

# ***Building an (ADU) or Junior ADU (JADU) in Cotati***



## Overview of Building an ADU



### **Step 1: Get Started 1-2 months**

- Think about what you want to achieve, including your goals, needs, and concerns.
- Look for inspiration such as the [Cotati Pre-Reviewed ADU Plans Program webpage](#) and other design resources that show architectural styles, floorplans, and photos.
- Make an informal sketch of your property with property lines, site access, building location(s), trees and other features.



### **Step 2: Learn the Rules 1-2 months**

- Learn about any restrictions or requirements relating to your property by contacting the City of Cotati [Community Development Department](#). For appointments email [permits@cotaticity.gov](mailto:permits@cotaticity.gov) or call 707-665-3636.
- Meet with City staff to find out what and where you can build on your property
- Develop your budget and plan for financing your project.



### **Step 3: Design Your ADU 1-6 months**

- Use a [pre-approved/pre-reviewed ADU Plan](#) to get a jump start or hire professionals like an architect, designer, or/or licensed contractor.
- Create your initial design and discuss it with City staff. For appointments email [permits@cotaticity.gov](mailto:permits@cotaticity.gov) or call 707-665-3636.
- Finalize your design for permitting. Your architect, designer, or contractor will help.
- Adjust your project budget as needed.



### **Step 4: Apply for Permits 1-6 months**

- Submit your [building permit application](#) and all [submittal requirements](#) by [email](#) or through the [Cloudpermit online portal](#) to the Cotati Building Department and pay the initial fees. Complete applications are reviewed, and comments provided within 30 days.
- Revise your application if needed. Expect 2-4 weeks for re-review. Check your email for updates or contact [permits@cotaticity.gov](mailto:permits@cotaticity.gov) with specific questions. Once approved, pay any remaining fees and receive your building permit through Cloudpermit or via email.
- Apply for an address for your ADU. Submit the [Address Request/Change](#) form to the Building Department.
- Complete the [ADU Survey](#) to help City staff improve the housing policy for Cotati.



## Step 5: Construct Your ADU 6-12 months

- **Ensure** all funding is in place before you start construction.
- **Schedule** inspections throughout construction. Schedule through the Cloudpermit portal or by calling 707-665-3632. Your contractor will do this for you.
- **Monitor** construction (typically 6-12 months) by checking in regularly with your contractors, making decisions about materials as needed, and ensuring inspections are moving along. City staff can help with questions about this.



## Step 6: Move In

Once your ADU has passed the final inspection it's ready for move-in! You may request a Certificate of Occupancy document from the Building Department for your records.

# ADU Building Process: A Step-by-Step Guide

We are here to help you through the ADU building process. Learn more about each step on the following pages and/or reach out with questions. **City contact Information** is provided at the end of this handout.

## Step 1: Get Started



**Building an ADU can be overwhelming. City of Cotati Community Development Department staff are here to assist early on and throughout the process.**

The [City of Cotati ADU webpage](#) has resources to support you.

- [ADU Guidebook](#): A step-by-step guide for building an ADU.
- [Building Permit and Development Fees Estimate form](#): Get an estimate of permit fees.
- [Pre-approved/Pre-reviewed Plans](#): View samples of ADU plans pre-approved by City staff.

## Step 2: Learn the Rules



**Learn what you can build on your property. City of Cotati staff are here to help. Contact the Community Development Department by calling 707-665-3636, emailing [permits@cotaticity.gov](mailto:permits@cotaticity.gov), or by visiting City Hall in person.**

### ADU Rules and Regulations

On lots of less than ½ acre, the maximum ADU size is 850 square feet for studio or 1-bedroom ADUs and 1,000 square feet for 2+ bedroom ADUs. Exceptions may be approved through a discretionary design review process. On lots of ½ acre or more, the maximum size is 1,200 square feet. The floor area of an attached ADU may not exceed 50% of the floor area of the primary residence. Junior ADUs (JADUs) are limited to 500 square feet in size and must be located within the primary dwelling unit or in an attached garage. Generally, ADUs should be located to the side or rear of the primary home on the lot. ADUs must be setback at least four feet from the rear and side property lines. Height is limited to 18 feet for a detached ADU, and 25 feet for an attached ADU, plus up to 2 feet to accommodate a roof pitch consistent with the primary dwelling. If an ADU conforms to the setbacks for the primary unit, its height may be up to the height limit for the primary unit. Regardless of height in feet, ADUs may be a maximum of 2 stories. More information about what you can build an ADU is in the Standards and Rules Appendix on page 9.

### General information:

- **Rentals:** Short-term rentals (less than 30 days) are prohibited for all homes in Cotati, including both ADUs and JADUs.
- **Sale:** An ADU may only be sold separately from the main home in certain circumstances in accordance with State ADU Law. JADUs cannot be sold separately.
- **Homeowner and Neighborhood Associations (HOA):** HOAs cannot prohibit or unreasonably restrict ADUs or JADUs, although they may require certain standards. HOAs are prohibited from restricting the rental of ADUs and JADUs.

### Utilities and Special Circumstances

- **Utilities:** ADUs and JADUs converted from existing space do not require a separate sewer or water connection, connection fees or capacity charges. However, although new connections are not required, homeowners may be required to upsize service and/or meters to meet capacity requirements. New electric and gas connections or electrical upgrades can add time and cost. Reach out to your utility providers early in the process to find out about connection fees, processes and timelines.
- **Soils Report:** A soils report is required for all new construction.
- **Fire Safety:** Common walls between dwelling units must have one-hour fire resistive construction. Fire sprinklers are only required for ADUs if fire sprinklers are required/present in the main house. Talk to City staff and [Rancho Adobe Fire District](#) to see what fire safety modifications are required.
- **Energy Code:** New detached ADUs must provide solar energy systems. Solar is not required for ADUs under 500 square feet or if the solar would generate less than 1.8 kilo watts.
- **Flood or Hazard Zones:** Hazard requirements depend on property elevation and location. Talk to City staff early to find out if there are additional requirements for your project.

## Step 3: Design Your ADU



**We strongly recommend hiring a professional architect/designer and contractor to help you through the process of designing and building your ADU. Although it might seem less expensive to do it yourself, an ADU is a big project and mistakes can be costly.**

### Designing Your Own ADU

However, some property owners may wish to design their own ADU, working with a contractor to ensure that codes are met. Another option is to use “off-the-shelf” plans that have already been designed by an architect or engineer. There are several options of these pre-reviewed plans, available from both the City and the State of California. You can often save time and money by selecting a design that is City of Cotati pre-approved.

## “Pre-Approved” ADU Plans

**Get a head start with ready-made plans that the City of Cotati has already reviewed!**

[Click here to explore available ADU plans online.](#)

Browse samples of plans for detached ADUs and prefab ADUs, provided by both the City and the State. Shorten the design process and get a head start on permitting. Plans will still need to be customized to your property.

## Garage Conversions

**Homeowners can convert legally built structures (garage, barn, art studio) into an ADU.**

Legally constructed, enclosed accessory structures on your property may be converted to an ADU. If you demolish a detached garage or other structure and build an ADU in its place, the ADU can be the same size and height of the structure it’s replacing. Demolition permits for an existing detached garage can be processed at the same time as the ADU. You may also convert an attached garage into an ADU. Garage conversion ADUs will require moisture barriers and other design elements to meet building codes. JADUs can be converted from an attached garage (but not a detached garage or structure).

# Step 4: Apply for Permits



**Meet with the City of Cotati staff to identify any issues before you submit your application.**

Once your ADU plans are finalized, you should talk to City staff to make sure you are submitting a complete application. Submittal requirements can be found in the [submittal requirements handout](#). Reach out to the agencies that provide vital services like water, sewer, gas, and electricity to see if their requirements will impact your design, cost, or timeline.

## Permit Review Process

**For people unfamiliar with construction, the ADU permitting process can be complicated. Reach out to the City of Cotati Community Development Department for help.**

The permit review process starts when you or your designer or contractor submits your application materials.

- **[Fire Permit Application to Rancho Adobe Fire District:](#)** In Cotati, a separate application must be submitted to the RAFPD before the Fire Department can begin reviewing your permit submittal. A separate fee will also be required to cover their cost. Doing this step before building permit submittal to the City will reduce your review time.
- **Building Permit Application:** Submit a complete [building permit application](#) online through the City’s [Cloudpermit](#) review system. Be sure to include all [submittal requirements](#) when you submit online through the [Cloudpermit](#) portal.

- **Plan Check:** Once a complete application is received, Building, Planning, Public Works, and Ranch Adobe Fire District (possibly others depending on your project) will review your construction plans. Expect 30 days for the first review and 2-4 weeks for any resubmittals, if required. Check your email or contact [permits@cotaticity.gov](mailto:permits@cotaticity.gov) for updates.

## ADU Project Fees

**ADUs can be charged a variety of fees from the City, State, and other agencies.**

Fees to construct an ADU include permitting, development impact, and utility fees. Some fees are based on the details of the project while others are fixed. Development impact fees help pay for community infrastructure like parks but are not charged for ADUs under 750 square feet. (Note that the school district charges a fee for any unit above 500 square feet.) For more information, review the City’s current Master Fee Schedule, which is updated yearly every July 1<sup>st</sup>.

### ADU Permit Fee Types\*

Permit, Impact & Utility Fees	Information Fee Amount or Calculation
<b>Average Building Permit/Plan Check Fees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building permit fees are based on the total project cost/valuation. Supplemental Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing fees (MEP) are also charged for all new dwellings, which are 25% of the building permit fee each.</li> <li>• Plan check fees are based on the time spent reviewing your submittal and rates vary by department. For estimation purposes we assume the plan check fees will be 65% of the building permit fee, although actual fees will likely differ. See below for two example fee estimates using the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026 Master Fee Schedule:  <u>\$100,000 ADU cost: Total City fees = \$4,736.97</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$1,973.74 building permit fee</li> <li>• \$1,480.30 MEP fees</li> <li>• \$1,282.93 plan check fee</li> </ul> <u>\$300,000 ADU cost: Total City fees = \$6,632.56</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$2,763.57 building permit fee</li> <li>• \$2,072.67 MEP fees</li> <li>• \$1,796.32 plan check fees</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b><i>Fees continued on next page</i></b>	

Permit, Impact & Utility Fees	Information Fee Amount or Calculation
Development Impact fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No city impact fees are paid for ADUs under 750 square feet. ADUs larger than 750 square feet shall be subject to impact fees proportionately in relation to the square footage of the primary unit. ADUs over 750 square feet are subject to the following impact fees (see page 16 of the <a href="#">Master Fee Schedule</a> for amounts):</li> <li>• Affordable Housing In-Lieu</li> <li>• Bed Tax</li> <li>• Park In-Lieu</li> <li>• Traffic</li> </ul>
School fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No school fees are paid for ADUs less than 500 square feet.</li> <li>• For ADUs 500 square feet or more: Fee is <b>\$4.79/square foot</b>. Check <a href="#">here</a> for updates.</li> </ul>
Fire District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$329.00 for plan review and inspection. For more information on the fee, check <a href="#">here</a>.</li> </ul>

*\*Fees typically change on an annual basis—please contact Community Development staff to confirm current fee rates and to obtain a fee estimate based on your specific project.*

## Unpermitted ADUs

**If you constructed an ADU without permits, or purchased a property with an unpermitted ADU, you may want to consider legalizing it.**

Legalizing an unpermitted ADU can reduce liability and risks to occupants, increase property value, and provide peace of mind. Reach out to the Community Development Department for assistance and to learn more. No fines or enforcement will result from contacting us. Owners can request a delay of citations for unpermitted ADUs, as long as there are no safety issues. An unpermitted ADU built can be likely legalized with no penalty fees, even if it is in violation of building code standards, or local ADU ordinances, unless the ADU is deemed substandard or there is a health and safety hazard. Visit the City of Cotati Amnesty Residential program webpage [here](#).

## Step 5: Build Your ADU



**A licensed contractor will complete the skilled construction work and manage the construction process, including hiring subcontractors, coordinating construction and scheduling inspections, and troubleshooting delays and changes**

### Hiring Your Contractor

The [California Department of Consumer Affairs](#) and or the [Contractor State License Board](#) can help you find a building contractor. They have resources on hiring, checking license status, negotiating a clear contract, and

resolving disputes. Before you hire your contractor, make sure to check their license, insurance and references for past work. You can verify their license by calling the Contractors' State License Board at 800-321-2752 or checking their [website](#).

## Building Inspections

Your ADU will be inspected by the City through each phase of construction to ensure it is being built according to the permitted plans and CA Building Standards Code. Call 707-665-3632 to schedule building inspections or schedule directly through the [Cloudpermit portal](#).

## Step 6: Move-In



**Congratulations on building your ADU! You may move into or rent out your ADU after receiving the Certificate of Occupancy from the City.**

## Understand Rental Laws

If you will be renting out your ADU, you will need to understand all the laws and responsibilities associated with being a landlord, especially relating to discrimination. For an overview of California laws, review [California Tenants: A Guide to Residential Tenants' and Landlords' Rights and Responsibilities](#), published by the California Department of Consumer Affairs

***ADU Resources and Forms, Standards Overview, and Contact Information are available beginning on the next page.***

# ADU Resources and Forms

- City of Cotati ADU Webpage <https://www.cotaticity.gov/212/Accessory-Dwelling-Units-ADUs>
- City of Cotati Municipal Code (CMC) section [17.42.170 Accessory dwelling units/junior accessory dwelling units.](#)
- CMC section [17.22 Allowable Land Uses](#) (to see where ADUs/JADUs are allowed in Cotati)
- Building Permit Application <https://www.cotaticity.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1451/Building-Permit-Application>
- City Master Fee Schedule <https://www.cotaticity.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1071/Master-Fee-Schedule-Effective-July-13-2025?bidId=>
- School District Fees <https://crpusd.org/Developer-Fees>
- Rancho Adobe Fire District Fees <https://www.rafd.org/fire-plan-submittals-and-permits>
- County Assessor's Office <https://sonomacounty.gov/administrative-support-and-fiscal-services/clerk-recorder-assessor/assessor>
- Financing Assistance or Programs [https://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/accessorydwellingunits/docs/CC%20ADU%20Finance%20Guide%20for%20Homeowners%20v5%203.18.21 ADA.pdf](https://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/accessorydwellingunits/docs/CC%20ADU%20Finance%20Guide%20for%20Homeowners%20v5%203.18.21%20ADA.pdf)
- California HFA ADU Grant Program [www.calhfa.ca.gov/homebuyer/programs/adu.htm](http://www.calhfa.ca.gov/homebuyer/programs/adu.htm)
- Symbium Build Property Lookup Tool [www.symbium.com](http://www.symbium.com)

## [Bay Area ADU Resources]

Napa Sonoma ADU Center [www.napasonomaadu.org/](http://www.napasonomaadu.org/)

- ADU Workbook [www.napasonomaadu.org/workbook](http://www.napasonomaadu.org/workbook)

ADU Marin [www.adumarin.org](http://www.adumarin.org)

- ADU Workbook [www.adumarin.org/s/Marin-ADU-Workbook-v9-121020-w-cover-link.pdf](http://www.adumarin.org/s/Marin-ADU-Workbook-v9-121020-w-cover-link.pdf)

Santa Clara County ADU [www.aduscc.org](http://www.aduscc.org)

- ADU Guidebook [www.aduscc.org/guidebook](http://www.aduscc.org/guidebook)

San Mateo County ADU Resource Center [www.smcadu.org](http://www.smcadu.org)

- ADU Guidebook [www.smcadu.org/guidebook](http://www.smcadu.org/guidebook)

# Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Standards Overview

Standards & Rules	Explanation of Rules & Requirements
<p><b>Occupancy, Rentals, Sale, HOA</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Owner Occupancy:</b> Not required for ADUs. Owners are required to live in either the JADU or the primary dwelling in some circumstances.</li> <li>• <b>Rentals:</b> Short-term rentals (less than 30 days) are prohibited for all homes in Cotati, including both ADUs and JADUs.</li> <li>• <b>Sale:</b> Selling ADUs separate from the main home is only allowed in unusual (certain) circumstances. JADUs may not be sold separately.</li> <li>• <b>Homeowner and Neighborhood Associations (HOA):</b> HOAs cannot prohibit or unreasonably restrict ADU or JADU development, although they may require certain standards. HOAs are prohibited from restricting the rental of ADUs and JADUs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Zones Allowed</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ADUs:</b> Allowed in all residential and mixed-use zones in Cotati: RR, RVL, NL, NM, NU, CE, CG, CD, HC, LP, NG, CA, SW, TOC</li> <li>• <b>JADUs:</b> Allowed only on lots zoned for or developed with single-family homes: generally, RR, RVL, NL.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Number of Units</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>On Single-Family Properties:</b> One detached ADU, one conversion ADU (located fully within/attached to the primary dwelling or in an existing legal accessory structure), and one JADU are permitted per lot, meeting the size and location requirements (see pages 4-5 of the ADU Standards Summary).</li> <li>• <b>On Properties with Existing Multifamily Development:</b> Up to 8 detached ADUs allowed, but the number of ADUs may not exceed the number of existing multifamily units. Additionally, property owners can convert non-living space within existing multifamily structures to ADUs. At least one such ADU within the existing space is allowed, with a maximum number up to 25% of the existing multifamily units.</li> <li>• <b>On Properties with Proposed Multifamily Development:</b> Up to two detached ADUs are allowed.</li> <li>• <b>JADUs:</b> Only one JADU is allowed per residential lot zoned for or developed with a single-family dwelling(s).</li> </ul>
<p><b>ADU Size</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Minimum:</b> 150 square feet (per California Building Code)</li> <li>• <b>Maximum:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Detached ADUs on lots less than ½ acre: 850 square feet for studio/1-bedroom unit and 1,000 square feet for 2+-bedroom units. (Exceptions may be granted with approval of a discretionary design review application.)</li> <li>○ Detached ADUs on lots of ½ acre or more: 1,200 square feet.</li> <li>○ Detached ADUs created through conversion of an existing legal accessory structure must be built within the physical dimensions of that structure, with an expansion of up to 150 square feet allowed to accommodate ingress/egress.</li> <li>○ Attached ADUs: May not exceed 50% of the existing floor area of the primary dwelling.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Standards & Rules	Explanation of Rules & Requirements
<b>JADU Size &amp; Design Guidelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 500 square feet.</li> <li>• Allowed but not required to have an interior access connection to the main home. If the JADU shares a bathroom with the main home, interior access is required.</li> </ul>
<b>Maximum ADU Height</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Detached ADUs with minimum rear and side setbacks of 4 feet but not conforming to primary dwelling unit setbacks:</b> 18 feet</li> <li>• <b>Attached ADUs with minimum rear and side setbacks of 4 feet but within the primary dwelling unit setbacks:</b> 25 feet</li> <li>• Any ADU may be allowed up to an additional 2 feet in height to accommodate a roof pitch consistent with that of the primary dwelling.</li> <li>• Detached and attached ADUs that conform to the Zoning District’s setback requirements for the primary dwelling unit are subject to the height limit for the primary unit.</li> <li>• The maximum height for an ADU converted from a legal existing living space, garage, or accessory structure may be the greater of the above limits or the height of the existing structure prior to ADU conversion. All ADUs shall be limited to 2 stories, regardless of height in feet (with the exception of an interior ADU in an existing dwelling of more than 2 stories).</li> </ul>
<b>Setbacks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>New Construction:</b> Minimum 4 foot side/rear setbacks.</li> <li>• <b>Converted Structures:</b> Same setbacks as the (legally constructed) existing structure.</li> <li>• Setbacks must comply with any recorded easements or setback restrictions.</li> <li>• ADUs should be located to the side and/or rear of the primary dwelling unit. Exceptions may be allowed. See Standards Section B5 (page 3) for more information.</li> </ul>
<b>Parking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ADUs:</b> New off-street parking is not required. Talk to Planning staff to confirm parking requirements for your property and project.</li> <li>• <b>JADUs:</b> No new parking required.</li> <li>• <b>Garage Conversions:</b> If converting a garage to an ADU, replacement parking is not required.</li> </ul>

# Contact Information

City of Cotati staff are here to help you through the ADU permitting and building process.

If you need assistance or have any questions, please contact the Community Development Department or visit our [website](#). To look up your property information, visit our [How to Research Property, Zoning, and Permit Information in Cotati](#) webpage.

Departments, Agencies, Service Providers	Contact Information
<b>Planning &amp; Building</b>	<b>Community Development Department</b> <b>Website:</b> <a href="https://www.cotaticity.gov/200/Community-Development">https://www.cotaticity.gov/200/Community-Development</a> <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:permits@cotaticity.gov">permits@cotaticity.gov</a> <b>Phone:</b> 707-665-3636 <b>In person:</b> Cotati City Hall, Community Development Department, 201 West Sierra Avenue, Cotati CA 94931 Drop in hours: Monday to Thursday 7:30 AM - 5:30 PM (closed 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM)
<b>ADU Website</b>	<a href="https://www.cotaticity.gov/212/Accessory-Dwelling-Units-ADUs">https://www.cotaticity.gov/212/Accessory-Dwelling-Units-ADUs</a>
<b>Water and Sewer Service</b>	<b>Cotati Administrative Services</b> <b>Webpage:</b> <a href="https://www.cotaticity.gov/185/Administrative-Services-Finance-Water-Bi">https://www.cotaticity.gov/185/Administrative-Services-Finance-Water-Bi</a> Phone: 707-665-3631 Email: <a href="mailto:water@cotaticity.gov">water@cotaticity.gov</a>
<b>Electricity &amp; Gas</b>	<b>PG&amp;E</b> Website: <a href="http://www.pge.com">www.pge.com</a> ; Phone: 1-800-743-5000; <b>Sonoma Clean Power</b> <b>Webpage:</b> <a href="https://sonomacleanpower.org">https://sonomacleanpower.org</a> Phone: 1-855-202-2139; Email: <a href="mailto:info@sonomacleanpower.org">info@sonomacleanpower.org</a>
<b>Waste Removal</b>	<b>Recology</b> <b>Webpage:</b> <a href="https://www.recology.com/recology-sonoma-marin/cotati/">https://www.recology.com/recology-sonoma-marin/cotati/</a> Phone: 800-243-0291; Email: <a href="mailto:csonomamarin@recology.com">csonomamarin@recology.com</a>