

San Diego's Bonus ADU Program

Differences between State and San Diego Accessory Dwelling Unit Regulations

Updated April 22, 2025

The table below summarizes the key differences between San Diego's ADU regulations and State law for Single-Family Residential (RS) zones. Characteristics not listed are substantially the same between State and San Diego regulations.

Characteristic	CA Requirement	SD Regulations
Number of ADUs	One detached + one converted (Note 1)	3 to unlimited depending on SDA
Number of JADUs	One (Note 2)	One
Height Limit	16-18 feet detached 25 feet attached	30 feet (per citywide single-family zoning)
Number of Stories	Can be limited to 2 stories	3 stories
Side and Rear Setbacks	No more than 4 feet	0 feet (if height is 16 feet or less and 1 story) 4 feet (if height is greater than 16 feet or greater than 1 story)
Affordable ADU Incentive	No detailed specification	Bonus ADUs
Fire Safety and Infrastructure	Allows exemption for water, sewer, fire, traffic	No restrictions for fire safety or infrastructure capacity
Allowed Maximum Size Limit	850 sf for studio or 1 bedroom 1000 sf for two or more bedrooms	1200 sf per unit regardless of number of bedrooms
Development Impact Fees (DIFs)	No DIFs for ADUs less than 750 sf DIFs allowed for ADUs greater than 750 sf	No DIFs for first two ADUs regardless of size DIFs charged on additional ADUs 750 sf or larger (State law doesn't allow more than two ADUs)
Parking	Can't be required within ½ mile of transit	No parking requirements regardless of transit proximity
For Sale ADUs	Allowed for non-profits Cities can opt-in for other	Allowed only for non-profits
Street Trees	No requirement	2 per 5000 sf of lot size if 2 or more JADU/ADU

Note 1: State allowance of two ADUs is based on a reinterpretation of state law by Housing and Community Development. Pending legislation would ratify this interpretation into state law and, by extension, San Diego's regulations.

Note 2: There are no material differences between State and San Diego regulations regarding Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs).

ADU regulations for Multi-Family (RM) properties are the same for both State and San Diego, with the exceptions shown below.

Characteristic	CA Requirement	SD Regulations
Number of ADUs	2 new detached for new construction 1 detached ADU per existing dwelling unit not to exceed 8 Allow conversion of at least one within existing units up to 25% of the total existing units. Unlimited conversion of non-habitable space to ADUs	State law PLUS Bonus ADUs (One market rate ADU for each deeded affordable ADU)
Number of JADUs	Not allowed	Not allowed
Height Limit	18 feet detached 25 feet attached	30-40 feet depending on zone

As Bonus ADU projects become larger and larger, they may be subject to additional state and local regulations regarding the development and operation of apartment buildings. San Diego has not performed an analysis of nor enforced further applicable regulations.