



**City of Carmel-by-the-Sea  
Community Planning and Building Department  
Guest Houses and Subordinate Units**

**What is a Subordinate Unit?**

A Subordinate Unit is an attached or detached residential dwelling that is located on a single lot with another primary, single-family dwelling and that provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons. These units include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, cooking and sanitation. There are four classes of subordinate units:

1. Subordinate units that were established prior to June 5, 1929. These units were legally established and require no permit.
2. Subordinate units that were established prior to April 5, 1988, and registered with the City by December 6, 1994. These units typically were built without City approval but were then legalized and brought to minimum health and safety standards through an amnesty period and registration.
3. Subordinate units that did not exist prior to 1988 but which may be established with a use permit for a recognized hardship resulting from the needs of an infirm or handicapped person who must live with or near a companion in separate, self-contained facilities.
4. Subordinate units that did not exist prior to 1995 but which may be established on building sites of at least 8,000 square feet to provide affordable housing.

**What are the regulations for Subordinate Units?**

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4

1. General Standards for Class II, III and IV Subordinate Units.
  - a. Only one subordinate unit shall be allowed on any single-family building site.
  - b. The subordinate unit shall comply with the minimum health and safety standards in the Uniform Housing and Building Codes and the standards for efficiency units in the Uniform Building Code (UBC) as follows:
    - i. The unit shall have a minimum living area of 220 square feet.

- ii. The unit shall provide a kitchen sink, cooking appliance and refrigerator facilities, each having a clear working space of not less than 30 inches in front.
- iii. The unit shall have sufficient light and ventilation for living and kitchen use.
- iv. The unit shall provide a separate bathroom, containing a water closet, lavatory and bathtub or shower.
- v. The unit shall have electrical or gas service, water service and sewer service.
- vi. The unit shall have a minimum ceiling height of seven feet, six inches.
- vii. The unit shall have heating facilities capable of maintaining a room temperature of 70 degrees at a point three feet above the floor.
- c. No nonconformities shall be created, increased, or enlarged.
- d. No detached subordinate unit shall exceed the maximum allowable size of a guesthouse.
- e. Class III and Class IV units located on sites of less than 6,000 square feet in area shall be attached to the primary dwelling.
- f. All attached Class III units shall provide for future interaccessibility, and shall be designed to facilitate conversion of the unit into living space within the primary dwelling. A plan for conversion must be submitted with the application.
- g. Class III units located on sites of 6,000 square feet or greater and all Class IV units may be attached or detached. Detached units shall be designed for conversion to a guesthouse. A plan for conversion must be submitted with the application.
- h. All unregistered Class II, Class III, and Class IV subordinate units shall be recognized as illegal and subject to the enforcement procedures found in Division VI.

2. Regulations Applying to Specific Classes.

- a. Class II. Class II units are subject to the general standards and convertibility provisions of subsection (F)(1) of this section and to the following:
  - i. The property owner shall either maintain the primary or the subordinate unit for his or her own use, or may rent or lease both dwellings. If both dwellings are rented or leased, the rental or lease terms shall be at least one year.
  - ii. Detached subordinate units on sites of less than 6,000 square feet shall not be enlarged or increased in size.
  - iii. Demolition of more than 50 percent of the value of the structures on a site containing a Class II unit shall require termination of the use and removal of the unit.
- b. Class III. Class III units are subject to the General Standards and Convertibility provisions of subsection (F)(1) of this section, and the following:
  - i. Documentation or evidence shall be submitted to verify that a hardship exists and that granting approval of the use permit to authorize a subordinate unit is warranted. Use permits shall be issued for a specified time period based on the anticipated length of the hardship and shall be recorded with the Monterey County Recorder's Office.
  - ii. All use permits for Class III subordinate units shall expire upon termination of the specific hardship for which it was granted or upon reaching its time limit, whichever occurs first. Such removal or conversion shall occur within six months of permit expiration.
- c. Class IV. Class IV units are subject to the general standards and convertibility provisions of subsection (F)(1) of this section, and the following provisions:

- i. Class IV units must meet affordable housing standards for low-income or very low-income households as defined for the Carmel area by California Statutes. Verification as affordable housing shall be supplied in a manner approved by the City.
- ii. Once established, Class IV units must remain as affordable units until converted to space within the single-family residential dwelling or converted to a guesthouse with a use permit per subsection (C) of this section.

C. Guesthouses. One guesthouse may be authorized on sites of 6,000 square feet or greater upon approval of a use permit. Guesthouses shall contain no food preparation facilities of any kind. A guesthouse on any building site of 8,000 square feet or greater may be converted to a subordinate unit (see subsection (F) of this section). A legal subordinate unit may be converted to a guesthouse upon approval of a use permit. No site shall contain both a guesthouse and a subordinate unit except as provided under hardship conditions (see subsection (F) of this section).

<b>Table 17.08-B – Maximum Floor Area for Guesthouses</b>			
<b>Lot Type/Size</b>	<b>Base Size of Guesthouse</b>	<b>Plus Increment Based on Lot Size</b>	<b>Equals Maximum Floor Area</b>
6,000 square feet or larger	400 square feet	(lot area over 6,000) x 1.5%	Allowed Size
Merged lots of at least 8,000 square feet	500 square feet	(lot area over 6,000) x 1.5%	Allowed Size
Example: 7,500-square-foot lot	400 square feet	(1,500 sq. ft.) x 1.5%	422 sq. ft.

**Parking**

c. Subordinate Units. Sites with Class II subordinate units shall provide a minimum of one parking space on-site at the time of approval. Upon enlargement or improvement of a Class II unit there shall be one parking space each for the primary dwelling on the site and for the subordinate unit. Improvements to subordinate units are allowed even if one or both parking spaces encroaches into a setback. Sites with Class III or IV subordinate units shall provide one parking space behind all setbacks for the subordinate unit and shall comply with all parking requirements established in Chapter [17.38](#)CMC, Off-Street Parking Requirements, for other development on the site.