
TURNAGAIN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

c/o Federation of Community Councils
1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

TO: Municipality of Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission
FROM: Turnagain Community Council
DATE: Monday, November 18, 2019
RE: PZC Case # 2019-0142, Proposed Lot Coverage Allowance for Front Porches

Members of the Planning and Zoning Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the following proposed ordinances.

Comments on PZC Case 2019-0142 (Porches)

1. Overall, we appreciate efforts by the Planning Department to make our neighborhoods safer, more connected and encouraging more attractive, “friendly” design of homes, such as having front porches. We understand this proposal currently only applies to single-family homes. We believe that it is worth exploring whether implementing a policy like this could be applied to other housing types also: for example, duplexes, attached townhouses or other houses typically built with garages in front. Turnagain, like many neighborhoods, has a mix of housing types in our area, and we would want the same benefits for all of our council.
2. Related question to #1: We would like to know how, if at all, this policy would impact setbacks. Would it allow encroachment into a setback from the front lot line, or side lines? We support maintaining existing setback requirements as much as possible. And, we wondered specifically if setbacks posed a challenge for implementing this for multi-unit housing.
3. We recommend not using the word “encourage” in the name of the ordinance. While the policy is stated as being to encourage this type of design, the policy is simply allowing this. We recommend a more neutral term such as “allow.”
4. We understand there are limited ways to address this in the code, but we are concerned about enforcement over time, and whether this would be misused to extend enclosed porches or arctic entries. For example, in year 1 homeowner uses this policy and builds an additional 180 square foot porch. In year 3 to 5, they decide to enclose the porch even though it was only granted as an open-air porch. Does this require approval by the Municipality, similar to other home additions, or would a person simply be able to do this? If it requires approval, we imagine that the Municipality could see that they previously were allowed this additional coverage, and could deny the application. If it does not, or if a person chooses not to get a required approval, this could be easily misused to create larger square footage in a two-step process. Again, we understand and support the intent, but at minimum it should be considered how to mitigate this loophole.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Cathy L. Gleason
Turnagain Community Council President

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TO: Municipality of Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission
FROM: Turnagain Community Council
DATE: Monday, November 18, 2019
RE: PZC Case #2019-0143, Alternative Landscaping Requirements

Members of the Planning and Zoning Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the following proposed ordinance.

Comments on PZC Case 2019-0143 (Landscaping)

1. We support the intent of this ordinance, and thank the Planning Department for working to identify good ways to incentivize retention of native and existing vegetation on a site. We have also observed the tendency to completely clear a site during development, and understand the risks to water quality, soil stability, aesthetics and neighborhood character that completely clearing a site brings. We hope these policies help accomplish that goal!
2. We support the inclusion of cottonwoods as acceptable species to remain onsite during development. While they have downsides and are not the most desirable landscaping tree, mature trees should be retained whenever possible.
3. We support the extension of the allowable growing season as it relates to developments to September 15.
4. We considered in existing code where other changes could be made to further support keeping native vegetation, especially trees, as they provide a great deal of benefit and take the longest time and resources to replace. We recommend reducing the minimum caliper of deciduous trees from 6 inches to 4 inches [AMC 21.07.080F(1)(d)], as an amendment in this ordinance. We understand that the intent is to only protect mature trees; however, we understand that 4 inches is typically larger than the trees available in a commercial nursery, and a tree of that size can reasonably be considered mature—especially the species of trees typical in Alaska, like birch or aspen. We believe this is also a worthwhile change to consider, supporting the general goal of incentivizing retention of existing vegetation, particularly trees.
5. We observed in some of the agency comments that there is potential conflict between this change and other codes, related to stormwater requirements and the Design Criteria Manual. We strongly encourage the Planning Department and other relevant departments to explore ways to implement this change or make other adjustments to code to accommodate it. This seems like a worthwhile change to make, given that climate change is extending the growing (and development) season. Do not let this conflict between the codes be a barrier to making common-sense change.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Cathy L. Gleason
Turnagain Community Council President