



Accessory Dwelling Units in Sacramento County *Quick Facts*

What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)?

(Also known as: guest house, granny unit, second dwelling, studio apartment, pool house, residential accessory dwelling, or rental unit.)

Generally, an ADU is an accessory structure that is developed for sleeping (or habitation) purposes. The ADU can include a full or partial kitchen, and full or partial bathroom. It must have water and sanitation service. The formal Sacramento County Zoning Code (SZC or Code) definition is:

Dwelling, Accessory Unit.

An attached or detached dwelling unit, accessory to a primary dwelling, which provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons. It shall include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation on the same parcel as the single-family dwelling is situated. An Accessory Dwelling Unit also includes the following:

- An efficiency unit, as defined in Section 17958.1 of California Health and Safety Code.
- A manufactured home, as defined in this Chapter and in Section 18007 of the California Health and Safety Code.

Can I Build an ADU?

An ADU is allowed in all Agricultural, Agricultural-Residential, and Residential zones in the unincorporated County, provided that the property is developed with a single family residence.

All ADUs are required to obtain an Accessory Dwelling Unit Administrative Permit (ADUAP) through the Office of Planning and Environmental Review. More information on the ADUAP process can be found at www.per.saccounty.net

What is the Difference Between an ADU and an Accessory Structure?

An Accessory Structure is defined as:

Structure, Accessory

A structure that is accessory to a permitted primary residential use and is developed in a manner that does not allow for sleeping (i.e., non-habitable) or include independent living facilities. Examples include detached garages, workshops, sheds, gazebos, and pool houses. Does not include Accessory Dwelling Units or Incidental Agricultural Accessory Structures.

Generally, ADUs are developed to allow either short or long term habitation, and Accessory Structures are not. Other differences include:

Accessory Dwelling Unit	Accessory Structure
Allows sleeping/habitation	Does not allow sleeping/habitation
Full or partial kitchen allowed	Partial kitchen allowed, no cooking facilities
Full or partial bathroom allowed	Partial bathroom (two fixtures) allowed, except for pool houses, which allow three fixtures.
Can have more than one room	Only one room (plus bathroom) allowed
Minimum size of 150 s.f.	No minimum size
Only allowed one ADU per lot	No max number
Must have water and sanitary facilities	Not required to have water or sanitary facility
Able to rent out short (VRBO) or long term	Not allowed to rent out short or long term

What are the Development Standards for ADUs?

Note: the following table and list are not comprehensive. Please review Code Section 5.4.5.F prior to moving forward with plans for an ADU for complete development standards.

Select Development Standards for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in All Zones		
Standard	Structure	Mobilehome/ Manufactured Home
Minimum ADU Size (Habitable Square Footage)	150 sq ft	
Maximum ADU Size- Detached (Habitable Square Footage, Gross Lot Area) [1]	For lots of less than 5,200 sq ft: Special Development Permit required for any size ADU For lots of 5,200 sq ft to less than 20,000 sq ft: 600 sq ft For lots of 20,000 sq ft or greater: 800 sq. ft.	
Maximum ADU Size- Attached (Habitable Square Footage) [1]	Same size limitations as for Detached ADUs, with the additional restriction that attached units cannot exceed 50% of the primary dwelling habitable square footage.	N/A
Maximum Non-Habitable Square Footage Attached to ADU	50% of the Habitable Square Footage of the ADU	N/A
Minimum Building Width	N/A	
Maximum Building Height and Number of Stories	20 feet , Single Story	

General Setbacks	Same setbacks as for primary dwellings.	
Minimum Setback from Primary Dwelling	Detached Unit: 10 feet Attached Unit: N/A	10 feet
Foundation	All ADUs shall be constructed on a permanent foundation.	
<p>Additional Development Standards</p> <p>a. The ADU is architecturally compatible with, and subordinate to, the primary dwelling in that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The exterior finish materials of a detached ADU are visually similar or complementary to those of the primary residence with respect to type, size, placement, and color. (ii) The exterior finish materials of an attached ADU are visually similar to the primary residence, with the goal of appearing as a single cohesive unit. (iii) The roof pitch of a detached ADU may vary from the primary dwelling, however flat-roofed structures are discouraged. (iv) The roof pitch of an attached ADU should be the same as the predominate roof pitch of the primary residence. (v) The primary entrance to an attached ADU shall not be constructed on the façade of the primary residence that faces a public right of way, unless other placement options are not viable. <p>b. The ADU has been sited and designed to pose minimal visual impact to, and maintain the privacy of, surrounding properties by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Greater setbacks than the minimum required are utilized when possible and beneficial to lessen visual impact of the ADU on surrounding properties. (ii) Windows, patios and balconies faced away from neighboring properties with closely sited residences, to the greatest extent feasible. (iii) Use of landscaping as screening to enhance residential privacy. 		
<p>[1] Deviations from maximum ADU size limits may be allowed through a SPZ, but in no case can ADUs be greater than 1,200 sq. ft. in size.</p>		

Can I Request a Deviation from Development Standards?

For the most part, yes. Deviations can be requested through the Special Development Permit process. This is an entitlement process that includes an environmental review and public hearings. More information on the Special Development Permit process, fees, and application materials can be found at www.per.saccounty.net.

Who Can I Contact with Questions?

Please email sacplan@saccounty.net, or leave a phone message at (916) 874-6221 with questions on ADUs. A member of the Public Information Team will respond within two business days.

