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

Detached Accessory Apartment Permits

Assistance Bulletin

12

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Q: What is a Detached Accessory Apartment?

A: A Detached Accessory Apartment is a dwelling unit that meets the following three criteria:

- It is located on the same lot, and under the same ownership as, and detached from, an owner-occupied single-family dwelling unit.
- It is intended for use as a complete, independent living facility.
- It does not substantially alter the single-family character of the neighborhood.

Q: What are the benefits of Detached Accessory Apartments?

A: They provide homeowner-occupants, especially senior citizen homeowner-occupants, an opportunity for supplementary income by developing a portion of their property into a rentable Accessory Apartment. They also provide an affordable, attractive housing option for renters such as people on fixed incomes, senior citizens, and young people just out of school.

Q: Can anyone build a Detached Accessory Apartment?

A: If you are the owner-occupant of a single-family dwelling, you may establish one Detached Accessory Apartment in conjunction with your home. However, you cannot establish both a Detached and an Attached Accessory Apartment on your lot (see PDS [Bulletin #13](#) on Attached Accessory Apartments). A Detached Accessory Apartment may not be located on a lot on which a temporary dwelling is located.

NOTE: Prior to having plans designed for an accessory apartment, you should verify with PDS Permitting staff that your property is not a substandard lot. (See more information on back page, last bullet.)

Q: How do I file for a Detached Accessory Apartment Permit?

A: You will be required to submit the following:

- A completed Master Permit Application form.
- A filing fee.
- A site development plan drawn to scale, showing the location of the existing residence on the property, the proposed Detached Accessory Apartment, associated parking for both dwelling units, location of the septic systems serving both dwellings (septic tank and drainfield), if applicable, the on-site well serving both dwellings, if applicable, and a landscaping plan, if applicable.
- A floorplan drawn to scale, which clearly delineates both units to verify compliance with square footage requirements.

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.

Q: Do I also need a building permit?

A: Yes. When the Detached Accessory Apartment Permit is granted, you will need to obtain a building permit from PDS. (See PDS [Bulletin #23](#), Residential Building Permit Process). The only exception would be a conversion permit for a guest house to a Detached Accessory Apartment.

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 Apartment:

- **Owner-occupied:** The single-family dwelling in which the apartment is to be accessory must be owner-occupied and remain owner-occupied for as long as the Detached Accessory Apartment exists. The owner-occupant may live in the Detached Accessory Apartment after construction of the accessory unit.
- **Floor area:** The minimum floor area for a Detached Accessory Apartment shall be 360 square feet, except as provided in the next bullet. The floor area of the Detached Accessory Apartment shall not exceed 40 percent of the floor area of the single-family dwelling unit to which it is accessory, or 850 square feet, whichever is less. (Floor areas are calculated exclusive of garages, porches, or unfinished basements.)
- **Mobile home:** A mobile home may be allowed as a Detached Accessory Apartment on lots ten (10) acres or larger located outside of an Urban Growth Area if the accessory mobile remains subordinate (smaller in size) to the existing single-family dwelling unit.
- **Exterior features:** When a Detached Accessory Apartment is located within a new structure, the exterior materials, roof form, and window spacing and proportions shall approximate those within an existing single-family dwelling. In the case where the owner-occupied single-family dwelling unit is stick built and the accessory apartment is a mobile home, the applicable landscaping requirements shall be met. When a Detached Accessory Apartment is located within an existing structure, the structure is not required to approximate the exterior features of the existing single-family dwelling.
- **Water supply and sewage disposal:** An applicant must provide documentation that the water supply is potable and of adequate flow, and that the sewage or septic system is capable of handling the additional demand that would be placed upon it by the Detached Accessory Apartment.
- **Parking:** One off-street parking space shall be provided and designated for the Detached Accessory Apartment (in addition to the two off-street parking spaces, if any, to accommodate all vehicles owned and used by occupants of the Detached Accessory Apartment. Driveways may be counted as one parking space. No parking areas, other than driveways, shall be created in front yards.
- **Duplex:** A lot occupied with a duplex is not eligible to also have an accessory apartment.
- **Notice:** No portion of a Detached Accessory Apartment shall extend beyond the building front of the existing single-family dwelling in the R7200, R8400, R9600, R12500, R20000, WFB, LDMR, MR, NB, CB, PCB, and GC zones, unless screening, landscaping, or other measures are provided to ensure compatibility with the neighborhood.
- **Notice!!!** Prior to having plans designed for an accessory apartment, customers should verify with PDS Permitting staff that their property is not a substandard lot. "Substandard lot" means a lot that was lawfully established and met the lot area and lot width requirements of the Snohomish County Code when it was established but does not conform to the lot area and width required to create a new lot in the zone in which it is currently located. SCC 30.23.235(3) has been amended in Ordinance No. 11-058 to prohibit new attached and detached accessory apartments on substandard lots.