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Dripping Springs Adopts New Downtown Parking Ordinance

DRIPPING SPRINGS, TEXAS – Tuesday, June 16, 2020 – Cities across the state are always struggling to meet parking requirements while also maintaining the feel of their downtown destinations. Dripping Springs is no exception. As the City grows, so has the need for parking, and so has the desire to also maintain the beautiful feel of the City that is attracting so many to its downtown. To that end, the Dripping Springs City Council has adopted a new Downtown Parking Ordinance that ensures parking needs are met, but also doesn't place an unnecessary strain on development as the City grows and attracts more visitors.

The goal of the ordinance is to maintain the City's historic downtown feel while continuing to create a beautiful and thriving town center, by providing a combination of street parking and shared parking lots. This ordinance ensures that downtown Dripping Springs continues to be successful for businesses and remains a walkable and enjoyable experience for visitors without becoming primarily a parking lot.

Here are some of the key provisions of the ordinance:

- Changes in the Use of a Building Will Not Require Additional Parking
No additional parking is required with use changes so long as the gross floor area at the business/building/site does not increase. If the gross floor area increases square footage from the existing footprint, then additional parking would be required. The addition of a patio would not trigger additional parking to be required.
- Calculation for Increase Gross Floor Area
If parking is needed because of an increase in gross floor area, then the parking requirements would be subject to a 25% reduction in required parking spaces if there is an increase in gross floor area. This is based on a comprehensive parking study of downtown (details below).
- Optional Fee-in-Lieu when Parking Spaces Required
The Fee-in-Lieu allows the developer/property owner who is expanding to pay a \$6,500 per required parking space if they are unable to meet the parking requirement after the reduction. It also allows the property owner to meet the requirement through a combination of both the fee plus parking places in a manner that meets the reduced parking requirements for the increased gross floor area.

- Special Exceptions

No longer allows parking special exceptions within the Mercer Street Historic District.

The changes to the parking regulations were decided after extensive collaboration among City staff and City planners, engineers, and architects. This group met for several months in order to address all parking concerns in the Mercer Street Historic District, including concerns by downtown stakeholders, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Planning & Zoning Commission. Through this collaboration, the ordinance addresses the concerns of property and business owners while providing a cost-effective way for the City to capture some cost in providing parking as the City grows.

Council Member Todd Purcell, who made parking a priority during his last term as Mayor, says, “Crafting these changes to the ordinance was truly a joint effort of all stakeholders. Overall our goal was to create an environment that encourages redevelopment and new development within the Mercer Street Historic District, while at the same time striving to bring more people and opportunities to our downtown. We also wanted to make the process easier for developers, who have had to request variances each time they wanted to improve their downtown properties. This new ordinance meets the needs of developers, business owners, and visitors.”

Before making the changes to the parking regulations, the City conducted a comprehensive parking study of downtown Dripping Springs. Parking space supply and space occupancy data was collected to assess supply and demand throughout the day. The study revealed that because downtown Dripping Springs is a mixed-use area, the parking demand fluctuates during a day. This analysis gives a benefit to developers as it showed less parking was needed, resulting in a 25% parking reduction requirement for businesses.

Per Amanda Padilla, Dripping Springs Senior Planner, “The new Downtown Parking Ordinance is based on extensive research. A lot of thought and effort went into making these changes and we’re confident that they will benefit all parties. However, this is not the end-all for assessing parking needs for our City. We want to manage the growth of our downtown while providing a thriving destination for visitors that is both easy to access and enjoyable to visit. We will continue to work on future improvements.”

The Fee In-lieu payments will go towards those future improvements and needs. The fees collected will be put into a downtown parking fund. The fund will be used solely to increase and improve public parking, such as providing more on-street parking and/or creating public parking lots or parking garages. Locations and timeline for the additional parking is still to be determined.

The new Downtown Parking Ordinance went into effect on June 10, 2020. Complete details on the ordinance can be found on the City’s website at cityofdrippingsprings.com or business owners may call the City at 512-858-4725 with any questions.

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