

ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY HOUSING ACTION STRATEGIC PLAN

Working Draft Plan v. 10-17-23

This document synthesizes the ideas in several prior plans, visioning and planning documents, Assembly resolutions, and other reference points for crafting a strategic plan:

- Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan (2001) [link](#)
- Anchorage Housing Assessment (2012) [link](#)
- Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan (2017) [link](#)
 - 94 actions identified through planning process
 - Many brought by Live Work Play Housing Committee and others
- Anchorage Climate Action Plan (2019) [link](#)
- Assembly Summary Actions from Planning Session (Sep 2022) [link](#)
- Assembly Housing Action Resolution, AR 2022-416 (Dec 2022) [link](#)
- Planning Dept. Housing White Paper (May 2023) [link](#)
- Housing Retreat Summary Strategies (May 2023) [link](#)
- Assembly Guiding Principles for Housing, AR 2023-260(S) (Aug 2023) [link](#)
- Policy recommendations from subject matter experts, industry and trade groups, including: Planning Department, for-profit and nonprofit developers, Anchorage Home Builders Association, AWWU, ACDA, and other entities.

The highlights throughout the document are placeholders or call attention to discussion questions.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK **DRAFT**

Vision

The Municipality of Anchorage has affordable, abundant, and diverse housing opportunities to ensure that everyone who wants to live here can find a place to live that fits their needs and preferences.

We Want More Housing!

Cottage houses	Triplexes and four-plexes	Supportive housing	Housing for seniors	Starter homes
Affordable rentals	Multi-generational housing	Urban, walkable living	Innovative design	New ownership models

Guiding Principles

- Economic prosperity
- Attainable home ownership
- Housing choice
- Housing stability
- Community for all people, cultures, lifestyles, and across the lifespan
- Opportunities for everyone to succeed
- Balancing perspectives and priorities of all residents
- Innovation
- Collaboration

Goals

The Assembly will take action through policy, investment, communication, convening and collaboration with other stakeholders to achieve these goals:

1. Increase the supply of housing units for sale and for rent.

[actions under this goal would be grouped into multiple categories; some may span several categories]

Strategy: *Redevelopment and Reuse* **example actions**

- Code safe harbor: Remove or reduce requirements for renovation of existing properties, to reduce the amount of effort and cost needed to reuse buildings.
- Adaptive reuse: Simplify change of use process for properties to become residential uses.

Strategy: *Infill and New Construction* **example actions**

- Reduce costs and barriers to development of 3 and 4 plexes (AO 2023-103)
- Encourage rezones to bring properties' current zoning with 2040 Land Use Plan

Strategy: *Zoning and Land Use Policy* **example actions**

- Encourage denser development (housing units per acre) by revising dimensional standards, minimum lot size and coverage, height limits, and other components.
- Simplify and reduce prescriptive policies: determine where requirements can become guidelines.

Strategy: *Infrastructure and Public Utilities* **example actions**

- Increase shared public-private responsibility for the cost of offsite improvements: water and sewer utility extensions, road and drainage upgrades, and other public infrastructure required of new development.

2. Diversify the housing market: housing types, sizes, price points, locations, and ownership models.

- **example action** Explore code changes needed to support creation of housing through a community land trust model.

For discussion:

- **Should policies focus on targeting specific types of housing, or focus on building housing generally?**
This is an ongoing debate in the fields of planning, development and housing policy. There is increasing recognition that land use reform broadly is needed.
- **Should Goal 2 be its own goal?**

3. Increase access to and ability to remain in safe, affordable, permanent housing for all residents.

- **example action** Support expansion of programs to prevent eviction.
- **example action** Remove barriers for people exiting the corrections system to secure permanent housing.
- **example action** Support local enforcement of the Fair Housing Act to reduce housing discrimination.
- **example action** Increase language access resources available to rental housing organizations, financial literacy, homeownership programs, real estate brokers, financial institutions, and other entities who work with the housing market.

4. Reduce housing cost burdens on residents.

- **example action** Explore policies to protect and preserve current affordable housing stock, such as owner- and renter-occupied units in mobile home parks.
- **example action** Encourage residents to pursue low-cost ways to save energy and money, such as installing programmable thermostats.

For discussion:

- **Are Goals 3 and 4 different, should each be its own goal?**
- **What housing actions should be included in the plan, that are not focused on housing production (land use, development, etc.)?**

5. Increase the proportion of resident-occupied housing units.

- **example action** Focus investment on re-use of vacant and abandoned nuisance properties identified by the Municipality.
- **example action** Create tracking method for short-term rentals (e.g. AO 2023-110)

6. Make the Municipality a better partner in the development process.

- **example action** Implement findings and recommendations of prior studies to improve performance and customer satisfaction with permitting.
- **example action** Support an intentional, customer-focused redesign of the permitting and development review process.
- **example action** Implement cross-function training for all staff within the Community Development Department.
- **example action** Implement quarterly post-action review of at least one already-approved and completed project, to identify lessons learned and areas for improvement.
- **example action** Identify realistic qualification criteria and performance metrics to evaluate projects eligible for incentives (tax abatement, etc.), to ensure public resources are invested with reasonable expectation of public benefit.

Housing Indicators and Targets

The Assembly will monitor the following measurable indicators, and focus effort, investment, and policy decisions to help the community achieve the following targets.

Indicator		Baseline (2022-23)	3-Year Target (2026)	Data Source
1	Number of new construction housing units. > Detached (single family) housing > Attached (multi family) housing		[Increase]	Permit Center, Building permits
2	Number of renovated housing units.		[Increase]	Permit Center, Building permits
3	Number of housing units created from conversion and reuse of existing properties.		[Increase]	Permit Center, Building permits
4	Number of subdivided residential lots.		[Increase]	Planning Dept., Platting Cases
5	Number of accessory dwelling units.		[Increase]	Registration Building permits
6	Average age of homeowner.		[Decrease]	[? Not sure if measurable]
7	Median sale price of housing units by type. > Detached (single family) properties > Condominiums > Attached (multi family) properties		[Decrease]	AK MLS MLS tracks the 3 types. Multi = commercial
8	Number of housing units for sale under the median sale price.		[Increase]	AK MLS
9	Rate of average annual rent increase.	7%	[Decrease]	AK Dept. of Labor, HUD
10	Proportion of resident-occupied housing units compared with all housing units.		[Increase]	Census, American Community Survey
11	Number of vacant and abandoned properties identified by the Municipality.		[Increase]	Code Enforcement (V&A database)
12	Median days between submitting a permit application and receiving a certificate of occupancy.		[Decrease]	Permit Center, Performance Measures

For discussion:

- **Are these the right indicators?**
- How should we track progress?
 - Should we set specific numbers as targets, such as “2,500 new affordable housing units”?
 - Or, should we simply track trend, increase or decrease?
- These indicators mostly focus on outcomes – housing units built, for example.
 - Should we measure Assembly outcomes, funding or policies passed?
 - Or do we hold ourselves to measures that describe the outcomes we want, but we have little direct control over?

Our Assembly Toolbox: Types of Actions We Can Take

- ***Policy***
 - Code changes, resolutions, policy direction
 - Change and simplify our codes and regulations
 - Remove barriers the Muni has control or influence over.
- ***Investment***
 - Incentivize results and choices we want; disincentivize other choices
 - Direct investment (funding, budget decisions)
 - Indirect investment (tax exemptions, fee reductions or waivers).
- ***Communication***
 - Listen and dialogue with the community about their needs, and steps we can take to address those needs
 - Tell the story:
 - Why change is needed, what the problems are
 - What we can do to solve those problems
 - What actions we are taking to solve them
 - (over time) Share back the results of our efforts, both where we achieved the goals, and where we need to try something different.
- ***Convening and Collaboration***
 - Bring together stakeholders for problem-solving and action
 - Identify actions others can take in parallel to achieve shared goals
 - Partner with agencies and community to enact complex policy changes
 - Facilitate and negotiate multi-stakeholder agreements
 - Advocate to other levels of government for them to take action.

Reference language from existing plans

2020 Comp Plan Goals Language

- **General Land Use**: A forward-looking approach to community growth and redevelopment.
- **Residential Uses**: A variety of housing types and densities in safe, attractive neighborhoods that offer a choice of urban, suburban, and rural lifestyles that are appropriate for northern conditions and in harmony with our natural setting.
- **Neighborhood Identity and Vitality**: A variety of safe, pleasant, and distinctive neighborhoods responsive to the diverse needs of residents, with good access to schools, recreation, natural areas, and community facilities.
- **Housing**: A balanced, diverse supply of affordable, quality housing, located in safe and livable neighborhoods with amenities and infrastructure, that reflects Anchorage's varied social, cultural, and physical environment.

LUP (2017) Goals

Goal 1: Plan for Growth and Livability: Anchorage achieves residential and commercial growth, which improves community resiliency and citizens' quality of life as it supports their vision for the future expressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

Goal 2: Infill and Redevelopment: Infill and redevelopment meet the housing and employment needs of residents and businesses in Anchorage.

Goal 3: Centers and Corridors: Mixed-use, walkable commercial centers, and corridors thrive within their neighborhood context, offer housing affordable to a range of incomes, and enable business growth.

Goal 4: Neighborhood Housing: Anchorage's neighborhoods provide a range of places to live, meeting the housing needs of residents at all income levels, household sizes, interests, ages, abilities, and all races and ethnicities.

Goal 5 Infrastructure-Land Use: Coordinated and targeted infrastructure investments catalyze new growth, provide an acceptable return on investment, and equitably improve safety and quality of life.

Goal 6 Accessible Land Use: Anchorage coordinates transportation and land use to provide safe, efficient, and affordable travel choices.

Goal 7 Compatible Land Use: Infill development is compatible with the valued characteristics of surrounding properties and neighborhoods.