

Carriage Houses Northwest is a licensed general contractor and modular home builder as well as an RV manufacturer and dealer.

Tiny House on Wheels or Backyard Cottage? Which tiny house is right for you?

Tiny House on Wheels (THOW)

THOWs are towable recreational vehicles. Depending on size, they are licensed as travel trailers or park model trailers. They are subject to the manufacturing guidelines established under the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). In the state of Washington, they must be inspected and certified by the Department of Labor & Industries Factory Assembled Structures division. The certification includes an insignia applied to the outside of the THOW verifying it meets or exceeds applicable ANSI standards.

Detached Accessory Dwelling Unity (DADU) or Backyard Cottage

The correct description for a backyard cottage is Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit, or DADU. They are designed to be placed on permanent foundation and must follow all local jurisdiction codes for construction, placement on foundation and connection to utilities. DADUs are subject to International Residential Code (IRC) standards – the same standard as any other residential home. Like THOWs, in the state of Washington, they must be inspected and certified by the Department of Labor & Industries Factory Assembled Structures division. The certification includes an insignia applied to the outside of the DADU verifying it meets or exceeds applicable IRC standards.

Can tiny houses be financed?

Financing for THOWs has historically been tricky. Many lenders are still determining how to think about them and where they fit in their lending portfolio. All of our THOWs and DADUs are licensed and certified. Because of this, we have found lenders who place THOWs in their park model trailer portfolio. For DADUs, lenders view them as an additional structure on the property and will often fund them through a home equity line of credit.

Can tiny houses be insured?

Yes, there are a number of insurers who focus on RVs and park models. For THOWs, our homes can be insured as park model trailers. American Modern Home and Foremost Insurance are major insurers of park model trailers. For DADUs, since they are delivered and attached to a foundation on the customer's property, insurance coverage would be added to the homeowner's existing insurance policy as an additional structure on their property.

How do utilities work?

- THOWs have connections like a typical RV: water is supplied via a potable water hose, electrical is supplied via a 50 amp RV cable and sewer or septic is connected via a single waste line out. Our THOWs do not have holding tanks.
- DADUs are permanently attached to the property, so permanent connections to water, sewer and electrical are coordinated by a general contractor.

How does the purchase process work and what is the timing?

- For THOWs, we work with customers to choose which of our models work best and determine which options they want in their home. From the time of order and deposit, we typically complete homes in 10 – 12 weeks. This can vary seasonally, depending on our current workload. Current supply-chain issues are pushing our completion times out a bit longer than normal.
- For DADUs, there is a more involved process. In addition to constructing the home itself, customers will work with us and their local jurisdiction on permits and site preparation. The permitting and site development often takes longer than the construction of the home, and can be going on concurrently to save time. Depending on the location and jurisdiction the process can take 6 months or longer, but is in almost every case faster than building a structure on location using standard construction processes.