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Sunnyvale

Community Development
Department
Planning Division
408-730-7440

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SUNNYVALE HOMEOWNERS: INTERESTED IN BUILDING AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT?

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a secondary residential dwelling unit (also known as a granny flat, in-law unit, or second unit). The following information applies only to ADUs that are located on the same property as a single-family dwelling or one Dual Urban Opportunity (DUO) unit. An ADU must include permanent sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation facilities. An ADU can be either detached or attached to the primary dwelling unit.

Why Build an ADU?

- To provide an affordable housing option for friends, colleagues, or anyone seeking rental housing.
- For aging relatives who need to be near family but want to maintain independence and privacy.
- For young adults who want to live near where they grew up but can't afford local housing prices.
- To supplement income.

Next Steps:

- Talk to your family members, tax advisor, and/or legal counsel about possibly making this change to your property.
- For any additional questions on zoning, permits and fees, contact Planning staff at planning@sunnyvale.ca.gov, (408) 730-7440, or by visiting the One-Stop Permit Center.
- For any additional questions on building and utility requirements, permits and fees, contact Building Staff at (408) 730-7444.

TWO TYPES OF ADUS:

- Standard Accessory Dwelling Units (SADU);
- Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADU)

ADU TO CONSIDER:

- Attached vs. Detached vs. Conversion ADUs
- SADU vs. JADU
- Streamlined vs. Non-streamlined processing
- Site-built vs. "Pre-fab" or manufactured ADUs

ARE YOU READY TO BECOME A LANDLORD?

Learn how to become a landlord from Project Sentinel:

Call (408) 946-6582

or see Housing.org

ADU RESOURCES:

[State of California ADU Website](http://StateofCaliforniaADUWebsite)

INTERIOR OR ATTACHED ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS



Description: Junior ADUs (JADUs) and Standard ADUs (SADUs) that are *within the interior or attached* to an *existing or proposed single-family dwelling*, such as conversion of living space, basement, attic, or an attached garage; addition of floor space for the ADU; or an ADU within a proposed new single-family home.

Requirements for Interior or Attached ADUs with Single-Family Homes			
	STREAMLINED <i>(Interior space of existing/proposed SF home)</i>		NON-STREAMLINED SADUs <i>(home additions)</i>
	JADU	SADU	
APPROVAL*			
Planning Approval (MPP)	Not required	Not required	Yes
Building Permit	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>*Non-ADU construction must be approved separately</i>			
LOCATION			
Minimum lot size	No min. lot size		No min. lot size
Combined with JADU	-	No	No
Zoning	Any lot with an existing SF dwelling (including legal non-conforming use)		R0, R1, R1.5, R1.7/PD, R2, residential DSP
Included in Gross Floor Area	The first 800 sq. ft. of an ADU is exempt from gross floor area, any ADU sq. ft. beyond must be included		
Subject to other zoning standards (e.g. FAR, lot coverage, design review)	No	No	Yes
Required to correct non-conforming zoning conditions	No	No	Yes
Subject to applicable building standards ¹	Yes, except that fire sprinklers are not required unless required in the primary dwelling.		
DIMENSIONS			
Minimum size	150 sf		150 sf
Maximum. size			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interior space within existing SF home 	500 sf	No max.	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interior space within proposed new home 	500 sf	No max.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of existing SF home to add an interior/attached ADU 	Not allowed		850 sf, or 1,000 sf with 2+ BR; not >50% of the existing home

	STREAMLINED <i>(Interior space of existing/proposed SF home)</i>		NON-STREAMLINED SADUs <i>(home additions)</i>
	JADU	SADU	
Max. height			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interior space within existing SF home 	Existing height		-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interior space within proposed new home 	No max. (within allowed SF height)		-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second-story addition 	Not allowed		Treated as an addition
Setbacks	Existing setbacks		4 ft
FACILITIES			
Parking for the ADU	Not required		Not required
Replacement of covered parking spaces	Not required		Not required
Independent exterior access	Required		Required
Independent kitchen	Required		Required
Independent bathroom	Optional	Required	Required
Interior connection to the main dwelling	Required if shared bathroom	Not allowed	Not allowed
OTHER REQUIREMENTS			
Owner-Occupancy deed restriction	Required	Not required	Not required
Utility connections/fees ³			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interior space within existing SF home 	Exempt		-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interior space within newly built SF home 	Non-exempt but fees not yet adopted		-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition/expansion of existing SF home 	-		Non-exempt but fees not yet adopted
Other city impact fees	Exempt	Exempt if less than 750 sf	Non-exempt
School impact fees	Collected by the school district		

¹ If legalizing an ADU built before Jan. 1, 2020, city may grant 5-year delay of enforcement of non-safety-related building code violations.

² The City has not adopted proportional utility connection fees for non-exempt ADUs.

DETACHED ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS



Description: Standard ADUs (SADUs) *detached* from an existing or proposed single-family dwelling; may be newly built or a converted accessory structure or detached garage. **Note: Junior ADUs (JADUs) are not allowed in detached structures.**

Requirements for Detached SADUs on Single-Family Lots			
	STREAMLINED		NON-STREAMLINED (over 800 sf)
	Converted Existing Accessory Structure	Newly Built (up to 800 sf)	
APPROVAL*			
Planning Approval (MPP)	No	No	Yes
Building Permit	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>*Non-ADU construction is approved separately</i>			
LOCATION			
Minimum lot size	No min. lot size		No min. lot size
Combined with JADU (located within the main dwelling)	No	Yes	Up to 800 s.f.
Zoning	Any lot with an existing SF dwelling (including legal non-conforming use)		Ro, R1, R1.5, R1.7/PD, R2, residential DSP
Included in Gross Floor Area	The first 800 sq. ft. of an ADU is exempt from gross floor area, any ADU sq. ft. beyond must be included		
Subject to other zoning standards (e.g. FAR, lot coverage, design review)	No	No	Yes
Required to correct non-conforming zoning conditions	No	No	Yes
Subject to applicable building standards ¹	Yes, except that fire sprinklers are not required unless required in the primary dwelling.		
DIMENSIONS			
Minimum size	150 sf		150 sf
Maximum. size			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entirely within an existing structure 	No max.	-	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition/expansion of an existing structure 	150 sf for ingress/egress only	-	850 sf, or 1,000 sf with 2+ bedrooms ²
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newly built structure 	-	800 sf	
Max. height	No max.	16 ft	16 ft
Setbacks	Sufficient for fire safety	4 ft ³	4 ft

	STREAMLINED		NON-STREAMLINED <i>(over 800 sf)</i>
	Converted Existing Accessory Structure	Newly Built <i>(up to 800 sf)</i>	
FACILITIES			
Parking for the ADU	Not required		Not required
Replacement of covered parking spaces	Not required		Not required
Replacement of uncovered parking spaces (driveway)	-	Required	Required
Independent exterior access	Required		Required
Independent kitchen	Required		Required
Independent bathroom	Required		Required
OTHER REQUIREMENTS			
Owner-Occupancy deed restriction	Not required		Not required
Utility connections/fees ⁴	Exempt unless with a new SF home	Non-exempt but fees not adopted	Non-exempt but fees not adopted
Other city impact fees	Exempt	Exempt if less than 750 sf	Not exempt
School impact fees	Collected by the school district		

¹ If legalizing an ADU built before Jan. 1, 2020, city may grant 5-year delay of enforcement of non-safety-related building code violations.

² If an ADU exceeds 25% of the required rear-yard area, it must be reduced to 800 sf for streamlined approval.

³ Setbacks may be less than 4 ft. if the ADU replaces an existing accessory structure in exactly the same location and with the same dimensions.

⁴ The City has not yet adopted proportional utility connection fees for non-exempt ADUs.

Additional Resources:

- The complete Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance can be found in Chapter 19.79 of Title 19 of the Sunnyvale Municipal Code, including regulations for ADUs within multi-family developments of two or more units.
- For more information regarding FAR, lot coverage, setbacks, height and more, refer to: [Things To Know About Additions, New Construction of Single-Family/Duplex Homes](#)

BUILDING, FIRE, PUBLIC WORKS INFORMATION

Building permits are required for all ADUs to ensure safe construction and conformance with code requirements. Contact the One Stop Permit Center's Building Safety Division at 408-730-7444 for additional information.

- **Fire Sprinkler System** is not required for a detached SADU so long as the primary dwelling unit does not have an existing fire sprinkler system. A Fire sprinkler system is required if the new attached SADU's living space is greater than 50% of the existing building's living space or there is an existing fire sprinkler system in the primary dwelling unit.
- **Utility Hookups** are not required for ADUs converted from existing sq. ft.; however, a utility fee may be required for new or expanded SADUs. If the primary dwelling unit is low occupancy (2-bedroom or fewer) and an SADU is constructed, then the property will be considered standard occupancy (3-bedroom or more) and current incremental sewer and water connection fees will be required. New attached ADUs may connect to the existing drain system. If both main house and ADU exceed 5 water closets total, building sewer, building drain including horizontal branches to be upgraded to a 4" line with building and property line cleanouts. (See side bar for more information.)
- **New Heating and Water Heating System** that is completely independent from any existing heating system at primary residence is required for new attached or detached SADUs.
- **100 AMP Subpanel** with a readily accessible disconnecting means is minimum requirement for new SADUs. Existing primary residence shall have a minimum of 200amp main electrical panel to accommodate new SADU electrical Loads. If the existing main electrical panel is less than 200amps, applicant shall verify with PG&E to make sure a panel upgrade of 200 amps is feasible.
- **1-Hour Fire Rated Construction Wall** is required between an attached SADU (conversion and addition) and the primary residence. Detached SADUs located less than 5' from any property line or imaginary property lines, the wall shall be fire rated construction. Interconnected doors are not allowed between an attached SADU and the main dwelling unit.
- **Note:** Water lines may pass thru existing primary building with separate shut off valves so long as existing water lines are sized adequately to accommodate new water flow demand.

Transportation Impact Fee (TIF) is required for SADUs 750 sq. ft. or greater and must be paid when submitting for a building permit.

School Impact Fees apply for new ADUs (attached or detached) greater than 500 sq. ft. living space and shall be paid to the associated school district.

Main Sewer Line for New Detached SADU may pass thru existing primary building, but

1. The new line must be connected down line of a kitchen island sink.
2. An ejector pump cannot be used to connect the ADU to the existing home's sewer line.
3. When the combined number of water closets is more than 5, the main home's interior drain line shall be upgraded to 4 inches.