

The Permit Process

An ADU requires a building permit. To apply for a permit, you will need full construction plans and the application fee. For a complete list of required application materials, including information on building plan requirements and forms, visit the Building Counter – 4th Floor, 701 Ocean Street. Building permit application requirements are also available from the Planning Department home page under the Building tab / Applicant information.

Fees

In addition to application and permit fees, capital improvement fees will be charged, based on the number of bedrooms. The capital improvement fees help pay for road improvements, parks and childcare facilities. Other fees will be charged by agencies such as schools, sanitation and the drainage district, also depending on the size of the unit. The Building Counter can estimate building permit fees. A fee estimator is available online at the Planning Department home page: see “Quick Links,” Fees / ADU fee estimate worksheet.

Declaration of Restrictions

Before the Building Permit is issued for your ADU, you will be required to record a Declaration of Restriction on the title to the property. The ADU may be occupied only under the conditions of the Declaration of Restrictions and in accordance with the County Code, including the requirement that the property owner must live in either the main unit or the ADU.

The Declaration of Restriction will also allow the County to recover attorney fees and costs needed to enforce the declaration as well as any rents collected during occupancy not authorized under your permit. The Declaration of Restriction is binding on all future owners of the property.

Questions?

More information about ADUs is available from the County of Santa Cruz Planning Department home page: see the large button entitled “Accessory Dwelling Units.” Here you will find additional brochures, financial assistance and the ADU ordinance itself.

You may also email the Planning Department at Planning.ZoningInfo@santacruzcounty.us or call the Zoning Information Line at (831) 454-2130.

The Building Counter is available at 831-454-2260, or plnbuildinginfo@santacruzcounty.us. *Please do not call if you have also sent an email.* The counters are closed on Fridays and Holidays. See also the brochure *Site and Structural Standards for ADUs*.

**County of Santa Cruz
Planning Department**
701 OCEAN STREET, 4TH FLOOR
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060

831-454-2130

Planning.ZoningInfo@santacruzcounty.us



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

BROCHURES



ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

ADUs are typically smaller than the primary home and allow for housing flexibility for those seeking rental income, housing for family members or households that are downsizing.

**SECT. 13.10.681
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CODE**

Basic Requirements

The accessory dwelling unit program allows property owners to construct an accessory dwelling unit if their property meets certain basic requirements, including:

1. The parcel must be owner-occupied as evidenced by a home owner's property tax exemption. On a vacant lot, the owner may build an ADU and primary dwelling either at the same time or sequentially*.
2. The parcel may have no more than one existing or proposed single family dwelling.
3. ADUs are allowed by building permit in the R-1, RA, RM, RR, A, TP or PR zone districts and in any General Plan designation of Residential (R). Where the General Plan is AG, ADUs are allowed by building permit unless subject to (4) below.
4. ADUs in the **CA zone district or on Ag Resource Soil** require discretionary review: administrative with public notice (Level IV) outside the Coastal Zone and a public hearing (Level V – ZA) inside the Coastal Zone, after review by the Ag Policy Advisory Commission (APAC).
5. Conversion ADUs can be created out of garages or part (or all) of an existing home, or by converting any legal accessory structure built before January 1, 2017.
6. Certain ADUs inside the Coastal Zone (outside the permit Exclusion Area) require public notice and are appealable to the Coastal Commission.

*For construction of ADU within proposed land divisions, owner-occupying requirements apply to the purchaser of a property with an ADU, but not to the developer.

Development Standards for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

- No minimum parcel size is required.
- The ADU may be attached to the main unit or detached from it.
- Within the USL, the ADU cannot be accessed by a separate driveway or right-of-way unless the site plan is approved by the Director of Public Works.

Maximum Gross Floor Area*

New Construction outside the USL**				
Parcel Size	< 5,000 sq.ft.	5,000- <10,000 sq. ft.	10,000 sq. ft. to < 1 acre	1 ac. or larger
Size of ADU	640 sq.ft.	800 sq. ft.	1,000 sq. ft.	1,200 sq. ft.

New Construction inside the USL**			
Parcel Size	< 5,000 sq. ft.	5,000. to <10,000 sq. ft.	10,000+ sq. ft.
Size of ADU	10% of Parcel Size	640 sq. ft.	800 sq. ft.

Conversions		
Parcel Size	< 5,000 sq. ft.	5,000+ sq. ft.
Size of ADU	Up to 50% of the existing habitable area of primary dwelling, not to exceed 640 sq. ft.	Same as New Construction ADUs in tables above

* On parcels 6,000sf or smaller, for New Construction or Conversion ADUs, an additional 2 percentage points are added to the maximum Lot Coverage and Floor Area Ratio (i.e., 52% FAR allowed).

Reference: County Code Sections 13.10.681(C)(2), (D)(2) and (F)6). See Floor Area Summary handout regarding what counts toward gross floor area (available on-line).

**The Urban Services Line is delineated on the County's [Internet GIS map](#) and also indicated under the Land Use tab.

- On parcels with an AG General Plan designation, the ADU may be no more than 100' from the primary dwelling.
- Only one ADU may be constructed per parcel. An ADU may be built on a parcel with a habitable accessory structure. An ADU is not allowed on parcels with agricultural caretaker's quarters, a dwelling group or duplex, though these uses may enable conversion to an ADU.
- The ADU must be architecturally compatible with the main unit in terms of design, color and materials. Doors, windows, balconies, etc. should be situated to preserve the privacy of your neighbors. Units inside the USL shall not exceed one story unless a Residential development Permit is approved by the Zoning Administrator.
- All development standards for the applicable zone district apply, with a few exceptions: Conversion ADUs may occupy any existing legal structure, regardless of conformance with zoning standards; ADUs built above garages are allowed side & rear setbacks of 5'.
- To file a building application for an ADU, a "Clearance to Apply for Building Permit" from Environmental Health Services is required if a septic system is used. Fire, Sanitation and Water Districts' approval requirements must be satisfied during the Building Permit process. Under new state guidelines, Fire Sprinklers can be required for the ADU only when they are present or required for the main dwelling on site.