

Appendix B

Land Use Designation Categories

INTRODUCTION

Homer's existing set of land uses and built environment offers much to be commended and retained. Three qualities in particular stand out as strengths:

Mix of uses

Homer has a freewheeling, organic character. In many parts of town, land uses – residential, office, retail, storage, industrial, and open space – are freely mixed. This style breaks common rules of traditional planning, but in most instances the result is attractive and functional. This eclectic mix of uses fits together with little or no conflicts, and helps create Homer's unique, well-liked character.

- 1. Building appearance**

Homer has an organic building aesthetic where the majority of buildings “fit.” Many are actually quite attractive, while relatively few stand out as offensive or out-of-place.

- 2. Development aesthetic**

Homer has a widespread site development aesthetic that is also quite attractive. Many commercial lots in Homer feature hand-crafted informal signage, natural landscaping, and a comfortable, natural fit with the land. This contrasts with the buildings and parking areas in many Alaskan communities (e.g., Wasilla) where development is rarely pleasing to the eye.

In many instances these qualities exist in spite of, or possibly out of, compliance with the City's zoning rules. In light of these realities, the function of an updated zoning code for the City of Homer should be to strengthen and institutionalize the styles and patterns most builders and developers are already following. Care needs to be taken that simplistic zoning rules don't damage the more, unique home-grown qualities that give Homer its special character. At the same time, odds are good that future developers may not know the “unwritten rules” that have made past development generally attractive.

For these reasons and to implement comprehensive plan policies, Homer needs to upgrade and revise its existing zoning code. As part of this comprehensive plan, a “land use designation map” has been prepared identifying intended land uses, working from the existing zoning map. This product is not as detailed or specific as a zoning map, but does express the general land use strategies of the comprehensive plan. This map is a starting point in the process of amending the zoning code to refine and implement these general policies. A particular focus of this land use designation map is to use mixed use zoning practices that focus more on offsite impacts and building forms and less on controls on the specific type of use. This approach provides necessary guidance while still preserving the unique and functional character of the community.

RESIDENTIAL

R-1 (URBAN RESIDENTIAL)

- **Intent** The R-1 district is intended to provide more intense residential development in the city core, in a manner that matches Homer's small town character and encourages increased densities near pedestrian-oriented commercial areas.
- **Primary Use** Medium and medium-high density residential including single-family, duplex, and multiple-family; allow for a variety in housing types and housing price levels.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
 - Areas generally served by water and sewer; central locations with excellent access to a range of urban services and facilities.
 - Residential is primary use; but allows for other uses where these uses maintain residential character.
 - Moderate lot size minimums (for example, 6000 square foot lots for single family homes).
 - Allows bed and breakfasts by right, allows second units and duplexes by right (both subject to standards). (For purposes of this plan, a B&B is defined as lodging where owner proprietor resides on site.)
 - Allows home-based businesses by right (subject to standards).
- **Development standards**
 - Encourage attractive, diverse housing types (vs. "cookie-cutter" subdivisions).
 - Ensure newer housing is compatible with character of older neighborhoods (for example, by requiring transitional densities, buffer uses).

R-2 (TRANSITIONAL RESIDENTIAL)

- **Intent** The R-2 district is intended to provide a transitional residential zone between higher and lower density residential or residential office developments with a focus on residential land uses. Densities in this area will be in between the lower density rural residential zone (R-3) and the more urban, higher density uses in the R-1 district.
- **Primary Use** Medium-density residential including single-family and duplex; provide for a scale, density, and character of residential development appropriate for locations between urban and rural residential areas.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
 - Areas generally served by water and sewer or likely to be served in the future; full city services.
 - Moderate lot size minimums (for example, 10,000 square foot lots for single family homes).
 - Allows second units and duplexes by right (both subject to standards).
 - Allows bed-and-breakfasts by right; other small scale accommodations¹ allowed with administrative review. (For purposes of this plan a B&B defined as lodging where owner proprietor resides on site – see footnote for details.)

¹ Small accommodations will need to be further defined. Current code allows rooming houses which are five guest rooms or less. Rooming houses is how Homer's code currently deals w B&Bs. There is no requirement for owner/operator on site. This may need to be changed. Hotel/motel is 6 or more rooms or 5 rooms but more than 15 guests.

- Allows home-based businesses by right (subject to standards); allows some larger non-retail business activities subject to administrative review.
- **Development standards**
 - Encourage retention of quasi-rural character.
 - Encourage attractive diverse housing types (vs. “cookie-cutter” subdivisions).
 - Encourage open space subdivisions as alternative to more typical lot layouts.

R-3 (RURAL RESIDENTIAL)

- **Intent** The R-3 district is intended to provide areas for low density residential development and limited agricultural pursuits.
- **Primary Use** Low-density residential development in outlying locations, generally with less services and/or lower level of service than in urban areas.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
 - Areas generally not served by water and sewer, nor likely to be served in the near future.
 - Larger lot sizes or cluster subdivisions to preserve sense of open space.
 - Allows accessory housing units by right (subject to standards).
 - Allows bed and breakfasts by right, subject to standards (for purposes of this plan B&B defined as lodging where owner proprietor resides on site)
 - Allows home-based businesses by right, subject to standards; allows some larger non-retail business activities subject to administrative review.
- **Development standards**
 - Option for higher densities and cluster development. Encourage open space subdivisions as alternative to more typical lot layouts.
 - Ensure newer housing is compatible with character of older neighborhoods.

COMMERCIAL AND MIXED USE

DT (DOWNTOWN MIXED USE)

- **Intent** The intent of the DT district is to provide a mixed use business district in the core area of Homer, with safe, pleasant, and attractive circulation for pedestrians and vehicles.
- **Primary Use** Provide a concentrated, centrally located district in the center of Homer for a mixture of urban uses, including general retail shopping, personal and professional services, educational institutions, entertainment establishments, restaurants and related businesses, civic uses, recreation and residential uses. Create high quality public spaces (sidewalks, trails, gathering areas) and encourage pedestrian movement throughout the area; allow for a mixture of residential and commercial uses with conflicts resolved in favor of commercial uses.
- **Other Uses, Allowances and Specifications**
 - Areas served by public water and sewer, full range of other urban services
 - Allow and encourage densities typical of small town, “main street” settings (sufficient concentration of uses to encourage circulation by foot).
 - Residential densities – multi-family dwellings; for example, up to 6 units per acre allowed by right; up to 14 units per acre with administrative review.

- Minimal building setbacks to create a friendly, pedestrian-oriented streetscape.
- Encourage parking off-site (e.g., allowing payment of a fee in lieu of meeting on-site parking standards, through shared parking arrangements, through reducing on-site requirements by providing public parking and protected pedestrian ways).
- **Development standards include:**
 - Create an attractive, pedestrian-oriented environment (e.g., windows and doors that are close to the street, landscaped parking, standards to humanize buildings such as clearly articulated entries).
 - Advisory guidelines re design character, so buildings and other structures within the district are compatible with one another and with the surrounding area.
 - Consider establishing an overlay zone for Old Town so buildings in that portion of the district feature an “Old Homer” historical character.
 - Consider establishing a University district.

CBD (CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT)

- **Intent** The intent of the CBD commercial district is to provide a mixed use business district in the core area of Homer, with greater allowance for vehicular use than in the Downtown district, but still with a character that encourages pedestrian use.
- **Primary Use** Provide a centrally located area within the City for a mixture of urban uses and activities, including general retail shopping, personal and professional services, educational institutions, entertainment establishments, restaurants and related businesses, civic uses, recreation, and residential uses. Allow a mixture of residential and commercial uses but conflicts resolved in favor of business.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
 - Areas served by public water and sewer, full range of other urban services
 - Allow and encourage relatively high densities (sufficient concentration of uses to encourage circulation by foot).
 - On-site parking required (option for shared parking with an approved parking plan).
 - Residential densities – for example, multi-family up to 6 units per acre - allowed by right
- **Development standards include:**
 - Create an attractive, pedestrian-oriented environment (e.g., landscaped parking, standards to humanize buildings such as clearly articulated entries).
 - Advisory guidelines regarding design character, so buildings and other structures within the district are compatible with one another and with the surrounding area.
 - Control signage to maintain visual quality (for example, avoid large, highly illuminated signs).

GC-1 (GENERAL COMMERCIAL 1)

- **Intent** The intent of the GC-1 district is to provide for auto-oriented business.
- **Primary Use** Provide for a diverse array of commercial, retail, and civic uses; commercial uses are primary objective. Applied in locations where the auto is primary means of access.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
 - Areas served by public water and sewer, full range of other urban services.
 - Residential densities – for example, residential uses up to 6 units per acre allowed by right; higher densities with administrative review or use dimensional standards like CBD above.
 - On-site parking required (option for shared parking with an approved parking plan).
 - Guide use to create/maintain an attractive highway environment.
- **Development standards include:**
 - Control signage to maintain visual quality (for example, avoid large, highly illuminated signs).
 - Provide for safe pedestrian circulation.
 - GC-1/Residential – allow residential uses, encourage water dependant uses along Beluga Lake, and encourage small commercial enterprises on Lakeshore Drive. Maintain the neighborhood character of mixed commercial and residential use, retain mature healthy evergreen trees when practical, and plant trees in landscaped areas.

RO (RESIDENTIAL OFFICE)

- **Intent** The intent of the RO district is to allow for a range of residential and residential compatible uses. While allowing office, certain commercial and other business uses, buildings and sites must have a scale and character similar to single family detached or small multi-family homes. This district serves as a transition zone between commercial and residential neighborhoods.
- **Primary Use** Provide a mix of low-density to medium-density residential uses with certain specified businesses and offices which may include professional services, administrative services and/or personal services, but does not include direct retail or wholesale transactions except for sales which are incidental to the provision of services.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
 - Areas served by public water and sewer, full range of other urban services, close to other urban services.
 - Moderate lot size minimums (for example, 7500 square feet); allows for attached housing.
 - Guide use to create/maintain an attractive highway environment
- **Design and development standard**
 - Required (not advisory) standards to maintain residential character/residential scale of buildings (e.g., height, setbacks, parking location, signage).
 - Advisory design guidelines regarding building style (e.g., use of materials, architectural style).
 - Allow for limited commercial signage, consistent with overall goal of retaining a largely residential character.

G-MU (Gateway Mixed Use)

- **Intent** The intent of the G-MU district is to provide land uses that primarily cater to the tourism and visitor industry of Homer and to promote year round activity. The gateway district serves as the primary roadway entry into Homer. It will provide an attractive built environment and promote those uses that will not compete with the DT, CBD and GC districts.
- **Primary Use** Promote mixed-use development, with emphasis on the visitor industry. Serve needs and interests of the visitor industry, as well as year-round residents and Homer's role as the Gateway to Kachemak Bay (not to conflict w/CBD). Minimize future traffic congestion along the Sterling Highway corridor and preserve the experience residents and visitors have when entering Homer by way of the Sterling Highway.
- Commercial uses are primary objective; focus on "Gateway" appropriate businesses such as visitor amenities, hotels – no gas stations, fast-food, strip development.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
 - Areas served by public water and sewer, full range of other urban services.
 - Allow and encourage relatively high densities (sufficient concentration of uses to encourage circulation by foot).
 - Residential densities – for example, multi-family up to 6 units per acre - allowed by right; higher densities with administrative review or use dimensional standards like CBD above.
- **Development standards**
 - Advisory guidelines re "Gateway" design character.
 - Encourage parking behind buildings (through appropriate set-back rules).
 - Design standards that create an entry point the community can be proud of - attractive, pedestrian-oriented to a degree (e.g., landscaped parking).
 - Control signage to maintain visual quality (for example, avoid large, highly illuminated signs).

E-MU (EAST END MIXED USE)

- **Intent** The intent of the E-MU district is to allow a wide variety of commercial, industrial, and heavy industrial uses in a district with access to the boatyard, marine services, and the airport; and to ensure such uses, which are important to Homer's economy, continue to have a viable location.
- **Primary Use** Mixed-use development with fewer constraints on uses than existing GC-1 and GC-2. Designed to accommodate the wide range of uses found in the area today, as well as other future uses; examples include industrial, marine-oriented, construction services (including batch plants), storage, and artist workshops. Residential and retail are allowable, but residential/retail and commercial conflicts will be resolved in favor of commercial/industrial uses.
- **Other Uses, Allowances and Specifications**
 - Allows for mixed use, live/work, provides larger lots than would be available in CBD.
 - On-site parking required.
 - Guide use to create/maintain an attractive highway environment.

an individual, a neighborhood, or developer and then be considered under a special, conditional review process.

- On-site parking required.
- **Development standards**
 - Strict standards for parking, noise, traffic generation, size, landscaping, screening trash and service areas, etc.
 - East End Road NC – limited numbers of small scale, local serving commercial areas designed to meet the convenience commercial service needs of neighborhood residents. The objectives behind this designation category might also be met through the Planned Unit Development process or an overlay zone allowing more commercial and retail uses than the underlying Residential Office District.

CO (CONSERVATION)

- **Intent** The conservation district is applied to sensitive public and in some instances private lands that are critical to the maintenance of fish and wildlife resources, serves important watershed protection areas, or serves other key environmental functions. These lands are to be maintained in an undisturbed and natural state, except for enhancement projects. Private landowners may agree to have this designation on their property. The Green Infrastructure map discussed is an important reference in identifying conservation areas.
- **Primary Use** Acceptable uses in this district include undeveloped open space, parks with passive recreation activities and facilities (e.g., wildlife viewing, nature walks, educational and interpretive uses) and other uses that do not change the character of the land or disrupt fish and wildlife. Passive recreation activities are secondary to habitat protection and enhancement. Private landowners may agree to have this designation on their property.
- **Development standards include:**
 - Where applied to private lands, specific development strategies and standards are needed to balance the interests of private land owners with the need for protection of functionally valuable, sensitive natural areas.
 - Consider requiring a 100 foot habitat buffer on all lands bordering the airport area conservation zone, as discussed under the East End Mixed Use zone.

EXISTING ZONING CATEGORIES – NOT CHANGED

The remaining land use designation categories are described below, using language from the existing City of Homer zoning code. These use categories are not addressed in this plan. The Marine Commercial and Marine Industrial areas both apply on the Homer Spit, which will be addressed through a separate more detailed planning process outside the scope of this version of the comprehensive plan.

MC (MARINE COMMERCIAL)

Provide adequate space for the commercial needs which service and support water-dependent industries and facilities; encourage adequate separation between allied but potentially incompatible commercial and industrial uses while providing proximate locations for the mutual benefit of such

water-oriented commercial and water dependent industrial uses. Commercial enterprise permitted to the extent that it services and supports the water-dependent industries which are important to Homer's economic base (e.g., fishing, marine transportation, off-shore energy development, recreation, and tourism) and to the extent that location elsewhere creates unnecessary hardship for the users of such commercial services. Performance standards are required to minimize the impact of commercial development on the natural features on which it depends.

MI (MARINE INDUSTRIAL)

Provide adequate space for those industrial uses that require direct marine access for their operation and to encourage the most efficient utilization of land. Promote marine-dependent industries important to Homer's economic base (e.g., fishing, fish processing, marine transportation, off-shore oil development, and tourism); give priority to those uses, and minimize conflicts among industrial, commercial and recreational uses.

OSR (OPEN SPACE—RECREATIONAL)

Promote public recreational opportunities while protecting natural and scenic resources. Give priority to pedestrian uses over motor vehicles uses and preserve public access to the tidelands. All development proposals in the district will be evaluated in terms of their compatibility with natural hazard and erosion potential and their effect on scenic vistas and public access.

BCWP (BRIDGE CREEK WATERSHED PROTECTION DISTRICT)

Prevent degradation of water quality and protect the Bridge Creek Watershed to ensure its continuing suitability as a water supply source for the City's public water utility. Restrict land use activities that would impair the water quality or increase the cost for treatment.

