



STAFF REPORT

CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

TO: City Council **MEETING DATE:** September 1, 2026
FROM: Lisa Walsh, Development Services Director
SUBJECT: An Ordinance Striking Required Garages for All Residential Units, Updates to LDR

BACKGROUND

Council discussed this item at the July 15, 2025 meeting and directed staff to solicit input from the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) on whether a garage should be required for all residential units within Green Cove Springs. Due to changes in City leadership and cancelled CAC meetings, a response was received in February from the CAC.

Staff conducted a cursory review of the garage requirements for surrounding communities and found that Fernandina Beach, Palatka, Atlantic Beach, Penney Farms, Clay County, St. Johns County, and the City of St. Augustine do not require garages. The Town of Orange Park, under Section 2.05.19.b.viii of their code, requires a 9' x 19' attached garage on all new or newly sited dwellings. There is also a provision that negates this requirement if many of the immediate neighbors do not have enclosed garages.

Staff presented this information to Council on March 17th, 2026. Council directed staff to engage the Planning and Zoning Board to solicit their opinions on this item. This item was last presented at the June 23, 2026, Planning and Zoning Board meeting. The Board directed staff to prepare an ordinance which strikes Sec. 117-5 from the City Code. Staff have drafted O-17-2026 which strikes Sec. 117-5 and makes the corresponding adjustments to the related sections while revising a few errors found within each section.

Staff presented O-17-2026 to the Planning and Zoning Board on July 28, 2026. Staff noted during the presentation that additional consideration had led staff to believe that financial institutions with drive-throughs should be permitted within the Form Based Code Primary Corridor zone by right, rather than by Special Exception, as drafted in the ordinance. This determination arrived because restaurants with drive throughs are currently permitted by right within the Form Based Code Primary Corridor zone. Hearing no comments, the Board recommended Council approve the ordinance, with the adjustment that financial institutions be permitted by right within the Form Based Code Primary Corridor zone, as recommended by staff.

At the August 4, 2026 City Council meeting, this ordinance was approved as to form only on the first reading. The proposed ordinance went to the Citizens Advisory Committee on August 13, 2026 for consideration. Their recommendations are listed below.

1. The current municipal ordinance restricting detached carport or garage construction beyond the plane of the front of the house (i.e., in the front yard) should be retained.
2. No stipulation on style of a detached carport is recommended as long as the structure meets the current Florida Building Code for wind resistance, structural strength and anchorage. CAC agrees that attached carport/garage structures should mimic the existing architecture of the structure.
3. There was considerable discussion regarding property rights and privacy, with an emphasis on the importance of maintaining privacy in rear yards. Members noted that front yards are generally expected to be publicly visible and, therefore, more appropriately subject to aesthetic standards and applicable code restrictions.

The discussion also addressed whether carport structures should be treated differently from other accessory structures, such as gazebos, ADUs, or pump houses, particularly with respect to setback requirements.

Ultimately, the CAC recommended maintaining the existing backyard - rear-lot and side - setback requirements.

Upon receiving these comments, staff were directed to incorporate them into the draft ordinance. Staff subsequently reviewed the ordinance language and did not find a need to revise the ordinance for the following reasons. Below is a copy of the ordinance language as proposed and reviewed by City Council on August 4, 2026.

Recommendation 1 is addressed under the *Permitted Uses* section of each zoning category: “Customary accessory buildings and structures, including portable or temporary buildings, private detached garages, detached carports, and noncommercial greenhouses and workshops, provided they are located in the rear or side yard behind the façade of the primary structure and are not closer than three feet to the rear property line, and meet the side yard requirements of the district;”

Recommendation 2 appears to be more of a comment; compliancy with the Florida Building Code falls under purview of the building official and would not need to be included within the zoning regulations.

Recommendation 3 also appears to be more of comment, with no further action needed.

FISCAL IMPACT

Minimal fiscal impact is anticipated to the City. Staff anticipate most newly constructed homes shall continue to construct garages as the market demands. Staff anticipate a slight increase in garage conversions, which shall result in a slight increase in revenue for the Building Department.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend approval of Ordinance O-17-2026.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Motion to approve ordinance O-17-2026 on second and final reading regarding garages and other Land Development Regulation updates.