



City of
FRESNO 



ADU

AND SMALL HOMES



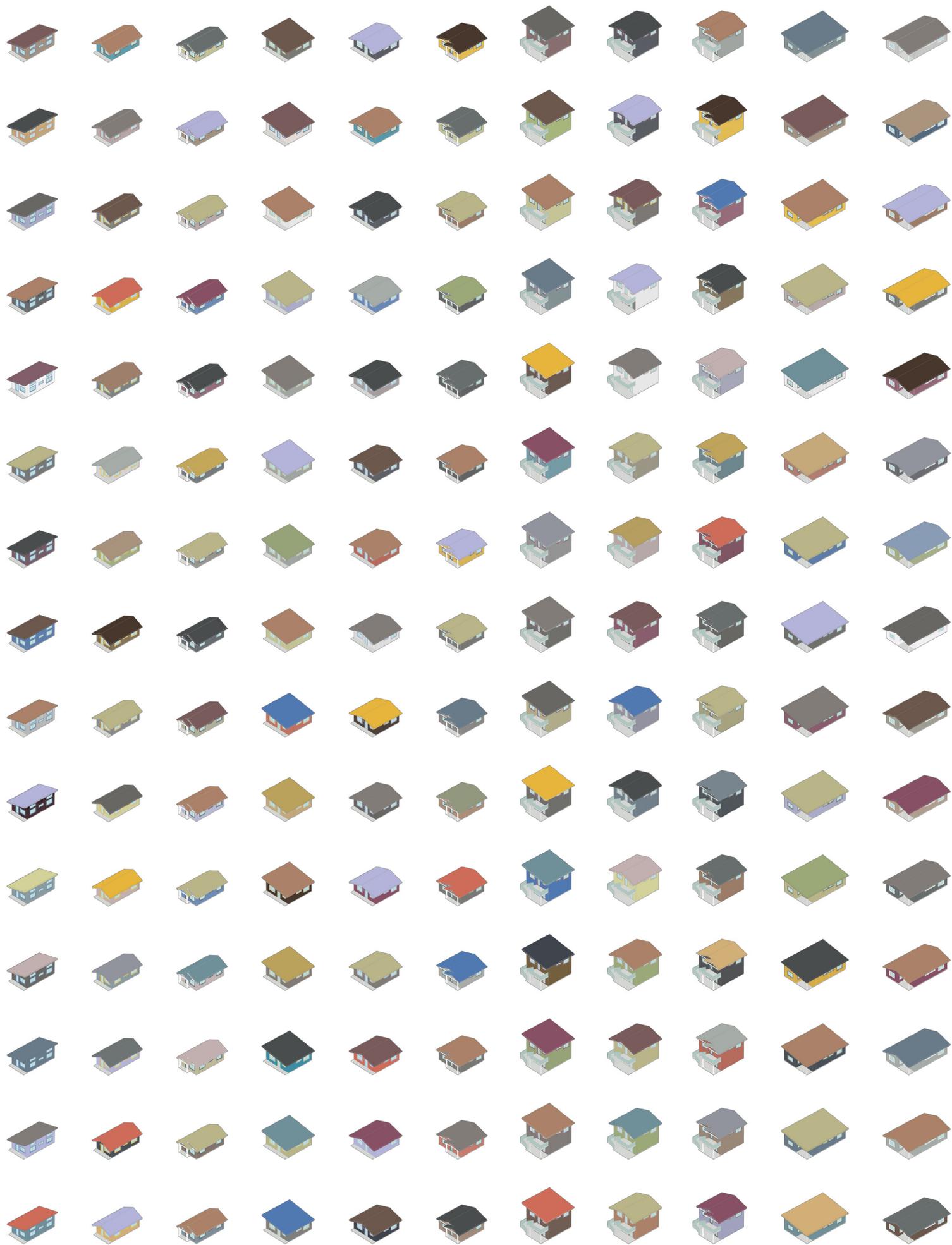
GUIDE- BOOK

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ADU AND SMALL HOMES GUIDEBOOK

DRAFT VERSION 1.0

**A STEP-BY-STEP DEVELOPMENT GUIDE,
INCLUDING INFORMATION ON PRE-APPROVED PLANS
FOR ADUs AND SMALL PRIMARY RESIDENCES**





TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 | INTRODUCTION

How to Use this Guidebook

03 | PART 1: ADUs AND SMALL HOMES

What are Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Small Homes?
Why Build an ADU or Small Home?
From ADU, Straight to You!

13 | PART 2: BUILDING YOUR HOME

The Path from a Dream to a Dream Home

1. Know the Rules
2. Clarify Your Goals
3. Research Your Property
4. Design Ideas and Selecting a Plan
5. Choosing a Development Team
6. Finances
7. Permits
8. Construction
9. Move In

33 | PART 3: PRE-APPROVED PLANS

Free Pre-Approved Plans

43 | PART 4: REFERENCES AND WORKBOOK

References

- Contact Information
- Additional Resources

Homeowner Workbook



INTRODUCTION

Are you interested in building an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) or small home to create a special space in your corner of the world? Throughout history, ADUs and small homes have been a flexible way to meet a variety of housing needs. With increasing interest in more affordable and sustainable forms of development, homeowners and city planners alike are rediscovering the benefits of smaller housing. Still, a homeowner thinking about building an ADU or small home can be uncertain about where to start. This guidebook is here to help.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK

This guidebook contains four parts:



PART ONE: ADUs AND SMALL HOMES

Learn about the benefits of ADUs and small homes.



PART TWO: BUILDING YOUR HOME

Learn the basics of development, from start to finish.



PART THREE: FREE PRE-APPROVED PLANS

Learn about the City's five free pre-approved plans.



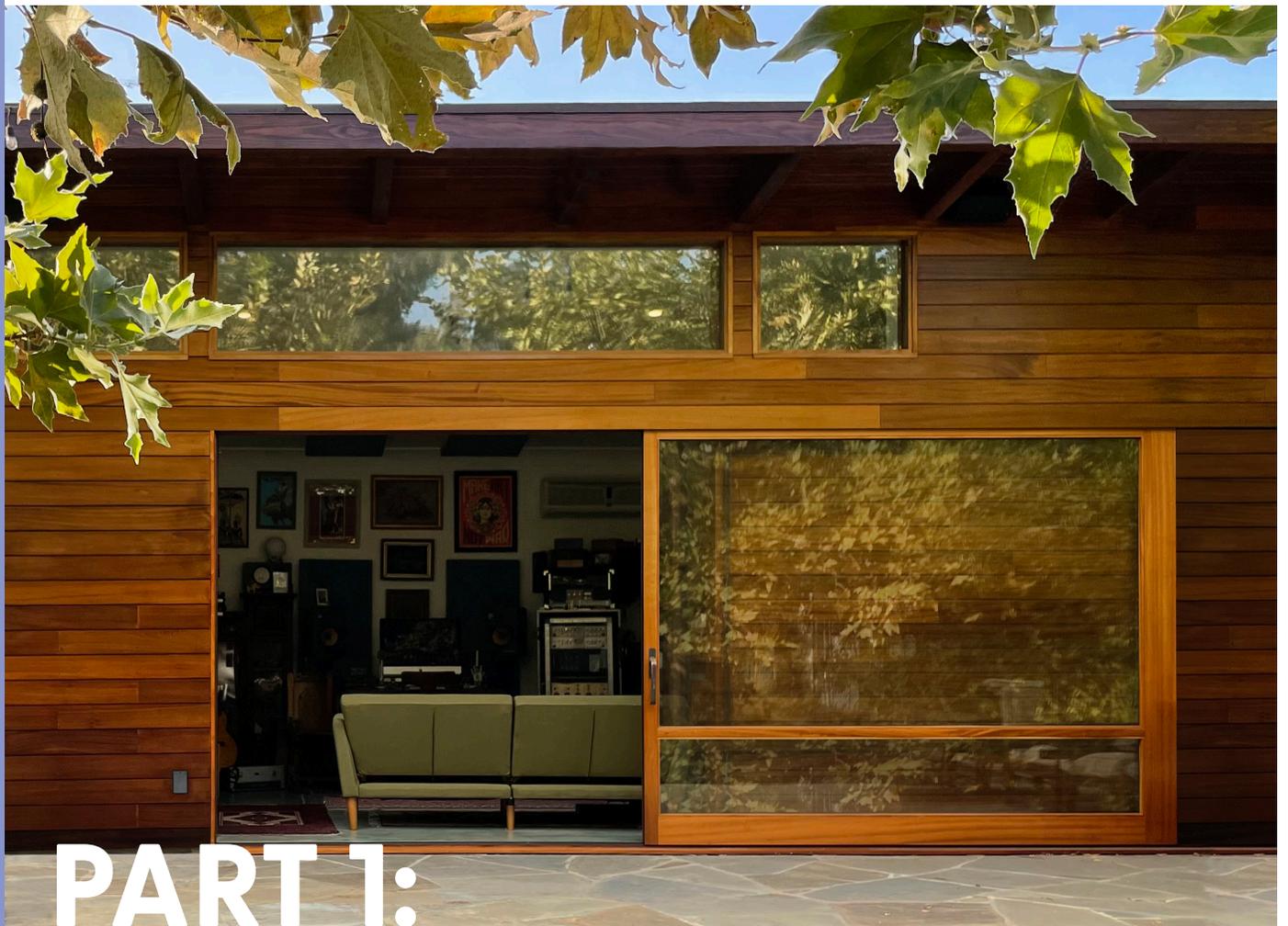
PART FOUR: REFERENCES AND WORKBOOK

Find additional resources and use the workbook to manage your notes.

The City of Fresno has free pre-approved construction drawings available for homeowners to use in developing ADUs on their property. These construction drawings can also be used to build small primary homes to help first-time buyers enter the housing market or assist those seeking to downsize. You will find information on these drawings in Part 3.

This guidebook sets a course for anyone who wants to develop an ADU or small home in Fresno, whether using your own design or the City's free pre-approved plans. It is a resource to help you get started, but know that it cannot replace the knowledge and experience of local designers, builders, and planners. The size and shape of your property, your budget, and your own design needs will make your experience unique.





PART 1:

ADUs AND SMALL HOMES

In this section you will...

- Learn what ADUs and small homes are and about the different types of ADUs
- Learn about the benefits of ADUs and small homes
- Make a list of your ideas, goals, and questions

WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU?

As you go through this guidebook, return to this question and consider which type of housing best fits your goals and budget.



WHAT ARE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUs) AND SMALL HOMES?

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

An ADU is a self-contained residential unit with its own room, kitchen, and bathroom that is secondary to the main home on a property.

ADUs are known by many names: carriage or coach houses, accessory apartments, mother-in-law suites, granny flats, backyard cottages, and second dwelling units. Whatever it is called, an ADU is smaller than the primary or main house on the same lot.

SMALL HOMES

A small home is exactly that – a home that is considered smaller than average. The difference between an ADU and a small home is that a small home is considered a primary or main residence. In some cases, you might even see a small home with an ADU.



TYPES OF ADUs

There are different types of ADUs: Attached (Internal), Attached (External), and Detached.

ATTACHED (INTERNAL) ADUS

Are located within the structure of the main house, for example, a converted basement, or attic. Also called Junior ADUs (or JADUs), these can share sanitation facilities with the primary home and are generally the least expensive to build.

ATTACHED (EXTERNAL) ADUS

Share one or more walls with the primary house. These ADUs are commonly constructed as additions or garage conversions.

DETACHED ADUS

Are the most visible, but typically the most expensive to build. These include freestanding backyard structures, detached garage conversions, same-level additions to a detached garage, or above-garage units.



WHY BUILD AN ADU OR SMALL HOME?

Building an ADU or small home can offer many benefits for you and your neighborhood. These types of housing are flexible and can serve many purposes over time.



EXPANDING HOUSING OPTIONS

An ADU or small home can have a positive effect on your community. ADUs provide more housing options in neighborhoods that are already built out and small homes can be built on vacant lots. Each can support relief for the growing demand for housing in a way that does not alter the character of existing neighborhoods.

EARNED AND SAVED INCOME

Depending on the circumstances, smaller homes can cost less to maintain than homes with a larger footprint, and ADUs can enable a homeowner to receive rental income, either through renting the main home or the ADU. Lowered maintenance costs and rental income can help make loan payments more affordable, allow a family to save towards a major expense, or accommodate a change in lifestyle.

AGING IN PLACE AND DOWNSIZING

Some people move into an ADU while their adult children move into the main house, or they rent out the main house for extra revenue in retirement. Other people move to a small home to retain independence without needing to manage extra, unused space.



REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Smaller homes (ADUs included) tend to be more environmentally- friendly simply because they tend to use less energy for heating, cooling, and lighting (Stephan and Crawford 2016). Energy-saving designs can be incorporated into an ADU or small home, further lowering its environmental impact. Each may also help reduce transportation-related environmental impacts when they are located near employment centers and established public transit routes. For instance, a 2014 study found that ADU residents in Portland were less likely to own cars (Brown and Palmeri 2014).

HOUSING FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND CAREGIVERS

While small homes can help people enter the housing market or downsize to a more manageable home, ADUs can uniquely provide the benefit of providing separate living space for friends, family members, and caregivers while keeping them close by. For example, many homeowners are motivated to build an ADU to provide a combination of in-home care and independent living for a family member.



TAKE A MOMENT

Fill out your goals, ideas, and questions in the Workbook in Part 4.



FROM ADU, STRAIGHT TO YOU!

Take it from those who've done it before! In a series of anonymous surveys, conducted by the City of Fresno, ADU owners shared their experiences and tips on how to make the right choices when it comes to building an ADU. Here is some of what they shared:



“After having difficulty with a design-build contractor, I worked with an architect who was an absolute rockstar! Find a great architect to make good plans the first time around!”

Good communication is invaluable to the process of building an ADU. When conducting research on design professionals, be open to shopping around to find someone you feel comfortable communicating with, who asks questions, listens to your needs, and applies them to the design. It is important to be as clear as possible on what you want for your design as well. Once you have selected someone, keep the line of communication open and have regular meetings to guarantee your needs are incorporated into the design.

**SEE
PAGE 21**



“Early in the Covid Era, having another space to entirely utilize for self-isolation was a game changer. Now just being able to support our family with extra space is incredibly useful!”

SEE
PAGE
7

When asked if creating an ADU changed the pace of the owner’s lives, most reported that the ADUs they built served as a means to support family members. Extra space provided versatility for young adult family members and older relatives who need independent space.



“Dealing with the permit process was challenging, at the end of the day I don’t have a background in architecture, and so when it was in my hands to communicate the issues of the City to the architect it took 8 weeks too long.”

SEE
PAGE
27

One of the challenges many homeowners face is navigating the permitting process for the first time. Most ADU owners who are starting out are unaware of how long the process can take to get an ADU permitted, let alone the time it takes for construction. Becoming more informed about the process at the start can help set realistic expectations and ensure a better experience in developing your ADU. If you are looking for a more streamlined experience, consider choosing one of the five free pre-approved plans that the City of Fresno offers. The plans themselves have already been permitted and so the process for these plans entails showing the location of the unit on your property and its connection to utilities.



“What cost me the most money was the delay, as materials had gone up in price. Luckily, I managed to save money by being able to do some tasks myself.”

SEE
PAGE
30

For handier homeowners, a popular response to cost saving strategies was personally tackling parts of the construction process themselves. Whether it be tiling, painting, major or minor construction, if there’s something you can do yourself this can be a way to save money.





PART 2: BUILDING YOUR HOME

In this section you will...

- Review the overall building process
- Consider using pre-approved or custom plans
- Learn about financing options

THE PATH FROM DREAM TO DREAM HOUSE



STEP 1
KNOW THE
RULES



STEP 2
CLARIFY YOUR
GOALS



STEP 5
CHOOSING A
TEAM



STEP 4
DESIGN
IDEAS



STEP 3
RESEARCH YOUR
PROPERTY



STEP 6
FINANCING



STEP 7
PERMITS



STEP 8
CONSTRUCTION



STEP 9
MOVE IN!





STEP 1. KNOW THE RULES

Like any development, your ADU or small home must meet certain local and state rules, including the City's Development Code, California Residential Code, and the CalGreen Code. This section provides an overview of the development and building requirements that apply to ADUs and small homes.

As you plan your home, ensure that it meets these requirements. If you are unsure about any of the rules and requirements, you can get help by contacting the Planning and Development Department (see Part 3 for contact information).

A list of suggested questions is included in the workbook to help you navigate how your project will meet these regulations.

ZONING

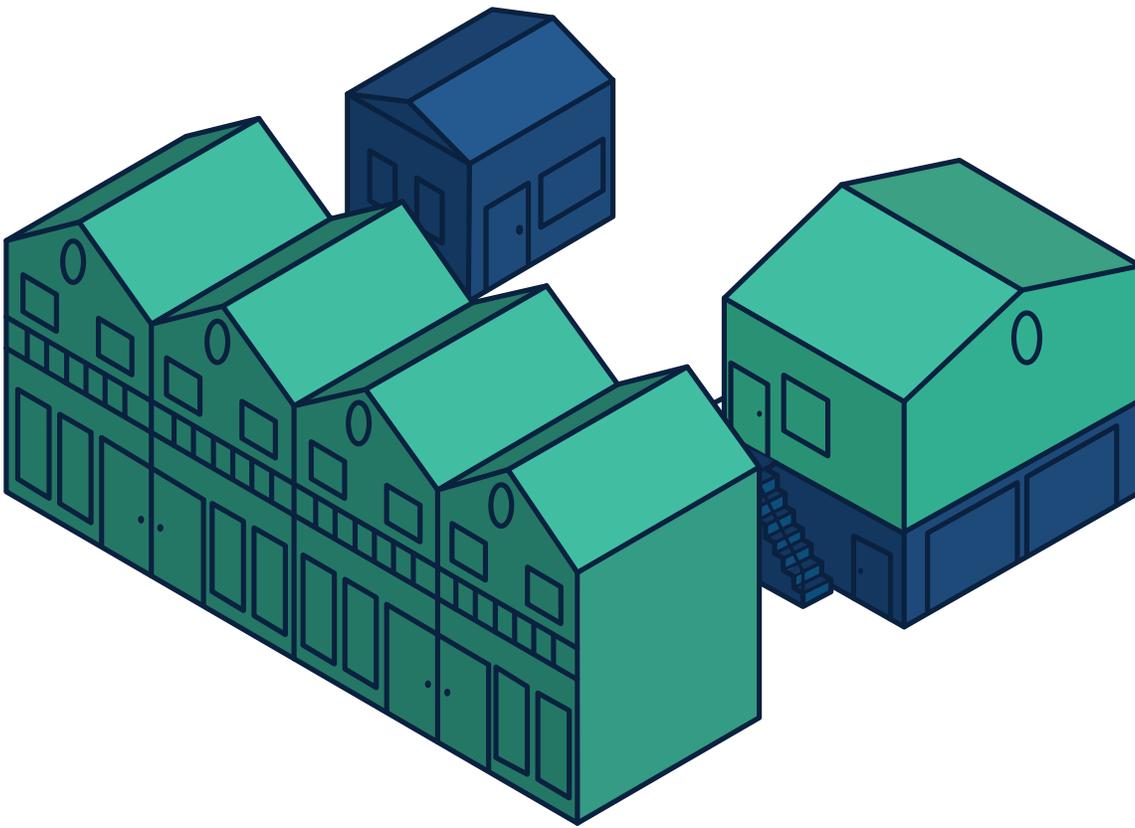
Small homes are allowed in all single-family zone districts and one multi-family district. Homeowners wishing to learn more about the zoning regulations are encouraged to read Article 9 of the Development Code.

ADUs are permitted on existing residential lots and in all zone districts that permit residential development, when built alongside a primary home.

NUMBER ALLOWED

The number of small homes allowed depends on your zoning district and what the density is allowed for that district.

One detached ADU and one attached ADU are allowed per single-family lot. ADUs are also permitted on parcels with multifamily development, but only through conversions of non-livable space, such as a common room or a garage.



ADUs are allowed on properties with multifamily homes, but only through the conversion of non-living space, such as a garage or laundry building.

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM SIZE

There is no minimum required size for small homes or ADUs. The minimum bedroom size required by code is 70 square feet.

The maximum allowed size for a small home is determined by the lot coverage requirements defined by the zoning district, but typically small homes are approximately 1,000 square feet or smaller.

For ADUs, the maximum size allowed depends on its type. ADUs that are created by converting an existing detached structure or converting a portion of the main home are allowed to use the full extent of the existing structure. A new attached ADU is allowed to be up to 50% of the size of the existing home or up to 1,200 square feet in area, whichever is less. A new detached ADU is allowed to be up to 1,200 square feet in area.



SETBACKS

A setback is the required distance between the property line and a built structure. Setbacks assist in fire protection, allow for sunlight and open space, and to help create privacy between lots.

For small homes, the required setbacks are determined by the zoning district.

For ADUs, the front-yard setback is determined by the zoning district, while the side and rear setbacks are four feet. An exception is if an existing structure is already located closer to the property line and is being converted into an ADU (ex. a garage with alley access that is being converted)..

PARKING

For small homes, one parking space is required per home and it must be located in a garage.

For ADUs, there are no off-street parking requirements and if a garage is converted to an ADU, replacement parking is not required.

DESIGN REVIEW

Small homes must meet the Site Design and Development Standards of the zoning district per the Development Code.

ADUs, on the other hand, only have design requirements when they are located in an area that has adopted design guidelines or if it is located in a designated historic district. In these areas, ADUs must simply be architecturally compatible with the main home. For example, if the main home is built in the Craftsman style, the ADU should reflect or take elements of that style, too.

FIRE SPRINKLERS

Newly constructed small homes are required to have fire sprinklers installed.

An ADU, however, is only required to have fire sprinklers if the primary home already has or is required to have fire sprinklers. There are a few additional, but very unique circumstances, where fire sprinklers may be required. In these cases, the Fire Department will review your site plan to determine if you need sprinklers.

SEWER AND WATER

A new small home must connect to the City's water and sewer infrastructure.

For an ADU, you have the option to connect to the main home's existing lines, or you can connect directly to the City's infrastructure. Connecting to the City lines can be helpful if you'd like the ADU to have a separate utility bill, but note that connection fees would be required.

GAS AND ELECTRICITY

New gas and electricity connections are managed by Pacific, Gas, and Electric (PG&E).

For a small home, visit [PG&E's website](#)¹ or call 1 (877) 743-7782 to apply for new service.

For an ADU, you can connect to the existing service located at the primary residence. As you're designing a new ADU or using pre-approved plans, you'll want to make sure the electrical panel at the primary residence has the electric service capacity (amperage) to take on the additional loads that will come from your ADU. If not, you can upgrade the electrical panel at the primary residence to meet the combined loads of the primary residence and ADU.

¹ www.pge.com/en_US/residential/customer-service/home-services/renovating-and-building/understanding-the-application-process/understanding-the-application-process.page





STEP 2. CLARIFY YOUR GOALS

As you imagine your ADU or small home ask yourself a few questions...

WHAT WILL YOUR HOME DO FOR YOU?

WHAT ROLE IS IT PLAYING IN YOUR LIFE?

WILL IT HELP BRING YOUR FAMILY CLOSER TOGETHER?



TAKE A MOMENT

Use the Workbook in Part 4 to record your ideas, goals, and questions.



STEP 3. RESEARCH YOUR PROPERTY

An important step towards the beginning of the process is to look up basic information about your property, such as the Assessor's Parcel Number (APN), year built, dimensions of existing building(s), location of utilities, zoning, and any unique characteristics. This will help determine what the opportunities and constraints are, and how your ADU or small home will fit on your lot.



TAKE A MOMENT

Use the Workbook in Part 4 to write down information about your property, but don't worry if you can't fill everything out just yet - you'll be able to learn more throughout the process.

Use the City's Data Hub to look up information about your property. Visit gis-cityoffresno.hub.arcgis.com and select General Viewer. You can zoom into your property and click on it to see a popup with information including your APN, Lot Area, and Zoning. To see if you are located in the Tower District Specific Plan Area, click on the icon in the upper-right side of the screen to turn on the Specific Plan Areas layer. To see if you are located in a designated Historic District, go back to the Data Hub home page and select Historic Preservation. The designated districts are shown in green.

Use the Fresno County Parcel Lookup to see your property dimensions and any recorded easements. Visit www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/assessor/mapping/parcel-map-lookup, type in the first 3 numbers of your APN into Book, the next 2 numbers into Page, and a recent year into Roll Year until your APN page appears. From here you can download your APN page.

Assessor's Map Page Lookup

Book:	Page:	Roll Year:
<input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="123"/>	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="45"/>	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text" value="2021"/>

If you are unsure about how to access this information or need some assistance, please call the City of Fresno Planning and Development Department at (559) 621-8277.





STEP 4. DESIGN IDEAS AND SELECTING A PLAN

SELECT A FREE PRE-APPROVED PLAN OR DESIGN A CUSTOM PLAN

PRE-APPROVED PLANS

The City of Fresno offers five free pre-approved plans that you can use for the development of your ADU or small home. These plans range in size from a 340 sq. ft. studio to a 1,014 sq. ft. 3-bedroom and are already approved with City staff to meet local building requirements. To learn more about the pre-approved plans in Part 3.

CUSTOM PLANS

Depending on your goals and needs, you may want to design your own custom plan. Perhaps your property has an unusual configuration that needs to be considered, or perhaps you have a strong vision of what your ADU or small home should look like. Whatever the case may be, homeowners frequently choose to work on their own or with designers to create custom plans.

CONSIDERATIONS

You may already have a vision of what your home will look like, but it is important to spend some time thinking about function. How will the design of the home meet your short-term and long-term objectives?

ACCESS

Think about how residents will get to their front door. There are many options to provide pathways that are stable and well-lit.

FINISHED MATERIALS

While you don't need to make decisions yet, keep in mind that the materials you use will affect your budget. A designer can provide cost estimates. You might also be able to save money by reusing some materials. If you're looking for healthier options, consider using low or no VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) paints and flooring indoors.

BEDROOMS

The number of bedrooms should reflect who you think will spend time there. Studios are attractive for their open and flexible space, but designated bedrooms offer more privacy. Units with designated bedrooms usually rent at a higher price, but they could be more expensive to build.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN AND ACCESSIBILITY

A home built with universal design means that anyone, regardless of age or ability, can live there comfortably. Universal design features include easy access to the unit with a ramp, no stairs, removable lower drawers, level-entry showers, lower counter tops and raised electrical outlets. Building to universal design standards is a smart way to ensure the home will meet needs as they change over time. The City's free pre-approved plans are designed for aging in place.

TRADITIONAL OR PREFABRICATED CONSTRUCTION

In addition to many design choices, you can choose whether to build using traditional "stick-built" on-site construction, prefabricated assembly, or a combination of both. Factory-built, modular, panelized and other newer construction technologies are increasingly available, and in some situations can reduce your costs or the time it takes to build. You might also be surprised by the high quality. If you are interested in a prefabricated method, consider how the building will be delivered to your lot, the delivery costs, and what site-preparation work will be required. Placement on the site, especially in a backyard would require a crane. It's also common to combine traditional "stick-built" wall framing with manufactured roof trusses on top.

ENVIRONMENTAL

You can reduce environmental impacts and save on energy costs through the layout and materials that you choose for your home. For instance, you can use recycled materials, insulate well, and orient the home to take advantage of the sun's location throughout the year. Work with your development team to understand what's possible.



An example of a prefabricated ADU¹ being craned into a residents backyard.

¹ https://www.portlandtribune.com/news/adus-out-of-your-price-range-think-again/article_fd249222-06a8-50b4-839b-bd6aac1ad70d.html





STEP 5. CHOOSING A DEVELOPMENT TEAM

ADU-IT-YOURSELF?

This section is primarily aimed at homeowners with little or no experience in construction or construction management. Homeowners who feel comfortable managing the development of their ADU or small home may still find some helpful tips to keep in mind when hiring subcontractors.

TYPES OF COMPANIES & THEIR ROLES

There are a number of ways homeowners can get the help they need to design and build their home. Most homeowners choose one of three types of development teams:

1. **Design Professional and Contractor:** The homeowner hires an architect, residential designer, or structural engineer, to complete the design of the home and then hires a contractor to construct it.
2. **Design-Build Contractor:** The homeowner hires a design-build contractor who will, as the name implies, design and build the home.
3. **Manufacturers and on-site Contractor:** The homeowner purchases from a manufacturer a standard or customized home which is manufactured, inspected, and approved in a facility and then delivered to the site. The on-site contractor prepares the site including grading, foundation, and utilities to receive the home and completes utility hookups.

ARCHITECTS

Architects are licensed professionals who can provide services ranging from design to construction drawings and oversee construction. Architects are legally responsible for their designs.



DESIGNERS

Designers have education or work experience in design, but unlike architects, are not professionally licensed. Experience dictates the level of services designers can provide and they may coordinate with other professionals to complete projects.

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

Structural engineers are licensed professionals who may or may not have a strong design background, but will have experience preparing drawings for construction. Structural Engineers are legally responsible for their drawings.

MANUFACTURERS

Factory-built homes are becoming more popular as an affordable and time-efficient housing development option. Manufacturers are monitored by the State and contractors are required to oversee the installation of the home on the property.

CONTRACTORS

Contractors are licensed to do construction and are legally responsible for their work.

WHAT TO PREPARE

There are a few basics you'll want to prepare before contacting designers and builders.

- **Goals:** First, go back to Step 1 to review your goals. Understanding your goals will help you select a pre-approved plan, or, if opting for a custom plan, will help your architect create a design that's right for you.
- **Budget:** Next, you'll want an initial budget. The cost of construction can vary depending on type, size, site, utilities, and finishes. Your contractor or design professional can help narrow the price range. The financing available to you will also help determine what you can afford (See Step 6).
- **Supporting Information:** Bring along your property information and your notes. If using a pre-approved plan, bring copies of the plan.

HIRING A TEAM

Building an ADU or small home is a long-term personal investment for most homeowners, so it is important to have a development team that understands your vision and with whom you can communicate well. Below are key questions to help you choose a design and development team. It is recommended to get bids from multiple designers and builders.

- **Cost and Services:** What will the firm charge and what services are included?
- **Communication and Process:** Do you feel that you are being heard and responded to in a timely manner?
- **Credentials:** Has the firm built other similar homes or completed remodels or new construction at a similar scale? Do they have experience with the City's permitting process? Ask to see what similar work they've performed and request references. Always verify their professional license and business address as well.

Visit here for Contractors:

<https://www.cslb.ca.gov/onlineservice/checklicensell/checklicense.aspx>

Visit here for Architects:

https://www.cab.ca.gov/consumers/license_search.shtml

Visit here for Engineers:

https://www.bpelsg.ca.gov/consumers/lic_lookup.shtml

SIGNING A CONTRACT

When you've decided which firm(s) you want to hire, a final contract should detail the work they will do, the time frame they will do it in, and the costs. The contract is a legal agreement by both you and the company to complete the tasks outlined within it. The contract is a foundation for good communication between you and your team.

Make sure everything that you discussed is included in the contract. For example, if you are building an above-garage ADU and want to reuse your old garage door, make sure that's noted. You have the right to add or modify elements of the contract, even after it is signed, by using a change order.

TIP:

Here is an example list for what a contract with a contractor should include. Note that a contract with a another type of professional will differ.²

- Contractor's license number, name, and address
- Statement confirming they have workers compensation insurance for employees
- Total project cost and payment schedule
- Start date and timeline
- List of work to be accomplished and materials to be used
- Work to be subcontracted (if any)
- Specific terms about what constitutes substantial completion of work
- The terms of warranties
- A provision requiring the contractor to obtain lien releases from all subcontractors and suppliers (this protects the homeowner if a subcontractor claims they were not paid)
- Whether there is a cancellation penalty
- Plan for cleanup and removal of material and debris
- Any special requests (such as saving scrap lumber or bricks)
- Requirements for protecting property and landscaping
- Areas where materials may or may not be stored
- Any instructions regarding children or pets

² San Mateo County. 2018. Second Unit Workbook. Page 77





STEP 6. FINANCING

Obtaining financing is often the most significant challenge homeowners face in trying to build a new ADU or small home. Typically, homeowners use their own savings, a loan or some combination of those sources to finance their development.

Here is an overview of some basic considerations and available resources to help you manage or lower your costs.

COMMON TYPES OF FINANCING

A short description for common types of financing is provided below to help you initiate a conversation with your financial institution(s). You can use the Workbook in Part 4 to jot down which options are available to you and what the pros and cons are of each option.

HOME EQUITY LINE OF CREDIT (HELOC) OR HOME EQUITY LOAN

A HELOC or a home equity loan allows you to borrow a certain dollar amount corresponding with their accrued equity and the value of their home.

CASH-OUT REFINANCE

A cash-out refinance is also based on home equity but includes refinancing the primary mortgage.

RENOVATION AND CONSTRUCTION LOANS

Renovation and construction loans are based on the value of the future home, thus the lender will need to see permit-ready drawings to determine an estimate.

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Local community nonprofit organizations may have programs to assist in small home or ADU construction.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Some homeowners are able to work with friends and family members to help support the development of their ADU.

PERSONAL SAVINGS

Some homeowners are able to fund the development of their small home or ADU with personal savings.

TIP:

If you are applying for a loan, secure your financing about one month before you're ready to apply for permits.

MAKING AN INFORMED DECISION

Before making big financial decisions, it's a good idea to seek advice from an independent financial counselor or homeownership expert. You can use the Workbook in Part 4 to estimate hard and soft costs.

Remember that you don't have to get a loan from the first lender you meet. Be prepared to seek quotes from several different lenders to see which can offer you the best rate and/or terms.

POTENTIAL WAYS TO HELP LOWER COSTS

RENTING:

- Rent out an ADU to help cover some of the construction costs. If you receive rental income, you'll want to report the amount in your taxes.

SWEAT EQUITY:

- Find opportunities to do some of the work yourself, where appropriate. Some ideas include installing cabinets, ordering appliances, painting, and landscaping.

RECYCLING:

- Reuse materials you already have or purchase gently used ones.

PREPARE FOR PROPERTY TAX ADJUSTMENT

Building an ADU will raise your property taxes because it will add value to your property. In Fresno County, property taxes are below 1% of the property's assessed market value.





STEP 7. PERMITS

PREPARE TO APPLY

Usually someone on your development team will handle the permitting process, however if you are managing this step then start by reviewing the required application materials. You can also contact the Planning and Development for assistance. If using a free pre-approved plan, you'll need to know the standard plan type (example: 23-TADU-001 for the studio Plan #1). For custom ADU plans you'll need a digital copy of the construction drawings from your development team.

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION AND PAY FEES

Once all your application materials are ready, submit them to the Planning and Development Department and pay the application fee. There are no application fees for the 5 pre-approved plans.



TAKE A MOMENT:

Use the References in Part 4 to see more information on how to prepare to apply or submit your application and pay fees.

CITY REVIEW AND REVISIONS

City staff will conduct an initial review to make sure your application is complete. When the application is complete, staff will begin reviewing your plans.

Staff reviewing your application will likely request some revisions. Revisions are normal and an expected part of the permitting process. Using a pre-approved plan can reduce the number of revisions.

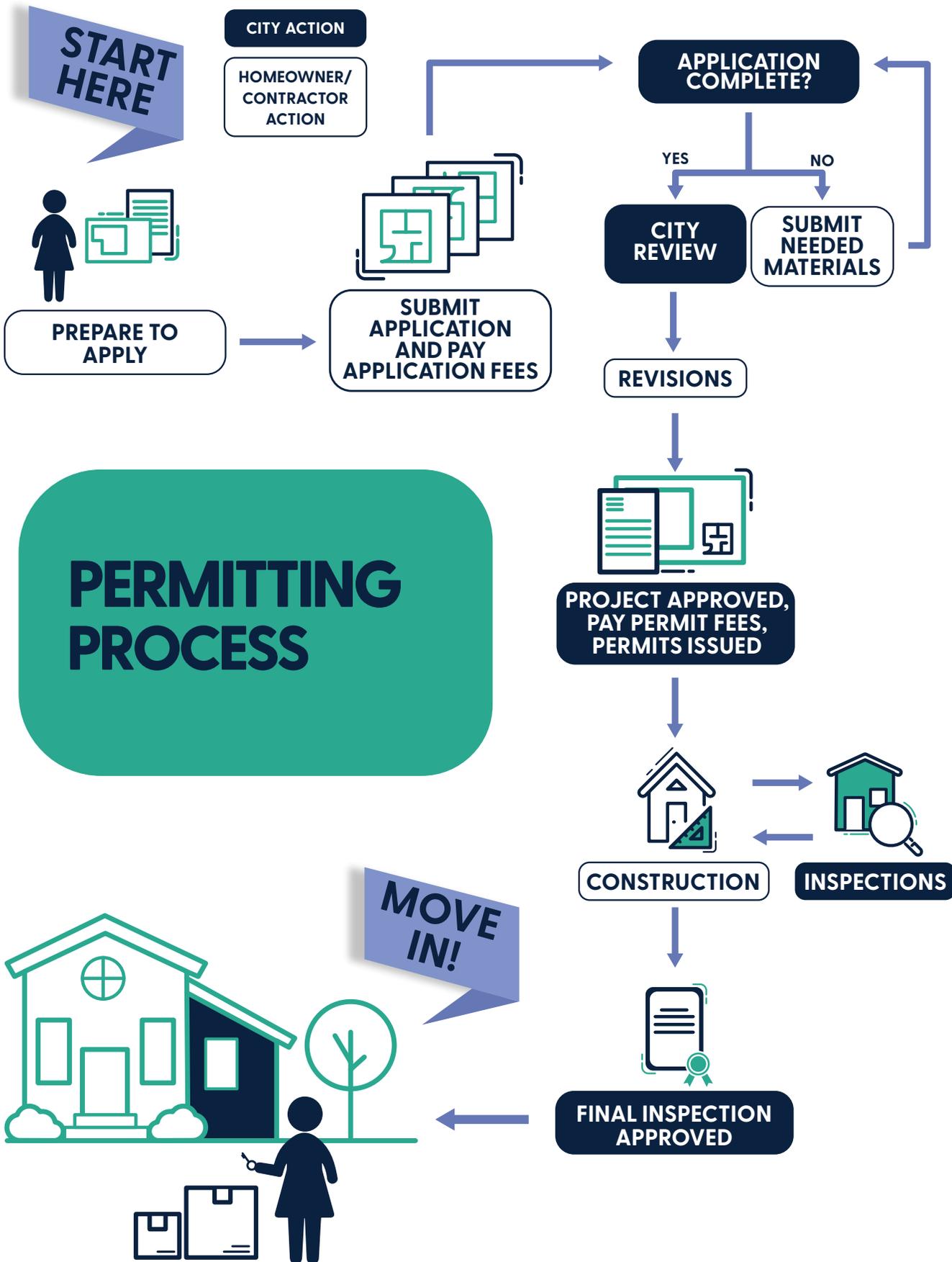
PERMITS

Once drawings are approved, your design professional or contractor can pull permits to build your project. Otherwise, you will need to pull the permits. Pulling permits is the process of applying, paying fees, and receiving permits to build your home. Building permits exist for many reasons, most importantly to keep you and your family safe. The permits are associated with inspections by qualified City inspectors who will periodically visit your site to make sure the project is complying with State and local codes. Projects completed without permits are often uninsurable, create challenges to selling in the future, and could lead to delays if issued a stop construction notice.

Once permits are pulled, construction can begin!

PERMITTING AN EXISTING ADU

If you already have an ADU on your property, find out if it needs to be permitted. Permitting existing ADUs help ensure the unit is safe, so you might be asked to make improvements to meeting building codes. Contact the Planning and Development Department for more information.







STEP 8. CONSTRUCTION

PREPARING FOR DISRUPTION

Part of the process of building a home is preparing yourself mentally for the disruption that occurs during any construction project. Construction typically lasts from a few months to a full year, during which time workers will have access to your property. If you are building an ADU, there will likely be instances where the construction will reach into places that you use on a normal basis, such as a driveway or yard. Talk about these details with your builder to understand what to expect.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

While it may feel as though you're in the back seat during construction, there are many important responsibilities that you need to fulfill. You'll need to:

- Monitor the work to make certain it's progressing according to schedule and that the quality is high;
- Make decisions in a timely manner when questions arise;
- Ensure that required inspections are occurring; and
- Ask for all product and equipment warranties and instructions.

INSPECTIONS

Inspections are usually coordinated by the contractor, but it's still your responsibility to confirm that they are performed. An "APPROVED INSPECTION" notice will validate that the work is continuing towards completion.

If you're doing the work yourself, you'll need to schedule inspectors using the Voice Permits Interactive Voice Response System.

- Voice Permits Quick Reference Guide: <https://www.fresno.gov/darm/building-safety/construction-inspection-services/>

ALL PERMITS HAVE A TIME LIMITATION AND EXPIRATION

Every permit issued shall become invalid if work is not commenced in 180 days after its issuance, or if work is suspended or abandoned for a period of 180 days. The Building Official can grant extensions.





STEP 9. MOVE IN

Congratulations! After construction is complete and the final inspections are done, your home will be ready to move in!

TIP:

Remember to update your property insurance to include your new home!

If you are planning to rent out your new small home or ADU, this section will provide a handful of resources to help you become an ethical landlord.

REGISTER YOUR RENTAL PROPERTY

If you are renting your new ADU or small home, you will need to register your unit with the City. The registration is free and application can be done online at rhr.fresno.gov. An inspection is not required, but you will need to complete and upload an online Application for Exemption (for inspections). You can find the Application for Exemption form in English and Spanish at www.fresno.gov/codeenforcement/rental-housing.

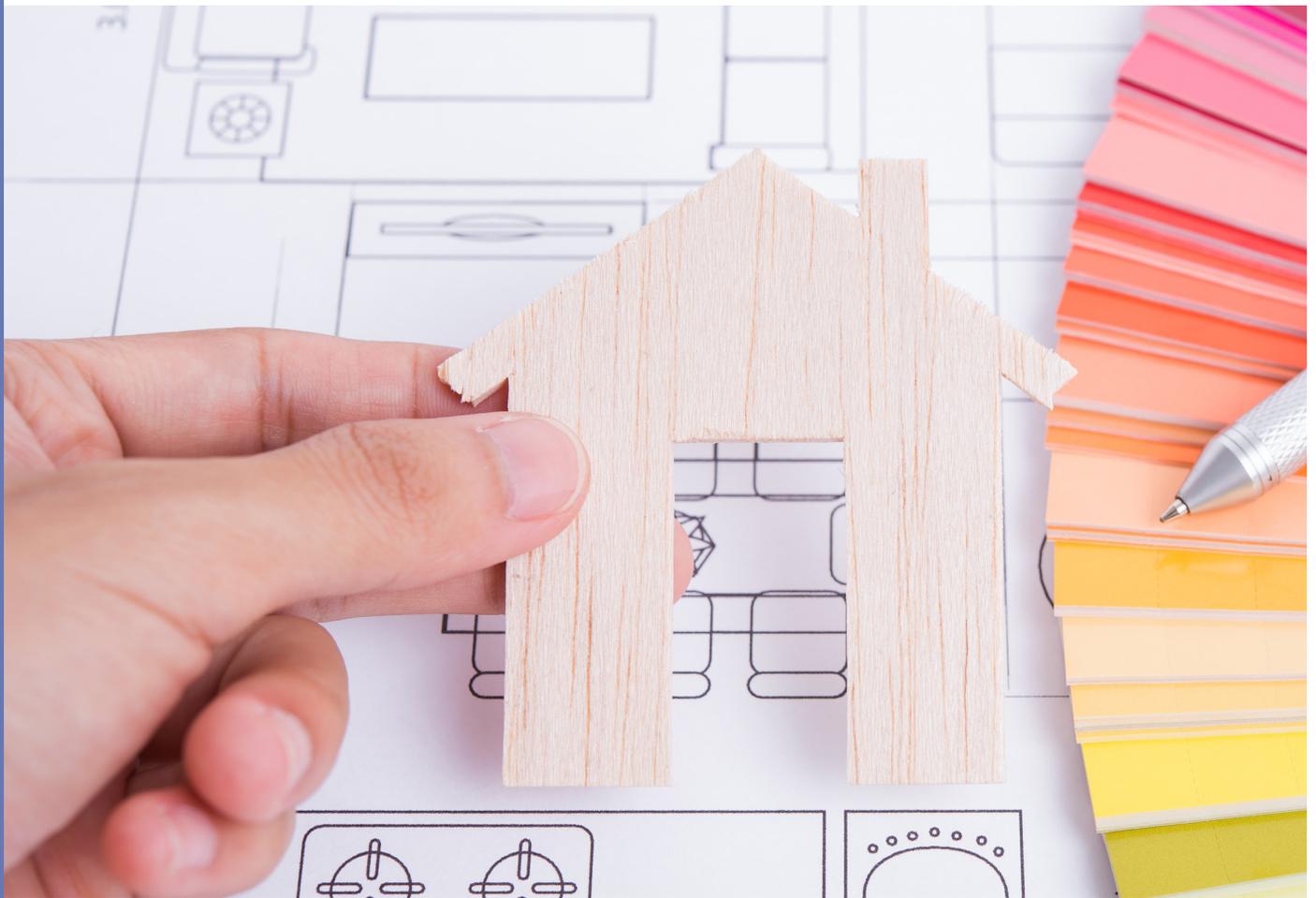
BECOMING A LANDLORD

It is very important to be knowledgeable of landlord-tenant and fair housing laws in order to follow your legal obligations and understand how to resolve any issues that might arise. Having this information can help you and your tenant maintain a positive relationship. If becoming a landlord isn't for you, look into hiring a property management company to take care of the details. Check out *California Tenants, A Guide to Residential Tenants' and Landlords' Rights and Responsibilities*, published by the State of California, at www.courts.ca.gov/documents/California-Tenants-Guide.pdf

LEARN MORE:

If you're interested in renting your ADU or small home to residents with Housing Choice Vouchers visit www.fresnohousing.org/partners/becoming-a-landlord, email landlordoutreach@fresnohousing.org, or dial (559) 457-4122.





PART 3:

FREE PRE-APPROVED PLANS

In this section you will...

- Learn about the City's five free pre-approved plans
- See renderings, exterior styles, and floor plans for the five free pre-approved plans

The City of Fresno's ADU and Small Homes Program encourages the development of ADUs and small homes by offering a selection of free pre-approved plans to homeowners. The plans offer a variety of sizes, options, and aesthetics that align with the majority of the single-family lots and neighborhoods in Fresno.

The goal of the Program is to increase accessibility to ADUs and small homes as an affordable housing option by making it easier to start the development process.

For more information visit the website at www.fresno.gov/ADU.





ADU 01

TYPE: Detached **SIZE:** 340 SF **BEDROOMS:** 1 **BATHROOMS:** 1



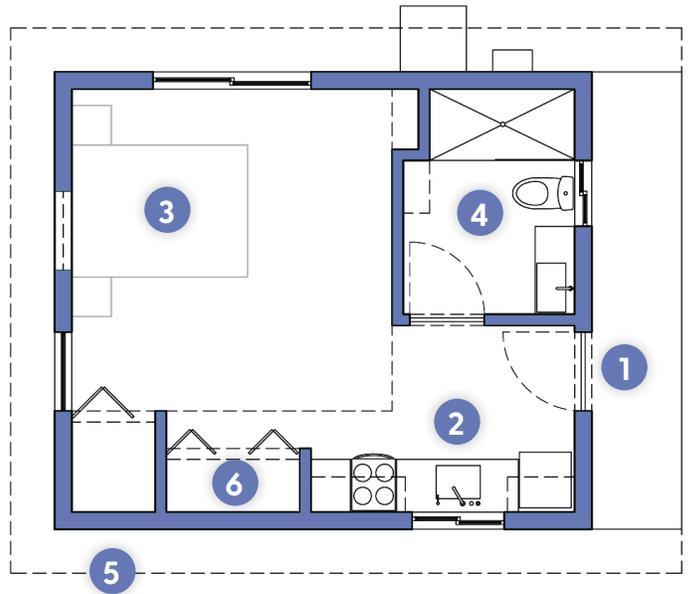
CONTEMPORARY



CRAFTSMAN



GABLE



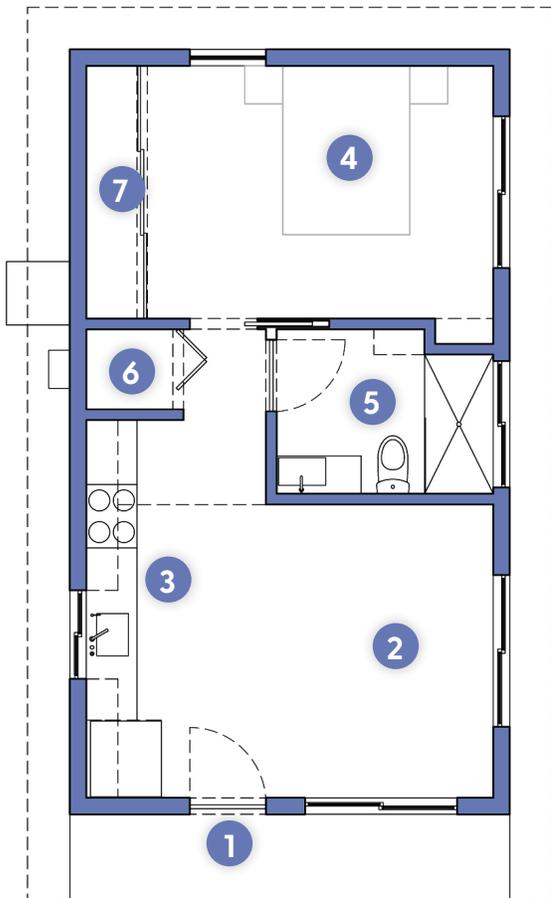
- 1 Entry
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Bedroom
- 4 Bathroom
- 5 Laundry
- 6 Closet/Storage



ADU 02

TYPE: Detached **SIZE:** 510 SF

BEDROOMS: 1 **BATHROOMS:** 1



- 1** Entry
- 2** Living Room
- 3** Kitchen
- 4** Bedroom
- 5** Bathroom
- 6** Laundry
- 7** Closet/Storage



CONTEMPORARY



CRAFTSMAN



GABLE





ADU 03

TYPE:

Detached

BEDROOMS:

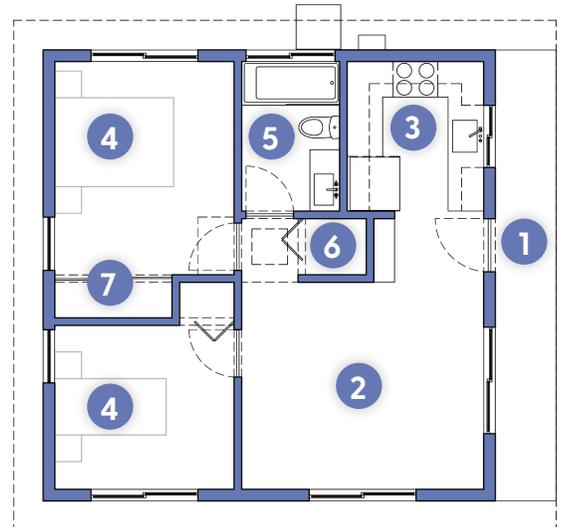
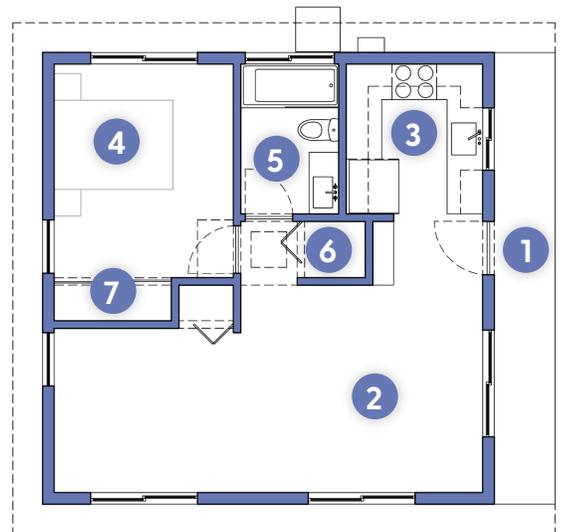
1-2

BATHROOMS:

1

SIZE:

625 SF



CONTEMPORARY



CRAFTSMAN

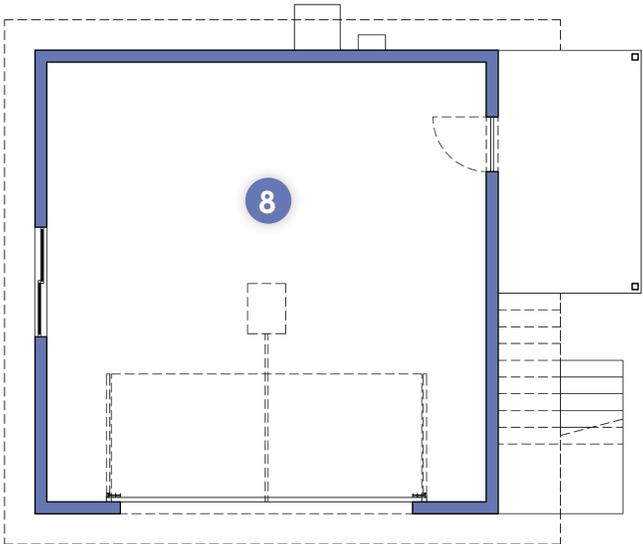
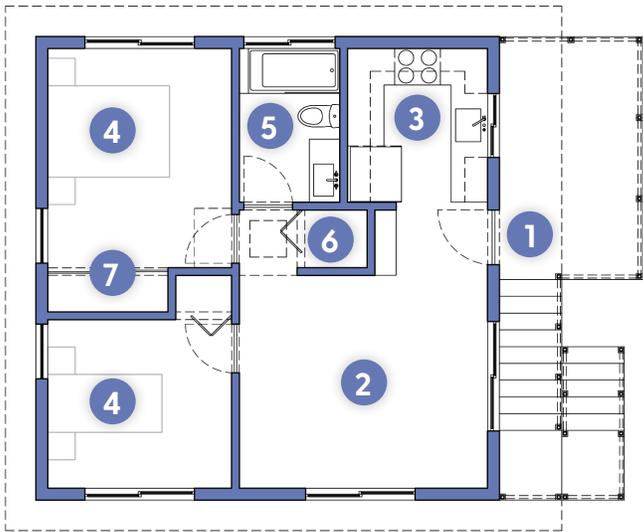


GABLE

- 1 Entry
- 2 Living Room
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Bedroom
- 5 Bathroom
- 6 Laundry
- 7 Closet/Storage



ADU 04



TYPE:

Detached over
Garage

BEDROOMS:

1-2

BATHROOMS:

1

SIZE:

625 SF



CONTEMPORARY



CRAFTSMAN



GABLE

- 1 Entry
- 2 Living Room
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Bedroom
- 5 Bathroom
- 6 Laundry
- 7 Closet/Storage
- 8 Garage





ADU 05

TYPE: Detached
SIZE: 1015 SF

BEDROOMS: 3
BATHROOMS: 2



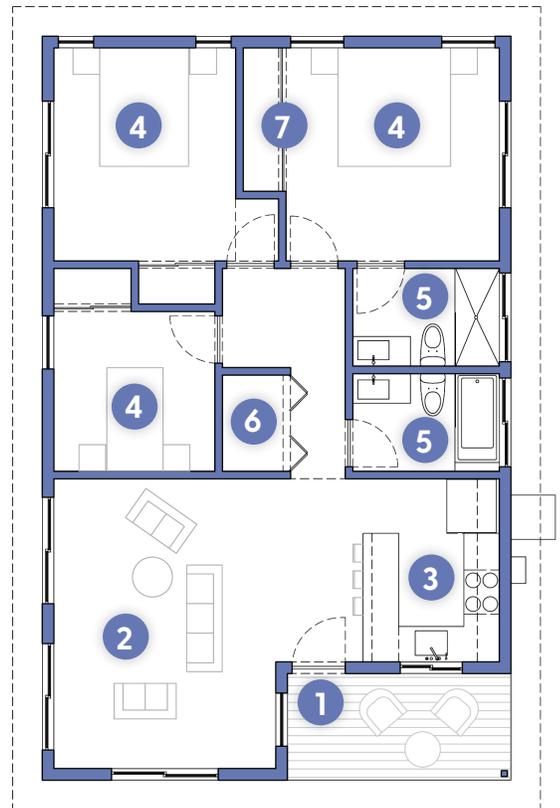
CONTEMPORARY



CRAFTSMAN



GABLE



- 1** Entry
- 2** Living Room
- 3** Kitchen
- 4** Bedroom
- 5** Bathroom
- 6** Laundry
- 7** Closet/Storage



PART 4:

REFERENCES AND WORKBOOK

REFERENCES

PREPARE TO APPLY

- Application materials: <https://www.fresno.gov/darm/adu-program/#tab-02>
- Contact Planning and Development Department: adu@fresno.gov and (559)621-8077
- Research information on your property: See STEP 3 - RESEARCH YOUR PROPERTY
- Selecting a free pre-approved plan: <https://www.fresno.gov/darm/adu-program/#tab-01>

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION AND PAY FEES

- ADU Quick Start Guide: <https://www.fresno.gov/darm/adu-program/#tab-03>
- Application Portal: <https://lmsaca.fresno.gov/CitizenAccess/Default.aspx>
- ADU Tutorial Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGB5JnC-Dro&list=PL5HumS2qE3v5fJMX2ZXEDx4a-DBUfrbqA&index=16>
- Other helpful Building Department Tutorial Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5HumS2qE3v5fJMX2ZXEDx4-DBUfrbqA>

CONTACT INFORMATION

City of Fresno:

- Planning (559) 621-8277
- Building (559) 621-8084 (General)
- Building (559) 621-8077 (Pre-approved ADU Plans)
- Public Works (559) 621-8650
- Public Utilities (559) 621-8600
- Fire (559) 621-4181

PG&E (877) 743-7782

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS

Backdoor Revolution: The Definitive Guide to ADU Development by Kol Peterson, 2018.

- <http://www.buildinganadu.com/backdoor-revolution>

CODES

Fresno Municipal Code

- https://library.municode.com/ca/fresno/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=MUCOFR_CH15CIDECOINRE

California Residential Code:

- <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/BSC/Codes>

CalGreen Code:

- <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/building-standards/calgreen/index.shtml>

WEBSITES

Fresno ADU Program

- www.fresno.gov/adu

California Department of Housing and Community Development

- <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/accessorydwellingunits.shtml>

Casita Coalition

- <https://www.casitacoalition.org/>

Accessory Dwellings.

- www.accessorydwellings.org

Building an ADU

- www.buildinganadu.com

Terner Center for Housing Innovation

- <https://turnercenter.berkeley.edu>

LANDLORD INFORMATION

California Tenants Guide:

- <https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/California-Tenants-Guide.pdf>

California Landlord Association Courses:

- <https://www.roaca.org/Catalog>



HOMEOWNER WORKBOOK

This workbook is included as a space for you to write down notes, questions, and to track progress through your development journey.

CHECKLIST:

- 1. Clarify your goals
- 2. Research your property
- 3. Select a pre-approved plan or create a custom plan
- 4. Create a Site Plan
- 5. Secure financing
- 6. Hire your development team
- 7. Apply for a permit
- 8. Start construction
- 9. Complete final Inspections
- 10. Move in!
- 11. Add the new home to your tax records
- 12. If renting, register the unit with the City of Fresno

WHY BUILD AN ADU OR SMALL HOME?

GOALS:

-
-
-
-
-

IDEAS:

QUESTIONS:

Q: _____ ?
A: _____

MY PROPERTY INFORMATION:

ADDRESS:

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER (APN): _____

ZONING: _____

BUILDING TYPE:
(SINGLE-FAMILY, TOWNHOUSE, DUPLEX, N/A-VACANT LOT, OR OTHER)

HOME SIZE (SQ. FT.): _____

YEAR BUILT: _____

LOT SIZE (ACRES): _____ LOT DIMENSIONS (WIDTH): _____ (LENGTH): _____

ABUTS AN ALLEY? Y N

HISTORIC DISTRICT OR TOWER DISTRICT? Y N

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS, IF ANY, OF YOUR LOT (EX. OAK TREE ON FENCE LINE; LOCATED IN A HISTORIC DISTRICT):

UTILITIES SIZED AND LOCATED? Y N

ELECTRICAL: _____

WATER: _____

SEWER: _____



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR PROPERTY RESEARCH

These are a few suggested questions you can ask as you research your property and develop your goals.

Where can it be located? What are the required setbacks?

A setback, or required yard, is an amount of space required between two structures, or between a structure and a property line or utility line.

Are there easements on my property?

Easements are rights to the use of a property for specific purpose and include utility (water pipes, telecom cabling, electric grid infrastructure) and private (neighbor access to driveway, run sewage, and draw water). Recorded easements may be shown on recorded documents, such as maps, deeds, and title report at the Fresno County Record's Office.

Where do I want the main entry to be? Windows facing? Roof oriented to optimize solar panel sun exposure?

Does the primary house have adequate electrical capacity to take on additional load from an ADU or will a separate electrical panel be necessary?

Does the primary house have adequate sewer and water lines for the ADU to connect to or will new lines need to be put in?

If an internal ADU, are the existing stairs and windows adequate?

What are the requirements if I want the ADU to have its own address?

What fees should I expect?

How much work am I permitted to do and what is required to be done by a licensed contractor?

NOTES/ SKETCHES:

A large grid area for notes and sketches, consisting of a fine grid of small squares and a larger grid of bigger squares.

HARD COST AND SOFT COSTS

Use this sheet to help estimate your expenses.

HARD COST ESTIMATE WORKSHEET:

Construction labor and materials \$

Interior finishes \$

Landscaping \$

Utility installations \$

Fire safety systems \$

Subtotal: \$

SOFT COST ESTIMATE WORKSHEET:

Consultant fees \$

Applicant and permit fees \$

Loan fees \$

Insurance \$

Subtotal: \$

Total: \$

TOTAL WITH CONTINGENCY*: \$

**Contingency is a percentage (usually anywhere from 5-20%) of the total project cost built in to help cover unanticipated expenses, such as higher-than-expected building or consultant costs. Think of it as a spending “cushion.”*

FINANCING - WEIGHING THE PROS AND CONS

Financing Option A: _____

Pros	Cons

Financing Option B: _____

Pros	Cons

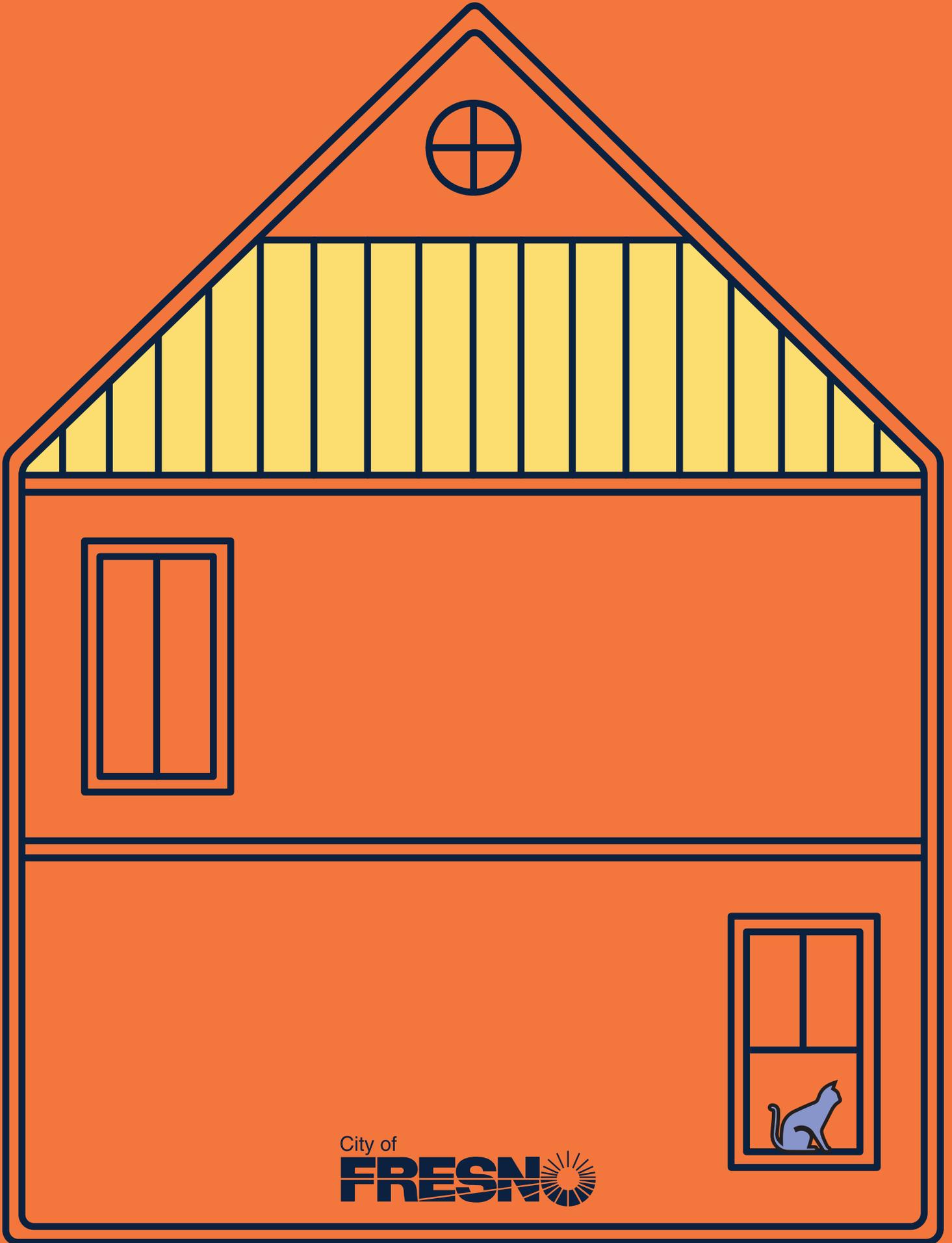
Financing Option C: _____

Pros	Cons

Financing Option D: _____

Pros	Cons





City of
FRESNO 

