
Building an ADU? You'll need guidance

By Vicki Viotti

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Architect Questor Lau, like others in his profession, see the legalization of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as a good thing, filling a decided need. That doesn't mean people necessarily will be eager to rush into a brave new world without guidance, he said, delivered in plain English.

A manual is what prospective ADU builders need, he said, and sometime next February, they'll have one. The city has issued a \$52,000 grant for two nonprofits — Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice and Hawaiian Community Assets (HCA) — to produce the publication, said Jenny Lee, public policy director at Hawaii Appleseed.

Already some lenders are independently preparing loan packages for ADU projects (Hawaii USA Federal Credit Union is one confirming that last week), but the assumption is people will need some guidance there. The part of the manual dealing with financing the project will be handled by HCA.

The project also will include a financial calculator, a website and advice on design, setting up a lease and finding a tenant. And Appleseed is working with Architects Hawaii Ltd. on an ADU blueprint.

"It fits in with our mission to create more affordables," she said, "and we want to enable homeowners to create affordable housing on their own property."

Meanwhile city offices will provide inquirers with a "public facilities pre-check form" to identify any potential barriers at the outset. And they have handouts answering some frequently asked questions. Among the points:

- » An ADU can be a maximum of 400 square feet for lots of 3,500-4,999 square feet; on larger lots, they can go up to 800 square feet.
- » ADUs have no residency restrictions barring non-relatives, as the ohana housing law did, and it requires one off-street parking space instead of the two for ohana units.
- » ADUs must be in areas with adequate sewer and water capacity.
- » Owners, or their relatives or authorized representatives, must live on the property; exemptions for hardship (illness, military deployment) are possible.
- » Units can be prefabricated, modular units, if they meet other ADU provisions.

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