

Knowledge Centre

Article No 4.

Carports on Residential Properties: Understanding the 1.5 Metre Rule

Introduction

For many homeowners, a carport seems like a relatively simple structure. However, one of the first questions that arises when a carport is proposed near the front boundary of a residential property is: “How close can I build my carport to the street boundary?” The answer is not necessarily the same as the normal building line applicable to the property.

The Property Size Matters

A 496 m² erf falls within the “more than 350 m² and up to 650 m²” category applicable to the relevant residential zoning provisions. This is important because the Municipal Planning By-law applies different development parameters to different land-unit sizes. The ordinary development parameters for this category include a 75% maximum coverage. For a 496 m² property, $496 \text{ m}^2 \times 75\% = 372 \text{ m}^2$ maximum coverage.

The Normal Street Building Line

A common mistake is to assume that the ordinary street building line automatically determines where every structure must be positioned. For the relevant residential category, the ordinary street building line is 3.5 metres. The specific garage/carport provision must also be considered.

The Special Carport Provision

For land units exceeding 350 m² but not exceeding 650 m², the By-law specifically permits a garage or carport to be positioned up to 1.5 metres from the street boundary. This is a specific permitted carport position, rather than a general reduction of the property's building line.

The Carport Conditions

The permission is subject to important limitations. The carport must not be higher than 3.5 metres from existing ground level to the top of the roof; it must not contain more than a double-garage façade; and it must not exceed 6.5 metres in horizontal dimension when viewed from the street boundary.

Can the Carport Be Built on the Street Boundary?

For a 496 m² property, the specific provision permits the carport up to 1.5 metres from the street boundary, not directly on the street boundary. Other provisions may apply to other structures, boundaries or land-unit categories.

What About the Side Boundaries?

The position of the carport must also be considered in relation to the property's common boundaries. A carport extending laterally toward a side boundary should not be assessed solely by looking at the 1.5 metre street setback. The complete footprint must be considered.

The 75% Coverage Limit Still Applies

The special carport setback does not mean that the carport can be ignored when calculating development potential. For the 496 m² property, the relevant general coverage parameter is 75%, giving 372 m² maximum coverage. Existing buildings, the proposed carport and other structures must be considered.

Building Line Compliance Is Not the End of the Assessment

A carport may satisfy the specific 1.5 metre rule and still encounter other restrictions. These can include zoning, site coverage, height, parking, vehicle access, stormwater, servitudes, title deed conditions, existing approvals, National Building Regulations, SANS requirements and municipal approvals.

The Title Deed Must Also Be Checked

A municipal planning provision does not necessarily eliminate a more restrictive condition registered against the property. The title deed should be checked for restrictive building lines, garage or outbuilding conditions, servitudes and other development restrictions.

Planning Permission and Building Approval Are Different Questions

Planning compliance asks whether the proposal complies with the Municipal Planning By-law and Development Management Scheme. Building compliance asks whether the construction complies with the National Building Regulations, SANS requirements and applicable building-plan requirements. Both should be considered before construction.

A Practical Example: The 496 m² Erf

Requirement	Applicable consideration
Erf size	496 m ²
Land-unit category	>350–650 m ²
Normal street building line	3.5 m
Specific carport setback	Up to 1.5 m from street boundary
Maximum carport height	3.5 m
Maximum street-facing width	6.5 m
Maximum façade	Double-garage façade
General site coverage	75%
Maximum coverage for 496 m ²	372 m ²
Title deed	Must be checked
Servitudes	Must be checked
Building regulations	Must be checked
Municipal approval	Must be established before construction

The Important Distinction

A 1.5 metre carport setback is not a general 1.5 metre building line. It is a specific provision applicable to garages and carports, subject to the conditions contained in the Municipal Planning By-law. Other structures on the same property may remain subject to the ordinary building-line requirements.

Before You Build the Carport

- Confirm the property zoning and registered erf area.
- Confirm the applicable street building line.
- Check whether the specific carport provision permits an encroachment.
- Confirm the proposed carport is within the 1.5 metre setback.
- Confirm height is ≤3.5 metres and street-facing width is ≤6.5 metres.
- Check overall site coverage.
- Check title deed restrictions and servitudes.

- Establish the applicable municipal and building approvals.

The CRINNOV Approach

At CRINNOV, we believe that residential design should begin with an understanding of the property and its regulatory environment. A successful design must balance what the homeowner wants, what the property can accommodate, what the planning regulations permit, what the building regulations require, and what can realistically be built.

Before You Call the Builder

If you are considering a carport, garage, extension or other structure near your street boundary, don't start by asking: "How much will it cost?" Start by asking: "Can I legally build what I am proposing?" Once the development potential has been established, the design and construction process becomes considerably more straightforward.

Planning a Carport, Garage or Extension?

CRINNOV Architecture & Building Services assists homeowners with residential architectural design, building plans, municipal submissions, planning and development assessments, SANS 10400 compliance, extensions and alterations, garages and carports, and regulatory guidance.

CRINNOV Architecture & Building Services

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About CRINNOV

CRINNOV specialises in residential architectural design, building plans, municipal submission support and regulatory guidance. By combining practical construction experience with architectural knowledge and modern digital technologies, CRINNOV helps homeowners transform ideas into compliant, practical and buildable solutions.