



City and Borough of Juneau
 City & Borough Manager's Office
 155 Heritage Way
 Juneau, Alaska 99801
 Telephone: 586-5240 | Facsimile: 586-5385

TO: Mayor Weldon and Assembly
 FROM: Rob Dumouchel, Special Project Planning Manager
 THROUGH: Katie Koester, City Manager
 DATE: September 22, 2025
 RE: Title 49 Phase 1 Text Amendments, Second Wave

This memo is a brief overview of the amendments contained within Phase 1 Wave 2 (P1W2) of the Title 49 Rewrite Project. The proposed ordinance touches on reasonable accommodations, zoning maps, subdivisions on arterials, and some general housekeeping items. A separate ordinance addressing marijuana regulations will follow in the very near future. The table below describes each element of P1W2 at a high level, more in-depth memos for each major topic follow this memo.

Topic	Code Sections	Overview of Changes
Reasonable Accommodation	Creates: 49.15.170 – Reasonable Accommodations Edits: 49.80.120 – Definitions	Creates a section governing Reasonable Accommodations to land use code requirements to help CBJ comply with Federal Fair Housing Act regulations for individuals with disabilities
Zoning Maps	Edits: 49.25.110 – Zoning Maps	Modernizes the zoning map code and allows a digital map to be the "official zoning map" of CBJ
Subdivisions on Arterials	Edits: 49.35.210 – Street System	Removes the requirement that all parcels subdivided along arterials, regardless of underlying zone district, must meet minimum lot size standards for the D1 zone district (36,000 square feet)
Housekeeping	Edits: 49.05.100 – Purpose and Intent (General Provisions); 49.10.520 – Meetings (Community Development Director); 49.15.401 – Minor Subdivisions; 49.15.404 – Public Way Vacations; 49.15.411 – Preliminary Plat Requirements; 49.70.130 – Concept Review (New Growth Areas); 49.80.120 - Definitions	Removes references to the coastal management program and subdivision review committee which no longer exist; removes a reference to landslide areas that was missed by Ordinance 2023-18(am)

The Ad Hoc Title 49 Advisory Committee was presented a group of concepts for P1W2 inclusion at their February 13, 2025 meeting. The topics in this proposed text amendment were selected from that list, researched, and preliminary drafts written in house. The Title 49 contract attorney reviewed and updated the drafts in collaboration with staff. The Planning Commission and Title 49 Advisory Committee will have an opportunity to review the proposed language before the Assembly considers the text amendment for adoption.

Staff Recommendation: Introduce ordinance with proposed text amendments to Title 49 and refer to the Planning Commission for a review to be completed within 60 days.

Attachments:

- Memo: Reasonable Accommodation in Zoning & Land Use for Individuals with Disabilities
- Memo: Zoning Map Code Modernization
- Memo: Minimum Lot Sizes for Arterial Subdivisions



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RE: Reasonable Accommodation in Zoning & Land Use for Individuals with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities has become a common component of modern zoning codes. This trend is mainly driven by the Federal Fair Housing Act¹. I do not believe that it is common for Title 49 – Land Use code to create barriers to housing development for individuals with disabilities in Juneau, however, it is important to create a mechanism for the Community Development Director and Planning Commission to grant reasonable accommodations when necessary to stay compliant with federal law while also advancing multiple Assembly goals.²

The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing practices that discriminate against individuals on the basis of disability,³ among many other factors. Zoning and land use regulations can create barriers to a person with a disability having equal opportunity to housing. Providing individuals or groups of individuals with disabilities a mechanism for requesting reasonable accommodations from the City and Borough's land use provisions ensures that these individuals have equal access to housing within the City and Borough and protects the City and Borough from costly allegations of violations of federal law.

A reasonable accommodation is a reasonable change, exception, or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice or service that is necessary for a person with a disability to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling. A simple example of a reasonable accommodation is granting a reduced front setback and/or increase in lot coverage in a residential zone to allow for the construction of a wheelchair ramp to access the front door of an existing home where doing so is reasonable. This type of accommodation may be reasonable in one area but not another depending upon the purpose served by the setbacks. Thus, having a permitting process that authorizes the Director to consider the requested accommodation, and the reasonableness and necessity of that accommodation, ensures that the City and Borough is protecting the rights of individuals or groups of individuals with a disability to have equal access to housing within the City and Borough's borders.

The Fair Housing Act does not require local governments to create formal processes for reasonable accommodations; however, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) strongly encourage adopting specific procedures and ensuring that they are publicized appropriately. Many modern zoning codes are including explicit reasonable accommodation sections to ensure that there are clear guidelines for both staff and the public to navigate requests. Because reasonable

¹ 42 U.S.C. §§ 3601-19

² **Related Assembly Goals:** Housing – Assure adequate and affordable housing for all CBJ residents; Community Wellness, and Public Safety – Juneau is safe and welcoming for all citizens; and, Sustainable Community – Juneau will maintain a resilient social, economic, and environmental habitat for existing population and future generations.

³ According to a 2016 interpretation of the Fair Housing Act by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice (<https://www.justice.gov/opa/file/912366/dl>), a person with a disability includes individuals with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. A “physical or mental impairment” includes, but is not limited to, diseases and conditions such as orthopedic, visual, speech and hearing impairments, cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, HIV infection, developmental disabilities, mental illness, drug addiction (other than addiction caused by current, illegal use of a controlled substance), and alcoholism.

accommodations are driven by unique circumstances related to an individual's disability and characteristics of the property and regulations in question, they must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

A local government is not obligated to accept a suggested reasonable accommodation if it would impose an undue financial and administrative burden or fundamentally alter the local government's zoning. When a proposed reasonable accommodation is rejected, the local government should work with the requestor to determine if there is an alternative that would address the disability-related barrier to use of a dwelling.

Proposal Highlights

The proposed text amendment would create section **49.15.170 – Reasonable Accommodations**. The section includes the following:

- Description of the purpose of the section which is to allow modifications to development regulations to support equal access to housing for people with disabilities in compliance with the Fair Housing Act when certain criteria are met.
- A framework for eligibility to request a reasonable accommodation and the criteria that the CDD Director must consider when reviewing an application for reasonable accommodation.
- A right to appeal the CDD Director's determination of a reasonable accommodation to the Planning Commission and authority for such an appeal to be consolidated with any other permit applications on the same property before the Commission.

Additionally, a definition for "reasonable accommodation" will be created within **49.80.120 - Definitions**.



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RE: Zoning Map Code Modernization

The zoning map is very important to the development process. Currently, the official zoning map is referenced as a 184-page atlas. In practice, property owners and developers are referring to CBJ's online digital GIS maps to research zoning information for specific parcels, not the paper atlas referred to in code. The divergence between code and practice is a vulnerability where potential differences between the GIS map and the atlas could lead to confusion at best, and expensive legal conflict in the worst-case scenario. Additionally, the reference to all of the City and Borough's maps, whether digital or in hard copy, as the "official zoning map" potentially creates confusion and increases the burden placed on the City to ensure all of the maps are updated contemporaneously. The purpose of an "official zoning map" is to have one map that shows the boundaries of each zoning district. This can be accomplished on a single map, especially when using GIS technology.

The intent of the amendments to **49.25.110 – Zoning maps** is to modernize and clarify the Code, allowing for a digital GIS map to be the "official" CBJ zoning map and ensuring that there is one map that reflects City and Borough zoning district boundaries. The modernization of zoning maps with digital replacements for paper maps is slowly becoming more common throughout the United States and Alaska. In Alaska, the Ketchikan Gateway Borough elected to move to a digital official zoning map in 2022 as part of a zoning code rewrite.

While the medium is proposed to change, it's important to note that processes that impact the map, like rezonings, remain the same.

An additional consideration while we are focusing on regarding zoning maps is ensuring that there are efficient mechanisms for maintenance and corrections by Community Development staff. This is particularly important in Juneau due to the dynamic nature of our physical geography. Many geologic and hydrologic processes are creating and destroying land through isostatic rebound, river meanders, silt accretion along waterways, erosion, landslides, etc. There needs to be mechanisms in code that allow staff to account for changes to the land that extend or contract the existing boundaries of platted parcels. Additionally, with the improvements to **49.70.720 – Zoning upgrade (Transition Zones)**, we need to ensure that the official zoning map can be updated to reflect upgraded transition zoned parcels without having to send the changes to the Planning Commission for review which would defeat the purpose of the recent amendment to the transition zone section. The proposed changes preserve the ability to change the map so long as those changes are performed in accordance with the law.



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RE: Minimum Lot Sizes for Arterial Subdivisions

Minimum lots sizes for subdivisions on arterials are impeding the reasonable development of housing in Juneau. A solution was proposed in 2023, but it was not adopted. This amendment resurrects that proposal and brings it to the Assembly for consideration.

Feedback from the Community Development team is that the current rules for the minimum lot size of a subdivision along an arterial have been a frequent barrier to property owners who wish to subdivide their land to build new housing. Under **49.35.210(3)(A)**, all resultant lots from a subdivision, regardless of its underlying zone district, must be a minimum of 36,000 square feet (the minimum size in D-1). This is incredibly restrictive. It requires, at a minimum, that a parcel be 72,000 square feet to be considered for subdivision into two lots.¹

The Community Development Department and the Planning Commission identified minimum lot sizes on arterials as a barrier to housing and reviewed a proposed amendment in August of 2023. That amendment never made it to the Assembly as an ordinance for a vote, and the barrier remains.

Proposal Highlights

The proposal includes the following:

- Allowing the underlying zone district to govern the minimum lot size for a subdivision on an arterial street.
- Allowing the subdivided lots' access to be determined by the owner of the right-of-way (CBJ or Alaska Department of Transportation).
- Defining arterial and connector streets and "major" and "minor" streets. These definitions make the section more user-friendly and accessible and eliminate any confusion.

Future Considerations:

The original proposal that inspired this text amendment (case AME2023 0003) included changes to private shared access standards. Those changes will be reviewed and included in a future wave for consideration.

Additionally, in a future wave, a proposal will be brought forward to remove **Chapter 49.35 – Public and Private Improvements** from Title 49 and place it in a new title along with **Chapter 49.15 Article IV – Subdivisions** and **Chapter 49.55 – Financial Responsibility**. These existing portions of Title 49 are not zoning concerns and would be more appropriately administered as a separate title.

¹ Minimum lot sizes in residential zone districts are as follows: RR, 36,000 sq. ft.; D-1, 36,000 sq. ft.; D-3, 12,000 sq. ft.; D-5, 7,000 sq. ft.; D-10 SF, 3,600 sq. ft.; D-10, 6,000 sq. ft.; D-15, 5,000 sq. ft.; D-18, 5,000 sq. ft.