

Frequently Asked Questions on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) - Updated March 14, 2019

Q: What is the current status of the proposed ordinance?

A: After a Town Council discussion on the proposed ordinance at their February 27th meeting, the Council held a public hearing and introduced the ADU ordinance at the March 13, 2019 meeting. The second reading of the ordinance is scheduled for Wednesday, March 27, 2019. The staff report for the March 27th meeting will be available online by the close of business on March 22nd [here](#).

Q: Why is the Council working on this issue?

A: In the fall of 2016, the Town Council adopted the [Housing Strategic Plan](#), which outlined a number of initiatives designed to engage residents on housing issues and explore housing opportunities. The Council recognized the challenges faced by three distinct groups in the community: seniors who wish to age in place, family members who grew up in Portola Valley who want to return to the community, and employees of the various businesses, schools, and other services vital to the Town's continued success. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) were identified as one potential tool to address these goals.

Q: What would stay the same under the proposed ADU Ordinance?

A: No changes are proposed to the total amount of floor area residents are allowed to build on their properties. The current allowed maximum for each lot would remain the same, and would continue to take into consideration lot size, slopes and geology. Impervious surface, setbacks, and height requirements would all remain the same. ADUs will not be allowed to be sold separately from the main house. The requirement that the property owner live in the main house or ADU would not change (owner occupancy).

Q: What would change under the proposal?

A: A summary of the current and proposed regulations is available online at www.portolavalley.net/adu flyer. Key elements include: allowing ADUs in all zoning districts and on properties less than one acre in size (with some limitations); allowing a separate address and separate utilities from the main house; and a streamlined review process that would shorten review times while preserving the opportunity for neighbor comments.

Related to ADU size, external ADUs (new square footage) on properties less than 3.5 acres are limited to 1,200 square feet, 50% of the main building, or the Adjusted Maximum Floor Area (AMFA) limit, whichever is more restrictive. On properties 3.5 acres or greater, one ADU is allowed up to 1,500 square feet or two ADUs are allowed under certain circumstances.

Internal ADUs, which include a conversion of existing space and no change to the building envelope, are limited to 1,700 square feet.

Q: What occurred after the implementation of the Housing Strategic Plan?

A: In 2018, the Town held two community-wide convenings to receive resident input on housing issues. The [March 2018](#) convening provided a strong desire from attendees that Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) should be further discussed, and that ADUs were seen as a viable resource to solve some of Portola Valley's housing issues. The second convening in [May 2018](#) was focused on sharing information and hearing ideas from residents specifically around ADUs. Based on that resident input, the Town Council held a Study Session on July 11, 2018, to review a broad range of ideas that might facilitate the creation of ADUs. The Town Council then asked the Planning Commission ("Commission") to review the ideas and provide recommendations on these potential policy changes.

Q: What was the public process for developing the ordinance?

A: The Commission held seven public meetings on ADUs, from October 2018 through February 2019. The minutes and staff reports for those meetings are available online [here](#). The Town Council held public hearings on February 27 and March 13, 2019 where they received public comments and discussed the major policy questions in the proposal. All public meetings were publicized through posting on the public bulletin boards, direct email to the Town's Housing Issues email list, posting to the Town's website, PV Forum, and PV Connect. Notice of the public hearings were also published in the print Almanac. Prior to the Council's February 27th meeting, the Town sent a postcard to all residences in Town, notifying them of the meeting and providing a link to the website.

A second reading of the ordinance is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday March 27, 2019.

Q: Where do I get more information about housing related initiatives?

A: A summary of housing activities and links to staff reports are available at <http://www.portolavalley.net/housing>. You can also sign up for email notifications [here](#). Select "Housing" under the Calendar and News categories to stay up-to-date on the Town's housing efforts.

Town staff is available to discuss the proposals under consideration and receive community input. Please do not hesitate to contact us at housing@portolavalley.net or 650-851-1700.