

# ADU UNIVERSAL CHECKLIST

**Are you thinking about building an ADU, JADU, or THOW?\*** If yes, reading this checklist may help you avoid costly changes to plans, and will help ensure your project qualifies and complies with the City's zoning and fire codes.

- \* ADU - Accessory dwelling unit. Also called a granny flat, secondary unit, or backyard home. An ADU can be a conversion of a garage or basement or newly constructed, attached or detached, from the main home.
- \* JADU - Junior accessory dwelling unit. Must be built within the existing footprint of a single-family home, including converting an attached garage. Owner-occupancy of the main home is required.
- \* THOW - Tiny home on wheels. These are a prefabricated ADU mounted on a trailer chassis. THOW projects have their own checklist: [Bulletin #291-Tiny Home on Wheels Permit Checklist](#).

A City planner can provide basic feedback on your project concept; contact the ADU Ally, see page 6.

- To submit your application, view the [ADU Plan Review process](#), found at [www.sanjoseca.gov/ADUs](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/ADUs).
- Find the San José Municipal Code governing ADUs: [Chapter 20.80 Part 2.75](#)
- To read about state laws on ADUs, see the [HCD Accessory Dwelling Unit Handbook, July 2022](#).

Para obtener ayuda en español, comuníquese con [ADU.Ally@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:ADU.Ally@sanjoseca.gov).

Để được hỗ trợ, nói chuyện với Người lập kế hoạch thành phố tại 408-793-4305.

## INSTRUCTIONS

To fill out this checklist on a computer, download it and follow the [Digital Forms](#) instructions.

IMPORTANT: For Parts 1 and 2, find property descriptions by going to [SJPermits.org](http://SJPermits.org). Tap "Permits & Property Information." Enter your address. Click "Select" by your property address. A list of property descriptions will appear.

## QUESTIONS

YES NO

### PART 1. DOES YOUR PROPERTY QUALIFY?

#### 1. IS THE PROPERTY IN SAN JOSE?

- Use [SJPermits.org](http://SJPermits.org) to confirm that the ADU property is in San José. At the "Incorporated" field, "yes" means the property is in San José; "no" means it is in a different jurisdiction.
- > If no, please work with the appropriate jurisdiction. If yes, continue with this worksheet.

#### 2. IS THE MAIN HOME PERMITTED?

- ADUs are allowed in any zoning district where the site has a legally-built main residence (single-family, duplex, or multifamily) with approved permits. Use [SJPermits.org](http://SJPermits.org) to confirm that the structures are permitted. For help, email [Zoning.Questions@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:Zoning.Questions@sanjoseca.gov) or call 408-535-3555 (press 1 and press 1 again) to speak with a Planner during these [hours](#).
- > If no, an ADU is not allowed. If yes, continue with this worksheet.

#### 3. IS THERE AN ACTIVE CODE ENFORCEMENT ISSUE ON THE PROPERTY?

- You must resolve any active Code Enforcement complaint or violation before we can accept your ADU plans. Check the [Code Complaints Map](#) for any open case associated with the ADU property.
- > If yes, there's a code case, email [BuildingCodeCompliance@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:BuildingCodeCompliance@sanjoseca.gov) for help resolving the issue.

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
<b>PART 2. WHAT ARE YOUR PROPERTY DESIGNATIONS?</b>		
<i>These designations affect the design of your ADU.</i>		
<p><b>4. FLOOD ZONES. Is the property in flood zone A, AE, AH, or AO?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find the designation at <a href="https://www.sjpermits.org">SJPermits.org</a>. For questions, call 408-535-7803 or email <a href="mailto:floodzoneinfo@sanjoseca.gov">floodzoneinfo@sanjoseca.gov</a></li> </ul> <p>&gt; If yes, your plans must follow the flood zone design requirements in <a href="#">Bulletin #211-ADU Plan Requirements</a>; these requirements do not apply to flood zones D and X.</p>		
<p><b>5. GEOHAZARDS OR SEISMIC HAZARDS. Is the property in a geohazard or landslide zone?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At <a href="https://www.sjpermits.org">SJPermits.org</a>, look for “Geohazards” and “Seismic Hazards.” It will show “yes,” “no,” or note as “landslide.”</li> </ul> <p>&gt; If yes or landslide, a Geologic Hazard Clearance is required; visit the Public Works <a href="#">Geological Hazard</a> webpage. For questions, call 408-535-7802 or email <a href="mailto:pwgeneralinfo@sanjoseca.gov">pwgeneralinfo@sanjoseca.gov</a></p>		
<p><b>6. HISTORIC PROPERTY. Is the property listed on the City’s <a href="#">Historic Resources Inventory</a> map OR the <a href="#">California Historical Resources</a> list for Santa Clara County?</b></p> <p>&gt; If yes, and you choose the City Development Standards (see Part 3) for your ADU design, then you must apply simplified design standards (Municipal Code <a href="#">Section 20.80.175 (E)</a>) to the project. If yes, and you choose the State Development Standards, then no further design standards need to be considered.</p>		
<p><b>7. WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE ZONE. Is the property located in a Wildland-Urban Interface Zone (WUI)?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See map on page 3 of the <a href="#">WUI Fire Conformance Policy</a>.</li> </ul> <p>&gt; If yes, construction must comply with all requirements outlined in the WUI policy.</p>		
<p><b>8. EASEMENTS. Does the property have a dedicated easement?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See the title report issued during the purchase of your home or contact a title company for a copy. Tract and parcel maps at the <a href="#">County Surveyor Record Index</a> tool may show easements, but may be less accurate than a title report.</li> </ul> <p>&gt; If yes, you must comply with the requirements of the easements; often, no construction is allowed within the easement area.</p>		
<p><b>9. NONBUILDABLE AREA. Is there a nonbuildable area in the location of the proposed ADU, such as a demolished swimming pool?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you’re uncertain about a former pool on your property, check for any pool permits at <a href="https://www.sjpermits.org">SJPermits.org</a>; after clicking the Select button for your property, scroll to the bottom of the screen and click “View Permit/File.”</li> </ul> <p>&gt; If yes, there is nonbuildable area due to a pool demolition, your submittal package must include pool demolition documents, either a plot plan showing the requirements per <a href="#">Bulletin #289-Swimming Pool Demolition Requirements</a> or a geotechnical report and foundation design, which may require an engineer’s services.</p>		
<p>NOTES: Enter any notes from the above property research:</p>		

**PART 3. CHOOSE THE CITY OR STATE ADU DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

**YOU HAVE A CHOICE:** Design the ADU following either City Standards (Municipal Code [20.80.175](#)) or State Standards (Municipal Code [20.80.176](#)). The standards cannot be mixed; you must choose either all City standards or all State standards.

**SINGLE-FAMILY PROPERTIES**

	CITY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS			STATE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS		
	DETACHED ADU (NEW OR CONVERSION)	ATTACHED ADU (NEW OR CONVERSION)	JADU	ATTACHED OR DETACHED ADU (NEW)	CONVERSION (EXISTING STRUCTURE OR SPACE)	JADU
<b># Allowed ADUs:</b>	1 (detached or attached)		1	1	1	1
<b>Minimum Size:</b>	150 sf	150 sf	150 sf	150 sf	150 sf	150 sf
<b>Maximum Size:</b> <i>See page 6 for how to measure square footage</i>	<i>Lots &lt;9,000 sf</i> 1,000 sf	<i>Lots &lt;9,000 sf</i> 1,000 sf	500 sf	800 sf	N/A <sup>2</sup>	500 sf
	<i>Lots ≥9,000 sf</i> 1,200 sf	<i>Lots ≥9,000 sf</i> 50% of main home & no more than 1,200 sf <sup>1</sup>				
<b>Minimum Front Setback:</b>	See <a href="#">Table 20-60</a>	See <a href="#">Table 20-60</a>	N/A	See <a href="#">Table 20-60</a> <sup>3</sup>	N/A <sup>2</sup>	N/A <sup>2</sup>
<b>Minimum Side Setback:</b>	1st story: 0 ft 2nd Story: 4 ft	N/A <sup>4</sup>	N/A <sup>4</sup>	4 ft		
<b>Minimum Rear Setback:</b>	1st story: 0 ft 2nd Story: 4 ft	N/A <sup>4</sup>	N/A <sup>4</sup>	4 ft	N/A	N/A
<b>Maximum Height:</b>	25 ft	25 ft	N/A	18 ft	N/A	N/A
<b>Maximum # Stories:</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Bedrooms / Bathrooms:</b>	No maximum; must meet Building & Fire codes			No maximum; must meet Building & Fire codes		
<b>Siting:</b>	Behind main home or 45 ft front setback	N/A	N/A	N/A <sup>3</sup>	N/A <sup>3</sup>	N/A <sup>3</sup>
<b>Other Standards:</b>	* 40% Rear Yard Coverage <sup>5</sup> * 6 ft building separation <sup>6</sup>	Front door must be on a different facade	Comply with <a href="#">Section 20.80.178</a>	None		
<b>Historic Property Regulations:</b>	Comply with <a href="#">Section 20.80.175 (E)</a>			None		
<b>Parking Requirements:</b>	None			None		

*Footnotes:*

- <sup>1</sup> - May not exceed 50% of the existing primary dwelling living area with a maximum size of 1,200 sf.
- <sup>2</sup> - Up to 150 sf for ingress/egress may be added.
- <sup>3</sup> - Front setback may be encroached if no other option enables a minimum 800 sf ADU on the site.
- <sup>4</sup> - Must meet minimum Building and Fire Codes.
- <sup>5</sup> - Not including pools, not more than 40% of the rear yard may be covered.
- <sup>6</sup> - A minimum of 6 feet must separate the detached ADU and the main home.

**PART 3 - CONTINUED. CHOOSE THE CITY OR STATE ADU DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

**YOU HAVE A CHOICE:** Design the ADU following either City Standards (Municipal Code [20.80.175](#)) or State Standards (Municipal Code [20.80.176](#)). The standards cannot be mixed; you must choose either all City standards or all State standards.

**DUPLEX & MULTIFAMILY PROPERTIES**

	CITY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS		STATE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS	
	DETACHED ADU (NEW OR CONVERTED)	ATTACHED ADU (NEW OR CONVERTED)	ATTACHED OR DETACHED ADU (NEW)	CONVERSION (EXISTING STRUCTURE OR SPACE)
<b># Allowed ADUs:</b>	1 (detached or attached)		2	1 or up to 25% of existing units <sup>7</sup>
<b>Minimum Size:</b>	150 sf	150 sf	150 sf	150 sf
<b>Maximum Size:</b> <i>See page 6 for how to measure square footage</i>	Lots <9,000 sf 1,000 sf		800 sf	N/A <sup>4</sup>
	Lots ≥9,000 sf 1,200 sf	Lots ≥9,000 sf 50% of main home & no more than 1,200 sf <sup>1</sup>		
<b>Minimum Front Setback:</b>	See <a href="#">Table 20-60</a>	See <a href="#">Table 20-60</a>	See <a href="#">Table 20-60</a> <sup>3</sup>	N/A <sup>4</sup>
<b>Minimum Side Setback:</b>	1st story: 0 ft <sup>4</sup> 2nd Story: 4 ft	0 ft <sup>4</sup>	4 ft	N/A
<b>Minimum Rear Setback:</b>	1st story: 0 ft <sup>4</sup> 2nd Story: 4 ft	0 ft <sup>4</sup>	4 ft	N/A
<b>Maximum Height:</b>	25 ft	25 ft	18 ft	18 ft
<b>Maximum # Stories:</b>	2	2	2	2
<b>Bedrooms / Bathrooms:</b>	No maximum <sup>4</sup>		No maximum <sup>4</sup>	
<b>Siting:</b>	Behind existing building or 45 ft front setback	N/A <sup>4</sup>	N/A <sup>3</sup>	N/A <sup>3</sup>
<b>Other Standards:</b>	* 40% Rear Yard Coverage <sup>5</sup> * 6 ft building separation <sup>6</sup>	Front door must be on a different facade	None	
<b>Historic Property Regulations:</b>	Comply with <a href="#">Section 20.80.175 (E)</a>		None	
<b>Parking Requirements:</b>	None		None	

*Footnotes:*

- <sup>1</sup> - May not exceed 50% of the existing primary dwelling living area with a maximum size of 1,200 sf.
- <sup>2</sup> - Up to 150 sf for ingress/egress may be added.
- <sup>3</sup> - Front setback may be encroached if no other option enables a minimum 800 sf ADU on the site.
- <sup>4</sup> - Must meet minimum Building and Fire Codes.
- <sup>5</sup> - Not including pools, not more than 40% of the rear yard may be covered.
- <sup>6</sup> - A minimum of 6 feet must separate the detached ADU and the main home.
- <sup>7</sup> - At least one ADU is allowed and up to 25% of the existing total units is allowed. For example, a 20-unit apartment could have 4 ADUs. New units must be converted from unused spaces such as attics, basements, boiler rooms, garages, passageways, storage rooms, or other such spaces.

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
<b>PART 4. FIRE SAFETY &amp; EMERGENCY ACCESS</b> <p>The City's Fire Bureau will review your plans for compliance with the California Fire Code (CFC). For questions, call the Fire Prevention Bureau at <b>408-535-7750</b> or email <a href="mailto:SJFDPermitSpecialist@sanjoseca.gov">SJFDPermitSpecialist@sanjoseca.gov</a>.</p>		
<p><b>10. ADU ADDRESS. Is the existing home address legible and visible from the street?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the Site Plan for submittal, show the address locations ("premises identification") for the main dwelling unit and the ADU. ADUs are assigned a unit number, which must be legible and placed visibly from the street fronting the property, and also placed closely to the side of the ADU access entry.</li> <li>To obtain an ADU Address, complete <a href="#">Form #302-Address Assignment Request</a> and email <a href="mailto:addressing@sanjoseca.gov">addressing@sanjoseca.gov</a>.</li> </ul> <p>&gt; If yes, both addressess are legible and visible from the front street, then your project is in compliance. If no, your plans will not be approved.</p>		
<p><b>11. ADU ACCESS. Is the distance from the street curb of the lot to the farthest side of the proposed ADU no greater than 200 feet as measured along a minimum 3-foot clear path to all sides of the ADU?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the Site Plan for submittal, show the distance along a minimum 3-foot clear path (measured outward from the ADU's farthest projections, such as eaves) from the front property line to the ADU's farthest exterior side or projection.</li> </ul> <p>&gt; If no, you may need a Fire Variance that entails additional safety measures. Call 408-535-7750 for information. See the <a href="#">Fire Variance Application</a>.</p>		
<p><b>12. HYDRANT PROXIMITY. Are all exterior walls of the ADU within 600 feet of a fire hydrant?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the Site Plan Vicinity Map, mark one or more locations of fire hydrants closest to the project. Show the distance from the hydrant/s to the farthest exterior wall of the ADU, using the minimum 3-foot clear path of travel.</li> </ul> <p>&gt; If no, you may need a Fire Variance that entails additional safety measures. Call 408-535-7750 for information. See the <a href="#">Fire Variance Application</a>.</p>		
<p><b>13. HYDRANT WATER FLOW. Is a minimum flow of 1,000 gpm at 20 psi available at the closest hydrant?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask your Water Company for this information. Send an email with "ADU Water Flow Request" in the subject line and present this information:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your name</li> <li>Street name and address of the project</li> <li>Nearest cross street to that location</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>IMPORTANT:</b> Submit the letter from the Water Company with your building permit application. <b>Do not wait.</b> A main reason for delays in permit issuance is because applicants did not provide this letter. Contact your water company today. Find contact information at the <a href="#">ADU Fire Requirements</a> webpage.</p> <p>&gt; If no, the flow is other than 1,000 gpm at 20 psi, Fire staff will evaluate whether additional fire safety measures are required.</p>		
<p><b>14. FIRE SPRINKLERS. Is the primary residence protected by fire sprinklers?</b></p> <p>&gt; If yes, the ADU must also have a fire sprinkler system.</p>		
<p><b>15. FIRE SPRINKLERS AND ATTACHED ADUS. Is the project an attached ADU greater than 500 sf and does the overall gross floor area with the main unit exceed 3,600 sf?</b></p> <p>&gt; If yes, the entire house and ADU are required to be protected with a fire sprinkler system.</p>		

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
<b>PART 5. MISCELLANEOUS</b>		
<p><b>16. TREE REMOVAL.</b> Will constructing an ADU require removal of an ordinance-size tree (38 inches in circumference measured at 4.5 feet above grade) or heritage tree?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An ordinance-size tree is any tree 38 inches or more in circumference measured at 4.5 feet above grade. To determine heritage trees, view the City of San José <a href="#">Heritage Tree List</a>.</li> </ul> <p>&gt; If yes, please visit <a href="http://www.sanjoseca.gov/TreePermit">www.sanjoseca.gov/TreePermit</a> and follow the instructions for heritage trees and tree removal permits.</p>		
<p><b>17. SCHOOL AND PARKLAND IMPACT FEES.</b> Does the size of your ADU, at 750 sf or greater, require you to pay school and parkland impact fees?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact fees do not apply to ADUs less than 750 sf. Find school and parkland fee information on the <a href="#">Fees for ADUs</a> webpage.</li> </ul> <p>&gt; If yes, your ADU size requires paying impact fees, note that your building permit will not be issued until the fees are paid. At the time of your project submittal, staff will provide a school fee referral form.</p>		

## HOW TO MEASURE SQUARE FOOTAGE FOR AN ADU PROJECT

For the purposes of an ADU project submittal, square footage is based on measurements of each livable floor space to the exterior finish. This applies to the main home as well as the proposed ADU.

- Main Home square footage - Do not include nonlivable spaces such as garages, unfinished attics, or unfinished basements.
- Interior stairs count toward the upper floor area. Area below the interior stairs counts toward the first floor area.

## ADU ALLY - HERE TO HELP YOU

Our ADU Ally is a staff member that will answer your questions or connect you to other staff who may be of assistance.

For basic feedback on your project concept, send an email to the ADU Ally and include:

- ADU project address
- Attach a site sketch that shows:
  - lot measurements
  - location and labeling of all existing structures
  - location of trees
  - proposed location of the ADU
- Attach any conceptual floor plans and/or elevations

Email: [ADU.Ally@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:ADU.Ally@sanjoseca.gov)

Phone: 408-793-5302, hablo español.

## FIND MORE ADU INFORMATION

[www.sanjoseca.gov/ADUs](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/ADUs)