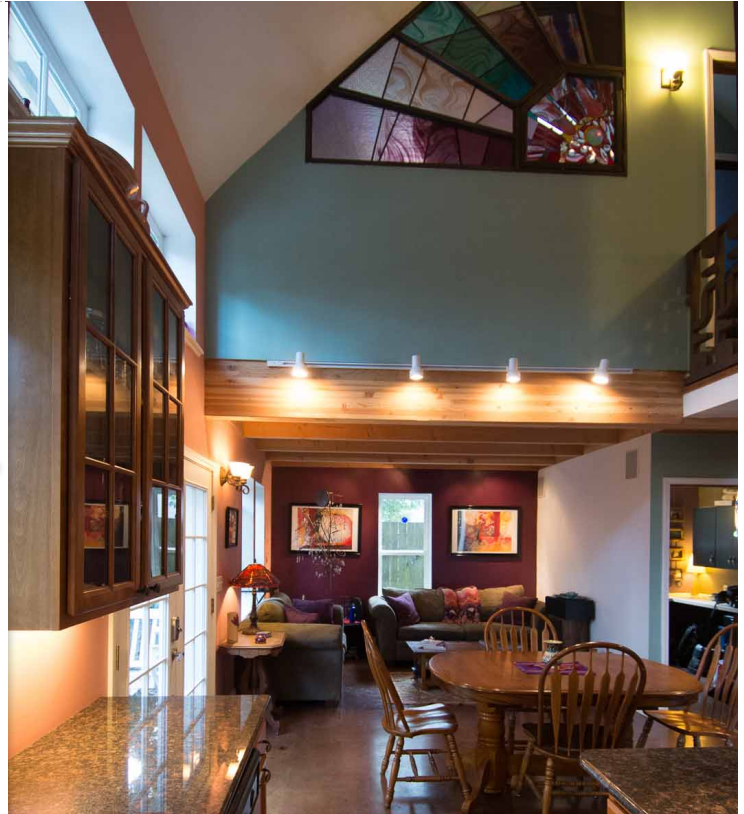


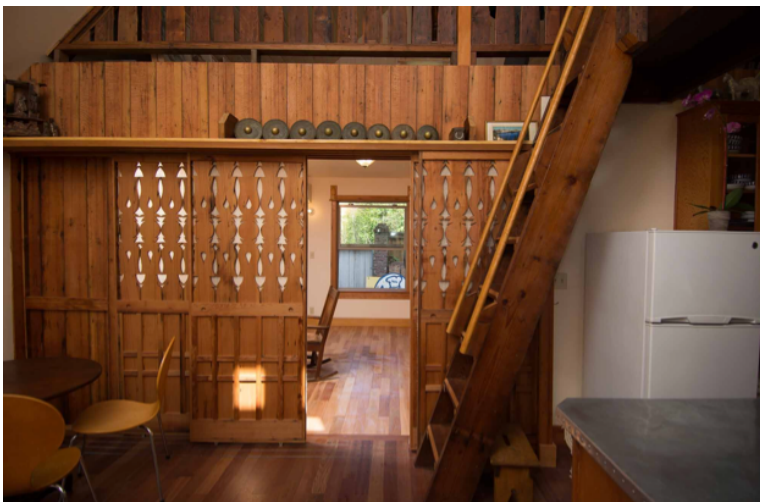
10 ADU Design Principles



A resource from BuildingAnADU.com

Design matters

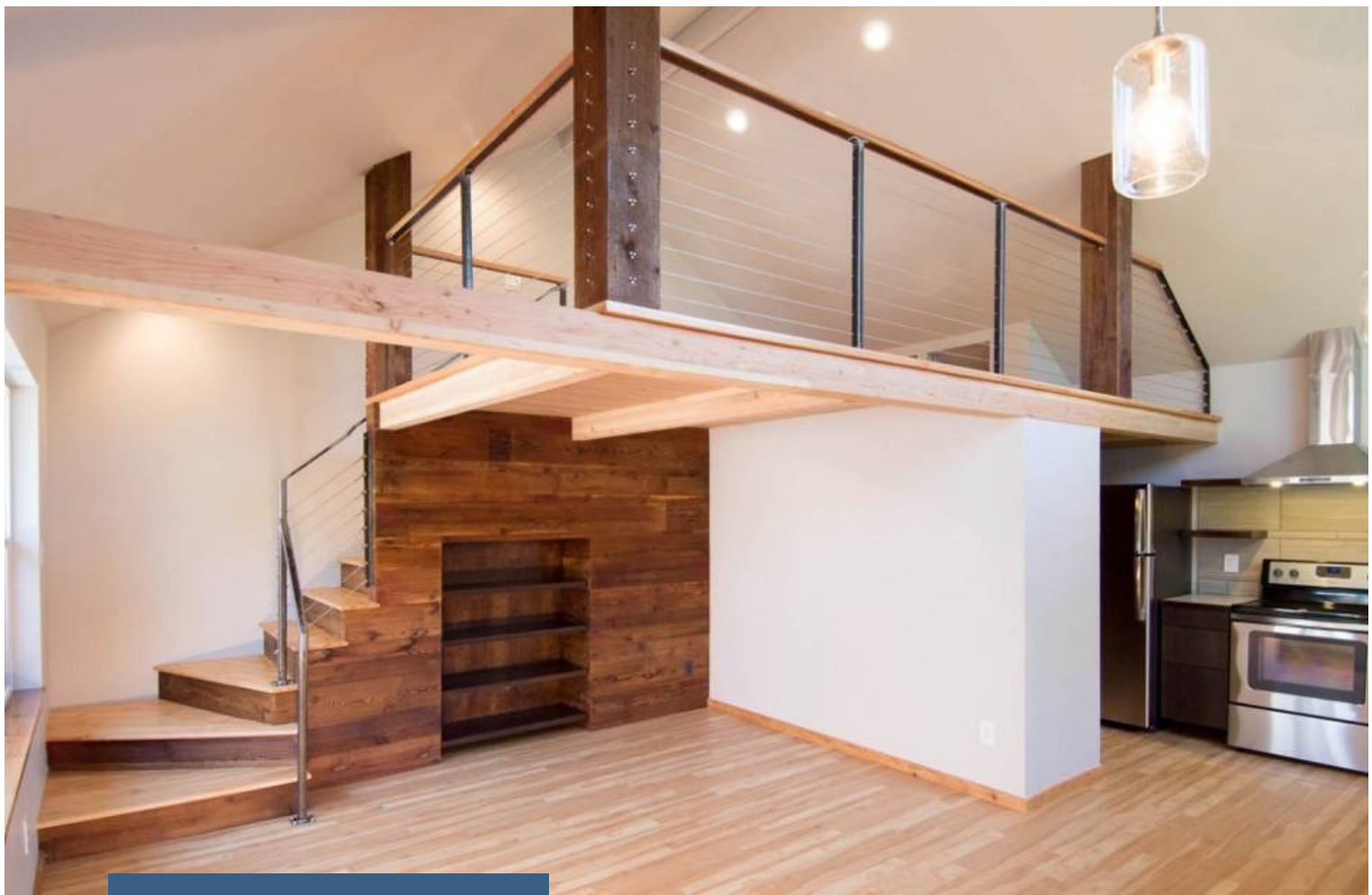
As is the case with so many things in life, it all comes down to design. And when it comes to small living spaces, design is that much more important, because you want to pack comfort and functionality into a compressed space. Thankfully, there are some tried and true design principles to help you. In the pages that follow, you'll find ten of them.



10 Design Principles

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Design Principle #1: Tall Ceilings

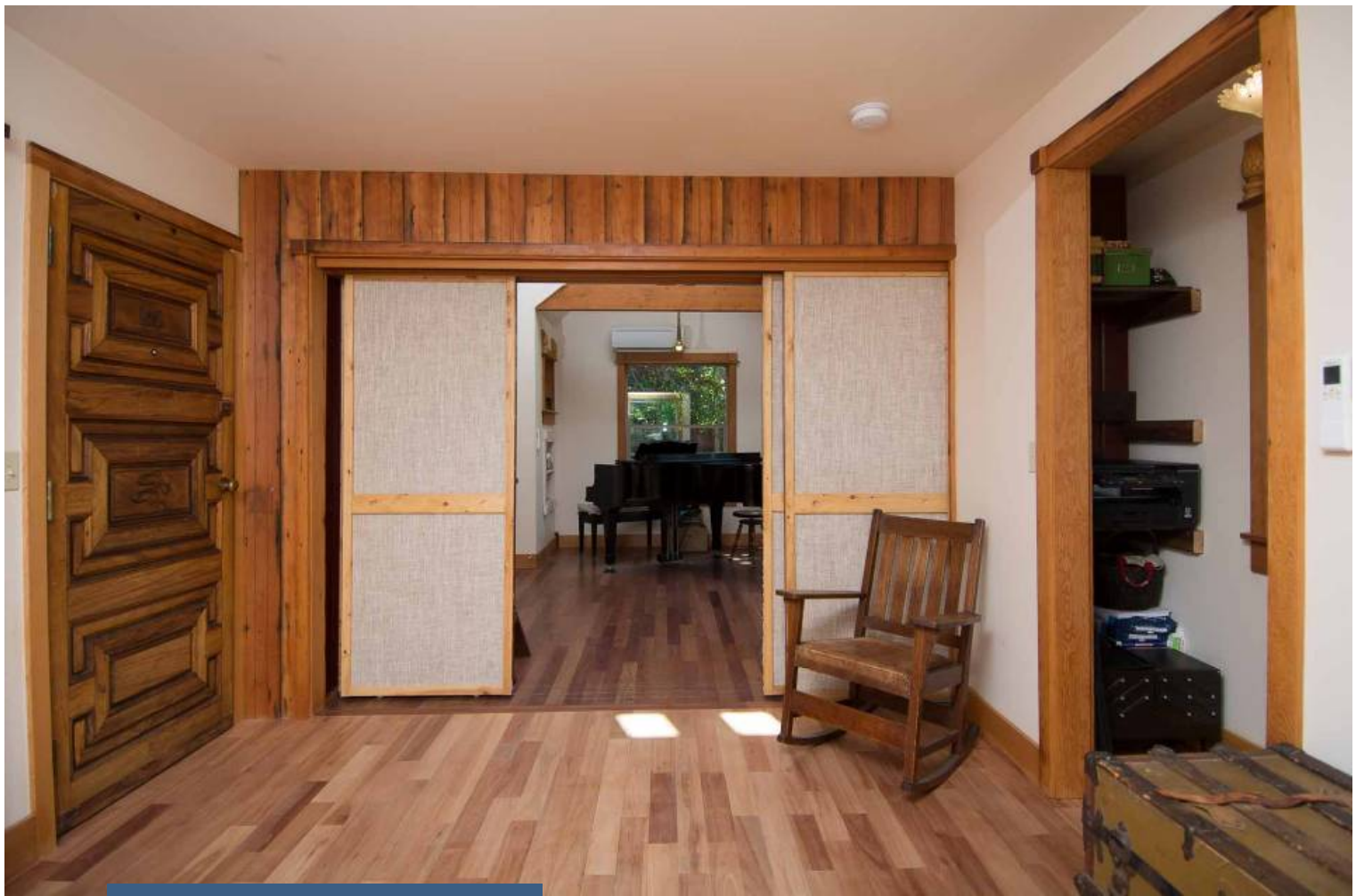
Having headspace puts you in a better headspace

The higher the ceilings, the bigger a space feels. This is especially true in smaller spaces. One particularly great design touch is creating areas where you can look all the way up to the ceiling of a second story from the first floor. This makes structures feel much bigger than they are.

Design Principle #1: Tall Ceilings

Additional Examples





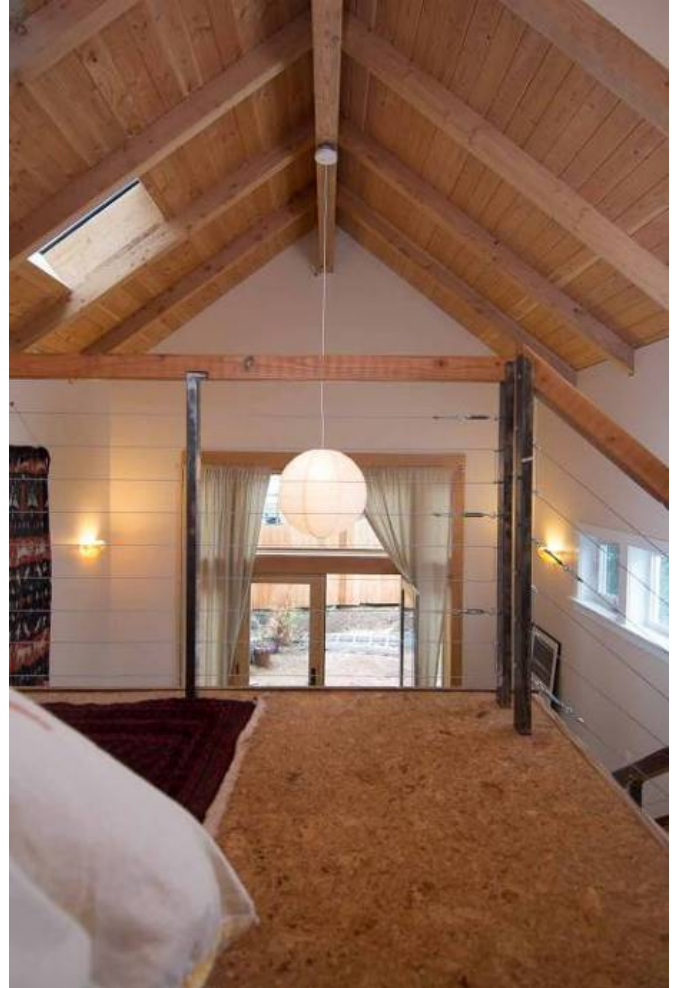
Design Principle #2: Long Site Lines

The further you can see, the better

Creating long site lines from one corner of the space to another—and ideally out through a window—gives the sensation of being in a large space. It makes a living space feel less cramped and claustrophobic. Establishing where you'll place windows strategically is key to creating long site lines.

Design Principle #2: Long Site Lines

Additional Examples





**Design Principle
#3:
Long-Term
Storage**

You need space for your possessions

Both the main house and ADU occupants will need long-term storage. If the main house has a basement, it can play a vital role for both units. If the basement or garage is being turned into the ADU—or the property doesn't have dedicated long-term storage space—an exterior storage shed may be a useful addition to the property for storage needs for both housing units.

Design Principle #3: Long-Term Storage

Additional Examples





**Design Principle
#4:
Open Doors
Facing a Yard**

This is your connection to the great outdoors.

A detached ADU is likely to be adjacent to a rear yard or garden. It is best to use full-light French doors, or sliding glass doors, to create an intimate connection to the yard from the ADU great room. This will make the ADU great room feel larger and will hopefully establish a visual connection with greenery and the surrounding landscape. Avoiding steps up or down from the building interior to the exterior can help to facilitate a more functional connection with the outdoors.

Design Principle #4: Open Doors Additional Examples





Design Principle #5: Great Rooms

The sum of your kitchen, living and dining room is greater than its parts.

When limited to a small space, it is critical to spatially join these three rooms to create a greater psychological sense of space, as well to leverage additional functionality by overlapping them. However, in general, these spaces should be separated visually by varied wall colors, ceiling and floor heights, lighting, textures, and furniture. Otherwise, the great room feel monotonous or unimaginative.

Design Principle #5: Great Rooms

Additional Examples





Design Principle #6: Stacking Functions

With fewer square feet, you need to pack more functionality into the space.

Small homes should attempt to layer or stack functionality of spaces. This design principle is commonly used in the design of tiny houses on wheels and in boat design. Examples of this type of design efficiency may be an office that easily doubles as a guest room or placing certain large pieces of furniture in the great room on caster wheels to more easily reconfigure a space for different purposes.

Design Principle #6: Stacking Functions

Additional Examples





Design Principle #7: Utilization of Views

Views are not created equal.

Most new homes will have views from the inside to the outside that are worth enhancing, and other views that are best to obscure. Place windows to take advantage of the best available views. If there is a pleasant canopy view, or a great urban streetscape, consider how to orient the window and glazing to take advantage of these features. Also consider placing windows to block poor views. For example, a clerestory window may let in natural light, give a view of a tree canopy, and yet may entirely block out the view of an unsightly dilapidated structure next door.

Design Principle #7: Utilization of Views

Additional Examples





Design Principle #8: Acoustic Privacy

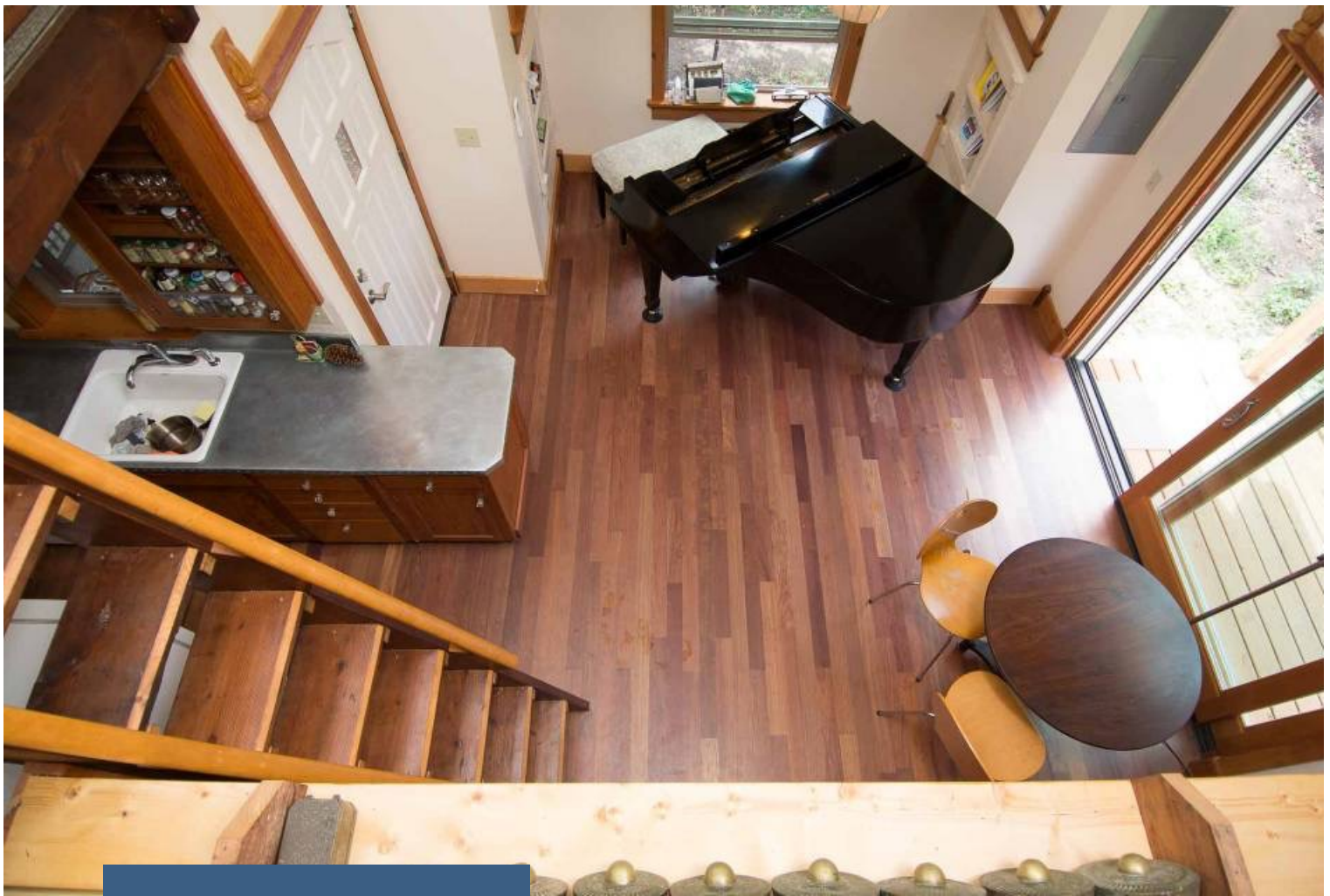
We all need peace and quiet.

If the ADU is built for two full-time occupants, sound privacy will be an issue. With no walls to obstruct its path, sound will move freely from the kitchen and living room into the bedroom. There is a design tension at play here, because open, lofted designs look wonderful and make small spaces feel large, but the lack of sound privacy resulting from an open floor plan can be cognitively and emotionally problematic for two-person households. Physical barriers with insulation and mass is how to best attenuate sound. Utilizing interior windows helps too.

Design Principle #8: Acoustic Privacy

Additional Examples





Design Principle #9: Staircase Alternatives

Staircases are space eaters.

Alternating tread stairs (aka Jefferson stairs) and ladders are steeper and a more space-efficient alternative to stairways. There are many, beautiful alternating tread stair images available as inspiration on the web. These alternatives are not code-compliant so they can't be used to access habitable space, but they can be used to access storage lofts or attics. In some cases, a spiral staircase can help create a code-compliant stairway where a linear or winder stairway will not fit.

Design Principle #9: Staircase Alternatives

Additional Examples





Design Principle #10: Pocket Doors

Pocket doors are the ultimate space saver.

Pocket doors are a the perfect solution for ADU bathrooms. Pocket doors and barn doors can also be used for closets and bedrooms in some situations. They often add character to an ADU since they are less common than hinged doors. And they save door swing space, making it less awkward to open and close the bathroom door, or allowing space in the adjacent room/hallway (where the door would normally swing when open) to be utilized for other purposes.

Design Principle #10: Pocket Doors

Additional Examples



Homeowners should consider how to apply these concepts in their ADUs. This is not intended to be an exhaustive depiction of all residential design best practices. ADU designers should consider incorporating these concepts along with other principles that they would normally use in their residential design practice.

There are now hundreds of books and websites about small space design, the most popular of which are a series of books authored by Sarah Susanka. You can find some of these design ideas represented in coffee-table style books and discussed in greater detail in other design-focused literature. The ADU design principles in this eBook have been curated by visiting hundreds of ADUs and well-designed small houses over the years, speaking with designers who focus on ADUs, and consuming a host of small space design literature.

For more information about ADUs, visit BuildingAnADU.com