

**Strathmere Zoning  
Summary of Proposed Ordinance  
Amendments March 12, 2019**

In response to concerns expressed about overdevelopment and the permissive granting of variances from building requirements in Strathmere, Upper Township created a Committee to update the current building ordinance in order to prevent overdevelopment of properties. The Committee consisted of representatives from the Strathmere Improvement Association and the UT Planning Board as well Township Planner, Tiffany Cuivelo and Township Engineer, Paul Dietrich. The process of preparing the proposed ordinance included a thorough review of all the concerns and development patterns. There were various factors to consider including the importance of ensuring all new construction meet flood protection standards.

Several key issues were identified:

- Excessive building Height – specifically the roof top access points and enclosed cupolas that acted as a “fourth floor”
- The excessive size of homes- 2 floors of living space plus the rooftop “cupola” of living space on the roof as well as the illegal conversions of storage space to living space on the ground floor.
- The “boxiness” of homes and the lack of architecturally appealing features
- Inconsistent requirements for residential development in the RR and RC zones resulting in oversized residences in the RC zone.
- Lack of standards for storm water management
- Un-elevated homes or homes built below flood protection elevation that prevents the raising of the local roads in the future as a means of flood protection.

In order to address these issues, the Committee identified what is desirable in terms of new construction and what is reasonable in terms of maintaining the character of Strathmere, recognized in the 2006 UT Master Plan, while at the same time not encouraging overdevelopment of properties. The proposed ordinance amendments were prepared to address the new residential construction in Strathmere and include the following changes to help achieve a balance of the above goals:

- Cupolas are defined as being decorative and height and size

limitations have been included. Additionally cupolas or other rooftop structures for stairways or elevators are not permitted above the maximum permitted building height, thereby eliminating the so called “4<sup>th</sup> floor”. The existing ordinance provides an almost 9 foot exception to the height restriction for these extensions.

- Limited the size of rooftop decks.
- Added a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) requirement. The purpose of the FAR is to control the habitable space within the building and to encourage the use of decks and open porches in building design. All habitable space above flood protection elevation is included in the FAR and an exception is made for decks and porches. This exemption discourages the practice of eliminating decks in favor of building a residence with a “boxy” appearance lacking in architectural interest and allowing for architectural designs that are a better fit with the character of Strathmere.
- The FAR provides for flexibility to allow a limited “ground” floor to accommodate foyers, storage and habitable space above flood protection elevation with 2 stories above that. The area next to the garage, if located below flood elevation, does not have sufficient height to be utilized as living space.
- In order to make the enclosing of space such as a deck or porch more difficult and to encourage the architectural interest in the building façade, a requirement was added that a property owner will have to add this enclosed deck or porch space and recalculate the FAR. If the FAR isn’t met, then the property owner will have to request a variance.
- The calculation of building coverage now excludes open decks. These are decks that extend off the rear of a house. They are included in total lot coverage and cannot be enclosed without a variance. This exclusion also discourages the practice of eliminating decks in favor of building a residence with a “boxy” appearance lacking in architectural interest, allowing for architectural designs that are a better fit with the character of Strathmere.
- The ordinance also restricts the use of roof top deck railings so that no more than 18-inches can extend above the roofline. This means that roof top decks need to be set below the roofline.
- The ordinance differentiates between larger and smaller lots. On lots over 8,001 square feet or greater, side yard setbacks are required and a reduced building coverage is provided. This is to

prevent excessively oversized houses on larger lots.

- The ordinance specifically states that garages cannot be converted to storage space.
- The ordinance creates a conditional use in the RC zone (the commercial area) for residential uses. Property owners were requesting variances to build a residential structure to conform to the RC standards. This permitted larger homes and increased coverages. To keep the residential development consistent throughout Strathmere the RC zone permits residential development as a conditional use provided it meets all the requirements of the RR zone as we are amending in this ordinance.
- The ordinance includes storm water management controls and requires a minimum ground floor elevation for garages. This is to ensure that future roadway improvements to address flooding can be completed.