



# Frequently Asked Questions

# *the* AVAVA Britespace

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### Our Product

#### **What is an AVAVA Britespace?**

The AVAVA Systems Britespace is a high-quality, sustainably designed and sourced home that is rapidly assembled in 4-6 weeks. We simplify home building at every step, from design to installation, by leveraging our patented, flat-packed building system. We source all of our materials from socially responsible suppliers that provide their workers with a fair wage and safe working practices. You can choose from several models from 264 to 750 sq. ft. Many customization options exist for each model. If you are interested in a model larger than our Model 480, please ask your salesperson for more info.

#### **What is an ADU?**

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a new dwelling unit added as part of or within an existing building or as a stand-alone structure.

#### **Is there a foundation?**

Yes, there is. Our proprietary pier and chassis system uses 50% less concrete than typical (perimeter or slab) foundations. It is strong, possible to adjust over time if necessary, and far easier to remove should the time come. It is also environmentally friendlier, requiring less concrete (which creates CO<sub>2</sub>), and less soil/hydrological disruption than perimeter walls or slabs.

#### **I live on a hill, can you build one there?**

We can! Because of our pier style foundation, AVAVA Systems is a straightforward and economical option for building an ADU on a hillside. The installation costs will be a bit higher than on flatland, but the final costs will be lower – and environmentally friendlier - than standard foundation types.

#### **What do I need to do to maintain my Britespace ADU?**

Minimal maintenance is required! The roof, siding, and windows are all guaranteed for 30 years and will likely last 50 or more. Your appliances are guaranteed through the appliance manufacturer, typically 5-7 years, with extended contracts often available.

#### **What about interior air quality?**

All of the finishes in our home are free of added chemicals or VOCs. We use real wood and bamboo rather than adhesive-filled pressboard materials for flooring, cabinets, doors, windows, and trim. The plywood we use is formaldehyde free. Any paint or finish that is applied to these materials is furthermore carefully selected to avoid harmful offgassing.

#### **What do you mean by the AVAVA Britespace being a sustainable choice?**

AVAVA Systems is committed to minimizing the carbon footprint of Britespace homes. We design and engineer our construction system to significantly alleviate construction waste, and use life-cycle analysis to evaluate the impact of our structural and finish material selections. The wood in our homes is Forest Stewardship Certified (FSC) whenever available, and our building materials are sourced as locally as possible. The Britespace features double-pane insulated Jeld-Wen Windows, high efficiency heating, hot water, and cooling systems, and LED lighting. We partner with a solar provider to offer a solar lease program as a standard out-of-the-box option - which is capable of handling the entire energy load of a Britespace home, with zero initial cost and lower monthly payments than using the grid alone.

### **How much access to my yard do you need to build?**

We need an entryway at least 3' wide by 7' tall to move the building materials into your backyard.

### **You show rain water collection, grey water and other sustainability systems in your brochure, are those included?**

We always encourage our clients to include whichever sustainability options they can afford. If these features interest you, please let us know. Pricing is available on our website or through your sales person.

### **What size are your models?**

We currently have 4 floorplans. The **Model 264** and **Model 352** are studio units, the **Model 480** is a 1BR unit, and the new **Model 650** is a 2BR unit. The model number relates to the square footage of the homes. We can add-on an extra bedroom, or, if your city permitting department allows, a second floor. While economically your best choice is a floorplan as is, we can design and build as custom a project as you need.

### **Why should I choose a one-bedroom or two-bedroom unit?**

Two-bedroom homes will get you much better rental income, but may also requires more management, especially for short term rentals. We have several different options and configurations for 2 bedroom ADUs. Permitting may affect what is possible in different jurisdictions. Our salesperson can help you decipher the best option for your property.

### **Which direction should my backyard home face?**

If you are occupying the unit, would you prefer morning or afternoon sun? Is there a way to point it so the front door has more privacy? You might desire to use the structure of the building to frame a dedicated portion of your yard for your new Britespace. If you will rent the unit to tenants, perhaps there is a rear portion of your home that you would rather your tenants were not directly facing. Consider the unit's surroundings from as many perspectives as you can think of. If you will be using solar panels, by default, the roof should pitch towards the sun (south) for the most impact. However, your lot constraints and design criteria may not always allow for optimal orientation - which depending on circumstances can still be effective enough to cover your energy needs. Our design team will be glad to help you identify and think through all of these considerations.

### **What setbacks make sense?**

5-foot setbacks are required by SB1069, the new California State Senate Bill governing planning codes for Accessory Dwelling Units. This distance allows you sufficient access between the home and your property line/fence so you can maintain landscaping.

### **Does the Britespace look like a trailer or a prefab unit?**

Your Britespace will look like a small, well-appointed home, not a trailer or a prefab. We specify the best quality building materials. This includes Jeld-Wen windows, real oak flooring, custom wood cabinets, and all LED lighting. We design homes like a product, giving every detail the attention it needs. Contact your sales person to see our material samples.

### **How many have you built?**

We have built 4 homes to date with 5 more homes going in this summer. We are building a demonstration home to be completed in August 2017, so you will have the option to walk through one very soon!

### **Can I change the floor plan?**

Yes! We offer customization on all Britespace models. Small changes can be made at no additional cost. More significant changes, including any changes to the bathroom, can be made for a \$750 fee. Please feel free to mark up our floor plans and share them with your sales person. We will review them and let you know if there will be a fee required or not.

**What about the exterior? Can that be changed?**

Window size and placement, with exception of the front window, can be changed. There will be a \$250 design fee for the new shop drawings we need to create, plus the difference in cost for the windows.

**What materials can I choose from? Is there a way to see it all together before I place my order?**

Check out our design tool on our website, [www.avavasystems.com](http://www.avavasystems.com). You can use this to mix and match materials and finishes to put together your Britespace home. You are also welcome to come to our office where we can show you the materials we use to finish our homes (including additional options beyond the primary choices available on the website).

**Does it come with appliances?**

AVAVA Systems has appliance sets we recommend, but these are not included in the price listed in our website or brochures. Appliances are usually 5-6k. You are able to make substitutions if you wish.

**What if I need extra storage?**

We can add extra storage space to the interior of the home. However, this limits your living space. Our designers can help you find the balance that works for your needs. We can also build or install additional small sheds for things like bikes and camping gear, which is usually the best option to maximize the Britespace living area.

**Can you build it on a slab?**

Yes, slabs are an option and building a Britespace on a slab can reduce overall height to 12'-6". They can also bring the entrance down to grade, and be a benefit for energy efficiency through heat storage. A slab typically adds about 8k to the price. Slabs do use much more concrete than our typical pier foundation, and reduce longer term flexibility for disassembling and moving your Britespace due to their inherent permanence.

## Working with Us

### **Can I meet with someone to walk through my backyard and help me determine what size and orientation I should order?**

Absolutely! A member of our team would be happy to come by and meet with you. Please contact us, and a salesperson will get in touch to coordinate a visit.

### **Is there somewhere I can see one?**

The homes we have built have people living in them, and in order to respect their privacy, we are unable to offer on-site tours of these completed projects. We plan to have a demonstration unit completed by August 2017. In advance of this, we can get your permit process started now, and you can walk through our demonstration unit and make final material choices then. Otherwise, we have high resolution photography, a web-based design tool, and comprehensive material samples to help inform your decisions about what we will be delivering.

### **Who handles the installation?**

AVAVA Systems has an in-house crew for the East Bay. In other areas, homes are installed by our trained partners, with quality oversight by AVAVA Systems. Your salesperson will manage all aspects of the installation and make sure that our quality standards are met for every delivery.

### **What happens when I am ready to place an order?**

In order to kick off your new Britespace home, we need drawings and a final decision regarding location and building orientation to begin the permitting process. The process starts with a \$10,000 deposit. \$3,500 of this goes towards permitting services and \$6500 towards permitting fees which typically run \$4-7k. The permitting process takes 8-12 weeks. Any unused funds from the \$10k deposit are refunded or applied to the next phase.

After the permits are approved, you select your finishes and add any options. Note that orientation and location cannot change once we receive the permits. The next payment is 50% when we go into production, 30% when we deliver the home to your property, and the final 20% when we do a walk through with you and hand you the keys.

### **How long does it take?**

The permitting takes 8-12 weeks. It takes 3-4 months to get the home produced and delivered to your location. Everything is ordered to spec. Once the home arrives at your property, it takes 4-6 weeks to build it out and hand you the keys. We will complete a thorough walk through with you at this time.

### **If I provided you with architectural drawings, could you build that instead of the Britespace?**

Yes. AVAVA can create shop drawings and apply our building system to other designs. We can then manufacture and deliver your home design. We require 5 home purchases OR a \$10,000 design fee in order to accomplish this.

### **Do the homes get inspected?**

Yes, AVAVA Systems or our partners handle all inspections. Our homes go through a standard local inspection process. We do not use state inspection processes. The homes are delivered with no interior wall coverings so inspectors can look at all electrical and plumbing systems.

## Permitting

### What laws exist to help with permitting ADUs? Is permitting difficult?

Last year, Senate Bill SB1069 was passed in the State of California and became effective on January 1, 2017. Here are the details:

- **Setbacks:** planning codes may not require more than 5 feet for side and rear property lines.
- **Sprinklers:** not required unless the primary house on the lot has them
- **Parking:** if you are within ½ mile of a rapid transit stop, requirements for additional parking can be waived. (In Berkeley, additional parking requirements are waived for the entire city)
- **Special Fees:** Municipalities may not require excessive and prohibitive fees for things like utility connections (such as special sewer fees).

### Do I need to do anything to get the home permitted?

Your salesperson can manage the entire process for you. You will not need to spend any time getting permits if you do not wish to. In all, most customers spend about 5 to 10 hours managing an AVAVA Systems project, and potentially even less if financing is not needed. A typical construction project will usually require over 50 hours of your time, even if you hire professionals.

### Any other location restrictions?

There is a 14 feet maximum height and a maximum size of 750 square feet for ADUs, and they cannot be larger than 50% of the existing homes square footage. There needs to be 800 square feet of open space.

### Are two-story units allowed?

Yes, and we can build them. A primary advantage is that they can draw additional rental income for you. However, because of the permitting process, we will either need to do lots of excavating to stay under 14 feet in height or go through a more standard, non-expedited permit process, which usually requires 4-6 months and an extra \$8k in fees.

### What areas are the easiest to permit?

The State of California SB1069 became effective in January 2017, so permitting anywhere in the state is now possible under the new rules. However, some municipalities are easier than others to work with due to the experience their departments may have already had with backyard home projects.

- Berkeley and Oakland are the most straightforward. They both allow fast track ADU permitting. We have our own installation crews in these cities.
- Marin, San Francisco, and parts of the South Bay (Mountain View, San Carlos, San Mateo, San Jose), and San Diego county are also particularly ADU friendly, and we have partnerships in these areas to help you navigate permitting and facilitate installation.
- Regardless of where you are, you will have a dedicated AVAVA Systems salesperson whose job it will be to guide your project from the permitting process all the way through to completion.

### Who is my local elected leader? Will this affect the permitting process?

Not significantly. However, AVAVA Systems engages with policy advocates which advocate for getting projects permitted even when barriers present themselves.

## How do utility connections work?

### Electric/Gas/Solar

- All utility connections except for gas are included. We encourage people to go “all-electric”. If gas is desired, a \$600 fee will be added.
- We recommend your new home be connected to your existing electrical system, even in cases where you power your Britespace with solar. As part of our site survey we will make sure that the existing electricity panel is in good condition and has capacity for a Britespace to be added. If an upgrade is required, it typically costs about \$2500.
- Should you choose the solar option, it could also offset the power draw of the main home.

### Water/Sewer

- It would be helpful to know where the nearest bathroom/sink/laundry is at the rear of your home. We will connect to the closest cold water connection point. If the main home has galvanized piping, we recommend that this be upgraded.
- How is the water pressure in your main home? If you are concerned about water pressure in your Britespace, upgrading your existing plumbing can help, as the water pressure in the main house will be similar to the water pressure in your backyard home.
- We will connect to the closest sewer connection point.
- If the closest sewer line is uphill from where you would like to site your unit, we are able to use a sump pump at no additional cost.

## Financing

### Is there financing available? What is the best way for me to pay for this?

There are lots of ways to finance your Britespace, and we can connect you with local finance professionals familiar with our homes. Here are the questions they will usually ask:

- How much equity is in your home?
- How is your credit score?
- What is your income?

Our partners can help you get answers to these questions, but the more favorable they are, the easier it will be to obtain financing at a preferred rate. Evaluating whether a Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC) will work for you is a good place to start.

### If I do not want to buy or can not obtain financing, are there other options?

Yes! We have other options which include a rent sharing option. If you can not acquire traditional financing (best value), please contact your sales rep and we will do our best to provide you with some additional options.

### Once it is built, should I AirBnB or rent it out?

AVAVA Systems always advocates for the local economic benefits of creating long term housing, and we believe our homes are a great tool for accomplishing that goal. If long term rental does not make sense for your situation, short term rentals can also be a great way to generate income while still maintaining flexibility. Keep in mind that short term rentals may require significantly more maintenance, and may be restricted in some cities.

### **What is the impact of adding a backyard home to my property value?**

An ADU can add significant value to your property, as well as provide monthly revenue. We can help you identify your home's square footage, sale, and rental value currently and with an AVAVA Britespace home.

### **What kind of cash flow can I expect from a rental unit in my backyard?**

Rental income after expenses ranges from \$200 to \$1200 per month based on location. For example, our Model 480 can typically generate \$750 monthly in Berkeley/Oakland.

### **How did you calculate monthly payments?**

Monthly payments are figured at the total cost of completing the project at 4.5% interest, plus \$150 per month for property taxes and utilities. Your interest rate may be higher or lower.

### **When I sell my home, will it be listed as a duplex?**

No, it will be considered a Single Family Home with an ADU. Some appraisers will call this a duplex because ADU is not a term they are familiar with. However, 'duplex' is a legally separate classification from 'ADU'.

### **How do I calculate the ROI for one of your Britespace Homes? Is this a good investment?**

There are several places our customers gain value by adding a Britespace unit:

- **Cash flow:** The difference between your loan payment (HELOC, Refi or Cash) and the amount of money you collect in rent.
- **Increase in Property Value:** Usually home values are \$600 per sq. ft. or more in many parts of the Bay Area and can be as high as \$1200 in some areas. The cost to add an AVAVA home is \$350 to \$500 per square feet. This means you add thousands of dollars in value to your property.
- **Appreciation:** While no guarantee of future performance, over time, both property values and rental rates have reliably increased, typically by 3% to 6% per year. That means that both cash flow and property value will continue to appreciate as time passes. In high-value markets with strong job growth, housing demand is likely to spur continued gains.
- Please ask your sales representative for a specific calculation regarding your property if you are interested.