

Dutton, Greg

PUBLIC COMMENT

**From:** David Whitworth <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 08, 2016 1:03 PM  
**To:** Dutton, Greg  
**Subject:** Re: FW: Garage placement code amendment draft language

PS. Single-family attached, which allows 25 foot wide lots, wouldn't get a front facing garage at all under this new concept.

David Whitworth

On Tue, Mar 8, 2016 at 12:44 PM, David Whitworth [REDACTED] wrote:  
Greg,

Please consider my response below to the garage placement tool. Thanks!

David Whitworth

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** David Whitworth [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Tue, Mar 8, 2016 at 12:42 PM  
**Subject:** Re: FW: Garage placement code amendment draft language  
**To:** [REDACTED]

So this is terrible. On a standard lot which is 40ft buildable width after set backs, 1/3 means you get 13.33ft for a garage. Even worse for the small lot amnesty, cottage lot, and urban home infill tools which are narrower. 20ft behind the front façade is incredibly significant. This adds big time impervious cover pushing a garage that far back. Architects are having to dodge trees, easements, deal with grade issues, meet McMansion, etc. and this is just one more bizarre parameter making things more and more unworkable. It was hard enough at 1/2, but 1/3 is overkill.

This is simply too much. It will increase the cost of home for a variety of reasons: fewer sites are then feasible bidding them up, Duplexes which are a more affordable housing model are dis-incentivized by this, and you basically need more land to make this work which we know affects the cost of housing big time in central Austin.

This reminds me of something else that was revised recently resulting in a death blow on the premise that they meant something else 20 years ago. It is on the tip of my tongue, I just can't remember.

David Whitworth  
David Whitworth Development Company  
512-294-5139

[REDACTED]  
[www.dwdcaustin.com](http://www.dwdcaustin.com)

On Tue, Mar 8, 2016 at 11:49 AM, Geoffrey Tahuahua [REDACTED] wrote:

We saw this at council last week to set a public hearing on 3/31. What is everyone's thoughts on this? Does anyone have any particular examples where this would significantly increase costs?

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Geoffrey Tahuahua

Vice President of Public Policy

Home Builders Association of Greater Austin

Direct : (512) 982-9175 | Mobile: (210) 557-3876 |

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**From:** Dutton, Greg [mailto:[Greg.Dutton@austintexas.gov](mailto:Greg.Dutton@austintexas.gov)]

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 8, 2016 11:42 AM

**To:** Dutton, Greg <[Greg.Dutton@austintexas.gov](mailto:Greg.Dutton@austintexas.gov)>

**Cc:** Rusthoven, Jerry <[Jerry.Rusthoven@austintexas.gov](mailto:Jerry.Rusthoven@austintexas.gov)>; Guernsey, Greg <[Greg.Guernsey@austintexas.gov](mailto:Greg.Guernsey@austintexas.gov)>; Word, Daniel <[Daniel.Word@austintexas.gov](mailto:Daniel.Word@austintexas.gov)>; McDonald, John <[John.McDonald@austintexas.gov](mailto:John.McDonald@austintexas.gov)>

**Subject:** Garage placement code amendment draft language

Hi all,

You are receiving this email because you have expressed interest or may be interested in a proposed code amendment regarding the neighborhood design tool for garage placement. Previously, Planning Commission initiated a code amendment to clarify that for neighborhoods that adopted this tool that the garage may not be more than 1/2 the width of the adjacent home (that is, not including the garage), or 1/3 of the total structure, including the garage. Please see attached draft language and initiation review sheet for more information.

Staff would welcome any input or questions you have on this item. You're welcome to contact me via phone or email, or I'm happy to set up a time to meet and discuss. We anticipate this item being to Council on March 31<sup>st</sup>. We will seek input from the Codes and Ordinances Subcommittee next week (3/15) and PC on 3/22.

Many thanks,

Greg

**Dutton, Greg**

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**From:** austin infill builder group [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 08, 2016 9:18 AM  
**To:** Adler, Steve; Casar, Gregorio; Tovo, Kathie; Gallo, Sheri; Pool, Leslie; Kitchen, Ann; Garza, Delia; Houston, Ora; Zimmerman, Don; Renteria, Sabino; Troxclair, Ellen; Cortez, John Michael  
**Cc:** Varghese, Lesley; Lawler, John; Harden, Joi; Smith, Taylor; Boggs, Annie; Tiemann, Donna; Nicely, Katherine; Hutchins, Christopher J.; Petronis, Joe; Richardson, Ashley; Chincanchan, David; Searle, Michael; Ott, Marc; Guernsey, Greg; Dutton, Greg  
**Subject:** important: proposed garage placement tool will hurt affordability  
**Attachments:** AIBG Garage Placement Tool Letter 4-7-16.pdf; garage placement ordinance revision.pdf

Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem & Council Members:

Please see the attached regarding the April 14th council agenda item in regards to the garage placement tool. Many infill builders will not be able to attend your April 14th council meeting as there is another industry event at the same time. Thank you for your consideration, and feel free to contact us if you have any questions or would like to discuss this.

(The proposed ordinance is attached herewith as well.)

Thanks,  
Lex

Chair

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**austin infill builders group**

*Our group represents nearly 100 local builders and development professionals, producing ~1000 homes per year in Austin's urban core. We promote intelligent, sustainable housing and the code needed to fulfill this vital mission.*

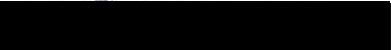
- A neighboring home would have to be 40' wide, however, to have enough room for a 20' garage or carport under the proposed change. In my experience, as a residential real estate broker for almost 20 years, most existing homes in South and East Austin are not 40' wide.
- If your lot is small and your neighbor's home is small, a two car garage is not possible and a one car garage may not be either.

As written, this change would effectively eliminate "front" facing two car garages and also restrict or eliminate one car garages in South and East Austin, where small lots are common. More affluent areas, with larger lots, would be largely unaffected, just as they were under the original tool. As a result, it has a disproportionate impact on more affordable areas of Austin.

I encourage you to take the time to consider the impact, language and implementation of any proposed change to this infill tool before making a decision, including the attached letter from the Austin Infill Builders Group. Thank you for your time and consideration on this issue.

Sincerely,  
Scott

Scott Turner, owner/broker  
Turner Residential/Riverside Homes

  
o 512-473-9930

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## Dutton, Greg

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**From:** Scott Turner <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 08, 2016 12:13 PM  
**To:** Adler, Steve; Casar, Gregorio; Tovo, Kathie; Gallo, Sheri; Pool, Leslie; Kitchen, Ann; Garza, Delia; Houston, Ora; Zimmerman, Don; Renteria, Sabino; Troxclair, Ellen  
**Cc:** Varghese, Lesley; Lawler, John; Harden, Joi; Smith, Taylor; Boggs, Annie; Tiemann, Donna; Nicely, Katherine; Hutchins, Christopher J.; Petronis, Joe; Fisher, Ashley; Searle, Michael; Cortez, John Michael; Chincanchan, David; Dutton, Greg  
**Subject:** "Garage Placement" item on 4/14 agenda  
**Attachments:** AIBG Garage Placement Tool Letter 4-7-16.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

As both a long-time urban Austin urban homebuilder and a constituent, I am writing regarding "Garage Placement" infill tool on the upcoming 4/14 agenda to ask for assistance. I know that every issue at council is complex, with multiple aspects to consider. I've tried to sum up my concerns, and those of other professionals who interact with this particular issue on a regular basis, below:

- **This proposed change will almost exclusively impact small lots that are 50' or less in width, the most common lot width in South and East Austin neighborhoods, where affordability may still exist.**
- 50' is the typical lot width in most areas under the McMansion ordinance. Many of the measures in the McMansion ordinance were based on a "typical" 50 x 125 lot, for example.
- A 50' wide lot less the 5' setbacks on either side leaves a 40' maximum home width.
- A two car garage or carport is has a 20' minimum functional width, ½ of the max home width on a 50' lot.
- That is what the current infill tool allows for a front garage, ½ of the home's width.
- Under this tool, two car garages or carports in front are tight but possible on 50' lots and always have been, despite the stated intent of the original infill tool.
- Neighborhood homeowners, builders and architects could and did do the same math on their lot at the time of the original tool's presentation and figure this out.

I believe that this is why there was little, if any, push back when originally adopted by several neighborhoods. If there is no real impact on your lot under this tool, why oppose it? If the intent was to eliminate two car garages on smaller lots with this tool, it was not reflected in the way it was written, approved, and adopted.

If the original language was not restrictive enough for the stated intent, this proposed change will have a material impact on thousands of homes, most of whom have no idea it's happening and none of whom approved it as a part of their neighborhood plans years ago. Please consider it as a further limitation on garage placement, not as a loophole or administrative oversight to be corrected.

The proposed change would limit garages to 1/3 of the home's width, or ½ of a neighboring home's width:

- 1/3 of the home's width: 50' lot – setbacks = max 40' wide home, per above. 1/3 is 13 feet, not enough for more than a one car garage or carport.
- **For lots less than 50' wide, common in East Austin and including urban & cottage lots, flag lots and cul de sac lots, even a one car garage may not be possible, as one car garages are an absolute minimum of 10' wide.**
- 1/2 of a neighboring home's width: I don't know if staff has prepared information about average existing home widths on 50' wide lots (or less), but that might be helpful to determine the impact of the proposed change.





# PUBLIC COMMENT

## PROPOSED GARAGE PLACEMENT CODE CHANGE WILL HAVE NEGATIVE IMPACT

The proposed garage placement amendment unnecessarily makes smaller sites less workable. It directly contributes to a code environment that favors larger, more expensive homes in Austin instead of compact, more affordable, and sustainable development, which this city desperately needs. Since this proposal affects affordability and a city affordability analysis exists, this proposal should not be considered until an affordability impact statement is complete.

### AIBG SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS:

- The allowable garage width should **not** be reduced from 1/2 of the house width to 1/3.
- Carports, flag lots, duplexes, and lots less than 50' wide should be removed from any application of this tool. This allows more affordable housing options to better provide reasonable covered parking ie: small lots, cottage lots, urban homes, two-family homes & irregular shaped lots. The limitation on design is exponentially more difficult with these more affordable housing models.
- Remove "secondary apartments" and "single-family-attached" from staff proposal. These are some of the only ways left to develop more affordable housing options in Austin and making them more onerous to develop is against the Mayor's key goal of increasing affordable housing.

**Example 1:** A 30' wide cottage lot minus 10' of side setbacks results in a 20' wide home. Dividing by 3 results in 6.7' of possible garage/carport width, which is not wide enough for a single covered off-street parking space! **Smaller lots will be ineligible for covered parking entirely and this is not a fair, wise, or an intended result.**

**Example 2:** A 50' wide lot minus 10' of side setbacks results in a 40' home. Dividing by 3 results in 13.3' of possible garage/carport width, which means **many typical Austin lots will be limited to a single covered off-street parking space while two off-street parking spaces are required.**

This tool was intended to prevent large-lot "snout houses" (prominent front garages forward of the home's main façade) in older, more modest areas, not to make affordable housing options unfeasible. The aesthetics of the large lot bungalow with rear detached garage should not be applied to the detriment of more affordable housing options. Many sites don't allow the garage/carport to be located further back on the lot due to trees, impervious cover limitations, and other design criteria.

**This proposed policy will negatively impact affordability and sustainability while contributing to sprawl and traffic.**

**\*\*Please see flowing pages for graphic exhibits\*\***





**NOT ALLOWED – WHY? Not intended!**

