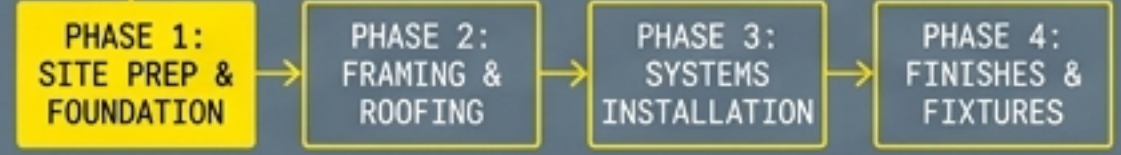
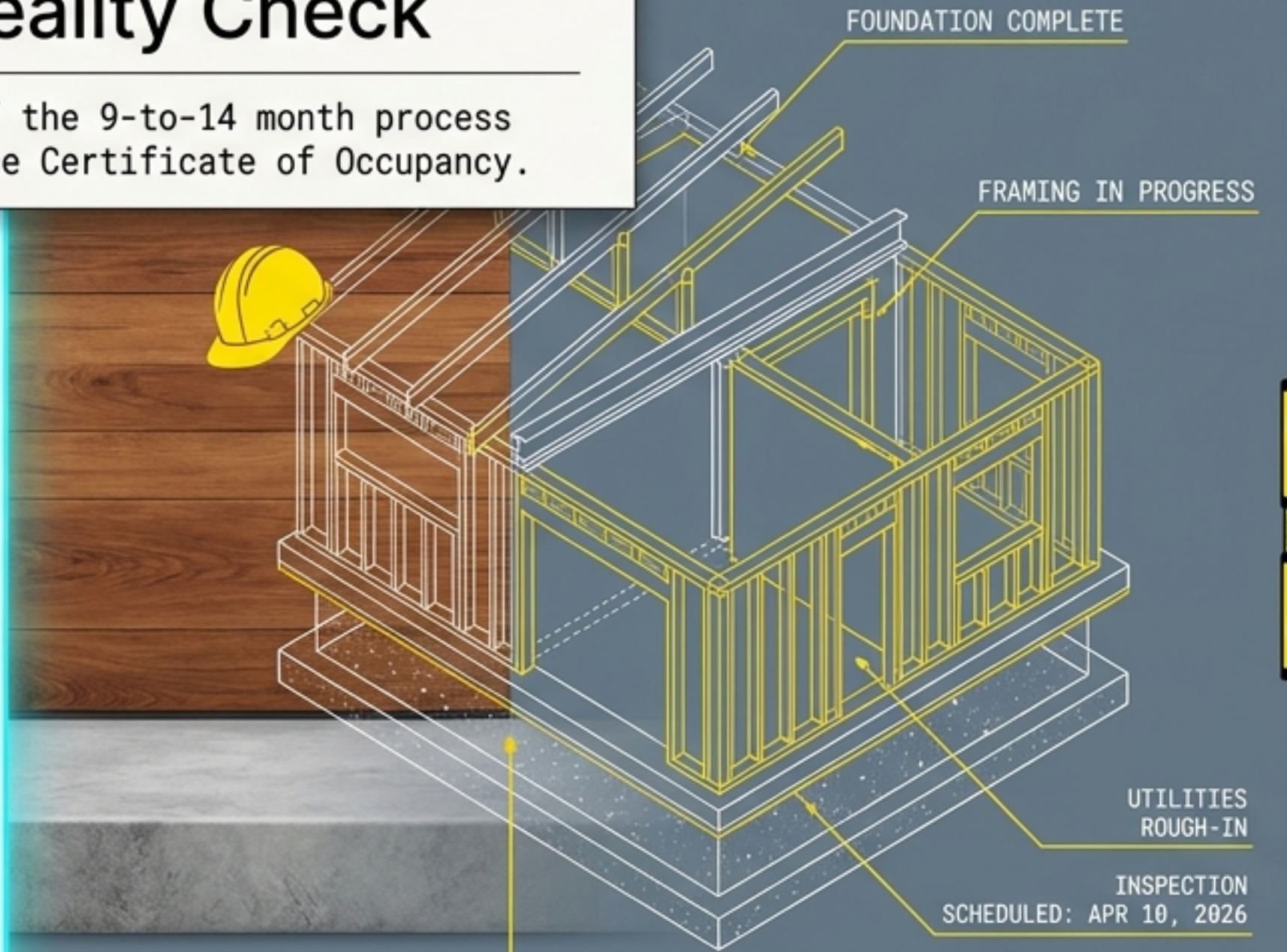
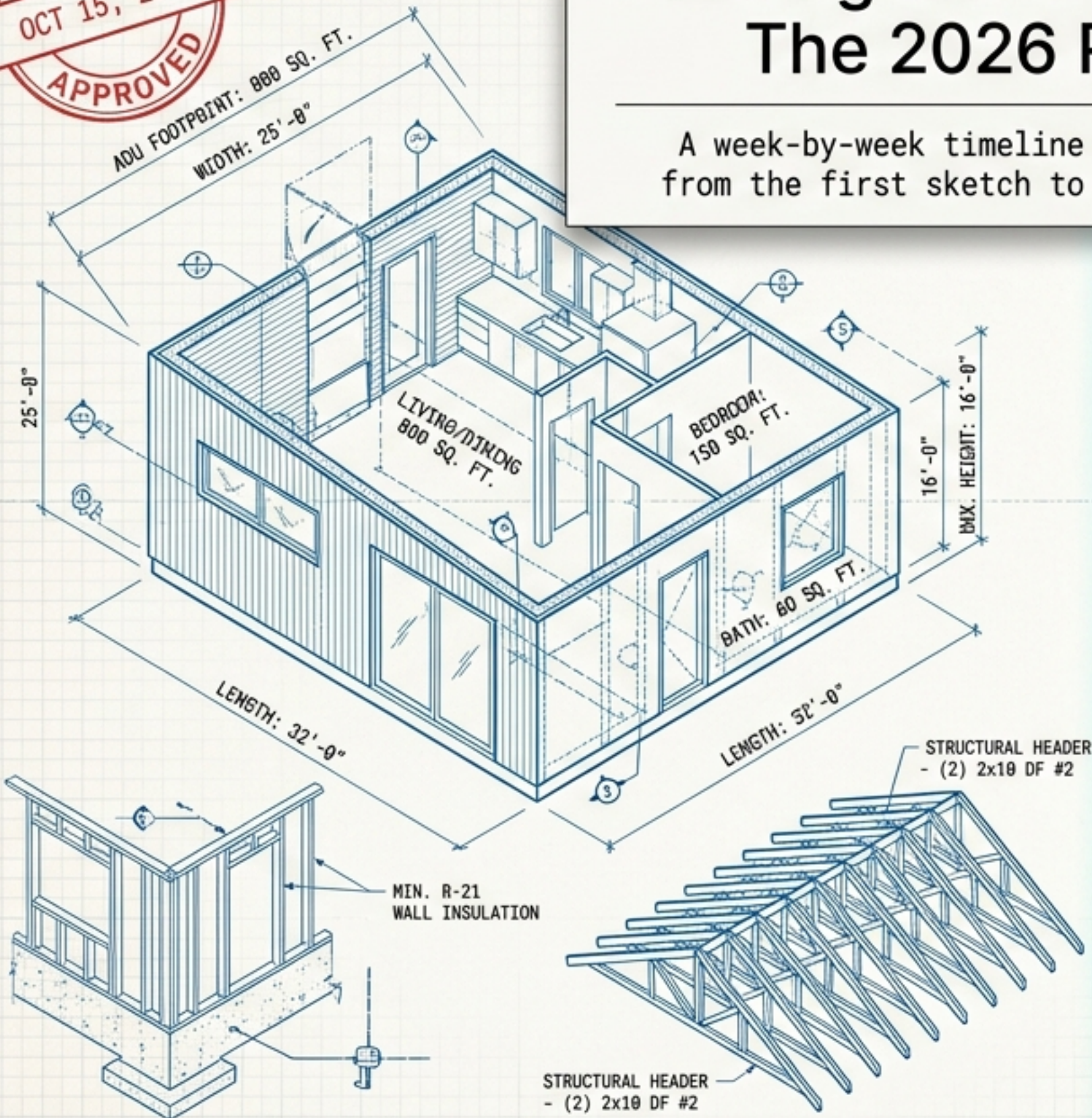




Building an ADU in Los Angeles: The 2026 Reality Check

A week-by-week timeline of the 9-to-14 month process from the first sketch to the Certificate of Occupancy.



CURRENT STATUS: FRAMING PHASE

The “90-Day Build” Myth



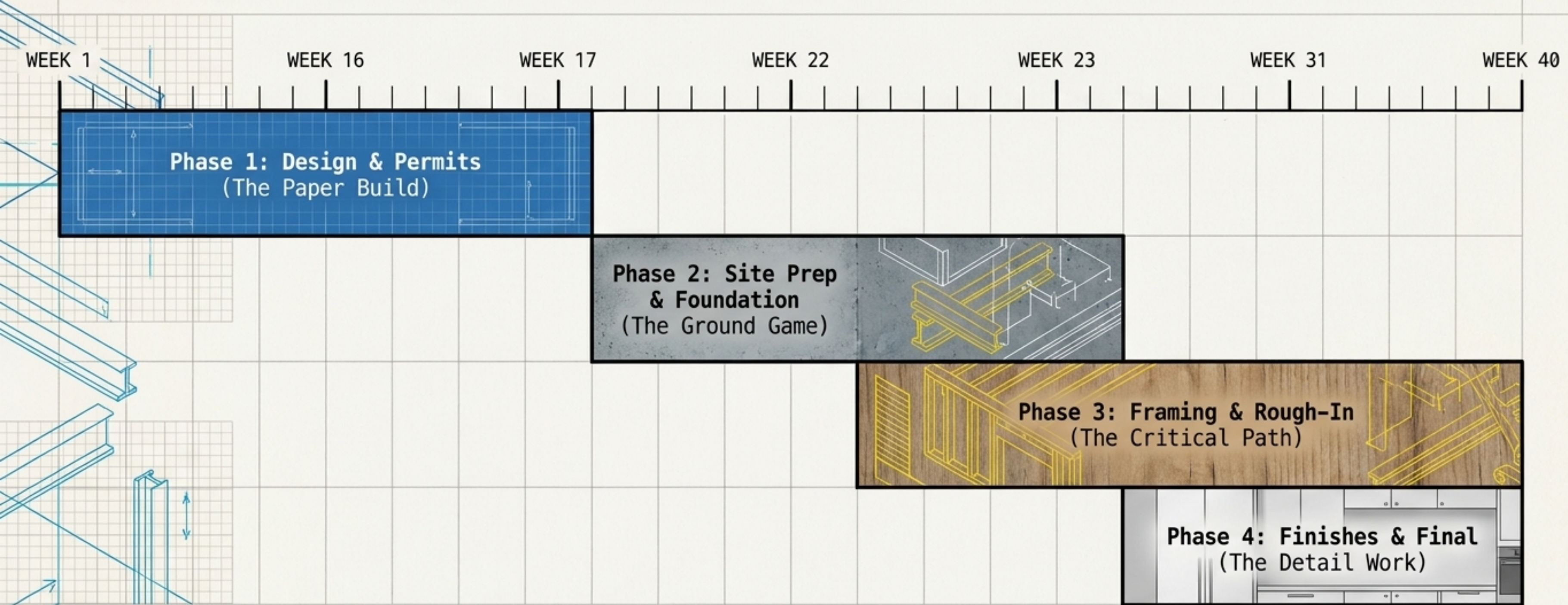
Advertised Construction: 3 months
(Foundation pour to final paint).

Hidden Pre-Construction: 4 to 6 months
(Design, structural engineering, LADBS plan check).

The physical build is highly predictable. The Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) paperwork is the wild card.

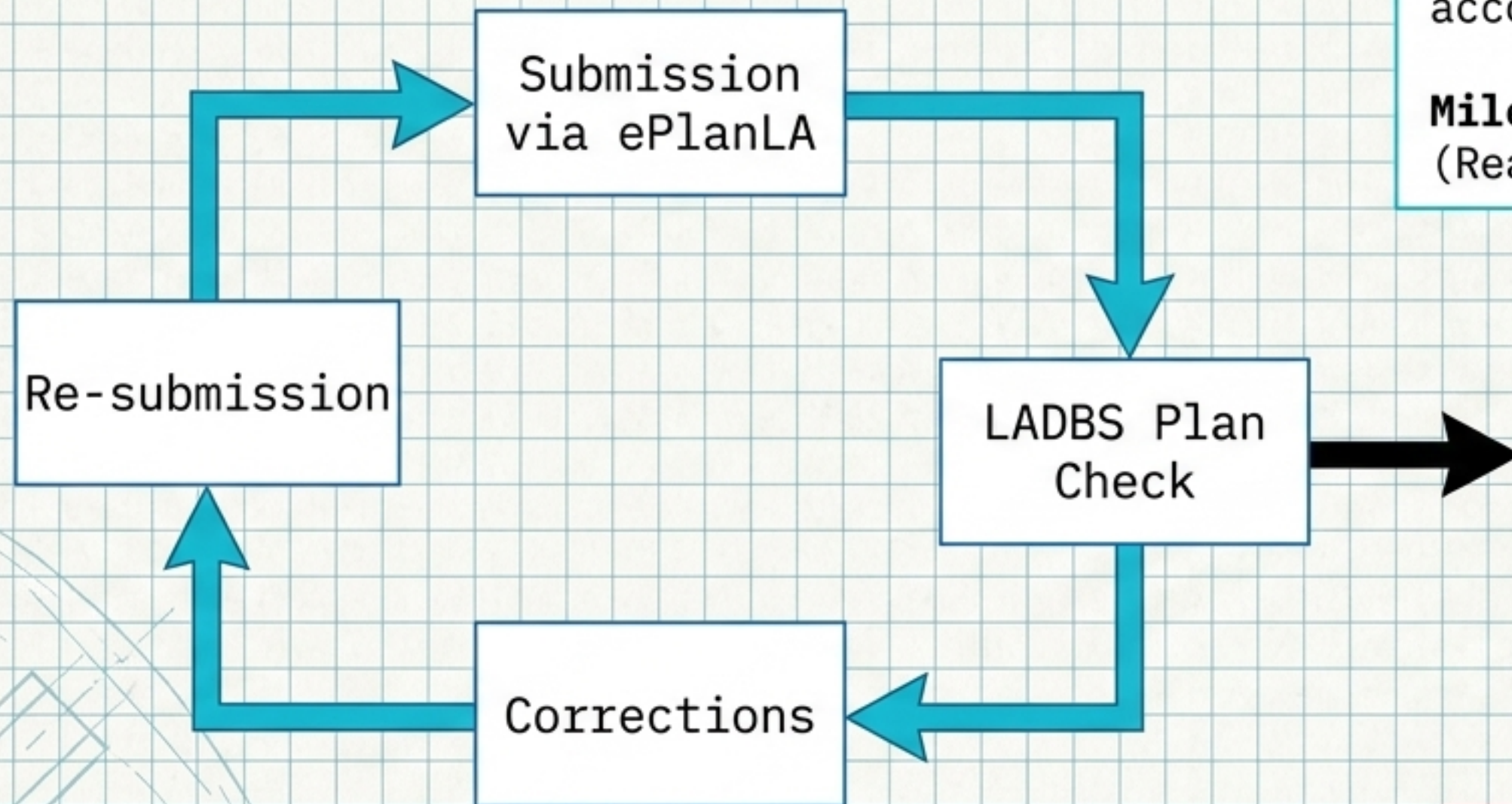
The true timeline for a detached ADU is 9 to 14 months.

The 4 Phases of an LA ADU



Summary Note: While AB 68 and AB 970 aimed to streamline approvals, the 2026 reality still requires navigating a 40-week maximum pipeline for new detached builds.

Phase 1: Design & Permits (Weeks 1-16)



Key Action: Connect your Angeleno account to ePlanLA.

Milestone: Securing the RTI (Ready-to-Issue) status.



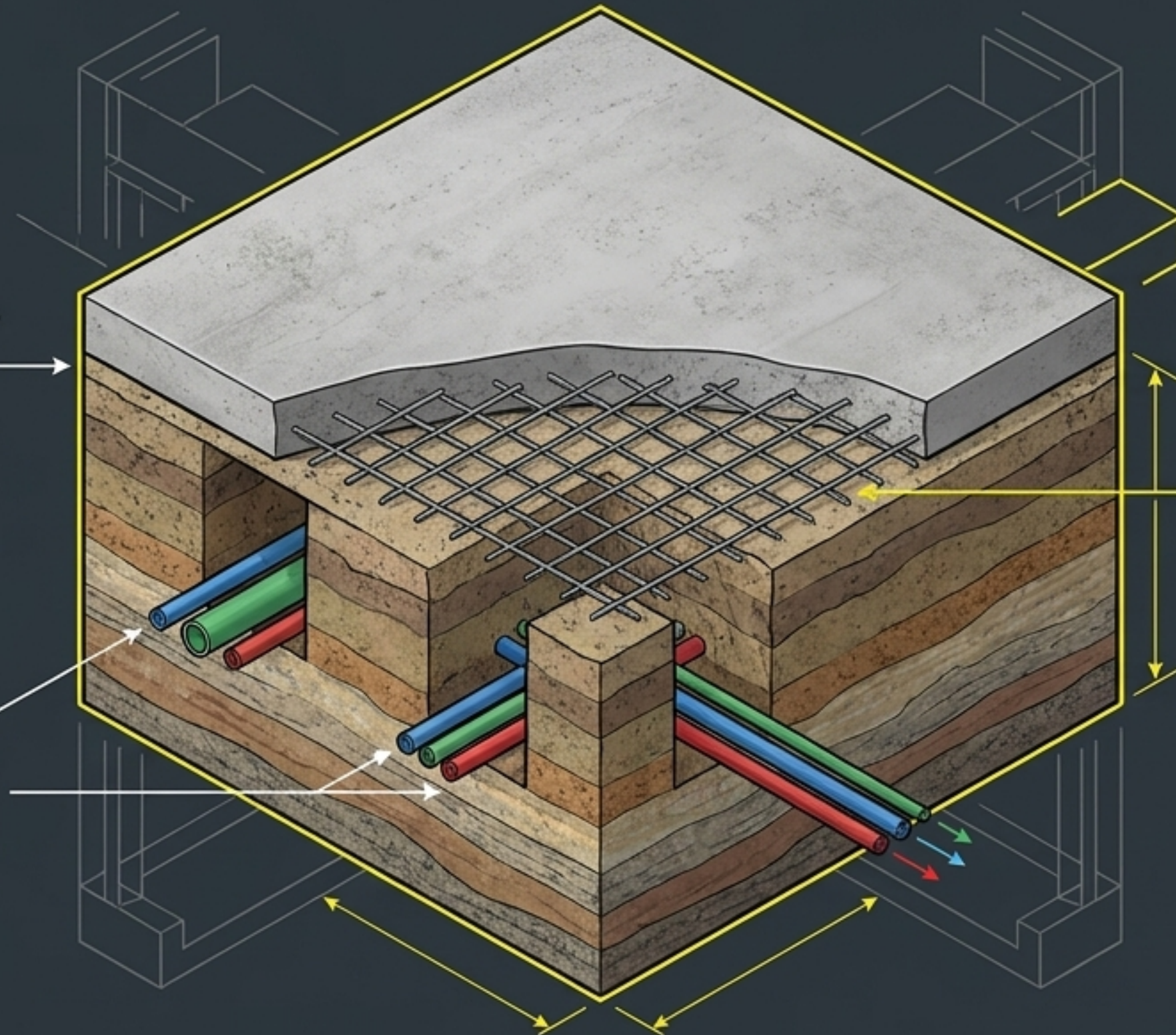
The Bottleneck: Architect design and structural engineer load path calculations must perfectly align with LA zoning.

The Golden Rule: Lock the scope. Any design change after submission resets the LADBS clock to zero.

Phase 2: Site Prep & Foundation (Weeks 17–22)

The LA Soils Report:
Mandatory for foundation design, especially in hillside or expansive clay areas.

Trenching Logistics:
Requires careful coordination with LADWP and the gas company for utility tie-ins.



The Stop-Gate:

Concrete cannot be poured until the first LADBS inspector physically signs off on footing trenches and rebar placement. Surprises here (bedrock, old septic tanks) cost weeks.

Phase 3: Framing & Rough-In (Weeks 23–30)



The Process: The floor system, walls, and roof trusses go up fast. Once dried in, trades complete the “rough-in” inside open walls.



The Rule: The walls cannot be closed up. A failed LADBS inspection here means tearing work apart. A solid General Contractor passes these on the first try.

Phase 4: Finishes & Final Inspection (Weeks 31–40)



The Detail Work

Drywall taping, mudding, and sanding can take a full week alone. Followed by paint, tile, and cabinetry.

Code Compliance

Electricians and plumbers return for final trims. LADBS conducts final checks for Title 24 compliance and GFCI outlets.

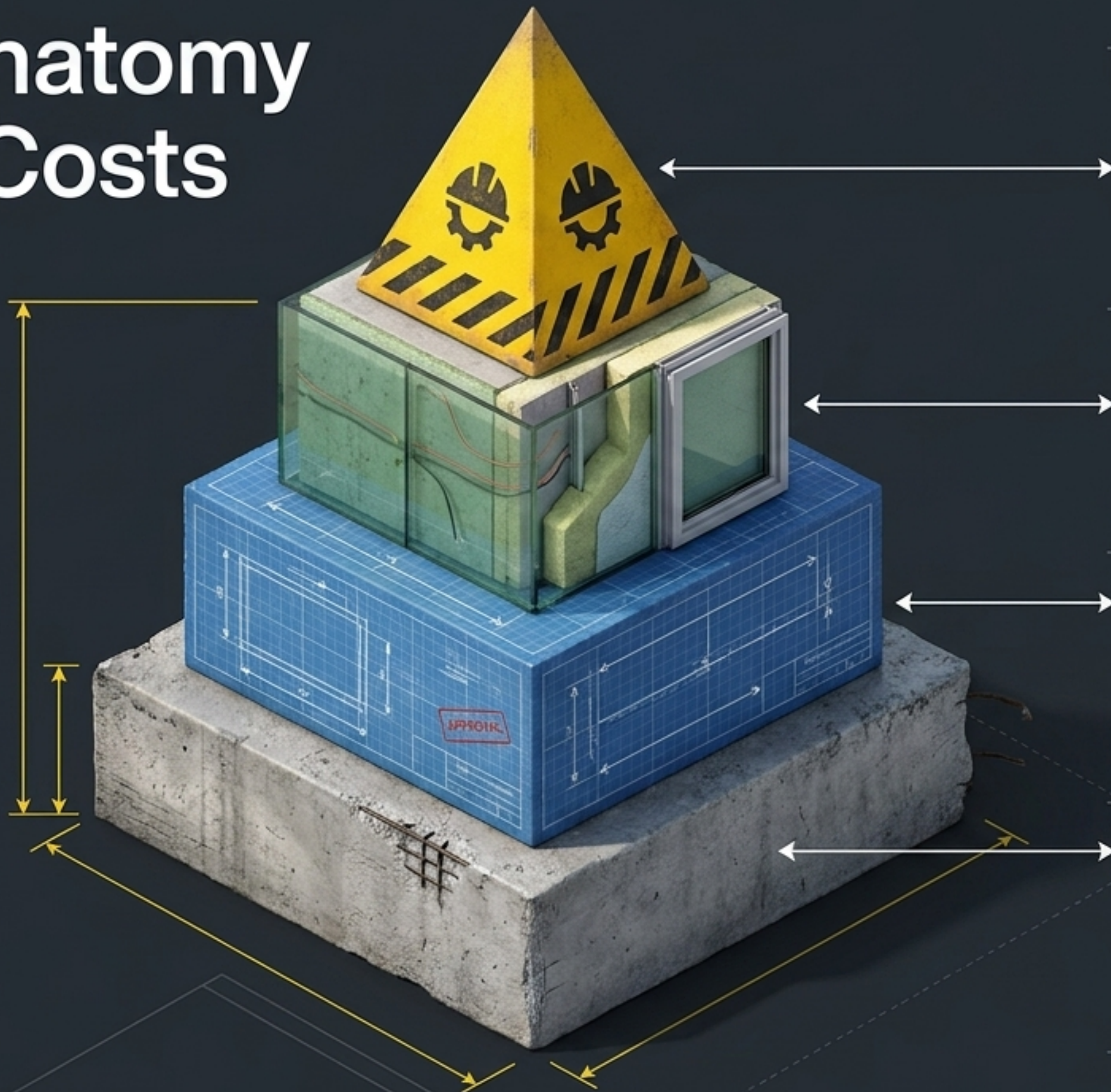
The Finish Line

The City issues the Certificate of Occupancy (C of O). The unit is now legally habitable.

The 2026 ADU Project Matrix

	Sherman Oaks Detached	Eagle Rock Garage Conversion	Highland Park JADU (Attached)
Scope	750 sq.ft, 2 Bed / 1 Bath. Stick-built, standard slab.	400 sq.ft Studio.	480 sq.ft. Existing footprint conversion (kitchenette + exterior entrance).
Structural Challenge	Ground-up new build.	New foundation & seismic retrofit required.	Interior modification only.
Total Cost	\$380,000	\$165,000	\$95,000
Total Timeline	13 months (16 weeks in LADBS plan check)	8 months	6 months

The Anatomy of LA Costs



Layer 1 (Labor): DIR Prevailing Wages

California Department of Industrial Relations sets a high bar for skilled trades in LA County.

Layer 2 (Materials): Title 24 Mandates

State energy codes require specialized, high-cost insulation and windows.

Layer 3 (Bureaucracy): LADBS & LADWP Fees

Plan checks, inspections, and utility hookups add tens of thousands before groundbreaking.

Layer 4 (Logistics): Site Constraints

Small, dense LA lots require manual labor and specialized equipment over heavy machinery.

Accelerators: How to Compress the Timeline



1. Use LA RTI Standard Plans

Utilizing the city's pre-approved Ready-to-Issue designs sacrifices extreme customization but can cut LADBS review time in half.



2. Lock Scope on Day 1

Treat the plan as gospel. Every change order forces a schedule sequence reset.



3. Pre-Order Everything

Have every finish, fixture, and appliance ordered before the first shovel hits the dirt. Backordered tile is a top cause of mid-project paralysis.

TOTAL ACCELERATION: -6 WEEKS

Landmines: What Blows Up the Schedule



Hazard 1: Underground Surprises.

Old foundations, undocumented sewer lines, or poor soil compaction requiring engineered redesigns.



Hazard 2: Scope Creep.

Moving a wall after framing doesn't just add a task; it forces all trades to redo their rough-in work.



Hazard 3: Unpermitted Primary House Work.

LADBS will often require you to legalize old, unpermitted work on the main house before signing off on the ADU.

The Rule: The NAHB recommends a 10-15% contingency for budget overruns on older homes. In Los Angeles, this is the bare minimum.

The Contractor's Schedule Mandate

Do not accept a schedule with just a start and end date. Ensure these milestones are legally locked:

- Scope-lock and design finalization date.
- Permit package submission to LADBS.
- Anticipated date for permit issuance (RTI).
- Milestone: Foundation inspection passed.
- Milestone: Framing inspection passed.
- Milestone: Rough-in inspections passed (plumbing, electrical, HVAC).
- Lead-time deadlines for windows and cabinets.
- Milestone: Final inspection from LADBS.

**AWAITING
SIGNATURE**

Living Through It: The Disruption Reality Check



Detached ADUs

You can live in the main house. Expect significant yard noise, dust, and trade vehicles, but internal peace is largely maintained.



Attached / JADUs / Garage Conversions

Severe disruption. Expect shared-wall noise, indoor dust, and periods of shut-off utilities (water/power) for tie-ins. Requires a high tolerance for inconvenience.

Navigating the LA Resource Ecosystem



State Level

CA HCD Accessory Dwelling Unit Portal

(Submit technical assistance requests, check State ADU/JADU law updates)



Local Level

LADBS ePlanLA & PermitLA

(Direct portals for standard and express permit submission)

Mention: Mayor's Executive Directive 1 (ED 1) applies for 100% affordable projects



Professional Level

AIA Los Angeles

(Directory for sourcing qualified architects and design professionals versed in LA codes)



The True Timeline Includes the Bureaucracy

Takeaway: The work done on paper with the city is just as critical as the work done on-site with a hammer.

Treat the 'Paper Build' with the same respect, budget, and rigor as the 'Physical Build' to ensure your 2026 LA ADU project is a success.