



PRESERVATION DESIGN STANDARDS FOR CONVERTING GARAGES INTO ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUS)

Adding new Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to existing buildings throughout San Francisco is possible and encouraged with adequate thought and sensitive planning into each project. There are common designs for adding an ADU to existing residential buildings, which often introduce new features to the street level facing facades. The Department's recommended design guidelines outlined below are intended to provide common methods to altering street-facing elevations to incorporate ADUs or required access ways and should guide your project at the outset.

Where an ADU will be constructed to character-defining*¹ garage, it should:
be retained and re-purposed for pedestrian use via insertion of glazing, and modification of operation.

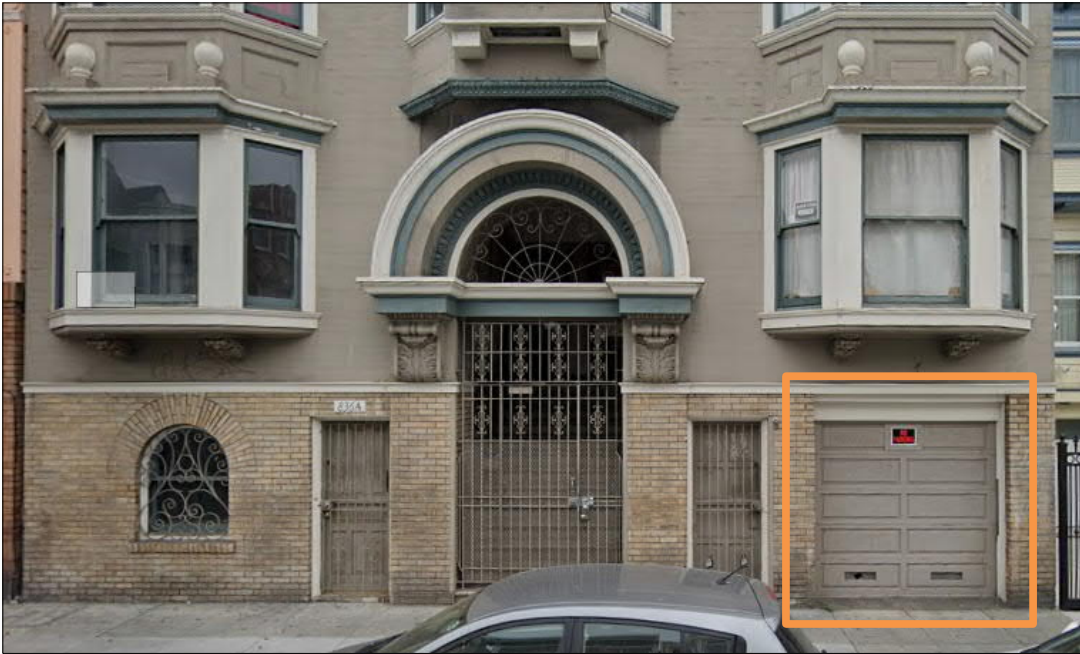
Example of a character-defining garage:



Character-defining elements (gate and surrounding decorative elements) were retained. Garage gate was re-purposed for residential use via insertion of glazing.

Where an ADU will be constructed to a non-original & non-character-defining garage, it should: be restored to match the surrounding material and configuration of the base of the building based on documentary or physical evidence of the building's original or historic appearance.

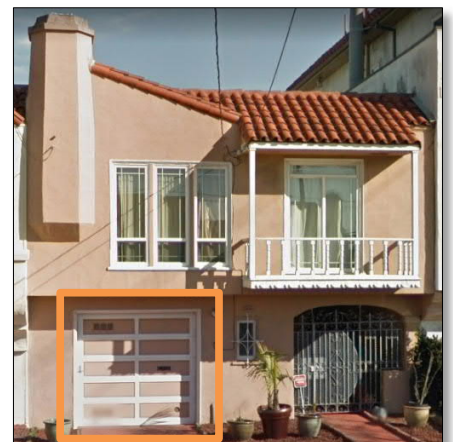
Example of a non-original, non-character-defining garage:



Based on research and historic evidence, garage was determined to be non-original & non-character-defining. Conversion of this garage into an ADU should restore the original appearance via insertion of matching material and window that's visible to the left of the entry and found in documentary evidence.

Where an ADU will be constructed to an original & non-character-defining garage it should: be clad in a manner that is consistent with the character of the building.

Example of an original, non-character-defining garage:



Original garages that lack decorative elements or significance related to events, themes, or persons may be determined to be non-character-defining by preservation staff.

Where window openings are needed for the ADU, they should:

- Have a simple design and details and be proportionally smaller than primary windows on upper floors.
- The proposed new windows should match materials and configuration of historic windows (extant or not) on upper floors of the building as much as is feasible.

Where door openings are needed for the ADU, they should:

- Be located on secondary elevations or incorporated into existing front stair structure, if feasible. If such locations are not feasible, then the new door opening(s) should be incorporated into existing openings (pedestrian or vehicular) and should be restricted to the minimum number and size required by Code.
- Recesses should be minimized to the depth required by the Planning and Building Codes and have a simple design that is residential in character.
- The front yard area shall be restored with soft and hardscaping that is compatible with the character of the building and/or district.
- Any relocated gas/utility cabinets should be located and treated so as to be as minimally visible as possible.

¹ During building permit review, preservation staff will determine if an existing garage opening is a character-defining element. You may request an early consultation by emailing CPC.ADU@sfgov.org.