

Existing Structures Converted to an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Policy

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Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to clearly demonstrate the process of applying for and reviewing existing structures that are converted into a viable accessory dwelling unit (ADU). This document will help establish the minimum building code requirements needed for submittal to safeguard the public health through structural strength, means of egress, stability, adequate lighting, ventilation, heating, energy conservation and life safety elements. It is intended to encourage the **continued safe use of existing buildings** and ensure that new work conforms to the intent of the code and the existing conditions remain at their current level of compliance or are improved **for safe use**.

General:

An ADU conversion refers to the conversion of an existing accessory structure to an independent dwelling unit. The proposed ADU can either be attached to a primary single-family dwelling (SFD) as a converted garage or basement. An ADU can only be built on a lot with an existing or proposed primary single-family dwelling. ADUs are limited to a conditioned floor area of 1,200 sq. ft. or less and cannot exceed 50 percent of the existing or proposed primary residence’s conditioned area (AB 2299). ADUs are required to be conditioned (heated and/or cooled) and provide a kitchen, a sleeping room, and a **full bathroom (toilet, lavatory, and tub and or shower)**. An ADU should have gas, water, electrical and sewer/septic service connections available for habitation. When an ADU conversion is attached to the primary residence, the ADU must provide independent exterior entry and egress openings separate from the access openings of the primary residence. ADU conversions do not include newly constructed detached ADUs that are not altering an existing structure.

Plan Review Checklist and Plan Set Requirements:

The following list presents the plan and building code requirements that an ADU conversion shall meet or exceed to obtain a building permit:

Plan Feature or Design Measure	Description
Building Site Planning	A converted ADU is only permitted on lots with an existing or proposed legally -permitted single-family dwelling or multifamily building as the primary residence. See the ADU Checklist for the Planning requirements for ADUs that <u>may</u> apply to ADU conversions.

<p>Cover Page</p>	<p>Cover page should list applicable codes, scope of work section, sheet index, building address, parcel number and size, Fire Safety Area: LRA (Local Response Area) or SRA (State Response Area) and itemized sq. footages including the size of the existing structure being converted and the conditioned sq. footage of the proposed ADU. Also provide sq. footages of new covered decks and porches. Provide a north arrow and drawing scale.</p> <p>Identify if fire sprinklers will be installed. ADUs are required to have fire sprinklers if primary residence is sprinklered (AB 2299).</p>
<p>Site Plan</p>	<p>Show property lines, easements, and new and existing building(s) locations. Dimension closest distance to property lines and between detached structures. Indicate finished grade elevations on a topographic map with contour lines around building site. Site Plan needs to locate utilities point of connections for gas, water, electrical and sewer/septic service connections to ADU including wire gauges, conduit and pipe sizes.</p> <p>No setbacks shall be required for an ADU created within a legally permitted existing living area or accessory structure, or an ADU created in a new structure in the same location as an existing structure, while not exceeding the existing dimensions, including height (Gov. Code, § 65852.2). See the specific setback requirements presented in the fire resistance section and the Planning ADU Checklist.</p>
<p>Foundation Plan</p>	<p>When a new or altered foundation is being proposed a foundation plan shall be required. <i>Is this document only addressing existing conditions?</i></p> <p>Per CRC Appendix AJ104.1 - Evaluation of an existing building: An existing building shall be investigated and evaluated by a registered design professional in the case of proposed reconstruction of any portion of a building.</p> <p><u>Reworded to clarify:</u> Per CRC Appendix AJ104.1 - Evaluation of an existing building: In the case of proposed reconstruction of any portion of an existing building. The reconstruction shall be investigated and evaluated by a registered design professional.</p> <p>Exception: Detached one- or two-family dwellings that are not irregular buildings under Section R301.2.2.6 and are not undergoing an extensive reconstruction shall not be required to be evaluated. Additions, alterations to bearing walls or removal of bearing walls shall be required to provide a foundation plan.</p> <p>A foundation plan should dimension interior footings, label, and locate porches, patios, decks and garages. Locate and note size and spacing of anchor bolts and strap tie downs on plan. Include size and location of crawl space vents.</p> <p>An existing slab should have an approved roll-on moisture/vapor barrier applied directly to the top of the slab per manufacturer's recommendations for temperature and surface preparation. If flooring is existing, no moisture/vapor barrier is required, but highly recommended.</p>

	<p>For new concrete slabs, a minimum 10 mil moisture/vapor barrier located on the underside of the slab is required. It shall be shown and called out. A porous layer of gravel or crushed stone shall be placed to a minimum thickness of 4 inches under the vapor barrier.</p> <p>If a slab-on-grade is retained from an existing structure that was not inspected, see Procedure C in Policy 1-4-2 Concealed Construction Verification Guidelines.pdf</p>
<p>Structural Plans and Calculations</p>	<p>No structural plans are required if the existing structure is not irregular, conventionally wood framed, and no proposed extensive reconstruction of the structure is proposed.</p> <p>If an addition or structural alteration is proposed to the existing structure then it must meet prescriptive requirements for conventional wood frame construction (CRC R301.1) or be engineered by a registered design professional.</p> <p>An evaluation by a registered design professional may be required to verify the structural elements being retained from the previous structure are safe for reuse and adequately support proposed structural loads (AJ104.1).</p> <p>The building official has the authority to accept alternative materials, operational methods and design features incorporated in the ADU conversion (AJ102.7) if technically infeasible or would impose disproportionate costs.</p>
<p>Floor Plan (Existing and Proposed)</p>	<p>Provide an existing floor plan of the existing structure being converted and a proposed floor plan identifying new scope of work. Provide a wall schedule identifying new and existing walls with their size, material and assembly noted. The proposed floor plan must label the function of each room. Habitable rooms shall have a floor area of not less than 70 square feet. Habitable rooms shall be not less than 7 feet in any horizontal dimension per minimum room areas (CRC R304). Show the location of the primary residence if ADU is attached and show independent entry access and means of egress from proposed ADU. A min. 32 inch side hinged egress door is required (CRC R311.2). An emergency escape window that is 5.0 sq.ft. on the first floor and 5.7 sq.ft. on the second floor or above with a min. opening height of 24 inches and width of 20 inch opening height of 24 inches and width of 20 inches is mandatory. The bottom of the clear opening shall not be greater than 44 inches from finish floor (CRC R310).</p> <p>A concrete curb/stem wall no less than 4 inches above grade shall be constructed at all door in-fills like garage doors. Minimum separation of wood to impervious surfaces must be met (CRC R317.1 and R317.1(5)).</p>
<p>Mechanical Electrical</p>	<p>On proposed floor plan show existing and proposed mechanical/electrical/plumbing features, including receptacle outlets, lighting sources, smoke and CO detectors, ventilation fans, water heaters and space conditioning equipment. Show electrical or gas connections to ADU, including wire gauge and pipe sizes.</p>

<p>Plumbing</p>	<p>Show location of water heater(s), space conditioning equipment (indoor and outdoor equipment) and show combustion air and ventilation requirements per manufacturers specifications.</p> <p>New heat pump water heaters shall comply with CAL Energy Code 150.1(c)8A: where all heat pump water heaters storage tanks shall be located in a garage or conditioned space.</p> <p>CAL Energy Code 150.2(H) (b) A single heat pump water heater. The storage tank shall not be located outdoors. The water heater shall be installed with a communication interface that either meets the requirements of Section 110.12(a) or has an ANSI/CTA-2045-B communication port; or (c) A single heat pump water heater that meets the requirements of NEEA Advanced Water Heater Specification <u>Tier 3 or higher</u>.</p> <p>Standard smoke alarms shall be a minimum of 20 feet from a cooking appliance or 10 feet or greater for an ionization smoke alarm or 6 feet or greater for a photoelectric smoke alarm.</p> <p>Show ADU electrical sub-panel location. A 100 amp service is recommended with appropriate conductor size for main branch circuit serving the ADU sub-panel. See California Electrical Code Table 310.16 for conductor size requirements.</p> <p>ADUs can be on same electric meter as primary dwelling unless PG&E’s requirements mandate otherwise.</p>
<p>Wall Bracing or Shear Wall Plan</p>	<p>A converted ADU with new walls being proposed or having existing walls being reframed will need to provide a braced or shear wall plan or provide the existing previously approved plan. The plan should dimension all braced wall segments and locations for non-engineered plans on a braced wall schedule, and/or identify and dimension of engineered shear wall locations and minimum lengths. Identify the braced wall method (CRC Table 602.10.4). Justify the amount of bracing provided at each wall line, per wind and seismic requirements of the CRC for non-engineered structures. Provide adequate identifications of braced wall lines for conventional bracing or provide on the plans lateral load hold-down devices and locations corresponding to the structural calculations, for engineered structures (CRC R602.10).</p> <p>Existing walls not being reframed or altered will not need to provide a braced or shear wall plan.</p>
<p>Exterior Elevations</p>	<p>Provide a minimum of four elevation views (each side of the building) showing all wall openings (for doors, windows vents etc), original and finished grades, stepped footing outline, wall and roof finished materials, crawlspace/attic vents and roof pitch. Identify a Class A roof assembly if roof is being replaced. (If the roof is being replaced a Class A roof assembly is required.) Structures in a mapped flood zone shall identify the base flood elevation in all applicable elevations. (Requires a Licensed Land Surveyor to identify the base flood elevation) Finished floor elevation is required to be X feet above the base flood elevation)</p>

<p>Building Sections</p>	<p>If converted ADU is attached to primary residence, show 1-hour fire-resistive separation at common walls, from the foundation to the underside of the roof sheathing. The fire-resistive separation shall be an assembly listed by a nationally recognized accreditation and testing agency or constructed per calculating fire-resistive values for elements per CBC Section 722 (CRC R302.3). CBC Section 722 calculation methods demonstrate 5/8 inch Type X gypsum board at both sides of common walls framed with studs spaced at 16 inches on center. A fire resistance rating of ½ hour is required between dwellings in buildings equipped with an automatic fire sprinkler system installed in accordance with R313 (CRC R302.3.1). (Include STC rating for the unit to unit fire rated wall)</p> <p>Provide sections through building showing structural elements including earth to wood clearances, floor to ceiling heights (the height limitation is 16 feet for an ADU), roof slopes, etc. Note typical finishes; call out insulation types and values per T24 energy compliance documentation. (current requirements apply or when it was built?)</p>
<p>Framing Plans and Details</p>	<p>If new framing is proposed identify framing members and sheathing. Show size and spacing of joists, studs and rafters, nail types and spacing for all plywood diaphragms, identify all beams with grade of lumber or engineered wood type. Dimension all spans of beams, headers, joists and rafters accordingly. Provide attachment details of new framing members stated above. Beam and post connections, special framing and flashing details are required as necessary.</p>
<p>Fire Resistance</p>	<p>Existing buildings in an SRA (State Response Area) do not have to be built to ignition-resistant construction standards (CRC R337.1). New or altered structures in the SRA shall comply with additional setback and exterior wall rating requirements of Chapter 13 of the Sonoma County Code, requiring 1-hour fire-resistive rating within 10 feet from adjacent property lines.</p> <p>ADUs in an SRA area must have fire safe standards (FSS) in place. Emergency vehicle access must be provided on the site plan.</p> <p>New and altered walls part of an ADU conversion within five feet of the adjacent property line or another structure require one-hour fire-resistance rated walls and projections and requires opening restrictions when ADU does not contain a sprinkler system (CRC R302.1(1)). See Sonoma County Fire Separation Tables 4905.4(a) and Table 4905.4(b) for separations in SRA fire response areas.</p>
<p>T24 Energy Compliance</p>	<p>ADU conversions shall demonstrate T24 energy compliance as an addition or alteration. See CA Energy Code Section 150.2 (b) Alterations for specific energy requirements for an addition or alteration.</p> <p>The conversion of an existing accessory structure to an R-3 occupancy, such as a garage converting to an ADU, is defined as an addition to the primary residence, whether attached or detached. A conditioned basement or pool house being converted to an ADU is a building alteration.</p> <p>Additions and alterations are exempt from T24 solar requirements and are not subject to compliance with the County of Sonoma’s All-Electric Dwelling reach code (Ordinance No 6395). An ADU conversion is not considered a newly constructed unit.</p> <p>A converted ADU will require its own water heating and space conditioning system separate from the primary residence. (Include the information in the MEP section)</p>

<p>CALGreen Checklist</p>	<p>Any work that increases an existing structure’s conditioned square footage or conditioned volume, such as an ADU conversion, (from unconditioned space) will need to comply with the 2022 Green Building Standards and provide a Sonoma County 2022 CALGreen Checklist Additions/Alterations.</p>
<p>Geotechnical Report/ Soils Investigation</p>	<p>Not required unless required by the AHJ.</p>
<p>Legalizing Unpermitted ADU Conversions</p>	<p>Under Sonoma County Code Section 7-5, it is unlawful to construct, enlarge, alter, move, convert or demolish any building or structure, or cause the same to be done without first obtaining a building permit.</p> <p>Building violation(s) must be corrected and current owner of ADU is required to immediately either: (a) remove the unlawful construction by obtaining a demolition permit, completing the demolition, and obtaining a verification inspection; or (b) legalize the unlawful construction by obtaining all required permits and obtaining a verification inspection. See the 7-0-21 ADU-Enforcement Extension Request Policy for specific options in legalizing an unpermitted ADU conversion.</p>

Applicable Codes and State Laws:

- 2022 California Residential Code (CRC; referenced sections of this code have the ‘R’ prefix)
- 2022 California Building Code (CBC)
- 2022 California Plumbing, Electrical, and Mechanical Codes (CPC, CEC, CMC)
- 2022 California Green Building Standards (CAL Green)
- 2022 California Energy Code (CA Energy Code)
- CA State Law AB2299 (Section 65852.2)

Definitions:

- **Newly Constructed** (Calgreen definition): Newly constructed building or new construction does not include additions, alterations, or repairs. (CBC) A building that has never been used or occupied for any purpose.
- **Conventional Light-Frame Construction:** Construction whose primary structural elements are formed by a system of repetitive wood – framing members.
- **Substantial Improvements** (CBC): Any repair, reconstruction, rehabilitation, alteration, addition, or other improvements of a building or structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds 50% of the market value of the structure before the improvement or repair is started. If the structure has sustained substantial damage, any repairs are considered substantial improvements regardless of the actual repair work performed.
- **Reconstruction:** The reconfiguration of a space that affects an exit, a renovation or alteration where the work area is not permitted to be occupied because existing means-of-egress and fire protection

systems, or their equivalent, are not in place or continuously maintained; or there are extensive alterations as defined in Section AJ109.3.

- **Renovation:** The change, strengthening or addition of load bearing elements; or the refinishing, replacement, bracing, strengthening, upgrading or extensive repair of existing materials, elements, components, equipment or fixtures. Renovation does not involve reconfiguration of spaces.
- **Alteration (CBC):** Any construction or renovation to an existing structure other than repair or addition. A change, addition, or modification in construction, change in occupancy or use, or structural repair to an existing building. Alterations include remodeling, renovation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, historic restoration, resurfacing, etc.
- **Addition (CBC):** An extension or increase in floor area, number of stories or height of a building or structure.
- **Habitable Space:** A space in a building for living, sleeping, eating, or cooking. Bathrooms, toilet rooms, closets, halls, storage or utility spaces and similar areas are not considered habitable spaces.
- **Living Space:** Space within a dwelling unit utilized for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, bathing, washing and sanitation purposes.

Following the Code Provisions:

