

# ADU QUICK-START CHEAT SHEET

(What Every Homeowner Must Know Before They Waste Time or Money)

Use this cheat sheet to save yourself from:

- ➔ Endless back-and-forth
- ➔ Unrealistic expectations

- ➔ "You never told me that!" moments
- ➔ Budget blowouts

## 1 FEASIBILITY CHECK (Don't Skip This Step)

Before anything happens, you must confirm your property can legally take an ADU.

Check these first:

- Zoning rules
- Setbacks
- Parking requirements
- Utilities (water, sewer, electrical)
- Lot layout and access

If this step is wrong... **everything that follows is a disaster.**

## 3 CHOOSE YOUR ADU TYPE

Your cost, timeline, and stress level all start here.

Common options:

- Detached ADU
- Attached ADU
- Garage conversion
- Basement conversion
- Junior ADU (up to 500 sq ft)

Common mistakes:

- Starting design before confirming feasibility
- Believing they can finish a garage conversion for \$20k
- Underestimating timelines
- Getting shocked by the cost of structural engineering



## 2 DESIGN + PERMITS (The 60-Day Clock Starts)

California law says cities must approve or deny an ADU application in **60 days**.

You'll need:

- A qualified designer/architect
- Structural calculations
- Energy compliance
- Site and floor plans

Typical ranges:

- Design: **\$3,500–\$15,000**
- Permits: **\$1,500–\$15,000**

Pick the wrong type → timelines double.

Pick the right type → smooth sailing.

## 4 CONSTRUCTION (Where the Real Money Goes)

- Typical build time: **2–6 months**
- Garage conversion: **\$30k–\$100k**
- New build: **\$100k–\$350k+**

Key stages:

- Site prep & foundation
- Framing & rough trades
- Insulation & drywall
- Interior finishes

## 5 FINAL INSPECTIONS + CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

- ✓ Rough inspections (foundation, framing, trades)
- ✓ Insulation + energy compliance
- ✓ Drywall inspection
- ✓ Final plumbing/electrical/HVAC/safety
- ✓ Final building inspection → Certificate of Occupancy

Understand these steps and you'll instantly look like the one homeowner who "gets it." Pass all inspections → **you get your Certificate of Occupancy. Because** no C.O. = You can't rent it, can't use it legally, and you inherit problems at sale time.