

This guide describes the requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on parcels developed with an existing or proposed Multiple-Unit Dwelling. Properties with Multiple-Unit Dwellings means there is more than one primary dwelling unit on the parcel, even if the units are detached from each other. The full list of development standards and requirements can be found in Santa Monica Municipal Code (SMMC) [Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units](#).

What is an ADU?

An ADU is a detached or attached structure that has its own private entry, no internal connection to a primary dwelling, a full kitchen, and a full bathroom.

How many ADUs can you build on your property?

Parcels with a Multiple-Unit Dwelling may establish the following types of ADUs:

- At least one ADU or up to 25% of the existing number of primary dwelling units in the multiple-unit building(s) through conversion (see page 2); and
- Detached ADUs:
 - Up to two newly constructed detached ADUs when proposed with a new Multiple-Unit Dwelling (see page 4); or
 - Up to eight newly constructed detached ADUs when proposed with an existing Multiple-Unit Dwelling, but not to exceed the number of existing primary dwelling units (see page 4).

Process

ADUs are ministerial projects that have no design review or public hearings. ADUs only need a building permit. However, if the parcel is within the Coastal Zone, a Coastal Development Permit or Waiver may also be required through the California Coastal Commission prior to building permit approval. Additionally, for historic resources, only properties identified on the California Register of Historical Resources may have additional standards, requirements, or processes.

To apply for a building permit, please see the following link: santamonica.gov - [How to Submit a Building Permit Application for Plan Review](#)

Additional Questions

For additional questions regarding ADUs that are not answered in the guide below, please submit through the City's [311 System](#).

Converted ADUs

Accessory Dwelling (ADUs) established through conversion of existing non-livable space shall fall within this category. Non-livable space includes, but is not limited to, storage rooms, garages, laundry rooms, basements, etc.

ADUs established through conversion on parcels with an existing or proposed Multiple-Unit Dwelling (MUD) shall be subject to all Santa Monica standards set forth in Santa Monica Municipal Code (SMMC) [Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit](#), as summarized below, and State building standards for dwellings.

Standard	Requirement
Maximum Number of Converted ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one ADU or up to 25% of the existing number of primary dwelling units in the Multiple-Unit building(s), whichever is greater, are permitted. <p><i>Fractions of 0.5 or greater shall be rounded up to the nearest whole number, and fractions of less than 0.5 shall be rounded down to the nearest whole number.</i></p>
Permitted Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within the footprint of the existing building's non-livable spaces. <p><i>However, a parking area that is not fully enclosed, but below a second story cantilever, may be converted to an ADU if the area can be enclosed with walls that provide the same setback (front, sides, and rear) dimensions as the existing second story, but shall be no closer than 4 feet to a parcel line.</i></p>
Expansion to Existing Footprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No expansion to the footprint of existing buildings is permitted. This includes the primary dwellings and attached or detached accessory structures. Adding an additional story is considered expansion to the footprint.
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Minimum Size</u> - 150 square feet of floor area. <u>Maximum Size</u>: The total area of the contiguous non-livable spaces to be converted is permitted.
Floor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exempt from floor area calculations. <p><i>Accessory spaces with no internal connection to the ADU or non-livable areas (e.g. garages) will not be exempt from floor area.</i></p>

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Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No setbacks shall apply to existing space being converted.* <p><i>* This also applies to any existing unpermitted structures built before January 1, 2020, that are being converted into an ADU.</i></p>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No height limits shall apply as existing space is being converted.
Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent exterior access is required. No interior access between the ADU and a detached accessory structure (other than a garage for the ADU) or another ADU is permitted.
Living Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The following independent facilities must be provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Kitchen that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, refrigerator, and a built-in stove top or range. ➤ Bathroom that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, toilet, and a shower and/or bathtub.
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site parking is not required.* When a parking area or garage is used to establish an ADU, the eliminated parking is not required to be replaced. However, please contact the Rent Control Department regarding possible rent adjustments if the eliminated parking was an amenity for a rent-controlled unit. If parking is voluntarily provided, it must comply with all standards set forth in SMMC Section 9.28. <p><i>* If subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, please contact the California Coastal Commission regarding parking requirements.</i></p>
Owner Occupancy, Lease Terms, and Separate Sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owner occupancy not required. Short-term rentals (30 days or less) are not permitted. Permitted to be sold separately from the MUD following the standards of SMMC Section 9.31.026, Accessory Dwelling Unit Condominiums.

Alternative to the above Santa Monica standards, ADUs may be established through the conversion of non-livable space within existing multiple-unit dwellings pursuant to State Mandated standards as set for in [SMMC Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit](#).

Detached ADUs

A detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) that is constructed entirely within a new free-standing building shall fall within this category; however, it may be attached to an existing detached accessory structure and/or another ADU. Detached is defined as at least 4 feet of separation from the ADU and the primary dwelling, measured from exterior walls.

A new detached ADU in conjunction with an existing or proposed Multiple-Unit Dwelling (MUD) shall be subject to all Santa Monica standards set forth in Santa Monica Municipal Code (SMMC) [Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit](#), as summarized below, and State building standards for dwellings.

Standard	Requirement
Maximum Number of Detached ADUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to two new detached ADUs are permitted on a parcel <u>proposed</u> with a new Multiple-Unit Dwelling, or Up to eight newly constructed detached ADUs are permitted on a parcel with an <u>existing</u> Multiple-Unit Dwelling, but ADUs are not to exceed the number of existing primary dwelling units.
Permitted Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permitted to be located anywhere on a parcel if it meets setback requirements. Permitted to be attached (e.g. share a wall or located above) to existing or proposed detached accessory structure or another detached ADU. Required to be located a minimum of 4 feet from existing primary dwelling(s), as measured between exterior walls. <p><i>Unenclosed access facilities (e.g. exterior stairs) may be within the 4 feet of separation between the detached ADU and primary dwelling(s).</i></p>
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Minimum Size</u> – 150 square feet of floor area. <u>Maximum Size</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Studio/1-bedroom – 850 square feet of floor area. ➤ 2 or more bedrooms – 1,200 square feet of floor area. <p><i>Garages for use of the ADU with an internal connection will not count towards the maximum size of the ADU.</i></p>
Floor Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exempt from floor area calculations. <p><i>Accessory spaces with no internal connection to the ADU or non-livable areas (e.g. garages) will not be exempt from floor area.</i></p>

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Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Front</u> – Not permitted within the required front setback of the underlying zoning district. • <u>Side & Rear</u> – 4 feet.
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 stories or 24 feet. <p><i>Height is measured using one of three options pursuant to SMMC Section 9.04.050, Measuring Height. Relatively flat parcels most commonly use Average Natural Grade (ANG) to measure height. If only constructing an ADU, the minimum required setbacks for the ADU are used when calculating ANG. For ADUs proposing more than one story or on a sloped parcel, a land survey must be prepared and provided with your building permit application.</i></p>
Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent exterior access is required. • No interior access between the ADU and a detached accessory structure (other than a garage for the ADU) or another ADU is permitted. • Upper-story outdoor space standards of the underlying zoning district shall apply. • Permitted Projections in SMMC Section 9.21.060 and SMMC Section 9.21.110 shall be based on the ADU height and setbacks, respectively. However, no projection unless otherwise stated in the code shall be closer than 4 feet to any parcel line.
Living Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following independent facilities must be provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Kitchen that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, refrigerator, and a built-in stove top or range. ➤ Bathroom that includes, but is not limited to, a sink, toilet, and a shower and/or bathtub.
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site parking is not required.* • When a parking area or garage is used to construct an ADU, the eliminated parking is not required to be replaced. However, please contact the Rent Control Department regarding possible rent adjustments if the eliminated parking was an amenity for a rent-controlled unit. • If parking is voluntarily provided, it must comply with all standards set forth in SMMC Section 9.28. <p><i>* If subject parcel is located within the Coastal Zone, please contact the California Coastal Commission regarding parking requirements.</i></p>

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Owner Occupancy, Lease Terms, and Separate Sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner occupancy not required. • Short-term rentals (30 days or less) are not permitted. • Permitted to be sold separately from the MUD following the standards of SMMC Section 9.31.026, Accessory Dwelling Unit Condominiums.
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Alternative to the above Santa Monica standards, newly constructed detached ADUs may be developed pursuant to State Mandated standards as set forth in [SMMC Section 9.31.025, Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit](#).