

# The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Process

County Staff are here to help you through your ADU building process. Contact the Planning Department at 530-265-1222 Option 2, email [planning@nevadacounty.gov](mailto:planning@nevadacounty.gov), walk in, or [schedule an appointment](#) to come by in person 950 Maidu Avenue, Suite 170, Nevada City M-F 8am to 5pm 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 Nevada County [ADU Calculator](#).



## 2 LEARN THE RULES

- **Learn about your property** including APN and zoning on [My Neighborhood Map](#).
- **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 County staff. Visit the Permit Center during business hours or [book an appointment](#).
- **Finalize your design** and plans for permitting.

## 4 APPLY FOR PERMITS

- **Prepare your [permit application](#) and review the [Residential Plan Submittal Checklist](#)** to make sure it is complete.
- **Submit your application** using the [Accela Citizen Access \(ACA\) Portal](#) or in person and pay plan check fees. Reviewed in 30 business days.
- **Revise your application** if requested (at least one round is typical) and resubmit on the Portal or in person. All fees are due before you collect your permit.

## 5 CONSTRUCT YOUR ADU

- **Ensure all funding is established** before beginning construction.
- **Monitor construction** (typically 6-12 months) by checking in with contractors to make sure work is moving along.
- **Schedule and pass all inspections** (usually done by contractor) during construction on the [ACA Portal](#).

## 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 unless the ADU meets specific requirements. 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.

- **Driveway Standards:** Requirements for driveways, like grade, width, and turnouts, are one of the most common hold ups for building permits. Talk to the Planning Department early one and see our [Driveway Standards Handout](#).
- **Septic systems:** ADUs often need an additional tank and an Onsite Soils Evaluation. Contact Environmental Health at 530-265-1222, [env.health@nevadacountyca.gov](mailto:env.health@nevadacountyca.gov), or in person.
- **Wells:** If not served by the public water system, Environmental Health requires an accurate well yield to make sure your water well is accurate.
- **Snow Load:** The Building 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.
- **Fire Safety:** The majority of ADUs will require Fire Protection Plans. Learn more by reading the [Ready, Set, Go! Handbook](#) or call the Fire Marshal at 530-265-4431 to get started. If your main home requires fire sprinklers, so will the ADU.
- **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, increase property value, and provide peace of mind. Call the Building Department 707-445-7245 or read about our [After-the-Fact Permit Process](#) to learn more. No fine or enforcement will result from contacting us.

