

Ideas:

- Motor homes already covered in zoning code; can't be located between house and street. You just can't live in them
- This code would just allow someone to live in them *so long as they meet maintenance code standards*
- Drop ADU connection.
- Any electrical or water hook-up would have to be permitted
- Sewer would want to know about sewer pipe load additions, in big picture (more theoretical than practical). Political solution available if desired.

A Legal Path for Tiny Houses on Wheels

Proposal

Create a legal path for the siting and occupancy of Tiny Houses on Wheels (THOWs) that meet sanitary and life safety requirements.

Motivation

This proposal would legalize a new form of small, safe, low-cost, environmentally-friendly, and discreet housing that furthers important city goals, including:

- Providing affordable rental opportunities for homeless and/or low-income residents requiring little or no public subsidy;
- Supporting extended family and other community living situations that don't always fit well within traditional single family homes; and
- Creating opportunities for people to live in the City of Portland with much smaller environmental footprints than is achievable through more traditional residential development forms.

Context

Tiny houses on wheels are technically vehicles, not buildings. In residential zones within the City of Portland, vehicles can be parked on private property. Portland's property maintenance code, however, does not allow such vehicles to be used for 'habitable' purposes. This proposal would allow for the habitation of these structures if they meet location, setback, lot coverage, and other requirements of detached accessory structures and meet specific life safety performance standards. It would not extend to accessory structures on a foundation for which building permits are required.

Implementation

This proposal would establish Tiny Houses on Wheels (THOWs) as either accessory dwelling units or detached accessory structures under the *zoning code*. It would also create an allowance within the *property maintenance code* for the legal habitation of these structures.

Zoning Code (Chapter 33)

Definitions

A tiny house on wheels (THOW) is a structure intended as a full time residence that meets the following conditions:

1. Built on a trailer that is registered with the builder's local DMV.
2. Towable by a bumper hitch, frame-towing hitch, or fifth-wheel connection; cannot move (and was not designed to be moved) under its own power.
3. Constructed using stick framing or structural insulated panels (SIPs).
4. Is no larger than allowed by applicable state law for a vehicle. The typical THOW is no more than 8'6" wide, 30' long, and 14'-0" high. Roof height is from bottom of tires to the top of the highest exterior point on the house, including any protrusions. The roof height may be taller when stationary, as long as it is collapsible for towing of the THOW. Chimney piping may need to be removed for travel and then reinstalled to meet clearance requirements for use.
5. Utility hook-ups (I.e. electricity, plumbing) are permitted
6. Either:
 - a. Includes [basic functional areas](#) that support normal daily routines (such as cooking, sleeping, and toiletry) – or -
 - b. Is located such that resident(s) has/have 24-hour access to such functional areas in another structure on the same property

Other Zoning Code sections:

- Designate THOWs connected to fresh water and sewer as *detached accessory dwelling units*. Allow one of these per property by right. Allow up to one per thousand square feet of site area through a Type II conditional use permit (to allow for little tiny house communities).
- Designate THOWs not connected to fresh water or sewer as *habitable detached accessory structures*. These would be functionally equivalent to detached bedrooms and regulated as such, meaning that more than one could be allowed on a property so long as site coverage maximums and other zoning code requirements are met.

Property Maintenance Code (Chapter 29):

Require that THOWs meet the following Property Maintenance code requirements:

- Emergency exiting (29.30.230),
- Handrails (29.30.080.B),
- Guardrails (29.30.080.C),
- Smoke and CO detectors (29.30.240),
- Structurally sound and in good repair (29.30.050.B), and
- Weatherproofing (29.30.060)

Either provide an exception to Section 29.50.050 to allow for occupancy of THOWs or publish an interpretation stating that a THOW complies with this section. Make a similar change or exception to any other section of the Property Maintenance Code that a safe THOW could not reasonably comply with.