

ADU Cost Factors Explained

What Really Drives the Cost of an ADU in Los Angeles



BEFORE YOU LOOK AT NUMBERS

ADU costs in Los Angeles vary widely. There is no single “standard” price, because each property brings different constraints, requirements, and decisions. This guide explains the main factors that influence ADU cost, so you can plan realistically and understand why estimates differ from project to project.

1) SITE CONDITIONS & ACCESS

- Lot Layout and available build area
- Slopes, retaining walls, or drainage issues
- Distance from street access to ADU location

Why this matters: Challenging site require more prep work, coordination, and time.

2) UTILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Electrical service capacity or required upgrades
- Sewer connection location or upgrades
- Water and gas extensions to the ADU

Why this matters: Utility work is one of the most common drivers of cost variability and often the least visible early on.

3) ADU TYPE & SIZE

- Detached ADU vs attached ADU
- Garage conversion vs ne construction
- Square footage and layout complexity

Why this matters: Larger units and ground-up construction typically require more materials, labor, and coordination.

4) DESIGN & STRUCTURAL REQUIREMENTS

- Architectural complexity
- Structural engineering needs
- Energy code and compliance requirements

Why this matters: Design decisions affect both construction scope and permitting requirements.

5) FINISH LEVEL & MATERIAL CHOICES

- Cabinetry, fixtures, and appliances
- Flooring and tile selections
- Custom vs Standard finishes

Why this matters: Challenging site require more prep work, coordination, and time.

6) PERMITTING & PLAN REVIEW

- Scope of plan review required
- Number of revision cycles
- Zoning overlays or special conditions

Why this matters: Time is a cost factor. Longer review cycles can affect scheduling and coordination.

7) TIMELINE & COORDINATION

- Project pacing and sequencing
- Consultant coordination
- Inspection scheduling

Why this matters: Well-coordinated projects tend to move more efficiently and with fewer surprises.

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

Instead of asking, “How much does an ADU cost?” a better early question is: “What factors will influence the cost of my ADU?” Understanding these drivers allows for better planning, clearer conversations, and more realistic explanations.

If you’d like help understanding how these cost factors apply to your property, a planning call can help clarify scope, priorities, and next steps.

Schedule a Planning Call