

REQUEST TO AMEND THE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL PARKING REQUIREMENTS

January 6, 2017

BACKGROUND:

The City Council received a request on December 20th for Council to consider initiating a Zoning Text Amendment that makes changes to the parking requirements in the NC (Neighborhood Commercial) zoning district (Attachment 1). The property owner seeks relief from off-street parking requirements as they apply to uses within the Neighborhood Commercial district for a project they would like to re-use of the Dobby Mill, at 4625 Reliable Street. **The property owner is interested in the City Council amending the Zoning Ordinance in manner that does not require on-site parking for commercial uses in the Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District.**

The property owners' desired reuse of the property with a small café and gallery triggers the need to construct approximately 20 parking spaces on the site to comply with zoning standards for parking. Future interests to host events would require additional parking. The site includes the old grain elevator and a former warehouse space with open undeveloped area on the east side of the site. A 20 space parking lot would take up approximately 20% of the open space on the site. Although parking could be constructed in part of their open space, the owners would prefer to not use part of the open space for parking and to plan for an outdoor use in the future.

The Neighborhood Commercial District is a unique zoning district that is defined as intended for small commercial areas in or near residential neighborhoods. Although the purpose of the district encourages small-scale retail and service use developments, most of the sites in the City are existing transitional or remnant commercial sites that did not fit the other zoning districts when the City adopted its current standards in 2000. There are seven areas across the City that are zoned NC at this time, including:

- Reliable Street
- 24th Street at Grand
- Hazel and Lincoln Way
- S 16th Street and Creekside Drive
- North of Sixth Street
- Sixth Street and Grand
- West Street

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS:

The letter from the property owners expresses an interest of utilizing existing street parking rather than constructing additional on-site parking. The City does not recognize on-street parking as meeting on-site parking requirements, with the exception of Somerset. Staff has identified three options for Council to consider in response to the request to initiate a text amendment.

OPTIONS:

Option 1. No referral for a text amendment

Reuse of the building would require construction of approximately 20 parking spaces before the new café and gallery could open. Required parking can be provided on site within the existing open area with approval of a variance to allow for parking between the building and the street (North Dakota Avenue to the east). Although a variance for the location of parking would likely be approved by the Zoning Board of Adjustment, a variance to provide no parking would be more challenging to approve when evaluated against the required variance findings.

Although sufficient parking can be provided on site meet the City's requirements, the property owner has stated their desire to maintain green space and feels it would add unnecessary pavement when on-street parking has historically been used to serve the site.

Option 2. Text amendment to utilize on-street parking as required parking in Neighborhood Commercial zoning

4625 Reliable Street has historically been served by on-street parking when it was an industrial use as grain elevator and automotive repair, as seen in historical aerial photos. There is a limited amount of parking on the west side of the building, approximately five stalls. In the property owners' situation, staff believes there is ample on-street parking available on Reliable Street due to the size of the road and the limited amount of commercial use in the area. However, on-street parking is currently not permissible within most zoning districts in the City to ensure that their generally available parking for all.

Allowing for on-street parking to satisfy parking requirements can be limited to the NC district to support reuse of older sites and the pedestrian orientated intent of the district. The allowance could be tailored to address a maximum number of spaces or proximity requirement to allow as credit for on-street parking. Signed or striped stalls would likely be necessary as well.

Most other Neighborhood Commercial zoned sites have very limited access to on-street parking immediately abutting an individual property. Allowing on-street

parking would have some benefits to other properties in the City. Changing the parking allowance would reduce costs of providing more parking for use of existing sites. **Because of the location of many of these NC zoned sites, there could be a need to balance potential neighborhood impacts with supporting reuse of the non-conforming sites.**

Option 3. Eliminate parking requirements for commercial uses in the NC district

The Zoning Ordinance could be changed to eliminate required parking all together for commercial (retail and office) uses allowed in the NC District. This would allow for all customer and employee parking on the street. This option would treat NC zoning similar to Campustown or Downtown where on-site parking is not expected in effort to support an active pedestrian environment. This option could have a size of development restriction for the benefit of no parking in order to ensure more intensive uses still provide for parking.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Ultimately, the text amendment request is to alleviate the onsite parking requirements in the Neighborhood Commercial district. Staff is of the opinion that a text amendment could be of benefit to future re-development and re-use of NC zoned sites. Due to the zoning district standards that control development size it unlikely that large scale developments would take advantage of a change and have substantial impacts on neighboring properties. Option 2 would appear to assist this developer in meeting their goals and still provide some level of protection for the surrounding property owners.



Fwd: Zoning Text Amendment Referral Request
 Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen
 to:
 Diane R Voss
 12/14/2016 12:00 PM
 Hide Details
 From: Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen <bronwynforames@gmail.com>
 To: Diane R Voss <DVoss@city.ames.ia.us>

Hi Diane,
 Elliot reached out to me to ask if this email from him will make this coming non-agenda packet. Will we see it this week?

Thanks!
 Bronwyn

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Elliot Thompson** <elliott@reliablestreet.com>
 Date: Fri, Dec 9, 2016 at 2:27 PM
 Subject: Zoning Text Amendment Referral Request
 To: bobanncamp@aol.com, gloriabetcherward1@gmail.com, GartinForAmes@gmail.com, pforazem@gmail.com, nelson.ames@outlook.com, amber.corrieri@gmail.com, schultes@iastate.edu, bronwynforames@gmail.com, dvoss@city.ames.ia.us

Dear Mayor Campbell and Members of the City Council,
 I am writing to request a zoning text amendment that changes parking regulations in Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zoning districts be referred to the City Planning department. NC zoning exists to cover odd sized, shaped, and hard to categorize properties that simply don't fit in any standard zoning. It is used on a small number of properties, such as Thumbs and West Side Deli on West St. and my property, the Doboy Mill, at 4625 Reliable Street. To say the Mill is atypical is an understatement and it has already presented many challenges. I purchased it to preserve and rehabilitate it as a café, art gallery and community space in an area of the City with no such existing services. I have met with the planning office several times over the last year attempting to get approved plans and needed building permits but have hit a roadblock with the parking requirements that has halted the project from moving forward.

The code states that "Parking areas are strictly regulated, to promote compatibility with the character of surrounding residential development and the intended pedestrian orientation of the uses" (Sec. 29.801.1) but under the current rules I would be required to construct a parking lot with over 30 spaces in a primarily residential, pedestrian focused neighborhood. There is already ample street parking on both side of Reliable Street as well as a paved area in the front of my property in the abnormally large City right of way. Based on historical photos and satellite imagery this has always been used as parking for the Doboy. Constructing an additional huge parking lot is unnecessary and completely at odds with the pedestrian focus and residential character zoning goals. It creates additional burden on the City's storm sewer, will be less desirable than the more convenient street parking, and financially makes the

rehabilitation of the building not feasible.

While meeting with Planning Staff we realized that all properties in NC zoning, not just Reliable Street, could be significantly hindered by this parking requirement and staff agreed a zoning text amendment changing it was the best path forward. This amendment would remove this roadblock and open these properties up for rehabilitation and uses that otherwise might not happen. It would be a huge step toward your stated Council goal to "Define the City's role (e.g., codes, incentives) in re-purposing existing buildings". It would be instrumental in my goal to create a neighborhood place that people of all ages, including the millennial group that Ames has been actively trying to recruit and retain, can enjoy.

Adopting this zoning amendment will be critical for the success of this project and I request that you please refer it to the City staff for consideration. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Elliot Thompson

Owner, Alluvial Brewing and Reliable Street

(515) 460-6581