



OUR DOWNTOWN

The Heart of Anchorage

A Project to Implement the Downtown Comprehensive Plan

Municipality of Anchorage
Planning Department



OUR DOWNTOWN

Step 1: Downtown Zoning Districts Code Reformat

PZC Case No. 2020-0002

Guide to Significant Development & Design Standard Exemptions and Adjustments

Appendix A-3

Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan
Implementation Action 3-2

Revised 11-13-19 (See inside cover.)



11/13/19 Revision -- Corrections made on pages below:

Page 4: Code section added to *Current Title 21 Reference* column for “Site Enhancement Landscaping”

Page 7: Corrected *References to Amended Text* column for “Measurement of Building Height” and “Height Exceptions”

Appendix A-3

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Introduction

Step 1 of *Our Downtown* focuses on merging the existing Downtown Anchorage zoning districts (B-2A, B-2B, and B-2C) from old Title 21 into current Title 21. The old Title 21 downtown district-specific standards from sections 21.40.150 (B-2A), 21.40.160 (B-2B), and 21.40.160 (B-2C) are being reformatted into current code language and organization, but their requirements remain the same.

However, the move places these Downtown standards into a new context. Current Title 21 contains provisions that differ from the requirements of old Title 21, especially in Chapter 21.07: *Development and Design Standards*. Many of these current Title 21 provisions are generally applicable and would apply to Downtown. Because of this, the Step 1 amendment proposes several exemptions and adjustments to current Title 21 for Downtown.

These changes ensure that Downtown zoning districts are not subject to current Title 21 provisions that would prematurely change the character of downtown development or introduce new requirements that would inhibit Downtown developments. An exception is wherever current Title 21 contains general provisions that advance public health and safety, are appropriate for Downtown, and reduce neighbor-to-neighbor impacts/conflicts. Those provisions will remain applicable to the Downtown zoning districts whether or not similar provisions were included in old Title 21.

This Appendix A-3 provides an overview of the most significant development- and design-related provisions in current Title 21 that differ from old Title 21. The table in this Appendix shows how the Step 1 amendment addresses these differences, including exemptions and adjustments from current Title 21. For more detail on any specific change outlined in the table below, please refer to the relevant section in *Exhibit B: Annotated Zoning Code Amendments* that each row points to. Where no action is proposed, please refer to the relevant section of current Title 21 provided in the second column.

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Subject	Current Title 21 Reference(s)	Description of Action	Reference(s) to Amended Text in Exhibit B
Approval Processes and Administrative Relief			
Common Approval Procedures	21.03.020	Current Title 21 ground rules for common procedures apply to approval processes that involve public review and hearings. These include common procedural requirements for pre-application conferences, community meetings, and minimum public notice requirements and time periods. Current Title 21 also provides for “concurrent processing,” to allow simultaneous processing of applications for different permits and approvals that may be required for the same development project. Since these common procedures increase certainty, transparency, consistent processing, and flexibility for applicants and the general public, they will apply to Downtown.	No changes proposed.
Alternative Equivalent Compliance	21.07.010D.	“Alternative Equivalent Compliance” (AEC) is a process that allows developments to propose alternative designs that are equal to or better than equivalent Title 21 design standards. This process only applies to specific sections of Chapter 21.07: Development and Design Standards. Downtown zoning districts will now be eligible for the same AEC process as all other zoning districts and will also be able to use the AEC process for urban design amenities that are used for bonus height and floor area.	21.07.010D.2. (pg. 12) 21.07.060F.2. (pg. 15)
Minor Modifications	21.03.120	The minor modification process allows for administrative approval for up to a 5% deviation from a range of applicable dimensional, development, and design standards. This amendment enables the relevant downtown standards to use the minor modification as well, which was not available in old Title 21.	21.03.120B.1.c.
Environmental Protections & Utility Provision			
Natural Resource Protection	21.07.020	The Downtown zoning districts will not be exempt from any provisions in this section, which includes stream setbacks, steep slope development standards, and floodplain regulations. Many of these provisions do affect Downtown or were revised in current Title 21 for public health and safety purposes and to achieve modern environmental protection standards.	No changes proposed.
Drainage, Storm Water Treatment, Erosion Control, and Prohibited Discharges	21.07.040	The Downtown zoning districts will not be exempt from any provisions in this section. Many similar provisions existed in old Title 21 and were revised in current Title 21 for public health and safety purposes and to achieve modern environmental protection standards. Provisions for snow storage and disposal in 21.07.040F. have been found to promote good site planning for winter snow management and head-off neighbor-to-neighbor snow melt runoff conflicts across property lines or onto downtown sidewalks, and unlikely to increase development area requirements in Downtown.	No changes proposed.

Subject	Current Title 21 Reference(s)	Description of Action	Reference(s) to Amended Text in Exhibit B
Utility Distribution Facilities	21.07.050	The Downtown zoning districts will not be exempt from any provisions in this section to ensure essential utility infrastructure requirements are uniform throughout Anchorage. The provisions of this section are like those that existed in old title 21.	No changes proposed.
Landscaping and Open Space			
Private Open Space	21.07.030	Downtown is entirely exempt from this section. Instead, the “usable yard area” requirement from old Title 21 has been reformatted and will continue to apply to the Downtown zoning districts.	21.07.030B (pg. 13) 21.11.070E (pg. 63)
Parking Lot Perimeter Landscaping	21.07.080E.2.b.	Parking lot perimeter landscaping requirements are more stringent in current Title 21 (e.g., they apply to smaller parking lots), so instead of applying those current requirements to Downtown the old Title 21 parking lot perimeter landscaping requirements will be carried forward. The exception is that the more flexible bed width and planting material requirements of current versus old Title 21 “visual enhancement landscaping” will apply.	21.07.080E.2.b.iii. (pg. 16) 21.11.070D.1. (pg. 62)
Parking Lot Interior Landscaping	21.07.080E.2.c.	Parking lot interior landscaping requirements kick in for smaller parking lots and have minimum widths in current Title 21, so the standards in old Title 21 will continue to apply instead. The exception is that the landscape bed and planting material requirements of current “parking lot interior landscaping” will apply instead of the old Title 21 “visual enhancement landscaping” planting bed requirements as those were designed to create linear perimeter buffers.	21.07.080E.2.c. (pg. 16) 21.11.070D.1. (pg. 62)
Site Enhancement Landscaping	21.07.080E.3.	Current Title 21 replaced the old Title 21 requirement for “visual enhancement landscaping” in areas of the site not paved or occupied by structures with a “site enhancement landscaping” requirement. The new requirement is clearer and more flexible than the old Title 21 requirement.	No changes proposed.
Trees for Residential Development	21.07.080E.4.	This provision was established in current Title 21 and requires a minimum number of trees in new residential developments. Since this provision was written for lower-density, residential neighborhood contexts and its 20-trees-per-acre requirement may not fit well in the compact, urban setting of a central business district, the Downtown zoning districts are exempted in this amendment.	21.07.080E.4.b. (pg. 17)

Subject	Current Title 21 Reference(s)	Description of Action	Reference(s) to Amended Text in Exhibit B
General Landscaping Requirements	21.07.080F.	This section of current Title 21 establishes, revises, and/or clarifies minimum requirements for planting material, planting bed protection, and installation and maintenance of landscaping. It increases minimum tree caliper standards and minimum conifer tree heights but removes some other standards like minimum deciduous tree heights that were counterproductive. It clarifies that existing trees and tree masses may count toward landscaping requirements. It establishes a requirement to protect required landscaping beds from adjoining parking facilities. It also requires a warranty guarantee of landscape survival for two years and a landscape plan signed by a licensed landscape architect. These general standards will apply in Downtown.	No changes proposed.
Screening for Service and Off-street Loading Areas	21.07.080G.3.	Requirements for the screening of service and off-street loading areas is more flexible in old Title 21, so the Downtown zoning districts will continue to be subject to those requirements as carried forward in new chapter 21.11.	21.11.070D.2. (pg. 62)
Structured Parking Landscaping	21.07.090M.6.	Current Title 21 requires approximately the same level of landscaping around parking structures as was required in old Title 21. Therefore, this provision is amended to apply to the Downtown zoning districts.	21.07.090M.6. (pg. 19)
Off-street Parking and Loading			
Parking Reductions and Alternatives	21.07.090F.	Developments in the Downtown zoning districts are not required to provide any off-street parking in old Title 21. This will continue to be the case, as the amendment to this section guarantees.	21.07.090F.4. (pg. 18)
Off-street Parking Requirements (minimum of three spaces)	21.07.090E.2.	Downtown will be exempted from the minimum of three parking off-street parking spaces that this provision requires, since no off-street parking is required.	21.07.090E.2. (pg. 18)
Dimensions of Parking Spaces and Aisles	21.07.090H.9.	Although off-street parking is not required in the Downtown zoning districts, any off-street parking that is provided must comply with generally applicable standards such as minimum dimensions. Old Title 21 provided options for compact parking in specific situations, which will also be available in current Title 21 as part of this amendment. The current Title 21 standards will apply by default, however.	21.11.090F.3. (pgs. 64-65)
Transportation and Connectivity			
Vehicular Access to Public Streets	21.07.060D.3.d.	Current Title 21 requires a development with more than 100 residential units to provide vehicular access to at least four public streets. Due to the compact, walkable nature of Downtown Anchorage and the undesirability of frequent curb cuts for vehicular access, the Downtown zoning districts are exempted from this provision.	21.07.060D.3.d. (pg. 14)

Subject	Current Title 21 Reference(s)	Description of Action	Reference(s) to Amended Text in Exhibit B
Neighborhood Protection from Cut-through Traffic	21.07.060D.3.f. 21.08.030F.4.	Where a development provides and/or connects to streets, several provisions of current Title 21 encourage those streets to be configured in a way that discourages cut-through vehicle traffic. Such a consideration is incompatible with the Downtown zoning districts, given the compact grid pattern that encourages secondary and redundant routes. The Downtown zoning districts will therefore be exempt from such provisions.	21.07.060D.3.f. (pg. 14) 21.08.030F.4.a. (pg. 24)
Standards for Pedestrian Facilities—Sidewalks	21.07.060E.2.f.i.	New developments on existing streets in Class A zoning districts are required in current Title 21 to install sidewalks in accordance with Municipal specifications when that development occurs in the following zoning districts: R-4, R-4A, and all commercial districts. Sidewalks are required in Downtown under old Title 21, so the Downtown zoning districts are added to the list of zoning districts that are subject to this subsection.	21.07.060E.2.f.i. (pg. 14)
Standards for Pedestrian Facilities—On-site Walkways	21.07.060E.4.	Current Title 21 requires developments to provide walkway access to the primary building entrance(s). Walkways are required to be at least five feet wide and delineated/protected from vehicle parking areas. This standard also helps met ADA accessibility requirements. Old Title 21 did not require on-site walkways; however, the current standard is consistent with Downtown development patterns and practices where building entrances front right on the sidewalk and provide ADA access. Therefore, the current code walkway requirement will apply in Downtown.	No changes proposed.
Residential/Commercial Design Standards & Planned Unit Developments			
Standards for Multifamily Townhouse Residential	21.07.110C.	Design standards for multifamily residential developments do not exist in old Title 21, and the current Title 21 residential design standards were not written for the Downtown central business district context. Therefore, this section will not be applicable to the Downtown zoning districts.	21.07.110C.2. (pg. 20)
Standards for Some Single-family and Two-family Residential Structures	21.07.110D.	Design standards for residential developments do not exist in old Title 21, and the current Title 21 residential design standards were not written for the Downtown central business district context. Therefore, this section will not be applicable to the Downtown zoning districts.	21.07.110D.1. (pg. 20)
Large Establishments	21.07.120A.	Large commercial establishments falling within the applicability provisions in current Title 21 are required to meet specific design standards. Similar provisions existed in old Title 21 and were applicable to the Downtown zoning districts, so eligible Downtown developments will be subject to the current Title 21 standards.	No changes proposed.

Subject	Current Title 21 Reference(s)	Description of Action	Reference(s) to Amended Text in Exhibit B
Planned Unit Development	21.07.110H. 21.07.115A.	Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) were permitted through a conditional use in Old Title 21, similar to how PUDs are handled in current Title 21. The Downtown zoning districts were subject to specific PUD requirements, however, which have been carried forward as their own section through this amendment.	21.07.115B. (pgs. 21-22)
Site Design (in Residential Design Standards)	21.07.110F.	Current Title 21 contains generally applicable provisions for multiple residential buildings on one lot, alley access for parking, and driveway width limits. Downtown is not proposed to be exempted from these provisions.	No changes proposed.
Tall Buildings	21.07.120C.	Current Title 21 requires a wind analysis to be conducted for building developments over 90 feet in height. This requirement is intended to ensure that new high-rise buildings include design features that protect pedestrians from unsafe and uncomfortable high wind speeds at sidewalk level. Given the likelihood of tall buildings in Downtown Anchorage and this provision's focus on pedestrian safety, applicable developments in the Downtown zoning districts will be subject to this section.	No changes proposed.
Dimensional Standards			
Measurement of Building Height	21.06.030D.4.	Current Title 21 adds a new optional method for determining the grade plane elevation from which to measure building height on steep slopes. This method is based on the average grade elevation around the building perimeter, rather than the lowest point ("Point B") on very steep slopes. It also enables terraced building heights that step up with the slope. This can provide flexibility in bluff areas of Downtown.	No changes proposed.
Height Exceptions	21.06.030D.6.	Current Title 21 clarifies and expands the list of appurtenant rooftop structures that may exceed height limits, for example, expressly including rooftop PV solar installations and greenhouses. It introduces limits on the extent to which appurtenances such as elevator enclosures may exceed the height limits, but these limits are scaled to accommodate high-rise buildings.	No changes proposed except for greenhouses in 21.06.030D.6.d. (pg. 11).
Definitions			
Definitions	21.14.040	Current Title 21 provides many more terms with definitions than were in old Title 21. These clarify the meaning of provisions throughout the code in order to improve certainty, consistency, and efficiency in development reviews and approvals. Therefore, these terms and definitions will apply in Downtown like in all other districts. There are several definitions being added to current Title 21 to clarify terms specific to Downtown that have been brought over from old Title 21.	21.15.040. (pg. 83)



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www.muni.org/Planning/2040Actions.aspx