

The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Process

County staff are here to help you through your ADU building process. Contact the Planning Department with your questions at 209-966-5151, email planningdept@mariposacounty.org, or come by in person at 5100 Bullion St #1, Mariposa (M-F 8am to 5pm). 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 Mariposa County [ADU Calculator](#).



2 LEARN THE RULES

- **Learn about your property**, including APN, lot size, service providers, and zoning using the [Mariposa County Property Search Tool](#).
- **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 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 Planning Department staff.
- **Finalize your design** and plans for permitting.

4 APPLY FOR PERMITS

- **Prepare your [building permit application](#)** and review our [ADU Checklist](#) to ensure your submission is complete.
- **Submit your application** in person or online to the Building Department and pay permit fees. Reviewed in two weeks.
- **Revise your application** if requested (at least one round is typical) and resubmit. All fees are 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 move along.
- **Schedule and pass all inspections** (usually done by your contractor) throughout construction by calling the Building Department at 209-966-3934.

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 be at least 800 square feet and up 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 entryways and must be rented for 30 days or more—no short-term rentals like Airbnb are allowed. RVs, tiny homes on wheels, yurts, and storage structures are NOT considered ADUs.

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.

- **Fire Safety:** Most mortgage lenders require fire insurance and there may be additional rules based on your location. Plus, if your main home requires fire sprinklers, so will the ADU. See our guidebook for resources on wildfire preparedness and fire hazard zones.
- **Septic Systems:** Your system may need to be modified. Contact Environmental Health at 209-966-2220 or eh@mariposacounty.org.
- **Snow Load:** The Planning Department will let you know about any requirements for your property, which depend on elevation. ADUs in heavy snow load zones will require high-engineered designs.
- **Town Planning Areas (TPAs):** There may be different rules if building an ADU in a TPA, like Catheys Valley or Mariposa. Talk to staff to find out.
- **Yosemite National Park (YNP):** ADUs within park boundaries will require National Parks Service review and approval. Staff will lead the process.
- **Historic Design Areas:** ADUs in a historic overlay, like Mariposa and Coulterville, require a Design Review. Talk to staff to find out the details.
- **Bring an Existing ADU up to Code:** If you constructed an ADU without getting a building permit, you may want to consider legalizing it. Doing so can reduce liability and risks to occupants, increase property value and provide peace of mind. Talk to staff to learn more. No fine or enforcement will result from talking to us about it.

