

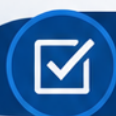


FAMILY
— HOME IMPROVEMENTS —



BUILT FOR
SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA
HOMES

THE ULTIMATE ADU CHECKLIST



A Homeowner's Guide to Planning, Budgeting,
Permits, Design, and Construction



PLAN

Your Goals
& Options



BUDGET

Costs, Financing
& ROI



PERMITS

Navigate Codes
& Approvals



DESIGN

Layouts, Style
& Function



BUILD

Construction
& Completion



ADU EXPERTS

QUALITY CRAFTSMANSHIP

FAMILY VALUES

*Built for Family.
Designed for Life.*

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Your Roadmap to Building an ADU in Long Beach

A practical homeowner guide for planning, budgeting, permits, design, construction, and choosing the right team.

An accessory dwelling unit can create flexible living space for family, generate potential rental income, support aging in place, or add long-term usefulness to your property. But an ADU is not simply a small room addition. It is a complete dwelling with its own living, sleeping, cooking, and bathroom functions, which means design, utilities, permits, construction sequencing, and budgeting must all work together.

This guide combines the topics raised in the three Long Beach ADU videos you provided with current information from the City of Long Beach and the practical design-build perspective of Family Home Improvements. It is meant to help you ask better questions, avoid expensive surprises, and prepare for a productive first consultation.

Important: ADU laws, City procedures, loan programs, fees, and design standards can change. Always verify current requirements for your exact property before making financial or construction decisions.

What this guide covers

- ADU types and uses
- Long Beach planning and permit path
- Pre-approved plan opportunities
- Coastal Zone and historic property considerations
- Budget categories and financing questions
- Site, utility, design, and construction checklists
- Contractor questions, estimate comparison, and red flags
- Final walkthrough and homeowner action plan



GUIDE OVERVIEW

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CHAPTER 1

What Is an ADU?

An accessory dwelling unit, commonly called an ADU, is an independent residential unit located on the same property as a primary residence. Depending on the property and project, it may be detached, attached, converted from existing space, or created within a garage or another legal structure.

Common name	Typical use
Backyard cottage	Detached private living space
Granny flat	Housing for parents or relatives
In-law suite	Independent family accommodations
Rental unit	Long-term housing and potential income
Guest house	Private space for visitors
Home office plus living space	Flexible work and residential use

Why Long Beach homeowners consider ADUs

- Create housing for parents, adult children, caregivers, or extended family
- Add a separate space for guests or a live-in helper
- Generate potential long-term rental income, subject to applicable rules
- Make better use of an oversized backyard, garage, or underused portion of the property
- Increase flexibility and long-term usefulness of the property
- Plan for multigenerational living or aging in place



CHAPTER 2

Choose the Right ADU Type

Detached ADU

A separate structure in the yard. Offers privacy and design flexibility but usually requires new foundation, utilities, exterior walls, roofing, and site work.

Attached ADU

Built onto the existing house. Can simplify access to some utilities but requires careful structural, fire-separation, and layout planning.

Garage Conversion

Converts an existing legal garage into living space. May reduce some shell-construction work, but the slab, roof, drainage, ceiling height, utilities, and code condition must be evaluated.

Interior Conversion

Converts existing legal space within the home. The feasibility depends on access, natural light, ventilation, ceiling height, fire separation, and utility layout.

Junior ADU

A smaller unit created within an existing or proposed single-family residence under applicable state rules. Requirements differ from a standard ADU.

Decision questions

- Who will live in the ADU now, and who may use it later?
- Do you want maximum privacy or convenient connection to the main house?
- How much yard, parking, and outdoor space do you want to preserve?
- Does the existing garage have the right location and condition for conversion?
- Would a pre-approved detached design fit the property?
- Will the project need accessible or aging-in-place features?



CHAPTER 3

Long Beach Property Screening

Planning comes before design. Your exact lot conditions determine what is possible.

Long Beach is currently administering ADU and JADU applications directly under California state law while the City works through updated local ordinances. The City directs homeowners to its current ADU Planning Information Bulletin for development standards such as the number of units allowed, setbacks, height, parking, and other site rules.

SPECIAL PROPERTY CONDITIONS

Historic District or Landmark: A Certificate of Appropriateness may be required.

Coastal Zone: An administrative Local Coastal Development Permit is required before submitting the building permit application.

Uncertain zoning or property conditions: Use the City Planning and Zoning Inquiry process before committing to a design.

Property screening checklist

- Confirm parcel address and assessor information
- Confirm zoning and existing legal dwelling units
- Determine whether the property is in the Coastal Zone
- Determine whether the property is a landmark or in a historic district
- Review easements, utility lines, power poles, and sewer location
- Measure usable yard area and access path
- Identify protected trees, grade changes, drainage patterns, and retaining walls
- Confirm existing structures and additions are permitted
- Review required fire and emergency access
- Check whether your proposed use requires additional planning



CHAPTER 4

Long Beach Pre-Approved ADU Plans

The City of Long Beach offers a Pre-Approved Accessory Dwelling Unit Program, often called PAADU. The program is designed to save property owners time and improve cost predictability by offering designs that have already completed a City pre-approval process.

A pre-approved plan is not automatically approved for every lot. The design still must fit the property and comply with site-specific planning, foundation, utility, energy, fire, and other requirements. However, qualifying applications may receive over-the-counter assistance and, after approval, a building permit may be issued the same day.

Potential benefits

- Reduced architectural and structural plan-development time
- A clearer preview of layout, appearance, and construction scope
- Potentially faster plan review
- Greater cost planning confidence
- A useful starting point for detached single-story ADUs

Questions before selecting a plan

- Does the footprint fit without creating site conflicts?
- Does the plan provide the bedroom, storage, and accessibility you need?
- Where will the private entrance and outdoor area be located?
- Will site-specific engineering or plan modifications be required?
- How will sewer, water, gas, electrical, and drainage connect?
- What architect, engineer, and licensing fees apply to use the plan?



CHAPTER 5

Long Beach Backyard Builders Program

A City financing and technical-assistance opportunity for eligible homeowners.

The City of Long Beach Backyard Builders Program provides comprehensive assistance for financing, designing, permitting, and constructing an ADU. The current Round 2 program is expected to open for applications in Summer 2026 and is supported by state funding.

Current published feature	Round 2 information
Maximum financing	Up to \$250,000
Interest rate	2%
Loan term	30 years
Payments	Deferred for the life of the loan, subject to program terms
Project assistance	City-appointed project management and technical support
General eligibility	Income-qualified owner-occupants of eligible single-family homes; additional underwriting and property requirements apply
Housing commitment	Program affordability, tenant, and compliance conditions apply

Do not assume you qualify or that funding is available. The program is limited, applications may exceed available loans, and the City may use a lottery among qualified applicants. Review the current program page and guidelines before relying on this financing.



CHAPTER 6

ADU Site Feasibility Checklist

Site and utilities	Access and livability
■ Property survey or accurate site measurements	■ Existing trees, roots, and landscaping
■ Rear and side access for workers and materials	■ Power lines, poles, and utility easements
■ Space for foundation and excavation equipment	■ Slope, retaining walls, and soil conditions
■ Setbacks and distance from existing structures	■ Fire access and address visibility
■ Sewer connection route and elevation	■ Trash and recycling storage
■ Water service capacity and route	■ Privacy between the ADU and main home
■ Electrical service size and panel location	■ Future maintenance access
■ Gas availability or all-electric design	■ Construction staging and temporary storage
■ Stormwater and roof drainage path	■ Neighbor impacts and property protection

A site visit should happen before a final budget is promised. Utility distance, foundation conditions, access limitations, and hidden property issues can materially change the scope.



CHAPTER 7

Build a Complete ADU Budget

A useful ADU budget is more than a price per square foot. It should account for preconstruction, permits, site work, the building itself, utility connections, finish selections, and contingency. The cheapest early number is often not the final project cost.

Feasibility and due diligence
Site measurements, property research, utility research, preliminary planning
Design and engineering
Architectural plans, structural engineering, energy documents, surveys, soils or specialty reports when required
City and agency costs
Planning, building permits, school or utility charges when applicable, coastal or historic approvals
Site work
Demolition, clearing, excavation, grading, drainage, access, tree protection
Structure
Foundation, framing, roofing, windows, doors, exterior finish, insulation, drywall
Utilities and systems
Sewer, water, electrical, gas or all-electric systems, HVAC, fire/life safety
Interior finishes
Cabinets, countertops, plumbing fixtures, flooring, tile, paint, appliances, lighting
Project controls
Temporary facilities, cleanup, supervision, inspections, testing, contingency

Recommended contingency question: What amount should be reserved for unknown site conditions, owner upgrades, utility surprises, or code corrections?



CHAPTER 8

Design the ADU for Real Life

A successful ADU feels comfortable even when the footprint is small. Every door swing, cabinet, appliance, window, storage area, and circulation path matters.

Layout

- Studio, one-bedroom, or two-bedroom
- Open living area versus separated rooms
- Furniture placement and clear walking paths
- Private entrance and outdoor space
- Laundry location and storage

Kitchen

- Full-size or compact appliances
- Countertop workspace
- Pantry and cabinet storage
- Ventilation and lighting
- Accessible clearances

Bathroom

- Walk-in shower or tub
- Low-threshold and aging-in-place options
- Ventilation and waterproofing
- Linen storage
- Grab-bar backing for future use

Comfort

- Natural light without losing privacy
- Heating and cooling zones
- Sound separation
- Window placement and shading
- Durable, low-maintenance finishes



CHAPTER 9

Utilities and Building Systems

Utility planning is one of the biggest differences between an ADU and a simple backyard structure. The unit needs safe, code-compliant systems that are correctly sized and coordinated before construction begins.

System	Questions to resolve
Sewer	Where is the connection? Is gravity flow possible? Will trenching cross hardscape or landscaping?
Water	Is the existing service adequate? Where will hot water be produced?
Electrical	Does the main service or panel need upgrading? Will the ADU be all-electric?
Gas	Is gas being extended, or will the design use electric appliances and heat-pump equipment?
HVAC	Mini-split, ducted heat pump, or another approved system? Where will equipment be located?
Solar and energy	What current energy-code and photovoltaic requirements apply to the project?
Drainage	Where will roof and site water go without affecting neighbors or the main home?
Fire and safety	Addressing, alarms, separation, emergency access, and other applicable requirements.



CHAPTER 10

Typical Long Beach ADU Workflow

1	Goals and property screening Define use, size, budget, and schedule; identify coastal, historic, zoning, and site issues.
2	Site visit and feasibility Measure, inspect access, review utilities, and identify likely constraints.
3	Concept and preliminary budget Choose ADU type, layout, exterior style, and finish level.
4	Plans and engineering Prepare architectural, structural, energy, and site-specific documents.
5	Planning review Confirm compliance and obtain any required historic or coastal approvals.
6	Building permit review Submit construction documents and respond to corrections.
7	Preconstruction Finalize selections, contract, schedule, utilities, logistics, and protection plan.
8	Construction Site work, foundation, framing, rough systems, insulation, drywall, finishes, and exterior work.
9	Inspections Coordinate required City inspections at each stage.
10	Final approval and closeout Complete corrections, final inspection, warranties, manuals, and homeowner orientation.



CHAPTER 11

Questions to Ask an ADU Contractor

1. Are you properly licensed and insured for this scope?
2. How many ADUs or comparable ground-up residential projects have you completed?
3. Who handles planning, plans, engineering, permits, and corrections?
4. Who will be my primary project contact?
5. Will you perform a site and utility feasibility review before final pricing?
6. What parts of the work are subcontracted?
7. How will changes and allowances be documented?
8. What is included for utility connections and service upgrades?
9. What is excluded from the estimate?
10. How will inspections and correction notices be managed?
11. How will my home, neighbors, landscaping, and access be protected?
12. What is the expected design, permit, and construction timeline?
13. What labor and product warranties are included?
14. How are progress payments tied to completed work?
15. How will the final permit and project closeout be documented?

The contractor should be able to explain the process clearly without guaranteeing approvals, exact fees, or hidden-condition costs before the necessary research is complete.



CHAPTER 12

ADU Estimate Comparison Worksheet

Comparison Item	Company 1	Company 2	Company 3
License and insurance verified			
Feasibility/site review			
Architectural plans			
Structural engineering			
Energy documents			
Survey or specialty reports			
Planning and permit coordination			
City fees included or allowance			
Demolition and site work			
Foundation and framing			
Roofing and exterior			
Windows and doors			
Electrical service and wiring			
Plumbing and sewer connection			
HVAC and water heating			
Cabinets and countertops			
Flooring, tile, and paint			
Appliances and fixtures			
Cleanup and final closeout			
Warranty			
Estimated schedule			
Total price and allowances			



CHAPTER 13

Red Flags and Preconstruction Preparation

Red flags to watch for

- ✗ A price is given without reviewing the property, utilities, access, or plan requirements
- ✗ The proposal says “complete ADU” but has major allowances or unclear exclusions
- ✗ The contractor cannot explain the permit process
- ✗ Plans and engineering are not assigned to qualified professionals
- ✗ Payments are heavily front-loaded instead of tied to progress
- ✗ The contractor encourages unpermitted work
- ✗ There is no written change-order process
- ✗ No one is clearly responsible for inspections and corrections
- ✗ The schedule ignores design and permit time
- ✗ Warranty and closeout documents are not explained

Prepare before construction

- Finalize the permitted plans and written scope
- Confirm finish selections and allowances
- Review payment milestones
- Document existing property conditions with photos
- Confirm work hours, access, parking, and deliveries
- Protect pets, landscaping, fences, and personal property
- Identify temporary utility interruptions
- Notify affected neighbors as appropriate
- Confirm insurance and emergency contacts
- Understand how questions and changes will be approved



CHAPTER 14

Final Walkthrough and Project Closeout

- All required City inspections are complete
- Approved plans and final permit records are provided
- Doors and windows operate and lock correctly
- Plumbing fixtures operate without leaks
- Hot water, HVAC, lighting, outlets, and appliances are tested
- Cabinets, counters, flooring, tile, and paint are complete
- Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are installed and tested
- Exterior grading and drainage are complete
- Addressing and required safety features are installed
- Construction debris and temporary protection are removed
- Warranty documents and product manuals are provided
- Homeowner receives system and maintenance orientation
- Open correction or punch-list items are documented in writing
- Final payment matches the contract and approved changes

Do not rely only on a visual walkthrough. Confirm the permit status, required approvals, warranty documents, and final written accounting.



CHAPTER 15

Long Beach ADU Frequently Asked Questions

Can every Long Beach property build an ADU?

Many residential properties may qualify, but the number, size, location, and type depend on state law and the exact property conditions. Zoning, existing units, coastal or historic status, easements, utilities, and site constraints must be reviewed.

Can I use a pre-approved plan?

Possibly. A Long Beach PAADU design must fit the lot and still requires site-specific review and documents. The program can reduce design and review time, but it does not eliminate property-specific requirements.

Do ADUs require permits?

Yes. A legal ADU requires the appropriate planning and building approvals, inspections, and final closeout.

How long does an ADU take?

The total timeline includes feasibility, design, engineering, planning, building review, corrections, procurement, construction, inspections, and closeout. Site complexity and City review can change the schedule.

Can I convert my garage?

A legal garage may be a candidate, but the structure, slab, roof, drainage, ceiling height, fire separation, natural light, ventilation, and utilities must be evaluated.

Can an ADU be used for family?

ADUs are commonly used for multigenerational housing, caregivers, adult children, and aging parents, subject to applicable occupancy and rental rules.

Does Long Beach offer financing?

The City has a limited Backyard Builders program for eligible, income-qualified homeowners. The current Round 2 information describes loans up to \$250,000 at 2% with deferred payments, plus project assistance. Qualification and availability are not guaranteed.

Should I start with plans or a contractor?

Start with property feasibility and clear goals. A coordinated design-build approach can help connect layout, budget, utilities, permit requirements, and construction before the plans become too difficult or expensive to revise.



CHAPTER 16

Ready to Explore an ADU in Long Beach?

Family Home Improvements can help you begin with the right questions: how you want to use the ADU, what may fit on the property, which design direction makes sense, and what information is needed before a dependable scope and budget can be prepared.

YOUR FIRST CONSULTATION SHOULD COVER

Property address and intended use

Detached, attached, conversion, or pre-approved plan options

Target size, bedroom count, accessibility, and finish level

Site access, utilities, coastal or historic conditions

Design, permits, construction, financing, and realistic next steps

SCHEDULE A FREE ADU CONSULTATION

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familyhomeimprovements.net



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REFERENCE PAGE

Official Sources and Video Topics

This guide was prepared using the Family Home Improvements service context, the three YouTube videos supplied by the homeowner, and current City of Long Beach information available at the time of publication.

City of Long Beach ADUs: <https://www.longbeach.gov/lbcd/adus/>

Long Beach ADU and SB 9 planning page: <https://www.longbeach.gov/lbcd/planning/adus/>

Pre-Approved ADU Program: <https://www.longbeach.gov/lbcd/building/lbpaadu/>

Backyard Builders Program: <https://www.longbeach.gov/lbcd/hn/aduloan/>

Planning Information Bulletin: <https://www.longbeach.gov/lbcd/information-bulletins/ib-pz-001/>

Video: Long Beach giving homeowners loans to build ADUs - with a catch

Video: How to Build an ADU in Long Beach California - Real Costs and Requirements

Video: Get Started on Your ADU Project - How to Build an ADU in Long Beach

Family Home Improvements: <https://familyhomeimprovements.net/>

Publication notice: Prepared July 2026. This is a general homeowner education guide and not legal, architectural, engineering, tax, lending, or City approval advice. Rules and programs can change. Verify current requirements and obtain qualified professional guidance for the exact property.