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# HOW-TO GUIDE: ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

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Inyo County  
168 N. Edwards St.  
Independence,  
CA 93526



## **Disclaimer**

The information provided in this how-to guide is offered solely as a convenience for members of the public and for general informational purposes only. It is not intended to, and does not, replace or supersede any approvals, permits, reviews, or determinations required by the County Building Department, County Planning Department, or any other applicable regulatory authority. Users of this guide should not rely on the information contained herein as a substitute for compliance with all applicable laws, codes, regulations, and official County processes. Please contact the appropriate County departments to confirm current requirements and to obtain all necessary approvals prior to commencing any work.



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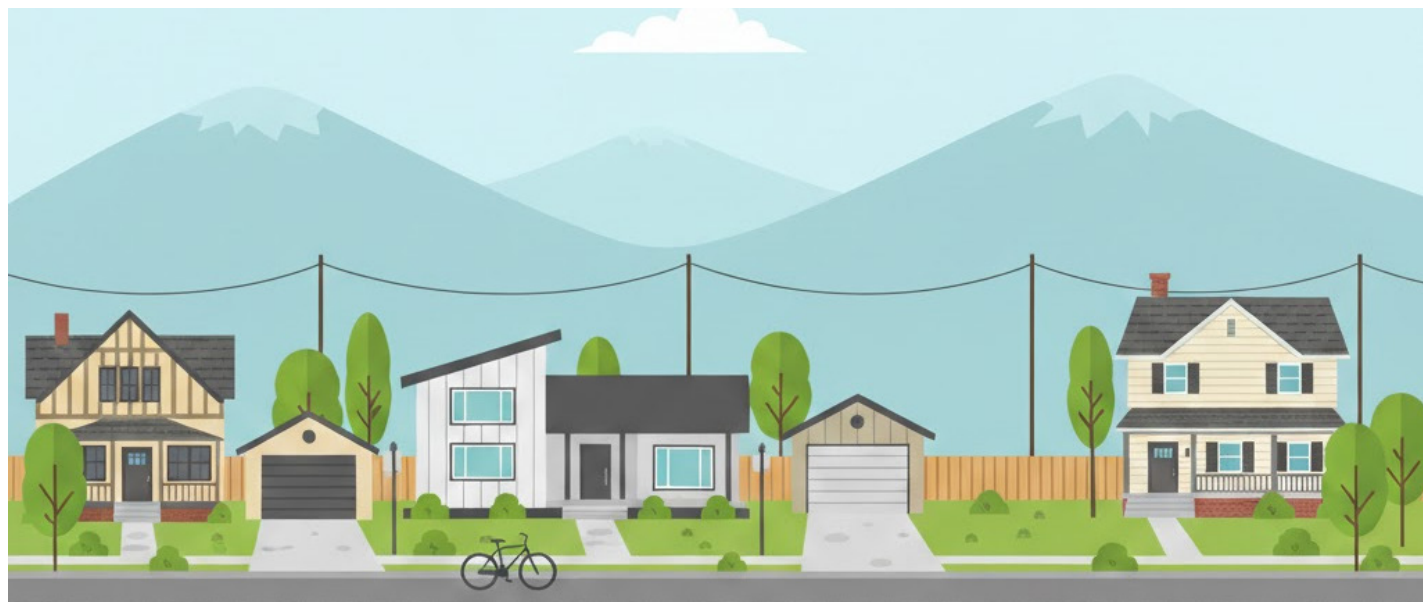
# 1. INTRODUCTION

**Recent changes to State Law** have made it easier to construct Accessory Dwelling Units (“ADUs”) throughout the state. In response to these changes, Inyo County updated its ADU Ordinance in 2021, to accurately reflect State ADU regulations, by incorporating State regulations by reference. To streamline the production of ADUs, the County has established the Inyo County Permit-ready ADU Program, offering “permit-ready”, “off the shelf” ADU plan sets so that anyone can choose a plan set, pay their permits, and build, ultimately reducing the cost and timeframe for the ADU design and permitting process. The County has created this ADU Guidebook to further assist homeowners in the county of Inyo through the process to build and ADU.

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## How to Use the Guide

This how-to guide (“Guide”) was created as a resource for homeowners in Inyo County to utilize as they navigate the process to build an ADU. This Guide provides a step-by-step approach for homeowners to follow, offering information and guidance on ADU basics, regulations, design, and permitting.



**How-to Guide Outline**  
This Guide is broken down into **SIX** parts:

1

**Introduction**

Introduction  
How to Use the Guide



2

**ADU Basics**

Types of ADUs  
ADU Regulations  
Frequently Asked Questions  
ADU Requirements Checklist  
Other Requirements



3

**How to Build an ADU in Inyo County**

Step 1. Determine Your Property's Eligibility for Building an ADU  
Step 2. Meet the Minimum ADU Requirements  
Step 3. Design Your ADU  
Step 4. Prepare and Submit Your ADU Permit Application



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**Inyo County ADU Review and Approval Process**

Application Process  
"Before You Apply"  
Application Submittal



5

**Permit-Ready ADU Program**

Plan Overview  
How it Works



6

**Funding and Resources**

Funding Opportunities  
Local Resources  
Further Reading







# 2. ADU BASICS

## Types of ADUs

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, separated structure
- **Conversion:** Existing space converted into an ADU (e.g., garage, basements, spare rooms)
- **Junior ADU:** Contained entirely within the primary home and not more than 500 sq. ft in size



**Attached ADU**



**Detached ADU**



**Conversion**



**Junior ADU**





## Frequently Asked Questions

Where are ADUs allowed? Page 13.

What types of ADUs are allowed? Page 8.

How many ADUs can I build on my property? Page 10

What are the site requirements for my property? Page 10.

What are the size limitations for ADUs? Page 10.

Can I build an ADU if I split my lot into 2 separate lots? Page 11.

## ADU Requirements Checklist

To help guide applicants through the process, the County provides a **Minimum ADU Requirements Checklist** on page 13, which outlines key requirements and development standards to ensure compliance with state and local regulations.

The Checklist is not intended to substitute the ADU Ordinance; please refer to the [ADU Ordinance](#) as hyperlinked for more information or contact the Inyo County Planning Department at (760) 878-0263 or [inyoplanning@inyocounty.us](mailto:inyoplanning@inyocounty.us) for assistance and official determination.



## Minimum ADU Requirements

Development Standard	Minimum Requirements Per State ADU Law		
	New Construction	Converted Structure	Converted Space w/in Dwelling
<b>Number (Max.)</b>	<b>Single-Family Lots:</b> 1 Detached ADU or 1 Attached ADU  <b>Multi-Family Lots:</b> Up to 2 Detached ADUs	<b>Single-Family Lots:</b> 1 ADU or 1 interior ADU  <b>Multi-Family Lots:</b> Up to 25% of the total number of units on lots with existing multi-family dwellings	<b>Single-Family Lots:</b> 1 interior JADU  <b>Multi-Family Lots:</b> At least 1 interior ADU conversion and up to 25% of the total number of units on lots with existing multi-family dwellings
<b>Size (Minimum)</b>	150 square feet including kitchen and at least $\frac{3}{4}$ bathroom		
<b>Size (Max.)</b>	<b>Detached or Attached:</b> <b>1 Bedroom:</b> Up to 800 sq. ft.  <b>2+ Bedrooms:</b> Up to 1,200 sq. ft.	ADU shall maintain the same square footage as existing structure	50% of the floor area of the primary residence  <b>Junior ADUs:</b> Up to 500 sq. ft.
<b>Setbacks (Min.)</b>	<b>Front Yard:</b> As established in the zone district <b>Side/Rear Yard:</b> Minimum of 4 feet  Minimum of 10 feet between detached structures	ADU shall maintain the same setbacks as the existing structure	n/a
<b>Height (Max.)</b>	<b>Detached:</b> As established in the zone district <b>Attached:</b> As established in the zone district	Same height as the space being converted	
<b>Parking (Min.)</b>	1 parking space required unless the unit is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> mile of public transit</li> <li>• Created within the area of an existing building</li> <li>• In a historic district</li> <li>• Located within one block of a car share vehicle option</li> </ul>	None required	

## Other Requirements

### i. Owner Occupancy, Rental, and Conveyance

Aside from the minimum ADU requirements, the County's Building an ADU program prescribes specific requirements for the occupancy, sale, and rental of ADUs and JADUs summarized below.

#### A. Owner Occupancy

ADU Type	Effective Date	Owner Occupancy Requirement
ADU ( <i>Detached, Attached, Conversion</i> )	Current	No owner occupancy requirements for accessory dwelling units.
JADU	Current	<p>If the JADU has shared sanitation facilities with the existing structure, owner-occupancy in the single-family residence is required. The owner may reside in either the remaining portion of the structure or the newly created JADU. Owner-occupancy is not required if the JADU has separate sanitation facilities, or if the owner is another governmental agency, land trust, or housing organization.</p> <p>For JADUs, a covenant, which shall run with the land, is required prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. The covenant shall include: 1) a prohibition on the sale of the JADU separate from the sale of the single-family residence, including a statement that the deed restriction may be enforced against future purchasers; and 2) a restriction to the size and attributes of the JADU.</p>

#### B. Rental Terms

The rental term of the ADU or JADU must be at least 30 continuous days or more. Short-term rentals require a permit from the Planning Department. However, ADUs built using the County's permit-ready plans are not eligible for short-term rental permits. In these cases, the Planning Department will require a recorded deed restriction specifying that the unit cannot be used as a short-term rental.

#### C. Separate Conveyance

An ADU or JADU cannot be sold or conveyed separately from the primary residence, except when sold by a qualified nonprofit corporation to a qualified buyer in accordance with [Government Code Section 65852.26](#). Note: A deed restriction is required for JADUs prior to issuance of a building permit to indicate that the JADU cannot be sold or conveyed separately from the primary residence.

## ii. Connection or Capacity Charges

Inyo County may allow ADUs or JADUs in areas where septic and well can be provided. 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.

- For ADUs or JADUs contained within an existing, developed single-family residence or accessory structure (e.g., garage or shed), the ADU or JADU is not required to install new or separate water and sewer connections and cannot be charged for a related connection fee or capacity charge.
- For ADUs and JADUs constructed at the same time as a new single-family dwelling, new or separate water and sewer connections may be required, and connection or capacity charges can be charged but must not exceed a “reasonable cost” for providing the service.

Contact the Inyo County Planning Department at (760) 878-0263 or [inyoplanning@inyocounty.us](mailto:inyoplanning@inyocounty.us).

## iii. Impact Fees and School District Fees

Impact fees and school district fees are typically required for new development to mitigate the impacts caused by the development. Depending on the size of the ADU proposed, impact fees and school district fees may be waived. Any impact fees or school district fees required are to be proportionate in relation to the square footage of the single-family dwelling. Note: impact fees are due prior to issuance of building permits.

Size of ADU	Impact Fee Requirements
ADU or JADU less than 500 square feet	No County impact fees; no school district fees
ADU less than 750 square feet	No County impact fees; school district fees are required and are to be charged proportionately in relation to the square footage of the single-family dwelling
ADU more than 750 square feet	County impact fees and school district are required and are to be charged proportionately in relation to the square footage of the single-family dwelling



# 3. HOW TO BUILD AN ADU IN INYO COUNTY

## 1. Determine Your Property's Eligibility for Building an ADU

ADUs are permitted on parcels in the County that meet the following three requirements:

- ✓ Zoned residential or mixed use or allow residential uses including single-family and multi-family, and
- ✓ Contain either an existing or proposed single-family residence or multi-family residential development (think: duplex, triplex, or apartment), and
- ✓ Inyo County may allow ADUs or JADUs in areas where septic and well can be provided.

To check the **Zoning** of your property, use the Inyo County Zoning Map ([Interactive Mapping Application](#)) to locate your property and determine your property's zoning designation. Next search the Inyo County Zoning Ordinance or [Interactive Municipal Code](#) to determine where your property's zoning designation allows residential uses.

If your property is zoned residential or mixed use or allows residential uses and contains an existing or proposed single-family residence or multi-family residential development, then your property may be eligible for an ADU– continue to **Step 2** to learn about the minimum ADU requirements as applicable.

For assistance and official determination of whether your property is eligible, contact the Inyo County Planning Department.

## 2. Meet the Minimum ADU Requirements

If your property is eligible for an ADU, any development must meet the minimum **ADU requirements** established by the Inyo County ADU Ordinance, as applicable. The County's ADU Ordinance is codified in Chapter 18.78.340 in the Inyo County Zoning Ordinance or [Interactive Municipal Code](#). Refer to **Part 2-ADU Basics for the ADU Minimum Requirements** Checklist on page 8 and to review the additional requirements.

### 3. Design Your ADU

#### i. Ways to Design Your ADU

There are at least four ways to design your ADU. Be sure to continue to consult with County Staff to ensure compliance throughout the design process. Contact the Inyo County Planning Department for further assistance.

Ways to Design Your ADU	
Design Option	Description
Participate in the Inyo County “Permit-ready” Program	Select from a set of plans for detached ADU that have been pre-reviewed and approved by the County. Save on design costs. Learn more in <b>Part 5. “Permit-ready” ADU Program</b> on page 20.
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.
Design/Build Firm	Hire a design/build firm to handle the entire project, from design to construction.
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. <b>Note:</b> If using a modular or prefabricated home, make sure to check for compliance with applicable State Law related to manufactured housing.

#### ii. Conceptualize Your ADU

Before proceeding any further, we recommend taking a few minutes to locate and confirm information about your property that will help you refine your ADU concept. Use the [Plot Plan Template](#) [See page 16] to plot your property as it exists today. From here, you can start to identify the size and location of your ADU and check your ADU concept against the ADU Requirements Checklist.

- ☐ **Determine the dimensions of your property:** Locate your property using the Inyo County Online Assessor’s Parcel Map ([Interactive Mapping Application](#)). Find your property on the County Assessor Parcel Map and make note of the dimensions (e.g., 150 feet by 25 feet).
- ☐ **Measure the dimensions of existing structures on your property:** Identify permanent structures on your property (e.g., primary dwelling unit, detached garage or shed, etc.) and make note of the dimensions including height and distance to property lines and between structures.
- ☐ **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 10-foot public utility easement, or your property 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.



- ❑ **Consider other property constraints:** Consider other potential property constraints that may require specific regulations and requirements. For example, is your property in a Fire Hazard Severity Zone? Is your project located in an earthquake fault zone? Is your property in a Flood Zone? Is your property within a snow avalanche prone area? If you've identified other constraints, we recommend discussing your project and property with County staff to avoid any surprises that may impact your ADU concept.

#### Helpful Resources:

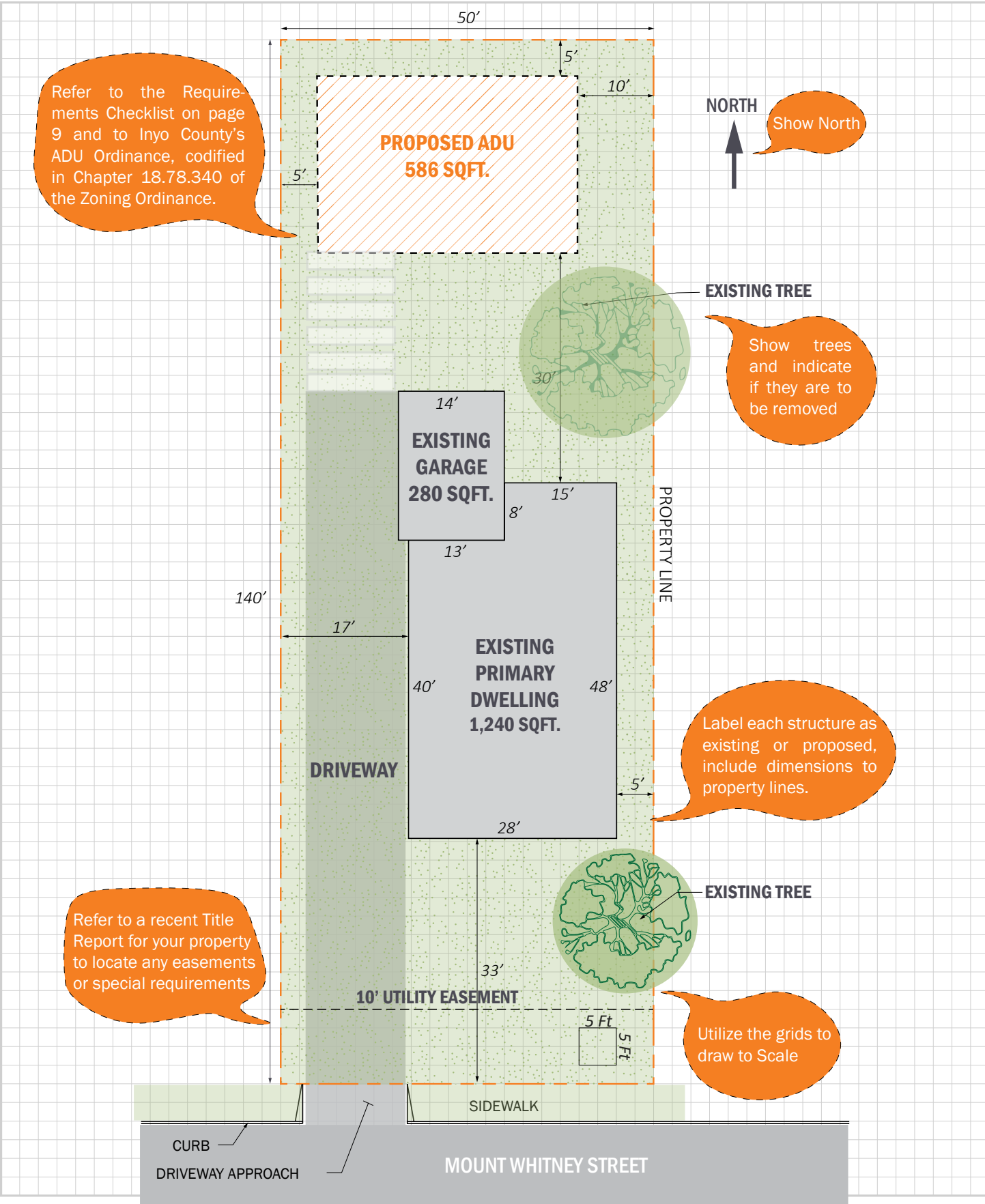
- [Fire Hazard Severity Zone:](#) Enter your address to see if your property is within a fire hazard severity zone.
- [USGS U.S. Quaternary Faults:](#) Enter your address to see if your property is within an earthquake fault zone.
- [Inyo County Flood Hazards:](#) Enter your address to see if your property is within a flood hazard zone.
- [Inyo County Snow Avalanche Prone Area:](#) Enter your address to see if your property is within a snow avalanche hazard zone.

For assistance and official determination of whether your property is eligible, contact the Inyo County Planning Department.

## 4. Prepare and Submit Your ADU Permit Application

Refer to **Part 4 – Inyo County ADU Review and Approval Process** on page 18 for information on the review process, fees, submittal requirements, and application materials.

# Plot Plan Template



# Like what you see?

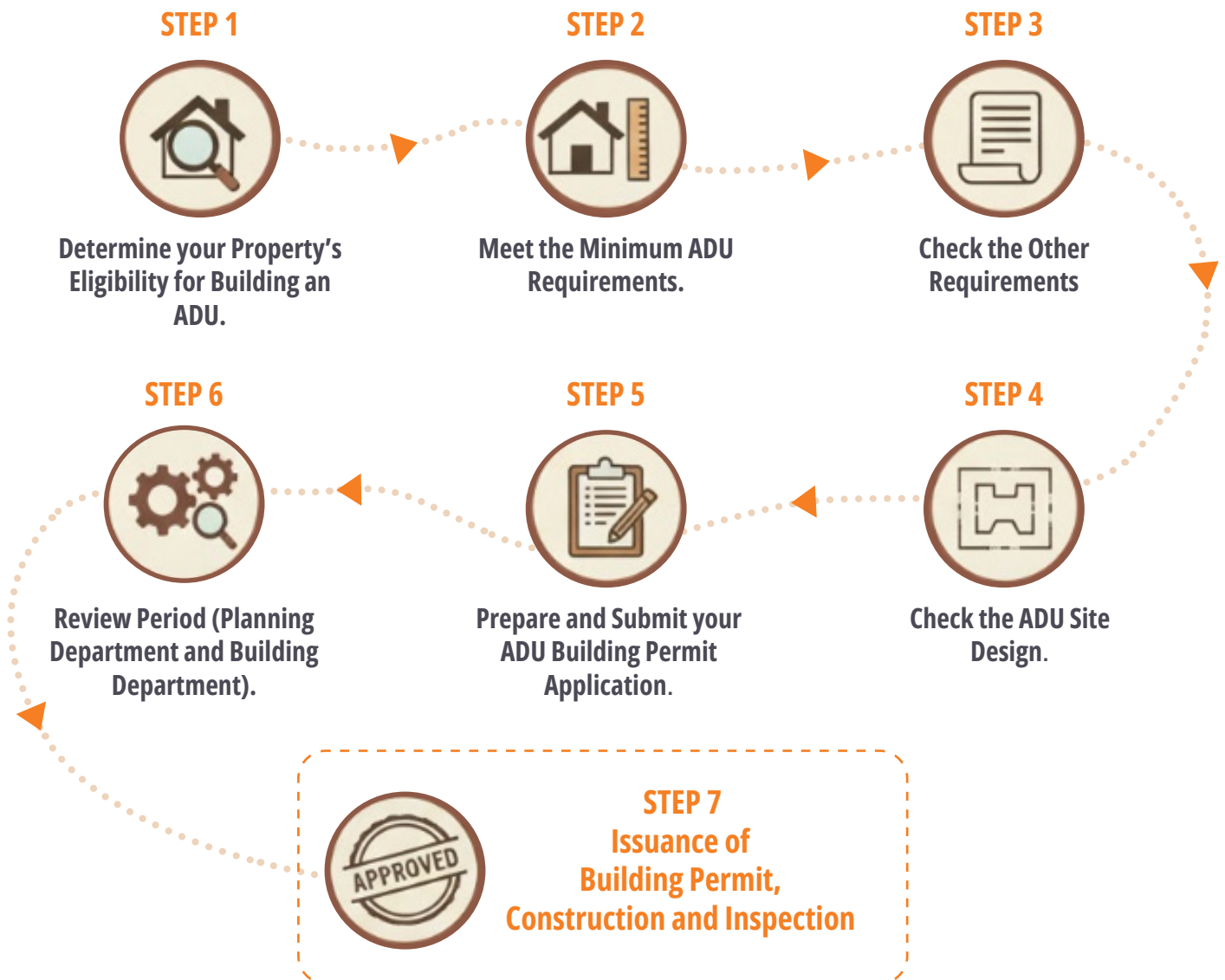
Read more about  
Permit-Ready ADU  
Plans on Page 20





# 4. ADU REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

## Application Process



## BEFORE YOU APPLY



Before preparing and submitting your ADU building permit application, it's important to research your property to confirm that building an ADU is feasible. Start by verifying that your property is zoned for residential or mixed-use or contains either an existing or proposed single-family residence or multi-family development. Additionally, review the County's Minimum ADU Requirements to make sure your site complies with all necessary criteria, failure to meet any of these requirements may disqualify the property from building an ADU.

**If you have any questions, contact the Inyo County Planning Department at (760) 878-0263 or [inyoplanning@inyocounty.us](mailto:inyoplanning@inyocounty.us) for assistance and official determination.**

## Application Submittal

### i. Application Process

There are no special planning permits required for ADUs. Simply apply for a building permit with the Department of Building and Safety at 377 W. Line Street, Bishop or online at: [County Building Permit Application](#).

### ii. Fees and Additional Requirements

#### Application and Permit Fees

Refer to the Inyo County Building and Safety Department at 377 W. Line Street, Bishop or (760) 873-7857 for assistance and official determination.

## Plan Check and Review

Once you submit your ADU building permit, the Department of Building and Safety will review your plans to ensure they comply with all applicable development standards and code requirements. During this process, the Building Official may request additional information to complete a thorough and accurate review.

## Permitting and Construction

Before your building permit can be issued, you must complete the following steps:

- **New Address Verification:** Submit the required application and fee to the Planning Department to establish a separate address for the ADU/ JADU.

## QUESTIONS ?



If you have any questions about the review process, contact **Department of Building and Safety at (760) 873-7857 for assistance and official determination.**



# 5. PERMIT-READY ADU PROGRAM

The Inyo County's Permit-Ready ADU Program ("Program") is an optional and voluntary program that provides permit-ready plan sets for detached ADUs at no cost to the participant, helping to reduce the design costs and overall time it takes to receive building permit approval.

## Plan Overview

To help simplify the design and permitting process, Inyo County offers "Permit-Ready" ADU plans available to the public at no cost. The plans include twelve plan sets ranging from a 311 square foot studio to a 1,200 square foot 2-bedroom home. Each layout is offered in three architectural styles: Traditional, Ranch and Spanish. Using a "Permit-Ready" plan can significantly streamline the permitting process while ensuring quality design and construction.

## How it Works



### 1 | CHOOSE YOUR ADU LAYOUT & STYLE

The Program offers free permit-ready plan sets for new construction, detached ADUs in twelve plan sets with a choice between three design styles. The floor plans and elevations are shown in the ["Permit-Ready" ADU and Single-Family Home Designs](#). Review your options and select a layout and style that fits your property. Pay attention to minimum requirements (page 10) and any property constraints (page 14). Contact the Planning Department at (760) 878-0263 or [inyoplanning@inyocounty.us](mailto:inyoplanning@inyocounty.us) for further assistance.





## 2 | PREPARE YOUR ADU APPLICATION PACKAGE

Refer to the Application Process, Submittal Requirements, and Fees and Additional Requirements outlined on page 16. Program components and the responsibility of the property owner/applicant are summarized as follows. Contact the Inyo County Planning Department at (760) 878-0263 or [inyoplanning@inyocounty.us](mailto:inyoplanning@inyocounty.us) for assistance and official determination.

Plans/Reports Offered	Responsibility of Property Owner/Applicant
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Floor/ Roof Plans <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elevations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building Sections <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wall and Roof Finishes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEP Plans <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Door and Window Schedules <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Foundation and Framing Plans <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structural Details <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Energy Calculations ( For Bishop and Death Valley)	<input type="checkbox"/> Building Permit Application <input type="checkbox"/> Site Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Building Permit Fees <input type="checkbox"/> Other Miscellaneous Reports, Documents, and Fees (if required) <input type="checkbox"/> Impact Fees (if required) <input type="checkbox"/> New Address Verification

Note: All floor/roof plans, elevations, building sections, foundation, and framing plans are available in Ranch, Spanish, or Traditional styles.

### BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM

- **Skip the design costs** - No need to hire an architect or design professional. Save costs on architectural/ design services, structural engineering services, plan review fees.
- **Enjoy a streamlined permitting process** - Plans are already approved.
- **Don't sweat the details** - Plans already meet the zoning and building code requirements.

### Required Applications/Forms

- Building Permit Application Form
- Site Plan
- Building Permit Fees
- New Address Verification

Available Plans

Studio Plan A	Studio Plan B
1 Bedroom A	1 Bedroom B
2 Bedroom A	2 Bedroom B
Over 1-Car Garage A	Over 1-Car Garage B
Over 2-Car Garage A	Over 2-Car Garage B



**Studio Plan A**  
393 Sq Ft



**Studio Plan B**  
311 Sq Ft



**1 Bedroom A**  
586 Sq Ft



**1 Bedroom B**  
558 Sq Ft



**2 Bedroom A**  
779 Sq Ft



**2 Bedroom B**  
819 Sq Ft



**Over 1-Car  
Garage A**  
519 Sq Ft



**Over 1-Car  
Garage B**  
519 Sq Ft



**Over 2-Car Garage A**  
753 Sq Ft

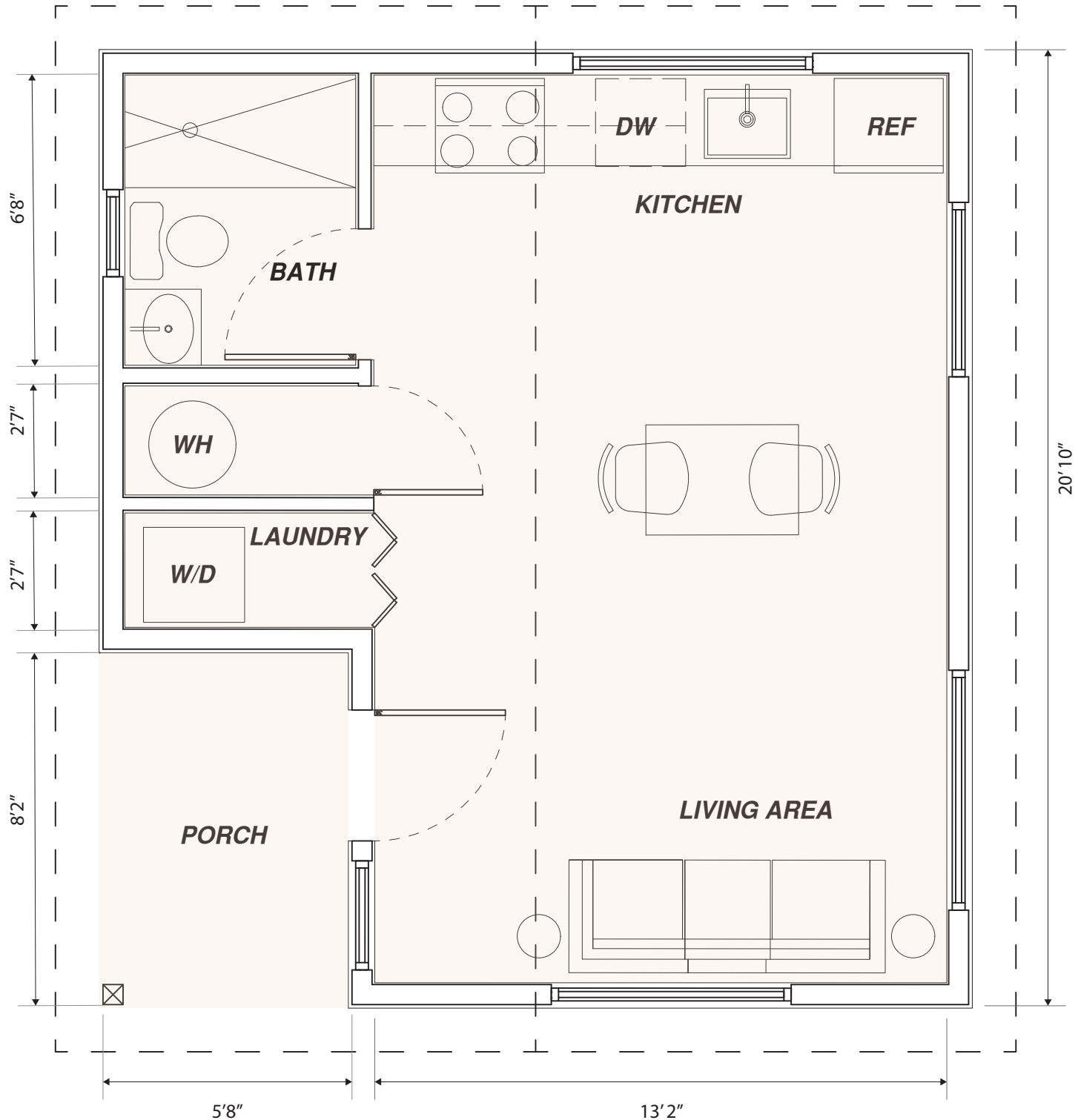


**Over 2-Car Garage B**  
624 Sq Ft



## Studio Plan A

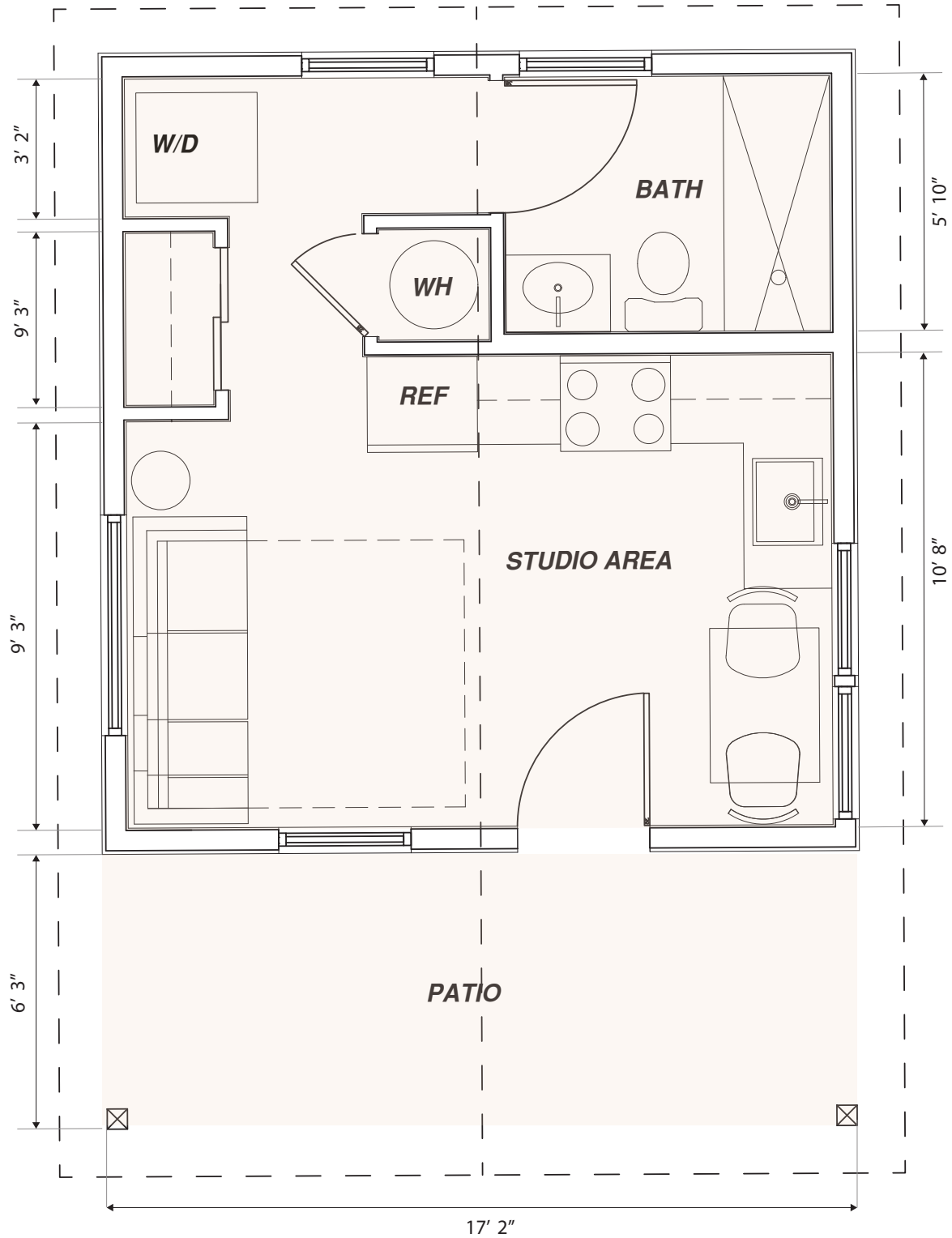
Area: 393 Sq Ft





## Studio Plan B

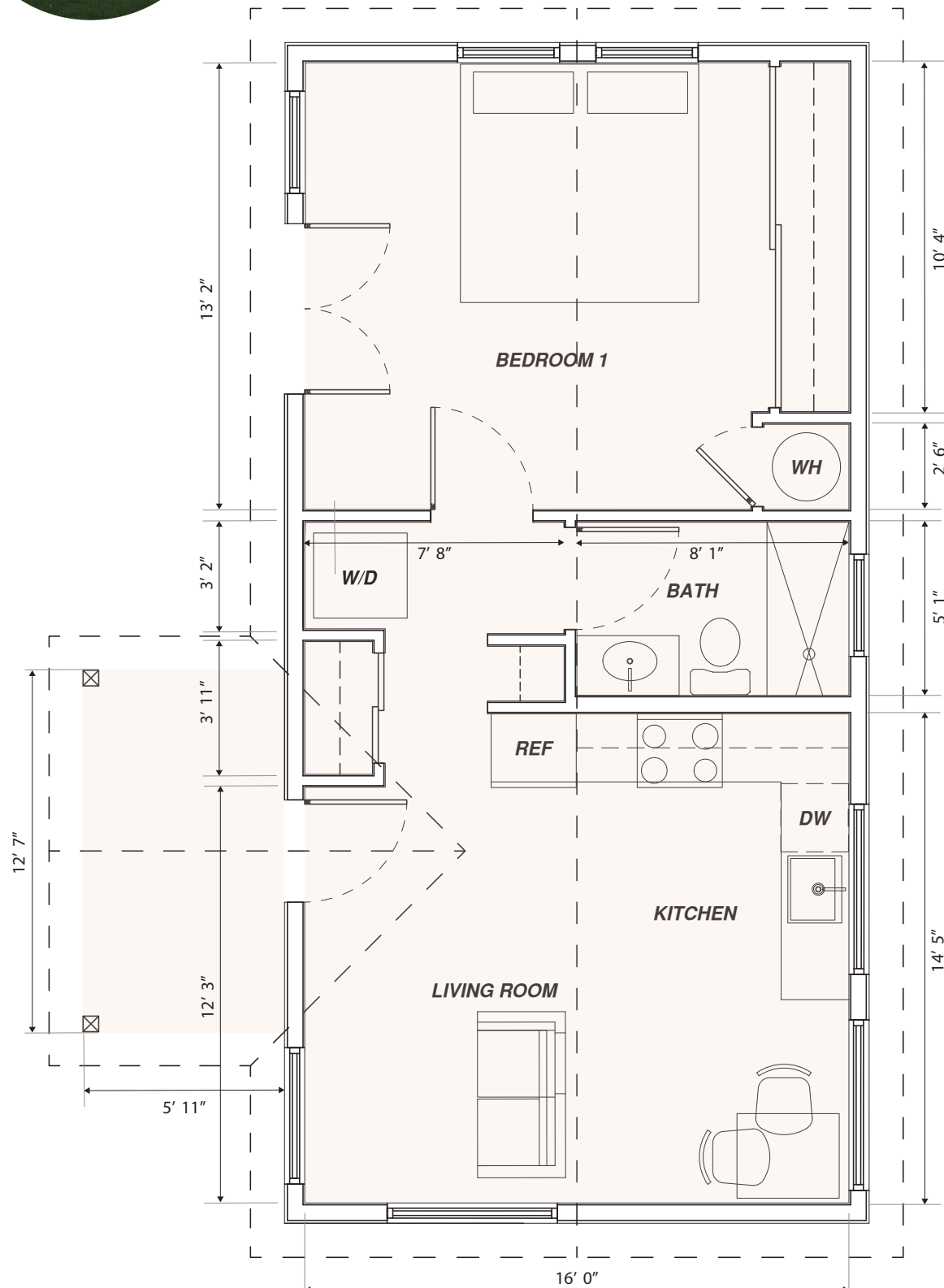
Area: 311 Sq Ft





# 1 Bedroom A

Area: 586 Sq Ft

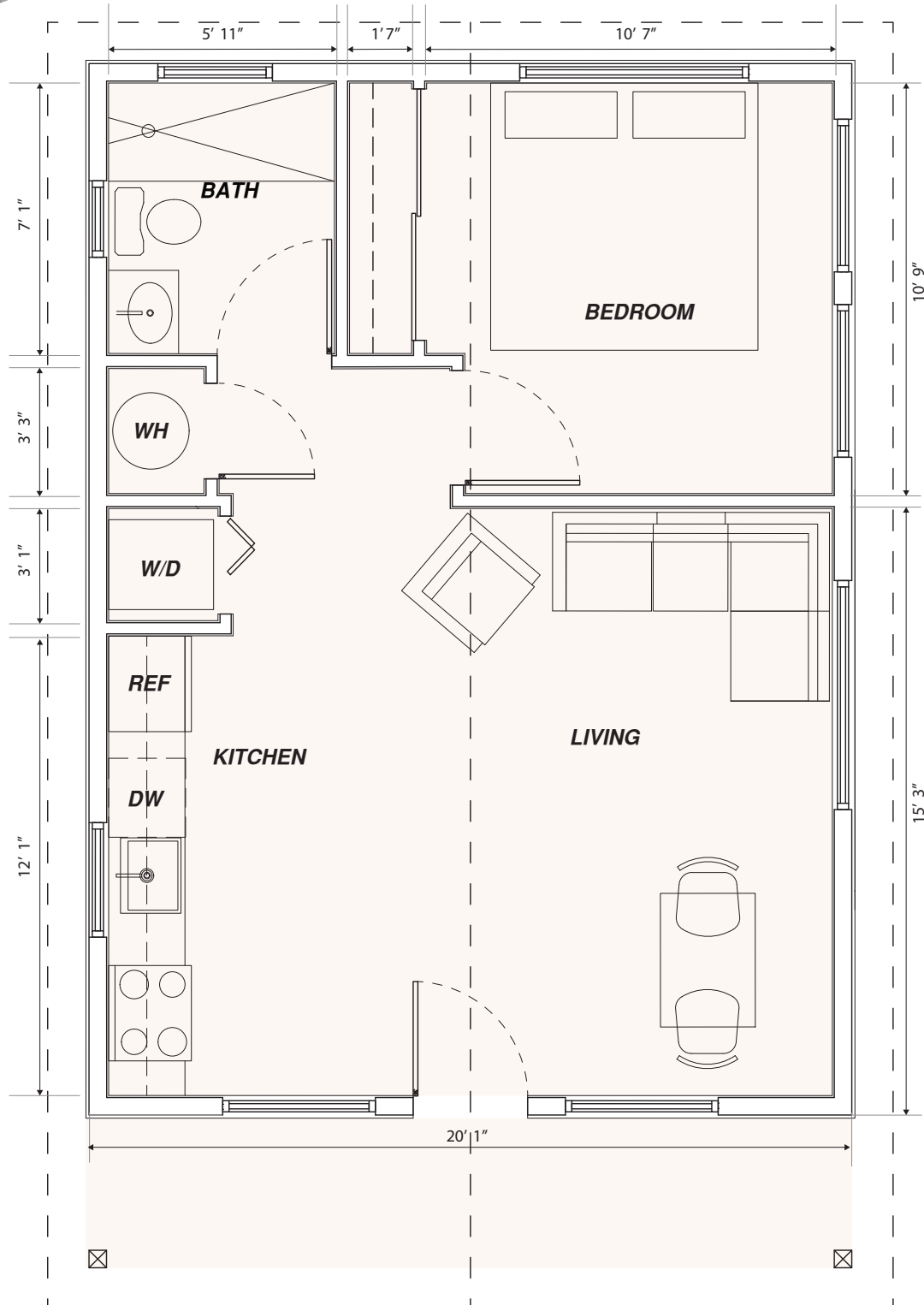






## 1 Bedroom B

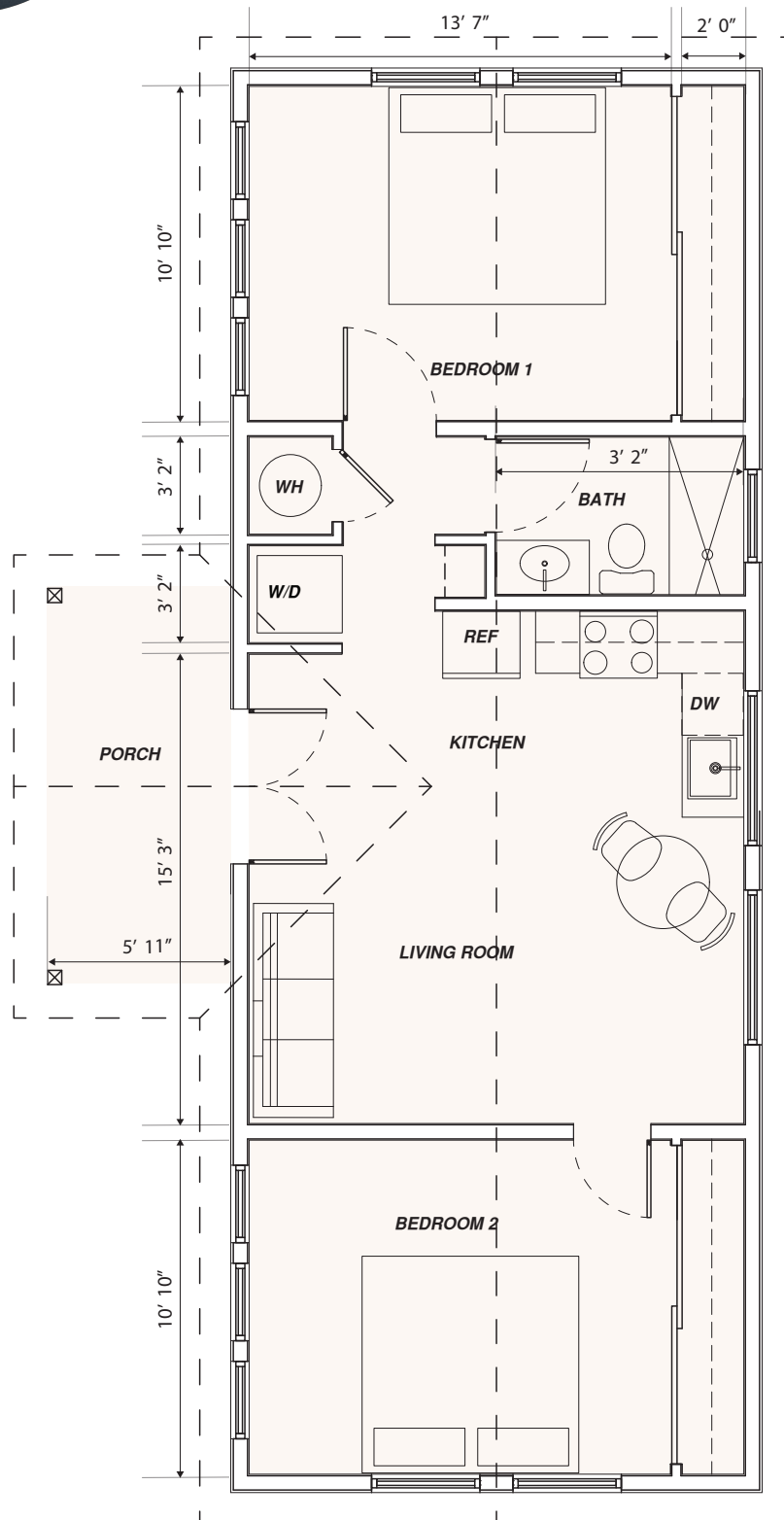
Area: 558 Sq Ft





## 2 Bedroom A

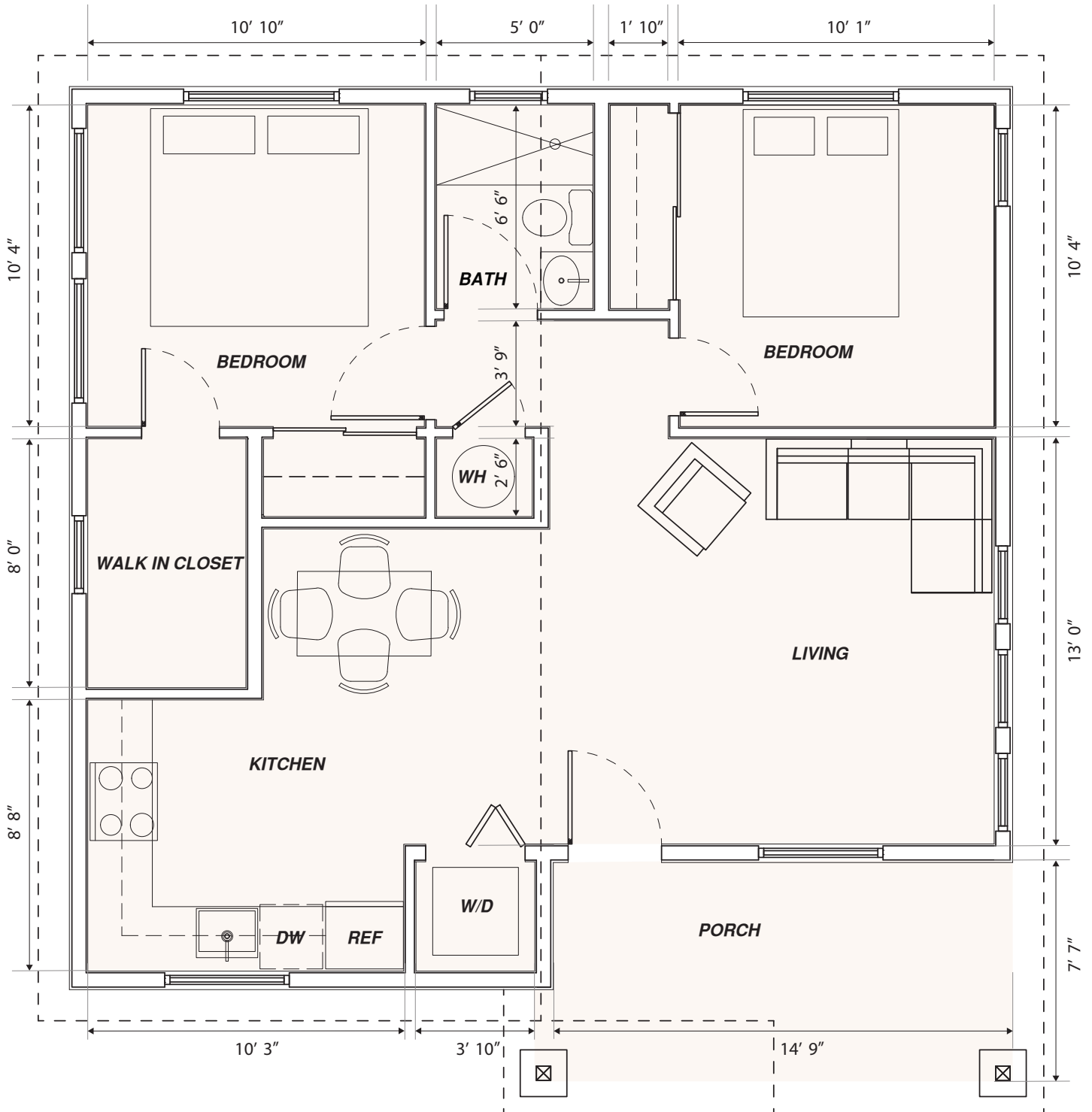
Area: 779 Sq Ft





## 2 Bedroom B

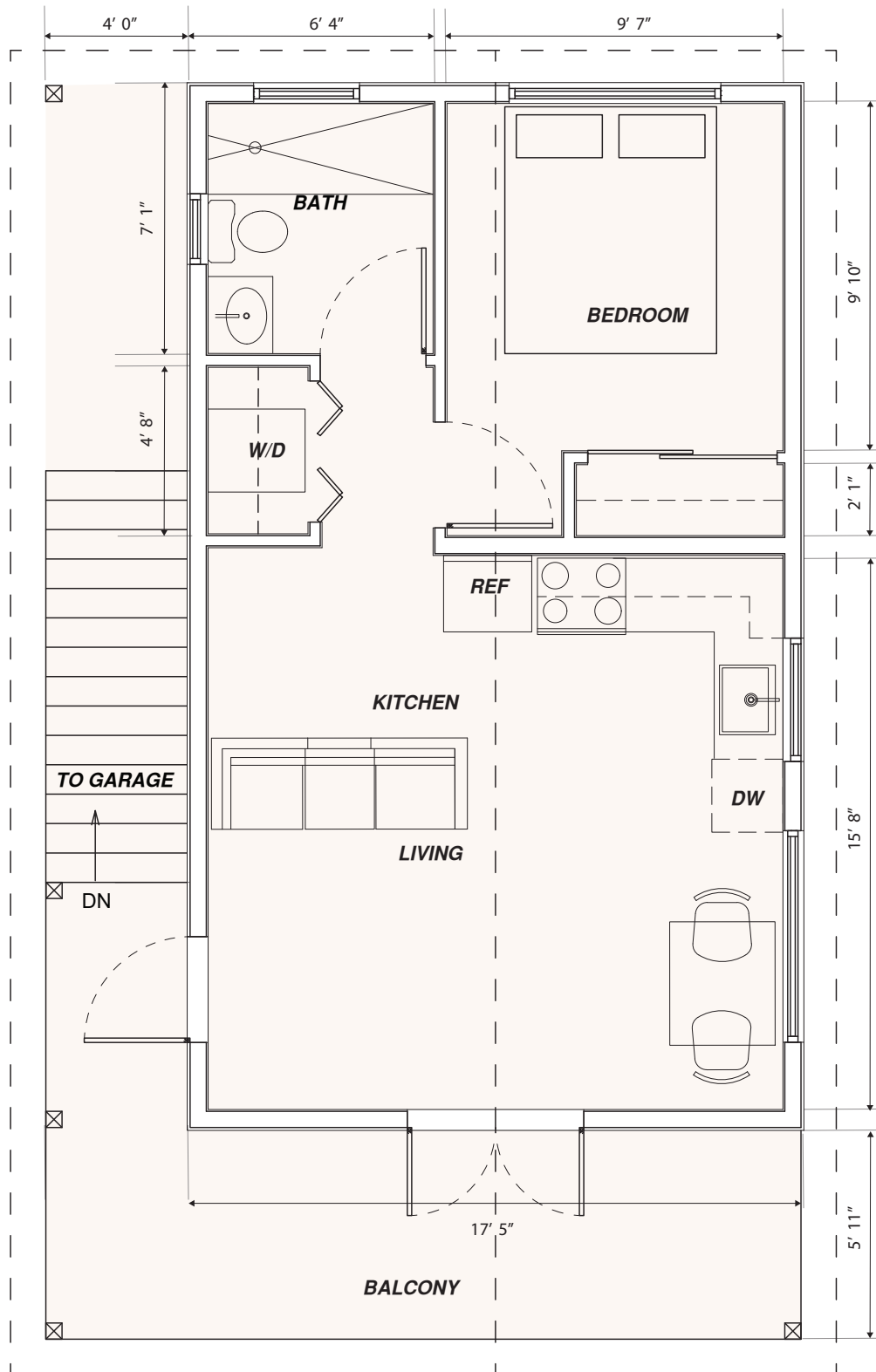
Area: 819 Sq Ft





## Over 1-Car Garage A

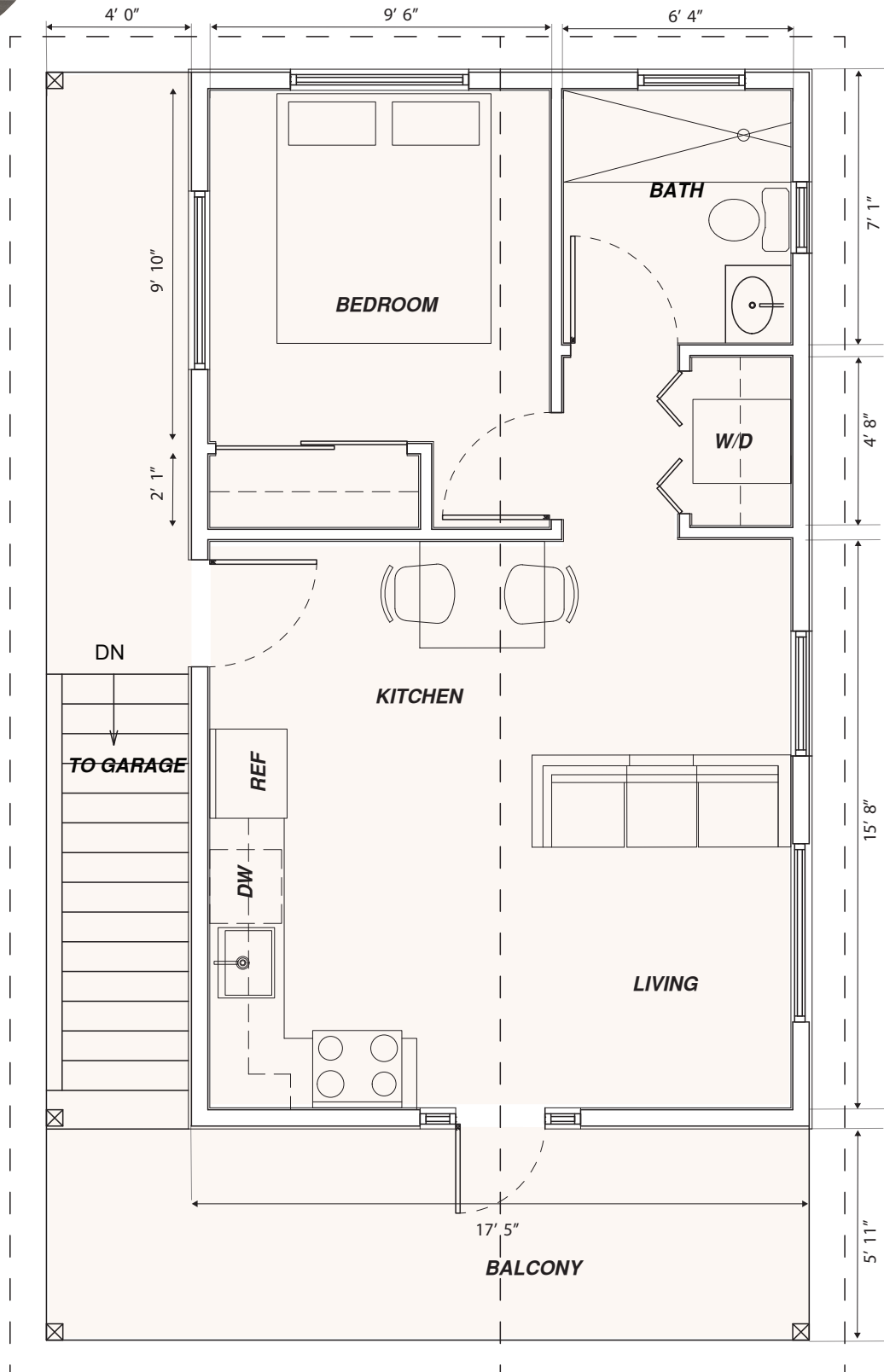
Area: 519 Sq Ft





## Over 1-Car Garage B

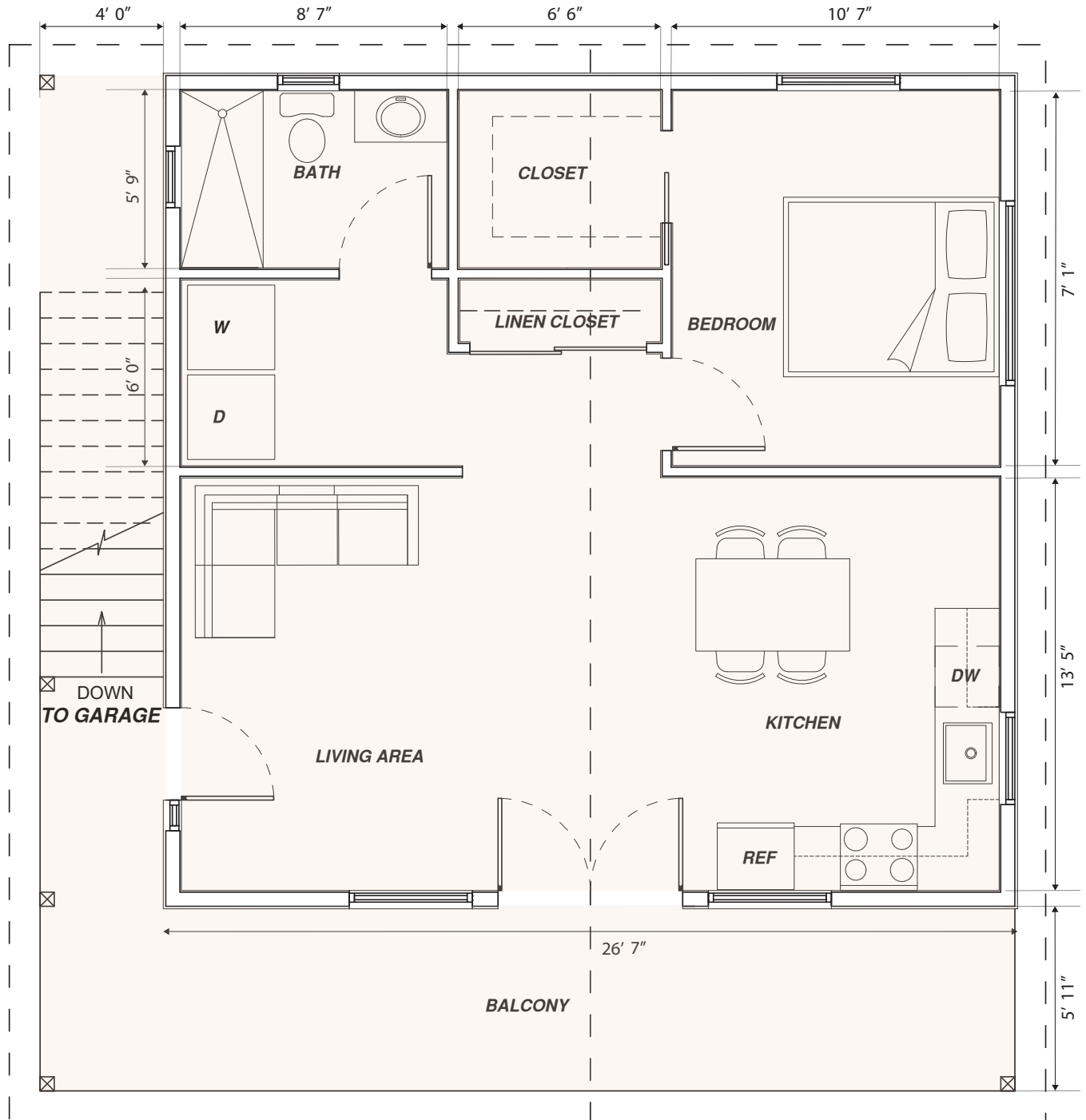
Area: 519 Sq Ft





## Over 2-Car Garage A

Area: 753 Sq Ft

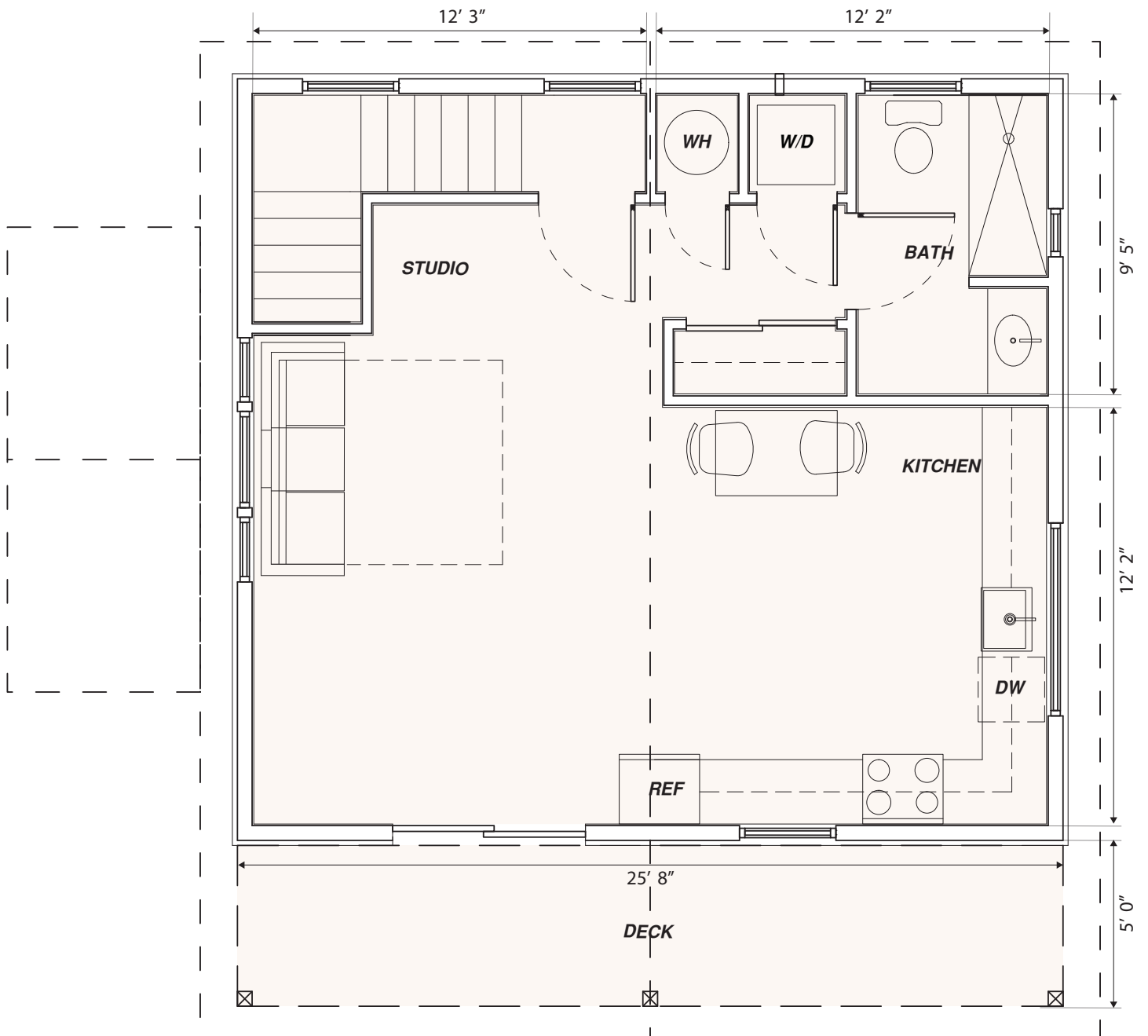






## Over 2-Car Garage B

Area: 624 Sq Ft





# 6. FUNDING AND RESOURCES

## 1. Funding Opportunities

### **CalHFA ADU Grant Program**

The CalHFA ADU Grant Program offers eligible homeowners up to \$40,000 in grant funding to reimburse pre-development and non-recurring closing costs associated with building an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). Covered expenses include site preparation, architectural and engineering designs, permit fees, soil tests, impact fees, property surveys, and energy efficiency reports.

To qualify, applicants must own and occupy the property where the ADU will be constructed and meet low- or moderate-income thresholds set by CalHFA. Homeowners must apply through a CalHFA-approved lender for an ADU construction loan and complete the required grant application forms to participate in the program.



[ADU for Lenders](#) | [ADU Grant](#) | [CalHFA](#)

## 2. Local Resources

[Inyo County ADU Webpage](#)

### **ADU Ordinance**

Inyo County updated its ADU Ordinance in 2021, to accurately reflect State ADU regulations, by incorporating State regulations by reference: Title 18, Chapter 18.78, Section 18.78.340 – Accessory Dwelling Units in the Inyo County Zoning Ordinance. Access the full [Zoning Ordinance online](#).

### **Zoning Map**

Inyo County's Zoning Map is available as an [Interactive Mapping Application](#).



## Permit Ready ADU Documents

### [“Permit-ready” ADU Building Plan Sets](#)

## Application Documents and Materials

All building-related documents and materials are available for download on the Inyo County Building and Safety Applications Webpage.

[Building and Safety | Inyo County California](#)

## 3. Contacts



**Inyo County Planning Department:**  
(760) 878-0263 or  
168 N. Edwards Street – Annex Building  
Independence, CA 93526



**Inyo County Building and Safety Department:**  
(760) 873-7857 or  
377 W. Line Street,  
Bishop, CA 93514

## 4. Further Reading

### HCD ADU Handbook: [2025 ADU Handbook](#)

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) ADU Handbook is a concise state-guide outlining how accessory dwelling units and junior ADUs can be added under California law, covering key topics like zoning, size, setbacks, and permitting.





Inyo County  
168 N. Edwards St.  
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