



# Garden Apartments, Courtyard Apartments, & Boarding Houses: Zoning

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**Question:** Should garden apartments, courtyard apartments, and boarding houses be allowed in neighborhoods where they currently exist, or when near transit routes or areas zoned for commercial services?

## Current Olympia Approach:

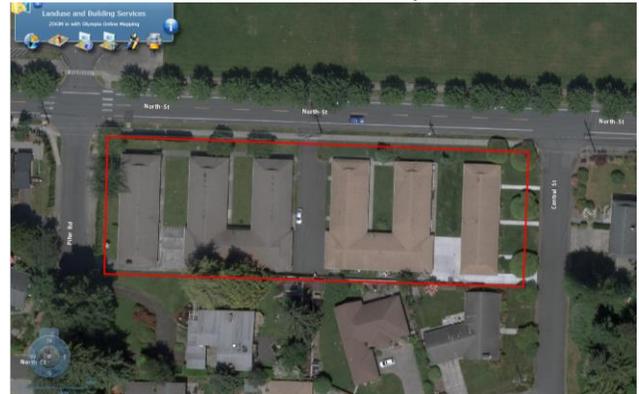
The code does not currently define garden apartments or courtyard apartments. As such, this type of development would likely be proposed and reviewed as apartments (so therefore, not allowed in the R 4-8 or R 6-12 zoning districts).

A single room occupancy is defined as, "A housing type consisting of one room with cooking facilities and with shared bathroom facilities. (See also Boarding Home, Lodging House and Bed and Breakfast.)" (OMC 18.02.180, Dwelling, Conventional). Boarding homes refer to the state statutes on Assisted Living Facility Group Homes, while lodging houses and bed and breakfasts are treated more like transient housing options. Lodging houses are limited to no more than five people other than the members of the immediate family of the operator; bed and breakfast options limit the stay to two weeks or less and are also limited to five guest rooms.

## Courtyard Apartments



A local example, across North Street from Olympia High School. These units are 1-story condominiums.



Google Maps images of these from North Street:



If limited in scale, number of units, or location, could garden-style or courtyard apartments be a viable housing type in either the R 4-8 or R 6-12 zoning districts?

SROs can be scaled to various neighborhoods. Some buildings may contain only a few units, while others may contain several units per floor. For the purposes of Missing Middle Infill Housing, is there a scale of SRO that would be appropriate in either the R 4-8 or R 6-12 zoning districts? Could a structure that looks like a standard two-story residence –but that contains any number of SRO rooms, be a good neighborhood fit in Olympia? If yes – how should the scale be determined? What types of parking provisions or design review standards should apply?

Current City requirements are:

- Garden and courtyard apartments are only permitted in zoning districts that allow apartments.
- Boarding homes and lodging houses (the closest housing types to SROs) are not permitted in the R 4-8 or R 6-12 zoning districts.

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

The provisions were likely intended to protect single family residential zones from multifamily apartments being constructed in the neighborhoods. However, garden-style and courtyard apartments can be much smaller in scale than other types of multifamily development.

**Alternative Approaches:**

The City of Lacey permits apartments in zoning districts that provide for at least 8 units/acre or more, although some two and three units dwellings are permitted in its Low Density 3-6 zoning district.

3 or more units (Apartments)	Least Intensive Zoning District that Allows:	Boarding Houses, Rooming Houses, or Similar Listed?
Lacey, WA	Moderate Density Residential (8-16 units/acre)	No (any residential use)
Tumwater, WA	MF Medium Density (9-15 units/acre)	Yes
Bremerton	Multifamily Residential (5 units/acre)	No
Vancouver, WA	R-18 (1,800 sq. ft. per/unit = min. lot size)	No. Mentions rowhouses and garden-type apartments
Vancouver BC		
Seattle, WA	Lowrise 1 (LR1)	

Portland, OR	Allows Group Living by Conditional Use in single family zones	Defines Group Living Facility <sup>1</sup> and Single Room Occupancy Housing <sup>2</sup>
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Alternatives include:

1. Allow single story detached or attached courtyard apartments in the R 4-8 and/or R 6-12 zoning districts. If allowed, the maximum number of units that can share a common wall could be limited (e.g. no more than 2 or 4 units in a structure).
2. Allow courtyard or garden style apartments in the R 6-12 zone (height limited to max. building height in the zone).
3. Allow SROs in the R 4-8 and/or R 6-12 zoning districts.

**Analysis:**

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

- **Affordability**  
Providing greater flexibility in the housing provisions may affect affordability, depending on the configuration and existing situation on the property. Because these housing types don't require land division, it is possible that in general these housing types would be less expensive to rent than standard single family homes. These could be converted into condominiums, at the property owner's discretion.
- **Variety of housing types**  
Increasing the type of units allowed in the R 4-8 and/or R 6-12 zoning districts will increase the variety of housing types in neighborhoods that currently do not have many smaller or clustered residential units. Generally these types of housing units do not require individual property maintenance by the tenants, so may appeal to a broader audience than that in the existing neighborhoods where typically the property owner or tenant has yard maintenance and structure requirements.
- **Ability to accommodate growth**  
Garden/Courtyard apartments and SRO housing units 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).

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<sup>1</sup> Structure(s) that contain sleeping areas and at least one set of cooking and sanitary facilities that is used as a residence for Group Living uses.

<sup>2</sup> A structure that provides living units that have separate sleeping areas and some combination of shared bath or toilet facilities. The structure may or may not have separate or shared cooking facilities for the residents. SRO includes structures commonly called residential hotels and rooming houses.