



Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Standards and Requirements

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[San Mateo Municipal Code Chapter 27.19 \(Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units\)](#) establishes the development standards and requirements for ADUs and JADUs. This Ordinance went into effect on April 22, 2022. The approval process for compliant ADUs and JADUs is ministerial, with only a building permit and related permits required; a planning application with public notification is not required.

General Requirements

- ADUs are permitted on residential zoned lots and lots with existing single-family dwellings.
- JADUs are permitted within the walls of a single-family dwelling.
- ADUs and JADUs must provide a separate exterior entrance.
 - Interior access to the primary dwelling may be required for a JADU that shares a bathroom and/or access to shared utilities (such as HVAC controls)..
- Both ADUs and JADUs are prohibited from being short-term rentals (less than 30 days) and cannot be sold separately from the primary dwelling. JADUs are also subject to owner occupancy on the premises if one of the units is rented out.
- ADUs and JADUs that meet all applicable standards only require a ministerial building permit.
- ADUs that do not meet all of these requirements can seek approval under an alternative discretionary review process. The Zoning Administrator is the decisionmaker for this discretionary review process and will take action based on the findings contained in [SMMC Section 27.19.045](#). Public notification is required prior to final action and the Zoning Administrator's decision can be appealed to the Planning Commission/City Council.

ADU Development Standards

- **Definition:** An ADU is an attached or a detached residential dwelling unit that provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons with permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation, and is located on a lot with an existing or proposed primary residence.
- **Maximum Unit Size:** No maximum size for attached or detached units. Up to 800 square feet is exempt from a lot's floor area ratio (FAR), for larger ADUs, the maximum unit size is set by the FAR of the underlying zoning district. An ADU must also be smaller than the primary dwelling unit.
- **Maximum Height:**
 - Attached ADU - 24 feet to top plateline and 32 feet to roof peak, as measured from existing grade.
 - Detached ADU - 16 feet to top plateline and 24 feet to roof peak, as measured from existing grade.
- **Setbacks:**
 - Front Yard – As required in the underlying zoning district.
 - Side and Rear Yards – Minimum of four feet from side and rear lot lines.
- **Daylight Plane:** All ADUs shall be within a daylight plan, which starts at a height of 12 feet and extends into the parcel at a 45-degree angle, from the nearest side and rear property lines.

- **Parking Requirements:** One off-street parking space (10 ft x 18 ft) is required for a new ADU. Parking may be provided in a garage, carport, uncovered, or tandem space. Uncovered parking can be located within a setback area. On-site parking may be waived if one of the following criteria are met:
 - ADU is within one-half mile walking distance of public transit;
 - ADU is located within a significant architectural or historic district;
 - ADU is within an existing or proposed legally permitted primary residence or an existing legally permitted accessory structure;
 - If there are permits required for on-street parking in the area that are not offered to the ADU occupant;
 - If the ADU is within one block of a car share location.

JADU Development Standards

- **Definition:** A JADU is a unit that is contained entirely within an existing or proposed single-family residence, including conversion of attached garages. JADUs cannot be located in detached accessory structures.
- **Maximum Unit Size:** Maximum size for JADUs is 500 square feet.
- **Design Standards:**
 - Off-street parking is not required, but is encouraged.
 - The cooking facility shall meet efficiency kitchen requirements (as defined by the California Building Code).
 - A bathroom may be provided within the unit or shared with the primary residence.

ADUs on Multi-Family Properties

Lots with existing or proposed multi-family dwellings (excluding individual ownership units, such as condominiums), pursuant to [Government Code Section 66323](#), may develop ADUs utilizing the following options:

- Up to eight detached ADUs on a lot with an existing multi-family building of two or more attached units, provided that the number of ADUs does not exceed the number of units on the lot and the ADU is smaller than the primary unit.
- Up to two detached ADUs on a lot with a proposed multifamily dwelling of two or more attached units.
- At least one ADU within an existing multi-family building, and up to 25 percent of the existing dwelling units, when converting existing area that is not used as livable space.
- ADUs on a multi-family lot are subject to compliance with development standards outlined above.

Other Standards and Considerations

- For detached ADUs, the City may require a new or separate utility connections. The new connection may be subject to a connection fee or capacity charges based on ADU size or number of fixtures.
- ADUs and JADUs will be assigned separate addresses prior to permit issuance.
- **Fire Sprinklers** – Verify requirements with the Fire Marshal.
 - If the main house has fire sprinklers, sprinklers may be required for the ADU.
 - When there are no sprinklers in the main home, sprinklers are generally not required for an ADU or JADU. However, while ADU or JADU construction alone shall not be a trigger for requiring sprinklers in the primary residence, if additional work is proposed to the main home this may trigger sprinkler requirements for both the main home and proposed ADU or JADU.
 - Where site specific conditions exist, (such as driveway length for fire access, insufficient hydrant coverage or water flow, etc.) additional mitigation may be required by the Fire Marshal to meet fire safety requirements. In this case, providing fire sprinklers in the ADU may be one option to meet requirements.
- Newly constructed detached ADUs are subject to the Energy Code requirement to provide solar panels if the unit is newly constructed and non-manufactured. The panels can be installed on the ADU or on the primary dwelling unit.
- Permitting fees are applied by the City's adopted fee schedule. Note that School District Developer Impact fees may also apply.