

Front Setbacks Follow-Up

Proposed Regulation:

Minimum front setback: 25 feet, or the average of the front setbacks of the two adjacent lots may be substituted if either is less than 25 feet. For corner lots, lots adjacent to a vacant lot, or lots otherwise lacking an adjacent front setback to reference, the default front setback of 25 feet shall be used as reference.

PC Recommendation:

Minimum front setback: 25 feet, or the average of the front setbacks of the two adjacent lots may be substituted if either is less than 25 feet. For corner lots, lots adjacent to a vacant lot, or lots otherwise lacking an adjacent front setback to reference, the default front setback of 25 feet shall be used as reference. Minimum front setbacks may not be reduced to less than 15 feet.

The Question:

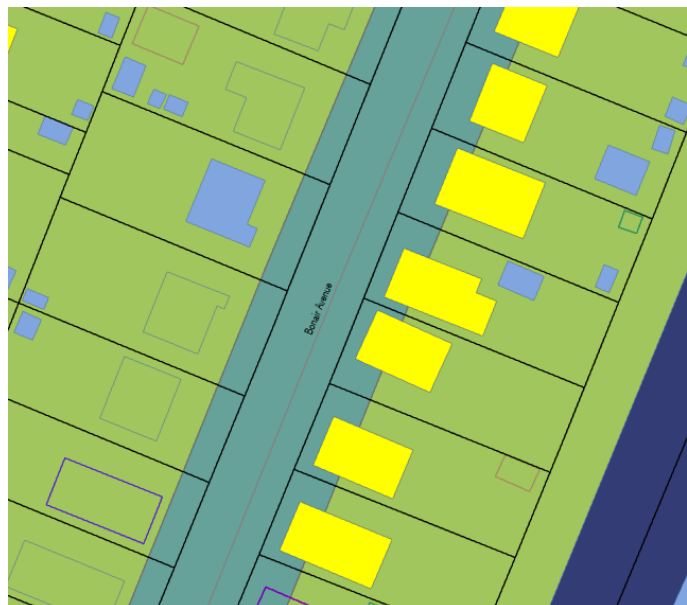
A resident raised concerns about particular streets (e.g. East Montgomery) where most or all homes have front setbacks of less than 25 feet, possibly less than the 15 feet proposed limit of reductions, others in attendance and members of the Planning Commission and Staff present acknowledged these concerns and sought clarification.

The Analysis:

As described before, single-family streets flagged by the previous analysis (which highlighted building footprints which were less than 40 feet from street centerlines) including:

- Mill Road
- South Chester Avenue
- Harding Avenue
- New Street
- Central Avenue
- North Penn Street
- East Montgomery Avenue
- East Moreland Avenue
- Bonair Avenue
- Lancaster Avenue
- Springdale Avenue
- Edward Road

Right: Bonair Road has many homes with that are flagged as being less than 40 feet from the street center.



Some areas identified in this analysis, such as the pictured segment of Bonair Road may not have setbacks short enough to be affected by the recommended 15 foot reduction minimum. In the case of Bonair Road and similar narrow streets, the actual right-of-way width is less than the conventional 50 feet which was used in the analysis.



Top Left: E. Montgomery Avenue was also flagged in the analysis and has a right-of-way of 50 feet, suggesting the analysis is more likely to identify affected properties.



Existing conditions on E. Montgomery Avenue consist of homes with short front setbacks. A professional survey would be required to provide definitive measurements of the properties in question, but aerial analysis indicates that many homes in this area and on similar streets throughout the borough could potentially be affected by the proposed reduction limit of 15 feet. Home renovations, such as the enclosed porch (middle left) make it more likely that the property's front setbacks fall below the recommended 15-foot limit, by a variety of measurements (bottom left). From the sidewalk edge to the original building front is approximately 24.5 feet. Measuring from the indicated property line to the front of the added room is only about 6.5 feet. This property is an example of one which would likely be affected by the recommended 15-foot limit to setback reductions.



Conclusion:

I recommend keeping the proposed regulation, as written above, without the 15-foot limit below which front setbacks cannot be reduced through the averaging method. I note again, though, opting to set an absolute minimum front setback of 15 feet (as recommended by the Planning Commission in January) is not anticipated to cause a drastic change in the overall physical character of Hatboro, owing to the relative rarity of short setbacks on residential properties and the slow pace of turnover in ownership and reconstruction on those properties. However, what non-conformities the 15-foot limit may create are fairly concentrated in older, more central neighborhoods of the borough- the kind of local conditions for which the averaging method was created.