



# Municipality of Anchorage

## Planning Department

### Memorandum





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

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**Date:** April 11, 2022

**To:** Planning and Zoning Commission

**Thru:**  Craig Lyon, Planning Director

**Thru:**  Kristine Bunnell, Long-Range Planning Manager

**From:**  Tom Davis, AICP, Senior Planner, Long-Range Planning Division  
 Elizabeth Appleby, AICP, Senior Planner, Current Planning Division

**Subject:** Case No. 2022-0026, Title 21 Text Amendment to Parking and Site Access Standards

#### REVIEW DOCUMENTS AND PROCESS

The Planning Department is proposing text amendments to the Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) Title 21 off-street parking and site access development regulations. AMC 21.03.210, *Title 21 – Text Amendments*, specifies that the Planning and Zoning Commission shall provide a recommendation to the Assembly on Title 21 text amendments after holding a public hearing and determining if three review criteria have been met.

This staff memorandum, the Public Hearing Draft Ordinance, and the information in Attachments 1 through 6 are presented for deliberation and consideration by the Commission. The attachments provide the Public Hearing Draft amendment language in three different formats. It is formatted in Attachment 2 as the Draft Assembly Ordinance for approval; it is shown in Attachment 3 with explanatory annotation; and it is distilled in Attachment 4 into a “clean” version of the amended code sections as they would appear after adoption.

#### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The Public Hearing Draft *Title 21 Text Amendment to Parking and Site Access Standards* creates area-specific lower off-street parking requirements in urban neighborhood context areas. The amendment also streamlines administrative approvals of site-specific reductions in required parking. Additionally, it reforms the Title 21 site access development standards for driveways, bicycle parking, and pedestrian facilities. It tailors some of these site access development standards for the urban neighborhood context areas.

The amendments comprise seven main recommendations:

1. **Streamlined Approvals for Administrative Parking Reductions:** Makes parking reduction approvals non-discretionary (i.e., “by-right”) up to a certain percentage reduction in the number of required parking spaces, without need for parking studies from the applicant or discretionary review/approval by department directors.
2. **More Complete Menu of Available Parking Reduction Strategies:** Adds more parking utilization management strategies available to developers for receiving administrative parking reductions.
3. **Area-Specific, Lower Minimum Parking Requirements in Urban Neighborhoods:** Replaces five existing area-specific administrative parking reductions with area-specific, by-right lower parking requirements tailored to traditional urban neighborhood context areas near Downtown and for transit-supportive development corridors extending from Midtown. Targets the lowered minimum parking requirement to meet the parking utilization in these areas.
4. **Improved Site Access for Pedestrians, Bicyclists, Rideshare, and Public Transit:** Shifts site development regulations toward including alternative modes of site access: ride-share, walking, bicycling, and transit. Consolidates Title 21 provisions for pedestrian-oriented building frontages. Tailors site development and building frontage regulations for urban neighborhood context areas.
5. **Reforms to Site Access Driveway Standards:** Allows and promotes narrower driveways and less paved area for on-site vehicle turnarounds in small multi-unit housing developments of 3 to approximately 6 units. Focuses the existing alley access requirement on urban neighborhoods only and places limits on driveway width in front setbacks in those areas.
6. **Provisions for Smaller Parking Dimensions:** Allows more parking spaces to be smaller, by-right, where appropriate in Anchorage’s traditional urban neighborhoods and for residential, offices, and other uses with lower-turnover parking utilization.
7. **Consolidated, Simpler Regulations:** These changes also consolidate, clarify, and shorten many development regulations in Title 21. This results in easier-to-use regulations.

An illustrated summary of the main recommendations above, providing more information including maps and examples, is available in [Attachment 1: Project Summary](#).

[Attachment 3: Annotated Zoning Code Amendment](#) (pages ii. – iii.) cross-references these main recommendations to a list of the key proposed code amendments, in a table. The table points to the subsections and page numbers that contain the specific code amendment text. Each page of amendment text in Attachment 3 is accompanied by annotation that explains the code change.

## PROJECT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND SCOPE

This project carries out implementation Actions 4-3 and 4-6 of *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan (2040 LUP)* **Goal 4: Neighborhood Housing** and its associated Action 7-2 of *2040 LUP* **Goal 7: Compatible Land Use**:

- Action 4-3:** Amend Title 21 to allow parking reductions by right for residential uses; offer greater reductions in Reinvestment Focus Areas and other key development areas.
- Action 4-6:** Amend Title 21 and other regulations for internal site circulation for vehicles, parking courtyards, and private lanes for compact infill housing.
- Action 7-2:** Incorporate neighborhood compatibility standards in compact housing developments in Actions 3-4, 4-3, 4-4, 4-6, 4-7, and 4-10.

This project is related to other ongoing Title 21 text amendment projects and helps carry out other 2040 Actions to achieve the Goals of the *2040 LUP*. It also helps implement goals and policies of area-specific plans and AMATS<sup>1</sup> transportation plans. Attachment 6 documents the applicable policy guidance of the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* and other elements of the Municipality's *Comprehensive Plan*. General goals for this project include:

- Reduce the cost of development and enable new housing and business growth.
- Support infill development, redevelopment, and walkability in urban neighborhoods.
- Support alternative travel modes such as rideshare, walking, bicycling, and transit.
- Provide more site planning options and flexibility to yield better design outcomes.
- Simplify and make regulations easier to use and save time in review processes.
- Reflect the character and goals for urban and transit-supportive neighborhoods and increase safety and quality of multi-modal site access.

The project scope focuses on carrying out specific actions adopted in the *Comprehensive Plan*. It is limited to making code changes, primarily in the Title 21 zoning ordinance, at low cost, which yield significant gains for development and the public. This amendment project does NOT include:

- Does **NOT** reduce minimum parking requirements in suburban Anchorage Bowl or in Chugiak-Eagle River, Girdwood, or the Turnagain Arm.
- Does **NOT** attempt a comprehensive reassessment of minimum parking requirements by use type.
- Does **NOT** increase spillover parking or require new investments in public infrastructure or changes to municipal street management and maintenance operations. The proposed parking reductions are calibrated to reflect the anticipated parking utilization. Most areas to receive lower parking requirements are already developed neighborhoods.

This project does set up a zoning/parking code framework to enable future improvements and innovations in street and curb parking management. This could yield further efficiencies in parking utilization, land use, snow management, and improved neighborhood street design.

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<sup>1</sup> Anchorage Metropolitan Area Solutions (AMATS) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation planning for Anchorage and Chugiak-Eagle River.

## CODE AMENDMENT RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

**Project Need and Rationale.** Off-street parking and driveway access standards are often the costliest and most land-consuming zoning requirements for multiple-dwelling, mixed-use, and commercial developments. When more parking spaces are required than are used, excessive parking can result in loss of housing unit construction, increased rents on remaining units to pay for building the parking, stymied economic reinvestment, discouragement of transportation alternatives, increased road congestion, constraints on good design, degraded quality of life, and lost small business opportunities. In addition, when alternative modes of site access like walking and bicycling are not accommodated, automobile-focused regulations can further depress the public's access to and usage of economical, equitable, healthy, and sustainable transportation alternatives. Parking requirements often become the de-facto limit against compact urban infill/redevelopment called for in the *Comprehensive Plan*, because they force developers to construct smaller buildings than the zoning allows.

Data indicates that Title 21 is requiring more parking than is utilized in some parts of Anchorage. It is also more difficult than necessary for various types of development projects that experience lower parking utilization to receive approvals for administrative parking reductions. Site plan requirements also de-emphasize the access needs and convenience of pedestrians and bicyclists while inducing overly wide and costly motor vehicle access driveways and on-site circulation.

**Amendment Methodology.** An interagency project team reviewed the code language for clarity, studied data on local parking utilization rates in urban neighborhood developments, and researched household income and vehicle ownership rates by census tract. Future parking utilization in urban neighborhoods was forecast in context of socio-economic trends, land use patterns, continued availability of free subsidized parking, and availability of transportation alternatives for walking, bicycling, and public transportation. The team compared the forecast parking utilization rate to the minimum off-street parking requirements in Title 21.

The project team also evaluated the current parking requirements for consistency with adopted community plans and goals for housing, mixed-use centers, congestion management, pedestrian access, transit-supportive development corridors, livable communities, and other priorities. The team studied parking reform experiences of other cities, and trends in parking management and planning practice in North America. These goals and best practices were evaluated against local development scenarios and municipal operations, implementation, and enforcement capabilities.

The project team sought feedback and guidance from public agencies, private developers, design professionals, businesses, community organizations, and residents in public meetings and consultations from fall 2020 through 2021. The team developed alternative options for replacing area-specific administrative parking reductions with by-right, area-specific parking requirements tailored to forecast parking utilization in urban neighborhoods. Public feedback indicated support for tailoring area-specific parking and site access standards in three kinds of urban contexts: Traditional Urban Neighborhoods (e.g., Fairview), Edge Urban Neighborhoods (e.g., Spenard), and outlying Transit-Supportive Development Corridors extending into suburban parts of the Bowl (e.g., Lake Otis south of Tudor). Public feedback supported decreasing minimum parking requirements to the forecast average peak-hour parking utilization rate in urban neighborhoods.

The project team also evaluated the effectiveness of various site-specific *parking demand reduction strategies*, such as shared parking agreements, vanpool rideshare programs, and extra bicycle parking, in reducing parking utilization and vehicle miles travelled. The team reviewed the existing menu of Title 21 administrative parking reductions and Anchorage’s track record of municipal approvals of parking reductions for the past 20 years. The team found that relatively few eligible development projects in urban neighborhoods were taking advantage of the available parking reductions. Making administrative parking reduction approvals non-discretionary (i.e., “by-right”) up to a certain percentage reduction<sup>2</sup> and simplifying the approval criteria could encourage greater developer usage. The team also identified new, potentially effective, and desirable kinds of parking strategies that could be added to the current menu of Title 21 parking reduction strategies.

**Evaluation of Site Access Development Standards.** To balance the zoning regulations treatment of automobile parking versus alternative ways to meet community accessibility goals, the project team evaluated current Title 21 minimum requirements for pedestrian accessibility, secure bicycle parking, and pedestrian-friendly site plan layouts to answer the question: Does current Title 21 ensure adequate pedestrian accessibility and bicycle parking to accommodate forecast trip mode share and goals for alternative modes of access? Driveway and parking facility dimensional standards were also reevaluated, with respect to goals for efficient site use and urban design. Agency and expert consultations assisted the evaluation of driveway access standards.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Public engagement for these code amendments began with pre-consultations (January-October 2021). The project team sought public and agency feedback on the general policy direction for Title 21 parking and site access amendments. After receiving feedback from pre-consultation meetings, design workshops, and survey questionnaire results, the Department prepared a Community Discussion Draft showing proposed text changes to Title 21 in October of 2021. The Community Discussion Draft also included an annotated format of the amendments with explanations of the changes as well as a project summary sheet summarizing the changes.

Feedback from dozens of consultations and public meetings with private-sector development experts, design/architectural professionals, business organizations, neighborhoods, public agencies, municipal committees and commissions, and individuals helped shape the draft text amendments. Comments and feedback indicated overall support for lowering parking requirements in specific areas, streamlining approvals of site-specific parking reductions, reforming some residential driveway requirements, and improving site access for bicyclists, pedestrians, ride-share, and public transit. Some commenters recommended eliminating minimum parking requirements or lowering them for the entire Municipality. Others were concerned about parking spillover effects on neighboring streets and properties, street and sidewalk maintenance and snow-clearing, and parking enforcement.

Public and agency comments on the proposed changes were obtained using the following methods:

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<sup>2</sup> Percentage reductions based the strategy’s effect on actual parking utilization rates and vehicle miles travelled.

- **Design Workshops, Public Information Sessions, and Forum.** The project team held three public design workshops with community professionals and the public, two open houses, and two public information sessions for anyone to attend. In addition, the project team discussed the proposed Title 21 text amendments at the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce “Make it Monday” forum, which included live polls of policy choices.
- **Online Survey and Live Poll Questionnaires.** An online survey questionnaire covering all aspects of the potential range of amendments was offered to meeting attendees and made available on the project website. The team used the online survey questionnaire along with design workshops and a forum with interactive live polls to obtain feedback on policy direction. Input on these policy choices shaped the draft text amendments.
- **Outreach to Community Organizations.** Presentations with opportunity for comments and questions were given to the Federation of Community Councils (FCC) Board of Delegates and to 14 Community Councils. The project team gave updates at four more FCC meetings and attended additional council meetings in Fairview and South Addition. Presentations were provided for other community and business organizations.
- **Agency Consultations.** Consultations were held with multiple agencies and commissions involved in street ROW planning, management, maintenance, and fleet operations.

<i>Table 1. Stakeholders Consulted for Title 21 Parking and Site Access Amendments</i>	
Experts, Stakeholders, and General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anchorage Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Anchorage Community Land Trust</li> <li>• Anchorage Homebuilders Association</li> <li>• Bike Anchorage</li> <li>• Community Councils</li> <li>• Property owners, residents, developers, and engineering and design professionals</li> </ul>
Municipal Departments and Other Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anchorage Community Development Authority</li> <li>• EasyPark (Anchorage Parking Services)</li> <li>• Anchorage Fire and Police Departments</li> <li>• MOA Land Use/Right-of-Way Enforcement</li> <li>• MOA Public Transportation Department</li> <li>• MOA Real Estate Department</li> <li>• MOA Street Maintenance</li> <li>• MOA Traffic Engineering Department</li> <li>• State of Alaska DOT&amp;PF</li> </ul>
Municipal Boards, Commissions, and Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AMATS Policy and Technical Advisory Committees</li> <li>• Anchorage Public Transit Advisory Board</li> <li>• Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission</li> <li>• Anchorage Housing, Homeless, and Neighborhood Development (HHAND) Commission</li> </ul>

## COMMENTS RECEIVED REGARDING THE PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT

**Public Hearing Draft Distribution.** The Public Hearing Draft Parking and Site Access Amendment was released for agency and public review on February 7, 2021 and scheduled for the April 11 Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing. Notice was provided for Case 2022-0026 in accordance with the procedures of AMC 21.03.020H., *Notice*. The documents were posted on the Planning Department webpages and distributed for review and comment to all Community Councils, review agencies, and other interested parties. The public hearing schedule was announced on the Municipality of Anchorage Public Notices webpages.

Two public information meetings were held, at noon and 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 8. The project team appeared at the January and February meetings of the Federation of Community Councils Board of Delegates. Additional appearances and consultations were held upon request. The project team has continued to meet to discuss the public hearing draft with public agencies and appear at municipal advisory commissions and committees.

**Comments Received.** Written comments received as of March 31 for Case 2022-0026 from reviewing agencies and community members and organizations are provided in Attachment 5. Several municipal agencies including Watershed Management Services and Right of Way Enforcement provided statements of no comment or objection. The Anchorage Public Transit Advisory Board supported the proposed amendments.

Other comments tended to support the code amendments with specific suggested edits. The Traffic Engineering Department had recommendations for several specific changes: consider modifying other Titles (e.g., Title 9) of Anchorage Municipal Code instead of Title 21 to clarify implementation of proposed Open Option Parking Districts; evaluate how the revised bicycle parking requirements would apply to changes of use in existing buildings; and clarify how low-turnover parking spaces eligible for smaller minimum dimensions would be identified on site plans. A community council supported the amendments to simplify project permitting, maintain green space, and to encourage non-motorized access, but requested clarifying the on-street parking management and right-of-way maintenance criteria for creating Open Option Parking Districts.

Other comments supported the proposed changes to strengthen bicycle parking requirements and make bicycle parking facilities more secure, while recommending changes to require at least a few bike parking spaces to be located outdoors for convenient short-term parking, to not count in-dwelling bicycle parking toward the bike parking requirement, and to remove minimum automobile parking requirements entirely from Title 21. An individual commenter raised concerns regarding on-street parking but supported efforts to make Anchorage a more walkable city. A second individual commenter provided overall support for the code amendments with some concerns for gentrification of neighborhoods with an urban context.

**Issue-Response.** After the public hearing, upon the request of the Commission, the project staff team is available to address the public comments received at the time of writing of this staff memorandum and any comments received afterward in an issue-response summary memorandum. Such issue-response summary could include additional recommended edits from the Department to the public hearing draft parking and site access amendments.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS OF CONSISTENCY WITH TITLE 21 TEXT AMENDMENT APPROVAL CRITERIA**

AMC 21.03.210., *Title 21 - Text Amendments*, establishes the approval criteria for text amendments to Title 21. Subsection *21.03.210C., Approval Criteria*, sets forth that text amendments to Title 21 may be approved if the assembly finds that all three of the following approval criteria have been met:

### **Approval Criteria 1: The proposed amendment will promote the public health, safety, and general welfare.**

The proposed text amendments will promote public health, safety, and general welfare by achieving the project goals listed in bullets on page 3 (middle of page). This additionally facilitates urban neighborhood cohesiveness, economic development, and improved quality of life. In particular, the amendments address housing conditions in Anchorage of high rent with low vacancy rates and high home prices with a low housing inventory. Each excess parking space costs, on average, between \$10,000 and \$60,000 to build, and occupies 350 or more square feet. By some estimates, parking accounts for more than 10% of multifamily hard development costs. The parking and site access amendments create the opportunity for smaller, more affordable units, more housing opportunities, and to release lower-income households from paying higher rents to subsidize parking spaces they may not use.

Changes to Title 21 that promote active transportation including walking and bicycling make streets and sidewalks safer, reduce expenditures on healthcare, and reduce roadway congestion, property values, encouraged more frequent visits to businesses, attracted a workforce, increased public health, and reduced noise and pollution.

Lastly, because the amendments are calibrated are calibrated to reflect the anticipated parking utilization, they avoid increasing spillover parking or requiring new investments in public infrastructure or changes to municipal street management and maintenance operations.

### **Approval Criteria 2: The proposed amendment is consistent with the comprehensive plan and the stated purposes of this title.**

- **Consistency with the Stated Purposes of Title 21**  
The purpose of Title 21 is provided in AMC 21.01.030, and includes:
  - A. Encouraging the efficient use of existing infrastructure and the available land supply in the municipality, including redevelopment;*
  - B. Encouraging a diverse supply of quality housing located in safe and livable neighborhoods;*
  - C. Encouraging a balanced supply of nonresidential land uses that are compatible with adjacent land uses and have good access to transportation networks;*
  - D. Promoting well-planned development that reflects the municipality's unique northern setting, natural resources, and majestic surroundings;*



- E. Providing appropriate development incentives to achieve an economically balanced and diverse community and to promote further economic development in the municipality;*
- F. Protecting the diversity of fish and wildlife habitats by minimizing adverse impacts of land development on the natural environment;*
- G. Protecting development and residents of the municipality from flooding, wildfires, seismic risks, and other hazards;*
- H. Encouraging development of a sustainable and accessible system of recreational facilities, parks, trails, and natural open space that meet neighborhood and community-wide needs;*
- I. Promoting development in city centers and infill areas so as to create efficient travel patterns;*
- J. Promoting development patterns and site designs that protect and enhance the surrounding community character and a variety of appealing and distinctive neighborhoods;*
- K. Promoting a pattern of land use and development upon which to provide for adequate transportation, water supply, sewerage, and other public facilities; and*
- L. Encouraging land and transportation development patterns that promote public health and safety and offer transportation choices.*

The text amendments promote development patterns and site designs that protect and enhance the surrounding neighborhood, promote development in city centers and infill areas to create efficient travel patterns, encourage development patterns that promote public health and safety with transportation mode choices, encourage a diverse supply of housing in livable neighborhoods, encourage the efficient use of existing infrastructure and the available land supply, and provide appropriate development incentives.

- **Consistency with the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan***

The proposed Title 21 text amendments are consistent with the Land Use Plan Map in the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan (2040 LUP)*. The amendments support developments that reflect the recommended land uses, physical character, and development densities of the Land Use Plan Map's *land use designations*. This is important to meeting **LUP Policy 1.4**, which recommends using the *2040 LUP* to evaluate proposed changes to Title 21 land use regulations.

In addition, the proposed Title 21 *neighborhood development context areas* to have area-specific parking requirements and tailored site access standards correspond to the Land Use Plan Map's growth-supporting features for **Transit-Supportive Development** and **Traditional Neighborhood Design**:

- The **Transit-Supportive Development** growth-supporting feature identifies corridors with higher levels of public transit service surrounded by a compact, walkable pattern of development with more housing and mixed-use opportunities with reduced dependence on personal automobiles and "urban spaces devoted to parking rather than people, households, and businesses". (*2040 LUP*, page 60)

- The **Traditional Neighborhood Design** growth-supporting feature identifies older urban neighborhoods and districts where infill and redevelopment should support and enhance existing urban patterns of development in with a more highly interconnected street grid, greater connectivity and sidewalks, and alternative transportation. It promotes policies, guidelines and developments that allow for and encourage compact development that reinforces these characteristics. It states that changes to land use regulations may include “alternative parking and driveway standards, and new overlay districts or form-based codes.” (2040 LUP, page 64)

The *2040 LUP Shared Infill Design Principles* (page 34, *2040 LUP*) apply to Title 21 text amendments affecting areas within the two growth-supporting features discussed above. The Title 21 parking and site access amendments in the proposed Title 21 urban neighborhood development context areas reflect the following Shared Infill Design Principles:

- Parking located beside or behind buildings in urban settings.
- Shared parking solutions among neighboring uses. Surface parking layout plans that address the possibility of transitioning to a higher-intensity use.
- Building orientation and scale that frames a welcoming walking environment.
- Windows and entrances of active uses, such as stores, offices, or living spaces, address the street and public realm.
- Parking located behind building frontages, with fewer driveway curb cuts across sidewalks.

The proposed amendments are also consistent with the following applicable Policies of the *2040 LUP*:

- **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 3.2.** 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 4.2.** Allow and encourage innovative compact housing types and a variety of housing options that respond to changing preferences.
- **LUP 4.4.** Encourage property owners to preserve, rehabilitate, or redevelop properties in ways that minimize housing displacement and maintain affordability, health, and safety for residents.
- **LUP 5.4.** Incentivize developments to incorporate “low-impact development” techniques, such as...[...].parking and congestion management strategies...[...].

- **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.
- **Consistency with the *Anchorage 2020—Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan***  
The Policies of *Anchorage 2020* apply in conjunction with the policies of the *2040 LUP*. The proposed code amendments are consistent with the following applicable Policies of *Anchorage 2020* that relate to the Goals of the *2040 LUP*:
  - **Residential Policies 9, 10, 12:** Policy 9 calls for a density of 8 dwelling units per acre or greater for new residential development within a quarter mile of a transit-supportive development corridor street. Policy 10 encourages mixed-use development within major employment centers, mixed-use redevelopment areas, town centers, and neighborhood centers through strategies of multi-modal access and housing needs. Policy 12 states that new higher density residential development, including that in transit-supportive development corridors, shall be accompanied by access to multi-modal transportation, safe pedestrian facilities and building and site design standards.
  - **Commercial Policies 20, 21, 23, 24, 25:** Policy 20 encourages medium- and high-density residential and mixed-use developments in aging and underutilized areas within and adjacent to major employment centers. Policies 21 recommends that all new commercial development be located and designed to improve overall land use efficiency, traffic flow, transit use, and pedestrian access. Policies 22, 23, 24, and 25 recommend that: Major employment centers are to promote compact and mixed-use such that people may walk between businesses, orient businesses to the street, and have a pedestrian-oriented environment; Town centers are to have an enhanced pedestrian environment; and Neighborhood commercial centers are to be designed with a goal of reducing vehicle trips and distance for neighborhood residents to minimize traffic impacts.
  - **Transportation Policies 30, 32, 34:** Policy 30 states that transportation and land use policies and programs shall include multi-modal and intermodal access, pedestrian-to-transit linkages, congestion management, optimal use of parking, and minimization of air quality impacts. Policy 32 calls for congestion management techniques for efficient use of the existing road system, with strategies to include reforms to parking standards. Policy 34 calls for transit-supportive development corridors to include a pedestrian-oriented environment, residential densities of 8 dwelling units per acre or more, and new commercial development to be oriented to the street with parking on the side or rear of the building.
  - **General Design & Environment Policy 46:** Policy 46 calls for protecting and enhancing the unique appeal of individual residential neighborhoods.

- **Consistency with Area-Specific Plans**

The parking and site access amendments conform to neighborhood and district plan policies regarding infill and redevelopment, land use, and urban design in general. These plans include primarily the *East Anchorage District Plan*, *Fairview Neighborhood Plan*, *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*, *Spenard Corridor Plan*, *West Anchorage District Plan*, and the *Anchorage Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan*. The amendments bring Title 21 into conformance with the following specific parking and site access policies of the *Spenard Corridor Plan* and *Fairview Neighborhood Plan*, as follows:

- **Consistency with Area-Specific Plans: *Spenard Corridor Plan***

The parking and site access amendments are consistent with the following Street Edge Character, Bicycle, and Vehicle Parking Policies of the *Spenard Corridor Plan*:

- The amendments are consistent with the **Street Edge Character Policy 3.20**, referring to features of private development that occur adjacent to the street frontage. Street edge characteristics include building setbacks and placement and parking location on site that promote walking and bicycling.
- The amendments are consistent with **Policy 5.27: Plan for Bicycle Amenities**, by setting minimum requirements for convenient, secure places to park bicycles, including bike parking that is protected from the elements.
- The amendments carry out **Policy 5.28: Provide Flexibility in Parking Requirements**, to enable developments in Spenard to provide only the parking they need to accommodate parking utilization, rather than oversupply parking.
- The amendments move Title 21 toward conformity with **Policy 5.29, Promote Compact Parking Design**, by counting EV charging stations as parking, tailoring pedestrian-friendly frontage standards for urban neighborhoods, and incentivizing carpool, vanpool, and car-share programs with dedicated parking spaces.
- The amendments are consistent with **Policy 5.30: Promote Shared Parking**, by allowing non-discretionary approvals (i.e., “by-right”) for shared parking agreements and off-site parking agreements.
- The amendments change the Title 21 approach to effectively achieve **Policy 5.31: Promote On-Street Parking**. The amendments support the creation of parking management districts that guarantee on-street parking spaces will be available for parkers, and that parking rules are enforced.
- The amendments carry out **Policy 5.32, Promote Efficient Management of Parking**. They streamline approvals of off-site and shared-parking agreements, create administrative parking reductions for carshare programs and parking pricing strategies (unbundled parking and parking cash-out), and enable establishment of parking management districts that manage the parking supply on an aggregate basis rather than through minimum off-street parking requirements on individual lots.

- **Consistency with Area-Specific Plans: *Fairview Neighborhood Plan***

The parking and site access amendments are consistent with the *Fairview Neighborhood Plan Goal/Strategy 2.4*, by proposing area-specific, tailored urban zoning regulations that promote more pedestrian interaction, such as with maximum front setbacks for buildings on the Gambell Street mixed-use corridor.

The parking and site access amendments are also consistent with the *Fairview Neighborhood Plan Goal/Strategy 3.2*: “Reduce on-site parking requirements; increase on-street parking and develop parking structures.” It fully or partly carries two recommended actions for this strategy including to, “Modify Title 21 parking requirements to reduce required on-site parking”; and “Expand the Anchorage Community Development Authority to Fairview.”<sup>3</sup>

- **Consistency with the *AMATS 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan***

Parking requirements are not solely a land use issue or a technical matter to be left to traffic engineers. They are a policy choice at the intersection of land use and transportation planning. Parking is a key component of the transportation system, providing the terminal transportation facility at the end of each vehicle trip. By favoring private vehicle transportation and occupying one- to two-thirds of many urban properties, parking reduces the practicality of other transportation modes and induces motor vehicle congestion.

The proposed code amendments implement Anchorage transportation planning policies and strategies that support multi-modal transportation options and reduce surface parking. The amendments are consistent with the following actions and policies of the *AMATS 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan* that fall under Goal 3: Improve Travel Conditions, Goal 5: Promote Environmental Sustainability, and Goal 6: Quality Decision-Making:

- **3E-5. Action:** Support MOA Planning and Traffic departments on parking strategies that support multi-modal transportation options.
- **3H-2. Policy:** Promote increased use of TDM/TSM measures.
- **3I-1. Action:** Work with MOA Planning to implement the 2040 Land Use Plan to increase land use diversity and transit-supportive land use development consistent with the plan.
- **3I-2. Policy:** Support initiatives that increase bicycle, pedestrian, and transit mode share.
- **5D-1. Action:** Work on expanding the vanpool program.
- **6F-1. Action:** Work with MOA Planning and the private sector to install non-motorized friendly amenities.
- **6F-3. Action:** Coordinate across disciplines on parking requirement changes including parking pricing, off-street parking mandates, and ways to reduce surface parking and identify opportunities for non-motorized improvements.

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<sup>3</sup> The Anchorage Community Development Authority includes EasyPark (Anchorage Parking Services), which manages on-street parking in the Downtown CBD.

- **Consistency with the *AMATS Non-Motorized Transportation Plan***

The proposed code amendments support multi-modal transport options and will improve the quality and quantity of bicycle parking for new development within the proposed urban neighborhood context areas, which is consistent with the *AMATS Non-Motorized Transportation Plan*. The amendments are consistent with objectives 1-I and 1-V under Goal 1 of the *Non-Motorized Plan*, to increase the number of pedestrians and bicyclists using the non-motorized transportation network, and to reduce car use on roadways by providing incentives for non-motorized transportation.

Research and expert consultations indicate that the absence of secure, convenient bicycle parking at the end of a bicycle trip is a primary barrier to increasing bicycle usage as a share of all trip modes. The *Non-Motorized Plan* integrates Goal 5 from the former *Anchorage Bicycle Plan*, to: “Provide support facilities and amenities designed to enhance the bicycle network and encourage the use of bicycling as a practical transportation system.” The proposed text amendments to the Title 21 bicycle parking requirements carry out Policy 5.1 from Goal 5 carried over into the *Non-Motorized Plan*, to “Review zoning codes for bicycle parking to include parking requirements for bicycle parking in well-monitored, lit, secure areas that are protected from the elements and are convenient to the entrances of buildings.”

Chapter 7, Section 7.5 of the *Non-Motorized Plan* establishes design guidelines for short-term and long-term (e.g., employee, resident) bicycle parking facilities. The proposed amendments move Title 21 toward conformance with the design guidelines in Section 7.5 for bicycle racks, bicycle lockers, and secure parking areas.

**Approval Criteria 3: The proposed amendment is necessary or desirable because of changing conditions, new planning concepts, or other social or economic conditions.**

Recent news stories in Anchorage media have highlighted housing shortages and high housing costs. The average price of an Anchorage home is now over \$400,000 with a very low supply<sup>4</sup>. The median rent has also gone up while vacancy rates have decreased<sup>5</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated and exacerbated these trends. The code amendments will allow greater flexibility in parking requirements to facilitate the development of a variety of housing types, including multi-family and mixed use, with fewer expensive parking spaces. Parking lots can take up most of a property and result in residents paying unnecessary parking spaces and paved areas. These code amendments will help address the costly and limited supply of Anchorage housing units.

Many cities have taken action to reexamine off-street parking requirements over the last

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<sup>4</sup> DeMarban, Alex. 2022. “Average price of an Anchorage home tops \$420K amid ‘scary’ low inventory”. *Anchorage Daily News*. Published March 3, 2022. Accessed March 28, 2022. <https://www.adn.com/business-economy/2022/03/03/average-price-of-an-anchorage-home-rises-to-over-400k-amid-scary-low-inventory/>

<sup>5</sup> George, Kavitha. 2021. “Rent up, vacancy down: How the pandemic impacted Alaska’s rental market”. *Alaska Public Media*. Published September 13, 2021. <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2021/09/13/rent-up-vacancy-down-how-the-pandemic-impacted-alaskas-rental-market/>

two decades. Landmark publications such as *The High Cost of Free Parking*<sup>6</sup> have highlighted the hidden impacts of excessive parking areas that degrade urban design, subsidize motorists, make housing more expensive, and preclude other ways of moving around besides a vehicle. The American Planning Association and other organizations have published a growing number of reports, articles, models, and guides that indicate that minimum parking requirements to meet demand in an auto-oriented environment for all land uses in every land use context is both inefficient and undesirable<sup>7</sup>. Automobile-centered urban environments have become extremely expensive. Factors include scarce land supply and rising land costs, increasing infrastructure and development costs, and the re-direction of urban growth inward toward urban infill and redevelopment. Municipal governments and private property owners in many cities including Anchorage can no longer afford to subsidize excess free parking as easily as before.

The planning field has also come to recognize the value of older, urban neighborhoods, and adjust land use regulations to such environments. The proposed Title 21 amendments tailor parking requirements to urban neighborhoods. They leverage recent area-specific public investments in higher levels of public transit service, sidewalks, and bicycle routes.

## **DISCUSSION OF ON-STREET PARKING MANAGEMENT DISTRICTS**

In current Title 21, only developments in the Downtown Anchorage central business district and Girdwood New Townsite zoning districts are exempt from off-street parking requirements. The Title 21 parking and site access amendment project team initially explored removing minimum parking requirements in at least some additional urban neighborhood areas, such as Fairview. Some members of the public advocated eliminating Title 21 parking requirements entirely. A growing number of cities in the U.S. are replacing off-street parking requirements with a combination of parking demand management strategies, on-street curb parking management/enforcement, and alternative transportation modes.

However, limitations in existing street design, winter street maintenance (e.g., snow removal), and on-street parking enforcement in Anchorage's urban neighborhoods constrained how far the draft Title 21 amendments propose to decrease the area-specific parking requirements. On-street parking enforcement outside of Downtown Anchorage is currently limited to three APD community service officers. Rolled-curb sidewalks invite drivers to park on the sidewalk itself, hindering safe pedestrian access. Anchorage has a longer, colder, and snowier winter season than any other sizeable North American city. Snow usually accumulates without melting away. Snow plowing of local streets can take days or weeks. Property owners do not typically clear their sidewalks, and most local sidewalks serve as long-term snow storage for street plows. Streets are often either too narrow or poorly designed to accommodate the combined needs of on-street parking, snow storage, and sidewalks. As a result of these limitations, the public hearing draft Title 21 text amendment avoids reducing area-specific off-street minimum parking requirements so low as to rely upon on-street parking management and enforcement, snow clearing from streets and sidewalks, or street and pedestrian facility reconstruction.

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<sup>6</sup> Shoup, Donald. 2005. *The High Cost of Free Parking*. Planners Press.

<sup>7</sup> American Planning Association. 2022. "Knowledgebase Collection: Rethinking off-street Parking Requirements". Accessed March 28, 2022. <https://www.planning.org/knowledgebase/parkingrequirements/>

To address street parking management challenges, the proposed Title 21 parking amendment ordinance includes an enabling provision to allow Anchorage to establish *parking management districts* in the future. The ordinance does not create or delineate a specific parking district in any neighborhood; rather, it establishes public approval process through which the community can, in the future, delineate areas where on-street parking would be managed and enforced to the benefit of parkers, property owners, street maintenance operations, and pedestrians. Property developments in such districts could then be exempted from minimum off-street parking requirements. Specifically, public hearing draft section 21.07.090E.7., *Open Option Parking District*, (*Attachment 3*, Pages 29 – 31), proposes to establish an enabling provision for a parking management district, in which there would be no off-street parking requirements in such district.

However, reviewers from agencies and the public, although supportive of parking management districts, were confused by the public hearing draft section 21.07.090E.7. establishing a new kind of on-street parking management district within Title 21. Comments from the Traffic Engineering Department (see Attachment 5) and other agency consultations suggest the Municipality should instead establish this kind of parking management district in AMC Title 9, *Traffic*. Title 9 is the title of the municipal code that regulates the management of on-street curb parking, and it addresses parking permit districts. Title 21 does not regulate on-street parking in public street rights-of-way.

In addition, agency comments received from the Traffic Engineering Department also express that the public hearing draft Section 21.07.090F.7. “Parking Reduction for District Parking” seems redundant to the parking district proposed in subsection 21.07.090E.7. that would exempt off-street parking requirements. It is confusing to have two different kinds of parking districts with different parking reductions/exemptions. The Parking Reduction for District Parking is carried over (with amendments) from current Title 21. Its primary objective has been to allow administrative parking reductions for developments near publicly managed shared parking facilities. For example, there is a public parking lot on the northwest corner of W. 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Spenard Road. The parking reduction does not necessarily need to refer to a parking district.

In response to these comments, the Planning Department staff reevaluated the Open Option Parking District in 21.07.090E.7. and the District Parking reduction in 21.07.090F.7., and determined changes should be made to streamline and clarify the draft Title 21 text amendments:

- The proposed subsections 21.07.090E.7.a. through e. (pages 29-30 in Attachment 3) which establish a new kind of parking district should be moved to AMC Title 9, *Traffic*. Existing Title 9 provisions for parking permit districts should be amended to accommodate the new kind of parking district. Only the proposed Title 21 subsection 21.07.090E.7.f. (page 31 in Attachment 3), which modifies the off-street parking requirements on private properties located within an established parking district, should remain in the draft Title 21 amendments. Title 21 Section 21.09.090E.7. should simply establish area-specific off-street parking regulations for properties within the parking districts established in Title 9.
- Section 21.07.090F.7., *Parking Reduction for District Parking*, should be modified to focus on administrative parking reductions for developments near publicly managed shared parking facilities, rather than parking districts.

These two changes are addressed in the Department Recommendation below.



## DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends **APPROVAL** of the Public Hearing Draft Title 21 Text Amendment to the Parking and Site Access Regulations, with the following amendments:

1. Amend proposed section 21.07.090E.7., *Open Option Parking District*, and all other sections that refer to Open Option Parking Districts, as follows:
  - a) Delete proposed subsections 21.07.090E.7.a. through e. (Attachment 3, pages 29 - 31) from the public hearing draft amendments.
  - b) Re-number proposed subsection 21.07.090E.7.f. (Attachment 3, page 31) to become a stand-alone subsection, and amend it for clarity and simplicity, as follows:

**Z[F].** ***Requirements for Developments in [OPEN OPTION] Parking Benefit Districts***  
The following area-specific parking regulations apply to all developments located in parking benefit districts established pursuant to title 9:

**a[I].** No off-street parking is required [FOR ANY DEVELOPMENT], except that accessible (ADA) parking spaces required by 21.07.090J. shall be provided.

**b[II].** Development projects that result in 10 or more dwelling units, [10 OR MORE BEDROOMS OF GROUP LIVING,] new construction of 10,000 or more square feet of [NON-RESIDENTIAL] gross floor area, or [SUBSTANTIAL] building renovations involving a change of use of 50,000 or more square feet of non-residential gross floor area, shall provide one or more [DISINCENTIVES FOR OFF-STREET PARKING UTILIZATION AND INCENTIVES FOR ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF SITE ACCESS, BY PROVIDING] parking reduction strategies from section 21.07.090F., [TABLE 21.07-9]. Structured parking, industrial uses, and affordable housing units that meet 21.07.110F., are exempt from this requirement.

**(A)** The applicant shall select parking reduction strategies [SELECTED] from section 21.07.090F.1., Table 21.07-9 that [SHALL] amount to a total reduction of at least 10 percent [FROM WHAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE THE MINIMUM PARKING REQUIREMENT WERE IT NOT FOR THE OPEN OPTION PARKING DISTRICT,] using the "Reduction Amount" column in Table 21.07-9. The total reduction required shall increase an additional 1 percent for each 10 off-street parking spaces [ABOVE 20 PARKING SPACES] not used for a parking reduction strategy in the development. In no case shall the total reduction be required to exceed 25 percent.

**(B)** The requirements of 21.07.090F. for receiving parking reductions apply.

**(C)** The [PARKING REDUCTIONS IN SECTION F. OF TABLE 21.07-9 DO NOT COUNT. HOWEVER, THE] applicant may propose strategies not included in Table 21.07-9, subject to 21.07.090F.8, Discretionary Parking Reductions.

- c) Replace all references to “Open Option Parking Districts” in the public hearing draft Title 21 text amendments with a more generic reference to “parking benefit districts established pursuant to Title 9, *Traffic*”.
2. Replace the *Open Option Parking District* content of the deleted proposed subsections 21.07.090E.7.a. through e. with a proposed amendment to AMC Title 9 modifying existing parking permit district to accommodate a new kind of street/parking management district called a *parking benefit district*. The Planning Department should work with other municipal agencies to prepare the Title 9 amendment text for Assembly review and action as a separate ordinance alongside the Title 21 Parking and Site Access Amendments ordinance recommended by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Title 9 amendment should address:
    - A clear public approval process for creating parking benefit districts.
    - An available supply of on-street public parking in the parking benefit district.
    - Enforcement of time limits, fees, and no-parking periods (such as for plowing).
    - Drivers paying market prices for use of parking spaces, such as through permits.
    - Prices that vary and are adjusted as needed to produce a target occupancy rate.
    - Parking revenues paying for on-street parking management and enforcement.
    - Reinvestment of any excess revenue directly back into the parking district neighborhood for public services such as improving streets and sidewalks, planting street trees or snow storage spaces, or clearing snow from sidewalks.
  3. Amend Section 21.07.090F.7., *Parking Reduction for District Parking*, and all other sections that refer to this parking reduction, as follows:
    - a. Modify proposed subsection 21.07.090F.1., Table 21.07-9, in the third row of Table Section E. (page 47 in Attachment 3) by changing “District Parking” to read “Nearby Public Parking.”
    - b. Modify proposed subsection 21.07.090F.7. (page 34 in Attachment 3) as follows:
      7. **Parking Reduction for Nearby Public[DISTRICT] Parking**  
The traffic engineer may reduce the minimum number of required off-street parking spaces for uses near a public parking facility where the parking spaces are managed and maintained for shared public use[WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF A MUNICIPALLY RECOGNIZED PARKING DISTRICT (AS DEIFNED IN 21.15.040) THAT PROVIDES OFF-SITE PARKING FACILITIES TO SERVE AN AREA]. To determine eligibility for this reduction or the size of the reduction to be allowed, the traffic engineer shall consider the relative distance to the public parking facility [THE USE FROM THE DISTRICT PARKING FACILITY] and the factors listed in 21.07.090F.8.b.
    - c. In Section 21.15.040, *Definitions*, delete the term and definition for “Parking District, Municipally Recognized” (Attachment 3, page 83, lines 9-13).

## RECOMMENDED FINDINGS

The Planning Department submits the following draft *findings of fact* for consideration by the Planning and Zoning Commission:

1. The proposed Title 21 text amendments to the parking and site access standards meets the approval criteria in 21.03.210C., *Approval Criteria* for Title 21 text amendments.
2. The proposed Title 21 text amendments respond to forecast housing needs and Goal 4: Neighborhood Housing 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.
3. The draft Title 21 text amendments respond to forecast employment growth and 2040 Goals 2 and 3 for growth through infill, redevelopment, and mixed-use centers and corridors in the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*.
4. The Title 21 text amendments respond to the unique development characteristics of urban neighborhoods and identifies these neighborhoods in a manner that enables appropriate, contextual development standards in Title 21.
5. Areas identified in the proposed neighborhood context maps for lower area-specific parking requirements and tailored site access standards correspond to the areas that the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* designates with growth-supporting features, including Traditional Neighborhood Development, Transit-Supportive Development Corridors, and Reinvestment Focus Areas (RFAs).
6. The proposed Title 21 text amendments to the parking and site access standards respond to AMATS transportation planning policies and strategies for automobile and bicycle parking and pedestrian access as important components of transportation infrastructure and factors in congestion management and equitable access between land uses.
7. The proposed Title 21 text amendments are consistent with district and area-specific plans, including the *Spenard Corridor Plan* and the *Fairview Neighborhood Plan*.
8. The Title 21 text amendment to the parking and site access standards enable future improvements and innovations in municipal on-street parking management that could, in the future, yield further efficiencies in parking utilization, off-street parking reductions, street and sidewalk snow management, and improved street and sidewalk design.
9. The proposed Title 21 text amendments to the parking and site access standards reflect a significant public involvement effort to inform, engage, and incorporate input from stakeholders, experts, and the public to develop and revise the ordinance.

- Attachments:
1. Project Summary
  2. Public Hearing Draft Assembly Ordinance
  3. Annotated Zoning Code Amendment Language
  4. Clean Version of Proposed Amended Code Language (Non-annotated)
  5. Comments Received
  6. Background Information