



Revised Parking Requirements for the International Financial Services Area

STAFF REPORT

(For Planning Commission’s Review, January 7, 2009)

Applicant:	City of Tacoma, Community & Economic Development Dept.
Type of Amendment:	Regulatory Code Text Change
Current Land Use Intensity:	High
Current Area Zoning:	Downtown Commercial Core (part), Downtown Mixed Use (part), and the Old City Hall historic special review overlay district.
Size of Area:	58.3 acres
Location:	Downtown (Figure 1)
Neighborhood Council area:	New Tacoma
Proposed Amendment:	Implementation of a market-based approach for off-street parking

Description of the Proposed Amendment:

The proposed amendment would: (1) add a Note 13 to 13.06A.060 Development Standards, Development Standards Table, as follows “Minimum and maximum off-street parking requirements do not apply within the International Financial Services Area (IFSA) (Figure 1); **parking provision must comply with federal and state ADA regulations.**”; and, (2) add the following to Footnote 2 “, except that no parking stalls will be required for residential development located within the IFSA (Figure 1); **parking provision must comply with federal and state ADA regulations.**”. See attached draft.

Agenda Item GB-2 (December 17, 2008), resubmitted with this Staff Report, contains: Resolution No. 37508 designating the IFSA as a special emphasis area within the Downtown Commercial Core; a generalized map of the IFSA area that will be more precisely drafted into Figure 1; an excerpt from TMC 13.06A, existing land use regulatory code, parking requirements, Downtown Tacoma; the November 17 Request to the Planning Commission from the City Council’s Environment and Public Works Committee; and, the December 11, 2008 cover Memorandum from the Planning Division. This December 11 Memorandum points out that “**The intent is to modify the parking requirement as the first implementation step of the Downtown Plan and move forward implementation of the City Manager’s mobility and parking strategy**”. (Emphasis added).

Project History:

City Council Resolution No. 37508 establishes the IFSA as the area between 8th and 15th, Commerce and I-705. Further, noting that downtown development regulations “...may contain provisions which are a barrier to facilitate desired development and need to be revised...the City Manager is requested to bring back to the City Council recommendations from Angelou Economics for a Downtown Tacoma Economic Development Strategy, as well as any additional recommendations, regarding steps that can be taken and policy choices that can be considered that would help Tacoma grow its international financial services

industry.” Finally, listed among the downtown regulations to be evaluated are off-street parking requirements.

The “Downtown Tacoma Economic Development Strategy, July 2008 Draft (Strategic Plan), prepared by Angelou Economics, first highlights that “Downtown Tacoma is the city’s economic and historic core, with 39,300 employees and over 15,000 residents generating a new vibrancy that Tacoma hasn’t seen in many years.” It then identifies the best target sectors for the City’s economic development efforts and sets forth “...a practical, implementable roadmap to increase private investment in Downtown Tacoma.”

This roadmap focuses on seven strategic nodes within downtown, one of which is the IFSA, places a short-term priority emphasis on visioning/planning and public policy work that can aid employer recruitment and expansion within the IFSA, and calls for supporting investor interests by providing additional incentives. In this latter regard, the Strategic Plan emphasizes that: “Development in downtown areas is almost universally more difficult than it is in suburban locations, due to less availability of land, stringent development restrictions, inadequate or deteriorating infrastructure, and limited parking options. In order to make a downtown location as appealing as a suburban location for developers, cities must often support investor interests by providing additional incentives....”

This roadmap and this incentive approach are consistent with the climate recommendations of the City’s Green Ribbon Climate Action Task Force, recommendations that are “...a selection of calculated decisions that represent a blueprint for Tacoma to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions....” Page 4. This ‘blueprint’ includes a major focus on transit-oriented development, zoning standards that support increased use of public transit, and changing parking policies to discourage single occupancy vehicle driving. Of particular note is Recommendation #19 in Chapter VI “Strategies to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions”: “Reduce or eliminate parking minimums required for residential/mixed-use developments to encourage transit or non-motorized transportation and thereby making these developments more profitable.”

Applicable Provisions of the Comprehensive Plan:

The range of potential incentives is thoroughly discussed in the 2008 Update to the Downtown Element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan, an update based on the Strategic Plan and design work by VIA Architects. The Downtown Element has a major focus on sustainability, and in particular on sustainable transportation choices (Section 2.3F): “One of the most important aspects of growing sustainability is an efficient, comfortable, and useable transportation system that provides alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle. This is best accomplished through an integrated approach, providing enhanced pedestrian and cycling amenities, pedestrian-orientated, compact urban design, and efficient and well-planned transit systems (along with effective automobile access).” Of particular note is Policy 2.1E.C: “Downtown should move towards the implementation of a shared satellite parking system, and **consider steps towards a market based approach within certain areas of downtown.**” (Emphasis added).

Public Outreach

This proposal will be the subject of extensive outreach.

Applicable Provisions of the Growth Management Act:

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that development regulations shall be consistent with and implement the Comprehensive Plan. Development regulations include, but are not limited to, zoning controls, critical area ordinances, shoreline master programs, official controls, planned unit development ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and binding site plan ordinances. The GMA also incorporates the following 14 primary goals, many of which either directly or indirectly relate to the proposed code amendment:

- (1) Urban growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
- (2) Reduce sprawl. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
- (3) Transportation. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
- (4) Housing. Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
- (5) Economic development. Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
- (6) Property rights. Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
- (7) Permits. Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
- (8) Natural resource industries. Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.
- (9) Open space and recreation. Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
- (10) Environment. Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
- (11) Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
- (12) Public facilities and services. Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.
- (13) Historic preservation. Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.
- (14) The goals and policies of the Shoreline Management Act.

These goals encourage growth in urban areas, discourage development sprawl, encourage the provision of a variety of housing styles, types and densities, support protection of the environment, promote the enhancement of open space and recreational amenities, and encourage public involvement in the planning process. GMA also includes specific guidance indicating that local jurisdictions should provide for

innovative land use management techniques, including, but not limited to, density bonuses, cluster housing, planned unit developments, and the transfer of development rights. (RCW 36.70A.090) The proposed amendment is designed to provide additional incentives in the City’s downtown regulatory code and to allow for additional flexibility directed at promoting urban growth, infill development, and reinvestment.

Amendment Criteria: Applications for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code are subject to review based on the adoption and amendment procedures and the review criteria contained in TMC 13.02.045.G. Proposed amendments are required to meet at least one of the eleven review criteria to be considered by the Planning Commission. The following section provides a review of each of these criteria with respect to the proposal. Each of the criteria is provided, followed by staff analysis of the criterion as it relates to this proposal.

1. There exists an obvious technical error in the pertinent Comprehensive Plan or regulatory code provisions.

Staff Analysis: The proposed amendment does not seek corrections to any error in the Comprehensive Plan or the Land Use Regulatory Code. However, the proposal does seek to improve the consistency between the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies as they relate to the International Financial Services Area and the associated zoning code provisions addressing off-street parking.

2. The amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan goals or policies or will achieve consistency.

Staff Analysis: For the reasons set forth in the project history section of this Staff Report, the proposed amendment will improve the consistency between the policies and goals of the Comprehensive Plan and the zoning regulations.

3. Circumstances related to the proposed amendment have significantly changed, or a lack of change in circumstances has occurred since the area or issue was last considered by the Planning Commission.

Staff Analysis: The policy context, as described in the responses to Criteria #2 and #11, has altered dramatically since downtown parking standards were last considered by the Planning Commission.

4. The needs of the City have changed, which support an amendment.

Staff Analysis: The needs of the City have changed as described in the responses to Criteria #2 and #11.

5. The amendment is compatible with existing or planned land uses and the surrounding development pattern.

Staff Analysis: For the reasons set forth in the response to Criterion #2 the amendment is compatible with existing and planned land uses and the surrounding development pattern.

6. Growth and development, as envisioned in the Plan, is occurring faster, slower, or is failing to materialize.

Staff Analysis: Growth and development in downtown, as envisioned in the Plan, is occurring slower than the desirable rate, a rate described in the response to Criterion #11.

7. The capacity to provide adequate services is diminished or increased.

Staff Analysis: For the reasons set forth in the response to Criterion #2 the capacity to provide adequate services is increased.

8. Plan objectives are not being met as specified, and/or the assumptions upon which the plan is based are found to be invalid.

Staff Analysis: Growth and development objectives for downtown, as envisioned in the Plan, are being achieved at a slower rate than that desired, an issue that is addressed in the response to Criterion #11.

9. Transportation and and/or other capital improvements are not being made as expected.

Staff Analysis: This proposed amendment is designed to modify the parking requirement as the first implementation step of the Downtown Plan and move forward implementation of the City Manager's mobility and parking strategy".

10. Substantial similarities of conditions and characteristics can be demonstrated on abutting properties that warrant a change in land use intensity or zoning classification.

Staff Analysis: This proposal does not involve a change in land use intensity or zoning classification.

11. A question of consistency exists between the Comprehensive Plan and its elements and RCW 36.70A, the County-wide Planning Policies for Pierce County, Multi-County Planning Policies, or development regulations.

Staff Analysis: While these proposed amendments are not based on any specific inconsistencies between the City's planning documents and County-wide, regional or state policies, they will improve consistency in multiple ways. The Pierce County Buildable Lands Program 2008 Consistency Evaluation, Draft Report 11/20/08 (Report), concludes that the City has sufficient land to accommodate its regional allocation of commercial and industrial development. However, based on recent trends the City's employment target of 39,000 new jobs by 2022 is projected to fall short by 7,000 jobs. Accordingly, the Report concludes that "...reasonable measures may be appropriate to increase employment capacity..." Report, page 71. Action on 'reasonable measures' is mandated by the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.215) and Vision 2040 and the City is taking concerted action to comply, with a focus on employment retention and recruitment through new policies and development regulations for the South Tacoma Manufacturing/Industrial Center and for the IFSA.

Economic Impact Assessment:

The Comprehensive Plan, Economic Element, sets out to reinforce the City's role as an "internationally competitive business center" and places a major focus on further Downtown revitalization. It first identifies among the strengths of the Tacoma economy "...the culture of growth, the favorable regulatory environment". It then establishes policies designed to foster entrepreneurial development and business to business expansions and to make efficient use of land through use of regulatory, pricing, taxing, and expenditure practices that encourage concentrated development.

Removing a large, mandatory cost for downtown redevelopment in the form of off-street parking requirements will be attractive to those looking to invest here in Tacoma and should provide Tacoma with a competitive advantage when site selections are being made.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends forwarding the draft proposal to amend the parking requirements in the IFSA for public review and comment.

Exhibits:

1. Agenda Item GB-2 (December 17, 2008), resubmitted with this Staff Report, contains:
 - the December 11, 2008 cover Memorandum from the Planning Division;
 - the November 17, 2008 Request to the Planning Commission from the City Council's Environment and Public Works Committee;
 - a generalized map of the IFSA area that will be more precisely drafted into Figure 1;
 - an excerpt from TMC 13.06A, existing land use regulatory code, parking requirements, Downtown Tacoma; and
 - Resolution No. 37508 designating the IFSA as a special emphasis area within the Downtown Commercial Core.
2. Revised 13.06A.060 and Figure 1.