

Staff Report

Fraternity and Sorority Parking Amendment

October 14, 2014

BACKGROUND:

On April 22, 2014, the City Council directed staff to initiate public outreach regarding reducing parking standards for Fraternities and Sororities and to provide a staff report on options for parking changes. This was in response to concerns from the Greek community on potential issues with expansion and reconstruction of Greek houses. Many fraternities and sororities face issues of older residences built during a time when students commonly did not have automobiles and some of the properties are not large enough to accommodate the automobile usage of modern students. The issues of parking requirements in this area are complex due to varying conditions and often nonconforming status of the properties.

The Greek Alumni Alliance has indicated that there is interest from a number of Greek Homes to renovate or expand, including potentially tearing down existing houses and rebuilding them. They have also identified two new Greek chapters that are looking to establish a house here in Ames and will be looking for a existing house or to construct a house within the next couple of years. A letter is included as Attachment E.

The vast majority of Greek homes are concentrated in the East University Impact District Overlay (EUI) between Beach Avenue and Lynn Avenue. The EUI Overlay is intended to preserve the current residential character of the area with its mix of houses, landscape, and high concentration of Greek homes. There are a small handful of other Greek homes located nearby in the area of Welch that are within the West University Impact District Overlay. (See Attachment A Location Map)

There are 40 Greek chapters represented in the area south of campus, with 6 chapters located in the west impact area and 34 located in the east impact area. There are approximately 3,100 members affiliated within the Greek system, with approximately 2,000 of those members living within one of the 40 Greek houses in the campustown area. Current house capacities for the represented chapters range from 29 beds to 89 beds per house.

Under the current parking standards, Greek houses are required to meet a basic requirement of one parking space per bed. However, in some circumstances, recent renovation projects for the Greek homes have not triggered the requirement for additional parking, while others have been able to meet the standards with surface and structured parking. Others have sought variances to certain requirements to proceed with their expansions. Greek homes within the EUI are subject to Council approval for any proposed demolition and rebuild based upon stated criteria related to reasonable use of the property and a hardship if a structure is required to remain. Regardless of permission to demolish an existing house, all new construction must comply with current zoning standards for setbacks, landscaping, parking, etc. **Demolition and**

construction of new houses have a much different relationship to parking standards than houses that only wish to expand an existing house.

Neighborhood Meeting

Staff held an open meeting on October 2nd with the Greek Alumni Alliance, the Greek Chapters, ISU, and the surrounding neighborhood residents to discuss the current parking standards for Greek houses as well as any concerns about potential revisions to parking standards. For discussion purposes, staff identified four general options for potential revisions to the parking standard, which include 1) reduced parking ratio for Greek houses, 2) a remote parking option, 3) a Special Use Permit option, and 4) an allowance for parking within the front yard.

During the discussion many neighborhood representatives noted the concern was for the enforcement of existing on-street parking requirements, and not a specific concern about potential expansion of the Greek facilities. Based on the conversation, many residents noted that they would rather find a way to accommodate the balance of parking needed for the expansions/renovations for the Greek houses, than have the properties be converted to apartments.

Furthermore, there was support for increasing the density of Greek houses with reduced parking requirements as long as there is no increase in the number of on-street parking spaces to compensate for the reduction in the off-street parking requirements. (For example, allowing parking on both sides of the street) One specific comment noted that the Council should not revise the existing parking ration, but look to allow for a revised parking option that would only accommodate the desired expansions/renovations. This approach would maintain the standards for the existing houses so as to not lose any existing parking.

The representatives of the Greek chapters and the Greek Alumni Alliance noted their support for a general reduction in the parking requirements to a 3 bed to 1 parking space ratio so that the homes could be in compliance with standards, but also noted the potential acceptance with a remote parking option. However, their concerns with a remote parking option is whether the house actually needs the additional off-site spaces to meet student demand, the cost for maintaining use of off-site parking spaces, and the need for a long-term agreement to meet the City's remote parking standards.

A University administrator noted there is parking spaces currently available at both the Iowa State Center as well as at the Intermodal facility, however, the University was not able to agree to a long term parking agreement consistent with the City's standards that it be available in perpetuity. **The University official offered to work with the City by requiring a parking standard for Greek chapters as part of the required affiliation with the University.**

Correspondence since the neighborhood meeting is included as Attachment E.

Parking Standards

Parking Ratios:

The City has base parking ratios for all new construction as well as allowances that allow for incremental changes or intensification of use before triggering additional parking.

The current base parking requirement from the Zoning Code, Table 29.406(2), for fraternity and sorority houses is a minimum parking ratio of one (1) parking space per bed. Prior to the year 2000, the parking rate had been one parking space for every two beds or sleeping rooms. Earlier editions of parking standards required one space per 300 square feet of floor area.

There are also general allowances for additions and change of use that are part of Zoning Code Section 29.406(2) that states,

“Whenever a building erected or established after the effective date of this Section is enlarged in floor area, number of employees, number of dwelling units, seating capacity or otherwise to create a need for an increase of 10% or more in the number of existing parking spaces, such spaces shall be provided on the basis of such enlargement or change.

Under the current standards, Greek houses could be renovated/expanded to increase the number of beds by 10% without additional parking. If a house is to be renovated/expanded to increase the number of beds by more than 10%, then parking for all new beds would be required. Under a separate provision, a house could expand its living/common area by 50% without triggering additional parking requirements for the property.

Design Standards:

Article 4 of the Zoning Code also identifies the minimum design standards that must be met to be considered a legitimate parking space. This requires that the space be paved; setback from the property lines a minimum of 5 feet, has required landscape screening, and must meet a minimum dimensional size and circulation pattern for the property. **Keep in mind that while many of the Greek houses do not meet the minimum number of parking spaces on the property, they also may not meet the minimum design standards for those spaces to be considered legal and meet the required on-site parking requirements.**

Considerations

Only two of the forty identified Greek houses meet the minimum number of parking spaces required under the current standard. (Attachment D) When looking at the Greek houses collectively, there are approximately 2,000 students living in Greek housing and approximately 1,100 parking spaces provided within the forty properties. This equates to an average of providing about 56% of the required parking. There is a high degree of individual variance within the overall numbers.

Staff has provided a map of the Greek Houses based upon the on-site parking information provided and labeled the parking ratio percentage that each house currently

meets. (See Attachment B) The properties are categorized by color for the general range of parking spaces provided per bed to help give context to options for parking reductions. This does not account for whether the spaces meet current parking design standards.

Greek houses are allowed in High Density Residential and the following is a comparison of the apartments parking requirements in the same vicinity as the Greek houses. **Apartments currently are required to provide parking based on the number of bedrooms in the rental unit and the zone in which they are located. Greek houses, on the other hand, are based on beds, not bedrooms.**

PARKING STANDARDS FROM ZONING CODE

Unit Type	Campustown Service Center	University Impacted Areas	All Other Zoning Districts
Apartments:			
One Bedroom Unit	1 space per Unit	1.5 spaces per Unit	1.5 spaces per Unit
Two or More Bedroom Units	1 space per Unit	1.25 spaces per Bedroom	1 space per Bedroom
Greek House	NA	1 space per Bed	1 space per Bed

Listed below is a comparison of three bedroom apartment scenarios, which highlight the difference in each parking requirement.

- A three bedroom apartment in the EUI area, would be required to provide 3.75 parking spaces, but could allow for 5 people to occupy the dwelling unit.
- A three bedroom apartment in a base RH zone, would be required to provide 3 parking spaces, but could allow for 5 people to occupy the dwelling unit.
- And a three bedroom apartment in the Campustown Service Center (housing allowed on the second story over commercial space), would be required to only provide 1 parking space, but could allow for 5 people to occupy the dwelling unit.

Greek houses are required to provide 5 parking spaces for five occupants regardless of location or sleeping arrangement, while other high density residential uses in the City may provide as few as 1 parking space or as many as 3.75 parking spaces for five occupants.

Other College Communities

Staff has researched parking standards for 14 other college communities and found that Ames generally ranks in the more restrictive range on its parking requirement for Greek

houses. **The average ratio for other college communities showed that 1 space for every two or three beds is a typical standard.** (Attachment C) Again there is wide variation in standards and each community has different circumstances.

OPTIONS TO LOWER THE PARKING RATIO FOR GREEK HOUSING:

Option 1. Lower the Parking Ratio for Greek Housing

At the public meeting the representatives of the Greek Alumni Alliance indicated that one quarter of the Greek students do not own a car. **If this is the case, the parking standard may be higher than necessary.** If the parking ratio was reduced to lessen the parking requirement, staff has determined the percentage of existing houses that would meet following rates: (this does not however, take into account any future expansion of existing houses)

- One space per Two Beds = Approx. 50% of existing houses could comply
- **One space per Three Beds = Approx. 90% of existing houses could comply (Greek Alumni Alliance Request)**
- One space per Five Beds = All existing houses could comply

While this could bring Greek houses more into compliance with parking standards, there is a potential for a reduction in actual on-site parking for existing houses under this option, particularly at the 3 to1 ratio. Reducing the base ratio could allow for houses that meet current standards to either convert the now excess parking spaces to different uses or to expand their housing capacity without providing more parking.

In combination with reducing the base parking ratio, the 10% increase allowance would remain the same and allow for all houses to have some expansion capacity. Changing the base parking ratio would potentially help facilitate new construction if they are able to layout a parking area in conformance with design standards.

Option 2. Allow for Off-Site Remote Parking

Many students rent a space from Iowa State University to store their vehicles, both on and off campus students may do this. This vehicle storage is in locations more distant from the campus, because many students living in all types of housing walk, bike, or ride the bus to campus. Currently, the RH Zone in which Greek houses and apartments are located do not allow remote parking to meet the required parking. And in other districts, e.g. Campustown Service Center (CSC), where remote parking is allowed, **the city looks for a long term agreement to be in place for the required parking ensuring that the parking will be provided at a complaint rate from year to year.**

In this area where Greek houses are concentrated, there is no obvious location of extra on-site parking that would be a convenient distance from all the houses and could be relied upon as permanent parking. The only readily available option is to rely upon ISU parking at the Iowa State Center. At its closest point it is 700 feet from a Greek house and more typically an average of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile from the area. The shortcoming of a remote parking approach is that in the future the University may convert storage parking to other uses and the City is not in a position to administer yearly compliance.

The University has noted a willingness to consider an off-site parking requirement through the chapter affiliation with the University. This approach would be outside of the City's control and, therefore, is something that cannot be regulated or enforced by the City.

Option 3. Special Use Permit

Currently, Greek houses are a permitted use if you meet the development standards. If a project cannot meet the parking standards, a property owner may request a variance. A few Greek houses have pursued variances to parking design standards and/or quantity of spaces in the past few years. The threshold to approve a variance is very high, focused on the special circumstances and a financial hardship causing the need for the variance.

An alternative is a special use permit process for the use and design of a site that must be approved by the Zoning Board of Adjustment. This option would allow for the Zoning Board of Adjustment to review the site plan to require that each house provide as much parking as possible or a means to determine the actual parking need for the property. Specific criteria would need to be developed for base expectations and what performance requirements are needed for a Greek House. The standards for such a permit could recognize special characteristics of the proximity of the use to campus, University affiliation of the fraternity and sorority residential use that distinguishes its operation from apartments, or ability to manage negative impacts of inadequate parking.

This option does require an additional time and process commitment on behalf of the applicant. There also would not be certainty in what may ultimately be approved as it is a case-by-case evaluation. In this option the ZBA would hold a public hearing noticed to neighbors, review application based on a determined set of criteria, and approve the site plan as part of the Special Use Permit.

Option 4. Allow for More Parking with Front Yard Parking

Front yard parking is not permitted in other residential districts in the City; however, the majority of the open space that could become parking is the front yard. While this is not a good aesthetic approach to the parking issue, it would allow for some additional parking to be provided on the property. Typically the front yard of the property is not substantial enough to provide a significant amount of parking needed to accommodate an expansion. Front yard parking would also have a significant impact on the character of the area and probably be detrimental to on-street parking with more driveway curb cuts created.

In consideration of this option, the residents noted a concern for the change in the character of the neighborhood that would occur if front yard parking was allowed.

Option 5. Modify Nonconforming Standards or the 10% Expansion Rule

One of the significant issues with this area is fitting new buildings or larger buildings onto previously developed sites that often were built out with less intense uses. All nonconforming properties are treated equal throughout the City in that if the use is

discontinued or the nonconformity of a site is removed, the reuse of the site must comply with the Zoning Code. The 10% expansion rule also applies citywide to all uses. The 10% expansion rule only applies to additions, it does not apply to reconstructed non-conforming development. Increasing the 10% allowance would facilitate additions.

The nonconforming standards and 10% expansion rule make intentionally tearing down and rebuilding a Greek house difficult to fully accommodate versus allowing for expansions. Potentially, nonconforming restrictions for site improvements could be modified to allow for existing parking areas to remain without fully complying with standards upon redevelopment of a site. These types of change would apply to all uses citywide and may be complex to evaluate on what must change and when.

Staff Comments:

It is evident in the Zoning Code provisions of the University West and East Impact areas that the City's desire is to support and maintain the existing Greek community within the Campustown area. This is embodied in the restrictions on demolition and the design standards of the district to help preserve its character. **It is also the interest of the neighborhood residents, as noted at the public meeting, to maintain the Greek houses in this area, and allow for expansion as long as a balance is maintained between the parking need and the means to accommodate that parking without putting added pressures on on-street parking.**

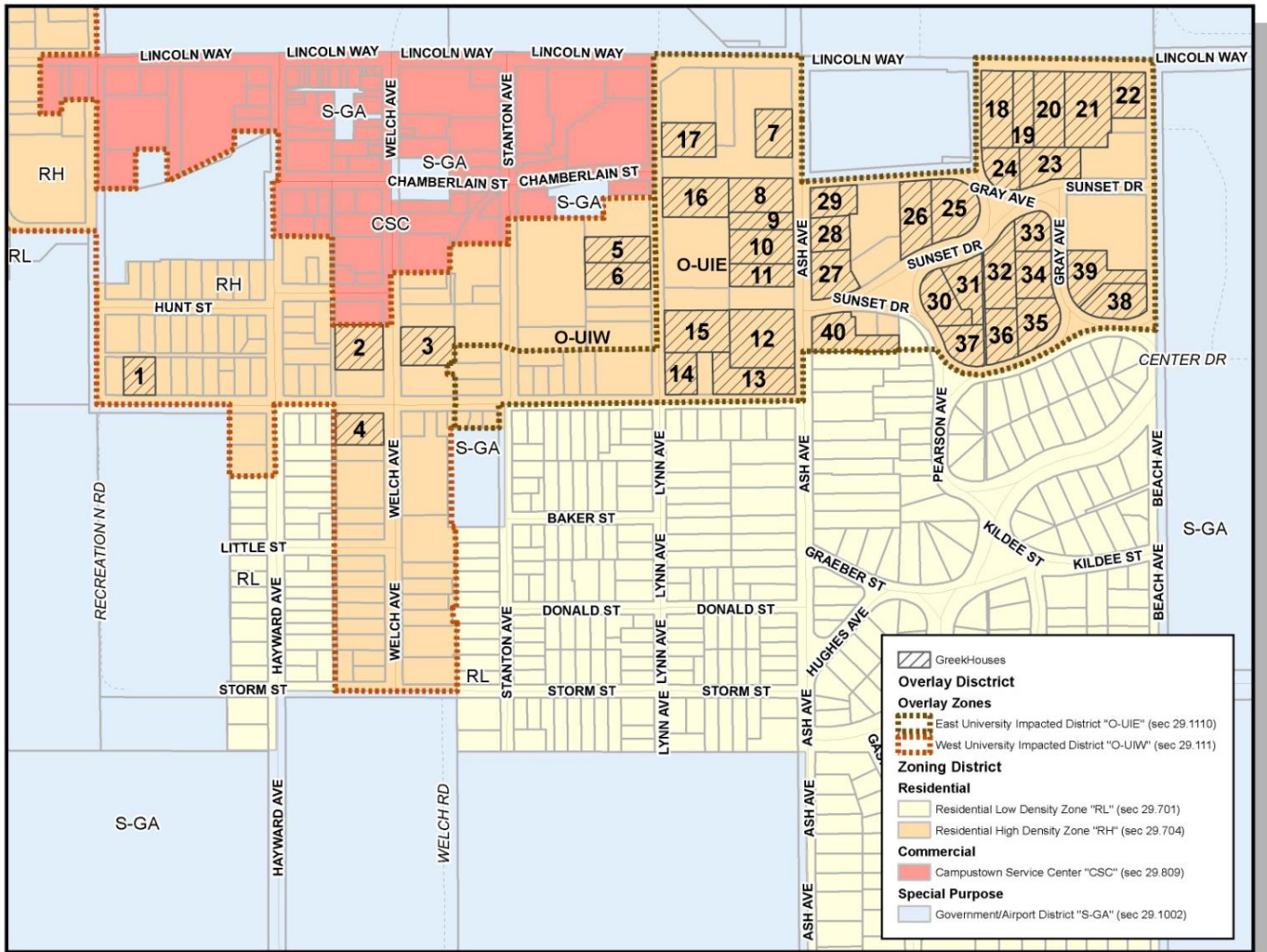
The existing standards related to off-street parking many times limit the expansion efforts of the Greek community as parking requirement often control the intensity of use of the site. Unfortunately, this is an occurrence for many properties across the City as standards are uniformly applied and not all types of use can fit an area as needs are balanced.

Considering the proximity to campus and how Greek houses operate in affiliation with ISU, there are reasons to consider alternative standards in the West and East University Impact area zoning districts. **Based upon review of current conditions, relative parking requirements in the City, and comparison to other community standards, easing of the parking ratio of between 2 and 3 beds per parking space can be supported.**

In addition, staff believes that there is no need to alter on-street parking requirements to support this type of change. Changing the base parking ratio is the most direct approach to addressing the issue brought forward by the Greek community. While it is important to note whichever reduced ratio is selected there can be no guarantee that it will satisfy the needs of every situation, it does lay the groundwork for the expansion of many Greek houses.

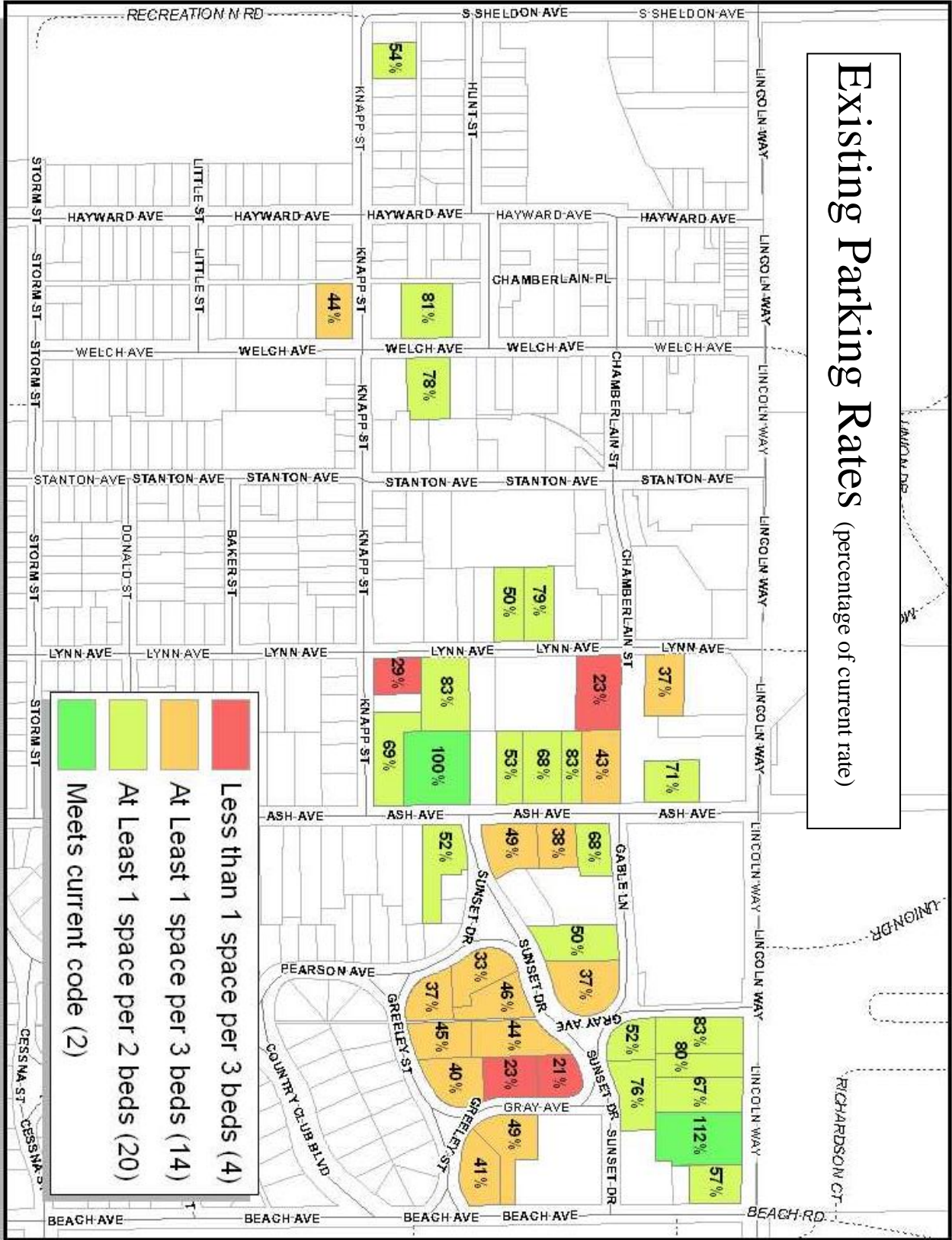
Staff is seeking Council's direction on whether Zoning Code amendments should be pursued in regards to current parking standards for Fraternity and Sorority houses, and which option Council wishes staff to pursue.

Attachment A



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|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Alpha Kappa Lambda | 11. Kappa Sigma | 21. Pi Kappa Alpha | 31. Beta Sigma Psi |
| 2. Theta Xi | 12. Farm House | 22. Phi Kappa Theta | 32. Alpha Gamma Delta |
| 3. Adelante | 13. Phi Gamma Delta | 23. Phi Delta Theta | 33. Kappa Delta |
| 4. Pi Kappa Phi | 14. Kappa Alpha Theta | 24. ACACIA | 34. Chi Omega |
| 5. Alpha Sigma Phi | 15. Phi Kappa Psi | 25. Alpha Gamma Rho | 35. Sigma Kappa |
| 6. Alpha Chi Omega | 16. Sigma Alpha Epsilon | 26. Delta Tau Delta | 36. Alpha Delta Pi |
| 7. Delta Upsilon | 17. Kappa Kappa Gamma | 27. Tau Kappa Epsilon | 37. Gamma Phi Beta |
| 8. Lambda Chi Alpha | 18. Sigma Chi | 28. Sigma Pi | 38. Alpha Omicron Pi |
| 9. Theta Delta Chi | 19. Alpha Tau Omega | 29. Pi Beta Phi | 39. Sigma Phi Epsilon |
| 10. Theta Chi | 20. Beta Theta Pi | 30. Delta Zeta | 40. Delta Delta Delta |

Attachment B

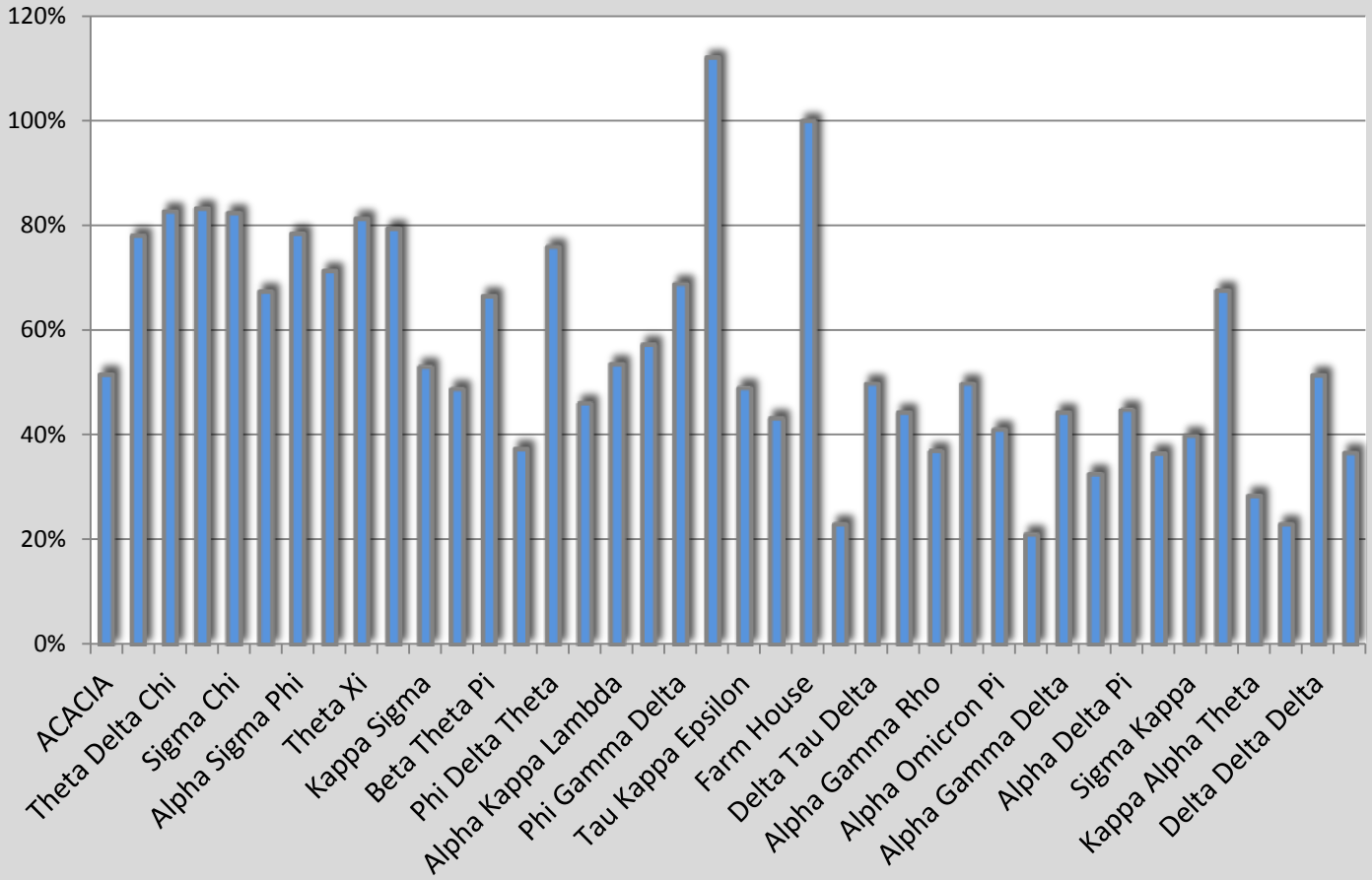


Attachment C

City	Base Parking Standard	Renovation/Expansion Standard
Ames	1 space per bed	If beds are not increased by more than 10%, no changes. If expanded by 10% or more, the new area must meet the current standard
Cedar Falls	1 space for every 2 residents in excess of 4 residents, not less than 5 spaces.	Any enlargement of an existing fraternity or sorority means the entirety of the building must meet the current parking standards
Des Moines, IA	1 space for every 2 persons residing on the premises	Any enlargement of an existing fraternity or sorority means the entirety of the building must meet the current parking standards
Iowa City	1 space for every 300 square feet or .75 per resident, whichever is less	Any increase in the number of beds or size of the structure requires that the entire development be brought up to existing parking standards
Champaign, IL	1 space for every 4 beds	Non-conforming properties must meet the parking requirement if they are altered, expanded, rebuilt, etc.
Urbana, IL	1 space for every 3 residents	If enlarged, expanded, or altered, total parking is calculated by adding existing parking spaces to the number of spaces required for the new area.
Lincoln, NE	.75 spaces per resident	If altered, must meet all the current parking requirements
Manhattan, KS	At least one parking space for each occupant for the first 20 occupants, or a total number of spaces equal to 75% of the total occupants, whichever is greater	Any enlargement of an existing fraternity or sorority means the entirety of the building must meet the current parking standards
Lawrence, KS	.75 spaces per lawful occupant	If legally nonconforming, only the enlarged area must meet the prevailing parking requirements
Columbia, MO	1 space for every 2 occupants	If intensity of use is increased resulting in an increase in net floor area, the new area must meet the prevailing parking requirements.
Morgantown, WV	1 space for every three occupants based on maximum building occupancy	If intensity of use is increased resulting in an increase in net floor area, the new area must meet the prevailing parking requirements.
Fort Collins, CO	2 parking spaces per 3 bedrooms, plus one space for every two employees	Any enlargement of an existing fraternity or sorority means the entirety of the building must meet the current parking standards
Boulder, CO	2 parking spaces per 3 occupants	Any enlargement of an existing fraternity or sorority means the entirety of the building must meet the current parking standards
College Station, TX	1 space per person plus 1 space for every 30 square feet of meeting room.	If intensity of use is increased resulting in an increase in net floor area, the new area must meet the prevailing parking requirements.
Charlottesville, VA	2.5 spaces per 3 bedrooms	If enlarged by less than 25%, no additional parking is required. If enlarged by greater than 25%, the new area must meet the current parking standards.

Attachment D

Percent of Required Parking Provided by Each Greek House



Note-Average level of parking is 56% of the required 1 space for each bed.

Attachment E

October 10, 2014

To: The Honorable Mayor Ann Campbell
Members of the Ames City Council
City Manager Steve Schainker

From: ISU Greek Alumni Alliance

Re: Request to amend Parking Requirements regarding Greek Chapter House Facilities

The ISU Greek Alumni Alliance (GAA) requests that the Ames City Council support an amendment to the current parking regulations as it pertains to the Greek Chapter Housing Facilities. Currently when a Greek Chapter House undergoes a redevelopment/expansion project, Ames City Code requires that on-site parking be at a ratio of 1 parking spot per 1 bed. One of the primary reasons a Greek Chapter House Facility chooses to undergo a redevelopment/expansion is to upgrade its facility to meet the living and educational needs of its student members.

Due to the unique shape and relatively small lot size for many of the existing Greek Chapter House Facilities, a redevelopment/expansion project is often prohibitive due to the lack of available on-site land to meet the parking requirement of 1:1.

As a result, the GAA requests that the Ames City Council direct City Staff to prepare an amendment to Ames City Code that would modify the parking requirements for Greek Chapter House Facilities. Further, the GAA requests that the on-site parking requirement ratio for Greek Chapter House Facilities be 3 beds to 1 parking spot, which is similar to several existing parking ratio found at many of the Greek Chapter House Facilities. Amending the parking regulations as it pertains to Greek Chapter House Facilities will allow for the Chapters of the ISU Greek Community to maintain a strong, viable presence near the campus area while enhancing the living and educational needs of their student members.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. The GAA looks forward to working with you to meet the needs of our Greek Chapter House Facilities.

From: "James Deppe" <jamesdeppe@q.com>
To: <kmarren@city.ames.ia.us>, <bobanncamp@aol.com>
Cc: <sschainker@city.ames.ia.us>
Date: 10/10/2014 11:41 AM
Subject: 10-14 Fraternity and Sorority Parking Input - Jim Deppe - Resident of Neighborhood

Dear Karen,

I appreciated talking to you on the phone yesterday. The following is my input, since I live on Ash Ave and was out of town during the parking meeting last week.

Dear Council,

I believe the fraternities and sororities have an obligation to provide to each member with one parking stall. It's a quality of life issue for the new fraternity and sorority members, families in the neighborhood, and people visiting residents in the residential buildings of the neighborhood. And it's an economic issue of keeping a level playing field. Some of the stronger points I feel are worth considering are:

1. The current parking requirements are economically fair to the fraternity & sorority non-profits, the apartment owners, and to the single family residential owners to the neighborhood. I believe changing them would give one economic entity an unfair advantage over another.
2. Previous grandfathered parking requirements should continue with previous room occupancies on record, until a building's occupancy is increased through new construction. At that time, the parking zoning regulations kick in, requiring the whole building to be in parking compliance or keep the grandfathered parking for the older part of the building and new additional beds would need to comply with the zoning parking requirement.
3. Offsite parking should be allowed for new construction if it is owned by the fraternities or sororities or it is a long term, renewable 20 year plus lease with the university. The fraternity or sorority signs a recorded document with the city, agreeing to have the required offsite parking and agreeing to vacate the building to legally occupancy limits if such parking is not in place. The offsite parking should either be on university land or land not zoned single family residential. Limits should also be placed on the distance from the dwelling structure.
4. Fraternities and Sororities should still have yearly occupancy inspections and a database to determine if occupancy and parking is in sync. If parking is not to the city standards and zoning in place, occupancy should be reduced until it comes into compliance. The same standards apply to any over-crowded apartment building not in compliance with occupancy and parking regulations.

Sincerely,
James Deppe