

Anchorage Federation of Community Councils 'Local Lens'

AO 2024-104

Pausing Residential Design Standards

How did we get to where we are?

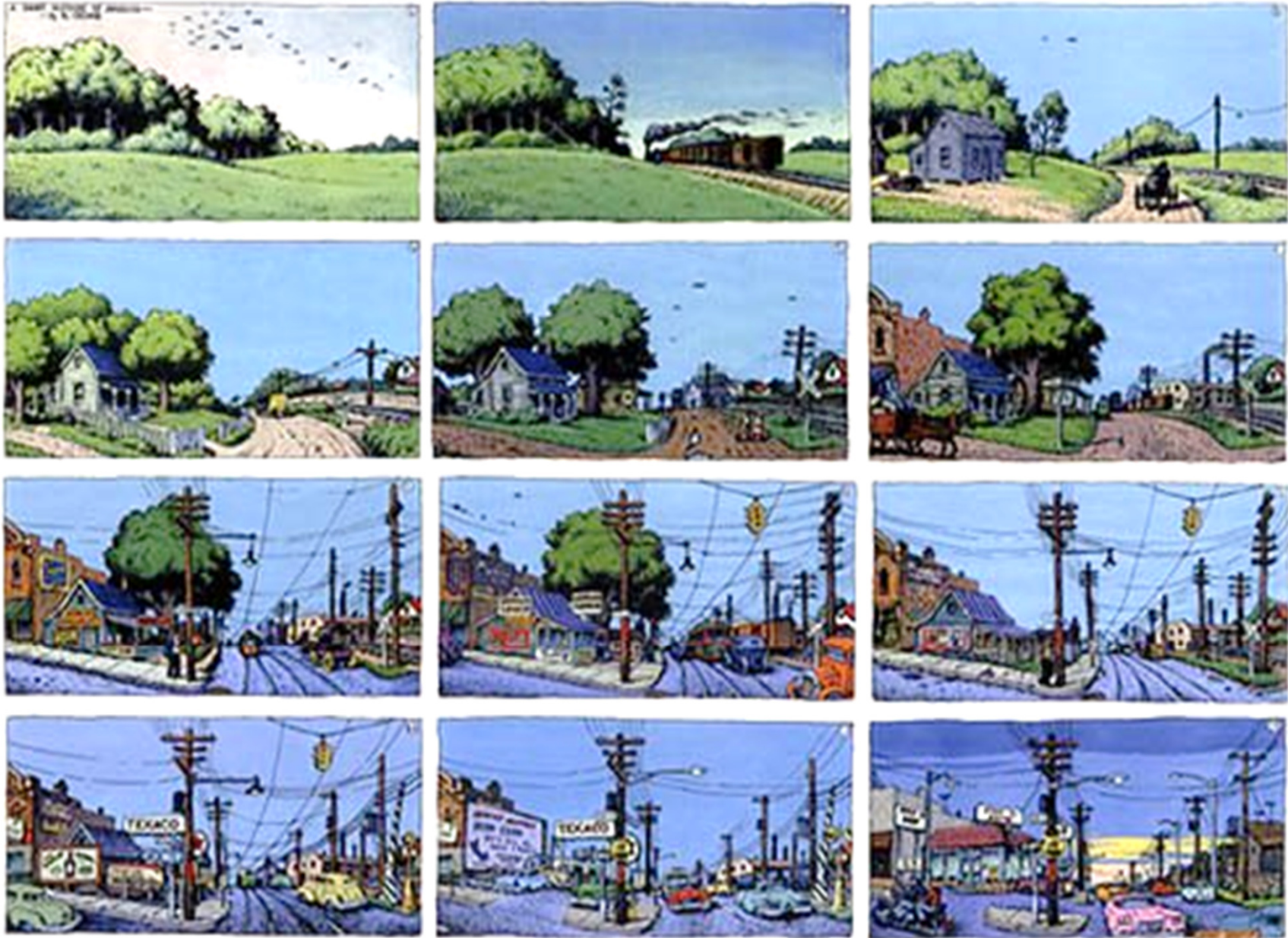
January 22, 2025

John Weddleton

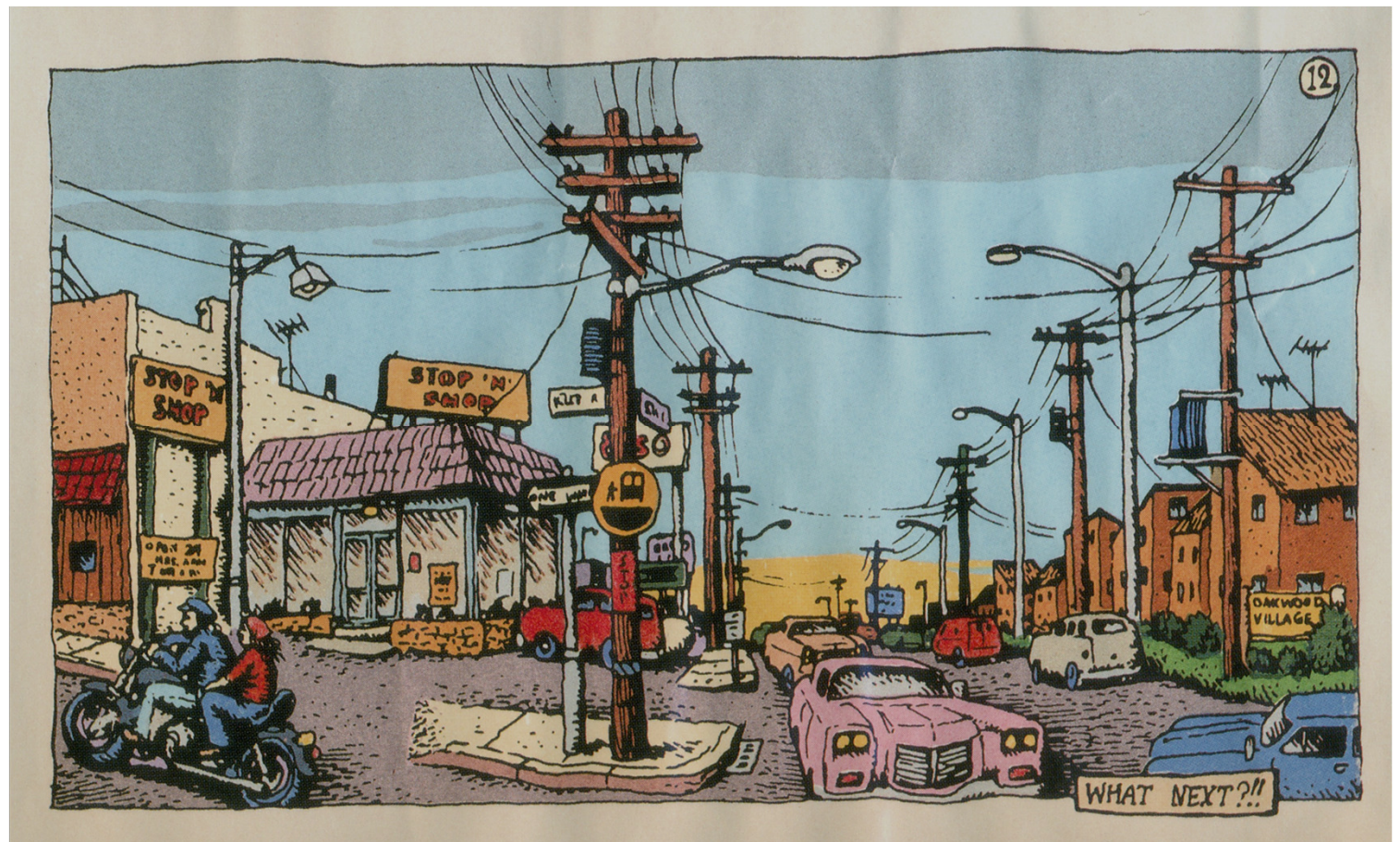
907-770-0685

john@weddleton.com

A Short History of America



**Rational choices by individuals
can lead to a result
no rational person would choose.**



ANCHORAGE 2020

Anchorage 2020 has a section called “A New Direction” It says

“The demands of rapid growth have faded, and quality of life issues have moved to the forefront.”

GOOD



GOOD



BAD



2002 Clarion: Many mature cities across the United States are facing the same issues that Anchorage will have to tackle as it promotes infill and redevelopment. Experience elsewhere clearly demonstrates that an infill/redevelopment strategy has a greater chance of success if neighborhoods have confidence that they will be protected through better building and site design standards, buffering and landscaping requirements, and lighting restrictions. Currently, [The 'old'] Title 21 contains only very modest provisions to ensure compatibility of new development with existing residential areas.

The challenge will be crafting such standards without unduly stifling the projects that the city would like to encourage as envisioned in the 2020 plan.

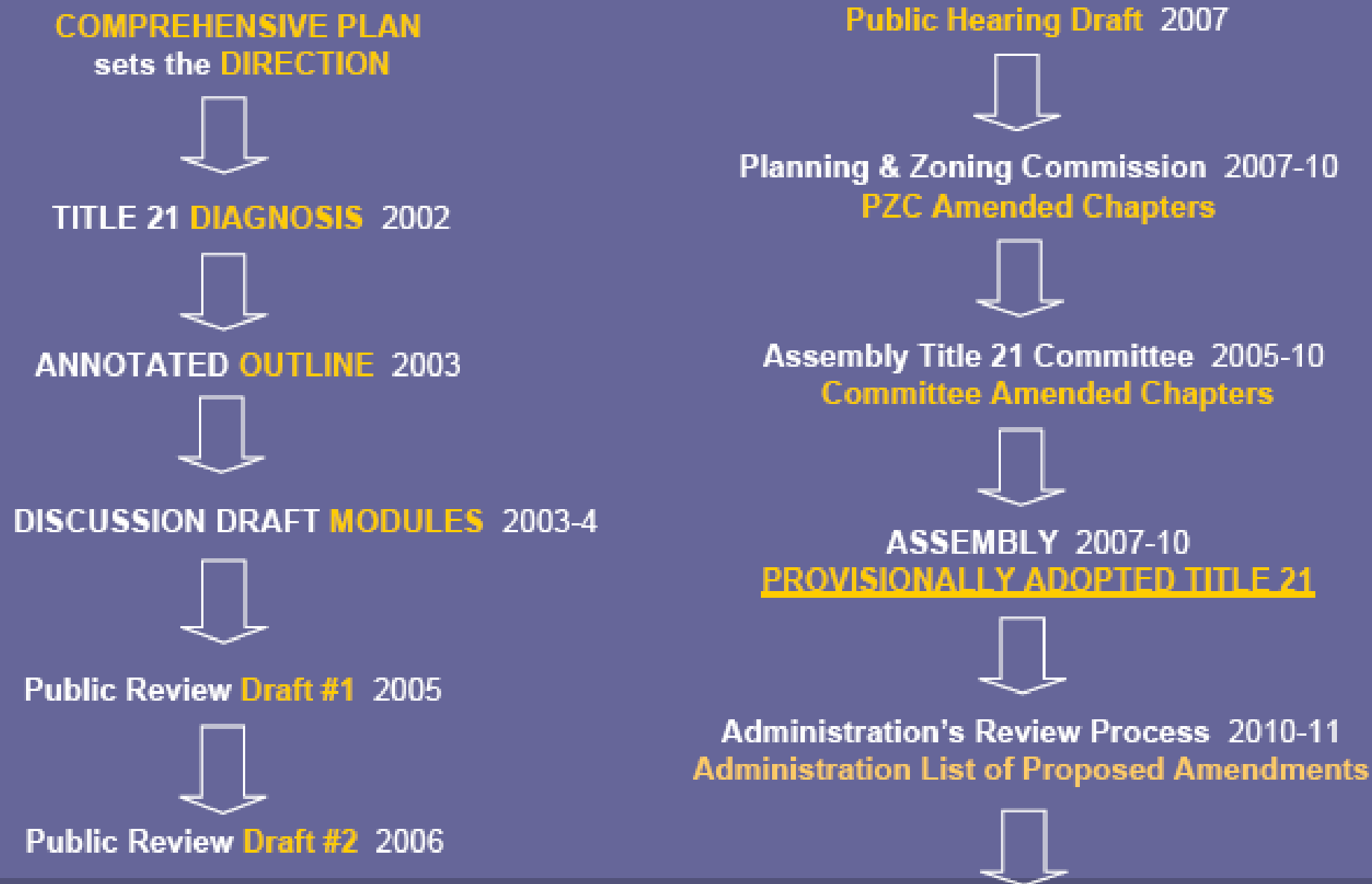
Title 21 Rewrite Public Process

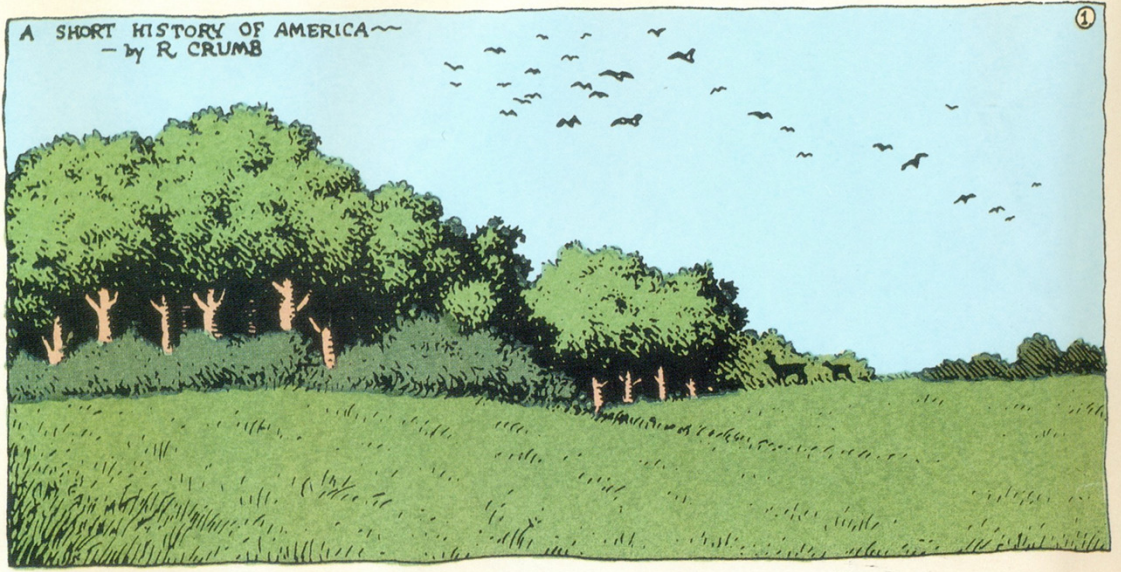


A CHRONOLOGY OF COMPROMISES

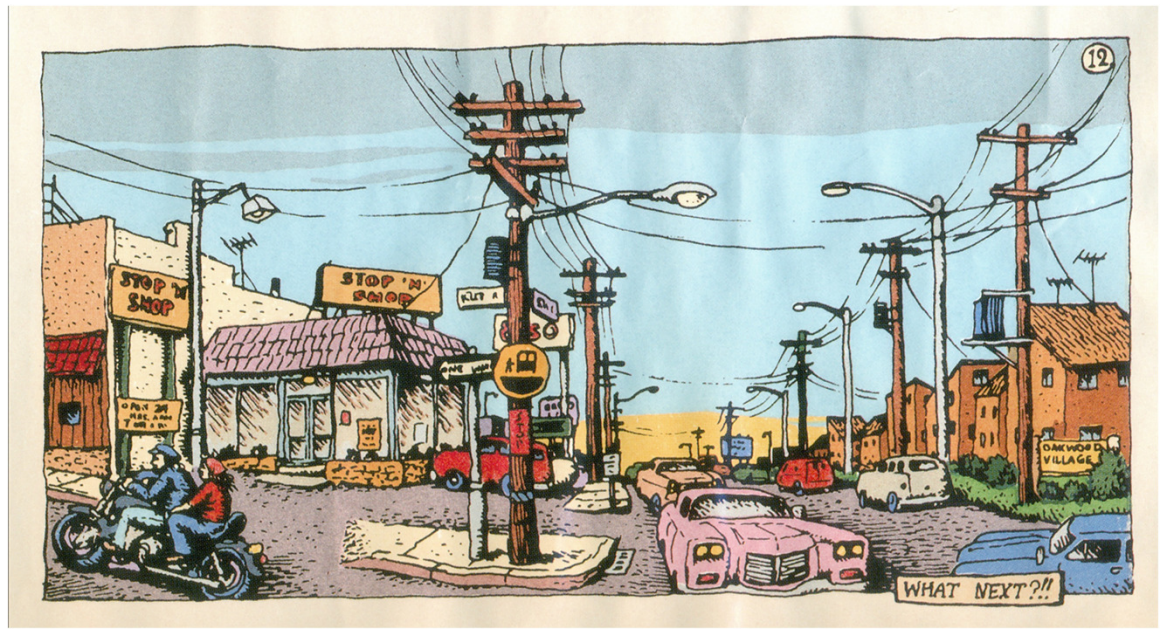


Title 21 **Process** | Community Product





So where did we end up?



Walking and Biking



Open Space



Multi Family



Mixed Uses



Residential Design Standards



Parking



Steep Slope Development



Stream Setbacks, Wildlife protection



Dumpsters



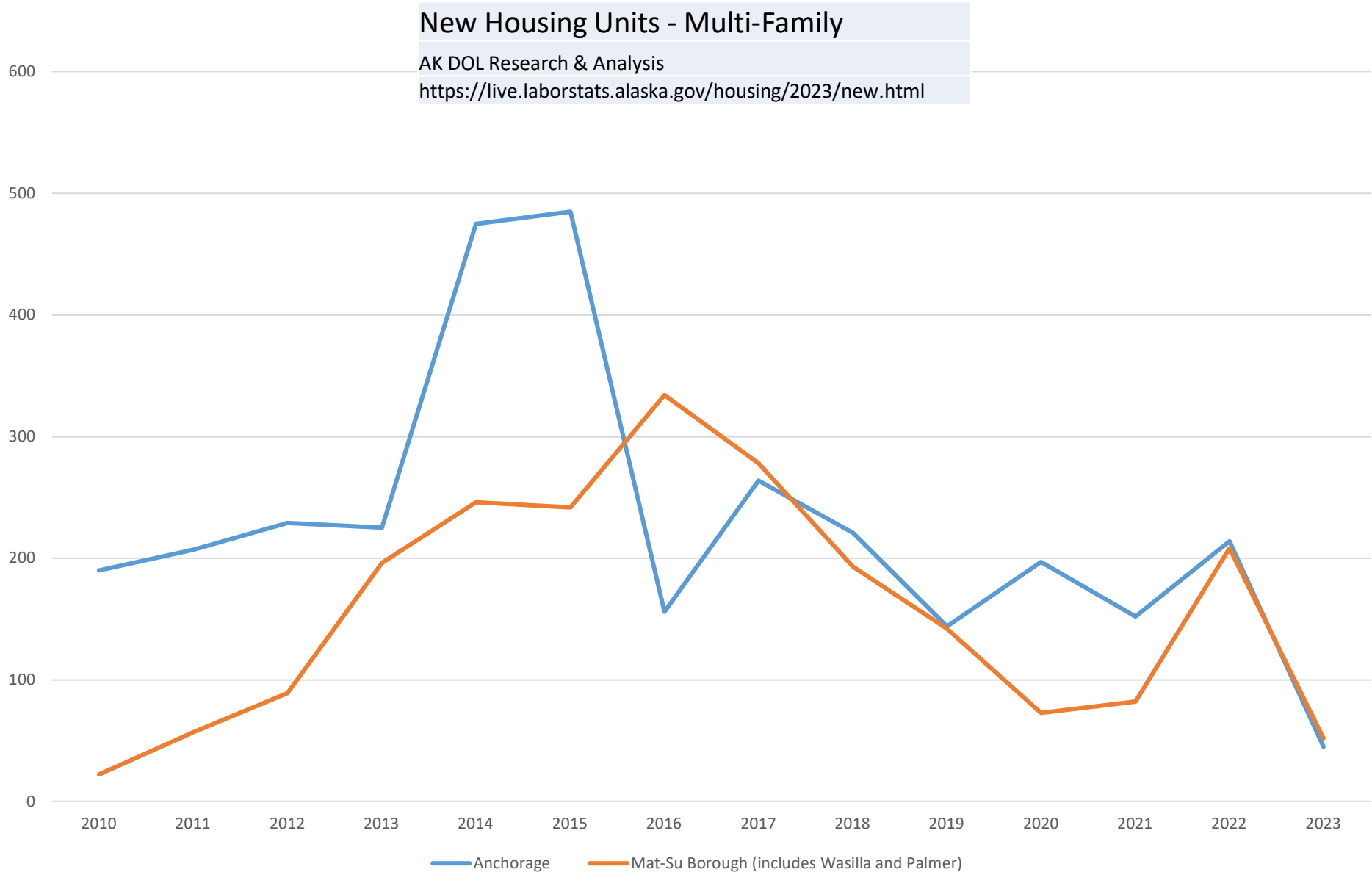
A Compromise Deleted general Commercial Design Standards



Did design standards *kill* multi-family housing?

- Evidence?
- What we know made a difference:
 - We knew land development costs would go up
 - Population decreasing in Anchorage
 - Population growing in Lower 48
 - Construction workforce heading south.
 - Steel Tariffs 2018, Canada wood tariffs of 20% 2017.
 - Increasingly stiff Building Code requirements.
 - Low interest rates so people bought houses

MAT-SU removed Design Standards in 2013. Anchorage added them in 2015-16



IS PAUSING DESIGN STANDARDS A BAD THING?

Anchorage is in a very different place now than we were in 2000. Despite decreasing population, the need for housing has gotten more acute.

The context for land use decisions changes. This is why we are recommended to revise our land use plans every 20 years. Having failed in doing that, we sail forward in this new context with no rudder.

Things are different now than they were back then. Goals change, strategies change. This is why we plan, so we can balance various community goals.

Always be aware that the context changes. Today's brilliant strategies may look tragically bad 20 years from now.

What makes you
happy to live in
Anchorage today?

What will make
people happy 25
years from now?

John Weddleton

John@Weddleton.com

907-770-0685

A SHORT HISTORY OF AMERICA
— by R. CRUMB



AO 2024-104(S) Proposes to pause for 3 years the design standards for most single family and multifamily homes.

AO 2024-024 paused the standards in Table 21.07-2 until November 1, 2025.

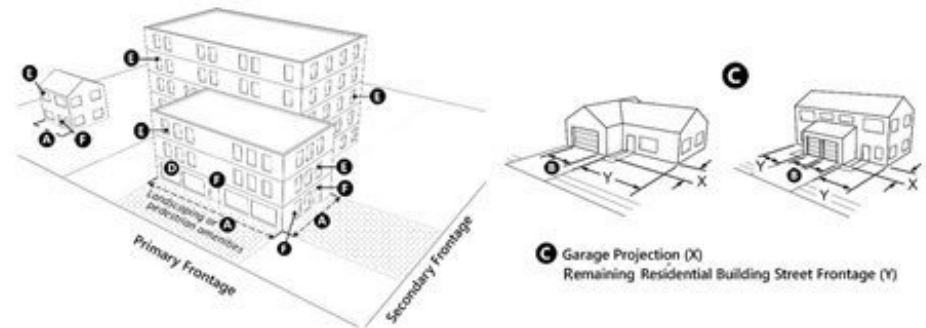


Table 21.07-2: Pedestrian Frontage Standard for Urban Neighborhood Contexts as of November 1, 2025

Site Elements for Pedestrian-Oriented Frontages	Standard
A. Minimum required ground-floor, street-facing building elevation with on-site walkways, pedestrian amenities, or landscaping in front – and no off-street automobile parking or circulation	50% of building elevation width ^{1,2} Lots with alley access: no parking allowed in front of building except in driveways for individual dwellings
B. Maximum allowed width of residential garage entrance(s) on ground-floor street-facing building elevation	40% of building elevation width ^{1,2}
C. Maximum allowed distance a garage may project out in front of the rest of the street-facing residential building elevation	No more than 50% of the width of the non-garage portion of the street-facing building
D. Minimum required visual access windows or primary entrances on non-residential ground-floor street-facing building elevation ³	25% of wall area on primary frontage 15% of wall area on second frontage
E. Minimum required windows or primary entrances on residential and upper-floor non-residential street-facing elevations ³	15% of wall area on primary frontage 10% of wall area on second frontage
F. Requirement for primary entrance(s) to be visible from the street via an unobstructed line of sight, and for residential entrances to be covered	Residential: Meet 21.07.060G.16., Covered, Visible Residential Entrance Other uses: at least one entrance
G. Minimum required number of pedestrian amenities from 21.07.060G. (in addition to G.16)	Developments with 10,000 to 20,000 square feet of gross floor area: 1 pedestrian amenity Developments with greater than 20,000 square feet of gross floor area: 2 pedestrian amenities

¹Exception: On lots without alley access residential developments with four dwelling units or less may have a minimum of 20% in A. above and a maximum of 67% in B. above. This footnote exception shall sunset at the close of June 30, 2025.

²Exception: Shared parking courtyards that comply with subsection 21.07.060G.22. are exempt from A. above.

5. General Standard for Development

The standards of Table 21.07-3 apply to the primary frontage and one secondary frontage.

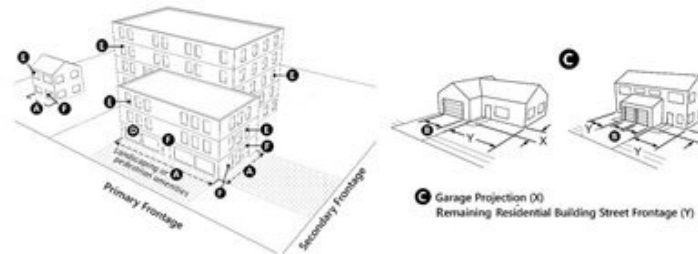


Table 21.07-3: General Pedestrian Frontage Standard for Development	
Required Site Elements for Pedestrian-Oriented Frontages	Standard
A. Minimum required ground-floor, street-facing building elevation with on-site walkways, pedestrian amenities, or landscaping in front – and no off-street automobile parking or circulation ¹	20% of building elevation width, on one frontage
B. Maximum allowed width of residential garage entrance(s) on ground-floor street-facing building elevation	67% of building elevation width
C. Maximum allowed distance a garage may project out in front of the rest of the street-facing residential building elevation	No more than the width of the non-garage portion of the street-facing building elevation
D. Minimum required visual access windows or primary entrances on non-residential ground-floor street-facing building elevation ^{1,2}	15% on primary frontage 10% on secondary frontage
E. Minimum required windows or primary entrances on residential and upper-floor non-residential street-facing elevations ^{1,2}	10% on primary frontage 5% on secondary frontage
F. Requirement for primary entrance(s) to be visible from a street via an unobstructed line of sight and for residential entrances to be covered ¹	Residential: Meet 21.07.060G.16., Covered, Visible Residential Entrance Other uses: at least one entrance
G. Minimum required number of pedestrian amenities from 21.07.060G. (in addition to G.16)	Developments with greater than 20,000 square feet of gross floor area: 1 pedestrian amenity

¹Exception: Shared parking courtyards that comply with subsection 21.07.060G.22. are exempt from A. above. Non-residential buildings located more than 100 feet from the applicable street rights-of-way are exempt from A., D., E., and F. above.

²Visual access windows shall have a sill height of no more than four feet above finished grade. Rules for measuring window area as a percentage of building wall area are provided in 21.15.0200. Visual access windows ("Window, providing visual access"), primary entrance, and ground-floor wall area are defined in 21.15.040.