



Permanent Accessory Dwelling Units

Administrative Uses and Approvals

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How can I get a Permanent Accessory Dwelling Unit?

In most residential zones, property owners within Whatcom County may apply to place an accessory single-family dwelling, either attached to the primary residence or detached, on their residential property. Properties located outside Urban Growth Areas have minimum lot size restrictions. Properties located within the Lake Whatcom Watershed have additional restrictions on density requirements and lot sizes, as well as impervious surface restrictions. Properties located within Urban Growth Areas do not have minimum lot size restrictions. However, the proposal must comply with zoning setbacks, lot coverage, height and access requirements. Accessory dwelling units cannot in any case exceed 1,248 square feet of living space and must be located closer to the existing residence than any property line.

Will I still need a building permit?

Yes. Administrative approvals permit certain land use activities. To construct buildings, garages, etc., you are required to obtain additional permits including the building permit. Once you have received the Administrative Approval, you may apply for a building permit for the accessory dwelling unit. Information packets for building permits are available at the PDS counter. **Please bring a copy of your Administrative Approval**

with you when submitting your building permit application.

Application process

In order to determine if you qualify for an accessory dwelling, you must provide Planning and Development Services with your tax parcel number. This is a 12-digit number followed by 4 zeros that can be found on your tax notice. This number identifies your property on zoning maps and enables PDS staff to determine the parcel location, zoning designation and property size. Once a determination has been made that your property qualifies for an Permanent Accessory Dwelling Unit, you will be required to provide the following information for permit submittal:

1. A completed Master Land Use Application and Accessory Housing Checklist.
2. A copy of your deed for the property.
3. Health Department approved written verification of septic/sewer and water availability for the second dwelling. Your existing services may or may not be adequate to support an additional dwelling.
4. Three (3) copies of a site plan indicating the location, size and setback of all buildings on the site, including garages, sheds etc., location of septic systems and wells and easements, and the location, width and

THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES HANDOUT SERIES

Whatcom County Planning & Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226
Phone (360) 676-6907 ▪ Fax (360) 738-2525 ▪ Inspections (360) 738-2520

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length of driveway access. Site plans must be drawn in ink and all dimensions shall be clearly labeled or a scale shall be provided. Adjacent roads shall be labeled and a north arrow shall be placed on the plan.

5. When the new dwelling will use the same septic system as the existing residence, a floor plan for both the proposed dwelling and the existing dwelling is required by the Health Department.
6. A list of the names, addresses and parcel numbers for all property owners within 300 feet (if parcel is located in an Urban Growth Area) or 1000 feet (if parcel is located outside of an Urban Growth Area) from the boundaries of the subject site. In addition, stamped addressed envelopes for each of these property owners shall be submitted with the application. This list of names, addresses and parcel numbers can be obtained from the Whatcom County Assessor's Office in the Whatcom County Courthouse at 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham.

Note: Please do not put your return address on the envelopes as they will be stamped with the PDS return address before mailing.

7. Fees – Please refer to the current Whatcom County Fee Schedule. Your permit may require the following fees:
Critical Areas Review, C.A. Site visit, Engineering Review, Lake Whatcom Watershed Review, and others.

In addition, you will be required to place a posting notice (provided by PDS) on the subject property(s), visible to the road, which shall be maintained for the duration of the permit process. You will also be required to

sign a Certification of Posting of the time and date that you posted the site.

Following the public comment period and various reviews by PDS, Engineering, the Fire Marshal's Office, and Health, you will be advised of the concerns each agency has and will be asked to address each one, if any. These concerns must be addressed prior to the issuance of the Administrative Approval.

You will also be required to sign an Accessory Housing Agreement, which restricts the sale of the accessory dwelling separate from the primary residence, unless the zoning changes, and verifying that you, as the property owner, will live in one of the two residences on the site. This agreement must be filed with the Whatcom County Auditor in the Courthouse at 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, and a recorded copy returned to PDS prior to issuance of your Administrative Approval.

Information

Due to the administrative complexity of these regulations, it is usually best to visit with PDS staff or contact the Zoning Administrator to answer any additional questions.

Planning and Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, Washington 98226 USA
E-mail: pds@co.whatcom.wa.us

Staff Contact: Zoning Administrator
Phone: (360) 676-6907