



COTTAGE HOUSING ORDINANCES: #COTTAGEPALOOZA

BACKGROUND

We are using cottage in the sense of an ADU, DADU, or “mother-in-law suite.” Our region has varying regulations that allow (or don’t allow) these backyard cottages.

IMPORTANCE OF COTTAGE HOUSING

Cottages provide additional housing units that are compatible with the look and scale of single-dwelling development, make more efficient use of existing housing stock and infrastructure, and provide a mix of housing options. Cottage housing has many benefits, including making it easier for younger buyers to qualify (renting out an ADU provides additional income), enabling seniors to age in place (ADUs can house a caregiver or be rented to create a new revenue stream), and expanding options for multigenerational living.

Backyard cottages can also be green, from using green construction techniques to helping create more walkable neighborhoods. Built Green has certified two projects in the past few years and would love to certify more. Check out [project one](#) and [project two](#).

ILLEGAL COTTAGE HOUSING

In the Seattle area, it’s estimated that three quarters of what look and function like cottage housing are, in fact, not-permitted ADUs. Many homeowners do not legally permit their backyard cottages because of the lengthy, bureaucratic process, the extensive cost to comply with code, and tax increases. Even when cities adopt ADU ordinances, most experience a negligible uptick due to:

- Excessive restrictions
- Size
- Red tape

HOW DO WE INCREASE COTTAGE HOUSING?

- Remove owner occupancy requirements
- Waive permit and impact fees
- Flexibility in maximum floor area requirements or lot area coverage
- Relaxed setback requirements
- Reduced off-street parking requirements



COTTAGE REGULATIONS ACROSS OUR REGION

BELLEVUE

40 percent of the total square footage of the residence for ADUs. Not less than 300 square feet or greater than 800 square feet. Owner occupancy required in one of the two units. One off-street parking space required. ADUs not currently allowed in new construction.

Reference: development.bellevuewa.gov/zoning-and-land-use/zoning-requirements/accessory-dwelling-units

KENT

If detached: 800 square feet or 33 percent of the size of the principal unit, whichever is smaller.

If attached: not more than 40 percent of the principal unit.

One off-street parking space. One of the dwelling units must be owner-occupied for at least six months a year. Interestingly, Kent does allow ADUs in both new and existing single-family dwellings.

Reference: kentwa.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=4092

EVERETT

75 percent of gross area of the principal unit or 800 square feet, whichever is less. Most have design standards requiring consistency with the primary residence. Owner must reside within either dwelling. Requires additional off-street parking stall unless within a quarter mile of a transit stop.

RENTON

No larger than 75 percent of the primary residence or 800 square feet, whichever is smaller. Owner must occupy one of the two units.

Recent policy change to incentivize ADUs in new construction: In a subdivision of 10 or more new residential units, development fees for ADUs are waived by 50 percent and waived in full for every third new ADU.

Reference: edocs.rentonwa.gov/Documents/1/edoc/967512/Accessory%20Dwelling%20Units.pdf

KIRKLAND

One accessory unit allowed per single-family dwelling. May be within or detached from the principal dwelling unit. The primary unit or the accessory unit must be owner occupied.

An attached accessory unit cannot exceed 40 percent of the total area of the principal residence and the ADU. The size of a detached ADU may not exceed 800 square feet. The total area of all detached accessory structures on your property may not exceed 1,200 square feet plus 10 percent of the lot area that exceeds 7,200 square feet.

The number of residents of the ADU and the principal dwelling unit combined must not exceed five unrelated individuals. One off-street parking space required, in addition to the two required for the primary residence. Primary entrance to the ADU must be clearly secondary to the main entrance of the principal unit.

Reference: kirklandwa.gov/Assets/Planning/Planning+PDFs/ADU+Application.pdf

AUBURN

ADUs are not to exceed 50 percent of the primary residence or 950 square feet, whichever is less. They must match primary residence. One additional parking space must be provided and owner occupancy is required in one of the two units.



MARYSVILLE

15 percent of total lot in R4.5, R6.5, R8, WR R4-8; 20 percent of total lot in R12-28 and WR6-18 zones; or 80 percent of primary floor area, whichever is less. Legal owner must reside within either dwelling. Requires additional off-street parking stall.

SHORELINE

Size is limited to 50 percent of the size of the main dwelling. Owner occupancy required in one of the two units. One off-street parking space in addition to two for the main house.

Reference: shorelinewa.gov/home/showdocument?id=2364

LAKE STEVENS

Size must be 50 percent of gross primary floor area or 800 square feet max, whichever is less. Legal owner must reside within either dwelling. One additional off-street parking space, in addition to existing SFR requirement.

SEATAC

City updated outdated ADU regulations this year and removed construction barriers to build with minimal impact in existing residential neighborhoods.

TUKWILA

Adopted regulations earlier this year to allow ADUs or DADUs up to 800 square feet in order to increase housing stock.

SNOQUALMIE

Has a Residential 2 (R2) zone that allows for the construction of duplex, triplex, quadruplex, attached townhomes of no more than 4 units, and small ADUs and DADUs.

SNOHOMISH

Size to be 50 percent of gross primary floor area or 800 square feet max, whichever is less. Must comply with city design standards. One unit occupied by the land owner. One additional parking space required, for a total of three parking spaces.

DUVALL

The city is in the process of reviewing, amending, and updating its ADU regulations with a targeted completion date and anticipated vote at council in January 2019.

STANWOOD

Size to be 60 percent of primary residence or 900 square feet, whichever is less. Design elements must be consistent with main house. Legal owner must reside within either dwelling. One additional parking space must be provided.

NORTH BEND

Updated their cottage residential regulations after a moratorium on their construction. Cottages must be under 1,500 square feet, clustered in development, and their design must promote a sense of openness and community. All homes must have easy access to a central common area or open space and, where possible, be designed with a covered porch and primary area facing the common area to encourage interaction and community.