



## TINY HOMES HANDOUT

### What is a Tiny Home?

The International Residential Code (IRC) defines tiny homes or tiny houses as a dwelling unit that is less than 400 square feet of floor area, excluding sleeping lofts. The tiny house must have permanent living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation areas built in accordance with the residential code. In the city of Lake Stevens, a tiny home is considered a very small house built on-site and not mounted on wheels. Trailers or wheeled units are not always considered tiny houses – to be considered a tiny house – the unit must be a modular home (WAC 296-150F) and be affixed to a foundation and have permanent utilities. Tiny houses have always been allowed under the building code, they just weren't called "tiny houses" until recently, when they began to gain popularity.

### Where can I build a Tiny Home?

Tiny houses can be primary dwelling units or as an Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) to a single-family structure as permitted in LSMC 14.80.10 (2)(b) and 14.44.045 in any of the city's residential zoning districts including: R4, WR, R6, R8-12, MFR.

### Requirements for a Tiny Home.

Rooms for sleeping and living cannot be less than 70 square feet and must be at least seven feet in one dimension. Minimum ceiling heights are usually seven feet; bathrooms and laundry rooms can reduce the ceiling height by four inches. Site-built tiny houses built are treated like any other structure, and must meet building code requirement for safety, structural, energy code, and ventilation.

### Can I build a Tiny Home on my lot?

Tiny houses built off-site must have Factory Assembled Structures (FAS) approval from the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I). Be aware there are different types of FAS structures and not all meet the requirements from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be considered a permanent living structure. A tiny house constructed on a chassis must be approved by L&I as a modular home. All prefabricated structures placed on a property still require city approval, including site plan approval, electrical, utility, and building permits.

### References

[Tiny Houses \(wa.gov\)](http://www.wa.gov)  
[Home \(wabo.org\)](http://www.wabo.org)

### Do I need a permit for a Tiny Home?

Yes. A building permit is required for a tiny house. Electrical, mechanical, plumbing, right-of-way disturbance, and/or grading permits may also be required. Tiny houses require connection to sewer and water utilities, and a foundation. A site plan is required, showing compliance with setbacks as well as utilities, access, parking, and other relevant requirements for new residences.

### HOW DO I BEGIN?

Before applying, you are encouraged to discuss your project with city staff. Early discussion help ensure a more successful application. It is a great opportunity to get early guidance from city staff on policies, regulations, and code compliance. All permit applications must be submitted through the [Citizen Connect](#).