



NEW HAMPSHIRE HOMEOWNERS

# ADU SUCCESS STORIES

# SUCCESS STORIES

## ADU SUCCESS STORIES ACROSS NEW HAMPSHIRE

Every ADU tells a story about the people who live in them, their families, and how they've adapted their homes to meet their needs.

The following stories reflect the diversity of communities, housing types, and motivations behind building an ADU. These New Hampshire homeowners demonstrate that ADUs aren't just about adding square footage, they're about expanding possibilities for how we live, care, and plan for the future.

Each story shows how why homeowners chose to build, how they navigated design and financing, and what they learned as they turned their ADU dream into reality.

As you read, notice how homeowners balanced cost, creativity, and circumstance. Each found solutions to common challenges, including tight budgets, accessibility needs, sustainability goals, and changing families.

By the end of this section, you'll be better equipped to imagine what might be possible on your own property, informed by the experiences of Granite States who have taken the leap.



### A CONNECTED FAMILY IN FREEDOM:

Melissa's mother, Sally, had been living alone, and the isolation was beginning to take its toll. After building an ADU in the backyard, Sally now enjoys visits nearly every day.

### ENERGY EFFICIENT D-I-Y ADU IN EXETER:

Lindsay and Malcolm hand-built their ADU as a source of income. Using sustainable and reclaimed materials, they created an energy-efficient, eco-friendly space worthy of a magazine cover.

### A GARAGE CONVERSION IN NASHUA:

Michael and Cindy faced difficult choices while caring for Cindy's elderly parents. Converting their garage into an ADU became an unexpected way to improve quality of life.



**DOWNSIZING DURING COVID IN NEW HAMPTON:**

When Sue and Tom were thinking about downsizing, their children returned home. Building an ADU helped them discover the benefits of living together.

**A FACTORY BUILT ADU IN BARRINGTON:**

When Cindy's son was ready to buy his first home, few options were available. They found a creative solution by placing a factory-built ADU in Cindy's backyard.

**AN ACCESSIBLE ADU IN WINDHAM:**

Because of vision challenges, Mark's mother, Mary, had never had a space of her own. An addition to the family home now gives her the independence she wanted.

# ENERGY EFFICIENT DIY ADU

📍 EXETER, NH

When Lindsay and Malcolm purchased a home in Exeter in 2021, they knew they wanted to make the fixer-upper their own.

As they started renovating, they realized their space was too cramped for their vision. “When we realized what we wanted to build was an ADU, we thought that we might as well start fresh.” They decided to build a large, detached garage with a second-story loft ADU above it.

*Sustainability, privacy, and aesthetics were key.*

They used reclaimed rigid insulation, installed an advanced energy recovery ventilator (ERV), and committed to an all-electric design for appliances and heating. “It is incredibly efficient, and most of the materials are sourced from local suppliers,” Malcolm said. They drew inspiration from historic New England farmhouses and used white linseed oil paint on the siding.

Over four years, the couple designed, built, and finished the ADU themselves. They did everything except pouring the concrete foundation and installing drywall. “I have videos of myself in a harness putting shingles on the roof,” Lindsay said. “It was a real adventure, but it was worth it.”



## A SPACE FIT FOR MAGAZINE COVERS

The result is a stunning one-bedroom unit tucked above the garage, blending seamlessly with the main home and the surrounding neighborhood.

The couple started reviewing tenant applications shortly before the ADU was done, and their tenant moved in as soon as the space was ready. "It was a great experience. We barely cross paths, but when we do, it is always friendly." To increase privacy, they installed skylights instead of windows on the side of the ADU that faces the main house.

*"We wanted to make sure our tenant has the privacy they need while maintaining a bright, open feel in the ADU."*

The ADU now provides a reliable source of income, while the expanded garage space serves as a workshop as they continue renovating their primary home.



Bright & Simple Materials Work Together To Pull a Focus on the Island

## ADU QUICK FACTS

- Type: New Construction ADU/Garage
- Size: 750sf + 750sf Garage Below
- Cost: \$250,000 to \$275,000
- Income: \$1,200-\$1,600/Month
- Approval: Special Exception
- Features: Do-It-Yourself Build & High-efficiency Construction



## LINDSAY & MALCOLM'S ADVICE

*"Keep it simple, and focus on your values. If you are doing it yourself, know that it takes time. It's worth it!"*

# Downsizing During COVID

## 📍 NEW HAMPTON, NH

Sue and Tom had lived in their rural New Hampton home for over 15 years. Their children had grown and moved out, the house felt quiet, and they wanted to downsize.

Then, everything changed when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020. Their adult children and grandchildren returned home. The once-quiet house was suddenly full again. Six people across three generations shared one kitchen. Daily life was crowded and complicated.

Sue and Tom wanted something smaller and more manageable for retirement, but they didn't want to leave their beloved 28-acre property. It wasn't until everyone was back home that they realized an ADU could offer the balance they were looking for. They could have togetherness and autonomy while keeping their property in the family.



## WHEN PLANNING BEGAN

Sue and Tom kept accessibility and long-term functionality in mind. They found themselves navigating town regulations and the quirks of building an attached ADU on a log home. Aging in place was a top consideration, so they prioritized one-level living, wide doorways, and a layout that supports mobility.

"It's not just about getting older, it's about making a space that can adapt if anything happens. We didn't want to wait for a crisis."

Their contractor built the shell quickly – just a few months from foundation to weather-tight frame. From there, the couple took on the rest themselves. They worked evenings and weekends, finishing the interior piece by piece. "You pay in either time or money," Sue said. "We chose time."

Their creativity showed up in clever design choices: a dual-access bathroom that lets the toilet and shower be used separately, a cozy wood stove, and a log wall from the original exterior. The result is a warm, functional home that feels thoughtful and comfortable.

Since moving into the ADU, the couple has found the rhythm of multigenerational living. They maintain privacy but benefit from shared responsibilities, financial relief, and the joy of having family close. Their adult sons and grandchildren live just steps away from them in the main house.

Sue and Tom envision using their ADU as a home base while traveling during retirement, and possibly as a future living space for their grandchildren. They've even planted an orchard of peaches, apples, pears with the next generation in mind. "We're building something sustainable for our family," they said. "Not just for the present, but for the future."



## SUE'S ADVICE

*"Build for functionality over time, not just for now."*



## ADU QUICK FACTS

- Type: One-Story Addition
- Size: 800sf
- Cost: \$115,000
- Approval: Special Exception
- Features: Age-in-Place Design

## WHY AN ADU?

Downsizing into an ADU attached to the home allowed this family to live together and build a more resilient family housing situation for everyone.

# AN ACCESSIBLE ADU

📍 WINDHAM, NH

When Jess and Mark bought their house in 2015, it was just the right size for their family. They could support Mark's legally blind mother, Mary, while raising their children.

Mary loved being close to her grandchildren, and the family cherished the joy of multigenerational living. But over time, space grew tight. Sharing one bathroom with five people and cooking elbow-to-elbow in the kitchen made it hard to balance privacy and connection.

*"At first, we all fit, but as the kids got bigger, the house didn't."*

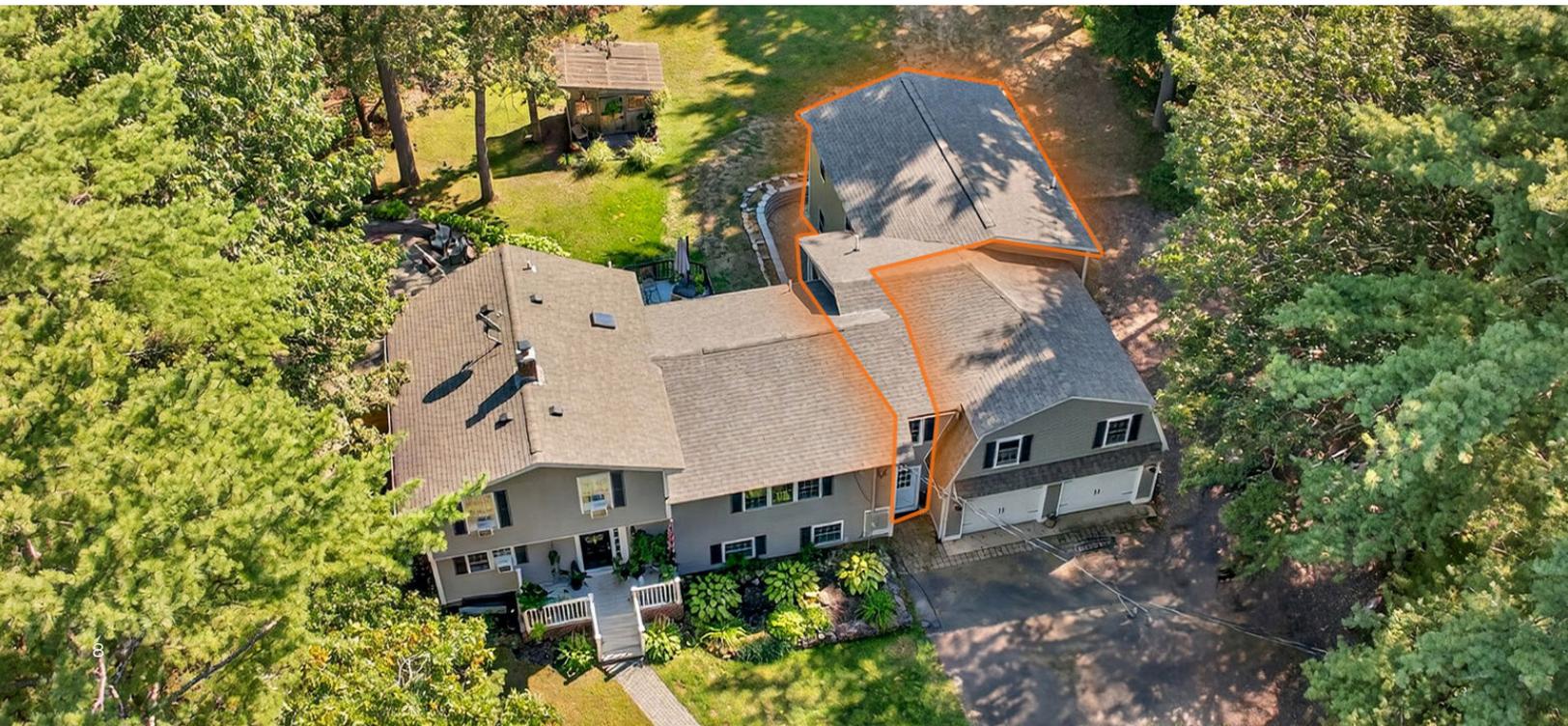
## WEIGHING THE OPTIONS

The family considered renovating their whole house or helping Mary buy a small home. Neither offered the safety, connection, and long-term security they were seeking. In the end, one idea kept returning: an ADU. "It made the most sense," Jess says. "We wanted Mark's mother to be independent, but still close."

## ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility was at the heart of the design. The ADU was built on one level with hard flooring, 36-inch doorways, and no steps between the driveway and the entryway.

A spacious, ADA-compliant bathroom and a heated hallway between the main house and the ADU ensured comfort, independence and connection. "We thought about everything," Jess explained, "from where you hang your coat to how you make your coffee. The space supports Mary's independence while making routines easier and safer. The design allows her to age in place with dignity and confidence."

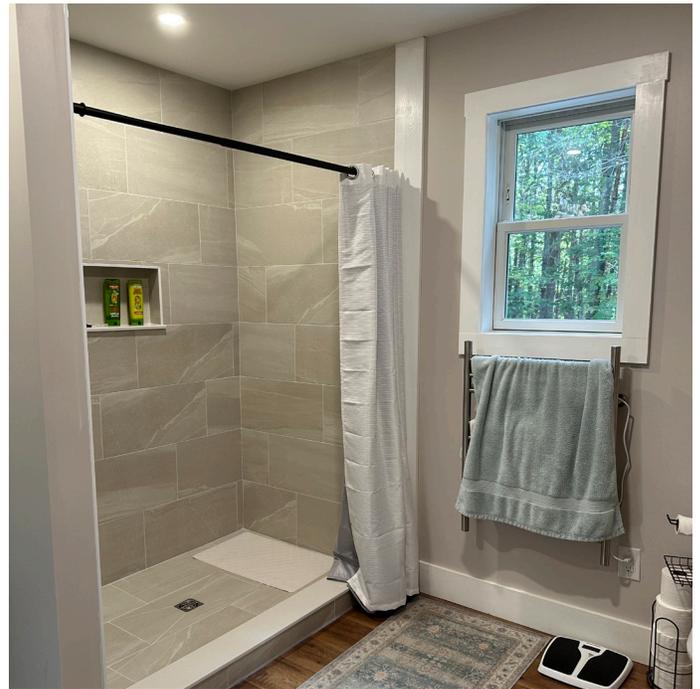


## DESIGN CHALLENGES

Like many construction projects, there were unexpected hurdles. When a rock ledge beneath the build site prevented them from building a full basement, Jess and Mark modified their plans to include a large attic above the ADU and a small crawlspace underneath for storage instead. They used excavated rock from the crawlspace to build a retaining wall and expand parking on the property. “We did our homework,” Jess said. “We knew the zoning, the footprint, and our needs. That preparation kept us on track and allowed us to adapt with confidence.”

Mary moved in shortly after construction was complete, and the change was immediate. “I used to share everything—growing up with four brothers, then raising a family,” she said. “Now I have privacy, and a place to call my own.”

Inspired by their experience, Jessica and Mark launched Kinstruct Tiny Homes, their own ADU design and consulting company. Jessica’s background in real estate and Mark’s expertise in construction provided them with the knowledge to build practical ADUs for other families.



## ADU QUICK FACTS

- ADU Type: Home Addition
- ADU Size: 768sf
- ADU Cost: \$250,000
- Approvals: By-Right Permit
- Features: ADA Accessibility

## WHY AN ADU?

The new space of an ADU helped elevate the entire family’s quality of life while providing low-barrier design features to ease daily tasks.



## JESSICA & MARK’S ADVICE

*“Talk through the details. Know your finances, understand your options, and discuss all outcomes. There’s always a way to make it happen.”*

# A FACTORY BUILT ADU

## BARRINGTON, NH

### GAVIN WAS READY TO BUY A HOME

When Cindy's son, Gavin, was ready to buy his first home, the timing was challenging. As a young professional with a stable job at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, savings in the bank, and a paid-off car, Gavin appeared well positioned to enter the housing market. But homes were scarce, overpriced, or selling too quickly to compete.

With five people living in their small, Cape-style home, Cindy knew that it was time for Gavin to have a place of his own.

After exploring everything from RVs to prefabricated house kits online, Cindy and Gavin eventually discovered Backyard ADUs, a company that builds high-efficiency modular ADU homes.

Their ADU was factory-built in two sections, then delivered and craned into place. "It was amazing to watch," Cindy said. The pre-installed wiring and thoughtful construction techniques made the setup feel almost like snapping LEGO pieces together. Much of the interior – plumbing, lighting, and even the kitchen cabinets—was already finished.



A yellow entry door is a playful pop of color that greets people upon arrival

### CHALLENGES PREPARING THE SITE FOR AN ADU

Cindy's property is on rocky, uneven land with poor drainage, so the site for Gavin's ADU had to be built up instead of being dug down. The ADU also required its own septic system, one of the highest costs of the project.

The project cost totaled \$300,000, with \$180,000 attributed to the ADU and the remainder covering grading, parking, infrastructure, and other site work.

Cindy said Backyard ADUs was an excellent company to work with, but if she could do it again, she would spend more time vetting subcontractors to ensure consistent quality.



### ADU QUICK FACTS

- ADU Type: Modular Detached
- ADU Size: 600sf
- ADU Cost: \$305,000
- Approvals: Contractor Managed
- Parking: Separate Driveway
- Features: Room to Stretch

### WHY AN ADU?

- Average Rent in Portsmouth: \$2,800/month
- Modular ADU construction cost: \$305,000 (once)
- Estimated ADU Loan Payment: \$1,800/month

Gavin now lives in the 600-square-foot home next to the family's main house. It's affordable, efficient, and gives him independence while still being close to the rest of the family. Gavin pays rent under a standard lease, and the space is fully independent.

Looking ahead, the ADU offers flexibility for Cindy and her family. "In 10 years, Gavin might still live there, or maybe my husband and I will move in, and he'll take the main house, or we could rent it out while traveling," she said.



### CINDY'S ADVICE

*"Build an ADU as an income source, and as an option to downsize in place over time."*



A side table and art offer contrast with the green paint in the entryway.



From Cindy's backyard, Gavin's ADU blends in with the natural features, giving both homes privacy.



The modular ADU was placed on the foundation by a crane.

# A CONNECTED FAMILY

## 📍 FREEDOM, NH

### SALLY WANTED TO DOWNSIZE, BUT SHE WASN'T SURE HOW.

Her longtime home had become too much to manage alone. In Freedom, housing options for older adults were limited. Available homes were scarce, prices were high, and senior housing came with high homeowner association fees. However, moving farther away from family was off the table.

Sally's daughter, Melissa, knew the only workable solution was to bring her mom closer to home. Melissa wanted to make sure Sally had a home that respected her independence and daily routines. Together, they decided to build a detached, one-bedroom ADU designed for aging in place with comfort and privacy.

"There are trees between the main house and Sally's ADU, so the ADU feels like its own peaceful cottage. We can see each other without getting in each other's way," said Melissa.



Melissa and her mother, Sally, take in the sun from the front porch of the ADU.

### START TO FINISH IN 7 MONTHS

Construction started in September 2024, and after a few delays due to an electrician shortage and longer site plan review, Sally moved into her new home in March 2025. The result was a 900-square-foot, energy-efficient, fully accessible ADU. "We wanted one-level living. No stairs. Just ease," Melissa said.

### AN ADU WITHIN BUDGET

Melissa set a budget of \$200,000, and the total cost came in at approximately \$220,000. To Melissa, it was worth every penny. Her mother is safe, nearby, and connected to the community. Sally's friends pick her up to go shopping, neighbors drop by to say hello, and her granddaughters visit. They've added vibrancy to their property without sacrificing space or privacy.

## ADU QUICK FACTS

- ADU Type: One-Story Detached
- ADU Size: 900sf
- ADU Cost: \$220,000
- Approvals: Special Exception

## WHY AN ADU?

- Median Home Price in Freedom: \$440,000
- ADU construction cost: \$220,000
- A Half-Price Alternative Housing Solution

Sally loves being close to her daughter, and she often surprises Melissa's family with fresh flowers, fudge, or sourdough bread from local markets.

"Building the ADU wasn't just a housing solution for my mother, it is a way to care for someone who's always cared for me," said Melissa.

Sally's ADU has a country home feel with natural wood flooring, cabinetry, and a dramatic exposed wood beam ceiling. The ADU has an air of high-quality fit and finish while using budget-friendly materials.



### MELISSA'S ADVICE

*"Be clear about your goals and don't underestimate how good it feels when the people you care about are close."*

# A GARAGE CONVERSION

**NASHUA, NH**

## KEEPING PARENTS CLOSE TO HOME

Cindy's parents had lived in their home for decades, but the upkeep was becoming overwhelming. Cindy's father struggled with stairs. The lawn went untended. The family faced a difficult choice: leaving their home and moving to assisted living or finding a new solution. For Cindy's husband Michael, the answer seemed clear. "I didn't want them in an assisted living facility," he noted. "I wanted them to be surrounded by family."

Michael and Cindy envisioned an ADU built out of the garage attached to their home: private, fully equipped, and designed for Cindy's parents' needs. The layout includes a cozy living area with space for their favorite rocking chairs, a small flexible kitchen, a bedroom with storage, and a spacious bathroom with its own washer and dryer. Every detail was chosen to support aging in place. The ADU included no stairs but plenty of wide-open spaces and windows that looked out onto the shared backyard patio.

The ADU offers both privacy and connection. Cindy's parents now enjoy a space of their own, complete with a separate entrance and full amenities, while knowing family is just steps away. They can maintain their independence and routines, supported by the comfort of nearby family.



Cindy's father displaying one of his many detailed wood carvings he makes at home.

## ADU QUICK FACTS

- ADU Type: Garage conversion
- ADU Size: 500sf (half addition)
- ADU Cost: \$149,000 (in 2024)
- Approvals: No variances needed
- Parking: No new parking built
- Features: Age-friendly design

## WHY AN ADU?

- Assisted living: \$10,000/month
- ADU build cost: \$149,000 (once)
- Family connection: Priceless



## A FUTURE LEGACY

Michael imagines that one day, his children or grandchildren may live in the main home while he and Cindy move into the ADU, making the home a resource for future generations.

“This ADU means my parents can live stress-free, and my kids and grandkids will always have a place too,” Cindy said. “It’s not just about today, it’s about tomorrow.”

Since moving in, Cindy’s parents have flourished. Her father spends afternoons making intricate wood carvings, while her mother enjoys daily walks with the family dog, Bella. They join backyard barbecues, celebrate holidays with grandchildren, and watch their great-grandchildren grow up before their eyes.

The ADU has also created peace of mind. If Cindy’s parents need anything, Michael and Cindy are right there. They no longer need to worry about home maintenance, finances, or isolation and can focus on enjoying life.



## MICHAEL & CINDY’S ADVICE

*“Design the ADU you want, then work with people who know the process... It’s one of the best decisions you’ll ever make.”*





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