

Resources for Adopting or Changing Beekeeping Ordinances In Washington State

2021

By the Washington State Beekeeping Association

Introduction: Urban beekeeping is increasing in popularity due public interest in beekeeping as a hobby that both appeals to sustainability advocates and to those wishing to support honey bee survival. Bees do very well in urban settings due to the density of nectar and pollen producing vegetation during the growing season. As the interest grows, municipalities are addressing how to define regulations related to beekeeping for their citizens. This guide is meant to serve as a resource to city staff, councils, and citizens interested in drafting or revising a beekeeping ordinance that reflects the interest of the community in a fact-based document. It includes examples of current ordinances as well as additional resources that may be of interest. The links to the ordinances are current as of January 2021. The list of cities cited is not an inclusive list but attempts to represent a variety of sizes and location of cities in Washington state. It is recommended that the city or county be contacted directly if further information is required and to verify the currency of the information.

Ordinances regulating the keeping of bees vary from community to community reflecting the needs and interests of the community. Washington state requires the registration of hives with the [Department of Agriculture](#) each year so almost all ordinances include this requirement.

Assessment of Risk and Liability: Existing ordinances attempt to address factors that will limit the risk of danger to the public and public well-being. The most frequent concern expressed by the public is their fear of being stung by a bee. Most requirements in an ordinance relate to mitigating the chances for accidental human/bee contact, such as limiting the number of hives based on lot size, requiring a setback from property lines, establishing flyway requirements, maintaining a water source near the hive(s), using hives with removable frames to allow for inspections, and ensuring the person keeping bees is knowledgeable about best practices for successful beekeeping.

The question of beekeeper liability has been addressed in 2019 through state law. To be protected from liability, hives must be registered annually with the state, the laws related to beekeeping must be obeyed, and no action that can be defined as amounting to gross negligence or willful misconduct can be performed. ([RCW 15.60.250](#))

Benefits to the Community: Urban and suburban areas that allow beekeeping have found that they receive benefits that were unexpected – not just honey for the beekeeper. For example honey bees:

- Provide pollination services to all in the community increasing vegetable and fruit quality and yield.

- Provide educational opportunities for both adults and children such as beekeeper visits to schools, presenting community programs, and cooperating with community gardens.
- Provide local honey which can be sold at farmer's markets and other commercial venues, spotlighting a feature of the community – natural, bee-friendly environment.

Information: Providing factual information on beekeeping in urban areas to both the citizens and the council is critical. One way of doing this is having an expert beekeeper from the local area or a representative from the Washington State Beekeeping Association provide information on the best management practices related to honeybees and to serve as an advisor to staff drafting a proposed ordinance.

Facts: Some interesting information about honey bees and their natural behavior to consider when drafting an ordinance:

- Bees will fly 3-5 miles to forage and don't recognize borders, so they are in the city even if no hives are allowed.
- Most "bee stings" are actually wasps/hornets which are far more aggressive and can sting multiple times. During 2000-2017 there were a total of 1,109 deaths from hornet, wasp, and bee stings in the United States. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6829a5.htm> for an average of 62 deaths a year.
- Swarms are a colony's natural method of reproduction and bees are usually extremely mild when swarming.
- Urban bees have access to greater biodiversity, resulting in a more varied diet and stronger immune systems. In addition, there is usually less pesticide use in cities than in rural areas, resulting in healthier colonies.
- Gardens and fruit trees increase in productivity and quality when a city allows bee hives, not just those in the yard of the beekeeper, due to increased pollination.

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Model Beekeeping Ordinances

Florida. Southwest Florida <http://swfbees.com/beekeepModelOrdinance.pdf>

Minnesota Hobby Beekeepers Association 2018 <https://mnbeekeepers.com/wp-content/uploads/MHBA-Model-Ordinance-2018.pdf>

Ohio State Beekeepers Association.

<http://www.ohiostatebeekeepers.org/resources/model-beekeeping-ordinance/>

<http://www.ohiostatebeekeepers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Ohio-Model-Ordinance.pdf>

Washington State Municipalities - Ordinances

Airway Heights [Municipal Code Chapter 6.06 Keeping Bees](#)

6.06.020 Conditions for hobby beekeeping.

An apiarist may keep bees in residential areas of the City of Airway Heights, Washington, subject to the following conditions:

A. The number of hives shall be limited to one hive per 4,356 gross square feet of lot area.

B. Hives shall be set back a minimum of five feet from any side or rear property line and 20 feet from the front property line.

C. A flyaway barrier shall be provided that is at least six feet high and consists of a solid wall, solid fencing materials, dense vegetation, or some combination thereof, that is parallel to the side or rear property lines and extends beyond the hives in both directions, to ensure bees are forced to fly at an elevation of at least six feet above ground level over the property lines in the vicinity of the hives.

D. Apiarists shall maintain an adequate supply of water for bees located close to the hives.

E. The apiarist shall be certified by the Washington State **Beekeeper's** Association, and must be registered with the Director by April 1st of each year.

Arlington [Code of Ordinances](#)

8.17.010 - Keeping animals in the city—General regulations

(c) Hives or colonies of bees may be kept within the city limits of Arlington, provided:

(1) All colonies must be registered with the director of the department of agriculture of the state of Washington as provided in RCW 15.60.021.

(2) All hives must be moveable frame hives.

(3) A maximum of two hives are permitted if the lot is fifteen thousand square feet or less.

(4) A maximum of five hives are permitted if the lot is between than fifteen thousand square feet and thirty-five thousand square feet.

(5) A maximum of fifteen hives are permitted if the lot is more than thirty-five thousand square feet.

(6) Hives may not be located within ten feet of the property line.

Auburn [Municipal Code 18.31.220](#)

F. Apiaries (keeping of honey bees (*Apis mellifera*)), also referred to as beekeeping, may be permitted if the owner complies with the following:

1. Beekeeping is allowed as an accessory use to a single-family residence.

2. All hives are registered with the State Department of Agriculture.

3. No more than two hives, each with only one swarm, shall be kept on lots of less than 10,000 square feet.

4. Hives shall not be located within 25 feet of any property line with the hive(s) entrance(s) facing away from the nearest property line.

5. The keeping conforms to ACC 8.28.010 regarding noise disturbance and ACC 8.12.020 regarding nuisances affecting public health and safety.

Bellingham [Municipal Code 7.12.060](#)

B. Hives or colonies of bees shall be kept in a manner in which they are inaccessible to the general public and so that bee movements to and from the hive do not interfere with the ordinary movements of persons on adjacent properties or the public right-of-way. Hives shall be located

at least 50' from the nearest property line. All colonies must be registered with the Director of the Department of Agriculture of the State of Washington as provided in RCW 15.60.030. The terms "hive", "colony", "colonies of bees" and "bees" as used in this section shall have the meanings set forth in RCW 15.60.005.

Des Moines [Municipal Code 18.150.100 Bee requirements](#)

Minimum requirements for the keeping of **bees** are as follows:

- (1) Required Procedure. City Manager or the City Manager's designee review;
- (2) Application Information. Show compliance with subsections (4), (5) and (6) of this section;
- (3) Maximum number of adult animals per one dwelling unit: no maximum;
- (4) Minimum lot size: 12,500 square feet per dwelling unit;
- (5) Minimum Setback. Hive must be at least 20 feet from a property line;
- (6) Special Regulations and Requirements.
 - (a) A hive must be enclosed by a fence, at least four feet high;
 - (b) The applicant must install at least two signs, measuring two square feet each, which provide notice and warning of the hive;
- (7) Screening. The City may require screening to mitigate financial, health, and aesthetic impacts on adjacent residential property when such residential property is used for residential purposes. The screening shall consist of a solid wall, a view-obscuring fence or hedge not less than five feet nor more than six feet in height, which will be erected and maintained on any exterior boundary that is common with property used for residential purposes, or shall consist of predominantly view-obscuring evergreen shrubs and trees of a type, number, location, height, and size approved by the City. [Ord. 1591 § 340, 2014.]

18.150.110 Notification to nearby property owners required when

In order to give all interested parties an opportunity to avail themselves of the appellate procedure contained in DMMC [18.20.170](#), the following procedure shall be followed in applications for small domestic animals, large domestic animals, and **bee** review. The applicant shall give notice of the pending application to all property owners within 300 feet of the applicant's property in the same manner as that required for a zoning amendment. Thereafter, the City Manager or the City Manager's designee shall give notice of his decision to any such property owner who has previously requested such notification in writing. [Ord. 1591 § 341, 2014.]

18.150.120 Modification of regulations – City Manager or the City Manager's designee authority.

The City Manager or the City Manager's designee shall have authority, either at the request of a property owner or on his own initiative, to modify any approval granted pursuant to this chapter if conditions on adjacent lots have substantially changed and the City Manager or the City Manager's designee concludes such modifications are necessary to effect the purposes of this chapter. [Ord. 1591 § 342, 2014.]

18.33.090 Bee requirements. Minimum requirements for the keeping of bees are as follows:

1. Required procedure: City manager review;
2. Application information: Show compliance with subsections (4), (5) and (6) of this section;

3. Maximum number of adult animals per one dwelling unit: No maximum;
4. Minimum lot size: 12,500 square feet per dwelling unit;
5. Minimum setback: Hive must be at least 20 feet from a property line;
6. Special regulations and requirements: (a) A hive must be enclosed by a fence, at least four feet high; (b) The applicant must install at least two signs, measuring two square feet each, which provide notice and warning of the hive;
7. Screening: The city may require screening to mitigate financial, health, and aesthetic impacts on adjacent residential property when such residential property is used for residential purposes. The screening shall consist of a solid wall, a view-obscuring fence or hedge not less than five feet nor more than six feet in height, which will be erected and maintained on any exterior boundary that is common with property used for residential purposes, or shall consist of predominantly view-obscuring evergreen shrubs and trees of a type, number, location, height, and size approved by the city.

Ellensburg [Municipal Code Chapter 5.30.260 Beekeeping](#)

- A. The intent of this section is to establish standards for beekeeping in a manner which will not endanger the health, peace and safety of the citizens of the city and which will assure that beehives are appropriately placed, maintained and managed. This section is enacted for the welfare of the public as a whole and not for any specific individual, group or class.
- B. The keeping of **bees** for accessory use is permitted in the residential low (R-L) and residential suburban (R-S) zones, subject to the requirements in subsections (B), (C) and (D) of this section:
 1. Number of Hives Allowed.
 - a. No more than four production colonies or hives are allowed on properties 7,000 square feet or larger within the residential low (R-L) and residential suburban (R-S) zones.
 - b. Properties less than 7,000 square feet shall be limited to two production colonies or beehives.
 2. Hive Placement Requirements. Hives shall not be located within 10 feet of any side or rear lot line and shall be screened by a fence or vegetation at least six feet in height.
- C. Hive, Apiary Management Requirements.
 1. All hives shall be registered with the Department of Agriculture and comply with Chapter [15.60](#) RCW and rules adopted thereunder;
 2. All hives shall consist of moveable frames and combs, unless exempted by the Department of Agriculture;
 3. Hives shall be managed for swarm prevention and gentleness;
 4. Hives shall be requeened if **bee** behavior is likely to cause a nuisance;
 5. A consistent source of water shall be provided at the apiary when **bees** are flying unless it occurs naturally. The water may be "sweetened" with mineral salt or chlorine to enhance its attractiveness. This requirement is intended to discourage **bee** visitation at swimming pools, hose bibs, animal watering sources, bird baths or where people congregate;
 6. Apiaries shall be managed and kept in a clean and orderly manner and appearance to prevent a nuisance;

7. Hives shall not be placed where they are a threat to animals who are chained or penned up and cannot flee if they are attacked;
 8. An apiary shall be identified by placing a sign so it is visible to passersby. Sign lettering shall be a minimum of two inches in height and shall include the owner's name, state issued identification number, and telephone number. Signs shall be placed in a manner to make them conspicuous to anyone approaching the apiary. The characters shall be in a color which contrasts with the color of the hive, and be conspicuous to anyone approaching the apiary.
- D. Nuisance. **Bees** shall be considered a nuisance and be subject to abatement under the provisions of ECC [5.30.140](#) when any of the following occurs:
1. Colonies of **bees** are defensive or exhibit objectionable behavior, or interfere with the normal use of property, or the enjoyment of persons, animals or property adjacent to an apiary;
 2. Colonies of **bees** swarm;
 3. Hives of **bees** do not conform to this code;
 4. The hive becomes deceased, as defined by the Department of Agriculture; or
 5. The hive becomes abandoned by its beekeeper.

Federal Way [Revised Code 19.260.080 Bees.](#)

Bees may be kept on the subject property subject to the following regulations:

- (1) *Minimum lot size.* The subject property must be at least 15,000 square feet in area.
- (2) *Number of hives.* Two hives are permitted if the subject property is less than 20,000 square feet in area. Five hives are permitted if the subject property is between 20,000 and 60,000 square feet in area. A maximum of 15 hives are permitted if the subject property is more than 60,000 square feet in area.
- (3) *Location of hives.* The hives must be at least 25 feet from each property line unless one of the following circumstances applies, in which case the hives must be at least 10 feet from each property line:
 - (a) The hives are at least eight feet above the adjacent ground.
 - (b) The hives are less than six feet above the adjacent ground and are behind a solid fence or hedge which is at least six feet in height and parallel to any property within 25 feet of the hives and extending at least 20 feet beyond the hive in both directions.
- (4) *Registration.* All colonies shall be registered with the state department of agriculture prior to April of each year in which they are kept.
- (5) *Housing and maintenance.* All colonies must be kept in movable frame hives. Adequate space must be maintained around hives to prevent overcrowding and swarming. Hives must be requeened following any swarming or aggressive behavior.

Issaquah [Municipal Code 18.07.160 Animals – Honey bees.](#)

. Parcel and Apiary Size Requirements:

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|---------|
| 1. | 0 to 5,999 square feet | 0 hives |
|----|------------------------|---------|

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 2. | 6,000 to 10,000
square feet | > 2 hives |
| 3. | 10,001 to 20,000
square feet | > 4 hives |
| 4. | 20,001 to 43,560
square feet (.46 ac
to 1 ac) | > 10 hives |
| 5. | 35,001 to 65,340
square feet (1 ac
to 1.5 ac) | > 20 hives |
| 6. | 1.5 to 5.0 acres | > 25 hives in urban areas |
| 7. | 5.01 to 10.0 acres | > 40 hives in urban areas |
| 8. | 10.01 > | > 60 hives as a rural or mountain honey
foraging site, or 60 or more hives as a 30-day
collection site for truck access in spring and
fall |

B. Hive Placement Requirements:

1. Hives shall be at least twenty-five (25) feet from a property line, with the hive(s) entrance(s) facing away from or parallel to the nearest property line.
2. Hives may be less than twenty-five (25) feet from a property line if placed behind a six (6) foot high fence, which shall extend at least twenty-five (25) feet beyond the hive(s) in both directions. The fence shall direct **bee** flight into the air at least six (6) feet before the **bees** cross the property line. The fence or obstruction may occur on the adjoining property; provided, that **bee** flight is not directed in the vicinity of recreational decks or entrances to housing or buildings on adjoining properties. In lieu of a fence, the hive(s) may be placed at least eight (8) feet above adjacent ground level, and comply with the remaining placement requirements.
3. A hive(s) adjacent to public roads shall comply with placement requirements in such a manner as to direct **bee** flight at least twenty (20) feet into the air over the road surface. In lieu of this requirement, a hive(s) shall be placed at least one hundred (100) feet from the road right(s)-of-way, with the entrance(s) parallel thereto.

C. Hive, Apiary Management Requirements:

1. Hive(s) shall be registered with the Department of Agriculture and comply with Chapter [15.60](#) RCW and rules adopted thereunder; and
2. All hives shall consist of moveable frames and combs, unless exempted by the Department of Agriculture as an educational exhibit; and
3. Hives shall be managed for swarm prevention and gentleness; and

4. Hives shall be requeened at least bi-annually to prevent swarming. Annual requeening is strongly recommended; and
 5. Hives shall be requeened if **bee** behavior is likely to cause a nuisance; and
 6. A consistent source of water shall be provided at the apiary unless it occurs naturally within three hundred (300) yards. The water may be “sweetened” with mineral salt or chlorine to enhance its attractiveness. This requirement is intended to discourage **bee** visitation at swimming pools, hose bibs, animal watering sources, bird baths or where people congregate; and
 7. Apiaries shall be managed and kept in a clean and orderly manner and appearance to prevent a nuisance; and
 8. An apiary(s) shall be identified by placing a sign so it is visible to passersby. Sign lettering shall be a minimum of two (2) inches in height and shall include the name, state issued identification number, and telephone number of the owner. Signs shall be placed in a manner to make them conspicuous to anyone approaching the apiary. In lieu of signing, a hive may be identified by displaying the identification number and telephone number of the owner in at least two (2) inch characters on the sides and tops of some colonies in each apiary. The characters shall be in a color which contrasts with the color of the hive(s), and be conspicuous to anyone approaching the apiary. An apiary(s) located at the owner’s residence is exempt from marking requirements.
- D. Nuisance: **Bees** shall be considered a nuisance when any of the following occurs:
1. Colonies of **bees** are defensive or exhibit objectionable behavior, or interfere with the normal use of property, or the enjoyment of persons, animals or property adjacent to an apiary(s); or
 2. Colonies of **bees** swarm; or
 3. Hives of **bees** do not conform to this Code; or
 4. The hive(s) becomes deceased, as defined by the Department of Agriculture; or
 5. The hive(s) becomes abandoned.
- E. Violations: Reported or visible violations may be corrected by order of the City within which they occur according to established procedures, or by the Department of Agriculture. The City may request the services of the Department of Agriculture to investigate violations or to determine and suggest appropriate corrective measures. Penalties may be levied by the City according to local ordinance or procedures, or by the Department of Agriculture. (Ord. 2108 § 7.2.11.3, 1996).

Kent [City Code 15.08.070](#) Keeping of animals

E. *Beekeeping*. Beekeeping is permitted as an accessory use, when registered with the State Department of Agriculture; provided, that:

1. No more than four (4) hives, each with only one (1) swarm, shall be kept on lots of less than ten thousand (10,000) square feet.

2. Hives shall not be located within twenty-five (25) feet of any property line except when situated eight (8) feet or more above the grade immediately adjacent to the grade of the lot on which the hives are located or when situated less than eight (8) feet above the adjacent existing lot grade and behind a solid fence or hedge six (6) feet high parallel to any property line within twenty-five (25) feet of a hive and extending at least twenty-five (25) feet beyond the hive in both directions.

(Ord. No. 3844, § 3, 6-19-07)

Kirkland [Zoning Code KZC 115.20.4](#)

4. Bees

a. Required Review Process – None.

b. Maximum Number

1) Lots containing 15,000 square feet or less – maximum of two (2) hives.

2) Lots containing more than 15,000 square feet but less than 35,000 square feet – maximum of five (5) hives.

3) Lots containing 35,000 square feet or more – maximum of 15 hives.

c. Minimum Lot Size – 7,200 square feet.

d. Minimum Setback – Hive must be at least 25 feet from any property line. See also special regulation in subsection (4)(e)(5) of this section.

e. Special Regulations

1) Colonies must be in movable frame hives.

2) Adequate space must be maintained in the hive to prevent overcrowding and swarming.

3) Colonies must be requeened following any swarming or aggressive behavior.

4) All colonies must be registered with the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

5) Hives may be located closer than 25 feet to any property line if:

a) Situated eight (8) feet or more above adjacent ground level; or

b) Situated less than six (6) feet above adjacent ground level and behind a solid fence or hedge six (6) feet in height parallel to any property line within 25 feet of the hive and extending at least 20 feet beyond the hive in both directions.

6) Bees living in trees, buildings, or any other space except in movable frame hives; abandoned colonies or diseased bees shall constitute a public nuisance.

Lake Forest Park [Municipal Code 6.04.105](#)

Beekeeping is permitted as an accessory use on single-family residential lots in accordance with this chapter and Table I.

Table 1

Single-Family Lot Size	Maximum Number of Hives
Up to 10,000 square feet	2
10,001 to 12,500 square feet	4
12,501 to 15,000 square feet	5
15,001 to 17,500 square feet	6
17,501 to 20,000 square feet	7
20,001 to 22,500 square feet	8
22,501 to 25,000 square feet	9
25,001 square feet and larger	10

- A. Hives shall not be located within 25 feet of any property line. No hives shall be located in environmentally sensitive areas or their buffers, in accordance with Chapter [16.16](#) LFPMC.
- B. Each hive shall have only one swarm.
- C. It shall be the duty of any person, firm or corporation having honey bees, *apis mellifera*, on its property to maintain each colony in the following condition:
 - 1. Colonies shall be maintained in movable-frame hives.
 - 2. Adequate space shall be maintained in the hive to prevent overcrowding and swarming.
 - 3. Colonies shall be requeened following any swarming or aggressive behavior.
 - 4. Abandoned colonies, diseased bees, or bees living in structures except in movable-frame hives shall constitute a public nuisance, and shall be abated as set forth in Chapter [1.25](#) LFPMC, Code Enforcement.
- D. All colonies shall be registered with the Director of Agriculture pursuant to RCW [15.60.030](#) prior to April 1st of each year. (Ord. 1130 § 7, 2016; Ord. 1040 § 2, 2012; Ord. 820 § 2, 2000)

Lakewood [Municipal Code 18A.40.030](#)

- Any person keeping bees for noncommercial purposes shall obtain zoning certification from the Director and provide an affidavit certifying that the owner understands and agrees to comply with the following requirements:
- i. Any owner/occupant of a lot within any zoning district containing at least six thousand (6,000) square feet of lot area and a single-family dwelling may keep up to three (3) colonies of bees. Each colony shall be housed within a hive.
 - ii. Hives shall be comprised of a combination of brood chamber and supers which do not exceed six (6) feet in height above ground level, including any stand or rack upon which the hives are placed.

- iii. Hives shall be registered with the Director of the State Department of Agriculture or the Director's authorized representative (RCW 15.60.021).
- iv. Minimum six (6) foot tall flight dispersion barriers (e.g., solid fences, walls, and/or hedges) shall be maintained in a good state of repair to the satisfaction of the Director.
- v. An appropriately sized water source for the exclusive use of the colonies shall be maintained on the same property where the colonies are kept to the satisfaction of the Director. In the event there is a natural or artificial water source on an abutting residential property, the colonies must be positioned nearer to the on-site water source than the off-site water source.
- vi. Hives must be set back five (5) feet from the property line, and at least ten (10) feet from any dwelling on adjacent lots.
- vii. Applicants shall provide a site plan or other information determined necessary by the Director to determine compliance with this section.
- viii. No person shall willingly and knowingly keep Africanized bees.

Newcastle [Municipal Code 6.10.010 E.2.](#)

g. Beekeeping is limited as follows:

- i. Beehives are limited to 50 on sites less than five acres;
- ii. The number of beehives shall not be limited on sites of five acres or greater;
- iii. Colonies shall be maintained in movable-frame hives at all times;
- iv. Adequate space shall be provided in each hive to prevent overcrowding and swarming;
- v. Colonies shall be requeened following any swarming or aggressive behavior;
- vi. All colonies shall be registered with the county extension agent prior to April 1st of each year, on a state registration form acceptable to the county; and
- vii. Abandoned colonies, diseased bees, or bees living in trees, buildings, or any other space except in movable-frame hives shall constitute a public nuisance, and shall be abated.

Puyallup [Municipal Code 8.08.030 Keeping of Bees](#)

The keeping of bees is permitted subject to the following criteria:

(1) Beekeeping may include honey bees, mason bees, cutter bees, cavity nesting bees or similar bees used for honey or pollination purposes.

(2) Honey **bees** must be registered with the State Department of Agriculture according to provisions of RCW 15.60.021 and meet the following restrictions:

- (a) A maximum of two honey **bee** hives on property up to one-quarter acre, or up to four hives on property one-quarter to one acre, plus two hives per additional acre, is permitted as an accessory use to a single-family home;
- (b) Honey **bee** hives shall not be located within 25 feet of any lot line, provided this distance may be reduced to 10 feet if strategies are employed to require **bees** to gain elevation before crossing the property line. This may include elevation changes, solid fencing or other techniques that can achieve this objective.

(3) Area housing **bee** varieties other than honey **bees** must be a minimum of 10 feet from adjacent properties and limited in size appropriate for pollination of the owner's lot. (Ord. 3156 § 1, 2017; Ord. 2463 § 1, 1995; Ord. 1069 § 3, 1943).

Redmond [Municipal Code 7.04.154 Beekeeping](#)

Beekeeping, where permitted, is subject to the following requirements:

1. No more than four hives per lot shall be allowed in areas zoned R-1, R-2, or R-3, and no more than two hives per lot shall be allowed in areas zoned R-4, R-5 or R-6, provided, that a beekeeper who picks up a swarm of bees may hold them for a period of no more than two weeks, notwithstanding the provisions of this section.
2. Colonies shall be maintained in small movable frame hives.
3. Adequate space shall be maintained in the hives to prevent overcrowding and swarming.
4. Colonies shall be requeened with a young hybrid queen annually, or as often as necessary to prevent any swarming or aggressive behavior.
5. All colonies shall be registered with the Washington State Department of Agriculture in accordance with apiary law, RCW 15.60.030.
6. Hives shall not be located within twenty-five feet of any property line, except under the following conditions:
 1. When situated eight feet or more above adjacent ground level; or
 2. When there is a solid fence at least six feet high separating the hive from the property line, extending at least twenty feet from the hive along the property line in both directions.
7. Bees living in trees, buildings or any other space (except in movable frame hives), abandoned colonies or diseased bees shall constitute a public nuisance and shall be abated, as set forth in this chapter.

Renton [Municipal Code 4-4-10 M. Additional Standards for Beekeeping.](#)

1. Maximum Number of Hives Generally Permitted: A maximum of three (3) hives are generally permitted and one additional hive may be kept for every additional ten thousand (10,000) gross square feet of lot size. The keeping of bees is allowed to be cumulative with the keeping of animals.
2. Minimum Lot Sizes for Beekeeping:
 - a. Seven thousand five hundred (7,500) gross square feet.
 - b. Four thousand five hundred (4,500) gross square feet if either of the following conditions are met:
 - i. Hives are kept at least eight feet (8') above or below the grade of abutting properties; or
 - ii. Hives are kept behind a minimum six foot (6') tall hedge or solid fence that runs parallel to any property line within twenty five feet (25') of a hive.

3. Beekeeping Requirements:

- a. Hives shall be located in rear yards, side yards, or on rooftops.
- b. Hives shall be located a minimum of twenty five feet (25') from an interior lot line, with each hive's entrance facing away from the nearest property line.
- c. Each hive shall only contain one swarm.
- d. Hives shall be maintained to avoid overpopulation and minimize swarming, for example by requeening regularly, so as not to become a nuisance.
- e. Hives shall be marked or identified to notify visitors.
- f. A source of fresh water (such as a fountain) located within ten feet (10') from the hives shall be provided.

Seattle [Municipal Code Chapter 10.36 – Beekeeping](#)

10.36.010 - Maintenance and registration of colonies.

A. It shall be the duty of any person, firm or corporation having honey bees, *apis mellifera* on its property to maintain each colony in the following condition:

1. Colonies shall be maintained in movable-frame hives.
2. Adequate space shall be maintained in the hive to prevent overcrowding and swarming.
3. Colonies shall be re-queened following any swarming or aggressive behavior.

B. All colonies shall be registered with the Director of Agriculture pursuant to RCW 15.60.030 prior to April 1st of each year.

10.36.020 - Nuisances designated. Bees living in trees, buildings, or any other space except in movable-frame hives; abandoned colonies; or diseased bees shall constitute a public nuisance and subject the owner to the penalties imposed by Section 1 of Ordinance [101531](#)^[19]. (Ord. [101531](#), § 2, 1972.)

10.36.030 - Abatement of nuisances. Activities or places not meeting these standards shall be deemed public nuisances. The Corporation Counsel shall maintain a civil action to abate and prevent such nuisances. Upon judgment and order of the court, such nuisance shall be condemned and destroyed in the manner directed by the court or released upon such conditions as the court in its discretion may impose to secure that the nuisance will be abated; the owner of such nuisance shall be liable for a fine not to exceed One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00). (Ord. [101531](#) § 1 (part), 1979.)

10.36.020 - Nuisances designated.

Bees living in trees, buildings, or any other space except in movable-frame hives; abandoned colonies; or diseased bees shall constitute a public nuisance and subject the owner to the penalties imposed by Section 1 of Ordinance [101531](#)^[19].

[23.42.052 Keeping of animals.](#)

The keeping of small animals, farm animals, domestic fowl and bees is permitted outright as an accessory use to any principal use permitted out- right or to a permitted conditional use subject to the following standards:

E. Beekeeping. Beekeeping is permitted outright as an accessory use, when registered with the State Department of Agriculture, provided that:

1. No more than four (4) hives, each with only one (1) swarm, shall be kept on lots of less than ten thousand (10,000) square feet.
2. Hives shall not be located within twenty-five (25) feet of any property line except when situated eight (8) feet or more above the grade immediately adjacent to the grade of the lot on which the hives are located or when situated less than eight (8) feet above the adjacent existing lot grade and behind a solid fence or hedge six (6) feet high parallel to any property line within twenty-five (25) feet of a hive and extending at least twenty (20) feet beyond the hive in both directions.

Spokane Municipal Code [Section 17C.310.130 Beekeeping](#)

A. Where Permitted.

Beekeeping is allowed as an accessory use on any lot occupied by a single-family residence that is in the RA, RSF, RTF, RMF and RHD zones. Beekeeping for educational or research purposes by an institution such as college, high school or agricultural extension office is allowed as a Type II conditional use permit in all zones, subject to the requirements of subsection (B)(1) through (5) below.

B. Standards Applicable to Beekeeping.

Beekeeping is subject to the following standards:

1. Location, Density and Maintenance of Colonies.
 - a. The number of colonies is limited to one colony per four thousand three hundred fifty square feet of lot area, up to a maximum of eight colonies; and
 - b. Colonies shall be setback a minimum of twenty-five feet of any property line, except that a colony may be situated within ten feet of a side lot line or rear lot line provided the following provisions are met:
 - i. The beehives are isolated from public access by a security fence as required under [SMC 17C.110.230\(F\)](#); and
 - ii. The beekeeper establishes and maintains a flyway barrier at least six feet in height consisting of a solid wall, solid fencing material, dense vegetation or combination thereof that is parallel to the property line and extends ten feet beyond the colony in each direction so that all bees are forced to fly at an elevation of at least six feet above ground level over the property lines in the vicinity of the colony; or
 - iii. The colony is situated ten feet or more above the grade of the nearest adjoining property line.
2. Colonies shall be maintained in movable-frame hives with adequate space and management techniques to prevent overcrowding and swarming.
3. In any instance in which a colony exhibits aggressive or swarming behavior, the beekeeper must ensure that the colony is re-queened. Aggressive behavior is any

instance in which unusual aggressive characteristics such as stinging or attacking without provocation occurs.

4. Every beekeeper shall maintain an adequate supply of water for bees located close to each colony.
5. Registrations and Training.
 - a. All colonies shall be registered with the director of the state department of agriculture pursuant to RCW 15.60.021 no later than April 1st of each year.
 - b. The beekeeper shall have completed the requirements for apprenticeship level of the Washington State Beekeeper's Association master beekeeper certification program.

Spokane Valley Municipal Code [Title 19.65.020 Agriculture and animal](#)

9. In residential areas, hobby beekeeping is subject to the following conditions:

- a. The number of beehives shall be limited to one beehive per 4,356 gross square feet of lot area;
- b. Beehives shall be set back a minimum of five feet from a side or rear property line and 20 feet from the front property line;
- c. A flyaway barrier shall be provided that is at least six feet high and consists of a solid wall, solid fencing material, dense vegetation, or combination thereof, that is parallel to the side or rear property line(s) and extends beyond the beehive(s) in each direction that bees are forced to fly at an elevation of at least six feet above ground level over the property lines in the vicinity of the beehives;
- d. Beekeepers shall maintain an adequate supply of water for bees located close to the hives; and
- e. The beekeeper shall be certified by the Washington State Beekeeper's Association.

Tacoma Municipal Code [Chapter 5.24 Apiaries](#)

5.24.010 Beekeeping – Maintenance of colonies – Nuisances designated.

- A. It shall be the duty of any person having honey bees, *Apis Mellifera*, on his or her property to maintain each colony so as not to create a public nuisance.
- B. Honey bee colonies shall, in addition, be maintained in the following condition:
 1. All honey bee hives shall be registered with the Washington State Department of Agriculture as required by RCW 15.60.030.
 2. Colonies shall be maintained in movable-frame hives.
 3. Adequate techniques, such as requeening, in handling bees, and adequate space in the hive shall be maintained to prevent unprovoked stinging 75 feet or more from the hive.
 4. Lots having less than 10,000 square feet shall not have more than four hives.
 5. Hives shall not be located within 75 feet of any property line, public street, sidewalk, or alley except when situated behind a solid fence or hedge six feet in height parallel to

any property line within 25 feet of the hive and extending at least 20 feet beyond the hive in both directions, or if such fence completely encloses the hives.

C. All other nests (colonies) of stinging insects, such as yellow jackets, hornets, and wasps, including Vespidae, in trees, buildings, underground, or in any other space, and diseased colonies of honey bees, constitute public nuisances. (Ord. 22662 § 1; passed Apr. 6, 1982)

5.24.020 Enforcement and entry – Right of entry for inspection.

A. The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and the Police Department shall enforce this chapter.

B. Proper officers of the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and any Tacoma Police Officers are authorized and empowered, during reasonable business hours, to enter premises to inspect hives or colonies for the purpose of ascertaining the variety of insects occupying the hives, conditions of health, and management of crowding. Entry may be pursuant to warrant or pursuant to the consent of the owner or occupier of the premises, or without consent or warrant if there is probable cause to believe that a violation of this chapter is occurring on the premises and evidence thereof will be lost or destroyed before a warrant can be issued. (Ord. 22662 § 1; passed Apr. 6, 1982)

5.24.030 Violation – Penalty. Any person, firm, corporation, or other legal entity found to have violated any provision of this chapter shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine not exceeding \$1,000.00 or by imprisonment not exceeding 90 days, or by both such fine and imprisonment. Upon a first conviction, there shall be imposed a fine of not less than \$100.00 and, upon a second conviction, there shall be imposed a fine of not less than \$500.00 and, upon a third or subsequent conviction, there shall be imposed a fine of not less than \$1,000.00 or imprisonment for not more than 90 days, or by both such fine and imprisonment. Upon a conviction, and pursuant to a prosecution motion, the court shall also order immediate action by the person, firm, corporation, or other legal entity to correct the condition constituting the violation and to maintain the corrected condition in compliance with this chapter. The mandated minimum fines shall include statutory costs and assessments.

Wenatchee Municipal Code [Title 10.48.060 Farm animals](#)

(9) Beekeeping.

(a) All colonies shall be registered with the Washington State Department of Agriculture in accordance with Chapter [15.60](#) RCW. The terms “apiary,” “colony,” and “hive” as used in this section shall have the meanings set forth in RCW [15.60.005](#).

(b) No more than six hives may be located on a lot.

(c) No hive may exceed 20 cubic feet in volume.

(d) No hive shall be located closer than three feet from any property line.

(e) No hive shall be located closer than 10 feet from a public sidewalk or 25 feet from a primary structure on an abutting lot.

(f) Hives brought in temporarily for commercial agricultural/orchard operations are exempt from the requirements of this section.

- (g) **Bees** living in buildings or any other space (except in movable frame hives), or abandoned colonies shall constitute a public nuisance and shall be abated as set forth in this section.
- (h) Noncompliance with the provisions of this section shall be abated in conformance with WCC Title [16](#), Code Enforcement.
- (i) Hives or colonies of **bees** shall be kept in a manner in which they are inaccessible to the general public and so that **bee** movements to and from the hive do not interfere with the ordinary movements of persons on adjacent properties or the public right-of-way.
- (j) **Hive, Apiary Management Requirements.**
 - (i) Colonies shall be maintained in movable-frame hives at all times;
 - (ii) A consistent source of water shall be provided at the apiary;
 - (iii) A flyway barrier at least six feet in height shall shield any part of a property line that is within 25 feet of a hive. The flyway barrier shall consist of a wall, fence, dense vegetation or a combination thereof and it shall be positioned to transect both legs of a triangle extending from an apex at the hive to each end point of the part of the property line to be shielded.
 - (iv) Property owners are required to self-register with the city of Wenatchee community and economic development department prior to hives being located on a site. Self-registration shall include a signed acknowledgement on a form provided by the city of Wenatchee that the beekeeper will comply with the provisions of this section.

Winthrop [Municipal Code Chapter 17.12.D Beekeeping](#)

D. Beekeeping. Beekeeping is permitted as set forth in Table 17.16.010 when the property owner or person maintaining such beekeeping activity is registered with the State Department of Agriculture; provided, that no more than four hives, each with only one swarm, shall be allowed on a property and hives must be located a minimum of twenty-five (25) feet from property lines of property owned by a different property owner.

[Table 17.16.010](#)

ALLOWED USES

- A = allowed
- PD = planned development
- CU = conditional use
- du = dwelling unit

Land Use	R-I	R-II	R-III	PR	B-I	B-II	B-III	IND	PU	T/R
Agriculture										
Agriculture, horticulture, farms								A		
Agricultural building							A	A		

Land Use	R-I	R-II	R-III	PR	B-I	B-II	B-III	IND	PU	T/R
Agricultural market							A	A		
Agriculture-related industry							CU ¹	A		
Beekeeping ¹⁶	A	A	A	A	A		A			A

Woodinville [Municipal Code Title 21.31.020](#)

(vii) Beekeeping is limited as follows:

1. Beehives are limited to 50 on sites less than five acres;
2. The number of beehives shall not be limited on sites of five acres or greater;
3. Colonies shall be maintained in movable-frame hives at all times;
4. Adequate space shall be provided in each hive to prevent overcrowding and swarming;
5. Colonies shall be requeened following any swarming or aggressive behavior;
6. All colonies shall be registered with the County Extension Agent prior to April 1st of each year, on a State registration form acceptable to the County; and
7. Abandoned colonies, diseased bees, or bees living in trees, buildings, or any other space except in movable-frame hives shall constitute a public nuisance, and shall be abated as set forth in Chapter 21.50 WMC, Enforcement.

Washington State County Codes:

King County [Code. Title 21A.30.020.g;](#)

g. Beekeeping is limited as follows:

- (1) Beehives are limited to fifty on sites less than five acres;
- (2) The number of beehives shall not be limited on sites of five acres or greater;
- (3) Colonies shall be maintained in movable-frame hives at all times;
- (4) Adequate space shall be provided in each hive to prevent overcrowding and swarming;
- (5) Colonies shall be requeened following any swarming or aggressive behavior;
- (6) All colonies shall be registered with the county extension agent before April 1 of each year, on a state registration form acceptable to the county; and
- (7) Abandoned colonies, diseased bees, or bees living in trees, buildings, or any other space except in movable-frame hives shall constitute a public nuisance, and shall be abated as set forth in K.C.C. chapter 21A.50;

Pierce County [Code 8.94](#) Beekeeping/Apiaries

8.94.010 Policy and Purpose.

A. It is the declared policy of this County to enhance and encourage beekeeping and agricultural pollination operations within the County. It is the further intent of this County to provide to the residents of this County proper notification of the County's recognition and support, through this Chapter, of those persons' and/or entities' rights to keep bees, and to set forth concomitant responsibilities in beekeeping.

B. Where non-agricultural land uses extend into agricultural areas or exist side by side, beekeeping occasionally becomes the subject of nuisance complaints. It is an intent of this Chapter to clarify the circumstances under which beekeeping shall be considered a nuisance.

C. Further it is intended that this Chapter is supplemental to, and not in conflict with, the provisions of Chapter 15.60 RCW. (Ord. 95-11 § 1 (part), 1995; Ord. 94-108 § 1 (part), 1994)

8.94.030 Beekeeping – Maintenance of Colonies.

A. Honey bee colonies shall be maintained in the following condition:

1. All honey bee hives shall be registered with the Washington State Department of Agriculture and comply with Chapter 15.60 RCW and Rules adopted thereunder.
2. Colonies shall be maintained in movable-frame hives, unless exempted by the Washington State Department of Agriculture as an educational exhibit.
3. Adequate handling techniques, such as requeening, should be employed, and adequate space in the hive should be maintained to minimize swarming.
4. Apiaries shall be managed and kept in a clean and orderly condition.
5. An apiary(s) shall be marked in full compliance with WAC 16-602-040.

B. It shall be the duty of any person having honey bees on his or her property to prevent diseased hives as defined in RCW 15.60.005(13) and (16).

- C.
1. The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department shall refer complaints of possible violations of Chapter 15.60 RCW to the State Department of Agriculture.
 2. The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department shall consult with the State Department of Agriculture on concerns regarding the maintenance of honey bee colonies.

8.94.040 Hive Placement Requirements. Hives in all areas of Pierce County shall adhere to the following:

- A. Hives shall be at least 25 feet from a property line, with the hive(s) entrance(s) facing away from or parallel to the nearest property line.
- B. Hives may be less than 25 feet from a property line if placed behind a 6-foot high fence, which shall extend at least 25 feet beyond the hive(s) in both directions. The fence shall direct bee flight into the air at least six feet before the bees cross the property line. The fence or obstruction may occur on the adjoining property, provided that bee flight is not directed in the vicinity of recreational decks or entrances to housing or buildings on adjoining properties. In lieu of a fence, the hive(s) may be placed at least eight feet above adjacent ground level, provided that all other requirements of this Section are met.
- C. A hive(s) adjacent to public roads shall comply with A. and B. so as to direct bee flight at least 20 feet into the air over the road surface. In lieu of this requirement, a hive(s) shall be placed at least 100 feet from the road rights-of-way, with the entrance(s) parallel thereto.
- D. The number of hives within urban residential areas shall be limited as follows:

<u>Parcel Size (Square footage)</u>	<u># Hives</u>
6,000 to 10,000	2
10,001 to 20,000	4
20,001 to 43,560 (.46 to 1 acre)	10

Exception: Residential limitations shall not apply when a parcel is contiguous to an open area, such as, but not limited to, wetlands, fish and game preserves and/or hatcheries, and military reservations. Such open areas shall be at least two acres in size.

- E. The number of hives may not be restricted on parcels of land over one acre in size;
1. During times of the year when there is minimal bee flight or activity (October – March); or
 2. The parcel is in a rural or agricultural area; or
 3. The hives with bees are being used for agricultural crop pollination; and
 4. A public nuisance is not created; and
 5. All other requirements of this Chapter are met.

F. In addition to the above production hives, a person may maintain a minimum of one, or up to 10 percent of their production hives, of single-story Langstrogh deep hives with colonies, in each apiary, for requeening purposes. Such hives shall conform to all placement and management requirements and restrictions.

G. A consistent source of water shall be provided as appropriate at the apiary. This requirement is intended to discourage bee visitation at swimming pools, hose bibs, animal watering sources, bird baths, or where people congregate.

(Ord. [95-11](#) § 1 (part), 1995; Ord. [94-108](#) § 1 (part), 1994)

8.94.050 Nuisance Declared. It shall be the duty of all persons keeping hives of honey bees or having other stinging insects as described below, in or upon their property or premises, to prevent the following:

- A. Colonies of bees which are defensive or exhibit objectionable behavior, or which interfere with the normal use of property, or the enjoyment of persons, animals, or adjacent property.
- B. Hives of bees which do not conform to PCC [8.94.040](#).
- C. An abandoned hive(s).
- D. All other nests (colonies) of stinging insects such as yellow jackets, hornets, and wasps which exhibit objectionable behavior or interfere with normal use of property, or the enjoyment of persons, animals, or adjacent property.
- E. All nests, hives, or colonies of Africanized honey bees (*Apis mellifera Scutellata*), except those which are permitted under RCW [15.60.140](#).

Each of the above described conditions shall constitute a nuisance pursuant to PCC [8.08.010](#), and shall be abated by the Health Department, pursuant to PCC [8.08.040](#), et seq.

(Ord. [95-11](#) § 1 (part), 1995; Ord. [94-108](#) § 1 (part), 1994)

8.94.060 Enforcement and Entry – Right of Entry for Inspection. The Health Department and the Sheriff shall enforce this Chapter. (Ord. [95-11](#) § 1 (part), 1995; Ord. [94-108](#) § 1 (part), 1994)

8.94.070 Violation – Penalty.

A. Any person, firm, or corporation in violation of any provision of this Chapter, shall, upon conviction thereof, be guilty of a misdemeanor, and be punished by imprisonment in the County jail for a maximum term fixed by the court of not more than 90 days, or by a fine in an amount fixed by the court of not more than \$1,000.00, or by both such imprisonment and fine.

B. Any violation of any provision of this Chapter shall constitute a class 1 civil infraction pursuant to PCC [1.16.120](#). Authorized officials of the Health Department shall issue notices of civil infraction to enforce the provisions of this Chapter, effective upon the date of amendment of the Health Department interlocal agreement granting such authority.

(Ord. [95-11](#) § 1 (part), 1995; Ord. [94-108](#) § 1 (part), 1994)

Spokane County [Zoning Code](#) Title 14.606.

4. Beekeeping LDR, LDR-P, MDR, HDR zones)

a. Beekeeping is allowed as an accessory use on any lot or parcel occupied by a single family residence.

b. The keeping of bees shall meet the requirements of the Washington State Department of Agriculture RCW 15.60 or as hereafter amended.

c. The number of colonies allowed is limited to two (2) for the first 4,356 square feet of lot area, and one (1) for every 4,356 square feet of lot area thereafter. There is no limit on the number of Nucs/Nuclei.

d. Beehives shall be setback a minimum of twenty-five (25) feet from any abutting side or rear property line or public right-of-way, except that beehives may be setback up to five (5) feet from any abutting side or rear property line when the beekeeper establishes and maintains a flyway barrier as provided in section (e) below.

e. A flyway barrier shall be at least six (6) feet in height consisting of a solid wall, solid fencing material, dense vegetation or combination thereof that is parallel to such side and/or rear property line(s) and extends beyond the beehive(s) in each direction so that bees are forced to fly at an elevation of at least six (6) feet above ground level over the property lines in the vicinity of the colony.

Additional Resources: Washington State

Revised Code of Washington [RCW 15.60](#);

Washington Administrative Code [WAC 16-602-025](#), [16-602-050](#)

Washington state Dept. of Agriculture – [Apiary Page](#)

Washington State Apiary Laws and Rules <https://agr.wa.gov/departments/insects-pests-and-weeds/insects/apiary-pollinators/apiary-reg-and-laws>

Washington State University. Cooperative Extension Service. <http://pubs.cahnrs.wsu.edu/locations/>

Additional Resources: Urban Beekeeping

Beekeeping and the Neighbors <https://www.perfectbee.com/learn-about-bees/about-beekeeping/beekeeping-and-the-neighbors>

Bees in the Neighborhood: Best Practices for Urban beekeepers. University of California, May 2018
<https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8596.pdf>

The Growth and Feasibility of Urban Beekeeping. Perfect Bee <https://www.perfectbee.com/learn-about-bees/about-beekeeping/growth-of-urban-beekeeping>

What is Urban Beekeeping? <http://completebeehives.com/urban-beekeeping-kit/>

Why Cities Should Invest in Beekeeping by SmartCitiesDive
<https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/why-cities-should-invest-beekeeping/1093071/>