



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Chair Windsor and Planning Commission Members

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning & Community Development Director *AA*

Date: October 10, 2025

Subject: Community Garden on Andrew Hope Street

The Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) and Baranof Island Housing Authority (BIHA) are partnering to establish a tribal community garden on BIHA's property at the end/between Andrew Hope Street and Rudolph Walton Circle. The property is located in the multifamily and mobile home district (R-2 MHP). In consideration of this request, staff has reviewed the zoning code to determine whether this is a permitted (i.e. allowed by right), conditional, or prohibited use.

Generally, larger-scale gardening is a type of horticulture use which SGC 22.05.750 defines as *"...the on-site production of plants or their products, including but not limited to gardening and fruit production. Horticulture does not include construction of accessory buildings other than those specifically allowed in the zoning districts. It also does not include such products as livestock, poultry, other animals, or the production of animal related products."*

"Horticulture and related structures" is listed in the "Retail and Business Uses" table of Chapter 22.16 which implies that this use is generally considered in the context of a commercial use. Correspondingly, the use is prohibited in all residential zones.

However, "Commercial home horticulture" is defined under SGC 22.05.340 as *"...the on-site production, principally for use or consumption by the property owner or tenant, of plants or their products, including but not limited to gardening and fruit production. Commercial home horticulture does not include the sale of such products produced off site, but does include the sale of such products produced and sold on site to others. It also does not include such products as livestock, poultry, other animals, or the production of animal related products. Accessory buildings, such as garden stands, other than those specifically allowed in zoning districts, may be permitted through the*

planning commission home horticulture permit process in SGC 22.25.025.”

Subsequently, commercial home horticulture is a conditional use in all residential zones.

STA & BIHA's proposal does not fit the definition of commercial home horticulture as the proposed location is not on the same property as the “property owner or tenant”.

Additionally, while a type of horticulture use, the proposal is not for a commercial/business related horticulture development which would otherwise be prohibited in the zone.

In looking at other types of permitted and conditional uses in the zone, staff noted that “community centers” are a conditional use in the R-2 MHP zone. Community centers are not defined in the zoning code, likely given that they can provide a broad swath of amenities/services.

Taking in combination that commercial home horticulture and community centers are conditional uses in the R-2 MHP zone, staff interprets that considering a community garden as a particular type of community center, and that it would be a conditional use, would be an appropriate designation/interpretation.

Additionally, staff believes that this interpretation is supported by the Comprehensive Plan, specifically Land Use Action 7.8, *“Review zoning code to explore changes to allow urban horticulture and agricultural uses more broadly in existing zoning districts.”*

Recommendation

Staff would like the Commission to consider this interpretation and advise staff on its appropriateness/congruity with the zoning code. A motion is not needed, as interpretations are completed administratively; this is an opportunity for the Commission to provide advice/guidance.

Enclosed:

- STA Request for Interpretation
- Aerial