

 <p>CITY OF SAN JOSE CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY</p> <p><i>Planning, Building and Code Enforcement</i></p>	#B-002 – Building Division Directive	February 16, 2022
	<h1>Detached ADU</h1> <h2>Fire Separation Distance Requirements</h2>	

Purpose

- To clarify fire separation requirements between single-family residences (SFRs), accessory structures, and detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on one parcel, as interpreted in the City of San José.

Background

Section R302.1 of the 2019 California Residential Code (CRC) specifies that construction, projections, openings, and penetrations of exterior walls of dwellings and accessory buildings shall comply with Table R302.1(1) or Table R302.1(2). Exception 2 of this section exempts “walls of individual dwelling units and their accessory structures located on the same lot” from the fire separation distances required in those tables by considering the SFR, ADU, and accessory structures as one building.

The CRC is not completely clear on whether this exemption applies only to the separations between the dwelling units and the accessory structures or to the separations between all structures on the lot, including between dwelling units.

From the 2018 International Residential Code (IRC) Commentary: Exceptions to Section R302.1: Exception 2 allows individual dwelling units and their accessory structures located on the same lot to be considered one building such that the requirements of Tables R302.1(1) and R302.1(2) will not apply to the exterior walls facing each other. This exception eliminates the imaginary line between two buildings on the lot when measuring the fire separation distance. Tables R302.1(1) and R302.1(2) will apply to the other exterior walls of the buildings.

Findings

The City will enforce the following requirements:

1. A dwelling unit and garage shall be separated as required by CRC Section R302.6 and Table R302.6. This applies to both an SFR and an ADU.
2. An SFR, garage (or other accessory structure), and a detached ADU on the same parcel will be considered as one building without fire separation distance/imaginary line requirements per Exception 2.
3. The two units (SFR and ADU) are required to maintain a minimum separation of 6 feet.
4. If the exterior walls of the two units (SFR and ADU) are separated by less than 10 feet, the exterior wall of the ADU facing the SFR is limited to 25% openings and shall be framed from the foundation to the roof.
5. All other exterior walls of the SFR, ADU, and accessory structures shall comply with the distance and rating requirements of CRC section R302.

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Illustration of Distance Separation Fire Requirements on a lot with a detached ADU

