



ADU Toolkit

2025

A step-by-step guide from the City of Grand Junction to assist with the design and development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

CONTENTS

3. ADUs & Affordable Housing
4. What is an ADU?
5. Types of ADUs
6. Costs & Financing
8. ADU Production Program
9. Permits & Applications

EXTRA RESOURCES

You can access these extra resources by scanning the QR Codes found throughout the toolkit.

- ADU Cost Estimator
- Sign Up for an ADU Workshop
- ADU Requirements Checklist
- Site Sketch Worksheet
- Right-of-Way Permit Application
- City of Grand Junction Housing Strategy Update 2024

TOOLKIT GOALS

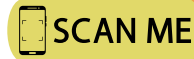
This ADU toolkit is intended to support Grand Junction community members in constructing their own Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). Encouraging ADU development in the City of Grand Junction is one of the affordable housing solutions outlined in the City's Housing Strategy, which was adopted by the GJ City Council in October 2021 and updated in 2024. You can learn more about the connection between ADUs and affordable housing on the following page.

How to use this toolkit:

- 1 Within this toolkit, you'll find **general information** on ADU types, costs, financing, and the City of Grand Junction development review process.
- 2 There are also **extra resources** located throughout the toolkit which you can access by scanning a **QR code** with your smartphone. These QR codes will be framed in orange boxes (see example below) and will take you to helpful online documents, such as worksheets, checklists, applications, and more. **You can also find the URLs associated with each of these codes on the back page of the toolkit.**



DISCLAIMER: The content and materials provided herein are for informational purposes only and should not be construed as legal, financial, real estate or other professional advice or as a substitute for seeking such professional counsel. The accuracy of all information, regardless of source, is deemed reliable but not guaranteed; such information, including government-issued forms, are subject to change and should be personally verified through your independent investigation and/or consultation with appropriate professionals.



City of Grand Junction
Housing Strategy
Update 2024

Why are ADUs an important part of the affordable housing solution?

Encouraging the development of ADUs is one of the City's Housing Strategies, with the goal of "promot[ing] a variety of housing types that can provide housing options while increasing density in both new and existing neighborhoods." ADUs are a form of **Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH)**, given their smaller square footage and their ability to use existing infrastructure such as streets, water, and sewer. While communities are often opposed to dense, vertical development in their neighborhoods as a solution for affordable housing, many communities are enthusiastic about ADUs, since they typically have **minimal impacts on the character of residential neighborhoods**. Grand Junction can benefit in multiple ways from encouraging the development of ADUs. These smaller units help to quickly expand housing stock - **especially if they're utilized as long-term rentals** - and they can also give homeowners the opportunity to generate more wealth from their property.

Who do ADUs help house?

Not everyone needs or wants to live in a huge home! There's significant demand in Grand Junction for smaller units, especially among particular members of our community:



Young Professionals



Elderly Individuals



Disabled Individuals



College Students



Traveling Nurses

Common Affordable Housing Terminology:

Area Median Income (AMI) - The midpoint of a region's income distribution. AMI is often referred to in percentages - you may hear phrases like "60% of AMI" or "120% AMI."

Housing Affordability - When households pay no more than 30% of their gross income on housing-related expenses. This is a metric of affordability defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

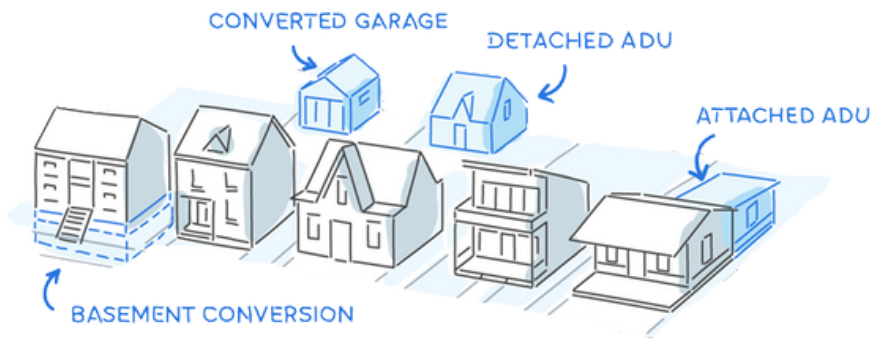
Affordable Housing - Housing that's built specifically to be affordable for households earning below a certain AMI. In the City of Grand Junction, affordable housing is defined as housing for those earning 60% AMI or below (if renting) and 80% or below (if purchasing a home). Affordable housing is also sometimes known as "subsidized housing."

Attainable Housing - Housing that is affordable to households earning around the Area Median Income (AMI), up to 140% AMI.

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) - Properties that are naturally affordable (without any government subsidy) due to smaller size, older age, etc.

What is an ADU?

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), also sometimes known as an "in-law" unit or a "carriage house," is a dwelling unit that is secondary to a primary dwelling unit. ADUs take on many different forms: they can be attached to the main structure, be a stand-alone structure, or be a converted space within the primary structure (e.g., a converted basement or attic). ADUs represent a sizeable share of the housing stock in many cities, and municipalities across the United States have recently revised their zoning laws to allow for more ADUs.



ADUS IN GRAND JUNCTION

In the past, ADUs in Grand Junction could be a challenge to construct; however, recent zoning & development code changes have made the feasibility of construction much easier. Currently, the average ADU construction within Grand Junction is about 18-34 units per year. Since the adoption of ADU changes - the city's ADU production has seen an increase of 133% ADUs per year (2024).

In addition to the role that ADUs play as a form of Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing, there are other benefits to building ADUs, including:

- **Building Wealth.** ADUs can generate additional income for homeowners.
- **Expands Housing Options.** In Grand Junction, smaller units have some of the highest demand. ADUs can help fill that demand, particularly for elderly residents or single-person households.
- **Lower Construction Costs and Faster Development Process.** Compared to building single- or multi-family units, construction costs and the development processes for ADUs can be significantly lower and faster because the land is already available. However, final costs can vary greatly depending on the finishing touches.

One Grand Junction homeowner is building a 1 bed ADU with an office, full bath, laundry, pantry, and open concept living space that he plans to rent to his mother, who is relocating to be closer to family and help with daycare costs.

Types of ADUs

Determining the type of ADU that works best for your property will depend on many factors, including the size of your lot, the size and layout of your existing home, the size and type of the unit you intend to build, where your home is located, and how much you can afford to spend. Below are some key construction considerations for different types of ADUs:

CONVERTED SPACE within existing structure

- Most affordable to construct
- Can convert existing attic/basement, or by partitioning off part of the home

NEW SPACE above existing structure

- Can be built over existing or new garage
- Adding to an existing structure will require evaluation of foundation and supports

NEW DETACHED new construction

- Starting from scratch is the most flexible option in construction
- Can be the most expensive, depending on materials as well as utility and development requirements
- Allows for modular or manufactured units

ADDITION/ATTACHED to existing structure

- Great option for smaller lots
- Can be designed for the first or second story, or for second story additions
- Costs vary significantly



Check **CODE REQUIREMENTS** before committing to an ADU type.

Which ADU size is right for you?



Small: 300-500 SF

- **Est. Project Cost:** \$96,500 - \$133,750



Medium: 600 - 700 SF

- **Est. Project Cost:** \$138,500 - \$163,500



Large: 800-900 SF

- **Est. Project Cost:** \$154,750 - \$190,000

Est. Construction Time: 3-6 Months

*Cost estimates for new construction are based on the average pricing provided by two Mesa County builders as of March 2025.



In addition, be sure that your ADU meets **International Residential Code (IRC)**. A tiny home on wheels, for example, DOES NOT meet IRC and would not qualify as an ADU.

Costs Overview

ADUs vary widely in cost depending on the type of ADU being constructed, design complexity, and finishes. There are two categories of costs associated with building an ADU, which include "hard costs" and "soft costs." More information on these types of costs can be found to the right.

To further assist you in calculating your potential costs, we've created an ADU Construction Cost Estimator that you can pull up using the QR Code / URL below.

Scan this QR code to download the ADU Cost Estimator!

ADU Cost Estimator



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COSTS

Hard Costs

"Hard Costs" are the costs associated with the construction materials and labor required to build an ADU. These are often the costs that homeowners will have the most control over. Hard Costs can also include any needed improvements to the property in general, such as fixes to the existing foundation of the primary dwelling unit or extension of existing utilities. It's important to keep in mind that, while they may seem like small line items, finishes like countertops, light fixtures, flooring, appliances, etc. can add up and have a big impact on the bottom line of your ADU budget.

Soft Costs

Money spent on design, studies, tests, permits, and fees are all considered "Soft Costs." (More information on permits and fees can be found in the paragraph below.) Soft costs are typically costs that homeowners have little control over. While there is no requirement that homeowners utilize builders, designers, or architects in constructing an ADU, it may be beneficial to your project and site planning, especially if your site requires more technical assistance, including building a retaining wall, foundation upgrades, or ensuring your building is up to current building codes.

Clearances, Permits, and Fees

Planning Clearances (issued by the City of Grand Junction, after a review by the City of land use, zoning, and other relevant regulations) as well as Building Permits (issued by Mesa County) are required before constructing any ADU type. More information on the process of obtaining these clearances/permits can be found on pages 9-11 of this toolkit.

Fees can encompass a significant part of your final ADU cost and are predetermined by the City, County, and your water provider. They help pay for City infrastructure and services like fire, police, and transportation. It's important to note that many of these fees need to be paid before a planning clearance can be issued. Fees are listed in the ADU cost estimator, or you can find them online at the QR Codes on the following page.

Financing

What fees do you have to pay before getting a planning clearance approved?*

(Note: In the course of your ADU project, there may be other fees you'll need to pay in addition to the fees listed below.)



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Updated Planning Clearance Fee



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Updated Impact Fees



Please note that the City of Grand Junction impact/planning fees are regularly adjusted for inflation.

There are multiple ways to finance your ADU project. Most homeowners use a combination of different funding sources and pool together personal funds and bank financing. Work with your lender for the best options given your financial situation.



Initial First Mortgage - The best option if there is an existing ADU when purchasing a primary home.



Borrowing Against the Value of Your Property (By Using a Second Mortgage or Home Equity Line of Credit, HELOC) -

Property value is often the biggest asset for many homeowners. HELOC can provide financing for up to 80%-90% of the property's value and can typically be paid back in 10-15 years.



Renovation Loans - provides homeowners with financing to convert or upgrade existing structures—like garages or basements—into ADUs.



Cash-Out Refinancing - This is an option for properties with significant equity to refinance an initial mortgage. This option usually allows for financing up to 80% of the property's value.



Use of Personal Assets - You can also use personal savings or work with friends and family to raise cash for the construction.



ADU | PRODUCTION PROGRAM

The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Production Program (APP) was created to incentivize and support the construction of long-term rental ADUs.

The City of Grand Junction's ADU Production Program provides incentives to promote ADU development and increase affordable housing in the community. Tier 1 covers impact fees for ADUs in exchange for a 5 year commitment for all units on the property to be used as long-term rentals, while Tier 2 offers additional financial support and impact fee coverage for **income-qualified** owner-occupants who commit to utilizing all units on the property for 7 years as a long term rental.

	Tier 1	Tier 2
Terms & Incentives of ADU Production Program	ADU Developers	Income-Qualified ADU Developers of Owner-Occupied Properties
5-Year Long-Term Rental Commitment	✓	
7-Year Long-Term Rental Commitment		✓
PAID Traffic Capacity Payment	✓	✓
PAID Sewer Plant Investment Fee	✓	✓
PAID Parks Impact Fee	✓	✓
PAID Fire Impact Fee	✓	✓
PAID Police Impact Fee	✓	✓
Additional Incentive		✓

"We had been considering building an ADU on our property for a while but were worried about the cost. The ADU Production Program made the decision much easier. Our builder encouraged us to participate, and the process was simple. Now, we're using the one-bedroom, two-story ADU as a long-term rental for someone working in behavioral health."

-ADU Production Program Participant

Learn more and apply



ADU Production Program

PERMITS & Applications

Once you've determined that building an ADU is right for you, reference the following pages to learn more about next steps. In addition to outlining the planning clearance process, we provide information on zoning code and development requirements and important people/organizations to keep in mind as you work on your ADU project.



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STEP 1 OPTIONAL: ATTEND AN ADU WORKSHOP (HELD BY THE CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION)

ADU Workshops are held quarterly and are a chance to hear about the information in this toolkit directly from Community Development Staff. Key people familiar with the ADU planning process will be available to answer any questions you may have. You can sign up for the latest ADU workshop at the QR code to the left. For more information, email housing@gjcity.org or call **970-256-4081**

My workshop/webinar is scheduled for:

Date/Time: _____

Location: _____



Important Contacts

City of Grand Junction - Community Development

General Planning & Code Questions
comdev@gjcity.org | 970-244-1430

City of Grand Junction - Housing Division

Affordable Housing, Incentives, & Workshop Questions
housing@gjcity.org | 970-256-4081

Mesa County - Building Department

General Building & Building Permit Questions
mccomdev@mesacounty.us | 970-244-1631

STEP 2 SPEAK TO CITY PLANNING STAFF


Community members interested in constructing an ADU can speak with the City's Planning Technicians to discuss their project in preparation for applying for a planning clearance. Planning Techs can give you personalized feedback on your proposed ADU site.

For general questions regarding the ADU planning process, please stop by the Planning Department front window at City Hall at 250 N 5th St., email comdev@gjcity.org or call **970-244-1430**

Permits & Applications (cont'd)

STEP 3 REVIEW ADU REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST AND SITE SKETCH WORKSHEETS

We've created an **ADU Requirements Checklist**, as well as an **ADU Site Sketch Worksheet** (QR Codes below), to offer some guidance as you apply for an ADU planning clearance. These tools will help ensure your proposed ADU is compliant with City standards and that your site sketch meets minimum submittal requirements.

 Scan the QR Codes below for checklists, worksheets, and the City of GJ ADU Zoning Code

ADU Requirements Checklist + Site Sketch Worksheet



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City of GJ ADU Zoning Code



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STEP 4 SUBMIT ADU APPLICATION TO CITY OF GJ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

It's time to submit your official ADU application to the City's Community Development Department! You can pick up a paper version at City Hall at the Community Development front window, or you can find the application online at by scanning the QR code on the next page. After submitting your application, please allow app. 2-3 weeks for review.

CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION ADU CODE



ADUs are permitted with single-unit attached dwellings, single-unit detached dwellings, or a duplex dwelling.



A lot with one single-unit detached dwelling or a single-unit attached dwelling with two units in the structure may have two ADUs if at least one of the ADUs is attached to the principal dwelling unit (e.g., attic, basement, carriage house, etc.). A duplex dwelling unit may have no more than one ADU on the lot.



The design and location of the ADU shall be clearly subordinate to the principal structure, and located behind the principal structure. An ADU may use side setbacks of principle structure. On corner lots, an ADU may use the setbacks for the principle structure where the property abuts a roadway and may be located in the front yard or exterior side yard.



The ADU must meet all BUILDING & FIRE Codes.



The ADU shall not exceed 900 sq ft of habitable space. *NOTE: Habitable space DOES NOT include areas such as mechanical equipment rooms, unconditioned space, stairwells, etc.

Interested in **ADU Production Program** incentives? Apply after submitting your ADU application and receiving your planning clearance number.



PERMITS & Applications (cont'd)

STEP 5 REVISE PLANS AND ADDRESS STAFF COMMENTS IF NECESSARY

During development review, Community Development staff may require changes to your ADU application to meet standards. If necessary, please revise your application and return to the Community Development Department.

STEP 6 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES PLANNING CLEARANCE

Congrats! After submitting your application, making revisions to ensure your ADU meets development standards, and paying all necessary fees, the City will issue a planning clearance. Before starting construction, you'll also need a building permit from Mesa County (see Step 7).

STEP 7 OBTAIN BUILDING PERMIT FROM MESA COUNTY BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Contact the Mesa County Building department to obtain a building permit. Building permit fees are dependent on the specifics of each ADU project. You can apply online at <https://www.mesacounty.us/building/>.

For questions, email mccomdev@mesacounty.us or call 970-244-1631



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ADU Planning
Clearance App



SCAN ME

ROW Permit
Application

STEP 8 AS NEEDED: OBTAIN A WORK IN THE RIGHT-OF-WAY (ROW) PERMIT FROM THE CITY

If you need to complete any work within a right-of-way (ROW) -- such as adding water and/or sewer, planting trees, etc. -- a permit for construction is required. The application for the ROW permit can be found in the QR Code above. Public right-of-ways include alleys, curbs, gutters, public streets, sidewalks, utility easements, etc. The cost of this permit is \$60. For questions, contact the Engineering and Transportation Department at 970-256-4082.

For more information about ROW permits, visit <https://www.gjcity.org/1506/Permits>



PLEASE NOTE: If interested in using your ADU as a short-term rental (STR), you MUST register your STR with the City of Grand Junction and pay associated fees. More info at: <https://www.gjcity.org/379/Short-Term-Rentals>

ADU Production Program - Please note that Developers participating in the ADU Production Program are not eligible to have any unit participate as an STR.

QR Code URLs

City of Grand Junction Housing Strategies: <https://www.gjcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/13851/GJ-Housing-Strategy-Update-with-Appendices-9-24-24?bidId=>

ADU Cost Estimator: <https://www.gjcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/8750/ADU-Cost-Estimator>

Updated Planning Clearance Fee: <https://www.gjcity.org/507/Fees-Forms-Standards>

Updated Development Impact Fees: <https://www.gjcity.org/349/Development-Impact-Fees>

ADU Production Program: <https://www.gjcity.org/1311/Accessory-Dwelling-Unit-ADU-Resources>

ADU Workshop Sign Up: <https://www.gjcity.org/FormCenter/Community-Development-14/ADU-Workshop-Sign-Up-103>

ADU Requirements Checklist + Site Sketch Worksheet:

<https://www.gjcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/8749/ADU-Worksheets-AC?bidId=>

City of Grand Junction ADU Code: <https://ecode360.com/45348328#45347697>

Grand Junction Planning Clearance Application: <https://grandjunctionco-energovweb.tylerhost.net/apps/selfservice#/applicationAssistant?sectionName=All&showTemplates=false>

ROW Permit Application: <https://www.gjcity.org/379/Short-Term-Rentals>

Questions?

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