Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead

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Director of Planning

February 11, 2004

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: James E. Hartl, AICP
Director of Planning

SUBJECT: REPORT ON SEMI-CIRCULAR DRIVEWAYS
(Motion of December 16, 2003--SYN. NO.117-B)

BACKGROUND

On December 16, 2003, your Board, on a motion by Supervisor Antonovich, requested the Departments of Regional Planning and Public Works to review current County Code provisions and related policies on parking on semi-circular driveways that are located in front of single-family residences. You instructed the departments to identity conflicting requirements about semi-circular driveways, to develop recommendations for eliminating any inconsistencies and to report back to the Board in 60 days.

In response to your direction, the Department of Regional Planning has coordinated with the Department of Public Works in the preparation of this report. This report summarizes existing County codes and policy relating to parking on semi-circular driveways for single-family residences, reviews the permitting procedures of the Department of Public Works and related provisions in the Zoning Ordinance and provides policy considerations for and against allowing parking on semi-circular driveways in residential zones. The report concludes with related recommendations.

CURRENT COUNTY CODE PROVISIONS AND POLICIES

Public Works Codes

Staff's research of Public Works-related Titles 16 (Highways) and 26 (Building Code) of the County Code and discussions with representatives of the Department of Public Works (DPW) indicate that DPW requires permits only for construction of driveway aprons within the public right-of-way. However, the DPW does not require permits for driveways located on private property unless they are in a hillside area where grading is necessary for driveways for single-family residences.

Representatives of the Construction Division of DPW have cited that the Highway Code allows up to 40 percent of the lot frontage to be used for driveways. Therefore, anyone with ample frontage along the road could construct a semi-circular driveway.

Zoning Ordinance

The County Zoning Ordinance (Title 22 of the County Code) does not make any reference to "semi-circular driveways" (or multiple ingresses/egresses or curb cuts) for single-family residences. Additionally, the Ordinance does not currently contain a precise definition for "driveway".

Section 22.52.1060 requires that for all single-family residential lots of less than one gross acre in size, a paved driveway must be provided if access is taken from a paved road. Section 22.52.1180 requires that two covered parking spaces must be provided within a garage or carport for single-family residences. Section 22.20.025 prohibits the parking of vehicles in front yards and in any area located between the street and any building in residential zones, except on a driveway.

The overall implication of these provisions is that parking is allowed on a paved driveway that leads directly to the required garage or carport; however, parking is not allowed on a portion of a semi-circular driveway that does not lead directly to covered parking on the lot.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Thus, the County currently prohibits parking in front of single-family residences on portions of semi-circular driveways that do not lead directly to covered parking due to the following potential negative effects on local neighborhoods:

- Negative appearance of vehicles that may be parked over much of the front yard setback area.
- Negative visual effects of more pavement and less landscaping in the front yards of single-family residences, thus creating the appearance of a parking lot, especially if the semi-circular driveway is used for long-term vehicle storage.
- Inconsistencies in visual character between a single-family residence with a semi-circular driveway that does not lead directly to covered parking and the general character of a neighborhood if surrounding properties do not have such driveways.

In addition, the following issues relate to semi-circular driveways:

- Potential danger to pedestrian and vehicular traffic safety from too many points of vehicular ingress/egress onto and from sidewalks and streets.
- The amount of available on-street parking will be reduced because semi-circular driveways require two or three access points to the street.

However, if the County chooses to allow parking in front of single family residences on portions of semi-circular driveways that do not lead directly to covered parking, the potential positive benefits would include:

- Accommodation of more off-street parking, limiting the number of vehicles that park on the street and related visual effects and traffic conflicts.
- Provision of additional parking spaces when the covered garage may already be occupied by other vehicles.
- Limits on the tendency for occupants of a residence to park vehicles in unpaved portions of their front yards.
- For semi-circular driveways only, accommodation of egress from the property by driving forward instead of backing up onto streets, thus improving traffic safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff has found no inconsistencies between Department of Regional Planning and Department of Public Works-related code provisions and policies for the review of semi-circular driveways. Additionally, staff has not found any inconsistencies within the Zoning Ordinance itself, but has found the zoning ordinance provisions pertaining to semi-circular driveways areas that do not lead directly to covered parking could be clarified. Staff recommends the following:

- Amend the Zoning Ordinance to:
  - Define driveways.
  - Clarify which portions of semi-circular driveways may be used for parking.
  - Identify development standards such as landscaping, screening, setbacks, etc. that could be required where parking is allowed on a semi-circular driveway.
- Until the Zoning Ordinance is amended as described above, DPW should refer applicants for permits that allow two driveway aprons in front of an individual single-family residential lot to DRP for a determination of what portions of a semi-circular driveway may be utilized for vehicle parking.

Given that the Department of Regional Planning is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of all parking provisions in the Zoning Ordinance in response to a Board motion adopted November 4, 2003, staff recommends that the issue of semi-circular driveways and other paved areas that do not lead directly to covered parking in residential zones be incorporated into this update.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please call me or Leonard Erlanger of my staff at (213) 974-6432.

JEH:RDH:LE

C: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Director, Department of Public Works