



ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU) INFORMATION

Many homeowners want to help create more housing — and you can, too. This handout explains how. Accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, sometimes called “granny flats,” “casitas” or “second units,” are a proven way to add housing in neighborhoods already zoned for homes.

In recent years, the California Legislature has passed laws to make building ADUs easier. In response, San Bernardino County has removed many of the barriers that once slowed construction. Changes include simpler parking requirements, lower utility connection costs, reduced fees and more flexibility for lot and unit sizes.

With high land costs and new permitting concessions, building an ADU has become a popular option for homeowners and future homeowners. If you’ve ever thought about adding an ADU to your property, this handout will help you get started.

WHAT IS AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT?

An accessory dwelling unit is an attached or detached residential unit that does not exceed the allowable density of the parcel. It provides complete, independent living facilities for one or more people, with permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation on the same parcel as the proposed or existing single-family or multifamily dwelling. An accessory dwelling unit may include an efficiency unit, as defined in Section 17958.1 of the Health and Safety Code, and a manufactured home, as defined in Section 18007 of the Health and Safety Code.

WHAT IS A JUNIOR ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (JADU)?

A junior accessory dwelling unit is a unit of no more than 500 square feet of interior livable space, contained entirely within a single-family residence. It may include separate sanitation facilities or share sanitation facilities with the proposed or existing structure and must comply with the requirements in Section 66333 of the Government Code.



Frequently Asked Questions

Permitting & Timelines

How long does ADU permit review take?

Land Use Services (LUS) staff adheres to strict timelines set by the state:

- Confirm whether an application is complete within 15 business days
- Approve or deny a complete ADU or JADU permit within 60 days

What happens if my application is determined to be incomplete?

You will receive a notice outlining the missing items. After you resubmit, the County will conduct another review within 15 business days.

Can the 60-day review be extended?

Yes. The timeline may be extended if the ADU application is submitted at the same time as a new home permit or if you request a delay in writing.

Do pre-approved plans help?

Yes. Using a pre-approved ADU plan can shorten the approval time by up to 30 days due to state-mandated streamlining.

Pre-Approved Plans

What are pre-approved plans?

They are detached ADU building plans the County has already reviewed and approved for code compliance, making permit review faster and more affordable.

How many plans does the County offer?

The County provides three pre-approved detached ADU plan sets on the Building and Safety website for homeowners to choose from.

What's the benefit of using them?

Using a pre-approved plan triggers state-mandated streamlining, which can reduce permit approval time by up to 30 days.

Utilities, Sewer, & Septic

Do I need a new utility connection?

Generally, yes. The County may require new or separate utility connections. Check with LUS staff to verify your criteria.

Do I need sewer or septic?

Projects must connect to a sewer system when the nearest property line is within 200 feet of a sewer line. This requirement increases by 100 feet for each dwelling unit in the project. All other projects must have a septic system or advanced water treatment system, subject to approval by Environmental Health Services.

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

Utilities, Sewer, & Septic (cont.)	<p>Will I need a recent percolation test?</p> <p>You may be required to have one if you use an onsite septic or water treatment system. Tests must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 years old or newer, or• 10 years old or newer, if recertified
Fees	<p>Do ADU fees vary?</p> <p>Yes. Fees can differ by location and utility district.</p> <p>What fees should I expect?</p> <p>Applicants are typically responsible for permit fees based on the size (square footage) of the ADU. Larger units generally result in higher permit fees.</p> <p>Are there other possible fees?</p> <p>Some ADUs may also require separate utility or onsite system approvals, which could include connection or testing fees, when applicable.</p>
Code Enforcement	<p>What are my rights if my pre-2020 ADU is cited for a building-code violation?</p> <p>A notice of a building-standards violation sent to an ADU owner must include a statement explaining that the owner has the right to request a five-year delay in enforcement. This delay is allowed only if the correction is not needed to protect health or safety and the ADU was built before January 1, 2020, or was built before that date in a jurisdiction that already had a compliant ADU ordinance. This enforcement-delay option expires on January 1, 2035.</p>

Accessory Dwelling Unit Standards (Summary)

Unit Type		Multifamily ADU	ADU	JADU
Lot Area Dimensions				
Size:		Determined by the underlying zoning district		
Width:				
Depth:				
Maximum Width/Depth Ratio:				
Density Per Lot ⁽²⁾				
Minimum:		None	None	None
Maximum (Attached)	Existing:	Up to 25% of multifamily units	2 units ⁽³⁾	None
	Proposed:	2 units		
Maximum (Detached)	Existing:	8 units; Not to exceed existing primary unit count	2 units ⁽³⁾	Not allowed
	Proposed:	2 units		
Maximum (Conversion):		Up to 25% of multifamily units ⁽⁴⁾	2 units ⁽³⁾	1 unit
Unit Size ⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾				
Minimum:		200 square feet	200 square feet	150 square feet
Maximum (Attached):		1,200 square feet ⁽⁷⁾	1,200 square feet ⁽⁷⁾	Not allowed
Maximum (Detached):		1,200 square feet	1,200 square feet	Not allowed
Maximum (Conversion):		None	None	500 square feet
Setbacks ⁽⁸⁾				
Front:		Per underlying zone	Per underlying zone	Setbacks of the existing structure apply per underlying zone
Side – Street Side:		4ft	4ft	
Side – Interior:		4ft	4ft	
Rear:		4ft	4ft	
Detached Unit Separation:		5ft ⁽⁹⁾	5ft ⁽⁹⁾	
Lot Coverage				
Maximum Coverage:		Determined by the underlying zoning district		
Building Height ⁽¹⁰⁾				
Maximum (Attached):		25ft	25ft	25ft
Maximum (Detached) ⁽¹¹⁾ :		18ft	18ft	N/A
Maximum (Conversion):		None ⁽⁸⁾		

Accessory Dwelling Unit Standards (Summary)

Unit Type	Multifamily ADU	ADU	JADU
Parking and Loading			
Requirements:	One uncovered for each unit ⁽¹²⁾	One uncovered for each unit ⁽¹²⁾	None
Miscellaneous Requirements			
Sanitation Facilities: ⁽¹³⁾	An ADU must have its own sanitation facility. A JADU may include separate sanitation facilities or may share sanitation facilities with the existing structure. A JADU without a separate bathroom must include a separate entrance from the main entrance to the proposed JADU, with an interior entry to the main living area.		
Unit Access:	A separate exterior entrance from the primary dwelling is required.		
Kitchen:	An ADU shall include a full kitchen that is separate from the primary dwelling. A JADU shall, at a minimum, be permitted to include an efficiency kitchen which shall contain a cooking facility with appliances and a food preparation counter with storage cabinets that are reasonable in size in relation to the JADU.		

(1) The standards set forth in this table do not preclude the construction of an ADU with a total floor area of no more than 800 square feet of livable space with 4-foot side and rear yard setbacks.

(2) The maximum unit number is a total aggregate maximum regardless of the type of ADU.

(3) On a lot 5 acres or greater, up to three units are allowed.

(4) Multiple accessory dwelling units may be constructed within portions of existing multifamily dwelling structures that are not used as livable space, including but not limited to storage rooms, boiler rooms, passageways, attics, basements or garages, if each unit complies with state building standards for dwellings.

(5) Calculated based on livable space. The minimum unit size does not prohibit the development of an efficiency unit as defined in Section 17958.1 of the Health and Safety Code.

(6) A junior accessory dwelling unit must be contained entirely within the existing space of the single-family residence.

(7) If there is an existing primary dwelling, the total floor area of an attached accessory dwelling unit may not exceed 50 percent of the existing primary dwelling and may not exceed 1,200 square feet. A detached unit may not exceed 1,200 square feet.

(8) No setback or building height is required for an existing living area or accessory structure, or a structure built in the same location and to the same dimensions as an existing structure that is converted to an accessory dwelling unit or to a portion of an accessory dwelling unit.

(9) Notwithstanding the 5-foot minimum separation requirement, separation between structures must comply with the latest California Building Code adopted by the county. Where a property is located within a Fire Safety (FS) Overlay, the standards of Chapter 82.13 (Fire Safety Overlay) apply.

(10) The height requirements do not allow for the construction of a unit greater than two stories.

(11) An additional 2 feet in height may be allowed if the roof of the ADU matches the roof pitch of the proposed or existing primary dwelling.