



Recommended Standards for Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinances
Updated July 13, 2017

Standards to Improve Feasibility and Affordability that Exceed SB 1069/AB 2299 Requirements

While SB 1069 & AB 2299 require several changes to local ordinances that will allow homeowners to more easily develop accessory dwelling units (ADUs), local jurisdictions can do more to improve the feasibility and affordability of construction. SV@Home recommends that cities throughout Santa Clara County adopt the following additional policies as part of their accessory dwelling unit ordinances to support the creation of ADUs.

In addition to these policy elements, SV@Home strongly recommends the implementation of strong ADU programs that provide a central point of contact as well as resources to simplify processes for homeowners desiring to create ADUs. Best practices for such programs include: developing easily understood resources for homeowners interested in building ADUs, establishing a program that centralizes all ADU-related procedures and information, including the cost of all associated fees, and creating an expedited process for the approval of ADUs.

Standard	SB 1069/AB 2299 Provisions	SV@Home Recommendation	SV@Home Comments
Existing Accessory Structures / Detached Garages	No setback shall be required for an existing garage that is converted to an ADU, and a setback of no more than five feet from the side and rear lot lines shall be required for an ADU that is constructed above a garage. (Section 5.5)	We recommend allowing the conversion of detached garages or other existing accessory structures into secondary units, and compliance with the SB 1069 stipulation that no new setbacks shall be required for existing garages that are converted. To further facilitate the conversion of garages into ADUs, we support the elimination of replacement parking requirements for such units.	Allowing the conversion of existing structures is one of the easiest and most affordable way for homeowners to create new ADUs, especially in neighborhoods where legal detached accessory units are located near or on the property line. Additional requirements, such as placement of doors and windows, can be adopted to ensure that the ADU is integrated with the primary residence.
Minimum Lot Size	A local agency may, by ordinance, provide for the creation of ADUs in single-family and multifamily residential zones. The ordinance shall do all of the following... (C) Provide that ADUs do not exceed the allowable density for the lot upon which the ADU is located, and that ADUs are a residential use that is consistent with the existing general plan and zoning designation for the lot. (Section 5)	We strongly recommend eliminating minimum lot size requirements and simplifying the overall regulations governing ADUs to maximize opportunities for ADUs, recognizing that data shows that, in the most optimistic case, only one or two homeowners on a block would create an ADU.	As a practical matter, setback and lot coverage requirements, however determined, dictate the minimum lot size that works. A separate minimum lot size requirement is unnecessary.

Standards to Improve Feasibility and Affordability that Exceed SB 1069/AB 2299 Requirements (continued)

Standard	SB 1069/AB 2299 Provisions	SV@Home Recommendation	SV@Home Comments
Lot Coverage	A local agency may, by ordinance, provide for the creation of accessory dwelling units in single-family and multifamily residential zones. The ordinance shall... (B) (i) Impose standards on accessory dwelling units that include, but are not limited to, parking, height, setback, lot coverage, landscape, architectural review, maximum size of a unit, and standards that prevent adverse impacts on any real property that is listed in the California Register of Historic Places. (Section 5)	We recommend using an overall lot coverage requirement instead of a minimum lot size requirement.	See comments on “Minimum Lot Size” and “Maximum Floor Area.” A lot coverage requirement, in combination with setback requirements, would effectively serve the same function of limiting the size of an ADU. Additional maximum floor area and minimum lot size requirements would be redundant.
Rear Setbacks		We recommend a 5-foot rear setback (with the exception noted on Page 1 regarding “Existing Accessory Structures/ Detached Garages”).	A smaller setback requirement will allow more homeowners to locate an ADU on their property while maintaining adequate open space in the backyard.
Design Standards		We recommend allowing exterior materials and roof pitch to differ from the primary residence.	Allowing different exterior materials and roof pitch will enable more homeowners to consider alternative building types, like tiny homes and other manufactured structures on permanent foundations, as a means of reducing costs and time required for construction.
Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs)	AB 2406: Allows local jurisdictions to create an ordinance to allow JADUs, or the conversion of existing bedrooms containing a kitchenette and not exceeding 500 square feet.	We recommend allowing for the construction of JADUs as specified in AB 2406, without minimum lot size or parking requirements.	JADUs are one of the most affordable way for homeowners to create new dwelling units on their property, which would allow them to take advantage of unused living space and potentially benefit from additional rental income.
Legalization of Existing Illegal ADUs	Not applicable.	We recommend that cities allow owners of existing ADUs that were constructed without necessary permits to retroactively apply for the proper building permits without facing penalties, with the requirement that the existing ADU is brought into compliance with building and safety codes.	Many illegal nonconforming ADUs provide an existing home for someone. A legalization program for such units would encourage owners to come forward and bring their units into compliance with building and safety codes. While they may not comply with current zoning or development standards, if they are safe for occupants and neighbors, they should be allowed to come into compliance with building and safety codes and be legally occupied.

Standards Defined by SB 1069/AB 2299

SV@Home recommends compliance with the following statewide requirements created by SB 1069 and AB 2299.

Standard	SB 1069/AB 2299 Provisions	SV@Home Recommendation	SV@Home Comments
Fees	ADUs shall not be considered new residential uses for purposes of calculating local agency connection fees or capacity charges for utilities... shall not require the applicant to install new or separate utility connection directly between the ADU and the utility or impose a related connection fee or capacity charge. (Section 5)	In addition to compliance with the SB 1069 requirements regarding utility fees, we suggest that that the City identify additional ways to reduce the costs of other fees incurred when building ADUs.	Fees can add tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of creating ADUs. Reducing financial burden for homeowners through reduced fees, as was recently done by Mountain View, or a fee-waiver program, as is the practice in Santa Cruz, are two ways cities can make ADUs more affordable.
Parking	<p>(d) Parking requirements for ADUs shall not exceed 1 space per unit or bedroom. These spaces may be provided as tandem parking on an existing driveway. Off-street parking shall be permitted in setback areas in locations determined by the local agency or through tandem parking, unless specific findings are made that parking in setback areas or tandem parking is not feasible based upon fire and life safety conditions. This subdivision shall not apply to a unit that is described in subdivision (e).</p> <p>(e) A local agency, whether or not it has adopted an ordinance governing ADUs shall not impose parking standards for an ADU in any of the following instances: (1) The ADU is located within one-half mile of public transit. (2) The ADU is located within an architecturally and historically significant historic district. (3) The ADU is part of the existing primary residence or an existing accessory structure. (4) When on-street parking permits are required but not offered to the occupant of the ADU. (5) When there is a car share vehicle located within one block of the ADU. (Section 5)</p> <p>(xi) When a garage, carport or covered parking structure is demolished in conjunction with the construction of an ADU, and the local agency requires they be replaced, the replacement spaces may be located in any configuration on the same lot as the accessory dwelling unit, including but not limited to, as covered spaces, uncovered spaces, or tandem spaces, or by the use of mechanical automobile parking lifts. (Section 5.5)</p>	<p>We recommend compliance with the parking requirements outlined in SB 1069.</p> <p>In regard to the definition of "public transit," we recommend applying the parking exemption to all passenger rail and bus stops within a half mile of public transit, regardless of headways/service intervals.</p> <p>Additionally, to facilitate the conversion of garages into ADUs, we support the elimination of replacement parking requirements for such units.</p>	Research shows that ADU residents have low rates of car ownership and high rates of transit use. Additionally, many single-family homes are underutilized and consequently, over-parked. The SB 1069 requirements thus ensure that limited available land can be used to meet housing need without requiring the provision of unnecessary parking.
Existing Accessory Structures/ Detached Garages	No setback shall be required for an existing garage that is converted to an ADU, and a setback of no more than five feet from the side and rear lot lines shall be required for an ADU that is constructed above a garage. (Section 5.5)	We recommend compliance with the SB 1069 stipulation that no new setbacks shall be required for existing garages that are converted.	Allowing the conversion of existing structures is one of the easiest and most affordable way for homeowners to create new ADUs, and the new SB 1069/AB2299 requirements will allow more homeowners to take advantage of this option.