

**COMMISSION ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT FOR SIDE SETBACKS IN THE S-HM  
(HOSPITAL-MEDICAL) DISTRICT**

**BACKGROUND:**

The Hospital Medical Zoning District (S-HM) is a special zoning district unique to the area of Duff Avenue and 13<sup>th</sup> Street. The Mary Greeley Medical Center (MGMC) (1111 Duff Avenue) and McFarland Clinic (1215 Duff Avenue) are located in the S-HM zoning district along with other properties along the east side of Duff. (Attachment A Zoning Map).

MGMC is seeking a text amendment to allow a zero setback for interior lot lines, that is, lot lines that abut a similarly zoned lot. Side yard setbacks in the S-HM District are currently based on number of stories (e.g. 8 feet for 2 stories; 10 feet for 3 stories, 12 feet for 4 stories, etc.). The proposed amendment would not change setbacks for front yards (areas along streets) or when adjoining a residentially zoned property.

The application from MGMC is attached, as is their letter to the City Council requesting the initiation of the text amendment. The motivation for the change is to allow for modification to the MGMC entrance located along the McFarland Clinic property line. These two buildings are currently attached through an above-grade corridor because of a variance to setbacks approved by the zoning board of adjustment in November, 2000.

Because of the close physical proximity and operational relationship between these two medical facilities, there is a lot of foot traffic between them. Mary Greeley Medical Center (MGMC) seeks to make improvements to a north entry way that would include a covered vestibule to promote safety and comfort in inclement weather. This vestibule would cross the property line onto McFarland Clinic, which supports the construction of the vestibule and the text amendment. A variance was not pursued as it is difficult to make the findings about the hardship that would occur if no expanded vestibule were to exist. The desire for the vestibule expansion lead to the text amendment to allow for the change.

Staff agrees that for integrated sites, such as MGMC and the McFarland Clinic, the distinction of side yard setback is not essential to the character or function of the two lots. Staff believes changing the setback standard for this type of use is appropriate.

To accomplish this goal of allowing for integrated sites there is some discretion in the wording of allowing for a zero setback. Side yard setbacks could be removed in their entirety for all properties in the S-HM and treat the S-HM as a standard commercial zone. Alternatively, or the language could be focused on integrated sites.

**Staff propose that this zero setback be applied only on the west side of Duff Avenue.** Although the east side of Duff Avenue is similarly zoned, the lot patterns and numerous smaller buildings may make the application of this change more problematic. On the west side of Duff Avenue, both the lot sizes and building sizes are considerably larger, limiting the number of lots to which this can be applied.

Staff proposes adding the following language to Table 29.1001 (3). New language is shown in bold underline, existing in normal typeface.

Minimum Principal Building Setback:	
Front Lot Line	25 ft.
Side Lot Line	8 ft. for 2 stories; 10 ft. for 3 stories 12 ft. for 4 stories 2 additional feet for each additional foot <b><u>-except-</u></b> <b><u>0 ft. for common lot lines of S-HM zoned parcels on the west side of Duff Avenue.</u></b>
Rear Lot Line	20 ft.
Corner Lots	Provide 2 front yards and 2 side yards

### **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. The Planning & Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed amendment to the setbacks for the S-HM zoning district.
2. The Planning & Zoning Commission can recommend the City Council decline to adopt the proposed setbacks for the S-HM zoning district.
3. The Planning & Zoning Commission can recommend alternative language for the proposed setbacks in the S-HM zoning district.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

The proposed zero setback amendment solves the immediate issue of the MGMC/McFarland. Although the zoning board of adjustment granted a variance for a similar request in 2000, it is unclear whether the variance criteria could be met for this particular request. Allowing connections between these two major health care centers provides convenience and safety to patients and staff of an area that functions as an integrated campus. Staff recommends limiting the amendment only to the west side of Duff Avenue. **Therefore, it is the recommendation of the Department of Planning and Housing that the Planning and Zoning Commission act in accordance with Alternative #1.**

## Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance Application Form

(This form must be filled out completely before your application will be accepted.)

1. **General Description of Affected Property(ies)** (attach, if lengthy):

Those properties that lie within the Hospital-Medical District (S-HM).

2. **Applicant:** Mary Greeley Medical Center

Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: 1111 Duff Ave. Ames Iowa 50010  
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Telephone: 515-239-2105  
(Home) (Business) (Fax)

3. **Contact Person:** Scott T. Blum, AIA

Business: Accord Architecture Company

Address: 1601 Golden Aspen Dr., Ste 103, Ames, Iowa 50010  
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Telephone: 515.663.9643 515/663.9644  
(Home) (Business) (Fax)

E-mail address: scott@accordarch.com

*I (We) certify that I (we) am (are) familiar with applicable state and local codes and ordinances, the procedural requirements of the City of Ames, and have submitted all the required information.*

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant(s)**  
Lynn Whisler, Vice President  
Mary Greeley Medical Center  
**Print Name**

## Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance

### Checklist

(This form must be filled out completely and the required information must be attached to this form before your application will be accepted.)

**The following information is required as part of the submittal of a request for a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. Please attach your answers to each item.**

- ☒ A written explanation of the **reasons for the zoning text amendment.**  
See attached letter to City of Ames City Clerk dated 9/16/15.
  - ☒ A **general description of the property(ies), zones, and/or areas** that will be affected by the zoning text amendment. Those properties that lie within the Hospital-Medical District (S-HM), in particular McFarland Clinic and Mary Greeley Medical Center.
  - ☒ A written explanation of the **consistency of this zoning text amendment with the Land Use Policy Plan.** We understand this language will be organized by the City of Ames P&Z department.
  - ☒ Existing ordinance language for consideration.
  - ☒ Proposed ordinance language for consideration.
- } We understand the existing and proposed language will be handled by City Attorney Mark Lambert.

**Accord**  
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September 16, 2015

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515.663.9643 515.663.9644 fax

Ms. Diane Voss, City Clerk  
City of Ames  
515 Clark Avenue  
Ames, Iowa 50010

SUBJECT: Mary Greeley Medical Center  
Request for Zoning Text Amendment to Zone S-HM

Dear Ms. Voss,

On behalf of Mary Greeley Medical Center, we are requesting an amendment to the text within the City of Ames Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 29.1001 that describes the setback distance for interior lot lines in the Hospital-Medical District (S-HM). Our request of the city council is to allow the reduction of the setback distance to zero (building growth to the interior property line) within the S-HM district, thus allowing Mary Greeley Medical Center to construct an entrance vestibule on the north side of the medical center's existing North Addition that does not violate the setback requirements. Notice that this is a request for zero setbacks on interior or non-street property lines only. Please allow me to provide a little background on the reason for this request in the following paragraphs.

In a continuing effort to improve patient and public safety at the hospital campus at 1111 Duff Avenue in Ames, Mary Greeley Medical Center (MGMC) would like to construct an enclosed vestibule on the north side of the hospital. Please refer to the attached illustrations. Currently, there are exterior stairs and a ramp at this location exposed to rain, snow and ice making this drop-off and pick-up point for patients potentially slippery. This stair and ramp are part of the North Addition project that was constructed by the hospital in 2001. In an agreement with McFarland Clinic at that time, the stair and ramp were constructed over the line that splits the two properties, thus making a portion of the MGMC improvements (ramp, stair, retaining walls and courtyard) on the McFarland property. Further, an enclosed hallway or "link" between the two buildings was also constructed at that time. An easement was established between the two organizations on April 1, 2001 in order to make this possible. A variance was granted by the city at that time as well to allow the connection of the two buildings.

The current north entrance serves what the hospital calls the "North Addition" and is primarily used as a medical office building housing MGMC services such as radiation oncology and the Diabetes Education and Nutrition Center, Hospital Information Management, External Relations and leased space by McFarland Clinic cardiology and oncology clinics. If MGMC is allowed to construct the proposed vestibule, it would extend over the property line and enclose the stairs at this location, thus making this entrance much safer. MGMC is also considering enclosing or providing a canopy roof over the ramp as part of this project, but that decision has not been made.

On September 9, 2015, representatives from Accord Architecture and MGMC met with zoning and inspections staff members at the City of Ames. As an outcome of that meeting, Mr. Charles Kuester, a planner with the City of Ames, indicated that I may formally request a text amendment in this letter to initiate the process of consideration and possible approval. Please consider this important text amendment, thus allowing a much safer entrance to the hospital. Thank you for considering this proposal. We are eager to work with the City of Ames to receive approval for this project, which we plan to publicly bid this winter.

Sincerely,

ACCORD ARCHITECTURE COMPANY

By



Scott T. Blum, AIA, LEED AP  
President