



BUILDING AN ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU) IN TUKWILA

This page references the [Tukwila Municipal Code, Chapter 18.50.220](#). Please refer to the code for complete zoning standards regarding ADUs.

What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit, aka ADU?

An ADU is a dwelling unit located on the same lot as a “Principal Unit”, which is a single-family housing unit, duplex, triplex, townhome, or other housing unit. For a structure to be considered an ADU, it must include living, sleeping, kitchen, and bathroom facilities, and it must have its own access via a lockable, exterior entry door.

What areas of Tukwila are ADUs permitted?

ADUs may be permitted on any parcel that contains a principal residential unit.

What is the minimum lot size necessary to add an ADU?

ADUs are permitted on any size lot if other development standards (maximum building footprint, development area, etc.) are met. See page 2 for development standards.

How many ADUs can a property have?

Each principal unit may have up to two ADUs. These ADUs can be either detached (DADU) or attached (AADU) to the principal unit.

Must the owner live on site?

Owner occupancy is not required.

Is parking required for an ADU?

Each ADU must provide one (1) additional off-street/on-site parking space. If the ADU is located within one half (1/2) mile of a “Major Transit Stop”, no additional parking is required.

A “Major Transit Stop” includes the following stops:

- Tukwila Sounder and Amtrak Station
- Tukwila International Boulevard Link Light Rail Station
- Any bus stop served by a Bus Rapid Transit route (e.g., King County Metro Rapid Ride F Line)
- Any bus stop served by a bus route that utilizes High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes (e.g., King County Metro Route 150)
- Any bus stop served by a fixed route that runs in intervals of 15 minutes or less for at least 5 hours a day, and during peak hours on weekdays.

ADU DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

The following table shows the development standards for ADUs and other structures within common residential zoning districts.

Development Standards	Low Density Residential Zoning District	Medium and High-Density Residential Zoning Districts
Building Footprint, max. (all structures)	For lots larger than 6,500 square feet (sf), use the following formula: $(\text{Lot Area} - 6,500) / 100 = X$ $X * 0.125 = B$ 35% - B = Maximum Building Footprint % Lots smaller than 6,500 sf: 2,275 sf 6,500 sf lots: 35% of lot size	N/A
Development Area, max. (building footprint(s) + impervious surfaces)	75% of lot size	50% of lot size
Setbacks from property lines	Front: 20' Front to decks and porches: 15' Second front: 10' Sides: 5' Rear: 10' 0' rear setback if abutting an alley	Front 1 st floor: 15' Front 2 nd floor: 20' Second front 1 st floor: 7.5' Second front 2 nd floor: 10' Sides and rear 1 st floor: 10' Sides and rear 2 nd floor: 20' 0' rear setback if abutting an alley
Maximum ADU Interior Size	Attached ADU: 40% of the square footage of the principal unit, or 1,000 square feet , whichever is greater Detached ADU: 1,000 square feet	
Maximum Height	AADU: 30' DADU: 25'	

OWNING AND LEASING AN ADU

Once built, an ADU may be used for personal use, rented to a tenant, or potentially sold via either the condominium conversion or plat process.

If the zoning district permits, the plat process may allow an ADU to be divided from the principal unit via what is called a Unit Lot Short Plat. This process creates individual unit lots on which each housing unit will sit. The original lot, now called the parent lot, will remain, with the new lots inside of it. Those individual unit lots may then be sold, similar to the sale of other types of real property. Please see TMC 17.12.070 or contact the Department of Community Development if you have questions about the Unit Lot Short Plat process or standards.

The City of Tukwila does not review proposals to convert or establish housing units to condominiums. See Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 64.34 for the full standards of the Condominium Act.

BUSINESSES AND SHORT-TERM RENTALS

ADUs may not be rented for periods shorter than 30 days. No ADU may be listed as a bed and breakfast or short-term accommodation.

Anyone may operate a business from their home, subject to the standards for home-based businesses in Tukwila, including the resident of an ADU. However, if the ADU is not used as someone's permanent residence, a business cannot be operated within it. See TMC 18.50.240 for the standards for home-based businesses (Home Occupations).

CONVERTING EXISTING STRUCTURE INTO AN ADU

Often existing structures do not meet all the development standards of the zoning district they are located within. If you plan to convert an existing structure into an ADU, it is **not** required that the structure comply with the setbacks or development coverage requirements. All other development standards apply.

REQUIRED PERMITS

The following permits are required to establish an ADU (additional permits may be required upon review by DCD):

- Development (D) permit
- Electrical (E) permit
- Plumbing (PG) permit
- Mechanical (M) permit

If you want to have an internet service connection to your DADU, contact your internet service provider (ISP) early in your planning process; your ISP may also be required to apply for permits.

If the City receives a complaint about an ADU that was established without permits, a Notice of Violation will be issued to the owners and an inspection of the unit may be required. The owner will be required to legalize the unit or remove the features that make it a separate accessory unit. In addition, the owner may be subject to penalties as provided in Tukwila Municipal Code.

PROPERTY RESEARCH

Want to learn more about a property located in Tukwila? A variety of current and historic information is available online. For more information, please visit TukwilaWA.gov/departments/community-development/property-research

To find out what can be built on a property, you will need to first find out the property's zoning. The Tukwila iMap "Zoning" map layer provides information on the current zoning of a property: TukwilaWA.gov/iMap



[Scan to navigate to iMap](#)

OBTAINING PERMITS + FEES

All permits must be submitted as a **Construction Permit** via the Online Permitting Portal with the Permit Center: TukwilaWA.gov/PermitCenter

For **Attached ADUs**, an "Accessory Dwelling Unit – Attached" permit is required.

For **Detached ADUs**, an "Accessory Dwelling Unit – Detached" permit is required.

Permit Fees for each permit type may be found on the Permit Center page under "Permit Fees."



[Scan to navigate to the Permit Center](#)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Permit Center is available to help with the permit process via email, phone, and virtual appointment, please see the Permit Center page for more information.

If you have questions that involve more than one department, or you believe your project is complicated and requires in-depth discussion with the City, you may apply for a pre-application meeting. These meetings allow the City's development review team to provide feedback about your plans and explain the review process and schedule.

Note: You must have at least a site plan, even if it is incomplete or rudimentary, in order for feedback to be given. The more information you provide the development review team, the better the feedback they will be able to give you.

If you have any questions regarding the land use development standards for ADUs, contact Planning@TukwilaWA.gov.

MINIMUM BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS FOR ADUs

Summary:

- One-hour separation is required between each residential unit.
- An ADU requires its own source of heating.
- An ADU requires its own separate electrical power panel or meter.
- An ADU must have ventilation per Washington State Energy Code.
- An ADU must have plumbing and sanitation, including hot and cold water. All ADUs may use the same sewer connection as the principal unit, but the connection for detached ADUs must be split.
 - If the residence is on a septic system, it will need approval from the King County Department of Health.
- All bedrooms require emergency egress windows or other exits.
- An ADU must have installed smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

The following are the minimum building code requirements for building a new ADU or converting an existing building to an ADU. All conversions shall comply with current Building, Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, and local Tukwila codes with Washington State Code and code amendments.

1. Required Separations

A one-hour separation shall be required between the two occupants, both horizontal and/or vertical. See the following references from the building codes for separations between ADU and the remaining Dwelling Unit (other additional codes may apply):

- *2018 IBC* (Separations required between ADU and main residence.)
- *508.2.4 SEPARATION WALLS*. Walls separating dwelling units in the same building, walls separating sleeping units in the same building and walls separating dwelling or sleeping units from other occupancies contiguous to them in the same building shall be constructed as fire partitions in accordance with Section 420.
- *420.3 HORIZONTAL SEPARATION*. Floor assemblies separating dwelling units in the same buildings, floor assemblies separating sleeping units in the same building and floor assemblies separating dwelling or sleeping units from other occupancies contiguous to them in the same building shall be constructed as horizontal assemblies in accordance with Section 711.
- *708.3 Fire-resistance rating*. Fire partitions shall have a fire-resistance rating of not less than 1 hour.
- *710.6 PENETRATIONS*. The space around penetrating items shall be filled with an approved material to limit the free passage of smoke.
- *711.2.4.3 DWELLING UNITS AND SLEEPING UNITS*. Horizontal assemblies serving as dwelling or sleeping unit separations in accordance with Section 420.3 shall be not less than 1-hour fire-resistance-rated construction.

2. Heating and Ventilation, Utilities, Sanitation, Life Safety

DWELLING UNIT. (IRC Chapter 2 Definitions) A single unit providing complete independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation.

- *A. HEATING OR SPACE CONDITIONING R303.10* Required heating. Every dwelling unit shall be provided with heating facilities capable of maintaining a room temperature of not less than 68°F at a point 3

feet above the floor and 2 feet from exterior walls in habitable rooms at the design temperature. The installation of one or more portable space heaters shall not be used.

- **B. VENTILATION R303.** Required ventilation Ventilation is required in all dwellings by natural or mechanical means.
- **C. ELECTRICAL SERVICE E3601.2** Number of services. One- and two-family dwellings shall be supplied by only one service. (230.2) E3601.3 One building or other structure not to be supplied through another. Service conductors supplying a building or other structure shall not pass through the interior of another building or other structure. (230.3) * The ADU shall have control and access to its own electrical power panel independently connected to the main power or as a secondary option have an independent and separate power service to that ADU by a separate serviced meter and direct connected to the ADU's power panel.
- **D. PLUMBING AND SANITATION**
 - R306 SANITATION
 - R306. 1 Toilet facilities. Every dwelling unit shall be provided with a water closet, lavatory, and a bathtub or shower.
 - R306.2 Kitchen. Each dwelling unit shall be provided with a kitchen area and every kitchen area shall be provided with a sink.
 - R306.3 Sewage disposal. Plumbing fixtures shall be connected to a sanitary sewer or to an approved private sewage disposal system. * Depending on which method is to be used, the ADU shall have its own cleanout prior to connecting to the existing building sewer or at the exterior prior to connection to outside sanitary sewer. * For residence on septic system, King County Health shall be contacted to verify system is adequate for the addition of an ADU.
 - R306.4 Water supply to fixtures. Plumbing fixtures shall be connected to an approved water supply. Kitchen sinks, lavatories, bathtubs, showers, bidets, laundry tubs and washing machine outlets shall be provided with hot and cold water. * Key words are "hot and cold water" provided and separate from the main residence. Water supply shall have a separate shut-off valve at the supply to the ADU. Hot water shall be supplied by a separate water heating appliance located within the ADU.
- **E. LIFE SAFETY**
 - R310.1 Emergency escape and rescue opening required. Bedroom windows shall comply with building codes Egress Window requirements for location, size and sill height. * Existing spaces converted to ADU, where bedroom windows do not comply, windows shall be sized to comply per code.
 - R314 SMOKE ALARMS (See code for hardwired and other requirements) Smoke alarms shall comply with NFPA 72 and Section R314. Shall be installed in each bedroom and in the hallway within close vicinity of the bedrooms.

3. On Each Additional Story of the Dwelling:

R315 CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS (See code for other additional requirements) Carbon monoxide alarms shall comply with Section R315. Shall be installed in the hallway within close vicinity of the bedrooms. Where a fuel-burning appliance is located within a bedroom or its attached bathroom, a carbon monoxide alarm shall be installed within the bedroom.

4. New Attached Garages:

WAC 51-51-0314 R314.2.3 New attached garages. A heat detector or heat alarm rated for the ambient outdoor temperatures and humidity shall be installed in new garages that are attached to or located under new and existing dwellings. Heat detectors and heat alarms shall be installed in a central location and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

DISCLAIMER: This document should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. The applicant is responsible for compliance with all code and rule requirements, whether described in this document or not. The department may require any additional information needed to determine compliance with applicable codes and laws, in addition to that which is prescribed in this document. While the information supplied in this document was current when written, fees or standards may have changed.