



PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

FROM: Planning & Zoning Department **DATE:** December 11, 2025
SUBJECT: Discussion regarding possible updates to Chapter 118 related to implementing maximum lot coverage requirements in lieu of rear-yard open space requirements.
PRESENTER: Cori Reaume, Director of Planning

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

In an effort to continue refining the City's Code of Ordinances in the spirit of clarity and efficiency, this ordinance update is being proposed by staff for consideration.

The definition for rear yard open space from the city's zoning ordinance is listed below:

Rear yard open space means an area reserved as an open space in the rear portion of a yard which extends from one side property line to another side property line and abutting the rear property line. The rear yard open space shall not protrude beyond the two most extreme corners of the main structure and no part of a residential dwelling unit may be constructed so as to occupy any portion of the rear yard open space.

The requirements for rear yard open space are outlined within the various zoning districts' "Lot and Area Requirements," along with building setbacks, minimum lot size, etc.

Section 118-718 (Accessory Buildings and Structures) includes references indicating that accessory structures, including sheds, carports, etc., would have no impact on the calculation of rear-yard open space.

It would seem that the rear yard open space requirement was introduced to ensure that when a lot is developed, a portion (typically around 20%) would remain open and not be covered by the primary structure (home). However, this regulation doesn't restrict how homeowners use their backyards. Since accessory structures like sheds and carports are excluded from the requirement, it appears the intent was to preserve open space during initial development, while still allowing residents to fully use their yards for outdoor amenities and personal enjoyment.

After reviewing our comparison cities, it seems most utilize a maximum lot coverage (or impervious coverage) percentage rather than the rear yard open space calculation. Additionally, many communities provide for a maximum percentage of front yards which may be paved. In conjunction with a recommendation on allowing for certain garage enclosures, staff would like to present some findings and lead a discussion about possible changes to these regulations.



Staff will propose for discussion a few options to address challenges identified from the existing code requirements, including:

- Replacement of rear-yard open space requirement with a maximum lot coverage requirement throughout typical residential districts
 - Max. lot coverage could vary by lot size and/or zoning district
 - Separate front-yard paving requirements could apply
 - Definition to be clarified – structures or any impermeable surface
- Modification of rear-yard open space definition & references to include a broader “usable open space”
 - This could require a minimum contiguous area of a specified square footage and/or could clarify that a significant percentage (50% or more) of the usable open space be located in a rear yard
- Modification of rear-yard open space requirement to include clarification that RYOS applies only to new construction or “major renovation,” thereby eliminating challenges with minor renovations.

Of the aforementioned approaches, we may be able to consider some hybrid approach that allows the city to stay flexible, while still honoring the tradition of mandating a significant continuous open area in the “backyard.”

Due to the complexity of the various options being presented, staff will recommend continuation of the public hearing to a later date where a final draft may be presented based on Commission feedback.

RECOMMENDATION:

Continue public hearing to the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting on January 15, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.