



# Escondido Pre-Approved ADU (PAADU) Program Guidebook



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# 1. Resources & Objectives

The City of Escondido has created this guidebook to help homeowners learn about Accessory Dwelling Units (“ADUs”) and to facilitate the Pre-Approved ADU (“PAADU”) application process. This guidebook provides key considerations for you to keep in mind before beginning your ADU journey, introduces PAADU Program and plans, and explains the PAADU permitting process.

## PAADU PROGRAM RESOURCES

In addition to the PAADU Guidebook, the City has prepared a collection of resources for you to use. Click on the links below to access the materials.



### PAADU PROGRAM BROCHURE

The PAADU Program Brochure provides general information about the PAADU program.



### INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Initial Considerations Handout offers a series of topics, considerations, and resources to help homeowners prepare for their ADU building journey.



### PAADU PROCESS CHART

The PAADU Program Road map provides a step-by-step guidance on the PAADU permit application process.



### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This document includes questions that have been commonly asked by the public about ADUs and the PAADU Program.



### CREATE YOUR SITE PLAN WORKSHEET

The Create your Own Site Plan Worksheet provides guidance on how to develop a site plan, a requirement of and ADU and the PAADU program submittal package.



### ADU OPTION SELECTIONS HANDOUT

PAADU plan sets provide homeowners the flexibility to customize plans. The PAADU Option Selections Handout provides a comprehensive overview of the options that need to be made before submitting PAADU plans.



### OLD ESCONDIDO NEIGHBORHOOD ADU STYLE ADAPTATION GUIDE

ADUs in the Old Escondido Neighborhood (OEN) must match the architectural style of the primary structure. The OEN ADU Adaptation Guide provides a selection of features that can be added to PAADU plans.

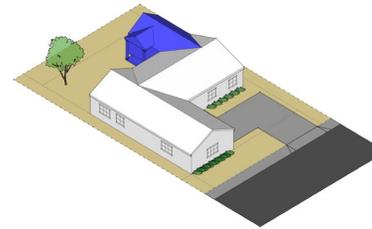
# 2. ADU Overview

Accessory Dwelling Units (“ADUs”) are secondary, but independent living facilities located within the same lot of a single-family or multifamily building (primary residence).

ADUs come in a variety of shapes and sizes, with the option to be either attached or detached from the main residence. They can include garage conversions, and prefabricated units. Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (“JADUs”) are also another type of ADU. Below are explanations of the different types of ADU options:

## WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ADU AND A JADU?

### TYPES OF ADUs



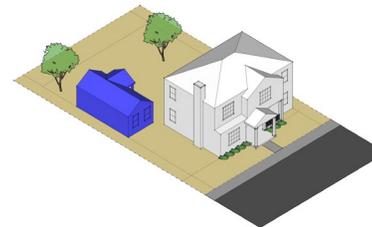
#### Attached ADU

- Attached to the primary building as an addition.



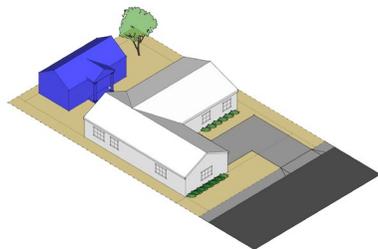
#### Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU)

- Between 150–500 square feet.
- May have direct, interior access to the main residence and share sanitation facilities.
- Must provide efficiency kitchen.
- Must be located within the primary residence.



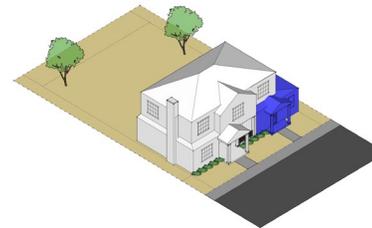
#### Detached ADU

- Detached and completely separate from the primary building.



#### Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

- Up to 1,000 square feet.
- Cannot provide access to the main residence.
- Must include independent sanitation facilities and kitchen.



#### ADU Conversion

- Conversion of existing space by adapting underutilized space in the primary residence, garage, or attic

## BENEFITS OF ADUs

ADUs have the potential to bring lots of benefits to property owners and individuals residing in them. They represent one of the many strategies that local jurisdictions and the State of California are utilizing to address the housing crisis.



### Practical Housing Option

ADUs provide an option for friends and relatives to live within the same premises while maintaining a sense of independence. They represent an alternative to an overcrowded home.



### Additional Income Source

Over time, ADUs could generate an additional source of income for homeowners and help make ends meet. After recovering the initial cost of their investment, homeowners renting their ADU can receive a steady source of income.



### Flexible Living Spaces

ADUs offer an option for aging parents or individuals who are physically or mentally impaired to live independently while being close to home. ADUs provide for intergenerational living for empty nesters, expanding families, and/or to allow seniors to age in place.

“

*ADUs tend to be significantly less expensive to build than new detached single-family homes and offer benefits that address common development barriers, such as environmental quality.*

”

California Department of Housing and Community Development, ADU Handbook, 2022

# 3. PAADU Program

The City of Escondido's PAADU program was created to address the growing housing needs within the City and California. The PAADU program offers homeowners access to free pre-approved plans that can be used to build a new, detached ADU on a property. **The PAADU Program is only available for new construction, detached ADUs.**

## WHY SHOULD I USE THE PAADU PLANS?

Pre-approved plans have already gone through the city review process. These plans fully comply with local zoning, building, and energy codes, streamlining the approval process. Plans are also developed and stamped by an architect and structural engineer, reducing the design and professional fees that would be otherwise spent on an ADU.

The PAADU program offers a range of pre-approved plan options, including a 484 SF studio or 1 bedroom, a 644 SF two-bedroom (linear), an 851 SF two-bedroom (square), and a 1,000 SF two or three bedroom. Applicants are responsible for providing a site plan for their specific property. A Site Plan lets the City know where the ADU will be located and any other physical features the City should consider to approve an application. Applicants are also responsible for filling out all applicable portions of the prototype plans including project-specific information of a PAADU plan's title sheet. For more information, refer to the full plan sets available on the City's website.

To review and download the full architectural plan sets, click [here](#) or scan the QR code below:



ESCONDIDO  
CALIFORNIA

Plan 1



484 SF - Studio or 1 bedroom/1 bath

Plan 2



644 SF - 2 bedroom/1 bath

Plan 3



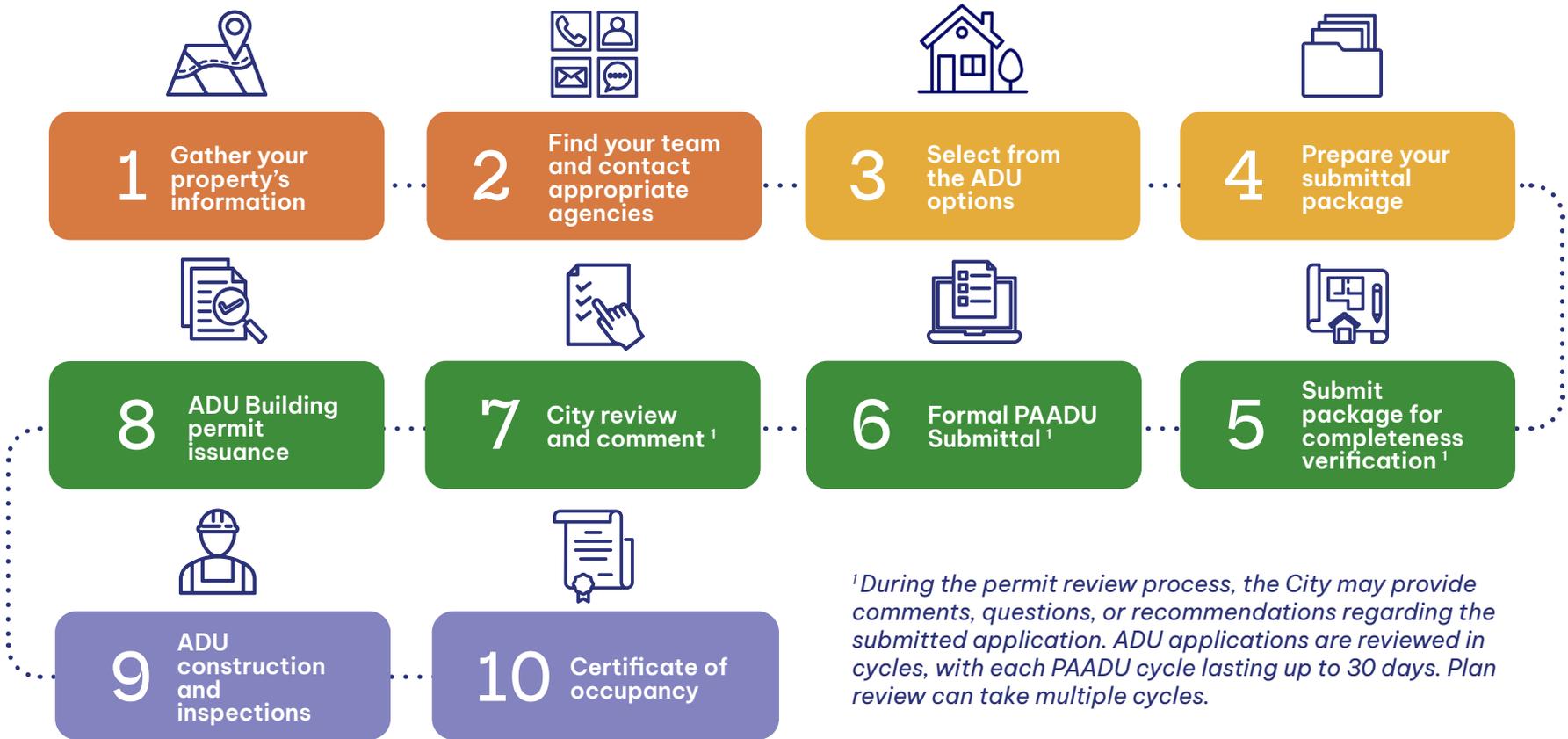
851 SF - 2 bedroom/2 bath

Plan 4



1,000 SF - 2 or 3 bedroom/2 bath

## PAADU PROCESS AT A GLANCE



## ADU PROJECT TIMELINE

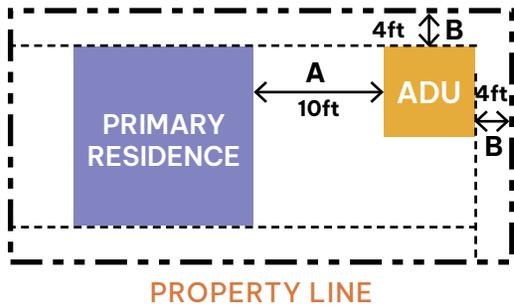


The PAADU Program's pre-approved plans offer several options that are suitable for various types of lots in the City. This graphic is designed to showcase the flexibility of these plans and how they can be adapted to fit different lot configurations.

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS:

ADUs are required to have a minimum 10 foot separation between structures. ADUs are also required to have a 4 foot separation from the rear and side of the property line, also known as a rear and side yard setback.

- A. 10' separation from primary residence to accessory dwelling unit (ADU)
- B. Minimum 4' side yard and rear yard setbacks

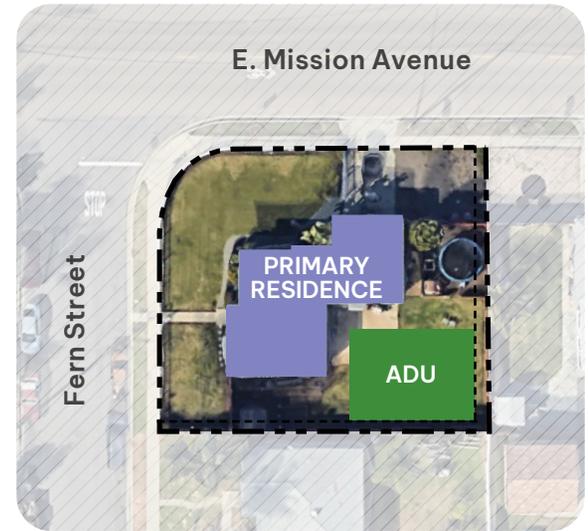


### Unit Placement Legend:

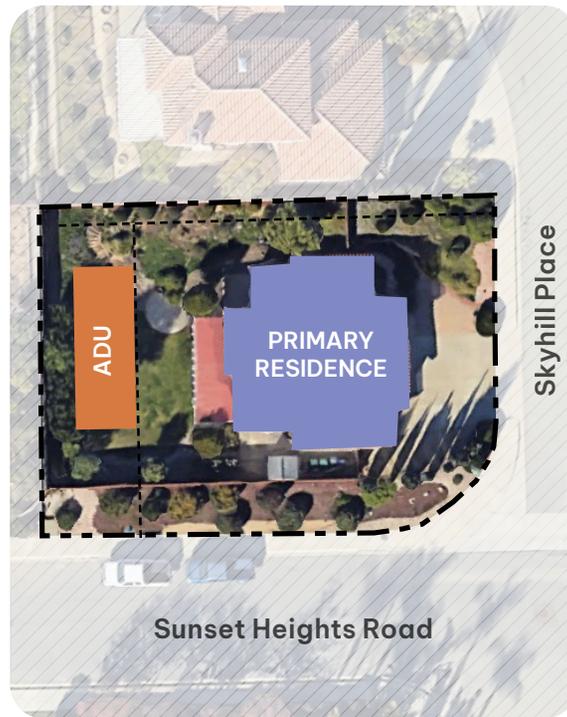
- 484 Square Foot Unit
- 644 Square Foot Unit
- 851 Square Foot Unit
- 1,000 Square Foot Unit



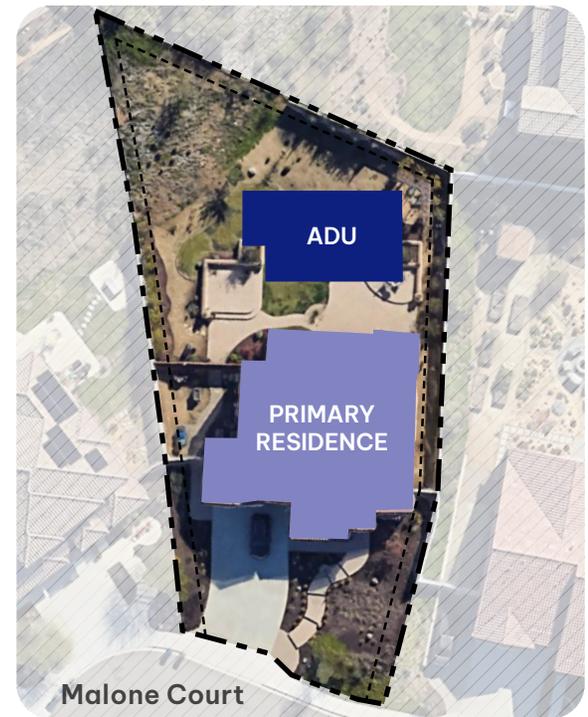
**Plan 1**



**Plan 3**



**Plan 2**



**Plan 4**

# 4. Getting Started

## GATHER YOUR PROPERTY'S INFORMATION

Before you can determine the location and size of your ADU, you must first assess the dimensions of your lot and any existing structures on your property (e.g., primary home, sheds, pools, etc.).

**First, request your property's official documents.** Your property's deed and Preliminary Title Report will provide legal information for your property including property lines, your home's square footage, and easements. These documents are required as part of your ADU permit submission. Contact the County Clerk's office to request these documents at (619) 237-0502 or via their website [www.sdarcc.gov](http://www.sdarcc.gov).

## UNDERSTAND YOUR SITE CONSTRAINTS

**Information gathered from your property's deed and Preliminary Title Report can help you determine the right size and placement of your ADU.** Consider other physical characteristics of your lot as these may influence or limit the type of ADU that aligns with your property, goals, and budget. Some questions to keep in mind include:

**Is your property on a slope?** While Escondido is generally flat, some areas of the City are on a hill or a slope. Check out the United States Geological Survey Map to learn about the topography within and around your lot: [apps.nationalmap.gov/viewer/](http://apps.nationalmap.gov/viewer/).



**Do you have a pool that needs to be filled or a structure that needs to be removed?** Filling a pool or removing a structure most likely entails preparation work and possibly permits. Consult with the City and professionals to tackle these tasks before submitting an ADU permit.

**Will the ADU have a minimum of 10-foot separation from the primary residence or structures and a 4-foot separation from the rear and side of the property line?** Per Fire Code, an ADU must have a minimum of a 10-foot separation from the primary residence or any adjacent structures. State law also requires ADUs to have at least a 4-foot separation from the rear and side property lines. Reach out to the City's Planning and Building Department to understand the rules around your lot and ADUs. The City can let you know if there are additional steps needed if you cannot meet these requirements.

**How big can my ADU be?** The size of an ADU can be limited by physical constraints like your lot size, a slope, and utility connections; there are also rules and regulations that may limit the area available for construction within your lot. State law says you can build a 850 square foot detached ADU, but you still need to provide calculations that to show that your new construction ADU doesn't exceed any local open space limits. Information about square footage of your lot and any structures can help determine Floor area ratio (FAR) and Lot/site coverage, both required for PAADU and ADU permit submittal.

### ADU PROJECT TIMELINE



## HOW TO MAKE YOUR ADU WORK

At the most basic level, ADUs require water, waste management, and electricity to function. If your home was built 30 + years ago, chances are, your property may require upgrades to meet current utility standards and new utility demand from the ADU. Of the three utility services: water, waste management, and electricity, waste management has the potential to be the most cost-prohibitive and demanding.

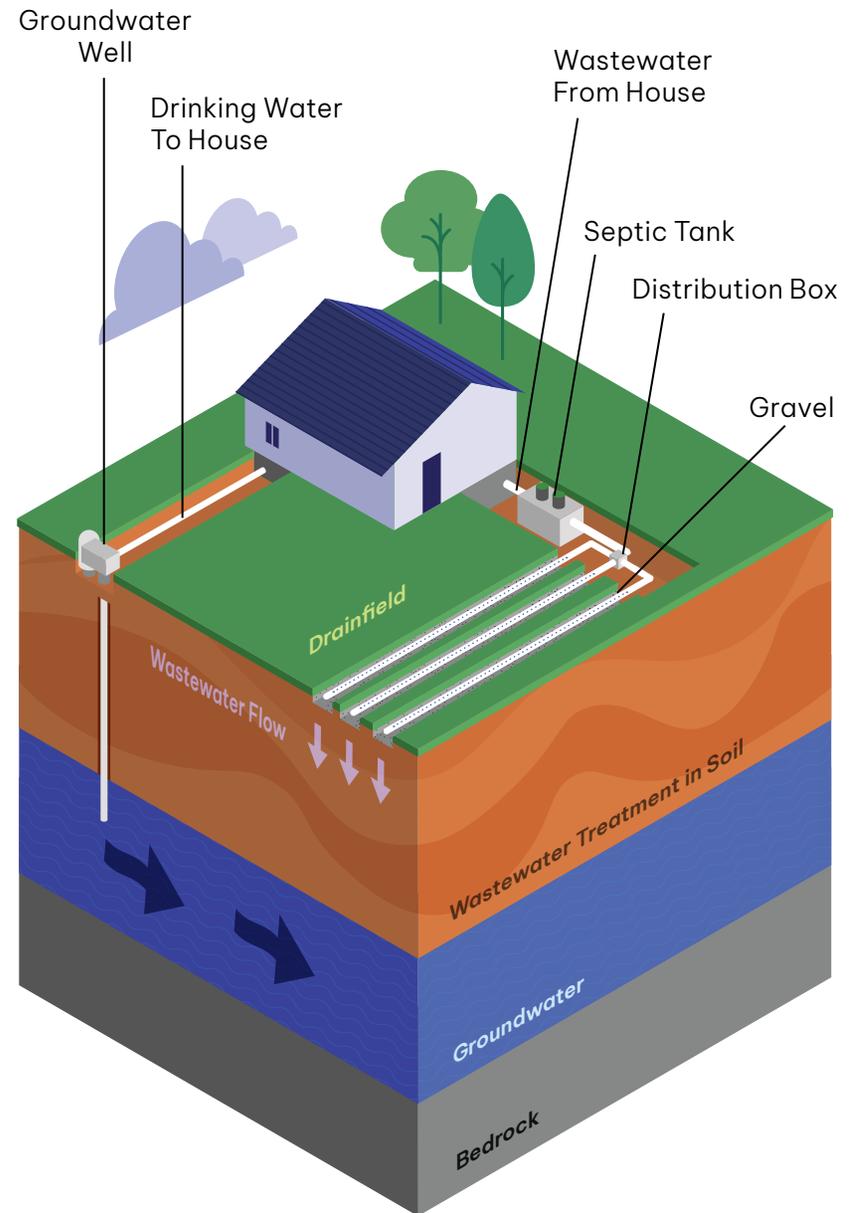
## IS YOUR PROPERTY CONNECTED TO SEWER OR SEPTIC?

**If your property is on a septic system,** you will need to make sure that your septic tank and drain fields meet current County of San Diego standards. Contact the County of San Diego's Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ) at (858) 565-5173 or via email [LWQDuty.DEH@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:LWQDuty.DEH@sdcounty.ca.gov) to get started with any permits or upgrades that may be needed. A letter of approval from DEHQ will be required as part of an ADU application.

**If your property is on sewer,** you must identify the location of sewer lines and adequately plan for the placement of new lines. A plumbing professional can help you identify and plan for utility connections to your ADU.



## Conventional Septic System



*PLEASE NOTE: Septic systems vary. Diagram is not to scale.*

## CONSIDER YOUR SURROUNDINGS

As you embark on your ADU construction journey, consider your personal needs and constraints.

**What is your budget?** Construction and labor are obvious expenses that are part of ADU projects. However, there are additional “soft costs” to consider. These may include City permit fees, school fees, utility connections and expansions, potential grading, contractors, and more. Make a list and, if needed, explore loan and alternative funding options can fit your needs.

**What do you plan to do with your ADU?** Whether you are planning to house friends and relatives or rent out the ADU, the City requires rental information at the time of permit submittal, including the type of occupancy and rental rate. Note: ADUs cannot be rented as Short Term Rentals, less than 30 days.

**What is the timeline for the project?** Applicants have 12 months from ADU permit issuance to schedule an ADU inspection. If an inspection is not scheduled, the project is considered abandoned. It’s important to plan accordingly to avoid paying permit fees twice.

**What about your neighbors?** Evaluate the orientation of your ADU’s windows and doors. Trees and shrubs may help preserve privacy. Consider how the ADU will be accessed. An independent walkway or entryway may be preferred.



## FIND YOUR TEAM AND CONTACT APPROPRIATE AGENCIES

We recommend you to reach out to the following agencies and professionals:

**A General Contractor** can help manage the permit and construction process of an ADU. They can ensure compliance with building codes, problem-solve, manage budget, and more. The State Licensing Board can help you verify that your contractor has the appropriate state licenses. Website: [www2.cslb.ca.gov/onlineservices/checklicensell/checklicense.aspx](http://www2.cslb.ca.gov/onlineservices/checklicensell/checklicense.aspx).

**Tip:** Compare estimates before choosing a contractor. By requesting more than one quote.

**Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) professionals** can help handle heating, ventilation, electrical systems, as well as the installation of water and sewer systems of your ADU.

**SDG&E** requests to be notified when new ADU’s are built. A copy of the project site plan and a project description must be sent to the SDG&E Gas and Planning Department. A confirmation form must also be submitted as part of the PAADU permit package. The form can be found at: [escondido.gov/DocumentCenter/View/551/SDGE-Notification-Form-PDF](http://escondido.gov/DocumentCenter/View/551/SDGE-Notification-Form-PDF).

**Escondido Unified School District (EUSD)** requests to be notified when a new ADU is built. Once your application is close to “Building Permit Issuance”, the Building department will provide you with a personalized letter and contact information for EUSD.

**HOA** representatives should be contacted early on. While an HOA cannot prevent you from building or renting an ADU, they may still have guidelines or standards to consider.

**Note:** The City PAADU and ADU permit process is completely separate from any permits required by an HOA.

**Escondido Engineering Department** can provide plans of sewer and water infrastructure in the Right of Way and near your property. You may contact the Engineering Department at 760-839-4651.

# 5. Selecting the Right Plan

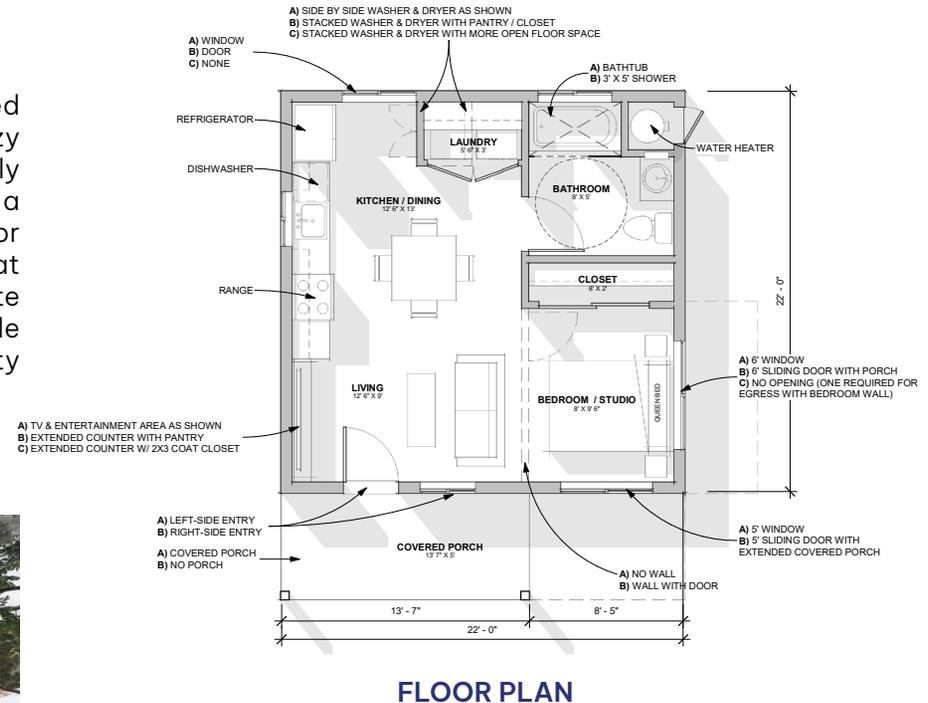
## PRE-APPROVED PLAN 1

484 square foot – Studio or 1 bedroom/ 1 bath

Plan 1 is a compact studio or 1 bedroom plan that can be situated on smaller lots and tighter configurations. Plan 1 offers a cozy home, perfect for a young professional or an extended family member. The front entrance can be built with an option for a covered porch. This plan features a full kitchen with space for a dining table, and options for more pantry storage or a coat closet in the main living space. The bathroom can accommodate options for a bathtub or shower. All of the plans are customizable with the ability to flex windows, walls, and meet ADA accessibility requirements, allowing interested users to fit their needs.



PERSPECTIVE VIEW



### ADU PROJECT TIMELINE



## PRE-APPROVED PLAN 1

Plans allow for a variety of finishes, allowing homeowners to choose cost-effective materials that fit their budget. Per the Escondido Zoning Code, exterior materials must also match the primary structure. A Materials and Colors Sheet is required as part of PAADU submittal.



FRONT ELEVATION



RIGHT ELEVATION



BACK ELEVATION



LEFT ELEVATION

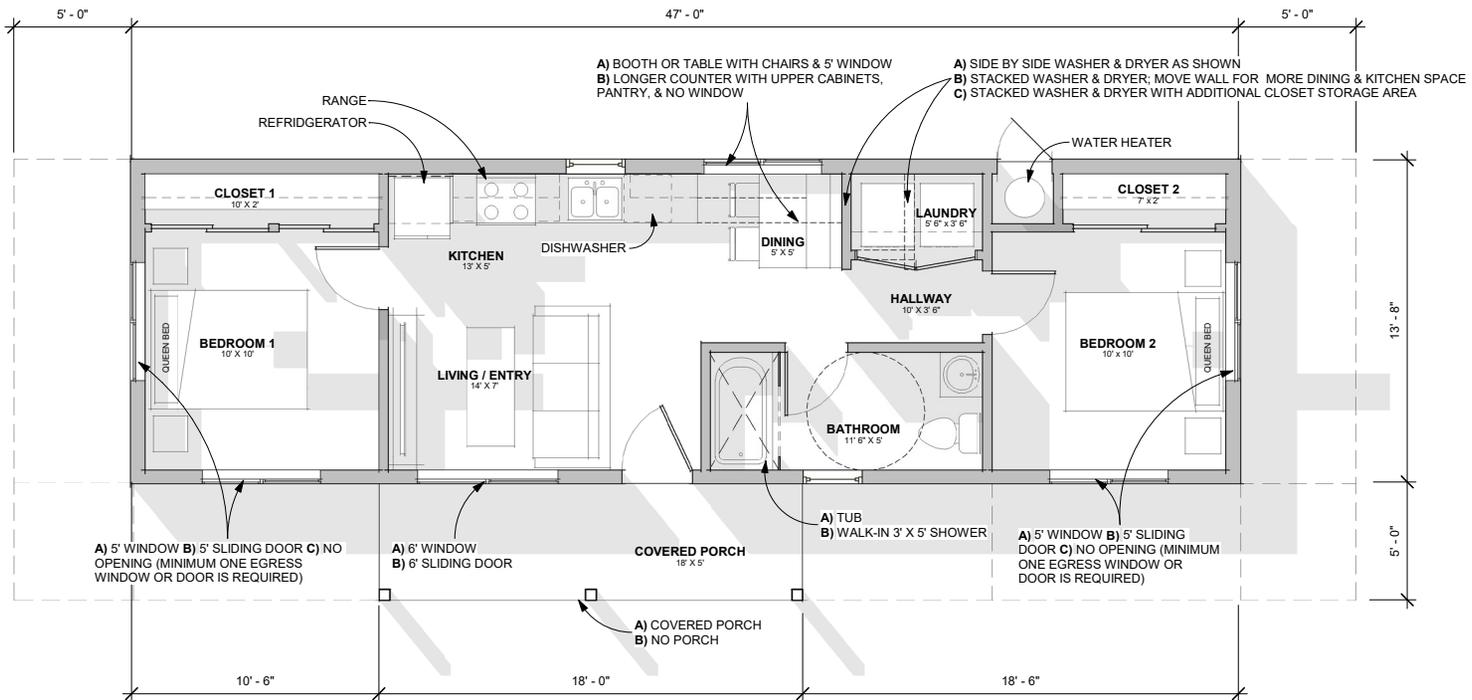
## PRE-APPROVED PLAN 2

644 square feet – 2 bedroom/1 bath unit

Plan 2 is a “linear” plan featuring an entrance that can be built with an option for a covered porch. This plan has a full kitchen, with options for more counter space or extra space for a dining table/booth. Two spacious bedrooms can accommodate queen-sized beds and are located on opposite sides of the living area. The bathroom can accommodate options for a bathtub or shower.



PERSPECTIVE VIEW



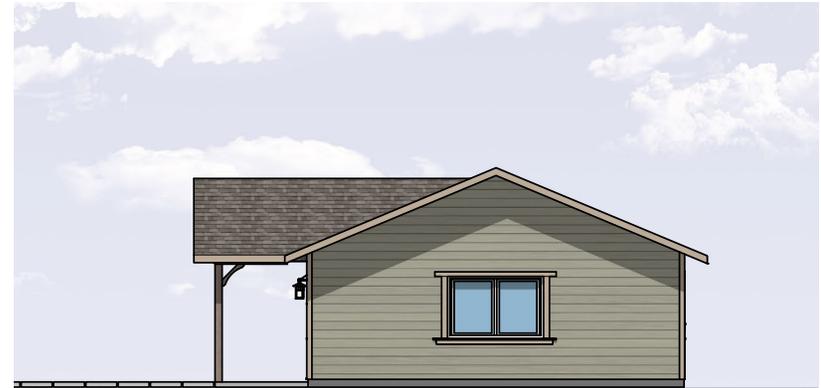
FLOOR PLAN

## PRE-APPROVED PLAN 2

Plans allow for a variety of finishes, allowing homeowners to choose cost-effective materials that fit their budget. Per the Escondido Zoning Code, exterior materials must also match the primary structure. A Materials and Colors Sheet is required as part of PAADU submittal.



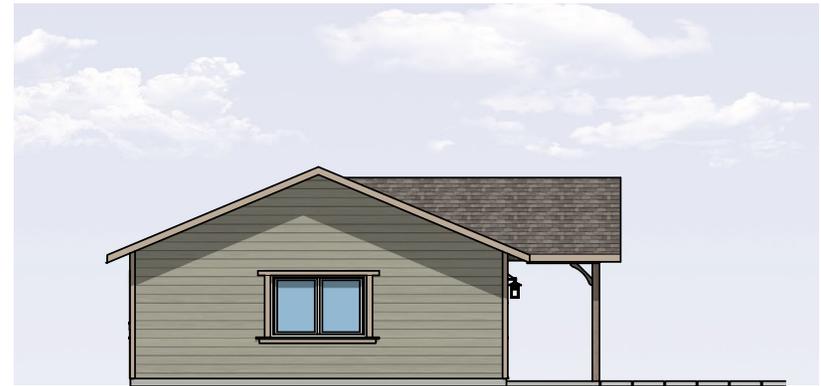
**FRONT ELEVATION**



**RIGHT ELEVATION**



**BACK ELEVATION**



**LEFT ELEVATION**



### PRE-APPROVED PLAN 3

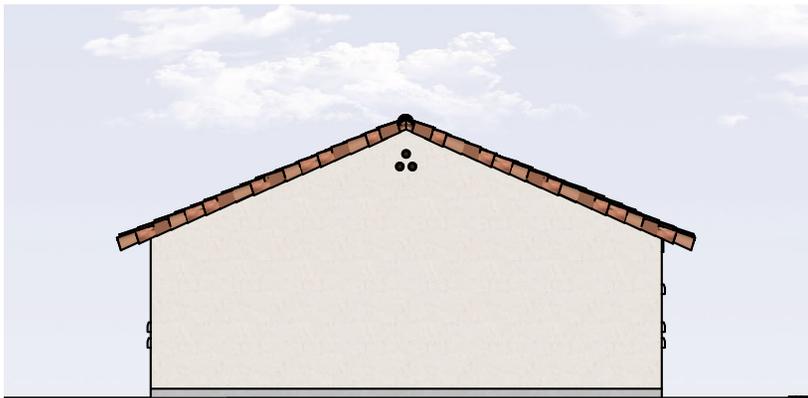
Plans allow for a variety of finishes, allowing homeowners to choose cost-effective materials that fit their budget. Per the Escondido Zoning Code, exterior materials must also match the primary structure. A Materials and Colors Sheet is required as part of PAADU submittal.



**FRONT ELEVATION**



**RIGHT ELEVATION**



**BACK ELEVATION**



**LEFT ELEVATION**

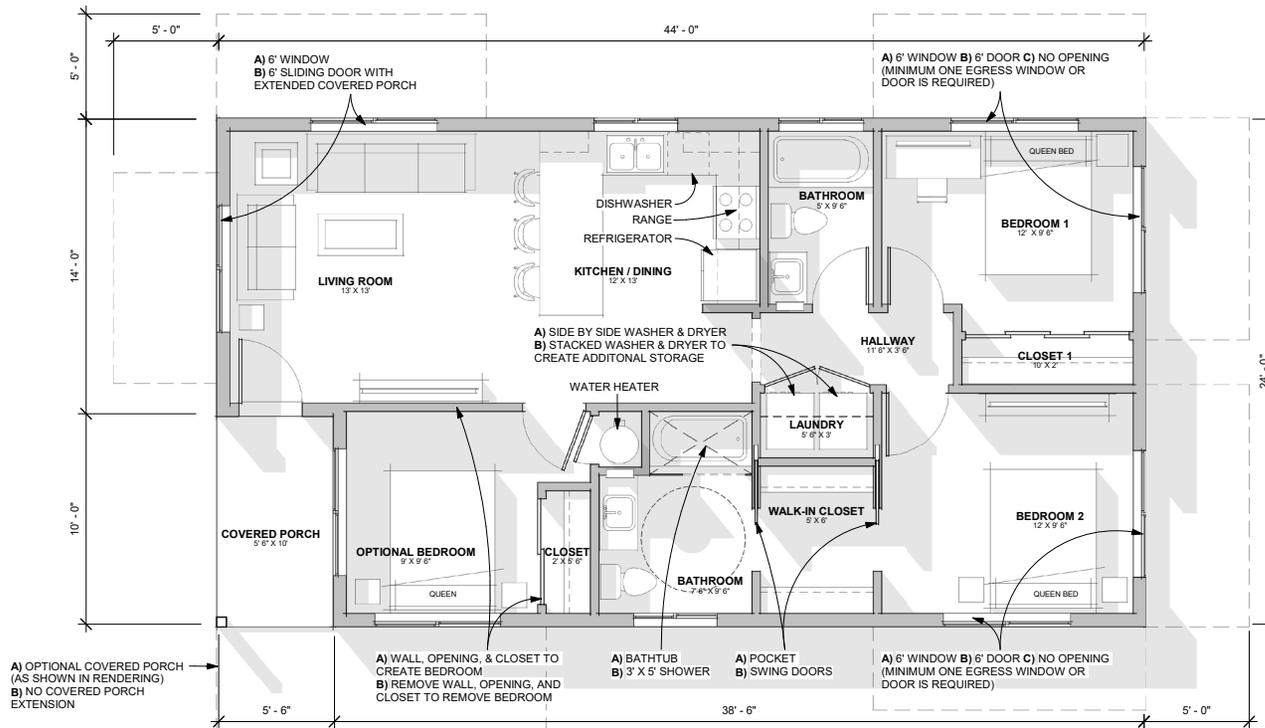
## PRE-APPROVED PLAN 4

1000 square feet – 2 or 3 bedroom/2 bath unit

Plan 4 is a “linear” plan featuring the option for either a two or three bedroom ADU. Without the third bedroom, the covered porch entrance may be expanded into a large outdoor space for dining or entertainment. This floor plan offers a more spacious living and dining area in an open floor plan. The laundry room, bathrooms, and bedrooms are all accessed through a small central hallway.



PERSPECTIVE VIEW



FLOOR PLAN

## PRE-APPROVED PLAN 4

Plans allow for a variety of finishes, allowing homeowners to choose cost-effective materials that fit their budget. Per the Escondido Zoning Code, exterior materials must also match the primary structure. A Materials and Colors Sheet is required as part of PAADU submittal.



**FRONT ELEVATION**



**RIGHT ELEVATION**



**BACK ELEVATION**



**LEFT ELEVATION**

# 6. Permitting

## THE PRE-APPROVED PLAN PERMITTING PROCESS

Pre-approved plans have been reviewed and approved by the City's Building, Planning, Engineering, and Fire departments, streamlining the review process. **However, applicants are still required to submit a building permit application for final review and approval.**

## WHAT DOES PERMITTING AT THE CITY OF ESCONDIDO LOOK LIKE?

Before submitting a building permit application, you want to first make sure you have ALL application documents completed. This includes:

- Completed PAADU cover sheet and site plan
- Completed [ADU Housing Tracking Form](#)
- Copy of Grant Deed
- Copy of a current Preliminary Title Report, including a complete legal description (dated within the last six months).
- Materials and Colors Sheet
- [SDG&E Notification Sheet](#)
- [Hazardous Waste Disclosure Statement](#)
- If the property runs on a septic system, a copy of a letter of approval from the County's Department of Environmental Health and Quality Land and Water Quality Division



To view all the information that is required as part of an ADU permit, click [here](#) or scan the QR code:



# PAADU BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS AT A GLANCE

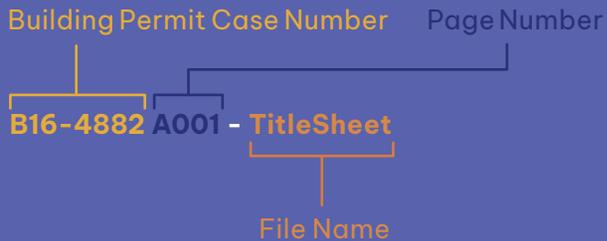
**1** Download your preferred PAADU plan via the City's website at [escondido.gov/1207](http://escondido.gov/1207)

**2** Create an account via the City of Escondido Permit & License Portal at [cwols.escondido.org/portal/](http://cwols.escondido.org/portal/) and select PAADU Building Permit Type.

**3** An email invitation from ProjectDox will be sent for you to create an account and upload your plans.

**4** Upload your plans.  
**Note:** Each sheet must be uploaded individually and follow a specific naming convention with no spaces.

**Example:**



**5** The application will be submitted for completeness verification. It may take a couple weeks for City staff get to your application.

**Note:** During this step, staff will look at your application to make sure your application is complete.

**6** If your application is deemed complete, the application will move forward for a formal review. Comments from the City are subject to a 30-day shot clock. Meaning, the City will complete their reviews within a 30-day time period.

**Note:** During this step, staff will look at your application for accuracy and compliance. City departments will provide comments. **This step is an iterative process and it can take several months to reach permit approval.**

**7** Once all comments from City staff are addressed, your application may be approved. You will receive a payment email to complete any outstanding items for issuance and to pay for fees.

**8** Once all items and payments are complete, your building permit is considered issued! You may download City approved files and move forward with construction.

## DEVELOPING A SITE PLAN

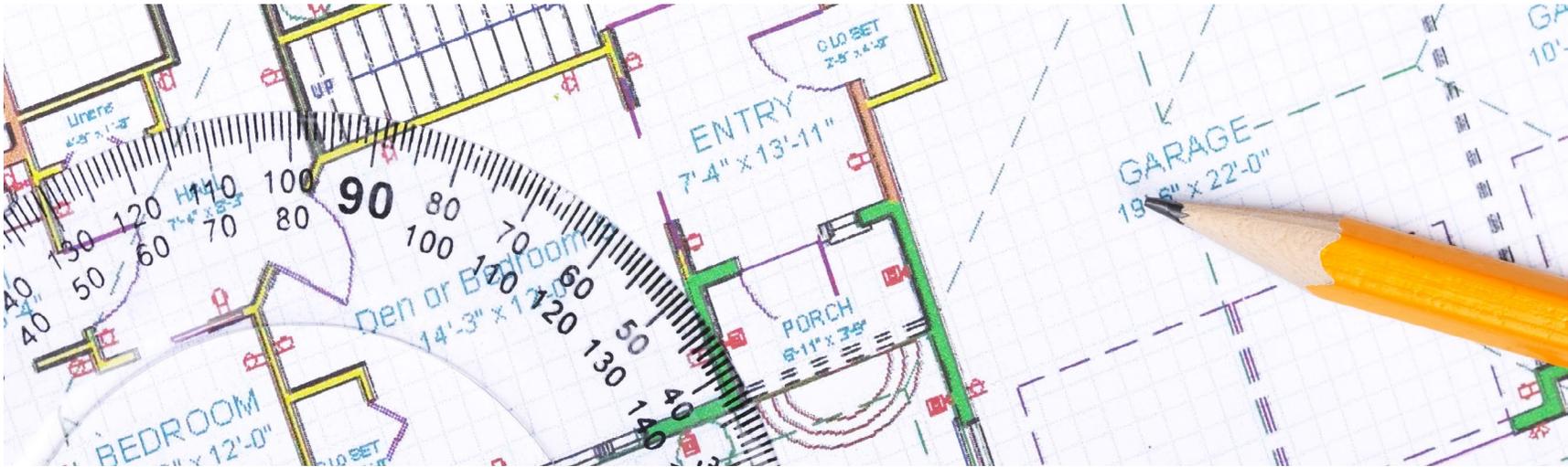
As part of your PAADU permit application, you are responsible for providing your own site plan. The PAADU plan sets-- available on the City's website-- include a blank page with space to upload your property- specific site plan.

The City strongly recommends hiring a licensed professional or contractor to prepare your site plan. Incomplete or deficient site plans are a common pitfall that result in project delays.

## What are Site Plans?

Site plans are detailed drawings that show information about your property and the proposed project. Site Plans help the City understand the overall context of your application by showing building(s) location and dimensions, property lines, setbacks, utility connections, and more. The more information shown on your Site Plan, the greater the chance for a quicker approval.





### What to include on Site Plans?

Site plan information can vary on a case-by-case basis. A good site plan typically includes:

- North Arrow
- Location of the lot's property lines
- Adjacent streets, sidewalks, light poles, and fire hydrants
- Existing and proposed structures including primary home, proposed ADU, and any swimming pools, gazebos, garages, and fences with the approximate location and size in square feet for each. If ADU is in a FEMA flood zone, the site plan needs to include the proposed finished Pad Elevation of the ADU.
- Existing and proposed vegetation and impervious surfaces like driveways and roads.
- Setbacks including the front, rear, and side yard distance from the proposed ADU and property lines in feet. Typically, a minimum of 4 feet is required for rear and side yard setbacks; However, distances may differ per fire and building standards.
- Distance between existing buildings and proposed ADU in feet. A minimum separation of 10 feet between structures is typically required. This includes the primary home, other accessory structures, and neighboring properties.
- Wet and dry utility: Water, sewer, electrical, and justification on how wet utility mains will handle increased flows
  - **Water:** Location of public water main, water meter, service lateral including pipe sizing
  - **Sewer:** Location of sewer lateral from proposed ADU to existing residential lateral, sewer clean out, invert elevation, and pipe size
  - **Electricity:** Location of electrical panel and amperage
  - **Other:** Drains, gas meters and lines, photovoltaic systems
- Topography of one-foot contours or drainage arrows with percentage
- Rainwater leaders
- Easements as listed in the Preliminary Title Report (If applicable) including easement location, width dedication, and separation in relation to structures, reference to record date and map number
- Lot coverage calculations

*Note: This is not a comprehensive list. The City may request additional details during the review process.*

## PERMIT FEES

The fees below are typically associated with an ADU project. This is not an exhaustive list. Fees can vary on a project-by-project basis.

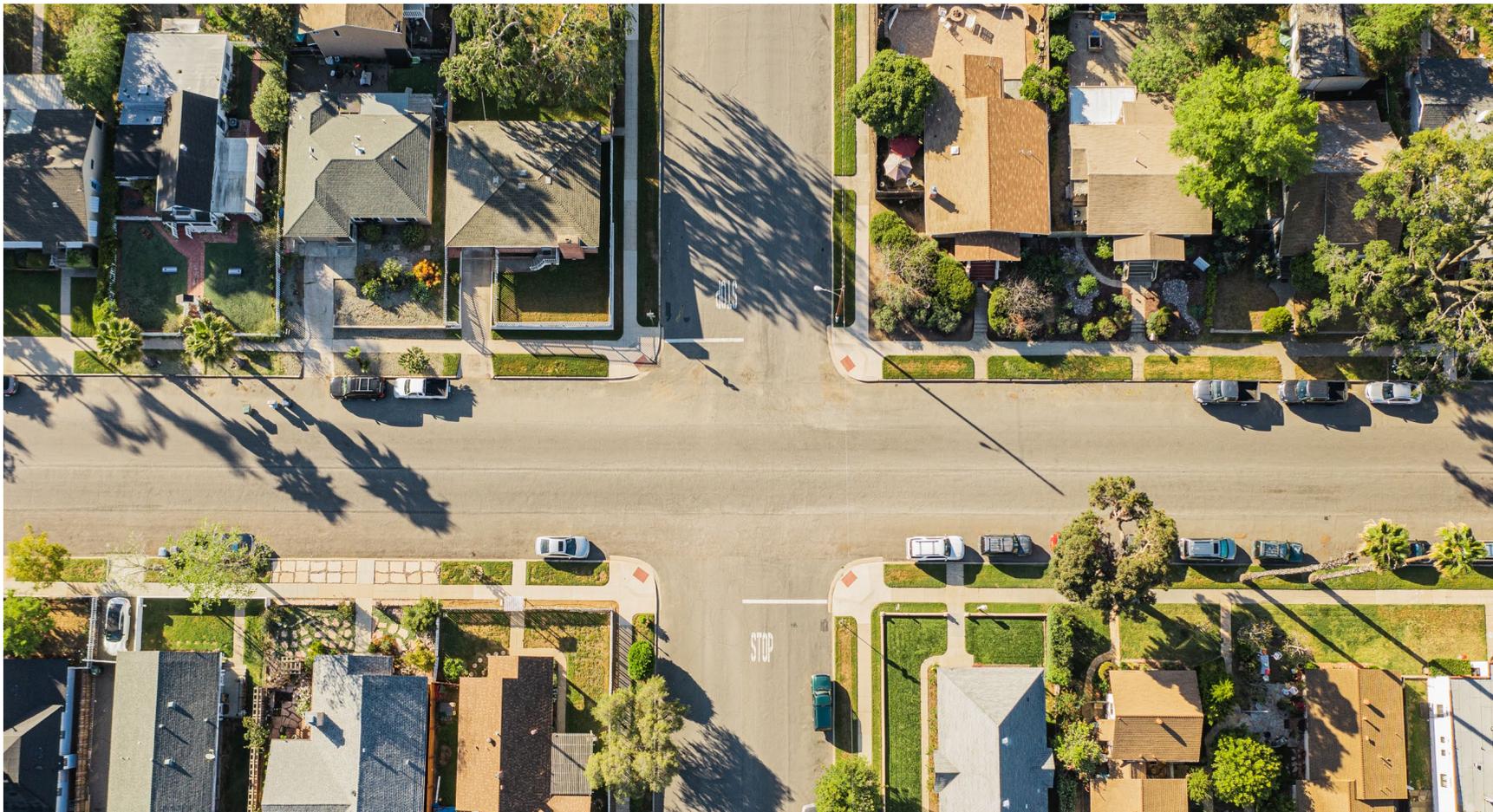
**City permitting fees** cover plan review and inspections before, during, and after construction. These fees are often a few thousand dollars.

**Development impact fees** help pay for new infrastructure in your area, such as new roads or parks. ADUs under 750 square feet are exempt.

**SDG&E connection & upgrade fees** are required for upgrades or new service. Reach out to SDG&E directly to learn about any fees that may impact your budget.

**Water and sewer fees** may be charged depending on upgrades or new connections associated with your ADU.

**School district fees** support the schools in your area and apply to ADUs 500 square feet or more. Typically, you will pay the school district directly. The City of Escondido will provide a letter and additional information on how to pay these fees during the permit process.



## INSPECTIONS

- Inspections are required during construction of an ADU. Applicants are responsible for requesting inspections.

Applicants can schedule inspections Online using the City portal. More information can be found at: [escondido.gov/1280/New---Online-Building-Inspection-Request](https://escondido.gov/1280/New---Online-Building-Inspection-Request)

## CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

- Once all permit items and payments are complete, your building permit is considered issued! You may download City approved files and move forward with construction.

To learn how to navigate the City's permitting software, click [here](#) or scan the QR code:



ESCONDIDO  
CALIFORNIA



# 7. Construction and Move-in

## PAADU CONSTRUCTION BENEFITS



### Efficient Design

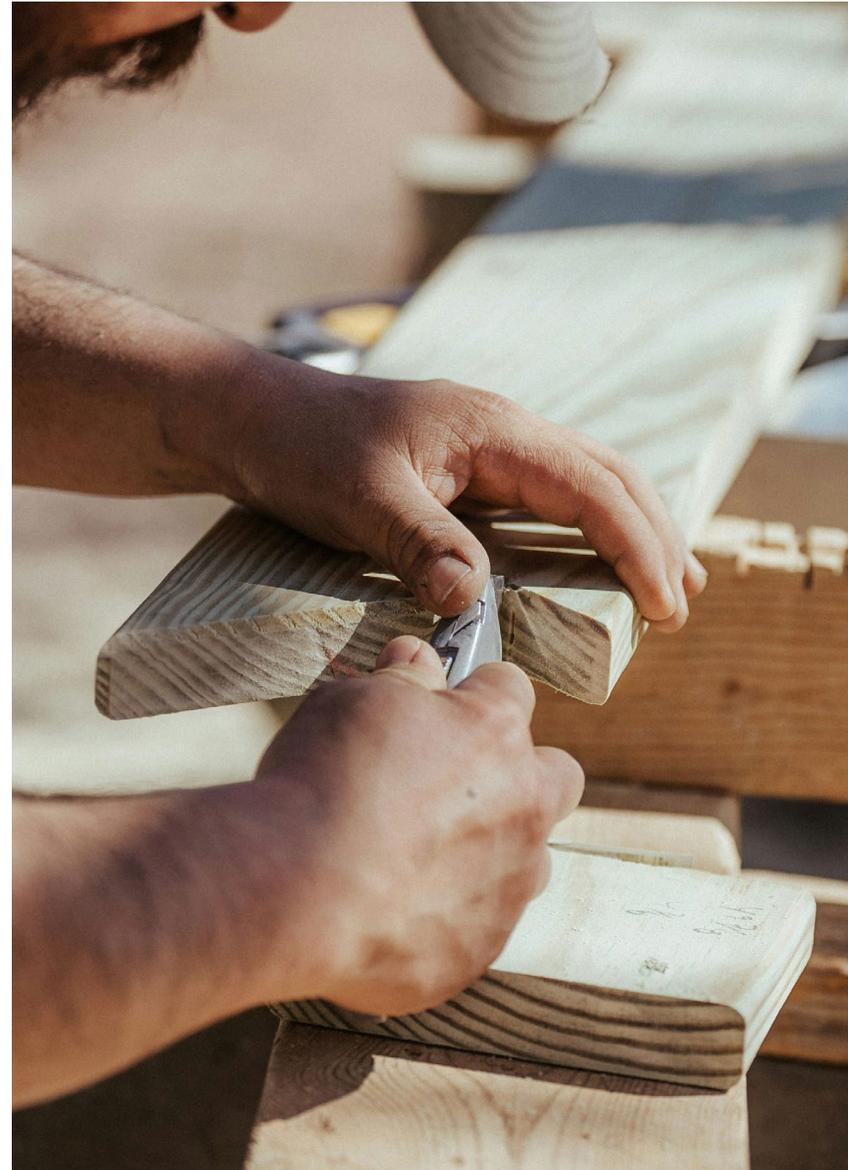
The pre-approved plans are designed to be simple and efficient to build, potentially saving on construction costs and building time, in comparison to traditional ADUs.



### Material Choices

The plans allow for a variety of finishes, enabling homeowners to choose cost-effective materials that fit their budget.

### ADU PROJECT TIMELINE



# 8. Final Considerations

## BECOMING A LANDLORD

If you are considering renting your ADU, you should become familiar with your role as a landlord.

- **Establish the rental price of your ADU.** Conduct research about rental prices of comparable ADUs in the nearby area to ensure that the rate is competitive to attract potential tenants.
- **Review California’s landlord-tenant laws.** Understanding the legal framework of renting your ADU can help prevent potential legal complications in the future.
- **Ensure you have a lease agreement.** Your lease agreement will provide you and your tenant with the legal obligations of renting your ADU. The agreement will outline the lease length and payment terms such as the security deposit, rent amount, due date, and acceptable payment methods.
- **Understand property taxes and insurance requirements.** Consult with your CPA and your insurance provider to understand the fiscal and liability implications of renting your ADU.

## RENTING YOUR ADU

There are a series of requirements and conditions applicable to the rental of ADUs:

- **Understand the requirements to lease your ADU.** Before renting your ADU, you will need a Certificate of Occupancy and landlord insurance.
- **Consider your lease length.** The City of Escondido does not permit for short-term rentals within the City. As a result, rental periods of 30-days or more are required for ADUs.
- **Review requirements for owner occupancy.** As an owner, you do not need to occupy the ADU. Recent state legislation, Assembly Bill 976, prohibits owner-occupancy requirements in California.<sup>2</sup>
- **Understand regulations around separate conveyance.** The City of Escondido does not permit the individual sale of ADUs.

<sup>2</sup>*Owner occupancy is required for JADUs, per Gov Code Section 66333. However the PAADU Program does not apply to JADUs, it only includes Pre-Approved ADU plans.*





[escondido.gov/238/Accessory-Dwelling-Units](https://escondido.gov/238/Accessory-Dwelling-Units)