

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: ZONING CODE TEXT AMENDMENT REGARDING PARKING AND LANDSCAPING IN CVCN DISTRICT

BACKGROUND:

On July 8, 2008, the City Council considered possible amendments to the City's landscaping and parking requirements for retail, grocery stores, and shopping centers. These amendments included:

- Eliminate reference to "minimum" parking, and instead call it "required" parking.
- Reduce parking requirement for all retail, shopping center, and grocery stores to approximately 1/300 sq. ft.
- Increase landscaping requirement for parking lots based upon square footage of building, using the difference between the current and proposed parking ratio to quantify the increase.
- Define "parking areas" to include associated drive aisles to address existing uncertainty as to whether required landscaping for parking lots encompasses the entire asphalt area.

This recommendation was prompted by expressed interest of Fareway to increase landscaping if allowed to decrease parking to a level that reflected their market demand. It was also prompted by Staff's comparisons of parking standards in Ames to parking standards in other jurisdictions for retail, grocery stores, and shopping centers. Potential benefits of the amendments considered by the City Council were discussed.

Council agreed that the proposed amendments merited further consideration, and directed staff to have the Planning & Zoning Commission consider these changes and work with staff to develop Code language that would implement these changes. Council further agreed that the changes would be appropriate for the CVCN zone inasmuch as Fareway has already demonstrated interest in the standards. However, Council was cautious about moving toward citywide implementation without further analysis and research. Staff was therefore directed to take a "dual track" approach to the proposal; one track being to move forward with recommended changes to the CVCN zone; the other being to take additional time necessary to consider citywide implementation.

For this first track pertaining to the CVCN zone, staff has drafted the attached amendments that would result in the following changes:

- Amend Table 29.406(2) to reduce the parking requirement for all retail, shopping center, and grocery stores in CVCN zone to 1/300 sq. ft.
- Increase the landscaping requirement for parking lots by .28 square feet per 1 square foot of retail or grocery store building area in the CVCN zone.
- Specifically reference and include driveways and drive aisles accessing parking areas in the parking area landscaping requirements of Section 29.403(b).

The .28 square-foot landscaping increase identified in the second bullet is based upon a one-for-one correlation between the amount of pavement that would be reduced under the proposed parking ratio of 1 space per 300 square feet as opposed to the current 1 space per 200 square feet for **retail sales and services**. Currently, **grocery stores** have a parking requirement of 1 space per 150 square feet. This means that there is not a one-for-one correlation between decreased parking and increased landscaping in the grocery store category. To achieve a one-for-one correlation in that category, the required landscaping would have to be .56 square feet per 1 square foot of building area. For simplicity purposes, however, a conservative .28 per 1 ratio is proposed for all retail-type uses in the CVCN district.

The original recommendation to the City Council included elimination of the word “minimum” in the parking standards to avoid the perception that we would prefer to have more than the stated minimum numbers of parking stalls. After further discussion of eliminating the word, staff, in consultation with the City Attorney, determined that the elimination may cause some individuals to assume that the stated parking requirement was absolute – i.e., both a minimum and a maximum. To avoid confusion, staff is now recommending language that retains the word “minimum.”

The final bullet item above would be the only change applicable beyond the CVCN district at this time. It would clarify the location of required landscaping under existing language in the code and avoid any further confusion over this issue.

Recommendation of the Planning & Zoning Commission. At its meeting of August 6, 2008, the Planning & Zoning Commission expressed enthusiasm for the proposed changes. The Commission remarked on the benefits of the changes as they pertained to both the visual and environmental quality of the city, and was anxious to address the issue citywide. With a vote of 6-0, the Planning & Zoning Commission recommended that the City Council approve the language proposed in Attachment “A.” There was no public in attendance at the meeting.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can approve the zoning text amendments reducing parking and increasing parking lot landscaping in the CVCN zone, and clarifying the applicable area for parking lot landscaping, as proposed on Attachment “A.”
2. The City Council can approve the zoning text amendments as proposed on Attachment “A” with modifications.
3. The City Council can maintain existing standards by not approving the proposed zoning text amendments.
4. The City Council can refer this issue to staff for further information.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The proposed amendments will allow a reduction in parking, but do not impose a maximum limit on parking as is done in some jurisdictions. The market would therefore be free to provide more parking than the standards require. However, the changes would allow relief to those retail businesses that require fewer parking spaces, and would provide visual enhancement to parking areas of all sizes serving retail uses in the CVCN district. The City Manager believes these standards would make retail development in the CVCN zone more compatible with the residential areas that directly abut the CVCN zone.

Therefore, to move the Fareway proposal forward, the City Manager recommends that the City Council act in accordance with Alternative 1, which is to approve the zoning text amendment as proposed on Attachment "A."

The City Manager believes that the same or similar standards would make significant differences in the visual quality of commercial areas that are both the entryways to our City and the front doors to many of our older residential neighborhoods. They would also be consistent with many "Cool City" initiatives, which the City of Ames is increasingly embracing. Staff will therefore continue researching what standards may be appropriate citywide and continue this discussion with the Planning & Zoning Commission for a final recommendation to the City Council.

ATTACHMENT "A"

Section 29.403

(4) Landscaping Requirements for Surface Parking Lots.

(a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to protect and promote the public health, safety and general welfare by requiring the landscaping of surface parking lots in such a manner as will serve to reduce the effects of wind and air turbulence, heat and noise, and the glare of automobile lights; to preserve ground water strata; to act as a natural drainage system and ameliorate stormwater drainage problems; to reduce the level of carbon dioxide and return oxygen to the atmosphere; to prevent soil erosion; to conserve and stabilize property values and to otherwise facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community; to relieve the blight of the appearance of surface parking lots; and to generally preserve a healthful and pleasant environment.

(b) Setback and perimeter landscaping. The minimum ~~surface parking area~~ setbacks and perimeter landscaping standards for parking areas, and for any driveways and drive aisles accessing parking areas, are set forth in Table 29.403(4) below.

Table 29.403(4)

Minimum Parking Area Setbacks and Perimeter Landscaping

Lot line abutting street	5 ft. @ L2 or 10 ft. @L1
Lot line abutting a Residentially-Zone Lot	5 ft. @ L3, except 10 ft. @ L4 in GI
Lot line abutting a Commercially or Industrial-Zone Lot	5 ft. @ L2 or 10 ft. @ L1
<u>Perimeter landscaping for Grocery Stores and Retail and Shopping centers in CVCN Zone only</u>	<u>See Section 29.403(4)(h) for additional landscaping requirements.</u>

(c) Surface parking Area Interior Landscaping. All surface parking areas must meet the following interior landscaping requirements.

(i) Interior landscaping shall be required for parking lots, containing 16 or more spaces, that include three or more rows of parking spaces separated by two or more drive aisles in a single location. Such interior landscaping shall, at a minimum, include a 9.0' wide and 16' long landscape island for every 20 interior parking spaces and a landscaped median, a minimum of 15' wide running the full length of the drive aisle, for every 3 contiguous double loaded parking aisles.

At least one Landscape Tree, as defined in Section 29.403(2)(b), shall be installed on each landscaped island. A minimum of one Landscape Tree is required per 50 lineal feet of landscaped median. Shrubs or ground cover plants must cover the remainder of each landscaped island and median.

(ii) Interior landscaping is not required for parking lots that have parking on one or both sides of a single drive aisle.

- (iii) All landscaping must comply with the standards of Section 29.403, Landscaping and Screening. Trees and shrubs must be fully protected from potential damage by vehicles.
- (iv) Interior parking area landscaping must be dispersed throughout the parking area. Some trees may be grouped, but groups of trees must be dispersed.
- (v) Perimeter landscaping may not substitute for interior landscaping. However interior landscaping may joint perimeter landscaping as long as it extends 4 feet or more into the parking area from the perimeter landscape line.
- (vi) Parking areas that are 30 feet or less in width may locate their interior landscaping around the edges of the parking area. Interior landscaping placed along an edge is in addition to any required perimeter landscaping.

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(h) **CVCN District Landscaping.** In addition to (and in conjunction with) the lot line landscaping requirements specified in Table 29.403(4), increased landscaping shall be provided around the perimeter of parking lots that serve, or partially serve, Grocery Stores and/or any category of Retail and Shopping Centers as listed in Table 29.406(2), as follows:

- i. For every 1 square foot of grocery store or shopping center gross floor area, 0.28 square feet of landscaping shall be provided.
- ii. Landscaping shall be contiguous to parking lot landscaping otherwise required by this Chapter, or in landscaped areas abutting parking lots that are at least 350 square feet in area, and which are no narrower than 10 feet in any dimension.
- iii. The area of increased landscaping required under this Section shall conform to the L1, General Landscaping requirements of Section 29.403(1)(a).
- iv. All remaining areas of the site that are not otherwise covered by site improvements such as parking areas, driveways, buildings or parking lot landscaping shall be landscaped under the L1 standard.

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**Table 29.406(2)
Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements**

PRINCIPAL LAND USE	ALL ZONES EXCEPT DOWNTOWN AND CAMPUS TOWN SERVICE CENTER ZONES	DOWNTOWN AND CAMPUS TOWN SERVICE CENTER ZONES
...		
Retail Sales and Services-General	Ground level: 1 space/200 sf; other than ground level: 1 space/250 sf; <u>and all levels in CVCN zone: 1 space/300 sf</u>	
Retail and Shopping Centers, exclusive of Grocery Stores and Offices Uses, 50,000 – 99,999 sq.ft.	4.5 spaces/1,000 sf; <u>except that in CVCN zone, 1 space /300 sf</u>	
Retail and Shopping Centers, exclusive of Grocery Stores and office uses, 100,000 – 199,999 sq.ft.	4.25 spaces/1,000 sf, <u>except that in CVCN zone, 1 space /300 sf.</u>	
Major retail and Shopping Centers, exclusive of Grocery Stores and Office Uses	4.00 spaces/1,000 sf, <u>except that in CVCN zone, 1 space /300 sf</u>	
Grocery Stores	1 space/150 sf, <u>except that in CVCN zone, 1 space/300 sf.</u>	
...		

Section 29.807(7) Landscaping. Landscaping shall comply with Section 29.403(5) and also comply with the following:

- (a) In addition to the standards of Section ~~29.403(5)~~ 29.403, at least one overstory tree shall be planted within the parking (space between the public sidewalk and street curb, where sidewalk does not exist it is the area between the property line and street curb) for every 60 ft (or part thereof) of lot frontage. If the City of Ames planting standards cannot be met due to site-specific conditions, the overstory tree shall be planted in the front yard, in addition to the other planting required by Section 29.403(5).
- (b) River rock or similar non-organic materials shall not be substituted for the landscaping area or used in combination with the minimum landscaping requirements in this zoning district or Section 29.403.