

From: [Charles Gervasi](#)
To: [Tishler, Bill](#)
Cc: [Melinda Gustafson Gervasi](#); [All Alders](#)
Subject: Support Winter 2025 Proposals to Increase Housing Units
Date: Friday, December 5, 2025 10:58:51 AM

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Madison Alders,

Thank you for the work that went on behind the scenes to create the [proposed rules to allow more housing](#). Houses are expensive because more people want to live in Madison than there are housing units. No subsidies and growth of income can fix that there are not enough to go around. Houses being expensive will encourage new development and eventually more affordability, if we have permissive planning/zoning rules.

I have lived at 218 S Whitney Way for 15 years and in the Hill Farms area for 20 years. I would like to see more duplexes, 4-plexes, and apartments in my area. That density will eventually bring corner stores and other services. All of this makes it a nicer place to live and decreases the amount of energy required for heating and transportation.

Please support this and other measures to increase the number of housing units in Madison.

Respectfully Yours,

Charles J Gervasi

From: [Harald Kliems](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: In support of TOD changes (item 11) and cottage courts (item 16)
Date: Tuesday, December 9, 2025 8:24:49 AM

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Dear members of the Common Council:

I am writing in support of agenda items 11 (changes to the transit-oriented development ordinance) and 16 (allowing cottage courts) at tonight's council meeting.

These are two common-sense reforms to help us stem the affordability and housing crisis. Car washes and multilane drive-throughs have no place on our most transit-friendly spaces; what we need there is housing, employment, and amenities. And allowing cottage courts is adding a new missing middle housing form that will create some new housing opportunities and ultimately benefit affordability.

Thank you for driving forward these changes. I look forward to additional housing policy proposals in the future.

Respectfully,
Harald Kliems

6 N Allen St

From: [Harald Kliems](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Housing and TOD reform
Date: Thursday, October 30, 2025 8:02:21 AM

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Dear Alders:

I have read the news reports about the proposed changes that would allow cottage court housing, allow for 4-units in the TOD zone, and prohibit car-focused uses in the TOD area. I just quickly want to say thank you for introducing these common-sense reforms. They'll move us closer to solving our housing crisis (cottage courts, 4-units) and also make our city safer, more walkable, and beautiful (no more and dangerous and ugly drive-throughs near our wonderful BRT stations).

I am fully in support!

Best,
Harald Kliems

6 N Allen St
Madison, WI 53726 (District 5)

From: [John Nguyen](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Support for latest Housing Forward proposals
Date: Thursday, October 30, 2025 9:46:56 AM

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Hello,

I was very excited to read the latest round of proposed changes to allow for cottage courts in Madison and limit car-centric land uses in the TOD overlay district, and am writing to express my support. Housing configurations such as cottage courts and pocket neighborhoods allow for additional gentle density in our cities while also creating a pleasant and interesting environment for their residents. And I am fully in support of unpleasant drive-throughs and car lots in the areas of the city in which car-free and car-light living are most possible. Thank you!

John Nguyen

From: [Josh Olson](#)
To: [Mayer, Davy](#)
Cc: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Supporting Winter Housing Forward Recommendations
Date: Thursday, October 30, 2025 1:44:13 PM

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Hi,

I support the proposed changes that would allow cottage court housing, allow for 4-units in the TOD zone, and prohibit car-focused uses in the TOD area. Thank you for introducing these common-sense reforms. This is great way to increase housing supply and our tax base (cottage courts, 4-units) and also make our city safer, more walkable, and beautiful. It's important to ensure the active users in our TOD zone (walkers, bikers, bus riders) have the infrastructure that supports them instead of commuters who drive into (and don't pay!) the City.

You have my full support!

Josh Olson

From: [Mary Pustejovsky](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Housing Forward proposals
Date: Thursday, October 30, 2025 2:12:45 PM

Some people who received this message don't often get email from darktownstrutter@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Alders:

I recently saw the post about the Housing Forward proposals. I'm thrilled to see such common-sense reforms introduced by the city.

I've been confused when I've seen such auto-oriented uses as drive throughs approved for lots in TOD areas, so I'm excited to see that loophole being fixed as part of the reforms.

I'm also excited to see the addition of more housing options for Madison. I'm particularly excited to see the option for cottage courts. When I lived in Austin there was an area that had a few (see [here](#) and [here](#)). These homes were consistently incredibly popular and sold very quickly! Many people want to have some semi-private greenspace but may not want the hassle and maintenance of their own yard, and these can provide that option. I also support the option for 4plexes in TOD, as this seems like a common sense proposal that would gently increase density and make the most of our investment in BRT.

Thanks for your dedication to our city and for working to make it more affordable for all types of households!

Mary

From: [Wasniewski, Darrin](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: AARP WI Letter of Support for Legistar #90552 & 90557
Date: Tuesday, December 9, 2025 9:28:32 AM
Attachments: [25.12 Madison Housing Forward Proposals LOS.pdf](#)

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Alders,

Attached please find our letter of support for Legistar #'s 90552 and 90557. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Darrin Wasniewski
Senior Associate State Director- Community Outreach
AARP Wisconsin

222 W. Washington Avenue
Suite 600
Madison, WI 53703

Phone:: 608-286-6303

[Book time with Darrin.](#)



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608-286-6300 | aarp.org/wi | wistate@aarp.org
twitter: @aarpwi | facebook.com/AARP Wisconsin

09 December 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Proposed TOD Area and Cottage Court Zoning Changes

Dear Council Members,

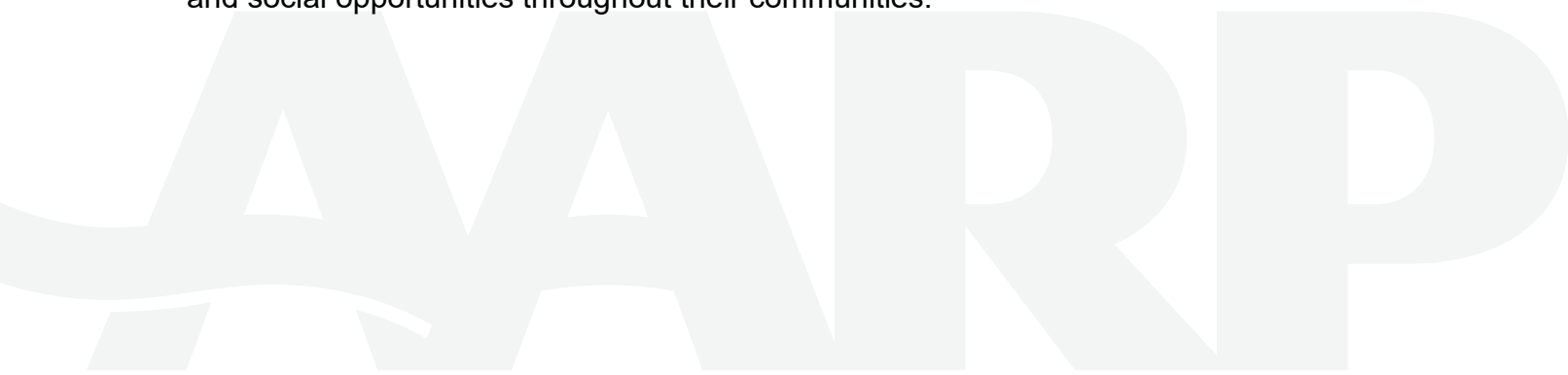
On behalf of AARP Wisconsin, I am writing to express our strong support for the proposed changes to Madison's zoning code regarding Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) areas and Cottage Court housing options. These updates represent an important step toward creating a more livable, age-friendly city that meets the needs of residents across the lifespan by linking affordable homes with reliable, accessible transportation options and walkable neighborhoods.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), Legistar # 90552

We recognize that this proposal is not an expansion of TOD areas but rather an evolution of the current code to better reflect Madison's commitment to walkability, accessibility, and housing diversity. AARP's housing policy emphasizes the importance of neighborhoods that provide access to transportation, healthcare, shopping, and social opportunities – key elements that allow older adults to age in place safely and comfortably.

During the Summer of 2024 living room meetings, which AARP was invited to facilitate in The Hill Farms Neighborhood, neighbors shared heartfelt concerns that their current homes are not suited for them to safely grow older. At the same time, they expressed a strong desire to remain in their community, near friends and familiar amenities, in a walkable environment with reliable transit options.

Updating the TOD framework will help address these needs by encouraging housing choices that reduce isolation and improve access to essential services. Allowing more four-unit housing in these areas and limiting new auto-centric uses such as standalone car washes and surface parking lots will help create safer, more walkable streets that prioritize people over cars. This aligns with AARP's transportation priorities, which call for safe, accessible, and affordable ways to get around that connect people to economic and social opportunities throughout their communities.



Cottage Court Housing, Legistar #90557

Cottage courts offer smaller, accessible homes clustered around shared green space – an approach that fosters social connection while providing affordable, low-maintenance housing options. When located within walking distance of transit service or in connected, walkable neighborhoods, Cottage Courts can support car-light or car-free lifestyles for older adults and people with disabilities, reducing transportation costs while maintaining independence. This type of development aligns with AARP's principles of diverse housing choices and universal design, ensuring that residents of all ages and abilities can find homes that fit their needs without leaving their neighborhoods.

Alignment with AARP National Housing Policy

AARP's national housing policy framework, including resources from our Livable Communities Initiative, supports zoning reforms that enable Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), Missing Middle Housing, and age-friendly design standards. These strategies promote affordability, accessibility, and community engagement – values reflected in Madison's proposed changes.

Madison's Age-Friendly Commitment

Madison has been part of AARP's Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities since 2020, demonstrating a long-standing commitment to creating environments that support residents of all ages. These proposed zoning changes build on that foundation and advance the city's vision for an inclusive, livable future. By pairing expanded housing choices with transit-supportive development and fewer auto-oriented uses in TOD areas, Madison is moving toward an age-friendly transportation system that supports walking, transit use, and safer streets for people of all ages.

Why This Matters

Madison's population is aging, and the demand for housing that supports independence, affordability, and community will only grow. Older adults are more likely to outlive their ability or desire to drive, making it essential that homes be located near frequent transit, safe walking routes, and everyday destinations. Concentrating new housing in TOD areas and enabling Cottage Courts throughout the city are proactive measures that will help Madison remain a vibrant, inclusive city for people of all ages.

AARP Wisconsin applauds the City's leadership in advancing these proposals and stands ready to support their implementation. Thank you for your commitment to creating a Madison where residents can thrive throughout their lives.

Sincerely,
Darrin Wasniewski
Sr. ASD – Community Outreach
AARP Wisconsin



From: [James Worker](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Cc: [Planning](#); [Bannon, Katie](#)
Subject: Legistar 90557
Date: Monday, December 8, 2025 2:37:51 PM
Attachments: [VH_logo_hrz.png](#)
[2025_12_08 - Legistar 90557 - Cottage Courts.pdf](#)

Some people who received this message don't often get email from jworker@veridianhomes.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Alders,

Over the past several weeks—since the release of the draft Cottage Court zoning typology—our team at Veridian Homes has been evaluating the feasibility of this new housing model and its potential role in our internal initiative to expand attainable housing options within the Madison area. We appreciate the City’s effort to introduce a flexible, community-oriented infill tool and are optimistic about what this typology could offer.

As we worked through site tests and early feasibility studies, we identified several hurdles that would currently prevent us from delivering Cottage Court homes to market as the ordinance is written. The most significant challenges include:

- **Application of full rear-yard setbacks**, which results in disproportionate perimeter space that undermines the compact, community-oriented intent of the typology. This has been addressed through the revision recommended by plan commission.
- **The prohibition of attached garages**, which competes with market expectations, fee simple ownership and site efficiency—particularly on alley-served parcels where single-stall attached garages could support homebuyer expectations without detracting from a pedestrian-focused layout.

For your review, I have attached a detailed letter outlining these concerns along with suggested clarifications and revisions that we believe would materially improve the ordinance’s usability and reinforce its intent.

Thank you for your leadership in expanding Madison’s range of housing options and for considering these observations as part of your deliberation. We remain committed to supporting tools that meaningfully advance attainable housing in our community and welcome any opportunity for continued dialogue.

Warm regards,
James Worker, AIA

James Worker

Architect & Residential Design Specialist

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[VeridianHomes.com](#)



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December 8, 2025

Dear Alders and Planning Staff,

Thank you for your continued leadership in expanding Madison's range of "missing middle" housing options. Veridian Homes share the City's goal to address housing shortage and increase housing choice, and believe the proposed Cottage Court ordinance is an important and forward-looking step. After reviewing the draft, we wanted to express strong support for its intent—while also identifying several key areas where small modifications could substantially improve its clarity, feasibility, and long-term success. As written, the code presents several challenges for us to effectively implement and market as a new housing typology.

The following items outline areas of concern and suggested improvements:

Rear-Yard Setback Proportionality – The proposed setbacks replicate traditional single-family standards, which undercuts the compact, communal intent of the Cottage Court model.

Courtyard Definition and Measurement – The ordinance underdefines how the required 20'x20' courtyard should be placed and measured, risking disjointed open spaces or permitting a front yard as meeting the requirements.

Dwelling Unit Orientation – The current requirement that all dwellings front the courtyard may unintentionally leave site edges undevelopable; flexibility for short pedestrian connections would support better site design.

Parking and Market Feasibility – While the restriction on attached garages promotes pedestrian focus, it may inadvertently increase impervious area and miss alley-based access opportunities. And complicate what could otherwise be Fee Simple homes.

These considerations are detailed in the following sections.

Rear-Yard Setback Proportionality

As written, the ordinance applies the full rear-yard setback of the underlying zoning district—typically 20 to 35 feet, or roughly 20–30% of total lot depth—to the perimeter of a Cottage Court site. In practice, this creates a large, unprogrammed rear zone that often exceeds the size of the intended central courtyard—the very feature that defines this housing type—and works against the space-making qualities and social function of the model.

This disproportionality limits both flexibility and livability. The purpose of a Cottage Court is to cluster smaller homes around a shared green space that fosters connection, not to replicate suburban backyard conditions at a site scale.

Proposed Revision (already integrated in revisions as recommended from plan commission):

(c) 1. Front, side and rear setbacks and yards of the zoning district shall apply only to the perimeter of the zoning lot. An eight (8) foot rear yard setback shall apply to the perimeter of the zoning lot.

This simple standard provides an equitable rule across all eligible zoning districts and grants greater flexibility than the rear setbacks otherwise required by those districts, while still providing a more generous buffer than typically afforded to accessory buildings or ADUs.

Courtyard Definition and Location

The required courtyard is the defining spatial element of the Cottage Court typology, yet as currently written in Section (d)(3) of the proposed ordinance, it is underdefined. The language establishes only a minimum 20-by-20-foot area for shared pedestrian access or open space, without specifying its placement, relation to dwellings, or treatment as a cohesive landscape. This lack of specificity could result in small, disconnected, or residual greens that fail to fulfill the social and spatial intent of the model. The ordinance could be strengthened by clarifying that the courtyard must occupy a central position within the buildable envelope, provide direct pedestrian access to unit entrances, and exclude any automobile infrastructure or service areas, ensuring it functions as the primary communal space for the development. The ordinance should also clarify how the minimum 20-by-20-foot dimension is measured—whether to the building façade, porch line, or internal lot line—to ensure consistent application and predictable site planning.

Proposed Revision:

“(d) 3. A cottage court shall have a single courtyard to be used for shared pedestrian access or open space and shall be located within the buildable area of the zoning lot and may not extend into required perimeter setbacks. The courtyard shall not be occupied by automobile infrastructure or buildings and shall have minimum dimensions of twenty (20) feet by twenty (20) feet measured between the outermost elements of opposing dwellings—such as porches, decks, or eaves—to ensure the courtyard represents a true clear open space.

Dwelling Unit Orientation

Borrowing language successfully implemented in other jurisdictions, such as Portland, Oregon, helps establish clarity and predictable design outcomes. The current language stating that 'all other single family detached dwellings shall have an entrance oriented towards a single shared courtyard' could be interpreted too rigidly, leaving the outermost corners of a parcel undeveloped or as voids because those areas cannot front a courtyard. Allowing limited flexibility for units that maintain a short pedestrian connection to the courtyard ensures better site utilization and variety in building placement while still achieving the ordinance’s community-oriented intent.

Proposed Revision:

(d) 4. The ~~single family detached dwellings~~ principal buildings closest to the street shall have an entrance oriented towards the street, except if they are setback at least seventy-five (75) feet from the street then an entrance may be oriented towards the street or the courtyard. All other ~~single family detached dwellings~~ principal buildings ~~shall have an entrance oriented towards a single shared courtyard. All other dwelling units should maintain a clear and direct pedestrian connection to a common outdoor area.~~

Parking and Market Feasibility

The current prohibition on attached garages may present feasibility challenges given current market expectations and the spatial efficiency needed for compact infill. While the intent to limit attached garages and consolidate parking and vehicular circulation is understandable and aligns with the ordinance’s pedestrian orientation, it inadvertently increases impervious surface area and forgoes opportunities for more efficient site design—especially where lots front a public alley that could naturally accommodate shared access and minimize driveways within the development interior. While the

allowance of a communal detached garage structure addresses the resident's expectation for structured parking it detracts from being able to offer a cottage court home in a fee simple ownership configuration.

Proposed Revision:

“(e) 1. If automobile parking is provided, ~~there shall be a single shared driveway and a single shared area for a parking structure or surface parking lot, detached garages, or carports. Individual dwellings shall not have attached garages parking areas.~~ garages or carports shall be accessed via a single shared drive aisle or alley. Individual dwellings may include a single-stall attached garage. Garages shall count toward the total cottage footprint.”

This revision preserves the ordinance's pedestrian emphasis while allowing flexibility in addressing realistic buyer needs and site logistics.

Additionally please clarify whether shared parking areas are subject to the landscape screening and EV parking requirements under MGO §28.141(8)(c) and (e).

These refinements offer a true middle ground—preserving neighborhood character while allowing Cottage Courts to function as intended: compact, efficient, and community-focused.

Thank you for considering these adjustments.

Warm regards,



James Worker
Architect, AIA

Summary of Suggested Revisions

Rear-Yard Setback:

(c) 1. Front, side and rear setbacks and yards of the zoning district shall apply only to the perimeter of the zoning lot. An eight (8) foot rear yard setback shall apply to the perimeter of the zoning lot.

Courtyard Definition and Measurement:

“(d) 3. A cottage court shall have a single courtyard to be used for shared pedestrian access or open space and shall be located within the buildable area of the zoning lot and may not extend into required perimeter setbacks. The courtyard shall not be occupied by automobile infrastructure or buildings and shall have minimum dimensions of twenty (20) feet by twenty (20) feet measured between the outermost elements of opposing dwellings—such as porches, decks, or eaves—to ensure the courtyard represents a true clear open space.”

Dwelling Unit Orientation:

(d) 4. The ~~single family detached dwellings~~ principal buildings closest to the street shall have an entrance oriented towards the street, except if they are setback at least seventy-five (75) feet from the street then an entrance may be oriented towards the street or the courtyard. All other ~~single family detached dwellings~~ principal buildings ~~shall have an entrance oriented towards a single shared courtyard. All other dwelling units should maintain a clear and direct pedestrian connection to a common outdoor area.~~

1. Parking and Garage Provisions:

“(e) 1. If automobile parking is provided, ~~there shall be a single shared driveway and a single shared area for a parking structure or surface parking lot, detached garages, or carports. Individual dwellings shall not have attached garages parking areas, garages or carports shall be accessed via a single shared drive aisle or alley. Individual dwellings may include a single-stall attached garage. Garages shall count toward the total cottage footprint.~~



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