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DISTRICT 1 | NORTH

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DISTRICT 4 | MIDTOWN

INVITATION: LET'S TALK ABOUT THE **HOME INITIATIVE!**

DATE February 20, 2024

SUBJECT **HOME Initiative (AO 2023-87 S): Public Engagement Process, Upcoming Meetings, Request for Feedback & Conversations**

Dear Federation of Community Councils,

We want to talk about housing, and how we can improve our residential zoning code!

The three Assembly sponsors of the HOME Initiative (Volland, Brawley, Zaletel) are reaching out directly to make sure you have the information about our ordinance to simplify residential zoning code in the Anchorage Bowl, upcoming meetings and public hearings scheduled as it moves through the process and to request some time with your members at a future meeting. There are 2 goals for our outreach meetings:

1. We want to share what's being proposed and why, and answer your questions.
2. We want your feedback on this idea, and what residential zoning rules should be.

More about our **meeting request** is below. This letter also includes:

- **Details about the HOME Initiative**, AO 2023-87(S) and detailed draft code changes
- Information about our upcoming **informational webinar on Monday, March 4**
- Details about how you can participate in the **Planning and Zoning Commission Hearing scheduled for Monday, March 18**, including how to submit written public comments
- How you can **contact us** to learn more.

Meeting Request: Presentation and Conversation about HOME

In addition to our webinar and the Planning and Zoning Commission hearing, we are scheduling a series of meetings with stakeholders across Anchorage to talk about the ordinance in the next few months – ***we want to meet with you!***

We understand the Federation of Community Councils meets on the third Wednesday of the month. We would like to request 15 minutes on your agenda on either March 20 or April 17 to provide a brief overview about HOME and invite individual councils to follow up for presentations.

We also invite community councils to reach out to schedule us on your agenda, anytime from March to May – even if it is a council the sponsors regularly attend, we are requesting time noticed on the agenda for this ordinance, aside from our usual Assembly updates. If your council would like an in-depth discussion, we know monthly meetings have limited time; we are happy to work with you for a special meeting or meet with your executive board or relevant committee.

Please reach out to Legislative Services (wwmasls@anchorageak.gov) to request scheduling or contact the sponsors (our e-mails are at the end of this letter).

[Learn More about HOME at our Webinar on March 4!](#)

The sponsors will host a [webinar on Monday, March 4 from 6 – 7:30PM](#) on Microsoft Teams.¹ (No registration is needed, just use the link to connect.) We will present an overview of the ordinance and also a walk-through of the proposed zoning rules for each new district, compared with current zoning. While we will have limited time for questions, we will also be collecting questions and preparing an FAQ to share back.

The webinar will be recorded for later viewing and posted to the [Muni's YouTube channel](#),² where you can also find Assembly and committee meetings. We will also post the slides.

First Public Comment & Testimony Opportunity: Planning & Zoning Commission

IMPORTANT: The first official public comment opportunity is to the Planning & Zoning Commission!

The sponsors will present the latest version of [AO 2023-87 \(S\)](#) to the Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) on Monday, March 18 at 5:30PM, followed by a PZC public hearing at 6:30PM. Both meetings are open to the public and, during the public hearing, the Planning & Zoning Commission will hear public testimony on the HOME Initiative, [Case 2024-0006](#).³ To testify in person, please arrive by the start of the meeting (or, attend the work session and stick around for the meeting to start).

Planning and Zoning Commission HOME Initiative Work Session and Public Hearing

Monday, March 18, 2024 | Work Session 5:30PM | Public Hearing 6:30PM

Location: Loussac Library Assembly Chambers (1st floor), 3600 Denali Street, Midtown

¹ Web link: <https://www.muni.org/PublicNotice/Pages/HOME-Initiative-Webinar.aspx>

² Web link: <https://www.youtube.com/@municipalityofanchorage9648>

³ Web link: <https://www.muni.org/CityViewPortal/Planning/Status?planningId=17913>

To submit comments on the proposed ordinance to the Planning & Zoning Commission, submit using the CityView Portal: [click here for online comment page](#).⁴

NOTE: The sponsors always welcome comments to us and you can always send public comments on any topic to the full Assembly. Because this ordinance is being heard by PZC, you need to submit comments through the CityView portal if you would like the commissioners see your comments and they are included in the packet.

If you have any trouble using the CityView Portal, please direct comments to staff contacts in the MOA Planning Department:

- Tom Davis, tom.davis@anchorageak.gov
- Ryan Yelle, ryan.yelle@anchorageak.gov

[What Happens After Planning and Zoning's Recommendations?](#)

Once the Planning & Zoning Commission votes on their findings and recommendations (on or after the March 18 meeting), the ordinance will move out of PZC and back to the Assembly, and is scheduled to come back for a public hearing at the Assembly's regular meeting on June 11.

The sponsors will send out a press release and brief update to stakeholders about the timeline at that point, with more details. In the meantime, we want to give a general timeline, and why we are looking to schedule community meetings in April and May, well in advance of the anticipated public hearing before the Assembly.

Background: What is the HOME Initiative, and What's Happened So Far?

Late last summer, we introduced an ordinance called the HOME (Housing Opportunities in the Municipality for Everyone) Initiative, introduced as AO 2023-87(S). It proposes reorganizing and simplifying residential zoning districts (part of Title 21 or AMC 21, our city's zoning code), to give more flexibility to property owners what they can build or develop on their land, to make the code somewhat easier to understand and use for developers and builders, people trying to figure out what they can build on their property, and also reduce administrative burden on staff by simplifying code.

⁴ Web link: <https://www.muni.org/PZComments/?casenum=2024-0006>

What Does the HOME Initiative Propose?

AO 2023-87(S) puts forward a general policy: reduce the number of residential zoning districts in the Anchorage bowl⁵ from 15 to 5, ranging from large-lot houses (like Hillside) to dense urban neighborhoods (like Downtown). The 5 zoning districts proposed:

1. LLR – Large Lot Residential
2. STFR – Single Family and Two-Family Residential
3. CMRL – Compact Mixed Residential, Low
4. CMRM – Compact Mixed Residential, Medium
5. URH – Urban Residential, High

The original ordinance does not address all of the details necessary to enact these change: there are more detailed code changes needed to convert existing zoning districts into the new set listed above. This is what the sponsors, along with their technical consultant and advisors, worked through to prepare for the 2024 public process. The draft new code accompanying the original ordinance is our first-draft proposal of how to fully implement the policy changes first put forward in the HOME Initiative in 2023.

Guiding Principles for Policy Choices proposed in the HOME Initiative

When reviewing current residential zoning districts and how they can be simplified, the sponsors followed these guiding principles for policy decisions in the draft code:

1. Make the code shorter, simpler, consistent with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan & 2040 Land Use Plan, for policies related to housing and neighborhoods.
2. Define residential zoning districts that follow the general intent of the land use designations in the 2040 Land Use Plan.
3. Keep the least restrictive dimensions & policies of zones being consolidated, as much as possible and feasible.
4. For dimensional changes (lot setbacks, etc.), use dimensions consistent with those in the equivalent existing zones.
5. While other parts of AMC 21 are impacted by this ordinance, retain or relocate other parts of code in this ordinance; revisit potential further changes at another time.
6. Make the zoning code more flexible and easier regulatory structure to administer, interpret, and update over time.

Process So Far, from Introduction to Next Steps

The Assembly postponed this ordinance to summer 2024, because the sponsors proposed taking time to work through the details to bring back to the public: what would the

⁵ The proposed changes do not impact zoning rules for Girdwood and Chugiak/Eagle River, which each have their own separate zoning chapter in Title 21.

dimensions (setbacks, height limits, etc.) be for each new district? What other parts of code need to be looked at, and updated with these new districts? Will this require any amendments to the comprehensive plan, which often happens when there are zoning changes? The ordinance, was referred to the Planning and Zoning Commission in March 2024, and scheduled to come back to the Assembly in June 2024.

After taking time to work through the detail with technical consultants and advisors, the sponsors have brought back a new draft set of code changes with our proposed answers to these questions: this full draft included in the PZC packet, along with the original ordinance. The Planning and Zoning Commission will review this packet, including the details to implement the changes, and adopt their findings and recommendations in the form of an advisory resolution to the Assembly.

The sponsors will then work with staff to prepare a new draft ordinance, incorporating all the proposed code changes in a single ordinance, as well as an ordinance with any necessary amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and 2040 Land Use Plan, which typically accompanies any proposed changes to zoning, when it also requires a plan amendment. This full package is what will be brought back before the Assembly for consideration and approval in summer 2024.

Consistency with the 2040 Land Use Plan

The sponsors are engaging in this process according to the following policies in the 2040 Land Use Plan (LUP):

1. **LUP 1.4:** Use the 2040 LUP and area-specific plans in conjunction with other elements of the comprehensive plan to determine appropriate zoning in the Bowl, and evaluate proposed changes to land use regulations (pg. 16).
2. **LUP 1.8:** Engage Anchorage residents, businesses, and property owners in predictable and transparent process leading to the adoption of plans that guide growth. Engage affected communities when making long-term land use decisions, with particular communities that are historically underrepresented (pg. 17).

Sponsor Contacts

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