



To: Magna Township Planning Commission
From: Brian Tucker, MSD Planner
Date: March 10, 2022
Re: Discussion on driveway depth

At their February 8, 2022, meeting, the Magna Township Council adopted a motion to have the Magna Township Planning Commission “examine and amend the zone density and parking issues”. This motion was made in response to concerns raised by Councilman Barney about the lack of larger residential lots in Magna generally and in the new master planned projects specifically. Councilman Barney also expressed concerns about vehicles parking in a manner that block sidewalks in those new master planned projects, thereby reducing walkability. In order to facilitate the Planning Commission in “examining and amending”, the MSD staff have scheduled discussion items on the commission’s agenda.

The discussion about vehicles parking in a way that blocks sidewalks seems to be centered the idea that front setbacks in the master planned projects are not deep enough for today’s longer cars and trucks. The largest projects under construction in Magna, Little Valley Gateway and Gabler’s Grove, have a variety of front setback based primarily on the unit type. These setbacks rarely exceed 20’ and can be as small as 10’. These setbacks are the result of the negotiations that led to the approval of these projects. The P-C code does not have any required setbacks other than what the development agreement states. The PUD ordinance has a focus more geared toward protecting adjoining land uses and does not generally address setbacks from property lines. Planned Communities of both types don’t always have lot lines in the traditional sense. These projects often make use of common areas and building pads rather than lots.

As Councilman Barney has suggested, it is important to ensure that a community is walkable and that residents are not forced to walk in the street. It is important to note that establishing a setback that accounts for the largest vehicles on every dwelling is not the only solution. Some potential solutions may include:

Create firm minimum setback requirements for projects in the P-C zone and for PUD’s.

Pros: A hard minimum that is not negotiable.

Cons: A hard minimum that is not negotiable. This approach undermines the flexible approach to land development that is the hallmark of master planned developments. This approach takes away one of the negotiable aspects of a project, if a firm minimum is set, this is one less area where the township and the developer can engage in give and take.

Create guidelines for setbacks that act as a baseline for negotiation but retain flexibility.

Pros: The guidelines act as a starting point for negotiations but retain flexibility.

Cons: The Council could allow unworkable setbacks that don't adequately address the walkability issue.

Adopt setbacks or guidelines that require a front facing garage to be a certain distance from the back of sidewalk rather than the entire building.

Pros: This approach is firm in requiring a useable parking space but retains the ability on the part of the developer to make use of the building envelop by recessing the garage and bringing the living area of the home to the forefront. This creates a distinction between the front setback and the size of parking spaces when they are located within the front yard. These are often tied together as a front setback, but they are different conversations.

Cons: Not every dwelling has a two-car garage, so this solution won't solve the problem in every case. This could potentially be mitigated by mandating that the two required off street parking spaces be of an adequate size where garages are absent.

Use code enforcement/law enforcement to issue citations. Magna Municipal Code, Section 11.20.050., already prohibits parking a vehicle on the sidewalk.

Pros: Notifying property owners of this code will make people more aware of the issue and will likely result in significant compliance in the same way that winter street parking rules help with snow removal efforts.

Cons: An aggressive code enforcement campaign may result in political backlash.

The best solution may be one of these ideas, a combination of some of these ideas or some other means entirely.