



Agenda Report

Fullerton City Council

MEETING DATE: MARCH 4, 2025

TO: CITY COUNCIL / SUCCESSOR AGENCY

SUBMITTED BY: SUNAYANA THOMAS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PREPARED BY: CHRIS SCHAEFER, AICP, PLANNING MANAGER
DAVID LOPEZ, SENIOR PLANNER

SUBJECT: RESIDENTIAL ZONES LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS REPORT

SUMMARY

Two City Council members requested information regarding front yard landscaping requirements for residential zones. This report provides an overview of the current front yard landscaping requirements for residential zones as outlined in Fullerton Municipal Code Section 15.17.050.H.1.

PROPOSED MOTION

Receive and file.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- Approve the Proposed Motion
- Other options brought by City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Proposed Motion.

CITY MANAGER REMARKS

This report has a summary of current residential zone landscaping requirements.

PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT

Not applicable.

FISCAL IMPACT

This item generates no General Fund impact.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Two City Council members requested information regarding front yard landscaping requirements for residential zones. The State of California has experienced a housing shortage for several years and passed legislation encouraging increased housing production by requiring cities to remove barriers to housing development and adopt streamlined processes. One process allows new ADUs without requiring additional off-street parking. Examples include:

Example 1 – Garage Conversion to ADU

A property owner of an R-1 zoned lot with a single-family residence (SFR) may convert an existing two-car garage into an ADU by right; without a requirement to construct a replacement garage.

Example 2 – Two New Detached ADUs

A property owner of a multi-family residential zoned property (R-2, R-3, R-4, etc.) may construct two detached ADUs with one parking space per ADU, located in the driveway.

In both examples, vehicles for the primary dwelling unit and ADU may park within the existing driveway. However, additional dwelling units may house multiple families, each with more than one vehicle, making on-site parking limited and requiring on-street parking. Homeowners may then consider paving additional areas within the front yard setback for parking even though the City's zoning code limits the amount of paved area allowed in the front setback.

Current Zoning Requirements for Front Yards

The Fullerton Municipal Code (FMC) Chapter 15.50 outlines City landscaping and irrigation requirements for all zones to maximize the range of landscape materials and design possibilities. According to FMC Section 15.50.025.A:

"Each landscaped area shall be located, designed and material selected such that at any time, including at maturity, it maximizes summer shade and winter solar gain and does not interfere with visibility, access, building integrity or utility infrastructure."

FMC Section 15.17.050.H outlines the landscaping requirements for R-1 (One-Family Residential) to R-2 (Two-Family Residential) zones, including the stipulation that:

"The front yard area must be maintained with a combination of planting, turf and hardscape areas, with non-pervious surfaces covering no more than 40% of the total front yard."

To comply with the Soil and Stormwater Management requirement in the Fullerton Landscape Ordinance (FMC 15.50.040.A):

"All planted landscape areas must have friable soil to maximize retention and infiltration."

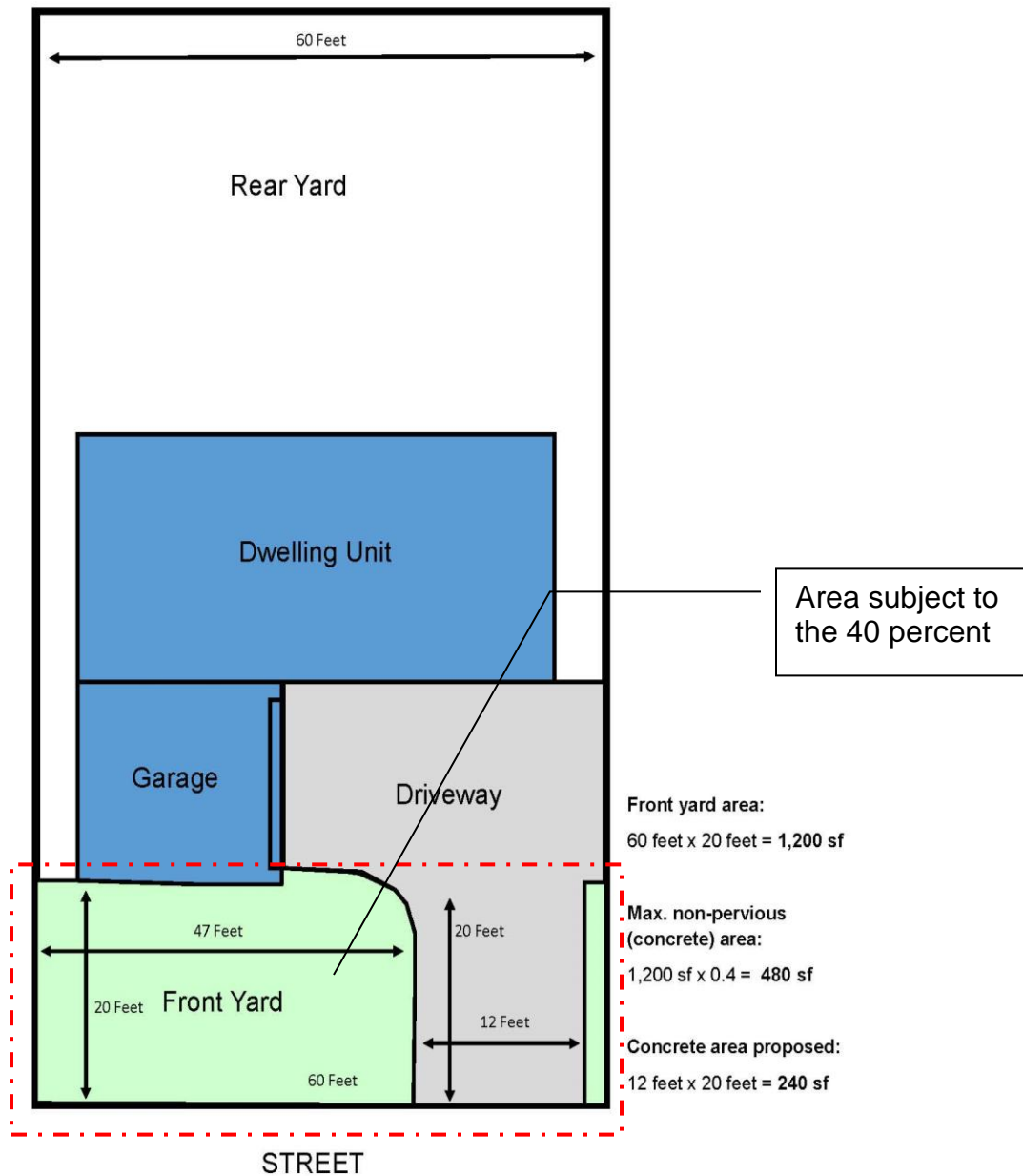
The City requires these landscaping requirements for several reasons:

- *Aesthetic Preservation:* Maintaining a balance of greenery and hardscape in front yards enhances the visual appeal of neighborhoods, preventing the look of over-paved, barren spaces.
- *Stormwater Management:* Limiting paved surfaces allows proper water absorption, reducing runoff and contributing to local groundwater recharge, as required by the Soil and Stormwater Management ordinance.
- *Environmental Benefits:* Landscaping, especially with trees and plantings, provides shade, lowers temperatures, improves air quality and supports local biodiversity.

The code sections referenced apply to projects that include widening or extensions of driveways and walkways located within the front yard. The City does not allow vehicle parking on dirt or gravel areas and only permits on non-pervious surfaces which includes concrete, asphalt and pavers.

Staff prepared Exhibit A to illustrate how Section 15.17.050.H.1 applies to a single-family zoned lot.

Exhibit A



Staff surveyed and reviewed the zoning code requirements for seven cities - Anaheim, Brea, Buena Park, La Habra, La Mirada, Orange and Whittier - regarding the front yard setbacks for single family zones and the paving restrictions within the front setback. The City of Buena Park included the most restrictive pavement restrictions at 30 percent while La Habra and Whittier have the same restriction as the City of Fullerton at 40 percent. Four other cities including Anaheim, Brea, La Mirada and Orange included a range between 50 to 60 percent of pavement restrictions within the front setback.

	Anaheim	Brea	Buena Park	Fullerton	La Habra	La Mirada	Orange	Whittier
Front Yard Setback	10-30 feet	10-25 feet	20 feet	15-35 feet	20-25 feet	20 feet	15-20 feet	15-25 feet

Residential Zones Landscaping Requirements

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Paving Restrictions	50%	55%	30%	40%	40%	50%	60%	40%
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City staff has consistently enforced the Fullerton Municipal Code and ordinances to maintain and beautify single family neighborhoods.

cc: City Manager Eric J. Levitt