

The ADU Math

Run these numbers on your parcel before you call a supplier.

01 YOUR PARCEL Property Inputs

Parcel address or description

Where the ADU will be built

Lot size

Total lot square footage

sq ft

Available build area (backyard/side lot)

Space available for ADU footprint

sq ft

Existing STR on parcel?

Yes / No

HOA restrictions?

Yes / No / Unknown

02 BUILD COST Estimate Your All-In Investment

Use these benchmarks as starting points. Get 2 quotes before committing.

ITEM	BENCHMARK RANGE	YOUR ESTIMATE
Prefab unit (400-600 sq ft)	\$50,000 - \$100,000	\$ _____
Foundation	\$5,000 - \$15,000	\$ _____
Site prep (flat lot)	\$5,000 - \$10,000	\$ _____
Utility hookups	\$5,000 - \$15,000	\$ _____

Permits and fees	\$2,000 - \$12,000	\$ _____
Contingency (15%)	Add 15% to total	\$ _____
TOTAL ALL-IN	\$80,000 - \$130,000	\$ _____

REVENUE & PAYBACK

03 Does the Math Work?

Projected monthly gross revenue _____ \$/mo

STR: \$1,200-\$2,500/mo avg mid-tier market

Estimated monthly expenses _____ \$/mo

Cleaning, platform fees, supplies ~25-35%

Estimated monthly net income _____ \$/mo

Gross minus expenses

Annual net income _____ \$/yr

Monthly net x 12

Total all-in cost (from above) _____ \$

Payback period _____ yrs

Total cost divided by annual net

HOST CAMP NOTE

Income varies significantly by market. A well-placed STR ADU in a mid-tier market averages \$1,200-\$2,500/month. Strong STR markets run higher. Run your local AirDNA comps before locking in a projection. ADUs also add 20-35% to underlying property value on average.

The Parcel Check

Run every item below before you contact a supplier. If the answer to any item is unclear, slow down.

01 ZONING What Does Your Parcel Allow?

- Pull your zoning district code
Google "[county name] zoning map" or "[county name] GIS map." Click the parcel. Read the code.
 - Pull the use table for your district
Google "[county name] zoning ordinance." Find your district. Confirm ADU is listed as P (permitted) or C (conditional).
 - Confirm minimum lot size requirement
Most jurisdictions require a minimum lot size to permit a detached ADU. Check before anything else.
 - Confirm setback requirements
How far must the ADU sit from property lines, the main structure, and the street?
 - Confirm maximum ADU size allowed
Most jurisdictions cap detached ADUs at 800-1,200 sq ft. Some are lower.
 - Confirm stay type the ADU can legally run
Nightly STR? 30+ day stays only? Owner-occupied required? This determines whether your revenue model works.
 - Check for license caps or permit limits
Some cities limit the number of STR permits per address or per neighborhood.
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02 HOA & DEED RESTRICTIONS What Does Your Title Say?

- Is the parcel subject to an HOA?
Check your title documents or county assessor records.
 - Pull the CC&Rs; and review ADU language
Some HOAs prohibit detached structures, additional dwellings, or short-term rentals entirely.
 - Check for deed restrictions
Separate from HOA rules. Some parcels have recorded deed restrictions that limit use.
 - Confirm STR is permitted under HOA rules
Even if city zoning allows nightly rentals, an HOA can block them independently.
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03 Can the Parcel Support a Second Unit?

- Confirm water connection capacity

Can existing water service support a second unit? Some parcels require a separate meter.

- Confirm sewer or septic capacity

Adding a second unit may require a septic upgrade or separate sewer connection depending on jurisdiction.

- Confirm electrical service capacity

Panel may need upgrading to support a second dwelling. Get an electrician assessment early.

- Assess lot terrain and access

Flat, accessible lots cost under \$10,000 to prep. Sloped or landscaped lots can run \$30,000-\$50,000.

- Confirm crane or delivery access

Fully assembled prefab units require crane placement. Confirm your lot can accommodate access.

04 What to Have Ready

- Know your zoning district code and confirmed stay type

Suppliers need this to confirm whether their unit qualifies for your jurisdiction.

- Know your available footprint and terrain

Determines which unit sizes and foundation types are viable.

- Know your utility situation

Affects unit type, site cost, and timeline.

- Have a budget range ready

All-in including site prep, foundation, hookups, permits, and 15% contingency.

- Read the Host Camp prefab supplier breakdown

hostcamp.com/blog/top-prefab-homes-2025 — vetted list from Kai Andrew across 50+ suppliers.

IMPORTANT

ADU rules vary by city, county, and state and change frequently. This checklist is a baseline screen, not legal advice. Before committing to a build, verify current rules with your city planning department, county zoning office, HOA, and a local attorney.