

ITEM #:	<u>2</u>
DATE:	<u>09-16-25</u>
DEPT:	<u>FIRE</u>

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: FIRE STATION NO. 2 RELOCATION PROJECT

BACKGROUND:

Ames Fire Station #2 is located at 132 Welch Avenue, at the intersection of Chamberlain Street and Welch Avenue. The station, which was built in 1966, is a single story, 5,500 square foot, three apparatus bay station.

For a number of years staff has been emphasizing the justification for relocating this station based on the following points:

- The current facility presents significant operational challenges, including access difficulties for fire apparatus and outdated facilities that no longer meet fire service requirements. The size of the lot and corresponding design of the existing station do not allow for drive-through access, which is the arrangement for the City's other two stations. Instead, apparatus returning from calls must be backed into Station #2 in the midst of heavy pedestrian and vehicle traffic.
- While still providing adequate response to the main ISU campus, relocating Station #2 to a site along State Avenue will immediately help improve response times to the west area of the city and further improve response capabilities in the future as the city limits expand to the west in accordance with the Ames 2040 Plan.

Using GIS fire response time modeling, the City's GIS staff predicts a two-percentage point improvement in overall response times compared to the existing station location. This two-point improvement represents approximately 120 additional emergency calls being reached within the target timeframe compared to last year's response data. Additionally, GIS modeling estimates a five-percentage point improvement in average response times within the Fire Station #2 district when evaluated against the planned Ames 2040 growth areas in west Ames.

A relocation of Station #2 to the west side of State Avenue will not require the addition of personnel or apparatus costs to the budget. In addition, \$172,218 worth of existing movable equipment, such as office equipment, kitchen equipment, bedroom furnishings, fitness equipment, laundry equipment, storage equipment, and tools, will be transferred to the new station in a further effort to avoid additional costs.

- We are very fortunate that ISU President Wendy Wintersteen has expressed to City staff a willingness to support a long-term lease for a site on University property at no cost to our residents.

It should be noted that although ISU staff may be in a position to recommend approval of the proposed lease agreement prior to the referendum date, the final

decision regarding the lease by the Board of Regents is expected in November, which is after the referendum. At the time of this writing, City staff is not aware of any potential impediments to the Board of Regents' approval.

The City Council should also note that for the bond referendum for the Healthy Life Center, which was also planned to be constructed on ISU property, the City Council voted in May 2019 to place the referendum on the September 2019 election ballot. Board of Regents approval for that lease occurred in August 2019, after the Council's approval to proceed with the referendum, but before the referendum itself.

- Once the station is relocated, an opportunity exists to sell the existing site on Welch Avenue and use those proceeds to reduce the debt service costs associated with the new station.

Because the amount of proceeds generated from a sale is unknown at this time, when calculating the impact on property taxes it would not be advisable to make any assumptions about how much of the debt service payments can be reduced by revenues from a sale of the old station property.

- The proposed site of the relocated station is not immediately adjacent to a residential area, minimizing the impact to neighbors from lights, sirens, and other activities at the station.

Other previously considered sites were met with resistance from nearby residents.

- A major benefit of a new four-bay station is this larger area allows for the storage of expensive apparatus that currently cannot be housed indoors, thereby prolonging their usable life. Currently, the Fire Department's reserve engine is stored under one of the City's water towers, and the Incident Command trailer and fire prevention trailer are stored outside.

Storing these apparatus inside the station will provide for improved readiness by being able to address maintenance issues more regularly and will reduce the potential for damage from rodents and exposure to the elements.

STATION #2 SIZING:

The City has contracted with Brown Reynolds Watford Architects (BRW) to provide: 1) a schematic design for the construction of the new fire station which includes a conceptual design with floor plans and elevations, and 2) a preliminary cost estimate for a potential bond referendum as soon as November 2025.

Over the last four months, City staff has met regularly with BRW to create, refine, and optimize a conceptual design into floor plans and elevations, and create a total project cost estimate. Below is a chart outlining the programming of a new Relocated Fire Station #2 by spaces and square footage. The chart reflects:

1. The square footage (14,180) for the Original Design of the station created by BRW and presented to City Council on August 12, 2025,

2. The Final Design square footage (12,925) generated by the City staff as a result of their value engineering efforts, and
3. The square footage (7,492) for Station #3 (our newest station), which was built in 2001 and has three apparatus bays.

A notable difference from Original Design to Final Design is the reduction of 1,885 square feet, while still maintaining Net Zero Ready.

Square Footage	New Station #2 Design - Original	New Station #2 Design - Final	Ames Fire Station #3	Difference Between Station #3 And Final Design
Mechanical/Utility				
IT/Communications	80	80	0	80 sq. ft.
Electrical Room	272	272	60	212 sq. ft.
Mechanical Room	629	629	0	629 sq. ft.
Fire Sprinkler Riser/Geothermal Room	375	375	145	230 sq. ft.
SCBA Compressor/Hose Storage/Shop	340	271	190	81 sq. ft.
Decontamination Shower Room	220	220	144	76 sq. ft.
Dirty Utility Room / Decon	195	125	120	5 sq. ft.
Support Spaces				
Laundry Room/Medical Supply/Utility Room	100	112	0	112 sq. ft.
Turnout Gear Room & Storm Shelter	275	250	60	190 sq. ft.
Exercise Room	575	374	230	144 sq. ft.
Kitchen/Dining/Dayroom/Classroom	1,110	980	636	344 sq. ft.
Lieutenants Office	150	150	141	9 sq. ft.
Report/Watch Office	165	165	155	10 sq. ft.
Dorm Rooms (In Total 6 Rooms)	759	650	650	0
Private Bathroom	191	160	288	(-128) sq. ft.
Vestibule	72	60	42	18 sq. ft.
Lobby	140	123	100	23 sq. ft.
Stairs	120	120	0	120 sq. ft.
Apparatus Bay				
Apparatus Bay	6,080	5,226	3,063	2163 sq. ft.
Totals				
Interior Rooms	11,848	10,342	6,024	
25% For Halls and Walls	2,962	2,583	1,468	
GROSS SQUARE FOOTAGE	14,810	12,925	7,492	5,433

When comparing the final recommended design square footage to the square footage of Station #3, there are four main drivers that account for the additional 5,433 square feet that is needed for new Fire Station #2:

- ADA Requirements account for 344 additional square feet in the bathrooms, kitchen, and bedrooms.
- Net Zero Ready Features account for 810 additional square feet in the mechanical, electrical, and geothermal rooms.
- The Fourth Apparatus Bay with increased bay depth accounts for 2,163 additional square feet and will be utilized to bring the Mobile Command and All Hazards Fire Prevention trailers inside. The forth bay will also be able to house current Engine #4, which is one of the department's reserve apparatus and housed in an unconditioned space under the Bloomington Water Tower.
- Operational Improvements which include the exercise room, IT room, separate dayroom from kitchen and dining area, and carcinogen reduction efforts through firefighter gear isolation in a separate space, decontamination bathrooms, and a living quarters laundry room account for an additional 2,116 square feet.

Key Differences Breakdown	
Reasons For Additional Space	Additional Square Footage Compared to Station #3
ADA Requirements	344
Net Zero Ready features	810
4th apparatus bay + increased depth	2,163
Operational Improvements	2,116
Total Square Footage Increase In Final Design As Compared to Station #3	5,433

STATION #2 PROJECT COSTS:

At the August 12, 2025, City Council meeting, City staff was directed by City Council to have the architect design a Net Zero Ready fire station. As a reminder, a Net Zero Ready building incorporates all of the features necessary to make it Net Zero, with the addition of a renewable energy system (e.g., solar panels) in the future.

Based on the most recent information, the construction cost estimate for a Net Zero Ready fire station is \$8,936,574 as compared to a cost of \$7,691,344 without a Net Zero Ready design (a difference of \$1,245,230, or 16.2%).

The projected construction cost estimate did not include other items for the total project, such as architectural/engineering fees, third party testing, connections fees, and furniture, fixtures, construction manager, and equipment.

Since that time, City staff completed multiple value engineering reviews to maximize operational efficiencies while identifying cost effective materials that would be durable, provide longevity, and be easy to maintain over the life of the station. This effort reduced the

construction cost to \$7,691,344.

The chart below outlines the total estimated cost of the project, including a breakdown of the revised base construction costs, Net Zero Ready upgrades, and owner provided services.

Station #2 Final Cost Estimate	
Base Construction Costs	
Building Construction Cost	\$7,066,412
Owner & Construction Contingency (5%)	\$376,932
Add Mezzanine (1,270 sq ft @ \$195/sq ft)	\$248,000
Total Base Project Cost	\$7,691,344
Net Zero Ready Upgrades	
Increase In Mechanical & Electrical	\$472,230
Increased Electrical Service	\$152,500
Geothermal Wells, Pumps, etc.	\$490,000
Additional Survey	\$10,000
Geotechnical Engineering	\$14,800
Net Zero Electrical Engineering	\$13,500
Net Zero Geothermal Engineering	\$44,200
Net Zero Commissioning	\$48,000
Subtotal - Net Zero Ready	\$1,245,230
Total Construction Cost (with Net Zero Ready)	\$8,936,574
Owner Provided Services	
Arch & Engineering Fees	\$680,000
Materials Testing	\$98,000
FF&E	\$88,554
Utilities Connections	\$100,000
Project Management	\$500,000
Station Alerting System	\$53,000
Subtotal - Owner Provided Services	\$1,519,554
ESTIMATED TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$10,456,128

LAND:

Working with ISU staff and leadership, ISU owned property located on the west side of State Avenue has been identified as an appropriate site for a relocated Station #2. The land, which is located at 601 State Avenue, is a 29-acre parcel owned by Iowa State University and would be leased to the City at no cost for a period of 52 years. The specifics of the lease agreement are being finalized and will need final approval from the State of Iowa Board of Regents. The specific location of the new fire station will be coordinated with the University to avoid unnecessary impacts to the property. This location will also improve the Fire Department's overall average response times to the total city.

SALE OF CURRENT FIRE STATION #2:

In 1966, Fire Station #2 was relocated from Iowa State University's Clyde Williams Stadium on Sheldon Avenue to its current location at 132 Welch Avenue, to better serve the University and west Ames. The University paid half the cost of the new station. The 1981 agreement between the City and the Board of Regents for fire services at Iowa State University, provides direction that should Station #2 ever be sold, the University would receive fifty percent (50%) of the proceeds from the sale. In conversations with ISU President Wendy Wintersteen, ISU intends to reinvest its 50% proceeds back into the new station. Any proceeds from the sale of current Fire Station #2 and the land will be used to pay down on the debt service associated with the new fire station.

ESTIMATED PROPERTY TAX IMPLICATIONS:

Preliminary debt service estimates for the relocation of Fire Station #2 show a property tax impact of \$0.23 per \$1,000 of taxable valuation. **For every \$100,000 of assessed residential property, and under the current rollback, this estimate equates to about \$11 per year, or a 2.1% in increase in the City portion of property taxes related *solely* to the new fire station project.**

For comparison, over the past five years the City's property tax collections have increased an average of 3.9% annually. **If that trend continues, and assuming no major changes to state tax law or the residential rollback, for every \$100,000 of *residential* assessed value, a taxpayer would see an increase of about \$20 next year from normal growth alone.**

With voter approval of the referendum, staff estimates the total increase in the City's portion of the property taxes would be about \$31 for every \$100,000 of residential assessed value—\$11 more than without the referendum, or a 6% increase in the City's portion of the property taxes.

Using the same assumptions for *commercial and industrial property*, for every \$500,000 of assessed value, it is estimated an annual increase in the City's portion of the property taxes of about \$170 from normal growth. With passage of the referendum, staff estimates the combined increase would be about \$267, or \$97 more than without the referendum, an increase of 6% in property taxes.

PROCEDURES/PROCESS:

Pursuant to *Iowa Code* Section 384.26, the process for authorizing the issuance of general obligation bonds for general corporate purposes requires submission of the proposal to the voters at a public election. The City Council must adopt a resolution directing the proposition to be placed on the ballot. The ballot language must state the project description and the not-to-exceed principal amount of the bonds to be issued.

As part of the election process, the County Commissioner of Elections (County Auditor) is required to mail notice to each registered voter within the City not less than 10 days nor more than 20 days prior to the election. This mailed notice must include the time and place of the election as well as the exact ballot language approved by the City Council.

The cost of the mailing is estimated to be \$21,072. This figure would be adjusted based on the number of registered voters at the time the mailing occurs. Staff recommends that the costs for the mailing be covered by savings in the General Fund that are anticipated in the FY 2025/26 adjusted budget. This adjustment will be included in the budget adjustments presented to the Council this winter.

In addition to the mailed notice, the statute requires publication of a notice in a newspaper of general circulation within the City not less than 4 days nor more than 20 days prior to the election. The published notice must contain the same basic information provided in the mailed notice, but must also include the minutes of the Council meeting at which the resolution was adopted, together with an estimate of the annual property tax impact on a residential property with an actual value of \$100,000. As noted above, the annual impact is estimated at \$11.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

The Communications and Outreach Team has developed a comprehensive communications strategy to inform and engage the community about the relocation of Fire Station No. 2. The plan emphasizes clear branding, consistent messaging, and accessible information. A special project logo will be designed to mirror successful efforts such as the Ames Animal Shelter's capital campaign, with supporting materials including flyers, fact sheets, videos, and FAQs. A dedicated web page will serve as the central hub for project updates, timelines, and frequently asked questions.

City communication channels will play a key role in outreach. Information about the relocation will be highlighted in the November 2025 issue of CitySide, reinforced through ongoing social media campaigns, and supported by a special Fire Department e-newsletter beginning in September. The strategy also includes monthly podcast and radio updates in September, October, and early November, emphasizing both project progress and public safety benefits. Social media, through both the City of Ames and Ames Fire platforms, will serve as an outlet for news and updates.

Community events and direct engagement will further extend the campaign. Fire Department representatives will host an information table at the Brookside Park 100th Anniversary celebration on Saturday, Sept. 13, at a special open house at Fire Station #2 planned for early October, and during the annual Fire Department Open House on Saturday, Oct. 11. Partnerships with the Ames Public Library and other community organizations will help raise awareness, while targeted meetings with neighborhood groups and service clubs will address specific interests and questions. We anticipate leveraging Iowa State University's outreach in our own communication efforts.

Engagement tools will include tours of the current Fire Station No. 2, visual storytelling through short videos and social media reels, and presentations at local venues such as the SixtyForward Center and Farmers Market. The campaign will be evaluated through tracking digital engagement, gathering feedback at events, and adjusting outreach efforts to ensure residents are informed and supportive of the relocation.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve a resolution to place a referendum on the November 2025 ballot, in the amount of \$10,500,000 for the construction of a Relocated Fire Station #2.

2. Approve a resolution to place a referendum on the November 2025 ballot, in an amount different than suggested by the architect's proposed project estimate.

This alternative will require City staff to identify further reductions in the square footage of the fire station or for the City Council to eliminate the Net Zero Ready features of the project.

3. After reviewing the information provided above, decline to place the referendum on the November 2025 ballot, and direct City staff instead to prepare for a November 2026 bond referendum.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Current Fire Station No. 2 faces operational challenges due to access difficulties for fire apparatus and outdated facilities that no longer meet modern fire service requirements, particularly the inability to provide drive-through access which forces apparatus to back into the station through heavy traffic.

City staff, alongside ISU leadership, has identified Iowa State University owned land on the west side of State Avenue, as appropriate site for a relocated station that would improve overall city response times, both now and into the future.

ISU Administration has expressed a willingness, pending the Board of Regents approval, to provide the site as part of a zero-cost lease agreement.

The existing site of Fire Station No. 2 on Welch Avenue could be sold after the new station opens with the proceeds, including ISU's portion, used to reduce the amount of property taxes needed to pay the principal and interest payments on the bonds issued to finance the project.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Ames Final Renderings with Logos-03.png](#)
[Ames Final Renderings with Logos-01.png](#)
[Ames Final Renderings with Logos-02.png](#)
[Ames Final Renderings with Logos-04.png](#)
[Ames Final Renderings with Logos-05.png](#)
[Ames Final Renderings with Logos-06.png](#)
[Ames Final Renderings with Logos-07.png](#)
[Station #2 Floor Plan.pdf](#)
[Resolution.pdf](#)