The purpose of this hand-out is to provide guidance to applicants interested in building an ADU on their property and to answer frequently asked questions. This handout does not address every situation due to the complex nature of construction.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What are the zoning requirements for an ADU?**
   Contact Planning Division for zoning requirements. All approvals/permits must be obtained prior to any work. Approvals/permits will require plan approvals.

2. **Why do I need to submit plans to get all these approvals/permits to convert my existing permitted garage to an ADU? I am only going to install new interior partitions, walls, ceilings, fixtures.**
   Change of use from garage (U) to ADU (R3) requires the building to be in compliance with the current code for fire resistant construction, light, ventilation, heating, minimum room area, minimum ceiling height, toilet/bath/shower spaces, glazing, emergency escape & rescue opening, means of egress, guard & window fall protection, smoke alarms, carbon-monoxide alarms, site address, flood-resistant construction will need to be upgraded to be in compliance with the current codes.

3. **Where can we find the costs for plan check and building permits?**
   Cost of the Building Division plan check and building permits are based on the valuation of the proposed work. Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing permit fees are separate from the building permit fees and are calculated on a per fixture basis. You may contact the Building Division Permit Counter for the permit fees that apply to your project. In addition to the Building Division plan check and permit fees, please also consider the following fees:
   - Fire Department Plan Check Fee- $257.86
   - Planning Division Plan Check Fee- $242.50
   - School District Development Fee- TBD (contact AUSD for estimate)
   - Utilities Fees- $448 if no new water meter/ $7,222 with new water meter
   - New Construction Tax- $2,000 for each new unit created
   - Issuance Fee- $59.02 each permit issued
   - General Plan Fee- .5% of the project valuation, minimum $30
   - Plan Maintenance Fee- 2% of the permit fees

4. **I would like to build an attached ADU and/or an addition to my existing garage to create an ADU. Do I need to reanalyze the entire garage and/or main dwelling structure?**
   Yes, you will need to as you are increasing the lateral load to the existing garage per Section 402.4.1 of the Existing Building Code. However, any existing lateral load-carrying structural
element taking not more than 10% additional load (demand-capacity ratio) can remain unaltered.

5. **Can a single heating unit be used to heat both the single-family dwelling and an attached ADU or JADU?**
   No. Section R303.9 requires every dwelling unit be provided with heating facilities. Mechanical code section 311.4 and section 6.1 of ASHRAE 62.2 prohibits the transfer of air between adjacent dwelling units. Therefore, a separate heating unit is required for each dwelling unit, as a single heating system cannot separately balance air in both units without transferring the air between them. Furthermore, section 120.2(a) of the energy standards includes that each dwelling unit shall be controlled by an individual thermostatic control.

6. **Can the ADU sewer be connected to the existing house drainage/sewer system, or does it need a separate sewer connection to the main public sewer?**
   It is allowed to connect to the existing drainage/sewer system or to install a separate sewer line. Contact Utilities Division for information about making a separate sewer connection.

7. **Do I need to install a separate utility meter or a separate service panel for an ADU?**
   No, however, an applicant can request a separate utility meter or service panel if desired.

8. **I want to provide power to the ADU from the existing service panel at the main dwelling. Is it necessary to upgrade my existing service or provide the ADU with its own service connection to the utility?**
   A new service to the ADU or upgrade of the existing service will not be necessary if residential load calculations are performed to confirm the existing service is sufficient. If the new calculated electrical loads exceed the rating of your existing service panel, then an upgrade will be required.

9. **Is electrical plan check required if I am upgrading the main service panel at the main dwelling to feed the ADU or installing a new service for the ADU?**
   Electrical plan check is not required for installation of a panel rated at 399 amps or less, 120/240V, single phase.
   Residential load calculations shall be performed to verify the minimum rating of panel/service that will be required for the additional ADU electrical loads as per section 220.40.
   New services require the installation of a grounding electrode system per section 250.50. Overhead service entrance conductors feeding the new panel shall be sized per section 310.15(B)(7) and be protected from physical damage per section 300.4.
   Main service panels shall be rated appropriately for the environment where they will be installed. Outdoor panelboards need to be rated for wet or damp locations per section 408.37. If there are more than six branch circuit breakers in the new service panel, a main overcurrent protection device is required per section 230.71.
10. **My load calculations determined that the existing service will be sufficient for my ADU.**

   **What are the requirements if I want to provide power to the attached ADU via the existing main service panel or a new subpanel that is located at the detached ADU?**

   When installing a subpanel in a detached ADU, a grounding electrode system for the new subpanel will be required. If there are more than six circuits breakers installed in the new subpanel, a main circuit breaker is required per section 225.33(A). The minimum rating for the main circuit breaker shall be 60 amperes per section 230.79(D).

   For an attached ADU, new circuits can be added to the existing service panel provided that the load calculations confirm it is acceptable to add the proposed circuits.

11. **Are there any restrictions on where I can install indoor electrical panels?**

   Circuit breakers, and thus the panels housing those circuits breakers, cannot be located in clothes closets or bathrooms per sections 240.24(D) and (E).

12. **Am I required to install AFCI protection for branch circuits that will serve my ADU?**

   Per section 210.12(A), AFCI protection is required for all new branch circuits rated 120 volts, 15- or 20-ampere installed in kitchens, family rooms, dining rooms, living rooms, parlors, libraries, dens, bedrooms, sunrooms, recreation rooms, closets, hallways, laundry areas, and similar areas. This includes kitchens, bedrooms, and living rooms, amongst the locations specified. Circuits in these areas that are modified, replaced, or extended shall have AFCI protection as well per section 210.12(B).

13. **Am I required to install GFCI protection for receptacles that will serve my ADU?**

   Per section 210.8(A), GFCI protection is required for all new receptacles rated 120 volts, 15- or 20-ampere installed in bathrooms, garages, outdoors, crawl spaces, unfinished basements, kitchens, within 6 ft. of a sink, bathtub, or shower stall outside edge, boathouses, and laundry areas.

14. **Are there any additional receptacle requirements for my ADU?**

   In the locations specified in section 210.52, all new 120 volts, 15- or 20-ampere rated receptacles shall be tamper-resistant receptacles per section 406.12(A).

   One receptacle is required at both the front and back of the dwelling per section 210.52(E)(1). These receptacles shall have a weatherproof enclosure, be listed as weather-resistant, and be GFCI protected per sections 406.9(B) and 210.8(B)(4)

15. **I am installing new lighting in my ADU, do I have to comply with California Energy Efficiency Standards?**

   All new lighting installed in residential units is required to be rated as high efficacy as required by section 150.0(k), Table 150.0-A. At least one luminaire installed in bathrooms, laundry rooms, and utility rooms shall be controlled by a vacancy sensor per 150.0(k)(2)(J).

16. **Are there any circuits that I am required to install in my ADU?**

   Yes, two small appliance circuits, one laundry circuit (if providing a laundry area), and one bathroom circuit are all required to be installed per sections 210.11(C)(1), (2), and (3). A
lighting circuit in habitable rooms and bathrooms is required per section 210.70(A)(1). A general receptacle outlet circuit shall be installed per section 210.52(A).

17. Why do I need to fill out a waste management form?
   Cal-Green code requires a minimum 65% recycling rate for all construction of new dwellings.

18. What are the Energy Code requirements for ADUs?
   Please refer to the attached 2019 Quick Reference for ADUs in the following pages

19. I plan on converting my detached Garage into an ADU, but the garage does not have a foundation, what do I do?
   A new foundation will need to be proposed and approved on the plans. To prevent unnecessary delays in construction, it is recommended that the designer confirm existing structural elements prior to drafting plans. Inspectors will require confirmation of certain key elements of the existing structure.

20. Do I need to install fire sprinklers in my ADU/JADU?
   If the main dwelling has sprinklers, the ADU/JADU requires sprinklers.
   If the main dwelling is not equipped with sprinklers, in lieu of providing sprinklers for the detached ADU you must provide a fire access pathway less than 150 feet from the front face of the street curb to the most remote part of the back portion of the ADU and you must have an existing or provide a new fire hydrant with a fire flow of rate of 500 GPM’s that is within 250 feet on a walkable path to the most remote part of the street curb in from of the property.
   If the main dwelling is not equipped with sprinklers, in lieu of providing sprinklers for the attached ADU/JADU, you must limit the size of your ADU/JADU to 50% of the existing main dwelling and 750 sq ft.

Steps to Plan Checks and Permit Issuance

1. Contact Alhambra Planning Division for zoning requirements before submitting an application for building permits. planning@cityofalhambra.org or (626)570-5034.

2. To file an application for Building plan review and permits, please use following link to navigate to our online permitting system called the Citizens Access Portal https://www.cityofalhambra.org/225/Citizens-Access-Portal-Disclaimer. Once in the portal, the applicant will need to create an account and apply for an “ADU Permit”. Each detached ADU requires a separate permit. ADU’s attached to each other can be referenced on one permit. Please see below for a guide to filling out the application:
• Step 1 (location): Click the ‘+’ button. Then search and select the jobsite address. Do not manually enter the address as this will not link the project to a parcel number for future referencing.

• Step 2 (Type): Here you will enter a detailed description of the work being done including if it is a new ADU or garage conversion, attached or detached to the main dwelling, and number of bed rooms and bathrooms. You will also need to provide the square footage of the proposed ADU and the valuation for the work being performed.

• Step 3 (Contacts): Click the ‘+’ button to add contacts for the project. Each project should have either an applicant, architect, designer, or engineer AND owners’ information. If I licensed contractor is to be used, then the contractor contact will need to be added before the permit is issued.

• Step 4 (More Info): Here you will need to enter additional information about the project. Make sure you add additional occupancy detail by clicking the ‘+ Add Row’ button. Occupancy type for an ADU is R-3, single story light frame wood construction is type V-B.

• Step 5 (Attachments): Here you can upload your full set of drawings as one file that includes all sheets of your plans. Please note that the plans uploaded are strictly for the permit technician to verify the application accuracy. Once the application is processed, you will be sent a link to upload your plans to be reviewed in our plan review software.

• Step 6 (Review and Submit): Please review the application information and click ‘submit’. Please allow the permit technician 1-2 business days to process the application and invoice you plan check fees.

3. All ADU's require an address assignment. Please use the Citizens Access Portal to fill out and submit an “Address Assignment” application. Please see below for the ADU addressing policy:

• All detached and attached ADU's are to be assigned a separate number that is higher than the main dwelling. If no larger number is available, the ADU shall be provided a unit letter. The main dwelling at the front of the property is to be provided unit A. The dwelling at the furthest rear of the property shall have the letter furthest from the beginning of the alphabet.

4. If you are demolishing any permitted structure completely (all foundation and framing removed), submit a demo permit through the Citizens Access Portal, one application for each structure being demolished.

5. If the ADU is new construction (all completely new foundation and framing, detached from any other existing structure), a separate grading and drainage plans submittal and permit are required if either of the below work is occurring:

• 50 cubic yards or more of earth cut, fill, and over excavation.
• Excavation that creates a slope greater than 5 feet measured vertically upward from the cut surface to the surface of the natural grade and is steeper than 2 units horizontal to 1 unit vertical (50 percent slope)

6. Once all required applications are submitted, the Permit Technician will invoice you the plan check fees in the form of an email from our 3rd party invoicing system called authorize.net. Pay the fees online and email your receipt to the permit technician building@cityofalhambra.org. Please note that we cannot complete the processing of the plan check application until the receipt is sent to the permit technician.

7. The Permit Technician will email you a copy of your processed plan check application, an agency referral check list that will show what approvals are required for permit issuance, and a link to our online plan review software called GoPost. See below for typical ADU agency approval requirements

- Alhambra Department approvals needed: Building, Planning, Public Works, Utilities, and Fire Departments. You will receive your
- You will need to contact LA County Sanitation District, (562)699-7411 ext 2727, to obtain their approval and pay their fees. Once the fees are paid, you can upload payment receipt to the attachments tab of your application in the Citizens Access Portal before permit issuance.
- For projects involving a demo permit, proof of AQMD notification will be needed to be uploaded to the demo application in the Citizens Access Portal before permit issuance.
- School District fees are required to be paid of all new construction ADU’s and for ADU conversions of 500 Sq. Ft or more. Please contact the school district at (626)943-3000. Once fees are paid, you can upload the receipt as an attachment to your application in the Citizens Access Portal.
- All ADU’s are required to fill out our Waste Management Agreement that will be emailed to you once you let us know you have a contractor or you are doing Owner Builder. The agreement can be uploaded as an attachment to your application in the Citizens Access Portal before permit issuance.

8. In Go Post, you will be able to upload your plans to begin review.

- If your project requires Grading plan review, you will need to create a separate grading project in GoPost.
- When uploading your plans in GoPost, you will need to upload the plans to be reviewed as one PDF file to the “Plans” tab and the application to the “Attachment’s tab”.
- You can upload additional documents to the attachments tab ie. Structural calculations.
- Don’t forget to click ‘submit’ once you finish uploading!

9. The first review will take 2-4 weeks to be completed
• ADU plan review has been streamlined. Building Division will review on behalf of Public Works, Planning, and Fire Department. You will receive comments or approvals from these department together with the Building Division comments or approvals.

• When resubmitting corrected plans, please resubmit to GoPost, not the Citizens Portal include your responses.

• Utilities Department does a separate but concurrent review.

10. Am I ready for permit issuance?

• All required Alhambra Departments and outside agencies must approve the plans.

• All other required agency approvals must be uploaded to your application in the Citizens Access Portal i.e. school district receipt, sanitation district receipt, AQMD notification, and Waste Management Agreement.

• The permit technician needs the contractor’s information or confirmation of owner builder declaration.

• If your project requires a grading application, the building permit cannot be issued until the grading and drainage plans have received all required approvals and Planning has stamped the grading and drainage plans.

• You will need to submit residential electrical, mechanical, and plumbing permit applications through the Citizens Access Portal. No plan review is required for trade permits for an ADU.

11. Once you are ready for permit issuance, the permit technician will invoice you the permit fees through authorize.net. You will need to send the receipt to building@cityofalhambra.org in order to complete the processing of your applications.

• All ADU’s are subject to a new construction Tax of $2,000 per new residential unit which will be added to the permit fee invoice.

12. The permit technician will email you your active permits along with the approved plans which need to be printed out and available for site inspections.

ADU Conversion General Building Code Requirements

Foundation

• Exterior walls and interior bearing walls shall be supported on continuous footings.

• Depth of footings below the natural and finished grades shall not be less than 12 inches, including footings underneath an infilled garage door opening or match existing footing depth if deeper than 12 inches. If any portion of the structure has an existing slab without any footing or is less than 12-inch in depth, the foundation shall be underpinned to a minimum of 12-inch in width and 12-inch in depth or match...
existing footing depth if deeper than 12 inches.

- Minimum concrete strength for new or underpinned footings shall be 2,500 psi.
- Existing footings are permitted to remain. New footings shall be reinforced with four ½-inch diameter deformed reinforcing bars (two bars at top of footing, two bars at bottom of footing).
- Existing slabs are permitted to remain, but the concrete floor will need to be provided with a vapor retarder as required in Section R506.2.3. Alternate materials can be proposed to prevent the passage of water vapors. The following alternate products are approved for use on an existing slab that does not have a vapor retarder:
  
  - ICC ESR#1413 – RedGard Waterproofing and Crack Prevention Membrane, C- Cure Pro- Red Waterproofing Membrane 963, CBP 232
  - Waterproofing and Anti- Fracture Membrane, and Jambo Waterproofing Membrane
  - ICC ESR #2417 – LATICRETE Hydro Ban
  - ICC ESR #2785 – Polycure-Aquatight and Flexideck
  - ICC ESR#3474 – Mapelastic AquaDefense Waterproofing Membrane

- Existing anchor bolts are permitted to remain. New anchor bolts shall be a minimum of ½-inch diameter x 10” long with 7” embedment spaced at a maximum 6 feet on center. Post-installed anchor bolts shall have an approved ICC-ESR or LARR and shall require special inspection by a deputy inspector.
- Existing sills and sleepers are permitted to remain. New sills and sleepers on a concrete slab which is in direct contact with the ground shall be preservative-treated wood in accordance with American Wood Protection Agency (AWPA) U1.
- Concrete foundation walls shall extend a minimum of 6 inches above the finished grade adjacent to the foundation.

**Framing**

- Existing wall framing may remain unless there is an increase in load of over 400 pounds (i.e. mechanical equipment). If there are no ceiling joists, ceiling joists shall be required to accommodate additional loads (i.e., ceiling drywall, lighting, and mechanical equipment). New framing or altered framing shall comply with current code regulations.
- The infill walls of existing openings such as a garage door opening shall be 2x4 studs at a maximum 16 inches on center. Existing garage door headers are permitted to remain.
- Headers for new openings in existing walls shall comply with current code regulations.
- Bracing for new openings in existing walls shall comply with the following requirements:

  Walls with new openings shall provide a minimum total length of 10 feet of Wood Structural Panel (WSP) braced wall panels and shall meet general light frame construction requirements. WSP braced wall panels shall be a minimum of 4 feet in length and shall have 15/32-inch minimum thickness with 8d common nails at 6 inch spacing along panel edges, 12 inch spacing at intermediate supports, and 3/8-inch
distance to panel edge. ½-inch minimum thickness gypsum wall board shall be installed on the side of the wall opposite the bracing material.

**FIRE PROTECTION/ FIRE-RESISTANCE RATED CONSTRUCTION**

- Exterior walls less than 5 feet from the property line of a non-sprinklered ADU conversion or less than 3 feet from the property line of a sprinklered ADU conversion shall be 1-hour fire-resistance rated construction.
- No openings shall be permitted in the exterior walls of an ADU conversion where the exterior wall is less than 3 feet to the property line.
- The area of exterior wall openings of a non-sprinklered ADU conversion located between 3 feet and 5 feet of the property line shall be limited to 25% of the wall area.
- Smoke alarms shall be provided in each sleeping room and immediately outside of each separate sleeping area. Smoke alarms or smoke detectors shall be installed a minimum of 20 feet horizontal distance from a permanently installed cooking appliance.
- Carbon monoxide alarms shall be installed where the unit contains fuel burning appliance and shall be provided immediately outside of each separate sleeping area.
MEANS OF EGRESS AND EMERGENCY ESCAPE

- The egress (main entry) door shall be side-hinged and shall be a minimum of 3 feet in width and 6 feet 8 inches in height. All interior doors through which occupants pass shall have a minimum width of 32 inches.
- Emergency escape openings shall be provided from every sleeping room and shall open directly to a yard or public way. Emergency escape openings shall have a minimum clear height of 24 inches, a minimum clear width of 20 inches, and a minimum openable area of 5 square feet. The bottom of the emergency escape opening shall not be greater than 44 inches above the finished floor.

INTERIOR ENVIRONMENT

- Habitable rooms shall have a floor area of not less than 70 square feet and shall not be less than 7 feet in any horizontal dimension. A minimum ceiling height of 7 feet shall be provided throughout.
- The ADU shall be provided with a kitchen area and every kitchen area shall be provided with a sink and permanent provisions for cooking. R306.2
- Habitable rooms shall have natural ventilation through an opening of not less than 4 percent of the room’s floor area, unless a whole-house mechanical ventilation system is installed.
- Habitable rooms shall have natural lighting through an aggregate glazing (window) area of not less than 8 percent of the room’s floor area, unless an artificial lighting is installed to produce an average illumination of 6 foot-candles at a height of 30 inches above the floor in conjunction with a whole-house mechanical ventilation system.
- The unit shall provide heating facilities capable of maintaining a room temperature of not less than 68°F at a point 3 feet above the floor and 2 feet from exterior walls. Portable space heaters shall not be used to achieve compliance with this section. [The CF1R Residential Certificate of Compliance will dictate what means of heating will be provided.]
- The unit shall provide a separate bathroom containing a toilet, lavatory, and bathtub and/or shower. Bathrooms shall provide mechanical exhaust fans with a minimum intermittent ventilation rate of 50 cubic feet per minute. The center line of any toilet shall be located a minimum 15” from any side wall or obstruction, and a minimum 24” clear space in front of the toilet shall be provided. R306.1
- Attics shall provide a minimum cross ventilation of 1/150 of the area of the vented space. An attic access opening shall be provided with minimum dimensions of 22 inches by 30 inches and a minimum headroom clearance of 30 inches. The attic access opening shall be located in a hallway or other readily accessible location.