

## Staff Report

**REQUEST TO INITIATE AMENDMENT TO THE WHOLESALE TRADE AND DISPLAY STORE PARKING RATE**

October 11, 2022

**BACKGROUND:**

FOX Strand, requested a Zoning text amendment to reduce the current parking requirement for a Furniture Store from 1 space per 500 square feet of floor area to 1 space per 625 square feet. This request was referred to the Staff by the City Council at their September 13, 2022 meeting.

FOX Strand is seeking this change on behalf of a regional furniture store looking to locate in Ames. The client they are working with believes the current parking rate results in an unnecessarily large parking lot for the stores needs and limits sites that would allow for them to locate a furniture store in Ames.

Under the City's current ordinance, Display Stores include uses such as furniture, appliances, and carpet stores. Fox Strand references Wholesale Trade as the parking category of interest, which has the same rate as a Display Store. Wholesale Trade includes uses such as building and electrical supplies, plumbing, ag and farm equipment, home furnishings, and store fixtures. Staff believes that the Display Store is the most applicable category, but both categories could be adjusted together.

**OPTIONS:**

The Fox Strand request is intended to benefit furniture stores with a reduced parking requirement. A text amendment changing Display Stores described above would be the most relevant change. If City Council is interested in pursuing the change, staff has identified two options in response to the request.

**Option 1: Reduce the rate as requested to 1 parking space per 625 square feet.**

This option will reduce the required parking rate for Display Stores by 20%. Display stores can have large areas with lower customer counts compared to typical personal goods retailers such as Target or J.C. Penney. The current rate of 1 space per 500 square feet reflects this expectation compared to general retail at 1 space per 300 square feet. Reducing the Display Store rate by 20% would likely be at the lower end of typical ranges for such a use, but if a store desires more parking it would be allowed to construct additional parking.

Our current rate is typical for a furniture store, but other cities have lower rates of parking. Examples include Cedar Falls at 1 space per 750 square feet, Des Moines at 1 space per 600 square feet, Urbandale with Wholesale Trade and Showrooms at 1 space per 1,000 square feet + 1 per 200 square feet for office areas.

**Option 2: Create a new generally applicable reduction for uses exceeding 100 or more parking spaces.**

From time to time the City considers parking reduction requests for specific uses. An alternative to considering the merits of individual requests would be to allow for uses with large amounts of required parking to reduce the total number required. The premise with lowering it broadly for large uses would be that there is a base level of demand for all uses, but the total demand is not linear to the increase in square footage, meaning as it gets larger it may not need as much parking per square foot.

**Under this option staff proposes creating a possible reduction for all commercial or industrial uses that exceed 100 parking stalls. The reduction would allow for the Planning Director to waive up to 20% of the total required parking stalls, but not less than 100 spaces.**

For example, if a proposal created more than 100 parking stalls, the Planning Director could waive up to 20% of all the required stalls, provided the reduction did not cause the total parking to go below 100 stalls. This option would only be able to be utilized on large proposals that generated high amounts of parking. No specific parking standard for other uses would be changed with this option, but it would equal the same reduction requested for the Furniture Store.

Examples of uses and required parking rates:

Fareway- Grocery Store- 24,247 sq ft @ 1/300=81 spaces- No Reduction

Super Walmart North- 156,833 sq ft @ 1/300=523 spaces- Reduction Option Allowed

Workiva- Office- 118,503 sq ft. @ 1/300=395 spaces- Reduction Option Allowed

Amcor Warehouse- 575,276 sq ft. @ 1/5000=115 spaces-Reduction Option Allowed

**STAFF COMMENTS:**

A cursory review of comparable parking rates indicates that cities have a range of requirements, with some cities having very similar standards to ours, and others having less parking required. Both options presented above maintain standards that keep Ames within a range of comparable communities. **Staff supports reducing the parking rate for Display Stores and for Wholesale Trade uses as the likelihood of parking**

**problems overburdening other sites for these types of uses is highly unlikely and also mitigates the amount of impervious surfaces that are required.**

Staff is supportive of reducing the parking rate with either Option 1 (Applicant application to Reduce Parking for a Furniture Store) or with Option 2 (20% Waiver Option for 100 parking space site) as a city-initiated text amendment.

**If Council has concerns or interests that other potential developers may also desire to reduce parking rates for a larger project it would be prudent to choose Option 2 as a more comprehensive approach compared to Option 1.**

## Attachment A- Letter To City Council



**FOX Strand**  
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September 6, 2022

City of Ames - Mayor and City Council  
c/o: Kelly Diekmann, Planning & Housing Director  
515 Clark Avenue  
Ames, IA 50010

RE: Request for Zoning Text Amendment - Wholesale Trade Parking Requirement

Honorable Mayor and City Council:

FOX Strand is currently working with a regional furniture store that is considering a new location in Ames. In discussions, it was noted that the City's parking requirement of 1 space/500 square feet (s.f) of wholesale trade area would result in an unnecessarily large parking lot based on the store's needs. For example, the company's typical store layout of roughly 100,000 s.f. would require 200 parking spaces under the City's current zoning code. Based on previous experience, they've found that 80% of that number of spaces provides ample parking for their customers. This reduction also provides the benefit of less pavement and less impervious area on a given site.

We respectfully ask that the City consider reducing the zoning code requirement of 1 parking space/500 s.f. of wholesale trade area to 1 space/625 s.f. or lower. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to a successful project that will bring this new business to Ames.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Scott Williams'.

Scott A. Williams, P.E.  
Project Manager