



TINY HOUSE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A TINY HOUSE?

A tiny house is defined by the International Residential Code (IRC) as a dwelling unit that is less than 400 square feet of floor area excluding sleeping lofts. The dwellings have permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation. Tiny houses have always been allowed under the building code, they just weren't called "tiny houses" until recently, when they began to gain popularity.

WHERE CAN I BUILD ONE?

Tiny houses can be built as a primary dwelling unit or as an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) to a single-family structure as permitted in [SMC 14.207.070](#). They are allowed wherever detached residential uses are allowed, including:

- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential (low, medium and high density)
- Commercial
- Historic Business District

DO I NEED A PERMIT FOR A TINY HOUSE?

Yes. A building permit is required for a tiny house. Electrical, mechanical, plumbing, right-of-way disturbance, and/or grading permits may also be required. Tiny houses require land use approval, connection to sewer and water utilities, and a foundation. A site plan will be required, showing compliance with setback regulations as well as utilities, access, parking, and other relevant requirements for new residences.

WHAT ARE THE BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS FOR A TINY HOUSE?

Rooms for sleeping and living cannot be less than 70 square feet and must be at least seven feet in one dimension. Minimum ceiling heights are 7 feet, and 6'-8" for bathrooms and laundry rooms. Tiny houses built on site are treated like any other structure, and must meet building code requirements for safety, structural, energy code, and ventilation.

WHAT IF I WANT TO PUT A PRE-MANUFACTURED TINY HOUSE ON MY LOT?

Tiny houses built off site must have [Factory Assembled Structures](#) (FAS) approval from the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I). Be aware there are different types of FAS structures and not all meet the requirements from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be considered a permanent living structure. A tiny house constructed on a chassis must be approved by L&I as a modular home. Trailers or wheeled units are not considered tiny houses. Recreational Park Trailers or Park Models do not meet HUD standards as a permanent living structure.

Prefabricated structures placed on a property still require City approval, including site plan approval, electrical, utility, and building permits.

HOW DO I BEGIN?

Before applying, you are encouraged to share your ideas with City staff. Early discussion may help to facilitate a rapid review of your application. It is a great opportunity to get early guidance from City staff on policies, regulations, and code compliance.

Pre-Application Review is offered free of charge through the [Self-Service Permit Portal \(SSPP\)](#). Click [here](#) for more information. All permit applications must be submitted through the SSPP.