



Staff Report

City Council

Item No. {{section.number}}.A

Meeting Date: December 11, 2024

From: John A. Corella, Director of Public Works and Andrew Firestine, AICP,
Director of Community and Economic Development

Title: First reading of an ordinance to amend zoning code to add driveway width standard, allow a greater percentage of front yard to be improved as a driveway, introduce civil fines for parking infractions, and prohibit parking in front of a mailbox.

RECOMMENDATION:

Introduce and provide first reading by title only; and waive further readings of an ordinance to amend Title 9 and Title 12 of the Cathedral City Municipal Code by amending Chapters 9.12, 9.14, 12.12, and 12.32. The proposed changes will revise sections relating to driveway width and guidelines for the percentage of the front yard that can be improved as a driveway, introduce civil fines for parking infractions, and amend areas designated as no parking areas to include restrictions for parking in front of a mailbox.

BACKGROUND:

In 1989, Ordinance No. 256 and 263 established the current residential development standards, including the parking standards for the Single Family Residential (R1), Residential Estate (RE), and Multiple Family Residential (R2) zoning districts. In 1990, Ordinance No. 307 amended these standards to allow the R1 and RE parking restrictions to be exceeded through a conditional use permit. These regulations are codified in the Cathedral City Municipal Code (CCMC) Sections 9.12.100 Access to Parking (Driveways), 9.14.090 Parking, and 9.14.100 Access to Parking (Driveways).

Excerpts of the CCMC for are provided for reference in Attachment 1.

At the September 25, 2024, City Council Study Session, city staff recommended amending the CCMC to prohibit parking in front of mailboxes. Staff further recommended 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, roadways with higher traffic volume and limited on-street parking. The City Council gave guidance and

expressed support at the September 25, 2024, Study Session to proceed with drafting amendments to the CCMC. On November 20, 2024, during a Public Hearing, the Planning Commission adopted a resolution to recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed ordinance that is attached to this staff report.

Single-Family Residential Lot Parking

The CCMC parking standards were 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. Since the parking standards were last amended in 1989 and 1990, several variables have changed that have affected the demand for parking.

Currently, the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates for Cathedral City reports 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 as 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 a two-car garage. Furthermore, industry publications indicate that the average vehicle size in the United States has continued to grow over the last two decades, further challenging the availability 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 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (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 government from requiring the replacement of garage, carport, or covered parking structure when it is demolished in construction of an ADU. State law 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.

The California Housing Opportunity and More Efficiency (HOME) Act (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 an additional 30 units.

While this is not a universal condition affecting all residential properties in the city, these 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 properties front onto major arterial streets without on-street parking, including

properties on Cathedral Canyon Drive, Ramon Road, Landau Boulevard, and Date Palm Drive. In August 2024, the city received seven complaints regarding vehicles and trailers parked on landscape surfaces and another for excessive vehicle parking on a cul-de-sac.

Staff reviewed parking standards in the municipal codes of other local cities. Cathedral City's parking regulations are similar in some senses, but there are exceptions. For example, Desert Hot Springs is the only other city to regulate driveway width at a maximum of twenty (20) feet. Palm Springs allows for a reduction in their required front yard landscaping when a turnaround is required to avoid traffic hazards on an adjacent street. La Quinta does not have a minimum open space or maximum impervious surface area requirement for single family residential zoning.

Parking in Front of Mailboxes

Related to the above 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. While the list of no parking areas is extensive in the CCMC, the city does not have an ordinance that specifically states that vehicles cannot be parked in front of a mailbox. Section 12.32.080 from the CCMC is included in Attachment 1 for reference.

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 of the September 11, 2024, City Council meeting, including those that have reported the refusal of the USPS to deliver mail when a vehicle is parked in front of a mailbox.

The USPS Postal Operations Manual states in Section 3.1.4 "The customer must keep the approach to their mailbox clear of obstructions to allow safe access for delivery. If USPS employees are impeded in reaching a mail receptacle, the postmaster may withdraw delivery service". This leaves the responsibility of maintaining the area in front of the mailbox up to the mail recipients, and with the CCMC not currently including regulations for this parking violation, the city is restricted in how they can support residents in response to parking complaints.

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 CCMC contains this provision, as do most cities' codes in the Coachella Valley, although the curb marking is seldom deployed due to costs.

It is estimated there are approximately 7,600 curb sections with mailboxes in the City of Cathedral City and most residential properties in the city have individual mailboxes versus cluster or gang mailboxes. Painting these curbs would cost approximately \$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.

Staff researched the municipal codes of local cities to determine how other cities regulate parking in front of mailboxes. Staff found that Indio prohibits parking in front of a mailbox and according to their staff, it works as a tool to respond to parking complaints. Another city, San Jacinto, also prohibits parking in front of mailboxes, but provides distinctive detail, stating

vehicles cannot park within ten (10) feet of a mailbox between the hours of 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., excluding Sundays and federal holidays.

DISCUSSION:

To complete the amendment to the zoning code to improve front and side residential yards to increase the availability of parking, CCMC Title 9 Planning and Zoning, specifically Chapter 9.12 RE Residential Estate District and Chapter 9.14 R1 Single-Family Residential District required review. Additionally, to initiate the amendment to CCMC to prohibit parking in front of a mailbox and establish civil fines for parking infractions, CCMC Title 12 Vehicles and Traffic, specifically Chapter 12.12 Enforcement-Obedience and Chapter 12.32 Parking required review.

Review of CCMC Title 9 Planning and Zoning, Chapter 9.12 requires one (1) amendment. Chapter 9.14 requires two (2) amendments.

To be amended:

- Section 9.12.100 Access to Parking (Driveways)
- Section 9.14.090 Parking
- Section 9.14.100 Access to Parking (Driveways)

The amendment to Section 9.12.100 updates the minimum and maximum width allowed for driveways in the RE District and includes the addition of more hard-scape materials allowed for driveways and parking areas. The amendment is as follows:

All parking spaces and structures shall be served by a driveway that meets the following standards:

- A. Minimum width of driveway: 16 feet,*
- B. Maximum width of driveway: 36 feet,*
- C. Driveways and open parking areas shall be constructed of Portland cement concrete or similar durability material approved by the City Engineer; and*
- D. Driveways and open parking areas shall not cover more than thirty percent of the required front or street side yard area.*

The amendment to Section 9.14.090 subsection D updates the allowed hard-scape materials that can be used for driveways and parking areas in the R1 District. The amendment is shown in the relevant excerpt as follows:

D. Vehicles shall not be parked or stored in any front or street side yard area except on driveways or open parking spaces constructed of Portland cement concrete or similar durability material approved by the City Engineer. Driveways and improved parking areas shall not cover more than fifty percent of the required front or street side yard area.

The amendment to Section 9.14.100 updates the minimum and maximum width allowed for driveways in the R1 District and includes the addition of more hard-scape materials allowed for driveways and parking areas. The amendment is as follows:

All parking spaces and structures shall be served by a driveway that meets the following standards:

- A. Minimum width of driveway: 16 feet;*
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- B. *Maximum width of driveway: 36 feet;*
- C. *Driveways and open parking areas shall be constructed of Portland cement concrete or similar durability material approved by the City Engineer; and*
- D. *Driveways and open parking areas shall not cover more than fifty percent of the required front or street side yard area except where a property fronts onto a major or arterial street classification. For properties fronting onto a major or arterial street classification, up to seventy-five percent coverage may be allowed where the City Engineer determines that a turnaround or circular driveway is required or where on-street parking adjacent to the property is prohibited.*

Review of CCMC Title 12 Vehicles and Traffic, specifically Chapter 12.12 Enforcement-Obedience, requires one (1) addition. Chapter 12.32 Parking requires one (1) amendment.

To be added:

- Section 12.12.130 Civil Fines

To be amended:

- Section 12.32.080 No Parking Areas

The addition of Section 12.12.130 adds guidelines to issue fines for any parking infraction. The fines for violations in this section are redundant with the offense outlined in Section 1.04.060 Civil Fines, as well as other sections of the CCMC. The addition states as follows:

Any person convicted of an infraction shall, for each separate parking citations or notices of violations, related to charging violations of local or Vehicle Code regulations governing the parking or standing of vehicles, be subject to: (a) a fine in an amount not to exceed two hundred fifty dollars for a first conviction of an offense; (b) a fine in an amount not to exceed five hundred dollars for a second conviction of the same offense within a twelve-month period of the date of the first offense; and (c) a fine in an amount not to exceed seven hundred fifty dollars for the third conviction of the same offense within a twelve-month period of the date of the first offense. The fine for a fourth and subsequent convictions of the same offense within a twelve-month period of the date of the first offense shall be one thousand dollars.

The amendment of Section 12.32.080 with the addition of subsection J updates the list of areas in which a vehicle cannot park or be left stopped to include restrictions for parking in front of a mailbox. The following relevant excerpt shows the amendment to the section:

J. In front of, or within ten (10) feet of, any individual mailbox, community mailbox, J. cluster of mailboxes, or United States postal receptacle available to the public during the hours of eight a.m. to seven p.m. of that same day (except Sundays and federal holidays). The length of time a vehicle is permitted to stop in front of any individual mailbox, community mailbox, cluster of mailboxes, or United States postal receptacle available to the public shall be limited to the time a person is involved in the act of depositing and/or collecting mail in the applicable receptacle.

Staff is requesting that the City Council approve first reading by title only; and waive further readings of an ordinance to amend Title 9 and Title 12 of the Cathedral City Municipal Code by amending Chapters 9.12, 9.14, 12.12, and 12.32. The proposed changes will revise sections relating to driveway width and guidelines for the percentage of the front yard that can be improved as a driveway, introduce civil fines for parking infractions, and amend areas designated as no parking areas to include restrictions for parking in front of a mailbox.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no anticipated fiscal impact of an amendment to the CCMC to amend Title 9 and the zoning district regulations to modify the parking standards on residentially zoned property or to amend Title 12 to add civil fines for parking infractions and to amend 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:

Goal F: Embracing, Inclusive Community

Objective: Cathedral City is valued and respected as a community that welcomes and embraces diversity, has an abundance of high quality and affordable housing options and vibrant businesses. Our neighborhoods are attractive, well-maintained, and issues surrounding homelessness have been compassionately addressed with thoughtful, coordinated, and collaborative programs.

This ordinance will specifically address Goal F-2: Prioritize updating the zoning code regarding residential parking and paving provisions; research and give recommendations on enabling parking prohibitions in front of mailboxes.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Cathedral City Municipal Code Referenced Sections
2. Ordinance No. _____