



INFORMATIONAL HANDOUT

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) – Residential Zoning

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), also known as “secondary dwelling units” or “in-law units,” are attached or detached units that are subordinate to a primary dwelling on the same lot. ADUs include separate, independent, and permanent facilities for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation.

Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs) are smaller units converted out of existing space in a single-family home that have an efficiency kitchen but may share bathroom facilities with the main home.

This informational handout is designed to help provide **general** guidance on the City’s requirements pertaining to ADUs and JADUs. Please note, the Alameda Municipal Code (AMC) and State law take precedence over this handout in any case of conflicting information.

For questions, contact the Planning Division at (510) 747-6805 or Planning@alamedaca.gov

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

Applications must be submitted online using the Accela Citizen Access portal at Alameda.gov/aca. Please review ([ADU APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTAL](#)) prior to submitting your application.

Steps to getting a Building Permit for an ADU

1. If the demolition of a garage/structure is required:
 - a. For a pre-1942 garage/structure apply for a Certificate of Approval from the Planning Division. Once approved, apply for a separate building demolition permit at the Permit Center.
 - b. If the garage/structure is not pre-1942, apply for a building demolition permit at the Permit Center
2. If project includes construction of an addition above the first story, raise of the primary residential building to create habitable space, or other alterations to the primary building that are not exempt under Design Review:
 - a. Apply for a Design Review planning entitlement from the Planning Division. Once approved, incorporate the resulting Decision Letter into the Building Permit plans. *

3. Apply for an ADU permit from the Building Division at the Permit Center, by submitting a building permit pre-application through the Accela Citizens Portal
4. If applicable, apply concurrently for solar, electrical main panel upgrade, new electrical meter and encroachment permits.
5. Provide the completed [ADU Zoning Checklist](#) with your application
6. Junior ADUs Only: Record a Declaration of Restrictions at the Alameda County Recorder's Office
7. Begin construction once a permit is issued
8. Call for building inspections
9. Receive a Certificate of Occupancy

***Concurrent Review.** The processing of a Ministerial Design Review Permit and Building Permit at the same time is referred to as concurrent review. ADU applications are eligible for concurrent review of the Ministerial Design Review Permit and Building Permit.

UTILITIES

New or separate utility connections may be required for an ADU. It is strongly recommended to contact the utility agencies early in the planning stage when considering an ADU to understand the requirements, fees, and estimated timeline for electric, gas, water, and sewer service.

- Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E-gas only)
- Alameda Municipal Power (AMP-electrical only)
- East Bay Municipal (EBMUD)

NEW FLOOR AREA

The following development regulations apply to all proposed ADUs.

	Attached ADU	Detached ADU
Maximum Size	1,200 square-feet	1,200 square-feet
Maximum Building Height	25', or the max. building height of the underlying zoning district, whichever is lower	18 feet ¹ 20 feet if the roof pitch matches the primary dwelling
Minimum Setbacks	4' side and rear yard. Minimum front yard setback of primary dwelling. ²	

(1) On lots located within the special flood hazard area, as defined by FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), the height of a detached accessory dwelling unit may exceed eighteen (18') feet by the minimum amount necessary, as determined by the Building Official and City Engineer, to allow:

- i. A finished floor of the habitable space at one (1') foot above the Base Flood Elevation shown on the FIRM; and
- ii. Up to eight (8') feet in vertical clearance from the finished floor to ceiling within the habitable space; and
- iii. A roof pitch that matches the roof pitch of the primary dwelling unit

(2) A setback of four (4') feet from the side and rear lot lines shall be required for an accessory dwelling unit that is not

converted from an existing structure or new structure constructed in the same location and to the same dimensions as an existing structure

***Notwithstanding subsection (2) above, the side and rear yard setbacks may be reduced to zero (0') feet if all of the following conditions are met:*

- i. The detached ADU is located seventy-five (75') feet or more from the front property line and, if applicable, five (5') feet from the street side of a corner lot;*
- ii. The portion of the neighboring lot(s) that adjoin the detached ADU is not within seventy-five (75') feet of the neighboring lots' front property line(s);*
- iii. All construction within three (3') feet of the property line, including eaves and similar architectural features, is one (1) hour fire resistive as required by the Alameda Building Code or as approved by the Building Official.*
- iv. Notwithstanding subsection (a), the detached ADU is not more than sixteen (16') feet in height; and*
- v. The detached ADU will not cover more than sixty (60%) percent of the minimum required rear yard as prescribed by the subject zoning district, with a minimum allowed coverage area of six hundred (600) square feet. This requirement shall not apply to an accessory dwelling unit constructed in the same location and to the same dimensions as an existing accessory structure that is converted to an accessory dwelling unit.*

CONVERSION OF EXISTING FLOOR AREA

The following development regulations apply to an ADU that is proposed from converting existing floor area, except that a small addition of up to 150 square feet shall be allowed on an accessory structure if necessary for ingress or egress for the ADU.

- ***Maximum Size of Conversion.*** 1,200 sq. ft. per ADU.
- ***Maximum Building Height of Conversion.*** For conversion of space within the primary dwelling, the standards of the underlying zoning district apply, for conversion of accessory structures, maximum height may not exceed 18 ft., unless the roof form matches the primary dwelling roof form, in which case the height may not exceed 20 ft., except on lots within a FEMA flood zone.
- ***Minimum Setbacks of Conversion.*** No setbacks required for an ADU located within the existing living area or an existing accessory structure, or an ADU that replaces an existing structure and is in the same location and to the same dimensions (including height) as the structure being replaced.

OTHER ADU REGULATIONS

The following regulations apply to all proposed ADUs:

1. ***Maximum Number of ADUs.*** One ADU and one JADU are permitted on a lot with an existing or proposed single-family dwelling.¹ On a lot with existing multifamily dwellings, any number of ADUs are permitted within portions of the existing building so long as they're compliant with state building standards. In addition, two ADUs detached from the primary dwellings are permitted on a multi-family lot.
2. ***Fire Sprinklers.*** The installation of fire sprinklers shall not be required for an ADU if fire sprinklers are not required for the primary dwelling unit.

3. ***Historic Property.*** An ADU that involves exterior modifications to structures listed in the

California Register of Historical Resources shall be designed and constructed in conformance with the objective standards for preservation provided in the Secretary of the Department of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

4. **Owner Occupancy.** Owner occupancy is not required for either the primary dwelling unit or the ADU. Owner occupancy requirements do apply to JADUs.
5. **Separate Entrance.** The ADU shall provide at least one exterior entrance that is separate from the main entrance of the primary dwelling.
6. **Separate Address.** The ADU shall provide a separate address from the primary dwelling. For attached ADUs and ADUs resulting from conversion of existing space, the location of the entrance must not be on a street facing frontage.
7. **Parking.** No additional parking spaces required for an ADU. Additionally, no replacement parking is required when a garage, carport, or covered parking structure is demolished in conjunction with the construction of an ADU or converted into an ADU.
8. **Short-term rental.** An ADU shall not be rented for a term of less than 30 days.

¹ Unless otherwise qualified for more under State law.

JUNIOR ADU (JADU)

The following development regulations apply to Junior ADUs (JADUs). An application for a home addition is allowed to be processed concurrently as a JADU, in compliance with the development regulations for JADUs and the Alameda Municipal Code.

1. **Maximum Number of JADUs.** One JADU is permitted per single-family property.
2. **Maximum Size.** A JADU is limited to a maximum size of 500 square feet and is contained entirely within a single-family residence, including an attached garage.
3. **Separate Entrance.** A JADU shall provide at least one exterior entrance that is separate from the main entrance of the single-family residence, and is not located on a street facing frontage.
4. **Separate Address.** A JADU shall provide a separate address from the single-family residence.
5. **Owner Occupancy.** Owner occupancy in the single-family residence in which the JADU will be permitted is required. The owner of the single-family residence may occupy either the remaining portion of the structure or the newly created JADU. Owner occupancy shall not be required if the owner is another governmental agency, land trust, or housing organization.
6. **Sale Limitations.** A JADU shall not be sold or otherwise conveyed separately from the primary dwelling except as allowed pursuant to Government Code Section 65852.26,

7. ***Short-term rental.*** A JADU shall not be rented for a term of less than 30 days.

Pre-Approved ADU Applications

The City of Alameda preapproved plans for detached ADUs that are submitted by designers, architects, buildings and other qualified professionals. Property owners may review preapproved plans for ADUs on the City’s website. Property owners wishing to submit an application for an ADU using preapproved plans will be subject to review of site-specific development standards and may not alter the preapproved plans to meet site-specific requirements.

1. Use the [City’s website](#) to identify a set of preapproved plans.
2. Contact the designer and work with them to apply for a Building Permit, following the steps in “How to Submit Your Application”, above.
3. For Registered Design Professionals interested in applying to have plans preapproved – See [Preapproved ADU Checklist](#).