



What is an ADU and how do I build one?

A: An **accessory dwelling unit (ADU)** is a secondary, self-contained housing unit located on the same lot as another existing home used as the primary residence.

ADUs may be:

- **attached** to the primary residence;
- **unattached** to the primary residence; or
- **junior accessory dwelling units (JADUs)**, a smaller, converted structure which may share a bathroom with the primary residence but has its own kitchen and requires owner-occupancy when rented out.

However they're constructed, ADUs offer several **benefits** to owners, since ADUs:

- increase **property values**;
- are **less expensive** to build than other new construction projects;
- require no significant **infrastructure** or new land;
- allow **family members** to live close to home but have their own space; and
- provide an extra **revenue stream** when the owner rents it out.

Recent state **legislation** has loosened restrictions on these cozy casitas, including lot sizes, height limits and owner-occupancy requirements when leasing ADUs. **Local governments** have the discretion to adopt an **ADU ordinance** consistent with state requirements. Alternatively, local jurisdictions may include **specific requirements** to match the character or historical context of their neighborhoods.

Always check with your **local building and planning office** when constructing an ADU. State requirements may suffice, or your local government might impose more stringent design or structure requirements.

Typically, you will need to hire a **licensed professional**, such as an architect or engineer, to **draw up plans** for your ADU consistent with local and state building and safety codes.

Once the plans are **submitted and approved** by the planning department, the local government will issue a **permit**, allowing the owner to construct their ADU. An **inspector** will review the unit throughout to confirm compliance with building codes. The owner will also be asked to pay any necessary **fees** at this stage.

Once successfully built, with all fees paid and inspections passed, the unit is ready for **occupancy**.