

# Want to Build a Casita?

As of November 21, 2024, the Unified Development Code (UDC) was amended to meet state requirements regarding casitas/ADUs. A Casita (also known as an ADU, or Accessory Dwelling Unit) is a secondary residential unit that can be added to a lot with an existing home. Casitas are independent units that have their own kitchen, bathrooms, living and sleeping space. They can be attached or detached from the primary residence, or they can be garage conversions. They must have a permanent building foundation.

Standards and guidelines for properties in Historic Preservation Zones (HPZs) or Neighborhood Preservation Zones (NPZs) should be followed in addition to the guidance below.

The Casita Model Plan Library has plans that have been pre-reviewed by PDSD.

## Overview:

- Two casitas can be built on parcels with one existing family dwelling
  - When building on parcels with an existing and occupied family dwelling, commercial standards are **not** applied
- A third casita is allowed on parcels over one acre, but one casita must be deed-restricted to affordable housing (defined as being affordable for households making 80% of area median income or less)
- One casita can be built on a parcel with a duplex
- Casitas are exempt from the residential density calculation
- A **cool roof** is required for newly built structures
- There are **no parking requirements** for casitas
- Casitas must have their **own address** issued by [Pima County](#)
- Separate **utility** requirements do not apply to accessory structures, including casitas. Utilities may be shared with the primary structure on the property although an upgrade may be required.



[Tucson Electric Power](#)



[Pima County Wastewater](#)



[Tucson Water](#)



Worksheet



Follow the steps below to determine eligibility and applicable standards for permitting and building a casita on your property.

- Step 1:** Determine whether your property is eligible to build a casita.
- Step 2:** Design your casita.
- Step 3:** Apply for a building permit.

## Step 1 Determine if your property is eligible to build a casita.



Look up your property on [Map Tucson](#)

Is your property located within the City of Tucson?

yes

no

→ For properties located in Pima County, visit [Pima County Development Services](#)

What zone is your property in?

Does this zone allow residential uses?

yes

no

→ Casitas are not permitted in zones that do not allow residential use, such as industrial zones. They are not permitted on sites that are multifamily or commercial use.

For uses allowed in your property's zone, see: [UDC 4.8 Use Tables](#)

See

**Steps: 2 - 3**  
(on backside)

### Additional Information:

#### Construction and Occupancy

Construction must be performed by licensed contractor or homeowner. See AZ State Law [A.R.S. § 32-1121.A.5](#)

Group dwelling restrictions prohibit 5 or more unrelated individuals from residing in one home. In R-1 zones, 5 or more unrelated individuals cannot live on the same lot.

#### Conversions

Casitas that are created by altering existing, permitted structures (like guesthouses, garages, or sheds) do not have to meet the same requirements for solar, gray water, and electric vehicle charging as new construction.

#### Commercial Standards

If building three or more units on a parcel without an existing occupied residence, commercial standards may apply

For more information about commercial development standards see [UDC Article 7](#)



For references to the UDC [Unified Development Code](#)

For additional zoning questions, contact [zone1.desk@tucsonaz.gov](mailto:zone1.desk@tucsonaz.gov)

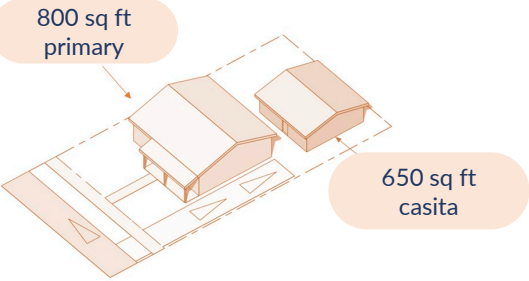
## Step 2: Design your casita.

**Size** - the square footage of the casita is based on two guidelines: size of the primary dwelling and lot coverage

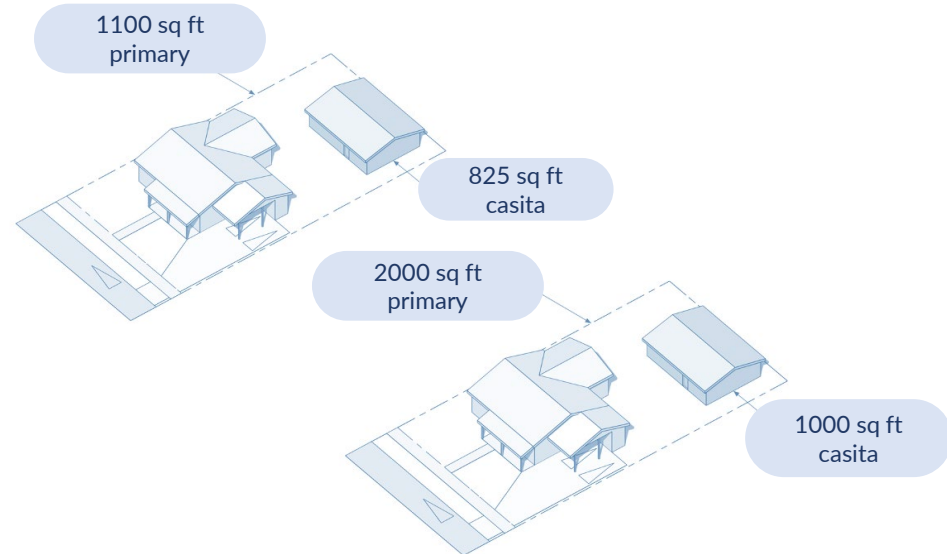
Size of the primary structure: Casitas can be up to 650sq ft or 75% of the primary dwelling up to 1,000 sq ft.

Examples:

When the primary dwelling is **less than 867 sq ft**, a casita is limited to **650 sq ft** gross floor area.

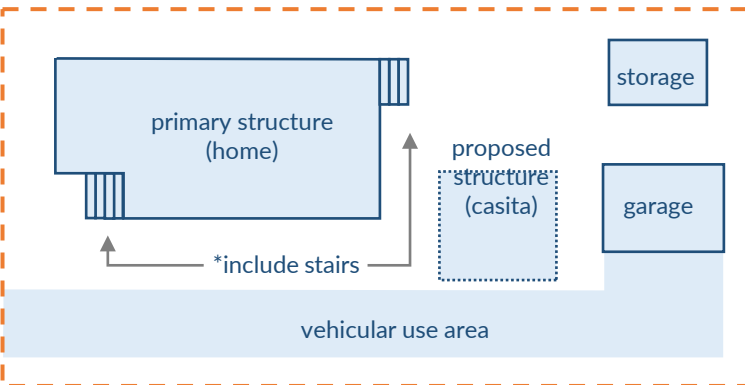


When the primary dwelling is larger than 867 sq ft, a casita is limited to **75% of the gross floor area of the primary dwelling up to 1,000 sq ft.**



## Lot Coverage

Coverage areas:



**Lot Coverage** is the area of the lot covered by improvements, including:

- Existing buildings (primary structure, garage, etc.)
- Vehicular use areas (either improved or unimproved)
- Storage areas
- Proposed structure (casita)

In most cases, lot coverage is limited to **70% - 80% of your lot, depending on your zone.**

Check the maximum permitted lot coverage in your zone: [UDC 6.3 Dimensional Standards](#)

|  |                      |       |
|--|----------------------|-------|
| Existing Buildings<br>(include primary structure, garage, etc) | <input type="text"/> | sq ft |
| Vehicular Use Areas  | <input type="text"/> | sq ft |
| Storage Areas  | <input type="text"/> | sq ft |
| Proposed Structure   | <input type="text"/> | sq ft |
| <b>What is your total lot coverage?</b>                        | <input type="text"/> | sq ft |

|                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| What zone is your property in?  | <input type="text"/>       |
| Maximum permitted lot coverage: | <input type="text"/> %     |
| What size is your lot?          | <input type="text"/> sq ft |
| Percent Lot Coverage            |                            |
| $\div$                          | $=$ <input type="text"/> % |

## Step 2: Design your casita. continued

**Height** - A casita can be the max height of a single-family dwelling within the same zone (generally 25 ft).  
See the maximum height permitted for your zone: [UDC 6.3 Dimensional Standards](#)

**Location & Setbacks** - the location of a casita is based on two sets of guidelines

### Location

A freestanding casita may be placed in the rear or side yards but not the front yard.

For more details, see [UDC 6.6.3](#)

### Setbacks

Setbacks are the distance between the property line and the exterior wall of the structure. The **minimum** side and rear setback for a casita is 5 feet.

### What flexibility is allowed for setbacks?

#### DDO - Design Development Option

A DDO is a separate application to allow minor changes to the standard requirements that may allow smaller minimum setback requirements. See [UDC 3.11.1](#) for more details.

## Step 3: Apply for a permit.

### Apply at [TDC Online](#)

Submit the following:

- Residential [plot plan](#)
- [Floor plan](#)
- Construction documents

For more information and resources for residential building permits visit [Planning and Development Services](#)

More information on permit and impact fees

[Impact Fees](#) [Impact fee calculator](#)

[Permit Fees](#) [Information on fees](#)

[Permit Process](#) [pdsinquiries@tucsonaz.gov](mailto:pdsinquiries@tucsonaz.gov)

Visit [Casitas in Tucson](#) to find more information, FAQs, and the Casita Model Plan Library

