



## Cottage Housing Questions and Answers

These questions came up during the city's virtual open house about cottage housing on October 5, 2022. Thank you to all who were able to attend and share their insights and ask valuable questions. If you weren't able to attend or have additional questions about cottage housing, you can reach out to: Elise Keim, Senior Planner at [ekeim@shorelinewa.gov](mailto:ekeim@shorelinewa.gov) or 206-801-2553

### Density:

How many cottage houses would be allowed per acre under the proposed plan?

The level of density has not yet been determined. We are studying the appropriate density of cottage housing to determine what criteria a cottage development would need to meet in order to build at a greater density. Some factors we are considering include requirements for green building practices, affordability standards, and proximity to transit and commercial centers. We are also studying how cottage housing density was approached in other cities which can vary between a 20% density bonus, up to doubling the density. These options will be presented to Planning Commission and City Council to determine what level of density is appropriate for cottages in Shoreline and what criteria a cottage housing development must meet in order to achieve that density.

### Timing

If this cottage housing proposal passes how soon will cottages be built?

Cottage housing is private development. If the ordinance is passed, a developer who wishes to build cottage housing must acquire land that is a good candidate for cottage development, submit permits which must be reviewed and approved, and then begin construction and inspections and finally put the houses up for sale. This process can take 1-2 years.

### Affordability

Is cottage housing for low-income households?

Cottage housing are usually for-sale homes. While they may be less expensive than a larger house, they are not necessarily affordable for low-income households. However, if a developer like Habitat for Humanity wanted to build in Shoreline, they could build cottage homes and sell them at more affordable prices. Check out this [Seattle Times article](#) where Habitat for Humanity did just that in the South Park neighborhood in Seattle.

What is the median price of a cottage house?

The housing price can vary significantly across different markets. Since new cottage housing is not currently allowed in Shoreline, we are relying on data from recent sales of existing cottage homes in Shoreline to answer this question. The median price of a cottage sold in the last five years in Shoreline is \$532,467. Keep in mind, this is a small sample size, and these homes were built 16-21 years ago. New cottage housing construction will likely cost more due to the increase



in cost of land, labor, and materials. In comparison, Shoreline’s overall median housing price for 2022 is \$784,000 according to [Redfin’s September 2022 housing market report](#).

## Zoning

Is the city proposing unlimited cottage housing in zone R6 as lots become available?

Cottage housing will still be subject to a maximum density. At this time, we are not looking at setting a cap on the number of cottage units in the city. We are studying whether cottage developments should have a cap on minimum and maximum number of units for a given development. Other limiting factors to cottage development are more market driven, such as a developer’s ability to acquire land, and the demand for this type of for-sale housing which is not suitable to all households.

## Sustainability

What level of sustainability/green building will be required (green roofs, solar panels, rain gardens etc.)?

Cottage homes will be required to meet current building and energy codes. However, we have heard feedback from community members that they would like to see cottage houses be more environmentally friendly than the minimum requirements. We are studying whether tying green building practices to density as a way to meet both the city’s housing and sustainability goals. The city currently has a [Deep Green Incentive Program](#), however, its effectiveness is limited to multifamily and townhouse construction as many of the incentives are not available in R-4 or R-6 zones.

## Safety

How does the city address new development’s increase in police and fire department service and expense?

**Fire Department:** Fire level of service is handled through fire impact fees. Every new unit constructed in Shoreline must pay a one-time fee to the fire department to address the additional cost of new units on the Fire Department’s operating costs. These impact fees are targeted for approximately 35% of total District revenues, with the remaining funds obtained from bonds, operating revenue transfers, and the sale of existing property.

**Police Department:** The City of Shoreline contracts with the King County Sheriff's Office for police services. The Police Department budget is detailed in the City’s biennial budget and is the result of negotiations for the King County Sheriff’s Office guild contract.

## Traffic

How does the city address new development’s impact on roads?

Transportation impact fees are also assessed on every new unit constructed in Shoreline to address the impacts of new development. Shoreline is required to plan and provide transportation facilities to accommodate growth. By charging impact fees Shoreline can ensure



the required transportation facilities are constructed to meet the demands of future growth and new development.

## Vacancy and Occupancy

What is the city doing to address foreign investors purchasing homes and letting them sit vacant?

There are no city regulations that address who may purchase a home.

## Other forms of housing

Where is the city regarding other forms of housing in Shoreline?

The city has been awarded a Department of Commerce grant to evaluate the appropriateness of allowing middle housing types (including duplexes and triplexes) in low density residential zones. This work is just starting with a study of existing policies and regulations. Work will also include community engagement and developing draft policies for consideration with the [2024 Comprehensive Plan update](#).