



Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

General Information and Standards

Basic Requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are allowed on any residentially-zoned property within the City of Santa Cruz when built alongside an existing or proposed Single Family Home. Currently, ADUs are not permitted on properties with multiple dwelling units (duplex, triplex, etc.)
 - ADUs are allowed in the following zone districts:
 - RS-1A, RS-2A, RS-5A, RS-10A
 - R-1-5, R-1-7, R-1-10
 - R-L, R-M, R-H
 - R-T(A), R-T(B), and R-T(D)
 - [What's my zoning?](#)
- ADUs can be created by building a new structure (New Construction Detached ADU), building an addition to a Single-Family Home (New Construction Attached ADU), or by converting any existing legal structure such as a garage, workshop, or guest house (Conversion ADU).
- Only one ADU is allowed per parcel.
- Properties with ADUs cannot be used for Short-Term Vacation Rentals.
- No parking is required for an ADU, and parcels with an ADU are not required to provide any covered parking for the primary home. The number of parking spaces required for the primary home is not changed, and parcels must maintain or improve any existing substandard parking arrangement.
- ADUs require a Building Permit and inspections. No public hearing or discretionary planning permit is required and these permits cannot be appealed.
- All ADUs are required to meet an additional Green Building requirement, based on size and type of construction, beyond what is required for single-family homes.
- Properties with ADUs must be occupied by a property owner*, and require a Land Use Agreement that is recorded on the deed of the property stating this restriction.
- Properties with ADUs are not eligible to participate in the City's Short-Term Vacation Rental Program – the ADU is intended to provide long-term housing for a household member, family, or tenant.
- Additional standards apply to [sub-standard lots](#) (lots that are smaller than required for the zone district, or less than 50' wide).

*Occupancy

The property owner or an adult member of the property owner's immediate family, (limited to the property owner's spouse, adult children, parents, siblings), must occupy either the primary home or accessory dwelling unit as their principal place of residence.

- Exceptions may be granted by the City Council for a temporary period of up to two years, with the option of a one-year extension, on a case-by-case basis. The exception to this requirement would allow both units to be rented, with a requirement that one of the units be rented to an income-qualified Low-Income household.



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- When the allowed rental period ends, the property owner and/or the property owner's immediate family member, must reoccupy the property or cease renting one of the units, or sell the property to a buyer who will reside on the property. A fee for such a request shall be in an amount established by resolution by the city council.

[ADU Code Section 24.16.100 et seq.](#)

Standards for New Construction Detached ADUs

If you are building a new, stand-alone structure as an ADU the following zoning standards apply:

- New Construction Detached ADUs may be up to 10% of the net lot area of the parcel. ([definition of net lot area](#))
- No more than 30% of the rear setback required for the primary home may be covered with structures. (Varies by zone district – in R-1-5 this setback is 20' from the property line)
- Single-story ADUs may be up to 15' tall at the peak, and shall not extend above and beyond the daylight plane having a height of seven feet at each side or rear property line and extending into the property at an angle of forty-five degrees.
- Single-story ADUs must be setback a minimum of 3' from the side and rear property lines.
- The distance between buildings on the same lot must be a minimum of 6'.
- ADUs higher than one story may be up to 22' tall at the peak.
- ADUs constructed above a garage shall provide side and rear yard setbacks of at least 5'.
- All other ADUs higher than one story must provide side setbacks of at least 5' and rear setbacks of at least 10'.
- If any portion of the ADU is located in front of the Primary Home, then the front and side yard setbacks are the same as those required for single-family homes in the zoning district.
- Detached New Construction ADUs higher than one story shall limit the major access stairs, decks, entry doors, and windows to the interior of the lot, an alley, or the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail if applicable. Windows that impact the privacy of the neighboring side or rear yards should be minimized.

Standards for New Construction Attached ADUs

If you are building an ADU as addition to your existing primary home the following zoning standards apply:

- New Construction Attached ADUs may be up to 10% of the net lot area of the parcel, not to exceed 50% of the habitable area of the primary home. ([definition of net lot area](#))
- All site standards that apply to the primary home (height, setbacks, floor area ratio), based on the zoning district, shall apply to the ADU.
- Attached ADUs may be located on the first, second, or third story of a home, as allowed based on the zone district.
- The ADU must be built to comply with current zoning standards, even if the existing home is non-conforming.



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Standards for Conversion ADUs

If you are building an ADU by converting any legal structure or portion of a structure built prior to 2017, the following zoning standards apply:

- Conversion ADUs can be created from part of the existing primary home, from an existing garage, or other legal structure
 - Legal structures are ones that were either built with permits or that predate the requirement for building permits and are legally non-conforming.
- Structures being converted may be partially or fully reconstructed and continue to qualify as a Conversion ADU.
- A Conversion ADU may be up to 1,200 sf regardless of lot size.
- Structures being converted may be expanded by up to 120 sf of floor area, not to exceed a total floor area of 1,200 sf. Expansion areas must conform with setback and lot coverage standards that apply to New Construction ADUs.
- Structures being converted may be expanded by up to 2' of height, not to exceed 15' for a single story ADU, or 22' for a more than one story ADU.
- Current zoning site standards do not apply to Conversion ADUs because they are reusing existing structures.

Substandard Lots

When a **New Construction ADU** is proposed on a substandard residential lot, the following design standards shall apply to the proposed structure and site plan. A Substandard Lot, as defined in [Section 24.22.520](#), is any parcel that is smaller than the required square footage for the zone district or less than the minimum width required for the zone district (i.e. for a lot zoned R-1-5, a substandard lot would be smaller than 5,000sf, or less than 50' wide):

- The maximum allowable lot coverage for all structures shall be forty-five percent. Lot coverage shall include the footprints of the first floor, garage (attached and detached), decks and porches (greater than thirty inches in height and not cantilevered), and any second-story cantilevered projection (enclosed or open) beyond two and one-half feet. Decks under thirty inches in height or fully cantilevered with no vertical support posts do not count toward lot coverage for this purpose. Second-story enclosed cantilevered areas that project less than thirty inches from the building wall do not count toward lot coverage. For such areas that project more than thirty inches from the building wall, only the floor area that projects more than thirty inches shall be counted as lot coverage.
- The floor area for all second stories shall not exceed fifty percent of the first floor area for all structures, except in cases where the first floor area of the structure to which a second story is being added constitutes thirty percent or less of the net lot area.
- Continuous long walls parallel to the side property line with narrow side yards shall be minimized.
- Landscaping shall be required at least for front yard areas.



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- Structures, landscaping or other features shall incorporate methods to lessen the visibility of garages on a street facade.
- When an attached **New Construction** accessory dwelling unit is proposed on a substandard lot in conjunction with a new single-family home, a Design Permit shall be required per Section 24.08.440.