



Riverside County ADU Permit Homeowner Checklist

Please note: Building laws change often. Use this checklist as a guide to get started. Check with your local officials or a licensed contractor to confirm current requirements.

1. Confirm Jurisdiction

- Determine if your property is within city limits or unincorporated Riverside County.
- Look up your address on the Riverside County Parcel Report or city boundary maps.
- If in a city, obtain the ADU checklist/forms from your local city's website.

2. Zoning and Eligibility

- Confirm your property is zoned for residential use (R-1, R-A, RR, A-1, etc.).
- Check minimum lot size and any special overlays (historic, flood zone, HOA, etc.).
- Verify ADU allowances for your lot:
 - Maximum unit size (detached/attached/JADU)
 - Required setbacks and lot coverage
 - Height limits (typically 16 ft for detached)

3. Pre-Design Considerations

- Review Permit Ready ADU plans (County) for pre-approved designs.
- Decide on: Detached, Attached, Conversion, or Junior ADU (JADU)
- Square footage desired (500, 750, 1200+ sq ft)
- Number of bedrooms/bathrooms

4. Design & Construction Team

- Hire a licensed architect or designer (unless using Permit Ready plans).
- Hire a licensed contractor
- Consult a civil engineer for grading/drainage if needed.



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5. Create Plan Set

- Site Plan: shows structures, ADU location, setbacks, utilities, landscaping.
- Floor Plans: dimensioned for all spaces.
- Elevations: exterior views with height and finishes.
- Roof, Foundation, and Structural Plans.
- Mechanical/Electrical/Plumbing plans.
- Title 24 energy calculations (CA code).
- Truss, fire, or separation plans if needed.

6. Supporting Documents

- Completed permit application (city/county form).
- Hold Harmless agreement (permit ready plans).
- Utility clearance forms (water, sewer/septic, electric, gas).
- Soils or grading plans if required.
- Owner-builder form (if applicable).

7. HOA and CCR Approval (If Applicable)

- Get written approval from HOA or neighborhood association.
- Ensure design complies with CC&Rs.

8. Plan Submittal

- Submit digital plan set and docs via County's PLUS/LMS portal or city portal.
- Pay plan check and permit fees.
- Track application and reply to any comments.



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9. Utility Coordination

- **Obtain approvals from:**
 - Water provider
 - Sewer/septic review
 - Electric utility
 - Gas company
- Plan for separate/shared metering as required.

10. Additional Agency Approvals

(If Needed)

- Fire Dept. review (access, sprinklers).
- Floodplain review.
- Environmental Health (septic/well).
- Public Works/Engineering (driveway, grading, drainage).

11. Permit Issuance

- Finalize all approvals.
- Receive permit card with inspection list.

12. Construction & Inspections

- Post permit card on site.
- Schedule inspections: foundation, framing, MEP, insulation, drywall, final.
- Pass all inspections.

13. Certificate of Occupancy

- Submit for final inspection approval.
- Obtain Certificate of Occupancy.



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14. Post-Construction

- Update property insurance.
- Notify assessor of improvements.
- Ensure compliance with rental/occupancy rules.

Pro-Tips

Start with a Site Plan.

Before hiring anyone, sketch your property with existing structures and where you want the ADU. This helps you, your contractor, and the permitting office visualize the project and spot potential issues early.

Ask for a Pre-Application Meeting.

Most city and county planning offices will review your concept before formal submission. Take advantage of this (sometimes free) service—it can save weeks or months if you catch issues up front.

Use Permit-Ready Plans When Possible.

If your project fits the county’s free pre-approved plans, you’ll save on design costs and potentially move through plan check faster.

When in doubt, contact a professional or your local building officials.

Even experienced homeowners and contractors run into questions or unexpected situations—don’t hesitate to reach out to your city or county permitting office, or consult a licensed contractor or design professional.

Read Your CC&Rs and Check for HOA Restrictions Early.

If you live in an HOA, don’t assume ADUs are allowed. Get written HOA approval before you spend money on plans.

Document All Communications.

Keep digital copies and notes of every conversation, form, and approval (including emails and photos). This will save headaches in case of questions, changes, or staff turnover at agencies.

Hire Local and Licensed Pros.

Contractors and architects familiar with Riverside County or your city can help you avoid costly design mistakes and speed up approvals.

Budget for Contingencies.

Construction projects almost always run into surprises. Have a 10–15% contingency fund ready for the unexpected.

Schedule Inspections Proactively.

Book required inspections as soon as each phase is ready—don’t wait until the last minute, as schedules can fill quickly

Don’t stress. stay organized, trust your team, and remember: every step brings you closer to your finished ADU.



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Additional Resources

City of Riverside – ADU Program & Permit Guide:

<https://riversideca.gov/cedd/building-safety/adu/permit-ready-adu-plans>

Honeywill Construction – ADU Resources & Guides

<https://honeywillconstruction.com/construction-design-blog/>

RIVERSIDE COUNTY BUILDING & SAFETY (RIVERSIDE OFFICE)

(951) 955-1800
building.rctlma.org

CODE ENFORCEMENT

(951) 955-2004 or (760) 393-3344
ce.rctlma.org
building.rctlma.org

BUILDING & SAFETY (PALM DESERT OFFICE)

(760) 863-8277
building.rctlma.org

TRANSPORTATION (PUBLIC WORKS)

(951) 955-6790 or (760) 863-8267
building.rctlma.org

RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT (RIVERSIDE)

(951) 955-3200
planning.rctlma.org
building.rctlma.org

FIRE DEPARTMENT (COUNTY JURISDICTION)

(951) 955-4777
building.rctlma.org

PLANNING DEPARTMENT (PALM DESERT)

(760) 863-8277
planning.rctlma.org

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (SEPTIC PERMITS)

(951) 955-8980
building.rctlma.org

BUILDING & SAFETY / TLMA ASSISTANCE CENTER

(951) 955-1800
building.rctlma.org

RIVERSIDE COUNTY CASHIER / BILLING

(760) 863-7735
planning.rctlma.org

LAND USE COUNTER SERVICES (NEW APPLICATIONS)

(951) 955-1800 (Option 5) or (760) 863-8277
building.rctlma.org

CITY OF RIVERSIDE – BUILDING & SAFETY / PLANNING

(951) 826-5800
riversideca.gov/cedd/building-safety
riversideca.gov/cedd/planning

PLUS/LMS TECHNICAL SUPPORT

plusassist@rivco.org
building.rctlma.org

HISTORIC OR ENVIRONMENTAL MAPS / FLOOD INFO

(951) 955-1200
building.rctlma.org

Need help at any step?

With over 25 years of experience, Honeywill Construction is devoted to making your ADU project in Riverside County as smooth and stress-free as possible. If you have questions about the process, run into challenges with permitting, or want a trusted team to manage your project from start to finish, we're here to help.

Contact us today for expert guidance, clear communication, and quality workmanship—every step of the way.

951-642-0651

honeywillconstruction.com



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