



ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU) FACT SHEET

September 2026

Background

California has changed its Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) laws several times in recent years to make ADUs easier to build and permit. SB 477 repealed former Government Code Section 65852.2 and moved the state's ADU laws into Government Code Sections 66310-66342. Later legislation, including SB 543 and AB 1170, made additional changes. Most of these changes address city and county permitting requirements and did not substantially change the rules that apply to sewer capacity charges collected by special districts such as Union Sanitary District (USD).

- USD may collect a sanitary sewer capacity charge for an ADU. State law may refer to these charges as “connection fees” or “capacity charges”; USD uses the term “capacity charge.”
- USD capacity charges are not considered “impact fees” under state law. As a result, the state exemption for impact fees on ADUs smaller than 750 square feet does not exempt an ADU from a USD capacity charge. (California Government Code Section 66311.5(c)(1)-(2))
- Under USD's capacity charge program, a capacity charge may apply when an ADU adds new residential square footage to a property, including a new detached or attached ADU. State law generally provides that an ADU is not considered a new residential use for purposes of calculating utility connection fees or capacity charges; however, it allows capacity charges to be assessed in certain circumstances based on the additional demand the ADU places on the sewer system. (California Government Code Section 66311.5)
- Any capacity charge must be proportionate to the ADU's burden on the sanitary sewer system. The charge may be based on the ADU's square footage or its drainage fixture unit values under the Uniform Plumbing Code, and it cannot exceed the reasonable cost of providing service. (California Government Code Section 66311.5(e))
- USD does not assess a capacity charge when an ADU is created entirely within existing residential space, or when no more than 150 square feet is added to an existing accessory structure solely to provide ingress and egress. (California Government Code Sections 66323(a)(1)(A) and 66311.5(d))

ADUs in USD's service area are also subject to annual sanitary sewer service charges, which are collected through the Alameda County property tax roll.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)?

An ADU is a separate residential unit located on the same lot as a primary residence. It typically includes its own entrance, kitchen, bathroom, and living and sleeping space. ADUs are generally smaller than the primary residence. Common types include:

Detached ADU: A stand-alone unit that is separate from the main residence, often located in the backyard.

Attached ADU: A unit that is physically connected to the main residence and typically has its own entrance.

Junior ADU (JADU): A unit of no more than 500 square feet that is contained entirely within the primary dwelling. A JADU must have a separate entrance and an efficiency kitchen with cooking appliances, food preparation space, and storage cabinets.

When should I start the ADU application process with USD?

Submit your USD ADU application at the same time you submit your application for a City permit. USD's permitting desk is located at 5072 Benson Road, Union City, and is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Applications may also be emailed to permits@unionsanitary.ca.gov

What should I submit to USD?

Submit a completed ADU application and project plans. If the project includes sewer work outside the building, a USD permit and inspection are also required. The application is available here: [ADU Application](#)

What charges may apply to an ADU?

ADUs that add new residential square footage may be subject to a USD capacity charge. Permit and inspection charges may also apply, depending on how the ADU is connected to the sanitary sewer. An ADU created entirely from existing residential space is not subject to a capacity charge.



What is the current capacity charge for an ADU?

Current and future ADU capacity charge rates are listed on USD's [*Capacity Charges web page*](#).

What specifications must the ADU sewer lateral meet?

The ADU sanitary sewer branch or lateral must meet these requirements:

1. 4-inch diameter PVC SDR-26 or ABS Schedule 40
2. Minimum 2% slope with 2 feet of cover
3. PVC C900 may be used only when 2 feet of cover is not possible
4. A two-way cleanout must be installed within 30 inches of the ADU kickout (where the sewer line exits the ADU)

How can an ADU be connected to the existing sewer?

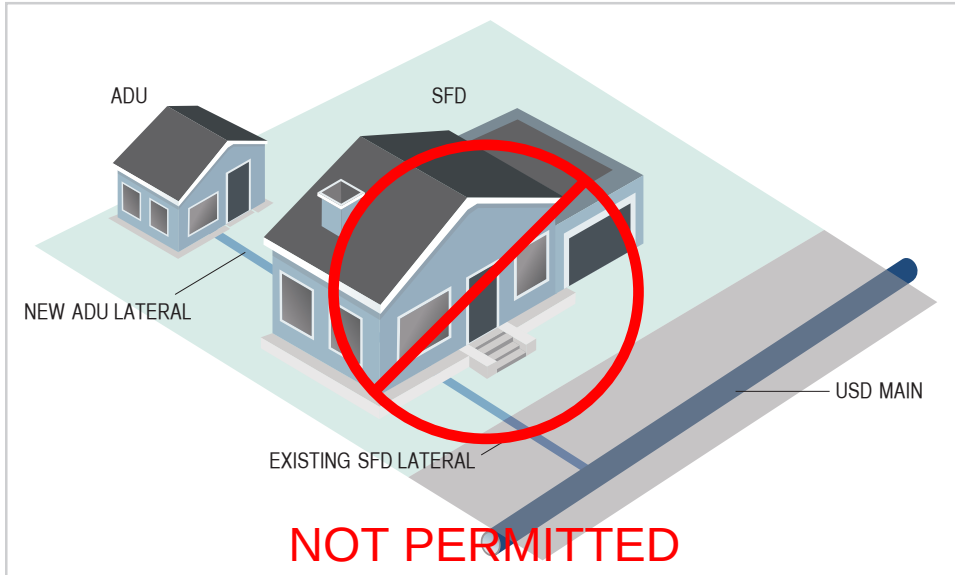
USD does not normally require a separate direct connection from an ADU to the public sanitary sewer main. An ADU may connect by a branch line to the existing sanitary sewer lateral that serves the residence. When appropriate and allowed, that connection may be made within the footprint of the residential structure.

There is an important exception for certain Senate Bill 9 (SB 9) lot splits. If a lot split creates a new property line between the ADU and the primary residence, placing the ADU on a separate legal parcel, the ADU is treated as a single-family dwelling. Under the California Plumbing Code, it must then have its own separate connection to the USD sanitary sewer main.

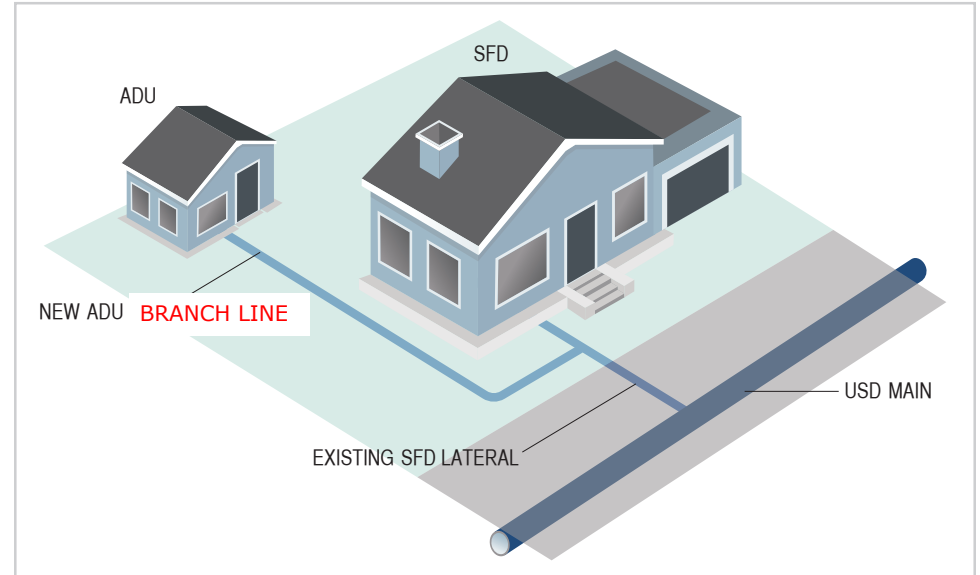
For connection examples and additional ADU information, visit USD's [*ADU web page*](#).

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT CONNECTIONS TO USD MAIN

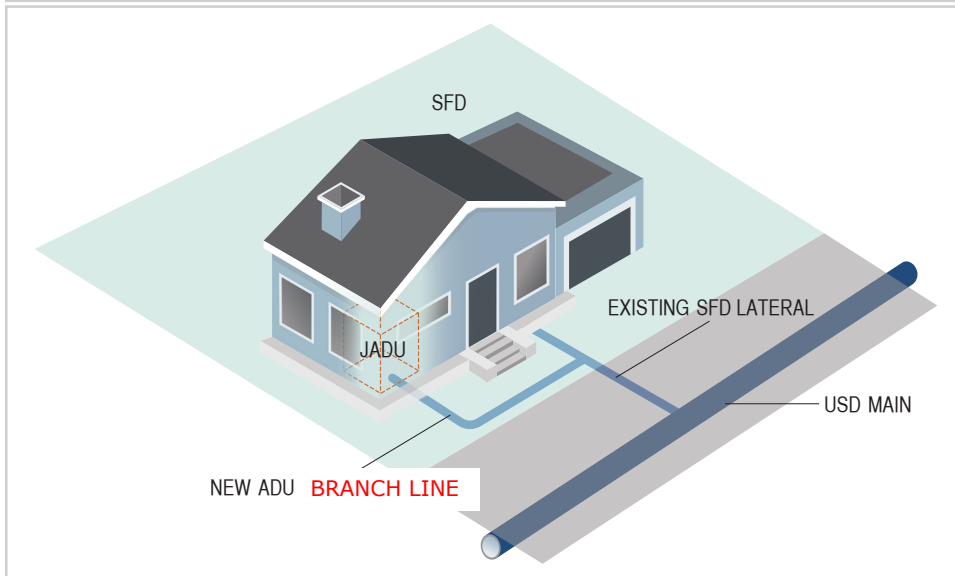
ADU'S LATERAL TIES TO EXISTING SFD LATERAL



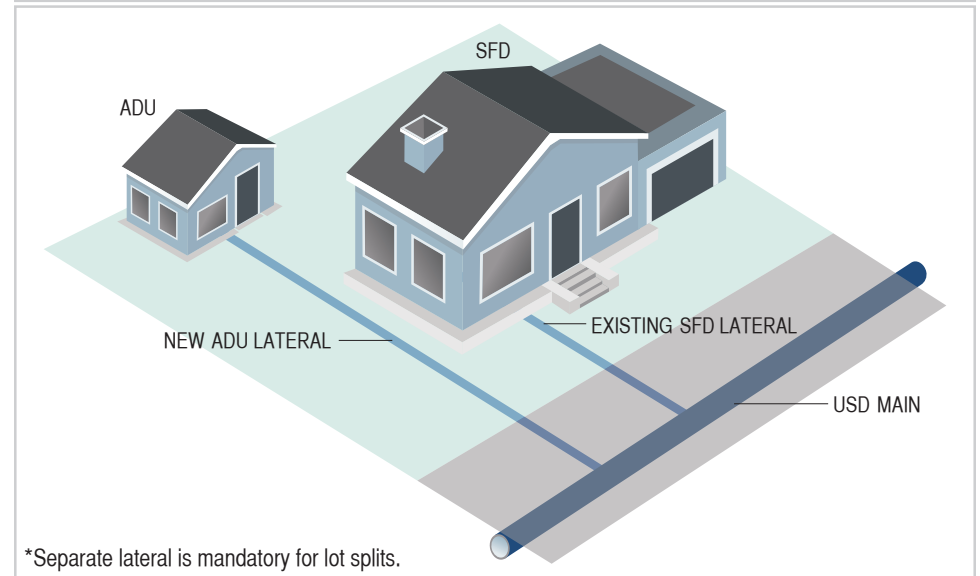
ADU'S LATERAL TIES TO EXISTING SFD LATERAL



JADU'S LATERAL TIES TO EXISTING SFD LATERAL



ADU WITH SEPARATE LATERAL TIES TO USD MAIN*



*Separate lateral is mandatory for lot splits.