OUR DOWNTOWN

Step 1: Downtown Zoning Districts Code Reformat

PZC Case No. 2020-0002

Exhibit A: Staff Memo

Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan
Implementation Action 3-2
OUR DOWNTOWN Project - Step 1:

This project implements the Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan, Action 3-2 by formatting the Downtown Zoning Districts (B-2A, B-2B, and B-2C) into the current Anchorage Municipal Code Title 21 code format. This project is the first of a three-step and multi-year planning effort to update the Downtown Title 21 Zoning Districts Code and Downtown Comprehensive Plan. For more information on this multi-year project: http://www.muni.org/Planning/2040actions.aspx

List of Draft Documents for this Project: (under separate covers)

- Adopting Ordinance
- Exhibit A: Staff Memo (and Appendices)
- Exhibit B: Annotated Zoning Code Amendments
- Exhibit C: PZC Resolution (forthcoming upon request by PZC Chair)
- Exhibit D: Policy Guidance from the Comprehensive Plan
- Exhibit E: Public Comments Received (forthcoming in late January)
- Exhibit F: Comment Issue-Response (forthcoming after public hearing)

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING:

The Downtown Zoning Districts Code Reformat - Public Hearing Draft will be considered by the Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) for recommendation of approval on February 3, 2020.

The PZC public hearing is scheduled for Monday, February 3, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. Assembly Chambers, Z.J. Loussac Library, 3600 Denali Street, Anchorage.

The public is invited to submit formal comments and testimony to the PZC in writing and/or in person at the public hearing. Written comments intended for the PZC case packet are due January 17, 2020. Comments received after January 17, 2020, will be distributed to the PZC the day of the PZC Public Hearing on February 3, 2020.

Assembly Adoption: PZC recommendations will be forwarded to the Anchorage Assembly for final action. The public will have an additional opportunity to comment during the Assembly Public Hearing.

Written comments to the PZC may be submitted in the following ways:

- CITYVIEW: http://munimaps.muni.org/planning/allcomments.cfm
  Case No. 2020-0002
- EMAIL: Anchorage2040@muni.org
- FAX: (907) 343-7927
- MAIL: Long-Range Planning Division
  MOA Planning Department
  P.O. Box 196650
  Anchorage, AK 99519-6650

MORE INFORMATION:

Kristine Bunnell - Public Outreach and Information: kristine.bunnell@anchorageak.gov
Tom Davis - Project Manager: tom.davis@anchorageak.gov
REQUEST FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT

The Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) is being asked to make its recommendations to the Anchorage Assembly regarding the Our Downtown, Step 1 project, a reformat into current Title 21 of the Downtown B-2A, B-2B, and B-2C zoning districts of the old Title 21 zoning ordinance. Your review and comment on the reformat of the Downtown zoning districts is requested for a PZC public hearing scheduled for February 3, 2020. This reformat is a text amendment to Anchorage Municipal Code Title 21 (Title 21).

For your written comments to be included in the case packet that will go to the PZC prior to the public hearing, please provide comments to the Planning Department by January 17, 2020. Any comments received after January 17 will go to the Commission by February 3 as a supplementary packet. Details on ways to submit your comments are included on the inside cover of this staff memo exhibit.

PURPOSE

Anchorage’s Downtown (central business district) land use regulations are still in an old version of the Title 21 zoning ordinance. These old regulations were written in the 1980s and are becoming difficult to use in today’s context. The Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan, adopted in 2017, calls for reformatting these Downtown zoning districts into the current Title 21 zoning ordinance as a first step toward modernizing Downtown’s development regulations and implementing the Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan.

This project is Step 1 of the Our Downtown project to update the Downtown land use regulations. The objective of Step 1 is to move the existing B-2A, B-2B, and B-2C districts and their district-specific standards out of old Title 21 Sections 21.40.150, 21.40.160, and 21.40.170, and reformat them into the language, format, and organization of current Title 21 as Chapter 21.11: Downtown. Step 1 retains the existing requirements in the B-2A, B-2B, and B-2C districts, including the same allowed uses and district-specific development standards, but restates them in current Title 21 language. The new chapter 21.11 will contain the Downtown-specific land use development requirements in one location, which is like the Girdwood (21.09) and Chugiak-Eagle River (21.10) zoning code chapters.

In addition, several sections of the old Title 21 downtown regulations refer to parts of the Anchorage CBD Comprehensive Development Plan, adopted in 1983. Additionally, the approval standards for the urban design amenities that earn bonus building height in the old Title 21 B-2 districts are currently located in another policy document, Anchorage Central Business District Urban Design Amenities, which the PZC approved in 1990. The reformatted Downtown zoning districts carry these referenced policies forward in Chapter 21.11: Downtown to ensure continuity, reduce cross-reference errors, and help streamline development review.
PROJECT NEED
Downtown Anchorage is the heart of the city—a major center for employment, civic institutions, visitors, entertainment, and culture. Downtown has unique development challenges and characteristics. However, its land use regulations are out-of-date and becoming more difficult to use as compared to the rest of the land use code. Downtown property owners should have access to the advantages of the modern Title 21 format. This reformat is a necessary first step toward updating the Downtown land use regulations to meet contemporary needs for growth in housing, mixed-use, commercial, and cultural and tourism opportunities. The Our Downtown project implements Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan: Action 3-2 and Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan: Action LU-1, as development catalysts.

REVIEWING THE PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENTS
The public hearing draft materials for review include an adopting ordinance (forthcoming separately), this Exhibit A: Staff Memo and its Appendices, and Exhibit B: Annotated Zoning Code Amendments. Exhibit B provides the public hearing draft’s recommended Title 21 text amendment language, along with annotation that explains each amendment and cross-references back to the equivalent sections of old Title 21.

Appendix A-1 to this memo excerpts the sections of old Title 21 code that are relevant to this amendment. Appendix A-1 also excerpts the parts of the 1983 Anchorage CBD Comprehensive Development Plan and the Anchorage Central Business District Urban Design Amenities policy documents that are referenced in the old Title 21 downtown regulations. Appendix A-2 shows how the old Title 21 allowed uses were translated into the current Title 21 allowed use types, and how the old bonus points system was translated as well. Appendix A-3 highlights differences between the generally applicable regulations of old Title 21 and current Title 21, and how the relocation of the Downtown districts from their old code context into the current Title 21 code context addresses those differences.

REFORMATTING METHODOLOGY
The Downtown zoning districts content was reformatted into the language, format, organization, and context of the current Title 21. Once the reformat is adopted, some provisions that are found in current Title 21 will be applied to projects in Downtown. This includes the community meeting requirement for land use entitlements that require public hearings, and the ability for an applicant to directly request a minor modification from the Planning Director.

CONCLUSION
The OUR DOWNTOWN Project is a three-step and multi-year process. Each step will build on the research, analysis, and public input received from the previous step. A three-step process is needed to provide the community adequate opportunities to engage, plan, and bring new ideas forward for discussion and resolution. This project is intended to create the thriving Downtown envisioned in the 2007 Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan. Details and timeline for each step are available on our websites.

DOCUMENT PUBLICATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
The Public Hearing Draft Title 21 text amendments for the Our Downtown, Step 1 Project was published on Monday, November 4, 2019. Municipal staff will present the ordinance at community council and public meetings. Please watch the websites for updates and meeting notices. Please contact us for a presentation. (See inside cover for contact and website information.)