

Fairbanks North Star Borough Downtown Plan

Working Group Kick-Off Meeting

September 2, 2021; 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Participants

FNSB Leadership & Staff

Mayor Bryce Ward, Brittany Smart, Kellen Spillman, Donald Galligan

Downtown Plan Working Group – present:

Jerry Cleworth, Jackson Fox, Scott McCrea, Sue Sprinkle

Downtown Plan Working Group – absent:

Sabrina Binkley, Chris Miller, Brenda Riley, Doug Sims, Buki Wright

Other Participants:

Andrew Ackerman (City of Fairbanks), David van den Berg (Downtown Association of Fairbanks), Olivia Lunsford (Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation Planning)

Consulting Team:

Shelly Wade, Aubrey Wieber, Patrick Cotter

Notes

Opening Comments from Mayor Ward

- The Working Group has been in existence for about three years.
- The group has done foundational work over countless hours and many meetings.
- The work done is greatly appreciated.
- The point of this meeting is to acknowledge the work done to date and to discuss the future of this project.

Progress to Date & Discussion

- The consulting team is getting familiar with the policies drafted by the Working Group, and the maps, which will help inform future work.
 - Comments from WG Members:
 - **General:** The August 2019 Downtown Fairbanks 2040 document shared for this meeting is not comprehensive of the Working Group's work.
 - **Specific:**
 - Some things are missing, and the formatting needs to be cleaned up.
 - It would be good to pick this document back up and continue to work on it.
 - The work we did was spread over several documents and has never been compiled into one document.
 - This is a good document to work from, but the Working Group never gave final approval of this.

- The work we did on zoning (land use) is missing here, specifically the proposed future land use map.
- There was also a parking study developed as a part of the planning process. This helped identify that there is too much parking downtown.
- Comments from the Project Team:
 - To start, we will ensure the [Working Group Dropbox](#) will get updated with the following:
 - [Future land use map](#)
 - Parking study
 - Related documents that Olivia Lunsford from FAST Planning can share as she was very engaged in the earlier phases of the planning process. She is also available as a staff resource and available to review data or methodology for earlier efforts. One example of existing data shared by Olivia is the project [StoryMap](#).
 - The Dropbox also includes 2020 interim products for Working Group review and comment:
 - Summary of interviews with 15 Downtown business owners.
 - Summary of interviews with Working Group members focused on desired final product – what will be most useful, effective, productive?
- Other Questions & Comments:
 - We need a website that shows the public what this project is about, the schedule, etc.
 - From the Project Team: We have a draft [website](#). We are aiming to go live with the website within the next few weeks.
 - How much time do you think the Working Group is going to be spending on this?
 - From the Project Team:
 - We heard from Working Group members during summer 2020 interviews that they have been overly engaged. In general, Working Group members noted the ideal time to reengage would be when there was a full draft plan for them to review, that would include their work on land use, transportation, parking, and housing. The current Work Plan includes two key engagements with the Working Group to review the Draft Plan before public release (spring 2022), and after the public comment period ends to review that feedback and to identify any changes to the plan before it goes before the Planning Commission and Assembly early summer 2022.
 - From Working Group Members:
 - Not all Working Group members wanted to stop the meetings. We have done a lot of work, but there is still further vetting to be done. There is concern the content of the existing chapters is not going to be fully clear to consultants and the Borough staff. Looking at the schedule and the work plan, there is frustration that the Working Group is not supposed to be involved until a plan is done.
 - It would be great to receive regular updates in between major meetings.
 - It would be nice to be up to date on information the project team is proposing, but don't want to get in the weeds. We have done a really good job so far, and we don't want our work, the Working Group's efforts, to be minimized. We care. As long as we are included in some fashion, we are

OK. Also concerned about the timeframe. Are we supposed to do this every five years?

- From Project Team:
 - This is a long range or 10 to 20-year plan. Typically, you would conduct an update to the plan every five years, but not a robust undertaking like we've done/are doing for this process.
 - This is great feedback regarding the desire to engage the Working Group sooner. A potential first meeting could be when the public safety policies are drafted – we can share those and the potential connection to the draft land use, transportation and parking policies developed by the Working Group. We will share an updated Work Plan that includes that additional engagement with the Working Group, no later than December 2021 and regular updates.
- Fairbanks City Council Engagement:
 - From the Working Group & Other Participants:
 - The Fairbanks City Council should adopt this before it goes to the Borough Planning and Zoning Commission and Assembly. City approval is critical.
 - Maybe we can find a way to loop in the Fairbanks City Council, which could start with an executive summary describing the plan and what we think will change/how it will impact the way the city conducts business. Getting that to them before this goes to the Planning Commission is a very good idea. Specifically, is there a way to identify things that will require changes to restrictions, regulations or how the City does business now? There are a lot of suggestions, but is there anything that will require us to do something different? If a City Council member called and asked what is changing, we should be able to answer that question.
 - Communication to the City Council is very important.
 - Agree that the City Council needs to be looped in early. There is a lot of stuff where this plan veers into City jurisdiction, and the Borough cannot step on the City's toes. There is a deliverable, the public safety heat map and analysis; this is an example of what I am talking about. Has the City asked for this? Are they expecting it?
 - Public safety keeps coming up. We know we can help in that area, but if the discussion goes very deep, don't know if that should be a part of a Borough comprehensive plan. The Borough doesn't have jurisdiction over police. We can look at things like street lighting, which could impact public safety, but beyond that don't know if that is something we should be involved in.
 - From the Project Team: Public safety was a top concern raised during public engagement. We are working directly with the City of Fairbanks to get data and identify interview subjects that will inform potential policies for the Downtown Plan. The Downtown Plan is a long range or comprehensive plan that lays out policies on topics that intersect and influence each other – you can make better decisions about housing, land use, transportation, quality of life, etc., with public safety and other data about the area. As typical

with most community, comprehensive and other plans where more than one municipality or organization is represented, the plan can provide education on roles, including implementation leads and supporters for policies. We can share similar examples from other places in Alaska where we've done this kind of work.

Next Steps

- The project team will:
 - Share notes from this meeting.
 - Continue to update the Working Group project Dropbox to include past, current, and other draft work products (e.g., land use map and parking study).
 - Revise the project Work Plan to include regular progress updates to and at least one additional work session to maintain positive and productive Working Group engagement in the planning process.
 - NOTE: Agnew::Beck Project Manager, Shelly Wade, is always available by phone or email to discuss questions, comments and concerns. We will keep communication open.
 - Cell: 907-242-5326
 - Email: shelly@agnewbeck.com