

**County of Madera:  
A Homeowner's How-to Guide to  
Accessory Dwelling Units**

# ADU



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# TOC

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
How to Use the Guide	1
<b>SECTION 2. ADU BASICS</b>	<b>2</b>
What is an ADU?	2
ADU Types	2
<b>SECTION 3. HOW TO BUILD AN ADU IN THE COUNTY OF MADERA</b>	<b>3</b>
ADU Process Overview	3
Step 1. Determine if Your Property is Eligible for an ADU	4
Step 2. Review Minimum ADU Requirements	5
Step 3. Design Your ADU	5
Step 4. Prepare and Submit Your ADU Permit Application	7
<b>SECTION 4. PRE-REVIEWED ADU PROGRAM</b>	<b>11</b>
Benefits of Participating in the Program	11
How It Works	11
Floor Plans	12
Elevations	16
<b>SECTION 5. RESOURCES, CONTACTS AND FURTHER READING</b>	<b>22</b>
Frequently Asked Questions	22
Resources, Contacts, and Further Reading	22



# 1

## SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

Recent changes to State Law have made it easier to construct Accessory Dwelling Units (“ADUs”) throughout the state. In response to these changes, the County of Madera updated its ADU Ordinance in 2024, establishing ADU standards specific to the County. To further streamline the production of ADUs, the County has established the County of Madera Pre-Reviewed ADU Program, offering Pre-Reviewed, “off the shelf” ADU plan sets to reduce the cost and timeframe for the ADU design and permitting process. The County has created this Homeowner’s How-to-Guide to Accessory Dwelling Units (“Guide”) to further assist property owners in the County through the process to build an ADU.

### ----- HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE -----

This Guide was created as a resource for property owners to utilize, offering information and guidance on ADU basics, regulations, design, and permitting. This Guide includes five sections:

**Section 1 – Introduction** (current section) provides an overview of the guide and ADUs.

**Section 2 – ADU Basics** provides the definition and overview of the ADU types.

**Section 3 – How to Build an ADU in the County of Madera** provides the step-by-step process for property owners to design, submit, and build an ADU in compliance with the County’s regulations and procedures.

**Section 4 – Pre-approved ADU Program** gives an overview of the County of Madera program.

**Section 5 – Resources, Contacts, and Further Reading** provides answers to frequently asked questions and links to more information related to ADU.

# 2

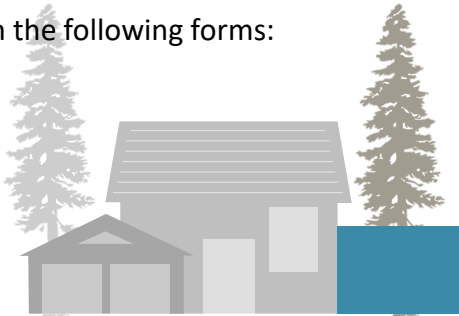
## SECTION 2. ADU BASICS

### ----- WHAT IS AN ADU? -----

At the most basic level, an ADU is defined as a secondary housing unit on a lot that contains an existing or proposed single family residence or multi-family residential development (e.g., duplex, triplex, or apartment building) and provides complete independent living facilities including kitchen and bathroom facilities for at least one person. . Under ADU law, it is considered an “accessory” use or structure to the primary use or structure on the lot (i.e., single-family or multifamily dwellings, or mixed-use structures/uses).

### ----- ADU TYPES -----

ADUs are also known as second units, guest cottages, in-law suites, and casitas, among other terms and can be in the following forms:



#### **ATTACHED ADU**

shares at least one wall with the primary home



#### **DETACHED ADU**

free-standing structure separated from the primary home



#### **ADU CONVERSION**

conversion of existing, internal space into an ADU such as an attached or detached garage, accessory structure, or attic space

#### **JUNIOR ADU**

contained entirely within the primary home and up to 500 square feet in size

# 3

## SECTION 3.

# HOW TO BUILD AN ADU IN THE COUNTY OF MADERA

If your property has an existing or proposed single-family home or multi-family development (e.g., duplex, triplex, apartment building), then you may be eligible to build an ADU on your property. The following is a general overview of the steps you can expect to take as you develop your ADU; details for each step are provided on the following pages.

### ----- ADU PROCESS OVERVIEW -----

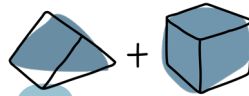
#### **1** Step 1. Determine if Your Property is Eligible for an ADU

The first step is to determine if your property is eligible for an ADU, including the appropriate zoning and confirmation by the Department of Public Works that there is utility capacity to serve the property/ADU.



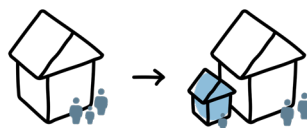
#### **2** Step 2. Review Minimum ADU Requirements

Your property and ADU concept must meet the ADU requirements according to the County's ADU Ordinance to be approved for construction. Before designing the ADU and applying for your permit, review the minimum ADU requirements on Page 6 to see the size, height, location, and shape that your ADU can be.



#### **3** Step 3. Design Your ADU

There are 4 typical ways to design your ADU: 1) hire an experienced designer, architect, or engineer to design your ADU, 2) purchase a modular or prefabricated ADU, 3) hire a design/build firm, or 4) participate in the voluntary and optional County of Madera Pre-Reviewed ADU Program which offers free Pre-Reviewed building plans for detached ADUs (See Pages 11-21).



#### **4** Step 4. Prepare and Submit Your ADU Building Permit Application

Application Requirements for your ADU are outlined on Pages 8-10 of this Guide. Once you submit a complete and accurate application package and pay the fees, your application will be reviewed for completeness, accepted, routed, and reviewed by the County of Madera. Building permits will be issued upon approval and then inspections can be scheduled prior to occupancy.

## ----- STEP 1. DETERMINE IF YOUR PROPERTY IS ELIGIBLE FOR AN ADU -----

ADUs are allowed on parcels in the County that are zoned residential or are within a zone district that allow residential uses and contain an existing or proposed single-family home or multi-family development. Refer to Madera County's [Zoning Maps](#) to locate your property and determine your property's zone district. For assistance and official determination of your property's zoning, contact the County of Madera Planning Division at (559) 675-7821.

### Identify Any Utility Constraints

Before proceeding any further, you must identify any utility constraints, including water, that are applicable to your property. Contact the Madera County Public Works Department at (559) 675-7811, as well as the appropriate water company – American Water Company/Hillview District, Madera Valley Water Company, Bass Lake Water Company – and the Office of the Fire Marshal.

### Identify Any Site Constraints

Next, locate and confirm information about your property to refine your ADU concept. Plot your property as it exists today and to identify the size and location of your ADU concept.



#### Determine the size and dimensions of your property:

Using the Madera County Parcel Map, [Assessor's Map Page Search](#) enter the Book and Page to view the Assessor Map image for your property. Locate your property on the Assessor Map Page and make note of the dimensions (e.g., 50 feet by 100 feet, 25 feet by 150 feet). Another option is to identify permanent structures on your property (e.g., primary dwelling, detached garage or shed, etc.) and make note of the dimensions including height and distance to property lines.

**DETERMINATION EXAMPLE: APN 032-780-020**

1. Enter your property's APN and click search.

Parcel # (APN): **032-780-020-000** [Open Map](#)  
Owner: [See Full Detail](#)


Best Frates, County Assessor

PROPERTY SEARCH

Assessor's Parcel Number:


Phone Number:  Zip:  Street Name:  Unit:  Suffix:

2. Open the Parcel Map and find your lot



Lot Dimension:  
100 feet by 215.5 feet

3. Measure dimensions to property lines and existing structures, trees, etc.



Property Line

**Identify any easements or special requirements:**

Review a recent Title Report to identify any easements or special requirements for your property. For example, your property might have a utility easement or might grant access to an adjoining property through an access easement. In general, easements limit the buildable area on your property and their location should be noted as you start to identify the location of your ADU.

Be sure to discuss your property and project with County staff to identify any other constraints and avoid any surprises that may impact your ADU concept.

**----- STEP 2. REVIEW MINIMUM ADU REQUIREMENTS -----**

If your property is eligible for an ADU, the next step is to determine the type, number, size, height, and distance from property lines based on the County of Madera’s minimum ADU requirements. These minimum requirements are contained in Madera County Zoning Code Chapter 18.50.020.

The Minimum Requirements Checklist provided on the next page is not intended to substitute the ADU Ordinance. Please refer to the ADU Ordinance for more information or contact the County of Madera Planning Division at (559) 675-7821 for assistance and official determination.

**----- STEP 3. DESIGN YOUR ADU -----**

There are at least four ways to design your ADU. Be sure to continue to refer to the County’s Zoning Ordinance and consult with County Staff to ensure compliance throughout the design process. Contact the County of Madera Planning Division at (559) 675-7821 for further assistance.

<b>Design Option</b>	<b>Description</b>
Participate in the County of Madera Pre-Reviewed ADU Program	Select from a set of plans for a <b>detached</b> ADU that have been pre-reviewed and approved by the County. Save on design costs. Learn more about the County’s Pre-Reviewed ADU Program on Pages 11-21.
Modular or Prefabricated Home Company	Work with a modular or prefabricated home company. Some companies may handle the entire planning and design process through construction.
Hire a Designer, Architect, or Engineer	Hire an experienced designer, architect, or engineer to design your ADU and then a builder/contractor to ultimately construct the unit.
Hire a Design/Build Firm	Hire a design/build firm to handle the entire project, from design to construction.

## Minimum Requirements for Development Standards by ADU Type

Refer to Madera County Zoning Code Chapter 18.50.020 for all standards and requirements

Standards	Detached ADU		Attached ADU	
	New Construction	Converted Structure	New Construction	Converted Space
<b>Number (Max.)</b>	<b>Single-family lots:</b> 1 detached ADU <b>Multi-family lots:</b> 2 detached ADUs		<b>Single-family lots:</b> 1 attached ADU and 1 JADU <b>Multi-family lots:</b> at least 1 attached ADU, not to exceed 25% of the number of units within the existing multi-family dwelling	
<b>Size (Max.)</b>	850 sq. ft. for a 1-bedroom unit or 1,000 sq. ft. for unit with more than 1-bedroom	Same size of the structure being converted but may be increased up to an additional 150 sq. ft. to accommodate entering and exiting	500 sq. ft. for JADUs ----- All other units: 50% of the existing primary dwelling, or 850 sq. ft. for a 1-bedroom unit or 1,000 sq. ft. for unit with more than 1-bedroom, whichever is greater	500 sq. ft. for JADUs ----- All other units: 50% of the existing primary dwelling, or 850 sq. ft. for a 1-bedroom unit or 1,000 sq. ft. for unit with more than 1-bedroom, whichever is greater ----- May be increased up to an additional 150 sq. ft. to accommodate entering and exiting
<b>Setbacks (Min.)</b>	<b>Front Yard:</b> Same as Primary dwelling <b>Side Yard:</b> 4 ft. min. <b>Rear Yard:</b> 4 ft. min.	No setback required if the unit is constructed in the same location and to the same dimensions as the existing detached structure ----- Any expansion of the existing footprint shall maintain the same setback as the existing structure or setbacks of 4 ft. from the side and rear yards	<b>Front Yard:</b> Same as primary dwelling <b>Side Yard:</b> 4 ft. min. <b>Rear Yard:</b> 4 ft. min.	No setback required if the unit is constructed in the same location and to the same dimensions as the existing attached structure or living area ----- Any expansion of the existing footprint of the attached structure or living area shall maintain the same setback as the existing structure/living area or setbacks of 4 ft. from the side and rear yards
<b>Height (Max.)</b>	16 ft. / 18 ft. / 20 ft. – see ADU ordinance for criteria	16 ft. / 18 ft. / 20 ft. – see ADU ordinance for criteria	25 ft. max.	25 ft. max.
<b>Parking (Max.)</b>	1 space per unit – see ADU ordinance for exceptions	1 space per unit – see ADU ordinance for exceptions	1 space per unit – see ADU ordinance for exceptions	1 space per unit – see ADU ordinance for exceptions

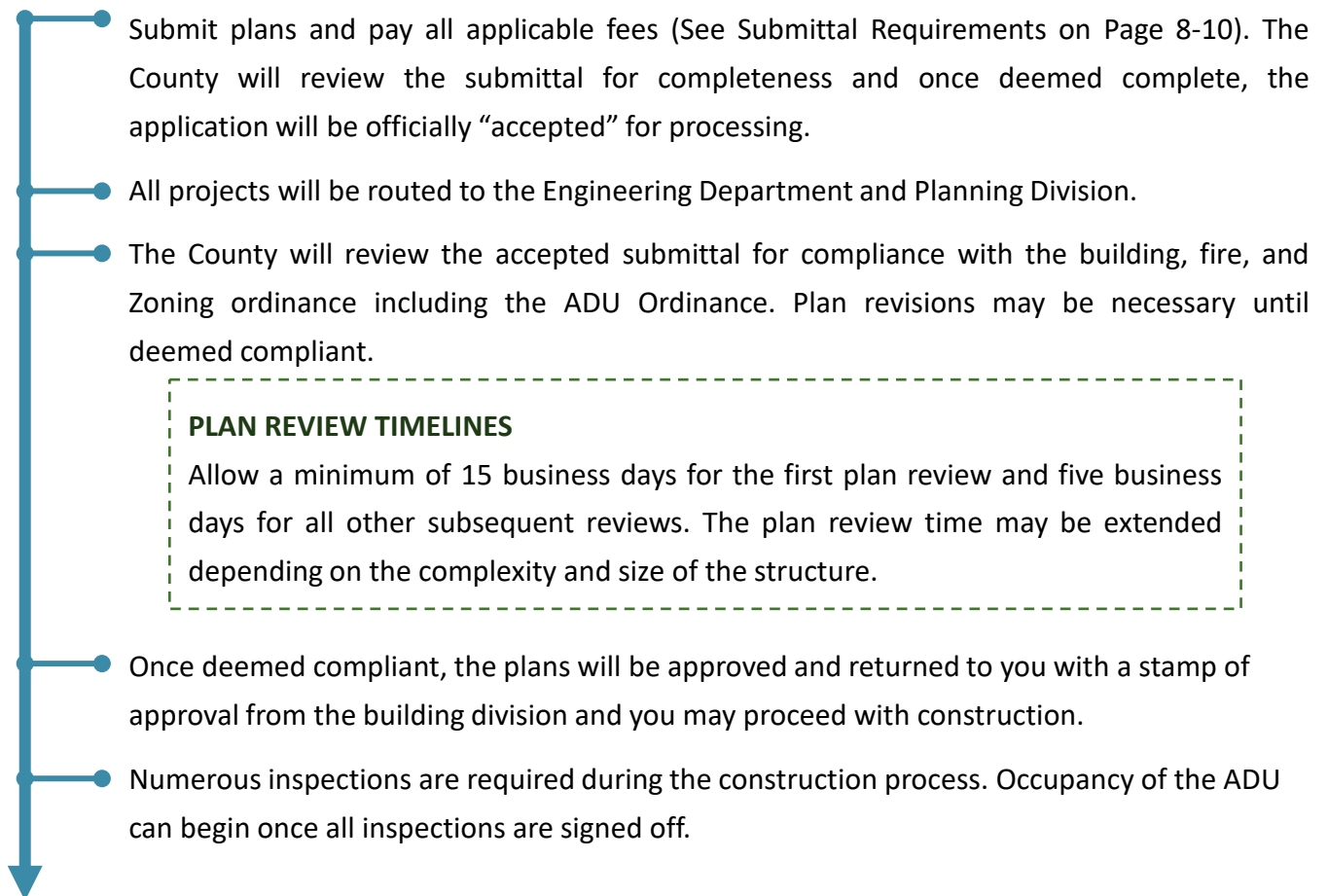


## ----- STEP 4. PREPARE AND SUBMIT YOUR ADU PERMIT APPLICATION -----

The last step is to prepare and submit your ADU building permit application. Application requirements are outlined on Page 8-10 of this Guide. Once you submit a complete and accurate application package and pay the fees, your application will be reviewed for completeness, accepted, routed, and reviewed by the County of Madera. Building permits will be issued upon approval and then inspections can be scheduled post-construction.

### Permitting Process

All ADUs require a building permit and are subject to all the standard application and permitting fees and procedures that generally apply to building permits. Depending on your situation, additional permits, studies, and reports may be required, e.g., demolition, fire sprinklers, solar panels, soils investigation, etc.



In general, if there is an existing single-family home or multi-family development on the property, complete applications will be acted on within 60 days or deemed approved. Exceptions to this timeline are described in the Madera County Zoning Ordinance Chapter 18.50.020.

### Submittal Requirements

Prepare and submit all items indicated and described in the Submittal Checklist on the next page.

## Submittal Checklist

Note: Submittal items denoted with a "\*" indicate items provided at no-cost with the Pre-Reviewed ADU Program.

- Completed [Building Permit Application](#).
- One (1) full set of 24" x 36" Drawings and all other minimum information listed below must be included with every building plan submission.
  - Plot Plan (Using [Madera County Plot Plan](#) Template (Example available [here](#)))
  - Floor Plan.\*
  - Elevation Drawings.\*
- Owner/Registered Design Professional/Contractor Information**
  - Registered design professional responsible for project. Include address (with zip code) and telephone number.
  - Architect or engineer acting as a sub-consultant responsible for a portion of the design; including address (with zip code), and telephone number.
  - Owners complete name, current address (with zip code), and telephone number
  - Builder's complete name, address (with zip code), telephone number, and contractor license number
  - Stamp and Signature of Registered Design Professional on each sheet
- Occupancy Information**
  - Indicate the occupancy type of each area of the new structure per CRC Sec 1.1.3.1
  - Provide the actual building height and number of stories above the grade plane\* (CRC section R301.3)
  - Provide the building areas (sq. ft.) for each occupancy type of each story of the building\*
  - Indicate the construction type of the new structure per CRC Sec R602
  - Indicate the occupancy category of the new structure per Table CBC 1604.6\*
  - Requirement for a fire sprinkler system per CRC Sec R313
  - Provide means of egress CRC Sec R311\*
- Design Criteria** {CRC section R301.1} (Required for first sheet)
  - Indicate the climate zone for the new structure. 13 or 16
  - Indicate the floor and roof live loads for the new structure. CRC R301.5, R301 .6
  - Indicate the ground [snow load](#) per CRC R301.2(5)
  - Indicate the wind speed and exposure category per CRC R301.2.1.4 (85 MPH default min.)
  - Indicate design method for wind, i.e.: simple , analytical (CRC section R301.1.3)
  - Indicate the soil site class per Table CRC R301.2.2.1.1 and CBC 1613.5.2
  - Provide the spectral response coefficients SDS per CRC Sec Table R301.2.2.1 .
  - Indicate the seismic design category per CRC Table R301.2.2 .1.1
  - Indicate the soil load bearing pressure value per CRC Table R401.4.1 (1500 PSF default).
  - Indicate water and sewer piping materials, i.e.: PEX, CPVC, Copper, Etc..
- Payment of application and permit fees.

## Permit Fees

Refer to the County of Madera Fee Schedule for how to estimate fees. If your ADU requires fire sprinklers, solar, or demolition, then additional requirements and fees may be applicable. Contact the County of Madera Building Division at (559) 675-7703 for further assistance and official determination.

## Impact Fees

Impact fees are typically required for new developments to provide new or expanded public services to the development. Depending on the size of the ADU proposed, impact fees may be waived or reduced. Impact fees are due prior to issuance of certificates of occupancy.

Size of ADU	Impact Fee Requirement
ADU less than 1,000 square feet	No County impact fees
ADU more than 1,000 square feet and less than 1,500 square feet	A 50% waiver is available for County impact fees
ADU more than 1,500 square feet	County impact fees may be required and are to be charged proportionately in relation to the square footage of the primary dwelling

## Connection Fees or Capacity Charges

Depending on the type of ADU proposed, new or separate utility connections may be required including water, sewer, gas, and electricity, which can add connection fees or capacity charges.

ADU Type	Connection & Fees Required
ADU constructed at the same time as a primary dwelling	A separate utility connection between the ADU and the utility, and payment of the connection fee and capacity charge for a new dwelling is required
ADU or JADU on a lot with a proposed or existing single-family dwelling, where the ADU or JADU is contained within the space of the single-family dwelling	No separate utility connection or payment of a connection fee or capacity charge is required
All other ADU types	A new, separate utility connection between the ADU and the utility, and payment of the connection fee and capacity charge at a “reasonable cost” is required

## Miscellaneous Reports, Documents, and Fees

Other miscellaneous reports and documents may be required, based on the ADU concept and site characteristics.

Miscellaneous Reports	Requirements and Fees
Roof Framing Plan/Truss Calculations	If truss-roof-layout, obtain the services of a Truss Manufacturer for truss layout plan (search for “roof truss manufacturers” online or use the <a href="#">Structural Building Components Association member directory</a> ). If engineered trusses are used, provide Truss Calculations.
Foundation and Soils Investigation	A foundation and soils investigation may be required per CBC Chapter 18. Additional fees may be required.
Energy Calculations and Forms (Title 24)	State law requires every new residential construction, alteration, and addition to meet the latest California Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards. To demonstrate compliance, a Building Permit Application for an ADU is required to include a California Code of Regulations (CCR) Energy Analysis or Energy Compliance Report or “CF1R” that shows how your ADU will comply with Title 24. This requires you to hire a certified third-party consultant to complete the calculations and produce a report. The consultant will need the ADU plan set to be able to complete their work and fees will vary based on the consultant or company.
Fire Sprinkler System	Fire Sprinklers are required to be installed in an ADU if they are installed in the primary dwelling. If Fire Sprinklers are required, then plans are required to be submitted prior to issuance of a building permit. Additional permitting fees may be required. Contact the County of Madera for details.
Photovoltaic (“Solar”) Permits	Solar panels may be required for newly-built ADUs in compliance with the latest California Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards. Additional permitting fees may be required. Refer to the County of Madera <a href="#">Photovoltaic Permit Application</a> for details.
Demolition Permit	If demolition of an existing structure is required in order to build your ADU, then a Demolition Permit Application and required documentation are required to be submitted. Additional permitting fees may be required. Contact the County of Madera for details.

# 4

## SECTION 4.

### PRE-REVIEWED ADU PROGRAM

The County of Madera Pre-Reviewed ADU Program (“Program”) is an optional and voluntary program that provides plan sets for new construction detached ADUs that have been pre-reviewed by the County of Madera. The plan sets are provided at no cost to the participant, helping reduce design costs and the overall time it takes to receive building permit approval. Read on to learn more about the Program.

#### ----- BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM -----

- **Save on design costs** - save costs on architectural/ design services, structural engineering services, plan review fees.
- **Enjoy a streamlined permitting process** - plans are already reviewed and approved.
- **Don't sweat the details** - plans already meet the zoning and building code requirements.

#### ----- HOW IT WORKS -----

##### 1. Choose Your ADU Layout & Style

The Program offers free plan sets for new construction detached ADUs that have been pre-reviewed by the County of Madera. The plans are offered in four sizes and four designs. The floor plans and elevations for each option are shown on the following pages.

To make sure that the ADU size would work on your property, plot your property as it exists today and measure out the minimum requirements for setbacks. Don’t forget to account for any site constraints (Page 6). Contact the County of Madera Planning Division at (559) 675-7703 for assistance and official determination.

##### 2. Prepare Your Building Permit Application Package

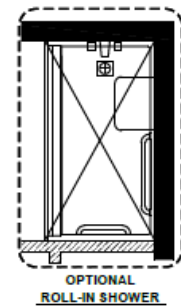
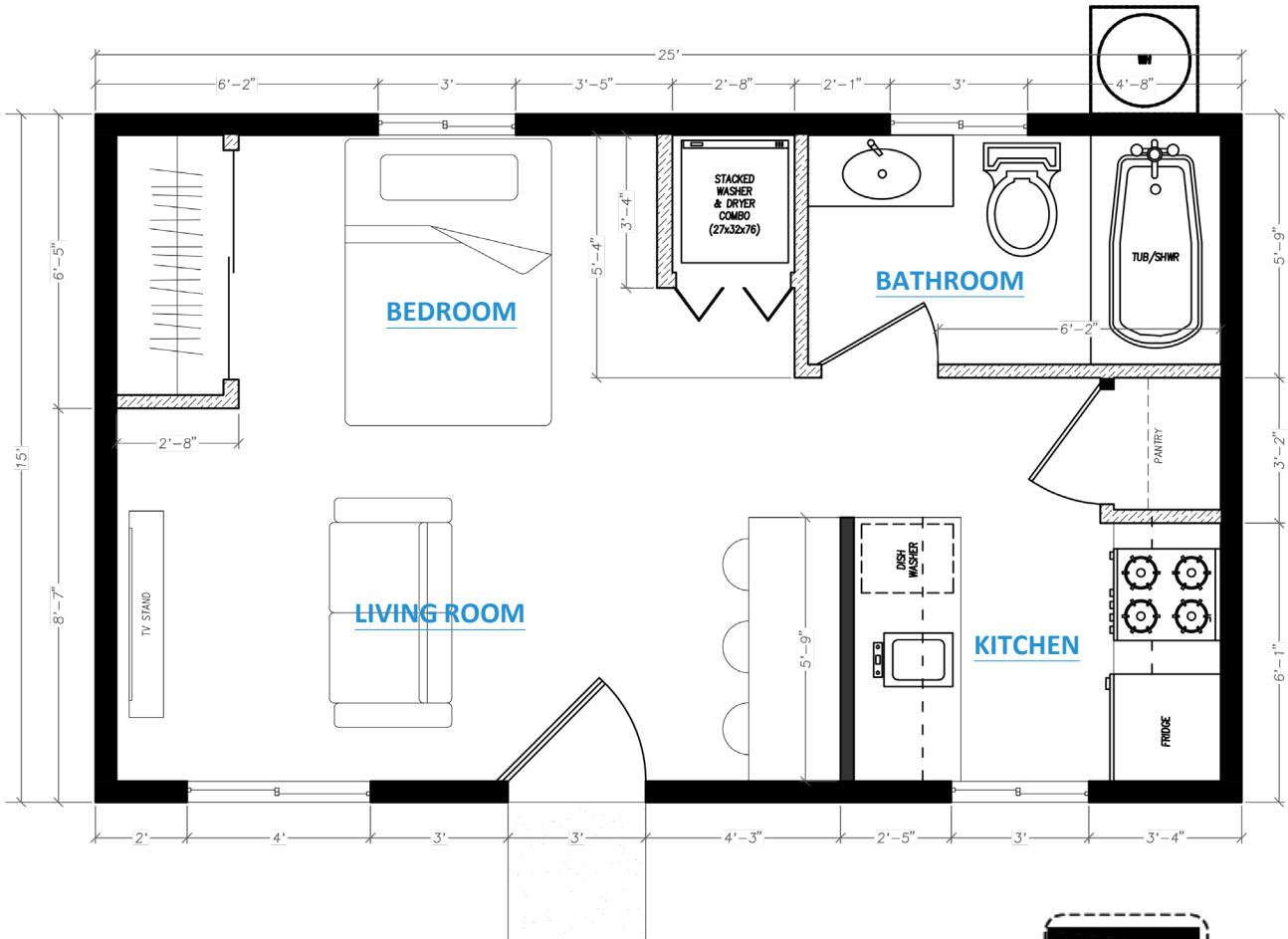
Refer to the Application Process, Submittal Requirements, and Fees and Additional Requirements outlined on Pages 7-11. Program components and the responsibility of the property owner/applicant are summarized below. Contact the County of Madera Building Division at (559) 675-7703 for further assistance and official determination.

Required Plans/Reports Provided in Program	Responsibility of Property Owner/Applicant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Floor Plan</li> <li>• Foundation Plan</li> <li>• Exterior Elevations</li> <li>• Typical Cross Section</li> <li>• Energy Conservation Information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Building Permit Application</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Site Plan</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Roof Framing Plan; Truss Drawings and Calculations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Payment of Application and Permit Fees</li> </ul>

# ----- FLOOR PLANS -----

## FLOOR PLAN 1

### 375 SQUARE FOOT FLOOR PLAN – STUDIO / 1 BATHROOM

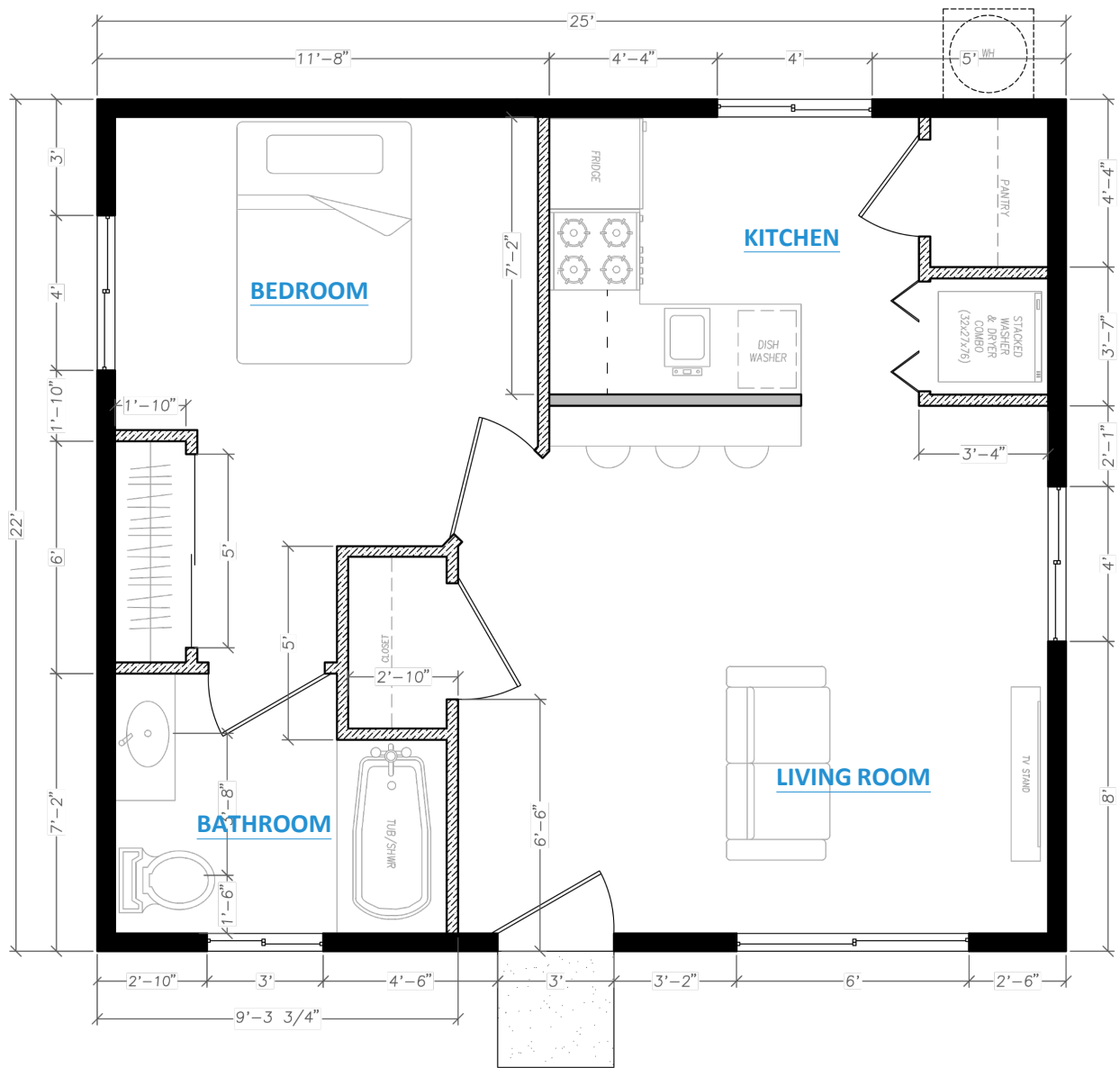


#### DETAILS

- One bathroom
- Kitchen with pantry closet
- Washer and dryer closet (stacked)
- Dining Bar
- Living Room
- Bathroom with shower/tub combination

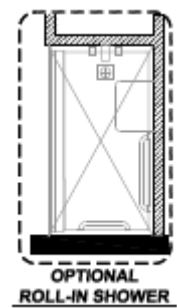
## FLOOR PLAN 2

### 550 SQUARE FOOT FLOOR PLAN – 1 BEDROOM / 1 BATHROOM



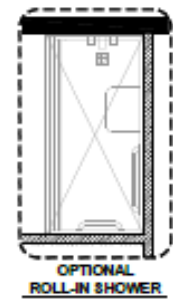
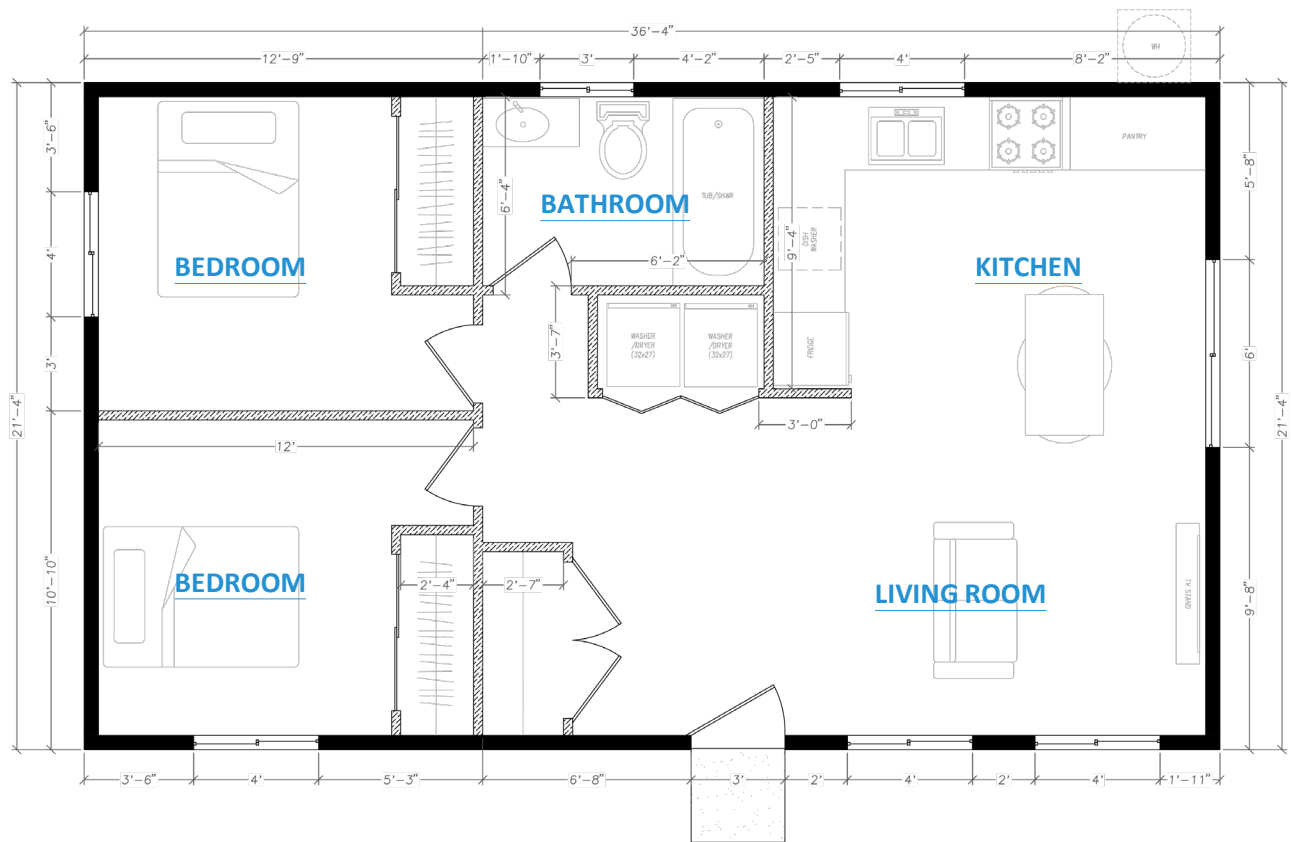
#### DETAILS

- One bedroom
- One bathroom
- Kitchen with pantry closet
- Washer and dryer closet (stacked)
- Dining Bar
- Living Room
- Bathroom with shower/tub combination



### FLOOR PLAN 3

#### 743 SQUARE FOOT FLOOR PLAN – 2 BEDROOMS / 1 BATHROOM



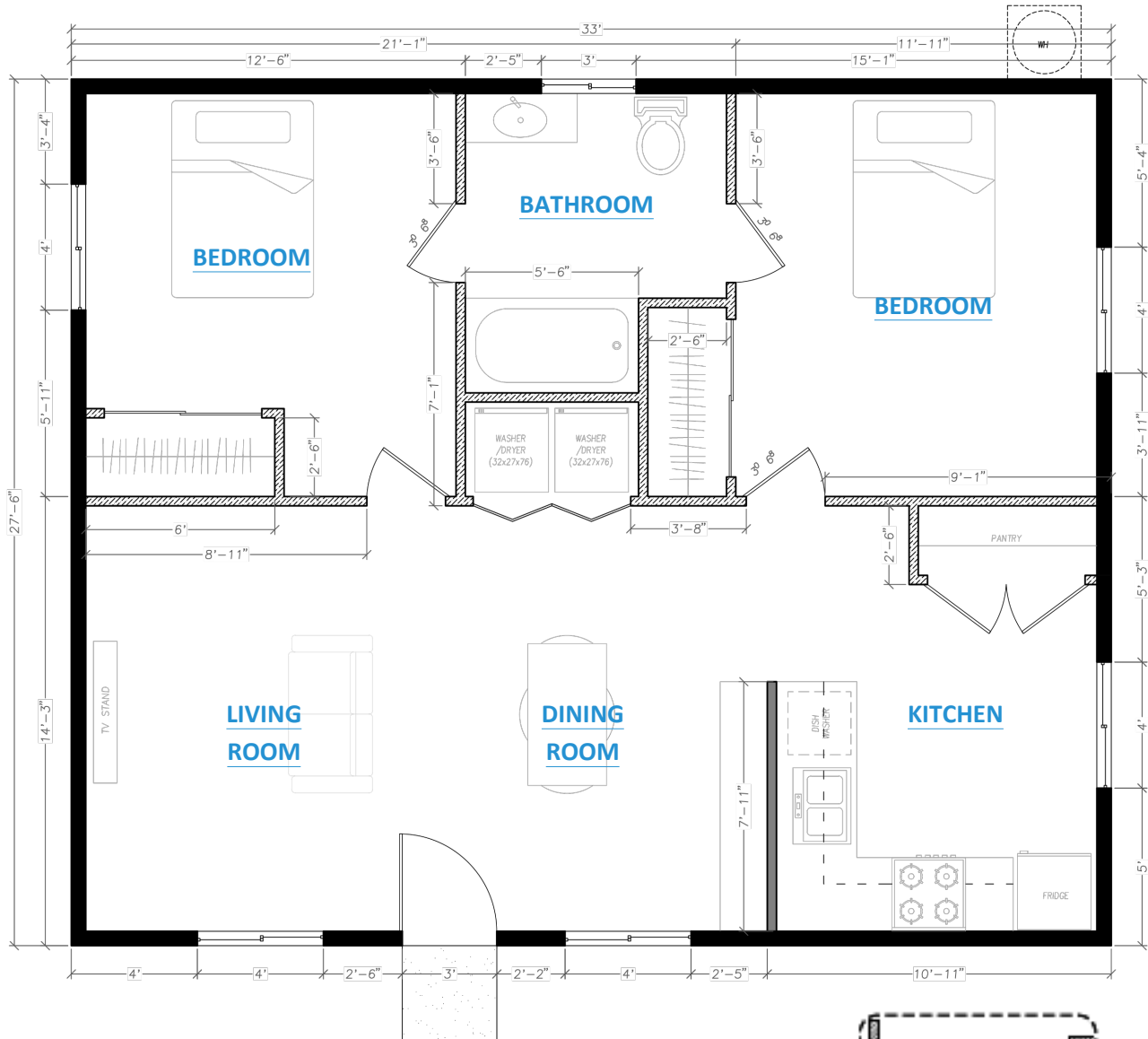
#### DETAILS

- Two bedrooms
- One bathroom
- Kitchen with pantry closet
- Washer and dryer closet (side-by-side)
- Dining Room
- Living Room
- Bathroom with shower/tub combination



## FLOOR PLAN 4

### 908 SQUARE FOOT FLOOR PLAN – 2 BEDROOMS / 1 BATHROOM



#### DETAILS

- Two bedrooms
- One bathroom
- Kitchen with pantry closet
- Washer and dryer closet (side-by-side)
- Dining Room
- Living Room
- Bathroom with shower/tub combination



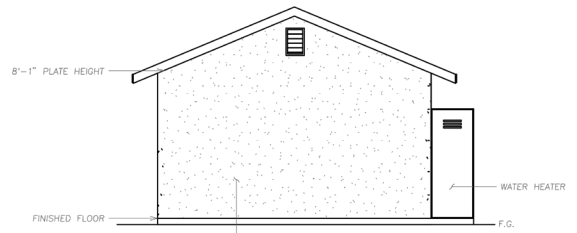
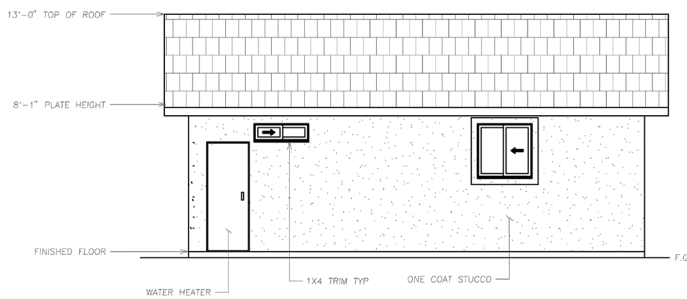
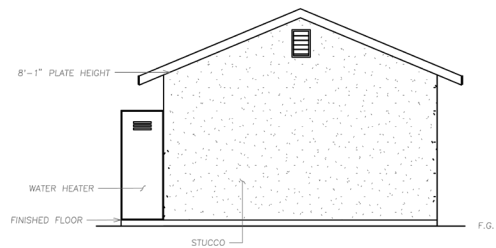
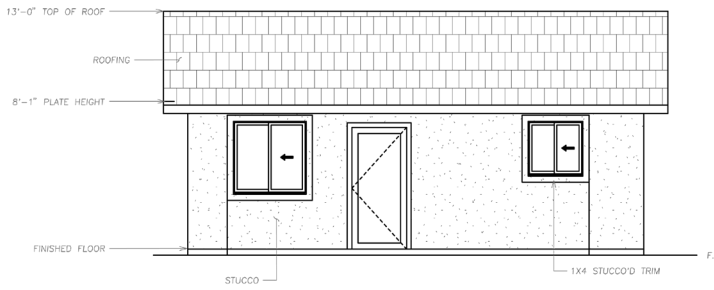
----- ELEVATIONS -----

**ELEVATION A**

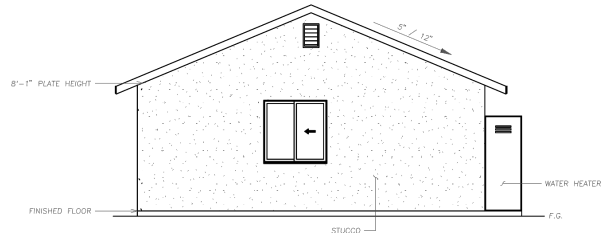
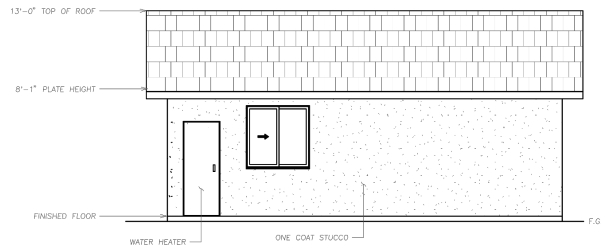
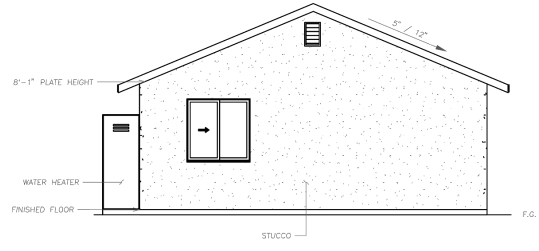
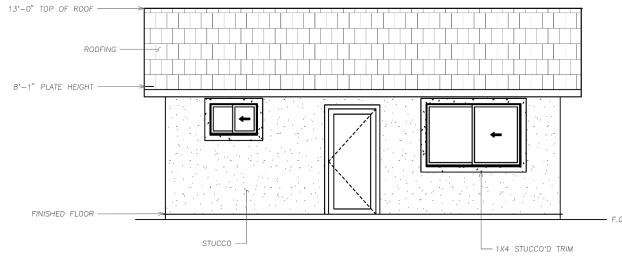
**SPANISH/MEDITERRANEAN**



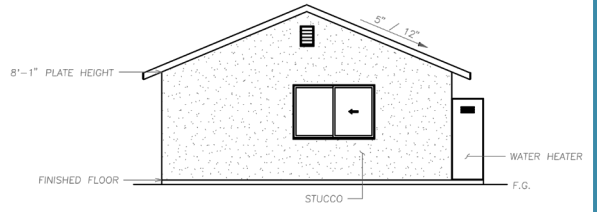
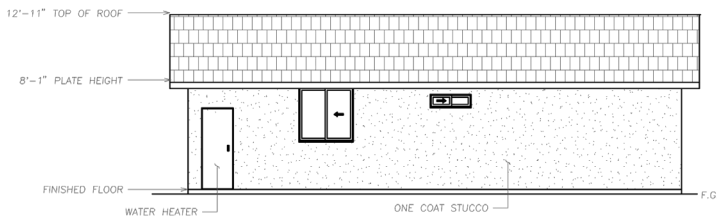
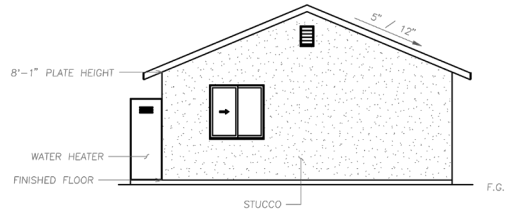
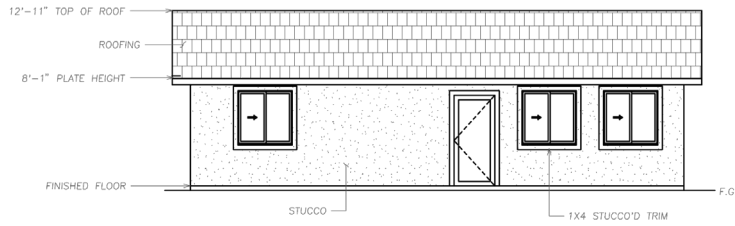
*375 Square Foot Elevation:*



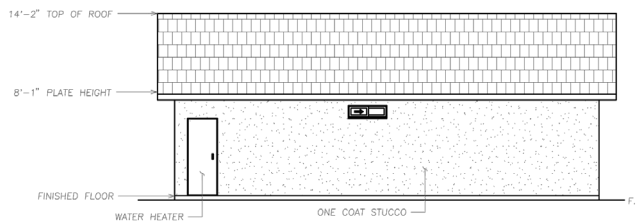
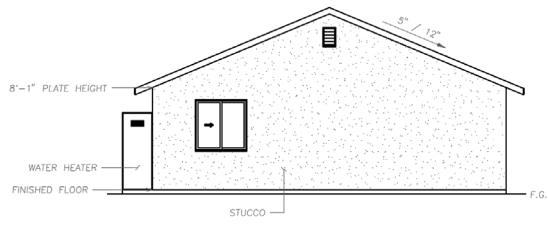
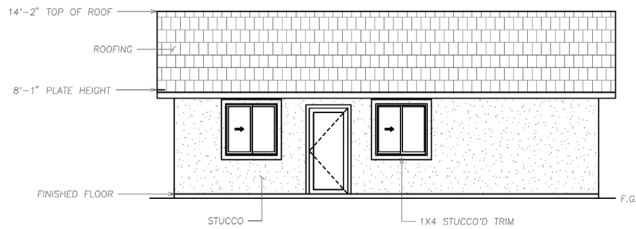
### 550 Square Foot Elevation:



### 743 Square Foot Elevation:



### 908 Square Foot Elevation:

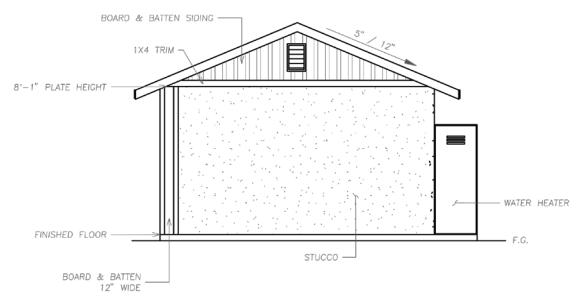
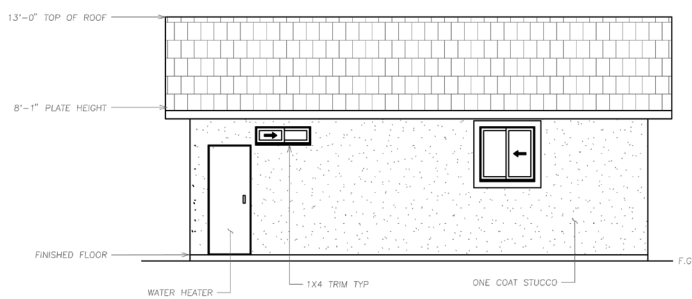
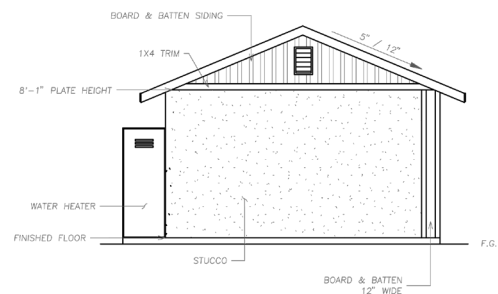
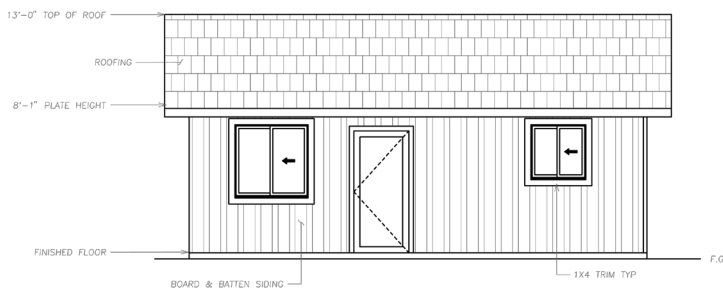


## ELEVATION B

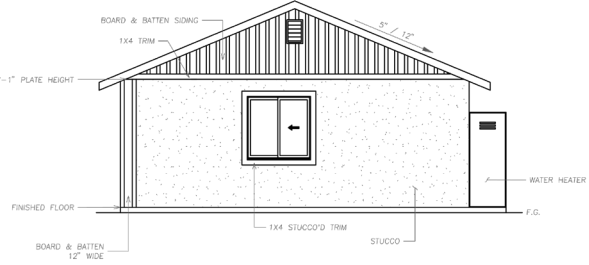
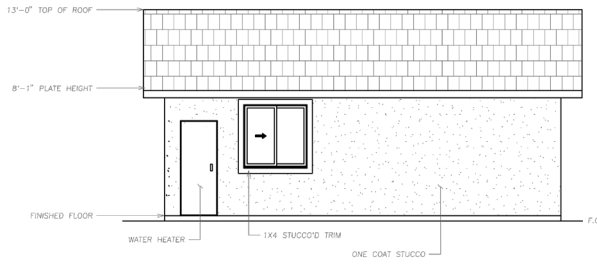
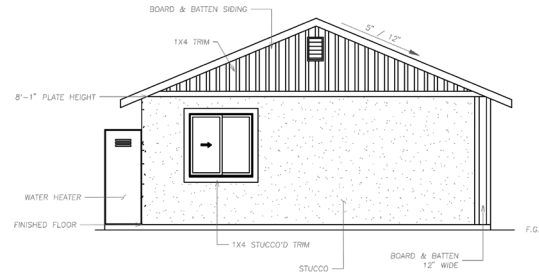
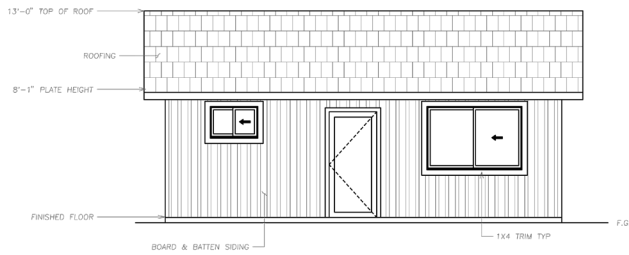
### MODERN FARMHOUSE



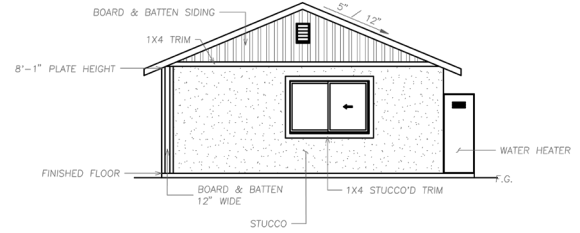
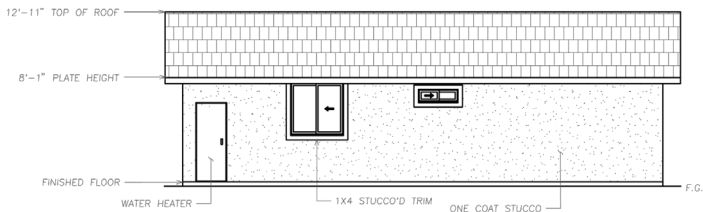
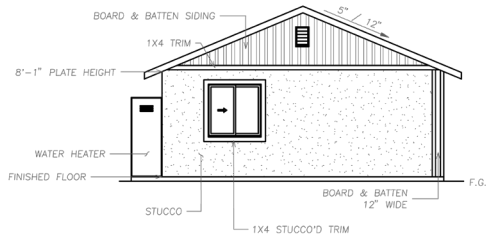
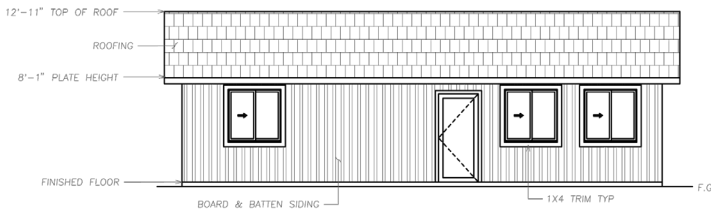
#### 375 Square Foot Elevation:



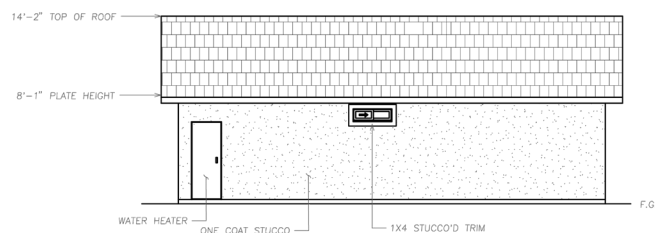
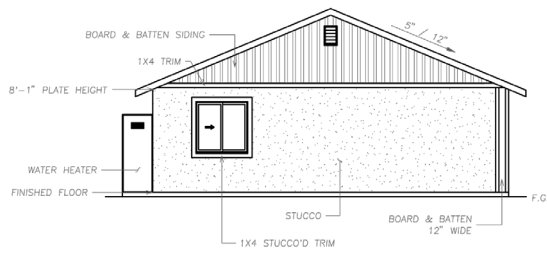
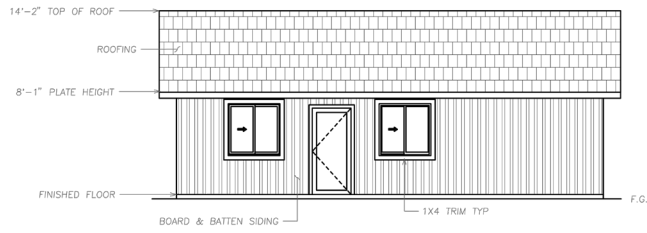
### 550 Square Foot Elevation:



### 743 Square Foot Elevation:



### 908 Square Foot Elevation:

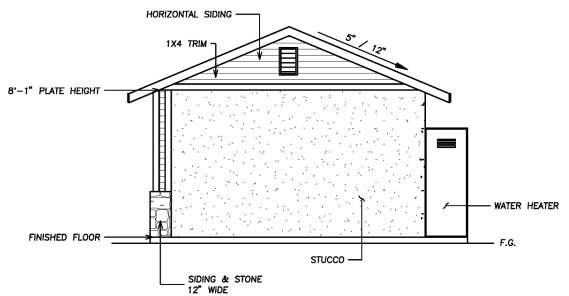
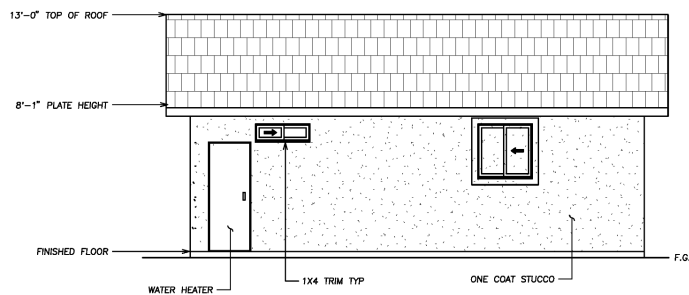
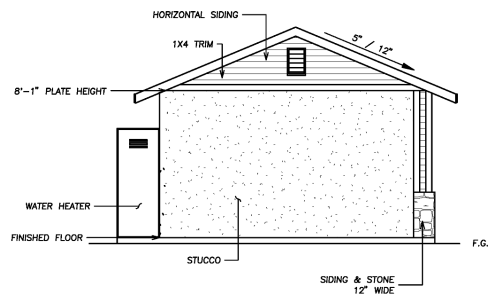
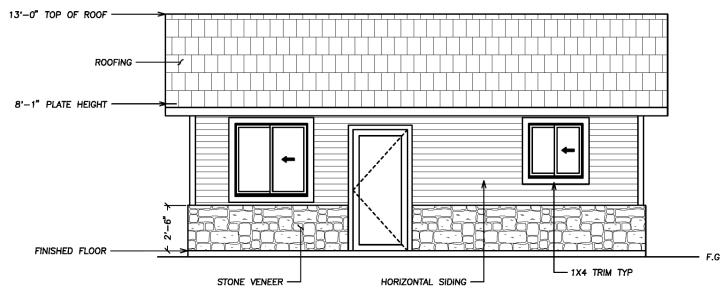


# ELEVATION C

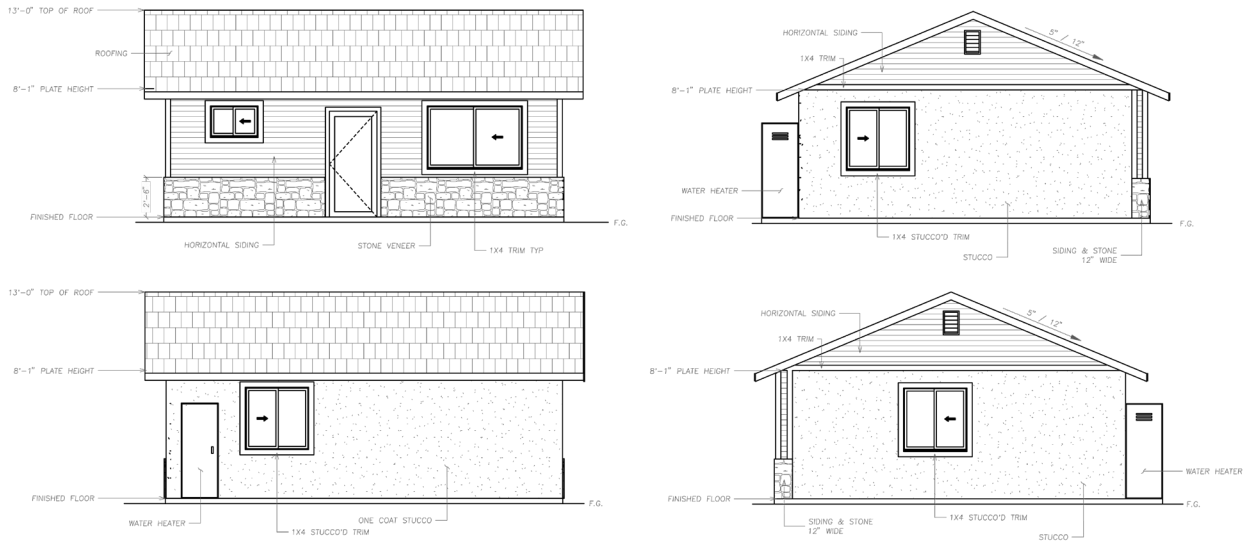
## CRAFTSMAN/BUNGALOW



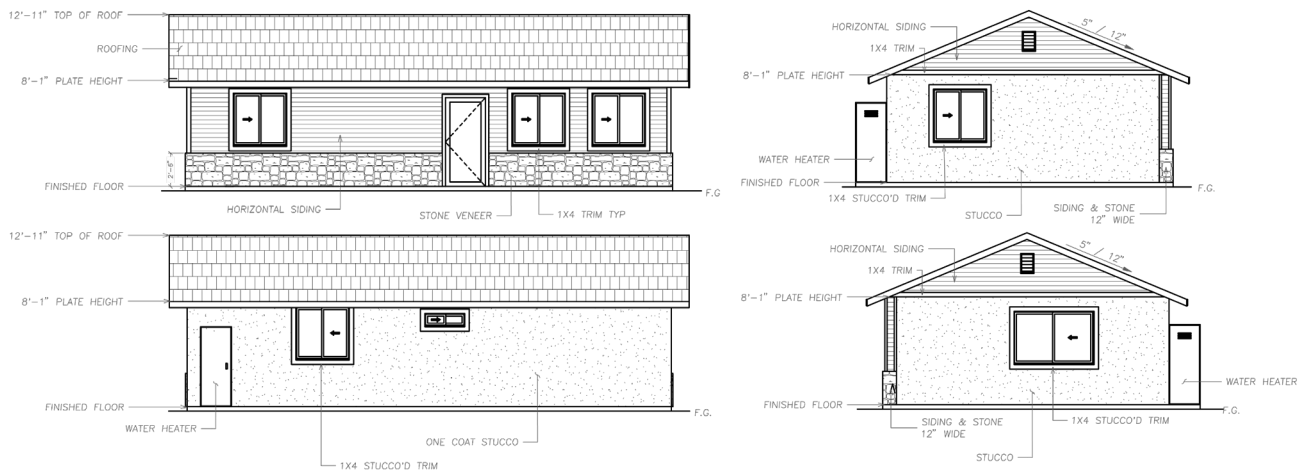
### 375 Square Foot Elevation:



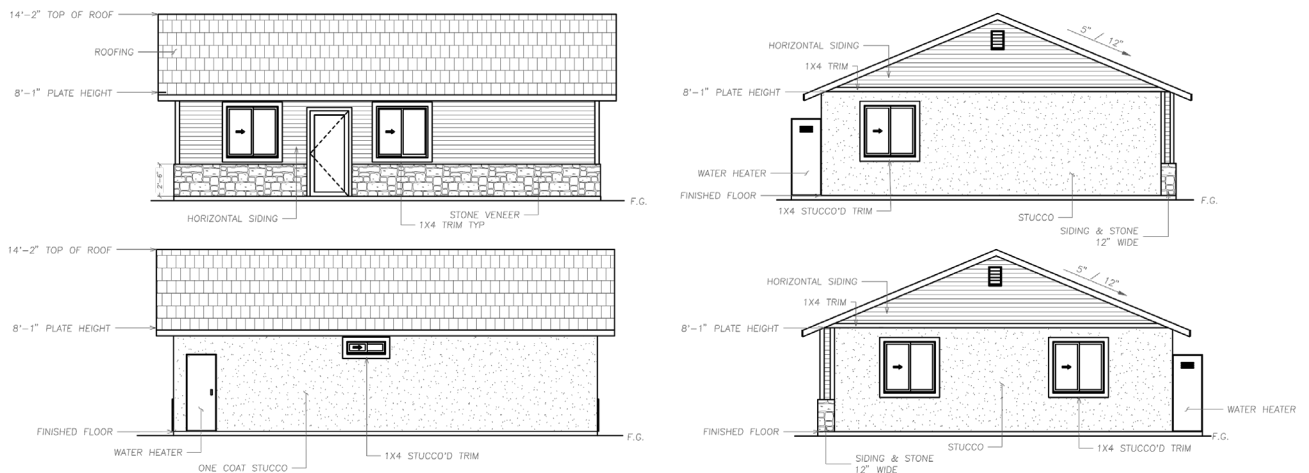
### 550 Square Foot Elevation:



### 743 Square Foot Elevation:



### 908 Square Foot Elevation:



# 5 SECTION 5.

## RESOURCES, CONTACTS AND FURTHER READING

### ----- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS -----

Where are ADUs allowed? Page 3

What types of ADUs are allowed? Page 2

How many ADUs can I build on my property? Page 6

What are the site requirements for my property? Page 6

What are the size limitations for ADUs? Page 6

### ----- RESOURCES, CONTACTS, AND FURTHER READING -----

#### Resources

Madera County Zoning Ordinance – [https://library.municode.com/ca/madera\\_county/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances](https://library.municode.com/ca/madera_county/codes/code_of_ordinances)

California Residential Code - <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/BSC/Codes>

CalGreen Code - <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/BSC/CALGreen>

County of Madera Planning Division Webpage - <https://www.maderacounty.com/government/community-economic-development-department/divisions/planning-division>

County of Madera Building Division Webpage - <https://www.maderacounty.com/government/community-economic-development-department/divisions/building-division>

#### Contacts

County of Madera Planning Division – (559) 675-7821

County of Madera Building Division – (559) 675-7703

County of Madera Public Works Department – (559) 675-7811

American Water Company/Hillview District – (559) 683-4322

Madera Valley Water Company – (559) 674-2407

Bass Lake Water Company – (559) 642-2494

Office of the Fire Marshal – (559) 661-5190

#### Further Reading

California Department of Housing and Community Development – ADU Handbook (Updated July 2022) - <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/sites/default/files/docs/policy-and-research/ADUHandbookUpdate.pdf>



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