



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Assembly Information Memorandum

No. AIM 50-2024

Meeting Date: April 23, 2024

1 **FROM: MAYOR**

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3 **SUBJECT: SITE ACCESS TEST RESULTS FOR AO 2024-24.**

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6 Attached is the "*Site Access Test Fit Report*," a targeted study conducted by the
7 Planning Department and a five-member team of licensed professionals comprised
8 of two landscape architects, a civil engineer, and an architect. The main goal of the
9 study was to determine if any AMC Title 21-based impediments to the development
10 of residential 3- and 4-plexes on small urban lots within the Anchorage "Urban
11 Neighborhood Development Context Area" were inadvertently created as a result of
12 the recently adopted Site Access and Pedestrian Frontage Standards via AO 2023-
13 50.

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15 The Planning Department focused the study on restrictive but likely development
16 scenarios that a residential infill project could encounter on an existing or newly
17 subdivided lot. A total of five concept site plans were drafted. These were tested in
18 comparison to Title 21, including the recently adopted AO 2023-50 and the Site
19 Access Clean-up Amendments in AO 2024-24. Four of these concept site plans (A-
20 D) demonstrate compliance with site access standards. Concept E does not comply
21 but was included for comparison between the cost and difficulty of development
22 under the new versus previous standards.

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24 The three objectives of this study were to determine the following:

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26 **1. Construction Viability:**

27 The project team tested the recently adopted site access and pedestrian
28 frontage standards of AMC 21.07.060 to demonstrate their viability and
29 application on small urban lots (50 feet x 150 feet) without secondary or alley
30 access and served by public utilities. The housing type tested was 3- and 4-
31 plex residential dwellings with a target of one or more parking spaces
32 provided per dwelling. The granting of exceptions or variances to code
33 standards was not assumed.
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2. Approximate Development Costs:

The team estimated costs based on current market prices per square foot of residential living area and site work including paving. Estimates include civil and architectural costs and are a tool for comparison purposes only. They do not include “soft” costs and site-specific costs such as contractor mobilization, the cost of the property, and utility connections.

3. Identification of Regulatory Hurdles, Impediments, and Questions:

Planning staff requested feedback on any difficulties with the interpretation, implementation, and feasibility of the recently adopted standards within AMC 21.07.060 and the recommended Clean-up Amendments in AO 2024-24. The project team was asked to keep a log of any issues or questions that arose while drafting these concept site plans. This log is included in Appendix C of the study. These observations will help the Planning Department identify necessary amendments and clarifications within AMC Title 21.

Upon conclusion of this study, the project team determined that the recently adopted site access and pedestrian frontage standards, with the recommended clean-up amendments in AO 2024-24, do not impose excessive or undue difficulty on the development of 3- and 4-plex construction on 50-foot-wide lots without secondary or alley access, provided that favorable conditions are available. Should the site be subject to topography, unique lot geometry, buffer landscaping requirements, and/or utility easements, greater code flexibility would be needed to overcome these challenges if the development is providing off-street parking.

The greatest difficulty encountered was the project-imposed goal to provide at least one or two vehicular parking spaces per dwelling unit for a four-plex. The team found there is simply not enough space in a 50-foot-wide lot to provide more than four to six parking spaces in a manner that does not result in excessive paving and/or a reduction in potential residential development area. These difficulties occurred with all surface parking configurations tested, whether located in front or behind buildings. An additional difficulty encountered was the lack of design flexibility to provide a two-car-wide garage along the street-facing façade.

The study recommended five changes to Title 21 that would be impactful for small infill developments. The Planning Department intends to provide a set of proposed amendments that will address the main findings of this study to the Assembly for consideration in deliberating the Site Access Clean-up Amendments in AO 2024-24.

The Assembly recently made an additional 3,830 existing lots in Anchorage eligible under Title 21 for 3- and 4-plex construction by reducing the minimum lot size for 4-plexes from 8,500 to 6,000 square feet in the R-2M zone (AO 2023-103(S)). This change also enables larger lots to be subdivided into more 3- and 4-plex lots. The *Site Access Test Fit Report* findings indicate that, with the Clean-up Amendments in AO 2024-24 and additional recommendations, the Pedestrian Frontage Standards in Title 21 are not a significant impediment to multifamily development on urban infill properties.

1 Prepared by: Ryan Yelle, Long-Range Planning Manager
2 Planning Department
3 Approved by: Craig H. Lyon, Planning Director
4 Concur: Lance Wilber, Community Development Director
5 Concur: Kent Kohlhase, P.E., Municipal Manager
6 Respectfully submitted: Dave Bronson, Mayor
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8 Attachment: Site Access Test Fit Report