

Residential Garages and Sheds

ACCESSORY STRUCTURES IN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

Detached garages and sheds are referred to as “accessory structures” because they are an accessory or secondary to the main building on the property – the home. A building permit is required for any addition to an existing building or for any new accessory structure that is 200 square feet or larger.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS



ATTACHED ACCESSORY USE

- Attached structures, remodels or additions, have the same setback and height standards as the main dwelling.
- Additional building code requirements may apply, such as fire separation.
- For properties in residential zones, contiguous usable open yard space is required in the rear or side yard that is equal to at least 10% of the size of the parcel. This is in addition to the setback requirements. See [Residential Setbacks and Development Standards Tip Sheet](#).
- For parcels 3,500 sf or larger, dimensions of this open yard space must be at least 15 feet.
- For parcels less than 3,500 sf, dimensions of open yard space must be at least 12 feet.
- Critical areas, structures, right-of-way, driveway, and vehicle parking areas do not count toward usable open yard space.

Note: If your residence is not located in a residential zone, such as a mixed-use zone, different regulations apply. You can contact a Land Use Planner to discuss at (253) 591-5030.



DETACHED ACCESSORY STRUCTURE

- Detached structures that are not connected to the main dwelling are limited to 15 ft height, as measured per the Building Code, unless located in a View Sensitive District (VSD). For VSD information, see [Height Allowances Tip Sheet](#).
- If the structure is located in the rear yard and completely behind the rear building wall of the main dwelling (or any attached structures, such as decks or porches), then there is no zoning setback requirement for the structure. However, on corner lots, the main building side yard setback is required along the corner side property line. Building/fire separation also applies.
- The structure must be located on the same parcel and behind the front wall of the main dwelling.
- All detached accessory structures on a property have a total size limit. Whichever is less is the maximum total allowed:
 - 85% of building footprint of the house
 - 15% of the parcel area
 - 1,000 square feet



Note: This Tip Sheet does not substitute for codes and regulations.

The applicant is responsible for compliance with all codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.

More information: City of Tacoma, Planning and Development Services | www.tacomapermits.org (253) 591-5030

To request this information in an alternative format or a reasonable accommodation, please call 253-591-5030 (voice).
TTY or STS users please dial 711 to connect to Washington Relay Services.

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SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST FOR A BUILDING PERMIT

- Site plan to scale (1" = 20').
- Show dimensions from all structures to property lines.
- Floor plan to scale (1/4" = 1').
- Show existing or proposed sinks, toilets, doors, walls, and windows.
- Building elevations to scale. Show exterior view of all sides of the building
- Foundation plan
- Roof framing plan
- Wall sections
- Plumbing and mechanical plans
- Height survey, if applicable*
- Other Information requested by staff

*If you're proposing a detached structure within 2 feet of the height limit in a View Sensitive District (VSD), a height survey will also be required at the time of submittal. See [Residential Height Allowances Tip Sheet](#).

HABITABLE SPACE

Habitable space is an area with sleeping, bathroom, and kitchen facilities. If you're proposing a sink, shower, or toilet, or stove/kitchen, contact a Land Use Planner to determine if the zoning code allows it. Creation of habitable space in garages and sheds requires an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Permit in most zoning districts. See [Accessory Dwelling Unit Tip Sheet](#) for more information.

If you are not creating habitable space, but would like to install plumbing (maximum 2" diameter line) for sink or laundry facilities in a detached garage or workshop, this may be allowed upon review by the Building Official. If it is allowed, you will also need a plumbing permit. A Side Sewer Connection Permit will be required for a sewer connection.

ACCESS AND PARKING

In most zoning districts, single-family or duplexes must have two parking spaces for each unit located on the private property. Off-street parking must be located in the rear portion of the property and cannot be accessed from the front of the property, unless determined by the City Engineer that access to the rear cannot be practicably developed. Driveway or parking areas cannot exceed 50 percent of the front yard area or, if on a corner lot, 50 percent of a corner street side yard.

GETTING A PERMIT

1. What zoning district is your property located in?

Before submitting an application, check your zoning with a Land Use Planner at (253) 591-5030 or in person at Planning and Development Services: Tacoma Municipal Building, 747 Market St, 3rd floor.

2. Submit your application and drawings.

All drawings may be reviewed electronically as PDF's. See [Drawings](#) and [Electronic File Standards](#) tip sheets for electronic submittal and drawing information. If you have building code questions regarding your drawings, call a Residential reviewer at (253) 591-5030.

When you are ready to apply for your permit, go to [TacomaPermits.org](#) – Apply for Permits – and read the [Getting Started Guide](#). Then go to [Tacoma Permits \(ACA\)](#) and register for an account, select Permits, and submit an application for Residential New Building (new structures) or Residential Alteration (remodels and additions).

3. Review and issuance.

After initial review of your drawings, you may be asked to submit corrections or additional information in order to approve the project. All revisions should be submitted through Tacoma Permits (ACA). After your drawings are approved, your permit will be made "ready to issue" by a permit specialist. Permit fees will be assessed based on project valuation (total project construction costs) and are due at the time of issuance. For a fee estimate, contact a Permit Specialist at (253) 591-5030.

4. Schedule inspections.

Call to schedule inspections within six months of receiving the building permit. At least 10% of the work must be completed and verified by a building inspector every six months for the permit to remain valid. No permit may be extended more than five years from the date of issuance.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) [13.060.010.E-F – General Regulations, 13.06.020 – Residential Districts, 2.02 – Building Code](#)



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