

	Presented
Date Action Taken:	6.8.15
Other:	
Verified By:	<i>Komit</i>

CITY COUNCIL INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

IM No. 15-08: Proposed revisions to Draft Downtown Overlay Zoning District and Design Standards in Ordinance Serial No. 15-06.

Originator: Tina Crawford, City Planner *TC*
 Date: 5/28/2015

Agenda of: 6/8/2015

Route to:	Department Head	Signature	Date
X	Public Works Director	<i>[Signature]</i>	6/1/15
X	Deputy Administrator	<i>[Signature]</i>	6/1/15
X	City Clerk	<i>Komis</i>	6.1.15

Reviewed by Mayor Bert L. Cottle: *[Signature]* 06:01:2015

- Attachments:** Proposed revisions to Downtown Overlay District – Ord. 15-06 (1 page)
 Overview of Identified Concerns and Possible Solutions (2 pages)
 Alternative #1 – Downtown Overlay District Boundary Map (1 page)
 Alternative #2 – Downtown Overlay District Boundary Map (1 page)
 Initial Draft Downtown Overlay District Boundary Map (1 page)
 Comparative Chart – Parks Highway vs. Main Street (1 page)
 Chart outlining Architectural Design Requirements
 Comparison Chart – Current Regulations vs. Proposed Overlay (3 pages)

Summary Statement: Based on the comments received at the May 11, 2015 and May 26, 2015 City Council meetings and written comments, staff is proposing a smaller area for the Downtown Overlay District and revisions to the proposed regulations and design standards (see attachments.)

Alternative #1 is being recommended as the boundary of the Downtown Overlay since it represents the historic downtown for Wasilla as shown in historical documents and in the adopted Downtown Area Plan. Although it still includes the parcels fronting on the Parks Highway, it should be noted that the design criteria, setbacks, parking, etc. are different for these parcels since they front on an “Avenue” type street classification (see comparative chart.) It is recommended that these parcels remain within the Downtown Overlay since they serve as the “gateway” to the downtown district.

Recommendation: Staff is recommending that the City Council consider the proposed revisions and direct staff to revise Ordinance Serial No. 15-06 to reflect those changes and schedule it for adoption at the June 22, 2015 City Council Meeting.

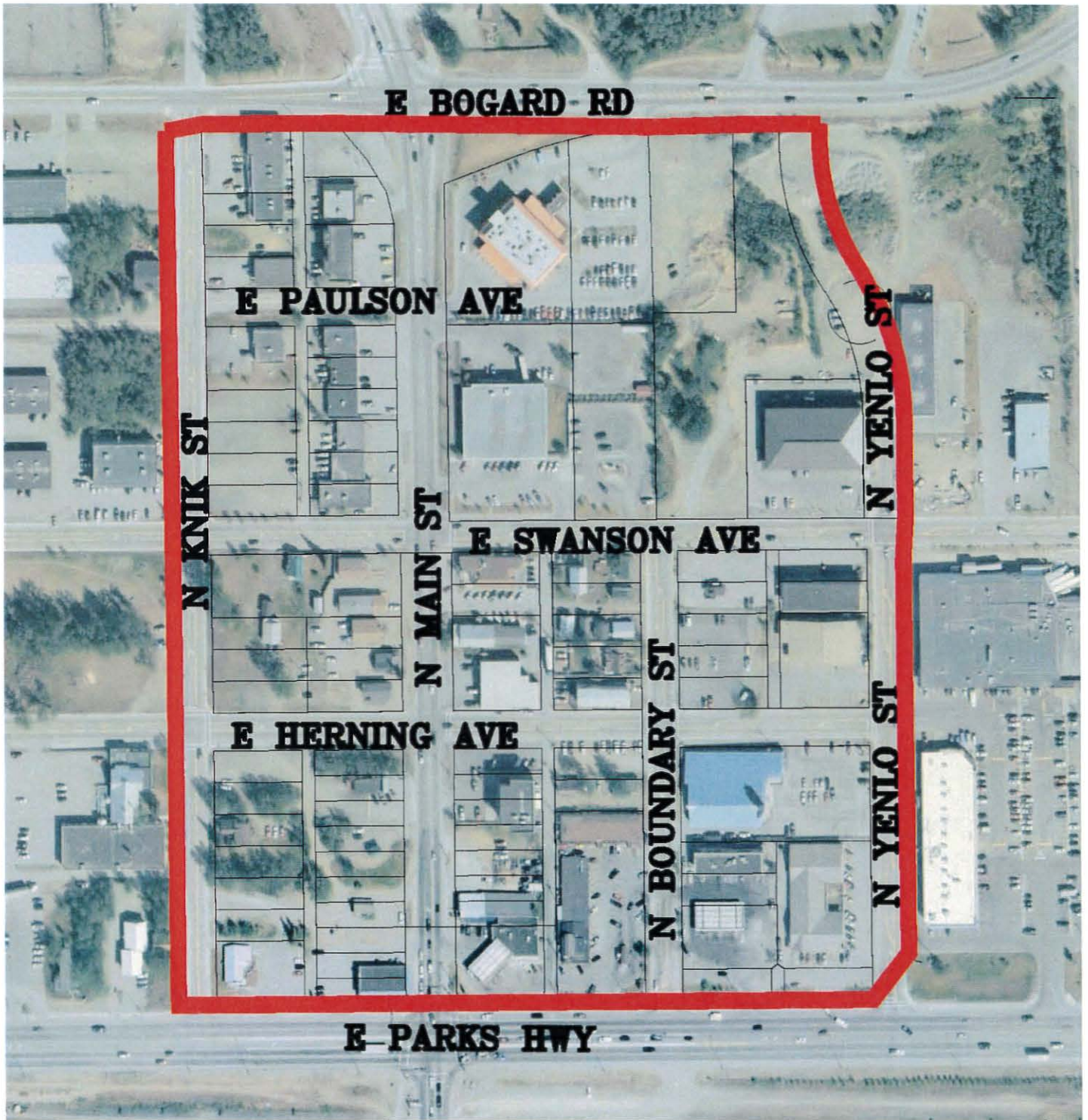
DOWNTOWN OVERLAY DISTRICT AND DESIGN STANDARDS PROPOSED REVISIONS

- Adopt Alternative #2 as the Downtown Overlay Boundary – Smaller size
- Prohibited Uses – Delete the following use types and add to the list of Permitted Uses as a Conditional Use:
 - Gas Stations
 - Pawn Shops
 - Convenience Stores with gas pumps
- Permitted Uses – Allow Offices on the ground level as a Permitted Use instead of a Conditional Use
- Revise the language regarding the threshold for compliance with the Downtown Overlay – Delete language referring to improvements equal to 25% or more of assessed value. With proposed revision, compliance would only be required if addition is more than 25% of the existing building size. NOTE: The current “grandfathering” regulations do not allow any size addition.
- Delete list of Prohibited Building Materials

ISSUE	CODE REQUIREMENT (AA – Administrative; UP – Use Permit; CU – Conditional Use)		COMMENTS
	Current	Proposed	
Existing uses and buildings not really “grandfathered” because they are required to come into compliance if changed - Grandfathered businesses should be allowed to expand without coming into compliance with regulations	Use or building only “grandfathered” if unchanged or no vacancy >12 months – If damaged >65%, may not be reconstructed. Additions to nonconforming structure must comply with current code and no additions if nonconforming use.	Improvement allowed up to 25% of assessed tax value or building size before requiring compliance. Then only requires sidewalk, street trees, and street lights and new addition must comply with design criteria. Existing building is exempt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overlay allows improvements up to 25% of building value or size – Could change to 25% of size vs. value Current code only allows improvements if only building is nonconforming and new addition meets current code. Business owners are unaware of current “grandfather” regulations and what current code requires for new development.
Rents will increase due to construction costs	Must be similar to area appearance and architecture – decision by City Planner or Planning Commission.	No prescribed design, material, or color – just identifies prohibited types	Overlay will not have significantly higher costs since developer chooses design, type, and color – Current code requires paved parking, landscaping, & architectural design
Regulations will lower property value and make it difficult to sell property	--	--	City adopted zoning in 1982 with major overhaul in 1996 – Did not negatively impact property values
No one shops downtown – people mainly shop online or at big-box stores	--	--	Baby boomers and millennials want walkable downtown near neighborhoods – Also want to live downtown but can’t always afford due to higher rents/demand. Existing businesses in Overlay are doing well.
No one walks downtown or anywhere – northern climate	Code requires sidewalks to provide circulation or access to schools, playgrounds, shopping, transit, and other community facilities.	Sidewalks required when new addition or renovation >25% of building value or size	Seniors, parents with kids, and school-age kids walk to parks, post office, Carrs, school, eat lunch, etc. even with unattractive, missing, and/or damaged and narrow sidewalks with no attractive route. Walking would increase if safer and more attractive route.
City shouldn’t tell property owners what they can/can’t do on property – City should only provide guidelines – not make revisions mandatory	--	--	1 st & 2 nd class boroughs must have Comp Plan and zoning – MSB delegated to City in 1986 - Initial zoning in 1982 and current in 1996 – Codes provide clear expectations and provide property value protection for investment cost.
All types of offices should be allowed on ground level as permitted use vs. conditional use	Allowed as AA	Allowed as AA for upper-story or ground-level with CU	Revise pages 3 & 4 of 16 in ordinance to either allow by right everywhere or keep CU for “main street” roads
No notice to owners	--	--	Web, eNotice, Ads, 2 Postcards about proposed Overlay
Beautification won’t attract customers	--	--	Landscaping, buffering, and screening required in current code – Why if it doesn’t make a difference?
Need incentives for owners to improve property	None	None proposed	Create Business Improvement District (BID) tax?
Downtown will only be used by tourists	--	--	Designed for community – not just tourists
Agree that City appearance needs to be improved – just not by business owners	--	--	Would require City residents to give up services to pay for business property improvements or create BID.
No benefit to City residents or businesses	--	--	Health benefits, improved attractiveness, increased property value due to increased demand, unique shopping, seniors able to “age in place”, etc.

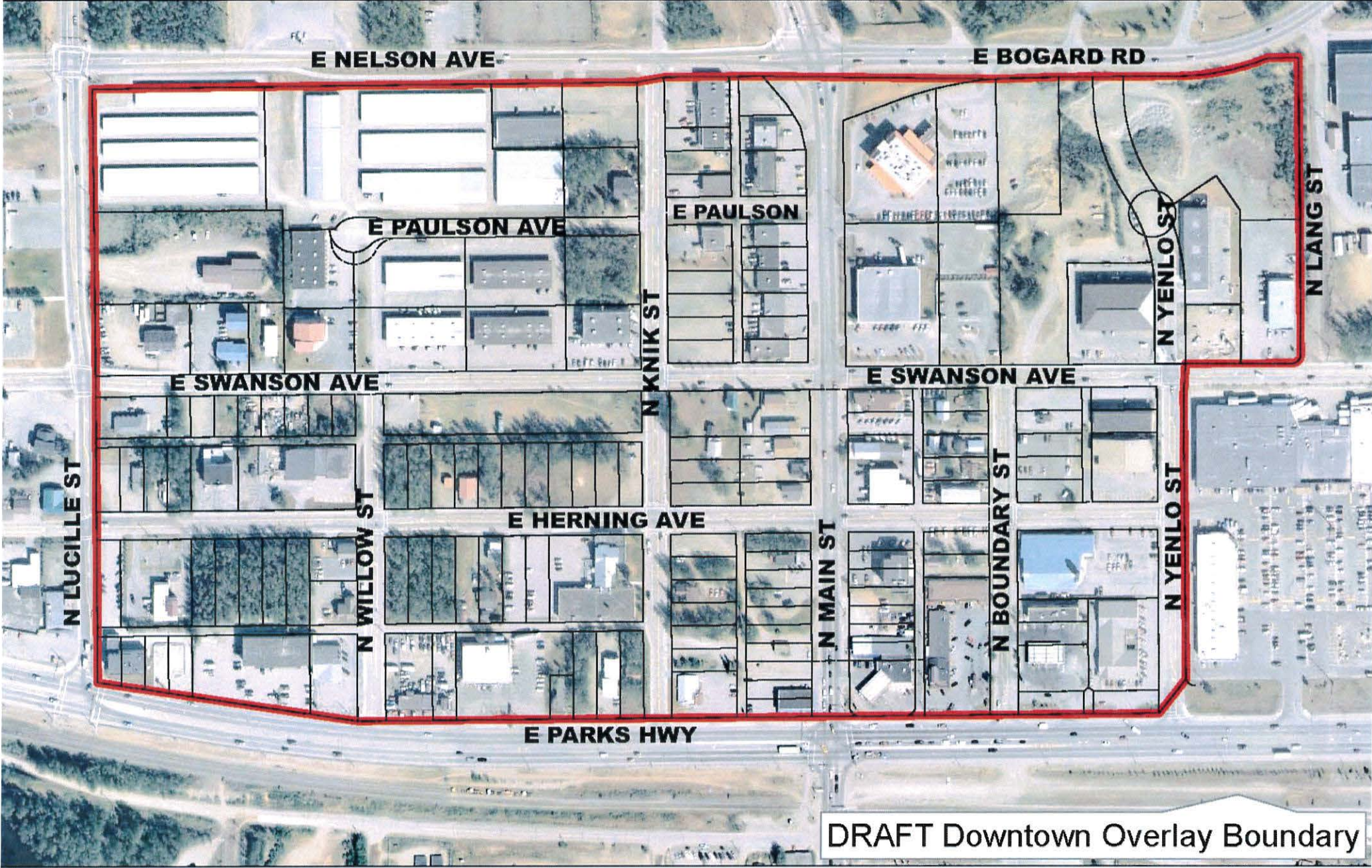
ISSUE	CODE REQUIREMENT (AA – Administrative; UP – Use Permit; CU – Conditional Use)		COMMENTS
	Current	Proposed	
Wait until couplet is complete before adopting overlay	--	--	Overlay will provide direction to DOT while designing roadway, sidewalks, street trees/lighting, etc.
No way to know what people will want in 25 years	First code in 1982 and current code in 1996.	Ensures appropriate design with use flexibility to reflect market demand	There is data that supports the demand by "baby boomers" and "millennials" for the traditional downtown
Reduce area of Overlay	--	15 Blocks – Approx. 76 acres	See two alternative boundary maps in packet
Downtown isn't a good location for residential uses – too noisy	Residential allowed with Use Permit	Upper-story multifamily allowed as AA; Ground-level as CU	Condos developed on and south of Wasilla Lake adjacent to railroad – Yenlo PUD in downtown
Don't want low-income housing in downtown	Can't regulate income-type	Can't regulate income-type	If managed properly, provides affordable housing near necessary services for less affluent seniors/families
Banks don't want marketability of properties to be reduced in any way	--	--	Banks continue to finance sale of "grandfathered" properties even without re-build letter from City
Let someone else do it first – then we will	--	--	Difficult to find investor willing to spend \$\$ to develop in less attractive area without assurance that future development will be of similar type and quality
Only traffic on Main Street is through traffic	--	--	Businesses are still open on Main Street.
Two areas in Michigan tried to create walkable downtown and both failed – Northern climate	--	--	See Golden, CO, Denver, CO, Ocean City, NJ, Breckenridge, CO, and other NE cities
Allow mini-storage in downtown	Up to 10,000 SF as AA; then CU	Prohibited	This is not the type of use that generates customers – Could revise ordinance to allow use as AA or CU
Allow gas station in downtown	Up to 10,000 SF as AA; then CU	Prohibited	Two in Overlay – Plenty of other locations available – Could revise Overlay to allow as AA or CU
Allow funeral home in downtown	Up to 10,000 SF as AA; then CU	Prohibited	One in Overlay – Doesn't generate customers – Could revise Overlay to allow as AA or CU
Price of groceries and goods will increase	--	--	Most design, type, and color are not mandated
Let market drive type of design and type of businesses	Code adopted in 1996 with regulations	Focuses on building type/design vs. type of use – allows flexibility	Could revise material, color, and design requirements
20% open space is too much	30% must remain in vegetation; if illegally removed, must be replanted	On-site sidewalks, seating, plazas, landscaping, etc. count toward 20%	Overlay will reduce vegetation required on-site and will allow up to 50% more commercial square footage.
Create Downtown Overlay Committee	--	--	Comprehensive Plan – Engage stakeholders to "implement" Overlay. Committee needed to identify ways to attract businesses downtown, fund necessary improvements (if not by owner), and activities/events to bring customers downtown
Conduct charrette/additional public process	--	--	Charrette and extensive public involvement for Comp Plan and Downtown Area Plan. Both require overlay to create an attractive, vibrant, and pedestrian oriented downtown.

**DOWNTOWN OVERLAY BOUNDARY – ALTERNATIVE #1
(HISTORIC DOWNTOWN AREA)**



DOWNTOWN OVERLAY BOUNDARY – ALTERNATIVE #2





E NELSON AVE

E BOGARD RD

E PAULSON AVE

E PAULSON

E SWANSON AVE

E SWANSON AVE

E HERNING AVE

E PARKS HWY

N LUCILLE ST

N WILLOW ST

N KNIK ST

N MAIN ST

N BOUNDARY ST

N YENLO ST

N YENLO ST

N LANG ST

DRAFT Downtown Overlay Boundary

PARKS HIGHWAY VS MAIN STREET DESIGNATED PROPERTIES SITE AND BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS

REQUIREMENT	AVENUE CLASSIFICATION (Parks Highway)	MAIN STREET CLASSIFICATION (Includes Main, Herning, Swanson & Yenlo)
Setbacks	FRONT/REAR: <i>Minimum</i> of 25' from property line (same as current code)	FRONT: <i>Maximum</i> of 0-12' from property line
Building Orientation	No requirement	Building front and access must face street
Sidewalk	6' wide – setback 2' from curb (same as current code)	8' wide – setback 4' from curb
Street Furnishings Zone	None	4' wide
Street Trees	1 per 50'	1 per 40'
Street Lights		
On-Street Parking	No	Yes
Protected Bike Lane	No	5' lane

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW ADDITIONS AND BUILDINGS

STYLE	REGULATION
Maximum Building Height	50'
Architectural Style	None designated – must be diverse
Building Harmony	Outparcels must be in harmony with principal buildings
Building Scale and Massing	Smaller scale – Variations in building mass – No continuous design for more than 75'
Building Materials	<p>Quality materials – Complementary to neighboring building – Use traditional materials such as glass, clay brick, terra cotta, stucco, and natural stone.</p> <p>Prohibited materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-textured • Non-architectural metal panel systems • As-cast smooth concrete masonry • Plain reinforced concrete slabs • Aluminum, plywood, press-wood or corrugated steel (except for mechanical penthouses and roof screens) • Imitation brick panels • Rough textured wood siding • Concrete pavers (used vertically) • Traditional metal/plastic siding
Building Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-sided design required • Contain two elements: brick, glass, wood, real stucco, stone (one element cannot be greater than 80%)
Exterior walls and façade Materials - Required	<p>No blank walls allowed – Permitted materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brick • Tile • Stone • Textured traditional cement stucco (real) • Architectural concrete masonry with fluted, split-face, or broken face finish • Portland cement plaster and lath system • Architectural concrete with fluted or exposed aggregate finish • Fiber cement-board
Exterior Components (visible from ROW)	<p>Prohibited items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steel gates • Burglar bars • Chain link fence • Steel roll down curtain
Roofs and Parapets	Roof variation every 100', Flat must have parapet with variation every 75' with decorative feature
Storefronts and Entrances	Variations required – not prescribed – may not be repetitive – Entrance on main street frontage
Doors and Windows	Mostly glass on 1 st floor – non-reflective – 60% of wall – every 10' - must have molding or trim – no vinyl trim
Colors	No garish or primary colors

COMPARATIVE TABLE CURRENT REGULATIONS VS. PROPOSED DOWNTOWN REGULATIONS

REGULATION	CURRENT CODE	PROPOSED OVERLAY
Building Height (max.)	35'	50' or three stories (<i>Two-story encouraged.</i>)
Setbacks	Front and Rear – 25' Side – 10' or 0' if firewall and minimum fire code building separation.	Front – 0' Side – 0' if firewall or minimum fire code building separation.
Building Orientation	N/A	Built to sidewalk with entrance on street.
Sidewalk	5' Sidewalk or 8' Bike Path	5'-8' sidewalk (depends on street type.)
Street furniture in right-of-way (<i>Benches, trash cans, bus shelters, bike racks, vending carts, wayfinding signage, public art, kiosks, newspaper boxes, etc.</i>)	Not required. If desired, must be on private property.	Encouraged.
Outdoor dining area or display of goods on sidewalk in right-of-way	Not permitted.	Allowed within street furnishings zone.
Entry Way Landscaping	Not required.	Encouraged.
Trees in right-of-way*	Not required.	1 tree per 40' in right-of-way.
Trees/shrubs (on-site)	6 trees & 12 shrubs per acre minimum plus required landscaping around parking lots.	1 tree per 40' in right-of-way – Hedge at street front parking perimeter.
Street Lighting*	On-site at pedestrian/vehicular access pts.	1 per 40' in right-of-way.
Sidewalk/Pedestrian Lighting*	None required.	Based on illumination levels. (<i>Only required when new or upgraded sidewalks are constructed.</i>)
Open Space/Green Space	30% of lot must remain in natural vegetation.	20% of lot must be open space or green space. (<i>Includes sidewalks, public plazas, landscaping, etc. on private property.</i>)
Landscape Buffers	Required.	Same as existing code.
Walls/Fences	No regulations.	Walls – Allowed. Solid walls over 2' high must have decorative openings. Fences – 4'-8' (no barbed or razor wire, chain link, plastic, plain wood.)

*City could assume responsibility for installing street trees, sidewalks, and street lighting instead of requiring business owner. Additionally a Business Improvement District could be established to cover the cost of the streetscape improvements.

REGULATION		CURRENT CODE	PROPOSED OVERLAY
Mailboxes		Not regulated.	Unobtrusive and visually integrated.
Parking standards	<i>On-Site Location</i>	Front, side, or rear of building.	Side or rear of building.
	<i>Parking Size</i>	10' x 20' parking spaces for all parking (on and off-street parking)	9' x 18' parking space for on-site parking. 8.5' x 18' for on-street parking.
	<i>Off-Site Parking</i>	300' of property line.	1,000' of building entrance.
	<i>Interconnectivity</i>	Not required.	Required.
	<i>Loading Space</i>	One 12' x 30' loading space if over 5,000 SF Gross Floor Area (GFA).	Not required.
	<i>Drive Aisle</i>	25' wide	24' wide
	<i>Driveway</i>	25' wide	24' wide
	<i>Parking Spaces</i>	Generally 1 space per 300 SF GFA.	Same as existing code.
	<i>Parking Lot Landscaping</i>	10' landscape bed with trees, shrubs, flowers, boulders, fencing, and mulch.	4' landscape bed with 4' evergreen hedge.
	<i>Parking Island Landscaping</i>	10' landscape islands totaling 15% of parking area if more than 40 spaces. <i>(Must contain trees, shrubs, flowers, boulders, fencing, and mulch.)</i>	10' landscape islands required at end of parking row and every three rows of parking. <i>(Must contain trees & evergreen ground cover.)</i>
<i>Parking Lot Lighting</i>	1 light per 25 parking spaces	No minimum. Must ensure appropriate lighting for pedestrians.	
<i>Snow Storage</i>	25 SF per required parking space	Same.	
Driveway width		11' minimum; 30' maximum	12' if one way; 24' if two-way.
Driveway access points		2 two-way access points.	2 one-way access points or 1 two-way access point. <i>(Lots with two street fronts can have access on both streets.)</i>
Dumpsters		Solid enclosure with solid doors.	Same but similar finish as main building.
Utilities/Mechanical Equipment		No requirement to screen with landscaping.	Screening required. New power lines must be installed underground.

REGULATION		CURRENT CODE	PROPOSED OVERLAY
Signage	<i>Freestanding</i>	150 SF maximum – 25’ maximum height.	Prohibited
	<i>Wall</i>	Unlimited	1 sign up to 5% of wall area facing street (up to 225 SF) plus a multi-tenant building may have one additional wall sign identifying the name of center.)
	<i>Window</i>	Unlimited	Prohibited except for holiday design or special event signage up to 30% of window area.
	<i>Awning</i>	1 on up to 30% of surface area	Unlimited but counts toward maximum wall signage.
	<i>Directional</i>	1 per lot	Unlimited - based on need
	<i>Projecting</i>	1 if no freestanding sign – 50 SF max.	Prohibited
	<i>Ground</i>	2 if no freestanding signs – 50 SF each	1 allowed - no size limit
	<i>Artwork as Sign</i>	Counts as freestanding sign	1 up to 8’ tall and 12’ wide.
Public Art		Must be on private property.	8’ tall x 12’ wide. May be in right-of-way.
Murals		Not permitted except as signage.	Allowed with approval as signage.
Architectural Design		<p>No defined criteria.</p> <p>Must “...blend in with the general neighborhood appearance and architecture.”</p> <p>No criteria or guidance for City Planner or Planning Commission when approving design.</p> <p>Developer has no clear understanding of City expectation.</p>	<p>Architectural style – Any style not exactly like adjoining building.</p> <p>Color – Recommended.</p> <p>Building materials – Some prohibited materials. Complement neighbor.</p> <p>Building scale – Variations recommended</p> <p>Building offset – Required every 75’.</p> <p>Roofs/parapets –Variation every 100’. Flat roof must have decorative feature.</p> <p>Storefronts – Recommended designs. No blank walls on street level, must have windows/doors, entrances must have design element but not mandated.</p>