



**CITY OF SAINT PAUL**  
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**DATE:** May 12, 2016  
**TO:** Neighborhood Planning Committee  
**FROM:** Mike Richardson, City Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Ward 3 Residential Design Standards – Sidewall Articulation

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The purpose of this memo is to provide the Committee a summary of discussions with Districts 14 and 15 regarding the recently adopted sidewall articulation ordinance and to discuss an analysis of potential options for amendment.

### *Background*

On September 2, 2015, amendments to the zoning code went into effect that modified some residential dimensional and design standards in Districts 14 and 15. One of the goals was to have impactful zoning that didn't result in a high number of variance requests, especially those that are frequently granted.

From the amendments that were adopted, sidewall articulation has emerged as one that warrants review based on the number of variance requests submitted, input from the District Councils, and decision history from the Board of Zoning Appeals. With few exceptions, the District Councils have supported variance requests from applicants. A detailed list of those decisions was prepared by the Department of Safety and Inspections and is included as Attachment 1. District Council staff has expressed concern to planning staff and the Ward 3 office regarding the applicability of the articulation requirement. The code language is as follows:

*Sec. 66.234. - Sidewall articulation.*

*For R1—R4 residential districts in planning districts 14 and 15, excluding property with local heritage preservation site or district designation, sidewall articulation is required for building faces that exceed thirty-five (35) feet in length. Articulation shall be in the form of a structural projection of at least one (1) foot in depth and six (6) feet in length, and must extend from grade to the eave.*

The intent of the language is to avoid the monotonous appearance of long, unbroken building facades that have become more common in the area and introduce additional sideyard space on lots with long

structures. Staff feels that the intent is valid based on the process that led to the amendments and conversations with stakeholders since the code took effect. However, staff also acknowledges that additional action may be required to make the code more enforceable and less restrictive for homeowners, while still maintaining the original intent.

As part of the adoption process for the 2015 amendments, the Planning Commission requested a report from staff after one year to summarize the impact of the amendments. However, based on cases and outcomes that have gone through the application process, staff felt that it was appropriate and timely to examine this aspect of the amendments earlier.

### *Meetings with District Councils*

Staff met with the Highland Community Development Committee meeting on March 15 and the Macalester-Groveland Housing and Land Use Committee meeting on March 23. The purpose was to make the District Councils aware that the city is considering changes and to ask for their input.

The major themes that emerged from these conversations were:

- The intent of the sidewall articulation requirement is valid and should remain in some form
- Flexibility in the ordinance would be good for both the owner and city staff
- Accommodating for existing structures and the limitations they present should be accounted for in the ordinance
- There is a significant difference between a long one-story wall and a long two-story wall, and that it may be possible to differentiate between the two in the ordinance
- There was broad appeal to have a “menu” of options to break up the wall, from which an applicant could choose to meet a minimum standard

Two residents in attendance at the District 14 meeting felt that a lot of consideration went into the ordinances and that they should be left intact for the time being. They felt that putting the burden of demonstrating a need for long walls on an applicant was not a bad thing.

The Neighborhood Planning Committee requested that staff ask the District Councils about changes to the height requirements and whether there was concern and if there were any relatively easy modifications that should be considered. Neither District Council expressed concern about the height ordinance.

One of the main goals of this effort is to reduce the number of projects that require variances, while still maintaining the intent of the ordinance. Attachment 2 is a table that evaluates options to modify the sidewall articulation ordinance that have been discussed so far. It describes the options, the objectives, pros and cons, and the opinions of the District Councils if any were given. Also included is a column that explores potential impacts of each option on the cases that have involved sidewall articulation.

### *Committee Action*

Staff requests that the Neighborhood Planning Committee discuss the options and considerations laid out in Attachment Two. Based on the discussion at the meeting, staff could bring draft language to the next meeting, unless language comes out of the discussion that could be forwarded directly to the Planning Commission.

#### Attachments:

Attachment 1: Zoning Variances Processed for One- and Two-Family Dwelling Submitted Since 9/2/15

Attachment 2: Analysis of Options for Articulation Ordinance Modification

Attachment 3: Sidewall Articulation Fact Sheet Draft

Attachment 4: Alamo Heights Articulation Language

cc: Zoning Administrator  
Ward 3 Office  
Ward 4 Office

**Zoning Variances Processed for One- and Two-Family Dwellings Submitted Since 9-2-15  
Those That Included New Design Standards Variances  
For Planning District 14**

3-31-16

Address & District	In Date	Purpose	Variance for Non-design Standard Regulations	Design Standard Variance	Staff Recommendation	District Council Recommendation	Neighbors' Comments	BZA Decision & Why Design Standard Was Varied
1443 Jefferson Avenue (14)	11-23-15	2 <sup>nd</sup> story addition over existing 1½ story single family dwelling	Side yard setback	Sidewall articulation on west side & for the 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor on the east side (already an articulation on the first floor on the east side)  Height (22' allowed, 25.2' proposed)	Approval for side setback  Denial for articulations & height	None	None	<b>Approved</b> for side setback and no sidewall articulation on the west side because it is a second floor addition on the rear of the existing house and an articulation would require structural changes to accommodate the need for load bearing walls  <b>Denied</b> for height and for a second floor articulation on the east side
1369 Sargent Avenue (14)	12-16-15	2 <sup>nd</sup> story addition on back half of a 1½ -story single family dwelling	Side yard setback	Height (22' allowed, 22.5' proposed)	Approval for side setback  Denial for height	None	None	<b>Approved</b> for height to improve functionality of interior space
1485 Sargent Avenue (14)	12-22-15	Add new roof with steeper pitch & dormer to existing 2-story single family dwelling	Side yard setback	Height (22' allowed, 26' proposed)	Approval for side setback  Denial for height	None	None	<b>Approved</b> for height at 24.1' because it would not create a significant massing issue & would be in scale with & fit into the neighborhood (the applicant submitted revised elevation plans changing the roof pitch)
2208 Goodrich Avenue (14)	12-16-15	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor rear addition over 1-story existing attached garage & garage extension	Rear yard setback	Sidewall articulation on west side	Approval for setback  Denial for articulation	None	5 letters of support, including property owners on both sides	<b>Approved</b> for articulation because it would result in the loss of windows & could affect a mature sugar maple

**Zoning Variances Processed for One- and Two-Family Dwellings Submitted Since 9-2-15  
 Those That Included New Design Standards Variances  
 For Planning District 15**

Address & District	In Date	Purpose	Variance for Non-design Standard Regulations	Design Standard Variance	Staff Recommendation	District Council Recommendation	Neighbors' Comments	BZA Decision & Why Design Standard Was Varied
1311 Eleanor Avenue (15)	10-18-15	Demo house; build new 2-story single family dwelling	Front & side setbacks	Sidewall articulation on both sides  Height (22' allowed, 26' proposed)	Denial for all	None	2 letters in opposition	<p><b>Approved</b> for articulation because the new house would re-use the foundation of the previous house and adding articulation would be difficult</p> <p>For height because the height would be similar to the houses on both sides</p> <p>Also, because they originally submitted the permit application prior to the effective date of the code change but staff determined that the application was incomplete and returned it. By the time it was re-submitted, the new code has gone into effect and additional variances were needed to the construction plans that were already developed</p>
1568 Osceola Avenue (15)	10-22-15	Add 2 <sup>nd</sup> story to 1½- story single family dwelling		Sidewall articulation on both sides  Height (22' allowed, 26.75' proposed)	Denial	Approval	2 letters in support from adjoining property owners	<p><b>Approved</b> west sidewall articulation because it would require structural changes to accommodate the need for load bearing walls &amp; east sidewall articulation because it would affect the 1<sup>st</sup> floor window</p> <p>For height in order to build a reasonable</p>

								and usable full 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor
1696 Juno Avenue (15)	12-15-15	Demo house; build new 2-story single family dwelling with attached garage	Front & rear yard setbacks	Height (23' allowed, 23.6' proposed)	Approval for setbacks Denial for height	None	2 neighbors in opposition	<b>Approved</b> height with condition that rear setback maintains the same setback as the previous house so height will have less of an impact
1634 Bayard Avenue (15)	11-10-15	Build a 1-story addition to the rear of a 2-story single family dwelling		Sidewall articulation on the west side	Denial	Approval	1 letter in support	<b>Approved</b> because existing west building façade has a dormer that breaks up the sidewall & provides character, meeting the intent of the articulation requirement

**Zoning Variances Processed for One- and Two-Family Dwellings Submitted Since 9-2-15  
Properties That Had Variances but Not From the Design Standards  
For Planning Districts 14 and 15**

Address & District	In Date	Purpose	Variance for Non-design Standard Regulations	Design Standard Variance	Staff Recommendation	District Council Recommendation	Neighbors' Comments	BZA Decision & Why Design Standard Was Varied
1711 James Avenue (14)	12-18-15	New side door entryway on single family dwelling	Side yard setback	None	Approval	None	None	Approved
1739 Beechwood Avenue (15)	12-29-15	Build 2nd story over 1-story single family dwelling	Side setback	None	Approval	None	None	Approved
1809 Yorkshire Avenue (15)	2-3-16	To allow a chimney to extend closer to the side property line on a single family dwelling	Side setback	None	Approval	Responded that they would not take a position	1 letter in opposition	Approved
1131 Davern Street (15)	2-11-16	To allow a balcony deck closer to the side property line on a single family dwelling	Side setback	None	Denial	None	5 letters in opposition	Approved

Options for Potential Modification of Sidewall Articulation Ordinance

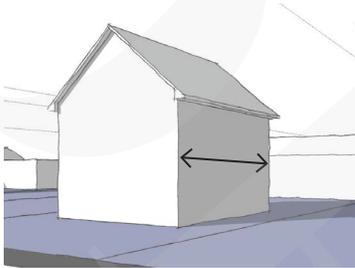
Line	Options	Objective	Pros	Cons	District Councils				DC Comment	Hypothetical Effect on Cases since 9/2/15	Additional Comments
					Support	Neutral	Disapproval	No Comment			
1	<b>Increase the minimum wall length that requires articulation</b>	Make ordinance less restrictive by setting trigger length to be longer.	> Fewer projects would require variances	> Unbroken wall length gets longer			15	14	District 15 felt that the 35' length as it exists is appropriate.	1311 Eleanor: Uses existing foundation - 42.5' Sidewall 1568 Osceola: Uses existing first floor walls and cantilevers over rear wall. 39' sidewalls. 1634 Bayard: Addition on back extended wall from 34' to 42' 8". 1443 Jefferson: Extends west side from 31' to 43'. East side is broken up with the longest unbroken segment at 25'. 2208 Goodrich: New length on west side 58'3". Unlikely minimum would be increased to include that length.	
2	<b>Require only one side to be articulated</b>	Make ordinance less restrictive and increase flexibility for applicant/owner.	> Fewer projects would require variances > Variation in sidewalls present at a block face level	> Negative impacts of long, unbroken façade still felt for some neighbors.			15	14		1311 Eleanor: One-side requirement would have been possible to meet, notwithstanding foundation issues. One side of foundation in nonconforming setback area, so couldn't have added on that side. 1568 Osceola: Would have been challenging to do either side working within constraints of existing walls. 1634 Bayard: Original house would have been in conformance, new addition created condition where both walls were greater than 35'. 1443 Jefferson: Would have been in conformance. 2208 Goodrich: Would have been in conformance.	
3	<b>Make accommodations or exceptions for existing structures or foundations</b>	Recognize that there are potential cost and spatial limitations to modify existing structures and foundations	> Less costly for owner > Sustainable to use as much of existing structure as possible	> Less substantial breaking of the sidewall plane	14 15				The difference between teardown and remodel is closely related to this and other options.	1311 Eleanor: Teardown, but using same foundation. Cantilevered 1' over rear. Depending on accommodation, articulation might not have been required or would have been modified. 1568 Osceola: Remove and rebuild second floor. Depending on accommodation, articulation might not have been required or would have been modified. 1634 Bayard: Addition not using existing foundation; no effect. 1443 Jefferson: Addition, using existing foundation. Depending on accommodation, articulation might not have been required. Could have built west wall offset to the east 1' to avoid nonconforming area and fulfill current articulation requirement, but would have been costly if using same foundation. 2208 Goodrich: Expand garage and add second story above. Depending on accommodation, articulation might not have been required or would have been modified.	
4	Example - require alternative features such as bay windows if full articulation is not feasible	Provides flexibility for owners	> Makes it easier for owner to meet code	> Challenging to define this list; see line 9	14			15		1311 Eleanor: Would have been difficult for owner to argue why could not have included something on east (not nonconforming) side. 1568 Osceola: This was done as a negotiation on the west side of the second floor. 1634 Bayard: Could have incorporated alternate feature, but may be impractical. One alternative feature could be different roof line, in which case this would conform. 1443 Jefferson: West side setback nonconforming. Should discuss if features should be required in nonconforming side setback areas. 2208 Goodrich:	
5	<b>Related to row above - define articulation in terms of variation in the façade (breaks, changes in story height, areas of relief, max areas with no relief)</b>	Recognize that the monotony of a sidewall can be broken by methods other than a projection, including changes in height	> Additional flexibility > Reflects opinion given by D15 in their review of case(s)	> Challenging to define and put into an ordinance > Would require additional documentation (elevation) in the application	14 15				Both DCs supported, but struggled to come up with precisely how it would be done.	1311 Eleanor: No façade differentiation at all in proposed/built house. 1568 Osceola: Facade expanded vertically, not broken up. 1634 Bayard: Story height did not change - one-story continued to one-story addition. If variation includes change in roof line, this would conform. 1443 Jefferson: Unclear if there would have been differentiation at top of west sidewall. 2208 Goodrich: Differentiation unclear without west elevation.	

Line	Options	Objective	Pros	Cons	District Councils				DC Comment	Hypothetical Effect on Cases since 9/2/15	Additional Comments
					Support	Neutral	Disapproval	No Comment			
6	Require articulation to begin at the top of foundation wall (rather than at grade)	Reduce difficulty in adjusting existing structures	>Eliminates need to adjust or build foundation	> Aesthetics (Subjective)	14 15				DCs felt that this was a reasonable, and sometimes more sensible change	1311 Eleanor: Would have been possible to incorporate projection on east side if cantilever allowed. Would have required adjustment of eave or roof line. 1568 Osceola: Not applicable. 1634 Bayard: Not applicable. 1443 Jefferson: Would have been possible on west side if not in nonconforming setback. May have caused awkward interior space. 2208 Goodrich: Not applicable as footprint expansion is limited and construction increased height of walls rather than built on foundation.	
7	Decrease the minimum length/depth of the articulation	Smaller projection could be less costly to build	> Possibly less costly to add	> Impractical, still have to build a projection of some kind				14 15		1311 Eleanor: Theoretically would have been easier and less costly than what is currently required. 1568 Osceola: Not applicable due to nature of project. 1634 Bayard: Could have offset addition, but would likely result in awkward interior space. 1443 Jefferson: Theoretically would have been easier and less costly than what is currently required. Perhaps less impact on interior space if less depth required. 2208 Goodrich: Likely not much of an effect.	
8	Don't require articulation to extend to eave	Use a one-story (or shorter) projection would count toward requirement, expanding options for applicant/owner	> More flexibility to determine where and how articulation happens	> Could result in awkward projections	14			15		1311 Eleanor: Theoretically would have been easier and less costly than what is currently required. 1568 Osceola: Theoretically would have been easier and less costly than what is currently required and what was negotiated. 1634 Bayard: One-story addition - less significant. 1443 Jefferson: Theoretically would have been easier and less costly than what is currently required (if not in side setback area). 2208 Goodrich: Not applicable.	PED and DSI have interpreted the current language to allow for projections that extend to the eave of any roof structure, including one that doesn't go to the "top" of the house. See bottom comparison in Attachment 3.
9	Provide a list of features from which owners could choose to use instead of articulation as currently defined	Give additional options to break up sidewall	> Additional flexibility > Fewer variance requests	> Challenging to define and put into an ordinance, including coordinating with setback projection allowance	15	14			DCs liked this option in general, but understood it could be difficult to make the right list and define the elements in it	1311 Eleanor: Would have been difficult for owner to argue why could not have included something on east (not nonconforming) side. 1568 Osceola: The feature added here would likely have counted towards a requirement like this. Not done on the other side because it was at the side setback line. 1634 Bayard: Possible, but somewhat impractical on a small addition. 1443 Jefferson: If not in nonconforming site setback, could have added feature to addition. 2208 Goodrich: Could have been included in new second story addition to break up facade.	From Alamo Heights, TX (Adapted and used in Edina): The maximum exterior side wall plane width without a minimum of a one (1) foot by ten (10) foot offset is thirty (30) feet or a combination of one (1) of the following architectural or utilitarian features every (30) feet to break up the monotony of the façade: (see Attachment 4 for list and language).
10	Eliminate requirement	Simplify design, application, and review processes	> Less time for owner to develop conforming design > Less staff review time > Fewer cases to BZA	> Counter to desires of PC and Neighborhoods > Allows long, unbroken walls				14 15	DCs did not want to eliminate the requirement.		
11	No change - leave language as-is		> No need to put amendments through adoption process > Less confusing for public that has started to digest ordinance as-is					14 15	DCs felt that there was a need to modify the ordinance.		
					Note: These are generalizations based on discussion held at the respective meetings.						

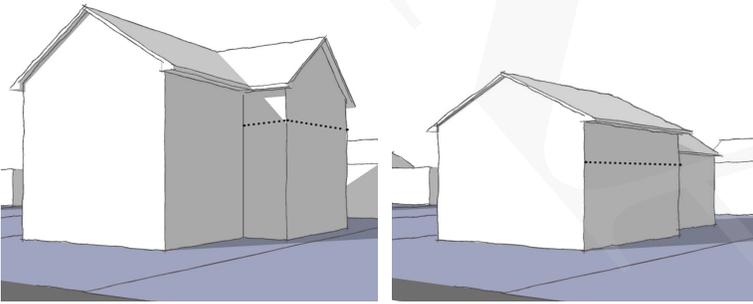
**Sec. 66.234. Sidewall Articulation**

For R1-R4 residential districts in planning districts 14 and 15, excluding property with local heritage preservation site or district designation, sidewall articulation is required for building faces that exceed thirty-five (35) feet in length. Articulation shall be in the form of a structural projection of at least one (1) foot in depth and six (6) feet in length, and must extend from grade to the eave.

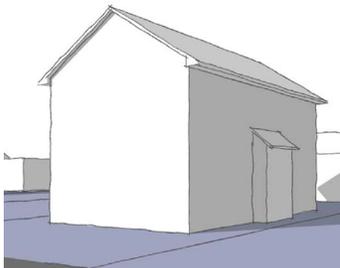
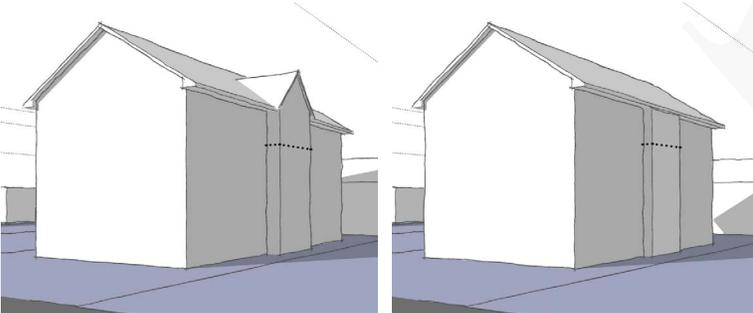
**MEETS REQUIREMENT**



- Overall length less than 35' without articulation

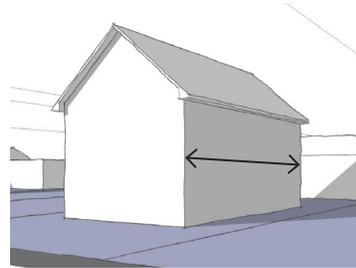


- Overall length greater than 35' and with projection greater than 1' deep and 6' wide

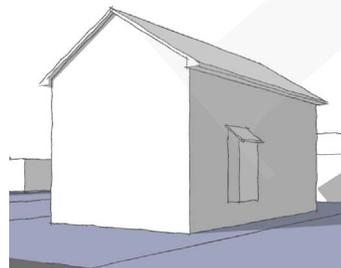


- Projection extends from grade to eave
- Edge of projection is the footprint of the structure and must meet setback requirement

**DOES NOT MEET REQUIREMENT**



- Overall length greater than 35' without articulation



- Projection does not extend from grade to eave
- Edge of projection is not the footprint (gas fireplace insert, bay window) and can extend into setback (63.106)
- This projection is allowed, but does not fulfill articulation requirement

**Single-Family Districts Zoning Code  
City of Alamo Heights Code of Ordinances**

*Exception:* A one-story unenclosed roofed front porch up to fifteen (15) feet in height may encroach into the required front yard setback up to six (6) feet if it is at least six (6) feet deep.

(Ord. No. 1750-C, § 2, 1-28-08)

**Sec. 3-15. - Side yard setbacks and side articulation.**

**SF-A and SF-B Districts.**

No building, structure or use shall hereafter so as to have a smaller side yard on each side of a building than hereinafter specified, except as specifically provided in section 3-82, special side yard regulations.

(1) The minimum side yard setback for the main structure on the driveway side is ten (10) feet.

(2) The minimum side yard setback for the main structure on the non-driveway side is six (6) feet.

(3) The minimum side yard setback for an accessory structure is three (3) feet.

*Main Structure Articulation:* The maximum exterior side wall plane width without a minimum of a two (2) foot by ten (10) foot offset is thirty (30) feet or a combination of one (1) of the following architectural or utilitarian features every thirty (30) feet to break up the monotony of the façade:

1. Projecting bay or box windows cantilevered, rather than supported by a permanent foundation (not to exceed twenty-five (25) percent of the façade length)
2. Stoops (not to exceed twenty-five (25) percent of the façade)
3. Porches (covered and unenclosed, not to exceed twenty-five (25) percent of the façade)
4. Chimneys (minimum depth of one (1) foot and not to exceed twenty-five (25) percent of the façade)
5. Structural window awnings or canopies (not to exceed twenty-five (25) percent of the façade)
6. Roof dormers

**Single-Family Districts Zoning Code  
City of Alamo Heights Code of Ordinances**

7. Pilasters
8. A second-story roof overhang (at least twenty-five 25 percent of the façade length)
9. Porte-cocheres (see definition in Sec. 3-2 and Sec. 3-21. *Required Off-Street Parking* exception #4)

*Exception:* The minimum an air conditioning unit or pool unit can be located from a property line or fence is three (3) feet and air conditioning units must be located as close as possible to a main or accessory structure.

(Ord. No. 1750-C, § 2, 1-28-08)

Sec. 3-16. - Rear yard setbacks.

**SF-A and SF-B Districts.**

No building, structure or use shall hereafter be located, erected or altered so as to have a smaller rear yard than hereinafter specified, except as specifically provided in section 3-83, special rear yard regulations.

(1) The minimum rear yard setback for the main structure is twenty (20) feet for the first story and thirty (30) feet for a second story.

(2) The minimum setback of a garage from a main structure is four (4) feet.

(3) The minimum rear yard setback of an accessory structure is three (3) feet.

*Exceptions:*

(1) The minimum an air conditioning unit or a pool unit can be located from a property line or fence is three (3) feet and air conditioning units must be located as close as possible to a main or accessory structure.

(2) For purposes of calculating rear yard setbacks for the main structure, a covered breezeway attached to both the accessory and main structures shall not be considered part of the main structure. The breezeway must be no more than eight (8) feet wide and twelve (12) feet tall, must be unenclosed, must be