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Subject: For Public Safety: UTV Ordinance and Front Lawn Parking

Front Lawn Parking

After several written exchanges with the Watertown Police Department, Zoning, and former Zoning officials, it has become clear to me that parking vehicles on the front lawns of residential properties is currently legal in Watertown. Several constituents have complained that this practice lowers their property values, decreases the attractiveness of neighborhoods, and contributes to the "Watertucky" stigma that many are trying to dispel. I agree with these sentiments, especially since lower property values lead to lower property taxes, and we already enforce other ordinances that keep the front yards of our neighborhoods tidy and welcoming.



Car parked on the front lawn of a house in a historic home in Watertown. (310 N Church St; April 5, 2024) This is currently allowed.

To close Watertown's front-yard parking loophole, I encourage you to review similar language in neighboring Cities and adopt one of their "complaint driven" codes that marries zoning/platting of designated parking areas and enforcement through municipal tickets. For example:

City of Whitewater:

- Ordinance: https://library.municode.com/wi/whitewater/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT19ZO_C19.51TRPAAC_19.51.080FRSIREYAPALI

"19.51.080 - Front, side, and rear yard parking limitation. B. In no case shall vehicles be parked closer than three feet to any abutting property line (except for shared parking areas for which a zoning permit has been granted) or any lawn or landscaped area. All parking must take place in legally established and maintained parking areas or driveways."

- FAQ: <https://www.whitewater-wi.gov/FAQ.aspx?QID=64#:~:text=Parking%20is%20also%20restricted%20within,on%20front%20and%20side%20lawns.>

City of Appleton:

- Ordinance: <https://www.appleton.org/home/showpublisheddocument/26355/638445639024070000> (page 419) "Sec. 19-91. Parking in front and side yard in residential district; parking on terraces.(c) Front yard. No person shall park or store any motor vehicle, or recreational vehicle of 26 feet or less...in the front yard of any residential district except upon a residential driveway and shall be subject to temporary recreational vehicle parking restrictions set forth in §19-92. ...Any vehicle parked in the front yard, shall be parked within the driveway area in such a manner as to maintain all wheels on the driveway surface"
- Article: <https://www.postcrescent.com/story/news/local/2018/01/12/appleton-bans-parking-grass-front-and-side-yards/1010226001/>

Others:

- City of Jefferson: <https://ecode360.com/37666158?highlight=front,yards&searchId=23221265112208139#37665982> "§ 300-1.23 Definitions. PARKING SPACE, DESIGNATED
An area of a parking lot, or drive which has been designated for parking on a site plan and is located on a paved surface per the requirements of § 300-6.06. On single-family and two family lots, parts of the driveway, open spaces (outside of front and side yards) and the spaces within a garage may be used as designated parking spaces. "
- City of Manitowoc: <https://www.codepublishing.com/WI/Manitowoc/html/Manitowoc10/Manitowoc10570.html> "10.570 Parking in Front and Side Yards Prohibited.
No motor vehicle may be parked on any residential front or side yard except in accordance with Chapter 15 MMC. Any motor vehicle found to be parked in violation of this provision shall be subject to no more than one citation per day and may be towed at owner's expense."
- City of Tomah: https://www.tomahwi.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/police/page/2407/front_yard_parking.docx (Word Doc download) "Sec. 52-206. - Parking in front yards. No front yard of a lot in any residential or business district upon which a dwelling unit is located shall be used for parking of motor vehicles nor shall motor vehicles parked on any other front yard be permitted within five feet of the right-of-way line of a street. The enforcement of this section shall be the responsibility of the building inspector, or any other code enforcement officer. The fine is \$98.80.

Next Steps

I would greatly appreciate your separate consideration of both matters on a future Public Safety agenda as we move toward summer, possibly as soon as late May. Please let me know how I can assist this process and feel free to reach out to the individuals CC'ed on this email for additional information as well.

Regards,

Jonathan Lampe

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