

Georgetown's Cottage Ordinance vs. Cottage Projects: Clearing Up the Biggest Misunderstanding

The Issue: Some Georgetown residents believe the draft Cottage Housing Ordinance is the same thing as approving a single development proposal on Market Street. Despite frequent reminders that approving the ordinance does not automatically approve any proposed development, this misunderstanding is driving unhappiness and worry.

The Fact: The ordinance does not approve any particular project. The ordinance is a town-wide zoning tool. Every project, whether the proposed Little Living Market Street Cottage Housing Development, or any other for-profit or nonprofit project must go through the full public review and Georgetown Planning Commission approval process.

What the Ordinance Actually Does

- Updates Georgetown's zoning code to allow a specific type of small, well-designed cottage neighborhood in certain zones.
- Creates clear standards for design, safety, landscaping, parking, setbacks, and community space.
- Allows any qualified applicant to propose a Cottage Housing Development and apply for approval through public review.
- Ensures that all projects still require:
 - Detailed site plan review
 - Staff technical review
 - Planning Commission review and public hearing
 - DelDOT review (where applicable)
 - Town Council approval

The ordinance simply establishes the rules. It does not approve homes, buildings, or construction.

What the Ordinance Does Not Do

- It does not approve the Market Street project.
- It does not bypass public hearings.
- It does not change zoning on any parcel.
- It does not give special treatment to any developer or organization.

Every project still stands or falls on its merits.

Why This Matters

A zoning text amendment like this one is about policy, not about a single project. Georgetown needs modern zoning tools to support modest housing options for local workers, young adults, young families, seniors, and veterans. The ordinance provides those tools, and ensures that any future projects will be reviewed under consistent, transparent standards.

The Bottom Line

The Cottage Housing Development ordinance creates clear, fair, and transparent rules for modest cottage homes. The ordinance makes this type of housing possible, but it does not approve any specific development. All projects must still go through the same rigorous, public, multi-step review process.

There are more than 35 comparable cottage housing developments across the United States. The oldest opened in 2003. Cottage housing is normal, safe, and mature.

