



City Council Report

Date: May 4, 2015
To: City Council
Through: Kari Kent, Deputy City Manager
Christine Zielonka, Development and Sustainability Director
John Wesley, Planning Director
Gordon Sheffield, Zoning Administrator
From: Angelica Guevara, Senior Planner
Subject: Amending Section 11-32-3(C) - Parking Regulations
"Citywide"

Strategic Initiatives



Purpose and Recommendation

The current parking regulations contain a maximum requirement for the number of parking spaces that may be provided for all developments. The maximum number of parking spaces allowed is 125% of the minimum required spaces.

This amendment to the parking regulations would allow an increase to the maximum number of parking spaces provided for office developments to 8 spaces per 1,000 square feet (s.f.) of gross building area.

Staff recommends City Council APPROVE the proposed amendments to the Parking Regulations, Section 11-32-3(C), as written. The Planning and Zoning Board also recommended the amendment be approved (5-0-2 Clement and Hudson, absent).

Background

The current parking regulations provide minimum and maximum standards for parking to accommodate the various land uses in the City. The current minimum standard for office use is one parking space per 375 s.f. of gross building floor area. This is equivalent to 2.67 spaces per 1,000 s.f. of area. The minimum requirements are in place to help ensure there are safe and convenient places to park vehicles, bicycles, and motorcycles.

As of September 3, 2011 the parking regulations include a maximum requirement for the number of parking spaces that may be provided for all developments. These limits were provided in order to reduce the amount of land area consumed by parking, to reduce the scale of paved surfaces in order to reduce heat gain that contributes to the urban heat island effect, and to encourage sustainable development by promoting the use of alternative modes of transportation, walking and bicycling. Surface parking is limited to a maximum of 125% of the minimum required spaces which can be modified with an Administrative Use Permit.

Discussion

The current parking requirements are not meeting the needs of some office users. According to the staff in the Economic Development Office, the parking space cap is creating a challenge for some office users to locate in Mesa as employers in the knowledge-based industry, technology, life sciences, and back office operations have higher worker density ranging from six to nine employees per 1,000 s.f. which creates a need for more parking.

There is a trend for increased office density across the country and locally. The valley has recently had examples of new office developments with similar density in Scottsdale and Tempe.

According to an article published in November 2014 by the American Planning Association office density has increased in the last 45 years. In 1970, the average square footage per worker ranged from 500 to 700 square feet per employee. By 2000, the average square footage had dropped to 250 square feet per employee. By 2010, it dropped additionally to 225 square feet and dropped further in 2012 to 176 square feet per employee. The average office square footage per employee is projected to drop further to 151 square feet per employee by 2017.

Research and current trends show that office tenants are becoming as efficient as possible by having more employees within a smaller footprint.

Although it is possible to modify the current parking regulations through a request for an Administrative Use Permit, we are repeatedly told that office users see this as an additional challenge and prefer sites in communities that are perceived to have less regulations and hurdles.

Staff has taken this information and used it as an opportunity to improve the regulations for office developments through an amendment to the parking regulations. The proposed amendment language would provide an exception that would allow certain office developments to provide higher parking ratios not to exceed 8 spaces per 1,000 square feet when the office development exceeds 60,000 square feet and has an employee occupancy rate of one employee per 200 square feet of building area or greater.

Alternatives

ALTERNATIVE A (Recommended) – Adopt the suggested amendment language: The proposed amendment is designed to allow certain office developments to provide additional surface parking at a higher ratio than currently allowed.

ALTERNATIVE B – Adopt the suggested Alternative A Language, and add modifications to address any concerns raised by Council during discussions.

ALTERNATIVE C (Not Recommended) – Make no changes to the existing zoning ordinance: Doing so would leave the regulations unchanged. In order for office developments to exceed the maximum parking ratios they would need to obtain an Administrative Use Permit.

Fiscal Impact

None.

APPENDIX A

Summary of the parking regulations for the surrounding communities

City	Minimum Parking Requirement per Gross Floor Area of the Building	Minimum Parking Ratio per 1,000	Maximum Parking Requirement
Mesa	General Office: 1/375 Interpretation by the Zoning Administrator has allowed general office uses to provide parking as a medical office use: 1/200	2.67/1,000 5/1,000	-Surface parking limited to a maximum of 125% of the minimum required spaces; Administrative Use Permit required to provide more surface parking than the maximum standard -Offices providing parking as a medical office use can provide a maximum of 6.25/1,000
Phoenix	Office buildings: less than 50,000 s.f. = 1/300 50,001 – 250,000 s.f. = 3.5/1,000 250,001 – 600,000 s.f. = 3.2/1,000 600,001 – 1,000,000 s.f. = 2.8/1,000 Over 1,000,000 s.f. = 2.7/1,000	3.33/1,000	None
Tempe	Office = 1/300 Call Center = 1/150	3.33/1,000 6.67/1,000	Surface parking limited to a maximum of 125% of the minimum required spaces; Use permit required to provide more surface parking than the maximum standard
Gilbert	General Office = 1/250 Call Center = 1/150	4/1,000 6.67/1,000	None
Chandler	Government Office = 1/200 General Office = 1/250 Call Center = 1/150	5/1,000 4/1,000 6.67/1,000	Number of parking spaces shall not exceed 125% of the minimum required spaces; a site specific parking demand study is needed to exceed the maximum parking requirement
Scottsdale	-Offices (medical/dental/clinics/gov't) = 1/250 -Office, all other = 1/300 In Downtown Area: Office (including: government/medical/dental offices/clinics): In a Type 1 area = 1/500 In a Type 2 area = 1/300	4/1,000 3.33/1,000 2/1,000 3.33/1,000	None
Tucson	1/200 for first floor + 1/250 for all other floors	5/1,000 + 4/1,000	None