



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia
Department of Planning & Community Development

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Building Inspections
Engineering
Planning & Zoning

To: Eric Campbell, City Manager
From: Adam Fletcher, Director – Department of Planning and Community Development; and
Harrisonburg Planning Commission
Date: November 13, 2018
Re: Zoning Ordinance Amendment to Article G. – Off-Street Vehicle and Bicycle Parking

Summary:

Public hearing to consider a request from Tim Reamer of Cottonwood Commercial to modify Section 10-3-25 (17), which specifies that retail stores, sales rooms and similar mercantile establishments that are 10,000 square feet or less in gross floor area are to provide one parking space for each 200 square feet of gross floor area and if over 10,000 square feet in gross floor area are to provide one parking space for each 250 square feet of gross floor area. The modification of Section 10-3-25 (17) and the addition of a new subsection within Section 10-3-25 would require retail sales of furniture and/or appliances to provide two parking spaces, plus one parking space for each 1,000 square feet of gross floor area.

Background:

Article G of the Zoning Ordinance – Off-Street Vehicle and Bicycle Parking, Section 10-3-25 (17) addresses parking for retail stores, sales rooms and similar mercantile establishments. This subsection is as follows:

Retail stores, sales rooms and similar mercantile establishments: If ten thousand (10,000) square feet or less of gross floor area, one (1) parking space for each two hundred (200) square feet of gross floor area; if over ten thousand (10,000) square feet of gross floor area, one (1) parking space for each two hundred and fifty (250) square feet of gross floor area.

When calculating parking for a retail store, sales room, or mercantile establishment use staff takes the total gross floor area of the entire building to include show room floors, warehouse area, office area, hallways, and restrooms, and divides by 200, or 250 depending the total square footage. All totals are rounded up to the nearest whole number. This number is the total number of parking spaces that are required for the use. This same method is used, total gross floor area, when calculating parking for enclosed shopping malls or multi-tenant strip malls when all the proposed uses within the mall are not determined.

Key Issues:

The applicant is requesting to amend Section 10-3-25 (17) by proposing the following language:

Retail stores, sales rooms and similar mercantile establishments (*applicable where no other specific retail standard is set forth*): If ten thousand (10,000) square feet or less of gross floor area, one (1) parking space for each two hundred (200) square feet of gross floor area; if over ten thousand (10,000) square feet of gross floor area, one (1) parking space for each two hundred and fifty (250) square feet of gross floor area.

The applicant also proposes new subsection (27) which reads as follows:

(27) Retail of furniture and/or appliances: Two (2) parking spaces, plus one (1) parking space per each one thousand (1,000) square feet of gross floor area of the establishment.

The applicant's letter states that because there is no differentiation between the various types of sales, a user with a high parking demand, grocery stores or convenience item sales, requires the same amount of parking as lower demand uses, such as furniture and appliance sales. Furthermore, furniture and appliance sales have especially low parking demand when viewed as a ratio to floor space, partially due to the amount of area required to display their stock, and partially due to the high price point at which their stock sells and the infrequency between user purchases. The letter also points out that creating excessive parking is a burden on the user/developer, as well as the City and its citizens because it:

- Incentivizes driving over public transportation, bicycling, and walking, which leads to unnecessary congestion on our roadways and creation of pollutants
- Creates an inefficiency of urban parcel development, which leads to lower realized taxation and urban sprawl
- Reduces available green space and increases stormwater runoff/stream pollutants
- Increases the "heat island effect" created by the City, which has harmful environmental consequences.

These are all valid points that make sense, and staff concurs with them.

One point that staff cautions is that, if approved, when a development is planned only for enough parking for a furniture store, and the furniture store closes, no other use, other than a furniture store, could occupy the space unless additional parking is provided either on the site or through a shared parking agreement with adjacent properties. Any future development that uses this minimum number of parking spaces for a furniture store would need to know this at the time of site development.

Staff recommends in favor of the Zoning Ordinance as requested by the applicant.

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A

Alternatives:

- (a) Recommend approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendment request as submitted; or
- (b) Recommend denial of the Zoning Ordinance amendment request.

Community Engagement:

As required, the request was published in the local newspaper twice advertising for Planning Commission's public hearing and twice advertising for City Council's public hearing. The advertisement was published as shown below:

Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Off-Street Vehicle Parking Regulations

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In addition, adjoining property owners were notified of the public hearing; the property was posted with signage advertising the request; and a notice was provided on the City's website at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-hearings>.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends alternative (a) approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendment request as submitted.

Attachments:

1. Extract (5 pages)
2. Application, applicant letter, and supporting documents (4 pages)
3. Proposed zoning ordinance amendments (3 pages)

Review:

Planning Commission recommended (7-0) alternative (a) approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendment request as submitted, along with the suggested change from staff.