



1. Multifamily and Townhouse Standards

– 21.07.110. Residential Design Standards with 21.07.030 Private Open Space

ISSUE:

The draft AO 2015-59 proposes to postpone implementation of Section 21.07.110, residential design standards until 2017, delaying full implementation of the standards for three years after adoption of the new code. Additionally, it requires Assembly acceptance of an evaluation of the consistency of the residential design standards with the Comprehensive Plan.

No specific rationale is provided. Members of the development and design communities have raised concerns about parts of 21.07.110 that apply to multifamily projects. At the request of the Assembly Title 21 Committee, the Department held a series of meetings and worksessions with members of the development and design communities and the Assembly Title 21 Committee in 2014 and 2015. These resulted in the Department bringing forward a number of proposed changes to the residential design standards and related code sections. The department amendments result from months of development, testing, and review. They already address the major concerns and numerous specific issues raised about 21.07.110, and have been reviewed and “approved” by the Assembly Title 21 Committee.

RESPONSE:

- The proposed AO 2015-59 ignores the substantial process and resulting set of amendments to the residential private open space and residential design standards put forward by the Department in cooperation with Assembly Title 21 Committee.
- The proposed AO 2015-59 ignores adopted Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and strategies which call for residential design standards. The residential design standards are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. See (1) on page 4.
- The community has consistently called for design standards to improve the appearance and function of multifamily development.

REFERENCES:

Title 21 Section 21.07.030 / .110

Proposed AO 2015-059

Department's Proposed Title 21 Amendments, PZC Case 2015-049



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RESPONSE CONTINUED:

- The new Title 21 enables more multifamily apartment bulk and density for infill sites than did the old Title 21.
- Experience indicates that Anchorage’s strategy of growth through higher density infill and redevelopment projects is likelier to be successful if existing neighborhoods are protected by minimum ground rules for how well new development fits in the neighborhood.
- The development of the Title 21 multifamily provisions has sought to provide standards that are flexible and do not overly burden the development project.
- The proposed amendments in PZC Case 2015-049 address the major concerns and specific issues raised by developers / designers, recommending the following key changes:
 - ◇ Consolidates and simplifies the multifamily and townhouse sections, and clarifies individual menu choices and standards;
 - ◇ Converts townhouse requirements into menu choices;
 - ◇ Increases the number and flexibility of menu choices;
 - ◇ No longer requires building wall articulation;
 - ◇ Deletes or amends the storage area requirement;
 - ◇ Allows more exceptions and reductions by-right from the street-facing window area requirement;
 - ◇ Reduces planting requirements in some landscaping breaks between driveways;
 - ◇ No longer subjects smaller townhouse projects to a public hearings approval process or common open space requirement;
 - ◇ Raises the threshold for when a development with multiple residential structures on a lot must go through a public hearing approval process;
 - ◇ Reduces the required amount of residential open space; and
 - ◇ Allows front porches, smaller balconies, and parking lot snow storage to count as required open space; and

Example facades able to Comply:



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1. Multifamily and Townhouse Standards – (Continued — 3 of 4)

RESPONSE CONTINUED:

- Two comprehensive code tests of these amendments on an multifamily apartment and an entry level townhouse project indicate Section 21.07.110 and the open space section are not an impediment to the developments. **Attachments A and B.**
- 36 site tests in Attachment C indicate that the building articulation menu, as recommended to be amended by the Department, no longer requires wall modulation. Buildings that provide façade relief in other ways besides wall modulation are now able to comply:
 - ◊ Most building facades that provide at least some façade relief achieve the minimum number of menu choices.
 - ◊ The wall modulation choice is now flexible so that nearly all buildings that provide wall offsets receive credit for them.
 - ◊ The menu avoids favoring one architectural style over another. Both traditional and modern buildings comply.
 - ◊ The amended articulation menu includes lower cost choices, which enables the majority of facades on entry level and moderate income to comply. It does not appear to be a regulatory barrier to affordable housing.
 - ◊ The menu still achieves its objectives to discourage blank walls and a lack of façade relief, and would require some enhancement to certain developments.
- 14 site tests in Attachment E indicate that the street facing windows provision as amended provides by-right flexibility and exceptions based on project specific needs, while continuing to encourage buildings to interface with the street. This provision contributes to a stronger and safer neighborhood, and avoids multifamily buildings turning their backs to the neighborhood with large blank walls .

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Example Sites Tested





1. Multifamily and Townhouse Standards – (Continued — 4 of 4)

(1) **Anchorage 2020** policies related to “design standards” call for:

- ◇ New higher density residential development to be accompanied by building and site design standards;
- ◇ Establishing minimum standards for site plan layout and building design of new development for appearance, function and compatibility;
- ◇ Siting and designing residential development to enhance the residential streetscape and diminish the prominence of garages and paved parking areas;
- ◇ Designing attractive affordable housing that is suited to its environs;
- ◇ Incorporating crime prevention and other public safety needs into design of residential areas, such as through windows facing neighborhood streets and common areas; and
- ◇ Creating neighborhood environments that invite pedestrian use and emphasize pedestrian access.

Anchorage 2020 implementation strategy titled “Design Standards” calls for the creation of site and building design guidelines and standards, to address such things as building scale and massing, windows, entries, pedestrian access, building placement and orientation, natural light, wind, landscaping, public spaces, and outdoor furniture.

The **Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan** contains the following:

- ◇ Community Design Objective i: Support the development of design standards for multi-family dwellings that address safety and aesthetics.
- ◇ Community Design Policy/Strategy n: Implement regulations pertaining to the design of multi-family dwellings including, but not limited to, building appearance, emergency access, drainage, protection of natural resources, protection of surrounding neighborhoods, snow storage and handling, landscaping, signage, lighting, and open space.
- ◇ Housing and Residential Development Policy/Strategy i: Develop design standards that incorporate northern city design, and recognize both the urban and rural characteristics of Chugiak-Eagle River.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Move forward with the department’s recommended amendments, approved by the Title 21 Assembly Committee, to the Multifamily and Townhouse design standards and the residential private open space standards, as provided in the staff report to PZC Case 2015-0049.
2. Delete Sections 6 and 7 of AO 2015-59, and instead focus MOA resources on preparing a Users Guide and implementation.
3. Work with Traffic Engineer and development community to amend Section 6 of AO 2015-59 to provide clearer standards for eligibility to depart from

