



## City of Santa Barbara

Community Development Department

### Memorandum

**DATE:** April 25, 2024

**TO:** Architectural Board of Review

**FROM:** Ted Hamilton-Rolle, Project Planner

**SUBJECT:** Assembly Bill 1332 (Pre-Approved Accessory Dwelling Units)

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Dear Board Members,

Staff is seeking your feedback on the City's approach to implementing Assembly Bill (AB) 1332, a State Law which requires local agencies to provide a process for the pre-approval of accessory dwelling unit (ADU) plans. This bill presents an exciting opportunity for the City to stimulate housing production by providing an even more streamlined and less costly "express lane" option for applicants to permit accessory dwelling units.

#### Background

AB 1332 requires local agencies to create a process that allows for the expedited review and pre-approval of accessory dwelling units by January 1, 2025. The City plans to take implementation a step further and open a call for entries for architects and designers to submit designs for "pre-approval"<sup>1</sup> by the City, with the goal of having pre-approved plans available for the public to use under contract with the designer by early 2025. The outcome for the applicant would be a reduced plan review fee, and an expedited plan check, and hopefully lower consultant fees, ultimately making the path to building an accessory dwelling unit more attractive.

#### Design Parameters

This bill only applies to detached accessory dwelling units, and the City is further limiting the design parameters to units that are one-story, maximum 16 feet in height, and 250-800 square feet. These criteria are consistent with the development standards for a Special Accessory Dwelling Unit, as defined in Santa Barbara Municipal Code (SBMC)

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, a "pre-approved" ADU is one that has been reviewed by City staff, complies with applicable building code requirements and has been posted to the City's website for homeowners and applicants to purchase through the designer. The homeowner or applicant would then add property-specific details such as the location of the primary residence, setbacks, project statistics, etc. for their property and submit the plans with a building permit application for review and approval by the City. Other jurisdictions refer to pre-approved ADUs as "ADU stock plans" or "Pre-Approved Standard Plans".

Section 30.185.040.L/ 28.86.090. These design parameters allow for the most versatile product, which would be allowable in most areas of the City, including High Fire Hazard Areas. The City's goal is to pre-approve designs that would be compatible with most neighborhoods and architectural styles in the City.

### **Selection Process – Key Dates (2024-2025)**

Call for Design Phase Entries	May 3 – Jul. 1
Design Review Consultation Hearings	Jul. 8- Jul. 17
Continued Design Review Consultations (if needed)	Jul. 22 – Jul. 31
Call for Building Phase Entries	Aug. 1- Sept. 2
Building & Zoning Plan Check (up to 2 rounds)	Sept. 3 – Nov. 18
Inform Candidates	Dec. 2 – Dec. 5
Post Plans to City Website	Jan. 6 – Jan. 15

### **Ministerial Options for ADUs**

Currently, the Municipal Code requires design review for detached accessory dwelling units that do not match the architectural style of the primary residence and are either: a) within 20 feet of the primary residence, b) located in the front yard, c) located in the Hillside Design District and 20% or greater average slope, or d) on a site with a historic resource. The City's goal in implementing AB 1332 is to pre-approve high quality accessory dwelling unit designs that don't necessarily *match* the primary residence, but are at least *compatible* with the primary residence, so that they work in most situations and neighborhoods. Since the proposed design parameters call for a detached, one-story, maximum 800 square foot unit, staff believes this is an achievable goal. Most of the time, accessory dwelling units meeting these criteria are exempt from design review anyway and are processed ministerially. With the assistance of ABR, HLC, and SFDB, staff aim to pre-approve an ADU design that can be processed ministerially in every situation.

### **Role of Design Review Bodies**

AB 1332 does not require local agencies to seek approval by, or input from, any discretionary bodies to implement a process for pre-approval of accessory dwelling units. However, staff view this program as an opportunity to select high-quality designs that contribute to the character of the City's built environment, therefore we are requesting your assistance with our review of the design entries. In July, ABR, HLC, and SFDB will have the opportunity to review design entries, ask the designers questions, provide comments, and give staff a recommendation on whether the designs should be approved, approved with conditions, or denied. You will be reviewing the design entries for consistency with applicable design guidelines and quality of architectural details and materials. Your role in this program will be similar to that of the judges in the 1924 [Small House Competition](#), which is an historical example of a similar program in the City whose purpose was to educate the public about professional architects and help

American builders fulfill the growing demand for small single-family homes after World War I.

**Request for Feedback**

Staff will ask each design review board/commission the following questions as part of the discussion:

1. Should pre-approved ADU plans be a certain architectural style or styles?
2. Do you agree with the approach of providing for several options for exterior materials, e.g. a customizable plan with Spanish Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Contemporary finish options?
3. Are there any exterior finishes/materials that should NOT be allowed for pre-approved ADU plans?
4. What is your level of comfort with providing comments/straw votes to vet plans for pre-approval?

Thank you for your participation in this effort and we look forward to hearing your feedback.

Sincerely,  
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