

# MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



Planning Department  
Current Planning Division

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*Mayor Suzanne LaFrance*

August 13, 2024

Spark Design, LLC  
Attention: Allie Gordy  
5401 Cordova Street, Suite 301  
Anchorage, AK 99518

**Case:** 2024-0090- Glacier City Development, LLC AEC Requests

**Request:** Alternative Equivalent Compliance for the southeast commercial building of Glacier City Development, LLC

**Property Description:** Tract E-3, Girdwood Elementary School

**Parcel ID:** 075-031-41

**Property Address:** 339 Hightower Road, Girdwood, AK 99587

Dear Ms. Gordy:

This letter is in response to your requests for Alternative Equivalent Compliance (AEC), Case 2024-0090 for the southeast commercial building of Glacier City Development, LLC. The 4,048 square-foot commercial building is anticipated to have a tasting room, eatery, coffee shop, and mechanical mezzanine. There are four separate AEC requests for the building:

- AEC 1 – For the east and west walls of the building to be 46 feet in length with recessed entries of 3 feet in depth when 4 feet is required by Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) 21.09.080F.2.d.
- AEC 2 – For the north and south walls to have segments not in plane with the primary wall under one-third the length of the building (26'-8" of the 80'-0" wall is required), a deviation from AMC 21.09.080F.2.d. requirements. Exterior fins extending to a roof overhang are proposed to frame the central bay to modulate the building.
- AEC 3 – For the arcade to be at least 8" higher than the adjacent walkway/street when at least 8" above grade is required by AMC 21.09.080F.4.d.vi.
- AEC 4 – For the 50% glass window requirement to be met with windows at ground level and the second story when it is required to be met at ground floor, a deviation from AMC 21.09.080F.2.f.iii(A) requirements.

**Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 196650 • Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6650 • <http://www.muni.org>

The Department finds that the alternative design meets the criteria for approval of the AECs in accordance with AMC 21.07.010D.3.a-c.:

**a. The proposed alternative design achieves the intent of the subject design.**

This design will achieve the intent of the subject design standards. AECs 1 and 2 for building scale and size includes elements to still create modulation in the building, such as the 3-foot door alcove insets, material changes, and the building fins. AEC 3 for porch and landing design still defines the entrances, which is a key element of Girdwood mountain style. AEC 4 for windows maintains interior views into the restaurant and bar portions of the commercial building.

In addition, this project appears to meet the intent statements for AMC 21.090.080F.2.:

- a. Mountain Building Style – Intent. The design of new buildings shall have the appearance of structures appropriate for Girdwood’s climate, mountain valley setting, and small western mining town character. Commercial and resort buildings shall utilize a mountain style defined primarily by the materials, roof pitches, use of porches, and street treatment as set forth below and in section 21.09.070F.
- b. Residential Building Style – Intent. New buildings in the old and new Girdwood townsite commercial areas shall have a residential character, even though the zoning permits and encourages Chapter 21.09: Girdwood Land Use Regulations Sec. 21.09.080 Building Design Standards Title 21: Land Use Planning April 23, 2024 Anchorage, Alaska Page 9-89 commercial uses. Building forms and detail elements shall have predominantly pitched roofs, porches, traditional rectangular windows with a vertical orientation (on the ground floor), avoidance of blank walls or materials associated with industrial uses. Buildings shall consist of relatively small, human-scaled or appear to be an aggregation of smaller, simpler forms. Residential apartments on upper stories are encouraged.
- c. Mass. The mass of a single building or group of buildings shall be organized so it appears to be an arrangement of smaller-sized connected structures. Upper level residential floors may be incorporated into the roof form to reduce the apparent height and mass of buildings.

**b. The proposed alternative design achieves the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan to the same or better degree than the subject standard.**

The proposed alternative is compliant with the following goals and policies of the *Girdwood Area Plan*:

*GOAL: Perpetuate Girdwood’s Small-Town Atmosphere<sup>1</sup>*

- a. *Expand the town core as a commercial and community center.*
- b. *Reduce vehicular congestion through efficient land use, local circulation patterns, and adequate parking.*

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<sup>1</sup> Goals and policies/strategies are on page 35 in Chapter 5 of the *Girdwood Area Plan*.



There is not expected to be conflict with proposed goals and policies in the draft *Girdwood Comprehensive Plan*.

**c. The proposed alternative design results in benefits to the community that are equivalent to or better than compliance with the subject design standard.**

The proposed alternative design provides accessible and weather-protected entrances. The commercial building is part of a mixed-use site that includes a residential building. Other residential buildings are near the site. It will provide a walkable place to eat and drink in the town core on formerly vacant property.

**Decision**

The Department APPROVES of the request for AECs 1 through 4 to allow an alternative design to the southeast commercial building of Glacier City Development, LLC, that deviates from commercial design standards in AMC 21.09.080F.2.d. *Scale and Size*, AMC 21.09.080F.4.d.vi. *Porches, Entrances, Arcades, and Roofed Walkways - Elevation above Grade*, and AMC 21.09.080F.2.f.iii(A) *Glass Windows*, subject to the following condition:

- 1) All construction and improvements related to this approval shall be substantially in compliance with the application, narrative, and the plans on file with the Planning Department.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Lyon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig H. Lyon  
Director  
Planning Department