

Housing Standards and “tiny homes” in Belfast

Growing interest in “tiny homes”, structures generally considered to be under 400 square feet in size, has resulted in confusion regarding their legality in Belfast.

All dwelling units in Belfast (and the State) are subject to the minimum standards identified in the building, plumbing, and electrical codes as adopted. The only exception at this time are new HUD certified mobile homes and modular homes, which are inspected at the factory and have installation standards for their placement. Site built tiny homes are subject to the same review and inspection process that all other dwelling units go through and are permitted in Belfast.

Some vendors in Maine are offering prebuilt tiny homes citing a State law that treats them as a recreational vehicle (RV) for regulatory purposes. The City of Belfast does not allow RVs to be used for permanent housing and so prebuilt tiny homes supposedly constructed to the same standards as a RV are also not allowed to be used as permanent residences in Belfast.

A person interested in a tiny home in Belfast has two options:

1. Build onsite a very small home (there is no size restriction), subject to the same review and inspection standards as a regular home.
2. Purchase a prebuilt tiny home that is certified to HUD standards, like other manufactured and modular homes.

Either of these options will provide the owner with a structure suitable for permanent occupation in Belfast.

For more information contact Belfast Planning and Codes Department.