



Community Development
Department
Planning Division
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SUNNYVALE HOMEOWNERS: INTERESTED IN BUILDING AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT?

An Accessory Dwelling Unit **ADU** (also known as a granny flat, in-law unit, or second unit) is a small dwelling unit that is located on the same property as a single-family dwelling.

Why Do People Build ADUs?

- To supplement their income.
- 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 provide an affordable housing option for friends, colleagues, or anyone seeking rental housing.

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 or speak with a planner on duty at the One-Stop Permit Center.
- For any additional questions on building and utility requirements, permits and fees, contact Planning Building Staff at (408) 730-7444.

ADU OPTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Site-built vs. “pre-fab” or manufactured ADUs
- Attached vs. Detached vs. Conversion 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](https://www.sunnyvale.gov/housing)

ADU RESOURCES:

[State of California ADU Website](https://www.sunnyvale.gov/housing)

NUMBER OF ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Only one ADU is allowed on lots that meet the requirements. ADUs are only allowed on lots with a single-family home.

OWNER OCCUPANCY

At least one of the homeowners must live in the main house or in the ADU if the ADU remains on the property.

PLANNING DIVISION REQUIREMENTS

The Planning Division reviews all accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to ensure they comply with size, location, design and other requirements of the Sunnyvale Municipal Code. The required permit is a Miscellaneous Plan Permit (MPP). Please refer to SMC 19.68.040 for the complete zoning regulations.

SUMMARY OF THE ZONING REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL ADUs:

- Detached ADUs must not be in front of the main residence.
- The entrance to the ADU and the entrance to the primary dwelling unit must not be on the same wall plane facing the public street; however, if the entrance to the ADU is above the first floor, it must not be on the same building side as the entrance to the primary dwelling unit.
- Exterior materials, colors, design and appearance of an ADU must be consistent with the primary dwelling unit on the same lot.
- A deed restriction must be recorded requiring the property to be owner-occupied as long as the ADU remains on the property (see sidebar).
- All applicable zoning development standards (i.e. height, setbacks, lot coverage, etc.) apply.

DEED RESTRICTION

Prior to issuance of the building permit, the property owner shall sign and record a deed restriction on the property that states the property shall be owner-occupied from the date of recordation as long as the ADU remains on the property. The deed restriction forms and recordation instructions will be provided by your Project Planner.

REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW OR EXPANDED ADUs

The following is a summary of the zoning requirements for new or expanded ADUs. New or expanded ADUs are those that are proposed as part of a new addition to the primary dwelling or in a new or expanded detached structure.

Allowed Zoning Districts	R-0, R-1, R-2 and Residential DSP Blocks
Minimum Lot Size	6,000 sq. ft. for R-0 zoned lots 8,000 sq. ft. for R-1 zoned lots 5,000 sq. ft. for R-2 and Residential DSP Blocks
ADU Size	150 sq. ft. minimum 700 sq. ft. maximum
ADU Parking	1 additional off-street parking space unless eligible for parking exemption (consult with Planner on duty)
Additional Design Standards	1,000 sq. ft. open space minimum for R-2 lots

CONVERTING GARAGES TO ADUs

Replacement parking for the primary dwelling unit is required when a garage is converted to an ADU. The replacement parking spaces must be located on the same lot. A design review process may be required for applications involving proposed covered replacement parking related to ADU conversions.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ADU CONVERSIONS

The following is a summary of the zoning requirements for converting existing floor area into an ADU. Conversions must be entirely within an existing legal structure (as part of the primary dwelling unit or in an existing detached structure).

Allowed Zoning Districts	R-0, R-1, R-1.5, R-1.7/PD, R-2, or Residential DSP Blocks
Minimum Lot Size	No minimum
ADU Size	150 sq. ft. minimum
ADU Parking	None (replacement parking is required for garage conversions, see sidebar on previous page)
Additional Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The existing floor area to be converted to an ADU must be contained within a legal and permitted structure.• Sufficient side and rear setback is required for fire safety. Consult with Fire Protection Division staff.• Minimal exterior changes allowed (mainly related to building egress).

For information regarding FAR, Lot Coverage, Setbacks, Height and more, refer to this handout: [THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ADDITIONS, NEW CONSTRUCTION OF SINGLE-FAMILY/DUPLEX HOMES](#)

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PLANNING DIVISION REVIEW

Application signed by the property owner (1 copy)

- Site Plan showing the location of the accessory dwelling unit, primary dwelling unit, required parking and property lines (2 copies)
- Floor plans for primary dwelling unit and/or accessory structure (2 copies)
- Architectural Elevations (2 copies)
- Photos of existing structures on-site (1 copy)

Fee (non-refundable) _____

BUILDING PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

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

- **Fire Sprinkler System** is not required for a detached ADU so long as the primary building does not have an existing fire sprinkler system. A Fire sprinkler system is required if the new attached ADU's living space is greater than 50% of the existing building's living space.
- **Utility Hookups** are not required for ADU conversions; however, a utility fee may be required for new or expanded ADUs. New attached ADU may connect to the existing drain system. If both main house and ADU exceed 3 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 ADUs.
- **100amp Subpanel** with a readily accessible disconnecting means is minimum requirement for new ADUs. Existing primary residence shall have a minimum of 200amp main electrical panel to accommodate new ADU 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 HR Fire Rated Construction Wall** is required between attached ADU (conversion and addition) and the primary residence. Detached ADU located less than 5' from primary building or from any property line shall be fire rated construction. If an interior door is proposed between the main building and the attached ADU, such door shall be 1 HR fire rated, self-closing and self-latching.

Transportation Impact Fee (TIF) is required for all ADUs 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 ADU shall not pass thru existing primary building. Note: Gas and water lines may pass thru existing primary building with separate shut off valves. so long as existing gas and water lines are sized adequately to accommodate new BTU's and water flow demand. Verify with PG&E to make sure existing gas meter is capable of servicing additional BTU demands.