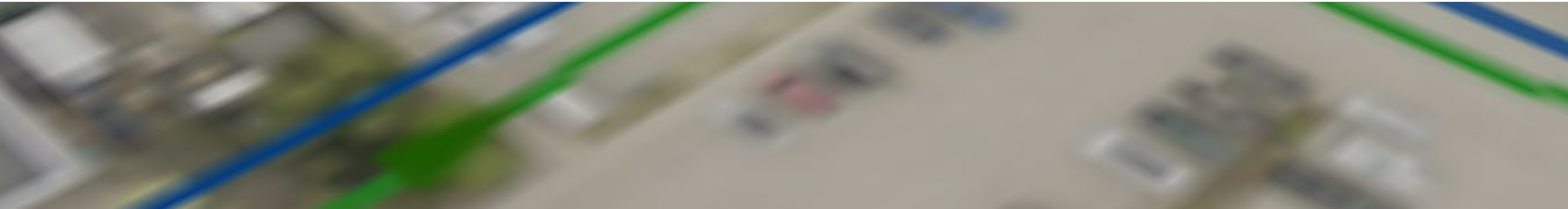




Work Session on AO 2025-128

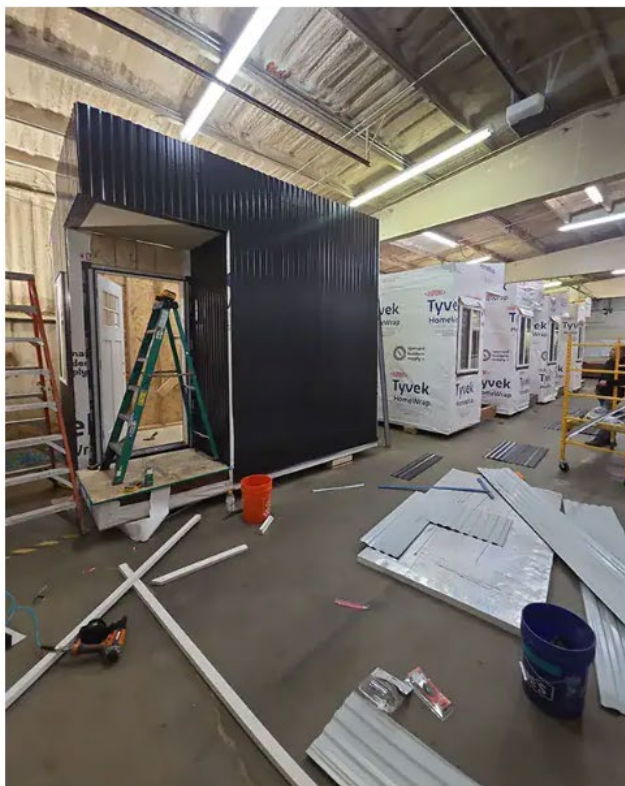
amending AMC Chapters 21.05 and 21.15 to make shelter units allowable structures for specific land uses with extended temporary use status



HOME | INDUSTRY | CONSTRUCTION | TINY HOMES FOR ANCHORAGE HOMELESS EXPECTED IN TIME FOR HOLIDAYS

Tiny Homes for Anchorage Homeless Expected in Time for Holidays

BY RACHAEL KVAPIL | OCT 7, 2025 | CONSTRUCTION, FEATURED, GOVERNMENT, NEWS, NONPROFITS, REAL ESTATE



Visser Construction is working to complete twenty-four small homes for homeless residents while they seek permanent housing. The company hopes the houses will be complete by Thanksgiving.

PHOTO CREDIT: VISSER CONSTRUCTION

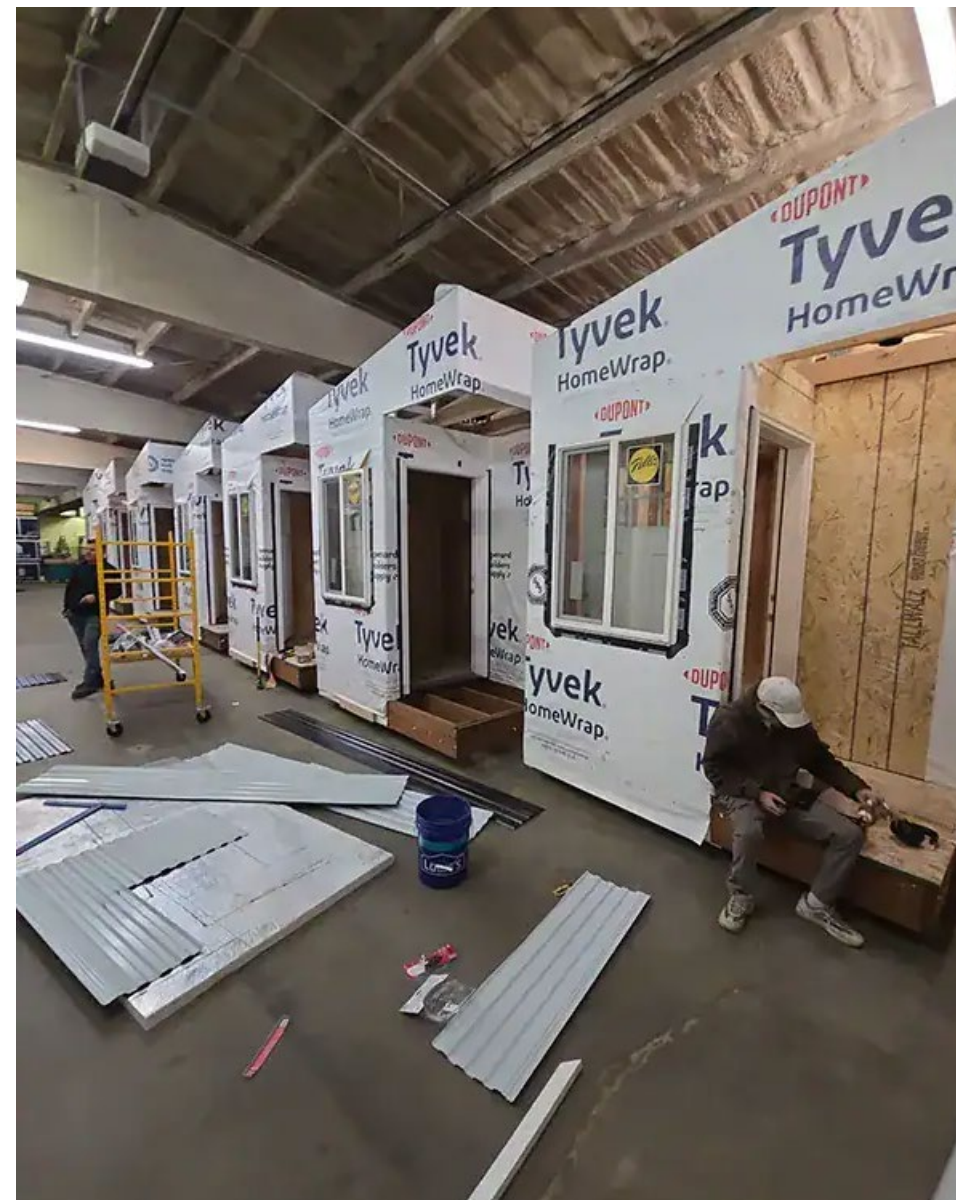
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Building Code vs Zoning Code

Building code (Title 23)	Regulates: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• materials and designs of how structures are built and spaced
Zoning code (Title 21)	Regulates: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• what uses are allowed in different parts of the city• Where uses are placed on a lot• What uses look like

What is a shelter unit?

AMC 23.10.104.16 Shelter units exempt from building permit.


Shelter unit means a rigid structure of small size designed by the manufacturer to be portable and relocatable, and intended for limited, short-term use by individuals without permanent housing. A shelter unit may be for sleeping overnight, or provided ancillary to sleeping shelter units for small gatherings of persons or for personal hygiene (restroom/washroom facilities).
Exclusions: Common fabric tents typically available at retailers rated by the manufacturer for four persons or less.



Building Code (Title 23)

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Development Services Department



Building Safety

Handout AG.31

Shelter Units Exempt from Building Permit Requirements of Title 23

Scope: This handout explains how shelter units may be exempted from building code review and inspection as defined in Title 23, provided they meet the requirements outlined below. All permitting for the buildings will be submitted under an Electrical Only Permit and will include the supporting documentation needed as described below.

Basis: This handout is based on AMC 23.10.104.16, added by Assembly Ordinance (AO) 2023-70(S-1) and further modified by AO 2024-53.

Exception: Facilities proposed outside of the Anchorage Building Safety Service Area ([see GIS map here](#)) are required to submit for a Land Use Only permit and are not required to submit items listed under AMC 23.10.104.16, except as follows:

1. Utilities in the Right-of-Way would still require permit (see below Title 23 – Building Code Requirements: item 9b – Additional Permitting: Units/utilities built in the Right-of-Way).
2. An approved Zoning Use is still required (see below Title 21 – Zoning Code Requirements).

Completion of the project will require three steps:

1. Issuance of permit (submitting permit and meeting Title 21 and Title 23 requirements).
2. Completion of Inspections (completing the scope of work and calling for all inspections).
3. Certificate of Completion (close out permit with the permitting office)

- Policy for exemptions from building code
- Addresses structural design criteria, size, fire resistance, spacing, other
- Requirements for toilet and bathing facilities and trash services
- Inspection requirements

Zoning Code (Title 21)

Chapter 21.05: Use Regulations
Sec. 21.05.080 Temporary Uses and Structures

21.05.080 TEMPORARY USES AND STRUCTURES

A. Purpose

This section allows for the establishment of certain temporary uses of limited duration, provided that such uses do not negatively affect adjacent properties or municipal facilities, and provided that such uses are discontinued upon the expiration of a set time period. The construction or alteration of any permanent building or structure is not considered a temporary use.

B. General Temporary Use Standards

1. Required Permits

All temporary uses shall obtain any permits required by other municipal departments, such as the clerk's office, the health department, the building safety department, or the police department.

2. Uses Allowed

Except as specified below, any use allowed in a district, pursuant to table 21.05-1, table 21.09.050-1, or table 21.10-4, is allowed on a temporary basis in that district. Such temporary uses shall comply with the requirements of subsection D. below. Any such temporary use that is established for more than the allowed time limit as determined in subsection 21.05.080D.3. shall be considered a permanent use and shall make all improvements required by this title.

3. Other Uses and Structures Allowed

The following temporary uses and structures shall be allowed in any zoning district or as specified below, in accordance with the standards of this section.

a. *Licensed Commercial Uses*

Temporary licensed commercial uses and associated temporary structures are allowed in any non-residential zoning district, for not more than 90 days total (consecutive or intermittent) within a 12 month period.

- Regulates where various uses may occur & how they're developed
- Regulates temporary uses and time limits
- Requires a plan for improvements if a temporary use is made permanent

Zoning Code (Title 21) Uses vs Use Types

- **Uses:** Residential
 - **Use types:** Habilitative Care, Transitional Living, etc.
 - ❖ **Structure type:** Shelter unit

Where will shelter units be permitted?

TABLE 21.05-1: TABLE OF ALLOWED USES - RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND OTHER DISTRICTS
P = Permitted Use S = Administrative Site Plan Review C = Conditional Use M = Major Site Plan Review
For uses allowed in the A, TA, and TR districts, see section 21.04.060.
All other uses not shown are prohibited.

		RESIDENTIAL																COMMERCIAL						INDUST.				OTHER						
Use Category	Use Type	R-1	R-1A	R-2A	R-2D	R-2M	R-3	R-3A	R-4	R-4A	R-5	R-6	R-7	R-8	R-9	R-10	B-1A	B-1B	B-3	RO	MC	I-1	I-2 ¹	MI	AF	DR	PR	PLI	W	Definitions and Use-Specific Standards				
RESIDENTIAL USES																																		
	Habilitative care facility, small (up to 8 residents)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					P	P	P									P		21.05.03 OB.3.			
	Habilitative care facility, medium (9-25 residents)	C	C	C	C	C	P	P	P	P	C	C	C					P	P	P									P		21.05.03 OB.3.			
	Habilitative care facility, large (26+ residents)						P	P	P	P								P	P	P									P		21.05.03 OB.3.			
	Rooming-house					C	P	P	P	P	C	C	C	C	C		P	P	P													21.05.03 OB.4.		
	Transitional living facility						P	P	P	P								P	P										P		21.05.03 OB.5.			
COMMUNITY USES																																		
	Homeless and transient shelter																		C										P		21.05.04 OC.5.			

This ordinance:

- Only allows shelter units to be constructed within **three specific land use types** (habilitative care, transitional living, homeless & transient shelters)
- Exempts shelter units from the use-specific standards for **habilitative care facilities**.
- Allows **transitional living facilities** to be developed from shelter units while retaining requirement to provide services.
- Permits **homeless and transient shelters** to be built with shelter units.
- Exempts shelter units from the time limits for **temporary uses** in 21.05.080.
- Instead, allows shelter units for up to one year, with subsequent year-long extensions with the Planning Director's approval.
- Allows shelter units in the **PLI district**.
- Defines shelter units in Title 21 by referencing the building code's definition.

Why this approach?



- Allow shelter units to be used for use types for which they make sense
- Avoiding a big change to the rules for all temporary uses
- Avoiding creating a new use type in the use table
- Efforts to harmonize Title 21 and Title 23

Questions?

Thank you



Planning Department
MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE