



# Cottage Housing: Zoning and Phasing

September 2017

**Question:** Cottage developments are allowed in the R 4-8 and R 6-12 residential zones. What mix of attached and detached units is appropriate? Should phasing of required improvements be allowed?

**Current Olympia Approach:**

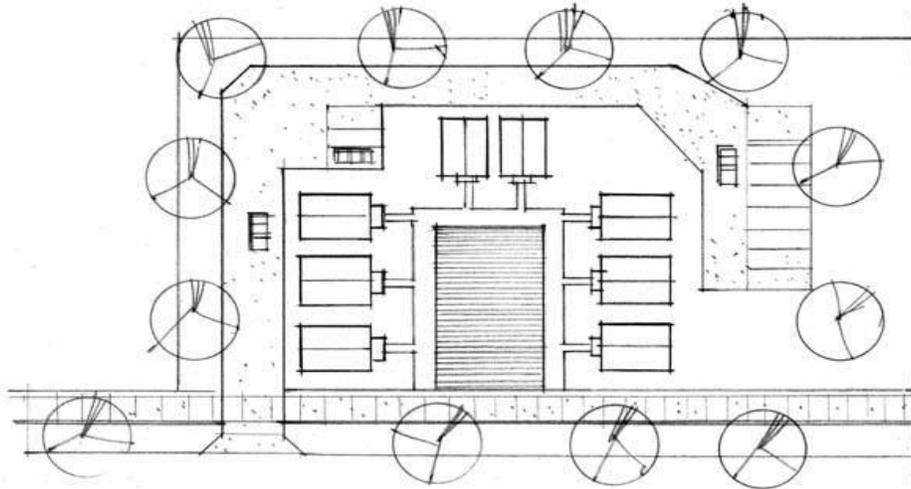
A cottage housing development is *“four or more small, detached dwelling units sharing a commonly owned courtyard/common area and parking area.”* (OMC 18.02.180, Dwelling, Conventional).

Current City requirements are:

1. **Courtyard.** The development shall contain a courtyard or usable landscaped area owned in common by the owners of the dwellings. Open space shall include at least two hundred (200) square feet of open space adjacent to each dwelling unit and a minimum of fifteen hundred (1500) square feet or two hundred (200) square feet per unit, whichever is more, provided in common open space. Additional provisions apply.
2. **Site Design.** Dwellings shall be located on at least two (2) sides of the courtyard or common area.
3. **Number of Units.** No less than four (4) and no more than twelve (12) dwelling units per courtyard.
4. **Dwelling Size.** The first story of dwellings in cottage developments, including any garage, shall not exceed eight hundred (800) square feet in size. Two (2) story structures shall not exceed one thousand six hundred (1,600) square feet in size.
5. **Parking.** At least 50% of on-site parking shall be accommodated in a shared parking lot.
6. **Covenants.** Covenants shall be recorded which establish common areas and preclude their conversion to another use.
7. **Density.** Cottage housing developments shall receive a bonus density of twenty (20) percent.

<b>Cottage Standards</b>	<b>Minimum Lot Size</b>	<b>Minimum Lot Width</b>	<b>Minimum Setbacks</b>	<b>Max. Bldg. Height</b>	<b>Min. Open Space</b>
<b>R 4-8</b>	2,500 square feet	35'	Front: 20' Side: 3' Rear: 10'	25'	450 square feet/unit
<b>R 6-12</b>	2,000 square feet	30'	Front: 20' Side: 3' Rear: 10'	25'	450 square feet/unit

**Design Review** is required. Cottage housing must be oriented to the public right-of-way or to a shared interior courtyard. The sides of end units may front the street when the interior courtyard is a prominent feature on the adjacent public right-of-way.



**Parking Requirements**

Min. Off Street Parking Required	Min. Long Term Bicycle Parking	Min. Short Term Bicycle Parking
One (1) space per unit or 1.5 space per unit if on-street parking is not available along street frontage.	One per five (5) units, or one (1) per three (3) units if no on-street parking. Minimum of two (2).	One per ten (10) units, or one (1) per six (6) units if no on-street parking. Minimum of two (2).

**What is current approach intended to accomplish?**

The provisions were likely intended to provide greater variety and flexibility in comparison to the standard zoning provisions for single family detached homes, to allow for a clustering of smaller homes with small yards and common open spaces for the development.

**Alternative Approaches:**

The City of Lacey permits cottage housing in its Low Density 3-6 (LD3-6), Moderate Density, and High Density zoning districts. Lacey may allow two cottage units for each regular dwelling unit allowed under existing standards in the Low Density Residential (3-6) and Moderate Density Residential Districts. Each unit is limited to 1,200 square feet but the ground floor units are limited to 800 square feet in size. The minimum parking requirement is one stall per unit, with a maximum of 1.5 stalls per unit. Garages can be attached to individual units. At least 50% of the required parking spaces shall be enclosed. More than one cluster of cottages can be included but each cluster shall contain between 4 and 12 units.

Lacey includes a provision at the end of its cottage housing chapter that states:

The city desires to form partnerships with nonprofit housing authorities and the private development community in promoting infill, providing affordable housing and achieving GMA smart growth and livable city objectives. To provide for innovation and creativity in achieving housing and livable city objectives of

the Plan, flexibility may be permitted where a specific cottage project furthers the Plan's objectives, but zoning code requirements would prevent the project, make it less effective in implementing the Plan's intent, or act as a barrier to implementation of the Plan's vision. The city may waive said code provisions under the following conditions:

1. The city and the private/public partners believe the subject project meets community objectives of smart growth, livable city and sustainability as identified in the city Comprehensive Land Use Plan;
2. Design of the project gives significant attention to place making and functionality that enhances the livability of the neighborhood, as identified in the Comprehensive Plan and/or neighborhood plan;
3. Design includes energy conservation features that promote sustainability goals as identified in the Comprehensive Plan and/or other plans that promote energy conservation and sustainability;
4. The project addresses target demographics or specific community housing need as identified in the Comprehensive Plan's Housing Element and/or the applicable neighborhood plan;
5. Based upon a determination by the director, the proposed project design will better implement objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Tumwater has a cottage housing chapter similar to Lacey's code. Some differences between the two cities include:

- Tumwater has a minimum cottage size of 500 square feet.
- Tumwater's code appears to be limited to single family cottages.
- Tumwater allows slightly larger structures – 1,250 square feet per dwelling but limiting the footprint of the structure to 1,000 square feet.
- Tumwater also requires a minimum of one parking stall per unit but does not include a maximum parking provision.
- Tumwater allows 1 ADU for every 5 cottages.

Similarities between the Cities of Lacey and Tumwater include:

- Design Review is required.
- Two cottages are permitted for each unit of density permitted in the underlying zone.
- Cottage clusters must contain at least 4 and no more than 12 cottages.
- An existing single family residence on the land to be developed as cottages are allowed to remain and be incorporated into the development.

### **Phasing**

Phasing of cottage developments is not specifically addressed in the Olympia, Lacey, or Tumwater codes. Should phasing be permitted, such that a developer could build 1-2 structures at a time? If yes, should a master site plan be approved that includes a phasing plan? Certain improvements could be tied to development of each phase. When should amenities designed to serve all units, such as the primary open space and or common structures, be required? Should the developer need to bond for some things upfront, even if the construction is not required until a later phase? Should utility extensions, which typically must be brought "to and through" the site with the first residential building permit be allowed

to be phased (e.g. extension of a water line could occur incrementally across a site, unless it is required to connect to another line in order to obtain minimum fire flow)?

Alternatives include:

1. Allow cottage developments to include attached dwelling units (up to 7 units per structure).
2. Allow more flexibility on the size of the cottages (currently ground floor max. is 800 square feet and two story units cannot exceed 1,600 square feet in size).
3. Clarify that some attached garages are allowed (currently at least 50% of the required parking must be accommodated in shared parking areas).
4. Remove the current provision for a 20% density bonus and instead allow 2 cottages for every unit of density permitted in the underlying zone.
5. Reduce the required vehicle parking to 1 stall per unit, which can be attached to the unit (e.g. a garage or carport) and require 1 parking stall for every 2 cottages that can be accommodated in shared parking areas.
6. Develop phasing provisions that could be applied to a phased cottage development that assures provision of group amenities while allowing the phasing of improvements when based on an approved site plan for the entire cottage development.
7. Calculate allowed density based on the size of the lot proposed for development (e.g. a one acre parcel in the R 4-8 zone would be allowed to develop 8 cottages – or 16 cottages around two common open spaces if #4 above is implemented).

**Analysis:**

The factors for consideration discussed by the Missing Middle Work Group are:

- **Affordability**  
Providing greater flexibility in the cottage housing provisions may affect affordability, depending on the configuration and existing situation on the property. We have heard the City’s existing provisions are prescriptive and can be challenging to implement in some situations. The provisions that both the City of Lacey and the City of Tumwater have regarding density (2 cottages = 1 residential unit for calculating density) would potentially make cottage developments more appealing to developers. Because these housing types are limited in size and can be clustered, it is likely that in general these housing types would be less expensive than standard single family development.
- **Variety of housing types**  
Increasing the type of units allowed in cottage developments will increase the variety of housing types in neighborhoods that currently do not have many smaller residential units. Currently cottages must be detached dwelling units. Allowing for some cottages to have shared walls, there will be more options for housing types.
- **Ability to accommodate growth**  
Cottage housing will accommodate more households without increasing the overall area of the city. They primarily will provide housing for households of 1-2 persons, which was 70.4% of Olympia’s households in 2010 Census (*The Profile*, Thurston Regional Planning Council).