



MEMORANDUM

To: St. Anthony Village Planning Commission

From: Stephen Grittman, City Planner

Date: Planning Commission Regular Meeting for May 17, 2022

RE: R-1 Zoning District – Options for Amendment

The purpose of this memorandum is to initiate a discussion over the potential for expanding buildable area on single family parcels in St. Anthony. The simple impetus for this discussion is to consider whether there are opportunities to allow more significant reinvestment in existing housing stock given a changing expectation for single family home design. St. Anthony has demonstrated a strong interest in its single family neighborhoods for a variety of reasons.

However, without continuing private reinvestment in housing stock, and attention to the wider residential housing market, there can result a loss in interest, and the fear of housing decline over the longer term. This discussion is intended to head off this potential before it can become a factor in the community's single family neighborhoods – preserving what is valued, and enhancing those aspects to best take advantage of the community's housing opportunities.

One of the considerations for maintaining the health of single family neighborhoods is allowing homeowners to reinvest in their homes, and consider adding space to accommodate changing demands and patterns of single home use. Among these are an increased need for home office space, and in the case of many of the homes in St. Anthony, more contemporary interior spaces such as dining and kitchen design, owner's suites and expanded bathroom square footage, entertainment spaces, and others.

While considering increasing the livable areas or significantly remodeling homes that were built and designed in the 1940s and 1950s, there are external impacts on neighborhood livability as well. Increasing buildable area on smaller lots will have a visual impact on the streetscape. It can also impact function of the single family lot, which is typically intended to accommodate outdoor recreation space (room to play with children on a lawn, entertain guests on a deck or patio, etc.).

Cities that grew up with this suburban model in mind were designed to rely on the availability of private outdoor space. One of the impacts of this pattern is reducing what had been (prior to suburban development) a greater emphasis on small pocket and "tot-lot" style parks. Thus, the availability of private suburban lawn for recreation lessened the need for short walks to public spaces. For fully developed communities like St. Anthony, retrofitting neighborhoods with tot-lot style parks is often impractical, thus, retaining this private recreation role is an important consideration.

Those 1940s and 1950s homes were designed and built when it was common for households to have (maybe) a single car, and limited need to storage space. Current lifestyles have changed that dramatically, with two or more personal automobiles the norm, and a significant increase in the need (or at least desire) for more personal storage.

In some communities, desirable land values have driven a trend (and a concurrent controversy) toward tear-downs and replacement on small single family lots with homes of much larger mass – reduced setbacks, taller multi-story homes that have raised issues of shadowing and neighborhood architectural character.

Complicating this exercise further is an interest – and need – in managing stormwater and flood control, which has historically been an issue for the community. Every increase in square footage will have a cumulative impact on treatment of stormwater. Thus, there are certain to be other mitigating factors to consider before any changes are made to lot buildability. Staff has asked the City Engineer to provide some discussion of management techniques the City may consider if increased impervious surface is a limiting design element.

In the sketches below, we have created three scenarios for Planning Commission consideration and comment. They represent common – although not every – type of single family lot/building arrangement. Each sketch includes a few options to consider for potential reductions in building setbacks. Each will accommodate some measure of new building opportunities for homeowners, but will also have impacts on both lot usage and neighborhood character.

Staff would like to discuss each option at the upcoming Planning Commission meeting to determine the levels of acceptability, and perhaps the pros and cons of each idea. From this discussion, we would hope to gain clarity as to what outstanding questions there might be – and what additional research the Commission would like staff to conduct. Eventually, we hope to arrive at a consensus as to the possible changes, at which time we would prepare formal ordinance language to be considered at a public hearing.

For reference, the typical requirements for a single family home in St. Anthony are as follows:

Lot Area – 9,000 square feet

Corner Lot – 11,000 square feet

Lot Width – 75 feet

Corner Lot – 90 feet

Front Setback – 30 feet from property line (ROW)

Corner lot – 30 feet from both rights of way

Side Setback – 5 feet minimum, 15 feet total between the two sides

Rear Setback – 25 feet, or 20% of the depth of the lot

Impervious Surface – 35% for lots >9,000 sf

Impervious Surface - 40% for lots <9,000 sf

Building Height – 25 feet/2 stories

Encroachments – Various site elements (patios, decks, stairs, and other features) generally extend 5 feet into the required front setback, and to a 5 foot setback in side or rear yards

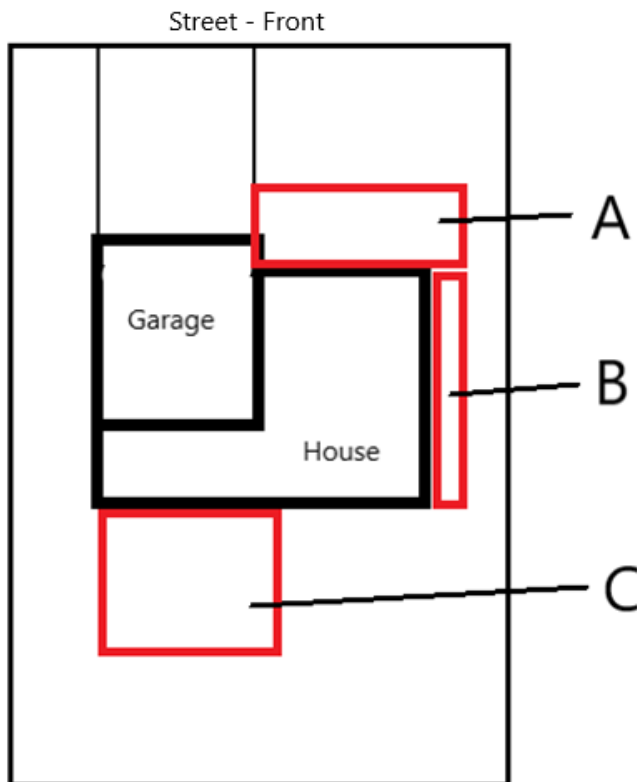
Scenario 1 – Typical single family home – Garage front to street

In this scenario, the possible expansions to discuss are the following:

A – Front Yard setback reduction to 20 feet for the livable area, and retain a required 30 foot setback for the garage. This change would allow the living area of homes to be 10 feet closer to the street, but require that garages maintain the 30 foot setback, ensuring that cars parked in the driveway do not encroach on the boulevard space or sidewalk.

B – Side Yard setback reduction to 5 feet on either side, not just one side. This change would have the effect of reducing the overall spacing between homes on a block to a total of 10 feet of building separation, rather than the average of 15 feet separation currently. One aspect of this change is that it may be only sparingly used, since expansion projects that create only 5 feet of additional width would be disproportionately expensive on a square foot basis.

C – Rear Yard setback reduction to 15 feet for 50% of the width of the principal structure. This change would allow property owners to construct a rear expansion to within 15 feet of the rear property line (reduced from 30 feet), but for just half of the width of the home. The purpose would be to retain some rear yard area for open green or patio space.



Scenario 2 – Typical single family home - Lot with Alley Access

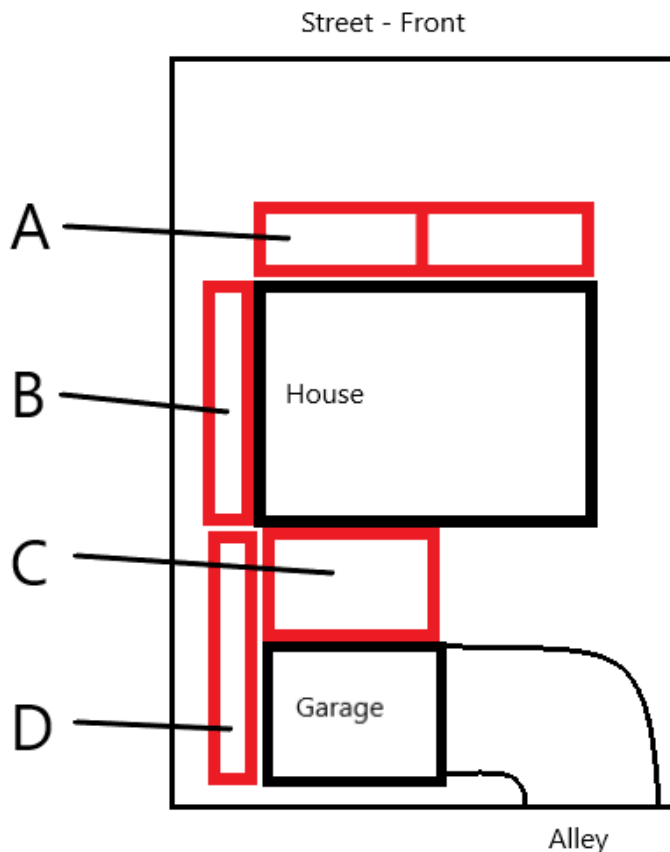
In this scenario, 4 possible (but usually smaller) expansions could be considered

A – A reduced front yard expansion toward the street, to a distance of 20 feet rather than the required 30 feet. An option with this change would be to only allow one-half of the building width to encroach, rather than the entire width of the house. This change would create a visual impact on the streetscape view of the neighborhood. Because there is no driveway access to the front, however, on-site parking is not an issue for these front yards.

B – As with Scenario 1, an option to expand into the side yard of the home to create two 5-foot wide side yards, rather than the 5 feet and 10 feet minimums that typically apply. Again, this change would have an impact on the overall spacing of houses on any particular block. See note in Scenario 1 as to expense.

C – This option would permit the rear expansion of the home to create a rear building expansion, even to the extent of creating an attached garage out of the existing detached garage. The issue raised by this option is how the City might treat the rear building expansion in Scenario 1, which would require a 15 foot setback (if considered as proposed), but here a newly-attached garage would be set at a 5 foot rear setback from the alley. One reason lesser alley setbacks are often allowed is that the building separation from the house to the rear is not as great, with the alley separating the two properties.

D – This option is similar to that of item B if livable area is permitted to expand to the side to a 5 foot setback. Detached garages are already allowed to be constructed with a 5 foot side yard.



Scenario 3 – Typical single family lot – Corner lot arrangement

A – Front setback reduction for livable area exposed to the street, reduced from 30 feet to 20 feet. Again, the garage front would retain a greater setback (see note D below).

B- This change is the largest of the various changes, potentially reducing the required side yard on a corner lot from 30 feet to 20 feet or even 15 feet. For most corner lots, the side yard facing the street is the least usable large land area on a single family parcel. It has traditionally been required to meet the same 30 foot setback as the front, under the expectation that “spaciousness” is the value being pursued in suburban neighborhoods. The primary issue for some lots would be that for the neighbor’s parcel below the one shown, their front would be facing the Corner side street, and would be required to have a greater setback than this encroachment, if allowed. Synching a change to the front setback with this corner side encroachment may be a consideration.

C – This is a rear yard expansion similar to that discussed above, permitting a rear building expansion to reduce the required setback from 30 feet to 20 feet for a portion of the building width.

D – This option could also apply to Scenario 1, which would be to allow garage setbacks to the front yard to be reduced from 30 feet to 25 feet. This dimension would still allow passenger vehicles to park in the driveway without encroaching into the boulevard portion of the right of way or over the sidewalk. As a part of this consideration, the longest passenger vehicle is an extended cab pickup with an overall length of 20’-6”. Most passenger vehicles are 18 feet in length or less.

