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QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE
1.1 GETTING STARTED: ADU GUIDEBOOK OVERVIEW

This Accessory Dwelling Unit Guidebook has been developed by the City of La Mesa to help provide information to owners of single-family property in La Mesa that are thinking of developing their properties for accessory units. The guidebook also answers common questions about the design, permitting, construction, and property management process for these individual as well as discussing the steps and factors that should be considered when making this decision.

This Chapter provides an overview of the different types of ADUs, introduces the process, and provides references to find more information on a particular ADU topic that exceeds the detail that this overview booklet can provide. At the end of this chapter, an informational checklist is provided to help guide interested property owners through steps and items to consider in the ADU process.

This guidebook is focused on ADUs that can be constructed in accordance with the City’s regulations for ADUs in conjunction with a single-family residence. It is not intended to address ADUs proposed under the State-provided ministerial exceptions (CA GOV 65852.2(e)) for single-family or multi-family residences.

1.2 WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1.2.1 I WANT TO... LEARN WHAT AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT IS

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (or ADU) is commonly known as a granny flat, back house, guest house, casita or in-law suite. An ADU, as defined in the La Mesa Municipal Code (LMMC Section 24.01.100) is a unit that:

- provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons and is located on the same lot as an existing or proposed residence in any single-family or multi-family zone, or on the same lot as existing multi-family dwellings in any residential or mixed-use zone.
- includes permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation on the same parcel or parcel as the primary unit is situated.
- can be an efficiency unit or a manufactured home as defined California Health and Safety Codes.

ADUs come in all shapes, sizes, styles, colors, and configurations, and there are several different types of residential units that fall under the “ADU” umbrella. These different types of ADUs include attached and detached units, converted structures such as garages, internal units such as basement or attic ADUs, and junior ADUs (JADU). For more information on the specific types of ADUs and their physical characteristics, please see Section 2.2 Types of ADUs.
1.2.2 I WANT TO...UNDERSTAND WHY THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA IS ENCOURAGING ADUs

Over the last several decades, housing construction in California (as well as the nation) has not kept pace with population growth nor has it provided for choices on housing type options. As demand for housing has extended well beyond the supply, housing has become less affordable. Housing costs have pushed many people to move further away from existing neighborhoods, communities, and job centers in order to find housing options that meet their needs. This has led to more sprawling development patterns that increase commute times and distances for many, which in turn impacts transportation infrastructure, the environment, and quality of life for those that must spend so much of their time commuting.

Along with many other initiatives to increase the construction and availability of housing for Californians, the State of California has enacted legislation to support the development of ADUs in communities throughout the State. By removing barriers to the development of ADUs, the State aims to provide creative and diverse housing solutions that can “be significantly less expensive to build”. The State’s legislative efforts have also resulted in the lessening of common development barriers” according to the State’s Housing and Community Development ADU Handbook.

1.2.3 I WANT TO...UNDERSTAND THE ADU DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

Every new ADU project in the City of La Mesa will undergo a process that involves planning, design, review, permitting, and construction. While time-lines will vary due to project and site complexity, design and construction schedules, and material availability and lead times, these are the general steps you can expect to take as you move toward completion of your ADU.

JUMP TO...

» Housing and Economic Trends - Page 20
» Efforts to Address Housing Supply and Affordability - Page 21

JUMP TO...

» Research and Site Assessment - Page 24
» Planning and Design - Page 35
» Plan Review and Permitting - Page 40
» Construction and Inspection - Page 42
» Property Management - Page 44
1.2.4 I WANT TO... DETERMINE MY GOALS FOR BUILDING AN ADU

There are a variety of reasons why you may wish to develop an ADU on your property and it can be helpful to identify your motivation or goals for building an ADU before investing time, money, and energy into the ADU design and development process. Having a clear set of goals can help you determine how to design and “right size” an ADU that meets your goals and needs. Common goals or motivations for an ADU may include:

- Create separate/nearby living space for family/relatives or an in home health care provider
- Provide a source of rental income
- Increase the potential value/re-sale of my property
- Convert extra space within a home or on a property
- Contribute to the supply of housing and housing type options
- Downsize and rent out the primary living unit

Note: The City of La Mesa does not allow an ADU to be sold or conveyed separately from the primary residence. Additionally, JADUs cannot be used for short-term vacation rentals less than 30 days.

For more information on identifying goals for building an ADU, please see Section 2.6.1.

1.2.5 I WANT TO... FIND INFORMATION ABOUT MY PROPERTY

The City of La Mesa provides an Online Interactive Zoning Map (or see Section 4.6 for current URL) that includes zoning and lot size information that can be used for planning purposes just by entering an address or Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) to search for property information. The online zoning map is based on the best data available at the time of publishing from the City of La Mesa, SanGIS, SANDAG, and other data sources. The map is not guaranteed to survey accuracy and a property owner must endeavor to use due diligence when considering an ADU.

To look up information such as zoning and acreage of your property, please see Section 2.6.2.

1.2.6 I WANT TO... CALCULATE THE ALLOWABLE SIZE OF AN ADU FOR MY PROPERTY

Both the State of California and the City of La Mesa have established a maximum size for ADUs and JADUs. The City of La Mesa has established a 1,200 sf maximum for new ADUs, though some physical characteristics of a property, such as topography or lot size, may result in a maximum ADU size of 800 sf. JADUs are limited to a maximum of 500 sf and need to be attached to the existing unit.

For more information on the allowable size of an ADU, please see Section 2.5.
1.2.7 **I WANT TO... UNDERSTAND REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS THAT APPLY TO MY PROPERTY**

You should make yourself familiar the particular development standards that must be used to guide the design of your ADU. These regulations affect the size, design, and location of the ADU on your property and help to ensure that new ADUs do not negatively affect the character of the neighborhood as well as your neighbor’s quality of life.

Please see Section 2.6.5 for applicable property development standards based on your zoning.

1.2.8 **I WANT TO... DETERMINE IF I CAN BUILD AN ADU ON MY PROPERTY**

One ADU and one JADU can be built on a residential property in conjunction with an existing or proposed single-family residence on lots zoned for single-family or multi-family use. For single-family owners, this generally means that you are able to build an ADU, however, you will need to evaluate your site. For an ADU, there are no owner-occupancy requirements, meaning you do not need to live on the property in order to add an ADU. There is an owner-occupancy requirements for JADUs.

For details on whether or not you can build an ADU on your property, please see Section 2.7.

1.2.9 **I WANT TO... DETERMINE IF I SHOULD BUILD AN ADU ON MY PROPERTY**

Even though it may be permissible to build an ADU on your property, there are several considerations you should weigh before deciding on building an ADU on your property. For example; does my property lend itself better to an attached, detached, interior, or junior accessory dwelling unit? Do I want to become a property manager? Can I finance the design and construction of an ADU?

To answer more questions like these, please see Section 2.8 Should I Do This With My Property?
1.2.10  I WANT TO... RESEARCH HOW AN ADU CAN PROVIDE AN INCOME STREAM

Once you have reviewed the real estate and economic trends in your area and decided on the development of an ADU on your property, there are several ways to go about financing your ADU. Using your own funds or finding a loan are great options to help you fund the development of your ADU. One of the potential benefits of adding an ADU to your property is the income you can earn by renting the unit out long-term. By renting out your ADU, you can help provide housing options in the community and use the additional income towards other expenses or savings. As long as the property continues to increase in value, you can still make money on an ADU, even when your cash flow does not fully cover your expenses. This is accomplished through property appreciation. Important factors to consider when determining economic viability, is to determine the various costs, potential revenue, financing, and real estate trends. Determine if you need to provide a monthly cash return (income exceeding all costs of mortgage, vacancy, advertising, insurance, taxes, maintenance and repairs) or are willing to break even on the costs from rent but need to assure that the long term investment has a return through property appreciation. Generally, you may not turn a profit during the first few years, but as the market supports rental increases, this margin can provide you with positive cash return.

For more information about the economic, real estate, and financial side of ADUs, please reference sections 2.6.3 Economic and Real Estate Trends and 3.2.5 Line Up Your Financing.

1.2.11  I WANT TO... DETERMINE IF MY NEIGHBOR IS ALLOWED TO BUILD AN ADU

As noted previously, one ADU and one JADU is allowed in conjunction with an existing or proposed single-family residence on lots zoned for single-family or multifamily use. There are limitations on size, height, and location that must be considered as well. Certain conditions may preclude a site from being a viable candidate for an ADU.

Best practices for designing with your neighbor in mind are highlighted in Section 3.2.2.

1.2.12  I WANT TO... LEARN BEST PRACTICES FOR MANAGING AN ADU ON MY PROPERTY

If you build and once your ADU is built, it will be important to consider the management time needed to properly manage your unit and the rest of the property as well. Whether that means renting it out to a long-term tenant, or using it to provide separate living space for family members, there are a handful of things you will want to learn in order to manage the property as best as possible.

For information about property management and renting out an ADU, please reference Section 3.5.
1.3 ADU CHECKLIST FOR SINGLE-FAMILY PROPERTY OWNERS

This checklist is intended to help property owners collect information about their property, the decisions to build and to determine details for designing, financing, constructing and managing an ADU. While this checklist is not required to submit a building permit application to the City of La Mesa, some of the information on this checklist can be copied over to your building permit application and help ensure your plans and permit application have all of the details required to ensure your application is complete.

» Property Details
  • Address: _______________________________________
  • Parcel Number: _______________________________
  • Property Zoning: _______________________________

» ADU Goals
  • Create separate/nearby living space for family/relatives or an in-home health care provider
  • Provide a source of rental income
  • Increase the potential value/re-sale of my property
  • Convert extra space within a home or on a property
  • Contribute to the supply of housing and limit climate change
  • Downsize and rent out the primary living unit
  • Other: _______________________________________

» Site Assessment
  • Lot Dimensions (feet): width: ______ depth: ______
  • Lot Area (square feet): ___________________________
  • Lot Type: standard narrow/deep corner irregular flag
  • Existing Structures: Yes No
  • Historic Property: Registered Eligible Historic District
  • Topography/Slopes: Yes No

» Development Standards
  • ADU Size: __________
  • Setbacks: front: ______ side: _______ rear: _______
  • Height Limit: ________
  • Lot Coverage Maximums: ______ %
  • Utility Connection: tie-in new connection

» Proposed ADU Type
  Note: Property owners may apply to build no more than one ADU and one JADU per property.
  • Attached (New Addition or Conversion)
  • Detached (New Addition or Conversion)
  • Interior (Conversion or Expansion)
  • JADU (Conversion or Expansion - must be owner-occupied)

» ADU Facilities Included:
  • Kitchen
  • Bathroom
  • Living Area
  • Sleeping Area
  • Separate Entrance
  • Interior Connection to Primary Residence for JADU
ADU Checklist for property owners (continued)

» Professional Management
- Do-It-Yourself
- Design Professional (architect, landscape architect)
- Design/Build Specialists
- Contractor(s) and Sub-Contractors
- Property Management Professionals

» Proposed ADU Design
- ADU Size (square feet) _________________
- One Story or Two Story
- ADU Height _________
- Access and Orientation
- Fire Access
- Construction Method: new construction/addition/alteration/pre-fabricated
- Utilities (new connection or existing tie-in)

» Neighbor Considerations
- Proximity
- Privacy
- Preservation of Views
- Parking
- Proactive Coordination

» Cost Estimates and Investment Potential
- Professional Design Fees
- Permit Cost Estimates
- Estimated Construction Costs
- Property Tax and Insurance Costs
- Property Management and Maintenance Costs
- Estimated Monthly Rental Income

» Financing Options
- Self-Financing
- Home Equity Line of Credit
- Home Equity Loan
- Construction Loan
- Renovation Loan
- Cash-Out Refinancing

» Managing Your Property
- Collecting rent
- Setting and enforcing rules
- Avoiding equal housing problem (understanding how discrimination laws apply to you)
- Insurance and liability issues
- Tracking tax write-offs
- Taking care of repairs
- Understanding and observing applicable laws
- Recording proper tax and legal documents
1.4 DRAW A SKETCH OF YOUR PROPERTY

See Section 2.6.4 for instructions on conducting an initial site assessment and tips for drawing your site.
1.5 DRAW A SKETCH OF YOUR PROPOSED ADU

See Section 2.6.5 for the property development standards that apply to the proposed design of your ADU.
THE ABCs OF ADUs
If you are interested in potentially developing an ADU on your property in La Mesa, but not sure where to get started, this chapter begins with the steps involved in the process of building an ADU and introduces and defines key terminology that may be helpful as you discuss your ADU plans with design professionals, neighbors, and contractors.

This chapter also provides historical context on the development of ADUs, describes the state and local legislative efforts to address the housing crisis, and identifies the range of goals that you may have for developing an ADU. Finally, this chapter identifies the key considerations in the Research and Site Assessment Phase of the ADU Development Process.

### 2.1 UNDERSTANDING THE ADU PROCESS

Every new ADU project in the City of La Mesa will undergo a process that involves planning, design, review, permitting, and construction. While timelines will vary due to project and site complexity, design and construction schedules, and material availability and lead times, Figure 2-1 identifies the general steps you can expect to take as you move toward completion of your ADU.

This guidebook is organized to help you navigate and consider important factors during each step of the process.

1. **Research and Site Assessment** - In this initial phase, you will learn what makes a living unit an ADU, how to identify your goals for developing an ADU on your property, and how to conduct a preliminary assessment of your property to determine if you can or should take the next step of designing an ADU for your property.

2. **Planning and Design** - After setting goals and conducting an initial assessment, the next step is to develop a design for your ADU. During this phase, you may wish to engage a design professional to assist in creating an ADU - whether it is a renovation, addition, or new construction - that meets your needs and complies with local planning standards and building codes.

3. **Plan Review and Permitting** - Once you have a proposed design for your ADU, your can submit your plans and building permit application to the City of La Mesa for review. If the application is complete, City staff will review the permit application and plans and either issue a building permit or request revisions to the plans to meet applicable codes.

4. **Construction and Inspection** - With the issuance of a building permit and financing secured, you can begin constructing your ADU. During this step, you may also wish to obtain bids and hire a contractor(s) to manage the construction and inspection process.

5. **Property Management** - With your ADU construction or renovation complete you can begin to enjoy your new space or start the process of finding a tenant to rent the space.
2.2 CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY

This section introduces key concepts and terminology associated with Accessory Dwelling Units.

2.2.1 WHAT IS AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT

An Accessory Dwelling Unit or ADUs are commonly known as granny flats, back houses, guest house, studio apartments, or in-law suites.

An ADU, as defined in the La Mesa Municipal Code (LMMC Section 24.01.100) is a unit that:

- provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons and is located on the same lot as an existing or proposed single-family residence in any single-family or multifamily zone, or on the same lot as existing multifamily dwellings in any residential or mixed-use zone.
- includes permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation on the same parcel or parcel as the primary unit is situated.
- can be an efficiency unit or a manufactured home as defined in California’s Health and Safety Codes.

Figure 2-2 illustrates an example layout of a primary residence with a Detached ADU.

Figure 2-2: Important Features that Should be Considered for an ADU

ADUs are required to provide space for:
- Living
- Sleeping
- Eating
- Cooking
- Sanitation
- Exterior Entry

...contained within the ADU and separate from the primary residence.
2.2.2 TYPES OF ADUs

ADUs come in many forms and configurations and may involve new construction, a remodel or addition, or conversion of existing space. The different types of ADU configurations are described and shown in this section.

ATTACHED -

A contained space connected to the structure of a single-family home, typically sharing a common wall, ceiling, or floor with the main house. This includes conversions of an attached structure (such as a garage) and second story or above-garage add-ons.

DETACHED -

Does not share a common wall, ceiling, or floor with the primary residence. They are a separate structure located on the same parcel of land as the single-family home and are commonly an apartment-type dwelling located in the rear yard (though they may be located in the front yard or facing an alley). Detached ADUs can also include a converted detached garage or other stand-alone structure.

INTERIOR -

This type of ADU makes use of existing space within the main residence and may be fully contained within the house’s existing footprint, or may expand beyond the existing house’s walls, particularly to accommodate a separate exterior entrance. Examples include basement or attic conversions.
**JADU** -
Similar to an interior ADU, a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU) is a residential dwelling unit that is no more than 500 square feet in area, contained entirely within an existing or proposed single-family residence. JADU standards can be found in La Mesa Municipal Code Section 24.05.020D9. JADUs, have different standards than ADUs, including a requirement that either the primary residence or JADU be owner-occupied and a JADU may be allowed in addition to an ADU on the same property.

**ONE- STORY VS. TWO- STORY -**
Typically, an ADU will be 1 or 2 stories and may use the maximum structure height of the underlying zone. In some cases, ADU height may be further restricted by the zoning code. Please consult with staff to ensure you are using the correct height limit.

**2.2.3 HOW SMALL OR LARGE OF AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT CAN I BUILD**
While the La Mesa Municipal Code does not specify a minimum unit size for ADUs, under California’s Health and Safety Code, an efficiency unit must include a minimum of 150 square feet of living area. “Living area” means the square footage of a residential unit including, but not limited to, common areas, kitchen areas, bathrooms, and bedrooms with closets. Garages and accessory structures are excluded from calculations of living area.

Both the State of California and the City of La Mesa have established a maximum size for ADUs and JADUs. The City of La Mesa has established a 1,200 sf maximum for new ADUs, though some physical characteristics of a property, such as lot size or lot coverage, may result in a maximum ADU size of 800 sf. JADUs are limited to a maximum of 500 sf.

Additionally, La Mesa’s ADU ordinance states that ADUs less than 750 square feet are not subject to development impact fees. The size thresholds for ADUs are highlighted in Figure 2-3.

**Figure 2-3: ADU Minimum and Maximum Size Limits for ADUs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>150 sf</td>
<td>Under California’s Health and Safety Code, an efficiency unit must include a minimum of 150 square feet of liveable area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 sf</td>
<td>New Junior ADUs in La Mesa can have a maximum of 500 sf of liveable area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750 sf</td>
<td>New ADUs smaller than 750 sf of liveable area cannot be charged impact fees under State Law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 sf</td>
<td>On properties with site constraints, a new ADU may be limited to a maximum of 800 sf of liveable area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,200 sf</td>
<td>The City of La Mesa has established a maximum size for new ADUs of 1,200 sf of liveable area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 HOUSING AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

Over the last several decades, housing construction in California has not kept pace with population growth and the need for more housing supply and types of housing in many communities. As demand for housing outpaced supply, housing has become less affordable and caused many people to move further away from existing neighborhoods, communities, and job centers to find housing that meet their needs. This has led to more expansive development patterns that increase commute times and distances for many, which in turn impacts transportation infrastructure, the environment, and convenient housing options and commute patterns for many. The factors driving these trends, as well as state and local efforts to address housing supply and affordability issues are further described in this section.

2.3.1 HOUSING DEMAND OUTPACING INVENTORY

California has experienced several decades of population growth that outpaced the construction of new housing units. According to a 2021 study from the Public Policy Institute of California, the state has added “3.2 times more people than housing units over the last 10 years” with the State’s Legislative Analyst’s Office estimating that California should have been building “190,000 to 230,000 housing units each year from 1980 to 2010” to avoid extreme housing price increases. During that time, an average of just 120,000 units were actually built per year resulting in an estimated shortage of nearly 3.5 million new housing units needed. As a result, housing costs have sky-rocketed for both renters and prospective homeowners and is pricing “middle-income families out of ownership and has one in four rental households paying more than half of its pre-tax income on rent.”

2.3.2 INCREASED HOUSING PRICES FOR RENTERS AND OWNERS

Affordable housing options have also become less attainable with the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the San Diego region reaching $2,232 per month in 2022 according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). The NLIHC further states that “to afford this level of rent and utilities - without paying more than 30% of income on housing - a household must earn $81,191 annually.”

Data produced by the NLIHC places California at the second lowest ranked state for affordable and available rental homes per 100 low-income renter households. The supply of these attainable homes is 24 for every 100 in California compared to 61 in Mississippi or Wyoming. The availability of affordable housing options is a crucial issue in California with 45% of households renting their home and one third of households spending more than 50% of their income on rent.

Sources:
- California Legislative Analyst’s Office (2015);
- Public Policy Institute of California (2021);
- National Low Income Housing Coalition (2022).
2.3.3 LIMITED LAND AVAILABILITY AND BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT

Planning and development standards such as zoning and subdivision regulations in the mid-20th century generally placed emphasis on new development occurring on vacant undeveloped land, as well as protecting parks, open space, and other natural resources from development, resulting in more limited land available for residential development in many communities today. Like many urban communities, La Mesa’s land area with potential for development is mostly built out with just two percent of the City’s land area vacant or undeveloped. With limited land area for new development, La Mesa encourages infill development and reuse of underutilized areas to contribute to the supply of housing and maintain park sites and natural open spaces.

2.3.4 DESIRE TO LIVE CLOSE TO WORK, SCHOOLS, AND SERVICES

There is a growing desire by many - from young professionals to families and seniors - who prefer to live close to work rather than commuting, and many households seek housing opportunities with convenient access to schools, services and shopping in walkable communities and neighborhoods. According to AARP, “these preferences — coupled with the rapid aging of the United States’ population overall, the decrease in households with children and the national housing shortage — will continue to boost the demand for smaller homes and affordable, quality rental housing.”

2.4 EFFORTS TO ADDRESS HOUSING SUPPLY AND AFFORDABILITY

Recognizing the shortage of diverse and attainable housing for California’s population, the State of California and many local governments have “taken important steps recently to increase production and remove regulatory obstacles” to the development of housing according to the Public Policy Institute of California. These efforts include both legislative changes as well as significant financial investments - through tax credits, grants, and low-interest loans - to support housing production.

2.4.1 ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS AS A SOLUTION

Support for the development of ADUs have received significant legislative attention due to their ability to provide smaller, diverse and flexible housing units in neighborhoods already served by infrastructure. In the 2016-2017 legislative sessions, California passed bills like Senate Bill (SB) 1069 and Assembly Bill (AB) 2299 which prevent local governments from prohibiting the construction of ADUs. Since 2018, California has developed further legislation in support of ADUs by providing clear terminology and parameters for ADUs. In January 2021, changes in ADU laws streamlined the permitting process to avoid delays in the issuance of permits for ADUs that meet planning and building codes. Other recent amendments to ADU law include: AB 2221 and SB 897 (2022), SB 9 (2021), AB 3182 (2020) and SB 13, AB 68, AB 881, AB 587, AB 670, and AB 671 (2019).
The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) prepared guidance to assist and encourage local governments and homeowners interested in developing ADUs with the July 2022 version of their ADU Guidebook. ADUs provide housing opportunities for couples, small families, friends, young people, and seniors. ADUs provide homeowners the flexibility to rent their unit to a tenant, or make the space available for family members, caregivers, and others. This flexibility can provide older adults and families the opportunity to stay in their home as they may require more care or support.

2.4.2 ADUs THROUGH THE YEARS

While the names have changed over time, the use of ADUs can be traced back to the early 1900s as they were a common feature in single-family homes, as noted in Figure 2-4. Building a smaller home to live in adjacent to a larger, primary residence was seen frequently. Before zoning laws came into place in the 1920s, people built as many homes as they wished on their property. When horse-drawn carriages became unfashionable, many larger homes converted existing outbuildings like carriage homes (garages) into dwelling units. During World War II (WWII), the San Diego Region grew rapidly because of the influx of workers that helped the Defense Industry build military equipment for the war effort. Many properties added units to support the severe lack of housing of that time.

In the late 1940s, post-WWII, development of ADUs nearly ceased to exist due to a boom in suburban single-family neighborhoods. Through zoning regulations, many communities identified residential areas - including existing neighborhoods that offered a variety of housing types - for single-family low density uses with just one dwelling per lot allowed.

In the 1980s, ADUs gained popularity as a way to support affordable housing within single-family neighborhoods. However, the tenants occupying the ADU were often limited to family members. Going into the 1990s and 2000s, interest in ADUs was flourishing as the idea that they could be used as rental properties became more widespread.

**Figure 2-4: Time-line of ADU Development Trends**

- **EARLY 1900s**
  - Common form of housing in cities and towns throughout America, known as secondary suites, granny flats, mother-in-law suites, coach houses, and accessory apartments, often converted from existing outbuildings.

- **POST WWII**
  - Decline in new ADUs as suburban single-family neighborhood development grew. Widespread bans of ADUs through new zoning regulations.

- **1980-2000**
  - Renewed interest in ADUs with regulation often limiting tenancy to family members. Growing interest to expand opportunities allowing ADUs as rental properties. Agencies begin developing state and local code templates.

- **2016 - 2017**
  - California passes SB1069 and AB 2299 limiting local governments from prohibiting ADUs and streamlining the permitting and construction process.

- **2020s**
  - Further legislation adopted to allow for multiple accessory units and provide clear terminology and parameters defining the different types of ADUs.

The ‘Summary of Recent Changes to Accessory Dwelling Unit Laws’ section of the California Department of Housing and Community Development’s Accessory Dwelling Unit Handbook includes additional information on specific ADU legislation.
2.5 HOUSING AND ADUS IN LA MESA

Consistent with an urbanized, largely built-out community, La Mesa has experienced relatively little housing growth since 2000. As noted in the City’s Housing Element, the housing stock in the City grew from 24,943 units in 2000 to 26,929 units in 2020, or an 8% increase over 20 years. La Mesa maintains a diverse housing stock with almost equal shares of multi-family units (46.5%) and single-family detached units (46.8%) in 2020, while 6% of the units were single-family attached units (such as second units and duplexes) and less than one percent of the units were mobile homes/trailers.

With few vacant lots remaining in the City of La Mesa, future residential development will primarily occur as infill developments and redevelopment of existing underutilized properties, including the development of ADUs. To keep pace with changing state legislation and encourage the development of ADUs in La Mesa, the City adopted an amended accessory dwelling unit ordinance in March 2019 allowing accessory dwelling units in all residential zones without discretionary review. The amendment also eliminated requirements for accessory dwelling units to be attached to the primary unit and to provide additional parking. The maximum unit size of accessory dwelling units was also increased to 1,200 square feet, with larger units allowed on lots 10,000 square feet or larger. The City further adopted amendments to its accessory dwelling unit ordinance in April 2020 to be consistent with changes to state law.

Since enacting changes to the accessory dwelling unit ordinance, La Mesa has seen a steady growth in interest and applications for ADUs in the community. Between 2018 and 2022, the City issued permits for 223 units, with 61 units in 2022. Given the recent interest in and rate of ADU development, La Mesa anticipates permitting approximately 80 ADUs per year over the eight-year planning period between 2021 and 2029, or approximately 640 ADUs throughout La Mesa during that time.

As noted in the City’s Housing Element, ADUs permitted in La Mesa have primarily been smaller units, averaging approximately 660 square feet in size and similar in size to small one-bedroom or studio units.

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**ADUs in La Mesa by the Numbers...**

- **Studio or 1 Bedroom**
  - Average size of ADUs permitted in La Mesa: 600 - 700 sf
  - Typical ADU built in La Mesa
  - Anticipated number of ADUs permitted/built per year citywide: 80 per year

Source: City of La Mesa Housing Element (2022).
2.6 RESEARCH AND SITE ASSESSMENT

Before designing and building your ADU, you should define your goals and understand as much about your property as possible. Learning about your piece of land, and the buildings and structures on it will help you be prepared when it comes time to draw up your plans or hire a professional.

2.6.1 IDENTIFY GOALS FOR YOUR ADU

As noted in the previous sections, there are a variety of reasons why property owners choose to develop an ADU or JADU. It can be helpful to identify the long-term use or goals for an ADU on your property before investing time, money, and energy into the ADU design and development process. Long-term uses or goals for an ADU may include:

- Creating separate/nearby living space for family/relatives or an in-home health care provider;
- Providing a source of rental income;
- Increasing the potential value/re-sale of my property;
- Converting extra space within a home or on a property;
- Contributing to the supply of housing; or
- Downsizing and renting out the primary living unit.

Having a clear set of goals can help you and a design professional determine how to design and “right size” an ADU that meets your goals and long-term needs. Note that the City of La Mesa does not allow an ADU to be sold or conveyed separately from the primary residence, with some exceptions for affordable housing units, as noted in the La Mesa Municipal Code. Additionally, JADUs cannot be used for short-term or vacation rentals with stays less than 30 days.

2.6.2 LOOK UP YOUR PROPERTY INFORMATION

You can find some information about your property through La Mesa’s Online Interactive Zoning map and the San Diego County Assessor’s Map Portal, though it is important to verify the information provided through these resources.

The City of La Mesa provides an Online Interactive Zoning Map that includes zoning and lot size information that can be used for planning purposes using an address or Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) to search for property information. The online zoning map is based on the best data available at the time of publishing from the City of La Mesa, SanGIS, SANDAG, and other data sources. It is not guaranteed to be 100% accurate. The owner also needs to use due diligence on their property.
2.6.3 EVALUATE REAL ESTATE AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

While ADUs are a great way to increase housing opportunities, many homeowners are interested in the investment potential of ADUs. Having an up-to-date understanding of economic conditions and real estate trends is important when determining whether or not an ADU is right for you. With relatively low up front costs and only minor impacts to a home's assessed value, ADUs can be an attractive option for those looking to earn passive income or increase the property value and marketability of their home. These benefits aside, you still need to do some research about the housing market in your area. Some factors to consider include:

- Construction costs - Consider the up front costs. This includes professional design fees, construction costs, and permitting fees to formulate a rough idea of what your ADU might cost to build.
- Real estate values - Look at real estate listings in your area. Compare similar properties with and without ADUs to see how much an ADU may increase list price. Assess whether the presence of an ADU has any perceived impact on price per square foot. Use this information to estimate the potential increase in your property value should you build an ADU.
- Rental income potential - Review rental listings in your area. Investigate monthly rates that are comparable to your potential ADU. Find ADU rental listings if possible for the most accurate comparisons, and determine how much you may be able to charge for rent.
- Financing options - Evaluate financing options. How you choose to finance your ADU may also impact your long-term return-on-investment. And even if you are able to break-even, could your money be doing more for you in some other type of investment? Refer to Section 3.5 for more information on financing options.

Many studies have indicated that ADUs can increase your property value by 20-30%, with some estimates indicating a 50% increase in resale value, all other things equal. Other studies have shown that homes with ADUs get nearly 2x the amount of offers as other homes. Prospective buyers typically view ADUs in a positive light, giving them more options to provide separate office/flexible space, room for extended family, rental opportunities than properties without ADUs.

2.6.4 CONDUCT AN INITIAL SITE ASSESSMENT

In addition to looking up information about your property online, you may wish to measure and create an initial sketch of your property including lot dimensions, the location of existing buildings, the access points, and any site features such as a slope or trees. The initial site assessment is also a great opportunity to carefully walk through the site, take photos, and experience the property in person. Often times, information that may not be available through online maps or site plans - such as existing views, landscape character, physical structures or landforms - can be observed and noted during a site visit. This a critical step in developing a design that meets your preferences and takes into account various existing site constraints that could otherwise cause problems during construction.

**TIPS FOR DRAWING YOUR PROPERTY**

- You can use an online map to guide you, but note it may not be current or accurately show property lines or features.
- Start by measuring and drawing the dimensions (width and depth) of your lot.
- Note the orientation of the property by marking which way is north in relation to the front of the lot.
- Label and show the location of adjacent streets or alleys. Mark the approximate locations of existing entryways to the property including driveways, walkways, gates, or steps.
- Measure and draw the approximate location of existing structures including the primary residence, garage, or other accessory structures.
- Make note of any existing landscape or site features such as trees, slopes, landscaping, patios, porches, or fencing.

See Chapter 1 for a template to help you sketch a diagram of your property and existing buildings.
LOT SIZE, DIMENSIONS, SHAPE, AND ORIENTATION

A lot is a parcel of land with defined boundaries (property lines) and is typically owned by private parties. You will use information about your lot size, dimensions, and shape to determine setback and lot coverage requirements. Your lot size and shape may also determine the size of your ADU and the best spot to locate an ADU on your property to maintain space between buildings and ensure fire access.

There are many creative ways to site an ADU on properties of different shapes and sizes that meet building codes and development standards. Please refer to Figure 2-5 for illustrations of these concepts and Chapter 4 for ideas and examples of ADUs sited on standard, deep, flag, corner lots and more.

**Lot size and dimensions -**

To find the size and dimensions of your lot, search for your property on the San Diego county assessor site and the parcel map for lot dimensions and acreage numbers. Lot sizes may be presented in acres rather than square feet. To convert from acres to square feet, you can multiply the acreage of your property by 43,560. For example, if your property is 0.15 acres, when multiplied by 43,560, the result is 6,534 square feet.

**Lot shape -**

While many standard lots are rectangular, they can vary in width and depth sometimes creating small or large, and narrow or deep lots. Over time, some lots have also been split, particularly on corners and sites where the property can be accessed from multiple streets or an alley. Additionally, there are some lots - due to street layout, topography, or other site constraints - that are irregular in shape or include a narrow space for street and utility access before extending behind other properties, called a pan-handle or flag lot.

**Lot orientation -**

Orientation is used to describe the direction a property or structure faces and is typically represented by indicating which direction is north in relation to the property or structure. Identifying the orientation of your lot is important in placing your property in context with nearby structures and geographic features such as slopes or views. A professional designer will also use lot orientation to design an ADU that maximizes energy efficiency by taking advantage of natural light and cooling where possible.

Figure 2-5: Lot Dimensions, Shapes and Orientation Illustrations
STREETS AND SITE ACCESS

The location of adjacent streets or alleys further illustrates the orientation of a property that will factor into the size, location, and design of an ADU. Existing entryways to the property including driveways, walkways, gates, or steps are also important to note during a site assessment as a designer will consider those access points in the design phase.

EXISTING STRUCTURES AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Measure and draw the approximate location of any existing structures on your property. This includes the primary residence as well as any garages, sheds or other accessory structures, even if they will be renovated or removed for the construction of an ADU. Note that an ADU is only permitted on lots with an existing or proposed single-family residence.

The presence of designated historic resources or structures that may be eligible for designation as a historic resource (listed on the La Mesa Historic Resource Inventory) on your property does not preclude you from building an ADU, though extra design consideration to retain exterior architectural features of the historic or potentially historic resource and a certificate of appropriateness if you propose to build an ADU or JADU that is attached to the historic resource. If you believe your property may include a historic resource, please refer to the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance.

LANDSCAPING AND NATURAL FEATURES

Existing landscape or site features can screen, shade, or otherwise influence the use and enjoyment of a property for you, your neighbors, or a future tenant. Trees, slopes, landscaping, patios, porches, or fencing and their approximate location should be identified during the site assessment. Additionally, you should consider if these features will be incorporated into the design or will need to be modified or removed to make space for an ADU.

TOPOGRAPHY AND SLOPES

Topography refers to the elevation of the surface of the land that provides us with a way of understanding a site’s natural features, grades, and overall terrain. It is useful for revealing opportunities and constraints related to siting buildings, access routes, drainage, view sheds, and more. It is best to locate your ADU on a flatter portion of your lot (<10% slope). A combination of grading and retaining walls can be used to level a portion of your lot for the new building. However, grading on slopes exceeding 25% is not advised. Designers should also consider drainage, site accessibility, views, and privacy when grading your site for an ADU.
2.6.5 IDENTIFY RELEVANT DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

The zoning district for your property will inform the specific development standards for your property including setbacks, structure height, and lot coverage. Additional development standards to provide fire access and utility connections apply to all new development regardless of zone.

ZONING

All lots in the city are assigned a zoning classification that reflects the intended types of land uses - residential, commercial, industrial or public facilities - and the expected intensity of development - from low to high density expressed in terms of dwelling units per acre or gross floor area. The Zoning Code, Title 24 of the La Mesa Municipal Code, establishes property development standards for each zoning district that determine how tall a building can be, where buildings can be located on a lot, and how far back they must be set from front, rear, and side yards.

La Mesa allows ADUs in all districts zoned for residential uses including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1E</td>
<td>Semi-Rural Estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1R</td>
<td>Semi-Rural Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1S</td>
<td>Suburban Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Urban Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1A</td>
<td>Urban Residential-Alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Medium Low Density Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>Multiple Unit Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB</td>
<td>Residential Business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, La Mesa’s Zoning Code has established overlay zones that may apply to your property. Overlay zones do not alter the uses or intensity of the base zoning district, but may modify other development standards to address specific environmental conditions, with overlay zones established for floodways, hillsides, and scenic preservation. The standards of these overlay zones apply to the development of ADUs except that Planning Commission review is not required for a project that solely proposes an ADU. ADUs are not subject to Urban Design Overlay Zone or Urban Design Program requirements.

Projects that only propose an ADU are exempt from park fees and the first ADU or JADU on a lot is exempt from Regional Transportation Congestion Improvement Program (RTCIP) fees. Additional units are required to pay the applicable impact fees.
**SETBACKS**

Standards that govern how close or far a building or accessory unit is to the property lines are called setbacks. Typically identified as the minimum distance a structure must be setback from a property line, these distances vary for front, side, and rear property lines with setbacks generally larger for lower density zones and larger lots. These standards apply to new development, so some existing structures may have been built prior to these requirements and for ADUs that propose to convert existing structures that encroach on the property’s setbacks, exceptions to the setback requirements may be granted.

It is important to identify your property’s specific development standards based on the zoning district assigned, but the range of setback distances that apply in La Mesa’s residential zones include:

- Front setbacks range from a minimum of 20 feet to 15 feet.
- Side setbacks range from a minimum of 15 feet to 5 feet.
- Rear setbacks range from a minimum of 30 feet to 15 feet.

ADUs must follow the property’s front yard setback requirement. However, ADUs have a minimum setback requirement of 4 feet from side and rear property lines (regardless of established zone setbacks). For example, if your front yard setback is 20 feet and your side or rear setbacks are 10 feet, your ADU must be located at least 20 feet back from the front property line, at least 4 feet off of the side and rear property lines.

**STRUCTURE HEIGHT**

Typically, ADUs may use the maximum structure height of the underlying zone which range from 20 feet to 30 feet. Above-garage ADUs must comply with the maximum structure height of the underlying zone. In some cases, ADU height may be further restricted by the zoning code. Please consult with staff to ensure you are using the correct height limit.
**ADU SIZE LIMITS**

ADUs can come in all shapes and configurations, but they are limited to a maximum of 1,200 square feet of liveable area. As noted previously in Figure 2-3, site coverage restrictions may limit an ADU to 800 sf and Junior ADUs are limited to 500 sf of living area. La Mesa’s ADU ordinance does not prescribe a minimum size but California Health and Safety Codes establish a minimum livable area of 150 sf for efficiency units. Additionally, La Mesa’s ADU ordinance states that ADUs smaller than 750 square feet are not subject to development impact fees.

**LOT COVERAGE**

Lot coverage refers to the percentage of a property that has buildings on it. Coverage does not include areas paved at grade for driveways, walkways, uncovered parking, uncovered or unenclosed swimming pools, walls or fences, covered but unenclosed patios, or structures used for beautification or landscaping such as arbors, trellises, and flagpoles.

La Mesa has established site coverage maximums of 40% for lots. On lots that are 10,000 square feet in area or less and have an existing single-family residence, the lot coverage may be increased up to 45% for ADU projects. To calculate your lot coverage, add up the square footage of buildings on your lot and divide by the lot area. Generally, if your lot coverage is below the maximum percentage you can build an ADU up to 1,200 sf. However, if you are at or above the lot coverage maximum you may still build an ADU, though it may be limited to 800 sf in size.

**ACCESSIBILITY, FIRE ACCESS, AND SAFETY**

All ADUs must comply with local fire department regulations and building codes and fire department review is a required part of the plan review process. Fire safety standards for site access, building spacing, and hose-pull limits among other considerations ensure that the proposed design does not impede on the safety of the user or the public.

These requirements allow fire trucks to access and maneuver portions of a site with buildings, and consider routes and distances that fire-fighters must traverse with a hose in order to access all portions of a structure.
**UTILITIES**

Separate utility connections are generally not needed for attached or interior ADUs and JADUs. For detached ADUs where the physical characteristics of the lot preclude tying into the existing utility connection, a new direct connection between the ADU and the utility will need to be provided. For ADUs requiring a new direct utility connection, fees will be applied in proportion to the burden of the proposed ADU based on its square footage compared to the primary residence.

### 2.7 WHAT COMES NEXT?

Once you are familiar with the process and terminology for building an ADU and have conducted some preliminary research on your property and the applicable development standards you may be ready for the next phase of designing your ADU.

If you still have questions about whether you can build an ADU on your property after completing this first phase of research and site assessment, this would be a good time to engage a professional designer such as an architect or set up an appointment with City staff to review your options and confirm whether or not your property is a viable candidate for an ADU.

### 2.8 SHOULD I CONSIDER AN ADU?

Once you have determined that you CAN build an ADU on your property, it is time to decide if you SHOULD build an ADU. Figure 2-6 includes some questions that may be helpful as you consider or discuss whether you should build an ADU. You may also wish to refer to the first page of the ADU checklist provided at the end of Chapter 1 to ensure you’ve considered the relevant details of your property before moving on to the design, permitting, and construction phases of building an ADU on your property, which are discussed in the next chapter.

**Figure 2-6: Questions to Consider**

1. **DO I HAVE EXTRA SPACE IN MY YARD?**
   - **YES,** determine if this space could fit an ADU up to 1,200 square feet
   - **NO,** look to see if there are other spaces like a garage or an extra room

2. **DO I HAVE AN EXISTING GARAGE OR STRUCTURE THAT I COULD CONVERT TO AN ADU?**
   - **YES,** determine if this space could fit an ADU up to 1,200 square feet
   - **NO,** look to see if there are other spaces like yard space

3. **DO I HAVE EXTRA SPACE WITHIN MY HOME THAT I COULD CONVERT TO A JADU?**
   - **YES,** determine if this space could fit a JADU up to 500 square feet
   - **NO,** look to see if there are other spaces like yard space or a garage for an ADU

4. **CAN I BUILD AN ADU ON MY LOT WITHOUT ADVERSELY AFFECTING MY NEIGHBOR?**
   - **YES,** evaluate what location, configuration, size, and type of ADU is most suitable
   - **NO,** consider an ADU or JADU using existing interior space within your home

5. **DO I WANT TO TAKE ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MANAGING MY PROPERTY?**
   - **YES,** please review Section 3.5 on property management
   - **NO,** decide who and what your ADU/JADU would be used for

6. **COULD I BENEFIT FROM AN ADDITIONAL REVENUE STREAM?**
   - **YES,** evaluate whether potential rental income can cover the construction costs and expenses to manage a rental property
   - **NO,** consider other ADU benefits such as creating housing opportunities

7. **CAN I SECURE FINANCING TO CONSTRUCT AN ADU ON MY PROPERTY?**
   - **YES,** look at Section 3.3 on financing and decide next steps
   - **NO,** look into alternative funding measures and incentive programs
Design options are unlimited but scale, compatibility, materials, costs and your neighbors are important considerations. Your most important choice may be the consideration of hiring a design professional such as an architect to help provide what you need and what you want, all done in a positive way that will increase your property value, rentability and be a source of pride for you, your tenant and your neighbors.
DECISIONS...DECISIONS
3.1 MOVING AHEAD WITH YOUR ADU

Now that you understand the different types of ADUs, the standards pertaining to size, considerations for design, general site planning principles, and financing requirements, you may be ready to move forward with the next steps in the ADU process.

This chapter outlines the steps and considerations involved in:
- designing an ADU
- submitting and obtaining a building permit
- constructing an ADU
- renting an ADU on your property

This chapter highlights the importance of hiring professionals such as architects, contractors, or property management processions to help you navigate the process of designing, building and managing your ADU. If you still have questions about whether you can build an ADU on your property after completing the first phase of research and site assessment, this would be a good time to engage a professional designer such as an architect or set up an appointment with City staff in the Community Development Department to review your options and confirm that your property is a viable candidate for an ADU of JADU.

3.1.1 CALL THE PROFESSIONALS

Consider the different types of expertise that will be involved with your ADU. Decisions will need to be made about the most suitable location, size, and configuration of your ADU. Your property should be evaluated to identify specific constraints and ensure that your ADU will comply with planning and building standards. A wide range of styles, materials, fixtures, and colors must be considered for the ADU itself. And finally, someone will need to coordinate the permitting, material procurement, scheduling, and construction of your ADU. Coming up with professional plans takes specific knowledge and expertise, creativity and effort, and considerable time. Though there are expenses associated with hiring a professional, the monthly rent and your property value are at stake.

HIRING A PROFESSIONAL

Relying on experienced professionals will make the process of designing and building your ADU a smooth and enjoyable experience. Consider researching and contacting professionals from the following fields before starting your ADU project.

ARCHITECTS - architects have a wealth of knowledge pertaining to building design and construction that can help you create a well-designed ADU that fits your style and budget and meets building codes. Look for architects that have completed ADU projects and if your property includes a historic resource, consider architects that have experience with historic preservation standards.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS - landscape architects can evaluate your site to determine the most appropriate size and location for your ADU, and can aid in the design of outdoor uses and the elements needed to support these uses such as paving, walkways, walls, fencing, grading, planting, lighting, and irrigation.

CONTRACTORS - contractors will manage the planning and construction of every aspect of your project (from framing and electrical to painting and landscape installation), and will be responsible for ensuring that all of the materials, equipment, and subcontractors are on-hand at the right time to keep your project moving along.

DESIGN / BUILD SPECIALISTS - design-build companies have in-house design and construction personnel and resources to see your project through from start to finish. With the rising popularity of ADUs, there are increasingly more design-build studios specializing in ADUs.
3.2 PLANNING AND DESIGN

At this point, you may have a pretty good picture in your head of your future ADU, so now is the time to meet with a designer to help turn that vision into a reality. The planning and design phase should focus on developing plans that fit your property, complies with codes and meets your goals. This section also provides tips for designing an ADU that minimizes impacts to you and your neighbors, and determining the financing options available for constructing your ADU.

The planning and design process typically takes place within a collaborative relationship between a professional designer and you. Whether you hire an architect or a home designer, it is important for you to feel comfortable that they have the talent, time and motivation to help you with your project. A design professional or architect will work with you to understand and define your goals and overall vision for the project. They will ask you questions and present you with options to help determine and clarify your preferences. They will then work within the constraints of the site to design an ADU that best meets your desires and expectations and the limitations or opportunities associated with your property. This process takes time and usually involves several iterations in order to design a project that you are ultimately happy with. Specific details and terms of engagement will be established and agreed upon in a contract between you and your architect or home.

3.2.1 DISCUSS YOUR GOALS AND DESIGN IDEAS

There are several factors to consider in the design of your ADU or JADU. Many of the concepts discussed in Chapter 2 - including site constraints and property development standards - will inform the design of your ADU and should be shared as you discuss your goals and design ideas with a design professional. The checklist and drawing templates at the end of Chapter 1 can be a helpful tool in your initial discussions and the examples provided in Chapter 4 may provide ideas or inspiration of aspects you would like to see incorporated into your ADU. In addition to these resources, the following questions may help you navigate initial discussions about the design.

Where on the property should the ADU be located? The shape, size end required setbacks of your lot may determine the ideal placement of an ADU. When identifying a location for the ADU on your property - consider privacy, private yards, and access to the ADU. Do you want a tenant walking through your back yard to get to their front door or could a fence provide private access? Is there space on your lot to allow for private yards for both you and your tenant? Outdoor environments are important and will affect potential rent and your ability to attract renters as well as the enjoyment of the primary residence.

Discussing your goals and design ideas with a design professional can help to ensure an ADU design that meets your needs and style preferences.
Should the ADU be joined to the main house or separate? ADUs may be attached or detached from the primary residence and may involve new construction, a remodel or addition, or conversion of existing space such as a detached garage or accessory structure. JADUs are attached to the primary residence by either adding to or converting an existing space. ADUs and JADUs are required to have a separate exterior entry, while a JADU may also connect through the primary residence. Depending on your specific lot, adding on to your existing house may make the most sense for preserving yard area and providing private access. Shared walls will have to be fire rated and meet sound separation requirements. There may also be greater disruption during construction as contractors tie the addition into your current home. However, since this option utilizes existing building area, construction costs and duration could be substantially reduced.

How will access be provided to the ADU? How a tenant and their guests will access an ADU should be considered, either as a pedestrian or if vehicular access will be provided from an off-street parking space. When determining what will fit on your property, consider if you want private or shared access, private or shared yards, required setbacks, and how much of your yard are you willing to use to accommodate an ADU. Consider access provided from an alley or side yard.

Can standard ADU building plans and pre-fabricated or modular designs be used? Standard plans and pre-fabricated or modular designs are acceptable. The City of La Mesa does not currently have any pre-approved plans for ADUs, but other jurisdictions, including the County of San Diego, have standard plans for ADUs in a range of sizes and layouts available at no cost that may be used in La Mesa if adapted to meet the Building Division’s submittal requirements. The plans and a building permit application must be submitted to the Building Division for review. While the use of standard plans or pre-fabricated materials will still require professional support to adequately incorporate an ADU onto your property, they can also reduce design costs and minimize construction impacts.

What size and how many bedroom/bathrooms should the ADU have? The building size and design will be influenced by the buildable area on your lot. Your ADU is required to provide space for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation on the same parcel as the primary unit. There are also minimum and maximum size limits ranging from 150 sf to 1,200 sf depending on the type of ADU you propose to build. A JADU is limited to 500 square feet and may share sanitation facilities with the primary unit.

What style should it have? In most cases ADUs are not required to have a specific architectural style unless the ADU will be located on a property with a historic resource or within a historic district, which is discussed on the next page. When deciding what style may be appropriate, consider community character and compatibility with the main house. If your neighborhood is consistent in architectural character, then it is usually preferable to maintain a compatible style in roof forms and materials. Having a style, color scheme and material selection that is consistent with the main house will also help your ADU fit into your lot and into the neighborhood as a whole.
How many stories should it have? You may want to consider the height of other buildings in your neighborhood and the height of your primary residence. One story units may have a similar scale to other nearby buildings while two story units could allow for more yard space or allow for a garage or parking on the first floor with an ADU above on a second floor. Second floors add to the overall cost of construction but may help you preserve more of the yard.

If the property has historic resources, what style should the ADU have? As noted previously, the presence of designated historic resources or structures that may be eligible for designation as a historic resource (listed on the La Mesa Historic Resource Inventory) on your property does not preclude you from building an ADU, though extra design consideration to retain exterior architectural features is needed. Meets corresponding historical preservation requirements in place at the time the accessory second dwelling unit is built. La Mesa’s ADU ordinance includes the following requirements for ADUs on properties with historic resources:

- Detached accessory dwelling units shall be located behind the primary residence and/or historic structure.
- The construction of the accessory dwelling unit shall not result in the removal of any other historically significant accessory structure, such as garages, outbuildings, stables or other similar structures.
- The accessory dwelling unit shall be designed in substantially the same architectural style and finished materials composition as the primary residence or historic structure.
- Construction of an accessory dwelling unit shall not result in demolition, alteration or movement of the primary residence/historic house and any other on-site features that convey the historic significance of the house and site.
- If the historic house/site is under a Mills Act contract with the City, the contract shall be amended, as needed, to authorize the introduction of the accessory dwelling unit on the site.

If you believe your property may include a historic resource, please refer to the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance.

What else needs to be considered in the ADU design? In addition to the above parameters, you should also take note of the following requirements that may pertain to your project:

- ADUs shall comply with all local building and fire code requirements
- ADUs are not required to install fire sprinklers if they are not required for the primary residence
- Interior ADUs or those proposing to convert an existing accessory structure may add up to 150 square feet for the sole purpose of providing ingress or egress
- JADUs are limited to 500 square feet and may share sanitation facilities with the primary unit
- Conversion of garages or carports does not require replacement of off-street parking
- Electrical and water utilities may be shared with the primary residence
- Solar may be required for new detached ADUs

The design of ADUs on historic properties require extra design consideration to meet preservation standards.
3.2.2 DESIGN WITH YOUR NEIGHBOR IN MIND

When considering building an ADU or JADU on your property, it’s important to consider how it will affect your neighbors. Although the State of California has legislated rights to building ADUs and local governments must consider this action to be a ministerial review process and not a discretionary permit process, it is important to keep good relations with your neighbors. An ADU/JADU increases the density in your neighborhood and may affect street parking, privacy and views. Regulations also allow ADU’s and JADU’s to be constructed close to the property lines. Reaching out to your neighbors early during the planning of your project can help you take into consideration their concerns and will go a long way in making them feel that you are being considerate.

But if you are at an impass with your neighbors, make it clear to them that there is no requirement for you to accommodate them but you are willing to try some adjustments. Try to make even small compromises since you may have your neighbors for a long time into the future. If you are finding that your project may have considerable impacts on your neighbors quality of life, you may want to consider a different design or configuration, or perhaps even a JADU.

If your neighborhood is part of a Homeowner’s Association, you may want to engage the board during your planning process. While they are not allowed to prohibit the construction, you may be able to design your project to address potential concerns.

Consider the 5 ‘P’ s when thinking about your project and your neighbors:

1. **Proximity** - Will the new unit cast shadows on your neighbors property, or create additional noise impacts?
2. **Privacy** - Can windows or second-story balconies be located to preserve privacy for your neighbors house and yard? Is there space for screening to mitigate noise and light trespass?
3. **Preservation Views** - Will the proposed location impact your neighbor’s access to scenic views?
4. **Parking** - Is there space on the property to create a place for your tenant to park, or is there adequate street parking? If there is limited parking, is your property close to public transportation?
5. **Proactive** - Reach out to your neighbors before beginning your project to find out if they have any concerns. Remember that you have a right to build your ADU, but engaging in a conversation early can show your neighbors that you are taking them into consideration.

**Figure 3-1: Illustration of neighbor design considerations**

### NEIGHBOR DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Proximity** of buildings to property lines
2. **Privacy** through screening and window placement
3. **Preservation** of scenic views and vistas
4. **Parking** for the main residence and ADU
5. **Proactive** coordination by keeping your neighbors in the loop
**3.2.3 REVIEW AND REFINE YOUR PROPOSED ADU DESIGN**

After taking your goals, site constraints, planning and zoning standards, and building codes into consideration, your designer will draft a set of plans for your ADU. These will include a site plan which will show the location of the ADU on your property and a floor plan which will detail the layout of the interior of your ADU. The plans will also include scaled drawings and details on how the foundation, flooring and roofing, electrical and mechanical, and plumbing and gas lines will be constructed.

You should review these plans carefully to make sure they meet your needs and expectations. Conducting a thorough review of the plans can help to avoid backtracking and reduce delays or other changes that can cost time and money during the construction phase.

**3.2.4 COMPLETE CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS**

With your review complete, your designer will incorporate revisions based on your feedback and prepare a set of construction drawings for your ADU. These drawings will ultimately be submitted for Plan Review and can be used to obtain bids from contractors.

---

**REVIEWING YOUR ADU PLANS**

The plans for your ADU will need to include several details to be considered complete. This includes the following from La Mesa’s Plan Review Submittal Checklist:

- Site Plan
- Floor Plans and Roof Plan
- Elevations
- Sections
- Foundation Plans
- Floor and Roof Framing Plans
- Details
- Electrical and Mechanical Plans
- Plumbing and Gas Line Plans
- General Building Notes

*A link to the Plan Submittal Checklist can be found in the next section.*

---

**3.2.5 LINE UP YOUR FINANCING**

While you may have identified potential costs and financing options during your preliminary research, once you have developed draft plans for your ADU, you should be able to develop a more accurate assessment of the potential construction costs. Your cost estimates will vary based on the size, construction methods, site constraints, and material/finishes. When determining how to finance your ADU there are several factors to consider and you are encouraged to assess your personal financial situation and conduct additional research to determine which avenue best suits your needs. The following are some common methods that can be used to finance an ADU:

- **Existing Savings** - Self-financing your ADU is a quick and easy way to finance your dwelling unit, however, this option may not be available for all homeowners. It also may not be the most beneficial option in the long-run, depending on available loan interest rates and your need to obtain a return on your investment.

- **Home Equity Loan** - A home equity loan, sometimes referred to as a second mortgage, is a secured loan with a fixed interest rate and repayment plan. This loan works well if you have an exact cost for the construction of your ADU.

- **Home Equity Line of Credit** - A home equity line of credit can provide funds by borrowing against the existing equity of your home. You can borrow up to a specific limit and then repay funds over time. If you have equity in your home and want the flexibility to borrow and repay as payments to your builder are due, this option may be a good fit for financing an ADU and may have positive tax deductions.

- **Construction Loan** - A construction loan is a short-term, typically one year loan, that estimates the home value with the addition of an ADU and allows the homeowner to borrow against that amount. But you will need to swing this loan over into a mortgage after construction is complete.

- **Renovation Loan** - The renovation loan is a mortgage loan that helps if there is limited equity on the current property. This loan provides financing for repairs, upgrades, but also requires construction work to be completed in a six month period.

- **Cash-out Refinance** - With a cash-out refinance, homeowners take on a larger loan and obtain some cash out of the refinancing process.
3.3 PLAN REVIEW AND PERMITTING

At the end of the planning and design process, you will have a set of plans for your ADU that contains all of the information needed to build the project. The next step is to submit these plans to the City and initiate the plan review and permitting process.

This process will involve review and discussions between your designer and City staff to ensure the proposed designs comply with all applicable planning standards and building codes. These steps are detailed in Figure 3-2, and a professional designer should be familiar with these requirements for the City of La Mesa. This is important because it will reduce the likelihood of mistakes or omissions requiring revisions and resubmissions.

In addition, it is important to note that the ADU review process is ministerial rather than discretionary. This essentially means that plans that meet the established, objective design parameters will automatically be approved; and that the reviewer holds no subjective power to approve or deny a project based on their own judgments. The general process from the time an application is submitted to the issuance of a building permit is outlined in this section.

3.3.1 SUBMIT YOUR BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION

Designers should review and complete the City’s plan submittal checklist to ensure that the plans contain all of the required information and meet layout and format standards set forth by the City. Plans must meet submittal requirements and pay the applicable fees before the City will consider an application complete and begin reviewing plans. The clock on how quickly the City is obligated to provide a permit starts once your application is considered complete, not just when you first submit. An incomplete package can cause a delay of several weeks and increase your overall costs.

The City of La Mesa utilizes an online plan review and permitting system where customers can generate electronic permit applications; submit plans, supporting documents, reports; receive comments and corrections; re-submit plans; pay fees; and receive permits 100% electronically.

Links to these resources including the Plan Review Submittal Checklist, as well as La Mesa’s Electronic Plan Review Portal are provided to the to the right. Please refer to section 4.6 for specific URLs associated with links provided in these chapters.
3.3.2 PAY APPLICABLE PERMIT FEES

A fee for the plan review is assessed based on several factors, including but not limited to: floor area size of the proposed ADU; whether or not the ADU will be attached or detached; and whether you will be converting an existing garage, part of an existing primary residence, or existing accessory structure into an ADU. The Building Division can provide a rough estimate for the plan check fee once the required information is provided. Building permit fees are determined during review of the building plans.

Projects that only propose an ADU are exempt from park fees and the first ADU or JADU on a lot is exempt from Regional Transportation Congestion Improvement Program (RTCIP) fees. Additional units are required to pay the applicable impact fees. As an added incentive for homeowners to pursue ADU projects, as of July 1, 2022, the City of La Mesa will waive the first $2,000 of permitting fees associated with ADU or JADU projects.

3.3.3 SUBMIT PLANS

After you submit your plans to the City through the online portal or in person, Building Division staff will review the submission for compliance with applicable codes and regulations. Applications will be reviewed as quickly as possible and will be approved or denied within 60 calendar days. Denied applications will be provided with comments and corrections necessary to achieve approval. A denied application may be reactivated within one year of initial submittal with submission of the necessary corrections.

Other factors on which approval and permitting may depend include input from public works and planning staff, fire department review (particularly if sprinklers are required), possible solar requirements, water and utilities, and potential need for grading, encroachment, and/or right-of-way permits.

3.3.4 OBTAIN YOUR BUILDING PERMIT

Applications will be reviewed as quickly as possible and will be approved or denied within 60 days. The application and plans will be approved when all reviews are complete and compliance with applicable codes and regulations has been confirmed. Upon submittal of permit declarations and payment of any outstanding fees, a building permit will be issued.
3.4 CONSTRUCTION AND INSPECTION

The next phase of your project is the construction phase. With plans and permits in hand, it is time to begin reaching out to contractors to solicit bids. If you have gone the design/build route you don’t need to find a contractor, as the company will have the in-house resources and experience to carry out the construction themselves.

There are many ways to find reputable builders and contractors. Word of mouth recommendations can be a good way of finding contractors from satisfied clients. Often times, seasoned designers and architects can provide you with recommendations based on past project experience. Customer reviews found online can help refine your recommendations from neighbors and designers. Contractors must be licensed by the State of California. Contractor licensing information can be obtained from the Contractors State License Board on their [website](https://www.cslb.ca.gov) or by calling (800) 321-CSLB.

3.4.1 OBTAIN BIDS AND SELECT A CONTRACTOR

After contacting potential builders, they will prepare an estimate that accounts for the anticipated costs of materials and labor, overhead, and a contingency to cover unforeseen expenses. It is then up to you to select a contractor based on your budget, time line, and assessment of qualifications.
Keep in mind that costs can fluctuate based on things like market volatility, variable prices of materials, and unforeseen circumstances and change orders. Additionally, the more detailed and thorough your plans are, the more accurate a contractor can be with their cost estimate. This is another reason it is a good idea to hire a professional to design your project.

Determine up front if the contractor is building on a fixed fee with contingencies for unforeseen conditions or if they are on a time and material basis with an upper limit. Be clear on your expectations and how change orders are to be handled and must be approved prior to incurring additional expenses. By agreeing on the process up front, you can avoid unexpected costs and control the budgets. If you do not manage this properly, costs could make it infeasible to meet your return on investment expectations and your financing capability. Insist on having the contractor show you why a change order is needed, why it was not in the original costs and how these costs are determined.

**3.4.2 CONSTRUCT YOUR ADU**

With a contractor in place, you’re ready to begin construction of your ADU. You and your contractor should be familiar with and take care to comply with La Mesa’s construction regulations to minimize impacts to you and your neighbors and avoid construction delays that may be caused by violating construction codes or regulations. Inspections of the work by City inspectors will be required at various stages throughout construction.

**3.4.3 COMPLETE INSPECTIONS**

At the end of the construction process, a final inspection will be conducted resulting in a final inspection approval if all conditions have been met. For a manufactured or pre-fabricated ADU, a certificate of occupancy will be issued.

Once this step has been completed, it means it is time to decide what you are going to do with your newly built ADU. Perhaps you have already made this decision, but the next section will walk through several considerations if you are planning to rent your ADU to a tenant.
3.5 PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Whether your ADU is newly constructed or your property already includes an ADU, you will be responsible for managing the property should you decide to rent your ADU to a tenant. Renting an ADU can provide supplemental income and as a homeowner, you can use this income for mortgage payments, expenses, retirement, or other savings. Renting your ADU also provides more housing variety and options in your community and increases the value and equity in your property.

3.5.1 PREPARE DOCUMENTS

You may wish to rely on the expertise of a professional property management company to either assist with the initial setup of legal and lease documents or to provide ongoing management and maintenance for the ADU. Rental of an ADU to a tenant will require some initial setup including: the preparation of documents such as the drafting of a lease agreement, identification of liability issues, purchase of additional insurance, and tracking of expenses and other tax write-off accounting.

3.5.2 LIST YOUR PROPERTY AND FIND A TENANT

If you decide to play a hands-on role in the day-to-day operations of your rental property there are several responsibilities you must uphold. When considering your involvement, it is important to evaluate the potential time and costs involved in drafting documents, finding tenants, and completing maintenance. This includes finding the right tenants for your property and then deciding how you manage and maintain your rented space and may involve:

- Completing legal documents such as a lease agreement;
- Researching and setting your rental rate;
- Photographing and advertising your property;
- Showing your property to prospective tenants;
- Screening renters and complying with equal housing protections;
- Collecting a security deposit and rent;
- Responding in a timely manner to maintenance requests and repairs.

Seeing the list above may be daunting, and you may find that you don’t have enough time for the day-to-day tasks. In this case, a property management company could be hired to supervise and manage your property for a percentage of the gross rent collected or a flat fee.
04

IDEAS TO CONSIDER
4.1 DESIGN IDEAS

With the previous two chapters highlighting the ADU process and important considerations for each step, this final chapter aims to provide examples, ideas, and additional resources that may be helpful as you design your ADU. The chapter starts with a discussion of architectural styles and expressions and a photo gallery of ADU examples. Included next are sample site layouts that take into account different lot shapes, sizes, and conditions and sample building floor plans that range in size and number of stories. Finally, this chapter concludes with a set of relevant resources and links that are referenced throughout this guide.

Please note: La Mesa does not have design requirements for ADUs. The plans, images, and illustrations provided in this chapter are intended to serve as examples and ideas. They are not intended to substitute for the services of a design professional and should not be submitted as part of a building permit application.

4.2 ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSIONS

It is usually desirable to have the new ADU structure or addition be compatible with the existing house and neighborhood. Some examples of compatibility are as follows:

- **Architectural Style and Massing** - This refers to the scale of the ADU as well as the design elements such as building orientation, roof pitch, wall cladding, and doors and window styles. If the new structure is similar in style, roof slope and details, it would still be considered compatible with variations in color or materials.

- **Color and Materials** - A new structure or addition with a different architectural style or massing could be tied together with consistent or compatible exterior colors and materials.

- **Garden Features** - If the ADU is separate from the main house, the design could also be made compatible by incorporating existing garden features that bring the two residences together.

- **Unique Design** - The design of detached ADU’s may be different from the main house if it still consistent with the general feel and architectural fabric of the neighborhood.

4.3 PHOTO GALLERY

Examples of design elements described above are provided in the images to the right with examples of compatibility noted with a checkmark and non-compatible elements noted with an X. The next page contains additional examples of ADUs of varying architectural styles including ADUs from garage conversions or additions and one-story detached ADUs.
Ideas to Consider

**Color and Materials**

- ![Image](image1.png)
  - Similar colors and materials are used on the ADU.

- ![Image](image2.png)
  - This ADU matches the primary residence in colors, wall cladding as well as door and window details.

- ![Image](image3.png)
  - ADU and primary house are not using compatible materials or styles making it seem forced and wedged in.

**Garden Features**

- ![Image](image4.png)
  - Garden features such as French doors, lighting, and pathways tie the style of the ADU to the main house.

- ![Image](image5.png)
  - This design provides an integrated deck design to bring the primary residence and ADU together.

**Unique Design**

- ![Image](image6.png)
  - ADU is setback and scaled to fit with the neighborhood.

- ![Image](image7.png)
  - Though different architecture styles, the integration of the design is provided by wall cladding materials.

- ![Image](image8.png)
  - This ADU uses different materials and styles and is out of scale with the primary and neighboring residences.
**Samples of Architectural Styles**

Source: buildinganadu.com

**Garage Conversion/Addition ADU Examples**

Source: buildinganadu.com

**Samples of One-Story Detached ADUs**

Source: buildinganadu.com
4.4 SAMPLE PLANS FOR TYPICAL LA MESA LOTS

4.4.1 STANDARD LOT - ATTACHED SINGLE STORY ADU

DESCRIPTION
This is a fairly typical property for La Mesa, approximately 67’ wide by 120’ deep with a single-story home and garage situated toward the center of the site.

CALCULATE ALLOWABLE SITE COVERAGE
- Lots under 10,000 SF are allowed 45% site coverage for an ADU
- \(0.45 \times 8,080 \text{ SF} = 3,636 \text{ SF}\)
- 3,636 SF is the allowable site coverage for this property

CALCULATE MAXIMUM ADU SIZE
- ADUs are not to exceed 1,200 SF on any lot
- Check to ensure that a 1,200 SF ADU adheres to the site coverage restriction
- Subtract the square footage of existing structures from the allowable site coverage square footage:
  - 3,636 SF - 2,337 SF = 1,299 SF
  - The site coverage restriction would allow for an additional 1,299 SF to be built on this site. Therefore, a 1,200 SF ADU is permissible.

DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LAYOUT
A desirable location for an ADU is behind the main residence when possible. For this property, suitable approaches may include a garage conversion, a detached backyard ADU, or the solution shown to the right. An attached, single-story, ADU up to 1,200 SF would be a good option for this property that relates to the existing single-story main house that maintains a healthy buffer along the property edge.

### Standard Lot Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size (SF):</td>
<td>8,228 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Lot Coverage (%)</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Lot Coverage (SF):</td>
<td>3,636 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Building Footprint (SF):</td>
<td>2,337 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Lot Coverage (SF):</td>
<td>1,299 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum ADU Size (SF):</td>
<td>1,200 SF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.2 STANDARD LOT WITH ALLEY ACCESS - TWO STORY ADU OVER GARAGE

DESCRIPTION
This standard shape lot consists of a single-family residential home facing the primary street with the back of the property facing an adjacent alleyway. The home does not have a garage, and parking is available on the primary street.

CALCULATE ALLOWABLE SITE COVERAGE
- Lots under 10,000 SF are allowed 45% site coverage for an ADU
  - .45 x 7,603 SF = 3,421 SF
  - 3,421 SF is the allowable site coverage for this property

CALCULATE MAXIMUM ADU SIZE
- ADUs are not to exceed 1,200 SF on any lot
- Check to ensure that a 1,200 SF ADU adheres to the site coverage rules
- Subtract the square footage of existing structures from the allowable site coverage square footage:
  - 3,421 SF - 1,287 SF = 2,134 SF
- The site coverage restriction would allow for an additional 2,134 SF to be built on this site. Therefore, a 1,200 SF ADU is permissible.

DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LAYOUT
Due to the access available from an alleyway, this lot provides an opportunity for a 2-level ADU or a second story ADU over a new garage oriented to the alleyway. This option provides separate access to the property for the two units, with the primary residence accessed from the street and the ADU access from the alleyway. When a property owner has access to a alley, it makes good sense to use it as the access to the ADU and assures that parking will not be on the local neighborhood streets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Lot with Alley Access Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size (SF):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Lot Coverage (%):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Lot Coverage (SF):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Building Footprint (SF):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Lot Coverage (SF):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum ADU Size (SF):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.3 STANDARD LOT WITH 40% SITE COVERAGE - TWO STORY DETACHED ADU

DESCRIPTION
This is a standard shaped lot with alley access and a building footprint that already covers 40% of the lot area. The addition of an ADU allows the site coverage to increase to 45% for lots under 10,000 SF.

CALCULATE ALLOWABLE SITE COVERAGE
- Lots under 10,000 SF are allowed 45% coverage for a proposed ADU
  - \(0.45 \times 5,960 \text{ SF} = 2,682 \text{ SF}\)
  - 2,682 SF is the allowable site coverage for this property

CALCULATE MAXIMUM ADU SIZE
- ADUs are not to exceed 1,200 SF on any lot
- Check to ensure that a 1,200 SF ADU adheres to the site coverage restriction
  - Subtract the square footage of existing structures from the allowable site coverage square footage:
    - 2,682 SF - 2,384 SF = 298 SF
  - The site coverage restriction would allow for an additional 298 SF to be built on this site. However, the City standards allow for properties that do not meet lot coverage standards to build up to an 800 SF ADU.

DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LAYOUT
Due to the lot coverage restrictions, a 2-level ADU would have a smaller building footprint than a single-story unit of the same size. With access available from an alleyway, this lot provides an opportunity for a 2-level ADU or a second story ADU over a new garage oriented to the alleyway up to a maximum of 800 SF.
4.4.4 CORNER LOT - SINGLE STORY ATTACHED ADU

DESCRIPTION
This corner lot property consists of a 2-story home and garage situated to the rear of the site from the primary street frontage.

CALCULATE ALLOWABLE SITE COVERAGE

- Lots under 10,000 SF are allowed 45% site coverage for an ADU
- \[ 0.45 \times 6,721 \text{ SF} = 3,024 \text{ SF} \]
- 3,024 SF is the allowable site coverage for this property

CALCULATE MAXIMUM ADU SIZE

- ADUs are not to exceed 1,200 SF on any lot
- Check to ensure that a 1,200 SF ADU adheres to the site coverage restriction
- Subtract the square footage of existing structures from the allowable site coverage square footage:
  - \[ 3,024 \text{ SF} - 1,247 \text{ SF} = 1,777 \text{ SF} \]
- The site coverage restriction would allow for an additional 1,777 SF to be built on this site. Therefore, a 1,200 SF ADU is permissible.

DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LAYOUT
The only available area on this site for an ADU up to 1,200 SF is on the open space to the east side of the lot. A detached unit would not provide adequate separation between structures. Therefore, an attached 2-story ADU would be the best option to maximize square footage while minimizing overall impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corner Lot Example</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size (SF):</td>
<td>6,721 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Lot Coverage (%):</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Lot Coverage (SF):</td>
<td>3,024 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Building Footprint (SF):</td>
<td>1,247 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Lot Coverage (SF):</td>
<td>1,777 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum ADU Size (SF):</td>
<td>1,200 SF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.5 **TRIANGULAR LOT - SINGLE STORY DETACHED ADU**

**DESCRIPTION**

This large triangular shape corner lot includes a single family residence with multiple driveway access points.

**CALCULATE ALLOWABLE SITE COVERAGE**

- Lots over 10,000 SF are allowed 40% site coverage
- \(0.40 \times 21,010\) SF = 8,404 SF
- 8,404 SF is the allowable site coverage for this property

**CALCULATE MAXIMUM ADU SIZE**

- ADUs are not to exceed 1,200 SF on any lot
- Check to ensure that a 1,200 SF ADU adheres to the site coverage restriction
- Subtract the square footage of existing structures from the allowable site coverage square footage:
  - 8,404 SF - 4,111 SF = 4,293 SF
- The site coverage restriction would allow for an additional 4,293 SF to be built on this site. Therefore, a 1,200 SF ADU is permissible.

**DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LAYOUT**

On a corner lot like the example to the right, the open space to the east side of the lot has adequate space for an ADU up to 1,200 SF. For this property, suitable approaches may also include a garage conversion or a detached backyard ADU. An attached, single-story, ADU up to 1,200 SF would be a good option for this property that relates to the existing single-story main house and maintains a healthy buffer along the property edge. This approach maintains a private side yard and backyard while providing some yard for the ADU with separate parking coming off the main driveway.
4.4.6 SLOPED LOT EXAMPLE - SINGLE STORY DETACHED ADU

DESCRIPTION
This property consists of a single-family residential home with an attached garage located at the rear of a steeply sloping lot. Sloped lots have additional grading considerations. Consult with staff regarding regulations that may apply to sloped lots.

CALCULATE ALLOWABLE SITE COVERAGE
- Lots under 10,000 SF are allowed 45% site coverage for an ADU
- \(0.45 \times 6,988 \text{ SF} = 3,145 \text{ SF}\)
- 3,145 SF is the allowable site coverage for this property

CALCULATE MAXIMUM ADU SIZE
- ADUs are not to exceed 1,200 SF on any lot
- Check to ensure that a 1,200 SF ADU adheres to the site coverage restriction
- Subtract the square footage of existing structures from the allowable site coverage square footage:
  - 3,145 SF - 2,123 SF = 1,012 SF
- The site coverage restriction would allow for an additional 1,012 SF to be built on this site. Therefore, this is the maximum size allowed for a new ADU.

DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LAYOUT
Given the slope and layout of the lot, the most feasible location for an ADU is toward the front of the property, either as a garage conversion or as a stand-alone detached unit. A detached ADU up to 1,012 SF could be placed along the front setback line with a front entrance oriented and connected to the primary street. Alternatively, a JADU could be incorporated on the lower level of the existing residence.
4.4.7  SLOPED LOT EXAMPLE - TWO STORY SPLIT LEVEL DETACHED ADU

DESCRIPTION
This property consists of a single-family residential home with an attached garage located near the front of an uphill sloping lot. Sloped lots have additional grading considerations. Consult with staff regarding regulations that may apply to sloped lots.

CALCULATE ALLOWABLE SITE COVERAGE
- Lots under 10,000 SF are allowed 45% site coverage for an ADU
- \(0.45 \times 6,693 \text{ SF} = 3,012 \text{ SF}\)
- 3,012 SF is the allowable site coverage for this property

CALCULATE MAXIMUM ADU SIZE
- ADUs are not to exceed 1,200 SF on any lot
- Check to ensure that a 1,200 SF ADU adheres to the site coverage restriction
- Subtract the square footage of existing structures from the allowable site coverage square footage:
  - 3,012 SF - 2,000 SF = 1,012 SF
- The site coverage restriction would allow for an additional 1,012 SF to be built on this site. Therefore, this is the maximum size allowed for a new ADU.

DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LAYOUT
Given the slope and layout of the lot, the most feasible location for an ADU is toward the rear of the property as a stand-alone detached unit. A detached ADU up to 1,012 SF would be a good option for this property that relates to the existing single-story main house that maintains a healthy buffer along the property edge. The diagram shows a split level single story with a two story in the back using a deck on the roof of the 1 story ADU.
4.4.8 NARROW LOT - SINGLE STORY DETACHED ADU

DESCRIPTION
This long, narrow lot consists of a single-story main residence and attached garage nearly spanning the full width of the lot.

CALCULATE ALLOWABLE SITE COVERAGE
- Lots over 10,000 SF are allowed 40% site coverage
- \(.40 \times 14,065 \text{ SF} = 5,626 \text{ SF}\)
- 5,626 SF is the allowable site coverage for this property

CALCULATE MAXIMUM ADU SIZE
- ADUs are not to exceed 1,200 SF on any lot
- Check to ensure that a 1,200 SF ADU adheres to the site coverage restriction
- Subtract the square footage of existing structures from the allowable site coverage square footage:
  - 5,626 SF - 1,580 SF = 4,046 SF
- The site coverage restriction would allow for an additional 4,046 SF to be built on this site. Therefore, a 1,200 SF ADU is permissible.

DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LAYOUT
An extremely deep backyard seemingly provides ample room for a detached ADU with plenty of separation from the main house. However, given fire access requirements pertaining to hose-pull lengths, the ADU must be situated within 150’ of the primary road as there are no other available routes for a fire truck to access the rear portion of the lot.
### 4.4.9 LARGE LOT WITH ACCESSORY STRUCTURES - SINGLE STORY DETACHED ADU

**DESCRIPTION**
This large site consists of a main residence with an attached garage, a detached car port, and backyard storage shed.

**CALCULATE ALLOWABLE SITE COVERAGE**
- Lots over 10,000 SF are allowed 40% site coverage
- \(0.40 \times 18,084 \text{ SF} = 7,234 \text{ SF}\)
- 7,234 SF is the allowable site coverage for this property

**CALCULATE MAXIMUM ADU SIZE**
- ADUs are not to exceed 1,200 SF on any lot
- Check to ensure that a 1,200 SF ADU adheres to the site coverage restriction
- Subtract the square footage of existing structures from the allowable site coverage square footage:
  - 7,234 SF - 4,298 SF = 2,936 SF
- The site coverage restriction would allow for an additional 2,936 SF to be built on this site. Therefore, a 1,200 SF ADU is permissible.

**DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LAYOUT**
The lot has ample room for an ADU up to 1,200 SF, and it may make sense to convert one of the existing accessory structures to an ADU. By transforming the car port structure into a single-story detached ADU, the main residence can preserve its backyard privacy while accommodating and ADU with its own separate surface parking area.
4.4.10 LARGE LOT SPLIT - TWO RESIDENCES AND TWO DETACHED ADUs

DESCRIPTION
There are some large lots like the example shown here at 38,663 SF where there is adequate space to subdivide the lot into two parcels and incorporate a primary residence and an ADU on each of the two lots.

CALCULATE ALLOWABLE SITE COVERAGE
- The R1S zone has a minimum area of 10,000 SF per lot therefore the lot can be split and still meet the minimum area for each lot
- Lots over 10,000 SF are allowed 40% site coverage
- \(0.40 \times 38,663 \text{ SF} = 15,465 \text{ SF}\)
- 15,465 SF is the allowable site coverage for this property

CALCULATE MAXIMUM ADU SIZE
- ADUs are not to exceed 1,200 SF on any lot
- Ensure that a 1,200 SF ADU adheres to the coverage restriction
- Subtract the square footage of existing structures from the allowable site coverage square footage:
  - 15,465 SF - 3,751 SF = 11,714 SF
- The site coverage restriction would allow for an additional 11,714 SF to be built - enough for an ADU plus another primary residence with its own ADU. Therefore, a 1,200 SF ADU is permissible.

DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE LAYOUT
Splitting this nearly 1-acre lot would allow the site to accommodate 2 primary residences, each with its own 1,200 SF ADU. With the establishment of a new address on the lot, a separate driveway into the new property would be provided off of the primary street.
### Sample Floor Plan A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADU Type</th>
<th>Detached ADU</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Stories</td>
<td>One Story</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit Size</td>
<td>684 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedrooms</td>
<td>1 Bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>1 Bathroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

4.5 SAMPLE ADU FLOOR PLANS

#### 4.5.1 SAMPLE ONE STORY DETACHED ADU (1 BD / 1 BA)
**Sample Floor Plan B**

- **ADU Type:** Detached ADU
- **# of Stories:** Two Stories
- **Unit Size:** 1,152 SF
- **Bedrooms:** 2 Bedrooms
- **Bathrooms:** 2.5 Bathrooms

---

**4.5.2 SAMPLE TWO STORY DETACHED ADU (2 BD / 2.5 BA)**
Sample Floor Plan C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADU Type:</th>
<th>Detached ADU</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Stories:</td>
<td>One Story</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit Size:</td>
<td>1,012 SF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedrooms:</td>
<td>2 Bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathrooms:</td>
<td>1.75 Bathrooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.3 SAMPLE ONE STORY DETACHED ADU (2 BD / 1.75 BA)
**Sample Floor Plan D**

- **ADU Type:** ADU above garage
- **# of Stories:** Two Stories
- **Unit Size:** 450 SF
- **Bedrooms:** 1 Bedrooms
- **Bathrooms:** 1 Bathrooms

---

**4.5.4 SAMPLE TWO STORY ABOVE GARAGE ADU (1 BD / 1 BA)**
**Sample Floor Plan E**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADU Type</th>
<th>JADU</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Stories</td>
<td>One Story</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit Size</td>
<td>450 SF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedrooms:</td>
<td>1 Bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathrooms:</td>
<td>1 Bathrooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Floor Plan - Existing House

1,500 SF
4 Bedroom/2 Bath

Floor Plan - with JADU

Main House: 1,050 SF
2 Bedroom/1 Bath

JADU: 450 SF
1 Bedroom/1 Bath

---

**4.5.5 SAMPLE ONE STORY JADU (1 BD / 1 BA)**
4.6 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

City of La Mesa Municipal Code

La Mesa ADU and JADU Regulations
https://library.municode.com/ca/la_mesa/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT24ZO_CH24.05REZODEST_24.05.020PESTUS
ADU: Section 24.05.020D8
JADU: Section 24.05.020D9

La Mesa Zoning Code
https://library.municode.com/ca/la_mesa/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT24ZO

La Mesa Historic Preservation Ordinance
https://library.municode.com/ca/la_mesa/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT25HIPR

City of La Mesa Forms and Handouts

ADU Quick Info Sheet
https://www.cityoflamesa.us/DocumentCenter/View/14739/ADU-Quick-Info-Sheet

ADU FAQs Handout

JADU Quick Info Sheet
https://www.cityoflamesa.us/DocumentCenter/View/14741/JADU-Quick-Info-Sheet

JADU FAQs Handout
https://www.cityoflamesa.us/DocumentCenter/View/14742/JADUs-FAQs-Handout

Applications, Forms, and Informational Documents
https://www.cityoflamesa.us/112/Forms

Interactive Zoning Map
https://lamesaca.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8fe276fcede69432eab009b3f64eb35b9

Historic Landmarks in La Mesa Webpage
https://www.cityoflamesa.us/765/Historic-Landmarks

2021-2029 City of La Mesa Housing Element

Residential Property Development Standards Handout

Plan Review Submittal Checklist
https://www.cityoflamesa.us/DocumentCenter/View/346/Check-List-for-Plan-Check-Submittals?bidId=

Electronic Plan Review Portal
https://h9.maintstar.co/LaMesa/portal/#/

Fair Housing Webpage
https://www.cityoflamesa.us/127/Fair-Housing

General ADU Guidance Resources

AARP - The ABCs of ADUs

BuildinganADU.com - ADU Photo Gallery
https://www.buildinganadu.com/adu-photos-home

California Department of Housing and Community Development - Accessory Dwelling Unit Handbook (July 2022)

County of San Diego - Assessor’s Map Portal
https://www.sdarcc.gov/content/arcc/home/divisions/assessor/property-records.html

County of San Diego - County Standard ADU Building Plans
https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/bldg/adu_plans.html

Contractors State License Board
www.cslb.ca.gov