

# The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Process

We are here to help you through your ADU building process. The Planning and Building Department is located at 3015 H Street, Eureka, CA 95501. Bring your questions to the counter, email us at [planningbuilding@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:planningbuilding@co.humboldt.ca.us), call 707-445-7541 or visit our website at [www.humboldtadu.org](http://www.humboldtadu.org) to access resources like the ADU Calculator and to learn more.



## 1 Think About What You Want

Visit [Humboldt ADU](#) to look at floorplans, hear from neighbors on what they built and look at photos for inspiration. Also, start to consider how you might finance your ADU and if a loan would be needed. You can estimate costs or rents using the [ADU Calculator](#).



## 2 Learn the Rules

You can use the [Web GIS Tool](#) to find out more about your property, and any development restrictions that might apply. You can also contact the Planning and Building Department to find out in advance about any special issues.



## 3 Make a Sketch

Make a sketch of your property on an 8.5x11 piece of paper, including existing home, any other structures and proposed ADU. Use the exercises on [Humboldt ADU](#) to complete.



## 6 Prepare Application Package

Call or email to schedule an application assistance meeting with the county, recommended for all ADU projects and required for projects subject to a Special Permit. Submit your Permit Application, Site and Construction Plans.

- [How to Apply for a Permit](#)
- [Site and Construction Plan Submittal Checklists](#)



## 5 Hire Experienced Professionals

Although you can build an ADU as an owner builder, we recommend hiring a licensed architect or designer to design your ADU and a licensed builder to construct it, or a design and build team for the entire process. Whoever you hire will help with the application process. Use our [free ADU Guidebook](#) to learn more.



## 4 Get a Planner's Advice

Now that you have a better idea of what you want to build, bring your sketch in. A planner will advise you on county rules and what to consider. You may be eligible for the Alternative Owner Builder Program (AOB), with fewer requirements.

- [Planning and Building Dept FAQ](#)
- [AOB and Safe Home Programs](#)
- [New AOB Residence County Handouts](#)



## 7 Submit Application and Pay

Submit your application via email or in person. Staff will contact you within two days of receiving it and give you a record number. You will then need to call (707) 445-7244 to schedule a pre-site inspection. Total fees are usually less than 5% of the project valuation. All forms of payment are accepted.



## 8 Get Permit Issued

A permit specialist will be assigned to your application and let you know if any changes are needed. Resubmittals will be reviewed within four to eight weeks. Once your application is approved and fees are paid, you can collect your building permit.



## 9 Construct ADU

Before you begin, ensure all funding is in place. Once underway, check-in regularly with your builders, make decisions about materials as needed and ensure required inspections are moving along. Construction times vary, but 12-18 months is common.



## MOVE-IN!

Your ADU's address will be finalized by the Planning Department.



## 10 Schedule and Pass Inspection

Your builder will call (707) 445-7244 to schedule a final inspection. Once your ADU has passed, you will receive a Certificate of Occupancy and it is ready for move-in!



## Interested in building an ADU or JADU? Here are some important things to keep in mind.

### *The Difference Between ADUs and JADUs*

Junior ADUs (JADUs) are located within the existing footprint of a home, including an attached garage, and are no more than 500 square feet. ADUs can be attached, detached and up to 1200 square feet. Both need to have their own entryways and kitchen areas, but JADUs can share a bathroom and/or have an efficiency kitchen. Both must be rented for 30 days or more—no short-term rental like Airbnb are allowed. For JADUs, the owner must live on the property.

### *Legalize Your Existing ADU Using the Safe Home Program*

If you constructed an ADU without getting a building permit, you may want to consider legalizing it through our [Safe Home Program](#). Doing so can reduce liability and risks to occupants, increase property value and provide peace of mind. Call (707) 445-7245 to learn more. There is no fine or penalty for legalizing an existing ADU and no enforcement will result from contacting us.

### *Utilities and Special Circumstances*

You may need to meet requirements with other departments or agencies depending on your project location. Our [Web GIS Tool](#) will provide an overview of any issues. Your permit specialist will also let you know. Common issues include:

- **Utilities:** New or separate utility connections may be required for ADUs only. Use the [Web GIS Tool](#) or call the Planning and Building Department to find out who provides water and sewer service to your property if you aren't sure. If your ADU will require new electric or gas service, contact PG&E or review their [New Service FAQ](#). The process for obtaining new service can take up to 12 months.
- **Septic Systems:** Some sites may require septic system improvements or additions. Check out the [Wastewater and Water Supply Guidance](#) from the Environmental Health Division or call them at 707-445-6215 to learn more.
- **Fire Safety:** Fire sprinklers are not required for an ADU if not required for the primary residence, however installation is strongly encouraged. An ADU outside of a Fire Protection Districts requires a special permit.
- **School Fees:** Required for ADUs that are more than 500 square feet. If this applies to your project, your permit specialist will let you know which school district to contact.