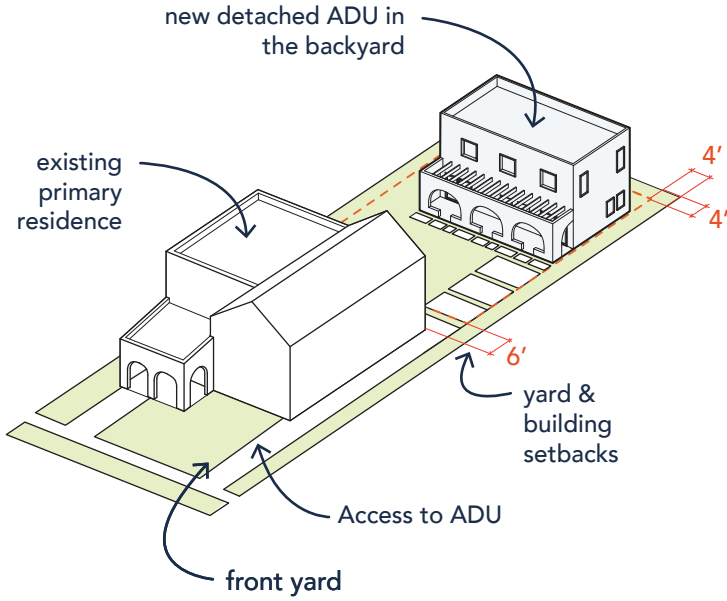
Sample Site Layout

Floor Plan



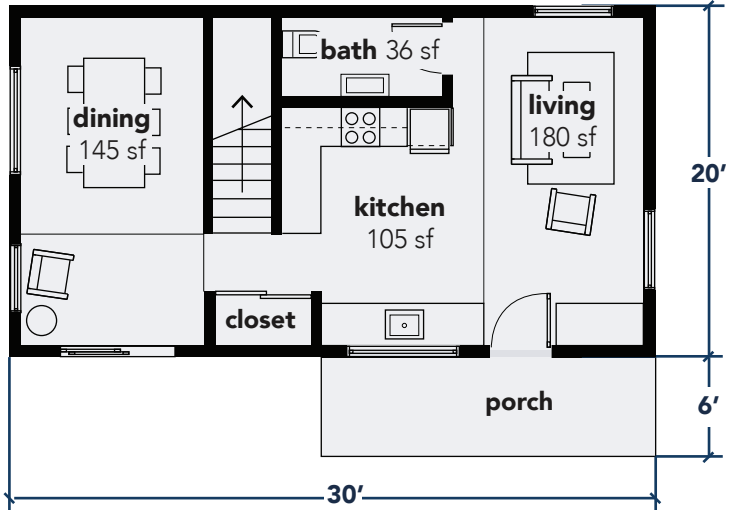
Perspective - Detached ADU | Spanish Style Exterior

# Conceptual Unit Designs 2-story, 2-bed 2.5-bath 1,200 sq ft

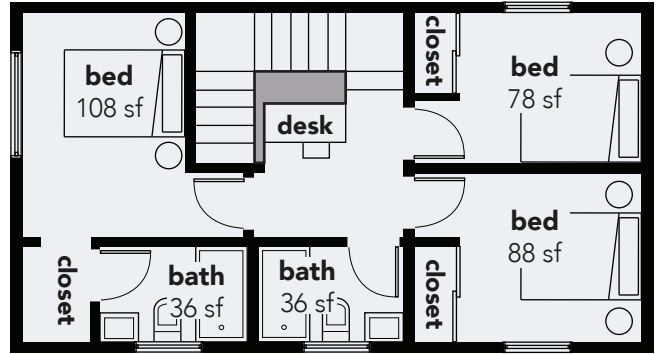


Sample Site Layout

First Floor



Second Floor



Floor Plan



Perspective - Detached ADU | Spanish Style Exterior

# Permitting an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)



*\*If in coastal zone, CCC approval is required before the City can approve the project.*

*\*\*Subsequent rounds of review, corrections, and re-submittals may be necessary until all reviewers approve ADU plans.*

*Note: All timeframes are estimates and will vary by individual project.*





City of Santa Monica  
**Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)  
 Permit Application Supplement**



This sheet is required to be submitted with applications for projects involving ADUs and Junior ADUs (JADU). Guidance on ADUs can be found in the City's [ADU Handbook](#), including a process diagram and checklist, regulations, FAQs, and other helpful information. Properties [located in the Coastal Zone](#) require California Coastal Commission (CCC) approval for ADUs and the City strongly recommends contacting CCC South Coast District early in the process ([SouthCoast@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:SouthCoast@coastal.ca.gov), 562.590.5071).

**Property Information**

Project Address \_\_\_\_\_ Assessor's Parcel Number \_\_\_\_\_

**ADU Square Footage & Type**

Fill in square footage and select all relevant ADU type info by unit (use Other to describe specific conditions if needed):

	Existing	Remodeled	New	Demolished	Total
Unit # _____	Basement				
	1st Floor				
	2nd Floor				
	3rd Floor/ other				
	Conversion	New construction	ADU attached	ADU detached	JADU
	Other _____				

	Existing	Remodeled	New	Demolished	Total
Unit # _____	Basement				
	1st Floor				
	2nd Floor				
	3rd Floor/ other				
	Conversion	New construction	ADU attached	ADU detached	JADU
	Other _____				

	Existing	Remodeled	New	Demolished	Total
Unit # _____	Basement				
	1st Floor				
	2nd Floor				
	3rd Floor/ other				
	Conversion	New construction	ADU attached	ADU detached	JADU
	Other _____				

	Existing	Remodeled	New	Demolished	Total
Unit # _____	Basement				
	1st Floor				
	2nd Floor				
	3rd Floor/ other				
	Conversion	New construction	ADU attached	ADU detached	JADU
	Other _____				





# Contractor Selection & Management Guide

Once your plans are permitted, the next step is to select a licensed general contractor (“GC”) to construct your ADU. First prepare a list of potential GCs based on referrals from friends/neighbors, your architect, and/or online referral services.

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Send all potential GCs on your list the full set of approved plans, along with any direction from you such as your vision for the project and any notes from your designer.

Determine a time/date for an on-site bid meeting for each interested GC. This is your chance to meet the GC, show them the site and any constraints/opportunities, describe in person your vision, and get a ‘feel’ for the GCs. It’s also a chance for the GC to ask questions. A professional GC will come prepared with questions based on a review of the plans prior to the bid meeting, and will take notes of the conversation during the bid meeting. Request all bids—which should include cost, timeline, and approach to construction—by a date/time certain.

Once you have collected the bids, review them with your architect or owner’s representative. Consider price, but also consider approach, timeline, and track record. Also review each GC’s references, insurance, and license status. Request to see prior work in person.

Once you have selected a contractor, the next step is to negotiate a contract. Make sure the contract includes a plan for utility connections and fixtures/furnishings, e.g., Are the utilities the

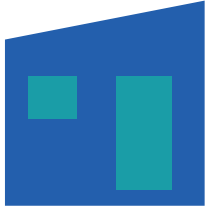
utilities separately run/metered, or run via the primary house? Who is selecting the fixtures/furnishings—the owner, architect, or GC?

Carefully review, with your architect or owners representative present, how the payments will work. For example, how much deposit is needed to begin? How and when will the GC submit draw requests—Monthly? Based on percentage complete? Based on milestones?

During construction, remember that your backyard is going to be a construction zone for 6-12 months. Construction is the riskiest part of the process and the goal is to actively manage that risk:

- Check the project daily
- Establish consistent communication with GC
- Find a balance between ‘oversight’ and letting the GC do their job
- Pay the GC promptly to keep the project moving

Make sure you have an architect or owner’s representative on your side during this process—to approve the drawings, obtain lien releases, and provide general advice along the way.



# Guide to Renting an ADU

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Once you have completed construction of your ADU you are ready to move a tenant in. If you are renting your ADU, the following resources can help prepare for you for your new role as a landlord.

As a landlord, you will need to understand Fair Housing Rights, which are the laws that relate to being a landlord, and the basics of property management. Attending training sessions are helpful ways to broaden your understanding of your responsibility of a landlord.

Before you advertise your unit and select a tenant you will need to develop a financial plan, research insurance options, set the rent, prepare a rental application and lease.

To help you understand the income, expenses and taxes associated with renting your ADU, contact an accountant or tax advisor. To set your rent, start by researching similar units in your area to see what they charge.

Consider hiring a property management company to help you find a tenant, collect rent, conduct maintenance, and manage tenants.

## Getting ready to rent

- [Landlord training](#)
- [Fair housing law training](#)
- [Homeowner Insurance FAQ](#)
- [Obtain an accountant referral](#)

## Selecting a tenant

- [Lease and rental agreement information](#)
- [Advertising the rental unit](#)

## Operating your rental

- [Your role in rental repair and maintenance](#)
- [Being a landlord in Santa Monica](#)
- [Why to hire a property manager](#)