



ADU Resources

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUS) AND JUNIOR ADUS (JADUS)

Note: This is not an exhaustive list and may be updated periodically to address other questions that may be asked at the Planning Counter.

General Questions

1. What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)?

An ADU is a residential dwelling unit that provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons located on a lot with a proposed or existing primary single-family or multifamily dwelling unit and may be created in different forms. An ADU must include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation on the same lot as the single-family or multifamily dwelling is or will be situated. See official code definitions: [Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance](#) (NCZO) Sec. 8102-0. / [Coastal Zoning Ordinance](#) (CZO) Sec. 8172-1.

2. What is a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU)?

A JADU is a dwelling unit that is no more than 500 square feet in size and contained entirely within an existing or proposed single-family residence subject to the limitations and the requirements of Government Code section 66333 et seq., and NCZO Sec. 8107-1.7.6 or CZO Sec. 8175-5.24.7.

3. What are the different options for ADUs available for residents to build in the County?

ADUs can be constructed in any of the following forms:

- Detached: The ADU is separated from the primary residential structure.
- Attached: The ADU is attached to the primary residential structure, including the conversion of existing partially enclosed spaces (such as a covered patio).
- Conversion of Space within Primary Residential Structure: The ADU is created within the space of an existing or proposed primary residential structure and includes the conversion of existing space (e.g., master bedroom, attached garage, storage area, or similar use).
- Conversion of Space within an Existing Accessory Structure: The ADU is created within the space of an existing accessory structure that is converted into an independent living unit and is located on the lot of the primary residence.

Refer to [ADU Guidebook pages 6-11](#) for more information on ADU types.

Building an ADU/JADU

4. How big can my ADU/JADU be?

- JADU maximum allowed size: **500sf**
- Detached ADUs, and Attached ADUs maximum allowed size (varies by lot size):
 - On lots under 9,000sf: **850sf studio/1 bed; 1000sf 2+ bed**
 - On lots between 9,000sf and 10ac: **1,200sf**
 - On lots over 10ac: **1,800sf**
- Conversion ADUs maximum allowed size:
 - **For residential and mixed-use zones:** Existing footprint with a max. 150sf expansion for ingress/egress for an ADU that is created by conversion of an existing accessory structure; and
 - **For open space and agricultural zones (OS, AE, COS, CA):** Up to the maximum allowed size for Detached/Attached ADUs as specified above.

5. What are the required setbacks for my ADU?

For Attached and Detached ADUs, side and rear setbacks from the property line must be a minimum of 4 feet. Setbacks do not apply to Conversion ADUs or JADUs because they use existing floor area of the primary residence or accessory structure.

6. How many ADUs and JADUs can I have on a property with an existing single-family dwelling in a residential or mixed-use zone?

As long as each ADU type meets County and State development standards, you can add up to three units on a lot with a single-family home in a residential or mixed-use zone, as follows:

- **1 ADU created by conversion** of the primary residence or accessory structure per the County's requirements in NCZO Sec. 8107-1.7.4(a)/CZO Sec. 8175-5.24.5(b); **and**
- **1 Detached ADU (new construction)** that meets the County's requirements in NCZO Sec. 8107-1.7.4(b) or Sec. 8107-1.7.5/CZO Sec. 8175-5.24.5(c); **OR an Attached ADU** that meets the County's requirements in NCZO Sec. 8107-1.7.5/ CZO Sec. 8175-5.24.6; **and**
- **1 JADU** created by conversion of interior space no larger than 500 sq. ft. per NCZO Sec. 8107-1.7.6/CZO Sec. 8175-5.24.7.

The following is not allowed on a lot with a single-family home in a residential or mixed-use zone:

- Two Detached new construction ADUs
- Two Conversion ADUs

Refer to [ADU Guidebook page 16](#) for more information on ADU combinations on a single-family lot.

7. How many ADUs and JADUs can I have on a property with an existing multifamily dwelling in a residential or mixed-use zone?

The amount of ADUs you can add varies based on how many existing units you have on your lot. ADUs must meet County and State development standards. For example, on a property zoned Residential Planned Development (RPD) that has a multifamily structure with 6 units in it, the ADUs may be created in the following manner:

- **Up to 25% of existing units but at least 1 ADU created by the conversion of non-habitable space.** In this example, existing garages on the lot (or a gym, or storage area) could be converted into a maximum of 1 ADU. (NCZO Sec. 8107-1.7.4(c)(3)/CZO Sec. 8175-5.24.6(d)(3), CA Gov. Code, § 66323, subd. (a)(3)(B); **and**
- **Up to 8 detached ADUs but no more than the existing number of units on the lot.** In this example, six (6) detached ADUs can be added. They must be detached from the multifamily structure but can be attached to each other. (NCZO Sec. 8107-1.7.4(d)/CZO Sec. 8175-5.24.5(e), CA Gov. Code, § 66323, subd. (a)(4)(A)).
- **JADUs are not allowed on lots with a multifamily dwelling.**

Refer to [ADU Guidebook page 17](#) for more information on ADU combinations on a multifamily lot.

8. Is there a limit on the height or number of stories for an ADU?

Yes, there are height limitations for ADUs.

For Detached ADUs: The maximum allowed height varies depending on the situation, as listed below.

Lots with an existing or proposed single-family or multifamily dwelling	• 16 feet above grade
Lots with an existing or proposed multifamily dwelling with multiple stories	• 18 feet above grade
Lots within one half mile of a major transit stop or high quality transit corridor	• An additional 2 feet height is allowed • 18 feet maximum above grade
Detached ADUs	• If the ADU is set back at least 20 feet from all property lines, height limits can be exceeded but cannot exceed two stories or the height of the primary dwelling.

For Attached ADUs: The maximum allowable height is 25 ft above grade but not higher than the existing primary residence.

9. Does access to utilities need to be demonstrated in order to build an ADU/JADU?

Yes. Utility connections (water, sewer, gas, electricity, septic) can impact what you can build on your lot, and where. The information below includes state and local law on utility connections for ADUs, but you will need to confirm with your service providers, your design team, and County staff.

- **ADUs/JADUs constructed at the same time as a new single-family home** may be required to have a new or separate utility connection between the unit and the utility, and subject to a related connection fee or capacity charge. These charges must be proportional to what the ADU will use compared to the main home (based on square footage or total plumbing fixtures).
- **Conversion ADUs/JADUs on a lot with an existing single-family dwelling** are not required to have new or separate connections and connection fees/capacity charges are not required.
- **All other ADUs/JADUs** may require a new or separate utility connection between the unit and the utility subject to a connection fee or capacity charge that is proportionate to the burden of the proposed ADU/JADU based on either its square footage or number of drainage fixture unit values.

Even when new connections are not required, homeowners may be required to upsize service and/or meters to meet capacity requirements. Contact your property's service provider for electricity, gas, water and sewer for more information on upgrades and new connections. If your property is outside the water or sewer service districts, contact County staff to find out if your water well or septic system can support the additional capacity of an ADU. For more information regarding the requirements, contact Building and Safety Division at (805) 654-2771 or building@venturacounty.gov

10. Does my ADU/JADU need fire sprinklers?

Only if required for the primary residence. The construction of an ADU/JADU shall not trigger a requirement for fire sprinklers to be installed in an existing primary dwelling.

11. Can an entire existing primary single-family dwelling be redesignated as an ADU so that a new single-family dwelling can be constructed and designated as the primary single-family dwelling?

Yes, this is possible – however, there are several factors that may need to be considered, depending on your site specifics. Contact Planning Division at (805) 654-2488 or Plan.counter@venturacounty.gov for more details.

12. Can I build an ADU above my garage?

Yes, you can build an ADU above your garage; however, the ADU height limits outlined above still apply. Note that the ADU will require an outside staircase entrance separate from the garage that must also meet setback requirements.

13. Is a JADU required to have access to the primary residence?

A JADU is only required to have access to the primary residence if it shares a bathroom with the primary residence. If the JADU has an independent bathroom, it is not required to have access to the primary residence. Please note that all JADUs are required to include an independent entrance, and an efficiency kitchen (at minimum).

14. Does my JADU need to include a kitchen?

Please note that all JADUs are required to include an efficiency kitchen; i.e., a kitchen that includes a cooking facility with appliances, and a food preparation counter and storage cabinets.

Regulatory and Entitlement Information/Permitting Process

15. What's my zoning for my property?

Zoning classifications are established to regulate specific uses and development on a particular property. To know what uses are allowed on a property within the unincorporated area of Ventura County, and what type of land use permits are required, you first need to know the zoning designation of your property. The Planning Division's [What's My Zoning](#) tool helps to find the zoning designation of properties by entering either the 9- or 10-digit Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) or the Property Address. Property owners may also search for their zoning designation and other useful property information using the [County View](#) mapping tool.

16. What is a Zoning Clearance (ZC)?

A ZC is a ministerial entitlement that is approved by the Planning Director, based upon a determination that the proposed project complies with established standards in the Zoning Ordinances. These determinations are arrived at objectively. Applications for a ZC have a quicker review turnaround time as opposed to a discretionary application (e.g., Conditional Use Permit) as ZC approvals do not require environmental review and public hearings.

A link to information about all ministerial permits, and instructions for submitting an application for a ZC are found on the [Application Materials and Forms](#) page of the Planning Division website.

Review [pages 18-20 of the ADU Guidebook](#) to identify what permits your ADU project needs.

17. What costs or considerations should be anticipated as part of an ADU/JADU permit review? What are the fees associated with the permitting process?

Permit fees will vary based on project-specific information. See the [Building and Safety permit fee calculator](#) to estimate applicable fees.

Applicants can use the Ventura County [ADU Cost Calculator](#) to explore typical costs related to ADU construction. The ADU cost calculator is a helpful tool at the beginning stages of a project to get a sense of typical costs associated with different design decisions, but it does not guarantee costs and should not replace an official cost estimate from a design professional.

18. What County agencies and departments will review my ADU application?

The following agencies/departments may review your ADU application, as necessary:

Resource Management Agency

- **Planning Division** – Zoning Clearance or Coastal Development Permit application and Rental Estimation form.
 - Contact: (805) 654-2488 or Plan.counter@venturacounty.gov
- **Building & Safety Division** – Building Permit application including building code requirements, new address issuance, energy requirements (ex. state energy conservation and green building mandatory measures), inspections, and final certificate of occupancy.
 - Contact: (805) 654-2771 or building@venturacounty.gov
- **Environmental Health Division** – Sanitation including Private Septic Certification (Onsite Wastewater Treatment System Clearance (OWTS)), and sewer district connection.
 - Contact: (805) 654-2813 or ehdmessages@venturacounty.gov

Public Works Agency

- **Land Development Services** – Grading Permit, Floodplain Permits, Water purveyor Will Serve letters for public water systems, and Soils Report/Geological Report.
 - Contact: (805) 654-2030 or Pwa_ldservices@venturacounty.gov
- **Watershed Protection District** – Well water quality approval for private water systems and Stormwater Review.
 - Contact: (805) 654-5051 or PWA.CountyStormwater@venturacounty.gov
- **Surveyor** – Legal lot status, easement locations, and recorded maps.
 - Contact: (805) 654-2068 or countysurveyor@venturacounty.gov
- **Integrated Waste Management** – What will be done with extra building/construction materials.
 - Contact: (805) 658-4321 or PWA.IWMD-CD@venturacounty.gov

Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (APCD)

- **APCD Clearance**
 - Contact: (805) 303-3700 or notifications@vcapcd.org

Ventura County Fire Protection District

- **Ventura County Fire Prevention Bureau** – Typically requires Fire Prevention Form 610B.
 - Contact: (805) 389-9738 or fireprevention@ventura.county.gov

Coastal Zone Standards

19. My property is in the Coastal Zone of unincorporated Ventura County (e.g., Silver Strand, Hollywood Beach, Solimar, Faria, Rincon, Mussel Shoals, La Conchita). Am I eligible to have an ADU?

Properties in coastal zones may be eligible to have an ADU as long as they meet development standards outlined in CZO Sec. 8175-5.24. Depending on site-specific conditions and/or the type of ADU proposed, the ADU application may require a Coastal Development Permit.

20. How does the Coastal Development Permit differ from a Zoning Clearance?

A Zoning Clearance is a ministerial review process which is typically a more streamlined, administrative process, as explained in the Regulatory and Entitlement Process section above.

Approval of a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) typically goes through a discretionary permit process, including a public hearing. However, CDPs for ADUs are unique, as they do not require a public hearing; but need to meet the noticing requirements associated with a CDP. For more information regarding CDPs for ADUs, see CZO Sec. 8181-13. Also, a Discretionary Permit Intake Coordinator at the Planning Division counter can help guide you through the permitting process.

Review [pages 18-20 of the ADU Guidebook](#) to identify what permits your ADU project needs.

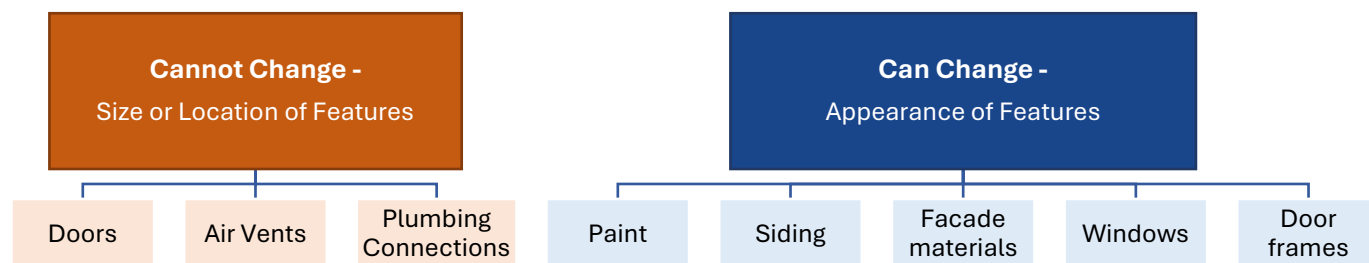
Standardized Plans and Manufactured Homes

21. Are there pre-approved ADU plans I can use?

Yes. The County has a complete set of standardized plans that can be utilized for the construction of Detached ADUs. These standardized plans have already been reviewed and pre-approved by the County's Building and Safety Division; and include three different designs: including one-, two-, and three-bedroom units.

The standardized plans can be found on the County's [Standardized Plans for Accessory Dwelling Units and Farmworker/ Animal Caretaker Dwelling Units](#) website.

22. Can I customize any of the features on the standardized ADU plans?



23. What are the benefits of using the standardized ADU plans?

Benefits:

- The construction sets are free of charge!
- They reduce the need to hire multiple design professionals. A contractor can help you complete the permit application if you keep the designs as they are.
 - Note: You will still need to hire a design professional to prepare energy forms as required by the California Energy Code.
- They offer a reduced permitting timeline since the plans have been pre-reviewed by Building and Safety Division.

Drawbacks:

- If your property has challenging site constraints like steep slopes, a stream, or an irregularly shaped lot, a standardized plan may not be able to meet your needs.
- They provide minimal options to customize. If you adjust the plans substantially, the Building and Safety Division will have to do a complete review of the plans which would lengthen your permitting time.

24. Can I have an ADU on wheels?

No, The County does not allow ADUs on wheels. ADUs are permitted as permanent housing units, and must be fixed to a foundation or pad.

25. Can I use a manufactured home as a new construction detached ADU?

Yes, you can use a manufactured home as a new construction Detached ADU, provided it meets the standards outlined in NCZO Sec. 8107-1.7 or CZO Sec. 8175-5.24. The manufactured home must adhere to the specified requirements regarding setbacks, maximum building height, and other relevant criteria as defined in the NCZO and CZO.

Additionally, you may want to look for California Housing and Community Development (HCD) certified manufactured/modular homes. These units have been certified to meet the same California Building Code as traditional stick-built homes.

Renting and Selling

26. Can an ADU be sold separately from the primary dwelling?

No, an ADU may not be sold or otherwise conveyed separately from the primary dwelling, except as specified in Government Code section 66341 (NCZO Sec. 8107-1.7.7(e)(4) / CZO Sec. 8175.5.24.4(e)(4)).

27. Can I split my lot under Senate Bill 9 (SB 9) and treat the ADU as the house on the second lot?

Yes. SB 9 allows you to split a lot into two, and for each lot to have a maximum of two units (including ADUs) per lot. An existing ADU can be utilized as a primary dwelling on one of the newly created lots under SB 9.

28. Can my ADU/JADU be used as a short-term rental (e.g., Airbnb)?

No, ADUs and JADUs must be rented for terms longer than 30 consecutive days, which means they cannot be used for short-term rentals like an Airbnb (NCZO Sec. 8107-1.7.7/ CZO Sec. 8175.5.24.4).

Miscellaneous Questions

29. Can my local Homeowners Association (HOA) prohibit the construction of an ADU/JADU?

Local HOAs cannot prohibit the construction of an ADU or JADU if the property is within residential or mixed-use zone, such as R1, R2, RES, RA, RE, RO, CR, CRE, CR1, CR2, RB, RBH, or CRPD. The regulations for ADUs and JADUs apply even if the property is subject to HOA rules.

30. What funding resources are available to build an ADU/JADU?

Some potential funding resources that could be used to build an ADU/JADU may include the following (*Note: The following includes some third-party ADU resources, programs or vendors. Those included on this list are not endorsed by or affiliated with the County, and their work is not guaranteed by the County. This list is intended as a helpful starting point for researching different ADU funding options for your property*):

- Loans: California Housing Financing Agency (CalHFA) offers any array of home renovation and ADU eligible loans.
- Credit: Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC) or cash-out refinancing.
- Company Rent Share: United Dwelling, ADU Builder, or Dweller.
- Grants: CalHFA ADU Grant Program.

An applicant for the funding may need substantial equity in the property and/or a credit rating and income to qualify with a lender. Lenders may differ on allowing you to count ADU rental income towards your ability to repay a loan.

31. Will my property be reassessed or my property taxes increase if I build an ADU/JADU?

It is likely that your property will be partially reassessed. The existing primary residence is not reassessed, but the new ADU or JADU's value is added to the property tax bill (which may result in its increase). However, we recommend that you check with the Ventura County Assessor's Office, who handles property values, ownership, and taxes. They can be reached at (805) 654-2181 or at: assessor.info@venturacounty.gov.