

# ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT DESIGN MANUAL & STOCK ADU PLANS



## Introduction

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are a critical element of Summit County's Housing Plan to create more housing for the local workforce. Because properties where ADUs are located are required to deed restrict either the primary residence or the ADU to local workers who work for a Summit County business or organization for an average of 30-hours a week, creating more ADUs has the potential to make a significant impact on the County's Housing Crisis. The County has also made it significantly easier to build an ADU by amending its Development Code to allow detached ADUs.

This manual is a resource for homeowners who are interested in adding an ADU to their property. The manual contains two parts: the first part is an informational guide on the process to design, obtain approval, and build an ADU; the second part is a summary of the County's Stock Accessory Dwelling Unit Plans program that offers a series of ADU building plan sets for residents to choose from and use at no cost.

## **Acknowledgments**

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# **Summit County ADU Design Manual**

## ADU Design Manual - Section 1: Benefits of ADUs

This first part of this manual outlines the planning, design, application, and review procedures that need to be considered prior to obtaining a building permit to construct an accessory dwelling unit (ADU). It also provides a summary of key zoning, engineering, and building code standards to consider when adding an ADU to your property.

An ADU, also known as a “mother-in-law” or “granny flat,” can be an attached part of a primary dwelling or a detached stand-alone structure on the same lot as an existing dwelling where the lot is zoned for single-family or duplex use. An ADU provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons. This includes permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation, all on the same parcel as the primary, single-family residence.

Many Summit County homeowners are interested in adding an ADU to their property. People build ADUs for lots of reasons, but the most common are rental income and/or to house relatives. These units can provide housing for local workers or relatives while generating income for the homeowners. The concept of creating living space from unused portions of your property or home is not new. However, interest in ADUs has increased in recent years as they are a relatively affordable type of construction that does not require purchasing land or major new infrastructure.

This manual is a resource to help residents build an ADU. The following pages provide an overview of the entire process, from how to get started to pulling permits. This useful information is intended to reduce the uncertainty in what can feel like a complicated process.

### Benefits of Building an ADU



**Rental Income** Building an ADU can help homeowners pay the mortgage via a steady stream of income.



**Housing for Relatives** Having an ADU allows a homeowner with aging relatives, adult children, or relatives with special needs to live together while maintaining privacy.



**Downsizing** Homeowners may build an ADU for themselves and then rent out the primary residence.



**Investment** ADUs are a good investment with a relatively short payback period that can increase a home's resale value.



**Community Benefits** ADUs provide attainable or affordable workforce housing to help address the County's housing crisis. The units will help local workers live in Summit County by diversify housing options while maintaining community character.

## ADU Design Manual - Section 2: Getting Started

### Planning an ADU Project

ADUs come in many shapes and sizes but are always a self-contained unit that is smaller than the primary dwelling and legally part of the same property. ADUs always contain a kitchen, bathroom, and place to sleep. ADUs can range from efficiency studio units to 1,400-square-foot units with multiple bedrooms. Interior conversions may include conversion of interior living space of a primary dwelling or conversion of a garage or other existing structure.

A building permit is required to build any accessory dwelling unit. Depending on the scope of work, your project will also likely require electrical, plumbing, and/or mechanical permits. It is recommended that you visit the County's ADU [website](#) to review all development regulations. The Building Department and Planning Department will have information on building codes, land use regulations, and design requirements. The Housing Department will have information on ADU covenant requirements as well as the ADU Assistance Program. County staff can also discuss your project with you while in the planning stages (*see appendix for Department Contacts*). Staff can help you determine if an ADU is allowed on your property and can help answer questions about zoning standards, building code requirements, construction standards, utilities, and the requirements of the Restrictive Housing Covenant, also known as the deed restriction.



**Detached ADU** Free-standing structure



**Attached ADU** Has at least one shared wall with the primary dwelling



**Interior Conversion** An ADU built within the walls of an existing primary dwelling



**Garage Conversion** An ADU built within the walls of an existing garage



**Above Garage ADU** A unit built above a garage

## Zoning and Design Standards

One ADU is allowed on a residentially zoned parcel that has no more than one existing or proposed single-family or duplex residence. ADUs can be built as detached (stand-alone accessory structure) or attached units (addition to an existing residence), within an existing home or accessory structure, or as a garage conversion. The County's ADU standards allow for a range of sizes, from efficiency studios up units with 1,400 sf. The zoning of your property and the size of your existing lot and house are determining factors in how large of an ADU you can build.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS	
<b>Number of units</b>	In zoning districts where ADUs are permitted, no more than one (1) ADU shall be permitted on each parcel.
<b>Maximum unit size</b>	ADUs may be detached or attached to the primary residence. In either case, the following size maximums apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On lots less than 5 acres, detached ADUs may not exceed 1,000 square feet.</li> <li>- On lots greater than 5 acres, ADUs may not exceed 1,400 square feet.</li> </ul>
<b>Parking</b>	One (1) parking space for a studio or one-bedroom ADU. Two (2) parking spaces are required for an ADU having 2 or more bedrooms. Parking shall be provided only in a designated, paved or graveled area. <p>Parking may be tandem, (outside or in a garage) and no administrative relief from the parking requirements is necessary to allow tandem parking.</p> <p><i>Relief from setbacks:</i> On a Single Family lot, 1 of the required parking spaces may be located within the setback, provided it is a minimum of 5 feet from a property line.</p>
<b>Setbacks</b>	Same as existing primary dwelling. <p><i>Exception:</i> A detached ADU on a duplex lot shall have a 7.5 foot setback from the internal and shared property line</p>
<b>Lot coverage</b>	Based on existing zoning
<b>Height</b>	35'
<b>Rental</b>	An ADU cannot be rented for periods of less than 6-months. Short-term rental of the ADU is expressly prohibited.

## Types of Construction

### Timber Frame

Timber frame, or stick-built construction, is the traditional method of home construction. This method is done on-site and relies on wooden posts, beams, studs, joists, and rafters for its basic construction. Timber framed homes often leave a portion of the wood timber exposed as part of the design aesthetic, in addition to its structural purpose.

### Modular

Modular construction relies on pieces of the house or ADU being fabricated off-site, and then being delivered to the building site. The prefabricated pieces are delivered to the site and placed into position, either by hand or with a crane.

### Manufactured

Manufactured construction is a process where an entire house or ADU, or sections of them, are predominantly built and assembled in factories. The entire unit, or the sections, are then transported to the building site and assembled.





## Design Professionals

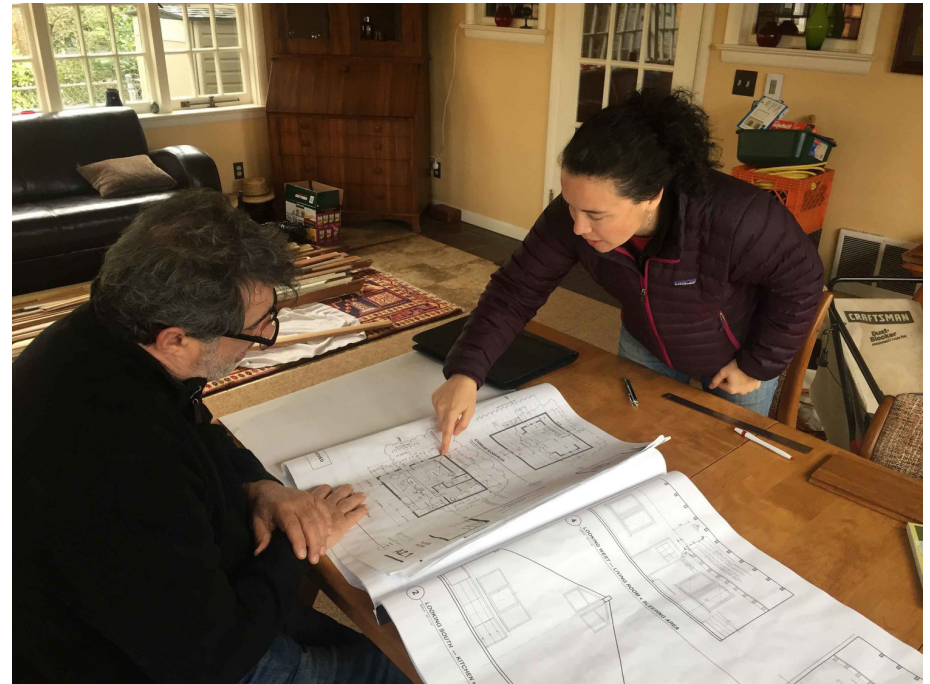
As you start the design process, one of your first considerations will be what professionals you want to work with. Most homeowners choose to work with some type of design professional to help navigate the design and permit review process. Property owners with design experience can choose to manage the project themselves, however, the County requires that all plans be stamped and signed by a licensed structural engineer.

### Architect

Architects provide a range of design services including full-service from the initial concept to final construction. This can include coordinating with additional consultants such as structural engineers, surveyors, or any other project related subcontractors. Architects are professionally licensed by the state, have a degree in architecture, and have passed a series of licensing exams. Architects are legally responsible for the work they design.

### Engineers

Engineers are involved in the design, construction, maintenance and inspection of development projects. A licensed engineer is legally responsible for the work they design. Civil, geotechnical, and structural engineers can help determine the proper site layout and structural design for development projects. Summit County requires that all building plans be stamped and signed by a licensed structural engineer. A geotechnical engineer will be needed to provide a soils report for the property. Having a soils report is critical to ensure a foundation is designed properly. You can check with the Building Department to see if a soils report is already on file for the property.



## Landscape Architect

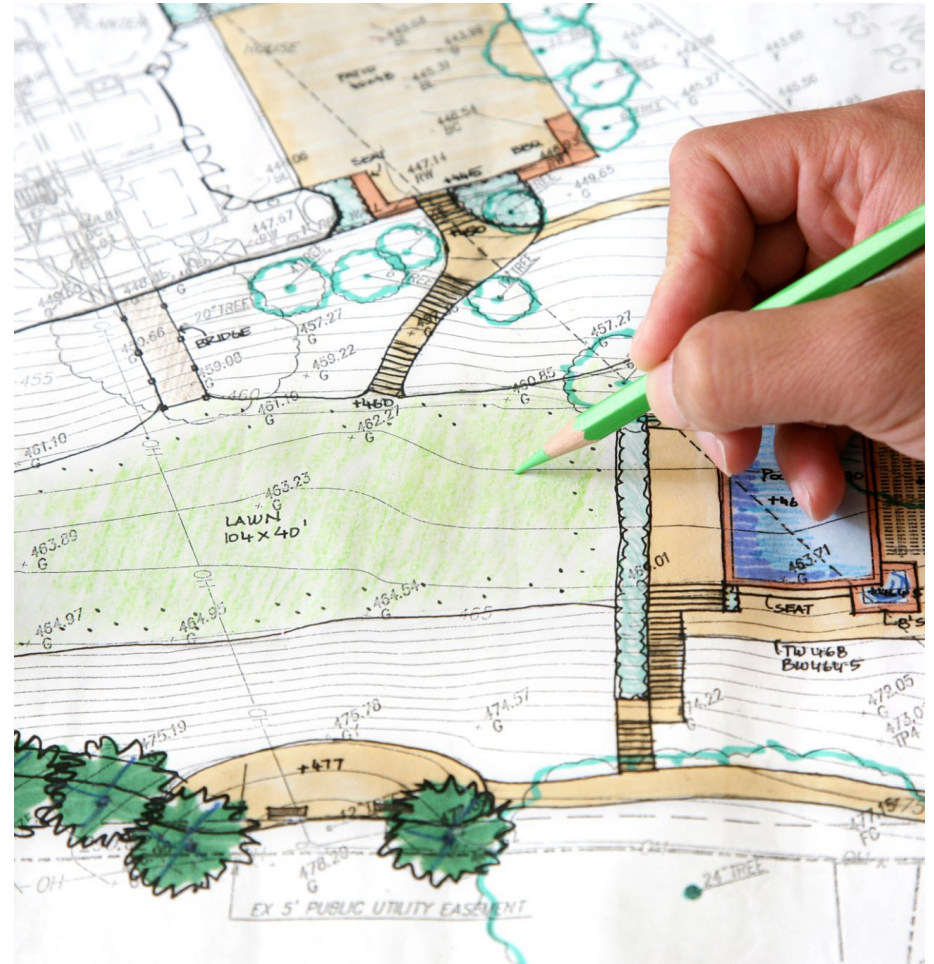
Landscape architects design outdoor environments that connect our built environments to natural surroundings. This can include parks, gardens, hardscapes, and small structures. Landscape architects are professionally licensed by the state and have a degree in landscape architecture, have passed a series of licensing exams, and are legally responsible for the work they design.

## Designer

Designers can come from varying backgrounds and skill sets, sometimes referred to as building designers or drafting services. Most designers have a design-based education and work experience, and some are self-taught, but none are professionally licensed. The services designers provide are dependent upon the level of their experience in the design, engineering, and construction fields.

## Surveyor

Land surveyors use exact locations to determine distances, directions, and angles between reference points or important features on a property. A licensed surveyor can verify and establish boundaries, research land records, and prepare maps and reports for development projects. To build any ADU in Summit County a boundary survey of the property will be needed. You may also want to check with the Building department to see if the County happens to have a boundary survey on file for your property already.







### **Manufacturer**

Modular and manufactured homes can be an efficient way of constructing your ADU. Manufacturers of these homes are monitored by the state of Colorado, and a contractor is required for the on-site foundation work, utility hookups, and placement or assembly of the unit. Most manufacturers offer a variety of options for homeowners to customize their unit. This method of construction simplifies the design process and generally takes the least amount of time from conception to completion.



## ADU Guidebook - Section 3: Design Considerations

ADUs provide many benefits for the owners, the County, and for prospective renters. When planning to build an ADU, there are many alternatives to consider. For the design of the ADU, a successful project will make considerations for the location, size, and aesthetic features of the unit.



### Purpose

ADUs help diversify the housing options within existing neighborhoods. These units will provide more affordable alternatives for local workers and the rental income helps owners offset their own housing costs. The size of these units is also conducive to multi-generational housing, and provide an affordable option for students, adult children, parents or grandparents, and caregivers.

### County's ADU Restrictive Housing Covenant Requirement

All ADUs in Summit County are required to have a covenant on them. The County's ADU Covenant requires that all rental agreements for new units must have leases of 6-months or longer to a local worker; therefore, short-term vacation rental is prohibited in an ADU. Owners can choose, however, to live in their ADU and rent out the primary home long-term to a local worker. The County's ADU Covenant also allows for long term occupancy of an ADU by relatives of the owner. The covenant is recorded prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

### Neighborhood and Site Context

Lot size, community character, and HOA design guidelines need to be considered when designing an ADU. Every property has an underlying zoning designation, and almost every neighborhood has an established lot and building pattern. Design features such as architectural styles, windows and doors, roof lines, and front porches, and the materials that make up these features, should be considered for the ADU.

Determining your zoning, lot size, HOA rules and potential design guidelines, and property boundaries will help guide preliminary design decisions. A property survey will provide the boundaries, lot size, and other important information. The zoning maps, designations, and standards can be attained from the County’s website (*see County Resources in Appendix*) or by contacting the Planning Department.

The size, or massing, of your ADU should compliment the primary residence and the surrounding neighbors. The relationship, or spacing, between structures can create attractive courtyards, gardens, and private spaces. These landscape and hardscape features are also important elements that connect the ADU to the property and the neighborhood.

When an ADU is proposed in an existing space, either through conversion of a garage or accessory structure, or within the house, or when an addition to an existing building is proposed, it may be helpful to make an initial visit to the Planning and Building Departments. The visit provides an opportunity to discuss the space, design, and structural issues that may be associated with the development of an ADU. In order for staff to provide the best information possible, simple site and floor plan drawings are beneficial.

The proper location and size of your ADU, along with the incorporation of specific architectural and landscape elements into the design, will ensure compatibility with your primary home and neighborhood. These



**STANDARDS FOR ADUs**

Size of Property	Max ADU Size
● Less than 5 acres	Detached: 1,000 sq ft Attached: 1,000 sq ft
● ≥ 5 acres	Detached: 1,400 sq ft Attached: 1,400 sq ft

## Stock ADU Plans + HOAs

HOAs in Summit County may also regulate if a property is allowed to build an ADU and whether it may be detached or attached. Typically, HOAs have review processes that require the ADU must comply with HOA design guidelines, which are in addition to the building permit process. Staff recommend that you talk to your HOA before getting too far into your project.

[illegible]

## ADU Guidebook - Section 4: Permit Process

Once the preliminary layout and design of your ADU is complete, a visit to the various County Departments is a beneficial next step towards construction. County staff from the Planning, Building, and Engineering Departments are available to answer your questions regarding your property, building plans, or the construction process.

### County Departments

The Planning Department can provide information about your property, including the zoning and lot size, which are critical in determining the type and size of ADU you can build. A Planner can also assist you with all of the other County Development Standards that may influence the design of your ADU.

The Building Department will ultimately issue your permit to construct and occupy your ADU. County staff can walk you through the permitting and inspection process, and provide you with a list of building codes and drawing requirements that you or your consultants will need to consider prior to applying.

The Engineering Department can help you with questions about property lines, right-of-ways, site drainage, driveway standards, and existing easements. Only a professional survey of your property can accurately determine where all of these boundaries lie.

Summit Fire or Red White & Blue can answer questions regarding life safety issues such as defensible space for wildfires and requirements for fire sprinklers in attached ADUs where the total square footage exceeds 6,000 sf. The departments issue and conduct inspections for fire hazard mitigation permits.

### Class 1 Submittal Checklist

- ☐ Site Plan (1:10 or 1:20 scale)
- ☐ Existing and Proposed Topography (1 or 2 foot contours)
- ☐ Snow Storage
- ☐ Property Lines and Setbacks
- ☐ SC Wetlands & Floodplain Guide
- ☐ Roof Outline
- ☐ Ridge Height
- ☐ Height Calculations
- ☐ Certified Topography if within 5' of Max Height
- ☐ Exterior Lighting Cutsheet(s)
- ☐ Well Permit
- ☐ Septic Permit
- ☐ Floor Plans
- ☐ Elevations
- ☐ Stamped Structural Plans
- ☐ Soils Report
- ☐ Sustainable Code Checklist
- ☐ Energy Efficiency (Insulation) Details
- ☐ Impact Fee
- ☐ Energy Audit for additions and remodels at or > \$50k



## Properties on Well Water or Septic

The County has many residentially zoned lots that are not served by sewer and must rely on septic systems. New septic systems require approvals and permits from the Summit County Department of Environmental Health. If a property owner would like to build an ADU on a property currently served by a well, they must contact the County Managers Office to ask if their property is eligible to obtain a water augmentation contract for an ADU.



## Permit Application and Review

The submittal and review process is often quite complex and requires knowledge and experience in architecture, engineering, and building technology for a smooth review. The County's Stock ADU Plans Program (*page 19*) offers a selection of floor plans that can be used by residents. Using one of these plans as provided will shorten the review process. Minor modifications to the plans are allowed, but may extend the review time. On any plan submittal, it is recommended that homeowners work with a licensed professional who can explain the requirements through each step of the permitting process.

In the application review phase, various departments will assess your project application to ensure that it meets all applicable regulations. Each department will provide review comments that may require changes to your application or design. The length of the entire process will depend on the completeness of the application, the number of reviews required, and how quickly the application is resubmitted between reviews. Most ADU applications are approved within one to three rounds of review.

## Restrictive Housing Covenant

Depending on what level of assistance is being sought, one of the three template Housing Covenants will be required to be recorded:

- Standard ADU Covenant
- Standard ADU Covenant + Fee Waiver
- ADU Assistance Program Covenant

# ADU PROCESS

START •

•

**GO**



## SUBMITTAL

Submit building permit application and required documents per the permit submittal completeness checklist to the Building Department for review.

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## PLAN CHECK & CORRECTIONS

Departments review plans for compliance and completeness. Applicant receives a sign-off card noting applicable external referral agencies such as sewer, water, and fire.

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## PERMIT ISSUANCE

Once all comments are addressed and all fees have been paid, the building permit will be issued and construction can begin.

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## CONSTRUCTION

During construction, routine inspections will be conducted. Once all inspections have been passed, final occupancy will be contemplated.

•



## FINAL OCCUPANCY

The Restrictive Housing Covenant is signed and recorded. Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is the final step before moving into your newly constructed ADU!

## Fees

Each ADU will require different fees and the amount will be dependent on your specific project. The Building Permit, Planning, and Engineering fees are required at time of application. The County currently has an ADU fee waiver policy where all building, engineering, and planning fees associated with the ADU Building Permit will be refunded to the applicant after a Certificate of Occupancy is obtained. Similarly, any ADU Assistance rebate will be provided when the ADU receives its Certificate of Occupancy. See ADU Assistance Program details [here](#).

## Inspections

Your ADU will require a series of inspections to ensure that the project is being built in compliance with all zoning, building, and fire regulations. Building Inspectors will check for code compliance, and assure the ADU is being constructed according to the plans you submitted for the permits. The Planning Department may do a final inspection to ensure that any special conditions on the project have been met. Two separate fire hazard mitigation inspections will have to be completed by the fire district prior to issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy. Additional inspections may also be conducted by other County Departments or your HOA. The Restrictive Housing Covenant (deed restriction) template will be provided by the Housing Department. The Covenant is signed and recorded prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy.



## Stock ADU Plans



## Stock ADU Plans

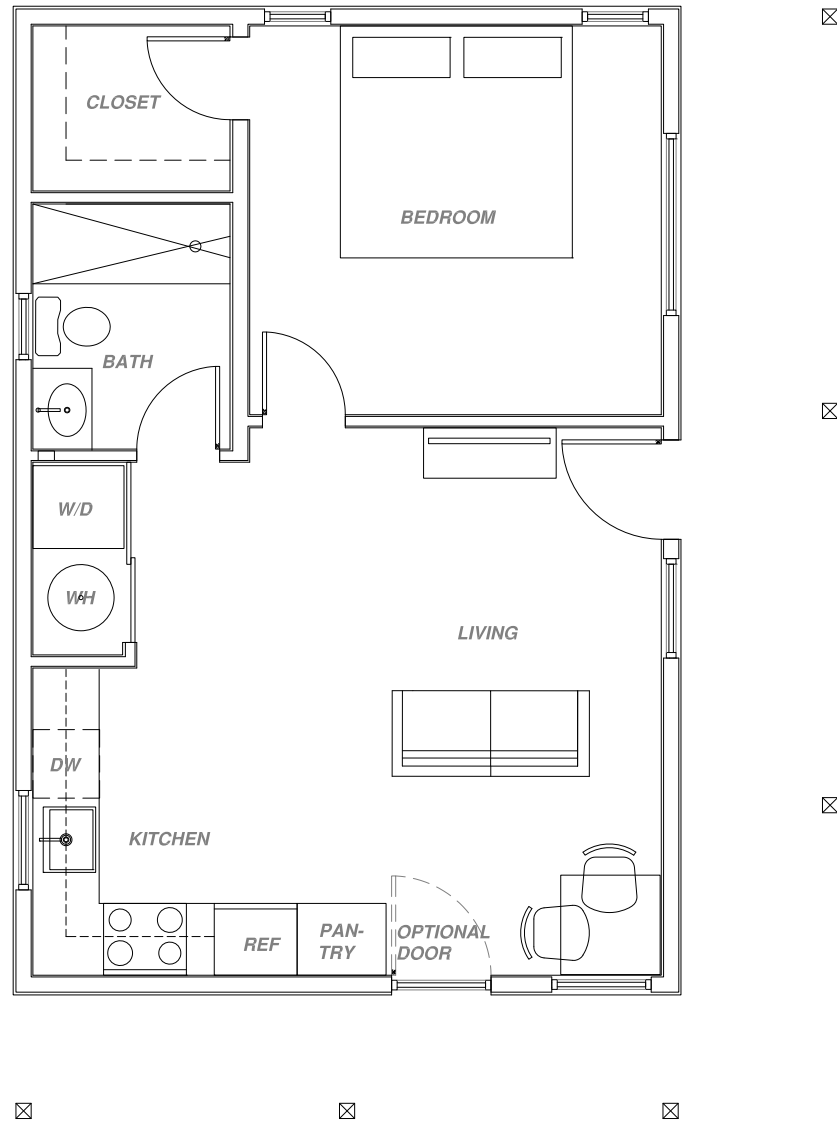
The Summit County Stock ADU Plans program provides four, pre-reviewed, code-compliant ADU construction plans that can be attained online or from County offices for free. The program helps the County meet Housing Plan goals to create diverse housing options throughout the County by encouraging the construction of ADUs. Customizable options have been incorporated into the plans to allow for a variety of exterior materials and fenestrations to express individual owners' tastes while respecting community character. These options reduce pre-construction fees for residents and shortens the review process for everyone.

Modifications of the Stock ADU Plans are allowed under certain circumstances. Non-structural changes, such as material choices, can be requested as part of the application process and can be reviewed by County staff on a case-by-case basis. Structural modifications, such as adding or enlarging door or window openings, will require revised plans to be prepared by the Architect and/or Structural Engineer team of record at an additional cost to the homeowner.

Residents can request digital copies of the full sets of plans after they sign and submit a liability waiver to the County (see Appendix). Residents will need to have a site plan prepared by a design professional and stamped by a licensed surveyor to submit along with their selected plan set and a complete ADU building permit application.

Due to the restricted number of Engineer Stamped plans the County can release to the public for use, engineer stamped plans will only be released by the Housing Department to the builder at the time of permit submittal. Please contact the Housing Department prior to submitting your building permit so they will have the stamped plans ready to pick up and verify the owner has signed the "hold Harmless" agreement.



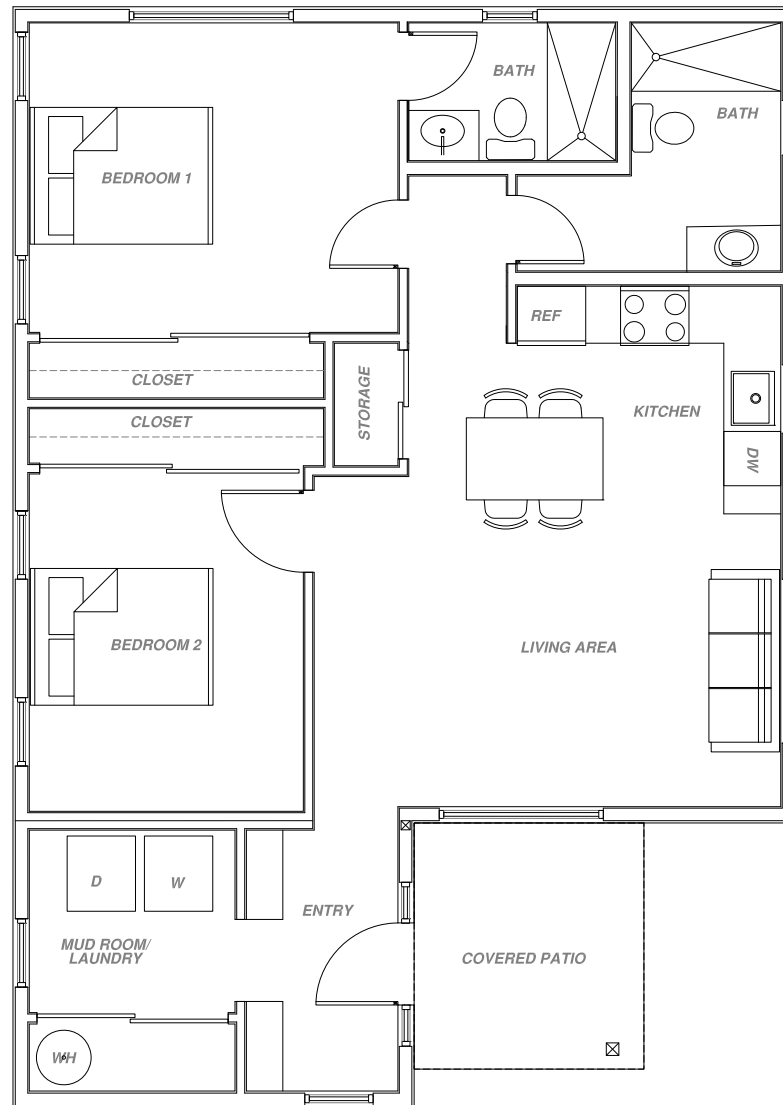


**SHED - Floor Plan**  
**One-bedroom, One-bath (548 sf)**





**SHED - Elevations**  
**One-bedroom, One-bath (548 sf)**

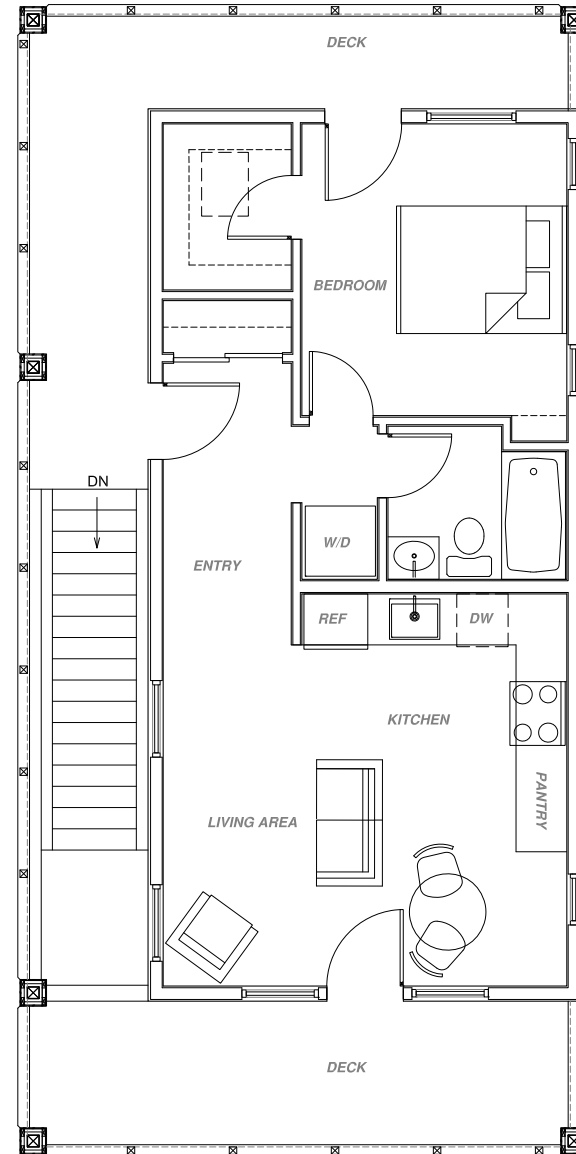
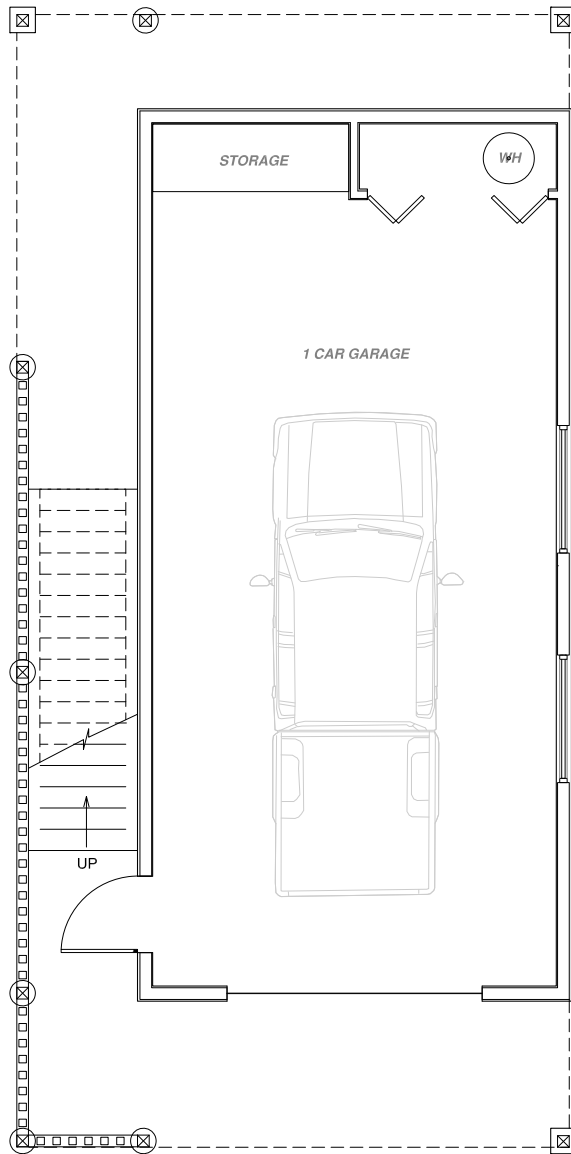


**COOP - Floor Plan**  
**Two-bedroom, Two-bath (934 sf)**





**COOP - Elevations**  
**Two-bedroom, Two-bath (934 sf)**

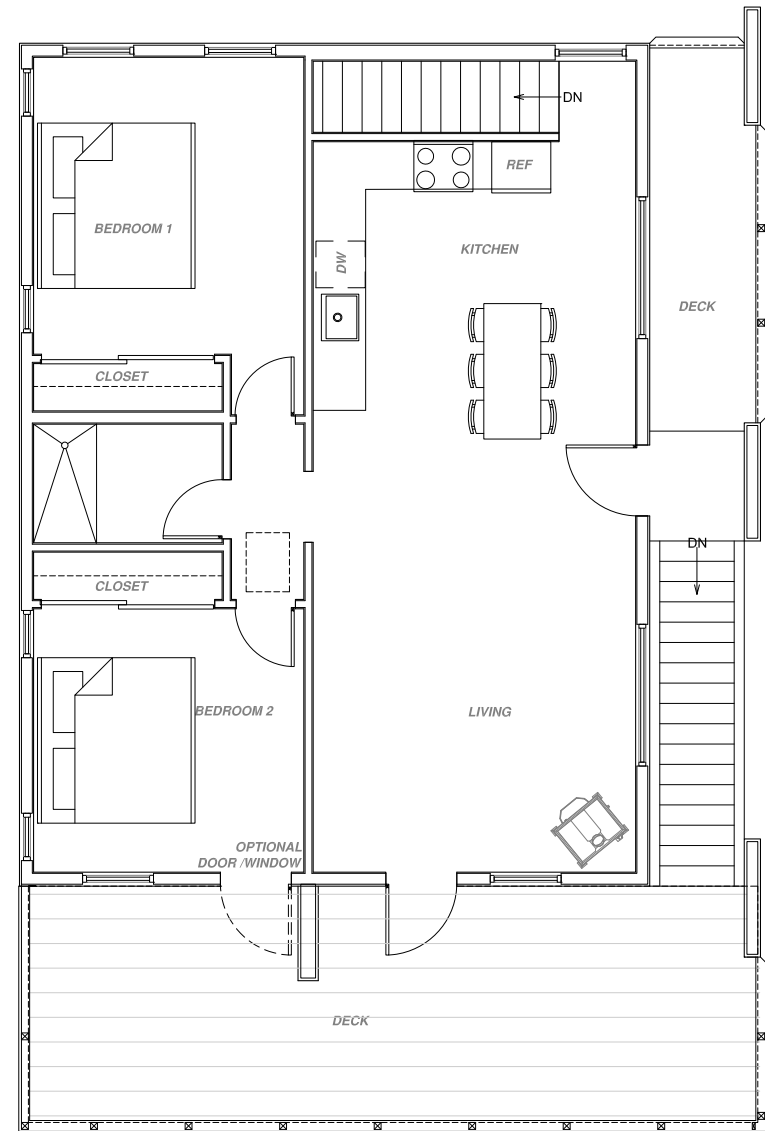
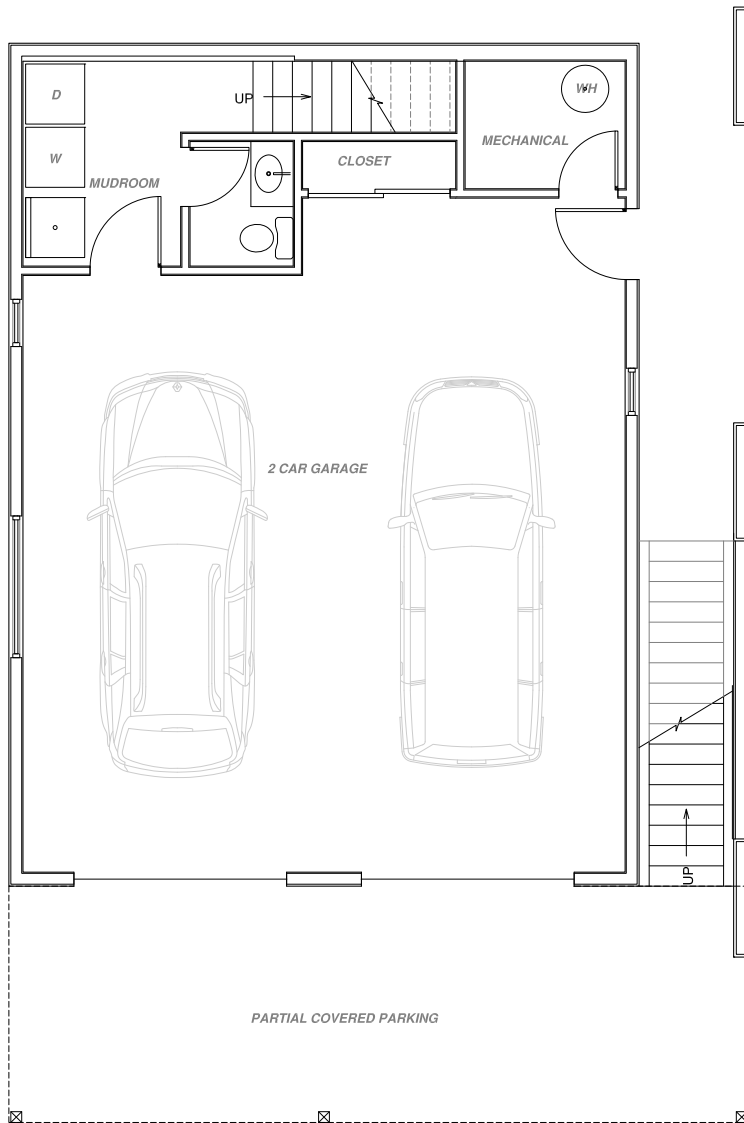


**STACK - Floor Plan**  
**One-bedroom, One-bath (540 sf + Garage)**





**STACK - Elevations**  
**One-bedroom, One-bath (540 sf + Garage)**



## DOUBLE-STACK - Floor Plan

### Two-bedroom, One-bath (985 sf + Garage)





**DOUBLE-STACK - Elevations**  
**Two-bedroom, One-bath (985 sf + Garage)**

# Appendix

## County Contacts

### Summit County Departments - County Commons

37 Peak One Drive  
Frisco, CO 80443

#### Planning

(970) 668-4200

[email](#)

[website](#)

#### Building

(970) 668-3170

[email](#)

[website](#)

#### Engineering

(970) 668-4212

[email](#)

[website](#)

#### Housing

(970) 668-4210

[email](#)

[website](#)

#### Environmental Health

(970) 668-4073

[email](#)

[website](#)

### Summit Fire & EMS

35 County Shops Road  
Frisco, CO 80443  
(970) 668-5100

[email](#)

[website](#)

### Red, White & Blue Fire

316 N. Main Street  
Breckenridge, CO 80424  
(970) 543-2474

[email](#)

[website](#)

### County Managers Office

208 Lincoln Avenue  
Breckenridge, CO 80424  
(970) 453-2561

[email](#)

[website](#)

## Appendix (cont.)

### County Resources

Summit County Land Use and Development Code  
[website](#)

Summit County Mapping Tool  
[website](#)

Summit County ADU Assistance Program  
[website](#)

Summit County Building Permits  
[website](#)

Summit County Assessor's Office  
(970) 453-3480  
[email](#)  
[website](#)

Summit County Contractor Registrations  
[website](#)

Summit County Builders Association  
(970) 668-6013  
[email](#)  
[website](#)

High Country Conservation Center  
737 Ten Mile Drive  
Frisco, CO 80443  
(970) 668-5703  
[email](#)  
[website](#)

### State Resources

Colorado Chapter of the American Institute of Architects  
[website](#)

Colorado Dept. of Local Affairs - Division of Housing  
[website](#)

Colorado Div. of the State Architect  
[website](#)

Colorado Dept. of Regulatory Agencies - Professions and Occupations  
[website](#)

Colorado Dept. of Regulatory Agencies - Public Utilities Commission Energy Commission  
[website](#)

### National Resources

American Institute of Architects (AIA)  
[website](#)

International Code Council (ICC)  
[website](#)



DESIGN  
PATH  
STUDIO

**GEBAU**<sub>inc</sub>  
consulting structural engineers

**March 2024**