

Seattle Permits

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

Home Occupations Including Bed and Breakfasts

Updated July 30, 2023

Home occupations are allowed as accessory uses in dwelling units in Seattle, subject to these conditions:

- The home occupation must be conducted by someone living in the dwelling unit.
- The home occupation must be clearly incidental to the use of the property as a dwelling.
- Home occupations must be conducted only within legal structures or outdoor locations on the lot.
- In legal detached accessory dwelling units, the same rules for home occupations apply.
- Child care* may be conducted only in the principal structure or in a legal accessory dwelling unit. Bed and breakfast occupations may be conducted only in the principal structure (see page 2).
- Child care play areas or other outdoor features normally associated with dwelling units, such as normally allowed parking, are allowed.
- No outdoor storage is permitted in conjunction with the occupation.
- A maximum of three passenger vehicles, vans and similar vehicles associated with the home occupation (less than 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight) are permitted to be at the home occupation site. For lots developed with a single-family dwelling in NR zones, this limit is in addition to the outdoor parking limit.
- The occupation must not produce noise impacts, odor, smoke, dust, light and glare, electrical interference or other similar impacts extending beyond the property line of the lot where the occupation is located.
- Drive-in businesses are not allowed as home occupations.

- Interior and exterior alterations consistent with the development standards of the underlying zones are permitted.
- For single family and duplex structures, home occupations within a dwelling unit may not take up more than 500 square feet of the dwelling unit, under the provisions of the Seattle Residential Code (section R202 Dwelling Unit).

* NOTE: For a child care other than a Family Home Child Care as defined by the Washington State Department of Early Learning, see Tip 108, Regulations Governing Child Care Centers.

Signs

Signs that do not exceed 5 square feet in area are allowed in most zones.

Alterations to Structures for Home Occupations

If a home occupation requires physical alterations to the home, a building permit may be required depending upon how extensive the changes will be. See Seattle Residential Code section R105; Seattle Building Code section 106. The residential character and use of the dwelling unit should be preserved. In nonresidential zones, interior or exterior alterations may require a permit to change the use from residential to a use more appropriate to the nature of your business, such as live-work unit or light manufacturing.

Bed and Breakfast Establishments

Bed and breakfast establishments are governed by rules different from other home occupations and there are additional permit requirements (see Seattle Municipal Code section 23.44.051 (Neighborhood Residential zones); section 23.45.545 (Multifamily zones)). See short term rentals, <https://www.seattle.gov/sdci/codes/common-code-questions/short-term-rentals>.

www.seattle.gov/sdci



**Seattle Department of
Construction & Inspections**

700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019
(206) 684-8600

In **Neighborhood Residential zones** the following additional conditions apply:

- The bed and breakfast must be operated by the primary owner of the dwelling unit.
- The bed and breakfast may have no more than five guest rooms. (This limitation does not apply to bed and breakfasts which were established on or before April 1, 1987, and have been in continuous operation since that date.)

The following conditions apply in both **Neighborhood Residential and multifamily zones**:

- Interior and exterior alterations consistent with the development standards of the underlying zones are permitted.
- A license for the bed and breakfast must be secured from the Seattle Department of Finance and Administrative Services.
- There shall be no evidence of the bed and breakfast from the exterior of the structure, except that a modest sign, externally illuminated or non-illuminated of less than 64 square inches in area, is allowed.
- The bed and breakfast may only be operated within the principal structure, or in an accessory dwelling unit.

Animals

Businesses involving the keeping of animals have special rules outlined in the Seattle Land Use Code (Seattle Municipal Code, Section 23.44.048).

Getting More Information

If you anticipate operating a business out of your home and are unsure whether the Land Use Code allows it, you may either: (1) Check the language in the Land Use Code, Section 23.42.050; or (2) Contact the SDCI Applicant Services Center, www.seattle.gov/sdci/about-us/who-we-are/applicant-services-center, to discuss your plans with a permit specialist.

Access to Information

Links to SDCI Tips, Director's Rules, and the Seattle Municipal Code are available on our website at www.seattle.gov/sdci.