

Step-by-Step Guide to ADU Design and Permitting

1. Funding- Ensure that you have ready access to sufficient funds
2. With rough budget in mind, brainstorm project scope
3. Talk to a City planner to determine feasibility. Read up on municipal ADU bylaws.
4. Uncover any major property specific design/cost red flag issues, including:
 - a buried oil tank or cesspool. These systems may have to be removed if they are close to where a foundation will be placed.
 - poor sewer line. If the existing sewer line is in a state of deferred maintenance, the ADU could trigger the need to update it. Sewer work in the public right of way is notoriously expensive.
 - Depending on the location and deed of the property, there may be special restrictions that go beyond the restrictions listed in the standard municipal zoning ADU code. These may include, but are not limited to deed restrictions, homeowners associations with Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions, historic design overlays, conservation or wetland overlay districts.
5. Rough sketch ideas for site plans
6. Talk to neighbors for early feedback, identify objections or potential conflicts
7. Interview architects or designers. Optimally, select professionals who have a passion for, or knowledge about small space residential design or have experience with ADU design.
8. Find reputable builders or general contractors and subs. If owner is acting as the general contractor, identify a licensed plumber, mechanical, electrical subcontractor. You may base your assessment on their costs, references, and communication skills.
9. Access financing as needed for the design and permitting phase
10. Designer draws up schematic drawing (or 3D models) based on your project goals
11. Integrated Design Build process- Meet with designer, builder, and subs to talk through objectives and schematics to get input and feedback about the schematic design.
12. Review heating and cooling and utility connection needs with the subs.
13. Designer refines schematics
14. Designer builds a 3D model of the design
15. Designer finalizes design with input from owner and builder
16. In accordance with code requirements, designer develops drawings and structural engineering calculations and other documentation to support permit application
17. Submit drawings to the City or County for permit
18. Obtain permits

Excerpt from
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