

Downtown Fairbanks Plan Working Group Meeting

Friday, December 9, 2022, 2:00 – 4:30 pm



How to Join

In-Person

- Ester Conference Room, 2nd Floor, next to the Community Planning Department, 907 Terminal Street, Fairbanks, AK

Virtual

- Zoom (audio/visual):
<https://agnewbeck.zoom.us/j/82462240116?pwd=V05lQ3ZQcWdidncwejFwZlEvMFJCZz09>
- Phone (audio only)
 - 1-877-853-5257 (Toll-free)
 - Meeting ID: 824 6224 0116#
 - Passcode: 573809#

Objectives

Share and gather Working Group input on:

- Planning Process & Schedule
- Public Review Draft Plan
- Outstanding Components of the Draft Plan
- Next Steps, working toward launch and Public Launch/Comment Process

Materials

1. Agenda (this document)
2. Public Review Draft Plan – Working Group DRAFT (emailed on 12/09/22)
3. August 11th Working Group Notes (emailed on 12/09/22)

Agenda

Time	Item
2:00 – 2:15 pm	Welcome, How We Got Here & Today's Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions• Process and progress-to-date and potential scheduling 2022/2023<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Potential launch date – January 9th, 2023○ WG review process – today and moving forward○ Outstanding components – Executive Summary & Action Plan○ Immediate priorities once launched – Fairbanks City Council Work Session, FNSB Assembly Work Session, and outreach to key stakeholders/potential plan partners and implementers (integrate discussion re: action plan)• Meeting guidelines
2:15 – 3:15 pm	Public Review Draft Discussion <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduction2. Economic Development – discussed at last meeting3. Land Use – discussed at last meeting4. Public Safety5. Transportation – discussed at last meeting6. Parking – discussed at last meeting7. Housing
3:15 – 3:30 pm	BREAK

3:30 – 4:15 pm	Public Review Draft Discussion (continued)
4:15 – 4:30 pm	Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate actions • Public Launch/Comment Period • Closing comments and questions

Invited Participants

First	Last
WORKING GROUP MEMBERS	
Jerry	Cleworth
Jackson	Fox
Sharon	Hildebrand
Scott	McCrea
Chris	Miller
Brenda	Riley
Doug	Sims
Sue	Sprinkle
Buki	Wright
TECHNICAL STAFF – City of FAI, DTA, FAST Planning, FNSB	
Bob	Pristash
John	O'Brien
Kellen	Spillman
Melissa	Kellner
Don	Galligan
Kayde	Whiteside
Brittany	Smart
David	van den Berg
Olivia	Lunsford
CONSULTING STAFF	
Shelly	Wade
Molly	Mylius
Pat	Cotter

Downtown Fairbanks Plan Working Group Meeting
Friday, December 9, 2022, 2:00 – 4:30 pm; Ester Conference Room and Zoom
Discussion Notes



Attendees

First	Last	Present/Absent
WORKING GROUP MEMBERS		
Jerry	Cleworth	Present
Jackson	Fox	Absent
Sharon	Hildebrand	Absent
Scott	McCrea	Absent
Chris	Miller	Present
Brenda	Riley	Absent
Doug	Sims	Absent
Sue	Sprinkle	Present
Buki	Wright	Absent
TECHNICAL STAFF – City of FAI, DTA, FAST Planning, FNSB		
Bob	Pristash	Absent
Tim	Zimza	Present
John	O'Brien	Absent
Kellen	Spillman	Present
Melissa	Kellner	Present
Don	Galligan	Present
Kayde	Whiteside	Present
Brittany	Smart	Absent
David	van den Berg	Absent
Olivia	Lunsford	Present (virtual)
CONSULTING STAFF		
Shelly	Wade	Present
Molly	Mylius	Present (virtual)
Pat	Cotter	Present (virtual)

Objectives

Share and gather Working Group input on:

- Planning Process & Schedule
- Public Review Draft Plan
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Note: Please see companion document, “FNSB Downtown Plan Edits Comprehensive, 12-21-22, WG Version”, with full list of proposed edits the planning team will be making to finalize the public review draft. The proposed edits document considers emailed comments and discussion from the November 18th and the December 9th Working Group meetings. Major/substantive edits were discussed with the group; other smaller edits (rewording, technical cleanup, etc.) have been identified in the proposed edits document but were not discussed during the working group meeting.

Discussion Notes

Welcome, How We Got Here & Today’s Focus

- Shelly provided an overview of our progress-to-date, and proposed process for public comment and finalization.
 - Written comments were received by:
 - Chris Miller
 - Jackson Fox
 - Olivia Lunsford
 - Kellen Spillman
 - The Working Group will likely not reconvene before the public comment review draft goes out but would meet following the public review period to discuss the feedback received and determine steps/edits for finalization.
- Assignments/action planning discussion
 - No organizations or agencies stepped forward as leads for strategies/actions in the draft during the most recent round of Working Group comments.
 - During the public comment period, we can do follow up with key entities (City, FNSB, Downtown Association, etc.) can work to identify leads. The resulting action plan will be added after public comment.
 - Some Working Group members and staff continue to have concerns about being overly prescriptive in the action plan.
 - Kellen feels there is sufficient level of detail now to support implementation. This has been an ongoing topic. Vision Fairbanks was a very detailed plan, and it was generally not a successful plan. If a plan is too detailed, and steps one and two are not implemented, the whole plan loses momentum.
 - The Working Group will come back together to review public comments and draft action plan contributions.
 - As an alternative to a full action plan, we could identify a lead entity responsible for implementing each action.
 - Right now, the economic development chapter has many leads identified; other sections do not.
 - The agencies assigned in the economic development chapter have not necessarily been consulted yet on whether they are willing/able to lead on their assigned actions.
 - ***Action:** Remove proposed leads during public comment period (mostly in the economic development section). Reach out to proposed leads/key entities during public comment

period (e.g., FEDC, City, etc.) to garner interest, and solicit leads/potential commitments to key actions and strategies.

- **Prioritization**

- Does the FNSB Comp Plan have any prioritization?

- No prioritization.

- Salcha-Badger Road identified some preliminary priority strategies but does not include an action plan.

- **Action:** Add a placeholder page to the public review draft where preliminary priority actions will ultimately be listed.

- **Evaluation and Tracking Progress**

- Into the future – will the FNSB look at this in a year and evaluate where we’re at? Is there accountability if someone says they will do something, and they don’t?

- Yes and no.

- Staffing is a challenge – right now the department can only do the essentials.

- Even then, we’re able to make progress on priorities.

- Using Salcha-Badger as an example:

- #1 strategy: land use plan has informed 2 rezones so far.

- #6 strategy: rewrote subdivision code.

- #9 strategy: wrote a grant to start an update to the Trails plan that calls out trails in the area.

- #12 strategy: big success with outreach and education. Every development our assessor has reviewed this year has the right permits. Before that – was only 60% of developments had the correct permits.

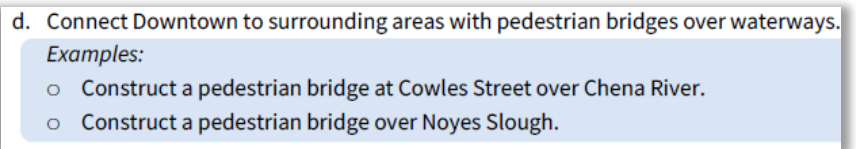
- Is there a way to share an update to long range plans periodically, e.g., to share how Salcha-Badger Plan is being implemented?

- Transportation Plans are constantly getting reevaluated and updated.

- This is a great plan for the community, but it’s not just the FNSB planning department responsible for implementation – that makes it harder to track.

- **Shaded boxes with details beyond actions – what to call them? (See screenshot of the example discussed with the group – Transportation strategy 3, action d, pedestrian bridge recommendations).**

The current draft shows them as “examples.” They include ideas for implementation, but don’t suggest these are the only solutions; it’s one way to avoid being overly prescriptive, while still offering substantive potential next steps.



d. Connect Downtown to surrounding areas with pedestrian bridges over waterways.

Examples:

- Construct a pedestrian bridge at Cowles Street over Chena River.

- Construct a pedestrian bridge over Noyes Slough.

- Ideas: Next Steps, Examples, Projects, Example Projects

- **Action:** Change shared boxes to be labelled “Example Actions/Projects”.

Public Review Draft Discussion

- Introduction
 - **Action:** Incorporate the following edits to the FNSB Responsibilities/City Responsibilities/Agencies and Other Partners Table.
 - Add “enforcement of city code” and “right of way permitting” under City Responsibilities.
 - Add “Fedco” “Festival Fairbanks” and “Golden Heart Parking” under Agencies and other partners and change “Private sector partners” to “private and public sector partners.”
 - Change “Fairbanks Downtown Association” to “Downtown Association of Fairbanks” (and do a search/find for this edit throughout the document).
 - Split “Agencies and Other Partners” into separate list/table.
 - **Action:** Incorporate the following edits to the demographics page:
 - Revisit the benchmarks table to see if there are more interesting/compelling facts than the average winter temperature to bring in.
 - Add the racial demographics of downtown residents, and information on individuals with disabilities living Downtown.
 - Add updated 2020 Census data with household/residence highlights.
- Economic Development
 - Molly shared an overview of proposed edits: bringing “Fairbanks is a Winter City” to earlier in the chapter, adding more cross-referencing to other chapters, and revising grocery store action to be more specific: conduct a feasibility study and implement recommendations.
 - *No further discussion on this chapter.*
- Land Use
 - Molly shared an overview of proposed edits: Add Cook Inlet Housing Authority's Mountain View development as a case study; adding a narrative summary of Figure 6 (vacant parcels map) and adding a second view of the map that shows a closeup of the Central Business District); regenerate proposed future land use map to better match look/feel of other maps, to include Mayor Ward’s proposed land swap in the southwest corner, and to add a buffer along the river.
 - Green is currently Parks & Open Space; for the sections adjacent to the river, not proposing a bike path, but rather, a riparian buffer. Want to avoid misconceptions. Might need to be its own category.
 - **Action:** Agnew::Beck to work with FNSB Community Planning to determine how to handle this corridor. See River Corridor example from Salcha-Badger Road Subarea Plan.
 - The Future Land Use Map shows parcels adjacent to the area boundaries because there is a desire for consistency and consideration with what’s happening just across the boundaries. This was the subject of extensive past discussion from the Working Group.
 - **Action:** Add an explanation about why the map shows proposed future land uses that extend beyond the project area boundaries.

- Land Use Categories
 - Discussed the dwelling unit per acre density.
 - For reference, 29 dwelling units per acre is the current standard in the FNSB’s Multi Family Commercial Office (MFO) category. These recommendations in the draft plan encourage greater density for mixed use preferred residential than current zoning code.
 - **Action:** Add example graphics/visuals to accompany this section to show what these densities look like on the ground, using Fairbanks examples. Consider also adding notes to how these recommendations differ from what the code says today.
- Public Safety
 - Discussed charts on Master Page 41:
 - **Action:** Add interpretation/narrative analysis. Consider adding per capita analysis; written analysis also should summarize the geographic comparison. Explore other ways to present this in a more compelling and digestible way.
 - Discussed revisions to strategy 1 around increasing funding for Community Safety Patrol and a public safety task force. Determined the intent is already there within existing strategies but we can make more robust/detailed.
 - **Action:** Revise strategy 1 actions e and f to include these details.
- Transportation
 - Discussed the following proposed addition: “Conduct a traffic study for downtown to examine conversion of roads from one-way to two-way.”
 - If we conduct a study, the changes need to consider impacts on pedestrians. Pedestrians are used to only looking one way. Adds a safety issue.
 - In general, this recommendation does not have full Working Group support. Recommend leaving out for the public review draft. It was a late addition and not in previous drafts; Working Group members have concerns about adding it in.
 - Lacey Street as an example of a problematic redesign. Each street should undergo a detailed public input process before a major redesign – which includes conversations regarding one versus two-way traffic. Stakeholders should be able to participate in the decision on a street-by-street basis.
 - **Action:** Add the following action, “Engage representative stakeholders in the planning of downtown road projects.”
 - **Action:** Kellen to type up a short summary of the 5th Avenue project as a successful case study to include.
 - Complete Streets
 - **Action:** Add, “where appropriate” as qualifier to Complete Streets bullet on page 49.
 - Bike storage – actions b and c are redundant.
 - **Action:** Combine actions b and c.

- Wayfinding and Signage
 - **Action:** Make sure the wayfinding cross references are clear and consider adding more detailed locations for cross references (example: strategy 7, action c cross reference regarding wayfinding).
 - **Action:** Better highlight the existing FAST signage plans with picture of current signage (see shaded box on page 50 – feature as a color image).
- Transportation maps
 - **Action:** Add reference to relevant strategies on the map page, not just within the strategy section.
 - **Action:** Identify roads that are essential for multiple users and serve multiple functions (e.g., Barnett, Cushman, Noble). Remove Figure 7. Current map is confusing and unhelpful.
 - Proposed road corridor connecting First St with Wendell Bridge. Do we need this? Hesitate to demolish more properties. The Working Group previously discussed this connection a lot; was in the FAST Planning TIP. The group opted to keep in public review draft for now.
- Parking
 - Parking Study
 - Graduate student approached FAST about a potential project. Opted to focus on parking. The student digitized parking lots, using Downtown Plan boundaries. FAST sent over a map package identifying parking spaces as individual parking polygons.
 - **Action:** Olivia to confirm with the former student that we can use the parking space shape file.
 - **Action:** Shelly and Molly can share the FAST parking data with FNSB Community Planning Department.
 - FNSB Downtown parking study is mostly done, although mapping component is still in progress. Kayde is working on occupancy maps of parking lots. Goal is to have the full parking study as an appendix. Includes inventory of all types of parking – public, private, signed, etc.
 - **Action:** Determine which graphics from the parking study should be highlighted in the plan. Working Group members expressed interest in comparing the numbers to other communities or to best practices (e.g., Figures 4-5); unfortunately, there is limited comparison data available. Would like the graphics to better tell the story.
 - Working Group previously discussed including a limited term conditional use permit for parking lots; however, the group opted not to include in the draft.
- Housing
 - Molly shared an overview of proposed edits: adding a notation about downtown being a food desert and cross-reference the grocery recommendation.
 - Figure 2 (page 72).
 - **Action:** Regenerate to match look and feel of other maps, remove cross hatching.

- Short term rentals. Would be helpful to have better data – what are the economics? What are the vacancy rates? How is it impacting the workforce? Don't want to jump to the conclusion of discouraging or limiting them.
- **Action:** Add as an example under strategy 2, housing needs assessment (page 73): assess the impact of short-term rentals on the downtown housing market and consider policies to limit short term rentals, if appropriate.

Next Steps

- Immediate actions:
 - We will need a few weeks to turn around revisions.
 - Tentative: Week of January 9th – need to reflect/confirm capacity to implement these edits together within that target (might need a little bit more time); “Working Group won't look at the edits over Christmas.”
 - Working Group closing comments:
 - “After I read this cover to cover – I would not be ashamed to put this out. I had some comments, but it looks good.”
 - “I'm excited for the updated imagery.”
 - “Diversity of opinions has made this a good product.”