

Planning and Zoning Commission

May 20, 2024

Case #: **2024-0067**

Case Title: **Amendment to the Comprehensive
Plan to Allow Implementation of the
H.O.M.E. Initiative**

Agenda Item #: **G.5.** Supplementary Packet #: **1**

☒ Comments submitted after the packet was finalized:

- **Turnagain Community Council Comments dated
May 17, 2024, regarding Cases 2024-0006 and 2024-0067**

Sent by email: **X** yes no

TURNAGAIN COMMUNITY COUNCIL
 c/o Federation of Community Councils
 1057 W. Fireweed Lane, Suite 100, Anchorage, Alaska 99503
 Cathy L. Gleason, President

May 17, 2024

RE: PZC 2024-0006 & PZC Case 2024-0067

Dear Planning and Zoning Commission Chair & Members:

This testimony on Planning and Zoning Commission Cases 2024-006 AND 2024-67 is being submitted by Cathy Gleason, President of the Turnagain Community Council on behalf of the Turnagain Community Council Board of Directors.

We concur with the findings of Planning Staff presented in their staff report memorandum dated May 20, 2024, on Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the 2040 Land Use Plan to Allow Implementation of the proposed H.O.M.E. Initiative. We recommend that the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) take the following actions outlined verbatim on page 18 of the staff report memorandum:

Recommending that the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) **postpone action on the public hearing draft *Comprehensive Plan* amendments in A.O. 2023-45**, to allow the Assembly to revise the public hearing draft ordinance and bring the revised public hearing draft back before the PZC for a public hearing, including taking the following actions:

1. Provide a More Collaborative, Completed Comprehensive Plan Amendment Consistent with a 10-Year Targeted Plan Review.

Reach beyond the minimum required public hearing procedure of AMC 21.03.060, *Comprehensive Plan*

Amendments, with a meaningful public involvement process that collaboratively engages Anchorage residents, property owners, and stakeholder organizations, to establish the basis and policy guidance for single-family zoning reform and other zoning ordinance amendments.

The *Comprehensive Plan* amendment should include but not be limited to the following:

- a. Amend the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan (2040 LUP)* and the area-specific neighborhood and district plans, to change the area-specific land use designations of low-intensity detached (i.e., single-family-only) areas from the area-specific plans' land use plan maps.
- b. Amend the *2040 LUP*, including Map 2-1: Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan Map and the narrative descriptions of its *Neighborhoods* Land Use Designations, to update the land use plan as needed and simplify the lineup of residential land use designation categories, increase their flexibility to support different low-density urban residential zones, and provide for neighborhood-scale commercial mixed-use within limits.
- c. Revise the proposed amendments to the Policies of *Anchorage 2020* and the *2040 LUP*, in consideration of the analysis in this staff report.
- d. Revise and expand the amendments to the implementation Strategies and Actions of *Anchorage 2020* and the *2040 LUP* to update it to reflect Actions completed, retire Actions no longer needed, and to integrate the proposed zoning changes into the Strategies and Actions.

2. Carry out the Rezoning Process Separately.

Accompany the revised *Comprehensive Plan* amendment with a public hearing draft Zoning Map amendment (rezoning), following the procedure for a rezoning in AMC 21.03.160, *Rezoning*s, to implement the Title 21 text amendment in PZC Case 2024-0006.

3. Improve the Draft Title 21 Text Amendment.

Revise the public hearing draft Title 21 text amendment and shape the accompanying Zoning Map Amendment as recommended in the Staff Report for PZC Case 2024-0006, in order to reduce the need for so many *Comprehensive Plan* amendments.

We urge you to postpone action and direct the Sponsors to work with the Planning staff and public to resolve these issues.

The TCC Board understands the severity of the housing crisis in Anchorage and the need for urgent action. We applaud the effort that the Assembly Sponsors of the H.O.M.E Initiative have made in reaching out to community councils and members of the public to brief them on the severity of the housing crisis and the proposed consolidation of the existing residential zoning districts in the Anchorage Bowl from 15 to 5.

Much of this makes common sense.

However,

- 1) Co-sponsors of this proposal admit that the rezoning changes, in and of themselves, will not trigger a sudden surge in new or higher-density-modified housing; it will take years for any significant changes to occur — *so why be in a rush to circumvent a more thoughtful review of two important planning documents (2020 Comprehensive Plan and 2024 Land Use Plan) and a thorough public review and comment process, and ignore staff recommendations, at this point in time?*
- 2) Reducing dimensional standards puts extra pressure on adjacent public infrastructure, particularly on-street parking, and it is unclear that any staff site reviews will be able to address this potential problem. Not doing so places burdens on enforcement for unsafe parking and on municipal maintenance for snow storage and clearing. Someone will have to pay this cost down the road, literally.

The broad and vague recommended amendments to the comprehensive plan are troubling. Much of it appears to remove reference to being compatible with adjacent development and community character, and the guidance that would make increased density palatable to many property owners who have invested in their residences. It is unclear how far reaching the effects of the proposed amendment will be. The staff memorandum report provides specific details on improvements that need to be made.

Finally, unfortunate gaffes in the way the Sponsors have handled the public process of introducing and taking action on AO 2024-45 and 2024-67 counter the good intentions and goodwill associated with their other outreach efforts.

- a. Substantive AOs consistently “laid on the table” the night of a meeting, while within their authority, provides no advance warning to the public and community councils that the action is on the agenda. The only way to find out is to be attending or watching a meeting, or be told after the fact by another attendee – the sponsors provide no advance notice to the public or community council of their intent to do so. This has the appearance of sloppy work or intentional shortcuts to the public process.
- b. Late notice and shortened review times, often as little as two weeks until the next meeting, do not allow enough time to obtain, review, draft testimony, get community

council review or board approval, and submit it time to get into the PZC or Assembly Packet.

- c. When listening to testimony, consider asking some questions that indicate that the testimony is being taken seriously.

Please consider correcting these shortcomings, because they create unnecessary opposition to proposed solutions. The TCC and most community councils would be eager to work with the sponsors and staff to vet solutions – this is not a process that has to drag out for years.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Cathy L. Gleason
President
Turnagain Community Council