

Memorandum

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Izaak Peterson , Associate Planner
DATE: November 25, 2025
SUBJECT: 960 Oakridge - Front Accessory Building Variance - Knollwood Builders
ITEM NUMBER: 7.B
SECTION: NEW BUSINESS

REQUESTED MOTION

To adopt a Resolution No. 25-90, approving a variance to allow for the construction of a detached garage within the front yard of the property located at 960 Oakridge Ave, subject to the following conditions:

1. The project must be completed in accordance with the submitted as part of the Variance application. Any significant changes to these plans, as determined by the Community Development Department, will require review and approval by the Planning Commission.
2. This approval will expire after one year if a building permit has not been issued and work has not begun on the project.
3. This approval is subject to a 5-day appeal period. Once the appeal period expires, a building permit may be issued for the proposed project. A building permit must be obtained before any construction activity begins.

This action is based on the following findings of fact:

1. Practical difficulty is present as stated in Resolution 25-90.
2. The project as presented, with the front yard location of the detached garage, meets the design requirements as specified for the R1 zoning district.

INTRODUCTION

Knollwood Builders, on behalf of the Meredith and Robert Johnson of 960 Oakridge, have submitted a request to demolish and reconstruct a detached garage located within the front yard of the subject property. The existing garage's location within the front yard of the property exists as a nonconformity and has been in place since the early 1970's. The proposed garage plans seek to expand the size of the detached garage in approximately the same location of the current garage. The proposed increase in size of the nonconforming garage's front yard location requires the following variance in order to permit:

1. Variance to Development Code Section 107-67(d)(1) to permit the proposed accessory building location within the front yard of the property.

DISCUSSION

Site Characteristics

The property is located on the southern (non-riparian) side of Oakridge Ave, and zoned within the R-1 Detached Residential zoning district. The property is surrounded by R-1 zoned property on all sides, with riparian residential properties to the north.

The subject parcel is 50 feet in width, and 260.4 feet in depth, with a lot area of .26 acres. Due to the dimensional width of the property, the it exists as a substandard lot, which does not meet current dimensional lot standards (75 foot width required).

The site currently contains an 1,104 square foot single family home with no attached garage, and a 349 square foot detached accessory building (garage) in the front yard between the home and Oakridge Ave. The existing home and garage were constructed in 1972. The existing garage is currently setback 28.7 feet from the front property line adjacent Oakridge. The rear of the site is heavily wooded, containing mature trees.

Project Description

The applicants propose to demolish the existing 349 square foot garage and construct a new 616 square foot garage in its current approximate location within the front yard.

Development Code Requirements

R-1 zoned properties are required to meet minimum dimensional size requirements including containing a width of 75-feet, depth of 125 feet, and area of at least 10,000 square feet. Lots that do not meet the dimensional requirement of the zoning district in which they are located are defined as Substandard Lots. Development Code [Section 103-5](#) outlines the design review process for construction proposed on substandard lots. Driveways, patios, detached accessory buildings, dwelling additions less than 150 square feet in size are require administrative substandard lot design review. Any associate variances necessitated by a substandard lot design review necessitate review by the planning commission.

[Section 107-67\(d\)\(1\)](#) requires that accessory buildings be located in the rear yard of the property except as otherwise permitted. Generally, front yard accessory building are only permitted within the front yards of riparian properties, which contain lakeside setback restrictions. [Section 107-67\(e\)\(2\)](#) provides that dwellings and accessory buildings abide by a minimum front yard setback of 25-feet from a front property line, and a maximum front setback of 40 feet.

Due to the garages construction in 1972, the current state of the garages encroachment within the front yard of the property exists as a nonconforming structure. Development code [Section 111-124](#) provides the following guidance with respect to nonconforming structure expansion:

A structure which is nonconforming due to dimensions or setbacks from property lines may remain at its current size and location and/or may be structurally altered, including an area expansion, provided that the alteration complies with the City's current development regulations and procedures.

Development code [section 107-67](#) requires that all accessory buildings follow the bulk and building setbacks specified in Table 107-67. With respect to a property less than 1/2 acre in size, with no attached or less than 2-car attached garage, the following standards are applicable:

Type of Accessory Building	Maximum Area	Minimum Side Setback	Minimum Rear Setback
Detached (with no attached or less than 2-car attached)	750 square feet or 75% of the dwelling unit foundation area, whichever is more restrictive	5 feet	10 feet

The proposed detached garage appears to meet or exceed all required setback and building design standards as currently proposed, however, to due the proposed expansion of the nonconforming location of the garage within a front yard, a variance to [Section 107-67\(d\)\(1\)](#) is required.

Variance Review Criteria

When considering a variance request, the commission must determine whether the ordinance causes the property owner practical difficulty and find that granting the variances is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance. Practical difficulty is defined as:

1. *Reasonable Manner*. The property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the Shoreview Development Regulations.
2. *Unique Circumstances*. The plight of the property owner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the property owner.
3. *Character of Neighborhood*. The variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood.

Applicant Statement

The applicant states that the sites width is constrained resulting in them being unable to locate a reconstructed garage in the rear of the property. The applicant notes that the proposed garage meets setback requirements. Further, the applicant indicates that surrounding properties contain front yard garages, and as a result, the character of the neighborhood will not be impacted.

Staff Review

The request was reviewed by staff in accordance with the variance criteria. Upon review, staff believe that a practical difficulty is present necessitating the variance request:

1. *Reasonable Manner*. Detached garages are permitted in the R1, Detached Residential District provided certain dimensional standards are met. The applicant's request to have a 616 square foot detached garage is reasonable.
2. *Unique Circumstances*. The property is a legally established substandard lot that contains a width of 50-feet. The sites limited width uniquely restricts the property owners ability to construct a rear yard accessory building and otherwise access the building with an improved driveway surface that would not encroach within the 5-foot setback required of driveways. In addition, if the detached accessory building were to be located in the rear yard of the property, the sites front yard setback maximum of 40-feet, required of accessory buildings and dwellings, would no longer be in compliance. For these reasons, staff believe that unique circumstances are present.
3. *Neighborhood Character*. Staff believes that granting the variance would not alter the essential character of the neighborhood. The proposed garage is approximately in the

same location of the garage which has existed on the property since 1972. In addition, the presence of front yard detached garages are common on riparian properties the neighborhood.

Public Comment

Property owners within 150' were notified of the request. At the time of this staff report, no public comments have been received.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has reviewed the proposed variance application for consistency with the development code compliance. Upon review, staff believe that a practical difficulty is present necessitating the proposed variance request.

Staff recommend the planning commission adopt a Resolution No. 25-90, approving a variance to allow for the construction of a detached garage within the front yard of the property located at 960 Oakridge Ave, subject to the following conditions:

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This action is based on the following findings of fact:

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ATTACHMENTS

[Location Map](#)

[Proposed Garage Elevations](#)

[Applicant Narrative](#)

[Proposed Survey](#)

[Draft Resolution No. 25-90](#)