



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: The Urbana Plan Commission

FROM: Jeff Engstrom, Planner I

DATE: August 14, 2009

SUBJECT: Plan Case No. 2113-T-09: Request by the Zoning Administrator to amend Table VIII-3 and Section VIII-4 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to allow access drives serving individual townhouse units to be up to 18 feet wide or 45% of the lot width, whichever is greater.

Introduction & Background

Plan Case No. 2113-T-09 is a request by the Zoning Administrator to amend the Parking and Access regulations in the Urbana Zoning Ordinance (Article VIII). The proposed amendment would allow driveways serving rowhouses or townhouses to be up to 18 feet wide, or up to 45% of the width of the property, whichever is greater, in the required front yard setback.

Article VIII of the Zoning Ordinance limits the width of new driveways for several reasons. First, landscaping in front yards provides relief from and offsets the built environment. Second, pervious ground surfaces are beneficial for avoiding stormwater runoff. Third, limiting driveway widths help provide for orderly parking.

However, as residential density increases, limiting driveway widths becomes more problematic. For single-family, duplex, and common-lot-line rowhouse or townhouse units, the maximum driveway width is currently 45% of the lot width (but no more than 35 feet). This means that for lots 40 feet and wider, a driveway at least 18 feet wide (two-cars wide) could be constructed. The issue for townhomes is that most of their lots are narrower than 40 feet, meaning that two-car wide driveway are not permitted. This is problematic as a two-car garage is the expectation for new homes.

It should be noted that rowhouse or townhouse dwellings, although by definition attached dwelling units, occur in two configurations. Appendix A, Figure 1 illustrates common-lot-line townhouses, meaning that each dwelling unit is located on its own lot and has a zero side-yard setback. Appendix A, Figure 2 illustrates one building on a single lot which contains multiple dwelling units, each with its own entryway. In terms of tenancy, multiple townhouse units on a single lot can be rented or owned individually (condominiums).

Urbana currently has several townhouse properties. Common-lot-line townhouse lots may be as narrow as 20 feet but are usually 30 feet or wider. Most of the existing townhouse units have driveways approximately 18 feet wide which means they are currently nonconforming under the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed amendment would bring most of the City’s nonconforming townhouse driveways into conformance, and would allow for future townhouse developments to include driveways built to a reasonable standard.

Comprehensive Plan

The 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan contains the following Goals and Objectives related to the proposed text amendment:

Goal 4.0 **Promote a balanced and compatible mix of land uses that will help create long-term, viable neighborhoods.**

Objectives

4.3 Encourage development patterns that offer the efficiencies of density and a mix of uses.

Goal 19.0 **Provide a strong housing supply to meet the needs of a diverse and growing community.**

Objectives

19.2 Encourage residential developments that offer a variety of housing types, prices and designs.

The intent of the proposed amendment is to eliminate an impediment for providing a housing type which is not only in demand within our community but helps Urbana achieve a balanced and compatible mix of housing types meeting the needs of a diverse community.

Text Amendment

The proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendment would revise Table VIII-3 and Section VIII-4.F(1) to allow driveways up to 18 feet wide for townhouse units, where before they were restricted to 45% of the lot width:

TABLE VIII-3. WIDTHS FOR ACCESS DRIVES

	<i>Minimum Width (in feet)</i>		<i>Maximum Width (in feet)¹</i>	
	One-Way	Two-Way	One-Way	Two-Way
Single-family and duplex buildings	9	9	Primary drive - <u>45% of the lot width, but no more than 35 feet.</u> Secondary drive - 15 feet	
<u>Common-lot-line rowhouses or townhouses with individual drives</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>45% of the lot width, but no less than 18 feet.</u>	
<u>Lots with three or more dwelling units without individual drives</u>	12	20	24 feet, or one-third of the minimum lot width for the zoning district, (as specified on Table VI-3), whichever is greater	
<u>Public and quasi-public, business, commercial and</u> or industrial uses	12	22	If a zoning lot has a linear street frontage greater than 150 feet, the maximum width shall be 50 feet.	

Notes: 1) Per VIII-4.F.1, access drives serving single family homes, duplexes and individual townhomes shall not exceed 45% of the total lot width.

Section VIII-4.F *Parking in a Required Yard is Prohibited Except as Follows:*

1. Residential Front Yards. Access drives serving single-family, duplex, and individual townhouse dwelling units, including access drives within a required front or side yard, may serve as required off-street parking for licensed passenger vehicles. Such residential access drive parking may be stacked. Provided, that accessory off-street parking, per Section VIII-4.J, shall not be located in a required front yard.
- ~~1. Access drives clearly serving single family dwelling units, individual townhouses or duplex dwelling units may contain required parking for licensed passenger vehicles in the required front or side yard, except that such area devoted to parking and access thereto shall not exceed 45% of the total lot width. Such spaces may be stacked. Accessory spaces provided pursuant to Section VIII-4.J shall not be located in a required front yard.~~

Issues and Discussion

Section VIII-4.F of the Zoning Ordinance specifies the limits under which vehicles may park in a required yard. For single-family, duplex, and townhouse units served by individual drives, vehicles may be parked in the required front yard setback if on a driveway. Per Table VIII-3, driveways for these residences, where parking is allowed within the front yard setback, shall not exceed 45% of the width of the property. For single-family homes and duplexes, this 45% limit is usually wide enough for a two- or three-car driveway. A standard duplex lot is 80 feet wide, which would allow for two 18-foot driveways. However, townhouse lots are typically much narrower.

The intent of the proposed text amendment is to update the Zoning Ordinance for current development practices. Current development regulations regarding driveway widths are designed to address single-family, duplex, and multi-family (apartment) residences. Townhouses represent a unique dwelling type that functions as single-family, but which is physically connected to other units. Townhouses, also referred to as rowhouses in the Zoning Ordinance, may have two lot configurations. The most common type is for each townhouse unit to be on its own narrow parcel (Exhibit A, Figure 1). This is referred to as a multiple-unit common-lot-line development. The other configuration occurs when a row of townhouses are built on one large lot (Exhibit A, Figure 2). This configuration is considered a multi-family dwelling in the Zoning Ordinance. Both configurations have the same physical appearance, including driveways that each serve one specific residence.

Typically, townhouse units in Urbana have a two-car garage and are served by their own driveway (Exhibit A, Figure 3). Under the existing Zoning Ordinance standards, many of these units have nonconforming driveways. Currently, driveways serving individual townhouse units may only have a width equal to 45% of the lot width. Since townhouse units may be as narrow as 20 feet, the 45% limit would only allow a nine foot (single-width) driveway within the required front yard. Most townhouse units are on a slightly wider lot, usually 30 to 40 feet wide. For a 30-foot wide lot, a townhouse is currently limited to a 13.5-foot driveway. Only if the lot is 40 feet or wider will a two-car driveway (18 feet) be allowed.

In researching this text amendment, staff found that there are approximately 217 townhouse units in Urbana that are served by their own driveway. Of these, 76 are currently nonconforming for width. With the proposed text amendment, 49 of these driveways will become conforming. Should the proposed text amendment be adopted, designers of future townhouse developments will have clear development regulations for driveway widths.

Summary of Staff Findings

1. Urbana's Zoning Ordinance has been enacted by the corporate authorities of the City of Urbana pursuant to its home rule powers as provided for in the Constitution of the State of Illinois, 1970, and in conformance with the Illinois Municipal Code.
2. Article VIII of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance limits driveway widths for individual townhouses to no more than 45% of the property width.
3. Current driveway width regulations have led to a number of nonconforming properties throughout the City.
4. The proposed amendment would allow townhouse driveways to be up to 45% of the lot width, but no less than 18 feet wide.
5. The proposed amendment would decrease the number of nonconforming townhouse driveways and provide clear guidelines for future townhouse developments.
6. The proposed amendment is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Urbana Comprehensive Plan.

Options

The Plan Commission has the following options for recommendations to the City Council. In Plan Case 2113-T-09, the Plan Commission may:

- a) Recommend approval;
- b) Recommend approval, as modified by specific changes; or
- c) Recommend denial.

Staff Recommendation

Based on the evidence presented in the discussion above, and without the benefit of considering additional evidence that may be presented at the public hearing, staff recommends that the Urbana Plan Commission recommend **approval** of the proposed text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, as presented herein.

Attachments: Exhibit A: Aerial and Frontage Views of Townhouse Developments

Exhibit A: Aerial and Frontage Views of Townhouse Developments

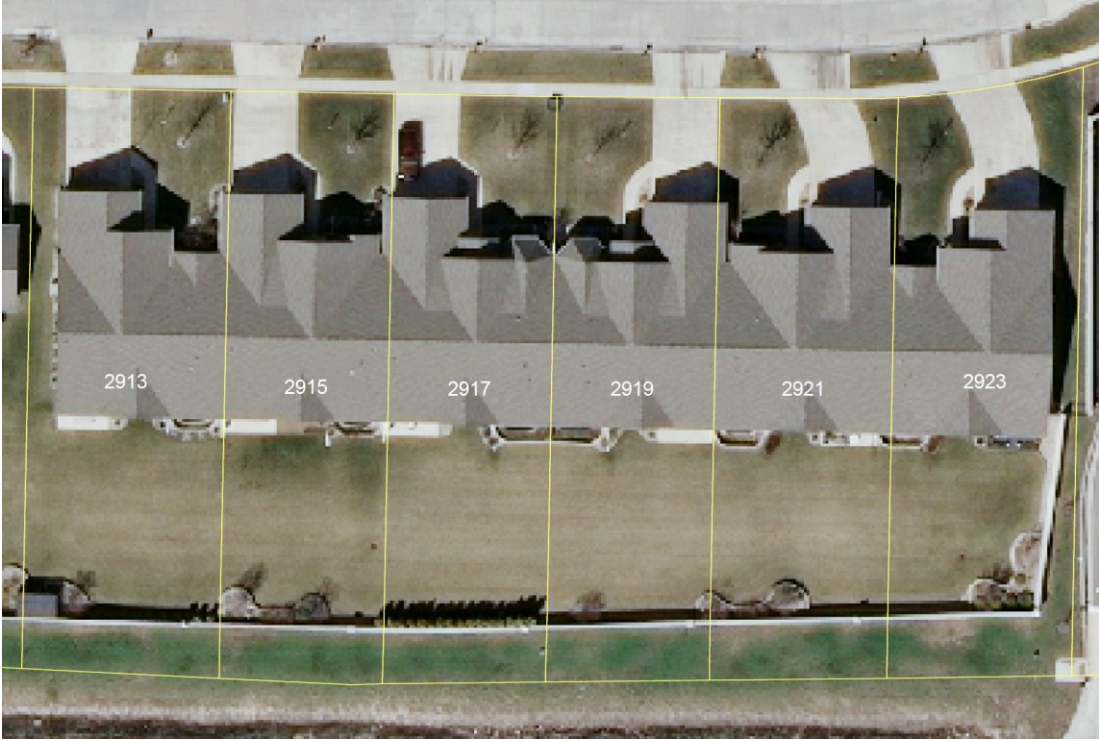


Figure 1: Common-lot-line townhouses

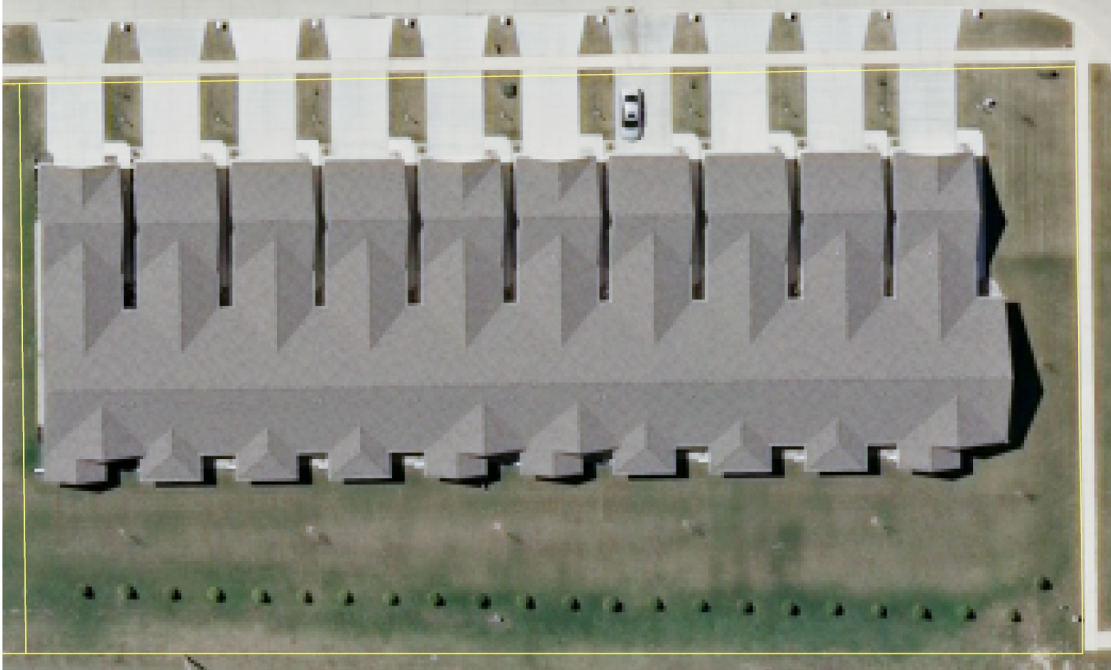


Figure 2: Ten townhouse units on a single parcel



Figure 3: Exterior of a typical townhouse development