



**MAYOR & COUNCIL COMMUNICATION**

**DATE: 06/03/2014**  
**REGULAR**  
**ITEM # 15**  
**ORD 08-112**

**AGENDA ITEM:** Zoning Text Amendments – Single Family Garage Requirements

**SUBMITTED BY:** Kyle Klatt, Community Development Director

**THROUGH:** Dean Zuleger, City Administrator

**REVIEWED BY:** Planning Commission  
Nick Johnson, City Planner

**SUGGESTED ORDER OF BUSINESS:**

- Introduction of Item .....Community Development Director
- Report/Presentation.....Community Development Director
- Questions from Council to Staff..... Mayor Facilitates
- Call for Motion ..... Mayor & City Council
- Discussion..... Mayor & City Council
- Action on Motion..... Mayor Facilitates

**POLICY RECCOMENDER:** The Planning Commission and Staff are recommending amendments to the Zoning Ordinance concerning provisions regulating the setback of the garage in relation to the front façade of a house and the amount of the front façade that can be used for a garage.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** None

**SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED:** The City Council is being asked to consider amendments to the City’s development standards for urban residential zoning districts, and specifically, the requirements concerning attached residential garages. The proposed amendments would eliminate the portion of the Zoning Ordinance that requires garages to be set back behind the façade of the house or behind a porch extension, and would also modify the maximum percentage of the width of the front façade of the house that could be occupied by a garage. The Planning Commission is recommending that the width of the visible garage door area when closed not exceed 60% of the principal building façade fronting the primary street.

The Planning Commission is recommending that the City Council adopt revisions to the attached garage requirements in urban residential districts the through the following motion:

***“Move to adopt Ordinance 08-112 amending the Zoning Ordinance by revising the requirements for attached garages in urban residential districts”***

**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY/PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT:** The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed ordinance amendments at its May 28, 2014 meeting and conducted a public hearing at this meeting. Staff distributed a packet of typical house plans that was provided by Lennar to demonstrate the range of housing options that would be built within the Savona subdivision. At the hearing the following individuals addressed the Planning Commission:

- **Joe Jablonski, Lennar Homes.** He shared his experiences building single-family homes and noted that Lennar does not offer single-family homes without a 3-car garage. He also explained that Lennar adds architectural features to their homes to add visual interest around the garage. Jablonski further stated that the garage side is typically determined by the grading plan and elevations of the lot. In response to a question from the Commission, Jablonski noted that close to 75% of the home types that were distributed to the Planning Commission do not meet the garage standards.
- **Craig Allen, Gonyea Company.** He spoke about his experience working with custom home builders and noted that the City’s garage requirements have an indirect consequence of limiting creativity within new developments. Allen also stated that Gonyea and their custom builders construct very few homes that do not have a three-car garage.
- **Michael Ramme, Ryland Homes.** He noted that Ryland does not build any homes with only a two-car garage. He discussed that their single-family home customer is demanding a three-car garage. Ramme explained that requiring garages to be recessed four feet would increase the redundancy of homes within new neighborhoods. Ramme also noted that he has not encountered other communities that have performance standards for attached garages.

In addition to the above comments, the City received six sets of written comments from builders as well. These written comments are attached for review by the City Council.

The Commission generally discussed the rationale for originally including the attached garage requirements in the Zoning Ordinance, and discussed other options for addressing the concerns of the builders. The Commission ultimately recommended removing the garage setback requirements from the code as recommended by Staff, but decided to revise the provision concerning the front façade of the house to read as follows:

- The width of the visible garage door area when closed shall not exceed 60% of the width of the entire principal building façade (including garage) fronting the primary street

The revision as proposed by the Planning Commission was slightly different than the ordinance amendment as initially proposed by Staff. Specifically, Staff recommended keeping the existing language but changing the percentage of the entire garage compared to the rest of the house façade to 75%. The attached Staff report to the Planning Commission includes additional information and discussion concerning the Staff recommendation to the Commission.

The Commission adopted a motion to recommend approval of the attached garage ordinance amendments with the revisions adopted at its meeting; the Commission's motion was adopted with a vote of four ayes and one nay.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION (SWOT):**

**Strengths:** The proposed ordinance will provide additional flexibility for home builders in new subdivisions.

The ordinance still encourages garages to be side or rear loaded, but does not mandate such design.

The ordinance will allow builders to select from their entire portfolio of homes rather than preventing several of their homes from being built in Lake Elmo.

**Weaknesses:** The attached garage provisions were some of the few design requirements that were adopted for single-family homes as part of the urban residential zoning ordinance amendments.

**Opportunities:** Maintaining maximum flexibility of choices for both builders and consumers will help ensure that newer subdivisions will be successful.

**Threats:** The proposed ordinance is still more restrictive than the requirements in nearly every other municipality in the Twin Cities, which may still restrict builders from constructing certain types of housing.

It may be difficult for multi-family or townhouse developments to comply with the garage façade requirements as recommended by the Planning Commission.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Based on the aforementioned, the Planning Commission is recommending that the City Council adopt revisions to the attached garage requirements in urban residential districts through the following motion:

***“Move to adopt Ordinance 08-112 amending the Zoning Ordinance by revising the requirements for attached garages in urban residential districts”***

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Ordinance 08-112
2. Planning Commission Report – 5/28/13
3. Developer Comments:
  - a. Ryland Homes
  - b. Lennar
  - c. Hans Hagen Homes
  - d. Gonyea Company
  - e. Bob McDonald (McDonald Construction)
  - f. Amaris Homes