



CITY OF RAPID CITY

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57701-2724

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Rapid City Planning Commission

FROM: Bill Lass, Senior Planner
Bill Knight, Assistant Fire Chief

DATE: 10/17/01

RE: Proposed Amendments to the Street Design Criteria Manual Regarding Residential Driveway Grades and Emergency Turn-Arounds

The Rapid City Fire Department has identified concerns with two aspects of residential driveway construction: driveway grades and lack of emergency vehicle turn-arounds.

Driveway Grades: Currently, the Street Design Criteria Manual limits residential driveway grades to 16%. The Fire Department has expressed concern with this standard noting that a 16% grade sometimes makes it impossible for emergency vehicles to safely access properties. This especially becomes a critical issue when long driveways over 100 feet are constructed. Shorter driveways do not present as much of a problem since many times reasonable access to the structure can be obtained directly from the street.

Staff is recommending that the Planning Commission authorize Staff to advertise for changes to the Street Design Criteria Manual to change the maximum allowable residential driveway grade from 16% to 12%. In discussing this issue, Staff has noted that some internal changes must be made in the way building permits are reviewed and enforced in order to help ensure that the grade requirement is being met. The Engineering Division has indicated that currently driveway grades are not known nor checked until after an approach permit has been received and the approach constructed. Many times the driveway is already constructed by this point making any grade changes extremely difficult. Staff is proposing the following methods to help ensure that driveway grade requirements are checked and enforced:

- Begin requiring contractors to provide a minimum of two elevations on a site plan – one at the approach entrance from the street and the other at the garage.
- Begin placing a note on all approved site plans which specifically calls out the maximum driveway grade requirement.

- Written notification of contractors prior to this administrative change would be undertaken by Staff to heighten awareness of the requirement.

Emergency Vehicle Turn-Arounds: Currently there is no requirement within the Street Design Criteria Manual to require residential driveway turn-arounds for emergency vehicles. Similarly to the driveway grade issue, this presents problems for emergency vehicles especially in cases of long or steep driveways. The Fire Department is recommending that the Street Design Criteria Manual be changed to require the construction of turn-arounds for driveways exceeding 100 feet in length. Attached is a drawing identifying the minimum dimensions for such turn-arounds. The Fire Department has indicated that the surface must be an "all-weather" surface which could mean paving, gravel or some type of pavers.

Staff is recommending that the Planning Commission authorize Staff to advertise for changes to the Street Design Criteria Manual requiring residential turn-arounds meeting certain specifications for any driveway exceeding 100 feet in length.

Staff will look forward to discussing these proposed changes further with the Planning Commission at the October 25, 2001 meeting.

Thank you.