

Tiny Home Industry in Alberta

The review of Edmonton's current zoning regulations and the challenges for smaller mobile dwellings led Administration to contact tiny home builders to gain a better understanding of the tiny home industry in Alberta. Through these discussions, builders indicated that interest continues to grow for tiny homes; however, regulatory hurdles tend to prevent customers proceeding with getting a tiny home on wheels built. One tiny home builder indicated that in the past three years, he has had nearly 900 inquiries, with more than half coming from Edmonton residents, and noted that if tiny homes were permissible he would have to expand his business to accommodate the demand. Another builder indicated that most of their customers are based in the U.S., where they have had more time to change the regulations for tiny homes as the concept is more prevalent there, and once the rules in Canada are relaxed, there will be more interest.

Due to the lack of regulation or clarity on what safety standard tiny homes should be constructed to, tiny home builders build tiny homes either to the Alberta Building Code (where possible) or to CSA standards for manufactured homes, recreational vehicles, or park model trailers. One builder, indicated that he was not able to be CSA approved as their builds do not meet the CSA standards for recreational vehicles or manufactured homes.

The tiny home builders also indicated that most of their customers purchase tiny homes to be used as a full time residence, and one builder indicated that some landowners in rural areas are using tiny homes to provide vacation rentals. In consideration of the potential impact with the relocation of a tiny home, builders identified that although tiny homes on wheels can move as easily as a recreational vehicle, customers tend to relocate tiny homes infrequently, at most once or twice a year. Builders also indicated that the ability to move a tiny home depends on its size and the capacity of the towing vehicle and the most common tiny home sizes requested range from 2.6 to three metres wide and up to seven to nine metres long. One builder noted that customers are usually not moving the tiny home themselves and that their company will help assist with moves. Administration has identified that buildings greater than 2.6 metres wide require a moving permit to transport the building and when the building is greater than 3.6 metres wide, a pilot truck is needed to warn other drivers of the move.

Administration also asked builders what utilities and services their tiny homes on wheels are equipped with. Builders indicated that their tiny homes are able to connect to water, sewer and drainage, and power. Some indicated that their homes are equipped for propane tanks for heating, but could be set-up for natural gas. Most of the tiny home builders indicated that the homes could also be set-up to be self contained for solar panels and compostable toilets, although those set-up for solar would likely require a generator for back-up during the winter months, and on average, builders indicated that tiny homes need at least 30 to 50 amps of power.

In consideration of tiny homes on wheels, builders indicated that these tiny homes are set-up similar to a recreational vehicle, support with jacks around the perimeter of the house and require even, stable ground. One builder indicated that they are able to add islets to the frame to facilitate anchoring. Another builder indicated that they provide customers with an installation guide with information on the CSA standards for the site preparation, foundation, and anchorage that is used for manufactured homes.

Tiny home builders indicated that customers commonly ask where they can park their tiny homes, but generally advise them to check with their local bylaws and the applicable municipal government. Tiny home builders indicated that the average range in pricing for a tiny home on wheels is approximately \$70,000 to \$150,000.