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# I. INTRODUCTION

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## A. OBJECTIVES FOR THE UPDATE OF THE GIRDWOOD LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Clarion Associates is working with the Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska, to review and rewrite Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal Code, which contains the city's zoning and land development regulations. As a key part of that effort, Clarion has been directed to rewrite the land development regulations that are specifically applicable to the Girdwood area of the municipality.

This diagnosis is intended to summarize the strengths and weakness of the current Title 21 regulations as they apply to Girdwood, as well as the draft Girdwood regulations prepared by the staff and city attorney. This diagnosis is the first step towards preparing a section of Title 21 that will contain regulations tailored for Girdwood. It is based on discussions with municipal staff and elected officials; interviews with developers, citizens, and other Title 21 users; and comments from a Girdwood citizen's advisory committee established by the municipality to act as a sounding board throughout the project. Based on those discussions and comments, and also upon the consulting team's national experience in reviewing and writing land development regulations, this diagnosis has been prepared for public discussion. This diagnosis is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all proposed revisions to the Title 21 relating to Girdwood; rather, it provides a general overview of both general and specific issues that must be addressed, and is intended to generate further discussion that will be used in the coming months to prepare draft regulations applicable specifically to Girdwood.

The preparation of this Girdwood code diagnosis has been guided by several key objectives for this assignment as related by elected and appointed officials, staff, citizens, and various interested parties. In particular, these groups all emphasized four principal goals.

- First, regulations and zone districts within Title 21 applicable to Girdwood must be brought into conformance with the Girdwood Area Plan and the Girdwood Commercial Areas and Transportation Master Plan. Importantly, this assignment is focused on implementing the Girdwood Area Plan, not on rewriting or revising it.
- Second, the current Title 21 approach to regulating development in Girdwood through a single R-11 district has serious shortcomings and does not provide adequate control over inappropriate land uses and developments. New zoning provisions need to be better tailored to protect existing community character while allowing design flexibility within acceptable limits.

***Key themes of the Girdwood Area Plan include:***

- Maintain small-town atmosphere and a sense of a village in a forest by preserving natural vegetation and controlling the bulk of buildings.
- Develop new quality resort and recreational facilities that respect the environment and existing community character.
- Preserve the valley's natural resources for their recreational, scenic, and wildlife values and create an integrated open space system.
- Support and improve existing commercial areas.

- Third, the revisions should build on and respect the past code drafting and review efforts that have been underway since 1997 by city staff and Girdwood citizens, particularly where the community has already reached consensus on key issues such as allowable uses and specific development standards (for example, commercial building design).
- Fourth, the Girdwood update should be carefully coordinated with the Title 21 update and should to the maximum extent possible seek to utilize procedures, standards, and definitions that will be applicable throughout the Municipality of Anchorage to avoid duplication or conflicting provisions.

Updating the Girdwood provisions of Title 21 will be a complex task. There are complicated political, social, and cultural dynamics regarding planning and zoning issues in Girdwood that must be addressed as well as a recent history of significant planning and code drafting efforts.

## **B. PROCESS FOR DRAFTING REVISIONS TO THE GIRDWOOD DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

The new Girdwood development regulations will be drafted through a four-step process. These steps include:

- |         |                                 |
|---------|---------------------------------|
| Task 1: | Project initiation (Completed)  |
| Task 2: | Diagnosis (this document)       |
| Task 3: | Draft Girdwood Title 21 Section |
| Task 4: | Final Girdwood regulations      |

As noted above, the first of these tasks was completed earlier this year. The consulting team:

- Reviewed current Girdwood development plans, policies, and regulations;
- Toured the community;
- Conducted a series of interviews with elected and appointed officials, staff, and code users, and
- Held a series of substantive review meetings with a broad-based citizens advisory committee.

This diagnosis will be discussed with city staff and presented to the citizens advisory committee at a meeting in Girdwood in July 2003. The next step will be to analyze comments from those meetings and discussions and begin drafting Girdwood-specific development regulations to replace the R-11 District regulations.

## **C. ORGANIZATION OF THE DIAGNOSIS**

This diagnosis is organized into three main sections. This Section I summarizes the project and the purpose of the diagnosis. Section II presents an overview of major themes for drafting Girdwood-tailored development standards. These are recurring issues that came up throughout our review of existing R-11 standards, draft code revisions, and Girdwood planning documents and during the initial interviews and discussions with local officials and citizens. Section III

presents a detailed chapter-by-chapter analysis of Title 21 as applied specifically to Girdwood, identifying numerous detailed changes and revisions that need to be made to achieve the project goals set forth above. Additionally, Section III provides an outline of the proposed Title 21, Chapter 9, Girdwood regulations.

## **II. MAJOR THEMES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

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Throughout the interviews, meetings with staff and the advisory committee, and our own independent document review, a number of important major themes for improving existing development regulations applicable to Girdwood emerged. This section provides an overview of these major themes with illustrative examples; it is not intended to be exhaustive. These major issues provided guidance for our more detailed chapter-by-chapter analysis, which is presented in the following section of this diagnosis.

### **A. REPLACE THE CURRENT R-11 ZONE DISTRICT REGULATIONS APPLICABLE TO GIRDWOOD**

Currently, the zoning regulations for Girdwood area are found in the R-11 district regulations of Title 21.<sup>1</sup> The regulations were created in 1983 as a tool to implement the 1979 Turnagain Arm Comprehensive Plan. At that time, there were no land use regulations in effect for the Girdwood area. The R-11 district, which sets forth allowable uses and some specific development and design standards, was designed to be a single zone district to cover all of Turnagain Arm and Girdwood.

Being a single district, the permitted uses were controlled by the Comprehensive Plan Map. Any use that was properly designated on the plan map was permitted if under a certain size or scale. Larger uses or uses not in keeping with the plan could be permitted through the conditional use process. There is widespread consensus that this broad-brush, loose approach no longer provides adequate control in preventing uses and activities not in keeping with the Girdwood Area Plan. The community strongly supports a finer grain of zone districts within Girdwood that recognizes the diversity of uses and character areas in the valley. These new use districts should be tailored to address residential, commercial, industrial, and resort uses as well as special properties or circumstances (such as the airport and planned golf course areas). In essence, Girdwood should have a full line-up of zone districts that is customized to fit existing circumstances and planned development in the area.

Also, in light of the level of resort, commercial, and residential growth and development anticipated over the coming decades, there is agreement that the new Girdwood zoning regulations will need to include design and development standards to ensure a degree of continuity and compatibility between existing and new uses. These new development standards should ensure that the small-town atmosphere and natural features of Girdwood are preserved. They should address aspects of development such as vegetation protection, lighting, signage, street standards, building materials, and similar site and building design considerations.

### **B. TAILOR NEW ZONING REGULATIONS TO GIRDWOOD CIRCUMSTANCES**

The current R-11 district regulations do not recognize the substantial environmental, geologic, and community character differences between Girdwood and the rest of Anchorage. Girdwood's topography, natural resources, and climate differ dramatically from most other areas within the municipality. Generally the area is more characteristic of the North Pacific rainforest

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<sup>1</sup> This description of the R-11 district is taken from the Girdwood Area Plan, p. 93 (1995).

ecosystem than Anchorage, which has a drier environment. Its economic base is much more tourism- and resort-oriented.

The differences extend to administration of development regulations as well. Importantly, there is no building permit program applicable to Girdwood. Moreover, while development in Girdwood does require a land use permit from the MOA, because of the distance from city offices, enforcement (or lack thereof) is a major issue and consideration.

Finally, there is a strong undercurrent that while Girdwood has some very unique natural resources and community character to protect, citizens feel that regulations should be kept clear and simple. They generally seem to favor fewer rather than more rules within the context of ensuring that community character is maintained and respected by new development. But most stressed a preference for standards that were clear and specific with less discretion left for interpretation.

### **C. IMPROVE DEVELOPMENT QUALITY/PRESERVE GIRWOOD'S DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER**

In a community survey undertaken as part of the Girdwood Area Plan, residents identified Girdwood's small-town character and natural environment as the two features they valued most. This sentiment was echoed in our meetings with citizens, who stressed the need for upgraded design and development standards to ensure new development would be compatible.

In specific discussions with staff and citizens, two areas of focus emerged. First, there is strong consensus that Girdwood needs stronger standards for issues such as signs, street standards, and vegetation protection than will probably be applicable in the rest of the city. In other areas such as lighting, snow management, and stream protection, it is anticipated that revamped Title 21 regulations could be generally applicable to Girdwood if they are tightened up as discussed in the Title 21 code diagnosis.

The second major area of focus was commercial and resort building design. With significant new commercial and resort development possible in Girdwood in the coming years, citizens expressed concern that the design of new buildings fit the small town character and mountain resort ambiance of the community. They voiced strong support for new building and site design standards tailored for Girdwood that likely would not be appropriate for other areas of the city. They identified five key features that new standards should address:

- Natural materials,
- Porches with shed roofs,
- Pitched roofs,
- Streets framed by vegetation, and
- Street standards that reflect Girdwood's rural and small town atmosphere.

### **D. FOCUS ATTENTION ON NEW MAJOR RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

In considering additional standards to ensure quality, compatible development, citizens gravitated towards focusing on new major residential subdivisions, multifamily structures, and commercial buildings rather than on existing single-family residential areas and expansion of

existing residences. They felt that these larger developments had by far the most potential to alter the small-town character of Girdwood. Thus, for example, proposed vegetation protection regulations should be applied primarily to larger developments involving a minimum number of houses/lots (4+) or commercial building sites, not existing single-family lots or homes.

**E. TAKE STEPS TO STIMULATE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN GIRDWOOD AND SUPPORT RESORT ACTIVITIES, BUT IN KEEPING WITH EXISTING COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

Concern about the lack of vitality and extreme seasonality of commercial enterprises in Girdwood was the impetus for the Commercial Areas Master Plan. That plan and subsequent meetings identified a variety of regulatory stumbling blocks that should be addressed in the development code rewrite. They include unattainable parking standards, lack of connections between commercial uses and nodes, and inappropriate street standards, among others. These problems suggest targeted revisions that need to be made to the Girdwood regulations. At the same time, however, the community was clear that new commercial development had to fit in with the character of Girdwood and its natural surroundings.

**F. INTEGRATE NEW GIRDWOOD REGULATIONS INTO TITLE 21—AVOID OVERLAP AND DUPLICATION**

As noted above, in parallel with the Girdwood regulations rewrite, the Municipality of Anchorage is undertaking a comprehensive revision of Title 21, the city's zoning and subdivision regulations. The question has arisen on how best to coordinate and integrate the Girdwood rewrite with the Title 21 update. Currently, the R-11 district is fully integrated into Title 21 although the approval process for development is unique. It involves issuance of a "land use permit" for most developments. Some larger developments are reviewed as conditional uses.

While there are some members of the Girdwood advisory committee who supported a stand-alone zoning title for Girdwood including separate procedures, districts, and standards, there appears to be general agreement that a preferable alternative is to integrate the Girdwood districts and special standards within Title 21 and to utilize generally applicable procedures and standards wherever possible. This will help avoid duplicative or contradictory administrative requirements that would be extremely burdensome for staff, applicants, and citizens alike. Importantly, however, the new Girdwood section of Title 21 will be much more tailored and detailed than the existing R-11 District in terms of use districts and selected development standards such as signs, vegetation protection, and commercial building design.

### III. CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER DISCUSSION OF KEY PROVISIONS

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This section of the diagnosis provides a chapter-by-chapter review of potential revisions and additions to the Girdwood zoning regulations keyed to the relevant sections of the proposed Title 21. The consulting team has proposed that the new Title 21 be divided into 12 major chapters (as opposed to the current 20) in an attempt to simplify and organize it more logically based on functions, roles, procedures, and substance. These sections include:

1. General Provisions
2. Boards, Commissions, and Municipal Administration
3. Review and Approval Procedures
4. Zoning Districts
5. Use Regulations
6. Dimensional Standards and Measurements
7. Development and Design Standards
8. Subdivision Standards
- 9. Girdwood Districts and Special Regulations**
10. Nonconformities
11. Enforcement
12. Definitions

The discussion that follows is keyed to each of these new chapters. Only provisions that will need amending or revising to tailor them to Girdwood are discussed. The majority of Girdwood-specific regulations will be set forth in Chapter 9.

#### A. CHAPTER 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

##### ***General Comments on Chapter***

This important chapter is currently buried in the middle of Title 21, yet its provisions apply uniformly to the entire document. We recommended in the Title 21 Diagnosis that both existing sections be comprehensively rewritten and relocated to more prominent locations in the new Title 21.

There are several additional general provisions that appear to be missing in the current Title 21, yet must be drafted for the new code. These include, at a minimum: Title, Statutory Authority, Applicability and Jurisdiction, Purpose, Relationship to Other Regulations, Conflicting Provisions, and Severability.

For the most part, the Title 21 General Provisions, sections dealing with purpose, applicability, and severability, will apply to Girdwood. There are several exceptions, however, as noted below:

##### ***Comments on Specific Sections***

- **Applicability**—There will be language added making clear that the Girdwood Chapter 9 is applicable only to Girdwood. NOTE: need to define boundaries of where Girdwood regulations apply.
- **Relationship to other regulations:** This section will make clear that the Girdwood specific regulations supersede any generally applicable regulations where there is any

conflict or overlap and supplement existing regulations where they are compatible but the Girdwood regulations add additional requirements (e.g., the recently adopted MOA land clearing regulations would apply in Girdwood, but would be supplemented by more specific vegetation protection regulations contained in Chapter 9).

- **Elements (21.05.030)** The list of comprehensive plan elements in this section that refers to the Turnagain Arm will need to be checked closely for accuracy and updated as necessary to incorporate recent Girdwood planning documents. to reference the Girdwood Area Plan and other relevant planning documents.
- **Land Use Classifications (21.05.050):** The list of land use classifications (e.g., residential, commercial, commercial recreation) will be reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect the land use classifications contained in the Girdwood Area Plan and proposed use districts.
- **Comprehensive plan (23.05.100):** The current reference in Chapter 21.05.100 to implementation of the Turnagain Arm Comprehensive Plan and conformity of proposed zoning map amendments, conditional uses, and subdivisions will be revised to reference the Girdwood Area Plan and other major policy plans.

## **B. CHAPTER 2: BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION**

### ***General Comments on Chapter***

Chapter 2 will set forth the various responsibilities of the review and decision-making bodies. All “powers and duties” discussions will be reviewed to ensure consistency with any changes made in review processes in other sections of Title 21. Also, the functions of the various bodies will be reviewed to ensure that the text reflects the actual duties and operation of the bodies. The powers and duties will be summarized in an easy-to-read table in the new code.

The intent is that the review and decision-making bodies referenced in Title 21 will have the same duties and powers with respect to development reviews in Girdwood. Direction is needed to determine if there should be a formal reference to the Girdwood Land Use Committee and its role as a community council. Under the proposed Title 21 revisions, community councils are given notice of major development proposals and are afforded the opportunity to comment as well as meet with developers in specified instances. We assume that the Girdwood Land Use Committee will play this role.

## **C. CHAPTER 3: REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCEDURES**

### ***General Comments on Chapter***

Chapter 3 will cover the procedures for obtaining development approval now found primarily in existing Chapters 21.15 and 21.20. They will be substantially rewritten and reorganized into a new Chapter 3 in the revised Title 21. We recommend that these procedures be generally applicable to Girdwood as well. The one major potential difference involves the master planning process being contemplated for major developments in Girdwood. The Girdwood master planning process might be included as a separate section of the new Chapter 3 or it might be included in the Girdwood Chapter 9 with the use district and development standards applicable only to Girdwood. A final option is to include it in the new Chapter 3, but have it applicable throughout the MOA.

## ***Comments on Specific Sections***

- **Notice of Public Hearings (21.15.005):**

While the public notice requirements will be generally applicable throughout the MOA, as noted above, we have recommended adding a provision here directing that certain notices automatically be sent to community councils and neighborhood organizations that have registered with the MOA. In Girdwood, the Girdwood Land Use Committee might be the designated community council/neighborhood organization for such purposes.

- **Land Use Permit**

This appears to be the only type of approval currently required in Girdwood and Eagle River. A purpose statement should be drafted, and submittal requirements removed.

- **Zoning Map Amendments (21.20).**

This chapter contains the procedure for rezonings. The procedure will be carried forward into the new procedures chapter, and will be applicable to Girdwood.

## **D. CHAPTER 4: ZONING DISTRICTS**

### ***General Comments on Chapter***

Chapter 4 will be the heart of Title 21, containing descriptions of the base zoning districts and the uses allowed within those districts. These provisions can currently be found in Chapter 21.40. Reference will be made here to the fact that the new Girdwood Chapter 9 will contain all of new zoning districts applicable to Girdwood. These will be based on the Girdwood Area Plan and the Casey draft code provisions, as amended by discussions with the Girdwood Advisory Committee.

### ***Comments on Specific Proposed Districts:***

The following discussion is based on the districts contained in the October 2001 Casey draft and comments on that draft from the Girdwood Advisory Committee during 2003. Unless otherwise noted, the only districts discussed below are those where there are significant changes anticipated from the Casey draft. All the new Girdwood districts will be included in Chapter 9 of the revised Title 21 with a cross-reference in Chapter 4.

#### Residential Use Districts (Casey draft p. 24)

- Recommend combining the gR-2 and gR-4 proposed districts. The uses allowed are basically identical. However, distinguish between lots with and without sewer.
- gR-5: In response to the issue of 3 lots in the district that were intended for single-family (gR-5 would now allow only multi-family), the consensus was to allow single-family/duplex uses in the district, but only on lots less than 20,000 square feet.
- Rollover accessory dwelling unit regulations from Wick November 1999 Draft (p. 88), but reconcile to maximum extent possible with proposed Title 21 accessory use regulations. Also, should be able to utilize new Title 21 bed and breakfast regulations rather than create new ones for Girdwood.
- Eliminate PN denomination in use table (which indicates Development Permit with Public Notice). The PN process will not be utilized. The majority of these PN uses will be treated as “permitted” subject to specific use standards designed to mitigate possible adverse impacts. May be a limited number that should be conditional uses where impacts are potentially significant (e.g., rooming houses or parks).

- Utilize the dimensional standards (setbacks, height limits, etc.) contained in the Casey draft as revised. However, the general Title 21 rules of measurement (for example, how to measure setbacks) will apply.

#### Commercial Districts (Casey draft p. 35)

- General agreement on proposed commercial districts in Casey draft.
- Eliminate PN (Development Permit with public notice) process. These uses will be permitted subject to mitigation standards. However, developments over 4,000 square feet will be treated as conditional uses.
- Rollover dimensional standards from Casey draft, but compare to and reconcile with recommendations in Commercial Areas and Transportation Master Plan (2001).
- Retain concept contained in recommended provision allowing “Variation for Site Constraints.” However, include these “variations” as one category of administrative modifications Chapter 3 of the proposed Title 21.

#### Industrial Districts (Casey draft p. 45)

- No significant changes from Casey draft.

#### Resort Districts (Casey draft p. 50)

- Applicability of design standards—the Alyeska Resort has an approved Master Plan (April 1987) in place that addresses a variety of land use and design issues. Design guidelines are included for the hotel (roof and building materials, etc.), but there is nothing in the Master Plan agreement or in the Final Conditional Use for Phase 1 of the project addressing the applicability of MOA design standards to other portions of Phase 1 (e.g., the village center) or later phases. Therefore, it appears that if it wishes, the MOA can apply the proposed commercial design standards to any future resort development.
- Definition of “alpine ski facility:” There was a consensus that the term “alpine ski facility” needs to be more broadly defined so as to give the resort flexibility to construct uses typically associated with a major ski resort. Such uses might include, for example, vehicle and equipment maintenance facilities. However, there was concern about the location of such facilities. The consensus was that location would be addressed through the master planning process.
- Current draft provisions prohibit any use in the resort district not specifically mentioned in the use tables. The resort desires more flexibility so that it can respond more quickly to market demands. Revisions will include a definition of facilities associated with a resort that will include activities normally associated with an alpine ski resort. The planning director will also be given authority to render interpretations of this phrase if the specific type of associated facility is not listed.
- Provisions will be added to deal with issue of master planning in areas with multiple owners. Options include offering incentives (such as density bonuses) to draw owners into the process, allowing an applicant with a majority of the property in an area to prepare the master plan in cooperation with the municipality, or permitting one owner to plan the other properties if they decline to participate in the process.

#### Other Districts (Casey draft p. 55)

- Girdwood Airport—The existing sled dog lot should be grandfathered. Permit public recreation as a permitted use as well as community water supply and snowmaking at the resort. Fueling facilities should be commercial only.

- Girdwood Open Space—Casey draft needs to be reconciled with Girdwood Area Plan. We propose this be accomplished as follows: The Girdwood Area Plan map open space designations should govern (See GAP Map #11.). Thus the area adjacent to Glacier, Virgin, and Crow Creeks in the lower valley would be designated for open space use, not GMP-1 as in the Casey draft. Commercial buildings and uses permitted in this open space area under the GMP-1 designation in the Casey draft would not be allowed. However, golf would be specifically allowed as a recreational use in GOS district as depicted in the Girdwood area plan map as part of an approved master plan. This would be consistent with the Girdwood Area Plan. (See the GAP at p. 56, for example.) No clubhouse or other golf-related structures would be allowed in the area designated as open space. Such facilities would be restricted to the adjacent GMP-1 commercial recreation district. Additionally, campgrounds and RV parks would be specifically prohibited in the open space. (Campgrounds and RV parking would be allowed in Crow Creek and dry RV parking allowed at the day lodge parking in the resort. Tent campgrounds would be allowed near the “squirrel cages” area in the GAP.)
- Girdwood Institutions and Parks—Make clear that schools are not allowed in the GIP-p designated areas. Community fairs and concession operations should be allowed in the GIP-p district, but not restaurants. Allow tent campgrounds in this district, but only in the California Creek area.
- GMP-1 (Golf Course/Nordic Ski Course Master Plan)—The GMP-1 area generally brackets the Girdwood Open Space area in the lower valley area of the Girdwood Area Plan. It is intended primarily to be developed through the master planning process for a golf course with clubhouse, driving, range, Nordic ski course and associated facilities and development. The term “associated” with the golf course needs to be defined carefully defined. It should include facilities typically found in a golf course development (e.g., a restaurant, retail golf shop, etc.). Secondary uses such as residential should be allowed, but the consensus is that no housing should be constructed until after the golf course is developed. Make clear that the 3 existing residential lots in the squirrel cage area can be developed with single family as a permitted use.
- GMP-2 (Glacier-Winner Creek Master Plan)—This largely undeveloped area encompasses the upper portion of the Girdwood Valley. The Casey draft is generally acceptable with the following amendments. Add trails as a conditional use; allow snow-cat skiing as a permitted use; eliminate lot coverage ratios; add list of allowable interim uses until master planned resort is proposed. Limit such interim uses so that they are compatible with the natural environment.
- GMP-3 (Crow Creek)—Casey draft provisions are generally acceptable. Key issue is to define what constitutes an expansion that will trigger submission of a master plan. Options include a specified increase in square footage of commercial buildings, a major change in use, or a significant expansion of the overall site coverage. Further discussion is needed here.
- GW (Girdwood Watershed)—Exclude uses such as reservoirs that are not appropriate in the Girdwood Valley. Check to make sure these watershed provisions are consistent with similar, generally applicable Title 21 provisions.

## **E. CHAPTER 5: USE REGULATIONS**

### ***General Comments on Chapter***

A variety of use-specific standards will be located in this chapter (e.g., churches, bed and breakfasts). We will carefully review these use regulations to make sure that they are

appropriate for Girdwood. Some tailoring may be needed in a few instances (such as bed and breakfasts) to meet special circumstances in Girdwood.

## **F. CHAPTER 6: DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS AND MEASUREMENTS**

### ***General Comments on Chapter***

This chapter of Title 21 will consolidate all zone district dimensional standards (e.g., setbacks, height, etc.) for Title 21 districts. For Girdwood districts, the dimensional standards will be included in Chapter 9, with a cross-reference here. Rules of measurement will also be set forth here and will apply to Girdwood.

## **G. CHAPTER 7: DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN STANDARDS**

### ***General Comments on Chapter***

This chapter will consolidate in one place all development and design standards that will be applied in the development review process. Topics to be covered will include landscaping, screening/buffering, lighting, signage, and similar issues. The proposed standards will be more detailed and specific than existing ones, and geared towards producing a higher quality of development in keeping with a major theme of the Anchorage 2020 plan. The consensus of the advisory group and staff is to the maximum extent possible apply these generally applicable standards to development throughout the MOA, including Girdwood.

However, several areas have been identified that warrant more detailed or different treatment in Girdwood to ensure development that is in keeping with the character of the valley. These included signage, retail design, streets and trails, and vegetation protection. Each of these topics is discussed in greater detail below. These special standards will be cross-referenced in Chapter 7 and set out in full in the Girdwood Chapter 9 of the proposed Title 21.

### ***Comments on Specific Sections***

- Signage—Controls should be stronger than the rest of the MOA. Draft Casey standards generally appear acceptable. Include a provision for consideration of unique icon signs such as the one at the entry to the Alyeska Resort that reflect Girdwood's special character. This would be done through the master planning process.
- Retail Design Standards—General consensus that tailored standards are needed for Girdwood that will exceed those generally applicable in the rest of the MOA. Key issues to be addressed include wood/natural exterior materials, porches with shed roofs, pitched roofs (or at least roofs that appear primarily to be pitched), no requirement for curb and gutter on most streets, streets framed by vegetation. The term "mountain style" should be used rather than "historic style" to establish a general framework for these retail design standards. Photos should be used to illustrate good and bad design and changes should be made to many of the Casey draft illustrations that are not appropriate for Girdwood in many instances. Finally, to provide flexibility, an "alternative compliance" process should be included that allows an applicant to demonstrate that an alternative design approach or solution will produce a result that is equal to or exceeds that resulting from the retail design standards. A public hearing would be required to approve such alternative compliance approach.

- Streets and Trails—There is general support for the standards contained in the Casey draft, but these standards differ significantly from existing MOA street and trail standards in certain respects and need to be reviewed by staff from relevant municipal departments in addition to planning. Snow storage and safety are two key issues in Girdwood. An issue was also raised about possible conflict with U.S. EPA wetland standards that needs to be explored further.
- Vegetation/Tree Protection and Replacement—The advisory committee agreed that, because of the importance of the forested canopy to Girdwood’s character, additional standards are needed for vegetation and tree protection. The primary concern is large developments and subdivisions, not individual existing single-family homes and lots. The new regulations should prohibit clear cutting and require well-distributed stands of trees within any new development/subdivision. The committee generally agreed that a 30% tree retention standard was reasonable. While the regulations would not be applied to existing homes and single-family lots, the group did feel that the Casey draft limits on impermeable surfaces on residential lots should be retained. Finally, wildfire protection is an important issue that should be addressed in a generally applicable section of Title 21.

**H. CHAPTER 8: SUBDIVISION STANDARDS: GENERAL PROVISIONS**

***General Comments on Chapter***

This chapter will contain general provisions that apply to all subdivisions, including those in Girdwood. They will be supplemented by Girdwood-specific design and development standards in Chapter 9.

**I. CHAPTER 9: GIRDWOOD-SPECIFIC DISTRICTS AND STANDARDS**

***General Comments on Chapter***

This chapter will set forth all of the tailored zone district and development/design standards applicable only in Girdwood as discussed above. Additionally, if the master plan process is not applicable elsewhere in the MOA, then those procedures will be set forth in detail here with a cross-reference in the general procedures chapter of Title 21. Chapter 9 will be organized as follows:

1. **Intent/Purpose**
2. **General Provisions**
3. **Special Procedures (e.g., master plan)**
4. **Zoning Districts and Use Regulations**
5. **Development and Design Standards**

**J. CHAPTER 10: NONCONFORMING USES**

***General Comments on Chapter***

Unlike many zoning ordinances, Title 21 already separates out regulations applying to nonconforming uses, lots, structures, and signs, and clearly sets forth regulations governing the expansion or change of nonconforming uses and structures. Thus, this chapter likely will

require little significant modification, though we will discuss this further with the Municipal Attorney. It will be generally applicable to Girdwood without modification.

## **K. CHAPTER 11: ENFORCEMENT; VIOLATIONS AND PENALTIES**

### ***General Comments on Chapter***

This chapter will cover the enforcement provisions of Title 21. As discussed in the “Major Themes for Improvement” section of the Title 21 Diagnosis and this Girdwood diagnosis, lack of enforcement is perhaps the greatest area of concern regarding land use issues in Anchorage, including Girdwood. There currently are just five enforcement officers for the entire Municipality. Yet, as discussed, there is only so much that can be done as part of this drafting project to improve code enforcement. The primary steps that can be taken include strengthening the enforcement provisions of this chapter to more specifically identify violations, a broad range of civil and criminal penalties as allowed by state law, and clear enforcement procedures for both public and private enforcement actions. To the extent possible, we recommend that flexibly be incorporated into the enforcement process, including providing sufficient incentives to encourage code compliance. The Title 21 enforcement provisions will be generally applicable in Girdwood.

## **L. CHAPTER 12: DEFINITIONS**

### ***General Comments on Chapter***

This chapter will consolidate all definitions of key terms. Specific attention will be paid to terms that may be applicable only in Girdwood (e.g., master plan, tree protection, etc.).