

**AGENDA REPORT
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
December 10, 2015**

SUMMARY

A request by the City of Columbia to amend Chapter 29, Section 30 of the City Code (Zoning Regulations) as it pertains to parking standards.

DISCUSSION

On October 19 the City Council directed staff to review and prepare revisions to Section 29-30 of the City Code related to parking standards. The initial request to prepare the amendment was presented by the Delta Gamma sorority in anticipation of a future reconstruction of their sorority house located at 900 Providence Road.

Currently Section 29-30 does not permit the establishment of off-site parking facilities within residential zoning districts or permit the use off-site parking facilities to meet the residential parking requirements of the code. These provisions, at times, makes the ability of redeveloping fraternity or sorority sites unable to comply with the City's parking requirements. As a result, such organizations are often required to obtain parking space variances from the Board of Adjustment or seek to rezone parcels they may own to C-P so they can have an off-site parking facility.

The proposed revisions to Section 29-30 (g) would offer an alternative to having to seek rezoning actions to permit off-site parking facilities and would permit off-site parking within 1000 feet of the generating use subject to a series of conditions. The ability to park off-site within 1000 of the generating use is currently permitted for non-residential uses provided the location of the off-site parking facility is zoned to accommodate the generating use.

At the October 19 Council meeting, staff was also directed to research the parking standards of similar communities to determine how the City's standards compared to others. In conducting this research staff identified the cities with an SEC conference and reviewed their parking requirements – specifically as they related to fraternities and sororities and the potential for off-site parking facilities.

12 of the 13 SEC cities were included in staff's research. Of the 12 cities, there was variability on how required parking was to be calculated. Three cities used building square footage as their basis, three used the number of bedrooms, three used active members, and remaining 3 used a combination of people and square footage. Required parking ranged from 1 for each 5 members to 1 space per person. Columbia's current requirement is 1 space per 2 occupants.

When reviewing the potential for off-site parking facilities, it was determined that only 5 of the 12 cities permitted such facilities. The location of the off-site facilities from the generator ranged from as little as 100 feet to as great as 600 feet. Currently, Columbia does not permit off-site parking facilities for residential uses.

Staff believes that the proposed amendment addresses a unique condition in a very select location. The proposed provisions to permit off-site parking would be limited to the area commonly known as “Greek Town” and shown on the attached map. It further believes that the conditions (setbacks, landscaping, paved area limitations, etc.) that must be met to permit improvement of an off-site parcel into a parking lot will maintain the residential character of the street frontage and permit easier conversion back to residential use, when desired, than if the parcel were rezoned as is current practice.

Staff does not find, after completing its research, that additional modifications to the required number of spaces for fraternities and sororities are necessary. The standards in place in Columbia are about in the middle of its peer SEC cities. Revisions to required parking, parking credits, and other parking-related provisions are currently under review as part of the comprehensive revisions to the zoning and subdivision codes. The proposed change to Section 29-30(g) addresses an issue not currently being consider in the comprehensive revisions and will permit an alternative to the more permanent action of rezoning land for the purpose of creating a parking lot.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approval of the proposed text change to Section 29-30.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Locator Map – Greek Town boundary
- Proposed Text Change.

Report prepared/approved by Patrick Zenner