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**MEMORANDUM**

**Agenda Item # 5**

**DATE:** May 3, 2007  
**TO:** Metropolitan Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Mark Donaldson, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** **Off-Street Parking in R-1, R-1A and R-1E Districts  
(4-B-07-OA)**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the following amendments to the *Knoxville Zoning Ordinance* Article 4, Section 2, 2a and 2b.

Add an exception to Subsections G of the R-1 and R-1A Districts, and Subsection F of the R-1E District, reading:

**OFF-STREET PARKING**

As required in Article 5, Section 7.

**Except:**

**Paved vehicle parking and storage facilities in the front or side street yard on any lot containing a house, duplex, or attached house shall be limited to not more than the greater of the following: (a) 25% of the required front or side street yard area; or (b) the paved area leading directly to a carport or enclosed garage; or (c) 400 square feet.**

**BACKGROUND**

City Council recently passed a resolution, requesting the Metropolitan Planning Commission to examine issues and solutions to problems related to front yard parking. Staff has looked at several types of neighborhoods (for example, early 20th century, post-WWII), talked to some neighborhood associations, and examined existing code provisions regarding the issues, which include excessive front yard paving, aesthetic concerns where lawns have been turned into parking areas, and impediments to the use of alleys as means of parking access in older neighborhoods (see the attached report for more detailed information).

This amendment has been created to address the first recommendation of the report to limit the amount of pavement in the front yard for parking in the low density residential districts.

*Front Yard Parking  
&  
Related Issues*

Prepared by the  
Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission

May 2007

*Driveways, parking pads and carports are products of the automobile era. Before World War II, there were few considerations regarding parking. In other neighborhoods, garages would occasionally be located off alleys or on-street parking was possible. In the emerging suburbs of the 1920s to 30s, like Sequoyah Hills, Holston Hills, Fairmont Boulevard and North Hills, lots were large enough to accommodate garages, generally located behind or to the side of a house. Although many ranch houses of the 1950s had smaller lots, they were created in the era of the “one-car family” and front yard parking was not a problem. In fact, zoning regulations were silent on issues of front yard parking.*

Increased vehicle ownership, including storage of cars and trucks, has resulted in several front yard parking problems throughout the city. They are outlined below:



Extensive front yard paving is an environmental and aesthetic issue.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Stormwater runoff increases with the added impervious surfaces of garages, parking pads, carports and driveways. This loss of grass, trees and other natural ground cover leads to greater flooding and a lack of ground water replenishment. The increases in hard surfaces also adds to heat build-up in the city.

#### STREETSCAPE, AESTHETICS, AND NEIGHBORHOOD PROPERTY VALUES



Something to Avoid: The entrance for parking could have been limited to the curb cut, and the larger parking pad could have been placed toward the rear of the property.

The loss of landscaped space has a detrimental effect on neighborhood appearance. When driveways are widened or parking pads are provided in front yards, it effectively makes a yard look like a parking lot. Entrances for driveways can be narrow, with the driveway widening toward the side or rear of a lot to provide garage or parking pad access. In MPC’s experience in meeting with several neighborhood organizations, staff has learned that many Knoxvilleians feel that parking on lawn space negatively affects a neighborhood’s appearance and property values. Lawn parking also causes loss of turf and can be an erosion problem.



Sidewalk parking and front yard paving in a neighborhood where parking can be provided off alleys.

### OTHER ASPECTS RELATED TO FRONT YARD PARKING

Garage space, which should count in meeting the off-street parking requirement, is often converted into front yard parking; instead of a simple driveway leading to the garage, pavement is added on front yards for off-street parking.

Storage of vehicles (some inoperable) is an occasional problem that is particularly detracting from neighborhood values.

### SOLUTIONS TO FRONT YARD PARKING

The problems are avoidable and the following solutions can be used to address the problem:



A new garage located off an alley on Oakwood Avenue.

#### Alley Access:

Many older neighborhoods have alleys, which should be used for on street parking. Where alleys are used for parking access, the aesthetics and market values of the neighborhood are enhanced. The front yard and sidewalks create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.



This environmentally sound solution creates access to a rear garage.

#### Parking Behind the House:

When alleys are not present, most lots have enough room to run a driveway beside a house to park next to or slightly behind the house. (This concept was used as a guide in such neighborhood protection zoning as the infill housing overlay and Tazewell Pike Neighborhood Conservation District).



A shared driveway with separate backyard garages in the Fairmont area.

**Shared Use of Driveways:**  
In some older neighborhoods, sideyard space is limited but shared driveways are or can be used to reach rear yard garages or parking spaces.



Side-by-side driveways

**Side-by-Side Driveways:**  
A similar solution to the shared driveway is seen in the following photographs; side-by-side driveways are used to access rear yard garages.



On-street parking provides a cushion between pedestrians and traffic, and avoids the impact of paving a front yard.

**On-Street Parking:** Many streets were designed to accommodate on-street parking. Such parking has the added advantage of sharing traffic and providing a separation of moving traffic from pedestrians.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The previous points included observations related to existing zoning code inadequacies and solutions that can largely be derived through changes in the zoning code. Still, there are a few other problems of regarding residential-area parking that have been perceived to be problems, including:



Travel lane or sidewalk?

### Sidewalk Parking:

This has evolved into a chronic problem in some neighborhoods. Section 17 -193 of the Knoxville City Code prohibits driving on sidewalks so there is existing law to address this problem.



Conversion of a planting strip into a parking pad

### Planting Strip Parking:

A planting strip is the area between the curb and the sidewalk, or between the sidewalk and the lot line, or the space between the edge of pavement and the lot line within the right-of-way. Section 23-15 of City Code prohibits parking in those spaces.



An example of parking on a planting strip as well as in the front yard

Pedestrian safety is compromised with sidewalk and planting strip parking and residents have expressed concerns about undermining the appearance of their neighborhoods and their property values under the foregoing situations. Some residents park in such circumstances to protect their cars from passing vehicles. Others are apparently parking in such areas for their own convenience.



Simple off-alley parking should be allowed in older neighborhoods.



Example of a "bulb-out" at the end of a block in the Fourth and Gill neighborhood.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Revise the Zoning Ordinance to limit the amount of pavement in the front yard for parking.**
2. **Clarify/revise the zoning ordinance as necessary to require alley access for parking where alleys exist and the topography permits such access. Revise regulations to allow gravel alleys (where the terrain is flat). Also, allow gravel parking pads off alleys (the solution to the right in Nashville's German Village neighborhood is attractive and allows stormwater percolation).**
3. **Revise City code to limit the duration that vehicles can be parked in a front yard to allow such activities as car washing or temporary guest parking but to stem the chronic problems of front yard parking including loss of ground cover and undermining neighborhood aesthetics.**
4. **Enforce existing provisions regarding sidewalk and planting strip parking.**
5. **Create traffic calming programs (such as bulb-outs at the end of blocks) to define on-street parking in residential areas.**