

Shape Our Fremont

Where Fremont residents can learn about shaping proposed housing developments...

Issues: Parking in New Housing Developments

Build them and they will come. That's certainly true for new housing in Fremont. And when people come, they will bring their cars and vans and SUVs -- one or two at least, and sometimes three or four. If their garages turn into storage rooms, even more vehicles will get pushed outside onto the driveway or into the street. Sometimes, there isn't room on the street and the glut of vehicles overflows onto neighboring streets.

At many meetings, the issue of parking in new housing developments has been among the most common concerns. The city is responsible for establishing parking requirements for new housing, and the developers are responsible for incorporating them into their designs, but sometimes that isn't good enough. So what are the parking requirements for new housing developments, what are the potential issues, and what can concerned Fremont residents do?

Parking Requirements Vary

For residential developments, parking can be inside or outside -- it doesn't necessarily have to be in a garage. The location and number of parking spaces depend on the type of dwelling and the type of parking.

Parking for residents of single-family dwellings is in individual garages on the same lot. Dwellings with up to four bedrooms require only two covered parking spaces. Dwellings with five or more bedrooms require three parking spaces. Additional vehicles can be parked on the apron in front of the garage or in the driveway as long as the vehicles don't extend over the sidewalk or protrude into the street.

Parking for residents of multi-family dwellings is in covered garages, carports, and parking structures, or in uncovered parking spaces on the property. Multi-family dwellings with two or more bedrooms require only one covered space and one-half uncovered space per unit -- that is, no more than half of these dwellings are expected to have two vehicles. Dwellings with one bedroom require only one covered space.

Parking for visitors in both single-family and multi-family housing developments is generally in designated spaces on streets or within parking structures. The requirement is one-half parking space per dwelling.

Garage Layouts Also Vary

Garages can be configured several ways. The traditional side-by-side configuration places vehicles next to each other with one double-width, or two single-width, garage doors. This configuration allows each vehicle to enter and exit independently and is preferred. The slide-in configuration places vehicles next to each other, but provides only a single-width garage door on one side, which allows the developer to place the dwelling front door and a stairway to the second floor on the other side. This configuration forces the vehicle on the side without the garage door to maneuver in and out diagonally to reach the second parking space. Finally, the tandem configuration places vehicles end-to-end with a single-width garage door. This configuration means the outside vehicle must be backed out to allow the inside vehicle to enter or exit. All three configurations are acceptable under current parking standards.

Spotting Problems Early

A lot of parking problems can be spotted early. Concerned residents should address these issues with the developer and the city planning staff while the project is still under review.

For example, if garages use slide-in or tandem parking, one of the vehicles may end up being left outside most of the time. If there isn't any driveway or parking apron, then those vehicles will have to be parked on the street. And if there isn't enough street parking, they may be left on nearby streets. This can also be true when part of the garage is used for storage -- despite any covenants, conditions, and restrictions to the contrary -- simply because the problem is so difficult to enforce.

In another example, if the development is a combination of residential and commercial, there may not be enough parking for residents, visitors, customers, and employees at the same time -- especially in the evenings and on weekends. Likewise, if the development includes a point of access to a public trail, parking may also become a problem.

Finally, many people question whether the required number of parking spaces is realistic. Does a four-bedroom, single-family dwelling -- with one or two adult parents, possibly an adult relative, and one or two teenagers -- really need only two parking spaces? And is it realistic to assume that the residents of a four- or five-bedroom multi-family townhouse need just one-and-one-half spaces?

Sometimes, the best way to solve a problem is not to create it in the first place. Requiring adequate parking in new housing developments can go a long way to solving problems.

See the city staff project planner's email address on each development's listing at www.ShapeOurFremont.com

For ways to express your opinions to the city, see the Contacts page at www.ShapeOurFremont.com