

PZC Resolution No. 2021-037

Title 21 Text Amendment to R-2 Zones
Height and Bulk Standards

PZC Case No. 2021-0111

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**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 2021-037**

A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING TO THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY APPROVAL OF THE TITLE 21 TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE R-2 ZONING DISTRICTS HEIGHT AND BULK DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS.

(Case No. 2021-0111)

WHEREAS, the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* assesses the housing needs of Anchorage residents and sets goals, policies, and actions to address these needs; and

WHEREAS, Goal 2 of the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* and its supporting policies promote infill and redevelopment in existing neighborhoods to meet the housing needs of Anchorage residents, in part by incorporating flexibility in development requirements; and

WHEREAS, Goal 4 of the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* calls for Anchorage's neighborhoods to provide a range of places to live, meeting the forecast housing needs of Anchorage residents of all income levels and household types; and

WHEREAS, Goal 7 of the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* and its supporting policies promote infill development that is compatible with the valued characteristics of surrounding properties and neighborhoods, including the physical scale and character; and

WHEREAS, the R-2A, R-2D, and R-2M zoning districts (R-2 zones) are found in much of Anchorage, constituting one-third of the urban, residentially zoned land in the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, the R-2 zones fulfill a unique and important function among Anchorage's residential zones by providing for a mix of single-family, two-family, townhouse, and (in the R-2M) multifamily housing at a low-to-moderate scale and intensity compatible with the single-family neighborhood scale; and

WHEREAS, Action 4-4 of the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* calls for reviewing the R-2M district to further infill and redevelopment that can meet housing needs; and

WHEREAS, Action 7-2 of the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* calls for incorporating neighborhood compatibility standards in the housing amendments in Action 4-4; and

WHEREAS, a two-and-one-half-story (2½-story) height limit applied to the R-2 districts from the 1940s through the early 1980s was removed, leaving a 25-foot height limit in the mid-1980s, which was increased to a 30-foot height limit in 1999; and

WHEREAS, the 2½-story limit was restored in 2013 to address compatible bulk and scale of new housing development in the R-2 zones; and

WHEREAS, problems with the current 2½-story limit have been identified, including: (1) it constrains the number of housing units that can fit on some development sites; (2) it increases the costs of adding third-story living spaces to resolve the space constraint because the third story must be a daylight basement or attic living space; (3) it prohibits exceptions or administrative relief or flexibility to respond to site context or characteristics; and (4) it is vague and confusing as currently worded; and

WHEREAS, problems with other dimensional standards in the R-2 districts have been identified, which include an excessive side yard setback applied to small multi-unit structures, and excessive maximum heights of rooftop stairwells and other rooftop appurtenances; and

WHEREAS, allowing 3-story buildings in appropriate locations and situations subject to additional height and bulk compatibility standards can, in combination with other adjustments to the height and dimensional standards, support more efficient housing development anticipated by the R-2 districts and the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*, while addressing impacts on surrounding properties and R-2 neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Zoning Commission held a work session with staff and a public hearing on the draft ordinance on November 1, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Planning and Zoning Commission the Commission reviewed the draft ordinance, public comments, and staff responses to issues raised; and

WHEREAS, the Commission concluded its deliberations on the draft ordinance on December 6, 2021, and finalized its recommendation to the Anchorage Assembly for approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission that:


A. The Commission makes the following findings of fact:

1. The draft Title 21 text amendment to the R-2 zones height and bulk standards meets the approval criteria for zoning ordinance text amendments and advances the goals and policies of the *Comprehensive Plan*.
2. The draft Title 21 text amendment to the R-2 zones height and bulk standards responds forecast housing needs and Goals 2, 4, and 7 in the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* to accommodate the housing needs of Anchorage residents through infill and development that is compatible with the neighborhood context and helps implement Action Items 4-4 and 7-2 of the Plan.
3. The Title 21 text amendment to the R-2 zones height and bulk standards reflects significant effort to engage stakeholders and the public to develop and revise the ordinance.
4. The Planning Department's issue-responses have addressed the comments and questions raised by both the public and Commissioners, and provided context specific to those requests including background information regarding the thinking that went into those particular issues in the ordinance.


5. The Commission appreciates the Planning Department's issue-response with recommended amendments to the draft ordinance in response to Commissioners' questions regarding the administrative site plan review approval criteria for buildings that would not otherwise qualify for 3 stories, including changes that will clarify these approval criteria, ensure that the ordinance's 3-story building bulk and height transition requirements are a part of these approval criteria, and help make the 3-story buildings fit within their neighborhood.
 6. Development trends and potential building cost savings indicate there is a market for 3-story development in the R-2 zones, including through the administrative site plan review process, such that the Title 21 text amendment to the R-2 zones height and bulk standards is anticipated to result in new housing opportunities from 3-story development.
- B. The Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) recommends to the Anchorage Assembly approval of the Title 21 text amendment to the R-2 zones height and bulk standards as provided in:
1. The November 1, 2021 PZC case packet, including Attachment 2 and the Planning Department's recommended amendments 1 through 6 on pages 8 and 9 of the staff memorandum.
 2. The December 6, 2021 issue-response memorandum for responses 5, 6, and 11 with the additional amendments recommended by the Planning Department.
 3. The Commission's floor amendment to the Title 21 Chapter 21.15 number on Line 5 of the draft ordinance.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission on the 6th day of December 2021.

ADOPTED by the Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission this 3rd day of January 2022.



Craig H. Lyon
Secretary



Jared Gardner
Chair

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