

**COMMISSION ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT TO REDUCE THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF OFF-STREET PARKING SPACES REQUIRED FOR GROCERY STORES**

**BACKGROUND:**

**Referral by City Council/Application for Text Amendment.** On January 19, 2010, the City Council referred a request from Scott Renaud, Fox Engineering, on behalf of Hy-Vee. This is a request to reduce the minimum number of off-street parking spaces required for grocery stores that are part of a “Retail and Shopping Center.” Since that time, Hy-Vee has submitted a formal application for a “Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance”, which alters their request for an amendment to parking standards, as referred to staff by the City Council. The applicant’s request for a text amendment no longer requests a change to the off-street parking standards for grocery stores that are a part of a retail and shopping center. The revised request is to change the minimum number of required parking spaces for “grocery stores” from 1 space/150 square feet of gross floor area to 1 space/250 square feet of gross floor area, as shown in *Table 29.406(2) of the Municipal Code* below.

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

PRINCIPAL LAND USE	ALL ZONES EXCEPT DOWNTOWN AND CAMPUS TOWN SERVICE CENTER ZONES	DOWNTOWN AND CAMPUS TOWN SERVICE CENTER ZONES
Grocery Stores	<del>1 space/150 sf</del> 1 space/250 sf, <u>except that in CVCN zone, 1 space/300 sf.</u>	None

**Reasons for the Applicant’s Request.** The applicant has stated the following in support of the zoning text amendment:

*“We are requesting a reduction in the city’s parking requirements to allow for more flexibility to grow and expand our existing stores in the city of Ames. We believe that a reduced requirement to 1 space per 250 sf would work well in a community such as Ames that has good public transportation and residents accustomed to modes of transportation other than cars.*”

We are specifically requesting a revision to Table 29.406(2) from the current requirement of: '1 space/150 sf' to read '1 space/250 sf.'

Ideally, Hy-Vee provides parking for our customers at a 1/200 sf ratio. When designing a new store we attempt to meet this ratio. However, as we expand some of our existing stores, space for parking is not always readily available. In these cases, we work with a lower parking ratio and give up the extra spaces in order to maintain or acquire a good store location.

Per your request, we have compiled parking requirements we have encountered for grocery stores in other communities. Below is a table illustrating these parking requirements:

1/250 sf

Waukee, IA  
West Des Moines, IA  
Cedar Rapids, IA  
Clive, IA  
Iowa City, IA

1/222 sf

Cedar Falls, IA

1/200 sf

Council Bluffs, IA  
Des Moines, IA  
Omaha, NE

*The requested change most directly impacts our proposed C-Store in the Lincoln Center Development at 640 Lincoln Way. Under the current ordinance, the development would not meet current parking requirements. With the requested ordinance change, the project would meet proposed parking requirements and allow the project to move forward. We would like to begin construction on the C-Store this spring. Thank you in advance for your timely review of this request."*

**City of Ames Grocery Store Parking Survey.** In 2007, the City of Ames Planning and Housing Department contacted various cities in Iowa regarding the parking requirements for grocery stores. The results of that survey are included in "Attachment A." City staff surveyed some of the same communities the applicant used to support their proposed change in parking standards. Parking standards for Iowa City, West Des Moines, Cedar Falls, Des Moines, and Council Bluffs are cited by both the applicant and the City survey and the findings match.



**Grocery Store Parking and Landscaping Requirements in the CVCN.** In July, 2008, Fareway proposed the construction of a new grocery store in the “CVCN” (Convenience Commercial Node) northwest of the intersection of Bloomington Road and Stange Road. At that time, Fareway representatives noted that the City’s parking requirement for grocery stores is significantly higher than what their marketing practices require. They indicated that they were willing to meet this higher requirement, but said they would be willing to provide more landscaping in lieu of what they believed to be surplus parking.

In response to this proposal by Fareway, the City Council approved an ordinance in September, 2008, reducing the amount of parking required for grocery stores in the CVCN zone from 1 space/150 square feet of gross floor area to 1 space/300 square feet of gross floor area, including the installation of additional landscaping to meet the following requirements as stated in *Section 29.403(4)(h) of the Municipal Code*:

(h) **CVCN District Landscaping.** In addition to (and in conjunction with) the lot line landscaping requirements specified in Table 29.403(4), increased landscaping shall be provided around the perimeter of parking lots that serve, or partially serve, Grocery Stores and/or any category of Retail and Shopping Centers as listed in Table 29.406(2), as follows:

- i. For every 1 square foot of grocery store or shopping center gross floor area, 0.28 square feet of landscaping shall be provided.
- ii. Landscaping shall be contiguous to parking lot landscaping otherwise required by this Chapter, or in landscaped areas abutting parking lots that are at least 350 square feet in area, and which are no narrower than 10 feet in any dimension.
- iii. The area of increased landscaping required under this Section shall conform to the L1, General Landscaping requirements of Section 29.403(1)(a).
- iv. All remaining areas of the site that are not otherwise covered by site improvements such as parking areas, driveways, buildings or parking lot landscaping shall be landscaped under the L1 standard.

**Application of the CVCN Parking Standards and Landscaping for Grocery Stores to Other Zoning Districts.** At the time the City Council was considering a reduction in the parking required for grocery stores in the CVCN district, there was discussion about applying the same parking/landscaping standards to all grocery stores throughout the community, or possibly to select zones in addition to the Convenience Commercial Nodes. Staff has been in the process of exploring the implications of reducing parking in other zones but had not finalized its research or had any further discussion with the Planning & Zoning Commission or City Council on this issue. The proposal by Hy-Vee now brings this issue back to the forefront for discussion and consideration. The grocery store parking standard proposed by Hy-Vee would provide slightly more parking (4.0 spaces/1,000 sq. ft. of floor area) than what is required in the CVCN district (3.33 spaces/1,000 sq. ft. of floor

area). However, no additional landscaping has been proposed by Hy-Vee in their revised grocery store parking standards.

**Parking Requirements for Grocery Stores in Comparison to Parking Requirements for Retail Sales and Services-General.** The consequences of reducing the parking requirement for grocery stores in comparison to parking required for retail and service establishments is worthy of further consideration. Parking standards for grocery stores (current and proposed) and parking standards for retail sales and services is described as follows:

Current Parking Standards:

Grocery Stores: **1 space/150 square feet** of gross floor area (6.67/1,000)

Retail Sales and Services: **1 space/200 square feet** of gross floor area on the ground floor (5.00/1,000)  
**1 space/300 square feet** of gross floor area on a floor other than the ground floor (3.33/1,000)

Proposed Parking Standards:

Grocery Stores: **1 space/250 square feet** of gross floor area (4.00/1,000)

Retail Sales and Services: **1 space/200 square feet** of gross floor area on the ground floor (5.00/1,000)  
**1 space/300 square feet** of gross floor area on a floor other than the ground floor (3.33/1,000)

In comparing current and proposed parking standards, it is evident that **grocery stores currently have a much higher requirement for parking (6.67/1,000) as compared to retail sales and services (5.00/1,000)**. If the parking requirement for grocery stores is reduced, as proposed by Hy-Vee, **grocery stores will have a lower requirement for parking (4.00/1,000) than retail sales and services (5.00/1,000)**.

**Consistency with the Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP).** This proposed amendment is not contrary to the goals and policies of the LUPP.

**Comments.** The question for the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council is whether the proposed standard will provide adequate parking for any future grocery stores constructed in Ames. The City Council adopted a lower parking standard for the CVCN zone; however, this included a requirement for additional landscaping. Hy-Vee is also requesting a lower parking standard for grocery stores, not just in a single zoning district, but for all zoning districts in the community that allow grocery stores, except CVCN. The Hy-Vee request includes no proposal for additional landscaping to accompany the lower parking standard. Application of the landscaping requirement for grocery stores in the CVCN zone to grocery store developments in other zones throughout the community is deserving of consideration by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council.

A consequence of reducing the number of parking spaces for grocery stores is the availability of fewer parking spaces for snow storage on the hard-surfaced parking lot. A potential advantage of fewer parking spaces is the use of a larger percentage of the site for landscaping/green space, which could offset the loss of surplus parking otherwise used for snow storage. While it is not advisable to store snow on landscape shrubbery, increased landscape areas facilitate larger areas of grasses and other groundcovers, which can readily tolerate the impacts of snow storage. Other advantages of increased landscaping in exchange for reduced parking include improved aesthetics of parking lots, improved storm water infiltration, and reduced heat island effects from expansive areas of hard surface (known to increase temperatures in urban areas).

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. The Planning and Zoning Commission may recommend the proposed zoning text amendment to the City Council that will reduce the number of required parking spaces for grocery stores in all zoning districts throughout the community that allow grocery stores as a permitted use, with the exception of the CVCN district, from 1 parking space for every 150 square feet of gross floor area to 1 parking space for every 250 square feet of gross floor area.
2. The Planning and Zoning Commission may recommend the proposed zoning text amendment to the City Council that will reduce the number of required parking spaces for grocery stores in all zoning districts throughout the community that allow grocery stores as a permitted use, with the exception of the CVCN district, from 1 parking space for every 150 square feet of gross floor area to 1 parking space for every 250 square feet of gross floor area, with the following condition:
  - A. Landscaping for grocery stores in all zoning districts that allow grocery stores as a permitted use shall meet the same standards as is required for grocery stores in the CVCN zoning district, as described in Section 29.403(4)(h) of the *Municipal Code*.
3. The Planning and Zoning Commission may recommend that the City Council not adopt the proposed reduction of the minimum number of parking spaces required for grocery stores from 1/150 to 2/250.
4. The Planning and Zoning Commission can refer this back to staff, and/or the applicant for further information and analysis.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

The proposed reduction in the minimum number of parking spaces required for grocery stores in zoning districts throughout the community seems reasonable when the current parking standard is compared with other Iowa communities. A closer examination of the parking requirements for retail sales and services, as described in this report, is warranted if the proposed requirement for grocery store parking is adopted.

It is staff's recommendation that the Planning and Zoning Commission act in accordance with Alternative #1, which is to recommend that the City Council approve the proposed change in required parking for grocery stores in all zoning districts, except CVCN, from 1 space for every 150 square feet of gross floor area to 1 space for every 250 square feet of gross floor area. If the Commission believes that additional landscaping is of benefit, as adopted for grocery stores in the CVCN zoning district, the staff recommends that the Commission choose alternative #2.

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# Attachment A

## Parking Requirements for Retail and Grocery Stores

Jurisdiction	Off Street Parking Requirements
Ankeny	High Volume Traffic Generation 1 space/200 S.F. Gross Floor Area
Des Moines	Retail, Supermarkets, etc. 0-4,000 S.F. without gas sales - 1 space/400 S.F. Gross Floor Area 0-4,000 S. F. with gas sales - 1 space/300 S.F. Gross Floor Area 4,001-200,000 S.F. - 1 space/200 S.F. Gross Floor Area 200,000+ S.F. - 1 space/200 S.F. Gross Floor Area
Davenport	Retail+Grocery 0-2,000 S.F. - 1 space/100 S.F. 2,001-20,000 S.F. - 1 space/200 S.F. 20,000+ S.F. - Minimum parking ratio of 5.5 spaces/1,000 S.F.
Dubuque	Retail+Grocery 1 space/250 S.F. floor area available to the public. Parking credit in downtown for grocery (1/4 of total required parking exempt)
Waterloo	Retail+Grocery 0-2,000 S.F. - 1 space/250 S.F. + 1 space/2 employees Minimum of 5 parking stalls required regardless of S.F.
Iowa City	Retail 1 space/300 S.F. Shopping Center 1 space/250 S.F. floor area available to the public.
Council Bluffs	Retail+Grocery 1 space/200 S.F. Gross Floor Area
West Des Moines	Grocery 0-50,000 S.F. - 1 space/225 S.F. 50,000+ S.F. - 1 space/250 S.F.
Urbandale	Retail 5 spaces/1,000 S.F. Gross Floor Area
Cedar Falls	Retail 2,000+ S.F. - 4.5 spaces/1,000 S.F. Convenience Store 1 space/100 S.F. + 1 space/2 employees
Marshalltown	Grocery+Retail 1 space/300 S.F. Gross Floor Area
Johnston	Retail/Grocery 0-2,000 S.F. - 1 space/500 S.F. +1 space/1employee 2,000+ S.F. - 1 space/175 S.F. Gross Floor Area