



# ADU Ordinance Updates Community Webinar

Community Development Department

Thursday, September 25, 2025

# Translation Information

This presentation and the following question and answer session will be in English.  
if you speak another language, please contact us after the webinar and we will connect you with a bilingual staff member who can answer your questions.

Esta presentación y la siguiente sesión de preguntas y respuestas serán en inglés.  
Si habla otro idioma, contáctenos después del seminario web y lo conectaremos con un miembro que habla su idioma para responder sus preguntas.

本次研讨会以及随后的问答环节将以英语进行。如果您说其他语言，请在网络研讨会结束后与我们联系，我们会安排一位双语工作人员回答您的问题。



[planning@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:planning@cityofsanmateo.org)



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# Meeting Purpose

Provide an overview of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and State Law context

Share the City's proposed ADU Ordinance updates

Answer questions & community conversation during Q&A

Connect participants with resources for learning more or exploring an ADU project

# Agenda

- Introduction Poll
- Staff Presentation
  - ADU Background
  - Regulatory Context
  - Proposed Updates to local ADU Ordinance
- Questions and Comments
  - Use Q&A feature on Zoom to ask questions any time. All questions will be answered at the end during Q&A, with option to ask questions live
- Next Steps and Additional ADU Information

# Questions & Comments

Use Q&A box to type questions or comments at any time. Staff will be monitoring the Q&A list, and all questions will be addressed at the end of the presentation.

We will have dedicated time at the end for Q&A where participants can also use the “raise hand” feature to be called up to speak if you prefer to ask a question live.

# Introduction Poll



# What is an ADU?

An **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)** is a separate, self-contained home on a property with an existing primary unit. ADUs must have their own exterior entrance, bathroom, kitchen, and area for living and sleeping.



# What is a JADU?

A **Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit** (JADU) is a special type of conversion ADU. JADUs are only allowed on single-family properties, and cannot be more than 500 square feet in size. JADUs must have their own exterior entrance, kitchen, and living/sleeping area, but may share a bathroom with the main home. They must be located within the walls of a single-family home or attached garage, and require a deed restriction for owner-occupancy.





# ADU Questions Poll



# Other ADU Resources



[smcadu.org](https://smcadu.org)

# ADU Regulatory Framework



## State Law

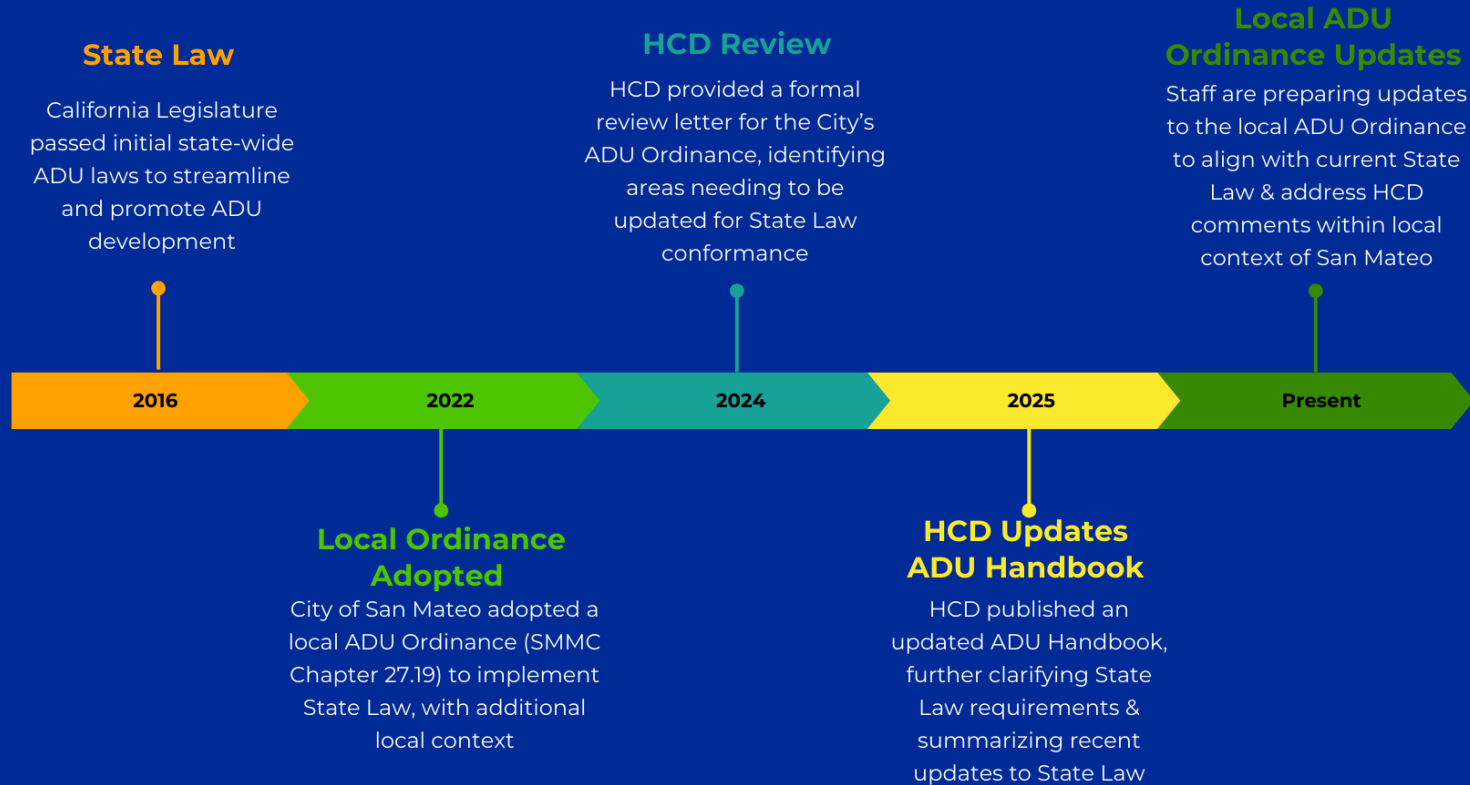
- California State Legislature establishes state-wide ADU laws
- HCD has authority to enforce State ADU Laws & review local ordinances for compliance



## Local ADU Ordinance

- San Mateo adopted a local ADU Ordinance in 2022
- Builds upon State Law to regulate ADU development in the City
- Currently being updated to reflect changes to State Law and local needs

# Background



# ADU Ordinance Updates



Changes to Address HCD Comments for State Law Compliance



Additional Local Changes to Address Community Needs

# ADU Ordinance Updates

## State Law Compliance

- Minor updates to ensure all design standards are fully objective.
- Update JADU maximum size to 500 square feet
- Clarify JADU interior access is only required for shared bathroom or utility controls
- Update to align number of ADUs allowed with State Law



# ADU Ordinance Updates

## Additional Local Standards

Height Limit for Detached ADUs

ADU Maximum Unit Size

Parking Exemptions for ADUs

Ministerial Approval and Objective Standards

# Height Limit for Detached ADUs

## State Law Context

- Must allow detached ADUs up to 16 feet, or up to 18 feet (plus two feet to allow for matching roof pitch to existing dwelling) for detached ADUs near transit or on multistory multifamily lots
- Must allow two-story detached ADUs
- State law only regulates total height (not plate vs. roof peak)



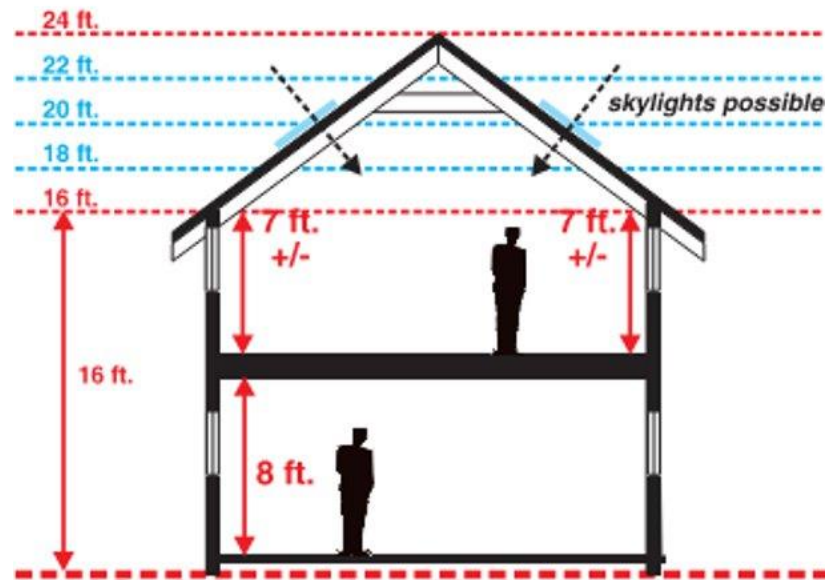


# Height Limit for Detached ADUs

## Local Context

- Current Standard – 16 feet to top wall plate and 24 feet to roof peak
- Proposed Update – 18 feet to top wall plate and 24 feet to roof peak

All measured from existing grade

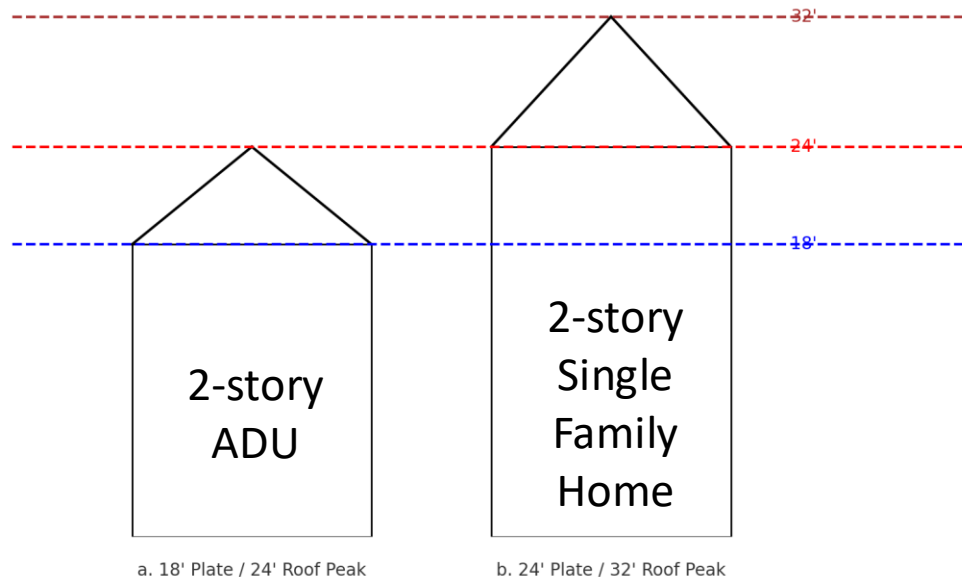


# Height Limit for Detached ADUs

## R1 Context

- Single Family residential can be up to 24 feet to top wall plate and 32 feet to roof peak
- Two-story ADUs would remain lower-scale than two-story single-family residential

Proposed Maximum Detached ADU Heights



# ADU Maximum Unit Size

## State Law Context

- ADUs of at least 800 square feet with 4-foot setbacks are allowed by-right
- Must allow ADUs of at least:
  - 850 square feet for studio and one-bedroom ADUs
  - 1,000 square feet for ADU with more than one bedroom



# ADU Maximum Unit Size

## Local Context

- Current Standard – No specific maximum size.
  - ADU size is regulated by Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Up to 800 square feet of ADU area is exempt from total FAR.
  - ADU cannot be larger than primary unit.
- Proposed Updates – No change to existing FAR regulations and up to 800 square foot ADU exemption.



# Parking Exemptions for ADUs

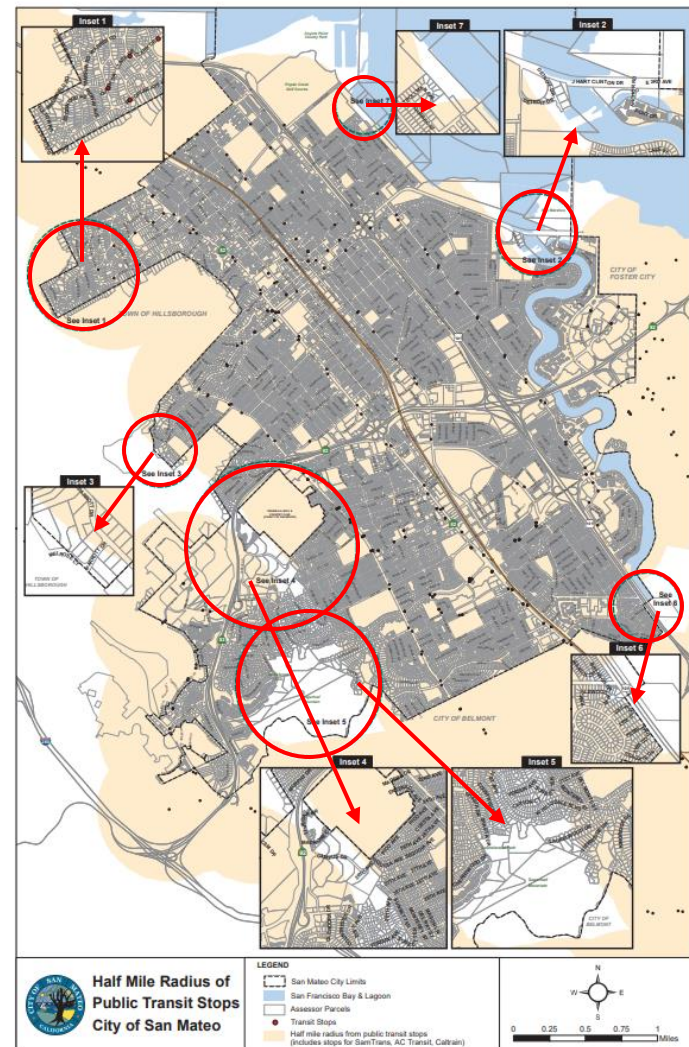
## State Law Context

- When parking is required for an ADU, may not exceed one space per unit or per bedroom, whichever is less.
- No parking required when parking is demolished or converted to an ADU
- No parking required for ADUs:
  - Within 1/2 mile walking distance of public transit
  - Within an architecturally and historically significant historic district
  - That are part of the proposed or existing primary residence or an accessory structure
  - When on-street parking permits are required but not offered to the occupant of the ADU
  - When there is a car share vehicle located within one block of the ADU
  - When a permit application for an ADU is submitted with a permit application to create a new single-family dwelling or a new multifamily dwelling on the same lot, provided that the ADU or the parcel satisfies any other criteria listed above.



# Parking Exemptions for ADUs

Map shows areas within ½ mile of transit stops. Areas shaded in tan are currently exempt from ADU parking standards



# Parking Exemptions for ADUs

## Local Context

- Current Standard – Minimum of one standard-sized off-street parking space for each ADU is required.
  - ADU parking can be covered or uncovered, may be in tandem configuration.
  - Exemptions to providing off-street parking are also provided pursuant to State law
- Proposed Updates – Eliminate all required off-street parking for ADUs citywide.
  - Clarify that voluntary parking is allowed and encouraged
  - Allow existing driveways and curb cuts to remain even when a garage or carport is converted or demolished for an ADU

# Ministerial Approval and Objective Standards

## State Law Context

- Ministerial approval is required when an ADU meets State law requirements.
- A local agency may apply objective standards on ADUs.





# Ministerial Approval and Objective Standards

## **Local Context**

- Current Standard – Two paths for ADU review:
  - 1) Ministerial Review – for ADUs that meet development standards of the Ordinance
  - 2) Accessory Dwelling Unit Discretionary Review (ADUDR) – alternative option for any ADU that does not meet the development standards of the ADU Ordinance
- Proposed Updates – Update development standards to all be objective. Keep ADUDR process as an option for ADU designs that do not meet all objective standards.

# ADUDR Summary

ADUDR Applications 2022-Present	
Total Submittals	19
ADUDR Approved	10
ADUDR Withdrawn	7
Under Review	2

## Reasons for seeking ADUDR

- Addition to existing accessory structure within 4-foot setbacks
- Two-story ADU exceeding 16-foot plate height
- New detached ADU with a second story balcony



# Objective Standard Updates

## Second Story Decks and Balconies

- Current Standard – All second-story decks & balconies require ADUDR.
- Proposed Update – Allow smaller second-story decks & balconies ministerially when:
  - No portion of the deck or balcony shall be within setbacks of the underlying zoning district.
  - Deck or balcony does not exceed 50 square feet

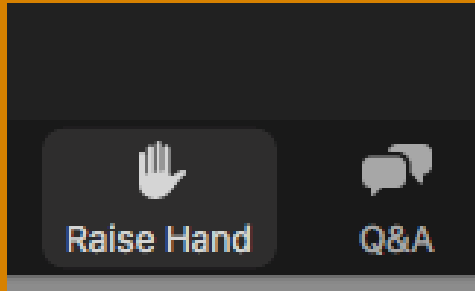


# Process Overview & Next Steps



# Questions & Comments

On Zoom use Q&A box to type a question, or raise hand if you want to ask a question live.



If you've joined by dial-in on your phone, press \*9 to raise or lower your hand.



# Other ADU Resources



**ADU Resource Center  
San Mateo County**



**smcadu.org**



**City of San Mateo  
ADU Info & Resources**



# Thank You!

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