

June 18, 2021

Burlington Planning Commission
149 Church Street
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Commission Members:

I would like the opportunity to talk during the public forum at the June 22 Planning Commission meeting. I would like to discuss the wording in “Article 6 (h) Building Location and Orientation” of the Development Review Standards. More specifically, I’d like to discuss the wording that states: *“In residential areas, accessory buildings shall be located in such a way so as to be secondary and subordinate in scale and design to the principal structure. A parking structure—either attached or detached--shall be setback from the longest street-facing wall of the principal structure and be deferential yet consistent in character and design.”*

I understand and I agree with the intent of preventing homes on smaller lots being built that are dominated in size by the garage. I believe the intent of this ordinance is to prevent prominent and or ill-proportioned garage dominance over the house. However, I think this “one size fits all” blanket approach language, that is currently in the Development Review Standards, of requiring any garage to be flat with, or recessed behind, the house is not appropriate on all lots. In particular, on those larger lot neighborhoods in parts of Burlington, this language sometimes has the opposite effect of what was intended. Residents are required to design a house that is flat in the front with very little character that does not fit in with the neighboring houses. This “recessed garage” requirement conflicts with the first section of Article 6(h) Building Location and Orientation which requires *new buildings and additions to maintain the existing development pattern and rhythm of structures along the existing streetscape.*

The replacement house that has been designed for my lot at 125 South Cove has less impervious surface area than the existing house located there (that unfortunately needs significant repair). My proposed new house would have an attached garage width that is less than 1/3 of the width of the total house/garage and is architecturally designed to be incorporated into the house and not stand out despite being 10-12’ forward of the principal structure. The garage stands only 3-4’ forward of the front door deck.

Most all homes on the lake side (west side) of my South Cove neighborhood have existing garages in the front of the house (including my current one there). This neighborhood is one of three in Burlington’s RL Larger Lot Overlay Districts. Requiring that I set back my garage on this 100ft wide lot, will make this home not align with the neighboring homes on either side of this house. These lake-front lots have large lake-side setbacks, generous front yard setbacks and numerous other restrictions such as low mow zone and underground ledge that makes it difficult to move much from the existing footprint. My ultimate goal is to promote a pleasing architectural neighborhood and uphold the interesting streetscape in Burlington.

I have some suggestions that I would like to discuss with the Planning Commission that I believe would make this standard more in line with its intent for these unique, larger lot neighborhoods in Burlington.

Thank you in advance for your time,

David Michael Boardman
125 South Cove Rd, Burlington