

What is a Residential Accessory Structure?

- Ancillary structures, including; detached garages, carports, workshops, art studios, greenhouses, and storage sheds.
- Recreation-related accessory structures, including; swimming pools and spas, cabanas, and enclosures for swimming pools or spas,
- Detached guest houses or similar that include conditioned space, and that are intended for occasional overnight use. Occasional overnight use means not more than ten (10) nights in any calendar month. Guest houses may not be used for short or long term rentals and are not considered an independent living unit. Only one such structure shall be allowed on a parcel.
- Patios and deck structures, including: uncovered detached raised decks or patios over 18 inches from grade, and detached ground-level patios or decks when covered.
- Fences, when accessory to a primary residential use and ***greater*** than allowed heights listed in Section 5.2.5 of the Sacramento County Zoning Code.
- Cargo containers, with use standards as listed in Section 3.9.3.T, and development standards as listed in Section 5.4.5, of the Sacramento County Zoning Code.

What *isn't* a Residential Accessory Structure?

- Paving or patio areas 18 inches or less above grade.
- Raised landscape planters or edging of up to 18 inches in height.
- Accessory Dwelling Units or Junior Accessory Dwelling Units. [See the handout available at [this link](#) for standards.]
- Incidental Agricultural Accessory Structures, including; private stables and corrals, barns used primarily for agricultural purposes, aviaries, and chicken coops.
- Fences, when they meet the standards of Section 5.2.5 of the Sacramento County Zoning Code.

*****Residential Accessory Structures are permitted as an Accessory Use in all Zoning Districts that permit residential uses. *****

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What Standards Must I Follow to Build a Residential Accessory Structure?

Table 5.10.A of Section 5.4.5.A of the Sacramento County Zoning Code contains the standards for Residential Accessory Structures. **Please ensure that your property is within the unincorporated area of Sacramento County and is not subject to any special zoning categories before using this table. The webpage at [this link](#) will walk you through that review.**

Table 5.10.A Development Standards - Residential Accessory Structures in All Zoning Districts, as Allowed	
In-Ground Swimming Pools and Spas	
Minimum Setback Requirements	Swimming pools and spas may not be located within the required front or side street yard, or within a recorded setback, except the rear yards of through lots unless otherwise prohibited by a recorded subdivision map. Pools do not have a minimum setback from primary dwellings, but edge of water must be three (3) feet from the rear and side property line.
Easement Areas	Swimming pools and spas may not be located within a public utility easement; or within a public easement.
Guest Houses [1]	
Maximum Square Footage (sq. ft.)	Guest houses may include up to 500 sq. ft. of conditioned space.
Internal Design	Guest houses are limited to one primary room and one bathroom. Closets are allowed but cannot be greater than three feet in depth.
Cooking Facilities	Guest houses shall not include cooking appliances, such as an oven or cooktop/range.
Maximum Attached Unconditioned Space	Attached unconditioned space is not limited, except by the overall maximum accessory structure square footage for a parcel.
All Other Standards	As stated under 'All Other Residential Accessory Structure Types.'
All Other Residential Accessory Structure Types [2]	
General Standards	
Maximum Square Footage (sq. ft.)	<p>The area of all accessory structures on a single parcel, shall not exceed [3];</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For lots less than 20,000 sq. ft. in gross area: 50 percent of the habitable floor area of the primary residential dwelling. • For lots 20,000 sq. ft. in gross area or greater, 100 percent of the habitable floor area of the primary dwelling.

Maximum Building Coverage	30 percent of required rear yard [3]
Maximum Height to peak of roof (feet)	16 (14 feet to plate line)
Number of Stories	One
Separation From Primary Dwelling	Residential Accessory Structures must remain detached from Primary Dwellings.
Setback Requirements (feet) [4][5][6]	
Front Yard	20
Interior Side and Rear Yard	3
Side Street Yard	12.5
When Adjacent to Primary Structure	If less than six (6) feet from the wall of the primary residence, accessory structures of any size must meet the same setback as the primary residence.
Minor Accessory Structures	Minor structures or sheds which do not exceed 120 square feet in area and nine (9) feet in height overall may be placed on the property line.
Maximum Permitted Encroachment Into Required Yard Areas (feet)	
Front Yard and Side Street Yard	Air Conditioning Equipment: 5 [7] Other Mechanical Equipment: 5 [7]
Interior Side Yard and Rear Yard	Air Conditioning Equipment: 0 Other Mechanical Equipment: 5
<p>[1] Refer to Section 5.4.5.B for Accessory Dwelling Unit development standards.</p> <p>[2] Refer to Section 5.2.5.B, "Development Standards for Walls and Fences" for complete fencing standards.</p> <p>[3] For the purpose of this calculation, all roofed space, enclosed or not, shall be counted as space occupied by accessory buildings, except for the habitable space of an ADU.</p> <p>[4] Accessory structures must maintain a minimum three (3) foot setback from property lines for any portion of the structure including eaves and overhangs.</p> <p>[5] Setbacks less than 5 ft from property line or other structures may require fire walls and/or restrictions on non-protected openings as determined by Fire and Building Permits and Inspection</p> <p>[6] If the site has a PUPF that is greater than the listed setback, it becomes the minimum setback requirement.</p> <p>[7] Provided said equipment is within a solid fenced yard or enclosure.</p> <p>[8] Provided equipment shall be no closer than two (2) feet from any property line.</p> <p>PUPF = Public Utilities, Public Facilities easement (per Section 5.2.1)</p>	

What if I want to Build a Structure that Doesn't Meet Standards?

Deviations from the standards may be permitted with a Special Development Permit from the Zoning Administrator. This is an entitlement process, meaning that the request will be reviewed through a public hearing, and may not be approved. Current costs run approximately \$9,000 and timelines can range from 4-6 months. Contact us through the email below if you would like more information on this option.

Will my Residential Accessory Structure Need a Building Permit?

Most structures require building permits. See the information provided by the Building Permits and Inspections Division at:

<https://building.saccounty.net/HomeOwner/Pages/DetachedAccessoryStructures.aspx> .

For more information, please contact the Office of Planning and Environmental Review (PER) staff at sacplan@saccounty.net or go to the PER website: <https://planning.saccounty.net>