



HAWTHORNE CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: December 9, 2025
FROM: Gregg McClain, Director of Planning
SUBJECT: Parking standards ordinance

PROJECT AND APPLICANT

Summary: ZA-2025-0002 amends portions of Title 17 of the Hawthorne Municipal Code that address parking standards in the City.
Applicant: City of Hawthorne

OVERVIEW

This proposed ordinance addresses the City's parking standards as they are imposed on private property. These include the number of required parking spaces, the size and accessibility of spaces, driveway dimensions, as well as the processes for approving variations and alternative standards. These amendments are motivated by two main objectives: the first is to remove a great deal of the constraints that parking standards place on commercial businesses that are consistently hindering economic development; the second is to consolidate the regulations within Title 17, remove confusing language, and to remove barriers that allow the City flexibility to approve slight variations in cases that warrant it.

The most significant proposed changes are:

- The creation of a standardized parking ratio for most commercial uses to help reduce the commercial vacancy rate;
- Removal of compact parking stalls for commercial uses (except surplus spaces);
- The introduction of parking credits for commercial spaces within close proximity to public parking lots, street parking, and center median parking;
- Reintroducing the City's ability to evaluate parking variances;
- Slight reduction in multi-family residential parking to disincentivize the use of density bonuses and other state laws that typically result in even lower parking rates; and
- The creation of a new procedure to allow alternative parking calculations;

SPECIFICS

The various amendments contained in the draft ordinance are described below by the sections in the draft ordinance:

Section 2

This section contains edits, deletions and additions to the definitions chapter of Title 17. As with the remainder of the ordinance sections, blue and underlined text represent inserted text, and red strikethrough text is to be deleted.

Section 3

HMC Section 17.38.050 is to be deleted and then replaced as follows:

Subsection A involves the removal of references to “buildings,” “occupancy,” and “stacking” as these are not relevant factors in determining required parking.

Subsection B removes seating capacity as a consideration as this is not going to be used as a metric for determining required parking going forward. Additionally, the wording about changes of use is removed because this will not be relevant with other changes that are proposed in Section 7.

Subsection C is removed as a method of approving what is effectively a variance because a streamlined and quicker process is proposed in Section 7.

Section 4

This section merely shortens the title of Chapter 17.38.

Section 5

This is an important amendment because the existing language concerning variances in HMC Section 17.40.030 makes parking variances effectively impossible for the City to grant. There is no point in offering a variance option if the Code imposes such onerous restrictions that the City cannot grant the variance. There are legitimate cases where it is in the City’s interest to allow a parking variance.

This section is also reformatted and the wording streamlined.

Section 6

Chapter 17.56 concerning loading areas is to be deleted because the regulations will be folded into the parking chapter in Section 7.

Section 7

This section deletes the entire parking chapter (HMC 17.58) and replaces it with a reorganized, consolidated, and reworded chapter. Also, the title of the chapter is

changed from “Off-street Parking” to “On-site Parking” as this is more accurate under the changes proposed.

HMC Section 17.58.010 firstly removes language related to nonconforming parking as this is appropriately covered in the nonconformities chapter. When more than one part of a municipal code addresses the same issue, this leads inevitably to contradictions and confusion. Historically the City deliberately duplicated regulations in different titles or sections, but as time went on and various sections were amended or deleted, they frequently forgot to address the duplicate text. For the past two decades, as municipal codes are now online and searchable, staff has been systematically removing duplicated regulations, they continue to surface.

Subsection A is existing text but simplified and moved to the top of the section.

Subsection B changes the measurement of floor area for parking purposes. Currently the Code requires calculations using the floor area, minus up to 16 from exempt areas, but including the thickness of exterior walls. This is proposed to exclude only indoor parking and counting stairs and elevators on the ground floor only. Also measurements are to be interior floor area only, which is consistent with architectural and building industry practice.

Subsections C and D are existing Code text that are moved and edited for clarity.

Subsection E removes the requirement for a conditional use permit to set aside some required parking for employees. The conditional use permit is unnecessary and the text of this section is redundant or contradictory to text in the chapter on conditional use permits.

Subsections F and G are moved from their own section and edited to allow flexibility that is addressed later in the chapter.

Subsection H codifies current practice of allowing standard spaces to be converted to accessible spaces.

HMC Section 17.58.020 organizes existing requirements by first stating the standards that apply to the calculation of required parking, and then describing the required parking for residential uses, and finally other uses.

Subsection A clarifies that accessible parking is considered as part of the required parking. This section also changes the rounding rule applied to parking calculations. Presently all results are rounded up, the new rule is to the nearest whole number. This subsection also provides simple and streamlined regulations for shared parking.

Subsection B addresses the required parking for residential uses and makes several important changes. First is removing the requirement for single-family houses to have an enclosed garage. It is unclear why the City ever required garages in the first place since their use for parking is clearly optional, but in this era of being allowed to convert

garages to accessory dwelling units (ADU), the only purpose of requiring garages now seems to be to ensure future ADUs. It is important to note that the required parking on the property is not being reduced here, just not requiring garages. Garages are not proposed to be prohibited, just not required.

Multi-family residential parking is proposed to be reduced slightly. There are several reasons for reducing the parking requirement for apartments and condominiums. First and foremost, parking consumes a large portion of an apartment or condominium development, which adds to the cost of building new housing as well as limiting the number of units that can be feasibly built. Reducing this barrier helps the City reach its housing obligations.

The second reason to reduce parking is that the state has introduced numerous restrictions on a city’s ability to impose its parking requirements under many conditions, and in some cases, this applies to an outright prohibition on required parking. In developments involving density bonuses, for example, or developments within half a mile from a transit station, no parking at all is now possible. In other cases, the required parking is capped by state laws. Therefore, maintaining a high-level parking requirement incentivizes developers to use density bonuses or take advantage of other laws that have precedence over local ordinances. These laws often create additional unit density while simultaneously reducing parking. The draft ordinance’s reduced parking requirements should outweigh the benefits these other options confer onto developers when all other developer qualifying obligations are considered. The following table shows the current and proposed parking requirements.

**Existing and Proposed Multi-family
Required Parking Standards**

	Current HMC	Density bonus	<1/2 mile of transit*	State streamlining laws**	Proposed
Apartment or condo units					
0-1 bedroom	2	0-1	0	1	1
2-3 bedrooms	3	0-1.5	0	1	2
4 bedrooms	3.5	0-2.5	0	1	3
5 bedrooms	4.5	0-2.5	0	1	4
Additional bedrooms	+1	+0	+0	+0	+1
Mobile home parks	2	n/a	0	n/a	deleted
Senior citizen housing	1	1	0	1	1
Guest parking	0.5/unit	0	0	0	0.25/unit

* Per AB2097, AB2553, and AB0211

** Per SB35, SB423, and AB2011

None of these options precludes a developer from providing parking that is not required, and most developers realize units without parking are harder to market.

Subsection C addresses non-residential parking. Currently the HMC has 20+ standards that apply to these uses—the draft ordinance reduces these to just six categories, which are:

- Commercial and institutional uses generally
- Commercial with large outdoor display areas
- Assembly uses (includes worship, banquet, and entertainment centers)
- Hotels
- Adult businesses (moved from industrial list)
- Automobile repair

The general parking standard applies to indoor retail, financial institutions, billiard halls, bowling centers, offices, furniture stores, laundromats, markets and grocery stores, medical offices, restaurants, gas stations, barbers, libraries, mortuaries, and tattoo facilities. Under the current Code, each of these has a unique parking requirement. This situation is problematic because it makes it very difficult for some businesses to fill vacancies left by others because the new business would not be able to provide additional parking. The proposed draft ordinance imposes a flat rate for all of these uses so that any one of these could fill a vacancy left by another.

Subsection D replaced the current three-tier industrial parking requirement with one rate and a separate add-on rate for outdoor areas used for storage.

Subsection E addresses multiple tenant commercial developments. Currently 75% of the floor area is calculated one way and the remainder is assumed to be uses with a higher parking demand, such as restaurants, so are calculated using a stricter standard. The proposed ordinance changes this so that the general parking rate applies, and that is multiplied by a factor of 0.75 to account for visitors that visit more than one business, and for peak usage hours that are not identical among the various businesses.

Subsection F covers two special cases: schools and live-work units. This section also allows the Director to require a parking study to be approved by the Planning Commission for uses that cannot be classified as described above. The Planning Commission can accept the parking study's recommendation or can impose another standard.

Subsection G builds on the parking study process by allowing the Director to require a parking study when they believe the standard applied is not adequate. This gives the City some flexibility to deal with new concepts or business types that may not presently exist without needing to further amend the Zoning Code. This will also require Planning Commission approval. Conversely, the same parking study option is available to applicants in cases where they believe the City standard is not reasonable and requires too much parking for their use.

HMC 17.58.030 introduces a new consideration for calculating commercial parking requirements. Where there is public or street parking within a prescribed distance, the required parking for the use can be reduced by specified amounts. The point of adding this section is to provide an incentive for commercial property owners to remodel or

make small additions to existing buildings without triggering additional parking. This section also allows for a significant reduction in parking for restaurants that are approved to have a drive-thru.

HMC 17.58.040 is the place where loading zone requirements are moved to. The most important change from existing Code is that a loading space is no longer required for all commercial, industrial or institutional uses.

In subsection A, the uses that still require loading spaces are listed along with the number and size required.

Subsection B provides a process for the Planning Commission to waive loading requirements.

Subsection C provides the size standards for loading spaces and permits unused loading spaces to be used for certain other purposes, which is not currently permitted.

Subsection D is new and lists uses that are required to provide a drop-off/pick-up area.

HMC 17.58.050 addresses parking development standards, such as size of stalls and parking lot features.

Subsection A contains general development and maintenance standards that are currently found in various places in the Code.

Subsection B deals with residential garage standards.

Subsection C through E contain parking standards that were relocated from other parts of the Code and edited to conform to other changes. The ratio of standard to compact spaces is relocated here and capped at 30% compact for industrial and institutional uses, while prohibited for commercial uses except any surplus spaces, if any.

In Subsection F, the standard parking stall widths for residential and industrial uses is proposed to match the wider commercial standard. Additionally, the draft ordinance describes areas in the four corners of parking stalls that can be occupied by pillars or other structures.

Subsection G reduces the back-up space for standard stalls by two feet. This change aligns with most cities and facilitates parking lot layout, especially on smaller lots.

Subsection H concerning driveways is expanded to add clarity.

Subsection I introduce new parking lot standards that will apply in all zones. First, any lot adjacent to a street right-of-way will now be required to provide a five-foot planter to separate the lot from the Sidewalk. Second, lot interiors will require 10% of the area landscaped, except that small lots under 10 spaces will require 5%. Currently lots over

20 spaces require 5% and no landscaping for lots under 20 spaces. Additional parking lot standards are enhanced and moved to this section. The enhancements are designed to require trees in parking lots and to allow design discretion concerning the landscaping layout.

GENERAL PLAN COMPLIANCE

The adoption of this ordinance does not alter the Zoning Code's compliance with the General Plan.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Planning Commission public hearing for this ordinance was published in the November 20, 2025, edition of the South Bay Cities (Hawthorne Press Tribune).

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This zone text amendment endeavors to clarify portions of the zoning code that can be difficult to find and understand by those it seeks to regulate. This is determined not to be a project under CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21065) and to the extent these changes result in a reduction in the available parking, any negative impact will be offset by reliance on alternate means of transportation and public parking availability.

RECOMMENDATION

After close of public hearing on this item, introduce ordinance