



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ BROCHURES

PLANNING DEPARTMENT • 701 OCEAN STREET, 4TH FLOOR • SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
ZONING INFORMATION: planning.zoninginfo@santacruzcounty.us • (831) 454-2130

ACCESSORY STRUCTURES, HABITABLE & NONHABITABLE INCLUDING CARGO CONTAINERS

(Excluding Accessory Dwelling Units)

SECTS. 13.10.611, 13.10.612
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CODE

Accessory Structures on Vacant Parcels

Accessory structures are not allowed on vacant parcels in the absence of a primary dwelling unit and must be subordinate to the primary structure or main use of the land.

Sheds in the Rear Yard

Sheds up to 120 square feet in area and no more than 10 feet in height qualify for special setbacks. If the shed is located entirely *within* the rear yard setback, the minimum side and rear yard setbacks are three feet.

For example, on a site with a minimum 15' rear setback, if no part of the small shed is *more* than 15 feet from the rear property line, then 3' setbacks to the side and rear property lines are allowed. See the brochure, *Storage Buildings and Sheds on Residentially Zoned Parcels*.

Prefabricated Carports

Structures built of light frame materials and covered with cloth or flexible plastic, with no electrical or plumbing, do not require a building permit as long as they are not more than 12' high and 300 sq.ft. in area. They must meet normal setbacks except that, if open on at least two sides, they may be located a minimum of 5' from side property lines in residential districts.



ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

Construction Standards, Allowed Features, Permit Requirements (Not including Accessory Dwelling Units)

	Heated/Habitable Accessory Structure Note: not applicable to ADUs.	Unheated/Nonhabitable Accessory Structure E.g.: unheated garages or storage buildings. Attached garages are not considered accessory structures.
Maximum Structure Size	If within Urban Services Line or Rural Services Line: 640 square feet maximum size (5). If outside USL / RSL: 1,000 square feet maximum size (5). (The Urban and Rural Services Lines are on the County GIS map under Land Use and indicated in the Parcel table under Land Use.)	If within Urban Services Line or Rural Services Line: 640 square feet maximum size (5). If outside Urban Services Line: 1,000 square feet maximum size (4). (The USL and RSL are on the County GIS map and GIS table under Land Use and indicated in the Parcel table under Land Use.)
Height Limits	Within USL / RSL: 13' or compliance with the zone district standards, whichever lower (5)v Outside USL: 28 feet or district standards, whichever lower, and three stories (5)v..	Within USL: 13' (5)v. Exception for detached garages: 16' if attached to an ADU and not in Seascape Beach Estates. Definition of "attached" is provided by 13.10.681 and 13.10.700-A. Outside USL: 28 feet and three stories (5)v
Allowed Features	Allowed: Toilet, lavatory sink, bathtub/shower, washer/dryer, utility sink, furnace and water heater allowed. Heating, insulation and sheetrock are required features in a habitable accessory structure. Built-in cooling is recommended but not required.	Allowed: Toilet, lavatory sink, water heater, washer/dryer, utility sink and outdoor non-enclosed shower are allowed.* Pool cabanas may have enclosed showers but no bathtubs. Sheetrock and insulation OK.
Amenities Not Allowed	Not Allowed: Kitchens and food preparation facilities.	Not Allowed: Kitchens and food preparation facilities, indoor showers / tubs and built-in heating or cooling are not allowed. Exception: indoor showers are allowed in pool cabanas.
Minimum Parcel Size	No minimum parcel size; however, site development regulations (setbacks, lot coverage, floor area ratio, and septic regulations) must be met. Not allowed on a vacant parcel.	No minimum parcel size, however, site development requirements (setbacks, lot coverage, floor area ratio, minimum separation) must be met. Not allowed on a vacant parcel.
Location, Slope, and Driveway Requirements	Shall be located no more than 100 feet from main house (4). Shall not be located on slopes over 30% (4). Shall use same driveway as site dwelling unless Director of DPW approves separate driveway. May be either detached or attached to a nonhabitable accessory structure.	No location or driveway requirements, other than meeting setbacks and separation. Location on slopes over 30% discouraged unless there is no feasible alternative. May be attached or detached to a dwelling or habitable accessory structure. If attached to another nonhabitable structure, considered one structure whether or not interior access.
Parking	One HAS is "free," requiring no additional parking. If two built, the 2 nd is counted as a new bedroom for fees and parking. Existing parking may not be removed unless the number of remaining spaces meets standard requirement for the dwelling.	Additional parking not required, but existing parking may not be removed unless the number of remaining spaces meets standard requirement for the dwelling.
Renting	Renting is allowed only if access to kitchen in main dwelling is provided. A habitable accessory structure may not be rented as an independent dwelling unit.	A nonhabitable accessory structure may not be rented out.
Use as a bedroom?	Yes, if all building code requirements are met.	No. A nonhabitable accessory structure shall not be used as a bedroom.
Maximum Number Allowed	One per parcel with just a building permit. If two proposed, (5). If three proposed, (6). Number of structures with toilets/sinks/showers/tubs is limited by parcel size.*	Not limited if structures meet site standards for setbacks, lot coverage and separation. Number of structures with toilets/sinks/showers/tubs is limited by parcel size.*
Electricity	Max 100 amp/220-volt single phase electrical service.(4) Shall not have a separate meter (4).	100 amp/220-volt maximum electrical service allowed (4). Shall not have a separate meter (4).

(4) If exceeded, an administrative permit with public notice (Level 4) is required. (5) If exceeded, a use permit and noticed public hearing (Level 5) are required. (5)v if exceeded, a Level 5 variance permit is required. (6) If exceeded, a Level 6 use approval is required – public hearing before the Planning Commission.

*On parcels less than 10 acres, a maximum of one habitable or nonhabitable accessory structure with a toilet, lavatory sink, shower or bathtub. On parcels more than 10 acres, the maximum is two structures with these fixtures.

Garages – Special Standards

Setback reductions allowed with size and height limitations*

- A. On residentially zoned parcels less than 10,000 square feet, garages (attached or detached, but excluding carports) are allowed a 50% reduction to minimum side and rear setbacks, provided that:
- There shall be no windows, doors or other openings on garage walls that are less than five feet from the side or rear property lines.
 - The garage shall have a minimum front setback of 40 feet, or for parcels less than 80 feet deep, 50 percent of the parcel's depth.
 - The garage depth is not more than 30 feet (front to back).
- B. Also on residential parcels less than 10,000 sq.ft., a garage may be located to zero feet from the rear or interior side property line if an administrative use permit (Level 4 with public notice) is granted with findings that the garage will be compatible with the neighborhood and will not unreasonably infringe on the light, air or privacy of adjacent residences.
- C. On residentially zoned parcels 10,000 square feet or larger in size, garages (attached or detached) are allowed a 50% reduction to side and rear setbacks, subject to subsections a-c above and provided that a Minor Exception permit is obtained per §13.10.235.
- D. Within urban or village areas, USL/RSL 13' max height (16' if attached to an ADU). Outside the USL/RSL, a garage with reduced setbacks shall not exceed 17' unless a Level 4 use permit is granted with findings that the garage will not harm neighborhood properties or affect light, air or privacy.
- E. The minimum setback to any garage from an alley, including the garage front, is 3'. An "alley" does not serve as primary access to any dwelling unit.

Cargo and shipping containers as accessory structures

Not allowed on residential parcels within the USL/RSL. Outside these areas, an administrative use permit is required to use a cargo container as an accessory structure. The container must be screened and painted in a color that is earth-toned, complementary to existing buildings or otherwise aesthetically appropriate. If habitable, the design, color and materials need to complement existing structures. Cargo containers shall also meet the standards of 13.10.611, summarized in this brochure. All cargo containers require a building permit and must address accidental locking hazards. If habitable, they must meet State building codes and be certified as clean with no hazardous materials.