

## Staff Report

**REQUEST TO INITIATE AMENDMENT TO THE MEDICAL OFFICE PARKING RATE  
FOR BUILDINGS LESS THAN 50,000 SQUARE FEET**

June 14, 2022

**BACKGROUND:**

On April 26, 2022, the City Council referred a letter to staff from Mary Greeley Medical Center (MGMC) regarding a change in the required parking for Medical Office uses (letter attached). Staff provided a memo in the May 24 Council packets, which the City Council then requested be placed on an agenda for discussion.

Medical Office uses currently have a requirement to provide parking at a rate of 1 space per 143 square feet (Equivalent to 7 spaces per 1000 square feet). Certain conditions allow for a less intense rate of parking, which is discussed below. Mary Greeley Medical Center (MGMC) has requested a Text Amendment to reduce the required parking rate in this use to 1 space per 200 square feet (Equivalent to 5 spaces per 1000 square feet).

**MGMC is seeking this change as they believe it is a burden to Medical Clinics under 50,000 square feet to have to meet the current standard. MGMC's rationale is that the standard often requires excess parking and is burdensome to their budget for future clinic construction in Ames.**

Medical Offices include uses such as dental clinics, chiropractors, medical laboratories, general practice doctors and surgery centers that do not permit overnight stays. **The current ordinance allows clinics exceeding 50,000 square feet, or where parking is shared, to meet a reduced standard of 1 space per 200 square feet (5 per 1000 square feet). It is only small and medium sized medical offices less than 50,000 square feet where the 1 space per 143 square feet (7 spaces per 1000 square feet) rate applies.**

The medical parking rate at 5 spaces per 1000 square feet is already greater than the standard office parking rates (3.3 spaces per 1000 square feet) to account for high levels of employment and turnover of patients. The higher parking rate for smaller facilities (<50,000 sq. ft.) at 7 spaces per 1000 square feet assumes there is high level of base demand that begins to dissipate with larger facilities.

Two outside technical resources, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and the International Traffic Engineers (ITE), recommend parking for medical uses at a rate of 4 to 4.6 per 1,000 square feet. This would be in line with the requested change to 5 spaces per 1000 square feet.

	<i>Equivalent</i>	
	Sq. Ft. per Space	Spaces per 1,000 Sq. Ft.
Current Standard – Medical Use <50,000 sq. ft.	143	7
Current Standard – Medical Use >50,000 sq. ft.	200	5
Current Standard – Medical Use w/shared parking	200	5
Office Use Parking Rate	303	3.3
ULI/ITE Recommendations	217 - 250	4 – 4.6
<b>Option 1: Standardize Medical Use</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Option 2: Reduce Threshold for Lower Rate</b>		
<b>Medical Use &lt;5,000 sq. ft.</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Medical Use &gt;5,000 sq. ft.</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>5</b>

Staff reviewed a sample of existing medical office building locations and determined that the only existing facility exceeding 50,000 square feet is the main McFarland Clinic. Two other McFarland facilities (West and South) are less than 50,000 square feet, but benefitted from the 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet parking rate due to shared parking. Staff also reviewed the prior Zoning Ordinance standards from the 1990s, which indicated that the medical parking rate was uniformly 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet. There is no discussion recorded about the change in parking rates for medical office uses as part of the zoning ordinance rewrite in 2000.

**From staff’s assessment of parking conditions, it appears that the higher level of required parking is not utilized.** The only facility that operates similar to a medical office that appears to frequently use most of the parking is the Childserve facility on Philadelphia Street. However, that site is parked at a rate of 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet, which is less than the medical parking rate.

**OPTIONS:**

The applicant is requesting that the City initiate a Text Amendment to change the Medical/Dental Office parking rate for medical clinics under 50,000 square feet from the current 7 spaces per 1,000 square feet to 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet.

Staff considered the possibility of creating a new standard based upon the number of exam rooms, but ultimately determined that such a standard would not adequately capture the level of detail is needed to account for general parking needs. **Two more feasible options, described below, have been identified by staff to address MGMC’s request, if City Council is interested in pursuing the requested change:**

**OPTION 1: Reduce the rate for all Medical Office Uses to 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet.**

The City Council can choose to initiate a text amendment to have a uniform parking rate for all medical office uses at 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet. This will align the medical office parking rate for all sized medical clinics across the City. This assumes that regardless of facility size, additional parking is not needed to meet demand. Staff would also review definitions along with changes to parking rates to ensure consistency with current terminology.

**OPTION 2: Reduce the threshold for the reduced parking rate from buildings of 50,000 square feet to 5,000 square feet**

This option would ensure that small facilities still have a base minimum of parking in recognition of the high levels of demand for staffing and patients, but would allow for a reduction in the parking rate for medium sized facilities. Staff would also review definitions along with changes to parking rates to ensure consistency with current terminology.

**STAFF COMMENTS:**

A cursory review of comparable parking rates indicates that cities have a wide range of requirements with some cities having less required medical parking and some having similar standards to Ames' 7 spaces per 1000 standard. It does not appear in Ames that full utilization of parking occurs at sites reviewed by staff where the 7 spaces per 1,000 square feet standard applies.

The City's medical office rate applies to a very diverse set of medical related uses that do not all have a high demand for parking. **Staff is supportive of reducing the parking rate with either Option 1 or Option 2 and ensuring definitions match current terminology. Given the two options, staff believes that Option 1 with a uniform parking rate would adequate for the City.**

Staff notes that the Mary Greeley Hospital site and McFarland Clinic Site at the corner of Duff Avenue and 13<sup>th</sup> Street are already parked at the rate of 1 space per 200 square feet (5 spaces per 1,000 square feet), as the size of those facilities exceeds 50,000 square feet in size. Therefore, neither of the two options presented by staff would affect those facilities.

## Attachment A- Applicant Request Letter



April 22, 2022

City of Ames City Council  
c/o: Kelly Diekmann  
515 Clark Ave  
Ames, IA 50010

RE: Request for Zoning Text Amendment on Medical Parking Requirement

Dear Ames City Council:

Mary Greeley Medical Center and McFarland Clinic are requesting a zoning text amendment be considered to reduce the current requirement of 1 space/143 SF or 7 stalls/1,000 SF of medical office to 5 stalls/1,000 SF. We are exploring a potential medical clinic project in Ames and have applied the current ratio to a site layout. The parking is unnecessarily large and a burden to the overall budget. Area communities, such as West Des Moines and Waukee, have medical office requirements of 3 or 5 spaces/1,000 SF for medical office/clinic use. 7 stalls/1,000 SF would equate to 238 parking stalls for a 34,000 SF clinic that will average 50 staff and 34 patients maximum. The parking that is currently being required is almost triple what is needed from a building use.

As we navigate uncertain times with increasing construction pricing and low availability of materials, the challenge to meet a project budget and still meet project goals are monumental. The cost burden of this parking requirement impacts many areas like soils, granular base material, concrete, storm sewer and landscape screening, which all impact the bottom line. Mary Greeley Medical Center and McFarland Clinic would prefer to concentrate budget dollars on medical equipment and space that assists in improving the quality of life for our community members.

We request that you amend the current zoning requirement of 7 stalls/1,000 SF of medical office to 5 stalls/1,000 SF or lower. We appreciate your consideration of this request for upcoming and future development.

Sincerely,

MGMC in partnership with McFarland Clinic



Amber Deardorff  
MGMC Vice President/Clinical and Support Services