

# THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ADDITIONS, NEW CONSTRUCTION OF SINGLE-FAMILY/DUPLEX HOMES - Permits, FAR, Lot Coverage, Setbacks, Height and more

## DESIGN REVIEW

The Design Review process improves the quality of residential design, enhances and protects existing neighborhoods and promotes an orderly and attractive community. The following single-family home or duplex projects require approval of a Design Review with the Planning Division before building permits may be applied for:

- New single-family or duplex home;
- One-story addition that is 20% or more of the existing floor area (including the garage);
- Second story modifications or additions, regardless of size (also requires public noticing); and
- Any significant change in the appearance of the exterior (e.g., change in roof pitch).

## LEVEL OF REVIEW

Projects are reviewed for compliance with zoning district development standards (see reverse) and design guidelines (see sidebar) such as those in the [Single Family Home Design Techniques](#). The level of Design Review required depends on the scope of the project. Consult with a Planner to determine which level of review is required for your project.

- **Staff Level Review:** New single-story homes and additions that do not exceed floor area and floor area ratio thresholds (see pg. 2 for thresholds).
- **Staff Level Review with Notice:** New two-story homes and any second-story modifications or additions that do not exceed the floor area thresholds require neighbor notification and a 14-day comment period.
- **Planning Commission (PC) Review (public hearing):** New homes and additions that exceed the floor area thresholds require a public hearing with the PC.

There is a 15-day appeal period from the decision date, after which the decision is considered final.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The following design principles should be respected in all residential projects. They are the cornerstones upon which the City's design techniques are based, and, since design guidelines cannot anticipate every condition that might occur, they will be used in addressing conditions not specifically covered within the design guideline documents.

- Reinforce prevailing neighborhood home orientation and entry patterns
- Respect the scale, bulk and character of homes in the neighborhood
- Design homes to respect their immediate neighbors
- Minimize the visual impacts of parking
- Respect the predominant materials and character of front yard landscaping
- Use high quality materials and craftsmanship
- Preserve mature landscaping

*Design guideline documents are available online at [Sunnyvale.ca.gov](http://Sunnyvale.ca.gov) - Search "Planning and Building" Home or at the One-Stop Permit Center.*

### [SINGLE FAMILY HOME DESIGN TECHNIQUES](#)

*Provides policy statements on neighborhood compatibility, architectural detail and privacy.*

### [EICHLER DESIGN GUIDELINES](#)

*Applies specifically to homes within Eichler neighborhoods and are used in conjunction with the Single-Family Home Design Techniques.*

### [TAAFE-FRANCES HERITAGE NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN GUIDELINES](#)

*These guidelines seek to preserve the unique historic character of homes located on S. Taaffe and S. Frances between Olive Avenue and E. El Camino Real.*

### [DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN](#)

*Single-family dwellings and accessory structures must comply with applicable development standards for the R-O District.*

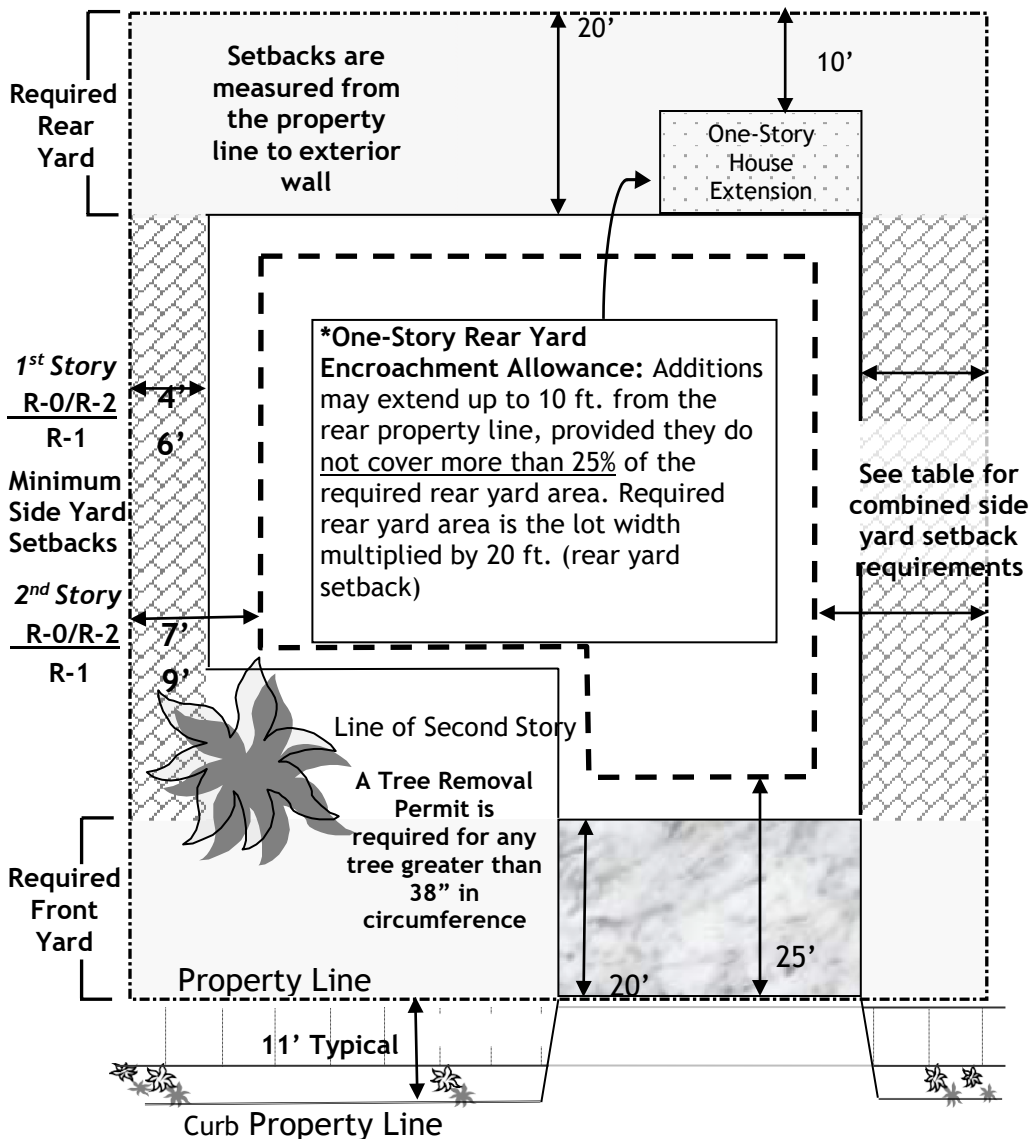
### [SINGLE STORY COMBINING DISTRICT](#)

*Single-story Combining District is created at the request of homeowners within a neighborhood. This designation limits construction and additions to one-story structures.*

# ZONING DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

To determine a property's zoning district, contact the on-duty Planner or go to

[ecityhall.sunnyvale.ca.gov/cd/](http://ecityhall.sunnyvale.ca.gov/cd/)



**Floor Area** includes both living area and garage area (except for ground-floor porches at front door and basements which are no more than 2 feet above grade), and attached covered patios. Interior ceiling heights which exceed 15 feet are counted twice towards floor area.

**Floor Area Ratio (FAR)** is floor area divided by lot size.

**Lot Coverage** is the land area covered by all buildings on a lot, including sheds, covered porches (at front door) and covered patios.

**Corner Lots:** Min. 9' setback is required along the longer street frontage; and maintain 40' corner vision triangle (see Vision Triangles brochure).

**Combined Side Yard Setbacks** is the sum of the two sideyard setbacks.

**First Story** - The minimum side yard setback is the larger of:  
1) Multiply the lot width (measured 20 feet back from the front property line) by 0.20 (20%), then round the result to the nearest whole number; or  
2) 10' for R-0 and 15' for R-1.

**Second Story** - Add 6 feet to the required first story combined sideyard setbacks calculated above.

## BASIC ZONING REQUIREMENTS FOR SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES AND DUPLEXES

<b>Lot Coverage</b>	One-Story: 45% of Lot Area OR Two-Story: 40% of Lot Area (Variance required to exceed Lot Cov. Max.)							
<b>Floor Area Ratio (FAR)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>R-0, R-1 and R-2 Single-Family Home: 45% FAR or 3,600 square foot floor area, whichever is less.</li> <li>R-2 Duplex or Multi-family: 55% FAR</li> </ul> Projects exceeding the above thresholds require review and approval by the Planning Commission.							
Zoning	Setbacks - First Story				Setbacks - Second Story			
	Front	Combined Sideyard	w/min. Side	Rear*	Front	Combined Sideyard	w/min. Side	Rear
R-0	20'	20% of lot width** or 10' min.***	4'	20' (10')*	25'	First Story Combined total plus 6'	7'	20'
R-1	20'	20% of lot width** or 15' min***	6'	20' (10')*	25'	First Story Combined total plus 6'	9'	20'
R-2	20'	20% of lot width** or 10' min***	4'	20' (10')*	25'	First Story Combined total plus 6'	7'	20'
<b>Height****</b>	Is measured from top of curb to top of structure (roof ridge) 30' / Two stories max.; 17' / One story for the Single Story Combining District							

All dimensions noted are measured from the exterior wall(s)

\*one-story encroachment allowance \*\*rounded to nearest whole number \*\*\*whichever is greater \*\*\*\* Design Principles noted on Page 1 also apply

## PARKING REQUIREMENTS

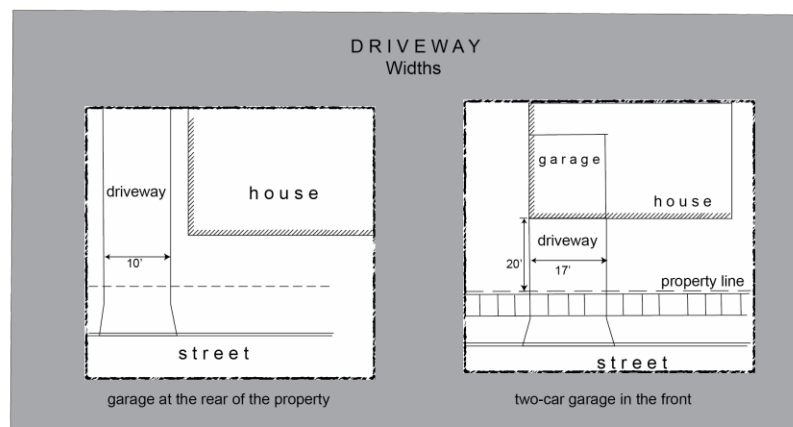
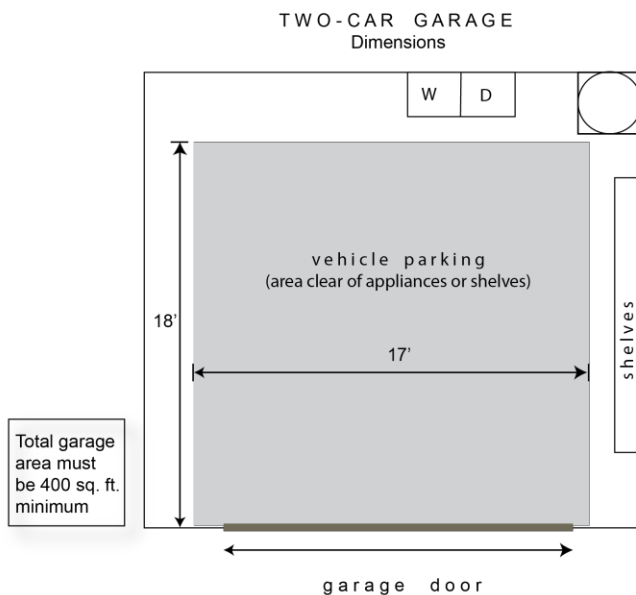
Each single-family home and duplex is required a minimum of 4 spaces total, 2 of which must be “covered” spaces. Covered spaces may be in a garage or a carport that meets min. size and dimensions (see sidebar and below graphic). Two uncovered driveway spaces located in front of the covered parking may count towards the 4 spaces if the area is at least 17’ (w) by 20’ (l).

### EXISTING HOMES WITH LESS THAN 2 COVERED SPACES AND 2 UNCOVERED SPACES

If an existing single-family home has no/one-car garage or carport (legal), two covered spaces may be required if the modification to the home results in:

- 4 or more bedrooms (rooms with closets count as bedrooms); or
- 1,800 square feet or more of floor area (excluding the garage/carport),

This parking must meet setback requirements and minimum dimensions (see sidebar). Covered tandem parking may be allowed if adding/remodeling a home with a lot that is less than 57’ wide (see SMC 19.46.050).



### GARAGE CONVERSIONS OR REDUCTIONS IN GARAGE SIZE

If you would like to convert an existing garage/carport into living area, you will be required to provide an equivalent number of parking spaces on your property. Existing garages/carports which do not meet the minimum dimensions (see sidebar) may not be reduced further in size.

### PERMANENT PARKING SURFACES

Approved parking surfaces include concrete, asphalt, pavers or other approved stabilized permanent surface. Uncompacted surface with aggregate or gravel is not an accepted parking surface.

### FRONT YARD PARKING/PAVING

Paved and parking areas shall not cover more than 50% of any required front yard. If paved areas exceed 50%, that portion of paved area needs to be permeable as defined by [Santa Clara Valley Runoff Pollution Prevention Program](#) (C-3 Stormwater Handbook).

### MINIMUM GARAGE/ CARPORT SIZE REQUIREMENTS

- Two-Car Garage/Carport: 400 square feet (measured to the outside dimensions) and minimum interior dimensions of 17 feet (w) and 18 feet (l)
- One-Car Garage/Carport: 200 square feet (measured from exterior wall) and minimum interior dimensions of 8.5 feet (w) and 18 feet (l)
- Each dwelling unit with a carport is required to provide additional storage of at least 300 cubic feet for each carport space.

### DRIVEWAY WIDTHS AND UNCOVERED SPACES

A driveway counts as 2 uncovered parking spaces provided it has a minimum dimension of 17 feet in width and 20 feet in depth. A driveway leading to a garage at the rear of the lot must be at least 10 feet wide.

## GUIDELINES FOR REMODEL, ADDITION, and NEW HOUSE

- Remodel: Typically, includes cosmetic changes such as new carpeting, countertops, cabinets, windows, and other minor modifications that occur within an existing house
  - Addition: Retains up to 50% of existing exterior walls\*
  - New House: Removes or reconstructs more than 50% of existing exterior walls.
- \*Projects that involve change in plate-height or roof design that could modify the existing wall and may be counted towards the 50% threshold.

If a house is considered a new house, then additional Planning and Building Division's requirements apply. To determine if a project is an addition or a new house, provide the linear length of existing exterior walls, walls to remain/removed and the percentage of existing walls to remain.

The property tax assessment regarding remodel/addition or new home is separate and is determined by the Santa Clara County Assessor's Office ([sccassessor.org](http://sccassessor.org)).

## ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU)

An accessory dwelling unit (also known as granny flats, in-law quarters, secondary dwelling units) is a dwelling unit that is subordinate to a single-family home on the same lot and provides independent living accommodations for one or more persons. [Accessory Dwelling Units](#) provides for more information regarding minimum lot size, unit size, parking, and other requirements.

## SOLAR STUDIES

The Sunnyvale Municipal Code requires that new structures not shade more than 10% (of the annual solar cycle) of an adjacent property's roof area or existing solar panels. A solar study demonstrating compliance with this code is required for any second-story addition or new two-story home. Refer to the brochure [Solar Access and Shadow Analysis](#).

## VISION TRIANGLES

The Sunnyvale Municipal Code requires vision triangles at driveways and corner lots to ensure visibility and safety. All lots must maintain 10-foot driveway vision triangles and corner lots must also maintain a 40-foot corner vision triangle. Vision triangles shall be clear of all objects except for fences, hedges, shrubs or other natural objects of 3.5 feet or less in height. Refer to the [Vision Triangles](#) brochure.

## FENCES

A fence or barrier of wood, masonry, stone, wire, metal or other material erected to enclose, separate, or screen an area may require a permit from both the Planning and Building Divisions. Refer to the [Residential Fences](#) brochure for detailed information regarding permit types and setback requirements for fences.

## TREE REMOVAL

If your project requires removal of an existing protected tree (trunk circumference measured 4.5' above ground is 38" or more), refer to [Tree Removal Permits](#).

## LANDSCAPING AND IRRIGATION

Pursuant to State law, construction of a new single-family home or duplex which includes installation of 500 square feet or more of landscaping, requires compliance with the water-efficient landscaping and irrigation regulations. Refer to the [Landscaping Requirements](#) brochure for more information.

## GREEN BUILDING PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

New construction, additions, and remodels must meet the City's green building standards. See the [Green Building Program Requirements](#) for more information.

## SECOND STORY ADDITIONS

Also, requires:

- [Solar Access and Shadow Analysis](#)
- Streetscape
- Notice board at site. See [Notice Board Requirements](#).
- 14-day public notice. Second stories are not allowed in Single Story (S) combining districts.

## ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

Any detached structure accessory to the residential use in the R-0, R-1, R-1.5, R-1.7/PD and R-2 residential zoning districts and DSP Blocks 8-12 and Block 17 is required to meet standards related to height, setbacks, and required permits. See [Accessory Structures Residential](#).

## FIRE SPRINKLERS

A new house or an addition greater than 50% of the existing living area (not including the garage) requires installation of fire sprinklers throughout the entire house. Contact a Fire Protection Engineer for more information.

## EASEMENTS

Easements can limit the location of structures on a property. Check for easements on your property - this information can be found in the Title Report (home ownership documents), and the tract map for the lot (verify with Public Works Engineer).

## PLAN LINES

The City has adopted Plan Lines that may affect how setbacks are measured on some properties. Contact a Public Works Engineer to find an adopted Plan Line for your street.