

**Attachment B****Staff Responses to Past Questions from Councilors Regarding Garage Ordinance, Driveways, and Parking Requirements**

**Q:** What is the definition of “permeable” areas discussed in Sec. 3.7.E.1? What are grass pavers, pervious concrete and porous asphalt?

**A:** These definitions and standards will need to be worked out with ISD and Engineering. However, working definitions for these specific permeable options are:

- Grass pavers: A type of open-cell paving stone filled with soil and planted with turf grass
- Pervious Concrete: Concrete made from cement and large aggregates that leave open voids allowing for water to pass through the pavement
- Porous asphalt: Concrete made from bitumen and large aggregates that leave open voids allowing for water to pass through the pavement

**Q:** My understanding is that you are recommending that the entrance to a driveway be no greater than 10 feet at the entrance and that this 10 foot width be extended 10 feet into the property from the edge of the sidewalk nearest the property line. Is that correct?

**A:** The latest draft recommends that one-way driveways be restricted to a maximum of 10 feet at the property line and for 10 feet beyond the property line into the site for properties in the R1 and R2 districts. Because of the smaller front setback requirements in R3, R4, and N the proposed distance is reduced to 5 feet beyond the property line. The property line does always correspond to the edge of the sidewalk. The curb cut is restricted to a maximum of 12 feet for one way-driveways.

**Q:** Have you measured the width of the average snowplow that is used to clear driveways when making this calculation?

**A:** The vast majority of commercially available snowplow blades are less than 10 feet wide with standards for attachments to jeeps and trucks ranging between 6 ½ feet and 8 feet. Most standard pickup trucks are best suited to 6½- and 7½-foot plows, half-ton trucks use 7 or 7½-foot blades and ¾- and 1-ton trucks typically use 7½-foot and 8-foot blades. Staff is also reaching out to local snow removal companies for further guidance.

**Q:** You recommend pervious surfaces for driveways. What is the relative cost of installing and maintaining them versus a fully paved driveway?

**A:** Permeable paving costs do tend to be higher than conventional asphalt or cement paving. However, construction costs are variable. Common estimates place maintenance fees for permeable paving at around 1-2% of the cost of construction annually. Though construction costs can skew higher for

## Attachment B

permeable paving, it has the benefit of reducing the need for stormwater conveyances and treatment structures, which can recoup some of the higher cost.

**Q:** Do ribbon driveways work in New England? How can they be plowed in the winter and made safe?

**A:** Ribbon driveways typically consist of two parallel strips of paving rather than a fully paved driveway. These can be constructed by laying a sturdy plastic base in a honeycomb pattern under the grass, which serves to reinforce the structure and can be shoveled or plowed over.

**Q:** Not every lot has room for a garage, and it feels like this proposed zoning is forcing it. Many lots in Newton don't have garages.

**A:** Our intent is not to force properties to have a garage, but to regulate the placement of the garage when provided. The current draft maintains the same allowances for limiting parking within the side setback but restricts parking between the building Front Elevation and the front property line. The Council should consider whether it would be appropriate to allow parking in front of garages and side wings, as long as it is not within the front setback.

**Q:** In Sec. 3.4.2.G, it says in R1 districts where the house is more than 70 feet from the Primary Front Lot Line, they are exempt from the standards of that section. Why?

**A:** The garage design standards are meant to limit the impact of garages on the public realm. Garages set back more than 70 feet will be minimally visible. This language has been updated to state "garage" instead of "house".

**Q:** Sec. 3.7.1.E.1 says, "Driveways may be located within the required side setback area provided the driveways are located at least 3 feet from the side lot line." Why was 3' used? Is this the standard or used now?

**A:** The current ordinance does not include any setbacks for driveways. The 3-foot setback was added to provide a small buffer between driveways and adjacent lots which could be used for landscaping.

**Q:** Can someone park on their lawn? It doesn't seem to prohibit it in Sec. 3.7.1.E.4

**A:** The current draft does not restrict parking on a lawn as long as the vehicle is not parking within the front setback and between the Front Elevation and the property line

## Attachment B

**Q:** Can you clarify whether commercial vehicle parking is permitted without limitation in all zones? If so, will there be size limits for those vehicles?

**A:** In the proposed plan, commercial vehicle parking is allowed as an accessory use in all residential districts. A maximum size for commercial vehicles has not yet been determined but could be a topic of discussion for the Committee.

**Q:** Why only side facing garages on narrow lots? And what constitutes a “narrow lot”?

**A:** Side Facing garages are allowed on all lots. There is no definition for a “narrow lot” within the proposed ordinance.

**Q:** Why rear garages on narrow lots – shouldn’t all lots be allowed rear garages?

**A:** Rear garages are allowed on all lots.

**Q:** Are the parking stall requirements described in 3.7.1.E.4 just for new builds? Presently many homes would be non-conforming if they apply to existing structures.

**A:** If existing parking is legal, and in existence prior to the adoption of the new Zoning Ordinance, then this parking would be protected under State Law as legally nonconforming.

**Q:** Section 3.7.1.E.7 says that 2 curb cuts have to be 35’ away from each other. Where did the number 35’ come from? Is this a standard?

**A:** Note: In the latest draft this refers to Sec. 3.7.1.E.8. The 35-foot distance between two curb cuts was provided by our consultant and reviewed by ISD and Engineering. 35 feet allows for two standard cars to be parked between the two curb cuts and it provides a sizeable “safe zone” for pedestrians between each curb cut.

**Q:** In Section 3.4.1.D.4 it says, "Where the building Front Elevation is less than 22 feet long, an attached garage is not allowed as part of that elevation." How was 22’ determined? There should be some similar statement for duplex or house with 2 units.

**Attachment B**

**A:** This requirement has been removed and overall simplified within the latest draft. Sec. 3.4.1.D.4 states, "The length of an attached garage facing the Primary Front Lot Line may be up to 50% of the width of the Front Elevation." This is the recommended standards for all buildings, regardless of the # of units.

**Q:** Section 3.7.1.E.8 says. "Curb cuts for residential driveways should be at least 20' from an unsignalized intersection and at least 40' from a signalized intersection" Are these standards – 20' and 40'?

**A:** Note: In the latest draft this refers to Sec. 3.7.1.E.9. These distances were provided by our consultant as best practice and further reviewed by ISD and Engineering for confirmation.

**Q:** Section 3.4.2.D claims that a garage set back 10' from front elevation and may not exceed 50% of the building front. This is good design practice when the front door takes precedence. How was 10' chosen? Is this a standard?

**A:** The latest draft recommends that a Front Facing Garage be set back a minimum of 8 ft from the Front Elevation (Sec. 3.4.2.D.a), which aligns with the standard requirements for the Side Wing Building Component. This is not a standard per se. The requirement to offset the garage from the Front Elevation of the building is to limit the visual impact. This recommendation was reviewed by the local architects and builders group.