



Community Development Department

Staff Report

Amendments to Residential Districts Development Standards

File #MC15-03

July 28, 2015

To: Mayor Higgins
City Council

Public Hearing: August 3, 2015

From: Sarah Fox, Senior Planner on behalf of the Planning Commission

Applicant: Pahlisch Homes

Contact: Jamie Howsley, Jordan Ramis, PC

Notice of the public hearing before Planning Commission was published in the Camas Post Record on July 28, 2015 (Legal publication No. 540627).

Applicable Law: The application was received on February 2, 2015, and the applicable codes are those codes that were in effect on the date of application, to include Camas Municipal Code (CMC) Title 17 Land Development and Title 18 Zoning. The city issued a State Environmental Policy Act determination of non-significance (non-project action) on July 21, 2015. Comment deadline is 5:00 p.m. on August 4, 2015.

Summary

- The applicant proposes an amendment to the single-family residential development standards at CMC§18.09.040 Table 2, for R-6, R-7.5, R-10 and R-12, to increase lot coverage limits to 45%.
- The applicant also proposes to add an exception that would apply to all residential zones with a footnote that reads, "Outdoor living areas which are under roof cover but not fully enclosed by walls, and are attached to dwelling units, are not included in lot coverage."
- Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on June 16, 2015, and forwarded a recommendation of denial to City Council.

Analysis – Lot Coverage Increase

The first part of the applicant's proposal is for a uniform 45% lot coverage limit for four zones, which is a 10% increase in the R-10 and R-12 zones, and a 5% increase in the R-7.5 and R-6 zones. The proposed amendments would modify the lot coverage standards for 66% of the single-family designated land in the city if approved (see chart). There are 206 vacant lots, and approximately 712 lots that are pending final approval within preliminarily approved plats. Most of these future lots are within developments that do not include a lot coverage standard as part of the land use decision. For those lots, the lot coverage standard in effect at the time that a building permit is submitted will apply, which could be different than those of the adjacent built lots.

Approval of a plat alteration would be required to modify the lot coverage standards of recorded subdivisions if it is stated on the face of the plat. The applicant's submittal includes examples from Lake Hills Subdivision (R-10 zone), which is a developments that would require a plat alteration before the proposed standard could be applied. Although the code change would be applicable citywide and is not limited to a single development, the perceived restriction as described in the applicant's letter of April 1, 2015, is the inability to design single story homes that are less than 3,500 square feet* to meet the 35% standard for that zone. The narrative stated that the lot coverage limits would not allow the applicant to build "*modest sized single story homes*". The examples provided by the applicant included single story homes with covered porches and three-car garages that range between 3,415 to 4,941 square feet (Refer to examples, Exhibit #4).

With some exceptions, the city does not have a lot coverage minimum or requirements for a garage. However, the private covenants† that apply to Lake Hills require one-story homes to be a minimum of 2,200 square feet and include a two-car garage. As just noted, the city also does not control the private covenants of homeowner associations or impose a minimum value for a future home. For these reasons, private homeowner association covenants could be modified to allow smaller homes.

Staff concurs that a variety of housing types are essential to serve the city's growing and aging population. In 2013, Staff proposed a uniform lot coverage standard of 40% for all but the R-5 zone, and an excerpt of that proposal is attached as Exhibit #6. The amendments were not approved by Council at a public hearing, for reasons that included the loss of useable yard space, impacts to the city's parks, and concerns regarding the engineered capacity of storm ponds. Staff discussed these issues at meetings with the applicant and in an email dated March 2, 2015 (Exhibit #3). Staff also noted that there are few new homes under 3,000 square feet that have been constructed in the city since 2004 (Exhibit #3). The applicant's narrative indicated that the single-story homes that they design exceed the current lot coverage limitations of the zoning. The application did not develop this argument and did not propose limiting the increased lot coverage to single story homes.

At the public hearing, Planning Commission shared similar concerns in regard to a lot coverage increase city wide, as were expressed by Council in 2013.

Aside from stormwater concerns and yard sizes, staff discussed whether or not an increased lot coverage standard if limited to single-story homes could be considered an incentive to meet comprehensive plan goals. The purpose of supporting this portion of the amendment would be to encourage more single-story housing in a city where the vast majority of new homes are multi-level. One of the six objectives for housing in the (current) 2004 Comprehensive Plan reads, "*Provide opportunities for affordable and special needs housing to all segments of the population through regulatory incentive approaches*". Single-story housing that is built with universal design

Chart 1: Provides acreage of only the zones that are included in proposed lot coverage amendment.

Zones	Acres*
R-12	941
R-10	1024
R-7.5	1543
R-6	154
3,662	
These zones comprise 66% of all single family zoning.	
Comprehensive Plan Designation	Acres*
Single-Family-High	436
Single-Family-Medium	4225
Single-Family-Low	846
Total single-family	5,507
*Total area within City limits is 10,782 acres.	

* This building square footage is based on a 10,000 square foot lot at a 35% maximum building lot coverage.

† Staff is referring to the homeowner association's "Covenants, Restrictions and Easements" or CC&Rs.

features is a component of communities preparing for an ageing population. According to the US Census Bureau, *“By 2030, one in every five people living in the US will be over the age of 65. This aging of America is fueled by 72 million baby boomers aging through the life cycle in combination with a profound increase in longevity. Average life expectancy doubled from the mid-thirties in the 19th century to age 78 today.”*

Further, staff feels that an incentive in single family zones would complement the cottage housing provisions in multi-family zones. Cottage housing (Refer to CMC Section 18.05.040(J)) was adopted in 2013, as an overlay in multi-family zones to promote single-story, smaller homes. For these reasons, staff supports approval of an incentive to the lot coverage standards in single-family zones to encourage single-story housing development. A proposed footnote has been included in the recommendations.

FINDINGS: Planning Commission was not supportive of a uniform lot coverage increase to 45% in single family zones. However, after further analysis, Staff supports an increase to lot coverage limits in single family zones as an incentive to increase housing diversity.

Analysis – Lot Coverage Exception

The second part of the applicant’s proposal is to include an exception to the lot coverage standards with a footnote to Table 2 of CMC§18.09.040 that reads, *“Outdoor living areas which are under roof cover but not fully enclosed by walls, and are attached to dwelling units, are not included in lot coverage.”*

Neither the building code or the CMC have a definition for “outdoor living area” as proposed by the applicant. For the purposes of this analysis, “lot coverage” is defined, *“Means the portion of a lot that is occupied by the **principal** and **accessory buildings**, including all projections except eaves, expressed as a percentage of the total lot area”*(emphasis added) CMC§18.03.040.

Building Code Definition

BUILDING AREA. See “Area, building.”
[A] BUILDING. Any structure used or intended for supporting or sheltering any use or occupancy.

Generally, lot coverage includes everything under a roof, which includes (not limited to): covered porches; gazebos; and carports. A building permit is required for structures over 120 square feet. As noted above, “accessory buildings” are included in lot coverage limits, and in addition they cannot be placed forward of the front building line - CMC§18.17.040. As proposed, an “outdoor living area” would exceed the lot coverage limits, and

could be anywhere on a lot. Staff is unclear whether the five-foot setback restriction for accessory structures would apply to “outdoor living areas”. The examples as provided by the applicant ranged from 266 to 605 square feet of outdoor living area, which would not be included in lot coverage limitations.

There are not any design review controls for single-family lot development, as there are in multi-family zones. The design of “outdoor living areas” could vary widely. For example, typical permitted additions to homes include covered porches, swimming pools and carports for recreational vehicles. Currently, those additions are restricted to lot coverage standards of the zone, and placement in the side or rear yards.

FINDINGS: Planning Commission was not supportive of adding a footnote to exempt “outdoor living areas” from lot coverage limitations.

Conclusions

Staff concurs with the applicant that the standards to evaluate a proposed zoning code amendment is lacking, and for that reason, the application addressed the standards of CMC§18.51.010 for a comprehensive plan amendment (Exhibit 2). Chapter 18.51 Comprehensive Plan Amendments requires that the staff report address the issues that follow subsection 030(A).

B. Impact upon the City of Camas comprehensive plan and zoning code;

Finding: The proposed amendments would amend only Table 2 of CMC Section 18.09.040 Density and Dimensions for Single-family residential zones. The discussion in the previous section stated that the lot coverage amendment could impact a total of 3,662 acres.

C. Impact upon surrounding properties, if applicable;

Finding: The standards for “accessory buildings” and the proposed “outdoor living areas” appear to be in conflict, as noted in the analysis.

D. Alternatives to the proposed amendment; and

Finding: Staff proposes increasing lot coverage in limited instances, to incentivize the development of single-story homes. This alternative is intended to be consistent with the city’s comprehensive plan’s housing objectives, for special needs housing.

E. Appropriate code citations and other relevant documents.

Finding: The application included the specific code citations within Exhibit #5.

F. The SEPA checklist and determination.

Finding: A State Environmental Policy Act determination of non-significance (non-project action) was issued on July 21, 2015. Comment deadline is 5:00 p.m. on August 4, 2015.

Recommendations

Staff recommends that City Council conducts a public hearing, deliberates, and makes a motion:

- 1. To approve an amendment to CMC§18.09.040 Table 2-Density and dimensions – Single-family residential zones, adding the following footnote: “On lots with under 10% grade, the maximum building lot coverage for a single-story home may be up to 45% in R-6 and R-7.5 zones, and 40% in R-10 and R-12 zones. To qualify for increased lot coverage, a single-story home cannot include a basement or additional levels.”**
- 2. To deny the proposed footnote concerning “outdoor living areas”.**
- 3. To direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance for Council’s consideration at the next regular meeting.**

Exhibits

1. Letter to Robert Maul from Jamie Howsley, Jordan Ramis (January 30, 2015) regarding submittal of application for zone code text change.
2. Letter to Maul from Howsley (February 5, 2015) providing narrative that responds to code change criteria of CMC Chapter 18.51.
3. Letter to Howsley from Sarah Fox (March 2, 2015) that responds to applicant narrative and raises concerns with the proposed amendments.
4. Letter to Maul and Fox (April 1, 2015) that included three site plan drawings for Lake Hills Subdivision lots 27, 39 and 46.
5. Letter to Fox (April 17, 2015) that provided a red-line version of the proposed text amendments.
6. Excerpt from Staff Report to Council (January 21, 2014), "Attachment A" as referenced by Howsley in letter to Fox on April 17, 2015.
7. Email to Fox (July 7, 2015) to propose a change to the proposed footnote regarding outdoor living areas.
8. Applicant's plot plan "Example 1"
9. Applicant's plot plan "Example 2"