

DADU Floor Plans by Lot Size

Seattle caps a detached ADU at **1,000 sq ft** of gross floor area (SMC 23.42.022), but the cap is rarely the limit. **Lot coverage is:** 50% of the lot once a DADU is present (SMC 23.44.010), minus your existing house footprint. Do that subtraction first.

The one calculation that decides your plan

Footprint available = (lot area × 0.50) – house footprint – other covered structures. Then take 5 ft off each side for setbacks and draw the rectangle before you draw rooms.

Coverage budget by lot size

Lot size	50% budget	Illustrative house	Footprint left
3,200 sf	1,600 sf	1,100 sf	~500 sf
5,000 sf	2,500 sf	1,400 sf	~1,100 sf
7,200 sf	3,600 sf	1,800 sf	~1,800 sf
10,000 sf	5,000 sf	2,200 sf	~2,800 sf

A two-storey cottage buys area without buying footprint — the standard move on tight lots.

Four plan archetypes

Plan	Size	Footprint needed	Budget band
Studio cottage	~400 sf	~400 sf, one storey	\$185K–\$250K
1-bedroom	~650 sf	~650 sf, one storey	\$210K–\$290K
2-bedroom	~800 sf	~800 sf, one storey	\$250K–\$320K
Two-storey	~1,000 sf	~500–550 sf	\$320K+

Five checks before you fall in love with a plan

1. Pull the house footprint from the county assessor record.
2. Measure lot width and rear-yard depth; mark the 5 ft setbacks.
3. Check for alley frontage — it recovers depth and access.
4. Locate significant trees; retention reshapes siting.
5. Confirm sewer or septic capacity and the side-sewer route.

FAQ

How big can a DADU be in Seattle? Up to 1,000 sq ft of gross floor area (SMC 23.42.022). Up to 250 sq ft of attached garage, storage and below-grade space are excluded. Lot coverage usually binds first.

What size lot do you need? No separate minimum for the cottage; Washington requires cities to allow an ADU on any lot that meets the minimum for the principal dwelling (RCW 36.70A.681). A ~3,200 sf Seattle lot can host a studio or a two-storey cottage.

Can it be two storeys? Yes — 32 ft base height plus up to 5 ft for a pitched roof in Neighborhood Residential (SMC 23.44.012); no city may hold an ADU below 24 ft unless the main house limit is lower.

How close to the property line? 5 ft from side and rear lot lines in Seattle, and to the lot line where the lot abuts an alley. Cities may not apply setbacks stricter than the ones for the principal house.

Two detached cottages on one lot? In an urban growth area, yes — RCW 36.70A.681 requires cities to allow two ADUs per qualifying lot. Whether the coverage budget fits both is the lot-specific question.

Outside Seattle

Bellevue (LUC 20.20), Issaquah (LUC 18.500.090) and Tacoma (TMC Title 13) each rewrote residential standards in the 2025 middle-housing cycle. We do not publish a number we have not read in the currently adopted code — but statewide, no city may apply an ADU setback, coverage or design standard stricter than the one for your principal house, so your own zone's rules are a fair first-pass envelope.

Free site evaluation: we return the coverage math, the buildable rectangle and the plan archetypes that fit your parcel. Call (253) 332-9333 or visit nwadubuilders.com/contact. King, Pierce & Snohomish counties · Mon–Fri, 8am–5pm PT.

Sources: RCW 36.70A.681; Seattle Municipal Code 23.42.022, 23.44.010, 23.44.012; Seattle SDCI backyard cottage guidance. Estimate only — confirm current standards with your jurisdiction before design.