

CITY OF HOMER
HOMER, ALASKA

FAILED 8/11/25

Davis

RESOLUTION 25-070

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA,
DIRECTING THE PLANNING COMMISSION TO REVIEW AND
RECOMMEND AMENDMENTS TO THE HOMER CITY CODE TO
ALLOW TEMPORARY STRUCTURES FOR RETAIL PURPOSES ON
VACANT LOTS IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT.

WHEREAS, The City of Homer seeks to foster a vibrant and economically thriving Central Business District (CBD) that supports local businesses and enhances the quality of life for residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, Encouraging retail activity in the CBD can increase business opportunities, generate additional tax revenues for the City, support essential public services and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Vacant lots in the CBD, which can remain undeveloped due to the high costs and complexities of constructing permanent commercial developments with full water and sewer connections, create gaps in the urban fabric that detract from the walkability and aesthetic appeal of downtown Homer; and

WHEREAS, Allowing temporary, unplumbed structures for retail purposes on vacant lots could activate these spaces, creating a more continuous and engaging downtown experience, while providing opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs; and

WHEREAS, The current Homer City Code, particularly HCC 21.18, does not explicitly permit temporary, unplumbed structures for retail use on vacant lots in the CBD, potentially limiting economic development opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Revising Homer City Code to allow such structures could balance the need for economic vitality with the City's commitment to maintaining a cohesive and attractive downtown; and

WHEREAS, The Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing and recommending amendments to Homer City Code related to zoning and land use to ensure alignment with the City's goals and community needs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Homer, Alaska, requests that the Planning Commission undertake the following actions:

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1. Review Homer City Code Chapter 21.18, particularly sections related to permitted and conditional uses in the Central Business District (HCC 21.18.020 and 21.18.030), to identify provisions that may prohibit or restrict the use of temporary, unplumbed structures on vacant lots for retail purposes.

2. Develop amendments to HCC 21.18 that would, if adopted, explicitly allow temporary, unplumbed structures for retail use on vacant lots in the Central Business District.

3. Present recommendations to the City Council by January 31, 2026, for further consideration and potential adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Homer City Council this 11th day of August, 2025.

CITY OF HOMER

RACHEL LORD, MAYOR

ATTEST:

RENEE KRAUSE, MMC, CITY CLERK

Fiscal Note: NA



MEMORANDUM

Resolution 25-070, A Resolution of the City Council of Homer, Alaska, Directing the Planning Commission to Review and Recommend Amendments to Homer City Code to Allow Temporary Structures for Retail Purposes on Vacant Lots in the CBD. Davis.

Item Type: Backup Memorandum
Prepared For: Mayor Lord and City Council
Date: July 28, 2025
From: Jason Davis, Councilmember
Through: Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager

Purpose: This memorandum provides background and rationale for Resolution 25-XXX, which requests that the Homer Advisory Planning Commission review and recommend amendments to the Homer City Code (HCC) to explicitly permit temporary, unplumbed structures for retail use on vacant lots in the Central Business District (CBD).

Background: In early 2025, a local entrepreneur applied to place a small, temporary shed on skids at a vacant lot on Pioneer Avenue in the CBD to sell artisanal products. The Planning Department required a zoning permit per HCC 21.70.010, and provided setback requirements. After review, the permit was denied based on HCC 14.04.020, which mandates that commercial buildings near city water and sewer lines connect to those utilities rather than using private wells or septic systems.

Issue: The Planning Department's application of HCC 14.04.020 extends the sewer connection requirement to all commercial structures, including small, temporary ones like a shed on skids, which may not require plumbing. It is unclear whether this interpretation aligns with the code's intent, which appears to target structures designed with plumbing. While HCC 8.08.010 allows retail activities from various structures—such as buildings, tents, or vehicles—for itinerant merchants, the current code does not explicitly permit temporary, unplumbed structures for retail use in the CBD. This lack of clarity, combined with the Planning Department's strict interpretation, creates a barrier to small-scale economic activity in the CBD, limiting opportunities for entrepreneurs.

Rationale: Resolution 25-070 requests the Planning Commission to review HCC Chapter 21.18 (Central Business District zoning) and related provisions, including HCC 14.04.020, to clarify restrictions on temporary, unplumbed structures and propose amendments to allow their use for retail purposes. Permitting such structures would:

- Support small-scale entrepreneurship, fostering business growth and increasing tax revenues for the City.
- Activate vacant lots in the CBD, reducing undeveloped gaps that disrupt the downtown's walkability and vibrancy.
- Offer a low-cost option for startups unable to afford permanent developments with utility connections, aligning with the City's economic development goals. If successful, such businesses may over time desire to expand into permanent commercial structures at their location.

By addressing this issue, the City can balance economic vitality with its commitment to a cohesive and attractive downtown, ensuring that small businesses can thrive without undue regulatory hurdles.