

## **Cottage Housing Design Standards: Why These Are Not Tiny Cabins or Temporary Units**

**The Issue:** Some social media posts describe cottage homes as “sheds,” “huts,” or “temporary cabins.” These claims can make cottage neighborhoods sound flimsy or out of place in Georgetown.

**The Fact:** Cottage homes are permanent, stick-built, code-compliant houses built to the same construction standards as any other home in Sussex County. Georgetown's Cottage Housing Development ordinance includes detailed design rules that ensure these neighborhoods are attractive, durable, and consistent with Georgetown's small-town character.

### **Cottage Homes Are Real Houses Built to Real Standards**

According to the ordinance, cottage homes must:

- Meet or exceed all Sussex County building code requirements
- Include 350 to 850 square feet of finished living space
- Be constructed with permanent foundations and durable materials
- Include full bathrooms, kitchens, HVAC, insulation, and utilities

### **Cottage homes are not:**

- Cabins
- Manufactured homes
- Trailers or mobile homes
- Sheds or “tiny house on wheels” units
- Transitional, temporary, or pallet housing units

These are real homes for local workers, young adults, seniors, and veterans looking for a modest place to call home, a starter home, or a downsized home.

## **Design Standards Required by Georgetown's Ordinance**

The Cottage Housing Development ordinance includes strict requirements to protect neighborhood quality. Every cottage home must have:

- A covered front porch of at least 40 square feet
- A direct connection to walkways or sidewalks
- Landscaping and green space near each unit
- Screened parking areas (no parking in front of cottages)
- Minimum building setbacks, including:
  - 10 feet from public street rights-of-way
  - 15 feet from external property lines
- Separation of at least 10 feet between structures
- Common open space equal to at least 400 square feet per home
- Private open space of at least 200 square feet per home

These requirements are written directly into the zoning code.

Every applicant must comply.

## **What This Means for Georgetown**

Because the design standards are embedded in the ordinance:

- No project can use “cheap cabin” units
- No project can skip porches, sidewalks, landscaping, or green space
- No project can place parking in front of homes or along open space
- No project can exceed height limits or density caps
- No project can bypass design review by Town staff and the Planning Commission

The result is a predictable, orderly neighborhood type that looks and feels like a traditional small-town community.

### The Bottom Line

Cottage homes are permanent, well-designed houses, not temporary cabins.

Georgetown's design standards guarantee attractive, modest-scale neighborhoods that fit the character of our town while providing stable homes for local workers, young families, seniors, and veterans.

**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.**

