



Memorandum

TO: Grosse Pointe Woods Council, Committee of the Whole
FROM: Brigitte Wolf, AICP
SUBJECT: **Front Yard Structures – Revisions to Ordinance**
DATE: November 20, 2023

CURRENT FRONT YARD SETBACK EXEMPTION TO MAILBOX

In the City of Grosse Pointe Woods there is a precedent for allowing exemptions to the front yard setback requirements. **Article XI of the Ordinance: Structures in Front Yards** allows for exemptions for what is defined as a structure (**Sec. 8-335**). The following are currently exempt from being considered a 'structure' and thus may be located within the front or side yard setbacks, these include:

- fence,
- pole containing a basketball hoop,
- a flagpole,
- a light pole,
- a mailbox
- an air conditioning condensing unit, or
- an unenclosed outside porch.

RECOMMENDATION FROM PLANNING COMMISSION

At the September 26, 2023 Planning Commission meeting, the Commission considered amendments to allow for mini-libraries and raised flower/garden bed in the front yards of residential properties. The amendments considered were to Article XI Sec.8-335 of the Ordinance to expand the list of items exempt from the front yard setback requirement of each residential district. Planning Commission made the following recommendations to Council:

1. Mini-Libraries –
Planning Commission recommends that the ordinance restricting front yard structures include in the exemptions a free mini-library, and no more than one per property, that is less than 5 feet in height and no more than 4 square feet in total area. Subject to Building Department permit.
2. Raised Garden Bed –
To preserve the community character and aesthetics of the City, Planning Commission recommends that the current ordinance restricting front yard structures not be expanded to include within its exemptions raised planters.

Without the inclusion of raised garden beds, they are permitted only in the side yard and rear yard. This would not pertain to raised landscape *borders* that run along the front of residential structures or around trees in the front yard setback.



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RAISED GARDEN BEDS

If further consideration is to be given to raised garden beds in the required front yard, restrictions in placement and size should be considered.

Placement

Consideration should be given to the following:

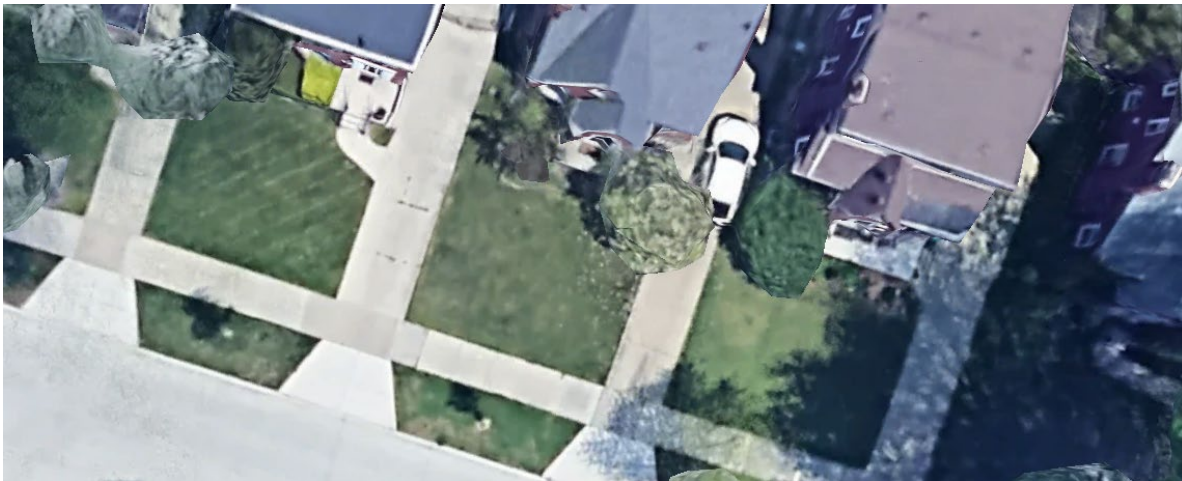
- a) At least 10 feet from the sidewalk or public right-of-way, OR within 5 feet from the primary structure
- b) At least 3 feet from the side lot line

Size

Restrict Size or Area of the Raised Planters, such as:

- a) 24 inches or 2 feet in height (This would pertain to the structure.)
- b) Cumulative area of the raised planters to be of 20 square feet or less or 5% of the required front yard area, which ever is less

Current Front Yards

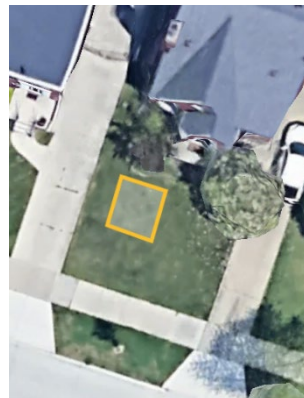


Potential Sizes of Raised Beds

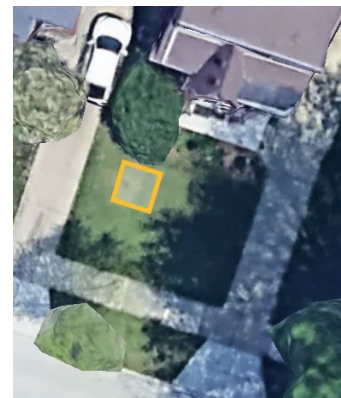
A. 15% Coverage



B. 10% of the Front Yard



C. 5% of the Front Yard, about 20 ft²





NEXT STEPS

If Committee of the Whole decides to proceed with an amendment to the City Ordinance regarding front yard structures, a public notice and hearing would be administered, and the final decision for adoption would need a favorable vote of five members of the council, regardless of how many members are present at the time the vote is taken.