



The City That Soars!

REQUEST FOR PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

Meeting Date	August 23, 2011
Agenda Item	Workshop 1
Title	Preliminary discussion on front porches in Falcon Heights
Submitted By	Deborah Jones, Staff Liaison

Description	Informal preliminary discussion on whether the City of Falcon Heights should revisit the zoning ordinance that severely restricts the addition of front porches on existing homes.
Background	<p>In this year's goal setting process, the City Council has decided to revisit the issue of allowing front porches as a legal encroachment into required front yards (front setback) in Falcon Heights. The existing setback ordinance does not include porches among the allowed encroachments. A number of homeowners have approached the City in recent years, seeking to add porches or porch-like structures to the fronts of their homes, but they were not able to do so unless the structure could be added behind the setback line.</p> <p>Most of the neighborhoods of Falcon Heights were built in an era when front porches were not popular features of home architecture styles, and the homes were built with small entries or stoops right up to the front setback line. The limits on front yard encroachments were probably designed to prevent larger scale encroachment into front yards, preserving the visual open space of the original neighborhood streetscapes. Over the years Falcon Heights residents have shown they value this open character.</p> <p>However, housing styles and family needs change over time. Recognizing that there may be benefits to neighborhoods in giving homeowners more options for the front entries of their houses and for the transitional spaces between public street and private homes, the Council feels it is time to take another look at the issue and has directed staff to open discussion of this subject with the Planning Commission.</p>
Budget Impact	None
Attachment(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falcon Heights City Code, Section 113-241. Required yards and open spaces. • Selection of photos and aerial photos of existing Falcon Heights residential streets.
Additional Resources	Commissioners are encouraged to bring any personal research they have done on this matter, including photos.
Action Requested	No formal action is needed at this time. The goal is to initiate discussion of amending Sec. 113-241 to allow more types and sizes of entry spaces at the front of single family homes, including porches. If the Commission's consensus is to move forward, what information, resources and discussions are needed to address this issue? Staff will report back to the Council.

Sec. 113-241. Required yards and open spaces.

- (a) *Existing yards.* No yards, now or hereafter provided for a building existing on the effective date of the ordinance from which this chapter is derived shall subsequently be reduced below, or further reduced if already less than, the minimum yard requirements of this chapter for equivalent new construction in any zone.
- (b) *Permitted encroachments on required yards.* The following shall be permitted encroachments into setback and height requirements except as restricted by other sections of this chapter:
 - (1) In any yards:
 - a. Posts, off-street parking, flues, sills, pilasters, lintels, cornices, eaves (up to three feet), gutters, awnings, open terraces, steps, sidewalks, essential services, stoops, or similar features provided that they do not extend five feet above the height of the principal structure or to a distance less than three feet from any lot line;
 - b. Yard lights and nameplate signs, trees, shrubs, plants;
 - c. Floodlights or other sources of light illuminating authorized illuminated signs, or light standards for illuminating parking areas, loading areas, or yard for safety and security reasons, provided the direct source of light is not visible from the public right-of-way or adjacent residential property;
 - d. No deck, uncovered porch, or air conditioner shall be less than five feet from a side or rear yard line and if in the required front yard area, a variance shall be required;
 - e. An exposed ramp is a permitted encroachment, provided that a setback of at least five feet in the side and rear yard is met and the design and materials are approved by the zoning administrator as being in harmony with the surrounding residential neighborhood and the documented medical needs of the user;
 - f. Chimneys, flagpoles and open fire escapes may not extend more than five feet above the principal structure or three feet from any lot line. Basement egress window wells may not extend closer than three feet to any lot line.
 - (2) In side and rear yards:
 - a. Fences that meet all other provisions of this chapter;
 - b. Walls and hedges six feet in height or less;
 - c. Bays not to exceed a depth of three feet or containing an area of more than 30 square feet, fire escapes and basement egress window wells not to exceed a width of three feet.
 - (3) On a corner lot, nothing shall be placed or allowed to grow in such a manner as materially to impede vision between a height of 2 1/2 and ten feet above the centerline grades of the intersecting streets within a triangular area 30 feet from

the intersecting street right-of-way lines.

- (4) In no event shall off-street parking, structures of any type, buildings, or any impervious surfaces cover more than 75 percent of the lot areas, except for R-1 zoned land which is regulated by the schedule below:

TABLE INSET:

Lot Area (sq. ft.)	Maximum Impervious Lot Coverage
7,370 or less	45%
Over 7,370 to 1,5800	3,320 sq. ft. or 30%, whichever is greater
Over 15,800 to 34,000	4,940 sq. ft. or 20%, whichever is greater
Over 34,000	6,800 sq. ft. or 15%, whichever is greater

- (c) *Street frontage.* All buildable lots must have frontage on and direct access to an improved public street except for planned unit development in which private streets have been approved by the city.

(Code 1993, § 9-2.05; Ord. No. 0-96-01, § 2, 2-28-1996; Ord. No. 0-96-05, § 1, 8-14-1996; Ord. No. 99-05, § 2, 8-25-1999; Ord. No. 03-01, § 1, 1-22-2003)

Planning Commission Workshop: Front Porches

August 23, 2011

7:00 p.m.

Photos and other visual resources have been posted on the Falcon Heights website at <http://www.falconheights.org/index.asp?Type=GALLERY&SEC={359ACA78-9C0B-46AC-B779-DF34B6E6DDF2}>

There is a link from the agenda page for this meeting.