

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE “DSC” DOWNTOWN SERVICE CENTER ZONING DISTRICT TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF VEHICLE PARKING SPACES REQUIRED FOR APARTMENT USE**

**BACKGROUND:**

At the December 22, 2020 meeting, City Council discussed a request from a property owner to initiate a Zoning Text Amendment to eliminate multi-family residential parking requirements in the “DSC” Downtown Service Center Zoning District. In his letter to Council, Jerry Nelson asked the Council to consider reducing the number of parking spaces for apartment buildings to facilitate residential development and rehabilitation within the Downtown.

Currently, the Zoning Ordinance does not require parking for most commercial uses in DSC. However, residential uses in DSC, including apartments, single-family homes, and two-family homes, are required to have one (1) space per residential unit (RU) on site. This standard is the same in “CSC” Campustown Service Center. The one space per RU is itself a reduction from all other zoning districts (*see Attachment B for current parking requirements in districts besides DSC and CSC*).

At the December meeting, Council responded to Mr. Nelson’s request and directed staff to proceed with changes to the Zoning Ordinance. City Council also directed staff as separate issue to explore potential changes to remote parking requirements and use of public parking spaces for overnight parking as additional options to support additional housing options Downtown. **Staff intends to bring these to issues back to the City Council at a later date.**

**The proposed changes will allow for apartment buildings of up to 18 units to be exempt from parking if those units have two (2) bedrooms or fewer. In buildings of up to 18 units, apartments with three (3) bedrooms or more would continue to be required to provide parking at one (1) parking space per residential unit (RU). Any project or building containing more than 18 units would be required to provide parking for each unit; the intent of the change is not to exempt the first 18, two-bedroom units. The units being owner-occupied or rented does not affect the proposed change.** The proposed Text Amendment change is included as Attachment B.

Examples of project parking requirements if this change is adopted:

- An 18-unit apartment building (one- and two-bedroom units only): zero (0) parking spaces required.
- A 14-unit apartment building (seven (7), two-bedroom units and seven (7), three-bedroom units): seven (7) parking spaces required at one (1) space per three-bedroom residential unit.

- A 19-unit apartment (of any bedroom count): 19 parking spaces required at one (1) space per residential unit.

Additional background is included in the addendum.

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

The Planning and Zoning Commission met on January 20, 2021 to consider the proposed text amendment. Commissioners discussed the appropriateness of allowing a reduction in required parking, with attention paid to the tradeoffs between reducing the burden on residential development that minimum parking creates and the possible impact on the surrounding neighborhood of additional parking. Staff also discussed the 2019 Downtown parking study findings in reference to questions from the Commission. The Commission recommended that the Council adopt the changes to minimum parking for development of 18 apartments or less to eliminate parking for units with two-bedrooms or less within the Downtown Service Center Zoning District. The vote was 5-1-0 in support of the recommendation.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve on first reading the changes to minimum parking standards for development of 18 apartments or less to eliminate parking for units with two-bedrooms or less within the Downtown Service Center Zoning District.
2. Adopt different changes to minimum parking for apartments within Downtown Service Center Zoning District.
3. Make no changes to the current Downtown Service Center Zoning District parking standards.

**CITY MANAGER’S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

The proposed alteration to the minimum parking requirements will facilitate new residential development in the Downtown by reducing the burden on property owners and developers related to parking. Because of Downtown’s history, lots in the Downtown are smaller and most are developed, making it difficult for a developer to find a lot that can accommodate development and parking on the same parcel.

Staff believes the proposed parking reduction for small to medium size apartment projects in DSC is appropriate based upon the vision for Downton described in the Land Use Policy plan as a strong center with a goal for 24-hr activity. It is not uncommon for communities committed to urban living environments and supportive of Downtowns to reduce parking for residential uses so support intensification, example include Decorah, IA; Champaign, IL; and Burlington, IA. This proposed small change will not rapidly change the parking dynamic of the area and if there are potential parking issues the City can respond with future changes to public parking requirements or again require on-site parking for residential uses.

The City has already reduced parking for uses in Downtown acknowledging the uniqueness of the urban environment of Downtown. The proposed change is designed to jump start smaller housing projects that have otherwise struggled to move forward in Downtown. Over time, the parking reduction will likely leave the Downtown with fewer surface parking lots. Instead of parking, underutilized lots can be used for commercial and residential purposes, bringing energy and vitality to Downtown and tax revenue to the City. Reducing parking can also have the effect of encouraging modes of transportation other than private automobile. Riding the bus, walking, and biking become emphasized, rather than the vehicle, especially in a walkable place like Downtown Ames.

**Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative #1 thereby adopting the changes to eliminate parking requirements for units with two-bedrooms or less within the Downtown Service Center Zoning for apartment buildings with up to 18 units.**

## ADDENDUM

The Land Use Policy Plan Chapter 2 describes the sub-area of Downtown as a primary activity center for the City and a “strong central place.” It includes discussion of planned enhancements to the area and desirable uses in the Downtown that promote it as a 24-hour center. One strategy for a 24-hour center is adding housing. Although DSC zoning currently permits housing with reduced parking, there has been no meaningful increase in urban living options Downtown over the past 20 years. One issue highlighted by property owners is the lack of ability to convert upper floors of buildings or redevelop small sites due to the difficulties and cost of providing on-site parking.

Within the context of the proposed text amendment, it would facilitate small and medium sized projects addressing these concerns. Based upon discussions with the Nelson’s and staff’s evaluation of development potential for traditional lots Downtown, the 18-unit project threshold would allow for one to three floors of housing above retail on a standard 50x100 foot lot. Generally, an assumption of 4-6 apartments per floor. The Nelson’s described the intensity as being able to match that of the Sheldon Munn in height for their property at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Burnett. Without redeveloping a site, the proposed change would also allow for some existing buildings to rehabilitate 2<sup>nd</sup> floor space into apartments.

Under current conditions staff finds the proposed changes to be supportive of the goal of increasing housing options Downtown. The proposed change incentivizes small to medium-sized projects that would be in character with the current Historic Downtown. Large scale projects would still be required to address parking needs so as not to overrun the capacity of area. It is important to maintain the historic character of Downtown and its identity, but also to allow for incremental improvements.

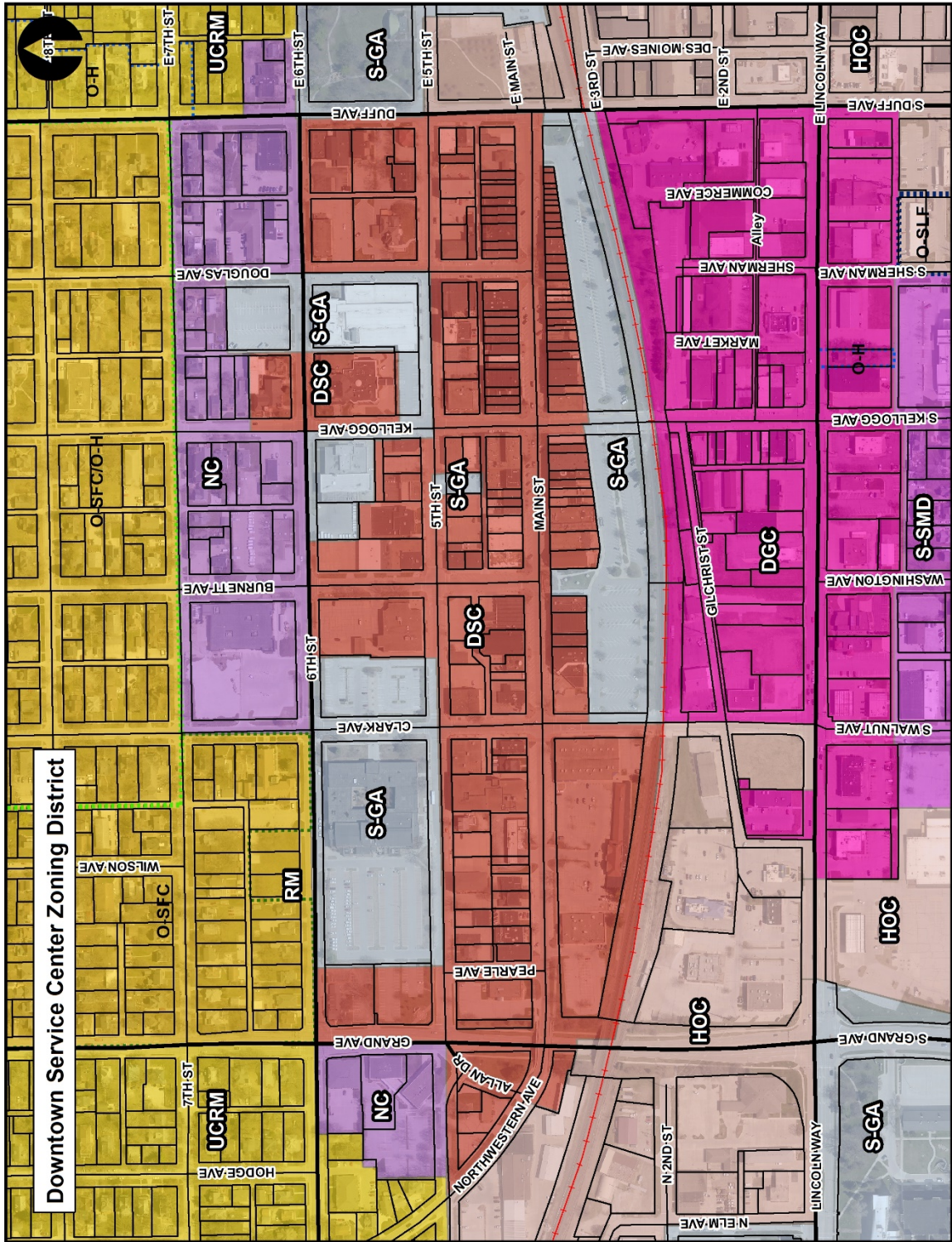
Reducing on-site parking requirements could potentially affect use of public parking spaces in the Downtown and adjacent streets that are outside of Downtown. The City will monitor these changes over time as new housing is added to the Downtown and adjust requirements as needed if there are negative impacts to availability of parking in the area.

Other alternatives discussed related to parking changes in DSC included waiving of all parking of any unit size, reduced parking for a smaller number of units, allowing for in-lieu fees, or changes to remote parking requirements to allow for spaces to be located further from the site. An alternative to requiring vehicle parking is to require bicycle parking. Covered bicycle parking for residential projects encourages alternative modes of transportation and supports occupancy of urban living environments by people that may embrace a car free lifestyle.

### *Downtown Parking Study Information:*

In 2019, the City engaged the services of Walker Consultants to [study parking in Downtown](#). Walker studied the use of existing parking on the street and in City-owned lots over two days. Their data did not show a parking shortage in Downtown, though the availability of spaces on certain blocks was limited during certain times of the day.

# Attachment A – DSC Map



## Attachment B – 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
<b>RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS</b>		
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
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
<b>OFFICE</b>		

<b>PRINCIPAL LAND USE</b>	<b>ALL ZONES EXCEPT DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES</b>	<b>DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES</b>
Medical/Dental office	1 space/143 sf where there is no agreement for shared parking; 1 space/200 sf where there is an agreement for shared parking or for medical facilities that exceed 50,000 sf	NONE
Other office	1 space / 300 sf	NONE
<b>TRADE AND WHOLESALE</b>		
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
<b>INSTITUTIONAL AND MISCELLANEOUS USES</b>		
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	NONE

<b>PRINCIPAL LAND USE</b>	<b>ALL ZONES EXCEPT DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES</b>	<b>DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES</b>
	main auditorium: 1 space/60 sf of worship area	
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
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
<b>INDUSTRIAL</b>		
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
<b>MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT</b>	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 APARTMENT USE IN THE DOWNTOWN SERVICE CENTER (DSC) 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 29.402(2) as follows:

**“Sec. 29.406. OFF-STREET PARKING.**

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

<b>PRINCIPAL LAND USE</b>	<b>ALL ZONES EXCEPT DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES</b>	<b>DOWNTOWN (DSC) AND CAMPUSTOWN (CSC) SERVICE CENTER ZONES</b>
...		
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> <u>Developments with up to 18 units:</u> <u>0-2 bedrooms units: NONE</u> <u>3+ bedroom units: 1 space/RU</u>  <u>Developments with more than 18 units: 1 space/RU</u>
...		<u>CSC – All Developments</u> 1 space/RU
...		

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

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John A. Haila, Mayor