



Staff Report

City Council

Item No. {{section.number}}.B

Meeting Date: September 25, 2024

From: Andrew Firestine, AICP, Director of Community and Economic Development & John A. Corella, Director of Public Works
Title: Residential Parking – An Assessment of Zoning Regulations and On-Street Parking

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends initiating an amendment to the Cathedral City Municipal Code to prohibit parking in front of a mailbox. Staff further recommends an amendment to the zoning code to increase or eliminate the driveway width standard and to allow a greater percentage of a front yard to be improved as a driveway or open parking area for lots fronting certain roadways or roadway classifications, specifically those with higher traffic volumes and limited on-street parking.

BACKGROUND:

Through the adoption of the 5-Year Strategic Plan in 2023, the City Council established two action items related to residential parking and in support of attractive and well-maintained neighborhoods. Action F-2 called for the City to address residential parking and paving provisions in the Cathedral City Municipal Code. Action F-3 prompted the City to prohibit parking in front of mailboxes. This staff report and presentation is intended to support a policy discussion on each of these action items.

DISCUSSION:

The Cathedral City Municipal Code regulates parking on residentially zoned property through various provisions in Title 9, Planning and Zoning, Division II, District Regulations. For residential land uses, these regulations govern the minimum and maximum parking requirements, the location of any vehicle parking, parking surface requirements, driveway width, and the percentage of a yard that may be dedicated to driveways or improved parking areas. These parking standards vary by residential zoning district but are summarized in the following table (single-family only):

Standard	R1	RE	R2
<i>Minimum Parking</i>	2 spaces within a garage	2 spaces within a garage	2 spaces within a garage
<i>Maximum Parking</i>	4 covered spaces (200 sf each) and 1,000 sf of open parking, excluding driveways ¹	4 covered spaces (200 sf each) and 1,000 sf of open parking, excluding driveways ¹	No maximum
<i>Location</i>	For front and street side yards, only on improved driveways or open parking areas	For front and street side yards, only on improved driveways or open parking areas	No parking spaces shall be located, or vehicles parked in any area except within approved garages, carports, or improved open parking spaces.
<i>Parking Surface</i>	Portland cement concrete	Portland cement concrete	Portland cement concrete
<i>Driveway Width</i>	16 feet maximum	16 feet maximum	12 feet minimum for driveways serving 1 to 3 parking spaces; 16 feet minimum for driveways serving 4 to 8 parking spaces; 25 foot minimum for more than 8 parking spaces
<i>Maximum Percent of Front or Street Side Yard as Driveway or Improved Parking</i>	50%	30%	50%; driveways shall not exceed 30%

The R1 zoning district is the City's predominant single-family residential zoning district whereas the R2 zoning district is a multi-family residential zoning district that allows for single-family residential land uses. The RE zoning district is also a single-family residential zoning district, although the only RE zoned properties are located north of I-10 and are within the North City Specific Plan. The parking standards were last amended in 1989 through Ordinance Nos. 256 and 263, which had the effect of adopting what are largely the current residential development standards, including the parking standards for the R1, RE, and R2 zoning districts. An amendment in 1990, Ordinance No. 307, allowed the R1 and RE restrictions to be exceeded through a conditional use permit.

The Cathedral City Municipal Code parking standards were clearly developed for traditional single-family residential developments consisting of a home with a garage and a driveway and a maximum percentage of a front or street side yard that may be improved as a driveway or open parking area that reinforces historic development patterns that restricted parking and promoted front yard landscaping.

The City's standards are typical of single-family development standards from similar communities within the Coachella Valley, including:

- Palm Desert, which requires at least 25 percent of a residential lot to be pervious and further requires that no more than 40 percent of the front yard be an impervious surface, such as a driveway.
- Desert Hot Springs, which limits the percent of the front yard that may be paved to 50 percent.
- Palm Springs, which requires a minimum of 50 percent decorative landscaping in its front and street side yards.
- Indio, which requires a minimum of 40 percent of the front yard area to be landscaped, of which half must be planted with live plant material.

There are some exceptions, however, including:

- Palm Springs allows for a reduction in the required decorative landscaping when a turnaround is required to avoid traffic hazards on an adjacent street. As well, it does not restrict driveway width.
- Desert Hot Springs allows driveways up to 20 feet in width while limiting the cumulative width of any driveway or open parking area to 40 percent of the street frontage.
- Palm Desert does not have a maximum driveway width.
- La Quinta does not have a minimum open space or maximum impervious surface area requirement for single-family residential.

Each of these development standards describe zoning regulations that influence the supply or availability of parking and parking surfaces on residentially zoned property. Since the parking standards were last amended in 1989 and 1990, a number of variables have changed that affect the demand for parking.

Currently, the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates for Cathedral City report that 61.5 percent of all households have two or more vehicles, 28.6 percent have three or more vehicles, and 11.2 percent of Cathedral City households have four or more vehicles. These figures are roughly the same to those across the State of California and do not by themselves indicate a greater demand for vehicle parking in Cathedral City. They do, however, illustrate that a sizable number of households have more vehicles than fit in two-car garage. Industry publications indicate that the average vehicle size in the United States has continued to grow over the last two decades, further challenging the ability of existing enclosed garages to contain vehicles. The resulting trend is that many vehicles are parked on driveways or residential streets.

Beyond these changes, recent changes to state law have fundamentally altered single-family residential zoning through ADUs, JADUs, two-family dwelling units, and urban lot splits.

With respect to ADUs and JADUs, state law limits parking requirements for ADUs to one parking space and allows the space to be provided as tandem parking on a driveway. It also prohibits local agencies from requiring the replacement of a garage, carport, or covered

parking structure when it is demolished in conjunction with the construction of an ADU and further eliminates parking requirements altogether in certain scenarios, including when an ADU is constructed entirely within an existing residence; when it is proposed as part of a permit application to build a new single-family dwelling unit; and where an ADU is built within 0.5 miles of public transit. JADUs require no additional parking.

SB9 further changed the residential landscape by allowing up to four total units on a residential lot, inclusive of two primary dwelling units and two ADUs / JADUs. As with state law on ADUs / JADUs, local agencies cannot require more than one parking space per unit with some exceptions.

The City of Cathedral City has only seen one SB9 application for an urban lot split, although in 2023 the City permitted 28 ADUs and through July 2024 the City has permitted 30 units.

Collectively, the dynamics influencing residential parking have changed since the City's residential parking standards were last amended in 1989 and 1990, creating additional demand for surface parking on private property, including driveways and open parking areas, and additional demand for on-street parking. The changes in state law have also removed outlets that would otherwise be used to increase parking provided to offset additional parking demand, such as the addition of a new unit. While this is not a universal condition affecting all residential properties in the City, they are explanatory variables for some of the parking complaints within City neighborhoods, including parking on landscaping, and on-street parking conflicts, such as parking that blocks driveways or mailboxes. These challenges are further exacerbated in areas of the City where residential property fronts onto a major arterial street without on-street parking, including properties on Cathedral Canyon and Date Palm.

The balance of this staff report identifies and discusses these complaints and conflicts in greater depth and potential options available to the City Council.

Residential Parking on Private Property

The City receives many complaints related to parking on private property. Some of these complaints pertain to junk or inoperative vehicles, but others relate to parking on landscape surfaces and excessive vehicle parking. In August 2024, the City received seven complaints for vehicles and trailers parked on landscape surfaces and another for excessive vehicle parking on a cul-de-sac. A review of prior data reveals similar trends. Examples of these complaints are shown below:





In two of the above examples, the driveway is too small to contain vehicle parking on private property. In the third example, a property that is routinely the subject of complaints, the property fronts onto Vista Chino and the complaints regularly show a vehicle parked on a walkway perpendicular to the driveway. The properties immediately west of this property have larger driveways and open parking areas that do not conform to the zoning requirements. As shown in the photo, while there is a parking lane in front of the property, most of the curb is painted red due to the proximity of a fire hydrant and a bus stop, restricting the availability of on-street parking.

The fourth example is situated on 30th Avenue and has set pavers and gravel across the

entirety of the front yard to accommodate additional parking.

As noted in the previous section, the City's residential parking standards have not been amended since 1989 and 1990 and they both reinforce traditional single-family residential development patterns and are consistent with other Coachella Valley cities. There are some alternatives, however, the City Council could consider, including:

- Increasing or eliminating the driveway width standard
- Increasing the percentage of a front yard or street side yard that may be improved as open parking
- Including a provision to allow a greater percentage of a front yard to be improved as a driveway or open parking area for lots fronting certain roadways or roadway classifications
- Requiring a setback from an adjoining property for a driveway or open parking area

With respect to driveway width, most cities do not regulate driveway width and the City's standard is more restrictive than Desert Hot Springs. The City's current standard allowing a maximum of 50 percent of a front or street side yard to be improved as a driveway or open parking area is consistent with other cities except for La Quinta, which has no standard. The flexibility in the Palm Springs code is intriguing in the sense that it is responsive to conditions affecting a small number of residential properties, conditions that are comparable to those in Cathedral City and single-family lots that front onto Vista Chino, Cathedral Canyon, Date Palm, 30th, and similar streets with higher traffic volumes.

Some combination of these alternatives may present options for households with more vehicles or conditions that may warrant a second driveway or an increased parking surface for a turnaround.

Residential Parking On-Street

Related to the preceding section is on-street parking in residential neighborhoods. In much the same way that parking spills over from driveways onto landscape surfaces, it also affects the availability of on-street parking and at times creates conflicts with mail service delivery when a mailbox is blocked by a parked vehicle. The City has received five complaints year-to-date for vehicles blocking a mailbox through the My Cathedral City app and one during the public comment section at the last City Council meeting.

While there is no law in the California Vehicle Code prohibiting parking in front of a mailbox, cities can choose to mark a curb white for the purpose of designating it for loading/unloading and mail delivery. The City of Cathedral City Municipal Code contains this provision, as do most codes in the Coachella Valley, although the curb marking is seldom deployed. The City of Indio specifically prohibits unattended parking in front of a mail receptacle, regardless of the curb marking.

It is estimated that there are approximately 7,600 curb sections with mailboxes in the City of Cathedral City and that most residential properties in the City have individual mailboxes versus cluster or gang mailboxes. Painting these curbs would cost \$150,000 to \$300,000 every two years and is not recommended based on the current number of complaints received by the Public Works Department.

A parking prohibition similar to that of the City of Indio would require some further definition to remove any ambiguity over what constitutes a parking violation, such as prohibiting parking within six feet of a mail receptacle or prohibiting parking in front of a mail receptacle that has the effect of precluding the delivery of mail.

Next Steps

With direction from City Council, staff can initiate a zoning code amendment to modify any of the residential parking standards. Similarly, staff can also initiate an amendment to prohibit parking in front of a mailbox. The City is in the process of conducting an RFP to substantially update its zoning code. Further evaluation of the City's residential development standards, including a calibration of the standards to existing and established neighborhoods, is recommended through the zoning code update.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no anticipated fiscal impact of an amendment to the Cathedral City Municipal Code to amend Title 9 and the zoning district regulations to modify the parking standards on residentially zoned property or to amend Title 12 and the parking regulations to prohibit parking in front of a mailbox other than the staff time necessary to prepare an ordinance and staff report.

The regulation of on-street parking would increase the City's enforcement responsibilities. If the City continues to receive a small number of these complaints annually, their enforcement can be managed on a complaint basis and in a reactive manner with existing resources. Should the City receive a substantial increase in complaints or if there is a desire for proactive parking enforcement, a reprioritization of existing resources or an allocation of new resources may be required.

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:

Action F-2: Address parking and paving provisions in the code for residences

Action F-3: Prohibit parking in front of mailboxes

ATTACHMENTS:

None