

SMART GROWTH IN ACTION

Third Street Cottages

LANGLEY, WASHINGTON

Langley, Washington, is a small town on Whidbey Island in the Puget Sound, an hour away from downtown Seattle and Everett by road and ferry. The town is home to about 1,000 people and retains a village character despite being under moderate development pressure.

In 1995, the city of Langley adopted the "Cottage Housing Development (CHD) Zoning Ordinance" to expand housing options, foster strong neighborhoods, and retain and enhance Langley's rural character. The CHD allowed detached homes at twice the previously allowable density in all single-family zones, up to 12 homes per acre.

Third Street Cottages is the first development in Langley to be built under the CHD. Neighbors initially voiced a few concerns about added traffic and loss of parking; however, with just 12 residents and 10 vehicles added to the neighborhood, these worries proved unfounded. The development is three blocks from downtown shopping and dining, and it is close to bike paths and routes around the island. To maintain consistency with the town's character, the Langley Design Review Board established minimal parameters on design, fencing, and landscaping of the development.

Homes in the Third Street Cottages development sold for \$140,000 to \$150,000, with five of eight sold before construction was completed in 1998. The centerpiece of the community is a landscaped common area containing a garden, tool shed, mailboxes, and a workshop. It is designed to facilitate community interaction and build cohesiveness. Though the cottages are no more than 975 square feet, the developers used natural light and architectural details to make the spaces seem open and airy. Typical owners are singles, couples, or families with one child.

The success of Third Street Cottages has motivated other localities in the region to adopt similar zoning requirements and legalize the construction of cottage-style homes and neighborhoods. The town has been able to increase housing supply with minimal land consumption. Building these homes under Langley's previous zoning would have consumed up to three times as much land. Although the developer added a hydrant and extended the sewer collection system to accommodate development, the smaller footprint and location near the existing downtown saved construction costs, avoided road building, and used existing water services.

"I grew up in wartime Maui, in a small cottage like this one," said owner Faith Smith to the Seattle Times. "This place reminds me of that very tight community where everyone kept an eye on each other."

— Solving Sprawl, NRDC

QUICK FACTS

Contact: Ross Chapin Architects
PO Box 230
Langley, Washington 98260
360-221-2373
inquiry@rosschapin.com

Location: Langley, Washington
Web: www.rosschapin.com/Projects/projects.html
Implemented: 1998



SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES THIRD STREET COTTAGES

#1	Includes Mixed Land Uses	
#2	Exhibits Compact Building Design	✓
#3	Provides Range of Housing Types	✓
#4	Promotes Walkable Neighborhoods	
#5	Exhibits a Distinct Sense of Place	✓
#6	Preserves Open Space	✓
#7	Utilizes Existing Development	✓
#8	Provides Transportation Choices	
#9	Practices Fair Decision-making	✓
#10	Promotes Stakeholder Participation	✓