

Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU), also known as second units or granny flats, have been around for decades. These types of units offer property owners an option to add a smaller unit on their property in addition to the main house. In 2021, the City of Duarte approved a local ordinance in compliance with recent changes in State law. The ordinance removed many barriers that were previously directed at the construction of ADU's, and also includes detailed standards that regulate how these units must be built. ADU regulations and the City's ADU ordinance can be a bit complicated, so this guide was developed to help property owners understand how ADU's are regulated, what is needed to build an ADU, and the most common things to think about before considering building an ADU.

ADU vs JADU

An ADU, or Accessory Dwelling Unit, is an attached or detached residential dwelling unit which provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons. An ADU must include a kitchen, a ¾ or full bath, and permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, sanitation, and storage on the same parcel where the primary single-family or multi-family residence is situated.

A JADU, or Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit, is a unit that is between 150 and 500 square feet in size and contained entirely within a single-family residence. A junior accessory dwelling unit may include separate sanitation facilities or may share these facilities with the main dwelling unit. A kitchen with cooking appliances, counters, sinks, and cabinets are required. Property owners must live on the property, either in the primary dwelling unit or JADU. JADU conversions from existing attached garage space must provide other garage parking on the property.



Conversion

Convert an existing structure or JADU

What upgrades are typical for an ADU?

Applicable to All Conversions

- Egress window installation
- Expansion of paving for alternative parking, generally located in rear yard of the property
- Electrical panel upgrades
- Water and sewer pipe capacity upgrades
- Utilities for the ADU/JADU must be served by utilities from the primary unit on the property – no separate service feeds.

Garage and Detached Building Conversions

- Floating the floor to make it level
- Treatment of concrete slab with moisture barrier
- Wall insulation installation
- Garage door removal and new footing and framing of wall
- Exterior entry door installation
- Ceiling joist reframing

Detached ADUs

- Permanent footings/foundation installation
- Required solar panel installation
- Fire sprinklers
- Undergrounding of all utilities from primary dwelling to detached unit even if the existing utilities to the primary dwelling are overhead

Attached ADUs and JADUs

- Soundproofing of walls



Attached

Shares at least one wall with the primary home

I Am Ready to Get Started... Where Do I Begin and What Can I Expect?

Contact the Planning Division to determine size, location and architectural considerations related to your proposed ADU/JADU.

- Prepare sketched plans that comply with the City's ADU Ordinance.
- Provide sketches to a Planner for a free preliminary review.



After consultation with a Planner, have plans professionally prepared.

- Submit plans with a completed application and fees to enter into Design Review.



After the design is approved by Planning, prepare construction drawings and submit to the Building Division for Plan Check.

- Permits are issued at the end of Plan Check.
- Covenant is prepared by the City; however, the owner is responsible for signing and recording the covenant with the LA County Recorder before final City sign-off.



Detached
Free-standing structure.

Consider the following before you build an ADU/JADU on your Property:

ADUs must be architecturally compatible with the primary dwelling unit.

Setbacks for the ADU depend upon several different factors. Many smaller ADUs can be set back four-feet (4') from the side or rear property line that you share with your neighbor. Permitted detached outbuildings may be located closer than that. Larger ADU's have to meet setbacks required of other buildings in your zoning district.

- While smaller setbacks are permitted for many ADUs, you may want to be aware that these reduced setbacks can lead to unwanted impacts such as reductions in privacy, an increase in noise, and modified construction standards for fire safety.
- Due to smaller setbacks, water heaters, HVAC equipment and other projections into the 4' setback may not be allowed – design accordingly or increase setbacks.

Buildings are limited to a maximum of 16' in height.

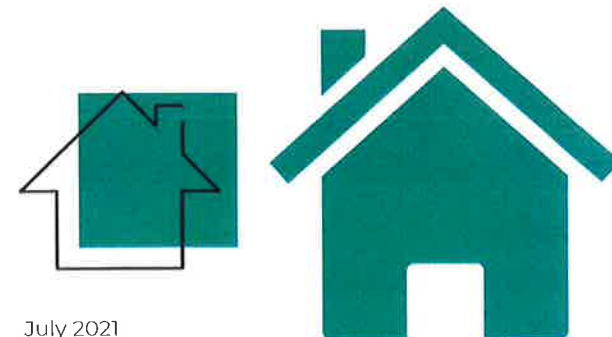
- Detached ADU's are only allowed as a one-story structure, unless a two-car garage is maintained and the ADU is built as a second story above the garage.
- Attached ADUs may not exceed the height and/or number of stories as the primary unit.

Street parking availability is expected to decrease as ADUs become more popular, so off-street parking should be provided if possible.

- Consider keeping or providing additional garage or driveway space for occupants of the ADU/JADU.

Any unpermitted work on the property will be reviewed and may be required to be permitted.

JADUs require owner occupancy at the time the unit is built. ADUs require an owner to occupy the property starting January 2025.



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Is an ADU the Right Choice for Me?

Think about why you're building an ADU/JADU.

ADUs can be a great choice for many people.

- However, there are things that may be considered drawbacks to building an ADU, such as: having another household on your property; ADUs are subject to deed restrictions and different lending requirements that may affect the property owner upon sale or refinance; and an ADU or JADU may limit the construction potential of your primary dwelling unit.

Understand your budget and resources.

- Since ADUs are required to provide a complete independent living facility, a regular addition may be a cheaper and less complex construction project for many homeowners.
- ADUs/JADUs must be built to current Building Codes. Many detached outbuildings were not built for human habitation or were constructed without permits. Correcting and rehabilitating this type of construction will likely increase your construction costs.
- Research zoning requirements to ensure you can build the type of ADU/JADU you envision. Learn about the Planning review and Building permitting processes.
- Hire an architect or qualified contractor/designer to help with floor plan design, architectural compatibility, and to assist in the permitting process.

Questions?

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