2009-2010 Development Code Docket
A-13: Cottage Housing (Titles 21, 22, and 23)

Date: October 6, 2010

Public Hearing Date: Tentative Date: November 3, 2010

Prepared by: Tony Kantas,
Associate Planner

Proponent/Applicant: Thurston County

Action Requested: Amend Titles 21, 22, and 23 by adding a Cottage Housing Chapter to the Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater Urban Growth Area Zoning Ordinances

☐ Map Changes ☒ Text Changes ☐ Both ☐ Affects Comprehensive Plans/documents ☐ Affects Affected Jurisdictions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS:
This proposed code change would permit cluster housing developments within the Lacey,
Tumwater, and Olympia Urban Growth Areas. The language provided below in Option No.1 has
been drafted by the Thurston County Green Building Stakeholders group.

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

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

OPTIONS:
1. Change each of the three Urban Growth Area Zoning Ordinances with the same language
provided below as recommended by the Green Building Stakeholders.
2. Adopt different language.

3. Do not adopt a cottage housing ordinance within the Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater Urban Growth Areas.

Option 1:

Chapter XX.XX - COTTAGE HOUSING

Sections:
XX.XX.010 Intent
XX.XX.020 Where permitted
XX.XX.030 Development Standards

XX.XX.010 Intent. It is the intent of this chapter to:

A. Provide an opportunity for small, detached housing types, clustered around an open space.

B. Provide traditional cottage amenities and proportions to ensure that cottage housing developments contribute to the overall community character.

C. Provide centrally located and functional common open space that fosters a sense of community.

D. Provide semi-private area around the individual dwellings to enable diversity in landscape design and foster a sense of ownership.

E. Ensure minimal visual impact from vehicular use and storage areas for residents of the cottage housing development as well as adjacent properties, and to maintain a single-family character along public streets.

F. Take advantage of existing natural features on the site including topography and vegetation, where desirable.

G. Provide the opportunity for more affordable housing units.

H. Promote conservation of natural resources by clustering smaller dwelling units on lots.

I. Provide energy efficient dwelling units.

J. Provide more opportunity for infill development.

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

A. Low Density Residential 3-6 District.

B. Moderate Density Residential District.

C. High Density Residential District.

D. Cottage housing developments are intended to be integrated with other housing types.

XX.XX.030 Development standards.
A. Density. The density of the underlying zone governs unless a density increase is granted as provided in this chapter.

B. Density increase in the Low Density Residential (3-6) and Moderate Density Residential Districts. The County may allow cottage housing developments to increase the density of the underlining zone by 50 percent when the development is in compliance with all standards of this chapter. The cottage housing development may increase the density an additional 50 percent if all dwellings are constructed in accordance with a green building certificate program.

C. Maximum Gross Floor Area. The maximum allowed gross floor area is 1,500 square feet per dwelling. The maximum gross floor area for the ground floor or main floor is 1,000 square feet per dwelling. Floor area does not include covered porches.

D. Platting. A cottage development may be completed through a subdivision plat, short plat, or condominium provided the county has adopted an ordinance providing this option.

E. Design. Cottages are subject to the design criteria in Chapter 21.70. Where there are conflicts between Chapter 21.70 and the standards in this chapter, the standards herein shall apply.

Cottage housing developments are subject to the following design review requirements.

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

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

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

1. The common open space abuts fifty percent of the cottages in a cottage housing development.

2. Cottage clusters must abut at least two sides of the common open space.

3. Cottages are oriented around the open space with an entry facing the common open space.

4. Cottages should be within sixty feet walking distance of the common open space.

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

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

G. Minimum Private Open Space. The minimum private open space required is two-hundred square feet per dwelling. Required open space shall be adjacent to each dwelling unit and for the exclusive use of the cottage resident(s). The private space shall be:
1. Usable (not on a steep slope).

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

3. No less than eight feet in dimension on any side. A desirable configuration for this private open space is an area between the dwelling unit and the common open space, similar to what’s shown in the examples in Table 2.

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

H. Facades and Porches.

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

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

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

I. Maximum Height for Cottages.

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

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

J. Setbacks.

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

Rear yards. The minimum rear yard shall be ten (10) feet.

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

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

L. Parking Requirements.

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

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

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

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

5. Parking is prohibited in front and interior yard setback areas.

6. All detached parking structures shall have a pitched roof design.
7. Garages may be attached to individual cottages provided all other design standards have been met and the footprint of the ground floor, including the garage, does not exceed 1,000 square feet. Such garages shall be located away from common open spaces to the extent possible.

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

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

10. Surface parking lots shall be broken into sub-lots of no more than eight parking spaces. Sub-lots shall be separated by landscaped bulb-outs a minimum of 12-feet in width.

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

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

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

O. Existing nonconforming structure and accessory dwelling units.

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

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

P. Clustering Groups. Developments shall contain a minimum of four and a maximum of twelve dwellings located in a cluster group to encourage a sense of community among the residents. A development site may contain more than one cluster.

Option 2:
Adopt different language in all three Urban Growth Area Zoning Ordinances that would permit cottage housing development.

Option 3:
Do not adopt a cottage housing ordinance within the Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater Urban Growth Areas.

2009 Dev Code Docket A-13
Cottage Housing
Version no. 1
SEPA:
A SEPA determination has not been issued at this time.

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

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:
Amending the Urban Growth Area Zoning Ordinances as suggested in Option 1) would provide consistent cottage housing development standards within all three urban growth area zoning ordinances.
The Resource Stewardship Department recommends the Planning Commission forward Development Code Docket item A-13, Cottage Housing (Title 21, 22, and 23) with a recommendation of approval of Option 1 to the Board of County Commissioners as follows:

Title 21, 22, and 23 Zoning would be amended as follows:

Deleted Text: Strikethrough Proposed Changes: Underlined
Staff Comments: Italic Unaffected Omitted Text: (…)

Proposed new language:
As stated above in Option 1.