

FAQ's for Tiny Houses

Can RV's or travel trailers be used as a tiny home?

No, tiny houses or tiny houses on chassis must be built to the International Residential Code (IRC). RV's and travel trailers are built under different standards. This ordinance specifically excludes RV's, self-propelled vehicles, and fifth-wheel trailers from being used as tiny homes.

If passed, would this ordinance allow people to park a tiny house on chassis in their driveway or as an ADU?

No, this ordinance would only allow tiny houses in mobile/manufactured home parks and on lots as a primary structure in some zoning districts through the conditional use permit process.

Tiny houses on chassis are not a defined structure type in the IRC. How will tiny houses on chassis be inspected, and what safety precautions will be in place to ensure they are safe for residential use?

The ordinance as proposed requires that tiny houses on chassis be built in accordance with the IRC from the floor joists up. The chassis will need to provide adequate structural strength to support the structure as determined by a manufacturer or third-party certification. Tiny houses on chassis will be constructed in Sitka under a building permit subject to inspection. Tiny houses built outside of Sitka can be placed here for residential use if an applicant can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Building Official that the structure was built to the IRC standards.

This ordinance would allow tiny houses on permanent foundations to be built in mobile/manufactured home parks. What are the risks for owners of the structure given that they don't own the land?

Structures on foundations can be detached and removed from the foundation – this is not an uncommon occurrence. As the maximum size for tiny house is 400 square feet, removal from a foundation is possible. And the remaining foundation could still be demolished or reused. Further, many mobile/manufactured homes currently in parks are effectively permanently placed/non-transportable.

Outside of mobile/manufactured homes, where could tiny houses be placed/built?

Currently, without any code amendments, tiny houses on permanent foundations can be built on any property in any zone that allows a single-family home. The zoning code does not have any square footage minimums for single-family homes. This ordinance would conditionally allow a single tiny house on chassis to be placed in zones that currently allow a single manufactured home on lot. Those zones include R-1 MH, R-1 LDMH, R-2 MHP, C-2, and WD.