

The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Process

County Staff are here to help you through the ADU process. Contact the Building Department with your questions at 209-754-6390, email buildingweb@co.calaveras.ca.us, or come by in person to 891 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas M-F 8am to 4pm or Wed 8am to 1pm with your questions. Visit our website for all the resources and tools mentioned below at <https://www.motherlodeadu.org>.

1 GET STARTED

- **Think about what you want** and any goals or concerns you have.
- **Look for inspiration** on our website from floorplans to neighbors who built ADUs.
- **Learn what you can build** by using the [Can I Build an ADU Tool](#).
- **Make an informal sketch of your property** and use our ADU [Exercises](#) to help.
- **Estimate costs** and possible rental income using the Calaveras County [ADU Calculator](#).



2 LEARN THE RULES

- **Learn about your property**, including APN, lot size, school district, and zoning by using the [Calaveras County GIS Portal](#).
- **Learn the County rules** and what you can build by visiting [our website](#).
- **Talk with County staff** early on to understand any rules, deed restrictions, or septic and water issues that might apply.
- **Adjust your project budget** as needed and create a plan for financing your project.

3 DESIGN YOUR ADU

- **Consider using the [ADU Plans Gallery](#)** to start from an existing plan, saving time and money.
- **Hire your team** including a licensed designer and contractor (or design/build team). They will help with the application process too.
- **Create your initial design** and discuss it with Building Department staff.
- **Finalize your design** and plans for permitting.

4 APPLY FOR PERMITS

- **Prepare your application and review the [Single Family Dwelling Checklist](#) and [ADU Checklist](#)** so your submission is complete.
- **Submit your application** and pay half the total base permit fees. Reviewed in 4-6 weeks.
- **Revise application** if requested (at least one round is typical) and resubmit. All fees due before you collect permit.

5 CONSTRUCT YOUR ADU

- **Ensure all funding is established** before beginning construction.
- **Monitor construction** (typically 6-12 months) by checking in with contractors and ensuring inspections are moving along.
- **Schedule and pass all inspections** (usually by contractor) during construction at the [Online Permit Services](#) website.

6 MOVE-IN!

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



MOTHER LODE 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 second home on your property with their own kitchen and bathroom that can range from 150 square feet to 1,200 square feet. Types include attached, detached, and conversion.

Junior ADUs (JADUs) are within the footprint of your home (or attached garage) and less than 500 square feet. They can share a bathroom and/or have an efficiency kitchen. Owner must live on site.

Both need to have their own entrance and must be rented for 30 days or more—no short-term rentals like Airbnb are allowed. RVs, tiny homes on wheels, yurts, and unconditioned storage structures are usually NOT considered ADUs (yurts can be ADUs as Limited Density Rural Dwellings (LDRDs)).

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

There may be additional requirements and fees depending on your property. Talk to staff early to find out.

- **Septic Systems:** ADUs often need a separate waste treatment system. Contact Environmental Management at 209-754-6399 for requirements.
- **Water Wells:** If not served by the public water system, Environmental Management requires a capacity report to make sure yours is adequate.
- **PG&E Meter Approval:** It can take 3-9 months for PG&E to approve new meter locations. Talk to them early on and see our Property Development Checklist ([Forms and Documents Webpage](#)).
- **Fire Safety:** Most mortgage lenders require fire insurance and there may be additional rules and fire impact fees based on your location. Plus, if your main home requires fire sprinklers, so will the ADU. See our guidebook for more information.
- **Snow Load and Flood Zone:** Requirements depend on property elevation and location. Additional review or highly engineered drawings may be required if your property is above 3,600 feet elevation, or within a FEMA flood hazard zone.
- **Limited Density Rural Dwellings (LDRDs):** If you are planning to build an LDRD, meet with county staff to discuss the permitting process.
- **Bring an Existing ADU up to Code:** If you constructed an ADU without a building permit, you may want to consider bringing it up to code. Doing so can reduce liability, increase property value, and provide peace of mind. Call the Building Department at 209-754-6390 to learn more. No fine or enforcement will result from talking to us.

