



Municipality of Anchorage

Planning Department Memorandum



Date: October 16, 2020
To: Anchorage Community and Reviewing Agencies
Subject: R-4A Zone Mixed-Use Text Amendment – Community Discussion Draft

SUMMARY

The Planning Department is seeking public and agency review of proposed text amendments to the R-4A Multifamily Residential Mixed-Use Zoning District regulations in Title 21. While the R-4A district already exists in current Title 21 land use regulations, its development standards need to be updated and simplified in accordance with Action 3-1 from the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*.¹ No changes to the zoning map are proposed. The proposed updates are intended to create a more pedestrian-oriented environment, allow more commercial space within mixed-use developments, and make the zoning district's requirements easier to follow. The amendment proposes to achieve this through the following:

- **Updating and simplifying mixed-use design standards:** The current mixed-use standards for the R-4A district are the same as those for the B-1A and B-1B commercial districts. The B-3 General Business District also refers to those shared standards for conditional height increases. The amendment proposes to move all R-4A mixed-use standards to one location in an easy-to-read table format, tailors the building placement and orientation standards to this residential district, and contextualizes the standards by distinguishing between primary and secondary frontages.
[See info sheet #1]
- **Revising height allowances:** The current R-4A has a by-right base building height of 75 feet (with a maximum height of 90 feet), and to build higher, the project must provide extra amenities and ensure a minimum amount of non-parking uses along 25 feet of up to two frontages. The amendment proposes to reduce the by-right base height to 65 feet and require all developments to reduce shadowing on abutting streets in order to exceed the base height. The extra amenities and minimum non-parking frontage areas would no longer be required.
[See info sheet #2]
- **Providing increased commercial space flexibility:** The amendment proposes to allow up to 35% of a development in the R-4A district to consist of commercial space without special approval, an increase from the 10% allowed in current code. Under certain conditions, developments would also be allowed to provide commercial space prior to building residential units. The amendment also allows a wider range of commercial uses that can be supportive of residential mixed-use.

The Planning Department appreciates any comments on this draft text amendment. Please direct all comments to the contacts provided in Exhibit A. Comments are requested by **Friday, December 11th**. Public feedback will help to prepare a Public Hearing Draft to go before the Planning and Zoning Commission in early 2021.

PUBLIC REVIEW DOCUMENTS

- **Review Item A:** Info Summary
- **Review Item B:** Zoning Code Amendment Language (annotated)
- **Info Sheet #1:** Pedestrian-Oriented Frontage Standards
- **Info Sheet #2:** Building Height Increase Standard

¹ "Amend Title 21 to simplify zoning regulations for mixed-use projects relative to commercial or other projects." *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*, page 84.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GUIDANCE

The revised standards in the proposed amendment continue to advance pedestrian-oriented design considerations referenced in the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* related to the “City Center” and “Urban Residential—High” *land use designations*, in addition to the “Transit-Supportive Development Corridor,” “Traditional Neighborhood Design,” and “Residential Mixed-Use Development” *growth-supporting features*. These are all elements of the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan Map* that are relevant to the R-4A zoning district. The revised standards also continue to implement the Shared-Infill Design Principles² that are referenced by these land use designations and growth-supporting features. The revised standards also continue to prioritize residential development and mixed-use housing in keeping with the “Urban Residential—High” and “Residential Mixed-Use Development” elements of the Plan.

In addition to implementing Action 3-1, the proposed amendment advances the following *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* policies:

- **LUP 2.2** Coordinate redevelopment incentives and public infrastructure investments with development entitlements to enhance walkability and quality of life, and encourage the market to add new residences, shops, and workplaces.
- **LUP 2.3** Remove barriers to desired infill development and incorporate flexibility in development requirements to promote adaptive reuse of older buildings and compact infill/redevelopment, including that which reflects traditional urban neighborhood design contexts.
- **LUP 3.1** Target and coordinate investment in the built environment and green infrastructure in and around centers and corridors that are most able to absorb housing and employment growth.
- **LUP 3.2** Promote the development of main street, transit-oriented, and mixed-use corridors that help meet the city’s needs for retail, services, jobs, and housing; and that support these uses and adjoining neighborhoods with access to multiple modes of travel and attractive pedestrian environments.
- **LUP 4.1** Provide sufficient land to meet the diverse housing needs of Anchorage’s citizens, where the integrity of the residential neighborhood area is protected from expanding commercial corridors or non-neighborhood employment activities.
- **LUP 4.2** Allow and encourage innovative compact housing types and a variety of housing options that respond to changing preferences.
- **LUP 5.1** Implement recommended land use patterns and growth in context with existing infrastructure capacity and planned improvements, for utilities, streets, trails, public transit, parks, green infrastructure, and schools.
- **LUP 7.1** Preserve, accommodate, and contribute to the character, scale, and identity of established neighborhoods as new infill housing and mixed-use development occurs. Protect and restore the natural environment as development occurs in these neighborhoods.
- **LUP 7.2** Ease the transitions between more intensive uses and adjacent lower-density neighborhoods—in terms of the built scale, height, level of activity, and character.

The revised standards in the R-4A district also support the area-specific land use designations, community design characteristics, and policies of the relevant neighborhood and district plans. These include the *Fairview Neighborhood Plan*, *Spenard Corridor Plan*, *UMED District Plan*, and the *West Anchorage District Plan*.

² Shared Infill Design Principles can be found on pages 34-35 of the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*.