

Tiny Home on Wheels Permit Checklist

A tiny home on wheels (THOW) may be installed on a property with a single-family home, subject to complying with Zoning Code standards and obtaining a building permit.

A THOW is considered a type of accessory dwelling unit (ADU), but it has different and specific requirements. This checklist pertains only to THOWs. For information on other types of ADUs, please visit www.sanjoseca.gov/ADUs.

Use this checklist to make sure your THOW project complies with the development standards of the City’s Zoning Code and as a guide to the permit process. To help avoid costly mistakes, homeowners and professionals providing services on installing the THOW should read this checklist before proceeding with the project.

As stated in the Zoning Code (www.sanjoseca.gov/MunicipalCode, Section 20.30.495 and Section 20.200.327), the development standards for a THOW are provided in this checklist.

Need help?

- We offer a no-fee consultation with a City Planner who can answer your questions and help with items on this checklist. Due to COVID-19, please email ZoningQuestions@sanjoseca.gov and a planner will respond with an email or will call you.
- For property designations on page 2, visit www.sjpermits.org and tap “Permits & Property Information”; enter your address; on the next screen, click on your property and select “Property Information.” A list of designations will appear.

QUESTION	YES	NO
SECTION A. PROPERTIES THAT QUALIFY		
<p>1. Zoning. Is the property a lot with one single-family home on it? > Outcome: If yes, one THOW is allowed. If no, a THOW is not allowed.</p>		
<p>2. Presence of other ADUs (granny units). The main dwelling may have either an attached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) or a junior accessory dwelling unit (JADU); a JADU is a unit less than 500 sq. ft contained fully within the primary dwelling. The property may NOT have a detached ADU on it. Does the property for the proposed THOW comply with these conditions? > Outcome: If yes, a THOW is allowed. If no, a THOW is not allowed.</p>		
SECTION B. PRELIMINARY CRITERIA The THOW must meet ALL criteria below to qualify for a building permit		
<p>3. Qualifying Features. Is your THOW a detached self-contained unit intended for separate, independent living quarters for one household, designed and built to look like a conventional building structure, and which includes basic functional areas that support normal daily routines such as cooking, sleeping, toilet, and bathing facilities? > Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		
<p>4. Registration. Is your THOW licensed and registered with the California Department of Motor Vehicles? > Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		
<p>5. Certification. Does your THOW meet the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) 119.5 requirements or the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1192 standards, and is it certified for ANSI or NFPA compliance? Note: Certification must be made by a qualified third-party inspector. > Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		
<p>6. Towable. Is your THOW towable by a bumper hitch, frame-towing hitch, or fifth-wheel connection and cannot move under its own power? > Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		

continued >

QUESTION	YES	NO
SECTION C. PROPERTY DESIGNATIONS & PLACEMENT ON THE LOT		
<p>7. Easements. Does the property have a dedicated easement? Easements are described in the title report that came with the purchase of your home. Contact a title company if you need to obtain a report. Tract and parcel maps may show easements, but may be less accurate than a title report. Find these maps at the County Surveyor Record Index tool at http://bit.ly/2ZhGjXc.</p> <p>> Outcome: If yes, you must comply with the requirements of the easements, which may include no construction allowed within the easement area.</p>		
<p>8. Historic Designation. Is the property located in a Historic District identified on the California Register of Historic Resources? Find historic designations: www.sanjoseca.gov/HistoricResourcesInventory.</p> <p>> Outcome: If yes, please contact a City Planner at ZoningQuestions@sanjoseca.gov for information on how to proceed.</p>		
<p>9. Distance from Primary Home. Is the THOW to be located at least six feet from the primary home?</p> <p>> Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		
<p>10. Location and Setbacks. Does the THOW location comply with these location and setback requirements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If a rear yard location - Minimum setback of 4 feet from any interior side or rear property line and minimum 10 feet from a corner property line ▪ If an interior side yard location - Minimum setback of 45 feet from the front property line and minimum setback of 4 feet from an interior side property line. An interior side does not face a street, such as may occur on a corner lot. <p>> Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		
SECTION D. SIZE & DESIGN STANDARDS		
<p>11. Floor Area. Is the THOW at least 150 sq. ft. and no larger than 400 sq. ft., as measured within the exterior faces of the exterior walls?</p> <p>> Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		
<p>12. Height. Is the THOW no greater than two stories and has a maximum height of 16 feet? Note: Roof height shall be determined in accordance with San José Municipal Code Section 20.200.510.</p> <p>> Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		
<p>13. Hidden Undercarriage. Is the undercarriage (wheels, axles, tongue and hitch) hidden from view from the public right of way?</p> <p>> Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		
<p>14. Design Elements. Does the THOW incorporate all of the following required design elements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> , Cladding and trim. Materials used on the exterior of THOW shall exclude single piece composite laminates or interlocked metal sheathing. , Windows and Doors. Windows shall be at least double pane glass and include exterior trim. Windows and doors shall not have rounded corners. , Roofing. Roofs shall have a minimum of a 12:2 pitch for greater than 50 percent of the roof area and not be composed of wooden shingles. , No Extensions. All exterior walls and roof shall be fixed with no slide-outs, tip-outs, nor other forms of mechanically articulating room area extensions. , Mechanical equipment. Must be incorporated into the structure and not located on the roof. <p>> Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		

continued >

QUESTION	YES	NO
SECTION E. PARKING STANDARDS		
<p>Note: No additional parking is required for the THOW. Any displaced parking resulting from the construction of the THOW is not required to be replaced.</p>		
<p>15. Parking Pad. Will the THOW be parked on a paved or alternate pad that includes bumper guards, curbs, or other installations that adequately prevent movement of the THOW?</p> <p>> Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		
<p>16. Wheels and Leveling Requirements. Do the wheels and leveling or support jacks sit on a paving surface that meets either of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> , The parking area is paved with hard, durable asphaltic paving that is at least 2 inches thick after compaction, or with cement paving at least 3 inches thick; OR , The parking area is paved with alternative paving materials that may consist of porous asphalt; porous concrete; permeable interlocking concrete pavers; permeable pavers; decomposed granite, crushed rock or gravel; plastic or concrete grid system confined on all sides and filled with gravel or grass in the voids; or other similar materials that meet the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Permeable interlocking concrete pavers and permeable pavers that have a minimum thickness of 80 mm (3.14 inches); and b. Products and underlying drainage material are installed to meet manufacturers’ specifications. Sub-grade soils shall be compacted as required to meet the product installation specifications. <p>> Outcome: If yes, this THOW is allowed. If no, this THOW is not allowed.</p>		
SECTION G. MISCELLANEOUS		
<p>17. Tree Removal. Will constructing the THOW require removal of an ordinance-size or heritage tree?</p> <p>> Outcome: If yes, please first see the rules for removing trees: www.sanjoseca.gov/treepermit</p>		

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Installing a THOW requires that you obtain electrical and plumbing permits along with the necessary inspections. You will need to submit this form to the Building Division:

- Use [Form 310-Building Permit Application](#) to apply for the electrical and plumbing permits.

Permit requirements include:

- , The THOW must have a flexible connection to electric, water, and sewer utilities. The City’s ordinance prohibits natural gas.
- , The THOW is not required to have fire sprinklers but must meet the ANSI A119.5 or NFPA 1192 standards relating to health, fire and life-safety.
- , If the wheels are removed and the unit is attached to a conventional foundation, the unit no longer qualifies as a THOW but instead becomes subject to permitting requirements for a detached ADU in accordance with with Municipal Code [Section 20.30.460](#).

HERE TO HELP YOU

Remember, a City Planner can provide a no-fee consultation and answer your questions or help with items on this checklist. Due to COVID-19, please email ZoningQuestions@sanjoseca.gov and a planner will respond with an email or will call you. To facilitate the consultation, please email a rough sketch of your site with parcel dimensions and mark the location of the primary home and the proposed location of the THOW.