



**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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ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT ORDINANCES

Expanding Housing Options in the Puget Sound Region

Prepared by the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties

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OVERVIEW

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are compact, independent residential units 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), mother-in-law suites, granny flats, or casitas. An attached ADU is a dwelling unit situated within or connected to another housing unit, 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. Here 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 can serve as a revenue stream for homeowners, helping offset housing costs and contributing to long-term wealth building.

Short-Term Guest Hosting: Homeowners can 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.

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 crisis, their construction can be challenging due to varying jurisdictional regulations 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, potentially easing the housing shortage.

HOUSE BILL 1337: ADU LEGISLATION

House Bill 1337 requires cities and counties that are fully planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA) to allow up to two ADUs. This legislation supersedes any existing zoning rules that do not align with its provisions. Municipalities are obligated to adopt, modify, and integrate HB 1337 into their land use regulations. Local jurisdictions subject to the new law have until six months following the next periodic comprehensive plan update—mid-2025—to adopt the changes.



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 detached single-family 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 footprints smaller than a typical single-family home. Balancing space efficiency with livability is essential.

MODEL CODE SUGGESTIONS GOING BEYOND HOUSE BILL 1337

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO FACILITATE ADUS

As municipalities integrate HB 1337 into their comprehensive plan updates and codes, we ask them to consider additional steps they could take to facilitate ADUs.

Despite ADUs being allowed, many builders and homeowners hesitate to construct them due to various challenges. These obstacles can 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 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
- 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

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 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.



- Adopt provisions allowing ADUs to be created for ownership through methods in addition to a condominium³
- Allow and encourage panelized/prefab/modular ADU designs
- 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

LOCAL ADU CODES

Following are examples of cities and counties within our region that already have leading ADU codes in place or have updated their codes to comply with HB 1337. As more jurisdictions work to adopt these changes, it is instructive to see how others are expanding this housing type.

City of Edmonds

- [ADU Code Amendments](#): Passing in June 2024, Edmonds is aligning with HB 1337 by allowing up to two ADUs per lot. The city has been expediting the implementation of these regulations to ensure their inclusion in its ongoing 2024 Comprehensive Plan update.

City of Everett

- [Ordinance 3963-23](#): Everett adopted Ordinance 3963-23 in July 2023, which expands the availability of ADUs within the city. Two ADUs are permitted per each qualifying lot with relaxed height and setback requirements.
- [ADU Dashboard](#): A resource dashboard was created with data and maps regarding ADUs as well as general resources to help homeowners with the process.

City of Kirkland

- Reforms passed in March 2020 were part of Kirkland's broader code changes that expanded middle housing choices throughout the city. [Kirkland's code guidelines](#) aim for streamlined and incentivized ADUs.
- [Pre-Approved DADU Program](#): The pre-approved detached accessory dwelling unit (DADU) program makes for a faster and more affordable way to add an ADU to properties.

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City of Lake Stevens

- [Ordinance 1179](#): Aligning with HB 1110 and HB 1337, Lake Stevens passed amended [housing regulations](#) in February 2024 to allow both detached and attached ADUs.

City of Renton

- [PRADU Program](#): The City of Renton offers free ADU model base plans for residential property owners within its jurisdictional boundary.
- [Housing Innovations Program: Renton Permit Ready ADU Case Study \(psrc.org\)](#)

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 Seattle

- **Seattle’s ADU Reform:** In July 2019, Seattle adopted legislation to remove regulatory barriers and make it easier for property owners to create ADUs in Seattle’s neighborhood residential zones. Properties are permitted to have two ADUs with no off-street parking and occupancy requirements.
- **Pre-Approved DADU Plans:** The Office of Planning and Development (OPCD) launched the [ADUniverse website](#) in 2020. Included in this is a gallery of pre-approved designs created by local designers and architects to facilitate a streamlined permitting process for ADUs/DADUs.

Snohomish County

- Passed [ADU regulatory reforms](#) in June 2021 allowing two ADUs per lot in urban areas.
 - [30.28.010 Accessory dwelling units](#) – Snohomish County Code
 - [PDS Assistance Bulletin on Detached Accessory Dwelling Units](#)

TOOLS & RESOURCES

PLANNING INSIGHTS: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND PRACTICAL TOOLS

Department of Commerce ADU Guidance	Link to resource
MRSC Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) FAQ	Link to resource
Puget Sound Regional Council	Link to resource
AARP All About Accessory Dwelling Units	Link to resource