

City of Sugar Hill
 Planning Staff Report
ZOA 24-002

DATE: October 2, 2024
 TO: Mayor and City Council
 FROM: Planning Department
 SUBJECT: Zoning Ordinance Amendment ZOA 24-002
 Residential Driveway Policies

RECOMMENDATION

Below is a menu of options for City Council to consider that will enhance and clarify the current regulations related to parking on driveways on residential properties. Each option can be implemented individually or in combination, based on the Council’s preference, through the initiation of a text amendment. Staff recommends that City Council review the options and initiate the preferred text amendments, as identified by number in the chart. If initiated, staff will finalize redlines and move forward with the text amendment adoption process.

#	Section	Regulation Summary	Policy Purpose	Additional Notes
1	Sections 407 (accessory uses), 1106 (SFR parking), and 14-311 (automobiles)	Consolidate into single section, preserving the intent of existing requirements while simplifying and updating standard to require maximum of 20% parking coverage for entire lot, eliminating separate requirements for individual yard areas. Clarification that these parking regulations apply to single-family detached uses.	To streamline application of regulations and not give the appearance of conflicting regulations. Reduction in the total lot area permitted for parking to align with the policy desire to reduce the quantity of driveways.	Case studies indicate a much lower proportion of lot would be more reasonable to properly regulate areas dedicated to parking. 20% of the lot area allowed for parking/driveways would allow even the smallest lots the ability to have ample driveway area. Total lot area is limited to 40% impervious cover.
2	Sections 405 (temporary permits; 407 (accessory uses); Table 4.3 (residential uses table)	<p>Allow temporary gravel driveways through the temporary permit process with the following restrictions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18–24-month duration • Can be extended one time for 6 months • No design specifications, except shall be maintained so that no gravel fragment leaves the driveway and parking area. • Upon expiration, gravel must be removed or replaced with concrete, asphalt, or other finished material. <p>Review Criteria (must meet one of the following):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The property is undergoing construction or significant 	Allows transitional uses of gravel where justified by at least one of the review criteria.	Adds temporary gravel driveways to the accessory use table; adds T-R as a temporary use allowed with restrictions to the Customary Residential Accessory Uses and Structures table.

		<p>renovation where a permanent driveway isn't feasible yet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The property owner demonstrates a temporary financial inability to install a permanent surface. • The property requires temporary driveway access during a specific season or weather conditions. • The property owner has a confirmed plan for future development that will replace the gravel driveway with a permanent structure within a specified period. 		
3	Section 407	<p>Allow permanent gravel driveways that comply with a minimal set of design specifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall be constructed of ¼-inch gravel at least four inches in depth. Compaction criteria per the supplier's recommendations. • Durable border constructed of wood, concrete, brick, or stone, extending a minimum of one inch below the depth of the gravel. • Shall be maintained so that no gravel fragment leaves the driveway and parking area. • Aprons shall comply with the City standard details. 	<p>Provide a driveway option that supports permeability of the parking surface as well as adequate maintenance controls to mitigate the impacts of allowing an unfinished surface to be used as a parking material.</p>	

Implementation:

For the implementation of any of these amendments, planning staff will work with public works staff to enforce standards for new/modified driveways during the plan review process. Code enforcement will address instances of violations occurring from work completed without a permit to gain compliance with adopted standards. Furthermore, existing driveways that do not comply with these regulations but were lawful at the time of installation will be allowed to remain in place under the provisions of Article 8, Non-conforming Uses.

BACKGROUND

Existing Regulations:

The City’s property maintenance ordinance prohibits parking on grass, lawn, or dirt areas within the yard areas of any home. Additionally, the city’s zoning ordinance requires that all vehicles be parked on a concrete, asphalt, or gravel driveway and does not allow a single-family residential parking area to exceed 30% of the front yard, 20% of the rear yard, or 35% of a combination of the front, side, rear yards.

While these regulations appear to conflict, they’re regulating slightly different components. When applied to a property, the regulations can be layered to produce a requirement specific to individual sites and circumstances.

Below is a table summarizing the content and different applications of these regulations:

Section	Summary	Policy Purpose
Article 4, Section 407	Not to exceed 30% of the front yard or 20% of the rear yard.	Preserves the aesthetic character of residential neighborhoods by limiting amount of yard space used for vehicle parking; mitigates the overuse of front and rear yards for vehicles, reducing visual clutter and supporting community appearance.
Article 11, Section 1106	Maximum 35% to be paved or covered in gravel for front, side, or rear; parking of vehicles required on concrete, asphalt or gravel driveway. Parking on grass, lawn, or dirt is prohibited.	Manages the total area of a lot that can be paved or covered in gravel, not just in specific yards. Additional limit for entire lot encourages balance between impervious surfaces and natural ground to minimize stormwater runoff, maintain aesthetic value, and prevent over-paving. Protects soft surfaces from damage caused by vehicle parking. Can lead to soil compaction, degradation of the landscape, and erosion, while also detracting from overall appearance.
Section 14-311 – Automobiles or motor vehicles	Parking on grass, lawn, or dirt is prohibited – this is almost entirely a duplication of a portion of the policy impact of Section 1106.	Protects soft surfaces from damage caused by vehicle parking. Can lead to soil compaction, degradation of the landscape, and erosion, while also detracting from overall appearance.

Policy Benchmarking:

Nearby municipalities have the following requirements:

- Buford – 30% of front yard – 35% of front yard (asphalt or concrete only)
- Dacula – 30% of front yard for detached residences (gravel allowed)
- Duluth - 35% of a combination of the front, side, and rear yards (gravel allowed)
- Gwinnett County – 35% of front yard (gravel allowed)
- Johns Creek – paved parking or all-weather surface area less than 35% of front yard
- Lawrenceville – Approved hard surfaces in the front yard area are limited to 35 percent (does not include gravel)
- Milton – Side yard and no more than 50% of a rear yard (approved hard surfaces include gravel)
- Suwanee – 35% of front yard, (vehicle shall be parked on a surface that is treated and intended to accommodate a vehicle)

Sugar Hill Regulations:

The City of Sugar Hill requirements are similar to those of our neighboring communities. These requirements appear in three separate sections of the city’s zoning ordinance and municipal code:

City of Sugar Hill Zoning Ordinance: Article 4, Section 407

Driveway, single-family residential parking area: Not to exceed 30% of the front yard or 20% of the rear yard.

City of Sugar Hill Zoning Ordinance: Article 11, Section 1106:

“No more than thirty-five percent (35%) of a combination of the front, side and rear yards may consist of a concrete, asphalt or gravel driveway or parking area and the remaining percentage shall be grass or landscaped areas.”




Sugar Hill Municipal Code Section 14-311 – Automobiles or motor vehicles

“It shall be unlawful to park any passenger car or truck, either operable or inoperable, on the grass, lawn or dirt areas in the yard of any residential structure located within the corporate boundaries of the City of Sugar Hill. Further, parking any passenger car or truck, either operable or inoperable, in the front yard unless on a driveway or a city-approved driveway expansion area shall be unlawful. It shall be unlawful for any person to retain in the city boundaries any automobile, truck, vehicle, RV, camper or trailer of any kind or type, without a valid license plate attached thereto, on private property or public roads. This section shall not be the exclusive regulation of placement, parking or standing of vehicles or contrivances within the city limits of Sugar Hill and shall supplement and be in addition to other ordinances, regulations, statutes and provisions of law of the city, county or state, including but not limited to Sections 613 and 1106 of The 2000 Zoning Ordinance of the City of Sugar Hill.”

- City of Sugar Hill Zoning Ordinance: Article 6, Section 613 – Junked Automobiles
 - o This section pertains to junked automobiles defined as, any automobile, truck, vehicle or trailer of any kind or type, without a valid license plate attached thereto, which are not allowed on any private or public property except for as provided by Section 613B.

Sugar Hill Case Studies:

All measurements are approximate using the Gwinnett GIS map and latest aerial imagery from 2023.

Example Property	Coverage
<p style="text-align: center;">Windswept Trace</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,022 sqft Total Lot – 2,432 sqft House Footprint = 7,590 sqft Remaining Yard • 1,004 sqft gravel + 545 sqft concrete = 1,549 sqft parking coverage • Approximately 15.4% of lot covered • Present since ~2015
<p style="text-align: center;">Frontier Trail</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36,666 sqft Total Lot – 2,026 sqft House Footprint = 34,640 sqft Remaining Yard • 4,927 sqft concrete • Approximately 13.4% of lot covered • Present since ~1978
<p style="text-align: center;">Cheeley Drive</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20,250 sqft Total Lot – 2,245 sqft House Footprint = 18,005 sqft Remaining Yard • 2,322 sqft concrete • Approximately 11.5% of lot covered • Present since ~2019 (loop driveway was present before)