



# Staff Report

PLANNING DIVISION  
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

---

To: Salt Lake City Planning Commission

From: Daniel Echeverria  
(801) 535-7165 or [daniel.echeverria@slcgov.com](mailto:daniel.echeverria@slcgov.com)

Date: September 3, 2015

Re: PLNPCM2014-00133: Attached Garage Regulations for Residential Districts

---

## ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT

**PROPERTY ADDRESS:** Citywide  
**PARCEL ID:** Not Applicable  
**MASTER PLAN:** Not Applicable  
**ZONING DISTRICT:** R-1, R-2, SR, and FR Residential Zoning Districts

**REQUEST:** The Salt Lake City Council has requested that the existing residential zoning regulations be evaluated with regard to compatible infill development in Salt Lake City. City Planning Staff identified issues regarding the existing attached garage regulations and is proposing regulations that would restrict the ability to build new attached garages that project from the front façade of homes in residential zoning districts. An exemption is proposed for existing garage replacement and when there is a development pattern of such garages on a block face. The proposed regulation changes will affect chapter 21A.24 Residential Districts of the zoning ordinance. The regulations will affect all R-1, R-2, SR, and FR Residential Zoning Districts Citywide. Related provisions of title 21A-Zoning may also be amended as part of this petition.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Based on the findings in the staff report, Planning Staff finds the proposed amendment adequately meets the standards for general text amendments and therefore recommends that Planning Commission transmit a positive recommendation to the City Council to adopt the proposed zoning ordinance text amendment related to attached garages in residential districts.

The following motion is provided in support of the recommendation:

*Based on the findings and analysis in the staff report, testimony, and discussion at the public hearing, I move that the Planning Commission transmit a positive recommendation to the City Council to adopt the proposed zoning ordinance text amendment related to attached garages in residential districts.*

## ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Petition to Initiate
- B. Proposed Ordinance Changes
- C. Analysis of Standards
- D. Public Process and Comments
- E. Motions

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

In September 2012 the City Council initiated a petition to evaluate the City's residential zoning regulations to address issues regarding compatible in-fill development in City neighborhoods. In response to this, the Planning Division has been evaluating the zoning ordinance for aspects of the zoning code that could be modified to help ensure that new homes within existing neighborhoods maintain compatibility with the scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood.

The zoning ordinance includes restrictions such as height limitations and setback requirements in order to ensure that new homes maintain compatibility with some basic aspects of community scale and character. As new in-fill development has occurred in existing neighborhoods issues with the current zoning regulations and how they ensure compatibility have been identified.



*Traditional neighborhood development pattern where garages are generally located behind the home.*



*Later neighborhood development patterns include garages that extend beyond the front facade.*

One issue that has come up a number of times in recent years is the issue of attached garage placement in existing developed neighborhoods. Many of the neighborhoods within Salt Lake City were developed in an era when garages were generally built behind homes. Because of this setback, the front door and other entry features, such as a porch, are generally readily visible from the sidewalk. The placement of the garage and the front facade features are a character defining feature of these neighborhoods. However, in recent years new homes have been developed in these neighborhoods that do not follow the surrounding development pattern.

An example of such a home development is shown in the photo to the right. In this case, an existing home that matched the character and scale of the neighborhood was demolished and replaced with a home that included an attached garage that projects beyond the front facade. No other homes along the street have a projecting garage. The placement of the garage in front of this home



breaks up the continuity of development along the street and starts to change the existing character of the neighborhood.

This proposal is intended to address the issue of incompatible attached garages in lower density residential neighborhoods. The full text of the proposal is located in Attachment B. The proposal generally requires attached garages to be located in-line or behind the front façade of the home. However, due to the variety of neighborhood development styles in the City it includes exceptions in cases where other homes along the street have attached garages that project in front of the home façade. Further, it includes additional exceptions for situations where it is infeasible to build an attached garage that complies with the general projecting garage restriction. These exceptions and other key issues are addressed below.

**Key Issues:**

The key issues listed below have been identified through the analysis of the project, neighbor and community input, and department review comments.

**Issue 1. Special Exceptions to the Attached Garage Regulation**

Special conditions exist in the City where property related constraints may make it difficult or prohibitively more expensive to develop a home where the garage does not project beyond the front façade of the house. An example of such a situation is on a lot with a downward slope from the front property line to the rear property line. In these cases, homes are often built below street level due to the slope of the lot, and the garage is built closer to the street in order to allow a vehicle access from the street to a garage without encountering a significant slope. In these cases the garage and driveway must be shored up with a significant amount of concrete or cement in order to be at grade with the street. Forcing the home to be in-line with the garage would also cause the home to need to be shored up with more support, which could add a significant cost to the home owner. Lots that slope up from a street may also encounter similar issues where the slope makes it prohibitive to build the front façade in-line with the garage.

Another situation could arise with an existing narrow or oddly shaped lot where the only vehicle access to the lot is from the street in front of the property. In this case the lot might not be wide enough to accommodate the required parking access in addition to front façade features. In this case the only way to develop the lot and provide the necessary parking would be to build a garage in front of the home façade.

Due to the possibility of the projecting garage regulation causing significant issues for development in these situations, the proposal includes a special exception to the regulation. The special exception would allow someone with one of the above or similar situations to apply for special approval to build a garage in front of the front façade of a home. The garage would still need to comply with the standard front yard setback requirement and other bulk and height regulations.

**Issue 2. Existing Neighborhoods with Projecting Garages**

There are a number of neighborhoods where the development pattern of the community is one of garages that project beyond the front façade of the home. For example, a large number of homes in the Northwest Community were built with this design. Because of

this reality, the proposal includes an exemption for projecting garages when there is a “*development pattern of such garages on the block face.*” As defined by the ordinance, a development pattern is when there are 3 or more of such projecting garages along a block. So with this proposal, home owners in these neighborhoods will continue to be allowed to build attached garages in front of their home’s front facade. If someone decides to tear down their home and rebuild, they could build a home with a projecting garage in a different location and with different dimensions without going through a special exception process.

In situations where there is an existing home with a projecting garage located on a block where there are not at least 3 projecting garages, a home owner could still demolish and rebuild with a new projecting garage. However, the new projecting garage would need to have the same dimensions and be in the same location as the previous projecting garage. No special exception process would be required in this situation.

### **Issue 3. Protection of Existing Traditional Neighborhoods**

Many of the City’s neighborhoods developed with a continuity of architectural styles, similar building heights, and site characteristics, including garage placement. In neighborhoods with garages generally located behind the home, new garages in front of homes can substantially disrupt the continuity of development in a neighborhood due to how much space they can take up on the front of a house. As such, garage placement is an important consideration for ensuring compatible development in neighborhoods. The City has two overlay districts that have standards which impact the development of such projecting garages in certain traditional neighborhoods. These districts include the Yalecrest Compatible Infill Overlay district and the Historic Preservation Overlay district.

The Yalecrest Compatible Infill Overlay (YCI) district was applied to a large portion of the Yalecrest neighborhood in 2005. The YCI includes regulations that specifically prohibit projecting attached garages with an exception for homes on hillsides. These are located in [21A.34.120.F and G](#). The current proposal was based on this regulation, but allows for additional exceptions that are not allowed in the YCI overlay. However, the YCI overlay takes precedence over underlying residential zoning, so attached projecting garages will still be regulated by the specific YCI overlay regulations rather than the proposed ordinance.

A number of traditional neighborhoods are located in Historic Preservation Overlay districts. In these neighborhoods, attached projecting garages may currently be approved through an existing special exception process that allows for modifications of any underlying zoning bulk and lot regulations. These regulations are located in [21A.06.050.C.6.g](#). At the same time, any additions or alterations to homes, including garages approved through a special exception process, are subject to a review for appropriateness by the Historic Landmarks Commission or by Historic Landmarks administrative staff. As these modifications are subject to the stricter requirements imposed by the historic overlay district, the proposed regulations are not expected to have an impact in these neighborhoods.

With this proposal, other traditional neighborhoods in the City that are not already

located in an existing overlay district would be protected from new projecting garage development. Where there is no pattern of development of projecting garages on a block face, such garages would generally be prohibited in both new construction and home additions. As identified in a variety of City Community Master Plans, maintaining compatible development in existing neighborhoods is an important purpose of the zoning code and this regulation will help protect the character of these neighborhoods.

**NEXT STEPS:**

The City Council has the final authority to make changes to the text of the Zoning Ordinance. The recommendation of the Planning Commission for this request will be forwarded to the City Council for their review and decision.

**ATTACHMENT A: PETITION TO INITIATE**

---

PLNPCM2014-00133  
Leg Intent  
September 11, 2012

**MEETING DATE:** 9-11-12

**AGENDA ITEM:** Announcements

**ACTION: F. Residential Infill Regulations**

Council Member Jill Love would like to initiate a Legislative Action requesting the Administration reevaluate the City's residential infill zoning regulations to address issues that continue to be raised regarding major renovation and new construction in residential neighborhoods.

The intent would be to fine-tune the regulations as they relate to mass, scale and building size by creating regulations that use a 'building envelope' concept similar to Salt Lake County or Holladay City residential infill zoning regulations. The areas of Sugar House, Liberty Wells and/or Harvard Yalecrest should be evaluated first.

Constituents have asserted that some elements of the 'building envelope' concept that focus on building mass, scale and size may be a better tool than the historic or conservation district regulations. The three items accomplish different purposes, but provide a greater variety of tools to deal with specific neighborhood character concerns.

➤ *Would other Council Members support Council Member Love's Legislative Action? Yes - Council Members Garrott, Penfold, and Simonsen were in support. Council Members were in favor of having the Council and Administration work collaboratively to address the issue.*



# **ATTACHMENT B: PROPOSED ORDINANCE CHANGES**

## **Code Proposal for All R-1, R-2, SR, and FR Residential Districts**

21A.24.###. Standards for Attached Garages:

1. Width of an Attached Garage: The width of an attached garage facing the street may not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the width of the front facade of the house. The width of the garage is equal to the width of the garage door, or in the case of multiple garage doors, the sum of the widths of each garage door plus the width of any intervening wall elements between garage doors.
2. Located Behind Or In Line With The Front Line Of The Building: No attached garage shall be constructed forward of the "front line of the building" (as defined in section [21A.62.040](#) of this title), unless:
  - a. A new garage is constructed to replace an existing garage that is forward of the "front line of the building." In the case, the new garage shall be constructed in the same location with the same dimensions as the garage being replaced;
  - b. There is an existing development pattern of such garages on the block face;
  - c. The garage doors will face a corner side lot line; or
  - d. Approved as a special exception pursuant to the provisions of Chapter [21A.52](#).

## **Special Exception Language Proposal**

21A.52.030.A.###. Attached garages forward of the "front line of the building" may be approved provided there are property related constraints that make it impractical to build an attached garage behind or in-line with the "front line of the building" and the rear and side yards cannot be reasonably accessed for the purpose of parking.

## **Existing Definitions Referenced by Above Code**

Below are three definitions that are helpful in understanding the proposed language:

**BUILDING, FRONT LINE OF:** "Front line of building" means the line of that face of the building nearest the front or corner side lot line of the lot. This face includes sun parlors, bay windows, and covered and/or uncovered porches, whether enclosed or unenclosed, but does not include uncovered steps less than four feet (4') above grade.

**DEVELOPMENT PATTERN:** The development pattern standard applies to principal building height and wall height, attached garage placement and width, detached garage placement, height, wall height, and footprint size. A development pattern shall be established when three (3) or more existing structures are identified to establish the pattern, or in the case that three (3) structures constitutes more than fifty percent (50%) of the structures on the block face fifty percent (50%) of the structures shall establish a pattern.

**BLOCK FACE:** All of the lots facing one side of a street between two (2) intersecting streets. Corner properties shall be considered part of two (2) block faces, one for each of the two (2) intersecting streets. In no case shall a block face exceed one thousand feet (1,000').



## **ATTACHMENT C: ANALYSIS OF STANDARDS**

---

### **21A.50.050 Standards for General Amendments**

A decision to amend the text of this title or the zoning map by general amendment is a matter committed to the legislative discretion of the city council and is not controlled by any one standard. In making its decision concerning a proposed text amendment, the city council should consider the following factors:

Criteria	Finding	Rationale
1. Whether a proposed text amendment is consistent with the purposes, goals, objectives, and policies of the city as stated through its various adopted planning documents;	Complies	Nearly all Salt Lake City master plans and other policy documents discuss the importance of compatible residential infill development and its effect on maintaining the character of existing neighborhoods. The proposed ordinance helps ensure compatible development in residential neighborhoods and is consistent with adopted City documents.
2. Whether a proposed text amendment furthers the specific purpose statements of the zoning ordinance;	Complies	<p>The statement of intent for the Residential zoning districts states:  <i>The residential districts are intended to provide a range of housing choices to meet the needs of Salt Lake City's citizens, to offer a balance of housing types and densities, to preserve and maintain the city's neighborhoods as safe and convenient places to live, to promote the harmonious development of residential communities, to ensure compatible infill development, and to help implement adopted plans.</i></p> <p>The proposed amendments are intended to further the purpose statement by promoting in-fill development that is harmonious and compatible with existing residential development in the City.</p> <p>Most of the associated residential zones include that they are intended to “promote sustainable and compatible development patterns and to preserve the existing character of the neighborhood.” The proposal will help further the purpose of these zones.</p>
3. Whether a proposed text amendment is consistent with the purposes and provisions of any applicable overlay zoning districts which may impose additional standards; and	Complies	As discussed in Issue 3, there are currently overlay districts which provide regulations that impact construction of projecting attached garages and impose additional standards on such development. As per 21A.34.010.A “Whenever there is a conflict between the regulations of a base zoning district and those of an overlay district, the overlay district regulations shall control.” As such, the overlay districts will continue to take precedence and overrule the proposed underlying zoning regulations in those areas within an overlay district.
4. The extent to which a proposed text amendment implements best current, professional practices of urban planning and design.	Complies	A number of municipalities have adopted regulations in recent years that restrict or discourage the ability to build garages in front of the front façade of homes. Some of these cities include: Portland, Or; Seattle, WA; Denver, CO; Phoenix, AZ; Fort Worth, TX; and Sacramento, CA. These regulations are supported by best current, professional practices of urban planning

	<p>and design which discourage the placement of attached garages in front of home facades and encourage the inclusion of front entry features such as front porches in the front of homes instead.</p> <p>Part of the intent of this is to support neighborhood interaction through front porch usage. A number of new communities have been built with this in mind, including Daybreak in South Jordan. The homes in these communities generally have garage access from the side or rear of the home and include prominent front entry features such as large stoops and porches.</p> <p>The restriction on projecting garages is also meant to encourage visibility of the public realm in front of homes from the porch, windows, and doorways by eliminating the bulk of the garage from the front yard. Increased visibility of the street (“eyes on the street”) is part of the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), which encourages urban design that by its nature helps reduce crime. Reducing the bulk of the garage in the front helps maintain natural surveillance by keeping visibility clear to the front yard, sidewalk, and street.</p>
--	---

## **ATTACHMENT D: PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMENTS**

**Open House:** On July 17, 2014, a community wide Open House was held regarding the proposed text amendment. There were no comments received at that open house meeting, but attendees at the Open House asked questions about the proposal and took information sheets about the proposal.

**Public Hearing Notice:** A notice of the public hearing for this text amendment includes:

- Public hearing notice published in newspaper on August 27, 2015.
- Public hearing notice posted on City and State websites on August 27, 2015.
- Public hearing notice emailed to the Planning Division listserv on August 27, 2015.

**Public Comments:** The four below comments were received in support of the proposal from community members. No comments against the proposal were received before report publication. Three additional general inquiries were made about the proposal before staff report publication.

1. *Dear Sir:*

*I am in favor of this regulation as I believe garages should be set back and not project in front of a house. A set back garage makes a house front and the street it is on a much more friendly and welcoming atmosphere.*

*Lynn Schwarz*

2. *Hello, Daniel. Hope you are well. I wanted to send you a brief thank you as well as my written support of the proposed planning action that would not allow street facing, attached garages in historic districts when in-fill housing or tear-downs are being accommodated.*

*Much of the character of our older neighborhoods arises out of the set back garages which originally were part of alleyways. By contrast, having attached, street-facing garages significantly changes the character and neighborliness of our older streets. Requiring that garages be set back from the primary residence helps maintain that character, and furthermore would allow for front porches.*

*Many new developments have street facing, attached garages as the primary architectural feature. These streets and developments are in stark contrast to our City's older neighborhoods. Garages in front do not encourage walkable neighborhoods or a sense of neighborliness.*

*I strongly support the proposed requirement that garages be set back from and not part of the streetscape.*

*Thank you sincerely for your time.*

*Best regards,*

*Russell Pack  
2660 South 1500 East, SLC 84106*

3. *I am in complete agreement with proposal to restrict garages from protruding in front of new or remodeled homes. Placing a garage out front says driving and cars are more important than people. Please, as a member of the Sugar House Community, I strongly urge you to restrict garages from protruding out in front of houses.*

*Dave Mulder, SHCC Trustee*

4. Daniel-

I have heard the planning commission will be discussing the proposal that new garages not be allowed to project from the front facade of homes.

I like it.

Here in Sugar House as we face continued demolitions and infills with this type of construction is destroys our neighborhoods. Siting the garage out in front of the house does not fit in with the older bungalow homes where we prize our porches and actually interacting with people. This is a suburban type of home construction and we wish to set expectations that if you are living in this area we want to keep the historic nature of our neighborhoods, which is likely what brought you to this community in the first place.

I like it and I hope the planning commission approves it.

Sincerely,  
Amy Barry

## **ATTACHMENT E: MOTIONS**

---

Based on the findings listed in the staff report, it is the Planning Staff's opinion that the project meets the applicable standards for zoning text amendments and therefore recommends that the Planning Commission forward a positive recommendation to the City Council.

### **Consistent with Staff Recommendation:**

Based on the findings and analysis in the staff report and testimony provided, I move that the Planning Commission transmit a positive recommendation for PLNPCM2014-00133 to adopt the proposed zoning ordinance text amendment related to attached garages in residential districts.

### **Not Consistent with Staff Recommendation:**

Based on the findings and analysis in the staff report and testimony provided, I move that the Planning Commission transmit a negative recommendation for PLNPCM2014-00133 to adopt the proposed zoning ordinance text amendment related to attached garages in residential districts.