



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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Second Units

PURPOSE

The purpose of the [Second Unit Ordinance](#) (County Code Section 13.10.681) is to allow and regulate the construction and occupancy of Second Units in the unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County. This ordinance allows needed housing to be built for Santa Cruz County residents in conjunction with existing and new residential development. It will also make it easier for families to purchase and maintain property and homes by using the additional income from the rental of the second unit.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

The Second Unit Program allows property owners to construct a second unit on their property, providing the property meets certain requirements. The basic requirements for construction of a second unit include:

1. The existing unit on the parcel must be owner-occupied as evidenced by the filing of a home owner's property tax exemption. *
2. The parcel must be zoned Residential or have a General Plan designation of Residential.
3. The parcel may have no more than one existing single family dwelling. A second unit can also be constructed concurrently with one single family dwelling.
4. Parcels located outside of the Urban Services Line** must be at least one acre in area. Within the Urban Services Line, the lot must meet the minimum size standards of the respective zoning designation. However, different site standards may apply to Rural parcels with sewer service, or Urban parcels with septic systems.

* For the construction of second units within subdivisions, owner-occupying requirements apply to the purchase of a property w/a second unit, but not to the developer.

** The Urban Services Line is delineated on the [Internet GIS site](#).

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR SECOND UNITS

The following development standards apply to all Second Units:

1. The Second Unit may be attached or detached from the main unit. Within the Urban Services Line, the Second Unit must be located within 100 feet of the main dwelling, and cannot be accessed by a separate driveway or right-of-way.
2. The total Gross Floor Area of the Second Unit may not exceed 640 square feet within the Urban Services Line. Outside of the Urban Services Line, on parcels between one

and 2.5 acres in area, the unit may be up to 800 square feet, and on parcels 2.5 acres or larger, the unit may be up to 1,200 square feet.

3. One additional parking space is required for each bedroom in the Second Unit. In addition, the main unit must itself meet current parking requirements, which are based on the number of bedrooms.
4. Only one Second Unit may be constructed per parcel. A Second Unit is not allowed on a parcel with an existing guest house or agricultural caretaker's quarters.
5. The Second Unit must be architecturally compatible with the main unit in terms of design, color and materials. Doors, windows, balconies, etc., should be situated to preserve the privacy of your neighbors. Units inside the Urban Services Line shall not exceed one story unless a Residential Development Permit is approved by the Zoning Administrator.
6. All development standards (i.e., setbacks, lot coverage) for the applicable zone district must be satisfied.
7. To file a building application for a Second Unit, clearance from Environmental Health Services will be required if a septic system is to be used. Fire, Sanitation and Water Districts' approval requirements must be satisfied during the Building Permit process.

THE PERMIT PROCESS

A Second Unit requires a Building Permit and, if the property is located within the Coastal Zone, an administratively issued Coastal Development Permit. To apply for permits, you will need full construction plans and the application fee. For a complete list of required application materials, including information on building plan requirements and building permit and other fees, visit the [Building and Zoning Counter](#).

FEES

In addition to application and permit fees, Capital Improvement fees will be charged, based on the number of bedrooms and location of the unit. The Capital Improvement Fees help pay for road improvements, parks, and child care facilities. These fees can be estimated at the Zoning Counter. Other fees will be charged by different agencies such as schools, sanitation and the drainage district, also depending on the size and location of the unit. The Building Department can estimate the plan check and building permit fees.

DECLARATION OF RESTRICTIONS

Before the Building Permit is issued that allows you to build your Second Unit, you will be required to record a Declaration of Restrictions against the title on the property. The Second Unit may be occupied only under the conditions of the Declaration of Restrictions and in accordance with the County Code, including the requirement that the property owner must live in either the main unit or the Second Unit and must live on the property as long as the second unit is to be occupied. The Declaration of Restrictions will also allow the County to recover attorney fees and costs needed to enforce the declaration as well as any rents collected during occupancy not authorized under your permit. The Declaration of Restrictions is binding on all future owners of the property.

QUESTIONS?

If you would like more information about getting a permit to build a second unit, please call the [Zoning Information Line](#) at 831-454-2130 from 1-4 pm weekdays.