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Junior Second Units

The Marin Independent Journal has published articles that indicate that the Town of San Anselmo has not adopted Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU) regulations. While this is true, the Town has not adopted JADU's regulations because our existing second unit regulations already permit JADU's.

The Town adopted a housing element in 2015 that included a program to consider "junior" second units, units created by repurposing an existing bedroom within a home, incorporating a small "wet-bar" type kitchen, and providing an exterior access to the unit.

A review of Town codes has revealed that no new regulations are necessary in order to encourage these types of units. The Town Council revised the second unit regulations in 2013, a year and a half prior to Novato's Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance, to relax the requirements for all second units.

The new regulations permit San Anselmo residents to create second units from 150 to 800 square feet with no additional parking if the unit is within a mile of a transit stop (which includes most of the Town). No fire sprinklers are required. Owner occupancy is no longer required. The Town has flexibility to approve small kitchens.

The JADU ordinance adopted by Novato, and under consideration by other Marin jurisdictions and the Marin Municipal Water District, is more restrictive than San Anselmo's existing regulations by requiring owner occupancy and limiting kitchen improvements. It would not further the goals of the Town Housing Element to adopt the more restrictive regulations proposed.

The Town finds the largest impediment to development of all second units is the cost of connection fees charged by Marin Municipal Water District and the Ross Valley Sanitary District. The Marin Municipal Water District will be considering waiving connection fees for JADU's at their Board meeting on March 18, 2016.

If adopted, San Anselmo residents that agree to place restrictions on their units (such as limitations on size, owner occupancy, and kitchen sink and electrical service) would not have to pay a connection fee. We support these efforts by Marin Municipal Water District to facilitate development of affordable housing and encourage the Ross Valley Sanitary District to do the same.