

# Memorandum

ISG

**To:** City of Independence

**From:** ISG

**Date:** 09/19/2025

**Subject:** Independence, Iowa Stormwater Ordinance Review

## SUMMARY

A review was conducted of stormwater management ordinances from other Iowa municipalities to ensure that the proposed ordinance for the City of Independence is consistent with regional and statewide practices. This comparative analysis included ordinances from the cities of Manchester, Decorah, Des Moines, Newton, Grimes, Garner, Forest City, and Cascade.

From these comparative analyses, ISG is proposing the applicability threshold for the ordinance to be similar to Manchester, which requires all new residential, commercial, industrial, and manufacturing developments and subdivisions two (2) acres and larger to meet the ordinance. This has been chosen to be like surrounding peers regionally but is less stringent than the Midwest region, which typically sees stormwater management ordinances applied to projects over 1 acre to match the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan requirements. Since this is a new process for Independence, taking a gradual approach to project size seemed prudent.

The green space requirement is also like surrounding peers with a small tweak that would allow reducing the minimum impervious surface if green infrastructure elements are utilized. This will help with incentivizing installation of surfaces that provide water quality measures for rainfall runoff prior to entering local waterways.

The design storm criteria for proposed rainfall runoff rates align with those of most surrounding communities. This alignment helps manage stormwater timing to mitigate flooding in our natural conveyance systems, such as streams, creeks, and rivers. By matching the surrounding areas, Independence demonstrates its commitment to collaborating with neighboring communities on local stormwater solutions. Collectively, these stormwater management ordinances slow down rainwater runoff at its source, reducing the volume of water reaching natural conveyance systems simultaneously. This delay in runoff helps reduce downstream flooding where stormwater discharges into rivers, for example and is a tool to better match natural conditions prior to the construction of impervious surfaces. The installation of these rate controls is also guided by practices observed in neighboring communities.

To avoid flooding issues adjacent to residential homes and account for varying home types, detention practices are not allowed in the front or side-yard setbacks and a minimum distance from the rear of the house. This also pulls detention practices a safe distance away from public streets to prevent vehicles that may veer from the street from entering a pond, rain garden, etc.

The form detention practices take is encouraged to be regional in nature and be aesthetically pleasing while providing water quality and rate control. These qualities may impact property values in a positive way. Regional practices will minimize the total number of these systems within the city limits that minimize the number of areas to maintain. The use of multi-stage outlets is preferred since they control the release of water downstream more accurately for each storm event and influence the attenuation of water in the detention basin, so it stores the desired water volume in small and large events. This adds to the mitigation of downstream flooding.

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out for further discussion.

Sincerely,

  
Derek Johnson, PE

  
Nick Frederiksen