



ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT INFORMATIONAL GUIDE

This guide provides answers to some common questions pertaining to accessory dwelling units and summarizes some of the regulations. This is not a substitute for the regulations which contain additional details and requirements which can be found in the City's [Zoning Code](#).

WHAT IS AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT?

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU), also referred to as a second unit or in-law unit, is a dwelling unit that provides complete, independent living facilities on the same lot as a single-family or multi-family dwelling. Independent living facilities includes permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation (restroom/wash facilities).

WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF AN ADU?

- Can provide an affordable housing option for family members, friends, colleagues, or anyone seeking rental housing.
- Can provide extra rental income to help pay the mortgage, save for retirement, or build a financial safety net.
- Can provide a way to downsize without moving away from the community.

WHAT IS THE PERMIT PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING AN ADU?

The permit process for an ADU is ministerial, which means only a building permit and any related permits are required. No planning permit, public notices, or public hearings are required. The City encourages all applicants to thoroughly review the City's ADU regulations to ensure the project meets all zoning and building code requirements prior to preparing detailed construction plans for building permit submittal.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ADUs?

- **Detached ADU:** An ADU that is not attached to the primary dwelling. Generally, a detached ADU is constructed as an independent structure that is surrounded by open space and located on the same parcel as the primary dwelling. A detached ADU may also include the conversion of an existing accessory structure (such as a detached garage).
- **Attached ADU:** An ADU that is created from the addition, internal conversion, or combination thereof to the primary dwelling.
- **Junior ADU (JADU):** An ADU that is created by the conversion of existing space within the walls of an existing single-family residence.



ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT INFORMATIONAL GUIDE

HOW BIG CAN AN ADU OR JADU BE?

The maximum size of a one-bedroom ADU is 850 square feet and 1,200 square feet for a two-bedroom, or up to 50% of the floor area of the primary dwelling for an attached ADU. The maximum size of a JADU is 500 square feet.

WHAT ARE THE PARKING REQUIREMENTS?

One additional uncovered parking space with the minimum dimensions of 9 feet by 18 feet is required for a newly constructed ADU. The parking requirement may be waived if certain criteria are met ([Zoning Code Section 14.14.050\(i\)\(1\) through \(6\)](#).) No parking is required for a JADU.

WHAT ARE THE KITCHEN REQUIREMENTS?



Kitchen Requirements

- Cooktop and oven or range (microwave optional)*
- Refrigerator
- Sink (dishwasher optional)
- Counter space
- Storage cabinet(s) and/or shelves

*Minimum requirement for JADU is a hot plate.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER CONSIDERATIONS?

- Protected Trees: If the construction of the ADU will fall into 2/3rds of the dripline area of any protected tree (48-inches or greater in circumference when measured at 48-inches above the ground) or result in damage and/or removal of such tree, a Tree Removal Permit shall be submitted to the Planning Division for consideration prior to the submittal of the building permit. Any protected tree that is proposed for removal shall meet the tree removal criteria per Chapter 11.08 of the Los Altos Municipal Code.



City of Los Altos

Development Services Department

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT INFORMATIONAL GUIDE

- **Deed Restriction:** Both an ADU and JADU are subject to a deed restriction for prohibition of separate ownership from the primary dwelling and short-term rentals (less than 30 days), and a JADU is also subject to an owner occupancy requirement.
- **Air Conditioners:** Mechanical equipment and air conditioning units for accessory dwelling units shall comply with the [Air Handling Equipment/Air Conditioning Unit Setback Guidelines handout](#) per Chapter 6.16 of the Noise Control Ordinance.
- **ADU Address Assignment:** A new address will be assigned to all ADUs prior to issuance of a building permit. Generally, the new address assigned to the ADU will be the numerical property address + “A” (i.e. 1234A Main St). Posting of the ADU’s address number, as specified by the Building Division and Santa Clara County Fire Department, is required prior to final occupancy of the unit.
- **Separate Utility Meters:** An ADU may have separate utility meters installed, or it can utilize the main residence’s services if added loads allow. ADUs require electrical load calculations to justify required panel sizes and/or added electrical loads imposed on the main residences electrical service.
- **Separate Sewer Connection:** A detached ADU shall have the sewer connection placed downstream of the main house’s building drain (connect to the existing main sewer lateral outside of the main residence). Attached ADUs may share the same building drain.
- **Impact Fees:**
 - ADU and JADU may be subject to school impact fees. Please contact the local School Districts to determine the school impact fees.
 - For ADUs that are over 750 square feet, impact fees are required proportionate to the main dwelling.
 - There are no impact fees required for a JADU.

WHO DO I TALK TO WITH QUESTIONS?

Contact the Los Altos Planning Division at planning@losaltosca.gov or (650)-947-2750 for questions related to ADU zoning standards and the Building Division at building@losaltosca.gov or (650) 947-2752 for questions related to Building Code standards and building permit requirements.