Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Guide

Understanding ADUs in the City of Santee (As of July 2026)

This guide provides an overview of Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)s in the City of Santee (City), including the types of ADUs allowed, the basic development requirements, and a summary of the City's permitting process for ADUs.

What are the benefits?

- Increase number and variety of housing choices in Santee.
- Generate an extra source of income.
- Create private living spaces for multigenerational living.
- Increase a property's resale value and home equity.

What are ADUs?

ADUs have been known by many names: granny flats, in-law units, backyard cottages, secondary units and more. ADUs are secondary housing units located on the same lot as a primary unit. There are various types of ADUs illustrated in *Figure 1 – ADU Development Scenarios* that may be permitted within residential areas of the City. State law guides what ADU development the City does and does not allow and the process by which the City reviews ADUs. State law identifies two general types of ADUs: Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs).

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

An ADU is a residential dwelling unit that provides complete independent living facilities for one or more people and is located on a lot with a proposed or existing single-family residence (SFR) or multi-family dwelling. It must include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation. Efficiency units, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section (§) 17958.1 and manufactured homes, as defined in Health and Safety Code §18007, can also be considered ADUs.

Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU)

A JADU is a residential dwelling unit that is no more than 500 square feet in size and contained entirely within a SFR or attached garage in a single-family zoning district. Single-family zoning districts in the City include: HL (Hillside/Limited Residential), R-1 & R-1A (Low Density Residential), and R-2 Low-Medium Density Residential. A JADU may include separate sanitation facilities or share sanitation facilities with the SFR. A JADU must

provide a kitchen or efficiency kitchen. The JADU or SFR must be owner-occupied, if shared sanitation facilities are proposed.

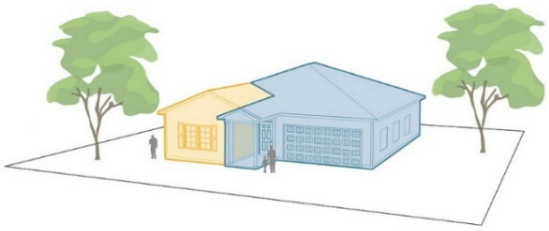
Figure 1 – ADU Development Scenarios



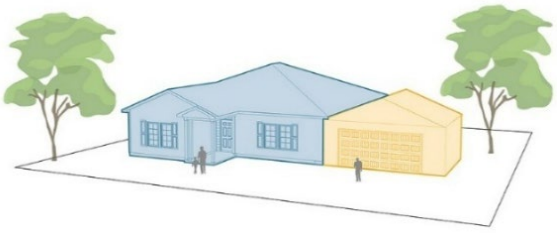
New Construction Detached ADU: Located on the same property as an existing or proposed SFR and fully detached from the SFR.



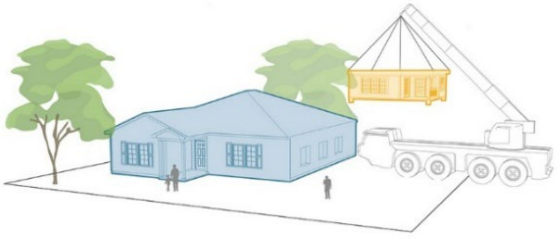
New Construction Attached ADU: Attached to an existing or proposed SFR (e.g., an ADU built on top of an attached garage, as a new second story of a SFR).



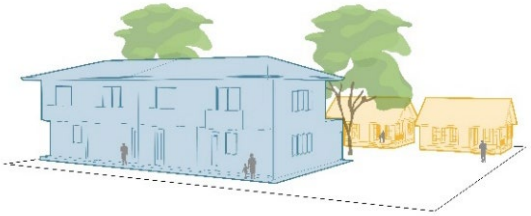
JADU: Contained entirely within an existing or proposed SFR, including an attached garage. May include separate sanitation facilities or share sanitation facilities with the existing structure.



Converted Attached/Detached ADUs: Created from the existing space within a SFR or within the existing space of an accessory structure (e.g., detached garage).



Modular/Pre-Manufactured: Modular ADUs are built partially or entirely off-site and delivered to the property and are permitted subject to the applicable ADU standards. Modular/pre-manufactured ADUs are subject to the standards of new construction ADUs.



Multi-Family ADUs: ADUs on multi-family sites must be detached from the primary multi-family dwelling. For proposed multi-family development, ADUs must be detached from the primary multi-family buildings but may be attached to each other.

What are the requirements for ADUs?

The lists and tables below summarize the requirements for different types of ADUs in the City, consistent with State law and the Santee Municipal Code (SMC). To review a comprehensive set of ADU and JADU requirements, please review Government Code 66310 - 66344 and SMC § 13.10.045.

City of Santee ADU and JADU Regulations

SMC § 13.10.045 or as amended in:

Government Code § 66310-66342

Summary Table

Type	Attached ADU	Detached ADU	Conversion ADU	JADU
Max Size (sq ft)	800 –1,200	800 –1,200	Existing & 150	500
Height (ft)	Zoning limits	16–20	Zoning limits	Inside existing home
Setbacks (ft)	4	4	None (safety only)	None
Max Lot Coverage (%)	25–75 depending on zone	25–75 depending on zone	N/A	N/A
Private Open Space	Maintain existing	Maintain existing	N/A	N/A
Parking	Not required if <800 sq ft or near transit	Not required if <800 sq ft or near transit	N/A	N/A
Kitchen	Full kitchen	Full kitchen	Full kitchen	Efficiency kitchen
Owner-Occupancy Requirement	No	No	No	Yes (if shared sanitation)

General Requirements (Apply to All ADUs & JADUs)

- **Zoning:** Attached ADUs and JADUs permitted in single-family zones; Detached ADUs and Conversions permitted in single-family and multi-family zones.
- **Kitchen Requirements:** ADUs require full kitchen; JADUs require a kitchen or efficiency kitchen.
- **Ingress/Egress:** ADUs require exterior entrance; JADUs require exterior plus interior access if sharing sanitation.
- **Owner Occupancy:** No requirement for ADUs; Required for JADUs (or associated SFD) if sharing sanitation.
- **Rental Restrictions:** Minimum 30 days. Short term rentals are not allowed in the City.
- **Fire Sprinklers:** Required only if primary dwelling requires/has them.
- **Sale of Units:** The City does not allow the sale of ADUs/JADUs.
- **Impact Fees:** ADUs less than (<) 750 square feet (sq ft) exempt from impact fees; greater than (>) 500 sq ft may require school fees.

Attached ADU Requirements

- **Maximum Size:** Up to 800 sq ft (streamlined) or up to 1,200 sq ft (additional objective requirements).
- **Height:** As allowed per the parcel's zoning.
- **Setbacks:** 4 ft side and rear.
- **Parking:** Required if >800 sq ft and over 1/2 mile walking distance from transit stop.

Detached ADU Requirements

- **Maximum Size:** 800–1,200 sq ft.
- **Height:** 16 feet (ft) (standard), 18 - 20 ft (must be 1/2 mile walking distance of major transit stop. Up to 20 ft to match roof pitch).
- **Setbacks:** 4 ft side and rear.
- **Parking:** Required if >800 sq ft and over 1/2 mile walking distance from transit stop.

Conversion ADU Requirements

- **Maximum Size:** Existing structure plus up to 150 sq ft for entry.
- **Height:** As allowed per the parcel's zoning.
- **Setbacks:** Only required for safety (building/fire code).
- **Parking:** None required.

Junior ADU (JADU) Requirements

- **Maximum Size:** 500 sq ft.
- **Location:** Must be within existing home or attached garage.
- **Kitchen:** Kitchen or efficiency kitchen required.
- **Bathroom:** May share or be separate.
- **Owner Occupancy:** Required for JADU or associated SFD if sharing sanitation.

What is the process for building an ADU on my property?

The following outlines the process for building an ADU, from initial planning stages through construction:

Pre-Plan

- Check zoning to determine if your property is eligible for an ADU.
- Review applicable ADU standards established in SMC § 13.10.045.
    - State laws change frequently, please note that you may consult with applicable City departments for clarification on the most current processes and requirements.
- Determine size and approximate location for your ADU.
    - Contact City staff to discuss preliminary layout and identify any issues in advance.
- Contact the Planning Division at (619) 258-4100 x 167 to determine if the project site is within an Airport Influence Area (AIA) which may require Aviation Compatibility review including review from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
    - Please be aware that review may result in sound attenuation measures and/or recordation of an overflight notification.
- Contact service districts and utility providers to discuss ADU utility connections, fees, and any potential conflicts with public utility equipment or easements.
    - Padre Dam Municipal Water District
    - San Diego Gas & Electric

Design

Prepare architectural drawings, including a site plan. A qualified draftsman or architect can complete plans for ADUs, which must be signed by a person responsible for plan preparation. You may also be required to hire an engineer to prepare a grading plan. ADU's in Santee must comply with the 2025 California Green Building Standards Tier II Voluntary Measures, SMC § 13.10.040.J and § 13.10.040.K regarding energy conservation. New two-story ADU's or ADUs proposed as a second story addition will require a licensed engineer.

Pre-Approved & Manufactured Home Plans: You can also apply for a building permit using preapproved or manufactured home plans, which may simplify review process and provide opportunities to reduce pre-construction fees. Note that pre-approved and manufactured home plans are not complete and require that you provide project-specific information, including a site plan that shows the location of the proposed ADU and a specific foundation plan. Modifications to pre-approved plans are not permitted. The City accepts the following pre-approved plans:

- County of San Diego Standard ADU Plans
- City of Chula Vista Standard ADU Plans
- City of Encinitas Permit-Ready ADU Plans

Apply for a Building Permit

- Prepare a complete building permit application for submittal. See Building Submittal Checklist on the City's website.
- The City will notify you within 30 days of submittal whether your application has been deemed complete.

Revise Application (If required)

- Upon receipt of a complete building permit application, the City must approve or deny the application within 60 days.
- If your application is denied, the City will provide you with comments identifying the deficiencies in the application and describe how they may be corrected.

Build

- Pay all building permit inspection/issuance, school and impact fees.
    - *Units smaller than 750 square feet may be exempt from impact fees.*
    - *Units smaller than 500 square feet may be exempt from school fees.*

- Start construction.
- Call for inspections.
- Obtain final sign-off on permits and connect utilities as applicable.
- The Certificate of Occupancy will be issued after final sign off. A copy can be picked up over the counter or requested via email at building@cityofsanteeca.gov.

Questions?

For further guidance and information, please contact the Planning & Building Department at 619-258-4100 ext. 167 or via email at planning@cityofsanteeca.gov or building@cityofsanteeca.gov.

CITY OF SANTEE - DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FEES WORK SHEET
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

RATES EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026 | FY 26/27

751 sqft ADU Development Impact Fee Example

Date: _____

Project Number: _____

Project Name: _____

Project Status: _____

Prepared By: _____

Type of Fee	# Units	Total SF	Fee / SF	Total Fee
PUBLIC FACILITIES FEE - 3101.00.4501				
Single Family		751	$ 5.46	$ 4,100.46
Multi-Family		0	$ 6.07	$ -
TRAFFIC SIGNAL FEE - 3102.00.4501				
Single Family		751	$ 0.39	$ 292.89
Multi-Family		0	$ 0.30	$ -
TRAFFIC MITIGATION FEE - 3103.00.4501				
Single Family		751	$ 2.81	$ 2,110.31
Multi-Family		0	$ 2.17	$ -
DRAINAGE FEE - 3104.00.4501				
Single Family		751	$ 0.37	$ 277.87
Multi-Family		0	$ 0.45	$ -
PARK IN-LIEU FEE - 3105.00.4501				
Single Family		751	$ 6.98	$ 5,241.98
Multi-Family		0	$ 7.77	$ -
FIRE FACILITIES FEE - 3107.00.4501				
Single Family		751	$ 1.83	$ 1,374.33
Multi-Family		0	$ 2.04	$ -
LONG RANGE PLANNING FEE - 2108.00.4501				
Single Family		751	$ 0.08	$ 60.08
Multi-Family		0	$ 0.09	$ -
ADMINISTRATION FEE - 2109.00.4501				
Single Family		751	$ 0.36	$ 270.36
Multi-Family		0	$ 0.38	$ -
RTCIP MITIGATION FEE - 3106.00.4501				
Single Family Residential	0		$3,109.88	$0.00
Multi-Family Residential	0		$3,109.88	$0.00
		Total Fees		**$ 13,728.28**

CITY OF SANTEE - DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FEES WORK SHEET
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

RATES EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026 | FY 26/27

1200 sqft ADU Development Impact Fee Example

Date: _____

Project Number: _____

Project Name: _____

Project Status: _____

Prepared By: _____

Type of Fee	# Units	Total SF	Fee / SF	Total Fee
PUBLIC FACILITIES FEE - 3101.00.4501				
Single Family		1200	$ 5.46	$ 6,552.00
Multi-Family		0	$ 6.07	$ -
TRAFFIC SIGNAL FEE - 3102.00.4501				
Single Family		1200	$ 0.39	$ 468.00
Multi-Family		0	$ 0.30	$ -
TRAFFIC MITIGATION FEE - 3103.00.4501				
Single Family		1200	$ 2.81	$ 3,372.00
Multi-Family		0	$ 2.17	$ -
DRAINAGE FEE - 3104.00.4501				
Single Family		1200	$ 0.37	$ 444.00
Multi-Family		0	$ 0.45	$ -
PARK IN-LIEU FEE - 3105.00.4501				
Single Family		1200	$ 6.98	$ 8,376.00
Multi-Family		0	$ 7.77	$ -
FIRE FACILITIES FEE - 3107.00.4501				
Single Family		1200	$ 1.83	$ 2,196.00
Multi-Family		0	$ 2.04	$ -
LONG RANGE PLANNING FEE - 2108.00.4501				
Single Family		1200	$ 0.08	$ 96.00
Multi-Family		0	$ 0.09	$ -
ADMINISTRATION FEE - 2109.00.4501				
Single Family		1200	$ 0.36	$ 432.00
Multi-Family		0	$ 0.38	$ -
RTCIP MITIGATION FEE - 3106.00.4501				
Single Family Residential	0		$3,109.88	$0.00
Multi-Family Residential	0		$3,109.88	$0.00
		Total Fees		**$ 21,936.00**