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# What to Know Before Starting Construction: Los Angeles



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Homeowners build ADUs for all sorts of reasons, but one of the most common reasons is for family. This was certainly the case for newlyweds Charles and Michelle who had been living with Charles' parents in Los Angeles and were on the lookout for their own home. Little did they know they'd end up building it themselves in the backyard!

Today, Charles and Michelle take over the Maxable blog to tell us about their experience building their own ADU in Los Angeles.





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## Deciding to Build an ADU

We decided to build an ADU after a months-long, house-hunting search in L.A. turned up empty. We couldn't find anything affordable or in close proximity to my husband's parents.

Since location and proximity were most important to us so that we could be nearby to help, we took a look at the detached garage and asked ourselves, what if? After doing some research online, meeting with an architect, and discussing with our in-laws, we made the decision to demolish the existing garage and build a two-story ADU.

For us, the square footage was especially important because we plan to start a family in the near future.

We'd have the best of both worlds in that we'd always be around to help out, and it was far more affordable than buying or renting anything in the area.





## Square Footage and Fit on the Lot

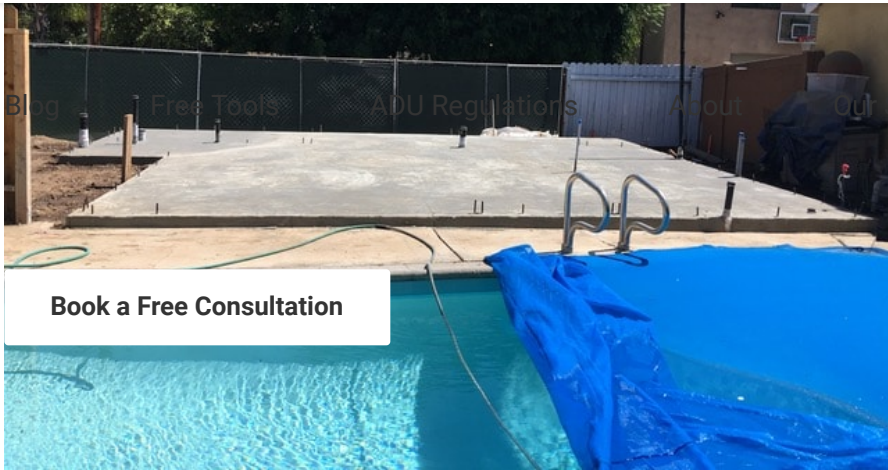
Our ADU is a two-story detached unit, measuring in at around 1100 square feet. Our lot size is 6,537 square feet, flat, and opens up to an alley. Since our lot sits on a corner, we felt we had more room to build. The backyard has a small grass area just outside of the main house, a pool, and then opens up to our ADU.

I remember when the foundation was poured and I thought, "A living room and kitchen will fit in that?! It's so small!" Seeing the framing go up and the ADU evolve has been so exciting. It seems huge now!

*Corner lots are ideal for ADUs, and some homeowners have the ADU face the opposite street so it feels like two separate houses. The big benefit of this is privacy.*

*A great way to increase the total square footage of your ADU is to build a two-story unit, if you have the budget (building up can be expensive). Size is important to Michelle and Charles because they plan to expand their family in the future.*





## 5 Things You Should Know Before Starting the Construction Process

Hindsight is 20/20 and if I could share any advice for those moving forward, these would be my top 5 tidbits:

### Tip #1 Maximize:

If it's in your budget, build as much as you can, and during the planning process, think of creating as much storage space (hidden, even!) as possible.

*There is no denying that small spaces are more difficult to design because every square foot matters. You are not building on a blank lot and there may be additional site constraints, like mature trees. So, the solution? Using the right architect!*

*Need help finding an architect? Contact [Maxable](#), and we will connect you with architects who can fit your design needs.*

### Tip #2 Vision:





Having that vision and bringing it with you when you meet with an architect or contractor will save you a lot of time!

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### Tip #3 Cost:

Be prepared with your budget, and pad it even more. Though building an ADU is far less expensive than buying an apartment or house in L.A., it can come with unexpected costs once construction begins.

*Most homeowners don't have experience overseeing a major construction budget. At Maxable, we recommend adding a 10% contingency for unexpected things that come up. Let's take a look at an example.*

*Lynn made a huge decision, to invest \$16,000 to put solar on both her ADU and main house. Solar*





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to be replaced prior to the install. Even. That wasn't part of the initial plan. It's good to have some padding in your budget for unexpected line items.

To learn more about Lynn's garage conversion, click [here](#).

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### Tip #4 Financing:

When we began our ADU journey, we couldn't find much information about financing the construction of one! It appears that there's a lot more information and options out there today, but when we started in 2017, we couldn't find much. It's crucial to crunch the numbers and compare all options before determining what's best for you. Whether it's a construction loan, financing with a contractor or construction company, or taking out a second mortgage, it's best to compare to find the best rate.

### Tip #5 Downsize:

Living in an ADU comes with its set of challenges when it comes to space. You may not need all of your furniture, and you will probably need to "Marie Kondo" your house three times over to whittle down what will fit in your ADU. If you plan on living in your ADU, it's especially important to consider this as you no longer have a garage to store things!

Which brings me back to my top tip – maximize your ADU space. It sounds simple and obvious, but really cannot be stressed enough – living small is a great way to change your lifestyle in terms of valuing time and quality of life over possessions, but it does





or check out their instagram page [#maxable\\_la](#).

And stay tuned for the second installment where we will be looking at the more technical side of the permitting process, budgeting and more!

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**Before You Build an ADU, Read This.**

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