

***Before utilizing these guidelines, have you confirmed that your property is within the Unincorporated Area of Sacramento County?***

***If not, please visit our General Map at [generalmap.gis.saccounty.gov](http://generalmap.gis.saccounty.gov) to check if your property is within the unincorporated area.***

## **What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and Junior ADU?**

**Accessory Dwelling Unit.** An attached or detached dwelling unit that provides **complete independent living facilities** (permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation) for one or more persons and which is located on a lot with a proposed or existing primary dwelling. An ADU also includes the following:

- An Efficiency Unit. Residential unit occupied by no more than two persons and which has a minimum floor area of 150 square feet and may have a full or efficiency kitchen or bathroom facility.
- A manufactured home. As defined in the Zoning Code and in Section 18007 of the California Health and Safety Code.

**Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU).** A residential dwelling unit that is no more than 500 square feet in size and **contained entirely** within the permitted area of a primary dwelling (includes attached garages, storage or other enclosed areas that are part of the primary dwelling). A JADU shall include an efficiency kitchen (or may have a full kitchen). A JADU may include separate sanitation facilities, or may share existing sanitation facilities within the primary dwelling.

**Efficiency Kitchen.** An efficiency kitchen is a cooking facility with appliances, a food preparation counter, and storage units, for food and related supplies.

## **What *isn't* an ADU or JADU?**

**Detached guest houses,** or similar, that include conditioned space that may be intended for occasional overnight use but does not contain cooking facilities (i.e., neither a full kitchen nor an efficiency kitchen). Only one such structure shall be allowed on a parcel. [See the handout for Residential Accessory Structure Standards available at [this link](#) for more information on Guest Houses.]

**Second Dwelling Unit (SDU).** While SDUs may look similar to ADUs, and State requirements provide similar side and rear setbacks for both types of dwellings, there are notable differences. SDUs are only permitted on properties that are eligible to utilize Senate Bill 9 (SB-9) provisions. Additionally, SDUs are subject to the same development standards as primary dwellings (except for size limitations), meaning

they can be taller, have multiple stories, and trigger full Development Impact and Affordable Housing Ordinance fees.

**Tiny Homes**, or similar ‘homes on wheels’ (THOWs). Any temporary living quarters (Recreational Vehicle, ‘Housecar’ or similar) that is regulated by the California Department of Motor Vehicles is not permitted as a dwelling unit in Sacramento County, except when parked at a permitted Mobile Home Park. All dwelling units must be placed on a foundation and meet residential building standards.

**Is an ADU Allowed on my Property?**

Any property developed with a primary residential use is permitted to have ADUs as provided in Table 1 below.

**Can I Use my ADU or Junior ADU as a Short-Term Rental?**

An ADU **cannot** be used for short-term rental activity **unless** it was a legally permitted ADU prior to January 1, 2020. JADUs and Guest Houses **cannot** be used for short-term rental activity in any circumstance.

**What Standards Must I Follow to Build an ADU or JADU?**

Sacramento County Zoning Code Section 5.4.5.B Table 5.11 contains the standards for ADUs and JADUs and is copied below in Table 1.

Table 1 is split into the following sections:

1. General Standards,
2. Additional Standards for New Construction, and
3. Additional Standards for Conversion of Existing Space.

<b>Table 1</b> Development Standards for ADUs and JADUs in All Zoning Districts Where Permitted [AMENDED 09-09-2022][AMENDED 07-11-2024]	
<b>General Standards</b>	
Number of ADUs and JADUs Per Single Family or Halfplex [1]	Maximum of 3 as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 new construction detached ADU</li> <li>• 1 JADU proposed as a part of a new construction dwelling or conversion of existing permitted space</li> <li>• One of the following three options:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New construction attached ADU, or</li> <li>• Attached conversion ADU, or</li> <li>• Detached conversion ADU.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Number of ADUs Per Multifamily Project [2][3]	<u>New Construction</u> Properties developed as multifamily may have up to two new construction detached ADUs.

**Table 1** Development Standards for ADUs and JADUs in All Zoning Districts Where Permitted [AMENDED 09-09-2022][AMENDED 07-11-2024]

	<p><u>Conversion</u> Properties developed as multifamily may have up to 25% of total unit count in ADUs or one unit, whichever is greater, converted from existing non-living space. [4]</p> <p><u>Existing (as of January 1, 2025)</u> Properties developed as multifamily as of January 1, 2025, may have new construction detached ADUs at a quantity not to exceed eight or the number of existing dwelling units as of January 1, 2025, whichever is less. This is in addition to multifamily ADUs permitted by conversion.</p> <p><u>Development Standards</u> Except for sites developed with a single Duplex, new construction and conversions that affect exterior facades shall meet the multifamily development standards in Section 5.4.3 and Chapter 3.0 of the Countywide Design Standards, “Multifamily Design Standards” for standards not otherwise addressed in this Table.</p>
Bathroom Facilities [2]	<p>Attached and detached ADUs are required to have separate bathroom facilities from the primary dwelling.</p> <p>Attached and detached ADUs are required to have separate bathroom facilities from the primary dwelling.</p> <p>JADUs may have separate bathroom facilities or shared facilities with the primary dwelling. If the JADU does not include a separate bathroom from the primary dwelling, the JADU shall have both a separate entrance from the primary dwelling as well as an interior entry to the main living area of the primary dwelling to access the shared bathroom facilities.</p>
Kitchen Requirement [2]	All ADUs are required to have a kitchen that includes a cooktop/stove and oven or range. JADUs shall have at least an efficiency kitchen.
Minimum ADU or JADU Size (Habitable Square Feet)	150 sq. ft.
Minimum Building Width	N/A
Equipment Encroachment Allowances	Encroachment Allowances as Listed in Section 5.4.5.A, Table 5.10.A.
Access [2]	Exterior access separate from the primary dwelling is required.
Owner-occupancy JADU [2]	The property owner must occupy either the primary dwelling or JADU. Owner occupancy is not required if the owner is a governmental agency, land trust, or housing organization.
Recordation of Deed Restriction- JADU	A Deed Restriction shall be recorded that prohibits sale of the JADU separate from the sale of the single-family residence and restricts the size and attributes of the JADU to conformance with CA GOV §65852.22, as amended from time to time.

<b>Table 1 Development Standards for ADUs and JADUs in All Zoning Districts Where Permitted [AMENDED 09-09-2022][AMENDED 07-11-2024]</b>	
Dwelling Unit Separation Requirements	<p>ADU - For purposes of any fire or life protection ordinance or regulation, an Accessory Dwelling Unit shall be considered a separate or new dwelling unit.</p> <p>JADU - For purposes of any fire or life protection ordinance or regulation, a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit shall <u>not</u> be considered a separate or new dwelling unit.</p>
Minimum Parking	<p>For ADUs, one parking space shall be provided, except that parking is not required where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The accessory dwelling unit is located within one-half mile walking distance of public transit.</li> <li>ii. The accessory dwelling unit is located within an architecturally and historically significant historic district.</li> <li>iii. The accessory dwelling unit is part of the proposed or existing primary residence or an existing accessory structure.</li> <li>iv. When on-street parking permits are required but not offered to the occupant of the accessory dwelling unit.</li> <li>v. Where there is a car share vehicle located within one block of the accessory dwelling unit.</li> <li>vi. The accessory dwelling unit is a new construction detached ADU that is 800 square feet or less in size.</li> <li>vii. The accessory dwelling unit is accessory to a multifamily dwelling, as defined by State law. [3]</li> </ul> <p>When a building permit application for an ADU is submitted concurrently with a permit to build a new single-family (primary) dwelling or new multifamily dwelling on the same lot, this parking requirement waiver is only applicable to the ADU.</p>
<b>Additional Standards – New Construction</b>	
Maximum Size – ADU [5][6][15]	<p><u>Detached</u>                      1,200 sq. ft.</p> <p><u>Attached</u>                      The greater of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. 50% of the habitable sq. ft of the primary dwelling</li> <li>ii. For a studio or 1-bedroom ADU: 850 sq. ft.</li> <li>iii. For an ADU with 2 or more bedrooms: 1,000 sq. ft.</li> </ul>
Maximum Size – JADU [2][7][15]	500 sq. ft. of space within proposed primary dwelling (including attached garages or attached storage areas), plus 150 sq. ft. for ingress/egress.

<b>Table 1</b> Development Standards for ADUs and JADUs in All Zoning Districts Where Permitted [AMENDED 09-09-2022][AMENDED 07-11-2024]	
Default Setbacks [9][10]	<p>Front Yard – 20 ft. [6][12]</p> <p>Side Street Yard (corner) – 12.5 ft. [6][12]</p> <p>Side and Rear Yard - 4 ft.</p>
Default Maximum Building Height to peak	<p><u>Detached</u>                      16 ft.</p> <p><u>Attached</u>                      25 ft. or the maximum allowable height of the primary dwelling, whichever is less.</p> <p><u>Detached ADU in a Multifamily Project [3]</u>                      18 ft.</p>
Provisions for Increased Maximum Building Height to peak [10]	<p>Detached ADUs may exceed the default maximum height, subject to the provisions provided in this section:</p> <p><u>Up to 20 ft.</u>                      Permitted if increased setbacks are maintained, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A rear setback of at least 10 ft, and</li> <li>ii. Side interior setbacks of at least 5 ft.</li> </ul> <p><u>Up to 18 ft.</u>                      Permitted subject to a Planning Director’s determination that finds that the proposed ADU is either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. Located within one-half mile of a major transit stop pursuant to CA PRC §21155, or</li> <li>iv. Proposed at a height to allow a roof pitch consistent with the primary dwelling. Documentation shall be provided demonstrating both the existing roof pitch of primary dwelling and proposed ADU.</li> </ul> <p>Deviations for detached ADUs provided beyond the allowances of this section and deviations for any attached ADUs are subject to an applicable Special Development Permit.</p>
Maximum Number of Stories	<p><u>Detached [8]</u>                      One Story</p> <p><u>Attached</u>                      Two Stories</p>
Foundation	All ADUs shall be constructed on a permanent foundation.
Maximum Non-Habitable Square Footage Attached to Detached ADU [11]	Maximum shall be as listed for Residential Accessory Structures in Table 5.10.A and shall be counted towards that square footage limit.

**Table 1** Development Standards for ADUs and JADUs in All Zoning Districts Where Permitted [AMENDED 09-09-2022][AMENDED 07-11-2024]

Additional Standards - Conversion of Existing Space/Structure [13]	
Existing Space/ Structure	Existing space/structure is limited to permitted space or structures on the subject parcel.
Maximum Size – ADU [2][15]	Area of existing space/structure, plus 150 sq. ft. for ingress/egress.
Maximum Size – JADU [2][7][14][15]	500 sq. ft. of existing space within primary dwelling (including attached garages or attached storage areas), plus 150 sq. ft. for ingress/egress.
Setbacks	Ingress/egress additions shall meet setbacks for new construction ADUs or Junior ADUs.  Existing space/structures may remain at setbacks originally permitted.
Conversion of Parking	When a garage, carport, uncovered parking space, or covered parking structure is demolished or converted in conjunction with the construction of an accessory dwelling unit, replacement parking shall not be required.

[1] ADU/JADU units may be combined with SB 9 projects. In no case shall more than four units, inclusive of ADU/JADU units, be permitted on an existing lot. In the case of a lot with a proposed SB 9 urban lot split, cumulatively across both proposed lots, no more than four units, inclusive of ADU/JADU units, shall be permitted.

[2] Mandated by State statute. A Minor Special Development Permit or minor deviation from the Planning Director cannot be applied for to deviate from this standard.

[3] ‘Multifamily’ for purposes of compliance with State ADU regulations shall mean any parcel developed with at least one instance of two attached dwellings where neither are classified as ADUs.

[4] Non-livable space can include storage rooms, boiler rooms, passageways, attics, basements, or garages.

[5] Maximum size limit of a detached ADU is 1,200 square feet for new construction, no further increases allowed.

[6] Minor deviations to this standard (i.e., front or side-street setback; lot coverage; or open space requirements) may be approved administratively by the Planning Director when it can be demonstrated that full implementation of the standard would physically prevent the ability to develop up to an 800 square foot attached or detached ADU within the buildable area of the lot. Deviations to this standard to allow for dwellings larger than 800 square feet and up to 1,200 square feet require approval of an applicable Special Development Permit.

[7] Deviations from maximum JADU size are not permitted.

[8] New construction detached ADUs beyond one story are subject to a Minor Special Development Permit.

[9] Setbacks less than five feet 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.

[10] Attached and Detached ADU setbacks are both measured from the wall of the unit to the property lines. Up to a 24-inch overhang into the required setback area is allowed.

**Table 1** Development Standards for ADUs and JADUs in All Zoning Districts Where Permitted [AMENDED 09-09-2022][AMENDED 07-11-2024]

[11] Habitable square footage of an ADU shall not be counted towards the Accessory Structure space maximum of Table 5.10.A.

[12] Properties located within area-specific zoning ordinances such as but not limited to Special Planning Areas, Neighborhood Preservation Areas or Planned Developments shall utilize the front yard and side street yard (corner) setbacks specified in the applicable ordinance.

[13] Conversions of existing dwellings to Accessory Dwelling Units in conjunction with development of a new primary dwelling may utilize these standards.

[14] For the purpose of calculations based on the habitable square footage of the primary dwelling, the square footage of the JADU shall be included in the total square footage of the primary dwelling.

[15] In no case shall an ADU or JADU exceed the square footage of the primary dwelling.

### **What if I want to Build an ADU or JADU that Doesn't Meet Standards?**

Minor height or setback deviations as provided for in Table 1 - Footnotes 6 and 8 may be authorized by the Planning Director by filing a [Planning Director Determination \(PLNR\) Application](#). PLNR requests will be reviewed for compliance with the requirements stipulated in State law for minor height increases or deviations to front and street-side yard setbacks. The application fee is \$495.33 and takes approximately four weeks to process from receipt of a complete application. If it is determined that the request does not comply with requirements, the request will be denied.

Deviations of up to 25% for all other standards, except for maximum sizes and standards mandated by State statute as described in Table 1 - Footnote 2 above, may be permitted with approval of a [Minor Special Development Permit \(SPM\)](#). This is an administrative entitlement process, meaning that the request will be reviewed for compliance with the SPM provisions and required findings. While there is no public hearing, if the applicable findings for approval cannot be made then the request may not be approved. Current costs run approximately \$1,337.60 and timelines can range from 3 to 4 months. Contact us through the email address below if you would like more information on this option.

### **Will Converting an Existing Accessory Structure to an ADU Require a Building Permit?**

Yes. A conversion of this type is considered a change in use under the building code and requires the structure to be brought into compliance with current residential building standards. See the information provided by the Building Permits and Inspections Division at <https://building.saccounty.gov/Pages/default.aspx>.

## **Want to skip the hassle of designing your own ADU? Check out our Shelf Ready ADUs!**

Thanks to a grant awarded to the County by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (Local Early Action Planning "LEAP" Grant), the County has a selection of detached ADU plans available for use on any property eligible for an ADU.

The "Shelf Ready" ADU plans offered through the program include a 460-square foot studio/one bedroom unit, an 870-square foot two-bedroom unit, a 1,000 square-foot two-bedroom unit, and a 1,184 square-foot three-bedroom unit. For more details, visit <https://building.saccounty.gov/pages/adu.aspx>.

## **What fees should I expect for a new ADU?**

Fees for ADUs are project specific and can vary significantly from site to site. Further, fees can come not only from the County, but from other agencies involved in the building process, such as the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District (SMUD), water districts, and local fire departments.

For any project, you should expect to pay for building permit fees and development impact fees. For information on building permit fees, you can contact Building Permits and Inspection (BPI) Division at (916) 875-5296. For an estimate of applicable development impact fees, you may contact the Site Improvement and Permits Section (SIPS) of County Engineering for assistance. For information on how to request a development impact fee estimate, visit this page: <https://engineering.saccounty.net/sips/Pages/Development-Impact-Fees.aspx>.

## **I'd like to Learn More about Requirements for Solar Panels, Utility Service Requirements, and Other Topics.**

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has developed a helpful booklet that provides a thorough FAQ of developing ADUs and JADUs in California. The booklet is available by going to [www.hcd.ca.gov](http://www.hcd.ca.gov), choosing 'Policy & Research,' and then 'Accessory Dwelling Units'.

**For more information, please contact Planning and Environmental Review (PER) staff at [sacplan@saccounty.gov](mailto:sacplan@saccounty.gov) or go to the PER website: <https://planning.saccounty.gov>.**