

1 **2009-2010 Development Code Docket**  
2 **A-13: Cottage Housing (Titles 20 and 21)**

Date: September 7, 2011

Public Hearing Date: Tentative Date: October, 2011

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Proponent/Applicant: Thurston County

Action Requested: Amend Development Code to  
allow Cottage Housing  
Development within the Lacey  
and Ground Mound Urban  
Growth Areas (Title 20 and 21).

3 **UPDATE:**

4 The Planning Commission has held four previous briefings regarding a Cottage Housing  
5 Ordinance, which would amend Title 20, 21, 22, and 23. To date, the Planning Commission was  
6 waiting to take action in scheduling a public hearing in making a recommendation to the Board  
7 of County Commissioners until the City of Tumwater had gone through the entire public process  
8 in adopting the Thurston County Green Development Stakeholders version of the drafted cottage  
9 regulations, but it was determined at the time of adoption, by the Tumwater Council, to wait until  
10 the City had adopted residential design standards.

11  
12 The Board of County Commissioners received a letter from the City of Tumwater, asking delay  
13 in adopting a cottage ordinance in the Tumwater Urban Growth Area until the City has adopted  
14 residential design standards, which may not occur until sometime next year (Attachment A).

15  
16 The City of Olympia has indicated that the City is not interested in amending the existing cottage  
17 code for the Olympia Urban Growth Area (TCC 23.04.060(8)). Staff is prepared to move  
18 forward with the Planning Commission in making a recommendation for cottage development in  
19 the Lacey and Ground Mound Urban Growth Areas. Currently, the Lacey and Ground Mound  
20 Urban Growth Areas do not have any standards or guidance for a cottage housing development.

21  
22 **ISSUE:**

23 The Growth Management Act requires urban growth areas with urban services to maximize infill  
24 opportunities. Many instances the layout of a property or the position of existing structures  
25 prohibits or makes it challenging for residential infill to take place. A cottage housing chapter  
26 for the urban growth areas would make it more flexible for residential infill, while providing  
27 more affordable and energy efficient dwellings by means of their maximum size and being  
28 constructed in accordance with a green building certificate program.

29

1 **BACKGROUND:**

2 There is no precise definition of cottage housing, and it is not clear when a house ceases to be a  
3 cottage and becomes a small-lot house, or simply a house. Cottages are typically built in  
4 clusters, close together, have some common area, and do not have parking adjacent to each  
5 cottage.

6  
7 Among cottages in the area, the small end of the size range would be found in the Pine Street  
8 Cottages in Seattle, which have about 450 square feet on the main floor, plus a 100 square foot  
9 loft. This space allows for a living room, bedroom, kitchen and full bath. At the larger end of  
10 the size spectrum, the Ravenna cottages in Seattle are about 950 square feet of space in two  
11 stories. This allows for two bedrooms and one and half baths. The Third Street Cottages in  
12 Langley, Washington, range from 600 to 650 square feet on the main floor, plus lofts ranging  
13 from 100 to 280 square feet.

14  
15 The cottage zoning ordinance in Seattle limits cottages to 975 square feet, with no more than one  
16 third of that space in either a basement or upper level. The City of Lacey Cottage Ordinance  
17 allows a gross floor area of 1,200 feet per dwelling with the maximum gross floor area for the  
18 ground floor or main floor being 1,000 square feet.

19  
20 Single-family neighborhoods are the optimum location for cottage clusters, both because of the  
21 economics of land cost and to achieve the promise of a single-family feel at multi-family prices.  
22 One or two story cottages would not fit well into a multi-family zone where taller, bulkier  
23 structures would overwhelm them.

24  
25 Cottages tend to be clustered together around some common open space, such as a courtyard or  
26 walkway. If the land is in condominium ownership, agreements will specify the areas that are  
27 subject to common maintenance and those that are the owner's responsibility. It is also common  
28 that the cottages have a shared, off-street parking area, and have common storage areas.

29  
30 Off-street parking, landscaping, interesting facades and other design features can result in a  
31 better streetscape than single-family houses might yield. A cottage cluster can present less mass  
32 than single-family houses that maximize the building envelope. The pedestrian orientation of  
33 cottages puts more people on the sidewalk and open space, enhancing neighborhood security and  
34 sense of place.

35  
36 To ensure that cottage projects fit well into existing single-family neighborhoods, careful thought  
37 needs to be given to specific development standards. These standards must achieve a balance so  
38 that they protect neighborhood character and at the same time provide incentives for cottage  
39 development.

40  
41 These pocket neighborhoods are not intended for everyone. The density, size, and style of a  
42 cottage development is geared towards a niche market of people who want to live in compact,  
43 connected, and walkable urban areas. Adopting a cottage ordinance would not require all single-  
44 family developments to be designed as a cottage development, but would give the developer an  
45 opportunity and guidance in such a development. Attachment B provides examples of some  
46 cottage developments and <http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2011-03-30->

1 [pocket30\\_ST\\_N.htm](#) and <http://www.pocket-neighborhoods.net/> gives good insight to cottage  
2 housing.

3  
4 **DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS:**

5 This proposed code change would permit cottage housing developments within the Lacey and  
6 Ground Mound Urban Growth Areas. The language provided below in Option No.1 has been  
7 drafted by the Thurston County Green Building Stakeholders group and amended based upon  
8 comments that have been received from the City of Lacey, City of Tumwater, Housing Authority  
9 of Thurston County, and Thurston County staff.

10  
11 The 15-member Green Building Stakeholder Group was formed from the private sector, which  
12 includes developers, architects, engineers, affordable housing developers and green building  
13 advocates. The stakeholders group is comprised of subject matter experts within the local green  
14 development building industry. One of the purposes of the group is to draft energy efficiency  
15 code that seeks the greatest possible reduction in green house gases and promotes sustainable  
16 development.

17  
18 The stakeholder group used the City of Lacey Cottage Ordinance as a model and reviewed  
19 cottage codes from Port Townsend, Redmond, Federal Way, Mukilteo, Seattle, Langley, and  
20 Marysville. If a jurisdiction required something different from a Lacey cottage requirement, the  
21 cottage standard was analyzed by the group and a specific standard was chosen. In general, most  
22 cottage ordinances that were reviewed provided the same general standards, but there were  
23 differences in the maximum building sizes, parking requirements, and open space standards.

24  
25 The below drafted cottage code language reflects comments that have been received from the  
26 City of Lacey, City of Tumwater, Housing Authority of Thurston County, and Thurston County  
27 staff.

28  
29 **ALTERNATIVES:**

30 **Option 1)** Amend Titles 20 and 21 by allowing cottage housing development within the  
31 Lacey and Ground Mound Urban Growth Areas.

32  
33 **Option 2)** Make no change to Title 20 and 21 with regard to cottage housing.

34  
35 **SEPA:**

36 A SEPA determination has not been made at this time.

37  
38 **NOTIFICATION:**

39 Written notice of the public hearing will be published in The Nisqually Valley News at least  
40 twenty (20) days prior to the public hearing.

41  
42 **DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:**

43 The Resource Stewardship Department recommends the Planning Commission move forward  
44 Development Code Docket item A-13, Amend Development Code to allow Cottage Housing  
45 Development within the Lacey and Ground Mound Urban Growth Areas (Title 20 and 21) with a  
46 recommendation of approval to the Board of County Commissioners as follows:

1 **Title 20 and 21 Zoning would be amended as follows:**

2  
3 Deleted Text: ~~Strikethrough~~ Proposed Changes: Underlined  
4 Staff Comments: *Italics* Unaffected Omitted Text: (...)  
5 Deleted Draft Text: ~~Strikethrough / Underlined~~  
6

7 **Chapter XX.XX - COTTAGE HOUSING**

8  
9 **Sections:**

10 XX.XX.010 Intent  
11 XX.XX.020 Where permitted  
12 XX.XX.030 Development Standards  
13

14 **XX.XX.010 Intent.**

15 It is the intent of this chapter to:

- 16 A. Provide an opportunity for small, detached housing types, clustered around an  
17 open space.  
18 B. Provide traditional cottage amenities and proportions to ensure that cottage housing  
19 developments contribute to the overall community character.  
20 C. Provide centrally located and functional common open space that fosters a sense of  
21 community.  
22 D. Provide semi-private area around the individual dwellings to enable diversity in  
23 landscape design and foster a sense of ownership.  
24 E. Ensure minimal visual impact from vehicular use and storage areas for residents of the  
25 cottage housing development as well as adjacent properties, and to maintain a single-family  
26 character along public streets.  
27 F. Take advantage of existing natural features on the site including topography and  
28 vegetation, where desirable.  
29 G. Provide the opportunity for more affordable housing units.  
30 H. Promote conservation of natural resources by clustering smaller dwelling units on  
31 lots.  
32 I. Provide energy efficient dwelling units.  
33 J. Provide more opportunity for infill development.  
34 K. Provide incentives for green certified building and low-impact development.

35 **XX.XX.020 Where permitted.** Cottage housing development shall be permitted in the  
36 following land use districts, consistent with the development standards in this chapter:

37 *Lacey Urban Growth Area:*

- 38 A. Low Density Residential 3-6 District.  
39 B. Moderate Density Residential District.  
40 C. High Density Residential District.  
41

42 *Ground Mound Urban Growth Area:*

- 43 A. Residential – 3-6 Units Per 1 Acre.  
44 B. Residential – 4-16 Units Per 1 Acre.

1  
2  
3 **XX.XX.030 Development standards.**

4 A. Conflicts. In instances where the development standards of this chapter conflict with  
5 other County requirements, the requirements within this this chapter shall prevail.

6 BA. Density. The density of the underlying zone governs unless a density increase is  
7 granted as provided in this chapter.

8 1. ~~B. Density increases, in the Low Density Residential (3-6) and Moderate~~  
9 ~~Density Residential Districts. The County may allow Ceottage housing developments may~~  
10 ~~exceed to increase the density of the underlining zone by 50 percent when the development is~~  
11 ~~in compliance with all standards of this chapter and if all dwellings are constructed in~~  
12 ~~accordance with a green building certificate program such as LEED (Leadership in Energy~~  
13 ~~and Environmental Design), Passive House, and Four Star Built Green.~~

14 C. Cottage Clusters. Developments shall contain a minimum of two and a maximum of  
15 twelve dwellings located in a cluster to encourage a sense of community among the residents. A  
16 development site may contain more than one cluster. The density bonus for clustering found in  
17 the underlying zone districts shall not apply to cottage developments.

18 ~~D. C. Maximum Gross Floor Area. The maximum allowed gross floor area is 1,200 4,500~~  
19 ~~square feet per dwelling. The maximum gross floor area for the ground floor or main floor is~~  
20 ~~1,000 square feet per dwelling. Floor area does not include covered porches. Floor area does not~~  
21 ~~include covered porches, garages, or accessory structures.~~

22 ~~E. D. Platting. A cottage development may be completed through a land division,~~  
23 ~~subdivision plat, short plat, or condominium provided the county has adopted an ordinance~~  
24 ~~providing this option.~~

25 1. Covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs) shall be submitted at the same  
26 time and in the same manner as required of any land division. In addition, CC&Rs for cottage  
27 developments shall address ownership and maintenance responsibilities, including but not  
28 limited to the following: the common open space areas, common drainage facilities, parking  
29 areas, and private roads. They shall also reflect the regulatory requirements regarding the  
30 minimum spacing requirements between structures (both primary and accessory) in effect at the  
31 time of final approval of the land division. The CC&R's shall also reflect the building design  
32 standards within the cottage development.

33 F. E. Design. Cottages are subject to the design criteria in this Chapter 21.70. Where  
34 there are conflicts between Chapter 21.70 and the standards, in this chapter, the standards herein  
35 shall apply. Cottage housing developments are subject to the following design review  
36 requirements:

37 1. Variety in Building Design. A variety of building elements and treatments of  
38 cottages and accessory structures must be incorporated. Variety in building design may include  
39 any of the following: change in materials or texture, windows, façade, colors, or other  
40 architectural feature as shown in the codes design standards of Chapter 21.70. No blank walls  
41 are allowed.

42 2. Five-foot-wide pedestrian pathways (sidewalks) must be included to provide for  
43 movement of residents and guests from parking areas to homes and other amenities.

1 G. Open Space. Cottage developments shall provide “common open space” and “private  
2 open space”. These two types of open space shall count towards the 10-percent open space  
3 required of land divisions in Title 18. All open space areas shall be landscaped

4 1. ~~F.~~ Minimum Common Space. The minimum common space required is three  
5 hundred square feet per dwelling. The common open space shall be configured so that, at a  
6 minimum:

7 a.-1. The common open space abuts at least 50 fifty percent of the  
8 cottages in a cottage housing development.

9 b.-2. Cottage clusters must abut at least two sides of the common open  
10 space.

11 c.-3. Cottages are oriented around the open space with an entry facing  
12 the common open space.

13 d.-4. Cottages should be within 60 ~~sixty~~ feet walking distance of the  
14 common open space as measured along accessible pathways as specified in subsection (F)(2).

15 e. 5. Area required to meet minimum private open space, setback, and  
16 parking requirements may not be used in the calculations for common open space.

17 f.-6. Common open space shall be accessible to all cottage residents in  
18 the applicable cluster and maintained by the development’s homeowners association.

19 g. Common open space shall be usable (not within a critical area or  
20 critical area buffer per Title 17.15.

21  
22 2. ~~G.~~ Minimum Private Open Space. The minimum private open space required  
23 is 200 ~~two hundred square~~ feet per dwelling. The private ~~Required~~ open space shall be adjacent  
24 to each dwelling unit and for the exclusive use of this unit ~~the cottage resident(s)~~. The private  
25 space shall be:

26 a. 1. Usable (not within a critical area or critical area buffer per Title  
27 17.15. on a steep slope).

28 b. 2. Oriented toward the common open space as much as possible.

29 c. 3. No less than eight feet in dimension on any side. ~~A desirable~~  
30 ~~configuration for this private open space is an area between the dwelling unit and the common~~  
31 ~~open space, similar to what’s shown in the examples in *Table ?*~~

32 d. 4. Front yard porch area may be included as private open space area.

33 H. Facades and Porches.

34 1. Cottages facing the common open space or common pathway must feature a  
35 roofed porch at least eighty square feet in size with a minimum dimension of eight feet on any  
36 side.

37 2. Cottages ~~abutting fronting on~~ a street shall provide a covered entry feature  
38 with a minimum dimension of six feet by six feet facing the street. This is in addition to the  
39 porch requirement, where the cottage is adjacent to a common open space or pathway.

40 3. ~~All facades facing common open space, pathways, and streets shall comply~~  
41 ~~with Architectural Details and Windows and Transparency design criteria specified in Section~~  
42 ~~14.23.072(C) and (I), respectively.~~

1 I. Maximum Height for Cottages.

2 1. The maximum height for cottages is 25 ~~twenty five~~ feet. All parts of the roof  
3 above ~~eighteen~~ feet shall be pitched.

4 2. The maximum height for all accessory structures is 18 ~~eighteen~~ feet.

5 J. Setbacks.

6 1. Front Yards. The minimum front yard shall be ~~ten~~ (10) feet.

7 a. Cottage housing developments shall be exempt from the front yard  
8 driveway length requirement found in underlying zone districts.

9 2. Rear yards. The minimum rear yard shall be 5 ~~ten~~ (10) feet.

10 3. Side yards. The minimum required side yard shall be ~~five~~ (5) feet.

11 K. Minimum Distance Separating Structures. The minimum required distance separating  
12 structures (including accessory structures) is 10 ~~ten~~ feet.

13 L. Parking Requirements.

14 1. The minimum required number of parking spaces is one and one-half spaces  
15 per dwelling.

16 a. Mixed use developments shall provide no less than one parking space  
17 per dwelling.

18 2. Parking shall be located on the same property as the cottage development.

19 3. Parking and vehicular areas shall be screened from public streets and adjacent  
20 residential uses by landscaping or architectural screens.

21 4. ~~Parking shall be located in clusters of not more than five adjoining uncovered~~  
22 ~~spaces (except where parking areas are adjacent to an alley).~~

23 4.5. Parking is prohibited in the front yard setback area.

24 6. ~~All detached parking structures shall have a pitched roof design.~~

25 5. 7. Garages or carports may be attached to individual cottages provided all other  
26 design standards have been met. ~~and the footprint of the ground floor, including the garage, does~~  
27 ~~not exceed 1,000 square feet.~~ Such garages or carports (either attached or detached) shall be  
28 located away from common open spaces. to the extent possible.

29 8. ~~At least fifty percent of the required parking spaces shall be enclosed. Such structures~~  
30 ~~shall be designed consistent with the cottage architecture. This includes similar building~~  
31 ~~materials, rooflines, and detailing.~~

32 6. If covered parking is provided, such structures shall be designed consistent  
33 with the cottage architecture. This includes similar building materials, rooflines, and detailing.

34 7. 9. Parking between structures is only allowed when it is located toward the  
35 rear of the principal structure and is served by an alley or private driveway.

36 8. ~~10. Impervious~~ Surface parking lots shall be broken into sub-lots of no more  
37 than ~~eight~~ 10 parking spaces. These rows shall be separated by landscape islands a minimum of  
38 12 feet in width. These islands shall either be landscaped in accordance with a low-impact  
39 development design in accordance with the adopted Drainage Design and Erosion Control  
40 Manual. Sub lots shall be separated by landscaped bulb outs a minimum of 12 feet in width.

41 a. Pervious surface parking lots are not required to utilize landscape  
42 islands.

43 9. 11. Surface parking lots of more than two spaces, visible from a public right-  
44 of-way (not including alleys) or adjacent single-family uses or zones shall be screened by  
45 landscaping and/or architectural features. ~~pursuant to the landscape requirements to separate~~  
46 ~~conflicting uses.~~

1 M. Utility elements. Utility meters and heating/cooling/ventilation equipment shall be  
2 located/designed to minimize visual impacts from the street and common areas.

3 N. Low impact development. Cottage developments shall utilize Low Impact  
4 Development techniques to accommodate and treat stormwater as on-site conditions allow, as  
5 determined by the director. Examples include the use of pervious pavement for walkways,  
6 patios, and vehicle access areas, directing runoff from roofs and other impervious areas to  
7 landscaped beds, green or living roofs, and the use of rain barrels.

8 O. Existing nonconforming structure and accessory dwelling units.

9 1. On a lot to be used for a cottage housing development, an existing detached  
10 single-family residential structure, which may be nonconforming with respect to the standards of  
11 this chapter, shall be permitted to remain, provided the house and any accessory structures are  
12 not enlarged and the development meets the standards herein. The existing dwelling shall be  
13 included in determining the allowable density for the site.

14 ~~2. For any cottage development containing an existing house and an accessory~~  
15 ~~dwelling unit, the accessory dwelling unit shall be counted as a cottage for the purposes of~~  
16 ~~determining allowable density for the site.~~

17 ~~P. Clustering Groups. Developments shall contain a minimum of four and a maximum~~  
18 ~~of twelve dwellings located in a cluster group to encourage a sense of community among the~~  
19 ~~residents. A development site may contain more than one cluster. Moved to Sect .030(C)~~

20 P. Accessory dwelling units.

21 1. There shall be no more than one accessory dwelling unit for every five primary  
22 dwelling units.

23 2. An accessory dwelling unit may be attached to or detached from a new or  
24 existing primary single-family dwelling unit.

25 3. The accessory dwelling unit will require one parking space, which is in  
26 addition to any off-street spaces required for the primary single-family dwelling unit.

27 4. The primary entrance to an accessory dwelling unit shall not be visible from  
28 the yard on the same side of the lot on which the primary entrance to the primary single-family  
29 dwelling unit is located.

30 5. To ensure that the accessory dwelling unit is clearly secondary to the primary  
31 dwelling unit, the floor area for the accessory dwelling unit shall in no case exceed 500 square  
32 feet, and the accessory dwelling unit shall contain no more than two bedrooms.

33  
34 Q. Landscaping

35 1. The design of the cottage housing development shall be designed in  
36 consideration to retain significant trees which will not constitute a safety hazard.

37 2. All required landscaping shall be in compliance with TCC 21.80.  
38  
39