

CHAPTER 21.01: GENERAL PROVISIONS

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CHAPTER 21.01: GENERAL PROVISIONS

21.01.010 TITLE AND EFFECTIVE DATE

This title shall be officially known as "Title 21, Land Use Planning, of the Anchorage Municipal Code of Ordinances." It also may be called "Title 21," the "Zoning Ordinance," or "the Land Use Ordinance," and is referred to throughout this document as "this title." This title shall become effective on January 1, 2014. The previous version of this title, effective on December 31, 2013, may be used until December 31, 2014, at the option of an applicant. The transitional provisions of section 21.01.090 below are applicable beginning on January 1, 2015.

(AO 2012-124(S), 2-26-13; AO 2013-117, 12-3-13)

21.01.020 AUTHORITY

This title is adopted pursuant to authority granted generally by the Alaska Constitution, the Alaska Statutes (A.S.), and the Municipal Charter, and specifically by:

- A. Alaska Constitution, Article X, Sect. 11 (Home rule powers);
- B. Municipal Charter, section 10.02(7) (Requires ordinances for land use controls);
- C. Municipal Charter, section 12.02 (Requires a planning commission); and
- D. A.S. 29.35.180(b) (Requires a home rule borough to provide for planning, platting, and land use regulation).

(AO 2012-124(S), 2-26-13)

21.01.030 PURPOSE OF THIS TITLE

The purpose of this title is to implement the comprehensive plan in a manner which protects the public health, safety, welfare, and economic vitality by:

- 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.

(AO 2012-124(S), 2-26-13)

21.01.040 APPLICABILITY AND JURISDICTION

A. General

The provisions of this title shall apply to all land, buildings, structures, and uses thereof located within the municipality, unless an exemption is provided by the terms of this title.

B. Application to Governmental Units

To the extent allowed by law, the provisions of this title shall apply to all land, buildings, structures, and uses owned by government agencies, including all municipal, state, and federal lands, within the corporate limits of the municipality. Where the provisions of this title do not apply to such land, buildings, structures, and uses, such agencies are encouraged to meet the provisions of this title.

C. Compliance Required

No building or structure shall be erected, converted, enlarged, reconstructed, or altered for use, nor shall any land, building, or structure be used or changed, except in accordance with this title. No lot of record that did not exist on the effective date of this title shall be created, by subdivision or otherwise, that does not conform to the applicable requirements of this title, unless allowed by section 21.01.090, *Transitional Provisions*.

(AO 2012-124(S), 2-26-13)

21.01.050 OFFICIAL ZONING MAP

A. Incorporation Into this Ordinance

The official zoning map designates the location and boundaries of the various zone districts established in this title. It consists of a series of map pages adopted by ordinance and any subsequent amendments in accordance with this title. The official zoning map is incorporated herein by reference and referred to as the "zoning map" in this title. The zoning map shall be kept on file in the office of the department and is available for public inspection during normal business hours. The map shall be the final authority as to the current zoning status of lands, water areas, buildings, and other structures in the municipality.

B. Changes to Official Zoning Map

Changes made in zoning district boundaries or other matters portrayed on the official zoning map shall be made only in accordance with the provisions of section 21.03.160, *Rezoning (Zoning Map Amendments)*.

C. Interpretation of District Boundaries

In the case of any dispute regarding the zoning classification of property subject to this title, the official zoning map contained in the department shall control, or other official records as provided below. The director shall use the rules set forth below to interpret the map. Appeals shall be made to the zoning board of examiners and appeals in accordance with section 21.03.050, *Appeals*.

1. Where the zoning map shows a zoning district boundary line located within or following a street or alley right-of-way, utility line right-of-way, or public use easement, the district boundary shall be considered to be in the center of the right-of-way or easement. If the actual location of such right-of-way, or easement, as indicated in a recorded legal

description of such, varies slightly from the location shown on the zoning map, then the actual location shall control.

2. Where the zoning map shows a boundary line as being located a specific distance from a street line or other physical feature, this distance shall control.
3. Where the zoning map shows a district boundary to coincide with a property line or municipal border, the legal property line or municipal border shall be considered to be the district boundary, unless otherwise indicated on the map.
4. Where the zoning map shows a district boundary to not coincide or approximately coincide with any street, alley, or property line, and no dimensions are shown, the location of the boundary shall be determined by use of the scale appearing on the zoning map.
5. Where the zoning map shows a district boundary dividing an existing lot, each part of the lot shall be used in conformity with the standards established by this title for the zoning district in which that part is located.
6. Where the case record conflicts with the zoning map, the case record shall control. For example, if the zoning map shows a property to be zoned R-1, yet the case record shows that the property was actually zoned I-1, the case record would control and the map would be changed to reflect the case record. Any permits issued in reliance on the erroneous designation shall be considered valid under this title; however, the lot, structure, or use shall be considered nonconforming and governed by chapter 21.13, *Nonconformities*.

(AO 2012-124(S), 2-26-13; AO 2020-38, 4-28-20)

21.01.060 CONFLICTING PROVISIONS

A. Conflict with Other Public Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, or Permits

This title is intended to complement other municipal, state, and federal regulations that affect land use. This title is not intended to revoke or repeal any other public law, ordinance, regulation, or permit, except as expressly set forth in ordinance. However, where conditions, standards, or requirements imposed by any provision of this title are either more restrictive or less restrictive than comparable standards imposed by any other public law, ordinance, or regulation, the provisions that are more restrictive or that impose higher standards or requirements shall govern.

B. Conflict with Private Agreements

This title is not intended to revoke or repeal any easement, covenant, or other private agreement. However, where the regulations of this title are more restrictive or impose higher standards or requirements than such easement, covenant, or other private agreement, then the requirements of this title shall govern. Nothing in this title shall modify or repeal any private covenant or deed restriction, but such covenant or restriction shall not excuse any failure to comply with this title. In no case shall the municipality be obligated to enforce the provisions of any easements, covenants, or agreements between private parties.

(AO 2012-124(S), 2-26-13)

21.01.070 SEVERABILITY

A. Invalidating a Provision

If any court of competent jurisdiction invalidates any provision of this title, then such judgment shall not affect the validity and continued enforcement of any other provision of this title.

B. Invalidating the Application of a Provision

If any court of competent jurisdiction invalidates the application of any provision of this title, then such judgment shall not affect the application of that provision to any other building, structure, or use not specifically included in that judgment, unless the circumstances leading to the invalidation are the same or substantially similar with respect to the other building, structure, or use.

C. Invalidating a Condition

If any court of competent jurisdiction invalidates any condition attached to the approval of an application for development approval, then such judgment shall not affect any other conditions or requirements attached to the same approval that are not specifically included in that judgment, unless the circumstances leading to the invalidation of the condition are the same or substantially similar.

(AO 2012-124(S), 2-26-13)

21.01.080 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A. Purpose

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to set forth the goals, objectives, strategies, and policies governing land use development of the municipality. As adopted, this section and the documents incorporated in this section constitute the comprehensive plan of the municipality.

B. Elements

1. Adopted Elements

The comprehensive plan consists of the adopted elements identified in the following table, and which are incorporated in this chapter by reference. Plans or other elements that are not listed below are not official elements of the comprehensive plan, though they may be valid planning tools.

TABLE 21.01-1: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS			
Area/Topic	Plan	Adoption Date ¹	Amendments
Anchorage Bowl	Anchorage 2020, Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan	AO 2000-119(S); 2-20-2001	AO 2002-119; 9-10-2002
	Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan	AO 2017-116, as amended; 9-26-2017	AO 2019-142, as amended; 12-17-2019; AO 2021-40, 5-12-2021; AO 2021-78, 11-1-2021; AO 2021-80, 11-1-2021; AO 2022-1, 2-15-2022; AO 2022-54, 5-24-2022; AO 2023-21, 4-11-2023; AO 2023-83, 9-12-2023; AO 2024-1, 2-27-2024; AO 2024-10, 2-27-24
	Spenard Corridor Plan	AO 2020-74 as amended; 9-15-2020	
	Tudor Road Public Lands and Institutions Plan	AR 1986-162; 9-9-1986	
	3500 Tudor Road Master Plan	AO 2007-118; 11-13-2007	
	Our Downtown: Anchorage Downtown District Plan	AO 2022-27, as Amended, 4-26-2022; AO 2007-113;12-11-2007	AO 2023-22, 4-11-2023
	Hillside District Plan	AO 2010-22; 4-13-2010	AO 2014-134; 11-18-14; AO 2015-17; 3-3-15; AO 2021-25(S); 8-24-21
	Utility Corridor Plan	AO 1990-13(S); 2-27-1990	AO 2003-78; 8-19-2003 AO 2005-121(S); 10-25-2005 AO 2007-97; 7-17-2007
	Section 36 Land Use Study (recommending Alternative 2)	AO 1992-125; 11-10-1992	

TABLE 21.01-1: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

Area/Topic	Plan	Adoption Date ¹	Amendments
	The Ship Creek/Waterfront Land Use Plan (May 1991), including the Transportation Element, as supplemented by the Ship Creek Framework Plan, 7-22-14	AO 1991-88; 6-3-1991	AIM 1991-178 AO 2014-79; 7-22-14
	Potter Valley Land Use Analysis	AO 1999-144; 12-7-1999	
	UMED District Plan	AO 2015-140; 3-22-2016	
	West Anchorage District Plan	AO 2012-47; 7-10-2012	AO 2016-32; 4-12-16
	Government Hill Neighborhood Plan	AO 2013-11; 2-12-2013	AO 2015-18; 3-3-15
	Fairview Neighborhood Plan	AO 2014-108; 9-9-14	
	East Anchorage District Plan	AO 2014-139(S); 12-2-14	
Turnagain Arm	Mountain View Targeted Neighborhood Plan	AO 2016-101; 9-13-2016	
	Turnagain Arm Comprehensive Plan	AO 2009-126; 12-1-2009	
	Girdwood Area Plan	AO 1994-238(S); 2-28-1995	AO 1998-176; 11-24-1998 AO 2006-47; 4-11-2006 AO 2007-112; 9-11-2007
	Crow Creek Neighborhood Land Use Plan	AO 2006-47; 4-11-2006	
	Glacier-Winner Creek Access Corridor Study Final Routing Report	AO 1997-11; 2-4-1997	
	Girdwood-Iditarod Trail Route Study	AR 1997-84; 5-20-1997	
	Girdwood Commercial Areas and Transportation Master Plan	AO 2000-124(S); 2-20-2001	
Chugiak; Eagle River; Eklutna	Girdwood Trails Plan	AO 2024-21; 2-27-2024	
	Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan	AO 1992-133; 1-12-1993	AO 1996-86; 6-25-1996 - amended by Alternative 1 of HLB Parcel 1-085 Land Use Study AO 2006-93(S-1); 12-12-2006 AO 2009-104; 9-15-2009 - amended by Chugiak-Eagle River Site Specific Land Use Plan, January 2009; amended by AO 2011-104 AO 2013-151; 1-14-2014 - amended by Land Use Plan Map AO 2017-67; 5-9-2017 - amended by Land Use Plan Map AO 2017-134; 11-7-2017 - amended by Land Use Plan Map AO 2018-23; 3-20-2018 - amended by update of the Chugiak – Eagle River Site Specific Land Use Plan and by Land Use Plan Map AO 2019-123; 11-5-2019 – amended by Land Use Plan Map
	Eagle River Greenbelt Plan	AR 1985-88; April 1985	
	Eagle River Central Business District Revitalization Plan	AO 2003-74; 5-20-2003	
Environmental Quality	Anchorage Coastal Management Plan	AO 2007-107; 8-28-2007	
	208 Areawide Water Quality Management Plan	AR 1979-151; 7-31-1979	AO 1982-33(S); 4-20-1982
	Eagle River PM-10 Control Plan	AR 1990-30; 2-6-1990	AR 1991-197; 9-24-1991
	Little Campbell Creek Watershed Management Plan	AO 2008-74; 6-24-2008	
	1992 Air Quality Attainment Plan for Anchorage, Alaska	AR 1992-279; 12-8-1992	

TABLE 21.01-1: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

Area/Topic	Plan	Adoption Date ¹	Amendments
	Anchorage Wetlands Management Plan	AO 1995-129; 3-12-1996	AO 2006-94; 7-25-2006 AO 2013-132(S); 7-8-2014
	Chester Creek Watershed Plan	AO 2015-46; 5-14-2015	
Transportation	Street and Highway Landscape Plan	AO 1981-180; 11-3-1981	
	Areawide Trails Plan	AO 1996-140; 4-8-1997	
	Anchorage Non-Motorized Transportation Plan: Pedestrian Plan	AO 2007-96; 10-9-2007	
	Anchorage Non-Motorized Transportation Plan: Bicycle Plan	AO 2010-08; 3-23-2010	
	Official Streets and Highways Plan	AO 2014-63; 6-24-14	
	2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan	AO 2012-30(S); 4-10-2012	
Parks, Greenbelts, and Recreational Facilities	Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan	AO 2005-122; 4-18-2006	
	Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan, Volume 2: Eagle River—Chugiak—Eklutna	AO 1985-188; 12-17-1985	
	Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan, Volume 3: Turnagain Arm	AO 1985-188; 12-17-1985	AO 1987-4; 2-17-1987
	Areawide Library Facilities Plan	AR 1984-83; 4-10-1984	
	Updated Far North Bicentennial Park Plan	AR 1985-87; 5-14-1985	AO 2002-165; 12-10-2002
	Campbell Creek Park System Acquisition and Development Plan	GAAB Resolution No. R1986-72	
	Rabbit Creek Greenbelt Plan	AR 1987-16; 3-31-1987	
	Chester Creek Greenbelt	AR 11-1975; October 1975	
Historic Preservation	Historic Preservation Plan for Anchorage's Original four Neighborhoods	AO 2013-12; 2-12-2013	

¹ AO 2000-119(S), at section 9, provides that elements of the comprehensive plan that were originally adopted by resolution are hereby ratified and confirmed, and shall be deemed to have been adopted on the date that they were adopted by resolution.

2. New Elements

Procedures for amending the comprehensive plan are set forth in section 21.03.070, *Comprehensive Plan Amendments*. That process may be used to amend existing elements of the plan or to adopt new plan elements, including, but not limited to:

- a. Plan elements that address new topic areas, such as, but not limited to, housing or public utilities;
- b. Neighborhood plans;
- c. Town center, district, or small-area plans; and
- d. Land use maps or residential intensity maps.

C. Periodic Review

The comprehensive plan shall be subject to periodic review in accordance with the procedure described in section 21.03.070, *Comprehensive Plan Amendments*.

D. Implementation—Conformity to Plans

- 1. The elements of the comprehensive plan shall be implemented as provided in this title.
- 2. The specific requirements and regulations of this title govern in land use and building approvals and actions under this title, except as provided in subsections D.3. and D. 4. below.
- 3. Amendments to this title, rezonings, conditional uses, subdivisions, and other related discretionary actions under this title shall be consistent with the comprehensive plan,

including the goals, objectives, policies, and strategies of the elements identified in table 21.01-1.

4. Rezoning, conditional uses, and subdivisions shall conform to the land use plan map and other applicable comprehensive plan maps of the elements identified in table 21.01-1.
5. Where comprehensive plan elements conflict, the most recently adopted shall govern.

(AO 2012-124(S), 2-26-13; AO 2013-117, 12-3-13; AO 2013-132(S), 7-8-14; AO 2013-151, 1-14-14; AO 2014-63, 6-24-14; AO 2014-79, 7-22-14; AO 2014-108, 9-9-14; AO 2014-134, 11-18-14; AO 2014-139(S), 12-2-14; AO 2015-46, 5-14-15; AO 2015-17, 3-3-15; AO 2015-18, 3-3-15; AO 2015-140, 3-22-16; AO 2016-32, 4-12-16; AO 2016-101, 9-13-16; AO 2017-67; 5-9-17; AO 2017-116, as amended; 9-26-17; AO 2017-134, 11-7-17; AO 2018-23, 3-20-18; AO 2019-123, 11-5-19; AO 2019-142, 12-17-19; AO 2021-40, 5-12-21; AO 2021-25(S), 8-24-21; AO 2021-78, 11-1-21; AO 2021-80, 11-1-21; AO 2022-1, 2-15-22; AO 2022-27, 4-26-22; AO 2022-54, 5-24-22; AO 2023-21, 4-11-23; AO 2023-22, 4-11-23; AO 2023-83, 9-12-23; AO 2024-21, 2-27-24; AO 2024-1, 2-27-24; AO 2024-10, 2-27-24)

21.01.090 TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

The purpose of transitional provisions is to resolve the status of properties with pending applications or recent approvals, and properties with outstanding violations, at the time of the adoption of this title and any future amendments to this title.

A. Violations Continue

Any violation of the previous title 21 ordinance shall continue to be a violation under this title and shall be subject to the penalties and enforcement set forth in chapter 21.14, *Enforcement*, unless the use, development, construction, or other activity complies with the provisions of this title.

B. Special Limitations

1. If a provision of this title conflicts with a special limitation of a zoning district, the more restrictive provision or limitation shall apply.
2. If any special limitation becomes unnecessary or void as a result of any provision of this title, other remaining special limitations of the zoning district shall still apply.

C. Uses, Characteristics of Use, Structures, and Lots Rendered Lawful

A use, characteristic of use, structure, or lot not lawfully existing at the time of the adoption of this title is deemed lawful as of the effective date of this title, provided it conforms to all of the requirements of this title.

D. Uses, Structures, and Lots Rendered Nonconforming

1. When a lot is used for a purpose that was a lawful use before the effective date of this title, and this title no longer classifies such use as an allowed use in the zoning district in which it is located, such use shall be considered nonconforming and shall be controlled by chapter 21.13, *Nonconformities*.
2. Structures and lots that legally existed on the effective date of this title may become nonconforming, based on the provisions of chapter 21.13, *Nonconformities*.

E. Processing of Applications Commenced or Approved Under Previous Ordinances

1. Pending Applications

- a. Any complete application that has been submitted for approval, but upon which no final action has been taken by the appropriate decision-making body prior to the effective date of this title, shall, within twelve months of the date of acceptance for

completeness, be reviewed in accordance with the provisions of the ordinance in effect on the date the application was deemed complete. However, in such cases, if the applicant fails to comply with any applicable required period for submittal or other procedural requirements, the application shall expire and subsequent applications shall be subject to the requirements of this title. Any re-application for an expired project approval shall meet the standards in effect at the time of re-application.

- b. An applicant with an approved pending application may waive review available under prior ordinances through a written letter to the director and request for review under this title.

2. Preliminary Plats

- a. Any complete preliminary plat application that has been submitted for approval, but upon which no final action has been taken by the appropriate decision-making body prior to January 1, 2015, shall, within twelve months of the date of acceptance for completeness, be reviewed in accordance with the provisions of the ordinance in effect on the date the application was deemed complete. Subsequently, the final plat for such subdivision applications also shall be processed and reviewed according to the provisions of the ordinance applicable at the time of submission of the complete application for preliminary plat.
- b. An application for which preliminary approval of a plat was granted prior to the effective date of this title may be processed for a final decision in accordance with the preliminary approval, applicable terms of the ordinance in place at the time of preliminary approval, and any other approved permits and conditions, even if the application does not comply with one or more requirements set forth in this title. Preliminary approvals granted under the previous title 21 may be extended no more than once, and for no longer than 24 months (12 months for abbreviated plats), pursuant to the extension procedures applicable under the previous ordinance.
- c. For preliminary plats in the DT districts, the threshold date that is applicable to the provisions in subsection a. above is May 28, 2020 rather than January 1, 2015.

3. Approved Projects

- a. Conditional use permits, subdivision plats, site plan approvals, grading permits, building permits, land use permits, sign permits, and variances, any of which are valid on January 1, 2015 shall remain valid until their expiration date. Projects with valid approvals or permits may be carried out with the development standards in effect at the time of approval, provided that the permit or approval is valid and has not lapsed.
- b. Any building or development for which a building permit or land use permit was granted prior to January 1, 2015 shall be permitted to proceed to construction even if such building or development does not conform to the provisions of this title.
- c. If the development for which the building permit or land use permit is issued prior to January 1, 2015 fails to comply with the time frames for development established for the permit, including any approved extensions, the building or land use permit shall expire and future development shall be subject to the requirements of this title.
- d. For multi-phase projects, the phases of the project may be developed in accordance with the approved master phasing plan, subject to the approval period and time extensions provisions provided in subsection 21.03.200C.7.e. or in the approval decision.

- e. For development in the DT districts, the threshold date that is applicable to the provisions in subsections a., b., and c. above is May 28, 2020 rather than January 1, 2015.

4. Remanded Cases

If the board of adjustment remands a case to another decision-making body, that body shall process the case under the rules applicable at the time the original complete application was submitted for approval, unless the applicant has waived review under previous ordinances pursuant to subsection D.1.c. above.

5. Future Amendments

The transitional provisions described in this section shall apply to any future amendment to this title, with the referenced effective date meaning the effective date of the amendment that impacts any particular application.

(AO 2012-124(S), 2-26-13; AO 2013-117, 12-3-13; AO 2020-38, 4-28-20; AO 2020-93, 10-1-20)