

Ask the Planner

How Do You Add Attractive Garages to Manufactured Homes?

By Don Westphal, ASLA

The addition of garages to homes is becoming more popular every year, and manufactured homeowners look for the same convenience and security available to site-built homeowners. Generally garages are one of two types: detached (or freestanding), or attached. Unfortunately many of the efforts to marry site built garages to manufactured homes fall short of the generally accepted appearance standards for garage/home integrations. Here are some of my observations on the matter.



Detached garages are quite easy to build and easily appointed to complement the home. All that is necessary to make them aesthetically compatible with the home is matching or complementary shingles, roof pitch, color and materials. Most can be built fairly inexpensively on thickened edge slabs.

Attached garages pose some more complicated challenges, both aesthetically and physically. Garages attached to manufactured homes are most often either adjacent to the home or integrated. The adjacent variety is built next to the home. Ideally the access into the home is by way of the utility room or kitchen. Comparable foundation systems are used for both home and garage. The garage is built with four walls in order to "stand alone" and not compromise the integrity of the HUD coded home by adding unplanned stress to the home.

An integrated garage is attached to a home that has been designed and approved to accommodate the anticipated load and stress of the garage. Comparable foundation systems are required for the home and garage so that they function as a unit after construction. It is important to note that if you plan to put an integrated garage on your manufactured home, you need to make sure the home was built to accommodate the structure.

Challenges and Solutions

The biggest problem encountered when attaching a garage to the home, especially in a land-lease community, is the difference in elevation between the floor of the garage and the floor of the home. This difference creates at least four problems.

First, it may require five or more steps to get from the garage into the home. These steps and the necessary landing at the door to the home take up significant floor space in the garage.

Second, sufficient clearance between the garage ceiling and top of the door into the house can be difficult to achieve.

Third, many garages are built with very tall side-walls to eliminate the second problem and to match the garage eaves with the home eave line. This results in a large area above the garage door and unusual proportions for the garage.

And fourth, most garage doors come in white from the factory, and since most face the street they can overshadow the front door of the houses in the streetscape.

All these problems can be minimized with a little planning and forethought. By setting the home as low as possible, and elevating the garage floor and driveway, you can effectively reduce difference in elevation. This also reduces the amount of room needed for the steps.

Forming a combination step and wheel stop in the garage floor also helps reduce this problem. Conventionally framing the garage roof or modifying the roof trusses adjacent to the home can provide sufficient clearance between the garage ceiling and home entry.

Locating the garage so that its ridge falls near the home door opening can also help. An added benefit of lowering the garage side-walls to a conventional eight foot height not only saves cost, but results in a break in the eave line which can add variety to the home appearance.

Finally, one can divert attention from the garage door by painting it to match the color of the siding and shift the focus to an accented home entry door where it belongs.

The contrasting pictures show how planning and forethought can create an acceptable and harmonious appearance to manufactured homes with garage additions, and improve the image of a community or home-site.

Photo One

Conventional look of detached garage in a land-lease community.



Photo Two

Another example of conventional look of detached garage in a land-lease community.



Photo Three

Garage addition, note the conventional appearance of the garage with its own eave line.



Photo Four

View of an integrated garage.



Photo Five

Integrated garage with matching eaves creates unusual look of wall over garage door, the door color draws additional attention to the garage.



Photo Six

Integrated garage, home is "pit set" thereby eliminating the conflict with garage height.



Photo Seven

Conventional garage, note the intermediate roof that allows clearance at garage entry to home.



Photo Eight

Roof line adjustments were used here to give garage a conventional look, and the garage door was painted to match the siding.



Photo Nine

Contrasting integrated garage looks: Home on the left has a planned conventional look while the garage on the right has unusually large area over the garage door and an unconventional appearance.



About the Planner

Don Westphal has over 35 years of experience planning manufactured housing communities. He is also co-author of *Navigating the Manufactured Housing Zoning Process* and co-author of *Renewing Your Manufactured Home Community: A Community Owner's Guide to Upgrading* both available through MHI. Don Westphal can be contacted at (248) 651-5518 or don@dcwestphal.com