

Comment:

The City’s draft code updates (as of 10/7/25) copies the “Cottage Housing” definition from the Commerce model code, except for one spot: parking for a cottage development’s community building is moved to a completely different section of the code, and word “required” is inserted before “community building”—a new requirement found nowhere in legislation or the Commerce model code.

D. Cottage housing.

1. Open space. Open space shall be provided equal to a minimum 20 percent of the lot size. This may include common open space, private open space, setbacks, critical areas, and other open space.
2. Common open space.
 - a. At least one outdoor common open space is required.
 - b. Common open space shall be provided equal to a minimum of 300 square feet per cottage. Each common open space shall have a minimum dimension of 15 feet on any side.
 - c. Orientation. Common open space shall be bordered by cottages on at least two sides. At least half of cottage units in the development shall abut a common open space and have the primary entrance facing the common open space.
 - d. Parking areas and vehicular areas shall not qualify as common open space.
 - e. Critical areas and their buffers, including steep slopes, shall not qualify as common open space.
3. Entries. All cottages shall feature a roofed porch at least 60 square feet in size with a minimum dimension of five feet on any side facing the street and/or common open space.
4. Community building.
 - a. A cottage housing development shall contain no more than one community building.
 - b. A community building shall have no more than 2,400 square feet of net floor area, excluding attached garages.
 - c. A community building shall have no minimum off-street parking requirement.

E. Courtyard apartments.

1. Yard or court.
 - a. At least one yard or court is required.
 - b. The yard or court shall be bordered by attached dwelling units on two or three sides.
 - c. The yard or court shall be a minimum dimension of 15 feet on any side.
 - d. Parking areas and vehicular areas do not qualify as a yard or court.
2. Entries. Ground-related courtyard apartments shall feature a covered pedestrian entry, such as a covered porch or recessed entry, with minimum weather protection of three feet by three feet, facing the street or yard or court.

Explanation:

The Commerce model code is on the left; all except for the final sub-point was copied onto page 11 of the City’s draft code at right. The final sub-point, with the word “required” appears on page 42 of the City’s draft code, below right.

Recommendation

The word “required” should be removed from any cottage community building references in City code. If the City wishes to expand upon the Commerce model code, it could consider concepts like allowing cottage density bonuses in exchange for size limits: our neighbor Anacortes does this in Chapter 19.43 of their code (<https://anacortes.municipal.codes/AMC/19.43.040>) Notably, neither Anacortes nor the model code says anything about requiring community buildings for cottage developments.

“Cottage Housing” means residential units on a lot with a common open space that either: (a) Is owned in common; or (b) has units owned as condominium units with property owned in common and a minimum of 20 percent of the lot size as open space. Cottage housing shall comply with the below-listed regulations:

1. Open space. Open space shall be provided equal to a minimum 20 percent of the lot size. This may include common open space, private open space, setbacks, critical areas, and other open space.
2. Common open space.
 - a. At least one outdoor common open space is required.
 - b. Common open space shall be provided equal to a minimum of 300 square feet per cottage. Each common open space shall have a minimum dimension of 15 feet on any side.

V. 10/07/2025 - Page 11 of 52

Draft materials intended to further existing conversations and input regarding the regulations contained herein. These draft regulations in no way imply any type of decisions have been made. Rather, these regulations have been put into code format in hopes of receiving input in an organized and quicker manner.

3. Entries. All cottages shall feature a roofed porch at least 60 square feet in size with a minimum dimension of five feet on any side facing the street and/or common open space.
4. Community building.
 - a. A cottage housing development shall contain no more than one community building.
 - b. A community building shall have no more than 2,400 square feet of net floor area, excluding attached garages.
5. Orientation. Common open space shall be bordered by cottages on at least two sides. At least half of cottage units in the development shall abut a common open space and have the primary entrance facing the common open space.
6. Parking areas and vehicular areas shall not qualify as common open space.
7. Critical areas and their buffers, including steep slopes, shall not qualify as common open space.

7. Cottage Housing:

- a. The required community building shall have no minimum off-street parking requirement.

B. Banks, businesses, and professional offices: one for each 300 square feet of net floor area of the building;

C. Bowling alleys: five for each alley;

V. 10/07/2025 - Page 44 of 52

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