



STAFF REPORT
WEST ALLIS PLAN COMMISSION
Wednesday, August 27, 2025
6:00 PM

5. Ordinance to amend Code Section 19.42 residential accessory buildings

Overview



What is the current regulation in West Allis? Section [19.42](#) of the zoning code allows the following:

- Detached accessory buildings are limited to a single 150 sq ft structure per lot, regardless of parcel size.
- Past Board of Appeals cases and inquiries from residents prompted staff to analyze accessory building standards against other municipalities.

19.42 Residential Accessory Buildings

No residential accessory building may exceed the minimum and maximum standards set forth in the table below. If any cell is blank, no limit is imposed.

	Accessory Dwelling Unit	Detached Garage	Other Accessory Building
Exterior Wall Height (maximum)	20'	10'	10'
Height (maximum)	Height of principal building, not to exceed 20'	Height of principal building, not to exceed 18'	15'
Building Coverage (maximum)	50% of principal building, not to exceed 800 sq. ft.	1,000 sq. ft.	150 sq. ft.
Setback from Principal Building (minimum)	10'	10'	10'
Front Setback (minimum)	60'	60'	60'
Rear Setback - abutting alley (minimum)	5'	5'	5'
Rear Setback - not abutting alley (minimum)	3'	3'	3'
Side Setback (minimum)	3'	3'	3'

HISTORY

Adopted by Ord. [O-2022-0024](#) on 5/3/2022

Comparison with other Codes

Staff has prepared a table comparing zoning codes from the communities of Greenfield, Wauwatosa, and Oak Creek with West Allis. West Allis lot sizes follow a pattern like Wauwatosa and Greenfield.

- West Allis Lot Size Statistics
 - Largest: 162,347 sq. ft. (3.727 acres)
 - Smallest: 1,297.58 sq. ft. (0.0298 acre)
 - Median lot size: 5510.8 sq. ft. (0.127 acre)
- West Allis Residential Lot Coverage Maximums by Zoning District:
 - RA-1 & RA-2: 40%
 - RA-3: 50%
 - RB: 60%

- Accessory buildings should not exceed the size of garages
 - Data from 2024 – Present
 - Median garage size is 516 sq. ft.
 - Min garage size built: 304 sq. ft.
 - Max garage size built: 990 sq. ft.

Best practices: flexibility with neighborhood context & compatibility in mind. This permits homeowners more flexibility while preventing outsized sheds and keeping total development within City’s existing lot coverage standards

Accessory Building Analysis

- Accessory building square footage maximums vary by municipality

Municipality	Regulation	Maximum Size Allowed	Pros	Cons
Greenfield	Area of Accessory Building (except garages). That this shall not prohibit the erection of two (2) accessory buildings (except garage) not exceeding two hundred fifty (250) square feet in area each to be no closer than two (2) feet to the side and rear lot lines and 10 feet to any principal structure.	250 sq ft	Clear maximum, easy to apply	Fixed cap is low and doesn't scale with lot size
Wauwatosa	Generally, total square footage of lot coverage for all buildings cannot exceed 37% and of that total percentage, detached garages, storage sheds, and outbuildings cannot exceed 12% of the lot area	Varies	Scales to parcel size. Ties into overall lot coverage	Calculations can be confusing to applicants. No hard upper limit on very large lots
Oak Creek	Two Accessory structures shall be permitted per lot, and shall only be permitted after a principal structure has been constructed on the same lot. An accessory structure shall not exceed 400 cumulative square feet.	400 sq ft	Clear maximum, easy to apply	No scaling for lot sizes. Smaller lots may
West Allis	Building Coverage Maximum: 150 sq ft	150 sq ft	Clear maximum, easy to apply	Restrictive and does not scale with lot sizes

This item was before the Economic Development Committee on August 12, and the committee favored a percentage of lot size (for example 10%) but also agreed that a floor area maximum limit (around 300-sf) was needed.

Recommendation: Discuss the item at Plan Commission meeting and some possible zoning ordinance options that will be directed to Common Council for consideration.

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