

Downtown Fairbanks Plan Working Group Meeting – NOTES
Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 3:00 – 5:00 pm



Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Status
WORKING GROUP MEMBERS		
Jerry	Cleworth	Present
Jackson	Fox	Present
Sharon	Hildebrand	Present
Scott	McCrea	Absent
Chris	Miller	Present
Brenda	Riley	Present
Sue	Sprinkle	Present

First Name	Last Name	Status
TECHNICAL STAFF		
Bob	Pristash	Absent
John	O'Brien	Absent
Kellen	Spillman	Present
Melissa	Kellner	Present
Don	Galligan	Present
Kayde	Whiteside	Present
David	van den Berg	Present
Olivia	Lunsford	Absent

CONSULTING STAFF		
Shelly	Wade	Present
Molly	Mylus	Present
Pat	Cotter	Absent

Objectives

Share and gather Working Group input on:

- Planning Process, Progress, & Schedule
- Public Review Draft Plan – Public Comments & Potential Responses
- Next Steps

Discussion Notes

Welcome, How We Got Here & Today's Focus

- Introductions
- Q: Is this the first of multiple meetings, or are we hoping to get through everything today?
 - A: Aiming to complete it all today. Don't anticipate going comment by comment through all the topics.
- Review "optimistic" timeline:
 - **November/December 2023:** Develop responses to all comments and post the comment tracker on the project website.
 - **December 2023:** Incorporate edits and finalize draft; request letters of support.
 - **January 2024:** Present the Final Plan to the City of Fairbanks and request letter/resolution of support.
 - **February 2024:** The Plan will be referred by the FNSB Assembly.
 - **February/March 2024:** Conduct FNSB Planning Commission Public Hearing; also refer to the Chena Riverfront Commission.
 - **April 2024:** Conduct Assembly Public Hearing.

- Letters of support: The project team will be requesting a resolution of support from the City of Fairbanks. We will also seek out letters of support for the plan from all entities who contributed comments (Explore Fairbanks, Downtown Association, Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce), and may request assistance from Working Group members to help us with the requests for organizations you are affiliated with.
 - Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation did not submit comments, although they've participated in the process and Jomo was at the Chamber luncheon. FEDC is going through a process of internally redefining their own vision and purpose.

Public Comments Overview

- How many comments were received?
 - The comments were split into specific requests, for a total of 187 individually themed comments.
 - 102 comments: project team recommends no action.
 - 85 comments: project team recommends incorporating/acting on the comment. Over 50 of these comments were about the land use map alternatives, with overwhelming support for preserving and protecting green space.
- Why did we identify some comments as “no action?”
 - Topic already addressed in the working group via detailed discussion.
 - Topic was outside the scope of the plan, including ones that included specific, detailed implementation items.
 - Q. Sharon: Where do I find the list of organizations who submitted comments? Noticed Doyon and Tanana Chiefs Conference did not submit comments. Sharon connected with leadership for both and they did not recall seeing a copy of the draft plan.
 - A. The comment tracker has a column for “organization,” which identifies the organizations that submitted comments.
 - **ACTION:** Shelly will look at who from Doyon and TCC received a copy of the plan and follow up with Sharon, and make sure leadership receive copies of the plan going forward.

Discussion of Specific Edits

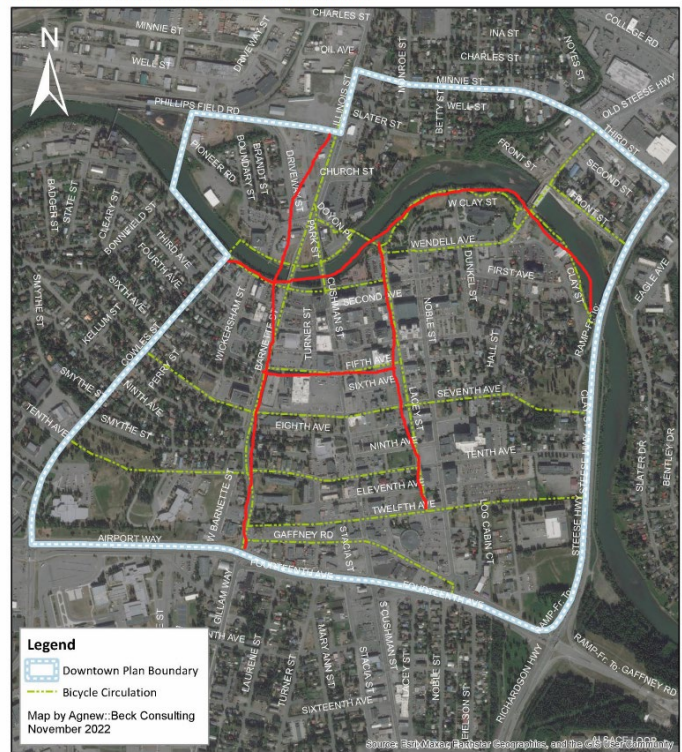
- Topic #1: Future Land Use Map
 - Public comments were overwhelmingly in favor of protecting and preserving green space. The planning team is going to prepare a new Future Land Use Map, Alternative 3, that maximizes green space in the Southwest corner of Downtown.
 - Q. Want to be sensitive to ownership and management responsibilities of City vs. Borough. In the comment tracker, the Fairbanks Mayor had a comment suggesting eliminating one of the alternatives. Does this approach support the Mayor’s recommendation?

- A. FNSB has had a follow-up meeting with City staff to discuss and review the comments. They are in support of this change.
- Topic #2: Bike Seasonality and Routes
 - The City of Fairbanks expressed concerns about the bike recommendations, including proposing year-round routes along City-managed streets.
 - Context (summarized by Chris, Sue)
 - There was a concern with the map on page 61 figure 30, that the designated bike paths – we don't know for sure what we're going to be doing there. The City is working through that with FAST Planning. To go ahead and pick streets feels premature. We were suggesting taking those out, except for the state's DOT&PF routes.
 - We just did 5th Avenue. On the South side of Fifth Avenue there is no parking. There is a wide shoulder there, which can accommodate bicycles. That's really nice for bikes in summer, marked with a fog line. We also did it on Gillam Way, with a fog line. Gillam Way – we moved traffic to the center and put in a fog line; relationship to center line is 9 ft, which is pretty narrow; you need comfortably 11-12 ft. That can help accommodate bikes on any street. Looking at these East-West streets, they all lend themselves to bikes, they are low rates of speed and are bisected with intersections to cars are not traveling at a high rate of speed. However – don't feel equipped to say which ones yet. Don't want to overengineer. Want to do a study first.
 - Traffic count data could also help inform these decisions.
 - Discussion
 - This whole plan is aspirational. Putting it on paper does not necessarily make it happen. It is not codified.
 - Related, there were some concerns around snow removal in the comments. For example, from a business owner who had concerns about snow removal.
 - Instead of removing “year-round” altogether, could it be “year-round where feasible?”
 - Public works expressed significant concerns with year-round idea. Making it year-round would require major changes in how the community handles snow. With the current schedule and commitments the City has, it is not realistic.
 - In winter, those roads are not really bikeable. They are not plowed enough. The only option is to ride down the middle of the road.
 - We would like this plan to recognize we want things to be better for those choosing to bike in the winter.
 - We want to acknowledge and manifest the intention of improving bicycle use downtown. Some options might be:
 - An aspirational seasonal map. -OR-
 - A much more modified year-round map with only 1-2 routes identified (east-west and north-south corridors).

- Remove map altogether and add as an action item: identify where to put bike corridors downtown.
- Kellen shared that the FNSB Community Planning Department had a productive long meeting with the City of Fairbanks on Monday. This plan will not go anywhere without the City’s support. We will need to find some compromise with the City, such as removing City streets from the routes identified on the map.
 - What would be left? Any green left? Barnette, Lacey, and possible E-W corridor?
 - The map would still include the separated pathway the Borough maintains, Airport Way, the bridge over the river, the pathway through the library, and the proposed Chena Riverwalk connection.

- If we keep the map, should add existing routes (Airport Way, along the river, etc.).
- See potential modified version drawn up during the meeting, with simplified routes in red on the right →.
- The reality is – people are going to ride who want to ride. We want to create something that doesn’t already exist that makes bicycling better.
- We should be clear in the plan language – this is conceptual; these are potential future bike options. We should apply similar language to all transportation maps, much like future land use map. “Potential seasonal bike circulation options.”

Figure 38. Proposed Bicycle Circulation Network in Downtown Fairbanks



- **ACTION:** Review plan to ensure all future transportation maps have necessary language about being conceptual.
- Update on FAST Planning: The 2012 Nonmotorized Plan identified a proposed network for bike lanes. They were mostly downtown roads.
 - The initial estimates were \$2 million to build out. That estimate was revamped in 2021.
 - When putting funding together, decided to test it with the community; took price tag down to \$500k, and reduced the network down to a more modified version for a pilot project.

- Includes painting and sharrows (shared road arrows). This is the number one scored project in the nonmotorized funding plan; being designed this winter.
- Once out on the roadway, there will be a process to collect public feedback, and feedback from City of Fairbanks Public Works. Want feedback from cyclists, drivers who feel they've been impacted, etc.
- The City has \$100,000 to design it this winter; it's supposed to be implemented through one contract and one contractor with bike lanes by early summer.
- We might get some complaints from people. It's a pilot project, with temporary paint.
- Proposed roads include 1st Avenue, 10th Avenue (from Steese all the way to Second Ave.), Barnette, Lacey Street, Stacia Street, Seventeenth Avenue, and more. Not a lot North of the river. The City has signed the match agreement.
- Conceivably, people who use those lanes might complain to the City, because the facility they got used to over the summer is now gone. Or maybe they will understand how snow removal works and will feel the seasonality is acceptable.
- The Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee prepared recommendations on what they think the signage should look like, which have been turned over to the City's designer, and the City can pick and choose what they want to move forward with.
- It is the City's decision at this point.
 - Do we want to show where the pilot project is occurring on the map?
 - City has not finalized plans on what they are moving forward. FAST has made recommendations but not solidified; will need to go out to bid by March. It would be premature to put on the map.
- Topic #3: Implementation
 - The project team will be adding more information about implementation to the front, near the "Who is responsible for implementing land use policies?" section (page 16-17).
 - One of the recommendations there will be to propose coming together every 6 months or annually; not overly prescriptive of who is facilitating. Potentially led by "representative groups and partners."
 - Proposed next step after plan adoption: review plan policies with a "policy committee"; could be very much like this working group. Bring together key representatives to review the list of strategies and actions and enlist entities to sign up for implementation, and create more accountability.
 - As an example, this action planning happened for the FNSB Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which was a five-year plan.
 - This desire was also expressed by the City – they want consistent evaluation and tangible actions. They offered to help facilitate at 6 month intervals.
 - In the Downtown Association meeting we also discussed this; Downtown Association wants to be a part of that follow up conversation.
 - "We're all ready to start doing stuff." We need to get the plan through first.

- FNSB Community Planning is ready to revise the parking ordinance tomorrow, but the plan needs to be completed first. Same with rezoning.
- Other Comments and Recommendations
 - Hoping to see something speaking toward the Alaska Native or indigenous peoples of the area. Want to ensure that is incorporated. Doyon and Tanana Chiefs Conference could provide more information. Morris Thompson Cultural Center also has a lot of additional information.
 - Examples: sidewalk that looks like beadwork. [Troth Yeddha' Indigenous Studies Center](#) as another example, where the University of Fairbanks will be recognizing those who lived in the Tanana region.
 - There are references and recommendations to celebrating and promoting Alaska Native culture, especially in the Economic Development chapter.
 - Another committee member echoed the desire for more history of the lands and peoples in the introduction.
 - **ACTION:** Add a land acknowledgement and description of the area's history and indigenous peoples to the introduction.
 - **ACTION:** Add QR code to the front that links with the website.
 - Q. Is there a step for the plan to go back out to the public? Not suggesting we do that, just curious.
 - No, there is not a plan for an additional public comment period. We would send out a notice of what the final plan looks like, adoption dates, etc. to our project contact list.
 - Might be nice to acknowledge – “We heard you! We made these changes.” Could send the comment tracker with responses sooner rather than later, and let people know we met again as a working group to discuss final edits.
 - **ACTION:** Send a thank you and distribute the comment tracker when it's ready.
 - Downtown Association – City and Borough have shared economic development powers. Confirmed this comment was captured in the comment tracker. There is some additional clean up needed on the comment tracker, including splitting out more complex comments into additional rows, fixing some of the mislabeled first/last names associated with the Downtown Association comments, and making sure all content is visible (no rows cut off).

Final Discussion and Next Steps

- Thank you!
 - Kellen estimates there were 32 Working Group meetings since this started in 2017. Kellen: “I’ve never seen a steering committee so engaged.” It will be important to convey that to the Planning Commission and the Assembly, who don’t have the background or recognition of the time and thought that went into this process.

- **ACTION:** Encourage Working Group members to attend Council and Commission meetings to demonstrate support.
- From Working Group members:
 - Thank you for letting us reconvene and come back together.
 - Thank you to Shelly and your team for doing what you are doing, and City Council members.
- Q: Will we see the finished comment tracker?
 - A. Yes, as part of its public release.
- **ACTION:** Working Group members to submit any final thoughts, comments by next Friday (November 17th).