



**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE**  
**City Commission Agenda Memo**  
**REGULAR MEETING**

**#17-0033**

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**TO:** Honorable Mayor & Members of the  
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

**FROM:** Lee R. Feldman, ICMA-CM, City Manager

**DATE:** February 21, 2017

**TITLE:** Ordinance Amending Article III – Development Requirements, of the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Unified Land Development Regulations, Creating New Subsections and Amending Existing Subsections to Revise Neighborhood Design Criteria / Case T16005

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**Recommendation**

It is recommended the City Commission adopt an ordinance amending Article III – Development Requirements, of the City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Unified Land Development Regulations (ULDR) to revise Neighborhood Design Criteria.

**Background**

The City's land development code was initially developed in the 1950's, and fundamental regulations for residential development such as density, building size, setbacks, parking and landscaping standards have generally remained the same. In the past decade, there has been a consistent dialogue about whether the current code successfully addresses characteristics that continue to enhance Fort Lauderdale neighborhoods. Concerns have been raised that the current code has become outdated and overly complex and has not evolved with the economic realities and design goals of the City and its neighbors.

In 2008, the Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Association's Ad Hoc Code Reform Committee made a presentation to the City Commission summarizing these concerns and providing recommendations for revised code regulations. At that time, the City studied the Unified Land Development Regulations and made recommended changes to address these concerns. From the council's initial effort, a series of community meetings took place centered on specific topics related to zoning, design, and development. This public input laid the foundation for a set of proposed modifications to the City's residential land development regulations. However, as the project progressed, it became apparent through stakeholder meetings and input that consensus on the proposed overall effort and proposed amendments as a whole had not been reached.

Today, it is important to recognize that several key zoning aspects that can influence positive residential development and meet the broader intent of the Neighborhood Design Criteria Revisions (NDCR) project can be addressed through key amendments to the City's Code.

Accordingly, staff has been directed to take an expedited approach to adopt key amendments that can help to address common concerns resulting in more positive redevelopment throughout the City's residential neighborhoods, primarily focused on duplex/two-family, townhouse and cluster residential development.

### **Description**

To address neighborhood character as it relates to Cluster, Townhomes, Duplex and 2-family Dwellings, the proposed changes focus on the following key elements:

#### **Less Prominent Garage/Vehicular Presence in the Front Yard**

Garages tend to have an emphasis on street presence, at the expense of the main entrance, which should be a more prominent feature in order to enhance neighborhood character and promote "eyes" on the street, a concept which improves human scale interaction and uses a recognized design element of "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" (CPTED). CPTED standards promote designing the built environment by reducing incidence and fear of crime by natural surveillance and thereby enhancing overall quality of life in neighborhoods.

To accomplish this, regulations regarding the width of garages and driveways have been developed based on lot size, and opportunities to move these uses to the side or rear are encouraged. The proposed code language promotes moving garage entrances away from the street. This would be required for cluster developments and incentivized for townhouse and duplex/two family developments. To ensure that the lots are still developable with the addition of side or rear loaded garages, staff is recommending reducing the front and corner side yard setbacks from 25 feet to 15 feet to account for the vehicular use area added to the side and rear of a development site, thereby incentivizing the shifting of garage entrances.

For townhouse and duplex/two family developments that wish to construct garages in the front of a development, staff has proposed limiting the garage door width to a maximum of 50% of the width of the unit. This code amendment will allow for the front yard of a project to be visually connected to the street by placing greater focus on the front yard with a more prominent entry/porch feature, additional landscaping, and trees.

#### **Enhanced Entry Features and Building Presence from the Street**

Along with the limitations of the prominent presence of garages, enhancing the connection between the new development and the street is also a major component of the proposed revisions. Some of the specific changes include requiring front facing entry features on all units in a cluster, townhouse and duplex/two family development facing the street. The revisions also clarify that features that promote public interaction such as front porches or balconies can extend into the setback beyond the face of the building. Other revisions such as non-opaque fencing, a minimum window percentage, and a dedicated walkway to the entrance add to the prominence of the entry features. The amendment would also allow small open carports in the front yard of traditional single family residences.

#### **Minimum Landscape Requirements for Residential Development**

Fort Lauderdale prides itself on lush, tropical landscaping, and a beautiful tree canopy. Trees in particular have been recognized to have an environmental, economic and social value and as part of the City's Strategic Plan the goal is to increase overall canopy throughout the City. As part of the requirement to provide improved landscaping in the front yard, staff will be incorporating options based upon how a front yard and the lot is designed, to create a more comfortable and appealing streetscape.

The ULDR currently requires that a minimum of 35% of a lot area be dedicated to landscaping for residential developments in all zoning districts with the exception of RS-4.4, RS-8, RC-15 and RD-15. It does however create an exemption in the landscaping section for townhouse developments, zero-lot-line and cluster dwellings to follow the less restrictive requirements for the RS-4.4 district. Furthermore, the exemption for these dwelling types only applies to the common area of the development. This creates a disparity and allows for these developments to have an excessive amount of non-pervious paved area, creating a further negative impact on drainage, as well as reducing the amount of overall greenspace. Proposed code language would require the developments to provide the same landscaping requirements as the district where the property is located. This will provide for additional greenspace for new developments in the above mentioned districts. The greenspace will allow for better drainage on a property, offer additional opportunities for shade trees, and better align with traditional low-scale residential development patterns that incorporate a landscaped front yard.

### **Design and Placement of Parking**

Current code requirements do not actively regulate the placement and design of parking areas as they relate to the frontage of the development sites for Cluster, Townhomes, Duplex and 2-family Dwellings, which tend to have a greater impact on the established character of existing neighborhoods. Staff is proposing additional requirements to these types of developments that would stipulate the orientation, location, and width of parking areas, in an effort to maintain the character of residential areas by placing a higher emphasis on the pedestrian experience. To address parking need concerns from neighbors, staff is also recommending changing the parking requirements for cluster and townhouse developments to require an additional 0.25 parking spaces per unit reserved for guest parking. Along with the additional guest parking on-site, placement of garages in the rear or side entry's may allow for additional on-street parking spaces that can be used by the general public, as appropriate on a street by street and neighborhood by neighborhood basis.

### **Swale Area Requirements**

Current ULDR requirements stipulate that should more than 50% of the frontage of a site be paved, a french-drain storm water system is required to be installed. This has created a situation where applicants are seeking to install paved areas where they may not be ideal in terms of maintaining on-street landscaped swale areas with street trees and ground cover that allow for natural drainage during storm events. To address this issue staff code language will clarify when paving of swale areas is appropriate and for what purposes.

Please refer to Exhibit 1 for the complete language in strikethrough and underline format.

The Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) recommended the item for approval to the City Commission by a vote of 7-0 on December 21, 2016. The December 21, 2016 PZB staff report and PZB meeting minutes are provided as Exhibits 2 and 3. The PowerPoint presentation presented to the PZB (with one correction on page 33 to show the underlying driveways) is provided as Exhibit 4.

### **Public Outreach**

As part of the process to adopt the current proposed amendments, there were several public meetings with different stakeholders including three open houses, three meetings with individual neighborhood civic associations, meetings with the Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations (CFLCA), and developer groups.

The general feedback received from these various meetings was very positive. Staff received great suggestions that ultimately helped craft the current proposed language as presented. Letters of support received as attached as Exhibit 5.

### **Resource Impact**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

### **Strategic Connections**

This item is a *Press Play Fort Lauderdale Strategic Plan 2018* initiative, included within the Neighborhood Enhancement Cylinder of Excellence, specifically advancing:

Goal 6: Be an inclusive community made up of distinct, complementary, and diverse neighborhoods.

- Objective 1: Evolve and update the land development code to balance neighborhood quality, character, and livability through sustainable development.

This item advances the *Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale 2035 Vision Plan: We Are Community*.

### **Attachments**

Exhibit 1 – Proposed Amendment

Exhibit 2 – PZB Staff Report

Exhibit 3 – PZB Minutes

Exhibit 4 – Updated Presentation Material

Exhibit 5 – Letters of Support

Exhibit 6 – Proposed Ordinance

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