

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. In some locations, a discretionary permit may also be required.

Note that fire districts, water agencies, and sanitation agencies (Dept. of Public Works sanitation or Environmental Health Services) review building permits for compliance.

Applicants in the Soquel Creek Water District must receive a “Will Serve” letter for New Construction ADUs.

Fees

ADUs are subject to building permit application fees including administrative fees, permit review fees, and “impact fees” (fees for the impact of the project on community services such as roadways and parks). Fees for new utility connections may be charged for New Construction ADUs.

A fee estimator is available online: <http://www.sccoplanning.com/ADU/Estimateyourfees/FeeEstimator.aspx>



ADUs in Illegal Structures

If there is a structure on your property that was built without permits and it is not possible to bring that structure up to current building code standards without demolishing and rebuilding the structure, you may be eligible for the County’s Safe Structures Program. Under this program, a building inspector performs a health and safety inspection and, pending any required health and safety upgrades, a certificate is granted allowing the structure to be used as housing. ADUs are allowed in structures that have completed the Safe Structures program.

Code Enforcement Amnesty

Between January 1, 2020 and January 1, 2030, ADUs constructed before January 28, 2020 with code violations (including ADUs in illegal structures) may request to defer code enforcement for up to five years, subject to a County determination that there is not an imminent risk to health and safety.

Questions?

More information about ADUs is available at: <http://www.sccoplanning.com/ADU.aspx>

You may call, email, or visit the Planning counter during open counter hours (M-Th, 8:30-11:30 am, 1:00-3:30 pm). The counter is closed on Fridays and Holidays.

County of Santa Cruz Planning Dept.

701 OCEAN STREET, 4TH FLOOR
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060

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(831) 454-2130



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

BROCHURES

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS: THE BASICS



ADUs are independent living units that are associated with a primary dwelling unit 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

See also the brochure:
ADU Development Standards

What is an ADU?

An ADU is an independent residential dwelling unit located on a lot with a primary dwelling unit. ADUs must include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation.

ADUs: Basic Requirements

1. ADUs are allowed on any parcel with a zone district or General Plan designation that allows residential or mixed uses. No minimum lot size is required.
1. A primary dwelling must exist or be planned on the parcel (on a vacant lot, the owner may build an ADU and primary dwelling at the same time or sequentially).
2. ADUs can be attached to the primary dwelling or detached; they can be new construction or converted from existing space.
3. ADUs are subject to special development standards, depending on whether they are “New Construction” or “Conversion” ADUs (please see brochure: *ADU Development Standards*).
4. Different ADU standards and approval processes may apply to parcels in the following locations:
 - Coastal Zone
 - Agricultural, timber and park land
 - Pleasure Point Combining Zone
 - Seascape Beach Estates Combining Zone
 - Parcels with environmental hazards or protected resources

800-Square Foot Allowance

On properties where existing buildings meet or exceed maximum allowed floor area ratio (FAR) or lot coverage limits, property owners are still entitled to build a New Construction ADU up to 800 square feet with a height of 16 feet and meeting other ADU development standards. This 800-square foot allowance is only for ADUs; it does not provide for construction of other types of structures on a property.

Junior ADUs

Property owners with single-family dwellings may also construct Junior ADUs (JADUs). JADUs may not exceed 500 sf in floor area and are subject to the following criteria:

- Converted from within the walls of the single-family dwelling
- Can include additions of up to 150 square feet
- Must have an efficiency kitchen
- Must have access to a full bathroom (independent or shared with the primary dwelling)

Efficiency Kitchen Alternative

The County allows one full kitchen and one efficiency kitchen in single-family or multifamily dwelling units. The efficiency kitchen can be within a JADU but this is not required. Some applicants may find that a non-ADU “efficiency kitchen” alternative is preferable to constructing an official ADU or JADU. For a comparison, please see brochure: *ADU Development Standards*.

Number of ADUs Allowed

Parcels with single-family dwellings:

1 ADU + 1 JADU per dwelling.

Parcels with multifamily dwellings:

2 detached ADUs per lot + 25% of units may have ADUs converted from non-living space such as garages and storage areas.

Parcels where the number of existing dwellings exceeds what is allowed:

Assuming that the units were constructed legally, the existing dwellings are considered “legal nonconforming.” The number and type of ADUs allowed depends on the zone district. Please consult with Planning Department staff.

ADUs and Short-Term Rentals

Short-term rentals (rentals of less than 30 days) are prohibited in ADUs. Also, any property with an ADU is not eligible for participation in the County’s Vacation Rental or Hosted Rental program.

ADUs and Owner Residency

Parcels with JADUs must be owner occupied. Parcels with ADUs that are permitted between January 1, 2020 and January 2, 2025 do NOT require owner occupancy unless there is also a JADU on site. ADUs permitted prior to January 1, 2020 require owner occupancy.

ADUs and Solar Panels

Detached, new construction ADUs must meet state law requirements for solar PV.