



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ASSEMBLY MEMORANDUM

No. AM 271-2023

Meeting Date: April 11, 2023

1 **FROM: MAYOR**
2
3 **SUBJECT: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL CODE**
4 **TITLE 21 CHAPTERS 21.03, REVIEW AND APPROVAL**
5 **PROCEDURES; 21.04, ZONING DISTRICTS; 21.07,**
6 **DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN STANDARDS; AND 21.15, RULES**
7 **OF CONSTRUCTION AND DEFINITIONS, IN ORDER TO AMEND**
8 **THE SITE ACCESS DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND ACHIEVE**
9 **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS FOR INFILL AND**
10 **REDEVELOPMENT, HOUSING, AND ACCESSIBLE LAND USE.**
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12

13 On February 13, 2023, the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) held a public
14 hearing for Case No. 2023-0011, the Public Hearing Draft of the Title 21 Text
15 Amendments to Site Access Regulations. Based on its review and findings, the
16 Commission recommended approval of the Title 21 Site Access Amendments, as
17 stated in PZC Resolution No. 2023-003 (Exhibit A).
18

19 **BACKGROUND AND NEED**

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21 The *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan (2040 LUP)* and other elements of the
22 *Comprehensive Plan* have called for reforms to vehicle driveway standards and other
23 site access-related development regulations. Current Title 21 regulations emphasize
24 automobiles and do not adequately accommodate other modes of site access. This
25 can limit the public's access to and usage of economical and equitable transportation
26 alternatives. The current Title 21 requires and encourages wider and more costly
27 access driveways and on-site vehicle circulation drives than are necessary for small
28 multi-unit developments in the urban neighborhoods of Anchorage. The regulations
29 ultimately make it more difficult and costly to develop new housing and businesses,
30 especially on smaller urban lots.
31

32 Assembly Ordinance (A.O.) 2022-80 proposed similar reforms to the site access
33 regulations along with reduced parking requirements. The Assembly made changes
34 in a Substitute version of the ordinance that eliminated minimum parking requirements
35 and decoupled the site access amendments from the ordinance. The Assembly
36 adopted A.O. 2022-80(S) in November 2022, with a direction to address the site
37 access amendments in a new and separate site access ordinance.
38

39 This project implements Action 4-6 of the *2040 LUP Goal 4: Neighborhood Housing*.
40 It also implements other elements of the *Comprehensive Plan* as discussed in the staff
41 report memorandum in Exhibit B, pages 8 and 9.
42

43 As anticipated future infill developments provide less off-street parking, and it
44 becomes more important to encourage pedestrian and other modes of transportation.
45 While the amendments improve site access across the Municipality, they are stricter

1 in older urban neighborhoods in which there is more pedestrian infrastructure and
2 public transportation alternatives, and a greater opportunity to provide benefits.

3
4 These amendments are important to increasing the housing stock in Anchorage by
5 reducing the need for costly and space-intense vehicle-oriented development. They
6 facilitate better use of the street right-of-way to support the elimination of minimum
7 parking requirements. They may also contribute to workforce recruitment and retention
8 as pedestrian access is a desired amenity for a high quality of life.

9 10 **OVERVIEW OF AMENDMENTS**

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12 This ordinance revises requirements for vehicle driveway access and circulation, on-
13 site pedestrian amenities, and parking lot placement and building orientation along
14 public streets. It cuts the length of these site access standards and tailors them for
15 urban neighborhoods. It includes **four** main recommendations:

- 16
17 1. **Create an Urban Neighborhood Context Area:** Improve site access
18 requirements across the Municipality, but support stricter requirements for
19 pedestrian access, pedestrian-oriented urban design, and vehicle alley access
20 in the urban neighborhoods where there is the opportunity to do so.
- 21
22 2. **Improve Site Access for Pedestrians and Alternative Transportation:**
23 Make pedestrian frontage requirements more generally applicable, for street-
24 facing windows and entrances, parking placement mostly beside or at the rear
25 of buildings, and limits on front garage width and garage projections;
26 strengthen some of these standards in urban neighborhoods.
- 27
28 3. **Right-size Driveway, Alley, and On-Site Circulation Requirements:**
29 Reduce paved area requirements for multi-unit housing developments;
30 improve alley access standards with limits on front driveway width in urban
31 neighborhoods.
- 32
33 4. **Consolidate and Simplify Regulations:** Consolidate walkway requirements;
34 consolidate and clarify driveway sections; simplify pedestrian amenity menu
35 choices; and merge pedestrian-oriented development regulations into easier
36 tables instead of being in different formats and sections scattered in Title 21.
37 Make technical corrections, such as deleting a reference to “required” parking.

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39 **These four main recommendations are outlined in more detail with illustrations**
40 **in Exhibit B, pages 3 to 6.**

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42 Two other references are provided in the packet. Exhibit C, *Clean Version of the Public*
43 *Hearing Draft Ordinance Language*, shows the resulting code sections after adoption
44 and is easier to read. Exhibit D, *Annotated Version of the Public Hearing Draft*
45 *Ordinance Language*, gives explanatory rationale alongside the text amendments.

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47 This ordinance is proposed to become effective on January 1, 2024. This will allow
48 time for the transition until after the busiest part of the building permit season is over,
49 and it coincides with when several parking amendments adopted in A.O. 2022-80(S)
50 will become effective.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public engagement for this code amendment began when these site access amendments were being considered along with the amendments to parking requirements. In 2021 and 2022, Planning staff held consultations, public meetings, open houses, and design workshops, and hosted an online questionnaire and a project website. Additional suggestions were received from the Assembly's A.O. 2022-80 S-version working group in the fall of 2022. Once the site access amendments were broken into a separate ordinance, additional site access focus groups were held with development and design experts and urban neighborhood representatives to refine the proposed code changes.

The Public Hearing Draft was released for agency and public review and comment on December 23, 2022, for the February 13, 2023, 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 and a comment-response table was provided to the PZC with responses to all comments from the public and agencies (Exhibit B, pages 221 to 225). The PZC minutes (Exhibit B, pages 242 and 243) also reflect staff responses to questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Assembly approval is requested of the Public Hearing Draft ordinance, which reflects the recommendations on February 13, 2023, PZC Staff Packet (Exhibit B), as adopted in PZC Resolution No. 2023-003 (Exhibit A).

THE ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDS APPROVAL.

Prepared by: Tom Davis and Elizabeth Appleby, Senior Planners
Planning Department
Approved by: Craig H. Lyon, Planning Director
Concur: Lance Wilber, Community Development Director
Concur: Courtney Petersen, OMB Director
Concur: Anne Helzer, Acting Municipal Attorney
Concur: Grant Yutrzenka, CFO
Concur: Kent Kohlhase, Acting Municipal Manager
Respectfully submitted: Dave Bronson, Mayor

Attachments: Exhibit A—Planning and Zoning Commission Resolution No. 2023-003
Exhibit B—Planning and Zoning Commission Staff Packet and Minutes
Exhibit C—Clean Version of Draft Ordinance Language
Exhibit D—Annotated Version of Draft Ordinance Language

(Planning and Zoning Commission Case No. 2023-0011)