



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# FAQ-001

Eff: 07-20-2023 Rev: 12-20-2023

## Accessory Dwelling Units – SB9 Principal Dwelling Units Projects

This handout is a summary of the most common and frequently asked questions that the Building and Safety Bureau (BAS) have received from permit applicants, design professionals, property owners and other interested members of the community about accessory dwelling units (ADU), 2021 Senate Bill 9 (SB9) for principal dwelling units, and other related topics that affect the design and construction of those dwelling units. BAS will periodically update or add to the FAQs contained in this handout when new legislation or policies are enacted. The general information provided herein may not be applicable to every development project and would require a case-by-case evaluation by City staff for projects with specific, unique, or special circumstances. Please visit our Permit Center to obtain additional information about your development projects.

### ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU)

**Q1:** What is the minimum separation distance between an ADU and adjacent property lines?

**A1:** *The California Residential Code Section R302 requires a fire separation distance ranging from 0 feet to 5 feet between the exterior wall(s) of an ADU and the adjacent property line(s). The actual distance required is based on several factors (e.g., exterior wall construction, percentage of openings and whether the building has fire sprinklers) as noted in the following table:*

MINIMUM FIRE SEPARATION DISTANCES (FS)				
WALL CONDITION	DWELLING UNIT NON SPRINKLERED <small>[CRC Table R302.1(1)]</small>		DWELLING UNIT WITH FIRE SPRINKLERS <small>[CRC Table R302.1(2)]</small>	
	NON-RATED WALLS	1-HOUR FIRE RATED WALLS	NON-RATED WALLS	1-HOUR FIRE RATED WALLS
TYPICAL WALL <small>(less than 25% openings)</small>	5 ft	3 ft to <5 ft	3 ft	3 ft
WALL WITHOUT OPENINGS	5 ft	0	3 ft	0
PATIO COVER <small>(open sides, post locations)</small>	5 ft	5 ft	3 ft	3 ft

Table is based on CRC Table R302.1(1) and R302.1(2).

**Q2:** The Zoning Code (as regulated by Planning staff) and the Building Code (as regulated by Building staff) contains different yard setbacks or fire separation distances for buildings containing ADUs. Which requirement (yard setback or fire separation distance) must be complied with for ADUs?

**A2:** *The location of ADUs must comply with the most restrictive requirement of either the Zoning Code’s yard setback OR Building Code’s fire separation distance. Example: If the Zoning Code require a four-foot side and rear yard setback and the Building Code require a five-foot fire separation distance from the property line(s), then the ADU must be five-feet away from the*

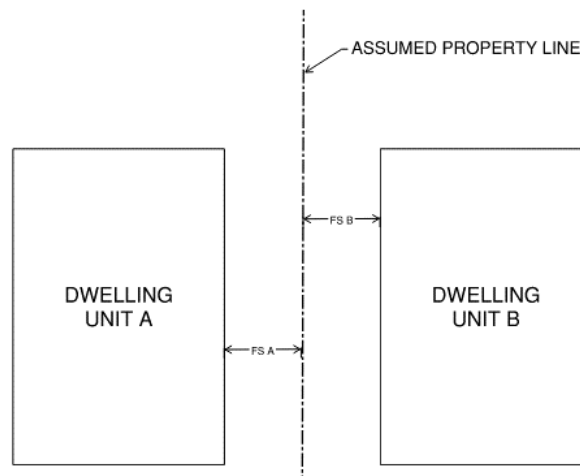
*property line(s) as the Building Code’s fire separation distance is the more restrictive of the two requirements.*

**Q3:** What is the required fire separation distance between a newly constructed detached ADU and the existing single-family dwelling or other buildings/structures on the same property?

**A3:** *The required fire separation distance is based on the total of the fire separation distances required of each building/structure. The following steps to determine this the total fire separation distance are as follows:*

- 1. Place an assumed property line parallel to the exterior wall of the existing building/structure and the detached ADU. (see diagram below)*
- 2. Determine the required fire separation distance (FS A) for the exterior wall of the existing building/structure that face the detached ADU. (see table below)*
- 3. Determine the required fire separation distance (FS B) for the exterior wall of the detached ADU that face the existing building/structure. (see table below)*
- 4. The total required fire separation distance is the sum of FS A and FS B.*

MINIMUM FIRE SEPARATION DISTANCES (FS)				
WALL CONDITION	DWELLING UNIT NON SPRINKLERED <i>[CRC Table R302.1(1)]</i>		DWELLING UNIT WITH FIRE SPRINKLERS <i>[CRC Table R302.1(2)]</i>	
	NON-RATED WALLS	1-HOUR FIRE RATED WALLS	NON-RATED WALLS	1-HOUR FIRE RATED WALLS
TYPICAL WALL <i>(less than 25% openings)</i>	5 ft	3 ft to <5 ft	3 ft	3 ft
WALL WITHOUT OPENINGS	5 ft	0	3 ft	0
PATIO COVER <i>(open sides, post locations)</i>	5 ft	5 ft	3 ft	3 ft



**Q4:** Can a factory-built housing (FBH) approved, listed and labeled by the CA Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) or a manufactured housing (MH) approved, listed and labeled by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) building be used as a new detached ADU? And if so, are there other requirements that may need to be considered?

**A4:** *Yes. FBH or MH buildings may be used as a new detached ADU. FBH or MH buildings must still comply with other requirements such as, but not limited to, Zoning Code’s yard setbacks and height limits, Building Code’s fire separation distances or site-specific requirements (e.g., flood regulation, methane gas mitigation, liquefaction, etc. where applicable).*

Q5: Is an ADU required to have its own utility meters or infrastructure (e.g., electrical, water, gas, and/or sewer)?

A5: *The property owner MUST determine if the ADU will share utility services or infrastructure with the main single-family dwelling or other buildings/structures on the same property OR if separate utility meters, services and/or infrastructure will be added for the ADU. Different requirements MAY be applicable depending on if the utilities are shared or separate. It is recommended that the property owner or their design professional check the capacity of the existing infrastructure to support the added ADU when making this determination.*

Q6: How do I submit construction documents (i.e., plans, specifications, calculations, and other relevant technical design documents) and related permit applications for an ADU project?

A6: *Construction documents and related permit applications must be submitted in-person at the Permit Center, including applicable fees to be paid on the same day of the submittal. All documents (i.e., permit applications, plans, reports, etc.) should be provided as PDF files on a USB device (also known as a flash/thumb drive or memory stick). The Permit Center is open for appointments or walk-ins during regular business hours, as posted on the department's website. Appointments are recommended to avoid long wait times. For more information on what is required as part of a submittal package, please visit our website at:*

- [longbeach.gov/lbcd/building/plan-review-service](http://longbeach.gov/lbcd/building/plan-review-service)

Q7: Are separate building, electrical, mechanical and/or plumbing construction documents (i.e., plans, specifications, calculations, and other relevant technical design documents) and/or permit applications required for an ADU project?

A7: *The requirement to file either a single combination building permit application and construction documents OR separate permit applications and separate construction documents is based on the number and type of existing buildings on the subject property and the proposed utility connections for the ADU as noted below:*

#### One-Family Dwelling on The Property:

*If there is an existing detached single-family dwelling (SFD) and an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is added either as (1) new detached construction, (2) addition to the SFD, (3) addition to an accessory detached structure, or (4) conversion of an accessory structure (e.g., garage convert to ADU), then a single set of construction documents and a combination building permit application would be required to cover all building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing related work.*

#### Two-Family Dwellings on The Property:

*If there are two individual and existing detached SFDs and an ADU is added either as (1) new detached construction, (2) addition to either detached SFDs resulting in a total of 2 units, (3) addition to an accessory detached structure, or (4) conversion of an existing accessory structure (e.g., garage convert to ADU), then a single set of construction documents and a combination building permit application would be required to cover all building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing related work.*

*If the ADU is added to an existing building or structure resulting in a total of 3 or more units OR the ADU is connected to electrical, water, sewer and/or gas from the existing utility*

*infrastructure, then separate construction documents and permit applications will be required to cover building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing related work.*

*Additionally, separate electrical, mechanical or plumbing plan submittals may be required when additional electrical, mechanical or plumbing work on the same property does not qualify for Express Permit Service as outlined in [IB-058 Express Permit Service](#).*

#### Multi-Family Dwellings on The Property:

*If there are existing multifamily buildings and an ADU is added either as (1) new detached construction, (2) addition to an accessory detached structure, or (3) conversion of an existing accessory structure (e.g., garage convert to ADU) AND the utility infrastructure is new, self-contained, and independent of the existing infrastructure on site (e.g., does not connect to electrical, water, sewer and/or gas from existing utilities), then a single set of construction documents and a combination building permit application would be required to cover all building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing related work.*

*If the ADU is added to an existing building or structure resulting in a total of 3 or more units OR the ADU is connected to electrical, water, sewer and/or gas from the existing utility infrastructure, then separate construction documents and permit applications will be required for building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing related work.*

*Additionally, separate electrical, mechanical or plumbing plan submittals may be required when additional electrical, mechanical or plumbing work on the same property does not qualify for Express Permit Service as outlined in [IB-058 Express Permit Service](#).*

### CONVERSION TO ADU

**Q8:** Is a complete set of plans required for a garage conversion or conversion of another existing building to an ADU?

**A8:** *Yes. A complete set of construction documents, including building plans construction details and an energy report, are required for conversion of an existing building to an ADU. Additional information including submittal requirements and sample plans are available on the department's website under [Plan Review Service](#), [ADU Garage Conversion Submittal Package](#) and [IB-045 Plan Submittal Guideline for One- and Two-Family Dwellings](#).*

**Q9:** Do I need to hire a registered design professional (state licensed architect or engineer) to prepare plans and calculations for a garage conversion to an ADU?

**A9:** *Construction documents, including plans and calculations, prepared and signed by a registered design professional are not required for garage conversions when the proposed conversion and remodeling fully complies with [IB-010 Wood Frame Prescriptive Provisions for the Design and Construction of One-story Residential Wood Building and Structures](#). See also [IB-013 When a Registered Design Professional is Required](#).*

### PRE-APPROVED ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (PAADU)

**Q10:** How do I get copies of PAADU plans?

A10: *After selecting a PAADU plan for your project, please contact the design professional listed on the [PAADU webpage](#) to discuss hiring them to prepare a PAADU submittal package for your property. PAADU designs and plans are the property of the registered design professional who created the plans and are only available from the design professional.*

Q11: What do I do after I obtain the completed PAADU plan submittal package from the design professional?

A11: *The next step is application submittal and plan review. Projects using PAADU plans are eligible for Over-the-Counter (OTC) Minor Building Plan Review. OTC Minor Building Plan Review appointments for may be scheduled through the department website at:*

- [longbeach.gov/appointment/permit-center](http://longbeach.gov/appointment/permit-center)

Q12: Are changes or revisions allowed to be made to PAADU plans?

A12: *No change or revision is allowed at this time. In very limited instances, minor non-structural changes or revisions MAY be considered on a case-by-case basis.*

Q13: Can PAADU plans be used on multifamily or nonresidential zoned properties?

A13: *Not at this time. All PAADUs are currently designed for use on single-family zoned properties.*

## SB9 PRINCIPAL DWELLING UNIT

Q14: Can a factory-built housing (FBH) approved, listed and labeled by the CA Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) or a manufactured housing (MH) approved, listed and labeled by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) building be used as a new detached SB9 principal dwelling unit? And if so, are there other requirements that may need to be considered?

A14: *Yes. FBH or MH buildings may be used as a new detached SB9 principal dwelling unit. FBH or MH buildings must still comply with other requirements such as, but not limited to, Zoning Code's yard setbacks and height limits, Building Code's fire separation distances or site-specific requirements (e.g., flood regulation, methane gas mitigation, liquefaction, etc. where applicable).*

Q15: Do developer impact fees apply to SB9 principal dwelling units even if the proposed floor area may be less than 750 sf?

A15: *Yes. SB9 principal dwelling units are subject to developer impact fees the same as a new single family dwelling unit. SB9 principal dwelling units do not qualify for the developer impact fee exemptions given to ADUs.*

Q16: Can an SB9 principal dwelling unit and an ADU share utility meters and services?

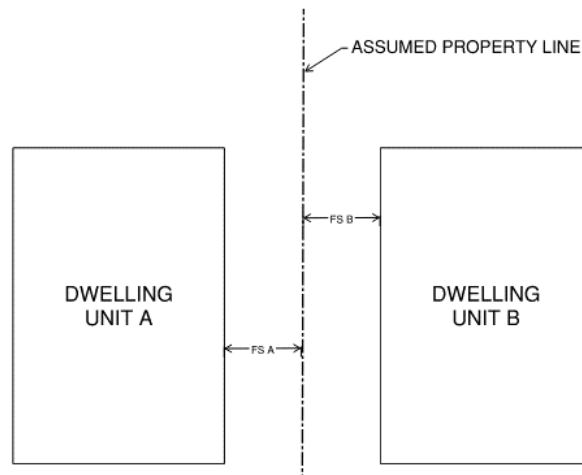
A16: *The property owner may choose whether an ADU will share utility services with an SB9 principal dwelling unit, or if separate utility services will be added for the ADU.*

Q17: What is the required fire separation distance between a newly constructed detached SB9 principal dwelling unit and the existing single-family dwelling or other buildings/structures on the same property?

A17: *The required fire separation distance is based on the total of the fire separation distances required of each building/structure. The steps to determine the total fire separation distance are as follows:*

1. Place an assumed property line parallel to the exterior wall of the existing building/structure and the SB9 principal dwelling unit. (see diagram below)
2. Determine the required fire separation distance (FS A) for the exterior wall of the existing building/structure that face the SB9 principal dwelling unit. (see table below)
3. Determine the required fire separation distance (FS B) for the exterior wall of the SB9 principal dwelling unit that face the existing building/structure. (see table below)
4. The total required fire separation distance is the sum of FS A and FS B.

MINIMUM FIRE SEPARATION DISTANCES (FS)				
WALL CONDITION	DWELLING UNIT NON SPRINKLERED <i>[CRC Table R302.1(1)]</i>		DWELLING UNIT WITH FIRE SPRINKLERS <i>[CRC Table R302.1(2)]</i>	
	NON-RATED WALLS	1-HOUR FIRE RATED WALLS	NON-RATED WALLS	1-HOUR FIRE RATED WALLS
TYPICAL WALL <i>(less than 25% openings)</i>	5 ft	3 ft to <5 ft	3 ft	3 ft
WALL WITHOUT OPENINGS	5 ft	0	3 ft	0
PATIO COVER <i>(open sides, post locations)</i>	5 ft	5 ft	3 ft	3 ft



Q18: How do I submit plans for a SB9 principal dwelling unit?

A18: All plans and construction documents must be submitted in-person at the Permit Center and applicable fees paid the same day. For more information on what is required as part of a submittal package, please refer to:

- [longbeach.gov/lbcd/building/plan-review-service](http://longbeach.gov/lbcd/building/plan-review-service)

### AUTOMATIC FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEMS

Q19: Are fire sprinklers required for newly constructed SB9 principal dwelling units?

A19: Yes. An NFPA-13D fire sprinkler system is required for all newly constructed SB9 principal dwelling units.

Q20: Are fire sprinklers required in a newly constructed duplex containing an SB9 principal dwelling unit and ADU?

A20: *Yes. An NFPA-13D fire sprinkler system is required for all newly constructed duplexes containing an SB9 principal dwelling unit and ADU, including all attached areas such as but not limited to garage, carport, storage, etc.*

Q21: Are fire sprinklers required for a newly constructed detached ADU on a site with an existing single-family dwelling?

A21: *Fire sprinkler requirements for a newly constructed detached ADU are as follows:*

- 1. When the existing single-family dwelling is not fire sprinklered, then the ADU is not required to have fire sprinklers.*
- 2. When the existing single-family dwelling or SB9 principal dwelling unit has or is required to have fire sprinklers, then the ADU is required to have fire sprinklers.*

Q22: Are fire sprinklers required for a garage conversion to an ADU on a site with an existing single-family dwelling?

A22: *Fire sprinkler requirements for a garage conversion to an ADU are as follows:*

- 1. When the existing single-family dwelling is not fire sprinklered, then the ADU is not required to have fire sprinklers.*
- 2. When the existing single-family dwelling or SB9 principal dwelling unit has or is required to have fire sprinklers, then the ADU is required to have fire sprinklers.*

Q23: Are fire sprinklers required for an ADU created by the addition of new floor area to an existing single-family dwelling?

A23: *Fire sprinkler requirements for an ADU addition are as follows:*

- 1. When the existing single-family dwelling is not fire sprinklered, then the ADU is not required to have fire sprinklers.*
- 2. When the existing single-family dwelling or SB9 principal dwelling unit has or is required to have fire sprinklers, then the ADU is required to have fire sprinklers.*

Q24: Are fire sprinklers required when an ADU is added to an existing duplex (two-family dwellings)?

A24: *Fire sprinkler requirements for an ADU addition are as follows:*

- 1. When the existing duplex is not fire sprinklered, then the ADU is not required to have fire sprinklers.*
- 2. When the existing duplex has or is required to have fire sprinklers, then the ADU is required to have fire sprinklers.*

Q25: Are separate fire sprinkler plans and permits required?

A25: *Yes. A separate fire application, plan review and permit approval are required prior to all fire sprinkler installation work. Fire sprinkler plans and permit approval are typically completed by the fire sprinkler installation contractor.*

## ADDRESS FOR NEW DWELLING UNIT

Q26: Will a new address be assigned for an ADU?

A26: *Yes. The new address for the ADU will usually be the same as the main single-family dwelling with unit "A" added to the address numbers. Example: If the main house address is "1234 Smith*

*St", then the ADU address will be "1234-A Smith St". Complete and submit [APP-015 Address Assignment Application](#) together with the other project documents when submitting the project for plan review. The permit center staff will determine and create the new address according to City policy.*

**Q27:** Will a new address be assigned for an SB9 principal dwelling unit?

**A27:** *Yes. A new address will be assigned for an SB9 principal dwelling unit. Complete and submit [APP-015 Address Assignment Application](#) together with the other project documents when submitting the project for plan review. The permit center staff will determine and create the new address according to City policy.*

To request this information in an alternative format or to request a reasonable accommodation, please contact the Community Development Department at [longbeach.gov/lbcd](http://longbeach.gov/lbcd) and 562.570.3807. A minimum of three business days is requested to ensure availability; attempts will be made to accommodate requests with shorter notice.