



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ASSEMBLY MEMORANDUM

No. AM 466-2022

Meeting Date: September 13, 2022

1 **FROM: MAYOR**

2
3 **SUBJECT: AN ORDINANCE OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY**
4 **AMENDING ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL CODE TITLE 21 CHAPTERS**
5 **21.04, ZONING DISTRICTS; 21.07, DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN**
6 **STANDARDS; 21.11, DOWNTOWN; 21.15, RULES OF**
7 **CONSTRUCTION AND DEFINITIONS, AND AMENDING ANCHORAGE**
8 **MUNICIPAL CODE OF REGULATIONS SECTION 21.20.007,**
9 **SCHEDULE OF FEES, IN ORDER TO AMEND THE OFF-STREET**
10 **PARKING AND SITE ACCESS DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND**
11 **ACHIEVE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS FOR INFILL AND**
12 **REDEVELOPMENT, HOUSING, AND ACCESSIBLE LAND USE.**
13
14

15 On April 11, 2022, the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) held a public hearing for
16 Case No. 2022-0026, the Public Hearing Draft of the Title 21 Text Amendments to Parking
17 and Site Access Regulations. Based on its review and findings on June 6, the Commission
18 recommended approval of the Title 21 Parking and Site Access Amendments, as stated
19 in PZC Resolution No. 2022-021 (Exhibit A).
20

21 **OVERVIEW**

22
23 The *Title 21 Parking and Site Access Amendments* reduces parking requirements for
24 developments and neighborhoods where people drive less. It reduces excess driveway
25 and parking dimensional requirements for multi-unit housing. It strengthens bicycle
26 parking requirements and simplifies and clarifies pedestrian access standards. The
27 amendments also tailor these regulations for urban neighborhood contexts, such as in
28 Fairview, South Addition, and Spenard.
29

30 This Title 21 text amendment is intended to reduce site development costs, enable more
31 efficient land use, and support additional housing and business opportunities. Its strategy
32 is to rightsize off-street parking and driveways while improving site access for pedestrians
33 and other transportation alternatives. It also seeks to facilitate infill and redevelopment
34 projects that fit in older, urban neighborhoods.
35

36 This project implements Actions 4-3 and 4-6 of *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*
37 **Goal 4: Neighborhood Housing**. It implements other goals of the *Comprehensive Plan*
38 and neighborhood and district plans, and policies and actions of the *AMATS 2040*
39 *Metropolitan Transportation Plan* and *Non-Motorized Plan* (Exhibit C, pages 8-14 of Staff
40 Memorandum).
41

42 An overview of the proposed Title 21 text amendments, as provided in the draft AO and
43 shown with annotation in Exhibit B, includes **seven** main recommendations:
44

- 45 1. Streamlines approvals of administrative parking reductions to become
46 *non-discretionary* (i.e., “by-right”), up to a certain percentage reduction in the

- 1 number of required parking spaces, without need for parking studies from the
2 applicant or discretionary approval by department directors.
3
- 4 2. Adds seven new parking management strategies and eligible project
5 characteristics to the menu of parking reductions available to developers.
6
- 7 3. Replaces four area-specific administrative parking reductions with by-right lower,
8 area-specific minimum parking requirements in delineated traditional urban
9 neighborhoods and transit-supportive development corridors. Tailors these lower
10 requirements to meet forecast parking utilization in these areas.
11
- 12 4. Revises site access standards to be more inclusive of alternative modes of
13 transportation—walking, bicycling, rideshare, ride-hailing, and public transit.
14 Consolidates/simplifies standards and incentives for pedestrian-oriented
15 frontages. Tailors bike and pedestrian standards to urban neighborhoods.
16
- 17 5. Consolidates/clarifies Title 21 site access driveway standards. Reduces excess
18 driveway width and vehicle turnaround requirements for multi-unit housing
19 projects. Focuses existing alley access requirements on urban neighborhoods and
20 limits driveway width in front yards in those areas.
21
- 22 6. Allows parking spaces to have smaller dimensions in urban neighborhoods and for
23 uses like housing that experience lower-turnover parking utilization.
24
- 25 7. Consolidates, simplifies, and clarifies many development standards.
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27 Exhibit B, pages ii-iii, outlines these changes in more detail and provides cross-references
28 to the specific code text amendment language.
29

30 **BACKGROUND**

31
32 Off-street parking and driveway access standards are often the costliest and most land-
33 consuming zoning requirements for multiple-dwelling, mixed-use, and commercial
34 developments. When more off-street parking spaces are required than used, excessive
35 parking can result in loss of housing unit construction, increased rents on remaining units
36 to pay for building the parking, stymied economic reinvestment, discouragement of
37 transportation alternatives, increased road congestion, constraints on good urban design,
38 degraded quality of life, and lost small business opportunities. In addition, when cities'
39 zoning regulations do not accommodate the needs of walking and bicycling, they can
40 further depress the public's access to convenient, economical, equitable, healthy, and
41 sustainable transportation alternatives.
42

43 Current Title 21 requires more parking than drivers use in some parts of Anchorage, and
44 in developments with certain kinds of characteristics. To compensate, Title 21 gives the
45 Traffic Engineer and Director discretionary authority to approve administrative parking
46 reductions. However, it is still more difficult than necessary for the developments that
47 attract people who drive less (e.g., affordable housing) to receive approval for the
48 reductions. Also, newer, potentially effective parking management strategies are absent
49 from the Title 21 list of parking reductions.
50

51 Current Title 21 also de-emphasizes pedestrian and bicyclist access needs while requiring
52 wide driveways and on-site vehicle circulation turnarounds, particularly for housing. Often
53 there is not enough secure bike parking to meet identified needs.

1
2 To resolve these issues, an interagency project team reviewed the current code language,
3 studied data on parking utilization rates, and researched household vehicle ownership
4 patterns. It evaluated the effectiveness of various parking demand reduction strategies. It
5 found that a low percentage of eligible development projects take advantage of the
6 available reductions. As-of-right parking reductions would make the parking requirements
7 easier to understand, provide certainty, and reduce cost barriers for applicants considering
8 reductions.

9
10 The project team found urban neighborhoods near Downtown and Midtown have lower
11 car ownership and parking utilization rates and a compact, pedestrian-friendly
12 development pattern that predates the imposition of suburban parking requirements.
13 Suburban parking requirements overpark urban neighborhoods. Title 21 could instead
14 allow construction that retains and restores these desirable traditional urban development
15 patterns.

16
17 The team also sought feedback from agencies, developers, design professionals,
18 businesses, community organizations, and residents regarding general policy options for
19 area-specific parking reductions (Exhibit C, Attachment 1, pages 9-10 of Project
20 Information Summary). Agency and expert consultations helped evaluate driveway and
21 bicycle parking standards. Exhibit C, pages 4-5 of the Staff Memorandum, provides the
22 project needs assessment, and methods, in more detail.

23 24 **PROJECT SCOPE**

25
26 The project scope focuses on carrying out specific actions adopted in the *Comprehensive*
27 *Plan*. The public process has targeted strategic, relatively easy changes to Title 21 that
28 can yield significant gains for development and the public, at low cost. Following is a list
29 of parking-related items this amendment does NOT do:

- 30
31
- 32 ○ Does **NOT** reduce minimum parking requirements in suburban Anchorage Bowl
33 (outside of Transit-supportive Development Corridors) or in Chugiak-Eagle River,
Turnagain Arm, or Girdwood.
 - 34 ○ Does **NOT** attempt a comprehensive reassessment of minimum parking
35 requirements by individual use type.
 - 36 ○ Does **NOT** increase spillover parking or necessitate new investments in street
37 infrastructure or changes to street management and maintenance.

38 Concerns about spillover parking effects were addressed by use of forecast parking
39 utilization rates. Also, most areas to receive lower parking requirements are developed
40 neighborhoods where infill projects occur piecemeal with gradual effects by new drivers
41 on parking patterns (Exhibit A, Attachment B of PZC Resolution, Issue-Response #10,
42 pages 10-12).

43
44 The recommended parking ratios are low enough to enable the infill, redevelopment, and
45 adaptive reuse the *Comprehensive Plan* calls for in urban neighborhoods
46 (Site examples in Exhibit C, Attachment 6.1, the PZC work session slides 20-29). In
47 general, the recommended amendments will make significant and positive impacts. They
48 also set up a regulatory framework that supports future improvements. Exhibit C,
49 Attachment 1, page 4 of the Project Information Summary, lists positive outcomes.

50

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public engagement for this code amendment began with dozens of pre-consultations, public meetings, and an online questionnaire in 2021. After receiving guidance on the general direction of the amendments, the project team incorporated further public comments on the October 29, 2021, Community Discussion Draft of the ordinance.

Exhibit C summarizes the public process and organizations consulted (Staff Memorandum pages 5-6) and lists 124 public and stakeholder meetings (Attachment 6.2, pages 1-5). Exhibit C (Attachment 5, page 1 of Comments Received), and Exhibit D (Attachment 6.3, pages A-10 through A-13 in Background Research) show resolutions by the (1) Public Transit Advisory Board (PTAB), (2) Housing, Homeless, and Neighborhood Development Commission (HHAND), and (3) AMATS Policy Committee.

The Public Hearing Draft was released for agency and public review and comment on February 7, 2022, for the April 11, 2022, PZC public hearing. The document was posted on the Planning Department website and distributed for review and comment to community councils, agencies, and other stakeholders and interested parties. The public hearing schedule was announced on the municipal Public Notices web page. Comments received were included in the PZC case packet as provided in Exhibit C. An issue-response table with recommended amendments to the public hearing draft ordinance was provided to the PZC with responses to all comments from the public, agencies, and commissioners (Exhibit D). The issue-response table was updated to reflect PZC action and is Attachment B to the PZC Resolution (Exhibit A).

ON-STREET PARKING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES THAT CAN ELIMINATE OFF-STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS

A growing number of U.S. cities are removing minimum parking requirements in favor of more efficient and effective means of managing their street rights-of-way and parking. In Anchorage, only developments in the Downtown central business district are currently exempt from off-street parking minimums. The *Title 21 Parking and Site Access Amendments* would also exempt development from off-street parking requirements, within **parking benefit districts**. However, the amendments do not create *parking benefit districts*. They are proposed to be delineated in the future, in areas that have sufficient on-street parking management, pricing, and enforcement to merit the removal of off-street parking requirements. Essential features of *parking benefit districts* are envisioned in Exhibit C, Attachment 6.1, slides 30-37.

During the public process, some participants advocated for removing parking minimums completely. Others did not support reducing or allowing by-right reductions. Even participants in urban neighborhoods like South Addition and Fairview expressed concerns about eliminating off-street parking requirements in their residential areas.

Issues of concern included: unmanaged on-street parking, poor sidewalks, piles of plowed snow on streets and sidewalks, wide front yard driveways taking away curb parking, and worries that developers (and new resident drivers) would take advantage of public street space. Municipal right-of-way agencies, such as Street Maintenance, warned that eliminating parking requirements or reducing them too far could add unmanaged on-street parking and substantially increase snow removal times. These challenges are visualized in Exhibit C, Attachment 6.1, slides 31-34. They are addressed by the targeted scope of the amendments discussed at end of page 3 of this memorandum.

1 Most cities that remove parking requirements have right-of-way management like
 2 on-street parking enforcement, more sidewalks, more public transit, stricter controls on
 3 front yard driveway widths, and fewer challenges with winter maintenance. These
 4 advantages allow their streets to accommodate more parked cars and pedestrian travel.
 5 In Anchorage, strategic management of rights-of-way and on-street parking is an
 6 important next step before removing off-street parking requirements completely.

7
 8 Changes to Title 9 (Traffic) and other regulations of the Anchorage Municipal Code could
 9 enable *parking benefit districts* and other right-of-way management strategies that can
 10 yield efficiencies in parking utilization, snow management, and street design. PZC
 11 Resolution No. 2022-021 (Exhibit A) concludes by recommending that the Municipality
 12 prepare such changes as a separate ordinance that would be a subsequent companion
 13 to the *Title 21 Parking and Site Access Amendments*.

14 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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 17 Assembly approval is requested of the Public Hearing Draft ordinance, which reflects the
 18 recommendations in the April 11, 2022, PZC Staff Packet (Exhibit C) and the June 6, 2022,
 19 Issue-Response Packet (Exhibit D), as adopted in Planning and Zoning Commission
 20 Resolution No. 2022-021 (Exhibit A).

21 **THE ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDS APPROVAL.**

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 24 Prepared by: Tom Davis, Senior Planner, Planning Department
 25 Approved by: Craig H. Lyon, Planning Director
 26 Concur: Adam Trombley, Community Development Director
 27 Concur: Courtney Petersen, OMB Director
 28 Concur: Mario Bird, Acting Municipal Attorney
 29 Concur: Amy Demboski, Municipal Manager
 30 Respectfully submitted: Dave Bronson, Mayor

31
 32 Attachments: Exhibit A—Planning and Zoning Commission Resolution No. 2022-021
 33 Exhibit B—Annotated Zoning Code Amendment Language
 34 Exhibit C—Planning and Zoning Commission Staff Packet (4/11/2022)
 35 -Attachment 1, Project Information Summary
 36 -Attachment 2, Public Hearing Draft Assembly Ordinance
 37 -Attachment 3, Annotated Zoning Code Amendment Language
 38 -Attachment 4, Clean Version of Proposed Amended Code Language
 39 -Attachment 5, Comments Received
 40 -Attachment 6, Background Information
 41 ~6.1, PZC Work Session Slides
 42 ~6.2, Public Involvement
 43 Exhibit D—Planning Department Issue-Response Packet (6/6/2022)
 44 -6.3, Background Research
 45 Exhibit E—Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes
 46 -April 11, 2022, Public Hearing
 47 -June 6, 2022, Deliberations and Action

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 49 (Planning and Zoning Commission Case No. 2022-0026)
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