

City of Ballwin

Memo

To: Eric Hanson, City Administrator

From: Thomas H. Aiken, AICP, Assistant City Administrator/City Planner

Date: 2/26/16

Re: Parking recreational vehicles in front yards

Chapter 28 - Trailers and Recreational Vehicles, regulates the parking and storage of such vehicles. Subsection 28-2 requires recreational vehicles to be parked inside or rear yards but contains no provision for parking such vehicles in secondary front yards on lots that have multiple front yards (front on more than one roadway). Subsection 28-7 established rules for the parking of trailers and permits their parking in rear yards that are also front yards, but does not permit them in side yards that are also front yards. These vehicles frequently end up being parked illegally. Many have expressed the belief that such parking limitations for these types of vehicles are unnecessary and create a hardship for people with corner or other double frontage lots.

At least one reason for these regulations is community aesthetics. Recreational vehicle and trailers are viewed by some as physically intrusive and visually unattractive. This is especially true in residential neighborhoods which do not typically have many vehicles of the scale and character of recreational vehicles and enclosed trailers. Prohibiting parking and storage in front yards makes these vehicles less visible.

Since any side of a parcel of land that fronts on a roadway is considered a front yard by the zoning ordinance, corner lots and lots that face roads in the front and the rear have two front yards. There are even a few lots in Ballwin that have 3 front yards. Additional front yards, which are functionally side and rear yards as they relate to the orientation of a building, cannot be used to park RV's. Trailers are permitted in rear yards but not side yards. A house on a corner lot, which is the most common multi-frontage residential scenario, is typically oriented toward one of the adjoining roadways. This makes the other roadway frontage appear to be a side yard even though it is actually a front yard. Additionally, such houses seem to be oriented such that the side of the house with the garage is on the second roadway frontage side of the lot. This creates an additional problem for these houses because the logical place to park an RV or a trailer is in the vicinity of the garage, but this is not permitted because it is a front yard. The only legal yards in which to park the RV or trailer on such a lot becomes the rear yard or the other side yard which are not where the driveway is. That creates economic and logistical problems because a second accessible parking location has to be built.

Violations of this ordinance are relatively common, especially in neighborhoods that have large lots with substantial room in the side yards to park RV's and trailers. Enforcement is usually triggered by a complaint. This commonly results in a scenario whereby the resident receiving the notice about an improperly parked RV or trailer points out that there are many such parking violations all over their neighborhood or the city. Inequity in application is a fundamental problem with enforcement by complaint.

If it is determined that under certain circumstances the parking of RV's and trailer in such front yards is not objectionable, the parking regulations for RV's and trailers in Chapter 28 need to be amended to address this double-frontage lot problem, I recommend that Chapter 28 be amended by adding a provision

that permits one (1) recreational vehicle or one (1) trailer to be parked in one (1) secondary front yard (this term will need to be defined in Ballwin's ordinances) on lots having multiple front yards provided such parking is within a front yard adjoining the side or rear of the primary structure on the site and said recreational vehicle or trailer is parked behind the setback line of the other front yards on the site. Recreational vehicles or trailers parked within a front yard as provided by this regulation shall only be parked in such a manner that they are fully contained within a 12 foot wide space extending from the exterior wall of the structure facing the yard in which the parking is permitted. Such vehicles shall not be parked in more than one secondary front yard and shall not project beyond the front line of the building when parked. Vehicles may only be parked as provided in this section if they are parked upon a paved improved surface."