

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO CHANGE CAMPUSTOWN BUILDING HEIGHT STEP-BACK**

**BACKGROUND:**

The City's current Campustown Service Center zoning standards establish a maximum height of 30 feet for those portions of buildings that are within 15 feet of the right-of-way of three street blocks. These are Lincoln Way between Hayward and Stanton Avenues, and Welch Avenue between Lincoln Way and Chamberlin Streets. (See Attachment A Location Map)

On August 27, 2013, the City Council initiated a zoning text amendment to revise this standard in response to a request by Kingland Systems. The request is to consider allowing a three-story building with no 15-foot step-back above the second floor for its site at Lincoln Way and Welch Avenue. Kingland's concern arises from the difficulty in achieving an efficient layout and additional construction costs when incorporating a step-back requirement on the upper level. On October 22, 2013, the City Council opened the public hearing for this text amendment and then continued the hearing until November 12<sup>th</sup>.

Zoning in Campustown allows for intense development of up to nine-story buildings. Campustown Service Center zoning principally allows for commercial uses, but also allows for residential uses above the ground floor in mixed-use buildings. At the time of adopting the current zoning for the area, there were concerns about the intensity and height of buildings planned for the area compared to the surrounding one- and two-story building pattern. As a result, standards were adopted that required any building greater than two stories in height to either be set back from the street 15 feet or to step back the upper floors by 15 feet. In recognition of the limitations of this standard, additional building height was allowed within the zoning district to still encourage high density development.

The City Council referred to staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission a proposal to exempt from the step-back requirement commercial buildings with site frontage on Lincoln Way that are three stories or less and to prohibit residential units on the third floor. This proposal would allow corner properties along Lincoln Way to have building facades extend down Welch and Stanton Avenues without a step-back. The 15-foot step-back requirement would be maintained for buildings over three stories. It would not affect the majority of Campustown properties; and would meet Kingland Systems' unique interests. (See attached Ordinance)

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

On October 2, 2013, the Planning and Zoning Commission considered this proposed zoning text amendment. The Commission discussed the redevelopment of Campustown, which the Commission supports, and how the area may physically change. There were questions about height and stories. A specific question arose about the likely maximum height in terms of feet of a three-story building without a height step-back. Staff stated that it is possible that three story buildings may be up to 50 feet in height. The Commission recommended approval of this amendment by a vote of four in favor and one abstention.

Since this meeting, it has been determined that the proposed Kingland three-story building will have a maximum height of 52 feet at its tallest point with an average height of less than 50 feet.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. The City Council can approve the ordinance to exempt from the CSC Zoning District the step-back standard for commercial buildings of 3 stories or fewer that do not have residential uses and are located on sites that have frontage on Lincoln Way.
2. The City Council can disapprove the proposed text amendment.
3. The City Council can refer this zoning text amendment back to staff for modifications or for additional information.

**MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:**

The required step-back in building height is an important tool for providing more intense development in the core area of Campustown, while maintaining the character of the area. However, buildings of three stories do not come near the maximum allowable height and are much less likely to have the negative impacts associated with a "canyon effect" than originally anticipated. With the width of Lincoln Way and the University open space on the north side of the street, the character of the urban space is quite different from Welch Avenue and other streets within Campustown that are more confined. The proposed height of three stories also is not excessively greater than the right-of-way width on Welch Avenue, which is 66 feet. This creates what staff believes is a reasonable width to building height ratio. Additionally, commercial buildings do not have public safety concerns with upper levels uses that are associated with residential uses. Residential uses should appropriately maintain a requirement for the 15-foot step-back.

**Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council accept Alternative #1, thereby adopting the attached zoning text amendment to exempt from the step-back standard commercial buildings of 3 stories or less that do not have residential uses and are located on sites that have frontage on Lincoln Way.**

# Attachment A Location Map



**ORDINANCE NO.**

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF AMES, IOWA, BY REPEALING SECTION 29.809(3) AND ENACTING A NEW SECTION 29.809(3) THEREOF, FOR THE PURPOSE OF AMENDING THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MAXIMUM HEIGHT; 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**, buildings or portions of buildings located within 15 feet of the right-of-way lines of Lincoln Way from Hayward Avenue to Stanton Avenue and of Welch Avenue from Lincoln Way to Chamberlain Street may not exceed 30 feet; and

**WHEREAS**, this required step-back in building height is an important tool for providing for more intense development in the core area of Campustown, while maintaining the character of the area; and

**WHEREAS**, buildings of three stories in height located on Lincoln Way are in character with the height of buildings in Campustown; and

**WHEREAS**, the cost for accommodating the step-back in building height has greater significance for a three-story building compared to buildings with more stories; and

**WHEREAS**, safety for pedestrians along streets in Campustown is less a concern if there are no dwelling units directly above them;

**NOW THEREFORE 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 Section 29.809(3) and enacting a new Section 29.809(3) as follows:

(3) **Zone Development Standards.** The zone development standards for the CSC Zone are set forth in Table 29.809(3) below:

**Table 29.809(3)  
Campustown Service Center (CSC) Zone Development Standards**

<b>DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS</b>	<b>CSC ZONE</b>
Minimum FAR	1.0 [1]
Minimum Lot Area	No minimum, except for mixed uses, which shall provide 250 sf of lot area for each dwelling unit
Minimum Lot Frontage	No minimum, except for mixed uses, which shall provide 25 ft.
Minimum Building Setbacks:	
Front Lot Line	0
Side Lot Line	0
Rear Lot Line	10 ft.
Lot Line Abutting a Residentially Zoned Lot	10 ft.
Minimum Landscaped Area	No minimum
Landscaping in Setbacks Abutting an R Zoned Lot	5 ft. @ L3. See Section 29.403
Maximum Building Coverage	100%
Openings between buildings	In order to provide access for vehicles and/or utilities to the interior of the block, there shall be a twenty foot wide opening between buildings, at the approximate mid-point of each face of each block. In addition to this mid-block areaway or drive, any lot without other means of access from a public street or alley may have one driveway from the street of up to 20-ft in width.
Minimum Height	25 feet
Maximum height in portions of CSC bounded by: Lincoln Way Stanton Avenue Hunt Street	115 feet

Hayward Avenue	
Maximum height within fifteen (15) feet of the right-of-way lines of: Lincoln Way from Hayward Avenue to Stanton Avenue Welch Avenue from Lincoln Way to Chamberlain Street	30 feet, except buildings of three stories height or fewer with frontage on Lincoln Way and without residential use
Maximum Height in all other locations	75 feet.
Parking Allowed Between Buildings and Streets	No
Windows	More than 50% of the area of primary or secondary façade between the ground line and the second floor line shall be windows that allow views into the interior space or be a display window.
Building Materials	Clay brick shall comprise more of the exterior wall surface of the building than any other material. Exterior surface does not include windows or doors or their trim. This requirement does not apply to additions to buildings which do not have brick as an exterior material.
Entrance	There shall be at least one functional pedestrian entrance facing a street.
Balconies	There shall be no exterior balconies above the third floor.
Site materials	No rocks, brick fragments or other hard, loose material over ¾-inch in size shall be used.
Drive-Through Facilities Permitted	Yes
Outdoor Display Permitted	Yes, See Section 29.405
Outdoor Storage Permitted	No
Trucks and Equipment Permitted	Yes

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

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Ann H. Campbell, Mayor