

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: MAINSTREAM LIVING, INC., IN SOMERSET – REQUEST TO CHANGE PARKING AND DRIVEWAY MODIFICATIONS**

**BACKGROUND:**

On March 18, 2014, City Council referred a letter from Mark and Shelly Ackermann regarding traffic concerns around the Mainstream Living house at the corner of Stange Road and Aspen Road. The Ackermanns expressed concerns over how parking along Aspen Road can create difficulties for those wheelchair accessible vehicles entering and exiting the site. Additional concern was expressed regarding visitor and staff parking. A related issue was referred by City Council on July 22, 2014, from the Mainstream Living staff to widen their driveway and allow for approximately two additional parking stalls to be constructed along the west side of the property. This report addresses both requests.

**Parking Regulations on Aspen Road (Eastbound Approach):**

City staff met with Mr. Ackermann and staff from the Mainstream Living Aspen group home to discuss the current parking situation around the property and develop potential solutions. The group wanted to address the more minor issue of staff and visitor parking first. Looking at an area map, it was quickly determined that there is underutilized parking along the west side of Stange Road between Aspen Road and Clayton Drive – approximately 9 to 10 spaces worth. As a result, Mainstream staff is now promoting use of the Stange parking spaces to their employees and visitors. City Staff is planning to help maximize the use of this parking by painting the stalls.

The second issue was how to better manage the parking along the segment of Aspen Road from Stange Road west to the driveway access to the shared commercial parking areas. Currently, on Aspen Road parking is allowed only on the south side of the road. It became apparent that any parking changes would most directly affect the new Wallaby's site. Therefore, staff contacted Wallaby's owner Rick Carmer to develop a solution that was mutually beneficial to both parties.

The combined group of citizens involved in this discussion (Mainstream, Wallaby's and Mr. Ackermann) supports the creation of a **"5-Minute" Loading Zone** from the parking lot access drive to a point approximately 50 feet behind the Stop bar at Stange Road. The rest of the segment would be **"No Parking Here to Corner"** and have yellow curb painted. The purpose of the yellow curb is to protect the operations and sight distance of the eastbound approach of the intersection. This option would provide the additional space needed for larger vehicles accessing the Aspen group home, while Mr. Carmer felt it would also help the operations of his business and the safety of his patrons by

reducing congestion near the intersection. This solution is depicted below. It should be noted, however, that commercial uses in the Village are allowed to count on-street parking towards meeting their parking requirements. It is unclear at this point what the impact of removing these spaces would be.

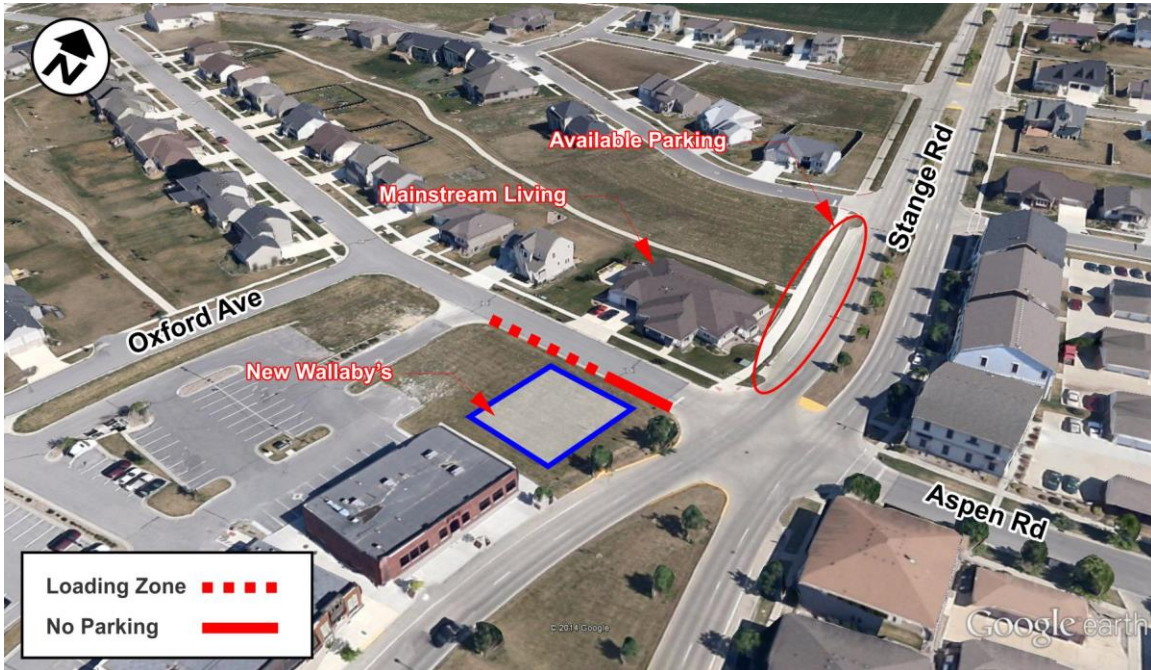


Figure 1: Somerset in the area of the Stange Rd. & Aspen Rd. Intersection

### The Mainstream Living Driveway Widening:

Currently, the driveway access for Mainstream Living is 30 feet wide at the property line and continues at that width up a two-stall garage on the west side of the building. The City of Ames follows the Iowa Statewide Urban Design and Specifications manual (SUDAS), which designates in Chapter 51-4 that the maximum drive width for a commercial area is 32 feet along a local street. Aspen Road is designated as a local street, which means Mainstream's driveway could only be widened an additional two feet and still be in compliance with City standards.

The Mainstream request is to allow the driveway to be wide enough for three cars, which typically means 12 foot per lane, or a total of 36 feet. Staff spoke with Bill Vaughn, President & CEO of Mainstream Living, about the purpose of making the drive wider than the standard 32 feet. One of the primary reasons is based upon the fact that many of the house residents are "medically fragile." It is common for ambulances to respond to medical emergencies at the group home, and these vehicles could benefit from a larger staging area. A secondary use of the space would be made available for family members who are staying overnight due to a house resident who is in critical or terminal condition. Below is a graphic depicting how the approximate change in width to a 32 foot or a 36 foot wide drive would appear.

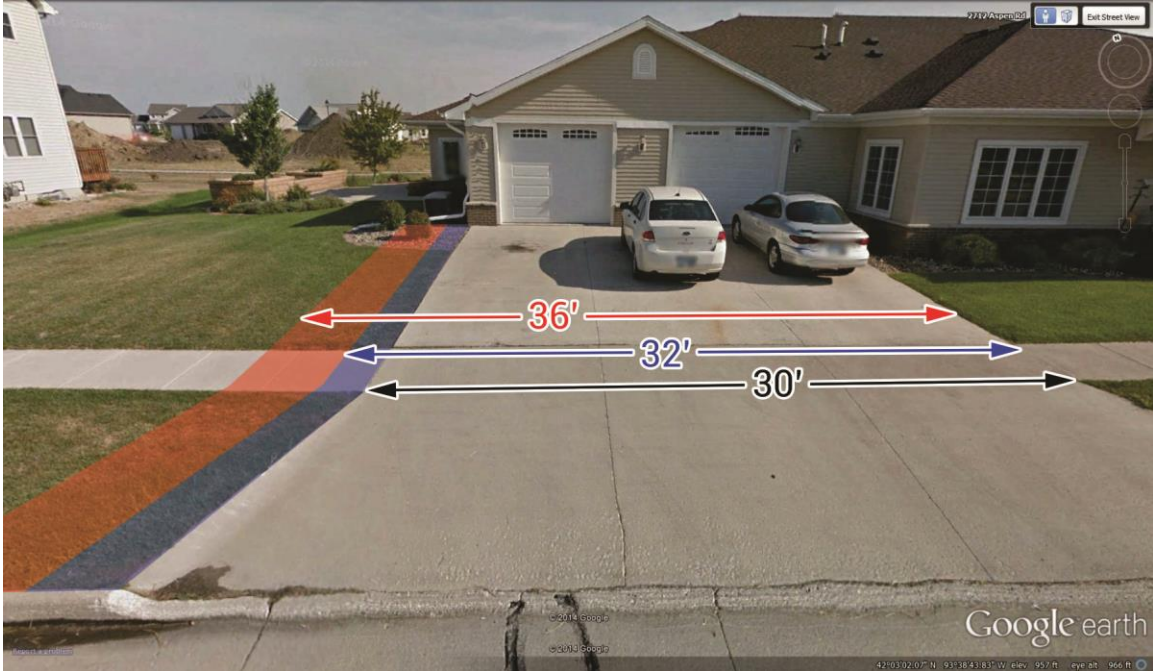


Figure 2: Mainstream Living potential driveway widening

The widening on the driveway does present a conflict with the Zoning Ordinance in the Municipal Code, specifically the regulation on “front yard parking”. Municipal Code states that it is legal to park a vehicle on a driveway that leads to a garage or located in the side yard. As seen in Figure 2 above any additional paving would be considered front yard parking.

Staff in Public Works and Planning discussed what options Mainstream Living would have to allow the extra drive width and parking area. The City’s Zoning Code allows parking in the front yard only if the paved driveway leads to a garage or to the side or rear yard. Therefore, the following options are available to Mainstream:

- 1) Expand the garage to the west, possibly creating an additional bay,
- 2) Build a “carport” or a parking stall that is covered but open on the sides, or
- 3) Take the issue before the Zoning Board of Adjustment and ask for a variance. (It should be noted that meeting the criteria for a variance is difficult.)

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. a. Direct the City Attorney to draft an ordinance to designate:
  - i. No Parking Here to corner along Aspen Road for the first 50 feet west of Stange Road.
  - ii. A “5-Minute” Loading Zone from a point 50 feet west of Stange Road for approximately 100 feet.

b. Direct staff to work with Mainstream Living to pursue options to widen the drive to 36 feet wide as requested.

2. Direct staff keep the existing conditions.

**MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

The options presented in this report were developed in collaboration with City staff, Mainstream Living, Wallaby's, and Mr. Ackermann to improve the parking situation and operations at and around the Aspen group home. These changes are also anticipated to promote safe traffic flow to and from the area businesses and Stange Road. While the options do not immediately resolve the on-site parking needs at the Aspen group home, they do provide direction for future steps that may be taken by Mainstream Living.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as noted above.