



CITY OF SAINT PAUL

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Board of Zoning Appeals

Staff Report

TYPE OF APPLICATION: Minor Variance **FILE #:** 22-083509

APPLICANT: Salamatu Forte

HEARING DATE: September 6, 2022

LOCATION: 1712 Orange Avenue East

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: GERARDINE'S GARDEN LOTS SUBJ TO ST, THE W 45 FT OF E 106 FT OF N 1/4 OF LOT 21

PLANNING DISTRICT: 2

PRESENT ZONING: R3

ZONING CODE REFERENCE: §63.501(b)(2), § 63.312

DATE RECEIVED: August 5, 2022

REPORT DATE: August 25, 2022

DEADLINE FOR ACTION: October 3, 2022 **BY:** David Eide

A. **PURPOSE:** The applicant is proposing to create an off-street parking area in their front yard. Two variances are requested: 1.) The zoning code states that off-street parking spaces shall not be located within the front yard; the applicant is proposing to place off-street parking in the front yard, for a variance of this requirement. 2.) Parking spaces shall be a minimum of four (4) feet from all lot lines; the applicant is proposing parking 3' from the north and west property line, for a variance of this requirement.

B. **SITE AND AREA CONDITIONS:** This is a 5' x 124' 0.13-acre parcel on the south side of Orange Avenue East between Kennard and Flandrau Streets.

Surrounding Land Use: Primarily single-family dwellings.

C. **ZONING CODE CITATIONS:**

Sec. 63.501. - Accessory buildings and uses.

The following additional standards shall apply to residential parking:

(2) Off-street parking spaces shall not be located within the front yard.

Sec. 63.312. - Setback.

Except as otherwise provided in section 66.431(b), surface off-street parking spaces shall not be

within a required front or side yard and shall be a minimum of four (4) feet from all lot lines, except that parking spaces using an alley for maneuvering shall be a minimum of ten (10) feet from the centerline of the alley.

D. **FINDINGS:**

1. The variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code.

The applicant is proposing to create an off-street parking area in their front yard. Two variances are requested: 1.) The zoning code states that off-street parking spaces shall not be located within the front yard; the applicant is proposing to place off-street parking in the front yard, for a variance of this requirement. 2.) Parking spaces shall be a minimum of four (4) feet from all lot lines; the applicant is proposing parking 3' from the north and west property line, for a variance of this requirement.

By providing additional off-street parking in the front yard, this variance request is in harmony with Sec. 60.103 of the Zoning Code to flexibly address travel and parking demands from new and existing development. **This finding is met for the front yard parking variance request.**

It is not clear why the applicant is not electing to provide the required 4' setback, given that the proposed area in the front yard is large enough to allow for setbacks and at least 2 parking spaces. The setback requirement is intended to mitigate negative externalities that surface parking may cause, including drainage. This part of the proposal is contrary to Sec 60.103 of the zoning code, to fix reasonable standards to which buildings, structures, and uses shall conform and to protect the general welfare of the community. **This finding is not met for the setback variance request.**

2. The variance is consistent with the comprehensive plan.

This proposal is contrary to LU-14 in the comprehensive plan, which encourages reducing the amount of land devoted to off-street parking. **This finding is not met for both variance requests.**

3. The applicant has established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the provision, that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the provision. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties.

The applicant cites the lack of accessibility to a rear garage on the property and vandalism to vehicles as the main reasons to request a zoning variance for front yard parking. However, it appears that the applicant has not ever had rear vehicular access to the accessory structure and purchased the property in the current configuration. It is not clear how this lack of access creates a practical difficulty. The applicant cites vandalism and a desire to remove vehicles from the street for this request. However, the applicant currently has a 16' wide two-car garage and could construct a driveway by-right that is four feet wider than that garage (20'). The zoning code allows vehicles to be parked in driveways that lead to legal off-street parking spaces. This means that the applicant could have four vehicles parked off-street if they were to use the garage and driveway. Parking on the portion of the driveway apron in the right-of-way, as was discovered during staff's inspection, is prohibited.

Staff inspected the property and noted available street parking and several vehicles on site. A two-car garage, which already exists and associated driveway, as the property owner could have by right, is perfectly reasonable. It appears that this property owner is creating the need for this variance themselves by keeping a larger-than-typical number of vehicles. Given that street parking is available, and that the property owner has a two-car garage and driveway, it appears that there are not practical difficulties in complying with this provision. **This finding is not met for both variance requests.**

4. *The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.*

A two-car garage and associated driveway, as the property currently has, is perfectly reasonable. There are not circumstances unique to the property that would warrant the granting of these variances, as the circumstances appear to be created by the landowner. **This finding is not met for both requests.**

5. *The variance will not permit any use that is not allowed in the zoning district where the affected land is located.*

Off-street parking accessory to a single-family dwelling is permitted and will not change the use. **This finding is met for both requested variances.**

6. *The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.*

The property owner installed a fence to screen the front yard. Granting the request will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area. **This finding is met for both variance requests.**

E. **DISTRICT COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION:** As of the date of this report, staff have not received a recommendation from District 2 – Greater East Side Community Council.

F. **CORRESPONDENCE:** Staff have not received any correspondence regarding these requests.

G. **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Based on findings 1 through 4, staff recommend denial of the requested variances.