

**To:** City of Independence

**From:** ISG

**Date:** 09/15/2025

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

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## 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.

## STORM WATER MANAGEMENT COMPARISON

### Applicability Threshold

- **Independence:** Required for all new residential, commercial, industrial, and manufacturing developments and subdivisions 2 acres or larger. Phased developments totaling 2 acres or more also require a plan.
- **Manchester:** Same as Independence.
- **Decorah:** Same as Independence.
- **Des Moines:** Applies to all development and redevelopment requiring grading permits, site plans, or plat approvals.
- **Grimes:** Same as Des Moines
- **Garner:** Required for residential development greater than 1 acre and commercial, industrial, governmental, and institutional development greater than 10,000 square feet.
- **Forest City:** Same as Garner.
- **Cascade:** All new residential, commercial, industrial developments and subdivisions 4 acres in size and larger.

### Green Space Requirement

- **Independence:** Developments under 2 acres must maintain a minimum of 20% green space. Green infrastructure (e.g., green roofs, permeable pavements, rain gardens) can reduce this requirement: for each 1% of such systems installed, 0.5% of green space is waived.
  - **Manchester:** Commercial and industrial developments under 2 acres must maintain a minimum of 20% green space.
  - **Decorah:** Not specified as a percentage. Green infrastructure is encouraged, and bioretention systems are permitted.
  - **Des Moines:** Follows Iowa Stormwater Management Manual (ISWMM); green infrastructure encouraged but no fixed percentage.
  - **Cascade:** Residential, commercial, and industrial developments under 4 acres shall maintain a minimum of 20% greenspace.
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## Design Storm Criteria

- **Independence:** Developed site runoff for 5-, 10-, 25-, and 50-year storms must not exceed the 5-year pre-developed peak runoff. 100-year storm release rate must also match the 5-year pre-developed rate.
- **Manchester:** Same as Independence.
- **Decorah:** Same as Independence.
- **Des Moines:** Same as Independence.
- **Grimes:** Same as Independence.
- **Newton:** Same as Independence.
- **Forest City:** Same as Independence.
- **Cascade:** The maximum release rate for storms up to an expected Return Frequency of 100-years shall be the 10-year Pre-Developed storm.

## Detention Restrictions

- **Independence:** For residential developments, detention not allowed in front or side yard setbacks or within 25 feet of rear building line. Single-lot detention/retention not allowed within 3 feet of rear lot line.
- **Manchester:** Same as Independence.
- **Decorah:** Same as Independence; bioretention allowed.
- **Garner:** Same as Independence.
- **Forest City:** Same as Independence.
- **Cascade:** For residential developments, storm water detention is not allowed within any front or side yard setbacks required by zoning code, or within 25 feet from the estimated rear building line.

## Encouraged Practices

- **Independence:** Regional stormwater facilities and retention basins are encouraged for water quality, aesthetics, and property value. Multi-stage outlets are preferred over single-stage.
- **Manchester:** Regional stormwater facilities and wet basins are encouraged for water quality, aesthetics, and property value.
- **Decorah:** Regional stormwater facilities, bioretention systems, and permeable pavement are encouraged.
- **Des Moines:** Green infrastructure, infiltration, and water quality practices per ISWMM.
- **Grimes:** Better Site Design principles are encouraged on all development and redevelopment sites.
- **Cascade:** Regional Storm Water Management Facilities are encouraged. Wet basins are also encouraged because they enhance water quality, add aesthetic value, and increase property value.