

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

REQUEST: ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO AMEND THE BUILDING HEIGHT AND ROOF DESIGN FOR INTERIOR CLIMATE CONTROLLED MINI-STORAGE WAREHOUSE FACILITIES

BACKGROUND:

The City has extensive design requirements for mini-storage warehouse facilities within the Highway Oriented Commercial (HOC) zoning district. The standards include review by the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a Special Use Permit and design requirements for building orientation, size, height, roof style, and site landscaping (Attachment 1). **At the request of U-Haul, City Council referred to staff a letter requesting a text amendment to revise the building height and roof design requirements to facilitate construction of a 3-story internally accessed mini-storage warehouse facility within the HOC zoning district** (Attachment 2). The applicant explains that the text amendment will allow them to design the building in such a way as to be compatible with the surrounding architectural style of other commercial buildings along South Duff Avenue. The proposed text amendment would apply to all HOC zoned properties within the City.

The property owner seeks relief from the maximum 20-foot building height and minimum 6:12 roof pitch to allow for an interior access self-storage facility for the property at 710 and 722 S. Duff Avenue. The request is to revise Section 29.1308(1)(c) and (d) to increase the maximum building height to 40 feet and revise the roof design requirements to reduce a pitched roof to a minimum 3:12 roof pitch and to permit flat roofs with parapets. As proposed by the applicant, the text amendment would apply for all HOC zoned mini-storage facilities, not just internally accessed storage facilities as referred by City Council.

HOC zoned properties are located along major thoroughfares throughout Ames. Examples of locations include properties fronting on South Duff Avenue, South 16th Street, and Lincoln Way in the downtown area and west Ames. There are also some small areas of HOC land off University Avenue, Airport Road and Dayton Avenue. HOC zoning is the most common commercial zone in the city as it provides for most of the retail, restaurant and small office areas in the city.

Standards were developed in 2004 to allow for mini-storage warehouse facilities within the HOC zone when approved by Special Use Permit by the Zoning Board of Adjustment (See Attachment 1, existing code standards from Section 29.1308). At that time, mini-storage uses were a permitted use by-right only within General Industrial zoning. The 2004 requirements relied upon the Special Use Permit process and design standards to mitigate the industrial nature of the storage use. The Special Use Permit requirement was instituted to address the appropriate location of such a use and preserve scarce commercial land that may be viable for traditional commercial uses.

The design standards were created to ensure compatibility and to screen the industrial aesthetic traits of the warehouse facility with surrounding commercial areas as well as with surrounding residential areas.

The overall goal of the standards in 2004 was to allow for limited opportunities for the storage use while limiting their size to ensure that buildings are not too expansive and that a pitched roof with multiple planes de-emphasizes the “box” look of mini-storage warehouse facilities. Limiting the height of the structure to 20 feet was to ensure that storage facilities did not exceed the scale of a typical one-story development in HOC areas and to also discourage the use of commercial property for larger scale activities that belong in industrial zoned areas. However, interior climate controlled facilities were exempted from the 60 linear foot building size limitation that applied to externally accessed units.

Proposed Amendments

The current standards are well written to meet the goals from 2004 by creating limited opportunities for storage facilities and having strong and clear design requirements geared towards one-story externally accessed facilities. Any changes that are made should not be perceived to encourage or incent self-storage uses within HOC areas rather than General Industrial areas.

The applicant’s proposed changes create a 40-foot height limit and allowances for low pitch or flat roofs to help achieve the maximum heights. The applicant proposal creates a buildable envelope for a 3 to 4-story building to assist in their development of an internally accessed climate control facility. With the current 20-foot height limit and pitched roof requirement, they would only be able to achieve a two-story facility. By changing the height limit to 40 feet and to allow lower pitched roofs it would be incumbent upon the Zoning Board of Adjustment to consider compatibility of a larger structure as part of the Special Use Permit process. The applicants proposed changes would apply to all types of storage facilities within the HOC zone. The remaining overall design standards would still apply.

Staff has proposed an alternative text amendment to meet U-Haul’s interest. Staff believes it would be better to word the proposed text amendment to state three stories rather than 40 feet and to clarify that the lower roof pitch standard would only apply to internally accessed facilities. Buildings adjacent to residential property will be limited to 1-story. Staff also suggests reorganization of the standards to clarify differences between internal and externally accessed units and to apply the other site improvement and fencing requirements appropriately. Both types of facilities would still be subject to a Special Use Permit. Please see the attached draft ordinance for the proposed amended language.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION:

At the April 19, 2017 meeting with a vote of 6-0, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended that the City Council approve a text amendment for interior access mini-storage facilities to be limited to a maximum of three stories and that such buildings may have a flat roof. No one from the public spoke on this item.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can approve on first reading a text amendment for interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities to be limited to a maximum height of three stories, buildings may have a flat roof, and adjust site landscaping and fencing standards per the attached draft ordinance.

The applicant has requested waiver of the rules and have second and third reading of the ordinance on May 9th.

2. The City Council can direct staff to prepare an ordinance as requested by U-Haul for an amendment to a 40-foot height limit and 3:12 pitch or flat roof standard.
3. The City Council can deny the proposed text amendment.
4. The City Council can refer this issue back to staff for further information.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

This amendment, although proposed in response to one particular property, would apply to any mini-storage warehouse facility in an HOC zone throughout the City. While staff would support a revision to the text for interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities in the HOC zone, the regulations for all other facilities should remain as existing as they are appropriate to other types of facilities and locations within the City. Staff is also concerned that the changes do not appear to create an incentive for this type of use on many HOC sites as the mini-storage use should only occur when other retail commercial uses are not viable.

Therefore, staff is proposing that an exception to the roof design (29.1308(1)(c)) and an exception to the maximum building height (29.1308(1)(d)) be granted for only interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities in the HOC zone to allow for a three-story height maximum and to allow for flat roofs to be permitted. This would allow the regulations for traditional exterior access facilities to remain intact, but give flexibility in the regulations for interior facilities in a commercial zoned area. Staff also supports reorganizing the standards to clarify that the internally accessed facilities requirements are separate from external units.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative #1 as described above. The applicant has request that the 2nd and 3rd readings of the ordinance be waived so that they can continue with the next step in the process for the Special Use Permit for the site.

Attachment 1: Existing Section 29.1308:Mini-Storage Warehouse Facilities

Sec. 29.1308. MINI-STORAGE WAREHOUSE FACILITIES.

Mini-storage warehouse facilities are self-storage spaces designed and used for the purpose of renting or leasing individual storage space to tenants who have access to such space for the purpose of storing and removing personal properties. Mini-storage warehouse facilities are permitted in the General Industrial (GI) Zone only, except that such facilities may be located in the Highway Oriented Commercial District (HOC) by virtue of a Special Use Permit authorized by the Zoning Board of Adjustment. A Special Use Permit for a mini-storage warehouse facility shall be subject to the Zone Development Standards of the HOC Zone and also be subject to the following additional regulations:

(1) **Architectural Standards.**

(a) Architectural Theme.

(i) Facilities placed in or near a shopping center or other retail uses shall be designed to be consistent with the dominant theme or design of surrounding buildings.

(ii) Building surface colors shall be restricted to muted earth tones.

(iii) All buildings, including storage units shall be surfaced in high quality materials such as stone, split face block, or brick. Smooth-faced concrete block, painted masonry, tilt-up concrete panels and prefabricated metal panels are prohibited.

(b) General Architectural Requirements.

(i) Buildings shall include design elements such as columns, ribs or pilasters, piers, quoins, and fenestration patterns to prevent a utilitarian, industrial, warehouse-like appearance.

(ii) Unit doors shall be screened or sited so they are not visible from the street. Storage unit doors must not face the street.

(iii) Unit doors shall be integrated into the overall design theme of the site through color and texture.

(iv) Buildings greater than forty feet (40') long must include a change in wall plane, recess, or reveal every twenty feet (20').

(v) Maximum building length on the site perimeter is sixty feet (60'), except where the buildings are adjacent to an industrial land use or zone and/or Airport Clear Zone.

(vi) Interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities are mini-warehouse buildings where storage is primarily accessed from the interior of the building. Interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities may exceed the sixty feet (60') maximum building length at the perimeter. Exterior garages and/or bays may be located on interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities, but shall not be located on the building that is adjacent to and/or facing the site perimeter.

(Ord. No. 3811, 11-23-04)

(c) Roof Design.

(i) Buildings shall include a roof pitch greater than or equal to 6:12, with roofs incorporating a high quality surface such as architectural shingles, standing seam metal or tile. Flat roofs are prohibited.

(ii) Roofs shall include four (4) or more planes, and have overhanging eaves extending at least one and one-half feet (1.5') past the building wall.

(d) Height. No building shall exceed twenty feet (20') in height.

(e) Building Placement. Screening and building location shall be such that overhead doors are not visible from off the site.

(2) **Landscaping and Screening.** Visual separation is desirable between mini-storage warehouse facilities and adjacent land uses or development. Landscaping shall provide a physical and visual separation.

(a) High shrubs shall be spaced at a maximum distance of six (6) feet on center to form a screen six (6) feet high.

(b) One Landscape Tree is required per fifty (50) lineal feet of landscaped area or as appropriate to provide a tree canopy over the landscaped area.

(c) Ground cover plants shall fully cover the remainder of the landscaped area.

(d) 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 the zone or this section.

(3) **Fencing.** Fencing is required for additional screening and as a security measure. Fencing shall comply with Section 29.408(2), and comply with the following:

(a) Fencing shall provide a five (5) foot minimum setback from the property line.

(b) Fencing shall be wrought iron or similar material with brick or stone columns spaced at a maximum of fifty (50) feet on center. Landscaping, as required in Section 29.1308(2)(a), shall be provided on the exterior side of the fence facing adjacent land uses. Fences containing barbed wire, electric charges, or sharp materials are prohibited.

(c) Where a setback abuts a residential zone, a six (6) foot masonry wall is required. Landscaping, as required in Section 29.1308(2)(a), shall be provided on the exterior side of the fence facing adjacent land uses. Masonry walls must be designed and constructed to facilitate maintenance and not to modify natural drainage in such a way as to endanger adjacent property.

(4) **Building Access.**

(a) Doors providing access to individual storage units shall not be permitted on the front yard side of the building, nor on any side abutting a public street or a residential district.

(b) Storage units and drive aisles shall be sited so a truck or car parked at a unit cannot trap another vehicle and prevent it from leaving the facility.

(c) Vehicular aisles providing access to storage units on both sides of the aisles, whether interior or exterior, shall not be less than twenty (20) feet wide.

(d) Aisles providing access to storage units on only one side of the aisle shall not be less than twenty (20) feet wide provided that there is more than one aisle available for circulation around a building.

(e) Loading docks shall not be permitted as part of the storage building.

(5) **Signage.**

(a) The only types of signs permitted are wall signs and monument signs, and shall adhere to the following:

(i) Wall-mounted Signs.

A. Only one wall-mounted sign is permitted along a street frontage.

B. The number of wall-mounted signs shall not exceed two (2) signs per

facility.

(ii) Monument Signs.

A. Only one monument sign is permitted along a street frontage per

facility.

B. The number of monument signs shall not exceed two (2).

C. The base of a monument sign shall be landscaped with ground cover

plants at a minimum of three (3) feet from the base. River rock or similar non-organic materials shall not be substituted for the landscaping area or used in combination with ground cover plants.

(b) Signage Size Restrictions.

(i) A wall sign is a sign that is displayed by being affixed to the outside of an exterior wall of a building. Wall signs shall be affixed to only those walls that face a street. A wall sign shall be no larger than thirty-two (32) square feet.

(ii) Monument signs shall be no larger than sixty-four (64) square feet, excluding the base.

(c) Signage Height Restrictions. The maximum permissible height for a monument sign is eight (8) feet, including the sign base; that is, the top of a monument sign shall be no more than eight feet above the grade of the site on which it is erected.

(d) Signage Lighting Restrictions.

(i) The face of an illuminated sign shall have a dark background.

(ii) The lighting of both wall signs and monument signs shall be projected downward.

(iii) Signs that flash light in any manner are prohibited.

(iv) Internally lighted signs and computerized/digital scrolling signs are prohibited.

(6) **Lighting.** Lighting shall be in accordance with Section 29.411, and with the following conditions:

(a) Night lighting and security lighting shall be sensitively designed to ensure no off-site glare is directed to neighboring parcels and that the overall intensity of the site lighting is not in violation of the standards for Section 29.411 or unreasonably intrusive on the use of adjoining property. All lights shall be shielded to direct light onto the site and away from adjacent property.

(b) Building mounted sconces shall be used instead of freestanding light poles wherever possible.

(c) When a mini-storage facility is adjacent to a residential zone, pole mounted lights shall be turned off between 9:00 PM and 6:00 AM.

(7) **Parking.** Parking shall be situated in conjunction with an office or management structure, for use by staff, service or delivery personnel, or prospective tenants.

(a) For developments less than or equal to two hundred (200) storage units, a minimum of five (5) off-street parking spaces shall be provided.

(b) For developments greater than two hundred (200) storage units, five (5) off-street parking spaces shall be provided on the property for the first two hundred (200) units, and one additional parking space is required for every one hundred (100) storage units thereafter.

(c) Except for purposes of loading and unloading, there shall be no parking or storage of trucks, trailers, and moving vans.

(8) **Prohibited Uses.**

(a) The following uses and activities shall be prohibited:

(i) Any business activity other than the rental of storage units, including miscellaneous or garage sales and transfer-storage enterprises that utilize vehicles as part of said business is prohibited.

(ii) Servicing or repair of motor vehicles, boats, trailers, lawnmowers, or similar equipment is prohibited.

(iii) Outdoor storage of boats, vehicles, or other materials is prohibited. All items stored on the property shall be located within buildings.

(iv) Storage of hazardous, toxic, or volatile substances is prohibited.

(v) Residential uses, other than one (1) unit for a 24-hour facility caretaker not to exceed 1,200 square feet.

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF AMES, IOWA, BY REPEALING SECTION 29.1308 AND ENACTING A NEW SECTION 29.1308 THEREOF, FOR THE PURPOSE OF SELF-STORAGE FACILITY HEIGHT DESIGN STANDARDS IN THE HIGHWAY ORIENTED COMMERCIAL ZONING DISTRICT ; 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.

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 enacting a new Section as follows:

“Sec. 29.1308. MINI-STORAGE WAREHOUSE FACILITIES.

Mini-storage warehouse facilities are self-storage spaces designed and used for the purpose of renting or leasing individual storage space to tenants who have access to such space for the purpose of storing and removing personal properties. Mini-storage warehouse facilities are permitted in the General Industrial (GI) Zone only, except that such facilities may be located in the Highway Oriented Commercial District (HOC) by virtue of a Special Use Permit authorized by the Zoning Board of Adjustment. A Special Use Permit for a mini-storage warehouse facility shall be subject to the Zone Development Standards of the HOC Zone and also be subject to the following additional regulations:

(1) Architectural Standards.

(a) Architectural Theme.

(i) Facilities placed in or near a shopping center or other retail uses shall be designed to be consistent with the dominant theme or design of surrounding buildings.

(ii) Building surface colors shall be restricted to muted earth tones.

(iii) All buildings, including storage units shall be surfaced in high quality materials such as stone, split face block, or brick. Smooth-faced concrete block, painted masonry, tilt-up concrete panels and prefabricated metal panels are prohibited.

(b) General Architectural Requirements.

(i) Buildings shall include design elements such as columns, ribs or pilasters, piers, quoins, and fenestration patterns to prevent a utilitarian, industrial, warehouse-like appearance.

(ii) Unit doors shall be screened or sited so they are not visible from the street.

(iii) Unit doors shall be integrated into the overall design theme of the site through color and texture.

(iv) Buildings greater than forty feet (40') long must include a change in wall plane, recess, or reveal every twenty feet (20').

(v) Maximum building length on the site perimeter is sixty feet (60'), except where the buildings are adjacent to an industrial land use or zone and/or Airport Clear Zone.

(Ord. No. 3811, 11-23-04)

(c) Roof Design.

(i) Buildings shall include a roof pitch greater than or equal to 6:12, with roofs incorporating a high quality surface such as architectural shingles, standing seam metal or tile. Flat roofs are prohibited.

(ii) Roofs shall include four (4) or more planes, and have overhanging eaves extending at least one and one-half feet (1.5') past the building wall.

(d) Height. No building shall exceed twenty feet (20') in height.

(e) Building Placement. Screening and building location shall be such that overhead doors are not visible from off the site.

(2) Landscaping and Screening. Visual separation is desirable between mini-storage warehouse facilities and adjacent land uses or development. Landscaping shall provide a physical and visual separation.

(a) High shrubs shall be spaced at a maximum distance of six (6) feet on center to form a screen six (6) feet high.

(b) One Landscape Tree is required per fifty (50) lineal feet of landscaped area or as appropriate to provide a tree canopy over the landscaped area.

(c) Ground cover plants shall fully cover the remainder of the landscaped area.

(d) 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 the zone or this section.

(3) **Fencing.** Fencing is required for additional screening and as a security measure. Fencing shall comply with Section 29.408(2), and comply with the following:

(a) Fencing shall provide a five (5) foot minimum setback from the property line.

(b) Fencing shall be wrought iron or similar material with brick or stone columns spaced at a maximum of fifty (50) feet on center. Landscaping, as required in Section 29.1308(2)(a), shall be provided on the exterior side of the fence facing adjacent land uses. Fences containing barbed wire, electric charges, or sharp materials are prohibited.

(c) Where a setback abuts a residential zone, a six (6) foot masonry wall is required. Landscaping, as required in Section 29.1308(2)(a), shall be provided on the exterior side of the fence facing adjacent land uses. Masonry walls must be designed and constructed to facilitate maintenance and not to modify natural drainage in such a way as to endanger adjacent property.

(4) **Building Access.**

(a) Doors providing access to individual storage units shall not be permitted on the front yard side of the building, nor on any side abutting a public street or a residential district.

(b) Storage units and drive aisles shall be sited so a truck or car parked at a unit cannot trap another vehicle and prevent it from leaving the facility.

(c) Vehicular aisles providing access to storage units on both sides of the aisles, whether interior or exterior, shall not be less than twenty (20) feet wide.

(d) Aisles providing access to storage units on only one side of the aisle shall not be less than twenty (20) feet wide provided that there is more than one aisle available for circulation around a building.

(e) Loading docks shall not be permitted as part of the storage building.

(5) **Signage.**

(a) The only types of signs permitted are wall signs and monument signs, and shall adhere to the following:

(i) Wall-mounted Signs.

A. Only one wall-mounted sign is permitted along a street frontage.

B. The number of wall-mounted signs shall not exceed two (2) signs per

facility.

(ii) Monument Signs.

A. Only one monument sign is permitted along a street frontage per

facility.

B. The number of monument signs shall not exceed two (2).

C. The base of a monument sign shall be landscaped with ground cover

plants at a minimum of three (3) feet from the base. River rock or similar non-organic materials shall not be substituted for the landscaping area or used in combination with ground cover plants.

(b) **Signage Size Restrictions.**

(i) A wall sign is a sign that is displayed by being affixed to the outside of an exterior wall of a building. Wall signs shall be affixed to only those walls that face a street. A wall sign shall be no larger than thirty-two (32) square feet.

(ii) Monument signs shall be no larger than sixty-four (64) square feet, excluding the base.

(c) **Signage Height Restrictions.** The maximum permissible height for a monument sign is eight (8) feet, including the sign base; that is, the top of a monument sign shall be no more than eight feet above the grade of the site on which it is erected.

(d) **Signage Lighting Restrictions.**

(i) The face of an illuminated sign shall have a dark background.

(ii) The lighting of both wall signs and monument signs shall be projected downward.

(iii) Signs that flash light in any manner are prohibited.

(iv) Internally lighted signs and computerized/digital scrolling signs are prohibited.

(6) **Lighting.** Lighting shall be in accordance with Section 29.411, and with the following conditions:

(a) Night lighting and security lighting shall be sensitively designed to ensure no off-site glare is directed to neighboring parcels and that the overall intensity of the site lighting is not in violation of the

standards for Section 29.411 or unreasonably intrusive on the use of adjoining property. All lights shall be shielded to direct light onto the site and away from adjacent property.

(b) Building mounted sconces shall be used instead of freestanding light poles wherever possible.

(c) When a mini-storage facility is adjacent to a residential zone, pole mounted lights shall be turned off between 9:00 PM and 6:00 AM.

(7) **Parking.** Parking shall be situated in conjunction with an office or management structure, for use by staff, service or delivery personnel, or prospective tenants.

(a) For developments less than or equal to two hundred (200) storage units, a minimum of five (5) off-street parking spaces shall be provided.

(b) For developments greater than two hundred (200) storage units, five (5) off-street parking spaces shall be provided on the property for the first two hundred (200) units, and one additional parking space is required for every one hundred (100) storage units thereafter

(c) Except for purposes of loading and unloading, there shall be no parking or storage of trucks, trailers, and moving vans.

(8) **Interior Climate Controlled Mini-storage Facilities.** Interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities are mini-warehouse buildings where storage is primarily accessed from the interior of the building. Such facilities shall meet all regulations of this Section 29.1308 with the following exceptions:

(a) Interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities may exceed the sixty feet (60') maximum building length at the perimeter.

(b) Exterior garages and/or bays may be located on interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities, but shall not be located on a building that is adjacent to and facing the site perimeter.

(c) Interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities shall be exempt from roof design requirements. Flat roofs may be permitted. All sloped roofs shall incorporate a high quality surface such as architectural shingles, standing seam metal or tile.

(d) No building shall exceed three stories in height. Buildings adjacent to a residential zoned property shall not exceed one story.

(e) Facilities with no exterior accessed storage units shall be exempted from the specific requirements of Landscaping and Screening and Fencing requirements of this section 29.1308. Each project shall incorporate perimeter landscaping in addition to other landscape requirements to enhance visual interest and compatibility with surrounding land uses and development where a total visual screen may not be necessary. Landscaping and fencing needs shall be reviewed as part of the Special Use Permit review for each site.

(9) **Prohibited Uses.**

(a) The following uses and activities shall be prohibited:

(i) Any business activity other than the rental of storage units, including miscellaneous or garage sales and transfer-storage enterprises that utilize vehicles as part of said business is prohibited.

(ii) Servicing or repair of motor vehicles, boats, trailers, lawnmowers, or similar equipment is prohibited.

(iii) Outdoor storage of boats, vehicles, or other materials is prohibited. All items

stored on the property shall be located within buildings.

- (iv) Storage of hazardous, toxic, or volatile substances is prohibited.
- (v) Residential uses, other than one (1) unit for a 24-hour facility caretaker not to exceed 1,200 square feet.”

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