



Accessory Dwelling Units

FAQs

Did you know?

In the City of Riverside, any residential property can add at least one Accessory Dwelling Unit, per State law. Properties developed with single-family homes can also add a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit.

What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit?

An ADU, also known as a Second Dwelling, Granny Flat, or Mother-in-Law's Quarters, is a completely self-contained housing unit located on the same lot as another home, called the primary dwelling. ADUs are considered accessory because they are typically smaller than the primary dwelling and are not the main use on the lot.

Where can I build an ADU?

ADUs may be constructed on any lot developed with an existing primary dwelling, or on a lot where a primary dwelling will be constructed at the same time as the ADU. ADUs can be attached to the primary dwelling or detached in a freestanding building. ADUs are allowed in the side and rear yards but are not allowed in front yards. In the side and rear yards, ADUs must be set back at least four feet from all property lines and from other buildings.

What is the maximum size of an ADU?

Detached ADUs may be up to 1,200 square feet of livable space. Attached ADUs may be up to either 1,200 square feet or 50% of the size of the primary dwelling, whichever is less. For example, a 2,000-square-foot house may have an attached ADU of up to 1,000 square feet, or a detached ADU of up to 1,200 square feet.

Can I convert an existing structure to an ADU?

Yes, existing structures such as garages, workshops, guest quarters or portions of a primary dwelling may be converted to an ADU. Some upgrades may be required for structures that were not originally meant to be inhabited to meet Building Code requirements.

How much parking does an ADU require?

ADUs do not require any additional parking. Additionally, if a garage or carport serving the primary dwelling is converted into an ADU, no replacement covered parking spaces for the primary dwelling are required.

Can my ADU be more than one story tall?

Yes, ADUs are subject to the same height and story limits set by the Zoning Code for the primary dwelling. In most areas of the City, the maximum height is 35 feet and two stories. ADUs may also be constructed above existing structures such as garages or as second-story additions to the primary dwelling.

Do I need a permit to build an ADU?

Yes, a building permit will be required. Plans will need to be prepared by a licensed design professional, such as an architect, and submitted for review to the Building & Safety Division. Plan Check and Permit Issuance fees will apply. Check with the Building & Safety Division at 951-826-5697 for more information.

Can I rent or sell my ADU?

An ADU can be rented separately from the primary dwelling. The property owner does not have to occupy one of the homes on the property to rent either home to other occupants. An ADU cannot be sold or conveyed separately from the primary dwelling except in limited circumstances by nonprofit affordable housing organizations.

How do I connect my ADU to utilities?

ADUs may have separate utilities or may be tied into the existing connections serving the primary dwelling. Separate connections allow the ADU to be billed separately but cost more to install. Contact Riverside Public Utilities at 951-826-5489 (Electric) or 951-826-5285 (Water), or the Public Works Department at 951-826-5341 (Sewer), for more information. Gas/telecommunications questions will need to be directed to the provider in your area. In some areas of the City, electric and/or water service is provided by other agencies.

What are the fees to build an ADU?

In addition to Plan Check and Permit Issuance fees, ADUs are subject to some – but not all – of the development impact fees and utility connection/capacity fees that primary dwellings are. Total fees will depend on the specific circumstances of your property and the scope of your project. Contact the Building & Safety Division at 951-826-5697 for questions regarding fees.



Did you know?

In the City of Riverside, any residential property can add at least one Accessory Dwelling Unit, per State law (see reverse side). Properties developed with single-family homes can also add a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit.

What's a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit?

A JADU is similar to an ADU but is smaller and is usually converted from existing bedrooms or other living space in a primary dwelling. Unlike ADUs, JADUs may share some facilities such as kitchens or bathrooms with the primary dwelling.

Where can I build a JADU?

A JADU must be located within the exterior walls of an existing primary dwelling or a primary dwelling that will be built at the same time. Garages and other non-livable spaces that are attached to the main dwelling may be converted to a JADU. JADUs are not allowed in freestanding structures that are not the primary dwelling.

How large can my JADU be?

JADUs may be up to 500 square feet in size and may be configured as efficiency or studio units.

What's an efficiency unit?

An efficiency unit is a small home or apartment of at least 220 square feet that has at least partial kitchen facilities, such as a bar sink, counter-height refrigerator and microwave, and has access to at least a three-quarters bathroom.

Can I rent my JADU?

Yes, a JADU can be rented. However, unlike ADUs, the owner of a property developed with a primary dwelling and a JADU must occupy one of the units. A deed restriction must be recorded against the property requiring owner-occupancy of one of the units.

How much parking does a JADU require?

Like ADUs, JADUs do not require their own dedicated parking spaces. If an existing attached garage is converted to a JADU, no replacement covered parking spaces for the primary dwelling are required.