DADU SOLUTIONS

Backyard DADU Pre-Flight Checklist

Initial Site Feasibility Criteria for Seattle, Bellevue & Surrounding Areas

Before investing thousands in architectural plans, walk your backyard with this step-by-step checklist to determine if your lot can legally support a Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (DADU).

1. Lot & Zoning Foundation

- [ ] **Eligible Zoning Designation**
  Your property must be located in an approved residential zone (e.g., Seattle NR1, NR2, NR3, RSL or Bellevue single-family zones). Multi-family and commercial zones have completely separate parameters.

- [ ] **Minimum Lot Size Limits**
  In Seattle, there is no longer a strict minimum lot size required to build a DADU, but lot coverage caps apply. In Bellevue and other King County municipalities, ensure your lot complies with local square footage minimums.

2. Property Layout & Critical Dimensions

- [ ] **The 10-Foot Building Separation Rule**
  Measure the exact distance between the closest exterior walls of your primary house (including attached decks or deep eaves) and the prospective DADU footprint. A strict minimum of 10 feet of clear legal separation is mandatory for fire safety codes.

- [ ] **Standard Property Line Setbacks**
  Confirm that the DADU layout allows for a minimum 5-foot setback from both side property lines and the rear property line. *Exception: If your yard abuts a public alleyway, you can often build up to a 0-foot rear setback.*

- [ ] **Total Lot Coverage Capacities**
  Calculate your current footprints. For typical lots over 5,000 sq. ft., the cumulative footprint of your primary house, garage, sheds, and new DADU cannot exceed 50% of the total lot area.

> ⚠️ **High-Risk Spatial Pitfall: Power Line Cylinders**
> Seattle City Light and local utilities enforce strict radial clearance zones around overhead high-voltage lines. A DADU must maintain a 10-to-14-foot clearance window from these swaying wires. This invisible barrier frequently catches homeowners off guard.

3. Environmental & Infrastructure Hurdles

- [ ] **Exceptional Tree Protection Zones**
  Identify large or unique trees in your backyard or immediately neighboring yards. Strict local ordinances shield critical root zones from construction activity, heavily impacting your physical building footprint.

- [ ] **Sewer and Water Main Tie-Ins**
  Locate your current side sewer and water lines. While you can frequently branch into your primary home's lines, severe structural deterioration, old clay piping, or flat slopes can necessitate an expensive completely new street line connection.

- [ ] **Topography & Critical Areas**
  Note any steep slopes, wetlands, or known landslide-prone boundaries. Slopes greater than 40% activate rigorous engineering mandates, retaining walls, and specialized pin-pile foundation requirements.

Checked every box but want absolute professional certainty?

Let our team run a comprehensive, data-backed Pre-Design Feasibility Study on your lot.

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Initial Backyard Site Plan Sketch

Use this 5mm blueprint grid to plot your rough layout. Map your property lines, existing residence, required 5ft setbacks, and show a 10ft separation line to your prospective DADU build.

