

Double Frontage – Corner Lot Lines: Perspective from other communities

A common example in Oelwein is where a property owner wishes to demolish a garage (or build one if none present). The address below is 102 6th Ave NW (50' x '140', a very common lot size) has two front property lines. The first 60' setback can be met no problem from 6th Ave NW. The second setback however, for 1st St NW, prohibits the construction of a new/replacement garage since that setback places it in the neighbor's yard to the north.



Oelwein's ordinance reads:

47. LOT LINE, FRONT: Any lot line abutting the public right-of-way. Corner and through lots have multiple frontage and front lot lines.

Which is all it says. It does not make accommodation for prior existing lots. The nonconforming use regulations do not permit the further creation of nonconforming structures.

Below are some ordinances from similar municipalities for comparison:

Centerville and Manchester, Iowa

2. For a corner lot, the shorter lot line abutting a public or private street or easement. In instances of equal line dimension, the front lot line shall be determined by the building official, or as may be noted on the final plat;

3. For a double frontage lot, the lot lines separating the lot from the right-of-way or easement of the more minor street. In cases where each street has the same classification, the front lot line shall be determined by the building official at the time of application for the original building permit for the lot, or as may be noted on the final plat;

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Nevada, Iowa (The same as Centerville and Manchester, but with the addition of item 2)

B. “Double frontage lot” – a lot, other than a corner lot, having frontage on two streets, private ways or courts. Primary access shall be restricted on a double frontage lot to the minor of the two streets or to the front line as determined at time of platting or as defined by this chapter (also known as a “through lot”).

(3) For a double frontage lot, the lot lines separating the lot from the right-of-way or easement of the more minor street. In cases where each street has the same classification, the front lot line shall be determined by the Building Official at the time of application for the original building permit for the lot, or as may be noted on the final plat.

(2) Corner Lots. Required setbacks shall not reduce the buildable width of any corner lot to less than 24 feet. Appropriate setback adjustments shall be allowed to maintain this minimum width. There shall be a side yard on the longer street side of a reversed frontage lot of not less than seventy-five percent (75%) of the front yard required on the lots to the rear of such reversed frontage lot, and no accessory building on said reversed frontage lot shall project beyond the setback line of the lots in the year; provided that this regulation shall not require a side yard greater than twenty-five (25) feet.

Atlantic and Independence, Iowa

4. Double Frontage and Reverse Frontage Lots. Double frontage and reverse frontage lots should be avoided except where essential to provide separation of residential development from traffic arteries or to overcome special disadvantages of topography and orientation. A planting screen easement of at least ten (10) feet, and across which there shall be no right of access, shall be provided along the line of lots abutting such a traffic artery or other disadvantageous use.

Washington, Iowa

B. Lots with double frontage shall be avoided, except in specific locations where good platting indicates their use.