

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE




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Director's Guidance Memo 2021-01

DATE: 08/10/2021
TO: Planning Department Staff
FROM:  Michelle J. McNulty, AICP, Planning Director
SUBJECT: Clarification on how the AMCR 21.90 Decision Tree Interacts with Title 21

Question: How does the AMCR 21.90 Decision Tree interact with the development and design standards in the rest of Title 21 that are intended to apply along private streets?

Answer: For the purposes of applying the development and design standards in AMC Title 21, the AMCR 21.90 Decision Tree does not determine whether a vehicle accessway is a private street versus a driveway. The AMCR 21.90 Illustration #1 Decision Tree applies solely for the purposes of AMCR 21.90 in determining when a vehicle accessway should meet the private street construction standards set forth in AMCR 21.90. For the rest of Title 21—including the development and design standards of Chapter 21.07 and the District-specific Standards of Chapter 21.04—the definitions for “Street,” “Private Street,” and “Driveway” in Chapter 21.15 should govern in determining where to apply the development standards for street-facing building frontages.

Discussion: The AMCR 21.90 Illustration #1 Decision Tree determines when a vehicle accessway within a residential development site is to be built to private street versus driveway standards. How that determination in AMCR 21.90 is interpreted to interact with the development standards in AMC Title 21 could affect the ability to create compact, efficient residential site plans.

The AMCR 21.90 Decision Tree determines whether a vehicle accessway should be subject to private street standards based on the number of residential structures and dwellings served by the accessway. If a vehicle accessway serves more than three residential buildings or 12 dwelling units, then it must be built to private street standards. This is how the code ensures adequate construction, engineering, and dimensions of these internal vehicle accessways to accommodate anticipated traffic volumes, pedestrian access, and emergency response vehicles.

The AMCR 21.90 Decision Tree is not intended to govern the rest of Title 21 for determining the applicability of development standards such as in Section 21.07.110, *Residential Design Standards*, or district-specific standards in Chapter 21.04. In these and other chapters, Title 21 establishes development standards for street-facing building frontages. It requires landscaping breaks between the driveways and garages of individual townhouse units that face along a street. It encourages buildings to face or orient to the street, provide street-facing windows and front entries, and avoid garage-only facades along the street.

However, such Title 21 requirements are not intended to apply along internal vehicle accessways that function only as back-of-house vehicle access alleys and driveways. For example, if a vehicle accessway within a private development site simply accesses a row of garage doors at the rear of

townhouse units whose front entries and addressing are on the other side of the building, then AMC Title 21 should treat that accessway as a driveway, not a private street.

Instead, the AMC Title 21 development and design standards for site development fronting along private streets should instead use the Title 21 definition for "Street" or "Driveway". Title 21 section 21.15.040 defines a street versus a driveway based on their different functions, rather than a threshold number of buildings or dwellings served by the vehicle accessway. Title 21.15.040 definition of streets includes primary frontage, pedestrian access, and address, more than just vehicle access. It is the principal means of access into a dwelling—including pedestrian and vehicle access. The Title 21 definition of streets—including private streets—purposefully left out driveways that functioned like alleys or vehicle access only, where the primary entrances and addresses to the units are not facing such an alley or driveway. Such driveway may access the garages of more than three residential buildings, or more than 12 residential units, but it is still not a street.

As such, the AMCR Decision Tree does not override the Title 21 definition of "street," "private street," and "driveway" when determining how and where to apply the Title 21 development and design standards for street-facing building frontages.