

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 3, 2019

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: KARL W. MORITZ, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING

SUBJECT: TA#2019-00003 Private Residential Garages

Commissioner Brown conducted a review of both the staff report and the proposed text language amendments. Commissioner Brown offered a series of recommended changes (Commissioner Brown's memo dated June 1, 2019). The memo includes very thorough and helpful suggestions that improve both the text amendment itself and the explanation of the proposed changes. In addition to recommending that the Planning Commission support many of Commissioner Brown's proposed changes, staff will include Commissioner Brown's memo in the record of this text amendment, where it can inform the interpretation of this text amendment in the future.

This memorandum provides amendments to the Staff Report for TA#2019-00003 which is a request to amend sections of the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to private residential garages. Staff proposes revisions to clarify and address questions raised by Commissioners. Therefore, staff recommends:

On page 3 of the Staff Report, in the second paragraph under Section II. the reference to Section 7-2200 be updated to Section 7-2502.

Similarly, on page 3 of the Staff Report, under the proposed Section 2-125.1 -Building wall, front, the reference to Section 7-2200 be updated to Section 7-2502.

On page 4 of the Staff Report, staff cites several sections which reference subordinate structures in Sections 7-100 and Section 7-2200. Subordinate structures are referenced in Section 2-103 (accessory building) and 2-104 (accessory use) which are the principal definitions of Section 7-100. The sentence be updated to reflect these sections.

On page 6 of the Staff Report, in the second paragraph, replacing the word "font" to "front" so the final sentence reads "Staff recommends allowing garages with the vehicle opening facing the primary front yard if the majority of the homes in the contextual block face provide forward-facing attached garages."

On page 6 of the Staff Report, under the proposed E. Special Exception Established, the

reference to Section 7-2200 be updated to Section 7-2502.

To change the remaining “site” to “lot” in Section 7-2200 Tree Coverage Requirement:

~~7-2200- Reserved.~~ **Tree coverage requirement.**

The supplemental regulations in this section apply to residential lots in the R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, R-2-5, and lots developed or proposed to be developed with single-family and two-family dwellings in the RA and RB zones, not including property located within the Old and Historic Alexandria and Parker-Gray Districts. The tree coverage requirements are as follows:

- (A) For all construction that requires a grading plan, trees must be planted, or existing trees preserved to provide a minimum of 25 percent canopy cover over the lot. Refer to the City of Alexandria Landscape Guidelines to determine tree crown coverage allowances.
- (B) The director shall approve this requirement as part of the grading plan.

To add the following clarification in Section 7-2501 (d) Freestanding private garages to the rear of the main building wall:

(d) The freestanding garage must be located completely behind the rear wall of the dwelling unless, the director determines that locating the garage completely behind the rear building wall is not possible due to topography, shape of the lot, placement of the existing dwelling on the lot or other environmental concerns, in these cases the garage must be located completely behind the front building wall, and approved by the director as to location.

Staff continues to recommend approval of TA#2019-00003 with the amendments proposed in this memorandum.

MEMO

TO: Karl Moritz
FROM: Dave Brown
SUBJECT: Infill Regs Amendment re Garages
DATE: June 1, 2019

Karl, I promised you a critique of Dkt. # 9, to be forwarded to Tony, Mary and Ashley. As you have seen in the past, I always try to take an especially close look at proposed amendments to the work of the Infill Task Force. In this case, I think the staff has done an excellent job of refinement on a particular topic we addressed back in the day. I will be supporting the Text Amendment.

I nevertheless have a few comments for staff's consideration—more so on the memo than on the actual text recommended for enactment. I will deal with both.

Staff Report at 3 (first paragraph in II.): I find the second (also the last) sentence incorrect and unnecessarily redundant of the first sentence. I would replace it as follows: "The Infill Regulations thus adopted a bright-line rule, depending on which side the lot fell as to its lot width."

Second full paragraph, p.3: The second, third and fourth sentences should be rewritten as follows (if what I say is true): "The current Section 7-2506(A)(1) requires side-yard access to attached garages on lots with a width of 65 feet or more. Staff has found that in some instances this regulation restricts homeowners from building front-loaded garages which would be compatible with the existing neighborhood pattern of development. The proposed changes replace the bright-line lot width rule with a more flexible one that ties approval of all front-loaded garages, regardless of lot width, to a criteria that are site-specific and relate to the extent to which front-loaded garages already are the development pattern \in the immediate vicinity of the property."

First paragraph of Part III.A. I found this paragraph very confusing, mixing old and new section numbers. I recommend the following complete rewrite:

"Staff proposes to amend 2-149 (garage, private), to amend and move 2-103 (accessory building) to a new 2-197.1 (structure, accessory), and to create new definitions for the front building wall (Section 125.1) and subordinate structure (Section 2-197.3). Staff also proposes the renumbering of other, otherwise unchanged nearby definitions affected by this restructuring (i.e., title loan business, subdivision, and ornamental structure). With these amendments, staff intends to provide more clarity and consistency to both staff and the public for application and interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance."

Discussion of Section 2-125.1—Building wall, front: I recommend the following rewrite of the first sentence: "Several sections in the Zoning Ordinance currently prohibit accessory structures forward of the front building wall, including Sections 7-2505(A), 7-2506(A) and 7-103(A)"

Staff Report at 4, Section 2-197.3—Structure, subordinate: The first sentence references [current?] sections that do not use the term. Please correct this. If you want to refer to the new text, please refer to it as such. One way or the other, this term must appear elsewhere in the Ordinance to justify adding the definition of it.

Staff Report at 4, C. Tree Coverage Requirement: In the fourth line, the sentence should end with “sections.” The next sentence should start “Only ...” The next sentence should be stricken. The next sentence (after the stricken one) should read: “Staff proposes to replace the word ‘site’ with ‘lot’ to be consistent with Section 2-166, the definition of ‘lot’.” [See suggested text amendment below.] The next sentence should be stricken and replaced with the following: “Staff proposes no other changes, except to add the standard language from the Infill Regulations specifying where the requirement applies (since it has been moved out of the Infill Regulations).”

Staff Report at 4-5, D. Private Garages: There is more confusion here in need of clarification. I would rewrite the entire discussion as follows:

“With the tree coverage requirement moved out of the Infill Regulations, all that remains, in the wake of earlier amendments, are the restrictions on private garages—Section 7-2505 (freestanding) and 7-2506 (attached). Staff therefore proposes retitling 7-2500 as Private Garages, with 7-2505 and 7-2506 becoming 7-2501 and 7-2502 respectively, as proposed to be amended. For freestanding garages, staff proposes to expand the range of lots eligible for such garages. For attached garages, staff proposes a rewrite of the criteria for when they will be allowed to have vehicle openings facing the street.”

Staff Report at 5, second paragraph under 7-2501 discussion: More confusion here, especially as between the existing and new requirements. I propose the following paragraph rewrite:

“The current Section 7-2506(B)(2) requires that a 1- or 3-foot setback be maintained depending on the location of windows. Staff recommends retaining this standard but also requiring any architectural features, such as eave and gutter, to comply with the 1- or 3-foot setback.”

Staff Report at 5, third paragraph under 7-2501 discussion: replace the term “in section 7-2501” with “in proposed new section 7-2501”

Staff Report at 6, second paragraph. In the next-to-last line, replace “font” with “front” and add the following sentence at the end of the paragraph: “This replaces the current rule which provides no front-loading restriction when the lot width is less than 65 feet and prohibits front-loaded garages on wider lots in all but certain corner lot circumstances.”

Staff Report at 6, third paragraph: in the last line, refer to “section 2-197.3” as “proposed new section 2-197.3”

Staff Report at 6, first paragraph under E. Special Exception Established

Change “proposed in Section 7-2200” to “in proposed Section 7-2502.” Note also that in my comments on the text below, I recommend you draft language to be added to new Section 7-2502 explicitly referencing the special exception provision in proposed new section 11-1302(E).

Suggested Text Amendment Changes

New section 7-2200: In subparagraph (A), second line, change “site” to “lot”. This is what the Staff Report (at 4) says is recommended.

New section 7-2501: Revise the start of subparagraph (B)(2) as follows: “*Setback*. The freestanding garage must be located in the required side or rear yard in compliance with the following.” The staff’s version makes it sound like a voluntary matter, not a requirement.

New section 7-2501: At the end of subparagraph (d), replace the period after “front building wall” with a comma, and add the following: “and approved by the director as to location.” This addition tracks what is intended as expressed in the Staff Report at 5.

New section 7-2502: I recommend drafting language to be added, perhaps as new section 7-2502(B), referencing the possible availability of a special exception as set forth in 11-1302(E) in cases where the standards of 7-2501(A) are not met.

DEL RAY CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

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P.O. Box 2233, Alexandria, VA 22301

June 3, 2019

Karl W. Moritz, Acting Director,
Department of Planning and Zoning
City of Alexandria
City Hall, Room 2100
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: Garage Text Amendment

Dear Mr. Moritz,

With regards to the proposed text amendment for an attached garage when a free-standing garage cannot be located completely behind the rear of the building, the DRCA Land Use Committee is requesting in such instances to be allowed the opportunity to review and comment on the location in lieu of leaving it up solely to the director of P & Z.

The development pattern of Del Ray historically has the garage located behind the residence even on our typical lots. By allowing input from the LUC it is hoped the proposed garage can be more sympathetic to the past.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter and the opinions of the Land Use Committee.

Sincerely,

Kristine Hesse, Co-Chair
Del Ray Citizens Association
Land Use Committee