

GENERAL ADU REQUIREMENTS FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

2/1/26

ADU - ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT

JADU - JUNIOR ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT

ADUS

ADU Size: Detached ADUs are limited to 1,200 square feet, while attached ADUs have different limits based on the number of bedrooms. An ADU cannot exceed 50% of the primary residence's size.

Setbacks:

- Minimum 4-foot setbacks from side and rear property lines are standard for detached units.
- ADUs are now permitted in front setbacks if they meet certain size and lot area criteria.

Lot size: There is no minimum lot size requirement. NOTE: Different jurisdictions handle this differently; you must check with each jurisdiction for its specific requirements.

Independent living facilities: Must have a kitchen, a bathroom, and permanent provisions for living, sleeping, and cooking facilities.

Separate entrance: Needs its own exterior entrance that is separate from the primary residence.

Permits: Cities must approve or deny applications within 60 days.

NOTE: The permitting process varies by local jurisdiction, but recent changes are intended to streamline it.

Impact Fees: ADUs under 750 square feet are exempt from impact fees.

No Owner-Occupancy Requirements: The rule requiring a property owner to live on-site (which was set to expire) has been made permanent, allowing owners to build and rent both the primary dwelling and the ADU.

Parking: Notwithstanding any other provision of this code, no additional parking shall be required for an accessory dwelling unit if any of the following is true:

- The unit is located within one-half of one mile walking distance of public transit.
- The unit is located within an architecturally and historically significant historic district.
- The unit is part of the proposed or existing primary residence or an existing accessory structure.
- On-street permits are required but not offered to the occupant of the unit.
- There is a car share vehicle located within one block of the unit.

Mandatory Pre-Approved Plans: By January 1, 2025, all California cities and municipalities must offer an online program of pre-approved ADU plans to speed up the process, reducing review time for projects using these plans to 30 days.

Fire Sprinklers: Accessory dwelling units shall not be required to provide fire sprinklers if they are not necessary for the primary dwelling unit. The construction of an accessory dwelling unit shall not trigger a requirement to install fire sprinklers in the existing primary dwelling unit.

Legalization of Unpermitted Units: A new amnesty program (AB 2533) simplifies the pathway for legalizing ADUs built without permits before January 1, 2020, as long as they meet basic health and safety standards.

HOAs: Homeowners' Associations can no longer prohibit ADU construction, though they can still have rules.

JADUS

Location and Size: Limited to 500 square feet, contained entirely within the existing walls of a single-family residence or attached garage.

Owner Occupancy: Both the JADU and main residence are rentable, provided the JADU has its own bathroom.

Kitchen Requirements: Must include a basic "efficiency kitchen," which features a food preparation counter, storage cabinets, and small appliances (hot plate/microwave) but generally not a stove/oven or gas connection.

No New Utilities: JADUs are not considered new residential uses for the purposes of calculating utility connection fees or capacity charges for water/sewer.

Parking & Rental: No additional parking can be required. JADUs cannot be sold separately from the main house.

Permitting: Local agencies must act on applications within 60 days, and they cannot require, but may allow specific ordinances.