



Snohomish County
Planning and Development
Services

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ONLINE INFORMATION
www.snohomishcountywa.gov/1190



This Assistance Bulletin only applies to property within unincorporated Snohomish County and does not apply to property within incorporated City limits.

Detached Accessory Dwelling Units

Assistance Bulletin

12

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WWW.SNOCO.ORG

Keyword: Assistance Bulletins

Q: What is a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit?

A: A Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a dwelling unit that meets the following criteria:

- It is located on the same lot, under the same ownership as, and subordinate to a single-family dwelling unit;
- It is not attached to, is physically separated from and located in a different structure than the primary dwelling;
- It is intended for use as a complete, independent living facility;
- It includes facilities for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation for not more than one family;
- Accessory Dwelling Units are also called apartments, mother-in-law and Accessory Apartments.

Q: Can anyone build a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit?

A: Within the Urban zones, you may establish one Attached and one Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (see PDS Bulletin #13). Outside the Urban Growth Area, Detached Accessory Dwelling Units can be built on all lots that have a legally-established single-family dwelling.

Q: How do I get a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit permit?

A: Permit applications are submitted online at MyBuildingPermit.com. For information on using our online permitting system, please see the following web page: <https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/3920/Online-Permitting>. If you need additional assistance with the online process, please call our office at 425-388-3311.

When applying on MyBuildingPermit.com, please use the following path:

- Application Type: Building
- Project Type: Single Family Residential
- Activity Type: New Construction
- Scope of Work: Accessory Dwelling Unit Detached

The following items are required to apply for a Detached ADU permit:

- Residential Building Permit Fees: A portion of the permit fees are due at application and remaining permit fees are collected at permit issuance (see [PDS Bulletin #18](#)).
- A site plan that meets minimum requirements of the [Residential Site Plan Checklist](#).
- Construction/building plans that meet the requirements of the [Minimum Submittal Requirements for Structural Plans Checklist](#).
- Exterior architectural drawings or photographs of the on site single-family dwelling.

This bulletin is intended only as an information guide. The information may not be complete and is subject to change. For complete legal information, refer to Snohomish County Code.

- Verification of water and sewage disposal as follows:
 - ⇒ Water and sewer availability letters for projects on public water and sewer, or
 - ⇒ Completed Snohomish County Health Department Construction Clearance Form for projects on septic and well.

Q: Do I also need a land use permit?

A: No. Per Ordinance No. 21-018, adopted on June 9, 2021, an Administrative Conditional Use Permit is not longer required for Accessory Dwelling Units.

Q: Are there any other requirements?

A: Yes. The Snohomish County Zoning Code requires compliance with the following standards in order to qualify for and retain a permit for a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit:

- **Floor area:** The floor area for a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit shall not exceed 1,200 square feet (floor areas do not include garages, porches, or unfinished basements).
- **Mobile home:** A mobile home may be allowed as a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit on lots ten (10) acres or larger located outside of the Urban Growth Area only if the accessory mobile home is subordinate to the existing single-family dwelling.
- **Exterior features:** When a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit is located within a new structure, the exterior materials, roof form, window spacing, and proportions shall approximate those of the existing single-family dwelling. When a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit is located within an existing structure or if the Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit is a mobile home, the structure is not required to approximate the exterior features of the existing single-family dwelling.
- **Water system:** Documentation must be provided showing that a proposed accessory dwelling unit has physical and legal access to water that is potable and of adequate flow.
- **Sewage disposal:** Documentation must be provided showing that the existing or proposed sewage or septic system is capable of handling the additional demand that would be placed upon it by the Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit. We strongly recommend applicants with properties served by septic systems contact the Snohomish County Health Department regarding requirements for establishing an ADU. This should be done PRIOR to hiring experts or paying for plans and designs. Visit [Septic Permitting | Snohomish Health District, WA \(snohd.org\)](#) for more details.
- **Parking:** In addition to the two off-street parking spaces that are required for the single-family dwelling, off street parking must be provided for an Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit consistent with the following:
 - ⇒ Within the urban zones: No parking required.
 - ⇒ Within the rural, resource, and other zones: One off-street parking space per Accessory Dwelling Unit
- **Driveways:** Accessory Dwelling Units located in the rural, resource, and other zones are required to be accessed using the same driveway as the single-family dwelling unit.
- **Duplex:** A lot occupied with a duplex is not eligible to also have an Accessory Dwelling Unit.
 - ⇒ [SCC 30.91A.035](#), defines an Accessory Dwelling Unit as “located on the same lot as, under the same ownership as, and subordinate to a single-family dwelling unit.”

Q: Who should I contact if I have questions?

A: You may contact us if you have any questions via:

Online: [Ask A Permit Tech](#)

Telephone: 425-388-3311

Visit us at: 2nd Floor, Administration East, Robert J. Drewel Building, 3000 Rockefeller Avenue, Everett

If you have a site with a septic system:

Contact the Snohomish County Health Department at (425)339-5250 or www.snohd.org.