KitsapCounty
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

STAFF REPORT

Title 17 Amendments for Guest Houses/ADUs

DATE: December 1, 2026

TO: Kitsap County Planning Commission

PREPARED BY: Cecilia Olsen, DCD Assistant Director

OVERVIEW

DCD proposes amendments to KCC T17 to eliminate Guest House as a separate categorical land use and clarify the distinction between a residential accessory structure and an accessory dwelling unit (ADU).

BACKGROUND

Title 17 currently distinguishes among accessory structures, guest houses, and accessory dwelling units. Guest houses are separately defined and subject to specific standards under KCC 17.415.260, including limitations on size, number of habitable rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, location and occupancy.

In 2025, DCD issued a Director's Interpretation (D.I.) to clarify the distinction between guest houses and attached or detached ADUs. The D.I. established additional guidance based on the combination of cooking and sanitation facilities provided within the structure.

Implementation of the D.I. has demonstrated that maintaining a separate guest house classification creates unnecessary complexity without establishing a meaningful distinction in land use impacts. Similar accessory structures may be classified differently depending on whether an applicant identifies the space as an art studio, recreation room,

home office, guest house, or other accessory use, despite having substantially similar physical characteristics.

Department Recommendation

Having analyzed the proposed amendment and other alternatives, if applicable, the Department recommends:

☒Adoption of the amendment:
- ☒as proposed above
- ☐as described in Alternative below
- ☐with revisions described below
- ☐with conditions described below
- ☐Deferral of the amendment to a future docket
- ☐Denial of the amendment

Substantive Findings

- The proposed code amendments were developed with opportunities for public participation and comment as required by GMA and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), chapter 43.21C RCW.
- The proposed code amendments were developed according to, and are compliant with, the requirements of GMA, chapter 36.70A RCW, the Countywide Planning Policies, the Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan, Kitsap County Code, and other applicable laws and policies.
- The proposed code amendments are consistent with the Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan by:
  - Adding clarity to existing sections of code.
  - Creating more predictability and certainty in development standards and the permit review process.
- The proposed code amendments promote the public interest and welfare of the citizens of Kitsap County.

Procedural Findings

- Public outreach regarding the proposed amendments was conducted through posting in the Kitsap Sun newspaper, and direct notification GovDelivery subscribers.
- On November 16, 2026, a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Determination of Nonsignificance was issued for proposed amendments. A 14-day comment period concluded on November 30, 2026.
- A public hearing with the Planning Commission, with combined deliberations and findings of fact, is scheduled for December 1, 2026.

- A public hearing on the proposed ordinance with the Board of County Commissioners is scheduled for December 14, 2026, and will be followed by potential adoption in January 2027.

Other Alternative Considered

No official alternatives are considered as a part of this staff report.

Comprehensive Plan Consistency

The proposed code amendments are consistent with:

- Land Use Policy 1.4 Implement land use designations through a clear regulatory process that ensures transparency, fairness and predictability in the land development process.

The amendments maintain existing residential density allowances and land use designations while preserving applicable development standards for ADUs.

SEPA

A Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) was issued on November 16, 2026. The DNS comment period ended on November 30, 2026.

Exhibits

1. 2025 Director's Interpretation for Guest Houses/ADUs
2. SEPA Checklist
3. SEPA DNS
4. Draft Ordinance
5. Draft Findings of Fact