
Planning Department

Anchorage: Performance. Value. Results.

Mission Statement

The Planning Department's mission is to guide Anchorage land use development and community resources to meet the quality of life, economic, social, environmental, and physical needs of present and future residents.

Description

The Planning Department provides professional, technical, and analytical expertise to help the community identify and implement goals, policies, and objectives that shape growth and future development within the Municipality of Anchorage. Through this work, the Department plays a central role in creating a livable and resilient northern community. It ensures development complies with Anchorage's zoning and subdivision regulations and prepares comprehensive, long-range land use plans that reflect community aspirations, economic opportunities, and environmental characteristics.

Deemed an essential municipal service, the Department supports Anchorage's economic vitality and quality of life by facilitating residential and commercial development through timely land use entitlements and consistent interpretation and application of adopted plans and codes. These efforts promote responsible growth and maintain public confidence in the planning process.

Planning Department Divisions

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Department Services

- Produces area-wide, regional, and neighborhood plans that meet community expectations for a winter city, including Assembly-adopted comprehensive plans for the Anchorage Bowl, Chugiak-Eagle River, Girdwood, and Turnagain Arm, as well as sub-area plans within those regions.
- Provides planning for long-term, multi-modal transportation needs.
- Ensures new developments adhere to adopted plans, codes, and regulations.
- Offers a public process for property owners seeking exceptions (variances, grandfather rights, rezonings) or accommodations (conditional uses, plat notes) under Anchorage's zoning or platting regulations.
- Assists the public with residential, commercial, and industrial development projects.
- Provides staff support to the Municipality's Emergency Operations Center in Planning, Operations, and other areas as requested.

Divisions

- Director's Office & Administration
 - Provides leadership, management, and coordination for overall operations of the department; and
 - Provides full array of administrative and financial management services to include but not limited to budget, accounting, grant administration, purchasing, IT coordination, asset management, human resources coordination, and payroll.
- Current Planning
 - Processes zoning, platting, and other development applications requiring land use actions;
 - Provides staff support to four adjudicatory/regulatory boards: Planning & Zoning Commission, Platting Board, Urban Design Commission, and Zoning Board of Examiners and Appeals; and
 - Develops ordinances in coordination with Long Range Planning to amend codes and regulations as needed to respond to market needs and public safety.
- Zoning and Land Use Review:
 - Reviewing all residential and commercial building and land use permits for compliance with Title 21 Land Use Regulations;
 - Code interpretations,
 - Use determinations;
 - Nonconforming ("grandfather") rights determinations;
 - Zoning verification letters;
 - Required setback determinations;
 - Agreements for access and common developments;

- Landscaping warranties; and
- Review and approval of various administrative permits such as bed and breakfast and cellular antenna permits.
- Long Range Planning
 - Creates, updates, coordinates, and implements the Anchorage Comprehensive Plan (Anchorage Bowl, Chugiak/Eagle River/Eklutna, and Girdwood/Turnagain Arm);
 - Prepares and implements district and neighborhood plans, and conducts planning studies as necessary;
 - Develops ordinances to amend code and regulations as needed to implement policy or adapt to changing conditions.
 - Manages the zoning code for consistency and transparency.
 - Prepares and updates the Future Land Use Map (Land Use Plan Map);
 - Assists the public in the development and construction of residential, commercial and industrial projects consistent with the Municipality's adopted policy guidance and best practices;
 - Tracks development data, trends, and other information of import to policy makers and the public and publishes this information for general access.
 - Historic Preservation Officer: Administers and maintains National Park Service Certified Local Government Status, which enables the Municipality to qualify for grant funding;
 - Provides staff support and expertise to the Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission, and towards historic preservation planning efforts;
 - Provides staff support to the Geotechnical Advisory Commission and the Watershed and Natural Resource Advisory Commission; and
 - Applies for and manages grants to further the vision and goals of the Municipality's land use and functional plans.
 - Serves as a convener for different divisions or departments for solving problems and meeting the needs of the Municipality.
- Transportation Planning (AMATS)
 - Supervises and coordinates the AMATS (Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions) Program through a cooperative, coordinated, and comprehensive planning process;
 - Develops and implements a multi-modal transportation system for the AMATS Area;
 - Maintains eligibility for Federal Assistance for road, transit, non-motorized, port, freight, and air quality improvements;
 - Develops and manages the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP); and
 - Updates the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
 - Monitors, amends, and updates the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP); Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, AMATS Safety Plan, Congestion Management Process, and
 - Prepares and reviews design and land use plans.

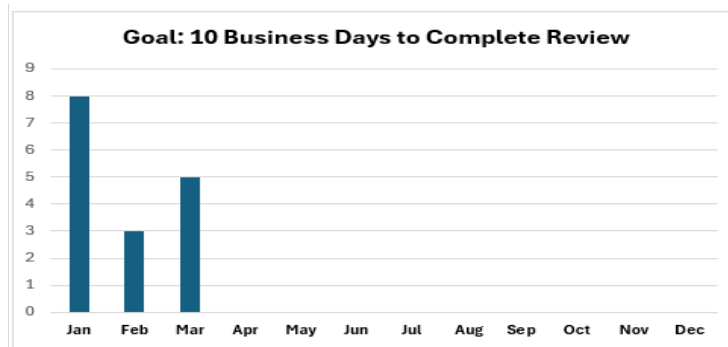
Performance Measures

Progress in achieving goals shall be measured by:

Measure #1: Average number of business days to complete initial reviews of land use determinations. Goal: 10 business days (Land Use Review)

2026	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average # of Days to Complete	8	3	5									
Total # Completed	2	4	6									
# of Staff	1	1.82	1.83									

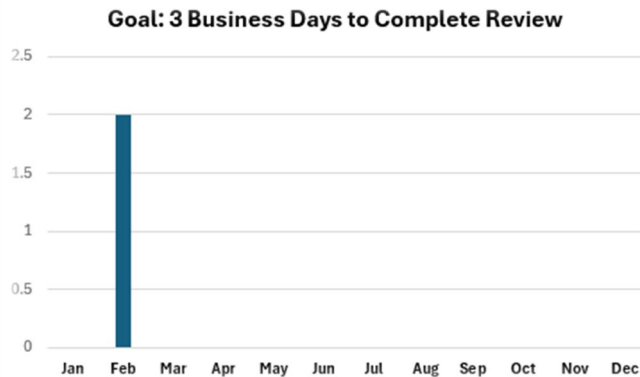
NOTE:



Measure #2: Average number of days to complete initial reviews of administrative land use permits. Goal: 3 business days (Land Use Review)

2026	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average # of Days	0	2	0									
Total # Completed	1	6	0									
# of Staff	.1	.1	.1									

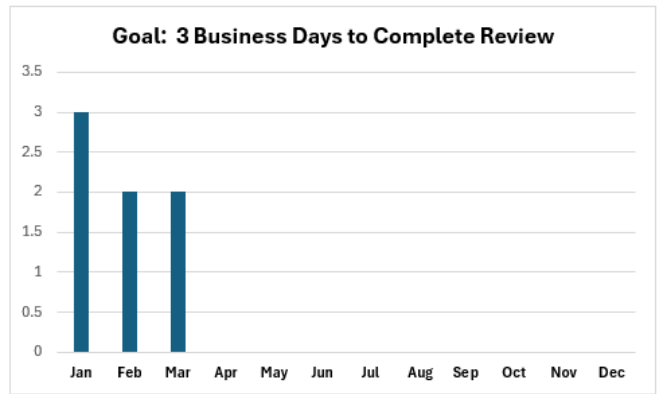
NOTE:



Measure #3: Average number of business days to complete initial reviews of Residential Permits. Goal: 3 business days (Zoning Plan Review)

2026	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average # of Days to Complete	3	2	2									
Total # Completed	18	25	40									
# of Staff	1.87	1.80	1.90									

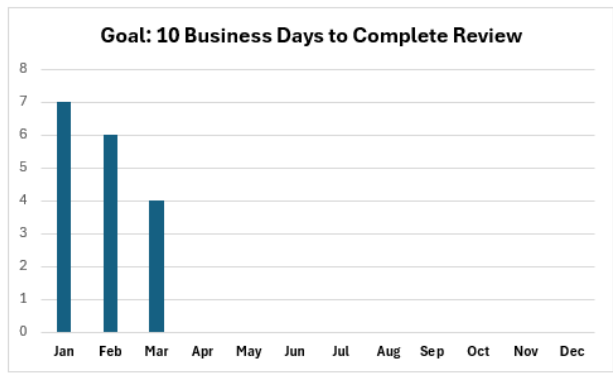
NOTE:
Holidays during the work week are calculated as workdays in the average # of days to complete a review.



Measure #4: Average number of days to complete initial reviews of Commercial Permits. Goal: 10 business days (Zoning Plan Review)

2026	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average # of Days	7	6	4									
Total # Completed	17	38	31									
# of Staff	1.87	1.80	1.90									

NOTE:
Holidays during the work week are calculated as workdays in the average # of days to complete a review.



Measure WC: Managing Workers' Compensation Claims

Reducing job-related injuries is a priority for the Administration by ensuring safe work conditions and safe practices. By instilling safe work practices, we ensure not only the safety of our employees but reduce the potential for injuries and property damage to the public. The Municipality is self-insured and every injury poses a financial burden on the public and the injured worker's family. It just makes good sense to WORK SAFE.

Results are tracked by monitoring monthly reports issued by the Risk Management Division.

