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COMMUNITY INVESTMENT **TOOLKIT** VOLUME 2

CASE STUDY

Cottage housing in the City of Wood Village

Cottage housing is a new model of clustered single family housing that provides a transition between single family housing neighborhoods and higher density areas, creating a development pattern that maximizes land values, reduces infrastructure costs and provides housing next to services. As the region implements the 2040 Growth Concept, the long range growth plan, Metro is working to help communities address the stark differences in scale, density and use that often appear between established neighborhoods and newer, higher density commercial or residential development in town centers and corridors. These transitions underutilize land and create a disjointed development pattern, often undermining the capacity of the region and the character of our communities.

Metro highlighted cottage housing in the **Community Investment Toolkit: Innovative Design and Development Codes**. After learning of cottage housing in the toolkit, the City of Wood Village researched the concept further in partnership with Metro and adopted minor adjustments to their development code to facilitate cottage housing developments in their community. The City's experience illustrates how local governments in the region can use innovative strategies to build vibrant, sustainable communities. This case study summarizes this research for use by other communities who may wish to consider cottage housing.

Cottage housing

Cottage housing is used as a creative infill development between higher density mixed-use areas and established neighborhoods of lower density single family housing. The coordinated design plan and smaller units of cottage housing developments allow densities that are somewhat higher than typical single-family neighborhoods, similar to the density of attached row houses, but minimize impacts on adjacent residential areas because of their smaller overall bulk and scale. While a cottage housing development focuses internally to the central outdoor space, the project maintains visual and pedestrian connections with the existing neighborhood in form and scale and with windows, doors and porches on the exterior façade oriented to human activity on the street.

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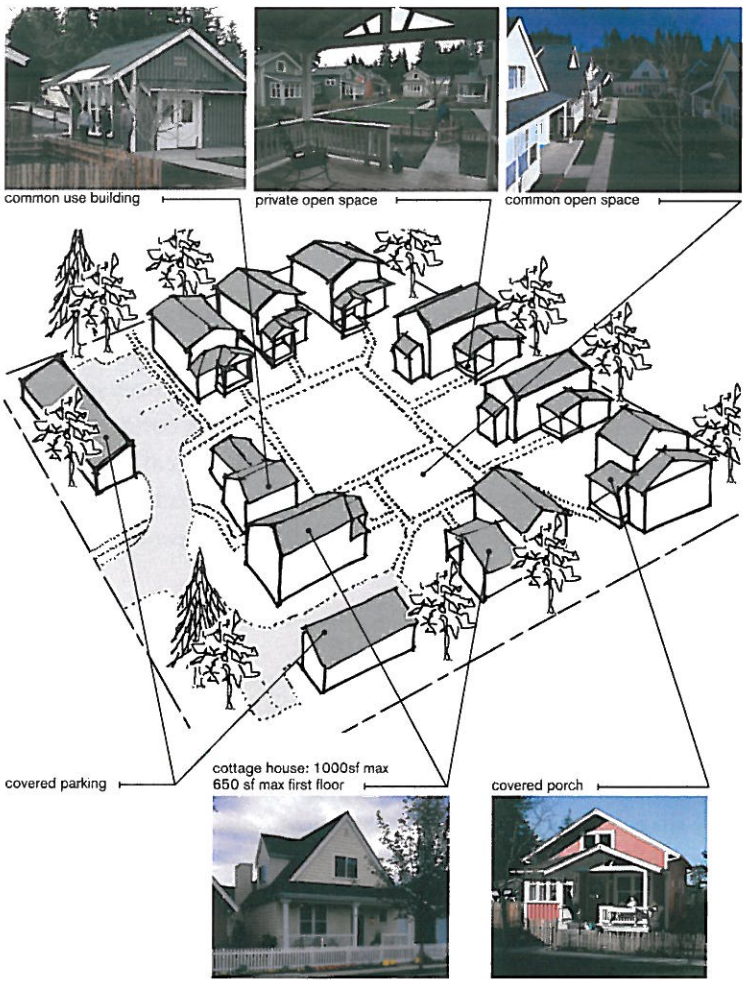
Photos above – from left, Salish Pond Cottages, Greenwood Avenue Cottages and Conover Commons. The projects were designed by Ross Chapin Architects. Greenwood Avenue Cottages and Conover Commons were developed by The Cottage Company.

"The City of Wood Village is leading the way in applying an innovative tool that promotes efficient land use and supports their community vision. Metro looks forward to more partnerships like this with other communities around the region."

– Rod Park,
Metro Councilor

From a homeowner's perspective, cottage housing offers an alternative housing opportunity that is responsive to changing household demographics, lifestyles and housing needs. Although average household size is decreasing, single-family housing still remains the preferred housing type. Cottage housing maintains a single-family housing environment by providing a small private yard space and detached units, but combines it with the affordable cost and reduced maintenance attributes of attached housing. The site design also encourages neighborhood interaction and safety by orienting homes around a functional community space. Community spaces are designed to be usable and can be easily tailored to the needs of the residents (e.g. past developments have used the space as an art studio, a workshop equipped with shared facilities, or a community garden). Cottage housing is therefore ideal for retirees wanting to downsize but remain in a single family neighborhood, as well as for small families and single parent households desiring homeownership.



Cottage housing layout

Cottage housing is generally defined as a development of small, detached single-family dwelling units clustered around a central outdoor common space within a coordinated site plan. The cottage units are smaller than single-family houses and are often oriented toward the common space. While houses share amenities such as open space, gardens, a workshop, or a community building, each cottage house also has its own yard and the privacy of a roofed porch.

Regional Model for Cottage Housing Standards

A. Intent

1. Support the growth management goal of more efficient use of urban residential land;
2. Support development of diverse housing in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan;
3. Increase the variety of housing types available for smaller households;
4. Provide opportunities for small, detached dwelling units within existing neighborhoods;
5. Provide opportunities for creative, diverse, and high quality infill development that is compatible with existing neighborhoods.

B. Definition of cottage housing development

A development of detached dwellings which has the following characteristics:

1. Each unit is of a size and function suitable for a single person or small family;
2. Each unit has the construction characteristics of a single-family house;
3. The density of the development is typically 7 to 14 units per acre;
4. Units are for residential use only and may not be operated as transient accommodations;
5. The development is designed with a coherent concept and includes: private and shared usable open space, off-street parking, access within the site and from the site, amenities such as a multipurpose room, workshop, garden, and a coordinated landscape plan;
6. Cottage design incorporates classic cottage features or northwest style using quality materials.

C. Small, compact dwellings

The total floor area of each cottage unit shall not exceed 1,000 square feet. Total floor area is the area included with the surrounding exterior walls, but excluding any space where the floor to ceiling height is less than six feet.

D. Number of cottages allowed

Two cottage housing units shall be allowed in place of each single family home allowed by the base density of the district.

E. Small clusters of cottages

Cottage housing units shall be developed in clusters of a minimum of 4 units to a maximum of 12 units.

F. Separation of developments

Cottage housing developments shall be separate from each other by at least 1,000 feet.

G. Maximum height

The height limit for all structures shall not exceed 18 feet. Cottages or amenity buildings having pitched roofs with a minimum slope of 6:12 may extend up to 25 feet at the ridge of the roof.

H. Common space

Cottage housing units shall be oriented around a central common space. The common open space must be at least 400 square feet per cottage housing unit. The common space shall have cottage units facing at least two sides. Open space with a dimension of less than 20 feet shall not be included in the calculated common open space.

For more information:

503-797-1839
www.oregonmetro.gov/communityinvestment

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A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to protecting open space, caring for parks, planning for the best use of land, managing garbage disposal and increasing recycling. Metro oversees world-class facilities such as the Oregon Zoo, which contributes to conservation and education, and the Oregon Convention Center, which benefits the region's economy.

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I. Private ground space

Each cottage housing unit shall be provided with a private use open space on the ground of at least 300 square feet with no dimension of less than 10 feet on one side. It should be contiguous to each cottage, for the exclusive use of the cottage resident, and oriented toward the common open space.

J. Ownership

Cottages are for residential use only and may not be operated as transient accommodations. Cottage housing developments are sited on one commonly owned property, or individual parcels may be created by subdividing the land with shared amenities owned in common.

K. Separation of structures

All structures shall maintain no less than 10 feet of separation within the cluster. Eaves may project into the required separation up to 12 inches.

L. Parking requirements

There shall be at least one off street parking space per dwelling unit.

M. Parking design (lots or structures)

1. Setback a minimum of 5 to 20 feet from the street, depending on the orientation of the structure or lot. If the structure or lot is perpendicular to the street, the narrow dimension may be within 5 feet of the street. If parallel to the street the lot or structure must be at least 20 feet from the street;
2. Clustered and separated from the common areas by landscaping and/or an architectural screen. Solid board fencing shall not be allowed as an architectural screen;
3. Screened from public streets and adjacent residential uses by a landscaping and/or architectural screen, which shall not include a solid board fence.

N. Setbacks

Setbacks for all structures from the property lines shall be an average of 10 feet, but shall not be less than 5 feet and not less than 15 feet from a public street.

O. Usable porches

Each unit shall have a covered porch with an area of at least 80 square feet and a minimum dimension of 5 feet. The porches on at least half the units shall face the common space.

P. Fences

All fences on the interior of the development shall be no more than 3 feet in height. Fences along the exterior of the development may be up to 6 feet in height, except as restricted by intersection clear vision standards. Chain link fences shall not be allowed.

Q. Maximum lot coverage

The total footprint of all structures shall not exceed 40 percent of the site area. Impervious surfaces shall not exceed 60 percent of the site area.

R. Architectural elements and materials

Cottages fronting a street shall avoid blank walls by including at least one of the following:

1. Changes in exterior siding material and paint color;
2. Windows which may include bay windows; and/or
3. Building modulation with a depth measuring at least one foot.

Structures shall be provided with substantial exterior trim elements consistent with traditional northwest cottage design and small home craftsmanship.

Note: The Regional Model for Cottage Housing Standards was adapted from successful cottage housing developments in the state of Washington and the Washington cottage housing model code.

Nuts and bolts

Because cottage housing demands more compact development, existing code often must be modified to allow for reduced minimum lot size and setback requirements. The table on page 4 outlines the model cottage housing standards based on successful developments in the state of Washington. Key elements of the model development standards include:

Salish Pond Cottages designed by Ross Chapin Architects

Higher densities than traditional single family housing. Cottage housing densities typically require a low lot coverage maximum of 40 to 60 percent; moderate density limits such as .35 Floor Area Ratio (FAR); two times the zone density allowance; or one unit per 2,000 to 5,000 square feet of land area. Given these densities, cottage housing is marketable and most successful as a transition tool in single family or moderate density multi-family zones where the cottage densities exceed the capacity of the underlying zone. Cottage housing codes can avoid overly dense developments by setting a maximum allowed number of units as well as requiring at least 1,000 feet between developments.

A maximum housing size of 1,000 square feet. When the style was in its infancy, units were between 500 to 600 square feet, but the market has driven up housing size – in some developments to more than 1,500 square feet. In order to maintain the intent of cottage housing, it is recommended that maximum unit size average not exceed 1,000 square feet, with a maximum building height of 18 feet for houses without pitched roofs and 25 feet for houses with pitched roofs.

Usable open space. Development standards encourage the creation of functional community open space not typically required or always available in single family housing developments. For instance, a steep natural ravine on a site may not qualify as usable open space in a cottage housing project because it would be impossible to build a community facility or a community garden with such topographic constraints. In a comparable planned development, a housing developer often requests that such spaces qualify for required open space. To maintain a single family environment, functional private open space is also required for each cottage housing unit.

Quality aesthetics and parking standards. Quality design and aesthetic controls are often required in order to create an efficient use of space and ease transitions between existing developments. Controls for garage and/or parking areas include setbacks of 20 to 40 feet from the street and an average maximum parking requirement of 1.5 parking spaces per unit. Cottage housing codes and projects have also required an average of one space per unit. Allowing reduced parking standards has been successful given the target demographics of cottage housing, goals for increased densities, and the desire for a more flexible, high-quality design. Quality design standards can include required covered front porches and northwest architectural design and materials.

Ownership. Ownership is an important element of the cottage housing style. Usually cottage housing developments are sited on one commonly owned parcel and each cottage is sold as a condominium. However, cottage housing units can also be owned fee-simple by subdividing the land into individual parcels with shared amenities owned in common by the cluster

Washington state

Cottage housing is a relatively new concept to the Portland metro area, but has been a popular form of infill development in cities across the state of Washington since the early 1990s. Early success in cities such as Seattle, Kirkland, and Richmond prompted the Seattle Housing Partnership to develop a model code for cottage housing in 2001. The Washington state model code has provided a foundation for cottage housing standards across the state of Washington and was assessed by Metro in the creation of the Regional Model for Cottage Housing Standards included in this case study.

City of Shoreline, Washington

The City of Shoreline, Washington, implemented cottage housing and learned that scaling and density standards are integral to the effectiveness of a cottage housing development. City officials did not include such requirements in their standards, and as a result developers utilized density bonuses and built cottage housing developments with double the density intended by the code. This was compounded by the lack of separation between cottage developments. Due to the resulting appearance of overcrowded units, Shoreline decided to repeal the cottage housing provisions four years after adopting standards into their code.

residents. This model offers a unique home ownership opportunity not commonly available. Ownership models vary and are typically determined by the developer based on the local market, unless the city only allows one of these options in the zoning code.

Development review. Cottage housing provisions are placed within the municipal code. Specific development plans can be reviewed and permitted through various avenues, a decision unique to each jurisdiction. Examples include administrative review, the subdivision process, a design review board, or a public hearing with a design review board or planning commission. When reviewing cottage housing development designs, priority is given to plans with functional, usable open space and a design that meets the intent and definition of cottage housing.

Model cottage housing code

Zones	Vary by city; single family or moderate density multi-family
Lot cover	40 to 60 percent
Density	.35 floor area ratio, twice the existing allowed density; 7-14 units per acre
Unit size	1,000 square feet maximum
Number of units	4 minimum /12 maximum
Height/ridge pitch	18 to 25' with 6:12 minimum slope
Yards front/side/rear	15'/5'/5'
Minimum open space-private/ common	300 square feet per unit, minimum dimension of 10'/400 square feet per unit, minimum dimension of 20' with cottage units facing at least two sides
Garage or parking standards	1-1.5 spaces; bundled parking; screened from view. 20' setback
Usable porches	Usable covered porches, minimum 80 square feet with a minimum dimension of 5'
Privacy standards	Minimum 10' distance between structures
Separation of developments	Minimum 1,000 feet
Review procedure	Varies by city
Ownership	Fee-simple subdivided land ownership with shared common space; commonly owned parcel with each cottage sold as a condominium
Other provisions	Quality design and construction provisions. Maximum 3' fences within a development

Keep in mind

Applicability. Cottage housing is an infill development opportunity to bridge transition gaps and create more affordable housing opportunities near amenities. Successful cottage housing standards clearly outline the intent of cottage housing and are allowed by right. They are also placed in their own section of code instead of being buried throughout other code sections, thereby limiting confusion and easing the ability of developers to implement projects.

Danielson Grove Cottages designed by Ross Chapin Architects and developed by The Cottage Company

Flexibility. Overly rigid regulations may hinder the ability of developers to implement projects. Therefore successful cottage housing standards are flexible, outlining a broad set of rules within which the developer can refine the project to fit the specific marketplace and the homeowner. For instance, flexible height restrictions can give developers the creativity to allow for better transitions between zones and may lead to more financially feasible projects. This flexibility is important because full two-story framing is often less expensive than story-and-a-half framing.

Dwelling size. Cottage housing is designed to create cottages as an alternative style of housing to larger single-family homes. Developers desiring to build larger homes may do so under existing development regulations for single family dwelling units. Thus, cottage housing development codes usually limit building mass to 1,000 square feet or less in order to maintain the original intent of cottage housing. Limiting dwelling size also ensures that cottage housing developments can serve as an effective tool to bridge transitions.

Scaling. Creating a compact, aesthetically pleasing development pattern through scaling requirements is also a key element of cottage housing. A minimum of four units per cluster is needed in order to create a coordinated site design, while a maximum of 12 units will prevent an over abundance of housing. In cities like Shoreline, Wash., having no maximum resulted in abuse of density bonuses and massive developments that undermined the effectiveness of cottage housing as a tool for bridging transitions.

Parking. In cottage housing standards, parking requirements are generally limited and preferably clustered off to the side or in an adjoining alley. Direct individual driveway access to the street is not necessary. Limiting parking helps achieve the goals of cottage housing in increasing density and creating a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. It also increases flexibility, allowing developers to be more creative with site design to increase a project's overall quality and its financial feasibility.

Affordability. Providing high-quality housing units at an affordable price is one of the primary goals of cottage housing developments. Due to its small scale, cottage housing is often a more affordable alternative to traditional single family housing. In the areas surveyed, cottage housing units were typically 20 to 30 percent below traditional market housing. Incentives can be placed to ensure affordability, including relaxing standards for architectural or building material regulations. This is particularly useful in areas with higher housing costs where the market often demands quality construction anyway.

"I think it's a significant trend, better rather than bigger, quality over quantity. It's something people have been waiting for. It takes more work, details and supervision but – like the old pre-1940s craftsman homes with mantels and casings – they are homes that get a premium price."

– Jim Soules, Cottage Company, LLC

Putting it together

"To address the realities of a limited land supply and changing demographics, the City of Wood Village has worked with Metro to identify a number of innovative solutions. Cottage housing allows the City to use our land more efficiently, while providing greatly needed housing next to services."

– Sheila Ritz, City of Wood Village Administrator

After attending a presentation by Metro on the Community Investment Toolkit, staff from the City of Wood Village became interested in cottage housing as a good fit for redevelopment of underutilized residential land, particularly in transition areas between high density residential or commercial uses and single family residential areas. Given the limited land supply, the City felt it was important to offer a variety of more thoughtful housing options than the traditional single family subdivisions, duplex rentals or leased manufactured home lots. By pursuing cottage housing, the City was looking to promote quality craftsmanship and desirable growth in their existing neighborhoods.

Creating cottage housing standards for Wood Village

City staff contacted Metro for technical assistance to research successful cottage housing developments in other cities and to help create cottage-style housing provisions for the City of Wood Village. Metro staff and city planners researched the cottage housing model code from the state of Washington, as well as cottage housing zoning requirements in the following cities in the state of Washington: Federal Way, Kirkland, Langley, Port Townsend, Redmond, Seattle and Shoreline. Metro and City staff also reviewed similar development projects within the Portland metropolitan region, including Salidge Ponds in Fairview and the "Common Green" housing developments in Portland.

Metro worked with City staff to synthesize the findings of the research and to address how cottage housing could be adapted to the City of Wood Village, both geographically in terms of where cottage housing would work within the city and in terms of how to incorporate cottage housing standards into City code.

After reviewing areas where cottage housing would be most beneficial, the City decided to include this type of housing as an approved use in the Multi Residential MR2 and MR4 zones. They selected these zones because they represent the transition areas adjoining the town center, the Halsey Street corridor and the neighborhood commercial zone to single-family neighborhoods. These areas also include larger parcels of land that have re-development potential and are generally flat for usable open space. The adjacent town center and neighborhood commercial zones offer cottage housing developments easy access to services and frequent transit routes. Cottage housing developments in these areas will be subject to the standards adopted into the City of Wood Village's zoning code as well as subdivision and/or design review approval by the planning commission.

In the preliminary development of the special cottage housing development standards, the City considered no limitation to the square footage of each unit and also considered more off-street parking than other jurisdictions because of the narrow streets and the number and size of vehicles per household. Staff and the planning commission eventually recommended to the City Council that a dwelling unit size limitation of 1,200 square feet was important to preserve the overall cottage housing character of single family mass and scale and to assure compact development. They also recommended a reduction in the minimum number of off-street parking spaces required from 1.5 to 1 space per dwelling, to be consistent with the existing single-family dwelling minimum parking standard. The planning commission recommended including individual garages with design standards, set back and to the side or

rear of each unit to respond to the characteristics and suspected demand of their community. They also recommended limited parking structures or parking lots to be closer to streets in certain circumstances in order to maximize internal common spaces, given the successful results of these standards implemented in other jurisdictions. Staff and the planning commission also outlined and recommended inclusion of architectural elements and material standards in order to ensure quality cottage craftsmanship.

In order to better respond to the market and changing demographics, the Wood Village Planning Commission decided to offer either fee-simple ownership through the subdivision of land or condominium ownership of each detached dwelling. The choice will be up to the developer, although land ownership is encouraged. The commission also recommended an increase in the maximum height of a pitched roof to 30 feet (versus 25 feet in the model) for more flexible design options. The Wood Village City Council agreed with these recommendations and unanimously adopted the cottage housing standards as recommended by the planning commission.

The City adopted these special cottage housing standards within the multi-family housing section of the City's zoning code. Thus, this type of housing is a use allowed by right if a developer meets the outlined standards. In doing so, the City chose not to embed the cottage housing standards within more complicated sections of its code that require more rigorous review processes, such as the Planned Use Development requirements, in order to ease implementation for developers. By making these decisions and choosing to maintain the other elements of cottage housing, the resulting cottage housing standards for the City of Wood Village adhere to the original intent of cottage housing and are consistent with the lessons learned in the cities in the state of Washington.

Tips for implementation

- Focus on the intent of cottage housing and how it fits into the context of transition zones within your community.
- Isolate areas where you think cottage housing would work and talk to the community to get feedback.
- Hold a public hearing to fully explain the intent of cottage housing and the benefits of its use as a housing option and transition tool.
- Invite housing developers and gather feedback from them, as well as local citizens, in order to guide the local cottage housing development standards.
- Make standards easy to understand. Include images for clarification.
- Make standards easy to implement by creating a special section for cottage housing within the city's zoning code.

Hastings Green developed by Northwest Pacific Development Group through Portland's "Common Green" provisions

City of Portland

While the City of Portland does not have cottage housing, it offers a similar style called "Common Green" housing provisions. Hastings Green in the South Tabor neighborhood at Southeast Clinton between 70th and 71st completed phase one development in 2003 and includes 13 single-family dwellings. The well-designed, high-quality units sold as condominiums, each with about 1,100 square feet and one to two bedrooms. A common space in the center of the units is used by residents as a community garden and clustered parking is provided. The first 10 units sold in six weeks. Phase two, constructed across the street, sold out prior to completion. The project has a density of 14 dwelling units per acre.

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www.oregonmetro.gov/communityinvestment

For more information on the City of Wood Village Cottage Housing Standards, contact:

City of Wood Village
2055 NE 238th Drive
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Staff contact: Carole Connell, AICP
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For more information on the Washington Model Code for Cottage Housing, contact:

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For more information on Portland's Common Green Provisions, contact:

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