

ITEM #: 35
DATE: 05-23-23
DEPT: P&H

Staff Report

**REQUEST TO INITIATE A ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT
TO PARKING STANDARDS FOR RETAIL**

May 23, 2023

BACKGROUND:

On February 13, 2023, Overflow Thrift Store submitted a Kick-Off Meeting application to discuss its proposed new store on S. E. 2nd Street, just east of the current location at the corner of S. E. 2nd Street and S. Duff Avenue. At that meeting, the applicants were told that the proposed amount of parking was insufficient for the amount of building square footage with a retail use.

Sandy Swanson, Managing Director of Overflow Thrift Store, then contacted Mayor Haila and the Council Members regarding her desire to see changes to the Zoning Ordinance requirements for minimum parking spaces (See Attachment A for the text of Ms. Swanson's communication).

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 on one site. Overflow favors building on this land because of the proximity to many of its low-income clients.

The current regulations for Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements (Attachment B) **mandate that retail uses have 1 parking space per 300 square feet of building.** The complete parking standards can be found at this [link in Section 29.406](#). A list of recent Zoning Ordinance amendments reducing minimum parking requirements can be found in Attachment C.

The proposed new Overflow building is 19,303 square feet. In the most recent design, Overflow indicated that:

- 3,639 sq. ft. would be used for office (including for online sales);
- 7,282 sq. ft. would be used for warehouse (storage), sorting, and loading area; and
- 8,382 sq. ft. (the remainder) would be 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 and the latest information provided by Overflow, 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.

Parking rates vary greatly among cities based on different experiences and goals as a community. National references such as Urban Land Institute (ULI) and International Traffic Engineers (ITE) publish recommended parking rates, typically geared to usage studies and peak parking needs in suburban types of environments. A small sample of midwestern cities retail parking rates are described below.

Mason City, Iowa:

Mason City has no parking minimums. The parking maximums are either 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet or 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet, depending on the location.

Dubuque, Iowa:

Dubuque requires 1 space per 250 square feet of floor area accessible to the public.

Iowa City, Iowa:

Iowa City requires 1 space per 300 square feet for most retail.

Des Moines, Iowa:

Des Moines requires 1 space per 400 square feet and 1 space per 600 square feet for furniture and appliance sales.

Sioux City, Iowa:

Sioux City requires 1 space for 200 square feet of Commercial Retail (such as clothing) and 1 space per 250 square feet plus 1 space per 1,000 square feet of outdoor sales for Heavy Retail (such as a lumber yard).

Peoria, Illinois:

Peoria requires no minimum parking spaces, except accessible spaces. Certain form-based districts have minimum parking for the district.

Madison, Wisconsin:

Madison requires no retail parking in many parts of the city. Elsewhere, there is a minimum of 1 space per 400 square feet and a maximum of 1 space per 200 square feet.

OPTIONS:

Presuming City Council desires to proceed with initiating a text amendment, staff has generated three options tailored to the Overflow request.

Option 1: Modify the Standards for Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements for 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. Staff would likely 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 the applicant’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 the City’s display stores or wholesale trade requirements would be needed to meet the Overflow request. All other minimum off-street parking requirements would remain. This option would meet the applicant’s needs.

Option 3: Exclude Storage Area from the Calculation of Gross Floor Area for Retail Sales and Services and Offices Uses

All retail uses have storage and loading areas included within the overall parking calculation. A defined area, however, could be excluded or calculated at a 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 their interests for reducing parking requirements. This option would meet the applicant’s needs.

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 designed to cover a large range of businesses operations and are not tailored to the individual needs of any one business.

When there is a distinction in use, a new category of parking can be created with a different rate, such as suggested with Option 1. To create a specific thrift store parking rate, there would need to be identifiable features of the use to distinguish it from other retail uses. Staff believes a reasonable definition can be created to meet these goals.

Alternatively, creating a new rate to reduce the parking for all retail uses (Option 2) would support Overflow’s request and be applicable to a wide range of retail trade uses from

national chain stores to small local businesses. This type of change focuses on minimum needs of retail uses rather than maximum needs of high volume retail establishments.

The approach of reducing parking in general is consistent with Ames Plan 2040 policies that indirectly support reducing impervious areas and increasing efficiency of the use of land. Reducing parking rates would mean that individual property owners would install parking based upon their on market-oriented decisions where they could build more parking if they desire.

Staff does not have a strong opinion of whether Option 1 or Option 2 is more appropriate for meeting the Overflow request. However, Staff does believe Option 3 is undesirable as most buildings have storage and it is hard to consistently monitor the future use of a portion of a building.

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

<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	149,609 pounds	468,210 pounds

Thank you for your consideration. Best wishes,

Sandy Swanson

Managing Director
 Overflow Thrift Store
 515-321-8657

Attachment B
Current Zoning Code Requirements for 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
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-All Developments</u> 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

**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
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	4 spaces/1,000 sf for all building sizes except S-HM and DGC. S-HM shall be 7 spaces/1,000 sf for buildings less than 50,000 sf and 5 spaces/1,000 sq. ft. and above. Any size with shared parking agreement shall be 5/1,000 sf DGC shall have a rate of 6 spaces per 1,000 sq. ft.	NONE
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 employee if no seating	NONE

**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
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	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 organizations, libraries, museums and community buildings	1 space/200 sf	NONE
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
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		

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
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

Attachment C

Recent Zoning Ordinance Amendments for Minimum Parking Requirements

Minimum parking requirements in Ames were first adopted with a rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance in 1965 (Ordinance 2109), around the time when many American cities were also adopting minimum parking requirements.

Since 2020, Ames has reduced minimum parking requirements six times:

- May 26, 2020 (Ordinance 4412): reducing the minimum parking for “Industrial Service, Manufacturing and Production uses exceeding 50,000 square feet
- March 23, 2021 (Ordinance 4433): eliminating minimum parking for residential uses in the Downtown Service Center (DSC) Zoning District for apartment buildings with less than 18 units
- October 12, 2021 (Ordinance 4449): eliminating minimum parking for “Auditoriums, Theaters, Stadiums, and Arenas” in the DSC and Campustown Service Center (CSC) Zoning Districts
- August 23, 2022 (Ordinance 4476): reducing “Medical Office” parking requirements
- January 10, 2023 (Ordinance 4487): reducing the minimum parking by 20% in commercial and industrial zoning districts where more than 100 spaces are required
- March 28, 2023 (Ordinance 4493): altering front yard parking requirements, increasing the minimum requirements for fast food restaurants, and eliminating the minimum requirement for heliports or helicopter landing areas