

# The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Process

We are here to help you through your ADU building process. Visit our website at [www.aduscc.org](http://www.aduscc.org) to learn more.

## 1 GET STARTED

- **Think about what you want and look for inspiration** on our [ADU website](#) and view floorplans and photos.
- **Make an informal sketch** of your property using our [exercises](#).
- **Estimate costs** and rental income using our ADU Calculator.



## 3 DESIGN YOUR ADU

- **Hire your team** – a licensed architect or designer and a licensed contractor, or design/build team.
- **Create your initial design** and discuss it with local Planning staff.
- **Finalize your design** and have your designer or contractor prepare plans for permitting.



## 5 CONSTRUCT YOUR ADU

- **Ensure all funding is in place** before construction.
- **Monitor construction** – check in regularly with contractors, make decisions about materials as needed, and ensure inspections are moving along.
- **Schedule inspections** throughout construction. Your contractor will do this for you.



## 2 LEARN THE RULES

- **Learn about your property** including APN, lot size, and zoning.
- **Learn the [Local ADU Rules](#)** for your city and what you can build on your property.
- **Meet with staff** early on to understand any rules that might apply to your ADU.
- **Adjust your project budget** as needed and create a financing plan.



## 4 APPLY FOR PERMITS

- **Prepare your application** – confirm application requirements with staff.
- **Submit your application** online or in-person and pay any required fees. Staff will review your application within 60 days, and often sooner.
- **Revise your application** if needed. Staff will tell you the best way to be in contact, likely via email. Generally, outstanding fees are due before your permit is issued.



## 6 MOVE-IN!

Once your ADU has passed final inspection, it's ready for move-in!



SANTA CLARA  
COUNTY ADU

# Interested in an ADU or JADU?

## Here are some important things to keep in mind.



### The Difference Between ADUs and JADU

**ADUs** are a self-contained home that is usually smaller than the main home and legally part of the same property. ADUs must have their own bathroom and a full kitchen.

**Junior ADUs (JADUs)** are no more than 500 square feet and are located within the existing footprint of a home (including an attached garage). JADUs can share a bathroom with the primary residence and need at least an efficiency kitchen, and the owner must live in the primary residence or the JADU.

Both must have their own entryway and be at least 220 square feet in size (JADUs must be at least 150 square feet). Both must be rented for 30 days or more—no short-term rentals like Airbnb are allowed.

### Special Circumstances and Utilities [SEE DETAILS IN OUR ADU GUIDEBOOK](#)

In addition to planning and building review, you may need to meet other requirements, get additional permits, and pay fees to other agencies or departments. Check with staff early to learn what applies to your property.

- **Deed restriction:** ADUs may be subject to conditions or rules that are added to your property's deed. Talk to staff to find out about local requirements. Think about your goals and make sure that they align with any deed requirements.
- **Neighborhood & Homeowners Associations:** An HOA cannot prevent you from building or renting an ADU but they may still have guidelines or standards to consider. Talk with your representative or board early on.
- **Fire Safety:** If your property is in a high fire severity zone your ADU may require additional review. Visit the [County Wildland Urban Interface website](#) to find out if your property falls within one of these zones and contact staff to learn about any special requirements.
- **Historic Districts:** If your property is in a Historic District, you may need to ensure that the proposed ADU is compatible with your existing structure and/or the historic district. Contact staff early to discuss requirements.
- **Utility Fees:** New or separate utility connections may be required for ADUs, but not JADUs. Contact your service providers early in the process.
- **Gas Connections and Appliances:** Some cities do not allow new gas connections or certain gas appliances. Check with staff early on. If you need to add or upgrade service you can learn about PG&E's process [here](#).
- **Septic:** If your property is outside of a sewer service district, you will need to meet county requirements when adding an ADU to your property. Talk to staff early.