



Cottage Housing Development Code

Click for specific information on Cottage Housing Development Codes for [Langley](#), [Shoreline](#), and [Redmond](#), WA, or [contact Jim Soules](#)

What is the Cottage Housing Development Code Provision?

The City of Langley, WA adopted the Cottage Housing Development (CHD) code provision in 1995. This provision was the first of its kind to be implemented in the Pacific Northwest and perhaps the US. The innovative nature of the provision is that it recognizes that a 1 or 2 bedroom home with less than 975 square feet (SF) of living area should not be treated the same as the typical 2,000 to 3,000 SF home. The cities of Shoreline and Redmond, Washington, followed next with a similar codes.

The code provision permits 4 to 12 small, detached cottages on a site that would normally be developed with half that number of large homes. The code provision permits this type of innovative change as a conditional use in all single-family zones. Half the cottages can be no more than 800 SF, and the other half 700 SF, on the first floor and no more than 975 square feet including a second floor. Each cottage must be adjacent to a common area. Parking at a minimum 1.25 space per cottage must be screened from the street.

The first CHD project, Third Street Cottages, completed January 1998 by the Cottage Company successfully demonstrated that 8 small cottages would fit into an existing single family neighborhood as well as 4 larger homes.



Responding to a Shift in Demographics and Growth

The CHD code provision responds to a major shift in demographics—about 40% of US households are one-person households, and 58% are one or two person households. Yet almost all new detached housing is built for larger households. There is great demand for quality, detached housing in single family neighborhoods. The Third Street Cottages is occupied by 6 single women, and two couples.

Adopting the CHD Code Provision

In working to meet the State of Washington Growth Management Act's urban growth and housing goals, the City of Langley Growth Management Committee and the Planning Advisory Board in 1994 set these criteria for any changes to the city's zoning code:

- Any land use code provision must retain and enhance Langley's village character and foster strong neighborhoods
- Expand the range of options for detached housing
- Enhance affordability

The result was adoption of the innovative CHD provision in the zoning code. Quality housing is assured since all CHD's require a conditional use permit, which includes a public hearing and approval by the Design Review Board.

The Third Street Cottages and Greenwood Avenue Cottages

The concept behind the code changes was first put into practice with the development of the Third Street Cottages and later with the Greenwood Avenue Cottages in Shoreline, Washington. In each project, developer Jim Soules and architect Ross Chapin have built a traditionally styled, beautifully detailed "pocket neighborhood" of cottages around a courtyard garden. They have carefully designed the site, the cottages and the common elements to foster community, enhance safety and provide privacy.

- The common garden, mailbox kiosk and sidewalks are natural places for informal meetings among neighbors.
- Covered porches and kitchens overlook the commons - the "eyes on the street" concept of community policing; Neighbors look after one another; Residents feel safe
- Careful positioning of windows ensures privacy
- Parking is close-by yet located inconspicuously to the side of the cottage cluster

Implementing the Code

The original Third Street Cottages could not have happened without both public and private initiative and, close cooperation between the City and the project developers. Within a year of adoption, Soules and Chapin began exploring the cottage-housing concept. They had several meetings with the City to review development concepts and clarify the provisions of the code. Throughout the public review process, including public hearings, Soules and Chapin were willing to take the extra steps necessary to ensure a quality development that blended with it's neighbors. Construction on the 4-lot (.7 acre) site began in June 1997 and the first cottages were occupied in January 1998.

This innovative project has demonstrated that clusters of smaller homes can be successfully integrated as infill in single-family areas. Planners, architects, community activists and developers from around the country have taken note of the project and it's unique code provision. There has been widespread local praise for the project. As a result of these pioneering projects, cities around the region & country are actively considering adoption of some form of CHD code provision.

See also [Frequently Asked Questions](#)