



Valdez Zoning Code (Title 17) Revision

Community Working Group: Meeting 1

Thursday, November 10, 2022 | 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Location:

In Person: Valdez City Council Chambers, 212 Chenega St.

Zoom: <https://agnewbeck.zoom.us/j/87206349659>

Meeting ID: 872 0634 9659

One tap mobile: +13462487799,,87206349659#

Phone option for audio: (253) 215-8782 | **Toll-free** (877) 853-5257

PARTICIPANTS

Working Group (invited): Dennis Fleming and James Devens, Council Members; Steve Goudreau and Chris Watson, Planning & Zoning Commissioners; Anna Batman, Valdez Native Tribe Administrator; Brad Barnett, Alice MacDonald, Dan Gilson, Priscilla Gregg, Valdez Residents

City of Valdez Planning Department: Kate Huber, Director; Bruce Wall and Nicole LeRoy, staff

Agnew::Beck Consulting: Shelly Wade and Anna Brawley (Anchorage, AK)

Stantec: Erin Perdu (Minneapolis, MN) and Ryan Givens (Bellevue, WA)

OBJECTIVES

1. Introduce Working Group members
2. Introduce Zoning Code (Title 17) Revision project
3. Confirm purpose of Working Group, scope of group’s work, meeting schedule, group processes
4. Share findings from review of current code and community feedback (meetings to date)
5. Share next steps and topics for next meeting: Monday, December 5, 2022
(Land Uses – Allowed/Conditional & Permitting/Approval Process)

AGENDA

Time (approximate)	Item	Lead
12:00	Land Acknowledgement Introductions: Working Group, Project Team Review Agenda and Objectives	Kate Huber, Shelly Wade
12:10	Project Overview and Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a comprehensive plan? What is zoning? • How does Title 17 connect back to Plan Valdez? • Project goals and schedule 	Shelly Wade
12:20	Working Group Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Discuss:</i> What brings you to this group? What is one thing you hope to see in code revisions? • Purpose of this advisory group • Key tasks, process, meeting schedule 	Shelly Wade

Time (approximate)	Item	Lead
12:40	What We've Learned So Far <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community feedback to date: Comprehensive Plan, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, City staff Review summary report: Issues with current code <i>Discuss:</i> What are your priorities and key topics? Tentative topics for discussion at future meetings 	Erin Perdu, Ryan Givens
1:25	Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team will share materials and notes from today Next meeting: Monday, December 5, 12:00 p.m.: <i>Focus:</i> Land Uses (Allowed/Conditional) & Permitting/Approval Process <i>Homework for WG Members:</i> Bring local examples back to next meeting: visit part(s) of town you want to highlight as an issue to address, what's working well, incompatible land uses. 	Shelly Wade

Working Group Meeting Schedule

- Meeting 2: Monday, December 5, 2022 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. | Council Chambers and Zoom
- Meeting 3: Monday, January 9, 2023 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. | Council Chambers and Zoom
- Meeting 4: Monday, February 6, 2023 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. | Council Chambers and Zoom
- Meeting 5: Monday, March 6, 2023 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. | Council Chambers and Zoom
- Meeting 6: Monday, April 3, 2023 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. | Council Chambers and Zoom

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

PROJECT GOALS, APPROACH, AND SCHEDULE

Goals

The proposed overall goals for revising the zoning code include:

1. Create an ordinance that is practical, simple, usable, and effective.
2. Ensure the ordinance is easy to understand and interpret, for the benefit of property owners, developers, and staff.
3. Eliminate unnecessary regulation and process steps.
4. Align districts, uses and standards to the place types and goals defined in Plan Valdez (Comprehensive Plan).
5. Modernize code language, eliminate redundancy, and ensure language is consistent.
6. Include more options and flexibility for innovative uses of property, while mitigating potential negative impacts on neighbors.
7. Allow for more mixed-use development.
8. Make desired housing types easier to build and address unique housing options.
9. Ensure that the code supports places where people (residents and visitors) want to spend time.
10. Incorporate equity into code requirements.

Schedule and Community Engagement Plan

The project team will engage with the Council, Commission, and the community throughout the revision process.

Timeframe	Activity or Milestone
Sept. 29, 2022	Staff Listening Session: Planning Department
Oct. 12, 2022	City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission Joint Work Session #1
Oct. 25, 2022	Staff Listening Session #2: Additional City Departments
Nov. 2022 – Spring 2023	Working Group: regular (monthly) working meetings with stakeholders representing community perspectives
Early 2023	Community outreach: survey, in-person workshop. <i>To be scheduled in early 2023.</i>
Early 2023	Initial review draft of zoning code (Title 17)
Spring 2023	City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission Joint Work Session #2
Spring 2023	Official public hearing draft and approval process for new zoning ordinance

KNOWN ISSUES WITH TITLE 17

We have had the opportunity to review your existing zoning ordinance (Title 17), hold two listening sessions with staff, and facilitate a joint work session with the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission to understand known issues with the zoning code, how it impacts business and resident ability to build or update their properties, and difficulties for staff implementing the current code and assisting the public in navigating the rules. Below is the project team’s understanding of known issues:

Known/Emerging Issues

1. Natural hazards create barriers for development in Valdez; therefore, to protect people and the natural environment, regulations need to be responsive to these potential hazards.
2. Valdez is a winter city, so things like snow storage need to be considered when looking at setbacks, building placement regulations, and the public realm.
3. Make the ordinance clearer and more flexible, allowing for the types of housing and development that the city wants. Currently, staff spends a lot of time with property owners and developers interpreting what's possible, and often there is not an appropriate district to apply.
4. It would be beneficial for both property owners and staff to have an option to evaluate minor variances with administrative approval, rather than having to use a formal public hearing process; reserve the full review process for larger or more complex projects.
5. Definitions and land use descriptions are narrow and prescriptive.
6. There are several districts that are either rarely used or very similar to other districts; consider consolidation of districts. Align these districts with the Place Types defined in Plan Valdez.
7. Lists of uses are antiquated, too specific, and should be more generalized.
8. Need to balance the desire for a walkable community with the needs of freight carriers and residents who drive.
9. Accommodate existing businesses/uses as much as possible: because there are so many other barriers to development, from remote location to construction costs, it is important to allow people to keep operating.
10. Rather than making non-conforming uses or businesses with significant impacts relocate, consider buffers or transition requirements to mitigate any negative impacts on neighbors.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

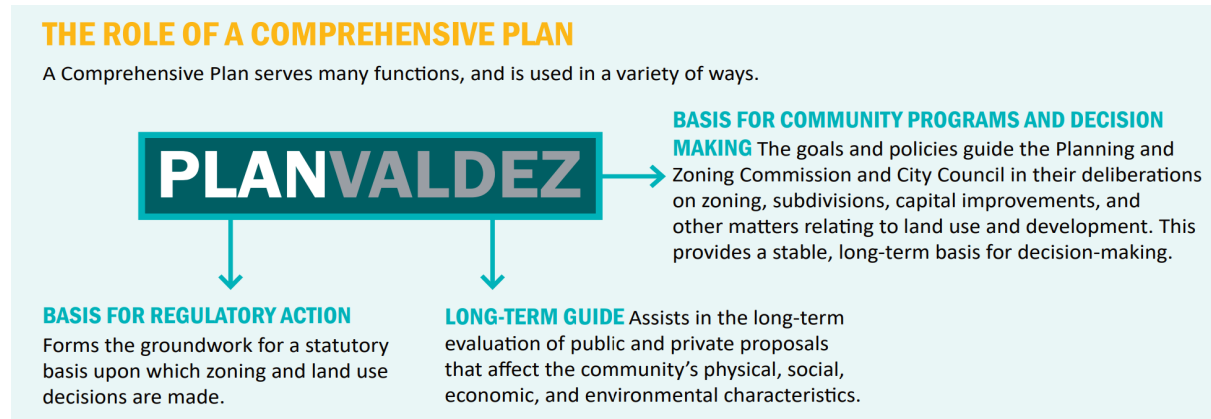
A comprehensive plan is a guide to the community's future, providing direction on what the community aspires to be and how it should look 20 years into the future. It is a navigational tool, a compass to evaluate alternative decisions and determine which are best aligned with the community's vision. It starts with an aspirational vision of what the people want the community to be in the future and provides actions intended to move the city towards the goals established in the Plan.

[Plan Valdez](#) is the City of Valdez's current comprehensive plan, adopted in 2021. Specifically, Plan Valdez outlines short- and long-term planning actions that will continue to safeguard the City's history and sense of place. Overall, the plan:

- Establishes a blueprint for future land use and infrastructure to effectively and efficiently guide private and public investments;
- Seeks to balance competing demands on land to the greatest benefit for citizens and the community as a whole;
- Identifies areas that will benefit from public infrastructure to promote well-planned, phased development patterns;
- Facilitates the development of work plans, budgets, capital improvements, and recommended amendments to zoning and land use ordinances to achieve desired goals and responsible stewardship of public resources; and
- Implements a consistent framework for addressing land use issues that will establish a degree of predictability for property owners, businesses, and residents.

The comprehensive plan is used by City staff, well as elected and appointed officials, as a guide for making decisions about development, capital improvements, and budgeting. While the Plan provides vision, goals, policies, and actions, it does not have the legislative “teeth” of city ordinances. For example, the future land use map in Plan Valdez shows what the City intends for future use of properties but does not govern what happens on the property right now. Instead, it represents a gradual transition towards a long-term vision.

Figure 1. Graphic illustrating the purpose of comprehensive plan (Source: Plan Valdez)



(Source: Plan Valdez, Introduction)

ZONING CODE

Zoning is the law that governs how land is used or developed. Its main purpose is to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of the residents of a city. A zoning code does this by regulating land uses and where they can be established; the form of development (where and how buildings are placed on the land); and other items related to how a property functions. Valdez Zoning Code (Title 17) stated purpose is to:

Regulate the use of land and improvements by districts in accordance with the city comprehensive plan. These zoning regulations are designed to provide for orderly development; to lessen street congestion; to promote fire safety and public order; to protect the public health and general welfare; to provide safe, aesthetic surroundings and living conditions; to prevent overcrowding; and to stimulate systematic development of transportation, water, sewer, school, park, and other public facilities. [\[VMC 17.02.020\]](#)

This project to update Title 17 is one of multiple implementation steps to take the broad policy guidance in Plan Valdez and incorporate the goals and desired future development of Valdez into city law. Zoning is the most important implementation tool for a comprehensive plan, closely linked to the plan itself.

What is included in a zoning code?

Typical components/structure of a successful zoning code ordinance include:

- Process/Review Procedures
- Review/Decision Making Bodies
- Table of Uses (rather than listing individual uses in each district)
- Dimensional Standards (tailored to the intended outcome/built form)
- Flexibility Provisions (e.g., variances / administrative adjustments)

- Nonconforming Provisions
- Buffering/Capability Standards
- Parking/Mobility Standards
- Design Guidelines

How Zoning links to Plan Valdez (Comprehensive Plan)

Plan Valdez has many sections that directly impact how we approach the zoning code. The most obvious is the establishment of **Place Types**. Place Types describe the appropriate mix of land uses (primary, supporting, and incompatible) and defining characteristics (such as connectivity and visual character). The zoning code should be updated to reflect the vision in these Place Types, such as the existing use districts (and other sections) updated to align with the broad definitions of the Place Types.

Other links between the Comprehensive Plan and Title 17 include:

- **Goal 2.1:** Plan for responsible growth (and associated Actions)
- **Goal 2.3:** Promote, protect, and build quality housing (and associated Actions)
- **Goal 5.2:** Provide programs and facilities for active lifestyles
Action: Update Title 17 to include conditions for approval for new motorized sports facilities.
- **Goal 7.1:** Reduce the community's vulnerability to natural events