This Information Bulletin provides guidance on City of San Diego requirements for obtaining a Building Permit to construct Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADU). General Regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units and/or Junior Accessory Dwelling Units can be found in San Diego Municipal Code Chapter 14, Article 1, Division 3.

EDITOR’S NOTE

The regulations and guidelines outlined below are not effective within the Coastal Overlay Zone. The regulations and guidelines outlined below will become effective within the Coastal Overlay Zone when the California Coastal Commission unconditionally certifies Ordinance No. NS O-21254.

For Coastal Overlay Zone Projects applying prior to California Coastal Commission certification, refer to the legacy version of the San Diego Municipal Code located here.

I. ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU)

A. What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit?

An Accessory Dwelling Unit is an attached or detached residential dwelling unit that is 1,200 square feet in size or less, provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation, and is located on a lot with a proposed or existing single dwelling unit or multiple dwelling units.

B. ADUs Allowable Locations

ADUs are permitted in Zones where Use Regulation Tables identify ADUs as allowable Limited Uses. Generally, ADUs are allowed in Zones that permit Residential Uses.

1. Base Zone Designations - Use Regulation Tables:  
   SDMC Chapter 13, Article 1, Divisions 1 through 7

2. Planned District Ordinance Zone Designations - Use Regulation Tables:  
   SDMC Chapter 15, Articles 2 through 20

3. Find your Zone Designation:  
   Zoning and Parcel Information Portal (ZAPP)  
   Zoning Address Look-Up
C. ADUs Number Allowed

1. Single-Family Zones
A Single-Family Zone is a zone that allows a maximum of one dwelling unit on a single lot.

a. Permitted within Single-Family Zones:
   1 Single Primary Dwelling Unit
   1 Accessory Dwelling Unit
   1 Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit

b. Single-Family Zone Exception for Existing Multi-Dwelling Unit Buildings:
   Within Single-Family Zones, where a legally permitted, previously conforming multi-dwelling unit structure exists, ADUs may be constructed in accordance with the Multi-Family Zone provisions outlined below in C.2 Multi-Family Zones.

c. Other Allowances:
   In addition to the Dwelling Units, Guest Quarters and Non-Habitable Accessory Structures are also allowable.

2. Multi-Family Zones
A Multi-Family Zone is a zone that allows more than one dwelling unit on a single lot.

a. Conversions or Interior Alterations of Existing Structures
   Existing Habitable Area:
   The maximum number of ADUs permitted within the habitable areas of an existing multiple dwelling unit structure is 25% of the total number of existing dwelling units. 1 ADU is permitted where the percentage calculation yields less than 1 ADU.

   Existing Non-habitable Area:
   The number of ADUs permitted within the non-habitable areas of an existing multiple dwelling unit structure is unlimited. Examples include storage rooms, boiler rooms, passageways, attics, basements, and garages.

b. Addition of Floor Area to Existing Structures
   New additional floor area to an existing multiple dwelling unit structure may not be used for the creation of ADUs.

c. Construction of New Detached Structures
   A maximum of 2 detached ADUs are permitted on premises with an existing multiple dwelling unit structure. The 2 ADUs may be within one structure or two separate structures.

d. Multi-Family Zones with an existing Single Dwelling Unit Building
   Within Multi-Family Zones, where a legally permitted single-dwelling unit structure exists, the premises may construct ADUs in accordance with the Multi-Family Zone provisions outlined above in C.2.a through c.

   The premises may construct the ADU(s) without a requirement to construct any other additional standard dwelling units.
D. ADU Size Regulations
1. The minimum gross floor area for an attached or detached ADU is 150 square feet.

2. The maximum gross floor area for an attached or detached ADU is 1,200 square feet.

3. The gross floor area of an ADU is included in the total gross floor area of a premises.

4. An ADU may exceed the total gross floor area of a premises, however the ADU shall be limited to a maximum of 800 square feet of gross floor area.

5. Minimum room dimension requirements contained within the California Building Standards Code are applicable.

E. ADU Setback Regulations
1. Conversions or Interior Alterations of Existing Structures
   Where an existing structure is converted to an ADU, the ADU may continue to observe the setbacks of the existing structure.

2. Demolition and Reconstruction of Existing Structures
   Where an existing structure is demolished and reconstructed as an ADU, the ADU may continue to observe the setbacks of the original structure. The reconstruction must be at the same location, and to the same dimensions as the original structure.

3. Addition of Floor Area to Existing Structures
   Where an addition to an existing structure is proposed for an ADU, the ADU must observe the Front and Street-Side Setbacks of the Zone. The ADU may encroach into the Side and Rear Setbacks of the Zone, including up to the Property Line.

4. Construction of New Detached Structures
   Where a new structure is proposed as an ADU, the ADU must observe the Front and Street-Side Setbacks of the Zone. The ADU may encroach into the Side and Rear Setbacks of the Zone, including up to the Property Line.

5. ADUs must comply with all requirements in the California Building Standards Code, including requirements for fire separation distance, opening protection, allowable height, and allowable area.

F. ADU Parking Regulations
1. No parking spaces are required for ADUs.

2. The conversion or demolition of a garage, carport, or covered parking structure does not require the replacement of parking spaces.

3. Where off-street parking spaces are provided, parking spaces may be within setback areas, and in any configuration including tandem configurations and mechanical lifts.

4. Where off-street parking spaces are provided, parking spaces must be entirely within the property line of a premises, and must conform to the dimension standards of SDMC Chapter 14, Article 2, Division 5.
G. ADU Other Regulations
   1. The property owner is not required to live on-site.

   2. An ADU may not be leased for a term of less than 31 consecutive days. An ADU may
      not be used for Transient Lodging.

H. ADU Fire Sprinkler Systems
   Reference Technical Bulletin RESD 3-4 for fire sprinkler requirements in ADUs.

I. ADU Solar Photovoltaic Systems
   1. Newly constructed ADUs are subject to the California Energy Code requirement to
      provide solar panels if the unit(s) is a newly constructed, non-manufactured, detached
      ADU. Per the California Energy Commission (CEC), the panels can be installed on the
      ADU or on the primary dwelling unit.

   2. ADUs that are constructed within existing space, or as an addition to existing homes,
      including detached additions where an existing detached building is converted from
      non-residential to residential space, are not subject to the California Energy Code
      requirement to provide solar panels.

J. ADU Bonus Program
   1. For-Lease Affordable Program
      a. Inside of Transit Priority Areas, for every qualifying on-site deed-restricted ADU
         (Table 141-03A), one additional non-deed-restricted bonus ADU is allowed.

      b. Inside of Transit Priority Areas, where a Project proposes qualifying on-site deed-
         restricted ADUs (Table 141-03A), the maximum number of bonus ADUs is
         unlimited.

      c. Outside of Transit Priority Areas, where a Project proposes qualifying on-site deed-
         restricted ADUs (Table 141-03A), the maximum number of bonus ADUs is one.

      D. Reference SDMC 141.0302.b.2.G for program details.

   2. For-Sale Affordable Program
      a. For qualifying 501.c.3 Developers, reference SDMC 141.0302.b.1.B for program
         details.
II. JUNIOR ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (JADU)

A. What is a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit?
A Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU) is a dwelling unit that is 500 square feet or less in size and is contained entirely within an existing or proposed single dwelling unit, attached or detached garage, or attached or detached ADU, on a residential single dwelling unit lot. A JADU may include separate sanitation facilities or may share sanitation facilities with the single dwelling unit.

B. JADUs Allowable Locations
JADUs are permitted in Zones where Use Regulation Tables identify JADUs as allowable Limited Uses. Generally, JADUs are allowed in Single-Family Zones.

1. Base Zone Designations - Use Regulation Tables:
   SDMC Chapter 13, Article 1, Divisions 1 through 7

2. Planned District Ordinance Zone Designations - Use Regulation Tables:
   SDMC Chapter 15, Articles 2 through 20

3. Find your Zone Designation:
   Zoning and Parcel Information Portal (ZAPP)
   Zoning Address Look-Up

C. JADU Number Allowed
1. Single-Family Zones
   A Single-Family Zone is a zone that allows a maximum of one dwelling unit on a single lot.
   a. Permitted within Single-Family Zones:
      1 Single Primary Dwelling Unit
      1 Accessory Dwelling Unit
      1 Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit
   b. 1 JADU may be constructed within an existing or proposed:
      Single Primary Dwelling Unit
      ADU that is attached to a Single Primary Dwelling Unit
      ADU that is detached from a Single Primary Dwelling Unit
      Garage attached to an ADU or Single Primary Dwelling Unit
      Garage detached from an ADU or Single Primary Dwelling Unit
   c. Other Allowances:
      In addition to the Dwelling Units, Guest Quarters and Non-Habitable Accessory Structures are also allowable.

2. Multi-Family Zones
   a. A Multi-Family Zone is a zone that allows more than one dwelling unit on a single lot.
   b. JADUs are not permitted within Multi-Family Zones.
D. JADU Size
1. The minimum gross floor area for a JADU is 150 square feet.
2. The maximum gross floor area for a JADU is 500 square feet.
3. The gross floor area of an JADU is included in the total gross floor area of a premises.
4. Minimum room dimension requirements contained within the California Building Standards Code are applicable.

E. JADU Setback Regulations
1. Conversions or Interior Alterations of Existing Structures
   Where an existing structure is converted to a JADU, the JADU may continue to observe the setbacks of the existing structure.

2. Demolition and Reconstruction of Existing Structures
   Where an existing structure is demolished and reconstructed as an JADU, the JADU may continue to observe the setbacks of the original structure. The reconstruction must be at the same location, and to the same dimensions as the original structure.

3. Addition of Floor Area to Existing Structures
   Where an addition to an existing structure is proposed for a JADU, the JADU must observe the Front and Street-Side Setbacks of the Zone. The JADU may encroach into the Side and Rear Setbacks of the Zone, including up to the Property Line.

4. Construction of New Detached Structures
   Where a new structure is proposed as an JADU, the JADU must observe the Front and Street-Side Setbacks of the Zone. The JADU may encroach into the Side and Rear Setbacks of the Zone, including up to the Property Line.

5. JADUs must comply with all requirements in the California Building Standards Code, including requirements for fire separation distance, opening protection, allowable height, and allowable area.

F. JADU Parking Regulations
1. No parking spaces are required for JADUs.
2. The conversion or demolition of a garage, carport, or covered parking structure does not require the replacement of parking spaces.
3. Where off-street parking spaces are provided, parking spaces may be within setback areas, and in any configuration including tandem configurations and mechanical lifts.
4. Where off-street parking spaces are provided, parking spaces must be entirely within the property line of a premises, and must conform to the dimension standards of SDMC Chapter 14, Article 2, Division 5.
G. JADU Other Regulations
1. A JADU shall have a separate exterior entry from an attached Single Primary Dwelling Unit or attached ADU.
2. A JADU shall provide a separate independent kitchen or efficiency kitchen from a Single Primary Dwelling Unit or ADU.
3. A JADU may include separate independent sanitation facilities or may share sanitation facilities with an attached Single Primary Dwelling Unit or attached ADU.
4. Where a JADU is detached from a Single Primary Dwelling Unit or ADU, the JADU shall provide independent sanitation facilities within the JADU.
5. Where a JADU exists on a premises, the property owner is required to live on-site.
6. The property owner may live in any of the on-site dwelling units.
7. A JADU may not be leased for a term of less than 31 consecutive days. A JADU may not be used for Transient Lodging.

H. JADU Fire Protection Systems
1. Where a primary dwelling unit is provided with a fire sprinkler system, the JADU will be required to install a fire sprinkler system.
2. Where a primary dwelling unit is not provided with a fire sprinkler system, a JADU will not be required to install a fire sprinkler system.

I. JADU Solar Photovoltaic Systems
JADUs are not required to provide a solar photovoltaic system.

J. JADU Agreement Required
Prior to issuance of a Building Permit, an agreement is required that neither the primary dwelling unit nor the junior unit may be sold or conveyed separately and that the record owner shall reside in either the primary dwelling unit, ADU or JADU.
III. PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESS

A. Building Permit Required
   1. A Building Permit is required to create an ADU or JADU. There are no exemptions.

B. Coastal Development Permit Required
   1. A Coastal Development Permit (CDP) is required for the creation of all ADUs within the Coastal Overlay Zone.

   2. The requirement to obtain a CDP for any ADU within the Coastal Overlay Zone is effective until the California Coastal Commission unconditionally certifies NS O-21254.

   3. Upon California Coastal Commission unconditional certification of NS O-21254, certain CDP exemption criteria may apply to qualifying ADU projects. CDP exemption criteria can be found in SDMC Section 126.0704.

   4. The creation of a JADU within the Coastal Overlay Zone does not categorically require a CDP. Qualifying JADU projects within the Coastal Overlay Zone meeting the exemption criteria of SDMC Section 126.0704 may be permitted without a CDP.

C. Submittal Document Requirements
   1. Single Primary Dwelling Units with ADUs or JADUs (R3 Occupancy Classifications):
      Project Submittal Manual Section 2A

   2. Multiple Dwelling Units with ADUs or JADUs (All Other Occupancy Classifications):
      Project Submittal Manual Section 2

Minimum submittal requirements for each ADU or JADU includes the following:

1. Plans / Calculations:
   a. Site Plan and Vicinity Map (See Information Bulletin 122).
   b. Floor Plans and Roof Plans.
   c. Elevations and Sections (as applicable).
   d. Structural plans and details.
   e. Structural calculations and/or truss calculations (as applicable).
   f. Title 24 Energy calculations.

2. Forms:
   a. General Application, DS-3032
   b. Water Meter Data card, DS-16
   c. Storm Water Applicability Checklist, DS-560
IV. FEES
   A. ADU and JADU Fees
      1. For a complete list of all fees that may apply, reference: Information Bulletin 501
      2. ADUs and JADUs are subject to payment of School Fees. For detailed information of when this fee applies, reference: Information Bulletin 146
   B. ADU and JADU Fee Exemptions
      1. ADUs and JADUs are exempt for the following fees:
         a. Development Impact Fees (DIF)
         b. Regional Transportation Congestion Improvement Program Fees (RTCIP)
         c. *General Plan Maintenance Fee (GPMF)

         *Projects proposing additional work unrelated to ADUs or JADUs are not exempt.

V. HOW TO APPLY
   Applications for Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units are now being accepted in digital paperless formats.

   A. Digital Application Portal
      1. Navigate to the application website here: Development Services Application Portal
      2. For new Permit Applications, request: “Building Permit”
      3. For changes to existing issued Permits (under construction), request: “Construction Change to a Building Permit”

Documents referenced in this Information Bulletin

- San Diego Municipal Code, Chapter 13, Zones
- San Diego Municipal Code, Chapter 14, General Regulations
- San Diego Municipal Code, Chapter 15, Planned Districts
- Project Submittal Manual Section 2
- Project Submittal Manual Section 2A
- Information Bulletin 122, Site Plan
- Information Bulletin 140, Residential Addition / Remodel
- Information Bulletin 501, Fee Schedule Building Permits
- Technical Bulletin RESD-3-4, Sprinkler Requirements for ADUs
- General Application, DS-3032
- Water Meter Data Card, DS-16
- Storm Water Requirements, DS-560