



To: Mayor and City Council

From: Kelly Diekmann, Planning & Housing Director

Date: May 9, 2023

Subject: Request from Overflow for a Text Amendment to Sec. 29.406 – Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements for a Retail Store

Background:

Sandy Swanson, Managing Director of Overflow Thrift Store, recently contacted Mayor Haila and the Council Members regarding her desire to see changes to the Zoning Ordinance requirements for the minimum number of parking spaces. (see attached letter)

The email states that Overflow is intending to construct a new facility on vacant land it already owns on S. E. 2nd Street. The new facility would combine the operations of its two locations onto one site. The applicant submitted a Kick Off application to City staff for review of the preliminary development concept. **One of the issues identified during the review was related to the amount of on-site parking required to be part of the development project.**

The current regulations for Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements (Table 29.406(2)) mandate that retail uses have 1 parking space per 300 square feet of building and that office uses have 1 parking space per 300 square feet of building. The current requirement for retail was adopted in 2012 (Ordinance 4120); the current requirement for office was adopted in 2014 (Ordinance 4175). The complete parking standards can be found at this [link in Section 29.406](#). Both ordinances reduced parking requirements (fewer spaces per the set amount of square footage). The City has also reduced parking rates for medical office, large 100 space parking lots, and manufacturing uses in recent years.

The proposed new Overflow development is 19,303 square feet. In the most recent design, Overflow indicated that 3,639 square feet would be used for office (including

for online sales), 7,282 square feet of warehouse (storage), sorting, and loading area, and the remainder used for retail. The retail parking rate would apply to all of these components of the business, including those areas used for storage and office. All retail stores have their parking calculated for their entire building gross floor area at the same rate: storage is not counted differently.

Based on the Zoning Ordinance requirements, the most recent iteration of the proposed development must have at least 64 parking spaces. Overflow has indicated that it has only 41. This equates to approximately 1 space per 470 square feet. Overflow currently has furniture at one of its stores, which does have a different parking calculation: 1 space per 500 square feet. Staff informed Overflow that the number of minimum required parking spaces would be reduced once the amount of area dedicated to furniture sales was determined, but that rate would not apply to the whole building if the majority of the area is not used as a display store for large item, such as furniture.

OPTIONS:

Ms. Swanson is requesting to have the City initiate a Text Amendment to zoning regulations for minimum off-street parking requirements. Her goal is to construct a new Overflow Thrift Store on land already owned by the organization, in a desirable location, without having to purchase a new site, and without having to reduce the size of the building in order for the existing land to accommodate both the building and the corresponding minimum required parking.

Option 1: Modify the Standards for Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements for specifically Thrift Stores

This option would allow for the applicant to apply for a text amendment to create a new parking category in Table 29.406(2). The parking ratio would be less than 1 space per 300 square feet applied to retail stores and have a specific rate for a defined use of Thrift Stores. In all likelihood staff would propose 1 parking space per 500 square feet of gross floor area to match “display stores” and whole trade parking rates. This option would meet Ms. Swanson’s request.

Option 2: Modify the Standards for Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements for All Retail Sales and Services-General

The City Council would choose this option to eliminate or modify the minimum off-street parking regulations for all types of businesses within the Retail Sales and

Services-General category. A reduction of parking to 1 space per 500 square feet that matches display stores or wholesale trade would be needed to meet the Overflow request. All other minimum off-street parking requirements would remain. This option would meet Ms. Swanson's interest.

Option 3: Exclude storage area from the calculation of gross floor area for Retail Sales and Services and Office Uses

All retail uses have storage and loading areas included within the overall parking calculation. However, a defined area could be excluded or calculated at lower rate to reduce the overall parking rate for a use. This is not commonly done for parking rates due to variability of needs for individual businesses, but it could be a method of reducing parking areas when there is a large amount of square footage designated for that purpose. Depending on how this change is written, it would reduce parking requirements related to Overflow and it may meet all of their interests for reducing parking requirements.

Option 4: Decline the Request

The City Council can decline to direct staff to proceed with a Text Amendment pertaining to changes to minimum off-street parking requirements. This action would result in no changes to the current regulations. Overflow would need to modify their design or find other opportunities for remote parking to serve the site.

STAFF COMMENTS:

As currently written, the code for minimum off-street parking is designed to ensure that sufficient parking spaces are built on-site with new construction. Minimum parking rates are design to cover a large range of businesses operations and are not tailored to individual needs of any one business. When there is a distinction in use a different category of parking can be identified or created, such as with Option 1. To create a Thrift Store parking rate there would need to be identifiable features of the use to distinguish it from other retail uses.

An alternative to creating a new specific parking rate would be to consider reducing the overall parking rate for all retail uses consistent with Option 2. Retail trade use are quite diverse with high variances in products, building sizes, and comparison of national chains to non-chain businesses. Reducing parking could be found to be consistent with Ames Plan 2040 policies looking to reduce impacts of impervious areas and increasing efficiency of the use of land. Reducing parking rates relies on

market-based decisions of individual developers and businesses with a belief that negative externalities of lower parking rates are not significant to the community.

Due to the wide range of Options identified, staff believes it would be best to refer the item to future agenda for Council discussion. Alternatively, if City Council does not find these issues to be a priority at this time, it would choose Option 4. However, if the City Council has a clear preference for one of the options, then it could immediately initiate a zoning text amendment.

Attachment A – Letter to Council

Good afternoon -

I am the Managing Director at Overflow Thrift Store. We are contemplating a development project on land we own immediately to the east of our current leased store at 202 S Duff. As we have worked with City of Ames Planning officials, one potential challenge for our site plan is parking code requirements. The current code of 1 parking spot / 300 sf building would require approximately 64 parking spaces on our site. Our current draft site plan has 41 parking spaces plus 12 on-street spaces (which are not counted toward meeting the requirement; we do currently have 13 spaces in on-street parking).¹

We want to build on this land near our current store because it ensures our proximity to the populations we desire to serve. Specifically, we are convenient for individuals and families in the lowest household income brackets and to area homeless shelters. We are also convenient for individuals and families who walk or bike to our store. Please see attached map of Ames showing low income areas. Overflow is in or near some of the highest concentration areas of low income households.

We respectfully request the Ames City Council to authorize a parking code exception and / or City Staff review of the City parking code overall, toward relief of the parking requirement for our development.

Background

This project is a long-term investment that will allow us to multiply our giving to those in need for years to come. This project will allow Overflow to reduce expenses and create a long-term asset that can be used for our mission.

Overflow is a community effort to care for people in need through recycling and reselling clean, affordable goods. Our purpose is to give an ever-increasing percentage of our gross sales to individuals in need and to organizations serving community needs. In 2022, Overflow contributed over \$160,000 to individuals, families, ministries and service organizations. Since its inception in 2014, Overflow has given nearly \$620,000.

At Overflow we believe we can also make a positive impact through recycling to create a healthier environment. The planned new facility will improve the efficiency with which we can accept and process recycling. We strive to sell or recycle as many donations as possible. We work with a variety of organizations in Iowa and the Midwest to recycle items that cannot be sold in our stores, including clothing, linens, shoes, stuffed toys, glass, metal, plastic and wood. In 2022, we diverted over 140,000 pounds of textiles to upstream recycling. In 2022, we sold or recycled over 617,000 pounds of material.

2022 Stats:

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Recycled Pounds</i> | <i>Sold in Store Pounds</i> |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Shoes</i> | 4,774 | 10,392 |
| <i>Clothing & Linen (Textiles)</i> | 141,925 | 98,943 |
| <i>Furniture</i> | NA | 93,260 |
| <i>Household Items</i> | NA | 232,178 |
| | | |

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|----------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| <i>Jewelry</i> | <i>NA</i> | <i>120</i> |
| <i>Books & Media</i> | <i>Approximately 50 boxes donated to Half Price Books</i> | <i>22,878</i> |
| <i>Toys / Stuffed Toys</i> | <i>274</i> | <i>9,867</i> |
| <i>Purses & Bags</i> | <i>2,633</i> | <i>572</i> |
| TOTAL | <i>149,609 pounds</i> | <i>468,210 pounds</i> |

Thank you for your consideration. Best wishes,

Sandy Swanson

Managing Director
Overflow Thrift Store
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