

ADU Planning Timeline

What to Expect When Building an ADU in Los Angeles

BEFORE YOU START

Building an ADU in Los Angeles is a multi-phase process that takes time. While every project is different, most ADUs follow a similar sequence from early planning to move-in. This timeline is designed to help you understand what happens when, and why realistic expectations matter.

PHASE 1: EARLY PLANNING & FEASIBILITY

Typical Duration: 1-3 Months

- Review zoning and basic ADU eligibility
- Evaluate site conditions and access
- Identify potential utility requirements
- Discuss goals, priorities, and constraints
- Establish early budget and timeline expectations

Decisions made here affect design flexibility, permitting success, and overall cost.

PHASE 2: DESIGN & COORDINATION

Typical Duration: 2-4 Months

- Architectural layout and design development
- Structural and consultant coordination
- Scope refinement and decision-making
- Preparation of permit-ready plans

Design is rarely one pass. Revisions are normal and expected.

PHASE 3: PERMITTING & PLAN REVIEWS

Typical Duration: 3-9+ Months

- Permit application submission
- Multi-department plan review
- Comment responses and revisions
- Resubmittals as required

Multiple reviewing departments, high application volume, zoning overlays, and utility coordination all affect timing.

PHASE 4: PRE-CONSTRUCTION PREPARATION

Typical Duration: 1-2 Months

- Final pricing and contracts
- Scheduling and material coordination
- Site preparation and logistics planning
- Utility coordination or upgrades (if required)

PHASE 5: CONSTRUCTION

Typical Duration: 4-8+ Months

- Site work and foundations
- Framing and structural construction
- Utilities and system installations
- Inspections at key milestones
- Interior finishes and exterior completion

Detached ADUs and projects with utility upgrades often take longer than garage conversions.

PHASE 6: FINAL INSPECTIONS & OCCUPANCY

Typical Duration: 1-2 Months

- Final Building Inspections
- Utility Sign-Offs
- Corrections (if required)
- Certificate of Occupancy or final approval

Once approvals are complete, the ADU is ready for use.

COMMON TIMELINE MISCONCEPTIONS

- Permitting is not immediate
- Construction does not start right after design
- Timelines vary widely by property
- Delays are not always avoidable

Understanding these realities early helps reduce frustration later.

Overall, you can expect a typical timeline to be between 12-24 Months.

If you'd like help understanding this timeline applies to your specific property and goals, a planning call can help clarify next steps.

Schedule a Planning Call