

Property Values and Neighborhood Stability: What Cottage Housing Really Does

The Issue: Some opponents claim that cottage housing will hurt nearby property values or make neighborhoods less stable. These fears are understandable, but they do not line up with real-world experiences from across the United States.

The Fact: Well-designed, stick-built cottage homes with clear design standards do not drive down surrounding property values. Studies of modest and affordable housing in communities across our country show that nearby home prices usually stay the same or rise slightly when good quality housing is added. In many places, cottage style and small home neighborhoods have helped replace vacant or underused land with stable, well-kept homes.

What Independent Research Tells Us

Independent studies from diverse regions of the United States have looked at what happens to nearby home prices when modest or affordable homes are built. Over and over, the findings are similar:

- Property values next to well-designed affordable housing stay steady or increase slightly.
- There is no consistent evidence that smaller homes, missing middle housing, or cottage style developments cause neighborhood home prices to fall.
- Good construction quality, strong maintenance, and thoughtful design matter far more than the size of the homes.

In other words, what harms property values is neglect, blight, and poorly maintained structures, not the presence of smaller homes that are well built and well managed.

Why Georgetown's Design Standards Protect Neighborhood Quality

Georgetown's Cottage Housing Development ordinance requires that cottage homes:

- Be permanent, stick-built houses on real foundations, not temporary cabins or trailers
- Meet all applicable building codes for safety and construction quality
- Include porches, sidewalks, landscaping, trees, and shared open space
- Place parking in screened areas away from cottage fronts and common greens
- Respect setbacks from streets and property lines
- Provide both shared and private outdoor space for residents

These design rules mean that cottage homes will present to the street and to neighbors as well cared for, modest houses, not clutter or visual blight. Consistent design, regular maintenance, and active property management help keep the entire area looking good, which supports surrounding home values.

How Cottage Homes Support Neighborhood Stability

Cottage neighborhoods are designed to house people who are already part of Georgetown:

- Local workers such as teachers, tradespeople, health care staff, retail employees, restaurant staff, and municipal workers
- Young adults and new graduates who want to stay close to family but cannot afford large homes or today's sky-high rents
- Seniors and older residents on fixed incomes who want to downsize without leaving town
- Veterans who prefer modest, low maintenance homes in a community setting

When these neighbors have access to attainable, right sized housing, they can put down roots, attend local houses of worship, support civic groups, and shop in local businesses. This reduces forced moves, overcrowded living situations, and long, sometimes dangerous commutes.

In town after town across the United States, such as Beaufort SC, Greensboro NC, and Berea KY, cottage and pocket neighborhoods have been associated with steady residency, strong social ties, and a sense of mutual watchfulness that benefits nearby blocks.

In Georgetown, cottage homes can also transform vacant or underused land into well-lit, well-maintained places, which is far better for neighborhood stability than empty lots, deteriorating structures, or long-term vacancy.

The Bottom Line

Healthy property values depend on safe streets, good upkeep, and a sense that neighbors care about their homes and their block. Cottage Housing Developments are designed to support exactly that kind of stability.

By adding well designed, stick-built homes for local workers, young adults, seniors, and veterans, cottage neighborhoods can strengthen Georgetown's tax base, protect neighborhood character, increase economic activity for local retailers and businesses, and help keep surrounding property values strong over time.

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.

