

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT



INFORMATION GUIDE

City of Los Altos
Development Services Department

This guide provides general information related to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs) in the City of Los Altos. This informational guide is not intended to be used as a substitute to the Los Altos Zoning Code, which contains detailed regulations.

What is an ADU?

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU), also referred to as a second unit or in-law unit, is a dwelling unit that provides a complete, independent living facility on the same lot as a single-family or multi-family dwelling. Independent living facilities include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation (restrooms/wash facilities).

Why are they useful?

ADUs can:

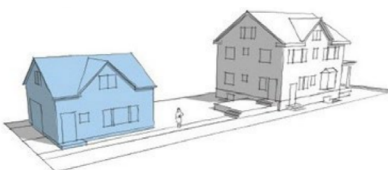
- Provide an affordable housing option for family members, friends, colleagues, or anyone seeking rental housing.
- Provide extra rental income for homeowners.
- Provide an opportunity to downsize without moving away from the community.
- Help the City achieve its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) by increasing the City's housing stock.

ADU TYPES

Detached ADU

An ADU that is not attached to the primary dwelling. A detached ADU can either be a newly-constructed structure, or conversion of an existing accessory structure (such as a detached garage).

A detached ADU can be up to 1,200 square feet.



Attached ADU

An ADU that is created from the addition, internal conversion, or combination thereof to the primary dwelling.

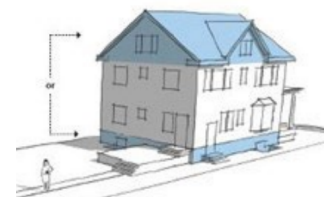
An attached ADU can be up to 1,200 square feet, but no more than 50% of the floor area of the existing or proposed primary dwelling.



Junior ADU (JADU)

An ADU that is created by the conversion of existing space within the walls of a single-family residence.

A JADU can be up to 500 square feet.



ADU REGULATIONS

	Detached	Attached	JADU
Maximum Height	18 feet	16 feet, or the height of the underlying zoning district, whichever is greater	N/A
Minimum Front Setback	Underlying zoning district*	Underlying zoning district*	N/A
Minimum Side Setback	4 feet	4 feet	N/A
Minimum Rear Setback	4 feet	4 feet	N/A
Building Separation	5 feet	5 feet	5 feet
Entrance	Exterior	Exterior	Exterior; optional interior
Parking	Required*	Required*	None required
Bathroom Facilities	Required	Required	Required; may be shared with primary dwelling if internal access is provided
Kitchen	Required; see below	Required; see below	Required; see below
Owner Occupancy	Not required	Not required	Not required

* For additional information, including exceptions from these standards, refer to the Los Altos Zoning Code.

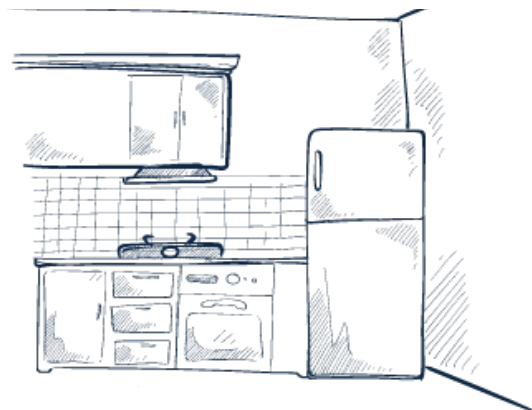
KITCHEN REQUIREMENTS

Detached or attached ADU:

- Sink
- Refrigerator
- Cooktop and oven, or range
- Appropriately-sized countertop and cabinets

JADU:

A JADU kitchen shall include, at minimum, a counter-top cooking appliance or hot plate.



PRE-APPROVED &
PERMIT-READY

ADU PROGRAM



PERMIT-READY ADU PLANS

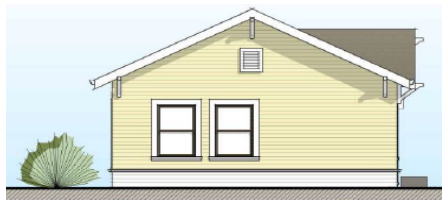
PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE BY THE CITY OF LOS ALTOS

The City offers permit-ready plans for detached ADUs free of charge. The full drawing sets can be viewed at City Hall during regular business hours and include structural, mechanical, electrical and plumbing plans. The City offers three different sizes of detached ADU (studio/1 bedroom, 1 bedroom, and 2 bedroom) in three different styles (Mediterranean, Traditional, and Contemporary). For additional information about the City's permit-ready ADU plans, visit the Los Altos Development Services Department Accessory Dwelling Unit Webpage.



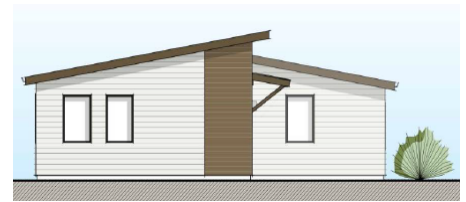
Mediterranean Detached ADU:

Studio/1-Bedroom (525 SF)
1-Bedroom (854 SF)
2-Bedroom (1190 SF)



Traditional Detached ADU:

Studio/1-Bedroom (525 SF)
1-Bedroom (854 SF)
2-Bedroom (1190 SF)



Contemporary Detached ADU:

Studio/1-Bedroom (525 SF)
1-Bedroom (854 SF)
2-Bedroom (1190 SF)

PRE-APPROVED ADU PLANS

PRE-REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE PLANNING AND BUILDING DIVISIONS

In addition to the permit-ready ADU program, the City's Pre-Approved ADU Program simplifies the permitting process for property owners by offering streamlined plans that have been pre-reviewed by the Building and Safety and Planning Divisions, saving time on design and approval. Property owners must contract with the designer to use the plans, obtain a building permit, and add specific property details. Pre-approved detached ADU plans submitted by private designers are available on the City's ADU webpage for purchase and submission.

SUBMITTING ADU PLANS TO THE CITY FOR PRE-APPROVAL

The City is currently accepting applications from qualified design professionals to have their plans for detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) pre-approved for use throughout Los Altos. If you are a design professional who would like to submit ADU plans to the City for pre-approval, please visit the City of Los Altos ADU webpage for additional information.

ADU Application Process

OPTION 1

Custom: Work with design professionals to develop custom plans for a detached or attached ADU.

Step 1: Get Inspired!

Think about what sort of ADU will best suit your needs.

Step 2: Learn the rules.

Understand what zoning and building code regulations will apply to your project. Contact the Planning and Building Divisions if you have specific questions.

Step 3: Prepare your submittal.

Work with your architect to develop a plan that suits your needs and complies with applicable regulations.

Step 4: Apply for a permit.

Refer to the ADU submittal checklist online for specific submittal requirements. Once your plans have been reviewed, you may need to resubmit your plans to address comments.

Step 5: Permit issuance and construction.

Once your plans are approved by all reviewing departments, you will be issued a building permit and can begin construction.

Step 6: Inspections and Occupancy:

Inspections will occur throughout the construction process. Inspections can be scheduled from the Building Division webpage. Once your ADU passes final inspection, it's ready to be occupied!

OPTION 2

Pre-Approved: Use plans that were developed by a design professional and pre-approved by the City.

Step 1: Review the eligibility criteria

Review the pre-approved and permit ready ADU submittal checklist to determine if your property is eligible for a pre-approved ADU.

Step 2: Get Inspired!

Browse the inventory of pre-approved ADU plans that are available on the City Website to see if any suit your needs.

Step 3: Contact the architect.

If you would like to use a plan that has been pre-approved by the City, contact the architect to purchase the plans and prepare a submittal package.

Step 4: Apply for a permit.

Refer to the pre-approved ADU submittal checklists online for submittal requirements. Once your plans have been reviewed, you may need to resubmit your plans to address comments.

Step 5: Permit issuance and construction.

Once your plans are approved by all reviewing departments, you will be issued a building permit and you can begin construction.

Step 6: Inspections and Occupancy:

Inspections will occur throughout the construction process. Inspections can be scheduled from the Building Division webpage. Once your ADU passes final inspection, it's ready to be occupied!

OPTION 3

Permit-Ready: Use permit-ready plans developed by the City of Los Altos and available free of charge (detached ADUs only).

Step 1: Review the eligibility criteria

Review the pre-approved and permit ready ADU submittal checklist to determine if your property is eligible for a pre-approved ADU.

Step 2: Get Inspired!

Review the permit-ready ADU plans that are available on the City Website to see if any suit your needs.

Step 3: Prepare your submittal.

While ADU plans are provided, some site-specific plans and materials must be included in your submittal. Work with a qualified design professional to prepare a submittal package.

Step 4: Apply for a permit.

Refer to the permit-ready ADU submittal checklists online for submittal requirements. Once your plans have been reviewed, you may need to resubmit your plans to address comments.

Step 5: Permit issuance and construction.

Once your plans are approved by all reviewing departments, you will be issued a building permit and you can begin construction.

Step 6: Inspections and Occupancy:

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