

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE “DSC and CSC” SERVICE CENTER ZONING DISTRICTS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF VEHICLE PARKING SPACES REQUIRED FOR THEATERS, AUDITORIUMS, STADIUMS, AND ARENAS

BACKGROUND:

At the July 29, 2021 meeting, City Council received a request from a property owner within the Downtown to initiate a Zoning Text Amendment to eliminate parking requirements for theaters in the “DSC” Downtown Service Center Zoning District. In his letter to Council, Jerry Nelson asked the Council to consider removing the requirement to provide off-street parking spaces in order to facilitate the rehabilitation of the Ames Tribune building (317 5th St.) into a theater and event space. The intended capacity for the Nelson project is approximately 200 seats.

At the August 3rd City Council meeting, the Council responded to Mr. Nelson’s request and directed staff to proceed with initiating changes to the Zoning Ordinance that would allow for no parking requirements for the uses of auditoriums, theaters, stadiums, and arenas in the DSC and CSC zoning districts. **The proposed text amendment would eliminate all requirements for parking for such uses.**

The Zoning Ordinance distinguishes parking rates for Downtown and Campustown (DSC and CSC zoning) from other parts of the community. This is the case because of the availability of public parking and the intention of the City to support intensification of development in these concentrated urban areas. DSC/CSC zoning does not require parking for most commercial/entertainment uses. However, auditoriums, theaters, stadiums, and arenas are required to have one (1) space per four (4) seats of 10 spaces /1,000 square feet, with a minimum of 20 spaces on site. The one space per four seats is itself a higher rate compared to all other zoning districts where the rate is one space per five seats. This increase in parking requirements from other commercial zoning districts seems counter intuitive to the goal of creating vibrant, active urban areas in Downtown and Campustown by encouraging more surface parking and is unclear why it is structured as such historically.

The former Tribune building has no on-site parking as it was developed at a time when parking would not be required with a building. This is the situation for almost all historical buildings in Downtown as well as Campustown. Buildings in Downtown and Campustown can be reused for commercial, office, and restaurant/bar/entertainment uses, without providing for parking. However, creating a performance venue of a theater does require providing for parking under the current standards. In the case of the Tribune building, the property owner could choose to pursue remote/shared parking agreement in order to establish the theater use but securing upwards of 50 parking spaces on private property would be difficult to do Downtown where most parking is public parking. Additionally, tying

up surface parking spaces for the theater use may not be the best long-term solution for supporting other uses and redevelopment options Downtown.

A 2019 Downtown Parking Study determined there is public parking available in Downtown with higher levels of availability in the evening hours. Parking is free after 6:00 pm in all unreserved parking spaces Downtown. The study inventoried 450 on-street parking spaces and 737 off-street public parking spaces within Downtown. Peak demand Downtown was measured at 1:00 pm. The study determined there is a forty-five percent (45%) occupancy rate of parking stalls at 6:00 pm.

Downtown Parking Peak Utilization

Figure 7: Peak Hour Occupancy "Heat Map" – 1 PM



Source: Walker Consultants, 2019

The City reviewed the operations of parking in Campustown in May 2019. The City managed approximately 327 spaces and there are an additional 40 spaces in the Intermodal Facility. Parking is free after 6:00 pm in all unreserved parking spaces located in Campustown. No utilization study was performed at that time as the City considered changes to the duration of parking at metered stalls. No evening parking issues were noted at that time.

The DSC and CSC zoning district parking requirements are the same for all uses. Campustown and Downtown are two very different commercial areas with different parking availability and demands. Additionally, transit service supports both areas, but is more significant in Campustown due to the nature of many businesses oriented to a student customer base compared to Downtown. Although Campustown at one time was the home of two movie theaters, currently, theaters do not exist in either commercial

district and there are few existing buildings that would be able to house such uses as an auditorium or theater. The Tribune building is unique in the size of its space and being able to house a small theater. Despite the lack of existing facilities, it is not possible to predict what redevelopment or rehabilitation projects may occur in the future. Approving the reduction in parking would apply to all future projects and not to just the one request. Under current conditions, the proposed reduction in parking requirements is not viewed as having a significant impact on parking demands given existing development patterns and uses in both districts.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning and Zoning Commission met on August 18, 2021 to consider the proposed text amendment. Commissioners discussed the appropriateness of allowing a reduction in required parking and asked questions related to the availability of parking in the larger Downtown and Campustown areas. City staff presented additional alternatives based upon facility size as well. Ultimately, the Commission recommended that the City Council adopt the changes to remove parking all parking requirements for auditoriums, theaters, stadiums, and arenas within the Downtown Service Center and Campustown Service Center Zoning Districts. The vote was 3-1-0 in support of the recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve on first reading changes to remove all parking requirements for auditoriums, theaters, stadiums, and arenas within the Downtown Service Center and Campustown Service Center Zoning Districts.
2. Modify the proposed ordinance and approve on first reading.
3. Direct staff to make additional changes to the draft ordinance and return with an updated ordinance at a future meeting.
4. Decline to approve the proposed changes and maintain the existing parking requirements.

CITY MANAGER RECOMENDATION

The City has purposely reduced parking for uses in Downtown and Campustown acknowledging the uniqueness of the urban environment compared to the City as a whole. There are several existing entertainment uses, for which there are no parking requirements regardless of their size or capacity. The addition of a theater to the list of uses that do not require parking is similar to these types of uses, especially based upon the likely small scale of any theater venue proposed in these areas. Theater parking demand peaks in evening hours, with the exception of large movie theaters that also have peak demand on Saturday afternoons. Data about parking utilization supports there is publicly available parking for this type of use during evening hours and also on weekends.

Staff believes the proposed parking reduction for the proposed use(s) in DSC is appropriate based upon the vision for Downtown described in the Land Use Policy plan as a strong center with a goal for 24-hr activity. Although remote parking is theoretically possible for the use, it is not likely to be accomplished and may be counter to the overall goals for redevelopment if private parking is reserved for these uses in perpetuity. Not requiring the proposed use to provide required off-street parking will increase pedestrian activity creating a livelier area, encouraging people to move throughout the district as they move from public parking locations to different destinations.

A similar urban environment exists in Campustown with more emphasis on residential density accommodating student housing. The Land Use Policy Plan does contemplate supporting a walkable, lively commercial district. Campustown is intended to be a unique district with a great deal of variety in activity and appearance. The uses that are impacted by this parking requirement do not presently exist within the district. However, two movie theaters have operated in the past with similar public parking availability. Public parking is not as plentiful as exists in Downtown as it is a smaller area; however, there is still a large number of public and private parking spaces that exist in the area. Although it has fewer parking spaces, it is a more active area with high density residential, pedestrian friendly features, and has better multi-modal access that all would support allowing for intensification of uses without additional off-street parking.

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

Attachment A – Proposed Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements Table

Table 29.406(2) Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements

PRINCIPAL LAND USE	ALL ZONES EXCEPT DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES	DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES
RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS		
One and Two-Family and Single Family Attached (including Manufactured Homes outside RLP District)	2 spaces/Residential Unit (RU)	1 space/RU
Apartment Dwellings	1.5 space/RU; for one-bedroom units 1 space/bedroom for units of 2 bedrooms or more 1.25 space/bedroom for units of 2 bedrooms or more in University Impacted (O-UIE and OUIW) 1 space/residential unit for an Independent Senior Living Facility	<u>DSC</u> Developments with up to 18 units: - 0-2 bedrooms units: NONE - 3+ bedroom units: 1 space/RU Developments with more than 18 units: 1 space/RU
		<u>CSC</u> -All Developments 1 space/RU
Dwelling House	1 space per bedroom	N/A
Family Home	2 spaces plus 1 space/2 full time staff members of the largest shift	NONE
Group Living		NONE
Nursing and convalescent homes	1 space/5 beds, plus 1 space/2 staff members of the largest shift	
College and University housing, fraternities and sororities	1 space/3 bed	
Mobile Home and Manufactured Home in Manufactured/Mobile Home Parks	2 spaces/Manufactured/Mobile Home Space plus 1 space for guest parking/4 Manufactured/Mobile Home Spaces	NONE
Short-Term Lodging Hotel/Motel, including ancillary uses	1 space/guest room; plus 6 spaces/1,000 sf of ballroom, meeting, bar and restaurant areas; plus 1 space/2 employees of the largest shift	1 space/guest room, plus 5 spaces/1,000 sf of ballroom, meeting, bar and restaurant areas; plus 1 space/2 employees of the largest shift
Boarding houses, rooming houses, and lodging houses	1 space/bed	0.5 space/bed
OFFICE		
Medical/Dental office	1 space/143 sf where there is no agreement for shared parking; 1 space/200 sf where	NONE

PRINCIPAL LAND USE	ALL ZONES EXCEPT DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES	DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES
	there is an agreement for shared parking or for medical facilities that exceed 50,000 sf	
Other office	1 space / 300 sf	NONE
TRADE AND WHOLESALE		
Wholesale Trade	1 space/500 sf	NONE
Printing	1 space/200 sf of retail area; plus 1 space/2 employees on largest shift; plus 1 space/company vehicle	NONE
Fuel Sale/Convenience Stores	1 space/200 sf; spaces at fuel pump islands may be counted towards this requirement	NONE
Retail Sales and Services-General	1 space/300 sf	NONE
Display store (furniture, appliances, carpets, etc.)	1 space/500 sf	NONE
Financial institution (freestanding or as ground level service area)	Ground level: 1 space/250 sf; other than ground level: 1 space/300 sf	NONE
Entertainment and Recreation Trade	14 spaces/1,000 sf	NONE
Sit-Down Restaurant	9 spaces/1,000 sf	NONE
Fast food restaurant	12 spaces/1,000 sf in dining or waiting area, or 1 space/2 employees if no seating	NONE
Recreation facility, health club	5 spaces/1,000 sf	NONE
Enclosed tennis, handball, racquetball or squash courts	4 spaces/court plus 1 space/200 sf for rest of building	NONE
Bowling Alley	5 spaces/lane. Bar, restaurant and other uses shall provide parking according to the requirement for that use	NONE
INSTITUTIONAL AND MISCELLANEOUS USES		
Auditoriums, theaters, stadiums and arenas	Greater of 1 space/5 seats or 10 spaces/1,000 sf, with a minimum of 20 spaces	NONE Greater of 1 space/4 seats or 10 spaces/1,000 sf, with a minimum of 20 spaces
Places of Worship	When seating is provided in main auditorium: 1 space/4 seats, exclusive of Sunday School and other special areas. When seating is not provided in main auditorium: 1 space/60 sf of worship area	NONE
Private clubs, fraternal	1 space/200 sf	NONE

PRINCIPAL LAND USE	ALL ZONES EXCEPT DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES	DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES
organizations, libraries, museums and community buildings		
Funeral Home/Mortuary	1 space/50 sf in slumber rooms, parlors and funeral service rooms	NONE
Vehicle Service Facilities Fuel Sales Only Service/Repair Facilities	3 spaces plus 1/employee 3 spaces plus 2 spaces/service bay	NONE
Car Wash	2 spaces plus 5 stacking spaces/washing bay	NONE
Motor vehicle sales and service	2 spaces plus 1 space/500 sf over 1,000 sf in the showroom, plus 2 spaces/service bay	NONE
Heliport or helicopter landing area	Greater of 1 space/employee or 2 spaces/1,000 sf of patron area, but not less than 10 spaces	NONE
Hospital/medical center	1 space/2 beds plus 1 space/2 staff members of the largest shift	NONE
Schools primarily serving children younger than age 16	Greater of 2 spaces/classroom or 1 space/4 seats in auditorium	NONE
High schools and universities	Greater of 1 space/2 students; or 10 spaces/classroom; or 1 space/4 seats in auditorium	4 spaces/classroom
Sports Practice Facility	2 spaces/1,000 sf of gross floor area	2 spaces/1,000 sf of gross floor area
INDUSTRIAL		
Industrial Service, Manufacturing and Production, Resource Production and Extraction	1 space/500 sf plus 1/space/company vehicle For manufacturing uses exceeding 50,000 sf 1 space/1,000 sf	NONE
Warehouses	One (1) parking space per 5,000 sf	NONE
MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT	Mixed-use development parking shall be determined as the sum of parking requirements of the individual use components	Mixed-use development parking shall be determined as the sum of parking requirements of the individual use components

ORDINANCE NO.

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF AMES, IOWA, BY AMENDING SECTION 29.406(2) THEREOF, FOR THE PURPOSE OF REDUCING THE NUMBER OF VEHICLE PARKING SPACES REQUIRED FOR THEATERS IN THE DOWNTOWN SERVICE CENTER (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN SERVICE CENTER (CSC) ZONE; 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 amending Section 29.406(2) as follows:

“Sec. 29.406. OFF-STREET PARKING.

**Table 29.406(2)
Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements**

PRINCIPAL LAND USE	ALL ZONES EXCEPT DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES	DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES
...		
INSTITUTIONAL AND MISCELLANEOUS USES		
Auditoriums, theaters, stadiums and arenas	Greater of 1 space/5 seats or 10 spaces/1,000 sf, with a minimum of 20 spaces	<u>NONE</u> Greater of 1 space/4 seats or 10 spaces/1,000 sf, with a minimum of 20 spaces
...		

...”

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

John A. Haila, Mayor