

Improving ADU application process

by Steve Vallejos

About prefabADU:

- New factory providing panelized ADUs
- Division of Valley Home Development Corp.
- Actively designing/building ADUs since 2006
- Built over 150 ADUs in the Bay Area
- Currently building 20-24 units
- Maintain 40-60 units in design que
- Actively involved with ADU legislation & finance

Issues with ADU applications:

(From the designer/builder/homeowner perspective)

- Restrictive zoning
- Confusing requirements
- Inconsistent application of the rules
- Slow processing
- Excessive fees
- Staff lacking understanding of prefab
- Overly restrictive energy code requirements (Title 24)

Issues with ADU applications:

(From the designer/builder/homeowner perspective)

- Restrictive zoning
 - Stop using Primary home setbacks for ADUs.
 - Keep FAR with ADU above 45% and don't include walkways, and patios.
 - Rear yard coverage should be 50% or more
 - Raise minimum height to 16'
 - Allow for 2 bedrooms
 - Building separation should be 3' min

Issues with ADU applications:

(From the designer/builder/homeowner perspective)

- Confusing requirements
- Inconsistent application of the rules
- Slow processing
 - Create a checklist for planning and building review process.

When a checklist is used, it cuts down the discrepancies between plan checkers by 75% or more. This provides a faster more consistent review process.

Issues with ADU applications:

(From the designer/builder/homeowner perspective)

- Excessive fees
 - Remove the impact fees

Most cities don't charge impact fees for an equally sized addition. Those projects continue to exacerbate the housing problems by increasing the size of a home and it's future value without adding an affordable unit. Building an ADU should not be the option that gets penalized.

Issues with ADU applications:

(From the designer/builder/homeowner perspective)

- Staff lacking understanding of prefab
 - Don't understand local role in a prefab application
 - Often do full review unnecessarily
 - Many require HCD involvement clarify local role
 - Add huge delay to process

Issues with ADU applications:

(From the designer/builder/homeowner perspective)

- Overly restrictive energy code requirements (Title 24)
 - Not designed for small homes
 - Poor glass ratio 20% total & 5% south facing that leads to excessive insulation requirements
 - Gas required to unit (can't do netZero w/solar)