



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT

JUNIOR ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT

Can I construct an ADU on my property?

In California, individuals with a single-family home may construct both an ADU and JADU in any residential or mixed-use zone.

What is a JADU?

A Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit ("JADU") is a secondary dwelling unit that may be created within the walls of a proposed or existing single-family residence and must not exceed 500 square feet in size. A JADU may share utility connections and a bathroom with the primary dwelling unit. A JADU must have, at a minimum, an efficiency kitchen (food preparation counter, storage cabinets, and small plug-in appliances (ex. plug in hot plate)).

What Is Considered an ADU?

An ADU is a secondary dwelling unit with complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons, typically taking one of three forms:

1. Detached: The unit is separate from the primary residential structure.
2. Attached: The unit is connected to the primary residential structure.
3. Repurposed existing space: Space within the primary residence, such as a master bedroom, garage, or basement, converted into an independent living unit.

What permits are required for an ADU?

The required permits for an ADU generally depend on the size and the type of ADU.

For a detached ADU the following permits apply:

- If the detached ADU is 800 square feet or smaller, only a building permit is required.
- If the detached ADU is 800 square feet or larger, a building permit and an ADU permit are required.

For an attached ADU both a building permit and an ADU permit are required, regardless of the size of the ADU.

If an ADU is created from existing space within an existing single-family dwelling, or within the space of a proposed single-family dwelling, only a building permit is required. Up to one hundred fifty (150) square feet can be added if the expansion is limited to accommodating ingress and egress to the ADU. Side- and rear-yard setbacks sufficient for safety must be provided, as dictated by applicable building and fire codes.

What permits are required for a JADU?

A building permit is required for a JADU.

Will my ADU or JADU have a separate address from the primary dwelling unit?

Yes, all applicants for ADU's and JADU's are required to apply for a separate address. This assigned address must be used on building permit applications and plans.

What are the size limits for an ADU?

- Studio or one bedroom: 850 square feet
- Two or more bedrooms: 1,000 square feet

Attached ADU's are further limited in size to 50% of the floor area of the existing primary dwelling unit. However, the 50% floor area limitation shall not require the ADU to be less than 800 square feet (ex. 1,500 square foot primary dwelling x 50% = 750 square foot ADU or 800 square feet).

Are there size limits for a JADU?

A JADU is limited to a maximum of 500 square feet and must be fully contained within the primary dwelling unit.

What are the costs associated with building an ADU on my property?

The costs associated with building an ADU depend on multiple factors, including the square footage, number of fixtures (sinks, showers, toilets, etc.), and ADU type (attached, detached, JADU, conversion). Below is a list of some fees associated with an ADU based on the square footage proposed:

- **Under 500 square feet:** No school fees. Subject to payment of building plan check fees and permit issuance fees.
- **Between 500 square feet and 749 square feet:** Subject to payment of school fees, building plan check fees, and permit issuance fees.
- **Between 750 square feet and 799 square feet:** Subject to payment of school fees, development impact fees, building plan check fees, and permit issuance fees.
- **Over 800 square feet to a maximum of 1,000 square feet:** Subject to payment of school fees, development impact fees, an ADU Permit, building plan check fees, and permit issuance fees.

All ADU's are required to have a separate address, which is subject to an application fee adopted by resolution of the City Council.

Are separate utilities required for an ADU or JADU?

Separately metered gas and electric service are required for newly constructed detached and attached ADU's.

If the ADU is converted from an existing living space or structure (ex. detached garage), a separately metered gas and electric connection is not required.

A JADU must be fully contained within an existing or proposed single-family structure and is therefore also exempt from providing a separately metered gas and electric connection.

Are fire sprinklers required?

Fire sprinklers are not required in an ADU if the primary dwelling unit does not have fire sprinklers.

If the primary dwelling unit has fire sprinklers, then fire sprinklers are required to be provided in the ADU. The building plans shall include a note stating that fire sprinklers are a deferred submittal directly to the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA).

The construction of an ADU does not trigger a requirement for fire sprinklers to be installed in the existing primary dwelling unit.

Am I required to live in the primary dwelling unit or the ADU?

An ADU that is permitted after January 1, 2020, but before January 1, 2025, is not subject to any owner-occupancy requirements. Meaning, the owner of the residence does not have to reside on the property as their legal permanent residence.

All JADU's are subject to an owner-occupancy requirement. The property owner must either reside within the primary dwelling unit or the newly created JADU.

Can I use my ADU or JADU for short-term rentals (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.)?

No, an ADU or JADU cannot be rented for a term that is shorter than 30 days. Furthermore, short-term rentals are prohibited within the City.

Is sleeping in my garage permitted?

Sleeping in a garage is not allowed according to the Lake Forest Municipal Code, and no obstructions that would prevent parking of vehicles are allowed within a garage. However, it is possible to obtain permits and meet zoning codes for garage conversions. By converting a garage into an ADU, habitation within a garage would be permissible.