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

Date: September 7, 2011
Public Hearing Date: Tentative Date: October, 2011
Prepared by: Tony Kantas, Associate Planner
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).

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

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

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

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.

These pocket neighborhoods are not intended for everyone. The density, size, and style of a
cottage development is geared towards a niche market of people who want to live in compact,
connected, and walkable urban areas. Adopting a cottage ordinance would not require all single-
family developments to be designed as a cottage development, but would give the developer an
opportunity and guidance in such a development. Attachment B provides examples of some
pocket30_ST_N.htm and http://www.pocket-neighborhoods.net/ gives good insight to cottage housing.

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

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 green house 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.

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

ALTERNATIVES:

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

K. Provide incentives for green certified building and low-impact 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:

*Lacey Urban Growth Area:*

A. Low Density Residential 3-6 District.

B. Moderate Density Residential District.

C. High Density Residential District.

*Ground Mound Urban Growth Area:*

A. Residential – 3-6 Units Per 1 Acre.

B. Residential – 4-16 Units Per 1 Acre.
XX.XX.030 Development standards.

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

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

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

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

D. C. Maximum Gross Floor Area. The maximum allowed gross floor area is 1,200 to 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. Floor area does not include covered porches, garages, or accessory structures.

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

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

F. E. Design. Cottages are subject to the design criteria in this 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:

1. 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, facade, colors, or other architectural feature as shown in the codes design standards of Chapter 21.70. No blank walls are allowed.

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

1. 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:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

   c. 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.

   d. 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 abutting 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 (D), respectively.
I. Maximum Height for Cottages.
   1. The maximum height for cottages is 25 twenty-five feet. All parts of the roof above eighteen feet shall be pitched.
   2. The maximum height for all accessory structures is 18 eighteen feet.

J. Setbacks.
   1. Front Yards. The minimum front yard shall be ten-(10) feet.
      a. Cottage housing developments shall be exempt from the front yard driveway length requirement found in underlying zone districts.
   2. Rear yards. The minimum rear yard shall be 5 ten-(10) feet.
   3. 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 10 ten feet.

L. Parking Requirements.
   1. The minimum required number of parking spaces is one and one-half spaces per dwelling.
      a. Mixed use developments shall provide no less than one parking space 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).
   4.5. Parking is prohibited in the front yard setback area.
   5. All detached parking structures shall have a pitched roof design.
   7. Garages or carports 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 4,000 square feet. Such garages or carports (either attached or detached) 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.
      6. If covered parking is provided, such structures shall be designed consistent with the cottage architecture. This includes similar building materials, rooflines, and detailing.
   7. 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.
   8. Impervious Surface parking lots shall be broken into sub-lots of no more than eight 10 parking spaces. These rows shall be separated by landscape islands a minimum of 12 feet in width. These islands shall either be landscaped in accordance with a low-impact development design in accordance with the adopted Drainage Design and Erosion Control Manual. Sub lots shall be separated by landscaped bulwarks a minimum of 12 feet in width.
      a. Pervious surface parking lots are not required to utilize landscape islands.
   9. 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. Moved to Sect .030(C)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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