



MASTER BUILDERS
ASSOCIATION
of King and Snohomish Counties

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Expanding Housing Options in the
Puget Sound Region

■ We believe everyone deserves a place to call home.

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Prepared by the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties

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OVERVIEW

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are compact, independent homes situated on the same lot as an existing single-family home, triplex, duplex, townhome, or other housing type. They are also commonly referred to as detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs), backyard cottages, or casitas. An attached ADU is a living space situated within or connected to another home, while a detached ADU stands independently and is separate from any other housing unit.

BACKGROUND



Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) have gained popularity as a means to expand housing supply, promote urban infill, and offer economic and social advantages to communities and cities. Below are some key benefits of ADUs:

Aging in Place: ADUs provide an opportunity for homeowners to age in place, accommodating caretakers or family members while maintaining independence.

Financial Benefits: ADUs provide lower-cost housing options and can serve as a revenue stream for homeowners, helping to offset mortgage payments and contributing to long-term wealth building.

Flexible Living: ADUs support multi-generational and flexible living arrangements. Homeowners can also use ADUs for short-term guest hosting, providing a comfortable space for friends and family.

Sustainability: ADUs typically use fewer resources than single-family homes, making them a more environmentally friendly housing option.

*Cover page: This attached accessory dwelling unit by LinMak Construction is in Kirkland's North Rosehill neighborhood.
Photo: Ruum Media*



Aesthetic Considerations: Rather than reconstructing the main house (which may not be feasible or could result in an oversized appearance), ADUs allow homeowners to maintain the neighborhood's architectural style while adding valuable living space.

While ADUs offer a promising solution to address the housing shortage, their construction can be challenging due to varying regulatory barriers and lot restrictions. In the past, the decision to permit or incentivize ADU construction rested solely with local jurisdictions. However, the passage of House Bill 1337 (HB 1337) in 2023 has changed the landscape. This new law mandates the adoption or modification of municipal zoning regulations to allow for at least two ADUs on lots within urban growth areas (UGAs) where single-family homes are permitted. As jurisdictions implement these changes, building ADUs should become more feasible, helping address our region's housing needs.

HOUSE BILL 1337

House Bill 1337 supersedes any previous zoning rules that do not align with its provisions. Under HB 1337, cities and counties were required to update their zoning and development regulations to comply with the new statewide standards by June 30, 2025.

KEY REQUIREMENTS OF HB 1337 INCLUDE:

- Permits the construction of two ADUs per lot, whether they are attached or detached.
- Legalizes ADUs on any lot size zoned for residential housing.
- Allows ADUs up to at least 1,000 square feet and a maximum height of 24 feet.
- Eliminates the requirement for the owner to live on-site.
- Caps impact fees for ADUs at 50% of those charged for houses.
- Removes parking requirements for ADUs within 1/2-mile or 15 minutes from a transit stop.
- Prohibits design standards stricter than those for the main house.
- Allows ADUs to be built up to abutting property lines on alleys.
- Allows ADUs to be created within existing structures, even when they don't meet current setback or lot coverage rules.
- Prohibits requiring public right-of-way improvements for ADUs.
- Legalizes the sale of ADUs as condominiums.





TRADE-OFFS & FINDING BALANCE

ADUs contribute to housing diversity and offer many benefits as a more affordable and sustainable housing type. However, they also come with trade-offs.

- **Yard Space:** Constructing an ADU may reduce available yard space. Detached ADUs often occupy part of the backyard of the primary home, reducing outdoor living areas. These impacts can be minimized by utilizing creative landscaping.
- **Reduced Parking:** Another trade-off includes more reliance on off-street parking or on public transportation. However, transportation, equity, and climate goals are more easily achieved when the need for homes is placed above the need for parking spaces. Cities can adopt flexible parking policies, considering proximity to transit, car-sharing options, and neighborhood walkability.
- **Smaller Footprint:** ADUs are compact, with sizes ranging from a few hundred to around 1,000 square feet. Balancing space efficiency with livability is essential.



*Detached accessory dwelling unit by Revolution Custom Homes
Photo: Ruum Media*

MODEL CODE SUGGESTIONS

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO EXPAND ADUS

As municipalities implement HB 1337 we ask them to consider additional steps they could take to expand ADUs. Despite ADUs being allowed, many builders and homeowners hesitate to construct them due to various challenges. These obstacles often include high permit fees, complex building codes, and stringent parking and setback requirements.

In addition to the minimum state requirements provided by HB 1337, MBAKS recommends implementing local codes with the following features:

- Either eliminate mandated minimum parking requirements or significantly reduce parking requirements, especially near transit or in areas with available street parking
- Expedited permitting processes
- Waived or greatly reduced permit fees, impact fees, and utility connection fees¹
- Set flexible size limits²

¹ Many local jurisdictions, such as Kirkland for example, already have reduced permit and impact fees for ADUs. This should be the standard adopted by all local governments, or they could choose to waive fees altogether. Under HB 1337, cities and counties may not assess impact fees on the construction of ADUs that are greater than 50 percent of the impact fees that would be imposed on the principal unit. Additionally, SB

5258 requires that any impact fee schedule adopted by local governments include consideration of the relative impacts of smaller homes, compared to larger single-family dwellings.

² Under state law, ADU size limits must allow a gross floor area of at least 1,000 square feet within urban growth areas. Local governments could choose to exceed this maximum



- Allow the ability to create independently metered utilities, including water, power, and gas for each unit, and the flexibility to access different utility hook-up points on the property
- Waived or greatly reduced street improvement requirements
- Flexible setback requirements
- Provide pre-approved ADU/DADU plans to streamline process
- Adopt provisions allowing ADUs to be created for ownership through methods in addition to a condominium³
- Allow and encourage panelized/prefab/modular ADU designs
- No requirement to notify adjacent property owners about proposed ADU projects if allowed under current code with no exemptions
- Allow square foot exemptions for spaces such as bike parking and consider exemptions for unheated storage space, or additional detached garages as well
- Ensure local tree codes and design standards do not preclude construction of ADUs on a lot.
- Allow flexibility to combine sewer lines onsite for the primary dwelling, ADU and DADU, using one sewer tap into the main in the street



*Aerial view of a single-family home with one attached and one detached accessory dwelling unit in Kirkland. Builder: Revolution Custom Homes
Photo: Ruum Media*

LOCAL ADU CODES

Following are some examples of ADU codes adopted in cities and counties within our region.

City of Bellevue

- [ADU Code](#): Bellevue allows up to two ADUs per lot to a maximum of 1,200 square feet or 40% of the combined area of the ADU and primary residence, excluding any garage area.
- [About Bellevue's Code](#): An overview and Frequently Asked Questions about Bellevue's ADU regulations.

City of Bothell

- [ADU Code](#): Under Bothell's code, two ADUs per lot are allowed, with one on middle housing lots.
- [ADU submittal checklist](#): Checklist contains information on fees and submittal requirements for reviewing applications to build an ADU in Bothell.

size limit, creating more flexibility for the design and construction of ADUs and more efficient use of all floor area if all other standards are met.

³ For example, ADUs can be created for ownership through fee simple. This could be accomplished via administrative review through unit lot subdivision (ULS).



City of Burien

- [ADU Code](#): Burien first legalized ADUs in 2019 and in 2025 adopted housing code amendments to comply with state laws, including HB 1337. Burien’s code allows up to two ADUs per lot.
- [Housing Code and Map Amendment](#): Passing on June 30, 2025, Burien’s Housing Code and Zoning Map Amendment expands the number and type of housing units permitting in residential zones across the city, including ADUs.

City of Everett

- [Ordinance 3963-23](#): Everett adopted Ordinance 3963-23 in 2023, which expands the availability of ADUs within the city. Two ADUs are permitted on each qualifying lot with relaxed height and setback requirements.
- [ADU Dashboard](#): This resource was created to serve as a guide to help homeowners with the process of permitting an ADU.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) have gained popularity as a means to expand housing supply, promote urban infill, and offer economic and social advantages to communities.

City of Kirkland

- [ADU regulations](#): Kirkland’s code allows up to two ADUs per lot up to a maximum size of 1,200 square feet.
- [The Kirkland ADU Toolkit](#): This comprehensive resource serves as a useful guide for a range of topics related to ADUs in the city.

City of Seattle

- [ADU Code](#): Seattle’s ADU code was overhauled in 2019 and further updated in 2025 with more changes pending.
 - To learn more, see: [Seattle Eases Accessory Dwelling Restrictions Just Ahead of State Deadline](#): Trumm, Doug—The Urbanist, July 1, 2025
- [ADUniverse](#): This resource features a step-by-step guide to the ADU process in Seattle.

Snohomish County

- [ADU Code](#): Allows ADUs on lots with single family homes and on lots with duplex homes.
- To learn more, see: [Snohomish County Relaxes Urban Accessory Dwelling Rules Ahead of State Deadlines](#): Fesler, Stephen—The Urbanist, March 31, 2025
- [PDS Assistance Bulletin on Detached Accessory Dwelling Units](#): Provides a Q&A resource on Snohomish County’s ADU code.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

Department of Commerce ADU Guidance	Link to resource
MRSC Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) FAQ	Link to resource
REALTORS® + Housing Tool	Link to resource
AARP All About Accessory Dwelling Units	Link to resource