

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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To: Planning Directors of Coastal Cities and Counties  
From: John Ainsworth, Executive Director  
Re: Implementation of New ADU Laws  
Date: April 21, 2020

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The Coastal Commission has previously circulated two memos to help local governments understand how to carry out their Coastal Act obligations while also implementing state requirements regarding the regulation of accessory dwelling units (“ADUs”) and junior accessory dwelling units (“JADUs”). As of January 1, 2020, AB 68, AB 587, AB 670, AB 881, and SB 13 each changed requirements on how local governments can and cannot regulate ADUs and JADUs, with the goal of increasing statewide availability of smaller, more affordable housing units. This memo is meant to describe the changes that went into effect on January 1, 2020, and to provide guidance on how to harmonize these new requirements with Local Coastal Program (“LCP”) and Coastal Act policies.

**Coastal Commission Authority Over Housing in the Coastal Zone**

The Coastal Act does not exempt local governments from complying with state and federal law “with respect to providing low- and moderate-income housing, replacement housing, relocation benefits, or any other obligation related to housing imposed by existing law or any other law hereafter enacted.” (Pub. Res. Code § 30007.) The Coastal Act requires the Coastal Commission to encourage housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households. (Pub. Res. Code § 30604(f).) New residential development must be “located within, contiguous with, or in close proximity to, existing developed areas able to accommodate it” or in other areas where development will not have significant adverse effects on coastal resources. (Pub. Res. Code § 30250.) The creation of new ADUs in existing residential areas is a promising strategy for increasing the supply of lower-cost housing in the coastal zone in a way that may be able to avoid significant adverse impacts on coastal resources.

This memorandum is intended to provide general guidance for local governments with fully certified LCPs. The Coastal Commission is generally responsible for Coastal Act review of ADUs in areas that are not subject to fully certified LCPs. Local governments that have questions about specific circumstances not addressed in this memorandum should contact the appropriate district office of the Commission.

## **Overview of New Legislation**<sup>1</sup>

The new legislation effective January 1, 2020 updates existing Government Code Sections 65852.2 and 65852.22 concerning local government procedures for review and approval of ADUs and JADUs. As before, local governments have the discretion to adopt an ADU ordinance that is consistent with state requirements. (Gov. Code § 65852.2(a).) AB 881 (Bloom) made numerous significant changes to Government Code section 65852.2. In their ADU ordinances, local governments may still include specific requirements addressing issues such as design guidelines and protection of historic structures. However, per the recent state law changes, a local ordinance may not require a minimum lot size, owner occupancy of an ADU, fire sprinklers if such sprinklers are not required in the primary dwelling, or replacement offstreet parking for carports or garages demolished to construct ADUs. In addition, a local government may not establish a maximum size for an ADU of less than 850 square feet, or 1,000 square feet if the ADU contains more than one bedroom. (Gov. Code § 65852.2(c)(2)(B).) Section 65852.2(a) lists additional mandates for local governments that choose to adopt an ADU ordinance, all of which set the “maximum standards that local agencies shall use to evaluate a proposed [ADU] on a lot that includes a proposed or existing single-family dwelling.” (Gov. Code § 65852.2(a)(6).)

Some local governments have already adopted ADU ordinances. Existing or new ADU ordinances that do *not* meet the requirements of the new legislation are null and void, and will be substituted with the provisions of Section 65852.2(a) until the local government comes into compliance with a new ordinance. (Gov. Code § 65852.2(a)(4).) However, as described below, existing ADU provisions contained in certified LCPs are not superseded by Government Code section 65852.2 and continue to apply to CDP applications for ADUs until an LCP amendment is adopted. One major change to Section 65852.2 is that the California Department of Housing and Community Development (“HCD”) now has an oversight and approval role to ensure that local ADU ordinances are consistent with state law, similar to the Commission’s review of LCPs. If a local government adopts an ordinance that HCD deems to be non-compliant with state law, HCD can notify the Office of the Attorney General. (Gov. Code § 65852.2(h).)

If a local government does *not* adopt an ADU ordinance, state requirements will apply directly. (Gov. Code § 65852.2(b)–(e).) Section 65852.2 subdivisions (b) and (c) require that local agencies shall ministerially approve or disapprove applications for permits to create ADUs. Subdivision (e) requires ministerial approval, whether or not a local government has adopted an ADU ordinance, of applications for building permits of the following types of ADUs and JADUs in residential or mixed use zones:

- One ADU or JADU per lot *within* a proposed or existing single-family dwelling or existing space of a single-family dwelling or accessory structure, including an expansion of up to 150 square feet beyond the existing dimensions of an existing accessory structure; with exterior access from the proposed or existing single-family

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<sup>1</sup> This Guidance Memo only provides a partial overview of new legislation related to ADUs. The Coastal Commission does not interpret or implement these new laws.

dwelling; side and rear setbacks sufficient for fire and safety; and, if a JADU, applicant must comply with requirements of Section 65852.22; (§ 65852.2(e)(1)(A)(i)-(iv))

- One detached, new construction ADU, which may be combined with a JADU, so long as the ADU does not exceed four-foot side and rear yard setbacks for the single family residential lot; (§ 65852.2(e)(1)(B))
- Multiple ADUs within the portions of existing multifamily dwelling structures that are not currently used as dwelling spaces; (§ 65852.2(e)(1)(C))
- No more than two detached ADUs on a lot that has an existing multifamily dwelling, subject to a 16-foot height limitation and four-foot rear yard and side setbacks. (§ 65852.2(e)(1)(D))

ADUs and JADUs created pursuant to Subdivision (e) must be rented for terms greater than 30 days. (Gov. Code § 65852.2(e)(4).)

## **What Should Local Governments in the Coastal Zone Do?**

### **1) Update Local Coastal Programs (LCPs)**

Local governments are required to comply with both these new requirements for ADUs/JADUs and the Coastal Act. Currently certified provisions of LCPs are not, however, superseded by Government Code section 65852.2, and continue to apply to CDP applications for ADUs until an LCP amendment is adopted. Where LCP policies directly conflict with the new provisions or require refinement to be consistent with the new laws, those LCPs should be updated to be consistent with the new ADU provisions to the greatest extent feasible, while still complying with Coastal Act requirements.

As noted above, Section 65852.2 expressly allows local governments to adopt local ordinances that include criteria and standards to address a wide variety of concerns, including potential impacts to coastal resources. For example, a local government may address reductions in parking requirements that would have a direct impact on public access. As a result, we encourage local governments to identify the coastal resource context applicable in a local jurisdiction and ensure that any proposed ADU-related LCP amendment appropriately addresses protection of coastal resources consistent with the Coastal Act at the same time that it facilitates ADUs/JADUs consistent with the new ADU provisions. For example, LCPs should ensure that new ADUs are not constructed in locations where they would require the construction of shoreline protective devices, in environmentally sensitive habitat areas, wetlands, or in areas where the ADU's structural stability may be compromised by bluff erosion, flooding, or wave uprush over their lifetime. Our staff is available to assist in the efforts to amend LCPs.

Please note that LCP amendments that involve purely procedural changes, that do not propose changes in land use, and/or that would have no impacts on coastal resources may be eligible for streamlined review as minor or de minimis amendments. (Pub. Res. Code § 30514(d); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 13554.) The Commission will process ADU-specific LCP amendments as minor or de minimis amendments whenever possible.

## 2) Follow This Basic Guide When Reviewing ADU or JADU Applications

### a. Check Prior CDP History for the Site.

Determine whether a CDP was previously issued for development of the lot and whether that CDP limits, or requires a CDP or CDP amendment for, changes to the approved development or for future development or uses of the site. The applicant should contact the appropriate Coastal Commission district office if a Commission-issued CDP limits the applicant's ability to apply for an ADU or JADU.

### b. Determine Whether the Proposed ADU or JADU Qualifies as Development.

Any person "wishing to perform or undertake any development in the coastal zone" shall obtain a CDP. (Pub. Res. Code § 30600.) Development as defined in the Coastal Act includes not only "the placement or erection of any solid material or structure" on land, but also "change in the density or intensity of use of land[.]" (Pub. Res. Code § 30106.)

Government Code section 65852.2 states that an ADU that conforms to subdivision (a) "shall be deemed to be an accessory use or an accessory building and shall not be considered to exceed the allowable density for the lot upon which it is located, and shall be deemed to be a residential use that is consistent with the existing general plan and zoning designations for the lot." (Gov. Code § 65852.2(a)(8).)

Conversion of an existing legally established room(s) to create a JADU or ADU within an existing residence, without removal or replacement of major structural components (i.e. roofs, exterior walls, foundations, etc.) and that do not change the size or the intensity of use of the structure may not qualify as development within the meaning of the Coastal Act, or may qualify as development that is either exempt from coastal permit requirements and/or eligible for streamlined processing (Pub. Res. Code §§30106 and 30610), see also below. JADUs created within existing primary dwelling structures that comply with Government Code Sections 65852.2(e) and 65852.22 typically will fall into one of these categories, unless specified otherwise in a previously issued CDP or other coastal authorization for existing development on the lot. However, the conversion of detached structures associated with a primary residence to an ADU or JADU may involve a change in the size or intensity of use that would qualify as development under the Coastal Act and require a coastal development permit, unless determined to be exempt or appropriate for waiver.

### c. If the Proposed ADU Qualifies as Development, Determine Whether It Is Exempt.

Improvements such as additions to existing single-family dwellings are generally exempt from Coastal Act permitting requirements except when they involve a risk of adverse environmental effects as specified in the Commission's regulations. (Pub. Res. Code § 30610(a); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 13250.) Improvements that qualify as exempt development under the Coastal Act and its implementing regulations do not require a CDP from the Commission or a local government unless required pursuant to a previously issued CDP. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 13250(b)(6).)

Typically, the construction or conversion of an ADU/JADU contained within or directly attached to an existing single-family residence would qualify as an exempt improvement to a single-family residence. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 13250(a)(1).) Guest houses and “self-contained residential units,” i.e. detached residential units, do not qualify as part of a single-family residential structure, and construction of or improvements to them are therefore not exempt development. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 13250(a)(2).)

d. If the Proposed ADU is Not Exempt from CDP Requirements, Determine Whether a CDP Waiver Is Appropriate.

If the LCP includes a waiver provision, and the proposed ADU or JADU meets the criteria for a CDP waiver the local government may waive the permit requirement for the proposed ADU or JADU. The Commission generally has allowed a waiver for proposed *detached* ADUs if the executive director determines that the proposed ADU is de minimis development, involving no potential for any adverse effects on coastal resources and is consistent with Chapter 3 policies. (See Pub. Res. Code § 30624.7.)

Some LCPs do not allow for waivers, but may allow similar expedited approval procedures. Those other expedited approval procedures may apply. If an LCP does not include provisions regarding CDP waivers or other similar expedited approvals, the local government may submit an LCP amendment to authorize those procedures.

e. If a Waiver Would Not Be Appropriate, Review CDP Application for Consistency with Certified LCP Requirements.

If a proposed ADU constitutes development, is not exempt, and is not subject to a waiver or similar expedited Coastal Act approval authorized in the certified LCP, it requires a CDP. The CDP must be consistent with the requirements of the certified LCP and, where applicable, the public access and recreation policies of the Coastal Act. The local government then must provide the required public notice for any CDP applications for ADUs and process the application pursuant to LCP requirements, but should process it within the time limits contained in the ADU law if feasible. Once the local government has issued a decision, it must send the required final local action notice to the appropriate district office of the Commission. If the ADU qualifies as appealable development, a local government action to approve a CDP for the ADU may be appealed to the Coastal Commission. (Pub. Res. Code § 30603.)

**Information on AB 68, AB 587, AB 670, and SB 13**

**JADUs – AB 68 (Ting)**

JADUs are units of 500 square feet or less, contained entirely within a single-family residence or existing accessory structure. (Gov. Code §§ 65852.2(e)(1)(A)(i) and 65852.22(h)(1).) AB 68 (Ting) made several changes to Government Code section 65852.22, most notably regarding the creation of JADUs pursuant to a local government ordinance. Where a local

government has adopted a JADU ordinance, “[t]he ordinance may require a permit to be obtained for the creation of a [JADU].” (Gov. Code § 65852.22(a).) If a local government adopts a JADU ordinance, a maximum of one JADU shall be allowed on a lot zoned for single-family residences, whether they be proposed or existing single-family residences. (Gov. Code § 65852.22(a)(1).) (This formerly only applied to *existing* single-family residences. Now, proposals for a new single-family residence can include a JADU.) Efficiency kitchens are no longer required to have sinks, but still must include a cooking facility with a food preparation counter and storage cabinets of reasonable size relative to the space. (Gov. Code § 65852.22(a)(6).) Applications for permits pursuant to Section 65852.22 shall be considered ministerially, within 60 days, if there is an existing single-family residence on the lot. (Gov. Code § 65852.22(c).) (Formerly, complete applications were to be acted upon within 120 days.)

If a local government has *not* adopted a JADU ordinance pursuant to Section 65852.22, the local government is required to ministerially approve building permit applications for JADUs within a residential or mixed-use zone pursuant to Section 65852.2(e)(1)(A). (Gov. Code § 65852.22(g).) That section is detailed in bullet points on pages two-three of this memorandum and refers to specific ADU and JADU approval scenarios.

#### **Sale or Conveyance of ADUs Separately from Primary Residence – AB 587 (Friedman)**

AB 587 (Friedman) added Section 65852.26 to the Government Code to allow a local government to, by ordinance, allow the conveyance or sale of an ADU separately from a primary residence if several specific conditions all apply. (Gov. Code § 65852.26.) This section only applies to a property built or developed by a qualified nonprofit corporation, which holds enforceable deed restrictions related to affordability and resale to qualified low-income buyers, and holds the property pursuant to a recorded tenancy in common agreement. Please review Government Code Section 65852.26 if such conditions apply.

#### **Covenants and Deed Restrictions Null and Void – AB 670 (Friedman)**

AB 670 added Section 4751 to the California Civil Code, making void and unenforceable any covenant, restriction, or condition contained in any deed, contract, security instrument, or other instrument affecting the transfer or sale of any interest in a planned development, and any provision of a governing document, that either effectively prohibits or unreasonably restricts the construction or use of an ADU or JADU on a lot zoned for single-family residential use that meets the requirements of Section 65852.2 or 65852.22 of the Government Code.

#### **Delayed Enforcement of Notice to Correct a Violation – SB 13 (Wieckowski)**

SB 13 (Wieckowski) Section 3 added Section 17980.12 to the Health and Safety Code. The owner of an ADU who receives a notice to correct a violation can request a delay in enforcement, if the ADU was built before January 1, 2020, or if the ADU was built after January 1, 2020, but the jurisdiction did not have a compliant ordinance at the time the request to fix the violation was made. (Health & Saf. Code § 17980.12.) The owner can request a delay of five (5) years on the basis that correcting the violation is not necessary to protect health and safety. (Health & Saf. Code § 17980.12(a)(2).)