

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Parking Waivers for Accessory Dwelling Units

Updated February 26, 2019

This Tip is intended to explain the eligibility criteria for parking waivers for accessory dwelling units and how to apply for parking waivers. You need to request a parking waiver when you submit your application to construct your accessory dwelling unit. You have two application paths that are described in this Tip.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are allowed with permit authorization on lots that include a single-family structure in single-family and commercial zones and on lots that include a single-family structure, rowhouse or townhouse in lowrise zones. ADUs can be either attached to the principal home or detached (which is known as a backyard cottage or detached accessory dwelling unit).

In most cases, in single-family zones, two parking spaces are required, one for the single-family residence and the other for the ADU (whether in the single-family structure or detached). However, an additional parking space for the ADU or backyard cottage is not required if the property is located in a designated urban village or urban center. Also, no parking is required for an ADU in a multifamily zone.

In single-family zones, the Director of the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) may waive the requirement for one or both stalls where "topography or location of existing principal or accessory structures makes provision of one or both of the parking spaces unduly burdensome." The two spaces can be provided in tandem (i.e., one behind the other).

You have the option to request a parking waiver if you believe that parking cannot be provided on your lot and the proposed accessory dwelling unit is not located within the University District or areas around Alki Ave Southwest. Maps of these areas are included on pages 3 and 4 of this Tip. You should make the parking waiver request when you submit your permit application for the accessory dwelling unit. There are two possible paths to

follow that may lead to a parking waiver being granted. This document contains instructions for preparing and presenting information which should be included with a permit application for an accessory dwelling unit if a parking waiver is being requested.

Path #1

The Lot is Not Located Within an RPZ Zone

To determine whether or not the site is located in a RPZ, examine the block front in front of the proposed accessory dwelling unit site to see if there are any RPZ signs that limit on-street parking without a permit. You should also refer to the interactive RPZ map at www.seattle.gov/transportation/RPZProgram on the Seattle Department of Transportation's website.

If the lot is not located within an RPZ zone, in order for SDCI to allow a parking waiver, you must demonstrate that the topography or location of existing structures would make it difficult to provide one or both of the required parking spaces. This information should be shown on your site plan.

If steep topography is the reason that parking cannot be provided, then your site plan should include information which clearly demonstrates the location and steepness of the slope on the site. The site plan should include contour lines which reflect the existing grades at two-foot intervals. If retaining walls or rookeries exist on the site, the site plan should indicate the elevation at the top and bottom of these features. For additions or new construction where the existing grades will be disturbed, you must provide a topographic survey (stamped by a licensed surveyor).

The Land Use Code contains some exceptions to the allowed location of parking based on slope of the lot. There are also limitations to the slope and design of a driveway. The zoning reviewer for your project will consider these factors when determining whether the slope is steep enough to warrant further consideration of a waiver.

If the location of existing structures is the reason that parking cannot be provided, then your site plan should



include the distances from each structure to all property lines. It is important to show whether the lot abuts an alley, whether the alley is improved, and the location of other features that would make the installation of a driveway difficult such as (but not limited to) fire hydrants, utility poles, bus stops, street signs, etc.

The zoning reviewer will review the site plan to determine whether a ten-foot-wide driveway could be constructed that would lead to an area on the lot where parking is allowed to be located. If not, then the site conditions would warrant further consideration of the parking waiver.

For specific information regarding code requirements and exceptions in a particular zone, you should speak to a land use planner at the Applicant Service Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave.

Path #2

The Lot is Located Within an RPZ Zone

If you are located within an RPZ, it may still be possible to obtain a parking waiver if adequate parking capacity exists. To determine if adequate parking capacity exists, you will need to complete a parking waiver study. There is a cost for processing the parking waiver study that you will need to pay when you submit your permit application for the accessory dwelling unit.

How to Prepare a Parking Waiver Study if You are Located Within an RPZ

A parking waiver study is a report which documents how many legal on-street parking spaces are available within a 400-foot walking distance of the subject site and the extent to which these spaces are actually used during an average week. The study can be prepared by a land use or transportation consultant, or by the homeowner requesting the accessory dwelling unit. The typical parking study follows the following steps:

1. Define the study area. The study should be performed over an area which is within a 400-foot walking distance of the subject property. In other words, the area is not a 400-foot radius surrounding the subject property. The 400-foot distance should be measured along normal routes where a pedestrian would walk such as the sidewalk or edge of the road. When defining the study area, barriers such as major arterials and geographic features such as ravines or bluffs which might discourage the average person from parking on adjacent streets should be noted.

A vicinity plan should be submitted which identifies the subject property where the accessory dwelling unit is proposed, and shows the blocks within a 400-foot walking distance in all directions from the property. The vicinity plan should be drawn at a scale of no less than one inch equals 200 feet. SDCI has maps which are available for the public to view which contain information about the size of lots, lengths of blocks and widths of streets which can help in determining the study area. These maps work well as a vicinity plan, and copies of the city maps can be obtained from a land use planner at the SDCI Public Resource Center (PRC) for a small copying fee.

2. Determine the legal parking supply. Once a copy of the city map is obtained, and the 400 foot walking distance is mapped, it becomes clear which blocks need to be included in the parking study. Only those block fronts, or portions of block fronts within 400 feet of the site need to be included in the study. Each block front or portion of block front within the study area will need to be analyzed to determine the number of legal on-street parking spaces available. *An example of a vicinity plan and block front data sheet is included at the end of this document to help demonstrate how the required information should be shown.*

On each block front data sheet, complete the top portion of the sheet which identifies which block front is being surveyed, the name of the person(s) collecting data, and the date that the data was collected. At the bottom portion of the sheet, you will find a large circle with an "N" in the middle. Darken the area between the directional lines in the circle to indicate which direction is North.

The location of each driveway, fire hydrant, stop sign, and similar street features should be clearly shown on each block front plan. In addition, certain distances adjacent to these features cannot legally be used for parking. A list of the common street features and the associated restricted distances from these features is provided below.

Required Clear Distances From Common Street Features

- Distance from the sidewalk of an unmarked* intersection (or from the edge of pavement where there are no sidewalks): **20 feet**
- Distance from the sidewalk at a marked* intersection: **30 feet**
- Each side of a driveway or alley: **5 feet**
- Each side of a fire hydrant: **15 feet**

- Special zones (no parking, loading, time limit parking, metered parking, bus zones): **No added area beyond the width of zone**

**A marked intersection is an intersection where a traffic light, stop sign or yield sign is installed.*

- The measurements of the length of the block face can be obtained from the SDCI geographic information system (GIS) maps; width of driveways, placement of hydrants and street signs, etc. are measurements made by the person(s) preparing the study. Once this information is obtained, the unobstructed lengths of street between street features available for legal on-street parking can be determined based on the chart below and should be noted on each block front plan:

Number of Legal On-Street Parking Spaces

Distance	Number	Distance	Number
	of Spaces		of Spaces
16-31 feet	1	168-183 feet	9
32-53 feet	2	184-205 feet	10
54-69 feet	3	206-221 feet	11
70-91 feet	4	222-243 feet	12
92-107 feet	5	244-259 feet	13
108-129 feet	6	260-281 feet	14
130-145 feet	7	282-297 feet	15
146-167 feet	8	298-319 feet	16

- 3. Define the study time.** At least two different days should be surveyed, and these should either be Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday of the same or successive weeks. The parking study should occur during the time period in which the residential parking zone (RPZ) restrictions apply. For example, if the RPZ requires a permit to park on-street anytime between 6 p.m. and midnight, the parking study should be completed any time between 6 p.m. and midnight.
- 4. Count the parked cars.** Once the parking capacity of the area has been established, the actual number of parked cars along a block face can be counted. Again, this count should take place during the time period as determined above. The actual number of parked cars and the date counted should be noted on the block front data sheet. Cars which are parked on the street in places which are not considered legal should be included in the study to indicate the actual demand for parking in the neighborhood.

- 5. Calculate the rate of parking utilization.** Determine the rate of parking utilization by performing the following calculations:

- Add the total number of parked cars for the two different days surveyed together and divide the sum by two. This results in the “average” number of parked cars.
- Divide the “average” number of parked cars by the sum of the legally available number of parking spaces for each block front, then multiply that fraction by 100. This results in the percent of parking utilization for the study period. A summary sheet for these calculations is included at the end of this document.

- 6. Analyzing the Results of the Parking Waiver Study.** The zoning reviewer who reviews the parking study after it is submitted will determine whether the information submitted warrants a waiver of the required parking. Analysis of the parking study may include a site visit by the zoning reviewer to verify the information.

On-street parking will be considered to be at capacity when the utilization rate is 75 percent or greater. Parking waivers will not be granted if the utilization rate is 75 percent or higher.

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of SDCI Tips, Director's Rules, and the Seattle Municipal Code are available on the "Resources" page of our website at www.seattle.gov/sdci. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this Tip, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.

EXAMPLE



**MAP FOR 400' STUDY
(Not to scale)**

LEGAL DISCLAIMER: This Tip should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. The applicant is responsible for compliance with all code and rule requirements, whether or not described in this Tip.

Parking Utilization Summary Sheet

EXAMPLE

Address of Subject property 8735 1ST AVE N.

Name of Property Owner MRS INLAW APT.

SDCI Project # _____

Name of person(s) or consultant preparing Parking Utilization Study MRS INLAW APT.

Dates that parking survey information was gathered 9/6/96, 9/8/96, 9 P.M.

Total number of on-street parked cars on the 1st night of parking survey (A) 4

Total number of on-street parked cars on the 2nd night of parking survey (B) 6

Average number of on-street parked cars within 400 feet of the subject site [(A + B) divided by 2] (C) 5

Total number of legal on-street parking spaces available within 400 feet of the subject property (D) 10

Parking Utilization Rate

(C divided by D) x 100 = Parking Utilization Rate

5 divided by 10 = 0.5 x 100 = 50%

Block Front Plan Data Sheet

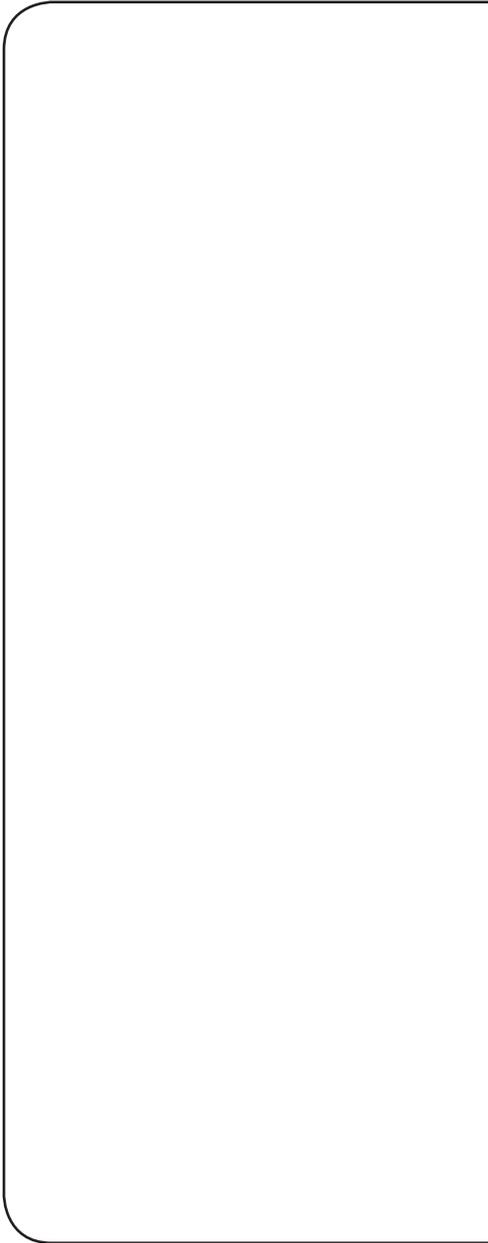
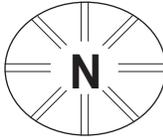
Street name _____

Date _____

Segment of _____

Name of Data _____

*Complete one sheet for each block front within the study area.
A block front is defined as one side of the block, from cross-street to cross-street.*

			
			
		1st Night	
		2nd Night	

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Parking Utilization Summary Sheet

Address of Subject property _____

Name of Property Owner _____

SDCI Project # _____

Name of person(s) or consultant preparing Parking Utilization Study _____

Dates and times that parking survey information was gathered _____

Total number of on-street parked cars on the 1st night of parking survey (A) _____

Total number of on-street parked cars on the 2nd night of parking survey (B) _____

Average number of on-street parked cars within 400 feet of the subject site [(A + B) divided by 2] (C) _____

Total number of legal on-street parking spaces available within 400 feet of the subject property (D) _____

Parking Utilization Rate

(C divided by D) x 100 = Parking Utilization Rate

_____ divided by _____ = _____ x 100 = _____ %

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**Parking Waiver Request Form for an
Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) or Backyard Cottage
(Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit/DADU)**

Please submit this form along with required plans and other documents

Project #	Project Address:
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Description/Reason for Request:
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<p>For lots not located within a Residential Parking Zone (RPZ), select all that apply:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Topography makes it difficult to provide parking</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Structure location makes it difficult to provide parking</p>
<p>For lots located within a Residential Parking Zone (RPZ), provide the following:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Parking waiver study</p>

Applicant First Name:	Applicant Last Name:
Address:	
Phone Number	
Email Address	
Relationship to applicant (select one)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Architect <input type="checkbox"/> Agent <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor	
Applicant Signature:	Date Signed: