



March 3, 2006

Planning Department
Municipality of Anchorage
PO Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519-6650

Subject: 2nd Public Review Draft of Title 21

To Whom It May Concern:

The Fairview Community Council at their February 2006 general membership meeting delegated responsibilities for commenting on this important land use document to the Neighborhood Plan Committee. The reason for this was the short public comment window established by the Planning Department.

The Committee has had an opportunity to examine the proposed changes and has met with representatives of the Historic 4 Councils to discuss common concerns. Our first impressions were of disappointment. We had requested in our past comments during public meetings and past Council resolutions that the Planning Department explicitly recognize the unique platted characteristics of land within the older part of the city. The second draft does not do this.

We again must request that staff make the appropriate changes to the draft land use code. These changes should address the fact that the Historic 4 neighborhoods are platted on a pedestrian scale, traditional town pattern. By this I mean a grid system with alleys where the lots are relatively small and the blocks are scaled to people. This is significantly different that most of the Anchorage area that is dominated by a more suburban land use pattern – discontinuous blocks, few to no alleys, cul-de-sacs with poor pedestrian connections and land use oriented to the automobile.

We are opposed to efforts by the Municipality to force the historic neighborhood of Fairview to transform itself into a suburban, auto-oriented design. The Public Draft does this by subjecting our small lots to the same off-street parking requirements as South or East Anchorage. The Public Draft does this by subjecting our small lots to the same requirements for snow storage, landscaping, private open space, etc as South or East Anchorage. The Public Draft does this at the same time as it increases densities.

The proposed land use requirements establish a significant barrier to revitalization of our traditional community. For example, an owner of a standard 7,000 sq. ft. lot cannot meet all

the land set-asides and still have enough space to develop a small business or quality residential complex. The code forces the consolidation of lots until the square footage reaches suburban size. If there is insufficient demand for these larger half-block to block size development then the lots lie underutilized. The result is that investment goes elsewhere in the community. This is against the best interests of the Fairview community and it is a violation of the policies established by the Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Development Plan.

One solution to this is for the Planning Department to establish an Anchorage Original Townsite Overlay District (AOTOD) in Chapter 4 Zoning Districts. This area would consist of those lots platted out on the traditional town survey model. Within the AOTOD, the site development and design standards would be modified to reflect more of a Central Business District pattern than a suburban one. The new overlay district could reduce the setbacks from street frontage, alter the landscaping requirements to accommodate a denser form (perimeter landscaping should be as required in the CBD), reduce the amount of off-street parking required and in general create a more pedestrian oriented land use code. Development and design standards within the AOTOD geared for the automobile are minimized.

We would also like to see language inserted that requires site and landscape plans to present a winter view in addition to the standard summer only designs. Since six months of the year are dominated by winter conditions, it seems reasonable for developers to explicitly think about how their site will function during this period of the year. Where there is evidence of extensive shadowing upon adjoining properties, then the applicant should be required to present a mitigation plan. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a significant public health issue in sub-arctic communities causing reductions in productivity and is a contributing factor to obesity. A winter view would provide an increased awareness of winter impacts.

In Section 21.07.050.e.3 Utility Distribution Facilities, we request that the target area be extended to the entire AOTOD.

In Section 21.07.060.E.4 Transportation and Connectivity and the section on maintenance, please insert the language "by the adjacent property owner for all properties within the AOTOD."

We support section 21.07.080.g.1 and appreciate the effort to enhance the wintertime environment.

We oppose the reduction in section 21.07.080.h.2 of the number of residential dwelling units to a tri-plex before trash is required to be stored inside the structure and taken out on garbage pickup. There is inadequate space on a typical traditional lot to screen a dumpster while accommodating other code requirements. A overflowing dumpster dramatically reduces curb appeal along a street and results in a significant reduction in property value all other properties. We strongly urge that the number of residential units be at least a four-plex.

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We oppose the increase in allowable fence height from 6 feet to 8 feet for side and back yards. This change will create an increasingly isolated series of spaces within a neighborhood and dramatically reduce the number of eyes on the street. It has been our experience that neighbors looking out for one another in dense blocks with a lot of transient rental housing, is critical to establishing a more secure neighborhood. This notion of defensible space is weakened by the creation of walled off castles.

It is important that the Municipal Planning Department support diversity of choice for city residents. The urban center, including the neighborhoods around the CBD, should be developed for those citizens who prefer a more urban lifestyle where they can live, work and recreate without a vehicle.

Sincerely,

Sent in via e-mail

Allen Kemplen, Chair
Neighborhood Plan Committee

Cc: Executive Board, Fairview Community Council