



Photo courtesy of Camille Bruno

ADU Fact Sheet for City of San Diego Homeowners

What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)?

In the City of San Diego, an Accessory Dwelling Unit is a Companion Unit or a Junior Unit. A Companion Unit means an accessory structure on a residential lot that provides independent living facilities for one or more persons, independent of the primary dwelling unit, which includes permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation. A Junior Unit means an accessory structure that is 500 square feet or less in size and is contained entirely within an existing, habitable single dwelling unit. [City of San Diego Municipal Code, Sec. 141.0302]

Can I add a Companion Unit to my property?

You may be able to add a Companion Unit if your property meets all the following conditions.

- It is in one of these zones (see Table 1 footnote):
 - RS-1-7 Single-Family Residence Zone, or
 - RM Zones that allow a maximum 2 units
- It is not governed by an HOA that forbids ADUs.

Important: This document does not address issues specific to individual properties and should not be considered the final word. Please consult with the planning department of the City of San Diego to confirm that these guidelines pertain to your situation. Also, if your property is located within a PUD or HOA that permits ADUs, you will need to consult its rules to determine whether you are subject to superseding restrictions. [Rev. June 2018]

What are the City of San Diego's basic requirements for Companion Units?

See Table 1 for building and parking requirements. In addition, the city requires homeowners to plant one 24-inch box tree in the required front yard of the premises or in the abutting parkway. Existing trees that are at least 15 feet high and 15 feet in width may be used to satisfy this requirement.

What if my property is a designated historical site?

They are allowed, subject to Historical Guidelines. See <https://www.sandiego.gov/development-services/historical/regulations>.

Can I sell my ADU?

You cannot sell a Companion Unit or Junior Unit separately from the single-family residence. Before a Building Permit may be issued for a Junior Unit, you will be required to enter into an agreement with the City that includes the following provisions: neither the primary dwelling unit nor the junior unit may be sold or conveyed separately from each other; and the record owner shall reside in the primary dwelling unit or the junior unit. The City will submit the agreement to the County Recorder for recordation. The agreement shall run with the land and be coterminous with the life of the junior unit. This type of agreement is not required for Companion Units.

Junior Units

The City of San Diego also allows Junior Units (also known as JADUs). In addition to the following summary, refer to Municipal Code 141.0302.

- No more than 500 square feet
- Contained entirely within an existing, habitable single dwelling unit
- No other ADU allowed on the lot
- Guest quarters and non-habitable structures are allowed if they comply with building spacing requirements [see Municipal Code 131.0450]
- Owner occupancy required in the Junior Unit or in the main portion of the house
- Requires a separate exterior entry with an interior connection to the main living area
- Requires an efficiency kitchen (sink with a maximum waste line diameter of 1.5 inches, a cooking facility requiring no more than 120 volts if not using gas, food preparation counter, and storage cabinets)
- Separate bathroom not required
- No additional parking required
- Cannot be rented for less than 30 consecutive days.
- Requires a recorded deed restriction [see "Can I sell my ADU?"]

What are the restrictions for renting my Companion Unit or Junior Unit?

- Companion Units: The main unit and the Companion Unit may both be rented; the property owner is not required to live in either unit.
- Junior Units: The main unit and the Junior Unit may both be rented; the property owner must reside in one of the units.
- Neither a Companion Unit nor a Junior Unit may be rented for less than 30 consecutive days. And if the owner lives in the ADU, the main unit may not be rented for less than 30 consecutive days.

What other restrictions should I know about?

- Properties located in the Coastal Zone require a Coastal Development Permit.
- Properties with Environmentally Sensitive Lands may require a Site Development Permit.
- Properties located in Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zones may require a Site Development Permit.
- Only one Companion Unit or Junior Unit is permitted on a lot. Guest quarters and non-habitable structures are permitted in addition to the Companion Unit or Junior Unit.

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What permits, fees and taxes will apply to my Companion Unit or Junior Unit?

The following permits and fees are applicable at the time of this writing (June 2018).

- Junior Unit: Agreement with the City of San Diego Recording Fee paid to the San Diego County Recorder (\$98 for four pages plus \$3 for each additional page)
- Building & Construction Permits (also known as Plan Check Fees and Inspections): These fees depend on the scope of the work. The following illustrative examples are from the City of San Diego Information Bulletin 501, “Construction Permits – Structures” dated July 2017, <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/dsdib501.pdf>:
 - Single Dwelling Unit/Duplex Minor Addition/Remodel (plan check = \$374 + \$374 per 500sf addition; inspection = \$1,032 + \$1,032 per 500sf addition)
 - Single Dwelling Unit/Duplex Major Addition/Remodel (plan check = \$1,006 + \$1,006 per 500sf addition; inspection = \$1,032 + \$1,032 per 500sf addition)
 - Single Dwelling Unit – Factory Built House or Manufactured Home (plan check = \$2,229; inspection = \$952)
- Property Taxes: When you make additions or substantial alterations to your property, California law requires the tax assessor to increase the property’s assessment to reflect the value of the “newly constructed” property. The assessor assigns the new construction with its own distinct base year value. The remainder of the property’s assessment is unaffected and retains its base year value.
- School Fee: (\$3.79 per square foot of assessable construction). See the City of San Diego Information Bulletin 146, “School Fees,” dated December 2016, <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/dsdib146.pdf>. to understand how this is calculated.
- Sewer Capacity Fee: No Fee
- Water Capacity Fee: No Fee
- Development Impact Fee: No Fee
- General Plan Maintenance Fee: No Fee
- Other fees may apply depending on the scope of work.

What are the steps for building an ADU in the City of San Diego?

See the Development Services Department’s “Construction Tips for Homeowners” at

<https://www.sandiego.gov/development-services/homeownr/hometips>.

Resources

City of San Diego Development Services

<https://www.sandiego.gov/development-services/>

Most of the information on this fact sheet was supplied by Development Services Staff, City of San Diego.

However, this is not an official city publication and facts may change. Please visit their website to answer your questions and to contact staff.

California Department of Housing and Community Development

<http://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/AccessoryDwellingUnits.shtml>

This web page is a wealth of information about current state law and local ordinances. It includes a link to HCD’s Technical Assistance Booklet as well as links to external ADU resources.

ReVisions Resources

<http://www.revisionsresources.org>

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[Rev. June 2018]

Table 1. Summary of the City of San Diego’s Companion Units Requirements (table does not apply to Junior Units)

	Rules for All Companion Units	Additional Rules: Detached CUs (adding sf)	Additional Rules: Attached CUs (adding sf)	Additional Rules: Garage Conversions (no additional sf)	Additional Rules: Other Conversions (no additional sf)
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must comply with California Building Code • Setbacks, height, lot coverage, and separation between buildings must comply with your base zone*. • No passageway is required from the primary dwelling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: 1200sf maximum • One story structures may encroach into the side and rear yard setbacks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: No more than 50% of the existing habitable structure, up to a maximum of 1200sf • One-story structures may encroach into the side and rear yard setbacks. • May be built above a permitted garage or non-habitable accessory structure encroaching on setbacks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: 1200sf maximum. • May maintain existing setbacks if in compliance with CA Building Code and Fire Code. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: No more than 50% of the existing habitable structure, up to a maximum of 1200sf. • A permitted non-habitable accessory structure that is converted may maintain existing setbacks if in compliance with CA Building Code and Fire Code.
Off-Street Parking	<p>Not required if unit is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 sf or less, or • Within one-half mile from a public transit stop, or • Within a designated historical resource area, or • Within a residential permit parking district, or • Within one block of a car share station, or • Within one block of a bike share station. 	<p>If required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5 spaces per bedroom with a minimum of one parking space. • May be provided in any configuration on hardscape areas, including setbacks, subject to safe and efficient access. • Access to CU parking spaces must be from an improved abutting alley (if it exists) unless the premises has a garage that accommodates all off-street parking. 	<p>If required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5 spaces per bedroom with a minimum of one parking space. • May be provided in any configuration on hardscape areas, including setbacks, subject to safe and efficient access. • Access to CU parking spaces must be from an improved abutting alley (if it exists) unless the premises has a garage that accommodates all off-street parking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacement parking on the premises is required when an existing garage is converted or demolished. • 0.5 spaces per bedroom with a minimum of one parking space. • May be provided in any configuration on hardscape areas, including setbacks, subject to safe and efficient access. • Access to CU parking spaces must be from an improved abutting alley (if it exists) unless the premises has a garage that accommodates all off-street parking. 	<p>Not required if already part of the existing single dwelling unit or an existing permitted habitable dwelling unit.</p>
<p>*Not sure which zone your property is in? Visit https://www.sandiego.gov/development-services/zoning. There, you may enter your address to discover your zone and a link (http://docs.sandiego.gov/municode/MuniCodeChapter13/Ch13Art01Division04.pdf) to a copy of the applicable Municipal Code with specific zone requirements such as setbacks, height, and the spacing between buildings.</p>					

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