

Accessory Structures

ZONING CODE UPDATE DISCUSSION DRAFT – JUNE 2015



This project addresses the City's Zoning Code regulations for accessory structures. Accessory structures are of secondary importance on a site and include buildings such as garages, storage sheds, home offices and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). They also include uncovered structures such as decks, trellises, ADA ramps and mechanical equipment. The focus of this project is on detached accessory structures built in conjunction with houses, attached houses and duplexes.

Portlanders are building and using accessory structures for a variety of uses. Often the same structure has multiple purposes. Current regulations subject accessory structures to different setbacks, height maximums and site design standards, depending on the use of the structure. Having different regulations creates complexity that makes it hard for owners, neighbors and builders to determine what is allowed. At the same time, structures in residential backyards can affect adjoining neighbors.

Project Proposal

The Accessory Structures Code Amendment Project proposes to streamline the regulations for accessory structures. These proposed regulations are based more on form (setbacks, height and bulk) rather than function (how the building is used). The amendments create one set of regulations that applies to all covered accessory structures. While the focus of the project is on residential development and zones, changes are also made to other zones for consistency.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the project website:

www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/ricap

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Project Timeline



Accessory Structures – Code Amendments and Structure Types

There are four categories of accessory structures that are affected by the code changes. These changes predominantly affect structures that are accessory to houses, attached houses and duplexes.

1. Detached Covered Accessory Structures

Detached covered accessory structures include garages, carports, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), artist studios, storage buildings and greenhouses. The proposed regulations consolidate the variety of regulations into one set of standards based on the size and location of the structure. The proposed rules will:

- Allow smaller detached covered accessory structures in side and rear setbacks.
- Add standards, such as limiting windows and doors within the setback, or requiring screening, that address impacts on adjoining properties.
- Create a single, 20-foot height standard for all detached covered structures.
- Require all covered accessory structures over 15 feet in height to meet a revised set of compatibility standards.



2. Detached Uncovered Vertical Structures

Vertical structures include flag poles, trellises, arbors, play structures, antennas and lamp posts. The proposed regulations create a set of standards that treat uncovered structures similar to covered structures while acknowledging the unique characteristics of some vertical structures.

The proposed rules will:

- Allow some vertical structures in side and rear setbacks (like arbors or trellises) if they meet a set of standards similar to those for covered accessory structures.
- Continue to allow certain smaller structures such as statues, lamp posts or entry arbors in all setbacks.



3. Uncovered Horizontal Structures

Horizontal structures include decks, stairways, entry bridges, ADA ramps, pools, tennis courts and hot tubs that are not covered or enclosed. The proposed regulations clarify how existing regulations should be applied and will:

- Separate the regulations for detached structures from those that apply to attached structures.
- Continue to allow attached or detached structures (like decks) within setbacks if under 30 inches in height. A taller structure may project 20 percent into a setback.



4. Mechanical Equipment

Mechanical equipment includes heating and air conditioning systems, radon filters and other equipment used in conjunction with the building. Currently these are not allowed in any residential setback. The proposed regulations will allow detached equipment in the side and rear setback if they are screened and can meet the city's noise standards.

