

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT TO ADOPT ALTERNATIVE LANDSCAPING STANDARDS FOR AUTO AND MARINE CRAFT TRADE USES

BACKGROUND:

A proposed ordinance adopting alternative landscaping standards for auto and marine craft trade uses was presented to the City Council on May 8, 2012. This was one of three proposed text amendments requested by Wilson Toyota to facilitate expansion plans for their dealership, and which could also facilitate a proposed new dealership by the Deery Brothers along Highway 30. The Council acted on two of the requested amendments (i.e., parking lot striping and integrated site plan subdivision provisions) but continued the alternative landscaping provisions to the May 22 meeting in order for staff to do the following:

1. Prepare a hypothetical site plan showing how an auto dealership site would be landscaped under the current code requirements versus the proposed alternative standards, and
2. Contract the remaining auto dealerships in Ames to receive feedback on the proposed ordinance.

Staff has prepared the attached hypothetical site plans showing landscaping under both the existing and proposed alternative standards. Staff will use these illustrations to more fully explain the differences at the June 12 Council meeting.

Staff also invited representatives from the following local auto dealers to a meeting to explain the proposed amendments and ask for feedback: Amescars Com Incorporated, Wilson Auto Group Inc., George White Chevrolet Inc., Lithia HDM Inc., Quality Motors of Ames Ltd., and Willey Inc. (Staff coordinated with the Deery's separately prior to the initial presentation to Council). Attending the meeting were Danny and Denny Wilson, and Doug Livy. The Wilsons continued to express their support for the amendments because they offered added flexibility. Mr. Livy likewise stated that he likes the flexibility component of the proposed amendments. Staff also heard from Mike Gougherty (Lithia Honda/Nissan), who stated that he may not be able to attend the meeting, but asked for a copy of the proposed amendments. Staff e-mailed a copy and offered to sit down with Mr. Gougherty in person if he preferred.

It should be noted that the proposed standards do not replace or change current standards; but are an optional alternative to current standards. It is that

characteristic that provides the added flexibility that responding dealer representatives said they like. Staff has received no negative feedback on the proposed standards.

ALTERNATIVES:

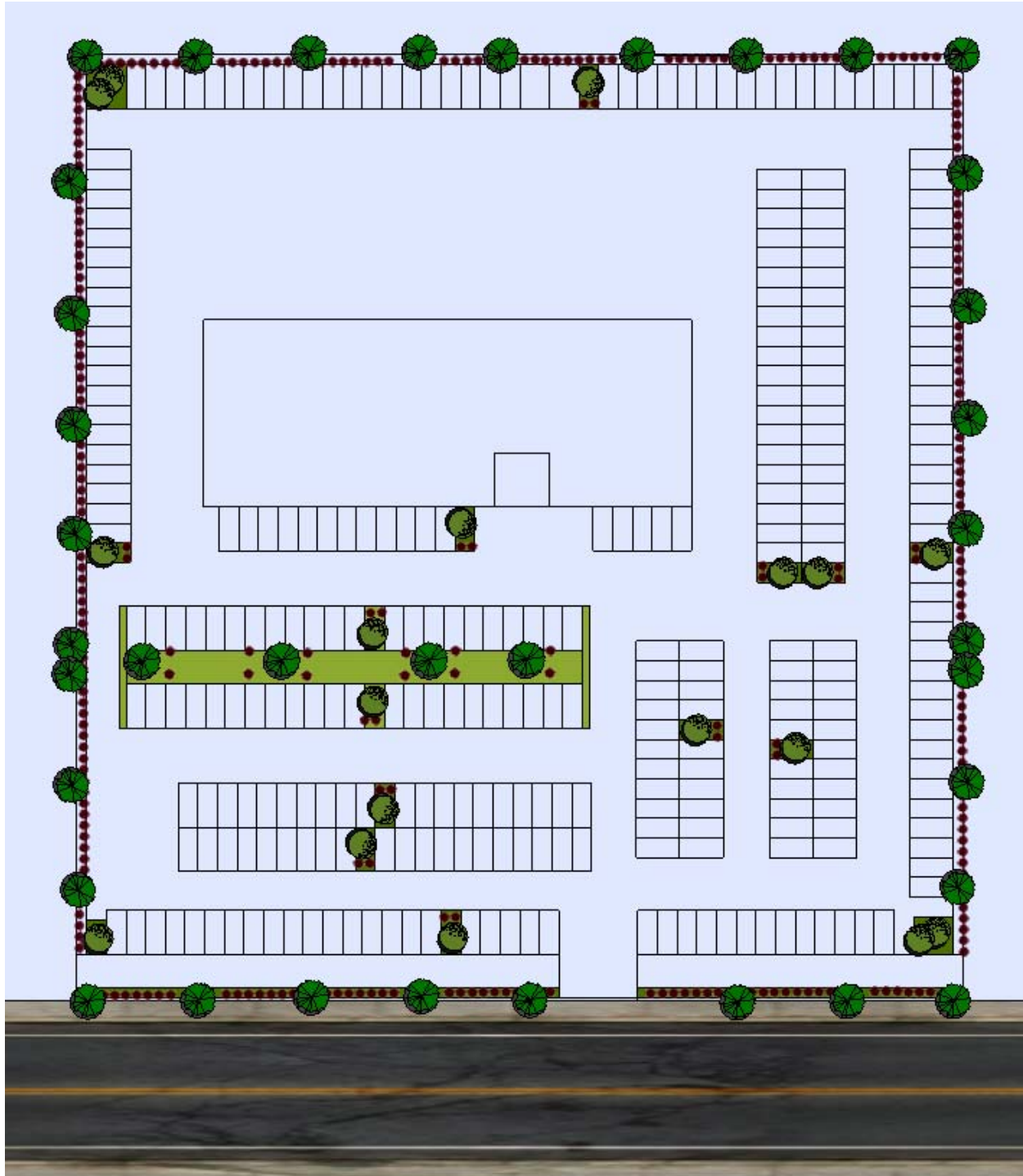
1. The City Council can approve the zoning code text amendment adopting alternative standards for auto and marine craft trade uses.
2. The City Council can approve the zoning code text amendment adopting alternative standards for auto and marine craft trade uses with modifications.
3. The City Council can decide not to adopt the proposed text amendments.
4. The City Council can refer this issue back to staff for further information.

MANAGER’S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

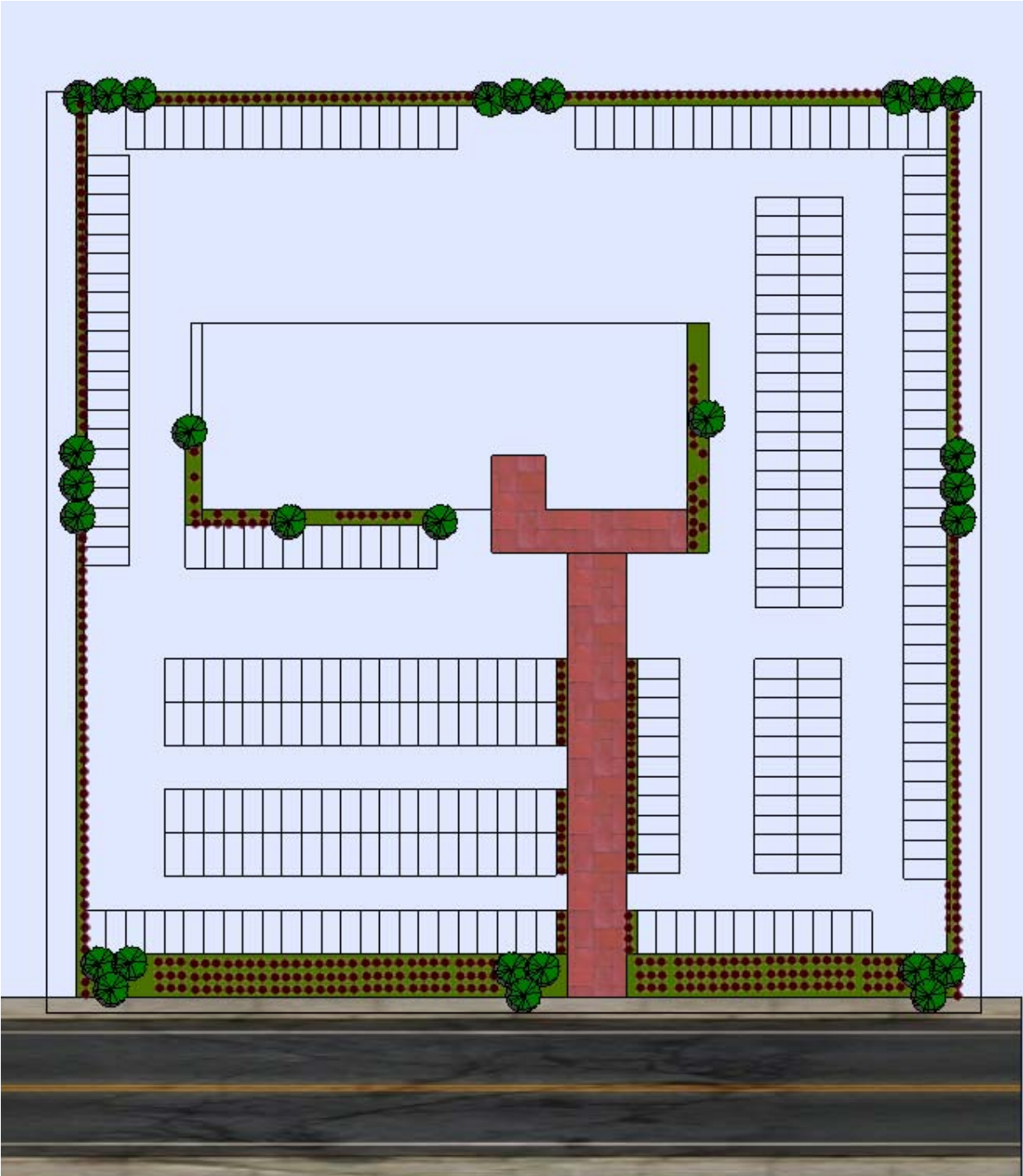
The proposed amendments seem to address the stated, essential needs of auto dealers interested in developing or expanding in Ames, while also reflecting the purpose and intent statements of the City’s current landscaping regulations.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council accept Alternative 1, thereby adopting the alternative landscape standards for auto and marine craft trade as provided in the attached proposed ordinance.

Site Plan - Current Landscaping Standards



Site Plan – Proposed Alternate Landscaping Standards



ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF AMES, IOWA, BY REPEALING SECTIONS 29.403(4)(b), 29.403 (5), 29.403(6) AND ENACTING NEW SECTIONS 29.403(4)(b), 29.403(5), 29.403(6), 29.403(7) THEREOF, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING ALTERNATIVE LANDSCAPE PROVISIONS FOR AUTO AND MARINE CRAFT TRADE USES; REPEALING ANY AND ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT TO THE EXTENT OF SUCH CONFLICT; PROVIDING A PENALTY; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City has adopted landscaping standards for the following purposes:

- i. Reduce heat-generating pavement
- ii. Provide greater space for trees to shade and cool pavement
- iii. Provide more space for trees to shade and cool buildings, thereby reducing energy consumption for air conditioning
- iv. Reduce the number of lights needed to illuminate parking lots and thereby reduce energy consumption and facilitate Dark Sky objectives
- v. Reduce stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces

WHEREAS, current landscaping standards for parking lots do not differentiate between parking lots serving different types of uses; and

WHEREAS, parking lots for auto and marine craft trade are not only for purposes of providing parking for individuals that visit or frequent the site, they also serve to display products for sale; and

WHEREAS, alternative landscaping standards for auto and marine craft trade parking lots have been drafted that address the marketing needs of the auto sales industry while also ensuring that the stated purposes of landscape standards are achieved;

BE IT ENACTED, by the City Council for the City of Ames, Iowa, that:

Section One. The Municipal Code of the City of Ames, Iowa shall be and the same is hereby amended by repealing Sections 29.403(4)(b), 29.403(5), 29.403(6), and enacting new Sections 29.403(4)(b), 29.403(5), 29.403(6), 29.403(7), to read as follows:

Sec. 29.403. LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING.

...

(4) Landscaping Requirements For Surface Parking Lots, Generally.

...

(b) Setback and perimeter landscaping. The minimum 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. For Auto and Marine Craft Trade Uses, see Section 29.403 (5), below.

...

(5) **Alternate Landscape Standards for Automotive and Marine Craft Trade Uses.** As an alternative to the requirements of Section 29.403(4)(b) and 29.403(4)(c), the following standards may be applied to sites developed for automotive and marine craft trade as defined in Article 5;

(a) Landscaped area between parking lot pavement and property lines.

(i) Minimum Landscape Width – 20 feet along all property lines abutting public right-of-way lines, 10-feet along all other property lines along a zoning boundary, and 5 feet along all other property lines of properties within the same zone, landscaped as follows:

(a) Five feet of the landscaped setback shall be landscaped according to the L2 , Low Screen landscaping standards of this Section, with the balance landscaped according to subsection iv below; or

(b) Landscaped according to L1 standards, except that required numbers of trees and shrubs may be strategically clustered to allow visual openings into the site. Trees and shrubs must be clustered in regular intervals within required landscaped areas, spaced no greater than 200 feet apart. Each cluster shall include no less than three trees spaced no greater than 15 feet apart (center to center) with the trunk of at least one tree in the cluster located within 8 feet of the parking lot edge (to ensure some shading of abutting pavement). Because landscaping under this option is less effective at softening impacts of lighting common to parking areas, all outdoor lighting shall conform to the Guidelines for Signage and Lighting in Section 29.1109(18), except 29.1109(18)(j). All lighting fixtures shall be shielded in such a manner that the lenses of the fixtures are not visible from public rights-of-way.

(ii) Setback areas beyond the minimum setbacks shall be fully landscaped applying the landscape element ratios in the LI General Landscaping standards of this Section.

(b) Landscaping around perimeter of all principal facades visible from a public street.

(i) Minimum landscape area equivalent to 5 feet times the length of each visible facade.

(ii) Building perimeter landscaping may be reduced or eliminated along selected areas of the perimeter if an equivalent amount of landscaped area is added to other areas of the building's perimeter, provided that perimeter areas of increased landscaping are along building facades visible from public rights of way.

(iii) Up to 25% of the required landscaped area may consist of either a brick-paved surface, or a raised sidewalk/pedestrian area consisting of either brick pavers or colored and pattern-stamped concrete.

(iv) Landscaping shall consist of one tree per 50 feet of building façade, and one shrub for every six feet of building façade. Plants and trees may be clustered as desired.

(c) Landscaped Entry Feature. A landscaped entry feature shall be provided that consists of either a landscaped sidewalk or driveway extending from the right-of-way providing primary vehicular access to the site, to within 20 feet of at least one principal building on the site. The landscape entry feature shall consist of the following:

(i) A five foot wide landscape strip on each side of the sidewalk or driveway. Said landscaping shall extend either:

(a) The full length of the required landscape entry feature; or

(b) At least 50% of the length of the landscape entry feature, provided that the entire length and width of the entry feature consists of a color-contrasted brick paved surface. (Colored and pattern-stamped concrete may be used for walkway areas, but will not suffice in areas of vehicle travel due to its poor color retention over time).

(ii) Landscaping in the entry feature shall consist of one shrub or tree for every 40 square feet of landscaped area. Shrubs may be low-lying to maximize visibility through the landscaped area.

(d) In addition to the minimum landscaping areas and plantings described above, the balance of all setbacks, landscape areas, and other portions of the site not otherwise developed with pavement, buildings, stormwater facilities and/or protected environmentally sensitive areas, shall be landscaped with lawn or groundcover plants (e.g., Sweet Woodruff, Ajuga/Bugleweed, Candytuft, Periwinkle, Vinca, Hosta, Carpet Juniper, prairie wildflower mix, etc.), and additional shrubs, flowers and trees as desired. Ground covers shall be typed, spaced and sized to provide at least 75% coverage within a three-year period. Within this context, Lawn means a managed area of grass forming a continuous turf mowed and maintained at a low and consistent height, and that is generally free of weeds, sedges, and invasive or volunteer plants or grasses.

(e) For sites 3 acres or larger, all of the above landscape provisions apply. For sites less than 3 acres, the applicant may eliminate either the building perimeter landscaping of subsection (b) above, or the landscaped entry feature of subsection (c) above.

(6) Landscaping Requirements for Apartment Dwellings in the UCRM, RM and RH Zones.

(a) Generally. These landscaping requirements are intended to be applied to front yards and side yards that abut streets for apartment dwellings in the UCRM, FS-RM, RM and RH zoning districts. This landscaping is required to enhance the yard area and to soften the impact of the building from the street and from nearby residential areas.

(Ord. No. 3591, 10-10-00)

(b) Required Landscape Elements. A minimum of one landscaping unit, consistent of:

One (1) deciduous (over-story) tree, or

Two (2) ornamental (understory) trees, or

Two (2) evergreen trees, or

One (1) ornamental (understory) tree or one (1) evergreen tree, and

Six (6) deciduous and evergreen shrubs,

shall be planted for every 60 feet or part thereof of frontage along a public or private street.

(i) Shrubs. Shrubs shall be a combination of deciduous and evergreen plant materials, and no more than b of the shrubs shall be of one type or the other. The majority of the shrubs shall serve as foundation plantings for the multiple family structure, and no more than 50 percent of the building foundation, exclusive of windows, shall be visible from the street in the summer upon maturity of the shrubs.

(ii) Minimum Size. The plant materials shall meet the following minimum sizes when planted:

Deciduous (over-story) tree: 1-1/2 inch caliper, measured 6 inches above the ground.

Ornamental (understory tree): Six (6) feet in height.

Evergreen tree: Three (3) feet in height.

Shrub: Small shrub – minimum of a 12-inch spread.

Medium and large shrub – minimum of an 18 inch spread.

(Ord. No. 4099, 01-10-12)

(iii) Trees and Shrubs. Trees and shrubs may be traded within a landscape unit, when there are utility easements or other site impediments that prevent the planting of a specific plant established above, e.g. one deciduous (over-story) tree may be traded for an additional one ornamental (understory) tree and three (3) additional shrubs.

(iv) Existing Vegetation. Developers shall be encouraged to save existing desirable vegetation on the development site, and they will be given credit on a one for one basis against the required landscape units for desirable species saved.

(v) Any undeveloped area on the site not planted with trees or shrubs shall be planted with grass, sod or other cover that is suitable to the local climate and is a suitable variety of ground cover plantings to present a completed appearance and provide full coverage within one (1) year.

(vi) Installation and Maintenance. Installation and maintenance of the landscaping for apartment dwellings in the UCRM, FS-RM, RM and RH zones shall meet the requirements provided for in Section 29.403(3).

(Ord. No. 3591, 10-10-00)

(7) **Screening and placement of mechanical units.** Mechanical units must meet all screening requirements of Section 29.408(4) and must be located outside of required landscape areas. However, in situations where upgrades or relocations of mechanical units for utility services are necessary to provide continued service, the Director of Planning & Housing may approve placement of mechanical units in required landscape areas, and may also waive screening requirements of mechanical units, if the Director determines that such upgrades or relocations could not have been anticipated either at the time of platting or at the time of site development when the utilities were first planned and/or installed, and that there is insufficient room for the relocated or upgraded utility mechanical units to be screened or placed outside of required landscape areas.

(Ord. No. 3997, 07-14-09)

Section Two. Violation of the provisions of this ordinance shall constitute a municipal infraction punishable as set out by law.

Section Three. All ordinances, or parts of ordinances, in conflict herewith are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict, if any.

Section Four. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and publication as required by law.

Passed this _____ day of _____, _____.

Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

Ann H. Campbell, Mayor