

OUR DOWNTOWN The Heart of Anchorage

A Project to Implement the Downtown Comprehensive Plan

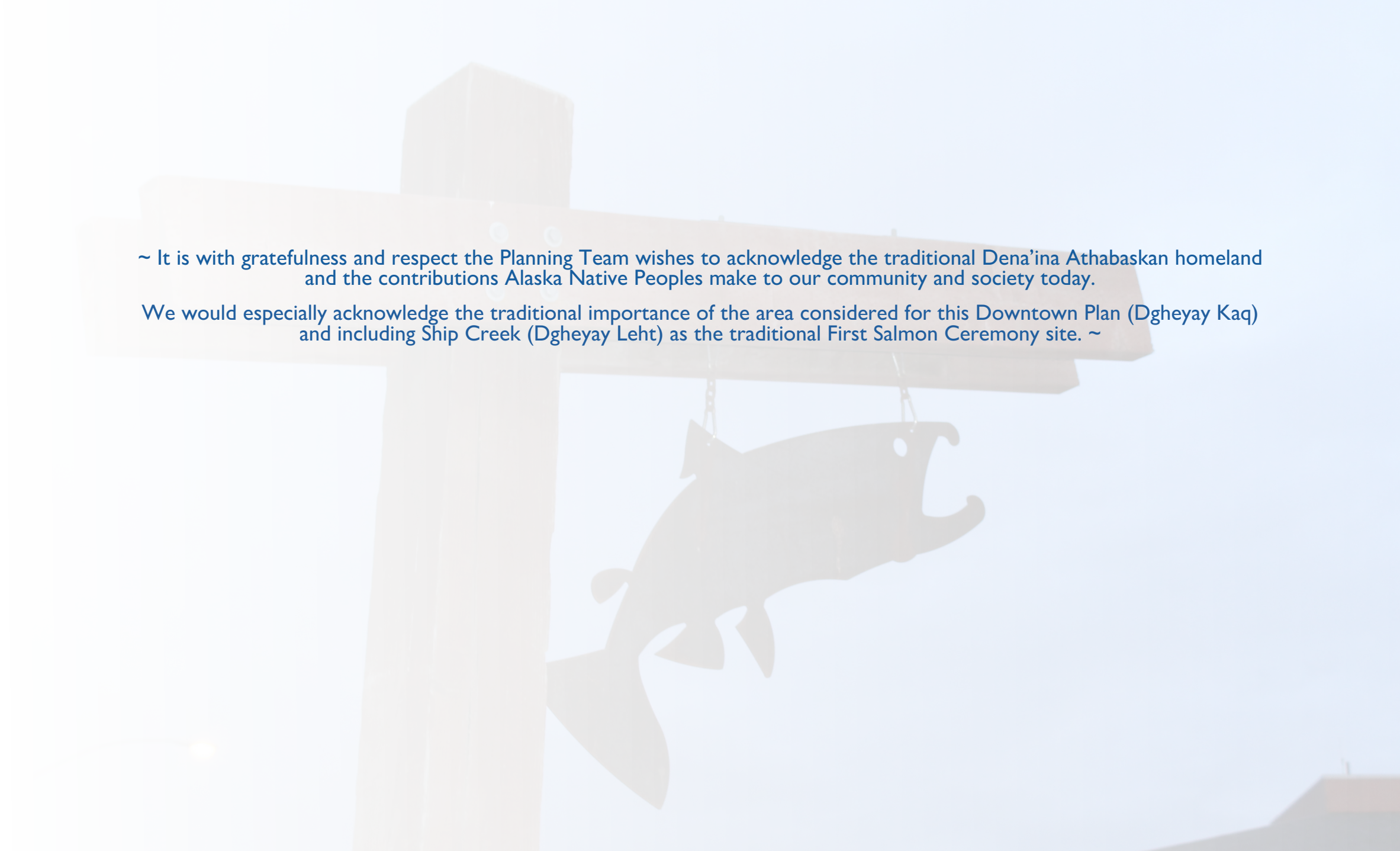


OUR DOWNTOWN ANCHORAGE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT PLAN 2021

A VISION FOR NOW

A.O. 2023-22

April 11, 2023

A wooden post with a fish-shaped sign hanging from it, set against a light blue sky. The fish is a dark silhouette with a white eye and a white mouth. The post is made of light-colored wood and has a crossbar. The fish is hanging from the crossbar by two metal rings.

~ It is with gratefulness and respect the Planning Team wishes to acknowledge the traditional Dena'ina Athabaskan homeland and the contributions Alaska Native Peoples make to our community and society today.

We would especially acknowledge the traditional importance of the area considered for this Downtown Plan (Dgheyay Kaq) and including Ship Creek (Dgheyay Leht) as the traditional First Salmon Ceremony site. ~

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan is a “targeted” review and update of the 2007 Downtown Comprehensive Plan (2007 *Downtown Plan*). Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) 21.03.070B.2. Targeted Plan Review (10-year intervals) directs a targeted review of the plan at least once every 10 years, or in conjunction with an areawide rezoning, in order to make it consistent with: 1) Economic and demographic trends, 2) Recent and proposed land use decisions, and 3) Adopted studies and plans.

Anchorage is at a turning point in our history with unstable economic times brought on by the Great Recession, the COVID-19 Pandemic, and in 2022 record-high inflation. This targeted review and update is timely and needed to bring clarity and direction to the next 10-20 years of development in Our Downtown. This update would not have been possible without the assistance of the public, agencies, partners, utility providers, design professionals, developers, businesses, and property owners that took the time to participate in meetings and share your thoughts and expertise.

The planning process included research into economic and demographic trends from 2019-2021, and a progress summary on the 2007 *Downtown Plan* implementation. A listing of Assembly-adopted development incentives and land use actions was compiled. Additionally, all plans or studies that focused on Downtown were included in the compilation published as the *Our Downtown Trends Report*.

A public survey, stakeholder meetings, one-on-one meetings, and subcommittee meetings contributed direction to the plan update. GIS mapping was completed by the MOA, instrumental in depicting existing conditions and this plan’s recommendations.

In 2020, the Municipality completed the reformat of the Downtown zoning districts. The reformat project created a separate Title 21 section in code for Downtown (Chapter 21.11: Downtown). Comments received during the 2020 reformat project were also incorporated into this plan update.

This plan update provides the goals, policies, and action items needed to support economic recovery. This plan is intended to give the present and next generations a Downtown where residents and visitors will want to live, work, and play.

This Plan advocates for bringing focus and concentration of limited MOA and community resources to Our Downtown - The Heart of Anchorage.

This plan update makes recommendations on projects and actions that should be prioritized for funding and immediate community action. These recommendations and actions support amendments to the downtown code, foster public and private partnerships, identify processes to expedite project development, support existing public and private agency programming, and ultimately support the synergy needed to make Downtown welcoming, vital, and safe for all residents and visitors.

This plan also recognizes our unique cultures and histories, celebrates the wonder of the surrounding environment, and advocates for a strong economy brought about by our location next door to a strategic military installation and two global cargo hubs.

“Housing is Economic Development.” Therefore, the recommended housing target of 1,400 new market rate rental housing units in the next 5-8 years is a major focus of this plan. Several Early Action Items to assist us in realizing this housing target must be funded and completed. This includes focused area development, focused area utility upgrades, the Downtown Code Update, the Housing GAP Trust Fund, an update to the 4-unit Downtown Tax Incentive, an update to the Fairview/East Downtown Tax Abatement incentive, and funding and completing the Downtown Streets Engineering Study.

Thank you to all who participated!

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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

2007 Downtown Plan - 2007 Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan	CPTED - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
4NHPP - Anchorage’s Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan	DTCC - Downtown Community Council
ACDA - Anchorage Community Development Authority	FVCC - Fairview Community Council
ACS - Alaska Communications Services	GAC - Geotechnical Advisory Commission
ADP - Anchorage Downtown Partnership	GDIC - Geographic Data and Information Center
ADOLWD - Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce	GCI - General Communications, Inc.
ADOT&PF - Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities	HLB - MOA Heritage Land Bank
AEDC - Anchorage Economic Development Corporation	HPC - Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission
AHFC - Alaska Housing Finance Corporation	LWP - AEDC’s Live. Work. Play. Committee
AIDEA - Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority	MOA - Municipality of Anchorage
AMATS - Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions	NRHP - National Register of Historic Places
Anchorage 2020 - Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan	NVE - Native Village of Eklutna
Anchorage 2040 - Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan	OKC - Oklahoma City
ARRC - Alaska Railroad Corporation	Parks - MOA Parks Department
Assessor - MOA Assessor	Planning - MOA Planning Department
AWWU - Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility	PM&E - MOA Project Management and Engineering Department
CD - MOA Community Development	RED - MOA Real Estate Department
CEA - Chugach Electric Association	SGA - Smart Growth America
CEDC - Assembly Community Economic Development Committee	Visit Anchorage - Anchorage Visitor and Convention Bureau

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Overview

What Was Specifically Done to Update the Plan?

This chapter provides a brief overview of the planning process, including a review of the *2007 Downtown Plan*, the foundation for the plan themes, Downtown partner agencies, a 2007 parking usage study results, excess parking as developable lands, local, state, and federal tax incentive programs, recommendations for Early Action Items, and the importance of Downtown to the overall financial health of Anchorage.

Updating the plan included a thoughtful and organized process to ensure the update was targeted to what mattered most from community, development, and administration perspectives. Revitalizing downtowns is not an overnight process. Therefore, the Planning Team wanted to ensure new content in the plan was reflective of current conditions, provided realistic assumptions, and contained data-driven achievable goals, policies, and action items.

- Each chapter from the *2007 Downtown Plan* was reviewed for relevant and timely content; much of that content was kept.
- An online survey was completed with over 300 people responding with 1,200 comments, and two subcommittees were formed for additional input and comments.
- A new land use plan map was developed from the 2007 Downtown Plan Strategy Framework.
- A new revitalization strategy map including focused development areas, cultural districts, and opportunity sites was developed similar to the 2007 Downtown Plan Strategy Framework.

- The Planning Team developed chapter-specific goals, policies, and action items based on comments and recommendations from the public, agencies, an online survey, community councils, and subcommittees.
- The Planning Team also researched the completion of *2007 Downtown Plan* action items. Some action items were carried forward, and some were revised to be relevant to this time.

Why Should We Direct Focus and Resources in Downtown?

Foundational Recommendations for Downtown District Plan Themes - Oklahoma City and Smart Growth American 2016 Visits

Anchorage has experienced unprecedented natural, social, and economic events since its founding in 1915. These events have made us a resilient community. Downtown advocates visiting Anchorage in the recent past, including a delegation from Oklahoma City (OKC) and Smart Growth America (SGA), recommended some vital tools and actions intended to help us jump-start new investment and provide focus on where our community might find the biggest gains. This plan update incorporates recommendations and guidance from the Oklahoma City delegation and Smart Growth America.

Oklahoma City Delegation Recommendations¹

In December 2016, a delegation from Oklahoma City visited Anchorage and met with AEDC's Live. Work. Play. (LWP) committee. The LWP Housing subcommittee completed a report based on the delegation's recommendations.

The report articulated the delegation's recommendations and is available at AEDC.net. Oklahoma City representatives included both public- and private-sector professionals, all of whom work hand-in-hand to facilitate good development projects for their city. The city's success was brought about by developers, businesses, nonprofits, and city government committed to revitalization with an enviable degree of trust and willingness to "work together."

Both Anchorage and Oklahoma City share an economic foundation of resource extraction, both are weathering the headwinds of depressed resource prices, and both are striving to implement comprehensive strategies to make their communities great places to live, work, and play.

The delegation was asked, "What would Oklahoma City do if you were in Anchorage's shoes today?"

The delegation shared a number of tools that they used to revitalize downtown Oklahoma City and how those same tools could work in Anchorage. Five theme statements and several recommendations are included in this plan to help give our community a tried-and-successful example of what our community could achieve.

There were also Downtown-specific action-item recommendations presented with the primary action to "Commit to improving downtown in the near term." The group made specific observations about our downtown and suggested that Anchorage begin with these actions:

- Strengthen ACDA. Use it to assemble blocks of land that are useful for furthering the vision of a great downtown.
- Create amenity-rich downtown housing.
- Maintain publicly owned parking and encourage its use.

- Explore development of “Texas Doughnut” style buildings or “wrap” buildings, for their efficiency.
- Bring currently untaxed entities in downtown onto tax rolls to support downtown development.
- Tax surface parking lots downtown.
- Create “free” parking in certain areas downtown for residents to access validated parking.
- Bring back the City of Lights and Flowers.
- Improve downtown park(s).
- Pass a minimal, time-limited sales tax and use it to make downtown improvements. This would mirror the approach taken in OKC with the MAPS project.
- Acquire, utilize public land. City-owned land has been crucial for the OKC process of revitalization.
- Explore housing development using HUD 221D4 financing to help bridge housing costs gap. Work with an experienced 221D4 developer from the Lower 48 for success and combine projects in order to achieve the scale required to access the program financing. HUD prefers to work with an experienced developer on these projects.

Theme Statements

This plan capitalizes on the actions from the OKC report, together with actions from SGA to provide the overarching guidance to this plan. The following theme statements from the Oklahoma report were formulated into the strategies for this plan:

“Focus on Downtown.” Great cities have great downtowns. Focus on Downtown first and make it a great place to be. Downtown is the part of town that belongs to all of us. Anchorage needs to develop a Downtown where people want to live - do this by bringing things people want to downtown, such as activities and events that draw people in.

1: [OKC-Report_FINAL.pdf \(aedcweb.com\)](#)

2: [Why It's Important to Have Women in Your Life Who Succeed - archive \(darlingmagazine.org\)](#)

“Start by building great housing to make Anchorage a desirable place to live.” To make Anchorage a desirable place to live, housing must come first. If we want Our Downtown to be a vibrant place to live, work, and play, then Anchorage must focus first on building housing, then on bringing other services and amenities to the area.

“Lead by Example.” Anchorage residents must lead the way when it comes to investing in our city. To thrive and grow, we need to convince outside businesses and developers to partner with us and invest in Anchorage. New investors will not come to the table without seeing the Municipality and Anchorage residents making an investment of our own in the city’s future. Changes in tax revenue allocation or expenditures may be needed to ensure a proportionate share of what is collected Downtown is used there.

“Embrace Anchorage’s Fiscally Conservative Nature.” Anchorage is a fundamentally conservative place. Residents are wary of changes that might hit their pocketbooks. To make needed investments in our future, we will embrace our conservative roots and build trust by showing examples of good financial management. Create a master plan or business plan for Downtown.

“Get Important Input from the Women in the Community.” At every turn, ask women what they want. Women drive decisions in the home and the workplace. Women research their options and choose places to live and work based on what appeals most to them. They are thought leaders within their families. Cities that do not anticipate their needs will not succeed.²

Wrap buildings, sometimes called “Texas doughnuts” consist of residential units and/or retail “wrapping” around an above-grade parking structure. Generally appropriate for sites where more expensive below-grade parking is not an option; the wrap building offers a good high-density solution on sites two acres or larger. These buildings can take on many forms and can be designed to relate to nearly any context.

Housing Area of Focus releases Oklahoma City delegation report

by AEDC | Mar 8, 2017 | Featured, Housing Area of Focus, Live, Work, Play, News



A Texas Doughnut in Houston, Texas.



Smart Growth America Also Came to Anchorage³

Smart Growth America also visited Anchorage in 2016 to conduct a community-wide workshop on the topic of [Planning and Fiscal and Economic Health](#).³ The results of the workshop concluded with the overarching vision to “Focus the Effort.”

“Focus the Effort.” The Planning Department took this recommendation to heart and in 2016 started working with several MOA departments and the Anchorage Community Development Authority (ACDA) to bring new mixed-use development to Downtown in a specifically designated area we termed “A Few Good Blocks,” shown in **Map #1** and further described below.

Subsequent new development included Elizabeth Place and Qanchi Place. Block 96 and the new Fire Island Bakery followed in 2021, also located in this focused area recommended by SGA.

The SGA report also provided the following actions which were formulated together with the OKC themes to provide the overarching guidance for this plan, as noted previously:

“Publish Incentives Information” The GAP Funding Report, which includes several recommendations, is a product of the early Action Item #5 and is available online to interested parties.

“Create a Redevelopment Authority.” ACDA serves as the redevelopment authority with the ability through code to bond for development projects. ACDA manages the public-owned parking in Downtown and is involved in several large-scale mixed-use projects for Downtown.

3: [SGA Workshop-MOA FINAL Report-6-8-16.docx \(muni.org\)](#)

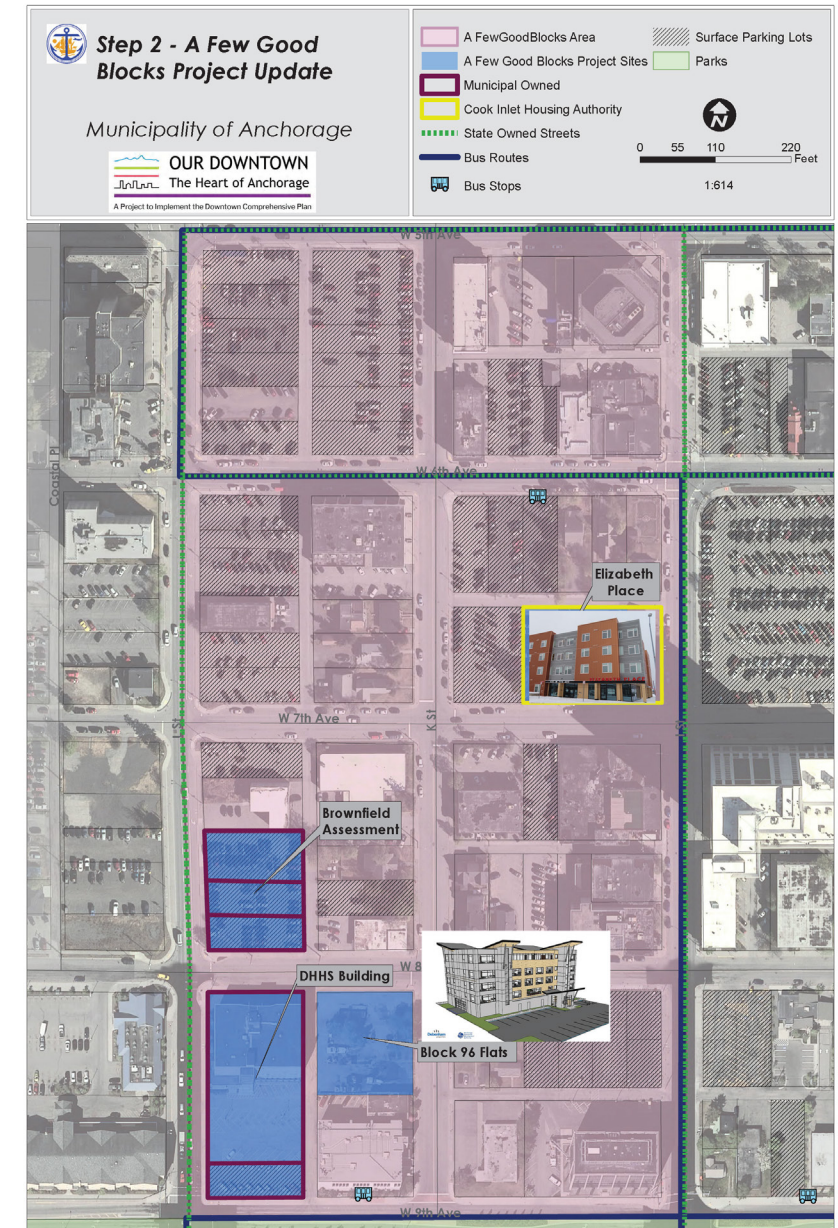
“Define a Specific Redevelopment Area that Includes the MOA-owned 7th Avenue and I Street Property as an Anchor for a Redevelopment Pilot Project.” Use the existing fiscal tools to incentivize the pilot project. The “A Few Good Blocks” area, as recommended by Smart Growth America and defined by the Planning Department, was approved by the Mayor’s Office in 2016.

The Planning Department initiated communications with MOA Real Estate, ACDA, the development community and private-property owners, and non-profits to catalyze new development. This plan advocates for an expansion of the 2016 Few Good Blocks to encompass a larger area where continued focused redevelopment can be achieved.

“Make Connections to Surrounding Neighborhoods – Make Downtown a Walkable and Desirable Place to Live, Work, and Play.” This plan advocates for an engineering study to determine optimal ownership, operation, uses, and improvements to streets, sidewalks, and trails as proposed in the *2007 Downtown Plan*. Overwhelming public comment in support of a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly Downtown was heard throughout this planning process at both public meetings and through the online survey.

“Fund and Implement a Community Homeless Plan.” Anchored Home was adopted in 2018 to guide the MOA and community in efforts to resolve and prevent homelessness. Millions of dollars have been allocated to implement the Anchored Home plan.

“Make Downtown Safer.” Several efforts are occurring to provide a safer Downtown Anchorage. These include additional community and police patrols, street lighting upgrades, and the Anchorage Police Department’s headquarters’ move to Downtown.



Map #1: The “A Few Good Blocks” area depicting MOA- or ACDA-owned properties in blue. The area includes 5th-9th Avenues and I-L Streets.

Community Partners

This plan would not be possible without our community partners, including AEDC, ADP, ACDA, Visit Anchorage, ACC, The Anchorage Museum, and the Downtown Community Council, and the good work each agency does to make Our Downtown a great place.



AEDC's Live.Work.Play.

AEDC has a vision through its [Live.Work.Play.](#) initiative to see Anchorage become the #1 City in America to Live, Work, and Play by 2025. Live.Work.Play. is a grassroots effort focused on community improvement and engagement for the people who live here. This important AEDC initiative provided recommendations on development incentives and housing development for Downtown.

Live: Affordable, available, and livable housing is cited by local businesses as a challenge in attracting and retaining employees in Anchorage. The Housing Area of Focus addresses this issue through several avenues, including a geographic focus on Downtown - the most desirable neighborhood in Anchorage. Tools such as tax incentives and unit lot subdivisions are designed to increase neighborhood density among other approaches.

Work: By 2025, the face of business will change. Technological advancements will empower a new workforce, employees and businesses can operate from anywhere. Businesses take advantage by adapting to new and advancing technology and by implementing and educating the business community and workforce. Downtown is a prime area for technology upgrades, nomad-type housing, and access to training and employee development.

Play: To be the #1 community to play, Anchorage must have a fully supported and diverse arts and cultural environment like that found in Downtown. Recreation is an essential part of living in Anchorage. We define our sense of place through recreational pursuits; whether fishing along streams, hiking in our mountains, or playing in our fields, we live a “big, wild life.” Additionally, as the entertainment hub of Alaska, Anchorage provides many great opportunities for entertainers to share their gift with locals and visitors.



Anchorage Downtown Partnership – Clean, Safe, Vital Downtown (ADP)

ADP works to bring the public and private sectors together as partners in Downtown Anchorage's redevelopment and revitalization. ADP's mission is to improve the economy of Downtown Anchorage by building connections that ensure the success of public/private development, redevelopment, vitality, and economic growth in the Downtown Improvement District.

Clean: ADP works to maintain a clean, attractive, and orderly downtown. This effort is to ensure downtown Anchorage as the best place to live, work, shop, and play.

The Downtown Improvement District is a special assessment district funded by the commercial property owners to support Clean, Safe and Vital work. It is renewed every 10 years by support from 50% plus one based on the assessed value. Owner occupied residential properties do not pay into the DID.

Safe: The Downtown Improvement District (DID) includes local businesses that contribute to safe sidewalks and building surroundings. Marketing and event promotion provides active streets, a vital part of making downtown Anchorage a better and safer place.

Vital: A key part of the ADP mission is increasing the vitality of Downtown. What constitutes “vitality” in a downtown district: the life, energy, enthusiasm, and health of our local businesses, residents, visitors, and places.



Anchorage Community Development Authority (ACDA)

Development, Revitalization, and Community are the three tenets guiding ACDA in its vision for a vibrant and prosperous Municipality of Anchorage, facilitated by innovative community development and public parking. Its mission to deliver quality development and public parking services within the Municipality helps Anchorage be successful in providing a Downtown that's welcome to all.

Development: ACDA brings together resources to create development using innovation, partnerships, and sound planning. ACDA is working to expand the tools available to encourage development in Anchorage.

Revitalization: ACDA is “bookending” Downtown with vibrant spaces like K Street Eats and The Rooftop. This is just one way we are revitalizing the community.

Community: ACDA views community development as more than just new construction of buildings; it also means adding value to our community with services and partnerships.



Anchorage Chamber of Commerce

The Anchorage Chamber of Commerce has a vision to advance a successful business climate by attending to the civic, economic, and cultural betterment of our community.

As one of the 4 A's (ADP, ACDA, AEDC, and ACC), the ACC provides support to the community through its Advocacy, Connectivity, and Education programming.

The 4A's independent group collaboration is not defined by administration changes within the Municipality, which enables this group to accomplish projects benefiting Downtown in partnership with the changing leadership and priorities.



Visit Anchorage's main aim is to attract and serve visitors to the Municipality of Anchorage. Travel and tourism generate social, cultural, and financial benefits for residents and diversify and develop Anchorage's economy. Since 1975, Visit Anchorage - formerly the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau - has represented the communities of Anchorage, Girdwood, Eagle River, Eklutna, Indian, Birchwood, Chugiak, and Portage to the traveling public, both in the U.S. and abroad.

Visit Anchorage Goals:

- Stimulate demand for Anchorage as a premier travel destination.
- Engage visitors that best align with Anchorage and its product mix.
- Enhance the visitor experience.
- Ensure the continued success of the Anchorage Convention Centers
- Position travel as a leading economic generator for Anchorage and Visit Anchorage as a community leader.

Visit Anchorage marketing functions are funded by one-third of the Municipal bed tax collected by lodging facilities; one-third of the bed tax goes to the Municipality of Anchorage's general fund, and one-third to service the bond debt and operations of the Anchorage Convention Centers. Destination marketing is a very competitive business. Visit Anchorage's positioning of Anchorage keeps our city top-of-mind with the traveling public, infusing much-needed visitor industry dollars into our community. These dollars allow for year-round employment, generate revenue for more than 1,000 local businesses, and keep our quality-of-life high by making it profitable for restaurants and entertainment options to remain open throughout the year, benefiting residents. Discover more about the many ways tourism works for Anchorage.



The Anchorage Museum sits on the traditional homeland of the Eklutna Dena’ina. The museum is committed to recognizing and honoring the land, culture, and language of the Dena’ina people. We recognize and respect the continuing connection, by Alaska Native people and all Indigenous people, to the land, waters, and communities.

Mission: To be a museum for people, place, planet, and potential, in service of a sustainable and equitable North, with creativity and imagination for what is possible.

Vision: A place of ideas and transformation, narratives and perspectives, resilient and relevant communities, responsive to a rapidly changing world toward a better future for all.

Anchorage museum staff supported this planning process from the very beginning kickoff meeting through its adoption.



Downtown Community Council

Our Mission: To Serve and Advocate for Our Downtown Community!

Our Vision: We Represent Downtown for the Betterment of the Community!

The DTCC was established in the early 1970s, along with many other community councils, by the Greater Anchorage Area Borough Council. The community council has a long history of supporting Downtown businesses, local, state, and federal government agencies, and the many events contributing to a “Downtown for All.”

Participation by the DTCC in the completion of this plan provided one of the most important components of community support this plan needed to be successfully approved by the Anchorage Assembly.

Investing in Downtown Is Important

The Impact of Surface Parking Lots on Downtown

Map #2 on the following page identifies all open areas classified as parking lots in the MOA Assessor data file. This information was used as a discussion item during the Smart Growth America workshop in 2016.

A parking statistic discussion that accompanies **Map #2** includes parking statistics from an ACDA Parking Inventory Utilization Analysis completed for a 2007 Downtown Anchorage Parking Strategic Plan.

ACDA Parking Inventory Utilization Analysis

The parking inventory analysis parsed out 8 study area zones in Downtown from Gambell Street to the Coastal Trail and portions along N Street and from 2nd Avenue on the north to 9th and 10th Avenues on the south.

Off-Street Parking Inventory – ACDA and Private Spaces

The off-street parking inventory included ACDA-managed or -owned lots, and private lots, which totaled 9,612 parking spaces. Of these 9,612 parking spaces, ACDA manages 3,925 or approximately 41%. The remaining 5,687 spaces or approximately 59% are privately owned.

On-Street Meters – ACDA

On-street meters in Downtown tallied to 1,536 spaces, all managed by ACDA.

Percent Occupied On-Street – Peak-Time Parking

A peak-hour parking survey was completed during the peak time of day at either 9:30 a.m. in one zone or 12:30 p.m. in the remaining 7 zones. The 8 different parking zones tallied differing percentages of use depending on where the zone was located. The usage or percent occupied varied from 56% to 84%. No one zone was 100% occupied. An average count was also completed for these same spaces during off-peak hours, finding overall the on-street parking was used anywhere from 52% to 74%. Again, no one zone was 100% occupied.

ACDA-managed Percent Occupied Off-Street Parking

ACDA manages off-street parking in 7 of the 8 zones used for the analysis. Of the 7 zones, ACDA parking tallied from 49% to 81% occupied. Private off-street parking was found in all 8 zones and tallied from 58-74% occupied. This use translated to ACDA having 1,705 off- and on-street spaces left available. 1,870 private parking spaces were left available.

Comparison of Use vs.Available Parking On or Off Street

Combined ACDA and private parking spaces left unused for this analysis tallied 3,575 and 1,870 spaces respectively for a total of 5,445 spaces or over 56% were going unused in the Downtown area. A minimal calculation of a parking space size is 264SF (square feet) when within a parking lot. This does not include driveways and turning radius space. An on-street parking space is slightly smaller.

Multiplying the number of unused parking spaces by the average size of a parking space suggests that there were approximately 1.5 million square feet of buildable at-grade space most likely lost every day to unused parking according to the analysis completed in 2007. It should be noted that 2007 was a much better economy than Anchorage has experienced over the last few years.

We could therefore surmise that there is even more available at-grade buildable space in Downtown. When you factor that we could build anywhere from 2 to several stories in Downtown, the cost to our community of these unused parking spaces is monumental.



Tallied Used Parking Spaces	5,445 spaces
Estimated Size of One Space	264 square feet
Total Estimated Space	1,437,480 square feet

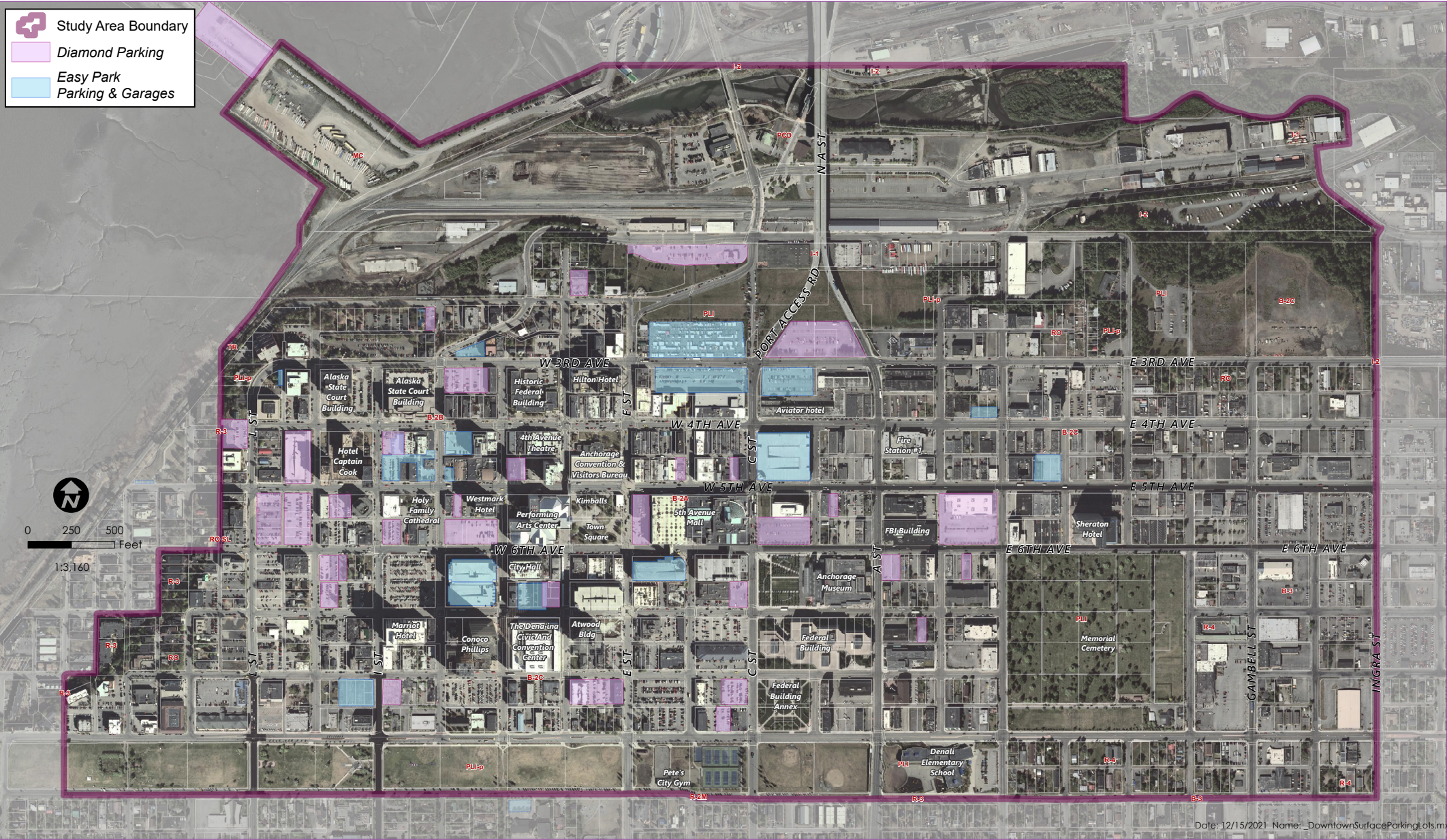
Step 2 - Downtown Surface Parking Lots as Separate Parcels Map

~ The vast amount of Downtown surface parking lots, many of which are privately owned as noted in the analysis, does not indicate prosperity, investment, or dreams realized for Anchorage and especially Downtown.

These spaces indicate future opportunity to our community that will be used for vital services and benefits when the economics signal the need for change.

New parking lots—as a result of building tear downs—are discouraged with this plan and could be considered as a revitalization policy by the community.

When you factor that we could build anywhere from 2 to several stories in Downtown, the cost to our community of these unused parking spaces is monumental. ~



Map #2: Surface Parking Lots as Separate Parcels: Assessor 2016 data – Mapping by the Planning Department.

“Lead by Example”

MOA Tax Incentives

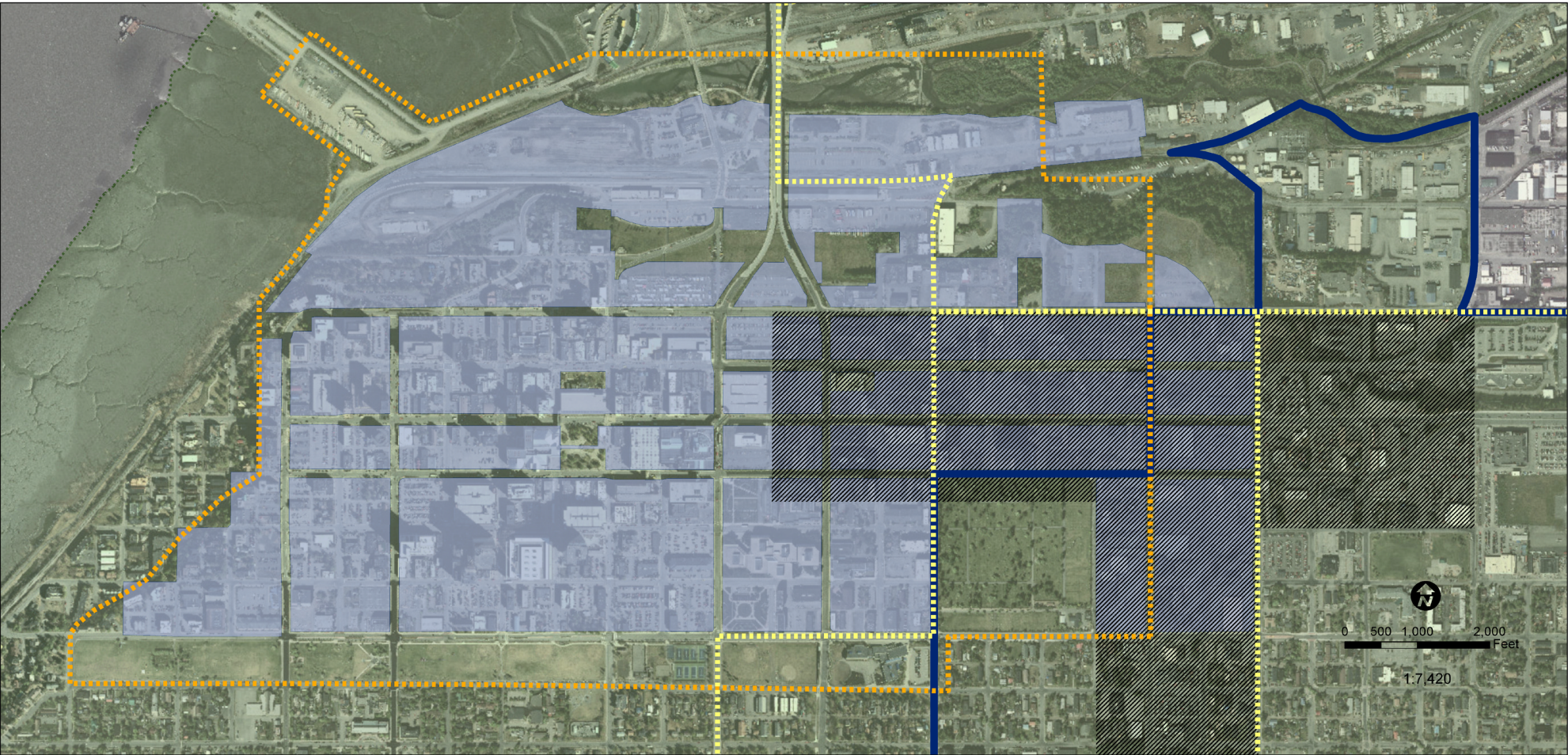
This strategy advocates for the MOA to direct MOA investments and incentives in focused development areas to leverage limited resources and catalyze new development.

This would demonstrate our commitment as a partner to improve development opportunities. For a good return on investment in Downtown, this may include upgrades and extensions of needed water, sewer, streets, trails, and high-speed internet to reap both short-term and long-term benefits.

These off-site infrastructure improvements are some of the most expensive costs associated with development. Knowing early on what improvements are needed will help developers and the agencies set their priorities and allocate funding.

Short term may include more housing and healthy lifestyle options; long term will include more businesses in retail, commercial, and tourism to support the local economy.

Assembly-adopted ordinances identify areas for tax abatement as an economic development incentive. The housing incentive encompasses all Downtown. This includes the East Downtown/ Fairview Tax Abatement Zone (A.O. 2014-71), and the Downtown Housing Incentive (A.O. 2019-12 as amended) respectively. (See Map #3.)



**Step 2- Economic Development Incentives
Downtown Anchorage**

Municipality of Anchorage

OUR DOWNTOWN
The Heart of Anchorage

A Project to Implement the Downtown Comprehensive Plan

Opportunity Zones

HUD Opportunity Zones (2)

Plans With Incentives

2007 Downtown Planning Boundary

Fairview Neighborhood Plan

Assembly_Ordinances

Fairview/East Downtown Revitalization Area (AO 2014-71(S))

Chapter 12.60 Housing Tax incentives (AO 2019-12) (1)

Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan

Map #3: Incentives in the Downtown area, Planning and GDIC Departments 2020.

MOA and Other Incentives

These incentives are intended to “enable” a significant investment in physical infrastructure that expands the tax base of the Municipality. The tax incentive areas are located within the Downtown/Fairview Redevelopment Focus Area identified in the 2040 Land Use Plan and are consistent with the goals and objectives of the *2007 Downtown Plan* and the Fairview Neighborhood Plan - 2014. A further discussion of the incentives is included in Chapter 3 with action items associated with these incentives in Chapter 8.

The Anchorage Assembly may approve tax abatement requests submitted by developers or property owners for three types of property development. The property must be (1) declared a [Deteriorated property](#), (2) declared an [Economic Development property](#), or (3) approved for a minimum 4-unit new housing project.

Deteriorated and Economic Tax Abatement

A Deteriorated and Economic Development Tax Abatement can be approved from 5-10 years under each abatement request.

The housing tax incentive encompasses all Downtown and can be approved for up to 12 years. The housing tax exemption is only applicable through February 29, 2024.

The Deteriorated Property or Economic Development Property Tax Abatement can be requested throughout Anchorage. The Tax Abatement can also be approved across a zone area, which was approved in 2014 for East Downtown/Fairview Neighborhood.

Tax abatement is just one tool the Assembly can use to incentivize new and redevelopment in the Municipality. There are other tools currently being pursued through the Alaska Legislature that could also support economic development and may be able to help Anchorage when adopted locally.

Municipal and Private Utility Investment

The MOA can assist by providing the short-term tax incentives and the code amendments recommended in this plan. MOA Project Management & Engineering (PM&E), AWWU, Chugach Electric, GCI, and ACS can invest in infrastructure improvements by aligning annual capital improvements with known planned development. The Utility Subcommittee recommends a Utility Coordination process that would assist developers “early” in the project to help reduce costs and delays.

C-PACE or Other Programs

Also available but not shown on the map is the federal [C-PACE](#) creative finance program that encourages energy efficiency in older buildings at a long-term fixed rate. The program will replace aging mechanicals, windows, etc. The loan goes with the property, not the owner.

Additionally, federally designated opportunity zones can also contribute to our economy by awarding tax incentives for job creation, new development, and neighborhood revitalization.

The Federal Qualified Opportunity Zone legislation was created by The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to spur economic growth in low-income communities by allowing investors to defer federal taxes by taking capital gains from other investments and investing in these designated areas. East Downtown-Fairview contains an opportunity zone starting at 3rd Avenue and Cordova Street and extending east to the Mountain View Community Council area.

Federal Investment

All government agencies, including federal, state and local, can step up and invest in Our Downtown. The federal government can continue to make improvements to its properties similar to the recent historic Federal Building remodel of the joint federal agencies information center. Investments by government agencies help them attract knowledgeable and trained workforces who are looking to a new home for a good work-life balance and affordability in a vibrant community.



5th Avenue in 2022. (Planning Department)

State of Alaska Lands and Rights of Way in Downtown

The State owns several surface parking lots along L Street (Trust Land Office) and 8th Avenue (Alaska Housing Finance). ADOT&PF can assist in making Downtown great by addressing the impacts of speeding traffic on 5th and 6th avenues to make them more pedestrian oriented and friendly.

The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) owns the entire Ship Creek and surrounding slopes where additional industrial and housing development may be developed.

The ARRC has recently attracted private capital to build out the [Downtown Edge](#) housing project, which brought in eight townhouse-style [condos](#). An infusion of infrastructure upgrades in Ship Creek could generate a large return on investment by the ARRC as envisioned in the 2014 [Ship Creek Framework Plan](#). The State could also help the Municipality finish the Port of Alaska upgrades which provides 80% of all goods shipped to the state. Bonding capacity by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) could bring funding into direly needed Port and Ship Creek improvements.

Banks and Non-Profit Investment

New financing sources are needed to help offset the financing gap to help some projects “pencil.” What we heard is the gap in funding either makes or breaks a project. This plan supports new incentives to help bridge the funding gap to allow projects to be financially feasible or “pencil out.”

State financing agencies, as well as local banks, and other stakeholder groups could expand their investment portfolios into programs and projects to support a more secure future for Downtown.



New Revenue Sources

Oklahoma City successfully marketed and used the Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) tax by transparently conveying information on the specific projects the taxes would be spent on and the project timing. This information satisfied the city’s residents in a number of ways according to information provide on Oklahoma City’s [MAPS project website](#).

The City collects the MAPS tax dollars in advance of paying for a project. The City begins work on the projects only after MAPs tax dollars hit the city coffers. It takes a concerted effort to manage resident expectations about the timeline of progress under this system because the funding takes time to build up before it can be spent; most people understand the concept of “saving up.”

There may be potential for Anchorage to initiate a MAPS tax to build the infrastructure improvements needed for more cost-effective and affordable development projects. A recent survey of local businesses by AEDC found several businesses agreed with this kind of investment. The online survey for this planning process found that of the 300 people responding to a question about a 1% sales tax to fund new revenue for housing and redevelopment, 63% said yes, 25% said no, and 13% left it to the planners.



A train running along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. (Planning Department)

A Grand Collaboration of Public and Private Investment Can Turn the Tide

Our Downtown needs a grand collaboration with all involved coming together and committing to this effort. Anchorage has Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, the Port of Alaska, Alaska Railroad Headquarters, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, the UMED District, Girdwood and the Alyeska Ski Resort, Chugach State Park, and Chugach National Forest, the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, and its world-class trail connecting system, and the Eagle River Nature Center, to name just a few outstanding amenities. Investing our resources, time, and efforts in Our Downtown is going to help keep our jobs, seniors, kids, events, historic buildings, and cultural sites here while giving our community a welcoming place to share with locals and visitors.

Planning Process

The planning process to complete the review and update of the 2007 Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan (*2007 Downtown Plan*) kicked off just as the COVID-19 precautions started. The Planning Team pivoted away from in-person meetings to Teams and Zoom meetings in order to reach our community. We found that more people were able to participate in the planning process through online meetings and by taking the project survey.

OUR DOWNTOWN – Public Online Survey (April 8 through April 30, 2021, at www.ourdowntownanchorage.com)

As public in-person meetings stopped in March 2020, the Planning Team shifted its public engagement focus to holding online meetings with interested groups, agencies, infrastructure and utility providers, and the design community. Members of the community were all eager to meet and discuss how to make Downtown better.

An important element of outreach was an online public survey completed by 370 people. These supportive members of Downtown provided over 1,200 comments and recommendations on how this plan can support Our Downtown into the future. This volume of survey results led to an amended set of goals and new or amended implementation actions.

Those actions include the update to the Downtown Zoning Districts, development incentives, utility coordination and upgrades, several focus areas for redevelopment, multi-modal street upgrades to accommodate increased pedestrian and bicycle use, adaptive reuse and renovation of historic buildings, designation of historic and cultural districts, the need for wayfinding, creative placemaking and interpretive information.

Many comments came in regarding affordable housing and reducing the burden on developers, preservation of the 4th Avenue Theatre façade, and support and solutions for the homeless. A major rebrand of Downtown was also suggested. The complete survey results can be found at the [project](#) website.

Stakeholders – Subcommittees – Developers

The Planning Team initiated a variety of groups and committees to assist with different topics of discussion. Stakeholder groups consisted of agencies, businesses, and MOA departments contributing overall guidance and support.

- A Technical Advisory Committee consisting of MOA and State of Alaska agency staff gave input on Maintenance and Operation, specific department planning issues, and other items of concern for the plan.
- The Utility Subcommittee laid out their individual business concerns including operational tariffs and code or development impediments.
- The Urban Design Subcommittee focused on a large set of questions and issues heard from developers, along with the experiences they have had professionally providing projects in Downtown. These discussions led to the most recommendations related to incentives and the Downtown Zoning Districts update.
- The Planning Team interviewed developers one-on-one to learn about specific concerns, successes, issues, and recommendations.
- The Planning Team met with the Downtown Community Council individually and participated in each monthly meeting held throughout the planning process.
- Government Hill and Fairview community councils received intermittent presentations and information during the planning process.
- The AMATS Citizen Advisory Committee received a presentation and was encouraged to provide recommendations for pedestrian and bicycle action items.

The input and recommendations received from these groups or individuals have been incorporated into plan recommendations and action items.

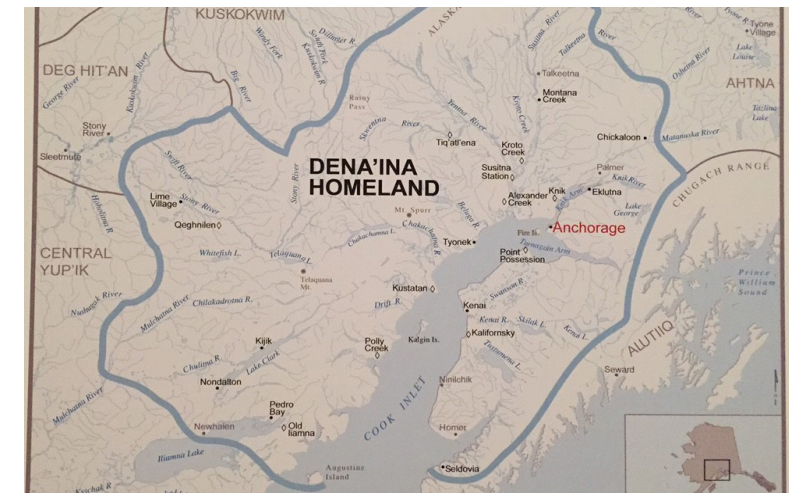
OUR DOWNTOWN—Downtown Zoning Districts Reformat (2019-2020)

The reformat of the [Downtown Zoning District](#) code was adopted and approved for use in May 2020. The code reformation clarifies the bonus point system, streamlines project review process, and provides more flexibility in some Title 21 land use code requirements. There are more changes to be made to the code. During this planning process, several recommendations were given regarding code updates. The recommendations are discussed in Chapter 6 – Urban Design and in Chapter 8 – Implementation Actions.

What Did the Team Hear the Most?

Safe pedestrian and trail connections are highly desired.

The public desires Downtown to be more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Actions to support this desire may include reducing speed limits, moving designated truck route traffic off 3rd Avenue between C to L streets, focused effort on sidewalk and lighting improvements, a bicycle boulevard, connecting the Coastal and Ship Creek trails, and a study to determine how the proposed street conversions will work as recommended in the *2007 Downtown Plan* and carried forward in this plan.



Original Dena'ina Homeland map at the Anchorage Museum.
(Planning Department)

Downtown Settlement and Regional Context

Pre-Settlement Story

The coast of southcentral Alaska is penetrated by a long watery arm that extends over 150 miles from the Pacific Ocean in the mouth of the Knik River in the north. Dena'ina Athabascans occupy the shoreline of this inlet, which they call Tikahtnu, “Big water river” in the Dena'ina language. The upper most reaches of the arm are the home to the K'enaht'ana branch of the Dena'ina whose villages, fish camps, trails, battlegrounds, graves and other sites dotted and crisscrossed the land and water of the area.

The K'enaht'ana region was never settled nor colonized by Russians who established and maintained a trading post further south on Tikahtnu at present-day Kenai. Following purchase by the United States in 1867, the region remained isolated until late in the 19th Century when several military exploratory expeditions and a few mineral prospectors briefly passed through the area (Fall and Kari 2004).

A small port named Knik was established at a Dena'ina village site on the western shore of Tikahtnu in 1906 to provide mail and supplies to Euro American settlers, but in 1914 things changed dramatically and rapidly. At a site at the mouth of Dgheyaytnu, today known as Ship Creek (Orth 1971), a tent camp was built as a construction base for the Alaska Railroad and became Anchorage; today Anchorage is the largest city in Alaska and 50% of the entire population of Alaska lives in this area.

(From Dena'ina Heritage and Representation in Anchorage, a Collaborative Project by Stephen J. Langdon, Ph.D. and Aaron Leggett – Courtesy of Aaron Leggett, Chief Native Village of Eklutna).

Downtown History and Anchorage Today

Anchorage's occupation and settlement story winds through centuries of Dena'ina families traversing the land to hunt, fish, and camp. Their prehistory is followed by European and American fur traders and gold seekers. Dena'ina families remain today, working and sharing their rich culture and heritage.

Anchorage is a metropolitan area of more than 280,000 people spread out across the Anchorage Bowl and in smaller communities along Knik Arm and Turnagain Arm. Our population has risen and fallen in the past decades mostly due to the highs and lows of the oil economy. Currently, Anchorage's population is declining, as evidenced by recent census demographic information. This is due to many factors (AEDC's [economic forecasts](#)). Over 100 languages are spoken in Anchorage according to the 2010 census. The most culturally diverse census block in the United States is in the Moutnain View area. Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (TSAIA) is the fourth largest cargo airport in the world. The Port of Alaska receives and moves goods consumed by 90% of the State. Tourism was a fast-growing economic sector up until 2019, and is rebounding in 2021. Oil prices remain about the same but have been inching higher as travel increases and the Lower-48 economy recovers.

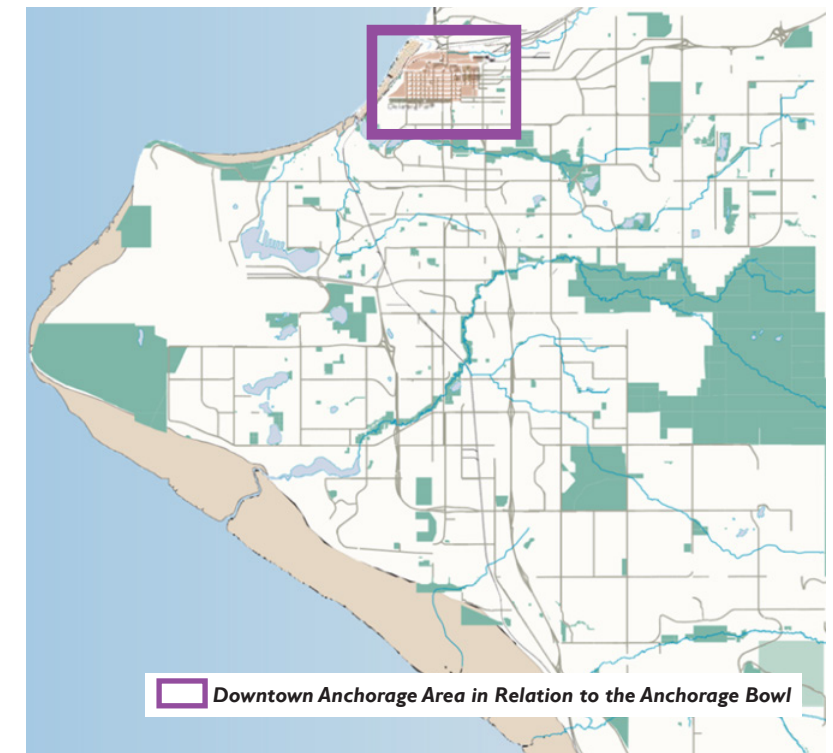
Downtown Anchorage went from a tent city to a railroad boom town in three years' time. The Alaska Engineering Commission cleared 240 acres and platted 121 blocks, each 300 feet by 300 feet. The next big event was World War II, when much of Anchorage was taken for what is now Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. The 1964 Good Friday Earthquake and its great destruction brought about reconstruction in Downtown along 4th Avenue. The oil boom of the 1980s brought oil prosperity and the Project 80s improvement program. Oil companies led the way in the construction of glass and steel skyscraper office buildings. The skyline you see today is the result of the 1964 impacts and 1980s petroleum wealth.

Regional Context

Outside Magazine, in its [Best 25 Towns of 2017](#), called Anchorage the “Best Place for Making the Most of Summer.”

The historic character of Downtown reminds residents and visitors of the diverse culture and rich history of the city. Fourth Avenue buildings and streetscape presents a window to the past, and hosts the Fourth Avenue Mushing District. Fifth Avenue also shares a strong place in history and culture with Town Square Park, the Anchorage Museum, SEED Lab, and the Museum Design District.

Downtown is surrounded by stunning views, connected to regional open space and a world-class trail network, and is a friendly neighbor to the Arctic's strategic command at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Anchorage is home to some of the region's most popular cultural and entertainment facilities and annual events.



Downtown Anchorage in context. (Planning Department)

Relationship to Other Plans

This Plan gives strategic direction to Downtown development while embracing livability, a sense of place, and the quality of life Alaskans desire for the heart of our city while coordinating with other adopted plans, studies, and land use actions. This Plan updates and replaces the 2007 Downtown Plan.

This Plan is the area-specific element of Anchorage 2020. Anchorage 2020 and the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* provide general direction for Downtown. Following are goals and policies from areawide plans that apply to Downtown. The Downtown districts and subdistricts in this plan fall within the “City Center” land use designation of the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*.

Other plans to guide development in the Downtown area also include the *Ship Creek Framework Plan - 2014 (SCFP)*, the *Fairview Neighborhood Plan – 2014 (FVNP)*, and the *Anchorage Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan – 2013 (4NHPP)*.

Anchorage 2020 Vision Statement

Anchorage Is:

- A diverse, compassionate community where everyone is valued and children and families flourish.
- A northern community built in harmony with our natural resources and majestic setting.
- A thriving, sustainable, broad-based economy supported by efficient urban infrastructure.
- A safe and healthy place to live where daily life is enriched by the wealth of year-round recreational and educational opportunities.
- A caring, responsive government that is accessible and equitable for all citizens.
- An active learning community with abundant cultural amenities.

Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan Policies Directly Related to Downtown

#18 – Strengthen the Central Business District’s role as the regional center for commerce, services, finance, arts and culture, government offices, and medium-high-density residential development.

#19 – Locate municipal, state, and federal administrative offices in the Central Business District.

#23 – Downtown is a major employment center.

Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan Goals Related to Downtown

#1 – Anchorage achieves residential and commercial growth, which improves community resiliency and citizens’ quality of life as it supports their vision for the future expressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

#2 – Infill and redevelopment meet the housing and employment needs of residents and businesses in Anchorage.

#3 – Centers and Corridors: Mixed-use, walkable commercial centers and corridors thrive within their neighborhood context, offer housing affordable to a range of incomes, and enable business growth. By encouraging business and housing growth in urban centers, this Plan makes it possible for more people to live near or more easily access job opportunities, social activities, and services for everyday needs.

#5 – Coordinated and targeted infrastructure investments catalyze new growth, provide an acceptable return on investment, and equitably improve safety and quality of life. Coordination of infrastructure projects allows the Municipality to set “Placemaking” in motion as an economic development strategy.

#6 – Anchorage coordinates transportation and land use to provide safe, efficient, and affordable travel choices.

#7 – Infill development is compatible with the valued characteristics of the surrounding properties and neighborhoods.

Ship Creek Framework Plan – 2014

The *Ship Creek Framework Plan* is a Comprehensive Plan element adopted by the Anchorage Assembly (A.O. 2014-79). The Plan identifies a unifying “big idea” and provides the vision for the future development and is consistent with the goals of this plan. The Framework Plan envisions a multi-modal transportation facility like the *2007 Downtown Plan*.

The *Framework Plan* also recommends additional access routes from the Ship Creek area that would be advantageous to reducing traffic on Downtown streets. The *Framework Plan* supports mixed-use development with housing, commercial, and retail, a new cruise ship docking area, and several connections to existing trails for a walkable and bikeable experience.

The Framework Plan Implementation Section (7) accounts for seismic, financing, urban design, trail connections, and economic analyses which are supported by this plan.



The Captain Cook Hotel in 2022. (Planning Department)

Fairview Neighborhood Plan – 2014

The *Fairview Neighborhood Plan* is another Comprehensive Plan element adopted by the Anchorage Assembly (A.O. 2014-108). The Plan has specific guidance to create an overlay district in the East Downtown Area which would include design guidelines. The East Downtown Area is included in the study area boundary of this plan to ensure consistency between the two plans.

The *Fairview Neighborhood Plan* supports mixed-use development of commercial high-density residential properties in the Fairview/East Downtown tax abatement zone and encourages use of House Bill 50 to allow AHFC to finance mixed-use development.

The *Fairview Neighborhood Plan* also accounts for a coordinated program to address homelessness, the installation of interpretive signage, provision of community events, and a focus on utility locations and coordination. The *Fairview Neighborhood Plan* promotes incentivizing development through several strategies. Marketing of investment properties with real estate professional and developer coordination will provide awareness and is consistent with this plan.

The *Fairview Neighborhood Plan* supports the completion of the Glenn-to-Seward Highway project to alleviate through-traffic in Downtown and Fairview.

Anchorage Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan (4NHPP) - 2013

The 4NHPP is a Comprehensive Plan element adopted by the Anchorage Assembly (A.O. 2013-12). The 4NHPP devotes an entire chapter to Downtown Anchorage. This plan mirrors recommendations from the 4NHPP. The recommendations from the 4NHPP include historic building reuse, nominations to the Anchorage Local Landmark Register, designation of Downtown Historic Districts, and wayfinding and interpretive information. Interpretive information is very important to both plans as it provides historic and cultural information to both Anchorage residents and the traveling public.

The 4NHPP also includes a map with locations identified as “Opportunities for Preservation.” This map is included in Chapter 2: Existing Conditions. A list of Landmarks to Save specific to Downtown will be used in future historic and cultural preservation efforts including the wayfinding and interpretive project proposed in this plan. There are Downtown-specific Policies and Implementation Strategies that will also influence historic and cultural resources in Downtown. By fostering a visually cohesive historic central business district, as each plan does, our community will be able to understand our past as we look to the future.

Our Downtown Trends Report

The project team developed a trends report to support the targeted review of the *2007 Downtown Plan*. The Trends Report provides information consistent with the elements identified for a 10-year targeted plan review. The Trends Report can be found at: ourdowntownanchorage.com

The Trends Report includes current economic and demographic information, recent and proposed land use decisions, and contributing information from adopted plans and studies. A report on Chapter 8-Implementation Strategies and the Strategy Diagram (page 33) from the *2007 Downtown Plan* is also included.

Contributing Elements to the Trends Report:

- 2020 3-Year Economic Outlook Report – AEDC.
- Downtown Anchorage Residential Market Study – Agnew::Beck.
- Downtown Plan Implementation – Chapters 3-8.
- Recent and Proposed Land Use Decisions.
- Contributing Plans and Studies.
- Downtown Zoning Districts Code Update.
- Existing Conditions Maps.



2019 COVID Pandemic - We Are Moving Forward and Recovering!

The recovery Anchorage needs to move our economy forward places the community once again at a crossroads. Do we keep doing business the same, managing government services the same, and building the same?

Or do we initiate every tool in the toolbox to turn around the economy and boost private and public investment to let investors know Anchorage is [Open for Business](#). This plan advocates using every tool we can and adopting new tools where we needed additional help.

Downtown Plan Accomplishments

Several multi-million-dollar public investments were planned or close to completion when the Anchorage Downtown Plan was adopted. During the last 13 years, the public invested in the Dena'ina Convention Center, Anchorage Museum, Linny Pacillo Parking Garage, and Town Square Park. Several streets were reconstructed, including 9th Avenue and F and G streets around the Dena'ina Convention Center.

Forty-seven implementation actions are listed in Chapter 8. Of these, 14 or 25% are completed, 17 or 29% received little action or no action, and 27 or 46% received some action and are ongoing. Coupled with the recent completed mixed-use housing developments, the renovations of Key Bank, and proposed new redevelopment projects, the community and its partners are finding new and creative ways to incentivize redevelopment and infill as envisioned by the 2007 Plan.

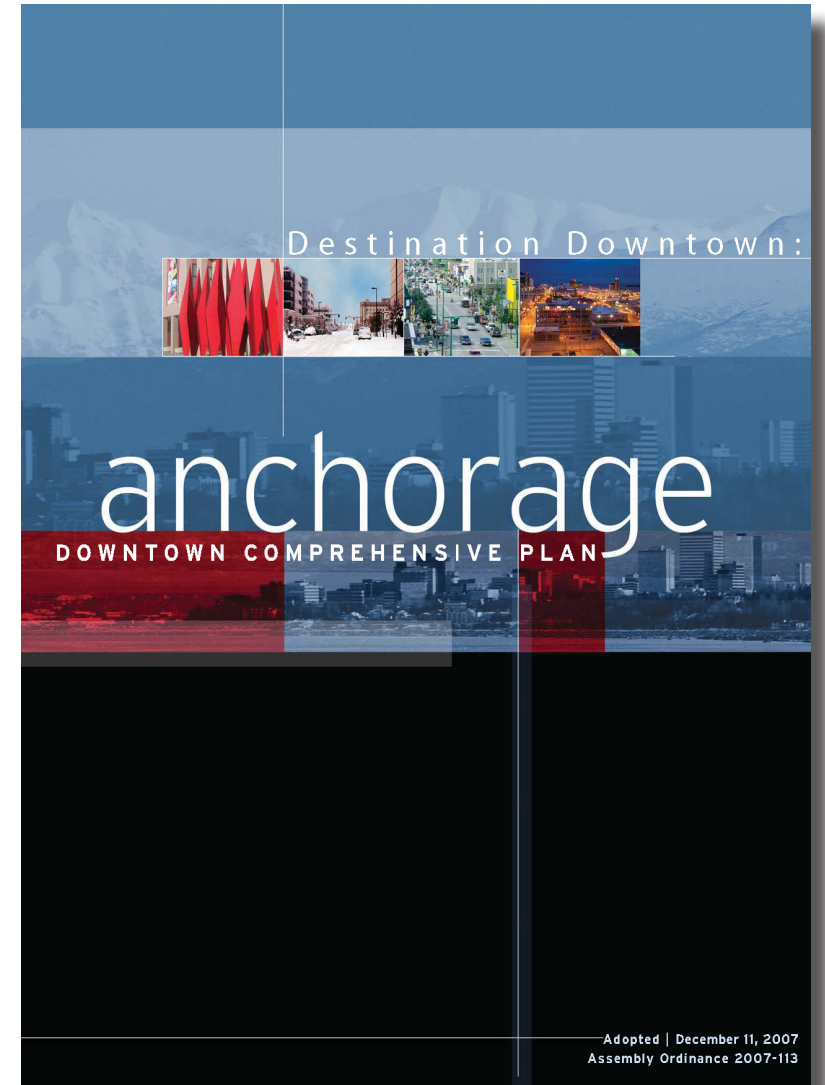
What Directed This Planning Process?

The Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2007 as an area-specific element of the Municipality of Anchorage Comprehensive Plan. The municipal code provides a process for re-evaluating and updating the elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive plan updates can typically take 2-3 years to complete. The Planning Team, with community support, fast-tracked the planning process. We appreciate the attention to detail, meaningful comments, and overwhelming community support of this plan update.

Targeted Review and Chapter Updates

- 2007 Downtown Vision was updated.
- *2007 Downtown Plan* overarching goals were affirmed with no changes.
- Chapter 2 – was updated and includes a brief on existing conditions gleaned from the Trends Report.
- Chapter 3 – Strategy Framework and Strategy Diagram were completely updated including the addition of chapter-specific goals, policies, and action items.
- Sections of Chapters 4 – Land Use and Economic Development, 5 – Transportation and Circulation, and 6 – Urban Design were updated including chapter-specific goals, policies and action items added.
- Chapter 8 – Implementation Actions was updated with many new actions items; a few 2007 implementation actions remained.



Recommended Early Action Items

These early action items are intended to help further support and “focus the effort” on Downtown economic development and revitalization for new housing, businesses, and cultural and tourism opportunities. Funding is needed for several projects. New funding will take the commitment and support of all.

EA-1: Continue to Invest in the Few Good Blocks Area - Concentrate on an expansion of the pilot project area of the 2016 Smart Growth Few Good Blocks to include (9th to 2nd avenues and G to M streets). Elizabeth Place, Block 96 Lofts, 7th & L, 6th Avenue Hotel Project, 8th and I MOA properties, proposed 2nd Avenue project all within this area. Use the current land capacity determination to calculate the existing and up-front utility needs and upgrades.

Seek funding to advance a utility survey and upgrade project in the Few Good Blocks through HUD/CDBG, Brownfield, or other agency funding. This project would further catalyze mixed-use and residential housing projects to help address housing and economic recovery in one of the “most impacted and distressed areas” of the State.

EA-2: Develop a Downtown Focused Capital Improvement Program - Work with each utility provider and in the MOA CIB/CIP to prioritize the Few Good Blocks Area for funding and upgrades (works with RVS-1).

EA-3: Create a Utility Coordination Subcommittee Liaison or Process within Development Services, Planning and/or PM&E - Establish the process to engage utility providers and developers at pre-application meetings for proposed projects in the Downtown area early in the exploratory phase of projects to identify missing or needed off-site improvements. Establish a Utility Coordination Subcommittee that meets quarterly or as needed. The MOA would provide coordination of the committee either through the Planning or Project Management & Engineering Departments (works with RVS-1).

EA-4: Fund and Complete the Downtown Zoning Districts Update - Seek funding for and complete the update to the Downtown Zoning Districts.

EA-5: Identify and Establish New Sources of Funding - Work to identify and establish new sources of revenue to assist in filling the financial gap. Possible sources of funding could include:

- State financing agencies, such as AIDEA and AHFC.
- Local funding, such as MESA payments by ACDA.
- Local, state, federal, and foundation funding to capitalize a Housing Trust Fund.
- Infrastructure funding, such as MAPS from Oklahoma City.

EA-6: Fairview/East Downtown Residential Property Tax Abatement - Renew both the Fairview/East Downtown tax abatement area for at least another 10 years; it is set to sunset in 2024 (A.O. 2014-06) and Downtown Housing Tax Incentive and Exemption (A.O. 2019-12 Amended) set to sunset in 2024. Consider extending the length of time of the tax incentive for housing to 25 years and include mixed-use housing and commercial projects to aid in redeveloping Downtown (only residential properties will qualify for the Housing Tax Incentive). When amending these timeframes, reduce the complicated and expensive submittal process incorporated into Chapter 12.35, by modeling the application process outlined in the Downtown Housing and Tax Exemption Ordinance (works with LU-3).

EA-7: Fund and Complete the Downtown Anchorage Streets Engineering Study - Seek AMATS funding to complete the study. To be completed by PM&E or Planning Department with technical support from Public Works, MOA Traffic, AMATS, and DOT&PF. The study would include evaluating street conversions, street closures, Bike Boulevard concept and Coastal Trail connectors, street ownership transfer and truck traffic (overlaps with T&C-1).

EA-8: Historic and Cultural District Information Update - Complete the study to determine a recommendation on historic or cultural districts and contributing and non-contributing historic and cultural resources to complete Local Landmark Register historic or cultural district nominations for approval by the Assembly.



49th State Brewery Rooftop in 2022. (Planning Department)



G Street Arts District - COVID-19 closure allowed for outdoor dining, keeping businesses open and employees working in 2021. (Planning Department)

Why is Investing in our Downtown Important?

Anchorage Property Tax Assessment

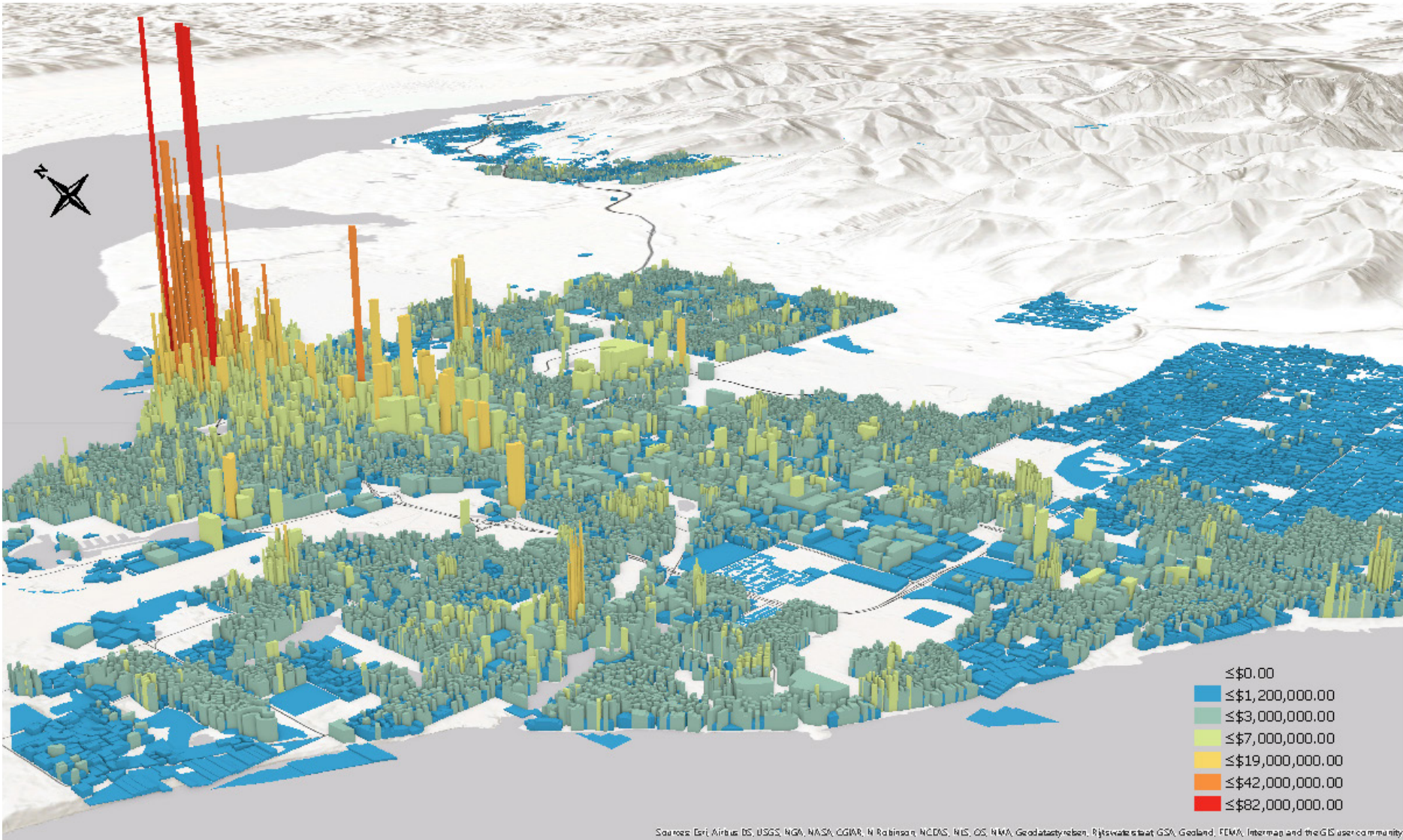
Downtown Anchorage has the highest concentration of assessed property value generating the highest concentration of property taxes for the Municipality.

Downtown property owners also pay into the [Downtown Improvement District](#) special assessment as noted previously. This results in Downtown properties paying the highest taxation in Anchorage. **Map #4** depicts the taxable value per acre by parcel of properties throughout the Municipality.

The large red spikes visually indicate Downtown property values far outpace any other areas in Anchorage, including Midtown. This map tells us that Downtown drives our municipal revenues and creates opportunities for all of Anchorage. Filling empty lots in Downtown will add new wealth to our community for the services, infrastructure, and programs we need to better our quality of life.

Taxable Value per Acre by Parcel (2019)

Municipality of Anchorage
Planning Department



Sources: Esri, Airbus DS, USGS, NOAA, NASA, CGIAR, N. Robinson, NCEAS, NIS, OS, NOAA, Geodatastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap and the GIS user community

Map #4: Taxable Value Per Acre by Parcel: Assessor 2019 data – This map is included in the Trends Report. Mapping by the Planning Department.

CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS

Overview

This chapter provides a brief overview of a variety of the existing conditions relevant to Downtown Anchorage during the timeline of this plan (2020 - 2022). In-depth information is provided in the Trends Report. This chapter covers the following:

- Economic, demographic, and employment trends.
- Status of the growth performance targets from the 2007 Downtown Plan related to hotel, housing, and office development.
- Any plans, studies, or land use decisions approved by the Anchorage Assembly.
- Historic and cultural places receive mention due to the adoption of the Anchorage Original Four Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan (4NHPP).
- Development or incentives tools are depicted and mapped wherein those tools can be used.
- This chapter revisits the assets and challenges listed in the 2007 Downtown Plan.
- Information and ideas heard through the public and subcommittee engagement process have been added.
- Housing information was reported by Agnew::Beck through a residential market study completed specifically for this plan.

Economic Conditions, Housing, and Demographic Information

Impacts from the Great Recession that began around 2015 and were exacerbated by the 2019 pandemic included job losses, businesses closing, and lost tourism visitation and revenue. However, in 2021, tourists [came back to Alaska](#), making Anchorage their basecamp for much of their visit. Described as “Independent Travelers,” tourism numbers were up, hotels, motels, VRBOs, and Airbnbs were booked to capacity. In ramping up to provide the experiences tourists and residents desired, tour operators, restaurants, and retail shops scrambled [to find workers](#), with many asking, “Where have the workers gone?” This was good news for the economy and a complete 180 from 2020.

The AEDC reports can be found online at the [AEDC website](#).

Downtown Housing and Demographic information was researched and provided by Agnew::Beck in the Downtown Residential Market Study produced for this plan. [New housing starts](#) and completions in Downtown have resulted in over 300+ new housing units of differing types and scales of affordability since 2016. With this new housing, residents are returning to Downtown.

The Agnew::Beck *Downtown Residential Market Study* is an appendix to the accompanying *Our Downtown Trends Report* and is also available online.

All reports, studies, and other information supporting this plan are available at: www.ourdowntownanchorage.com or www.muni.org.

Growth Performance Targets

Chapter 4 in the 2007 *Downtown Plan* recommended Growth Performance Targets for the years 2010, 2015, and 2025. The Growth Performance Targets are discussed as part of this Existing Conditions chapter. This discussion includes a short summary on projected growth performance numbers, what has occurred, and some conclusions. The Growth Performance Targets are also discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 in relationship to the Land Use and Economic Development Goals and Recommendations included in this plan.

Adopted Plans and Studies, Land Use Actions

Planning staff reviewed all land use, tax incentive, and regulatory changes completed after 2007. Staff also reviewed adopted plans and studies related to Downtown and completed after 2007, and completed a status summary on the Implementation Actions from Chapters 3-8 of the 2007 *Downtown Plan*. This included interviews with the implementers identified in Chapter 8.

COVID-19 Economic Impacts

Anchorage is recovering from an economic downturn caused by the Great Recession and the COVID-19 Pandemic. Readers should consider this overview **a snapshot in time** representing ever-changing economic conditions. Economic information for this chapter was from the 2020 and 2021 3-year Outlook Reports published by experts at the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC).

Economic & Demographic Update

Anchorage-wide Population and Employment

The year 2020 was the fourth straight year of population decline. Anchorage's population totaled 288,970 in 2020, a net loss of 3,500 residents (1.2%) from 2019. This is an overall loss of approximately 12,067 residents since the peak population of 301,037 in 2013.

Anchorage-wide Growth Predictions

Anchorage's population is forecasted to continue falling to around 286,200 by 2023, a continued steady decline from 2013. Conversely, the Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan forecasts population growth to 317,000 people in its "Low Growth" scenario by 2040, a .3% estimated Average Annual Growth Rate. The 2040 Plan, adopted in 2017, didn't have the pandemic to consider in its forecasts. Therefore, it is difficult to predict how much the pandemic will impact Anchorage's population loss, recovery, and long-term growth as time goes on.

Downtown Resident Population

The population density of Downtown Anchorage is relatively low at roughly 3 residents per acre compared to places like Boise, Salt Lake City, and Minneapolis which have more concentrated populations in their downtowns.

Downtown Resident Diversity and Income

According to the *Downtown Anchorage Residential Market Study*, Downtown residents are diverse in race, income distribution, and age groups and include a large population percentage of Black, Alaska Native, and other people of color (43%). Regarding age groups, a growing share of residents are in their 20s, 30s, and mid-60s.

Downtown income distribution is relatively even among residents, which is important to equality, cohesion, and economic growth. However, 51% of Downtown residents are cost-burdened with over 30% of their income used on rent.



New housing built by Cook Inlet Housing Authority Downtown in 2021. (Planning Department)

Anchorage-wide Employment

Anchorage entered 2020 with the expectation the economy would add jobs. This was a cheery outlook after four consecutive years of job loss according to AEDC's 2020 3-Year Economic Outlook. An average of 149,945 jobs were recorded in 2019, representing a net decline from 2018 of only about 300 jobs (0.2%), the smallest annual decline since the recession began in 2015. Statewide, employment trends also turned positive in 2019 (showing an increase of 0.7%).

Hopes were high that Anchorage would see positive job numbers in 2020. Then came COVID-19. In March 2020, the pandemic-related employment cuts started. April 2020 saw real damage as the local economy shed about 16,000 jobs. April 2020 was the largest monthly jobs decline in Anchorage's history.

However, it wasn't all bad news! The AEDC 2021 Forecast Report estimated 4,000 jobs would be added in 2021 across all sectors of employment. Now we need the workers to fill these jobs.

A deeper dive into the employment numbers and job sectors follows below, including statistics on retail, leisure and hospitality, office, and oil and gas. These sectors all provide employment in Downtown.

However, the numbers could not be parsed specifically to Downtown businesses due to the pandemic and timeline for completing this plan.

An additional 300+ new housing units were built or are in process of development since 2018. This new housing may increase Downtown population by approximately 360 new residents. That's great news for Downtown.

Downtown Resident Employees

An analysis of census data for Census Tract 11 revealed 404 of those Downtown residents noted above were employed. The data does not indicate the location of these employed Downtown residents. The 2007 Downtown Plan process completed an in-depth look at jobs in Downtown, revealing thousands of jobs in all sectors. This plan did not complete that same study due to the Pandemic and the shift to more people working remotely.

Retail Employment

Downtown's retail sector includes the 5th Avenue Mall, boutiques and shops, and the Anchorage Museum. The 5th Avenue Nordstrom and Black Diamond closures contributed to the citywide loss of retail sector (2,700) jobs (17.4%) as the city entered the “hunker-down” phase of the pandemic. The sector gradually added jobs back as restrictions on retail operations were eased. Overall, in Anchorage the retail sector employed an average 15,200 people in 2020, about 1,300 jobs (7.9%) below 2019, marking the industry's fifth consecutive year of employment decline.

AEDC expected the retail sector to add 400 jobs in 2021 in their 2021 Economic Forecast. While the retail sector did regain some of the jobs lost in 2020, average annual employment in 2021 was expected to fall short of pre-pandemic levels. Some retailers have fared better in the pandemic (grocery stores, sporting goods shops, hobby shops, and hardware in particular), but some retailers and restaurants have not survived.

The ADP continued to plan summer and winter events, First Fridays, and special “Shop Local” weekends to support Downtown retail and restaurants and workers. To that end, ADP facilitated street closures in Downtown to accommodate outdoor dining over several months in 2020 and early 2021. Their 2021 summer event schedule brimmed with great music acts and a variety of family experiences.



4th Avenue with a brand new sidewalk in 2022. (Planning Department)

2007 Growth Performance Target - Retail Space

The *2007 Downtown Plan* used an aggressive growth forecast to estimate for multi-year projections on growth and development in Downtown. An addition of 185,000 square feet of retail space was projected by 2015. Downtown didn't receive that level of investment, but it still managed to grow retail space in the last 13 years. Retail floor space increases were realized by the 5th Avenue Mall and the Fur Rendezvous Building for a total of 8,100 square feet. Several marijuana businesses set up in Downtown in existing buildings. The difference between what was realized and what was projected is about 176,900 square feet.

Leisure and Hospitality Employment

Employment dropped sharply in the leisure and hospitality sector due to the pandemic. In Anchorage the sector lost about 7,700 jobs between March and April of 2020 citywide. Employment improved over the next few months, but even at its peak remained about 5,000 jobs below 2019. The sector ended 2020 averaging about 13,300 jobs, 4,300 jobs (25%) below 2019.

Hotel / Entertainment / Recreation Employment

Hotel/entertainment/recreation employment were particularly impacted as the 2020 visitor season vanished. Visitor industry indicators all point to the season's loss:

- Passenger enplanements (boardings) at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport experienced a 59% decline from the same period in 2019 but were up in 2021, and increased in 2022.
- There were no cruise ship calls in 2020. 2022 brought cruise ships back to Alaska and Anchorage.
- Anchorage's hotel room demand was down 41% in summer 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. Hotels were booked for the full summer of 2022, helping to reverse the loss in hotel income and tax revenue.

Food Service Employment

In Anchorage, food services, which generally account for about two-thirds of leisure and hospitality sector employment, had about 3,000 fewer jobs in June 2020 compared to June 2019, a 25% decline.

2007 Growth Performance Target - Hotel

The aggressive growth projection was 375 hotel additional rooms by 2015. Downtown lost 323 hotel rooms with the conversion of the Lofts and Inlet Tower but gained that same amount of housing. Significant hotel growth in Anchorage is occurring in Midtown south of Downtown, drawing a significant portion of the hotel market there.

These two factors are contributing to a shortfall of projected hotel rooms in the *2007 Downtown Plan*. However, several hotel proposals from boutique to major developments are in the works for Downtown. This includes the [Key Bank Building's](#) \$60 million renovation by Peach Investments, LLC, and the [6th Avenue Hotel](#) project by ACDA and partners. These are two recent investments demonstrating a vote of confidence in Downtown.

Downtown Visitor Experience

Downtown visitor accommodations provide amenities and rooming options within easy walking of restaurants, trails, shopping, cultural and entertainment experiences, and grand views. Many Downtown visitors come to learn about our history. [Heritage tourists stay longer](#) and spend more money. Our Downtown provides a variety of experiences and access that heritage tourists are looking for.

Office Development and Employment

Financial Sector

The financial activities sector includes banks, credit unions, investment firms, insurance companies, real estate agents, and property manager. This sector averaged approximately 7,200 jobs in 2020 and was expected to hold steady in 2021.

Some return to employment normalcy in the financial activities sector was expected as the recovery from the pandemic continues. That gain was expected to be largely offset by continuation of the long-term decline in banking sector employment. The net effect was no change between 2020 and 2021 in terms of annual average employment.

Professional and Business Services Sector

The professional and business services sector experienced a COVID-19 related loss of about 1,700 jobs between March and April 2020. The employment picture did improve over the next few months. However, employment at its highest point in 2020 remained about 1,000 jobs below 2019. The sector ended 2020 averaging about 16,500 jobs, 900 jobs below 2019. AEDC expects the professional and businesses services sector to add back about 300 jobs in 2021, rising to an annual average of 16,800 jobs.

Oil and Gas Sector

AEDC expected oil and gas industry employment in Anchorage to average 2,100 jobs in 2021, 100 jobs above the 2020 average. The forecast of 100 new jobs was an annual average and did not reflect the full extent of the recovery. By another measure, AEDC expected that by December 2021 there would be 2,300 oil and gas jobs in Anchorage, a 300-job improvement over December 2020. Many of these oil and gas jobs are in the ConocoPhillips building Downtown.

2007 Growth Performance Target - Office

The *2007 Downtown Plan* projected office space construction of an additional 1,257,500 square feet by 2015. New construction or substantial renovations adding new office space has not been realized from this projection. Redevelopment includes the Key Bank Building on 5th Avenue, the NANA Corporation building on 9th Avenue and I Street, the Solar Building at 441 W. 5th Avenue, and the Anchorage Police Department Headquarters on 4th Avenue. Office space upgrades and development are good for Downtown.

Conclusions

This jobs and economic review is a moment in time and not meant to convey the outlook on job growth or business recovery from the pandemic.

The pandemic impacted all sectors of employment in Anchorage. AEDC is the expert providing information for this chapter, and the economy had started recovering at the time this plan was adopted.

Hotel and Motel Expansions

Hotel and motel expansions are vital to the economy of Anchorage, for the room taxes and retail sales generated and the other numerous benefits derived from a redeveloped, active, and vital Downtown.

A commercial land assessment study commissioned by the Municipality in 2012 determined Downtown would be the leading location for lodging development at roughly 2.9 million square feet.

Several recommendations for Downtown code updates, coupled with the current tax incentives offered by the Municipality, could help make development more financially feasible and spur growth in the hotel sector for Downtown.

Office and Commercial Expansions

Some of the new office development could be planned as Maker and Shared-Use spaces. High-speed internet will be required for those “[Digital Nomads](#)” who can destination work from wherever they wish to call home. They are finding support [and information](#) from [www.Digitalnomads.world](#), which states online: “Perhaps nowhere else does the comforts of the modern age combine with the freedom and adventure of living on the edge of vast unspoiled nature.” Nomads are coming to Anchorage for extended months to get that Alaska experience.

Hotels can market the reality that Anchorage visitors staying at Downtown hotels have a visitor experience like no other area of the city.

Anchorage Housing

Anchorage-wide Housing Update

AEDC’s [2020 3-Year Economic Outlook Report](#) projected 420 new housing units in 2020. This estimate was based on MOA housing permit data through the first three months of 2020. With about 117,000 housing units in Anchorage, the annual growth rate of housing construction has hovered around 0.3% annually for the last several years. Multi-family units compose about half of all new units. Giving a perspective on housing growth, across Anchorage 345 housing units were added in 2019. This is roughly 90 units fewer than were added in 2018. Multi-family projects accounted for 149 of these units while single-family homes contributed 185 units. 16 mobile homes were also added in 2019. Housing permits are up citywide again in 2022 with a projected 10% increase in projects.

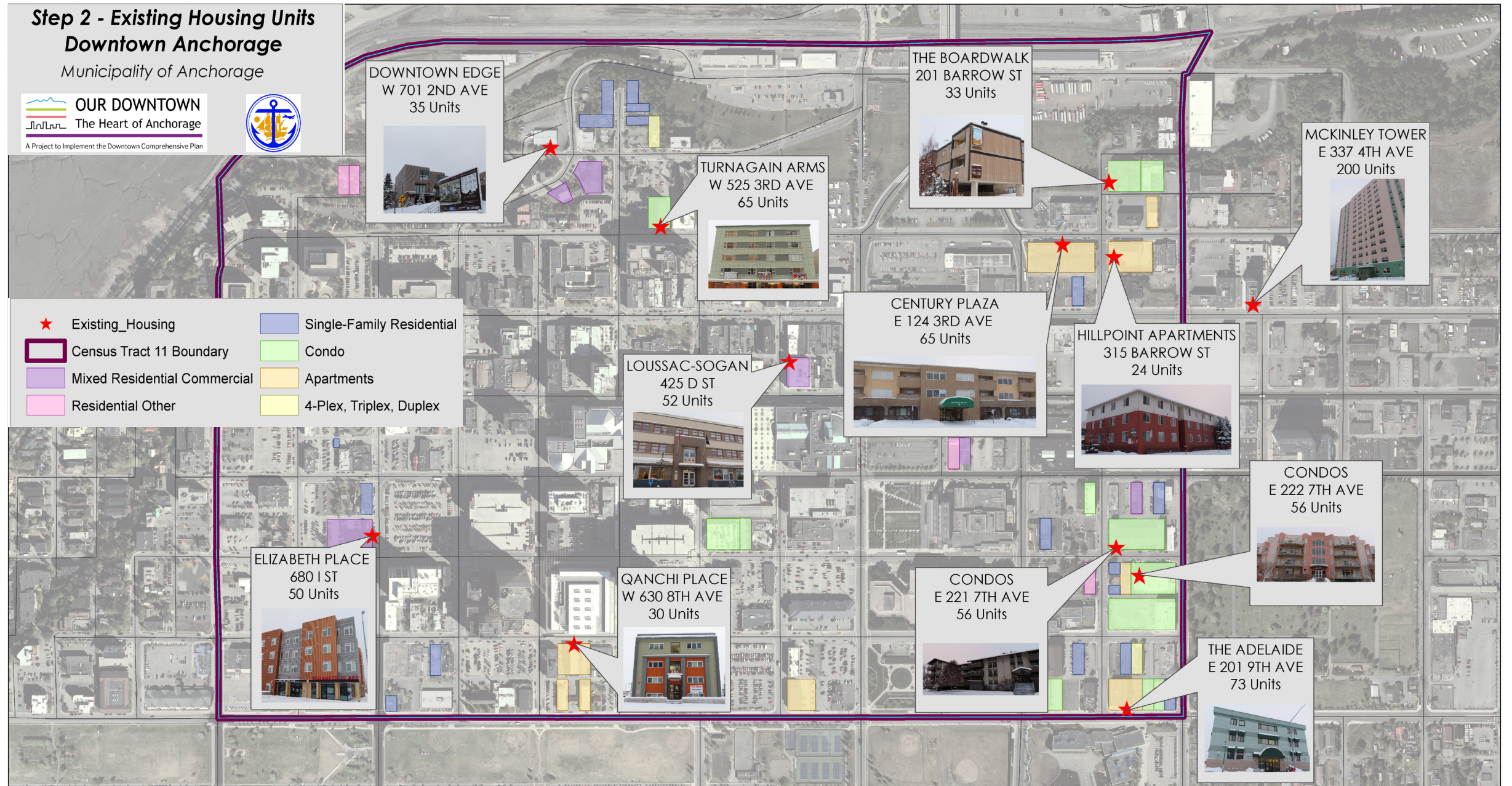
Downtown Housing

Figure #1: Downtown Housing Estimate (Source: Agnew::Beck)

Approximately 614 housing units are in the core of Downtown represented by Census Tract 11. This housing number is a combination of single-family, condominiums, mixed-use residential, 4-plex or smaller, and rental apartments, with 55 separate Downtown buildings housing residential units as noted in **Figure #1**. Census Tract 11 was used to analyze the number of units in Downtown consistent with the *2007 Downtown Plan*. A few additional buildings located just outside of the Core were also counted, as depicted on the map below. The largest residential property in Tract 11 is the Adelaide on East 9th Avenue at 73 units and McKinley Tower with 200 units just outside Census Tract 11. (See **Map #5**: Step 2—Existing Housing Units Downtown Anchorage from the Trends Report on the next page.)

	Total Housing Units	% of Total	Average Units per Property	Minimum Units per Property	Maximum Units per Property	# of Properties
Rental Apartments	238	39%	44	6	73	9
Condos	229	37%	16	1	65	14
Mixed-Use Residential	112	18%	19	1	52	6
4-Plex or Smaller	16	3%	2	2	4	7
Single Family	19	3%	1	1	1	19
Total/Average	614	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	55

Figure #1: Downtown Housing Estimate



Map #5: Step 2 – Existing Housing Units Downtown Anchorage from the Trends Report.

What Does it Cost to Develop Housing in Anchorage?

Key Findings Agnew::Beck Pro Forma Study: The Agnew::Beck pro forma has been used for several years and has tested the feasibility of multi-family rental housing in five different areas of Anchorage. The results indicate that regardless of location in Anchorage, market rate rental housing faces financial feasibility challenges, despite a strong demand for multifamily housing.

When we use realistic rents given existing market conditions in Anchorage and compare the capitalized value of the income stream to the total development costs, a financing gap results. This is consistent with economic findings of the *2007 Downtown Plan* where financial feasibility was identified as an issue. Construction, infrastructure, and land costs are too high relative to the rents that can be achieved.

Figure #2 indicates the results of five hypothetical projects throughout Anchorage with one in Downtown. As shown, a 40-unit rental housing project costs roughly \$10 million to construct and yields \$4 million in capitalized value, resulting in a \$5.8 million funding gap. Some developers who are also their own general contractor can construct a project for less cost, but the financial feasibility gaps still exist. The 4-unit Downtown Housing Tax Incentive reduces the gap by roughly 50 percent, but additional solutions are still required to make projects pencil.

New Housing Summary (2007-Present)

New housing built by Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA) includes *Elizabeth Place* (50 units) and *Qanchi Place* (30 units). The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) partnered with the Petersen Group to build The Downtown Edge (35 units). Two projects by ACDA include the mixed-use [6th Avenue Hotel](#) project, projected to add a substantial number of hotel (156) and housing (32) units, and the [Block 96 Flats](#) on 8th Avenue proposed with (44) market rate studio and one-bedroom apartments. A public/private partnership was required for all of these projects to make them financially feasible.

GAP PER UNIT				
Project	NO INCENTIVE	12-YEAR TAX INCENTIVE	12-YEAR + \$2M Patient Capital + Land Write Down	25-YEAR + Some Land Write Down
Current DT Project 40 units on 1/2 acre. Surface parked at .50 spaces per unit. Density: 80 DUA. All Stick Built.	\$120,000	\$70,000	No Gap	No Gap
Block 102 – 8th & F 150 Units on .96 acres: North Parcel Only. Parking = .05 per unit. 40% parking onsite surface and remaining in adjacent lots or garages. Density: 155 DUA. All Stick Built.	\$110,000	\$60,000	\$20,000	No Gap
Block 28 – 3rd & H 200 Units on .80 acres: North parcel only. Parking = .05 per unit. 40% parking onsite surface and remaining in adjacent lots or garages. Density: 249 DUA. All Stick Built.	\$90,000	\$50,000	\$20,000	No Gap

Downtown Plan 2021 Housing Target



Identifying and communicating a housing target in this plan is a policy choice many other cities have made to bolster downtown housing development. This plan empowers our community leaders to champion the housing target and incentives that are needed to support new housing in Downtown Anchorage. 4,700 housing units are possible Downtown. **A target of 1,400 market rate housing units is proposed in the next 5-8 years.** We need to do the following to get there:

- Tax Incentive Amendments.
- Establishment of a GAP Housing Trust Fund.
- ACDA is appointed as the lead agency for redevelopment Downtown.
- Coordinated utilities and infrastructure development.

Figure #2: Project Financing Gaps Key Findings-Three Downtown Anchorage Examples

Housing is Economic Development

Housing is the foundation on which Anchorage can build a stronger economic future. Lack of affordable, available, and livable housing has been cited by many local businesses as a challenge to attracting and retaining employees in Anchorage

Plans, Studies, Land Use Decisions

Plans and Studies

Since 2007, the Anchorage Assembly has reviewed or adopted over 15 plans and studies with some relationship to Downtown. This includes the Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan, Fairview Neighborhood Plan, AMATS TIP, and Anchorage's Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan, and the Ship Creek Framework Plan. Studies include the Gambell Street Revitalization Project, Anchored Home, Former Native Service Hospital Master Plan, and the Anchorage Climate Action Plan. Within these plans and studies are a mix of numerous actions and recommendations that require funding and community support to be initiated and completed.

Land Use Decisions

Land use decisions are adopted by Assembly ordinance usually recommended for approval by the Planning & Zoning Commission. The rezone of the historic Native Hospital site on 3rd Avenue will allow housing, mixed use, commercial, and active open space development. The adoption of the 4-unit housing tax incentive (A.O. 2019-12), Downtown Zoning Districts reformat (A.O. 2020-38), and the Fairview / East Downtown Economic Development Tax Abatement Zone (A.O. 2014-71(S)) are all intended to spur and support new development. However, the market for commercial and housing will ultimately dictate what will be built in the future.

The Trends Report also noted 61 permits were approved for the Downtown area from 2007 forward. These permits run the gamut in size and investment from marijuana shops to the multi-million-dollar Key Bank Building renovation.



Plan outreach and Downtown code working group 2021-2022. (Planning Department)

Historic and Cultural Places

Downtown Anchorage is home to several architectural and historically significant buildings. These include the Captain Cook Hotel, 4th Avenue Theatre, Federal Building, Loussac Sogn Building, Wendler Building, Pioneer Schoolhouse, NANA Building, Anchorage Museum, and Dena'ina Convention Center. The story associated with each building is unique and meaningful to our history and culture.

MOA-Owned Historic Properties

The MOA owns several National Register Listed Historic Properties in Downtown, including Cottage 25 on 3rd Avenue, the Oscar Anderson House in Elderberry Park, Pioneer Schoolhouse in Crawford Park, and Old City Hall in Peratrovich Park. Private historic properties listed on the National Register include the 4th Avenue Theatre, Loussac-Sogn Building, Wendler Building, Historic Anchorage Hotel, and Leopold David House.

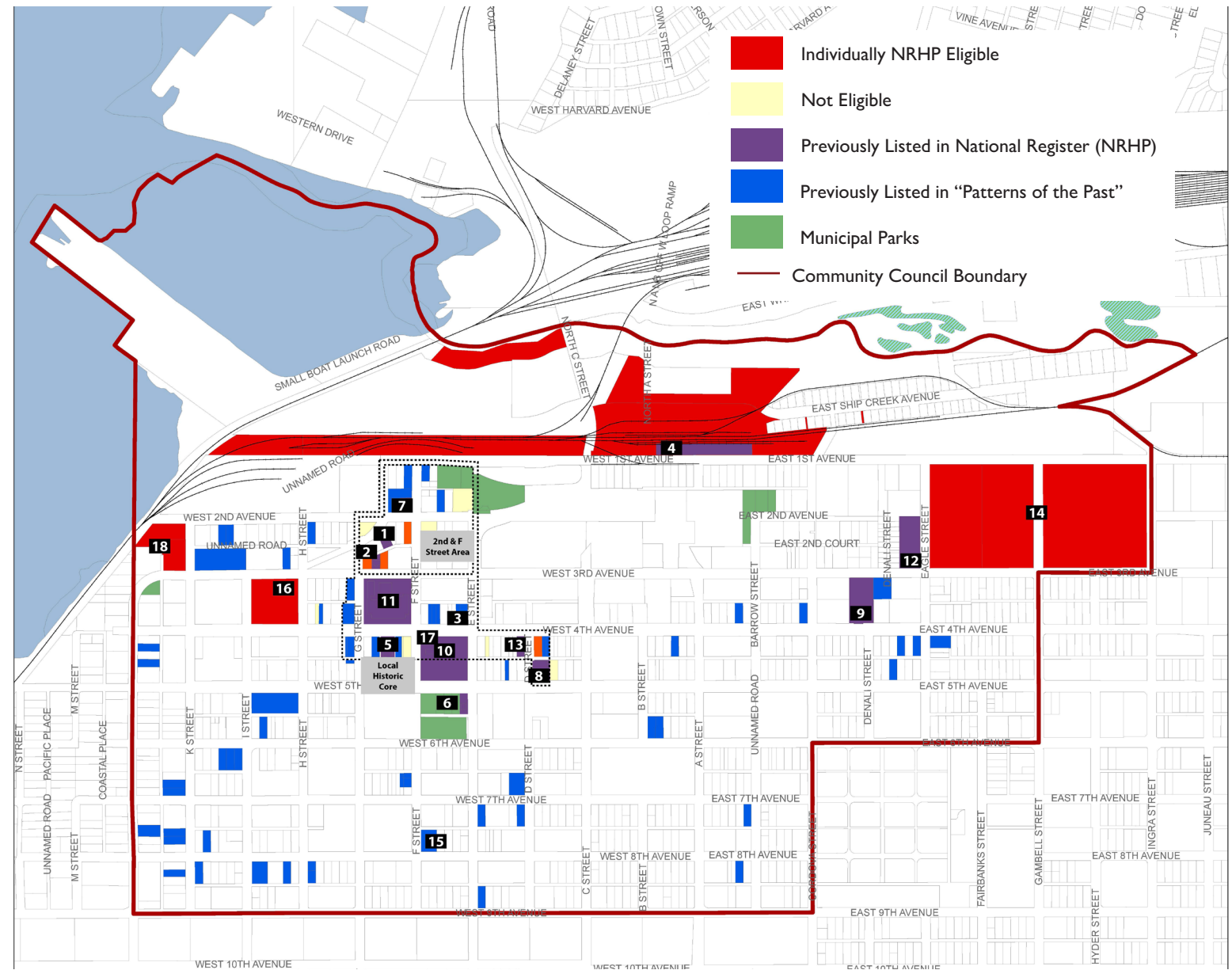
Cultural Sites or Districts

Cultural sites or districts include Ship Creek, Museum Design District, 4th Avenue Mushing District, and 2nd to 4th Avenues Denali Views District in the center of our city. The history and culture that accompanies these special places are what makes them unique and treasured by residents and [visitors alike](#). Carolyn Childs of My Travel Research extolls the benefits to the traveler and the community in her online blog: [How Culture and Heritage Tourism Boosts More Than A Visitor Economy](#) ([mytravelresearch.com](#)).

Conclusion

The Municipality adopted the 4NHPP and the [2015 Original Neighborhoods Interpretive Plan](#) to guide the preservation and celebration of our historic and cultural resources. The Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan encourages historic and cultural preservation, including historic building adaptive reuse and designating historic districts, viewsheds, buildings, and places, as does this plan.

Downtown Historic & Cultural Properties Survey Results



Map #6: Downtown Historic and Cultural Properties Survey Results (1988 & 2007). Additional information is available in the Anchorage Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan.



Anchorage in winter. (Planning Department)

Land Use Code

Title 21 Downtown Zoning Districts

The *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* called for reformatting the Downtown zoning districts into the current Title 21 zoning code format intended as the first step towards modernizing Downtown's development regulations. Downtown land use code was still regulated by an older version of Title 21 originally written in the 1980s, making it difficult to use in today's development context. The Planning Department completed the Downtown zoning districts (B-2A, B-2B, and B-2C) reformat.

The code reformat clarified and streamlined the existing land use regulations for Downtown and gave Downtown property owners access to the advantages of the modern, more user-friendly format of current Title 21. The Downtown-specific regulations were also located together in a new chapter (21.11) devoted to Downtown to allow for easier use, greater transparency, and flexibility.

Downtown property owners and developers now have approval procedures and regulatory flexibility including Alternative Equivalent Compliance.

Other Title 21 Development Code incentives include: concurrent processing, which allows simultaneous processing of applications for different entitlements and approvals that may be required for the same development project:

- Minor modifications, which allow for administrative approval for minor deviations from development standards.
- Alternative Equivalent Compliance allows alternate landscaping and building design requirements that are equivalent to the code requirement.
- Reduced private open space requirements.
- More flexible landscaping requirements.
- Exemption from minimum parking requirements (carried over from old Title 21).
- Clarified bonus incentives.
- Entitlements and incentives for the renovation and reuse of historic structures.

Conclusion

Incentives to assist new development Downtown, public-private partnerships, and the Downtown Zoning Districts reformat are great steps envisioned in the *2007 Downtown Plan* to support revitalization of Our Downtown. The current update to Title 21 Chapter 11: Downtown will accommodate more substantive amendments to improve the land use regulations from recommendations included in this plan.

Downtown Assets and Challenges

Assets

The *2007 Downtown Plan* identified the most noteworthy assets and critical challenges facing Downtown. The 2007 Plan also included many goals, recommendations, and implementation actions that expressed the community's vision for Downtown.

This section reaffirms Downtown's fundamental assets with some updates. Downtown Anchorage is much the same today as it was in 2007, and Downtown still attracts visitors and locals to experience all that it has to offer. Assets include amenities and attractions, connections, and a beautiful setting.

Amenities and Attractions

- Compact, walkable multi-use district ideal for public transit, schools, and affordable housing.
- Diverse cultural, historical, and entertainment amenities and venues located in a compact retail district. Those include the Anchorage Museum, Museum Design District, Alaska Center for the Performing Arts, Mushing District, 4th Avenue Historic District.
- A cluster of gourmet restaurants serving an eclectic range of traditional and ethnic cuisine.
- A broad spectrum of excellent lodging options.
- A mix of shops and galleries featuring Alaska Native and local art.

- Many civic and government facilities, including the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center, the Egan Center, state and federal office buildings and courthouses, and Old City Hall.

Connections

- Direct connections to all regional transportation links, including transit and railroad.
- Hubs and primary traffic routes, such as the Seward and Glenn highways, A and C Street couplet, and the L and I Street/Minnesota Bypass.
- Numerous connections to adjacent neighborhoods, the Port, and the ARRC Historic Railroad Depot via existing paved pathways.

Setting

- Dramatic natural setting with direct viewing access to the Knik Arm, Chugach, Talkeetna, and Alaska ranges.
- A bird's eye view of the Great One—Denali and Mount Susitna.
- Diverse mix of building types from historic frontier homes, World War II bungalows, classic mid-century modern to the industrial warehouses near Ship Creek.
- A beautiful environment with ample open space and streetscape plantings.
- A northern four-season climate with a true winter and a summer season with the "midnight sun."

Challenges

Some challenges remain the same since the *2007 Downtown Plan* was adopted. Public input and comments from the 2021 online survey garnered similar and additional challenges.

Development Constraints

- Housing market-rate rentals is financially unfeasible.
- Too many parking lots.
- Design guidelines need to be updated.
- Portions of the Downtown area are located within areas designated as potentially high susceptibility to seismic-induced ground failure.
- Building setback requirement.
- Bulk tower regulations discourage going taller, making building more costly.
- Bonus point system out of date.
- Alternative Building Tower Design process needs to be streamlined.
- Parking lot landscaping requirement too restrictive.
- Utility upgrades are expensive.
- Not enough incentives to get more housing.
- Small lots – No process in place to consolidate small lots.
- Better communication is needed early on in project development between infrastructure providers, including the utility companies and the project developers to avoid cost overruns and project delays.

Design Conditions

Many existing buildings were poorly designed for the northern climate or pedestrian-friendly city center. Shadowing, wind effects, and blank walls have impacted pedestrian spaces as a result.

- Sidewalks and crossings are not designed for winter conditions, resulting in areas with unfriendly streetscape environment.

- Wide streets designed for fast-moving vehicles cut through the heart of Downtown.
- Narrow sidewalks, poor lighting, barren parking lots, and buildings with large, blank walls inhibit pedestrian safety and comfort.
- Sign code not relevant for Downtown – discourages creativity and ability to convey the Downtown context. Doesn't consider that art is not a sign sometimes.
- Sunlight access and wind survey studies aren't incentivized to get good design.
- Trees are not supported with adequate subsurface soil cavities, resulting in lost landscaping investment—standards need to be changed for landscaping.
- Wayfinding and interpretive signs should not be part of sign code.
- Open space requirement should consider surrounding public park land as potential asset to requirement.
- CPTED doesn't necessarily fix an issue.

Access and Circulation

- Lack of signage and wayfinding weakens connections to amenities, resources, and neighborhoods.
- The current circulation system limits easy access/drop-off at primary destinations.
- Tour bus queuing and regional truck traffic create circulation issues.
- Truck traffic on 3rd Avenue makes it difficult for pedestrians and bicycle riders to use.
- The perception of a lack of parking in the city center.
- Conversely there is too much parking.
- Missing trolley circulator to move workers and visitors around Downtown.
- One-way streets are hard to navigate.

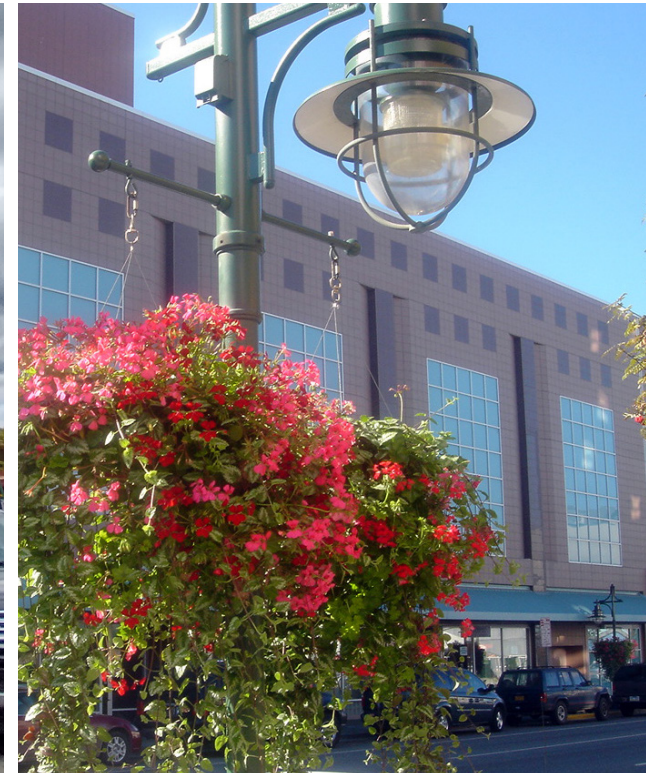
Social Factors

- Year-round activity to provide is needed.
- Safety concerns due to panhandling, public inebriation and abuse of public and private properties.
- Solutions to housing and caring for homeless populations.

Public Comments Regarding Assets and Challenges to be Addressed in the Plan

The two subcommittees formed for this plan assisted the Planning Team in discussions of several issues including the cost and timing of development, design standards, and landscaping. A Utility Subcommittee and an Urban Design Subcommittee both provided invaluable input as utility providers and private-sector partners in making Downtown great. More importantly, the subcommittees contributed several ideas to streamline and achieve great design. The comments from two subcommittees were added to the challenges noted from their experiences in supporting Downtown development.

Comments from the online survey also added information that was used to develop a set of recommendations for Chapter 8—the implementation section of this plan. Online survey participants contributed invaluable experiences in Downtown including what they liked and what needed fixing. The Downtown Community Council provided insight and examples of the assets and challenges facing Downtown for those that work and own property there.



Anchorage in summer. (Planning Department)

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CHAPTER 3: DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

Overview

This chapter introduces the strategies from the Oklahoma City and SGC recommendations, as well as updates the Vision, Overarching Plan Goals, Statements of Themes, Statements of Strategies, Strategy Framework, and Strategy Diagram with the following:

- **Vision:** Reaffirmed and updated with one sentence added at the end.
- **Overarching Goals:** Reaffirmed with the addition of bicycling to Goal 4.
- **Plan Strategies:** Updated with recommendations from the Oklahoma City delegation and Smart Growth America as introduced in Chapter 1.
- **Revitalization Map:** Replaces the Chapter 3 2007 DT Plan Strategy Map.

The Vision, Overarching Plan Goals, and Supporting Strategies work together with the Chapter 3 Revitalization Map to provide guidance on development, programs, and implementation actions. The implementation actions are repeated in Chapter 8 – Implementation Actions. Chapters 3-7 interact and support each other to create a straightforward and implementable plan for Downtown revitalization.

Our Downtown Vision

Downtown Anchorage is a vibrant northern city center that serves all of Alaska and welcomes the world. Its unparalleled connections to nature and open spaces and its stunning views make Downtown like no other urban environment.

Residents and visitors are attracted to Downtown's innovative urban design, creative use of sustainable technologies, and celebration of Alaska's unique culture.

Downtown embraces a diverse concentration of people, employment, shopping, entertainment, government services, cultural facilities and events, public spaces, and housing.

Downtown's comfortable and exciting pedestrian environment, inviting open spaces, events for families and children, and mix of cultural and entertainment facilities offer a refined urban living experience in the grandest of settings.

Our Downtown belongs to everyone!

Downtown District Plan Goals

The following overarching goals from the 2007 Downtown Plan still reflect the dream of what the community would like Our Downtown to be. The following Overarching Plan Goals reflect the aspirations the community expressed for Our Downtown. These goals articulate a Downtown that is welcoming, encourages businesses and government agencies to choose Downtown, and promote development of adequate housing for those who wish to live there.

The goals provide for a connected street and trail system that accommodates pedestrians, bicycles and cars, and comfortable connection between the street, sidewalk, and buildings. The goals can also provide direction for the Downtown land use zoning districts code and new projects considered for development.

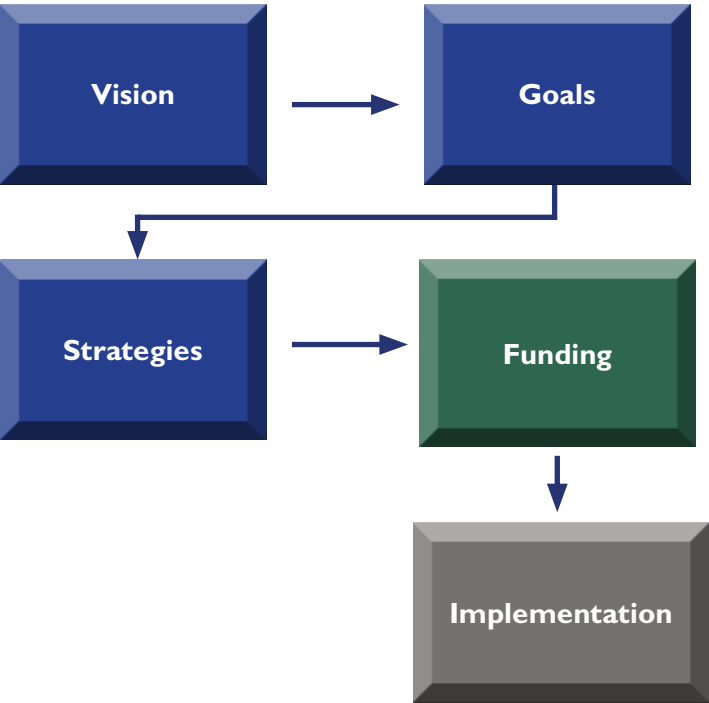


Figure #3: The Chapter 3 Strategy Matrix identifies how the plan vision, overarching goals, primary strategies, funding, and implementation work together to provide direction to the revitalization of Our Downtown

Overarching Goals

- 1. Create a Downtown for all:** Celebrate Anchorage’s diversity by offering amenities, goods, attractions, and services that appeal to persons of varying ages, backgrounds, and incomes. Downtown crowds should reflect the community.
- 2. Jump-start development:** Coordinate and leverage the substantial public-sector investment of major planned projects to catalyze private development in commercial and residential projects.
- 3. Be economically sustainable:** Attract business and civic agencies large and small to locate and stay in Downtown by promoting a favorable business environment that meets their financial requirements.
- 4. Provide more housing Downtown:** Make Downtown a great place to live by developing diverse housing options and residential amenities that will boost commerce, build community, and create round-the-clock vibrancy.

- 5. Improve connectivity:** Link amenities, housing, office space, retail, and natural resources to enhance Downtown’s sense of place and connectivity among destinations. Promote walking as an important mode of travel within Downtown. Encourage bicycling connections within Downtown and to the surrounding community. Strengthen intermodal connections, making it easier for Downtown pedestrians to use Anchorage’s air, rail, bus, and ferry terminals.
- 6. Activate the ground-floor environment:** Ensure that the ground floors of all buildings and sidewalk treatment engage pedestrians and create an active, inviting urban experience with a comfortable, safe, and vibrant pedestrian environment year-round.
- 7. Provide a clear, sensible regulatory framework:** Establish codes and guidelines to ensure that new development achieves the vision for Downtown while providing clarity and flexibility for the development community.



Photos: A Downtown for everyone. (Planning Department)

Plan Strategies

The following strategies provide direction to the plan and prioritize Implementation Actions for Chapter 8. The 2007 *Downtown Plan* strategies were reimaged to include what was most important to the community, supplemented by recommendations from the Oklahoma City delegation and Smart Growth America.

- 1. Focus the Effort:** Start with the Revitalization Map in this chapter, supported by the Land Use Plan Map, land use goals, and recommendations in Chapter 4.
- 2. Build Great Housing:** Urban design, proposed code updates, a Utility Coordination Process, and a Parking Coordination Process are provided in Chapter 6 to support new housing and commercial in Downtown.
- 3. Get Important Input from Women in the Community:** Quality of Life recommendations include wayfinding, interpretive projects, marketing, branding, safety and security. Activity and special events programming are included in Chapter 7.
- 4. Lead by Example:** Create a Return on Invest Model. Encourage Public/Private Partnerships (3P partnerships), support tax incentives.
- 5. Make Connections to Surrounding Neighborhoods:** Manage streets for optimal safety while providing connections for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- 6. Make Downtown Safer:** Support ADP’s Clean, Safe, Vital Program, PM&E’s lighting upgrade projects, and snow management; implement Anchor Home the community-wide homeless plan.

Focus the Effort

Designates locations in Downtown to be nominated as Reinvestment Focus Areas to direct limited resources and 3P partnership investment. The Revitalization Map created for this plan update identifies Areas, Districts, and Sites to create that “critical mass” needed to spark redevelopment and revitalization. Revitalization is already happening in the 2016 A Few Good Blocks Area. This plan update takes these tenets even further in the Revitalization Map. (See **Map #8.**)

Identifying areas, districts, and sites was important to the planning effort and received positive community input and support. The Revitalization Map benefits from Assembly-adopted tax abatement ordinances, carries forward redevelopment opportunities identified in the 2007 DT Plan, incorporates mayoral quality of life declarations, provides information on historic property surveys, and capitalizes on recommendations from the Smart Growth America 2016 Anchorage workshop.

This plan recommends a Focused Development Strategy to include reinvestment in locations where economic development elements may be including:

- The return on investment of existing infrastructure is increased as new customers are added.
- New development is being proposed or already occurring creating a renewed interest in the surrounding parcels.
- Focused development will help the service providers plan their work early-on with owners to right-size the improvements needed to support a planned development.
- A Reinvestment Focus Area (RFA) is designated.
- A property is located within the East Downtown/Fairview Tax Abatement Zone.
- The area is within the 2040 Land Use Plan’s Transit Supportive Development or Greenway Supportive Development zones.
- The location, when developed, will implement one or more Assembly-approved plans or studies.

- Where known historic or cultural properties or districts are located.
- The area is within a [Federally Qualified Opportunity Zone](#). (See **Map #3** Introduction).

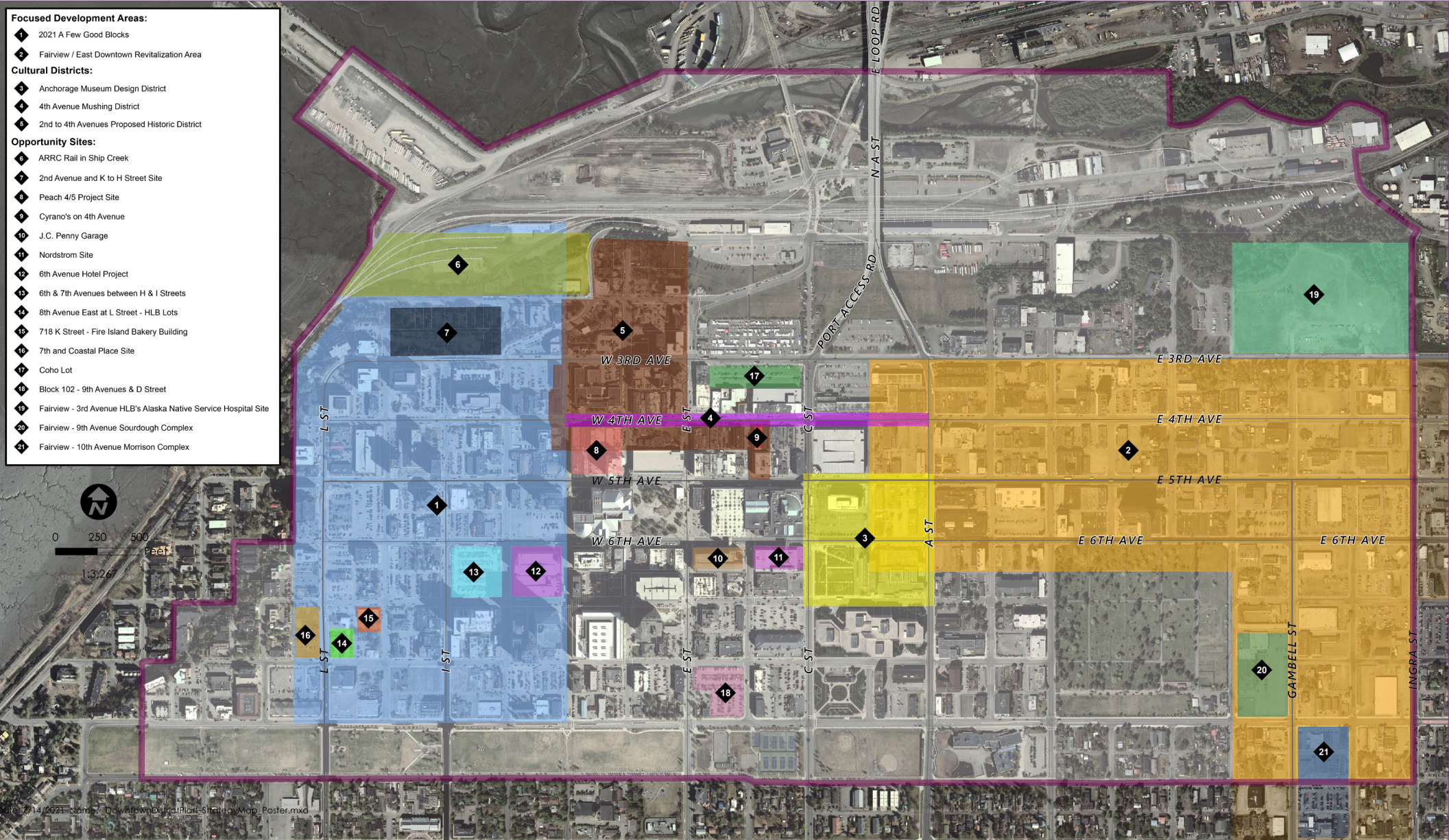
Excerpt from Smart Growth America 2016

Start by getting a few really good blocks: Designate an area where (1) new development or redevelopment is already occurring, (2) there is a substantial amount of community and private resources committed, (3) the areas and sites contain transit routes and are located within the Downtown Redevelopment Focus Area adopted by the Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan, (4) the areas and sites are an existing incentive area adopted by the Anchorage Assembly and the Federal government, (5) the areas and sites are approved with a Growth-Supporting Feature including Transit-supportive Development or Greenway-supported Development, (6) the areas and sites are zoned for the recommended development, or (7) the areas or sites implement one or more Assembly-adopted and/or approved plans or studies.

-SGA Final Report, 2016

~Limited Resources will receive the greatest return in these areas~

Step 2 - Downtown District Plan Revitalization Map



Map #7: Planning Department

Focused Development Areas

The first step in focusing the effort would be to seek Assembly designation of the two Focused Development Area as RFAs. The RFA designation is described in the 2040 Land Use Plan and will do the following to support new development:

- RFAs encourage utility upgrades and investment and a coordination process to streamline those investments.
- RFAs encourage parking coordination and management to help reduce the need to provide parking in new developments. The use of existing parking to support new development can save costs in the 3P Partnership.
- RFAs also direct Capital Improvement Programs (CIP) for MOA departments, including Parks and Recreation, Public Works, and Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU). CIPs would prioritize these areas.
- The AMATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) would also be encouraged to prioritize the RFAs. The Downtown Streets Engineering Study will consider the challenges to the pedestrian network in these areas; considerations might include a bicycle boulevard connecting the Ship Creek, Tony Knowles, and Chester Creek trails. These investments will strengthen the urban intensity and provide a mix of housing types and large and small commercial and retail providers.
- Historic building reuse is encouraged.

The Focused Development Areas include public and private properties and several undeveloped properties. Older buildings and some new construction is located here, including the newly-renovated Fire Island Bakery building. These areas have great access to views and trails and provide connectivity to transit routes.



1

A Few Good Blocks was initiated by the Planning Department and the Office of Economic and Community Development after a 3-day visit and public workshop held by Smart Growth America in 2016. Smart Growth America recommended the following:

- Define a specific redevelopment area that includes the MOA-owned 7th Avenue and I Street property as an anchor for a redevelopment pilot project.
- Use the existing fiscal tools to incentivize the pilot project.

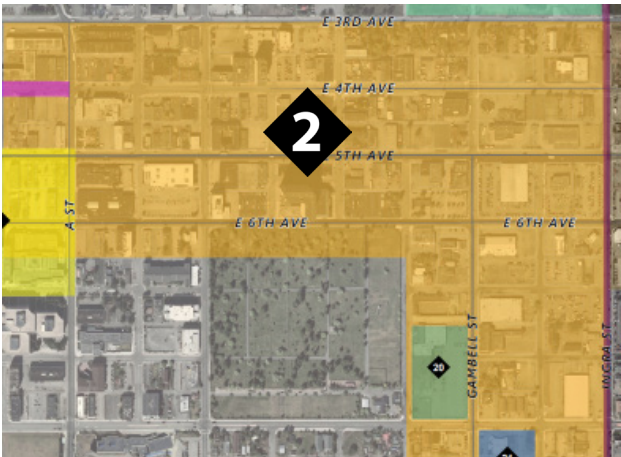
From these recommendations, A Few Good Blocks was defined as 9th to 5th avenues and I to L streets in 2016. The Planning Department completed a mapping analysis of the utilities and property ownership for the 2016 Few Good Blocks area and initiated outreach to property owners, including MOA departments, to seek ideas for redevelopment. From this initial effort, Elizabeth Place was completed. The Block 96 Lofts at 8th and K will be the next housing development built in the Few Good Blocks area.

This plan expands the Few Good Blocks to include 9th Avenue to the ARRC Railroad line and from G Street to Coastal Place. In addition to extending this boundary, the plan proposes a special area study to determine development impediments. Grant funding and tax incentives are also proposed to support new market-rate rental housing.

2

The Fairview/East Downtown Economic Revitalization Area was adopted by the Anchorage Assembly in 2014 for a 10-year period.

Implementation Strategy LU-6 from the Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan directs the Municipality to develop “incentives, funding opportunities and land assembly/site location strategies for a diverse mix of housing types and income levels.” As such, development and/or redevelopment is encouraged in this area by allowing greater tax abatement incentives.



Cultural Districts

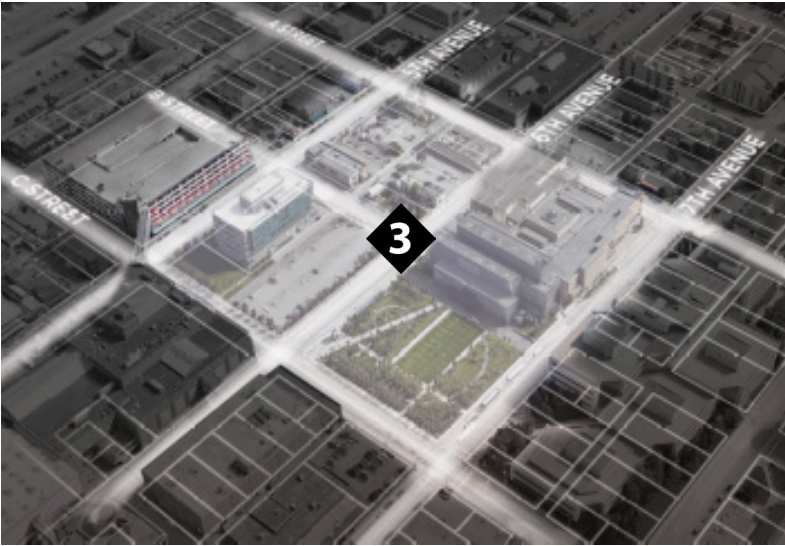
Cultural Districts boost urban revitalization in many ways. The Cultural Districts proposed for this plan are as varied and distinct as Alaska is. They capitalize on the arts, food, shopping, historic character, and Alaska Native culture Our Downtown is famous for. Cultural Districts provide:

- Beautification;
- Employment;
- Tourist and resident attraction;
- Are complementary to adjacent businesses;
- Expand the tax base;
- Focus historic preservation federal and local tax incentive programs;
- Help implement the Anchorage Original Four Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan; and
- Provide contributions to a creative, innovative environment.

Cultural Districts may include a variety of old and new buildings, parks or greenspace, art installations, trails and walkways, and other natural features, such as viewsheds and creeks. A wide range of land uses, landscapes, and geographic locations within downtowns can be reasonably labeled a “Cultural District” according to Americans for the Arts. More than 90 cities in the United States have planned or implemented Cultural Districts, positioning arts and culture at the center of their urban revitalization efforts.

Anchorage is a young city by European settlement comparison. However, we have a long and rich prehistory that should be honored and revered, and a settlement history to celebrate and support within these Cultural Districts.

Two Cultural Districts were designated by mayoral proclamations in 2018 and 2019, the Anchorage Museum Design District and the 4th Avenue Mushing District respectively. The two proposed historic district areas were evaluated in 2010, by the MOA and were found to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.



The Anchorage Local Landmark Register may ultimately be the tool the community uses to publicly designate and honor these cultural districts. The Cultural Districts include public and private properties, some of which are at least 100 years old. The Districts are located within the historic street corridors of Downtown. The Districts are numbered 3, 4, and 5.

❖ **Anchorage Museum Design District** Includes the area encompassing A to C Streets and 5th to 7th Avenues

❖ **4th Avenue Mushing District** Includes 4th Avenue from A to G Streets.

❖ **2nd to 4th Avenues Proposed Historic Districts**
Determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, these areas could also be eligible for the Anchorage Local Landmark Register designation. The proposed Downtown historic districts are identified in [Anchorage’s Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan](#).



Opportunity Sites

Fifteen opportunity sites are recommended with this plan update. A few of the sites are carried over from the *2007 Downtown Plan*. Some locations or sites are owned by public agencies including MOA Real Estate, ACDA, AHFC, TLO, and ARRC. Several opportunity sites are privately owned, and some locations are already under construction or have planning and design occurring for construction. It is important to recognize opportunities for new or redevelopment with this plan to ensure coordination with infrastructure planning, funding, and tax incentive applications.

The Opportunity Sites include the following public and private properties. The sites are numbered in the order they are found on the Revitalization Map (**Map #7**):

- 6 **ARRC Rail in Ship Creek** 11 acres currently under development by the Alaska Railroad.
- 7 **2nd Avenue and K Street** A consortium of owners would be required to develop the 4-5 lots.
- 8 **Peach 4/5 Project** Includes lots from F to G Street and 4th and 5th Avenues.
- 9 **Cyrano's on 4th Avenue** Listed for sale. A proforma has shown this site is viable for mixed-use.
- 10 **J.C. Penny Garage** Will need substantial investment, a public/private partnership has been proposed.
- 11 **Nordstrom Site** Will need substantial investment and approval by multiple property owners.
- 12 **6th Avenue Hotel Project** Formerly the 6th Avenue Transit Center owned by ACDA.
- 13 **6th and 7th Avenues between H and I Streets** Arco Parking Lot for the Conoco Phillips Building.



A recent popular adaptive reuse project in Downtown. (Planning Department)

- 14 **8th Avenue East side at L Street** - 3 HLB lots.
- 15 **7th and Coastal Place** Between 7th and 8th and L Street and Coastal Place - 3 Trust Land Office lots.
- 16 **Coho Lot** 3rd Avenue on the south side between C and D - ACDA lot.
- 17 **Block 102** 9th Avenue between C and D Streets - 4 lots owned by AHFC.
- 18 **Fairview: Former Alaska Native Service Hospital** SiteHLB manages these properties for the MOA.
- 19 **Fairview: 9th Avenue Sourdough Complex** Privately owned large parcel.
- 20 **Fairview: 10th to 11th Avenues between Gambell and Hyder** Morrison Complex with several parcels.



The Peach Tree project site under construction in 2022. (Planning Department)



The Museum District. (Planning Department)

Revitalization Strategy Policies and Action Items

3-1:The MOA will direct limited resources to the Focused Development Areas, Cultural Districts, and Opportunity Sites proposed in this 2021 Downtown District Plan to leverage investments and incentives to revitalize Downtown with housing and businesses to accelerate economic recovery in Anchorage.

RVS-1: Prioritize capital improvement projects (CIP) in Downtown for the MOA, AWWU and other utility providers, DOT&PF, and PM&E to align agency CIPs with the development recommendations in the Focused Development Areas, Cultural Districts, and Opportunity Sites proposed in Chapter 3. This will leverage capital investments in areas where development is occurring. A review of this plan and input from private property developers will be important to this annual CIP process.

RVS-2: Use the new policies adopted by this plan when the update to the *2020 Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan* is undertaken.

RVS-3: Create the Downtown New Investments Program. This may include establishing a Point of Contact within the MOA or Redevelopment Agency tasked with interacting with the financial and lending community and developers. The intent is to assist potential developers and investors by obtaining the most up-to-date information, contacts, resources, relationships, and local business endorsements the project may need to obtain funding and support for new housing and business proposals.

3-2:The MOA should seek, court, and incentivize key development within Downtown that promotes both economic development and quality of life.

RVS-4: Establish the GAP Housing Trust Fund to be used to fill the gap between incentives and costs for new or redeveloped housing (works with RVS-3).

Funders and program interaction may include AHFC, AIDEA, AEA, and the Bond Bank, Angel Investors, non-profits, and the banking community to lead the creation and management of the GAP Housing Trust Fund. Look to other cities that are successful in this effort (Carmel, Indiana, Cincinnati, Ohio; etc.). Establish a steering committee including AEDC, ACDA, MOA RED, Community Development, and Planning to conduct research and make recommendations on the scope, strategies, and guiding principles for this program.



Dog sled race in the Mushing District. (Planning Department)

CHAPTER 4: LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overview

This chapter implements Strategy #1 - Focus the Effort, Strategy #2 – Build Great Housing, Strategy #3 – Lead by Example.

Chapter 4 defines land use planning and its benefits to our community and provides specific land use goals and recommendations to direct land use development. This chapter includes a new land use plan map. An explanation of the land use categories and implementing zoning districts are included with the map. A people-oriented and vibrant Downtown was envisioned in 2007. Vibrancy was associated with development projections of several different housing choices, a busy commercial and retail sector, thriving restaurants, a welcoming place, and the recognition of our culture and history. Our community still desires this development for Our Downtown - heard clearly from the online survey and public and agency comments received during the planning process. People also stated they want safer streets, slower traffic, good pedestrian and bicycle facilities, connections to trails, and events and activation in our public spaces to foster the great and welcoming community we have.

Land Use Planning Defined

Land use planning is a [planning technique](#) used to improve the quality of life in urban areas. Land use planning allocates various socio-economic activities into a specific space to help increase the overall efficiency of the urban area. The major categories of land use are usually assigned based on activities found in an area. This may include residential, commercial, industrial, transportation, public, and semi-public use, government offices, parks, etc. This categorization is considered essential to keep a balance of different activities taking place in an area.

Land Use Plan Map

The Downtown District Land Use Plan Map will replace the “Strategy Diagram” located on page 33 in the *2007 Downtown Plan*. The new land use plan map is accompanied by detailed descriptions of the designated land uses, which may include residential, commercial, or mixed-use developments. The underlying zoning districts recommended to implement a land use are also included. Land use also includes a description of the character-defining features of an area including existing pedestrian routes, streets, parks, viewsheds, or other area amenities. A land use plan map has two jobs, to identify both current and proposed conditions and development.

2040 LUP and 2020 Comprehensive Plan Policies

2040 LUP Policies LUP 1.1 and LUP 1.4 support the adoption of a land use plan map for this plan.

- LUP 1.1 - Use the 2040 LUP in concert with area-specific plans as the framework to guide decisions on future development patterns, land uses, and allocation of growth.
- LUP 1.4 - Use the 2040 LUP and area-specific plans in conjunction with other elements of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan to determine appropriate zoning in the Bowl, [and to] evaluate proposed changes to land use regulations.

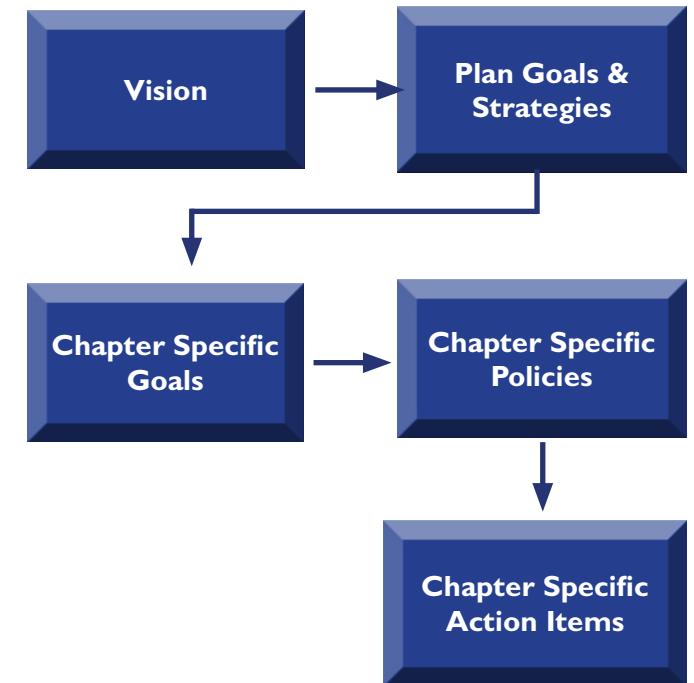


Figure #4: The Chapter 4 Strategy Matrix identifies how each chapter's goals, policies, and action items factor into the Plan's Overarching Goals and Strategies.

Land Use and Economic Development Goals

As noted above, there are several land use and economic development goals, policies, and action items presented in this plan. Some of the goals are from the *2007 Downtown Plan* accompanied by new goals, strategies and action items based on what the Planning Team heard during the public outreach process. Goals, policies and actions are included in Chapters 3-7 and are intended to implement the overarching goals presented in Chapter 3. Chapter goals and policies provide more detailed direction to each chapter. The following also **focuses the effort**, provides for a variety of housing options to **build great housing**, and encourages the MOA and other agencies to **lead by example** by leveraging limited public resources.

1. Leverage new public and private investment: Encourage land use patterns and development to attract new public and private investments. Commercial and civic activity associated with new development should complement existing assets and jump-start new investment.

2. Increase housing options and accommodate diverse income levels: Provide incentives to encourage Downtown residential development to dramatically increase urban living opportunities for multiple income levels and household types.

3. Attract government and private offices to Downtown: Create a dynamic urban environment with urban amenities that retain and attract office users.

4. Encourage Downtown development to enhance the pedestrian experience: Encourage mixed-use development with active and engaging ground-floor uses to ensure Downtown offers a vibrant and welcoming urban experience.

5. Increase the intensity of the Downtown Core: Fill Our Downtown - the Heart of Anchorage - with higher densities in employment, retail offerings, restaurant experiences, housing, and cultural and entertainment venues.

6. Support seismically safe development: Minimize risks, economic vulnerability, and economic and social impacts through development reviews to confirm construction standards are met for projects proposed in areas of high or very high ground failure susceptibility, specifically for seismic zones located in areas such as Downtown Anchorage. Life safety risks can be reduced or minimized through appropriate reviews and recommendations.

7. Identify distinct subdistricts of Downtown: Identify each subdistrict of Downtown so each can further develop its own unique function, development patterns, and intensities of use. The subdistricts will complement one another with their distinct and contributing placemaking and development opportunities.

Land Use and Economic Development Policies and Action Items

4-1. The Downtown Plan is intended to foster a revitalized economy in Downtown Anchorage.

LU-1: Fund and establish the Downtown Development Project Manager position within the Community Development Department to oversee and champion the ongoing implementation of this plan. The Program will be responsible for coordination of projects and may coordinate with the Downtown New Investments Point of Contact to facilitate implementation of this Plan (works with RVS-3).

LU-2: Establish a coordination process to redevelop vacant government-owned properties.

4-2. The Downtown Plan advocates for the following land use action items to facilitate new development in Downtown:

LU-2: Fund and complete the 2040 LUP Housing Needs Update (LUP Action 4-16) to determine the capacity for affordable and market-rate housing options possible for Downtown.

LU-3: Amend Chapter 12.35 to incorporate a longer time frame for new commercial development and to create a streamlined application process.

LU-4: Create land assembly and site control strategies through a public process managed by the Redevelopment Authority.

LU-5: Create guidelines for short-term rentals in Downtown.

4-3. The Downtown Plan encourages the funding and implementation of the following efforts to incentivize and encourage housing and commercial development in Downtown.

LU-6: Establish the Municipal Downtown Capital Improvements Tax Zone, with Downtown business and property owner approval, to fund specific infrastructure improvements in support of new housing in Downtown.

LU-7: Incentivize the reuse and renovation of existing buildings to reduce landfill impacts and costs to help retain the historic fabric of Downtown.

LU-8: Provide funding assistance and support to help maintain the AEDC Business Resources Program developed to encourage new and growing businesses in Anchorage.

LU-9: Encourage and incentivize civic and office employment in Downtown to retain all large employment sectors.

LU-10: Adopt an Idle Property Tax Abatement Program (IPTAP) or similar program to catalyze redevelopment. Consider using the Ohio Idle Property Tax Abatement Program as a model to spur the redevelopment or shared use of excess parking lots. An IPTAP is a program that provides tax incentives for properties in predevelopment.

4-4. The Downtown Plan will direct code updates to encourage great design and expand the types of allowed uses in housing and commercial development.

LU-11: Consider the following to be included in the Downtown code update:

- To allow multifamily residential, and live/work spaces in all districts.
- Allow the placement of active interiors to face the public realm on lower floors of buildings, conversely using the interior for storage.
- Allow for smaller-scale, light industrial production uses such as cottage crafts, maker spaces, studio spaces, work-live spaces that can fit into and contribute to activities and attractions in the Downtown urban mixed-use context.
- Incentivize developments with active ground floors.
- Provide a framework for addressing conflicts between nighttime and residential uses. Development protections in identified areas of Downtown may be required to address late-night impacts such as noise while providing stronger buffers for existing and future uses. The implementation of policies intending to increase residents in Downtown will lead to increased conflicts unless a thoughtful approach is established.

4-5. The Downtown Plan informs the public and developers about seismic zones and hazards in the Downtown area.

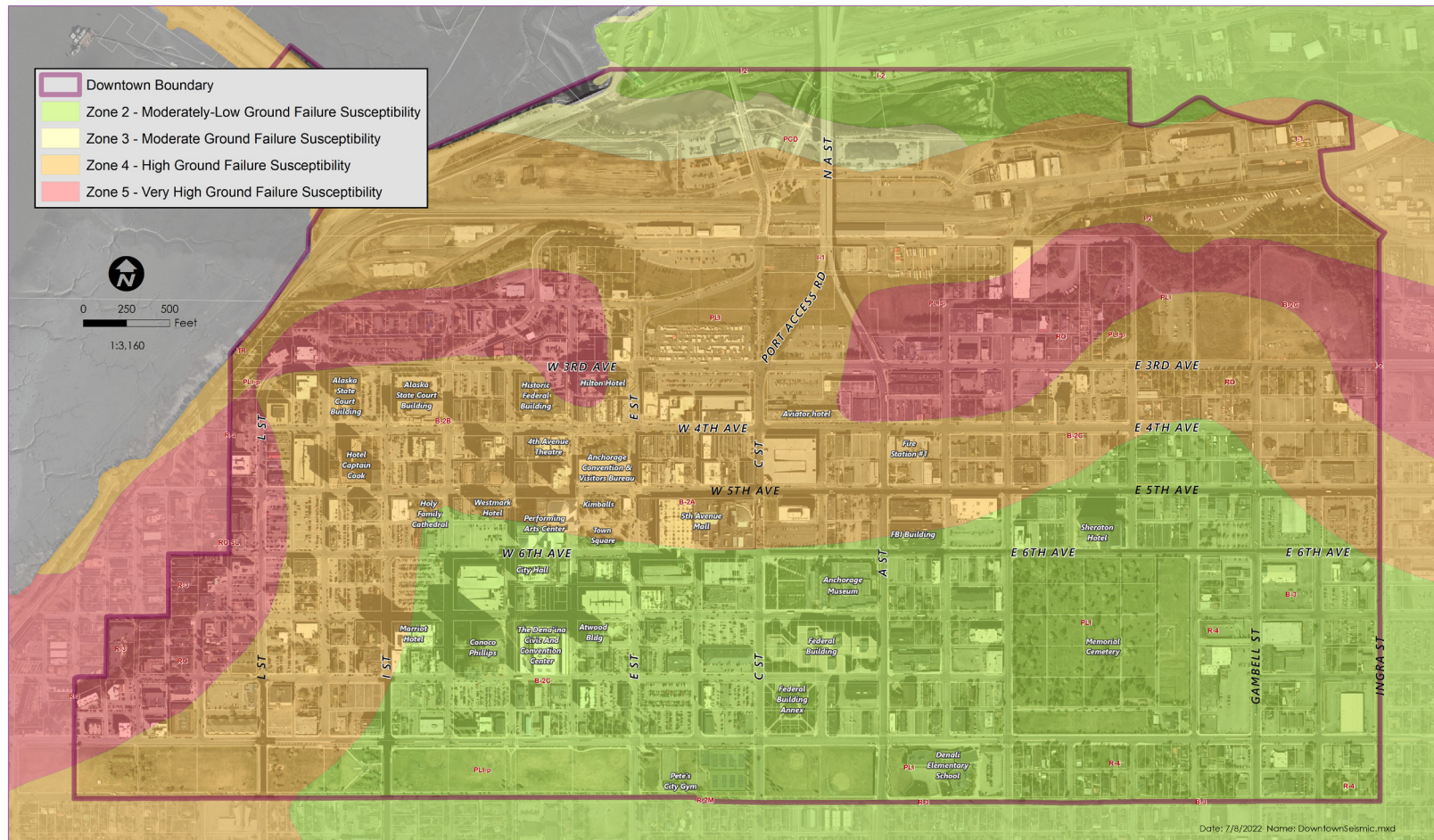
LU-12: Inform the public of the seismic zones in Downtown through the Seismic Hazard Map and Geographic Information Systems data available from the MOA.

LU-13: Use recommendations from the 2013 Seismic Risk Assessment and the All Hazards Mitigation Plan for development requirements in seismic ground failure hazard zone #5 when the Downtown Zoning Districts are updated (works with LU-11).



Existing and new housing in Downtown in 2022. (Planning Department)

Downtown Anchorage Seismic Risk Assessment



Map #8: Current Seismic Data

Seismic Hazards (Map #9)

The 1964 Magnitude 9.2 Great Alaska Earthquake has had a profound impact on development in Anchorage, prompting consideration of seismic risks with input usually sought from the Geotechnical Advisory Commission (GAC) staffed by the Planning Department.

The Seismically Induced Ground Failure Zones are based on the areas of destruction, land sliding, and ground spreading that occurred during the '64 Earthquake.

Seismic ground failure zones #4 and #5 present the most risk. The International Building Code (IBC) and its local amendments include ground failure zones and require various levels of site-specific geotechnical analysis.

The Downtown buttress area was established by the Alaska State Housing Authority following the '64 earthquake. The buttress area was created to stabilize adjacent Downtown lands from sliding when the next major earthquake occurs.

Downtown Anchorage Seismic Risk Assessment (2013)

A seismic risk assessment was completed in 2013. This Assessment considered the life/safety of building occupants, the potential loss or damage to critical facilities such as hospitals, which would be needed after a major earthquake, and economic loss of buildings and infrastructure. The risk assessment report included recommendations for updating municipal requirements regarding appropriate land uses, building design criteria and other regulatory changes within seismic ground failure zone 4 or 5. The assessment estimated the risk of a range of building structure types and occupancies (uses) exposed to the seismic ground failure hazard zones in Downtown. Its analysis modelled the potential effects of combined horizontal-vertical ground displacement under seismic shaking intensities similar in magnitude to those incorporated into the IBC.

The Risk Assessment recommended limits on certain critical facilities, vulnerable use types, and building structural designs in seismic ground failure zone #5, including:

- Buildings with high-intensity occupancies greater than 500 persons, such as large hotels, apartment buildings, and offices.
- Large concrete frame or shear wall structures with offices, hotels, or multi-family residences, and
- All medium-rise concrete shear wall buildings on shallow foundations.
- Critical community facilities, such as public safety facilities, utility plants, and medical facilities. Vulnerable use types that generate high demand for emergency response resources, such as assisted living, childcare, school or long-term care facilities.

Anchorage's local amendments to the IBC currently require site-specific geotechnical investigations and building engineering reports to be completed as part of the building permit process for proposed building structures in zones #4 and #5.

Land Use Plan Map Overview

A Downtown Land Use Plan Map consistent with AMC 21.03.070 is adopted with this plan.

The 2007 Downtown Plan used a Strategy Diagram to establish primary and secondary land uses and named subdistricts throughout Downtown. The Strategy Diagram was not adopted as a land use plan map. This plan adopts a land use plan map based on the 2007 primary and secondary land uses and subdistricts. This plan also acknowledges the 2040 Land Use Plan and the Fairview Neighborhood Plan as contributing factors in the Downtown Land Use Plan Map.

Primary Land Uses

Four primary land use categories were adopted with the 2007 Downtown Plan. These growth drivers are carried forward in this plan.

Residential - Housing is economic development and a key opportunity for revitalizing Downtown. National trends indicate the increasing desire for the urban lifestyle. Home values throughout Anchorage are increasing. New amenities in Downtown will support new housing.

Retail - Downtown is one of Alaska’s primary retail and entertainment destinations. Downtown must remain competitive with other areas in Anchorage to encourage new retail investment.

Office - Downtown offers a walkable space for office workers with access to convenient lunch and dinner spots and trails for commuting. Downtown is also the hub for government agencies and many large corporations.

Hotel - Cruise ship visitors typically stay one night. Amenities and access to recreation, historic, and cultural offerings could encourage longer stays and more spending in Downtown. Two convention centers and year-round events at each could catalyze more Downtown hotel development.

PRIMARY LAND USES			
Residential	Retail	Office	Hotel
SECONDARY LAND USES			
Cultural/Entertainment	Civic/Government	Industrial	Open Space/Recreation

Figure #5: Land uses in Downtown

Secondary Land Uses

Four secondary land uses were also adopted to augment the primary land uses with the intent to create a truly diverse integrated landscape of development.

Cultural/Entertainment - Downtown is the heart of Anchorage with tour and event offerings. Historic buildings and Ship Creek relay our history and culture and provide a window into Anchorage’s prehistory and history.

Civic/Government - Federal, state and MOA agencies and departments are a mainstay for the Downtown economy with employees who frequent local restaurants, typically using government parking garages or lots, and using local trails for commuting.

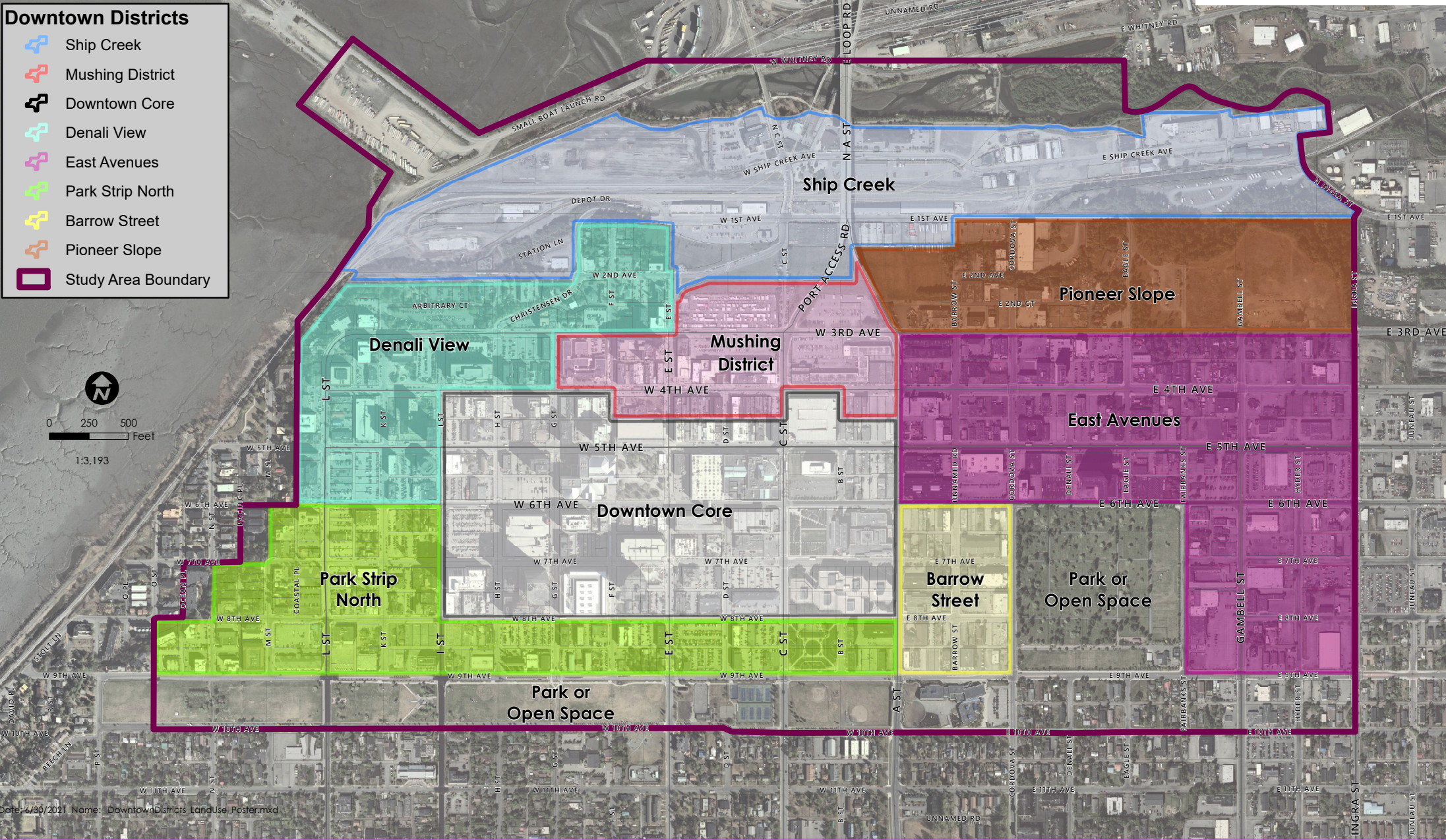
Industrial - Industrial zoned lands are located at the foot of Downtown in Ship Creek. Most of this land is owned by the ARRC. ARRC redevelopment plans are contributing housing and commercial development in Downtown. Utilities in Industrial areas may be improved to boost business development.

Open Space/Recreation - The MOA Parks and Recreation Department maintains several parks in Downtown partnering with the ADP to provide event and recreational programming on a year-round basis. The ADP also manages the Downtown BID to provide a Clean, Safe and Vital Downtown streets and open space areas. 4th Avenue with Peratrovich Park provides a walk-through-time for visitors and residents with the Historic Old City Hall.



This building in Downtown was designed to withstand earthquakes by sliding down the hill in case of a big one. (Planning Department)

Downtown Districts Land Use



Map #9: Land uses and districts, Planning Department.

Downtown Land Use Districts

Downtown Land Use Districts Defined

Each Downtown land use district and subdistrict is defined in this chapter and includes a set of recommendations for development types to guide use and development patterns. This information is general guidance to development and uses. The implementing zoning districts included in the table below are from Anchorage Municipal Code Title 21 land use regulations. *Table #4* cross-references the Downtown District Plan districts, subdistricts, and implementation zoning. Zoning districts were also included for the Fairview Neighborhood Plan area and the Ship Creek Framework Plan area.

Each land use district is described with its own character, and activities, and offers a unique opportunity to create neighborhoods of distinct functionality and sense of place through these descriptions. Identifying the distinct districts is intended to foster contributions to the vitality and revitalization of Downtown as a whole. The unique land use districts may also enable recognition and support for the Focused Development Areas, Cultural Districts, and Opportunity Sites mapped in Chapter 3.

Current code describes the Downtown Zoning Districts as central business district core (B-2A), central business district, intermediate (B-2B), and central business district, periphery (B-2C). These descriptions are not specifically used in this Plan since the proposed Land Use Plan Map suggests a slightly different, yet perhaps more descriptive, system of Land Use Districts and Subdistricts.

The Downtown Land Use Plan map encompasses all existing districts and subdistricts from the 2007 Strategy Diagram. However, three changes were made to incorporate public input during the planning process. East Avenues, Pioneer Slope, and Ship Creek were extended to Ingra Street to be consistent with the 2022 planning area boundary. The Mushing District was created from a portion of the Downtown Core and is centered on 4th Avenue to reflect its unique characteristics, function, and planning considerations in order to celebrate our Historic Downtown. Denali View was renamed from Office/Legal to reflect the views seen and experienced from this area.

Downtown District Plan Land Use Districts	Downtown District Plan Land Use Subdistricts	Corresponding Implementing Zoning Districts (Title 21)
Downtown Core	--	B-2A, B-2B, B-2C
Downtown Mixed-use	Denali View	B-2A, B-2B,
	Mushing District	B-2A, B-2B, PLI
	East Avenues	B-2C, B-3, R-4*
Downtown Mixed-use Residential	Park Strip North	B-2B, B-2C
	Barrow Street	B-2B, B-2C
	Pioneer Slope	B-2B, I-2, PLI
Ship Creek	--	PCD, I-2

*Zoning District R-4 only applies to the Fairview Neighborhood in the context of the Downtown District Plan.

Figure #6: Downtown Land Use District with accompanying Zoning Districts.

Building heights are guided by the Merrill Field Departure and Approach Zone (Map # Merrill Field Hight Restrictions. Development densities are defined in Title 21, Chapter 11: Downtown, unlike the 2040 Land Use Plan which includes zoning densities as a floor area ratio measurement.

Downtown Core

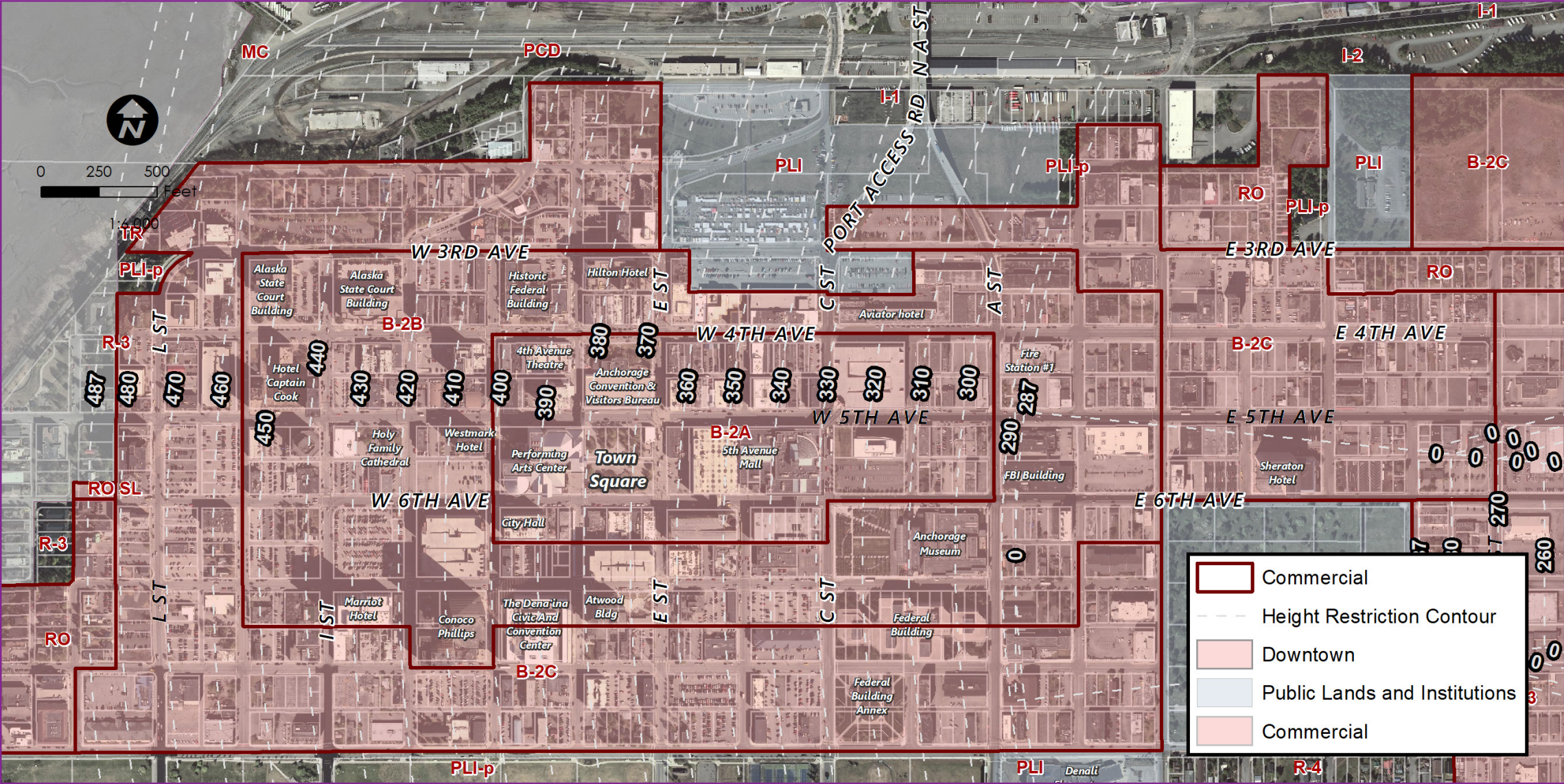
The Downtown Core is considered the most active and intense part of the city center and a high priority area for high-density mixed-use development, active sidewalks with pedestrian amenities, great access to store fronts, accessible parking, and the center of outdoor events using flagship open spaces and buildings. The Downtown Core is expected to have the greatest development intensity and tallest building heights, creating a concentration of office, civic, government, cultural, entertainment, housing, and retail uses. The Downtown Core may retain historic buildings of different era and architecture.

The district recommends the following:

- Conform to Merrill Field flight path limits.

- Ground-floor retail, housing, civic or government, cultural and entertainment, office, open space, and hotels or other visitor services. The tallest buildings in Downtown may be expected in the Core.
- High concentrations of employment with densities reaching 50 or more employees per acre.
- Building massing and stepping guided by Title 21, Chapter 11: Downtown.
- Highly active streetscape with pedestrian amenities, ground-floor uses oriented to the sidewalk, front building entry and street frontages guided by Title 21, Chapter 11: Downtown, including design guidelines to enhance the pedestrian-oriented street experience.
- Certain proposed uses, intensities, and building heights will build to AMC Title 23 Development Code requirements for seismic ground failure zones #4 and #5. Heights will vary by use, site, and methods of construction within the seismic zones.
- Traffic speed limit: 20-mph.

Merrill Field Height Restrictions



Map #10: Merrill Field Height Restrictions, Planning Department.

Several notable midcentury modern buildings, original log cabins that have been repurposed, and World War II kit buildings house small businesses. Several buildings in this district could be nominated to the Anchorage Local Landmark Register.

The Fairview Neighborhood Plan envisions catalytic redevelopment along Gambell and Ingra streets once the Seward to Glenn Highways project is completed. The East Avenues area between 3rd and 7th Avenues to Gambell Street is designated as a Major City Center on the Fairview Land Use Plan Map. Between 7th and 9th to Fairbanks Streets the area is designated Fairview Mixed Use Corridor. Development heights would be limited by the Merrill Field height restrictions.

- Building height guided by Title 21, Chapter 11: Downtown.

Denali View

The Denali View subdistrict is the second district characterized by broader mixed-use development. Law and professional offices and the Alaska Court System complex are centered here. Medium- to high-density office uses are encouraged. The north and west bluffs of Denali View are impacted by seismic hazard zones #4 and #5. The Denali View subdistrict is part of the Original Townsite platted in 1915. It contains some of Anchorage's oldest remaining homes along 2nd and 3rd Avenues. Several buildings and viewsheds in this area could be eligible for nomination to the Anchorage Local Landmark Register.

Single-family homes converted to offices provide affordable option for small businesses. This plan supports the continued use of historic buildings to ensure small businesses are not priced out of the Downtown area, Maker Spaces and Live / Workspaces consistent with the zoning for this land use district. L Street to 3rd Avenue is a prime bicycle and pedestrian connection from the Coastal Trail and is mentioned as the location for a bike boulevard. These districts recommend the following:

- Medium- to high-density residential, live/work, office, hotel, ground-floor retail development.



Houses-turned-businesses along 3rd Avenue. (Planning Department)

- Highly active streetscape with pedestrian amenities, ground floor uses oriented to the sidewalk, front building entry and street frontages guided by Title 21, Chapter 11: Downtown including design guidelines to enhance the pedestrian-oriented street experience.
- Building height guided by Title 21, Chapter 11: Downtown.
- AMC Title 23 Development Code guides development in seismic ground failure zones #4 and #5.
- Housing, offices, small-medium hotels, ground-floor retail, restaurants/cafes, offices and small- scale public spaces for workers and residents in the Denali View subdistrict.
- Preserve to the greatest extent possible view corridors west and north across the Cook Inlet and east toward the Chugach Range.
- Traffic speed limit: 20-mph.
- A bicycle boulevard proposed to connect the Ship Creek, Tony Knowles Coastal, and Chester Creek Trails.

Downtown Mixed-use Residential - Park Strip North, Barrow Street, and Pioneer Slope Subdistricts:

Three highly distinct areas adjacent to the Downtown Core are characterized by low- to mid-rise residential development. These include the Park Strip North, Barrow Street, and Pioneer Slope subdistricts. These subareas are intended to provide housing opportunities and a great living environment. They include a range of housing types to ensure affordability and accommodate compatible commercial uses, such as neighborhood-serving retail, and access to open space. The Mixed-use Residential subdistricts accommodate office uses at a scale and intensity that is compatible with a residential-oriented mixed-use district.

Park Strip North

The Park Strip North subdistrict is a prime opportunity for developing a mixed-use district comprised primarily of medium-density housing. This area is an opportunity to substantially increase the number of people living Downtown to activate the urban center and provide more customers for retail and commercial activity. The Delaney Park Strip provides active or passive recreation and creates a buffer between the Downtown Core and the neighborhoods to the south. These districts recommend:

- Increased density and building height closer to the Downtown core.
- Housing and neighborhood-serving ground-floor retail at key corners and intersections.
- Building height guided by Title 21, Chapter 11.
- Highly active streetscape with pedestrian amenities, ground floor uses oriented to the sidewalk, front building entry and street frontages guided by Title 21, Chapter 11.
- Individual entrances may be raised above grade for privacy or screened with landscaping or stoop design.
- AMC Title 23 Development Code guides development in seismic ground failure zones #4 and #5.

Barrow Street

Barrow Street is a small district located between the Downtown Core and the Anchorage Memorial Cemetery. Barrow Street has its own identity and development specifications due to the smaller single-family and multi-family housing found here. Housing in this small, mixed-use neighborhood will be comprised of medium-density residential. Barrow Street was part of the Original Townsite and retains a few kit house buildings and midcentury modern residential and commercial that could be nominated to the Anchorage Local Landmark Register. The area reflects pride of ownership, clean streets, and the look and feel of a small desirable walkable neighborhood. Small-lot assembly could occur along 6th Avenue to accommodate commercial multi-family and mixed-use development. This district encourages the following:

- Primarily residential and live/work uses, some small home office, art galleries, corner retail, education, medical, and cottage production uses.
- Townhouses and condo units with front door entries to street and garage entry from rear alleys.
- Building height guided by Title 21, Chapter 11.
- Development takes advantage of nearby open spaces and views to the east.
- Traffic speed limit: 20mph.

Pioneer Slope

The Pioneer Slope residential mixed-use subdistrict is a transitioning neighborhood bordered on the south by East 3rd Avenue and to the north 1st Avenue. Most of this subdistrict is located in seismically induced ground failure zoned #5, with very high ground failure susceptibility, and is considered for a diverse mix of low- to medium-density uses, including open space, commercial, residential, and industrial uses. The boundary for this district is expanded with this plan to include the MOA-owned parcel between what would be Gambell and Ingra streets, the former Alaska Native Service Hospital site.

Pioneer Slope is overlaid on a large section of the north bluff containing a large wooded-zone, and fantastic views of the Knik Arm and Talkeetna and Chugach Ranges. Pioneer Slope contains several lodging options and has seen some reuse of historic buildings, including the Pioneer Schoolhouse at Ben Campbell Park. The area has a mix of single family, multi-family, medium-sized commercial businesses, and large portion of the ARRC Buttress Park. This district encourages the following:

- Primarily residential and live/work uses, some open space, small home office, artist studios, galleries, hotels, motels, hostels, corner retail, and light industrial.
- Connectivity to trails or upgraded pedestrian facilities encouraged.
- Building height guided by Title 21, Chapter 11.
- AMC Title 23 Development Code guides development in seismic ground failure zones #4 and #5.

Ship Creek District

The Ship Creek district borders the Knik Arm on the west and Ship Creek on the north. Several historic buildings constructed by the Alaska Railroad Engineering Commission at Anchorage's founding are located here. This area is adjacent to the Port of Alaska and contains the street system accessed by Port users. The Ship Creek Trail is located here with a connection to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. The ARRC property continues to support Alaska Railroad operations established during the 1915-1920s as the heart of Alaska's rail service. The southwest portion of Ship Creek contains [The Rail at Ship Creek](#) a 13-acre master-planned site designed and developed by ARRC. The Rail is mentioned in previous chapters and included as an opportunity site recommendation in Chapter 3. When funded and implemented, the [Ship Creek Framework Plan \(SCFP\)](#) could help guide development in this area for the next 25-30 years. The SCFP was adopted as a long-term investment to foster new development and transition a portion of ARRC's PCD-zoned properties. The SCFP needs the full support of the state, federal agencies, and the Anchorage community to be funded and implemented.



Old Ship Creek power plant. This facility used to heat much of downtown. (Planning Department)



Grandma Olga statue at the small boat launch. (Planning Department)

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CHAPTER 5: QUALITY OF LIFE

Overview

This Chapter provides chapter-specific goals, policies, and action items to implement Strategy # 3 – Get Important Input from Women in the Community and Strategy #6 – Make Downtown Safer.

The OUR DOWNTOWN Project was initiated in 2019 with the intent to bring Downtown Anchorage back to the forefront of our town’s economic and housing development. The plan recognizes the importance Downtown holds for our community, tourism, employment, shopping, restaurants, parks and trails, historic, cultural, and scenic experiences. Downtown contributes to our quality of life in several concrete and intrinsic ways.

Our Downtown is the center of our unique Alaskan history and culture, receives the most tourist visitations, and has the largest concentration of shopping, eating, and special-event experiences. The *2007 Downtown Plan* included four quality of life goals and related actions intended to support ongoing and future efforts to bring people Downtown to a clean, safe, and vibrant area teeming with things to do, places to eat, and events to participate in and enjoy.

This plan carries forward and adds to those quality of life goals and policies recommended as necessary to enhance the Downtown experience for all. This chapter directs projects that support a sense of comfort and security, marketing and branding, interpretive signs and wayfinding, activities and events, cultural and historic preservation, and parks and open space.

The online survey asked Quality of Life questions focused on Creative Placemaking and Downtown Promotion. The following is a brief overview of the survey results and respondents comments.

Downtown Plan Online Survey

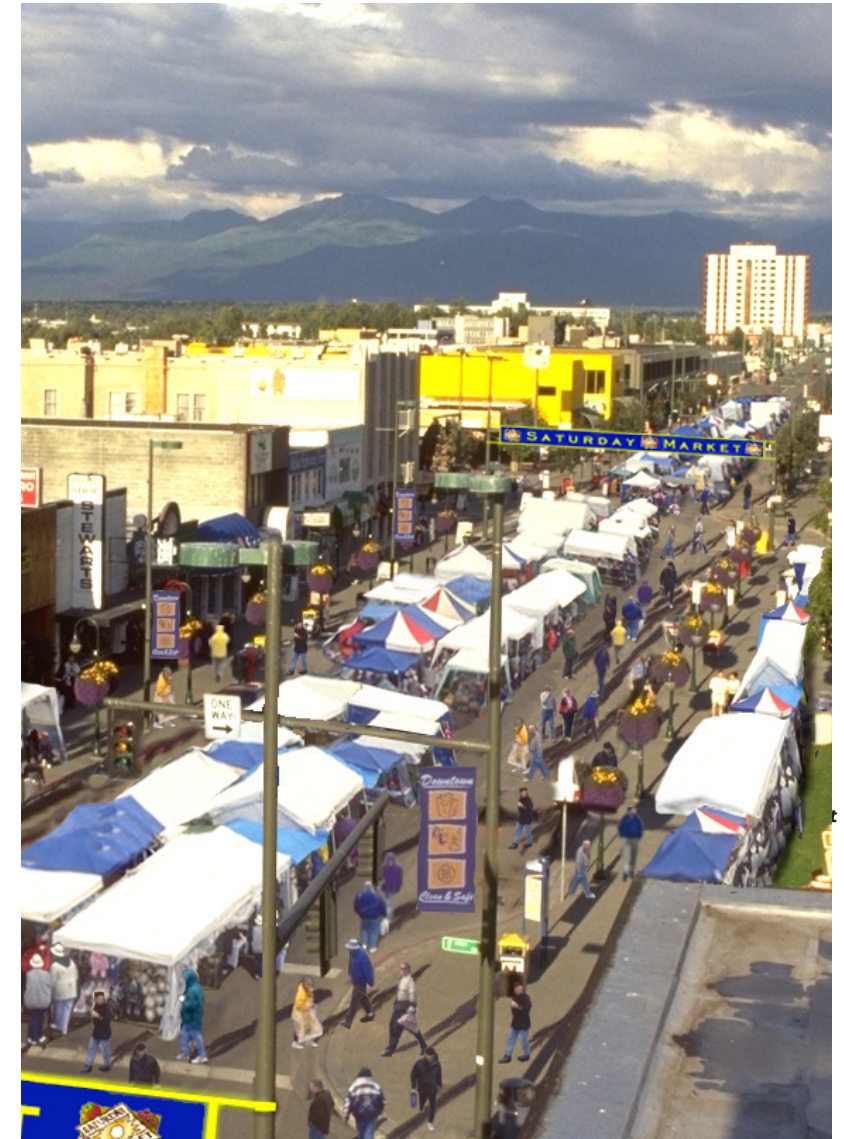
Creative Placemaking

The creative placemaking section of the survey was composed of two questions relating to the Indigenous Place Names interpretive project and using creative placemaking as a strategy to revitalize Downtown. Both questions were supported by a significant number of survey respondents with 75% supporting implementing an Indigenous Place Name interpretive project for Downtown and 72% supporting the Downtown Plan establishing “Creative Placemaking” as a strategy to revitalize Downtown. Commenters also noted that creative placemaking can create wonderful experiences but needs to be thoughtful and coordinated with other efforts for Downtown to become a more vibrant place.

Promoting Downtown

This section of the survey was comprised of only one question: Should Anchorage complete a comprehensive wayfinding and interpretive sign plan for Downtown? The results were: 75% said yes, 12% said no, and 13% said leave it to the Planning Team.

A wayfinding and interpretive sign plan is proposed in this chapter that goes beyond just telling our stories, but also to provide an emergency response system to inform visitors and residents where to go in case of an earthquake or emergency. The project team used this public input to develop the goals, policies, and action items that follow.



Market Downtown during the summer (Planning Department)

Goals

1. Use the existing Image, Marketing and Branding programs developed by Visit Anchorage, ADP, and AEDC to market Anchorage as the number #1 place to Live.

Work. and Play: Image and branding programs are an important strategy in evolving the character and quality of Downtown's social, cultural, and natural environments. Anchorage's immediate and future recovery is dependent on the efforts of these important agencies.

2. Create awareness for our community and visitors by establishing continuity in a Downtown sign and wayfinding project:

Anchorage's Four Original Neighborhoods 2015 Interpretive Plan was completed during the Anchorage Centennial to assist in implementing the Signage and Wayfinding Program proposed in the *2007 Downtown Plan*. Project funding will be imperative to complete this project.

3. Support the ADP Safety and Security program by advocating for funding and support of Downtown businesses and agencies:

The real and perceived feelings of safety impact how visitors and residents experience Downtown. More "eyes on the street," improved lighting, and increased police and ADP patrols will achieve the goal of a safe and secure Downtown.

4. Continue to support Downtown's art, culture, and entertainment programming:

ADP and MOA Parks provide a coordinated approach to activity and event planning in Downtown. Community support for the efforts by these agencies will help Downtown build upon existing events, such as First Fridays, Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, and Fur Rondy to create a range of spectator and participatory events for all user groups year-round.

5. Support the goals and actions from the Anchorage Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan (4NHPP):

Downtown is one of Anchorage's four original neighborhoods. The Assembly adopted the 4NHPP in 2012 to support historic and cultural preservation in Downtown with specific projects.

6. Fund and maintain parks and open space: Anchorage has several MOA-owned and -maintained parks located throughout Downtown. Additionally, the ARRC maintains the greenspace in the north bluff area off 3rd Avenue. Parks and greenspaces connected by treed pedestrian and trail routes add to the quality of life of residents and visitors.

Quality of Life Policies and Action Items

5-1. The Downtown Plan may be used by the marketing agencies for funding and action item implementation:

QOL-1: Continue to promote Downtown funding marketing and branding efforts to correspond with the current demographic and economic elements influencing visitor and resident desires seeking a Downtown experience. Design marketing and branding programming consistent with the Downtown vernacular to create world-wide recognizable logos, publications, websites, and other print and online media. Fund and implement marketing outreach to increase Downtown's hotel supply and occupancy rates by marketing Downtown as a winter destination to tour and cruise operators. Provide parking and other incentives to hotel operators.

QOL-2: Include honorary naming of parks after Alaska Native Tribal places or leaders, like Peratrovich Park.

QOL-3: Market Downtown's exceptional arts and cultural facilities, including the Anchorage Museum, Anchorage SEED Lab, Performing Arts Center, and Alaska Public Lands Information Center in addition to the local art galleries and boutiques.

5-2. A comprehensive wayfinding system that establishes continuity in Downtown's signs, street furniture, and lighting is needed. This system will direct residents and visitors toward key destinations; advertise upcoming events; and celebrate significant historic, cultural, or natural sites and resources. The system should make travelling to desirable destinations easy— essential to attracting more locals and visitors Downtown.

QOL-4: Develop signage distinct from the rest of Anchorage, reflective of Alaskan culture and the Downtown cultural districts, including the Mushing District on 4th Avenue, Anchorage Museum Design District, and the proposed 2nd to 4th Avenues historic district identified in the Anchorage Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan.

QOL-5: Determine buildings, sites, or other locations to direct pedestrians and bicyclists to in case of an emergency. Determine the locations where signs and audible warning systems can be installed to direct pedestrians and bicyclists to these locations.

This action may be part of the wayfinding project. Distribute online and through social media the information developed by the wayfinding program.

QOL-6: Fund, design, and install the new sign and wayfinding system throughout Downtown. The design will be consistent with the Downtown vernacular. Certain existing interpretive panels and signs will be replaced. This may include an update to the historic walking tour map with information from the 2010 Historic Property Survey and indigenous place name information from Shem Pete's Alaska. The historic walking tour may also be included on the Alaska App.

5-3. Visitors and residents will have an understanding of the safety and security programs found in Downtown.

QOL-7: Continue to support ADP efforts for a Clean, Safe, Vibrant Downtown including funding of the ADP Business Improvement District.

QOL-8: Fund and maintain MOA Community Service Patrols in Downtown.

QOL-9: Maintain a safe and clean environment by installing regularly-spaced trash and recycling bins.

QOL-10: Fund year-round street cleaning.

QOL-11: Fund, determine locations, install, and maintain self-cleaning public restrooms.

QOL-12: Continue implementation of a comprehensive street lighting upgrade program to increase visibility and safety on all streets.

QOL-13: Employ certain Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principals related to landscaping placement, access, and maintaining line of sight to ensure places are used as they were intended.

5-4. Activity and event programming are important elements used to attract visitors, residents, and employers to Downtown and will be supported with this plan.

QOL-14: Fund and provide support to planning and promoting Winter City-themed events, shoulder season events, summer concerts, and parades.



A family walking and enjoying the museum in the summer (Planning Department)

QOL-15: Plan and fund cultural and recreational activities for and by youth.

QOL-16: Fund and implement the Town Square Park Master Plan.

QOL-17: Consider the promotion of a new weekend market in Downtown.

QOL-18: Adopt in the permitting processes the long-term use of low-traffic volume streets to provide spaces for activities, dining, and other special events as a normal event planning function supported by this plan.

5-5. Historic and cultural preservation is one of the cultural pillars of this plan and will be used to promote Alaska as Dena'ina homeland and the place where Anchorage was founded.

QOL-19: Promote the 13 National Register of Historic Places listed buildings through social media, tours, and the interpretive project.

QOL-20: Promote the use of the Anchorage Local Landmark Register in websites, interpretive programs, social media, and other outreach to encourage nominations of historic and cultural resources to the Anchorage Local Landmark Register maintained by the MOA.

QOL-21: Review the action items in the 4NHPP to prioritize grant applications and project completions.



Anchorage Museum exhibits and dog sled race. (Planning Department)

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CHAPTER 6: URBAN DESIGN

Overview

This chapter provides the chapter-specific goals, policies, and action items to implement Strategy #1 – Focus the Effort, Strategy #2 – Build Great Housing, Strategy #3 – Get important input from Women in the Community, and Strategy #5 – Make Connections to Surrounding Neighborhoods.

This chapter advocates for great design in Downtown buildings to promote a beautiful skyline for our city and includes: downtown signage, parking lot and landscaping improvements, and recommendations to streamline development. The chapter also includes design recommendations for a northern climate, plus recognition of the unique role cultural and historic assets play in contributing to the area's architectural fabric. Finally, this section provides support for a walkable and bikeable Downtown.

The chapter articulates design guidelines to implement the four Urban Design goals to direct improvements in this urban environment. Design guidelines are not intended to conflict with Title 21. Where a conflict may arise, Title 21 will prevail. Some edits were made to this chapter based on recommendations of the Downtown code working group and from comments during the public hearing process.

This chapter also discusses how the connection between the buildings and the streets of Downtown work together and what can be done to provide improvements to these connections. A street typologies map with descriptions of streets is included as guidance. This map will be updated with the completion of the Downtown Streets Engineering Study.

Online Survey and Subcommittee Engagement

The online survey for this planning effort included several questions focused on Urban Design and Creative Placemaking. Most of the survey questions were specific to *2007 Downtown Plan* implementation.

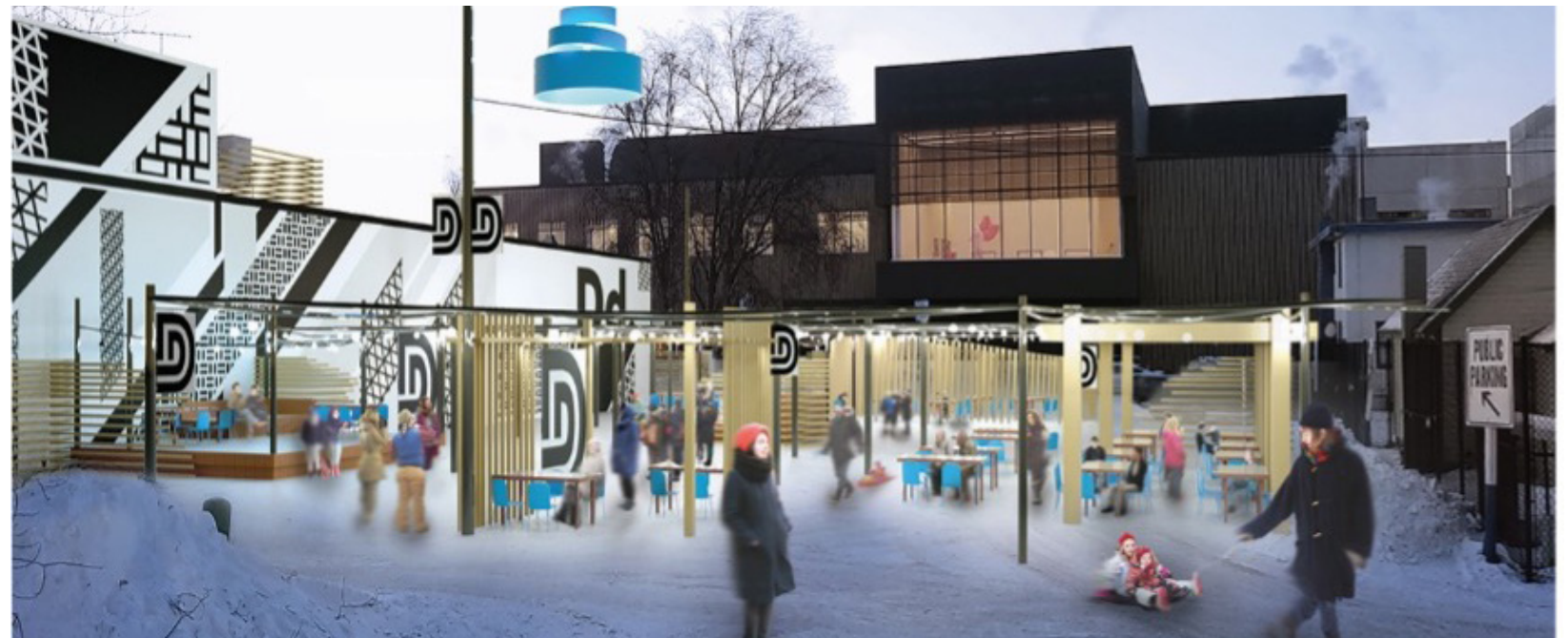
The project team formed a Utilities Subcommittee and Urban Design Subcommittee to help inform this chapter. These two groups of experts provided succinct knowledge and best practices that when adopted will reduce some of the costs of developing in Downtown Anchorage.

Online Survey Results

Urban Design and Creative Placemaking offered several focused questions based on the *2007 Downtown Plan* implementation actions. Heated sidewalks, views, historic buildings, and seismic information were mildly supported by survey respondents. This group emphasized recognizing *Dena'ina* place names in Downtown.

Urban Design Questions and Responses

Questions 14 through 19 in the online survey focused on urban design issues. The questions covered the topics of heated sidewalks, identifying historic buildings for rehabilitation, and developing a seismic overlay zone.



Museum Design District Concept 2018 (Anchorage Museum)

Fifty-nine percent of respondents supported constructing heated sidewalks Downtown and 23% opposed; 18% answered to leave it to the Planning Team to decide. Comments included that it should be easier for people to walk Downtown, but there was concern about the overall cost and long-term maintenance of the system, and that it may be helpful to identify priority areas or corridors instead of installing them throughout Downtown.

As for identifying and protecting viewshed corridors, 52% said yes, 33% said leave it to the Planning Team, and 15% said no. Question 16 was an open-ended question that asked survey takers to identify important Downtown viewshed corridors. Several comments identified the inlet/water and mountain views (in all directions) as priorities, and those who were not supportive of viewshed corridors commented that they preferred business and building development to spur economic activity.

When asked if saving and renovating historic buildings in Downtown should remain a policy, 72% said yes, with the answers “no” and “leave it to the Planning Team” receiving 14% each. Sixty-four percent of respondents said that an action item to nominate Downtown historic districts should be included in the plan, with 17% choosing no, and 20% saying leave it to the Planning Team. The 4th Avenue Theater was one of the only buildings specifically mentioned by name in the comments. Overall, people were supportive but also expressed that there is some discretion and nuance that needs to be added when deciding what and how to preserve historic buildings.

There was considerable support for mapping and adopting a seismic overlay zone with development guidelines for Downtown, with 70% of people saying yes, 22% selecting to leave it to the Planning Team, and 8% saying no.

Creative Placemaking Questions and Responses

The creative placemaking section of the survey was composed of two questions relating to an Indigenous Place Names interpretive project and using creative placemaking as a strategy

to revitalize Downtown. Both questions received a high number of positive responses by survey respondents, with 75% of people supporting implementing an Indigenous Place Name interpretive project and 72% supported Creative Placemaking as a strategy to revitalize Downtown. Creative Placemaking will be added as a recommendation to this chapter as a result of the public’s comments. Commenters also noted that creative placemaking can create wonderful experiences but needs to be thoughtful and coordinated with other efforts for Downtown to become a more vibrant place. The comments and survey responses are supportive of goals and recommendations from the *2015 Centennial Interpretive Plan* and the *Anchorage Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan*.

Plan Update Subcommittees

The project team formed a Utilities Subcommittee and an Urban Design Subcommittee for the code update. The subcommittees gave the Planning Team guidance on issues their respective agencies or businesses may have experienced in the development process. The Planning Team also sought ideas and recommendations from the subcommittee members regarding ways to improve the development process, and how to get great design in Downtown.

Each subcommittee received a series of white papers describing issues and posing questions regarding their experiences. Insights into all aspects of the development process were shared with the Planning Team. The white papers evolved into a presentation of several issues, discussion on the issues, and then recommendations from the subcommittee members. One of the most profound takeaways from the subcommittee meetings was the dedication and caring the subcommittee members have for Downtown. For a full report on the subcommittee work, please see the Ourdowntownanchorage.com website. A substantial list of recommendations from the subcommittees is included with this chapter.



White Architects Sweden KTH School of Architecture (Treesranch.com)

Utilities Subcommittee

The Utilities Subcommittee had representation from every utility company working in Anchorage and the MOA Public Works Department. The Utilities Subcommittee met two times. The initial meeting focused on how they interact and support the development community. The topic of the second meetings was how to help streamline the design and development process. The primary recommendation of the subcommittee is the establishment of a MOA Utilities Coordinator position to coordinate the initial project meeting between the utility providers and developers. This coordinator would ensure all utilities, project designer, and developer are informed on what utilities are needed, where utilities are located, are the utilities at the capacity the project needs, and the timing of construction.

Urban Design Subcommittee

The Urban Design subcommittee met three times to review a set of questions including setback requirements, sign code, landscaping in parking lots, housing incentives, and building bulk design requirements. The subcommittee also chose to comment on what was the draft Chapter Revitalization Map and the draft Chapter 4 Land Use Plan Map.

This subcommittee provided several recommendations with many focused on achieving great building design. The subcommittee also advocated for a Downtown-specific sign code with safety, local aesthetics, and context influencing how signs look and where they are placed. The subcommittee also provided recommendations for landscaping to ensure the long-term existence of healthy trees and shrubs, and securing input from an arborist for technical specifications.

Urban Design Goals

1. Design for People: Build attractive, well-designed buildings and streetscapes to provide a walkable city center. Activate the ground-floor environment by orienting building entrances toward the street and making them open and inviting. Incentivize façade articulation, building step-backs, window placement, and other pedestrian-scale design elements to create welcoming places for visitors, residents, and workers.

2. Design Streets: Reduce and minimize motor vehicle impacts on adjoining outdoor and indoor spaces. Provide for all modes of travel in street design. Streetscapes will be updated to maximize year-round pedestrian, bicycle, transit access, and winter maintenance needs. Provide walkable, safer, easily accessed connections throughout Downtown. Accommodate landscaping and trees where possible.

3. Design for Density: Catalyze concentrations of commercial, civic, cultural, and residential uses. Encourage a mix of co-existing uses around shared public streets and spaces.

4. Design for the Northern Climate: Employ context-sensitive design principles to buildings and streets, provide solar access, and minimize wind impacts where possible. Focus limited municipal resources to make Downtown a comfortable and attractive place to be throughout the year.

5. Design to History and Culture: Encourage building types authentic to Anchorage, Alaska. Support adaptive reuse of existing buildings that exemplify Anchorage's history and culture.



Sidewalks can have multiple uses to support economic development and encouraging vibrant public places. (Planning Department)



Right-of-way improvements along 4th Avenue. (Planning Department)

Development Factors

Development or planning factors are included in this chapter to address and provide guidance to content and recommendations. These development factors include Climate and Setting, Pedestrian Environment, Street Typology (formerly in Transportation and Circulation), Creative Placemaking, New Technologies, and Demographic Shift.

Climate and Setting

Solar access downtown depends heavily on the angle of the grid pattern established in 1915. Fortunately, the current orientation of Downtown streets contributes to phenomenal views in all directions and is recognized as a major asset to living, working, or recreating in Downtown.

The *2007 Downtown Plan* advocated for updates in development code to encourage design that embraces our northern climate. This plan makes recommendations for design to help mitigate some of the environmental issues identified in 2007, including:

- Maximum sun penetration and wind protection can be inhibited by taller buildings.
- Canopies, step backs, or other architectural elements are needed to create more a comfortable ground-level pedestrian environment.
- Pedestrian shelters should be encouraged in new or renovated buildings.
- The ground level of many buildings should open onto the sidewalk.
- Visual access between interior spaces and the sidewalk is needed.
- Long blank walls, mirrored glass, and a lack of entryways oriented to the sidewalk affect the pedestrian environment.
- Viewsheds are important to maintain.

Pedestrian Environment

The Downtown grid system promotes efficiency and walkability. Cities built on the grid are intended to have slower vehicle speeds, provide short walks between different land uses, and can be more cost-effective to maintain. The street typology discussion and recommendations in the *2007 Downtown Plan's* Transportation and Circulation chapter and in the 2007 Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Plan are a better fit in this chapter for making urban design guidelines and recommendations.

Most sidewalks in Downtown are constructed to a 6-foot width; however, 4th Avenue has an 18-foot width. Sidewalks that are 8.5-feet wide or less are considered inadequate for high pedestrian traffic zones. Wider sidewalks allow room for on-street amenities like trees, benches, waste bins, or parking meters. Sidewalks wider than 8.5 feet are recommended in the 2007 Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Plan for the Downtown Core area.

The following issues were previously identified in the *2007 Downtown Plan*. Several sidewalk improvements were completed since 2007. Chapter 7 details those sidewalk projects. This plan recommends action items to improve pedestrian facilities where needed in Downtown:

- Narrow sidewalks limit pedestrian mobility and comfort.
- There are limited opportunities to stop, sit, and relax.
- Icy sidewalks inhibit pedestrian mobility in the winter.
- Pedestrian lighting is inconsistent from one street to the next.
- Parking garages are often single-use structures.
- Underground garages are encouraged with wrapped mixed-use space to create an activated sidewalk.
- Activated sidewalks increase property values and contribute to the overall economy.



4th Avenue ground-floor uses encourage visitation, shopping, and a place where people want to be. (Planning Department)

Street Typology / Downtown Streets Design and Function

The 2007 Downtown Plan attempted to rectify the disparity between Downtown streets functioning as highway routes and their actual use in the walkable Central Business District of Our Downtown. 3rd, 5th and 6th avenues along with A, C, L, Gambell, and Ingra streets are designated as major arterials. Ingra is designated as a freeway in the [AMATS Official Streets and Highways Plan](#). Highways are defined as controlled access routes with high speeds. Pedestrians, bicycles, strollers, and wheelchair users are not supposed be equal users in the pure context of a highway. According to the Federal Highway Act of 1956, “Highways on the Interstate System in Alaska and Puerto Rico shall be designed in accordance with such geometric and construction standards as are adequate for current and probable future traffic demands and the needs of the [locality](#) of the highway.”

The MOA Design Criteria Manual (DCM) and Title 21 Land Use Code direct how the rights-of-way throughout Anchorage including streets, bicycle lanes, sidewalks and ADA access are to be constructed, and the Alaska Department of Transportation has several design manuals directing development of DOT&PF rights-of-way. This plan does not change those adopted standards. However, this plan does advocate for updates to be considered to street standards in the DCM and/or Title 21 if identified during the completion of the Downtown Streets Engineering Study (*Action Item EA-7 adopted with this plan*).

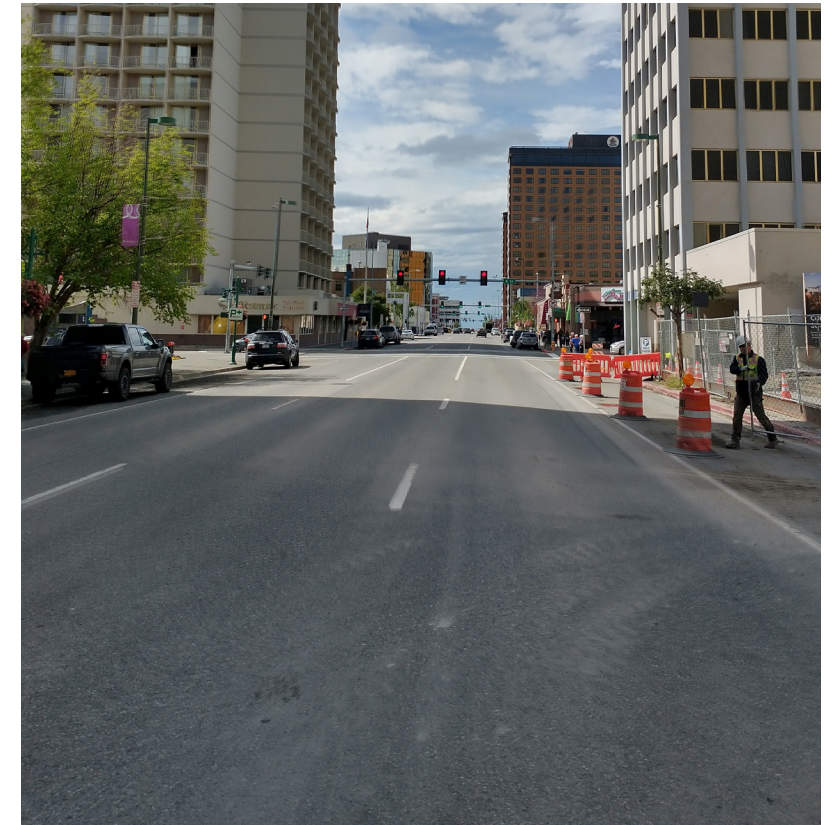
An inclusive public outreach effort usually accompanies all MOA and DOT&PF street projects, giving the public the opportunity to weigh in on how they wish to see a street improvement function. The public process is intended to ensure that transportation projects are in harmony with or are [Context Sensitive](#) to the surrounding community area and preserve environmental, scenic, aesthetic, and historic resources while maintaining safety and mobility. The AMATS Context Sensitive Design Strategy involves taking into consideration the land use and environment adjacent to the roadway when planning and designing a project in order to achieve an improvement that blends with the surrounding community.

This plan update also advocates for an in-depth review of the street classifications in Downtown to determine the appropriateness of each classification. This would include the consideration of how the streets function. Desired traffic volumes, the community’s desire to add bicycle lanes, a bike boulevard, sidewalk use and upgrades, and signal timing should all be factored into the Downtown Streets Engineering Study.

Proposed Downtown Streets Typologies

Street Typology or Street Classifications are based on how streets are intended to be used. Typologies provide a more balanced street classification system that recognizes adjacent land uses and in the case of Downtown, the mixed-use urban setting, and active transportation modes of travel including walking, bicycling, and transit uses. This section provides guidance with a set of Downtown Street typologies, general design characteristics, and maps from the 2007 Core Streets Streetscape Plan. These Downtown-specific typologies also derive from the AMATS Official Streets and Highways Plan and other AMATS plans that established areawide street typologies for the Anchorage Bowl.

These general street typologies and associated design concepts are intended to be a starting point for further development and application as part of a public processes to update the municipal street engineering standards and the Title 21 development regulations. Because the interface between street designs and adjacent land uses is important, these street typologies can provide useful guidance. The typologies from the 2007 Core Streets Streetscape Plan are recommended to be carried forward and explained in **Map #11 – Downtown District Plan Street Typologies Map**. These recommendations will work with the National Association of Municipal Organizations (NACTO.org) Major and Minor Street descriptions included in Chapter 7 of this plan.

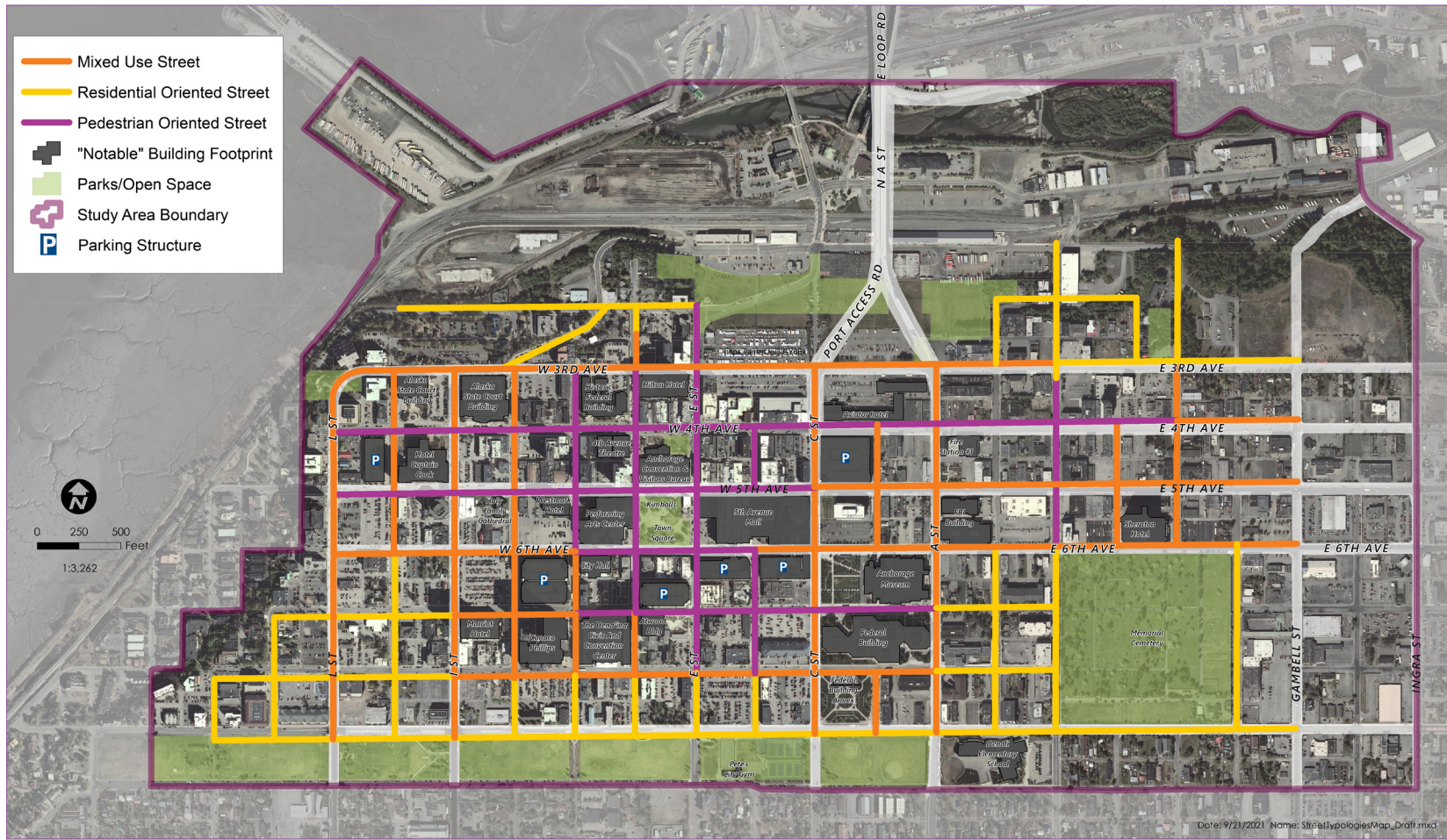


Major thoroughfare in Downtown. (Planning Department)

Street Typologies are Developed using three primary areas of information:

1. Roadway Characteristics
 - Volume
 - Width and number of lanes
 - Intersection density/signalization
 - Speed limits
 - One-way vs. two-way
2. Surrounding Land Use
3. Context – Central Business District

Downtown District Plan Street Typologies Map



Map #11: Street typologies, Planning Department.

Map #11 and associated descriptions will be changed as a result of the Downtown Streets Engineering Study. The following street types can usually be found in areas with a mix of commercial, retail, and residential development with substantial pedestrian activity. The general concepts for Mixed-use Streets adopted in 2007 include:

- Mixed-use street:** Downtown streets are primarily be defined as “Mixed-use Streets.” This street type is usually in areas encompassing a mix of commercial, retail, and residential development with substantial pedestrian activity. The general concepts for Mixed-use Street adopted in 2007 include:
- Mixed-use streets frequently provide on-street parking and wide sidewalks depending on the street’s adjacent commercial land uses.
 - Mixed-use streets with speed limits of 20-25 mph recommended throughout Downtown, as adopted in 2007.
 - The on-street bicycle network should include portions of 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Avenues and A, C, D, E and H streets.

Pedestrian-oriented mixed-use street: These streets would feature the widest sidewalks, with an unobstructed clear width of at least 8-12 feet where possible. These may include curb-bulb-outs, raised intersections, and other pedestrian amenities, where warranted by adjacent activities, and where right-of-way and resources allow.

Residential-oriented mixed-use street: These streets may feature on-street parking and tree lawns between the sidewalk and street curb. Landscaping and front porches between residential buildings and the street would be encouraged.

Sub-Typologies

Signature Streets: Streets located in key pedestrian traffic areas can receive additional treatments to create defining urban spaces. These streets include 4th Avenue, E Street, and F Street between 7th Avenue and the Performing Arts Center. 3rd Avenue between D and Christensen Street, 5th and 6th Avenues between A and L Streets should also be added to the Signature Streets designation in support of the Few Good Blocks Focused Development Area.

Cultural District Streets: Downtown has several unique districts with a distinct character based on their retail mix and types of services provided. Two districts were adopted in 2007, the G Street Art Central District and the SoNo District.

G Street between 3rd and 5th Avenues contains several art galleries will continue to be advertised to tourists and locals as the place to visit for the art scene. SoNo is still relevant south of Nordstrom's, despite the closing of this anchor retail site. The 5th Avenue Mall still contributes to this district, along with the local bars and other retailers located here.

Two additional districts are proposed with this plan to include the Anchorage Museum Design District between 5th and 7th avenues and A and C streets, and a portion of 4th Avenue that includes the Mushing District between A and G streets.

Pocket Streets: Support extremely low vehicle traffic volumes and vehicle speeds making the streets quiet and peaceful for pedestrians. D Street north of 5th Avenue Mall and F Street north of the Performing Arts Center are two pocket streets within the Downtown Core that should be maintained. The design character of these streets should reflect the intimate atmosphere by creating a sanctuary for Downtown walkers and bicyclists. Additional streets proposed as pocket streets with this plan to include G Street from 3rd to 5th avenues, B Street north of the Anchorage Museum, and F Street north of 3rd Avenue.

Alleys: Downtown alleys serve a variety of uses including trash containment, parking, and back-of-house access. Downtown's alleys are probably an underutilized asset that could be promoted and used for a variety of events, including art walks, pop-ups, food trucks, etc. To facilitate a transition to more community events, attractions, and creative placemaking, this plan recommends new lighting and maintenance of alleys towards these ends.

Creative Placemaking

Successful creative placemaking highlights unique community characteristics. Placemaking projects focus on connecting local history with the present, bringing cultural influences into the spotlight, and creating new traditions. Placemaking can build connections between people and places by encouraging collaboration and visualization. The length of a project will often shape what is implemented.

Oftentimes, creative placemaking will activate public spaces or create a short-term opportunity to connect residents around arts and culture. Places like alleys or low-traffic-volume streets in the historic core of Downtown are prime locations for creative placemaking projects.

Creative Placemaking can also contribute to commercial district revitalization by increasing value for the buildings and businesses within a Downtown. It's also about increasing the cultural value of the Downtown to customers, residents, local government, and the community at large. The Anchorage Downtown Partnership, MOA Parks and Recreation Department, and the Anchorage Museum are experts at creating short-term creative opportunities for residents and visitors in Downtown.

New Technology

Anchorage 2020 adopted a strategy to underground utilities throughout the MOA. While the 2007 *Downtown Plan* didn't specifically include an implementation action to complete this strategy, undergrounding projects have been occurring Downtown for several years. Most recently the alley between 3rd and 4th avenues was undergrounded in 2019. Title 21 includes the undergrounding of existing overhead facilities located in "target areas" as defined in the section "Designation of Target Areas of Title 21.90.060C," which includes the Central Business District (CBD). The 2021-2025 Chugach Electric Overhead to Underground project list in **Figure #9** shows several CBD projects.

These projects are great news for redevelopment in Downtown. The CEA undergrounding projects are also an opportunity for the utilities to upgrade their current services to meet growing demand. The five CEA projects are located with the two Focused Development Areas identified on the Chapter 3's Revitalization Strategy Map.



The Blue Piano Project at the Anchorage Museum established a place where anyone could visit and play the piano. Temporary Placemaking installations are effective in bringing the community together for short timeframes to provide entertainment and enjoyment. (Planning Department)



2022 Music in the Park. (Anchorage Downtown Partnership)

Urban Design Guidelines

Many of the following design guidelines are carried forward from the 2007 Downtown Plan, along with recommendations from the Downtown Buildable Lot Capacity Study completed for the plan update in 2022. Ultimately, Title 21, Chapter 11: Downtown guides design and development in Downtown and will prevail over the guidelines included in this chapter. The guidelines will provide general guidance for the planned update to AMC 21.11 – Downtown land use development code.

The design guidelines are captured under the following four policies:

- 6-1. Provide and improve public places and amenities.
- 6-2. Improve the quality of building design.
- 6-3. Encourage accessible interior public and semi-public spaces.
- 6-4. Activate streets and alleys.

6-1. Provide and Improve Public Places and Amenities

Public View Protection

Specific vantage points and priority viewsheds were identified in the 2007 Downtown Plan. Viewshed protection may be incentivized through design:

- Preserve visual connections to surrounding natural scenery from street corridors and public places, including views of Denali, Knik Arm, Chugach Range, the Talkeetnas, and the Alaska Range.
- Encourage the creation of new vantage points, such as public viewing areas at the top of buildings.
- Protect the view corridors on the east-west oriented avenues by designing buildings, skywalks and awnings to minimize view obstructions.

Sidewalk Widths

Sidewalk widths vary throughout Downtown, creating challenges for future improvements. The plan encourages widening sidewalks during any future street improvement where adequate space can be obtained on either public right-of-way or private property.

- Provide sidewalk widths to create a safe and comfortable walking environment.
- Implement the guidance from the 2007 Street Typologies Map when there is adequate right-of-way to do so.
- Provide buffer elements between traffic and pedestrians in high-pedestrian usage areas.
- Consider parking lanes on all streets. Where sidewalk width is less than 6 feet, convert one on-street space into a bulb-out at the intersection with a tree planting bed.
- Inventory street rights-of-way to determine where sidewalk widening can occur. Widen sidewalks to accommodate at least the minimum clear zone where excess travel capacity exists.
- Give priority to extending sidewalks widths to wherever street conversions or reconstructions occur.

Public Streetscape Amenities

Public streetscape amenities provide opportunities for gathering, lighting, shelter, and street maintenance. These guidelines encourage amenities that will allow enjoyment of the outdoors in all seasons and contribute to our ability to have clean and maintained sidewalks and streets.

- Provide public seating clustered with other amenities including lighting, shelter, trash receptacles, public art, and landscaping.
- Allow outdoor dining areas on sidewalks and streets that do not interfere with required clear zone movement.
- Provide self-cleaning restrooms or an alternative movable option in several locations during times of high-tourist visitation.
- Allow street-level spaces for vendors to sell food and drinks.



Removing utility lines provides opportunities for alley redevelopment and activation. (Planning Department)

Maker Spaces

This plan update advocates for technology advancements, manufacturing, and creating in Downtown. It is recommended Title 21, Chapter 21.11 – Downtown will be amended to allow more maker and live/work spaces in Downtown zoning districts. Fostering creativity, inventions, digital nomad workers, and state-of-the-art upgrades to fiber and telecommunication systems in Downtown will provide for a growing sector of residents and visiting workers.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PAGE NO.	YEAR
CBD: 4th Avenue Alley – Gambell to Karluk Street	A-10	2021
Gambell St. - 3rd Ave. to 15th Ave.	A-13	2021-2022
CBD: 7th/8th Alley - Gambell St. to Ingra St.	A-13	2021-2022
CBD: Frontierland Park - 10th & E St.	A-22	2023
CBD: W. 9th & P St.	A-27	2023-2025

Figure #7: Chugach Electric 2021 project list.

Landscaping and Art Palette

- Plantings, art, and other hardscape features can create a positive synergy when designed in context with the Downtown environment.
- Plant and maintain street trees when sidewalk is wide enough to accommodate planter infrastructure.
 - Light poles will be consistent with the cultural district or focused development area they are located in.
 - Public art may be integrated into locations with recommended clear zone.
 - Encourage integration of public art in parks and other public spaces appropriate and planned for through park or other planning efforts.
 - Provide optimal settings for seasonal art.
 - Allow art in sidewalks or other hardscapes, including decorative brick or metal plaques as approved by MOA PM&E.

Heated Sidewalks

- Heated sidewalks can provide ice-free travel for pedestrians. Ice-free sidewalks are not required of any new development but may be encouraged as a desired design element.
- Heated sidewalks are encouraged when feasible to build, operate, and maintain.

Pedestrian Crossings

- Pedestrian crossings are encouraged with clearly visible amenities including street lighting, striping, raised intersections or curb bulb-outs, with all levels of pedestrian uses in intersection design.
- All intersections with high levels of pedestrian use will be raised or receive special treatments in materials or signage.
 - Incorporate curb bulb-outs at intersections to reduce crossing distances and increase space for walking amenities.
 - Minimize driveways across sidewalks by requiring access from alleys.
 - Catch basins should be built mid-block to prevent impacts to crosswalks.

Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage

- Wayfinding and interpretive signs give the community different methods to convey information about culture and history, trail locations, local amenities like parks and museums, emergency response providers, and emergency evacuation routes.
- Implement a wayfinding and interpretive signage palette for use in all projects for the next 10-20 years. Consider using the interpretive themes and installation examples found in the [2015 Centennial Interpretive Plan for Anchorage’s Four Original Neighborhoods](#).
 - Gateway street design elements will be consistent with the historic or cultural district being celebrated or interpreted. See the District Revitalization Map in Chapter 3 identifying the proposed Downtown cultural districts.
 - Dena’ina and Anchorage’s culture and history will be celebrated through permanent and temporary installations for the enjoyment of residents and visitors to Downtown.

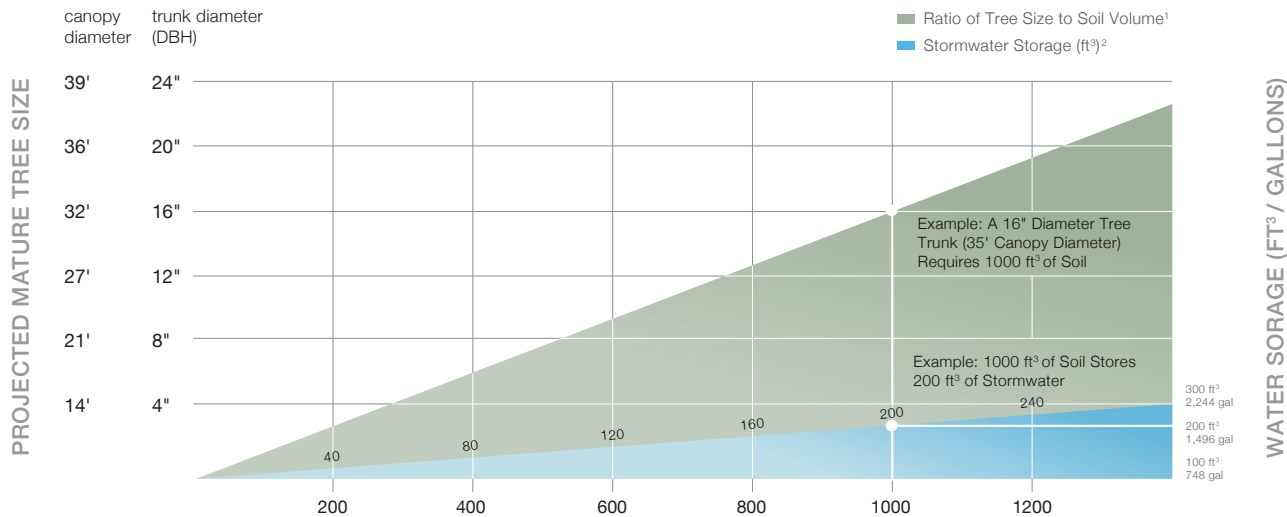


Figure #8: Diagram courtesy Peter Briggs, Corvus Design, Anchorage, AK – Urban Design Subcommittee - 2021



Fairview/East Downtown Historic Street Signage Project. (Planning Department)

Lighting

Light installations offer an opportunity to create a safe walkable environment and a cost-effective method to convey a city's historic culture and heritage. Lighting upgrades Downtown will provide a safer, multi-modal transportation network.

- Standardize public lighting within the historic context of Downtown to create a unified urban design, while providing base-level area lighting for safe travel by all street and sidewalk users.
- Illuminate both front at-street and sidewalk areas and back door alley accesses for safety and security on both public and private buildings, especially as utility undergrounding projects occur.
- Interior lighting in public and private buildings that reflects out from front-facing windows and doors onto the sidewalk creates a welcoming and safe place for pedestrians and should be encouraged with both new projects and redevelopment projects.



Lighting at the Anchorage Museum. (Planning Department)



Street lights. (Planning Department)



Exterior building lighting in Ship Creek at the ARRC Freight Shed. (Planning Department)

6-2 Improve the Quality of Building Design

Residential Building Treatment

The plan encourages privacy for ground-floor residential with an appropriate yet balanced interface between the buildings and the sidewalk. It also encourages residential building design in context with the Downtown urban environment.

- Design residential development should be varied in building form and include features such as front stoops, bay windows, façade articulation, balconies or sunrooms, and upper-level step-backs.
- Line residential streets with grass, landscaping, and more street trees to soften the urban environment.
- Provide open spaces, gardens, and pedestrian linkages through blocks or neighborhood parks as residential development occurs.
- Entrances to residential buildings may include individual front stoops and doorways for use by ground-floor residential units.

Building Setbacks

A building setback may be used to provide solar access, views, to allow for wider sidewalks, and variations in building design. Building setbacks may also be used to encourage outdoor activities, greenspace, and landscaping.

However, there are no front or rear building setbacks required in Downtown. Section 18 of AO 2021-89(S) removed front setback requirements in the Downtown zones. The proposed Downtown code update removes all setbacks from the zoning code.

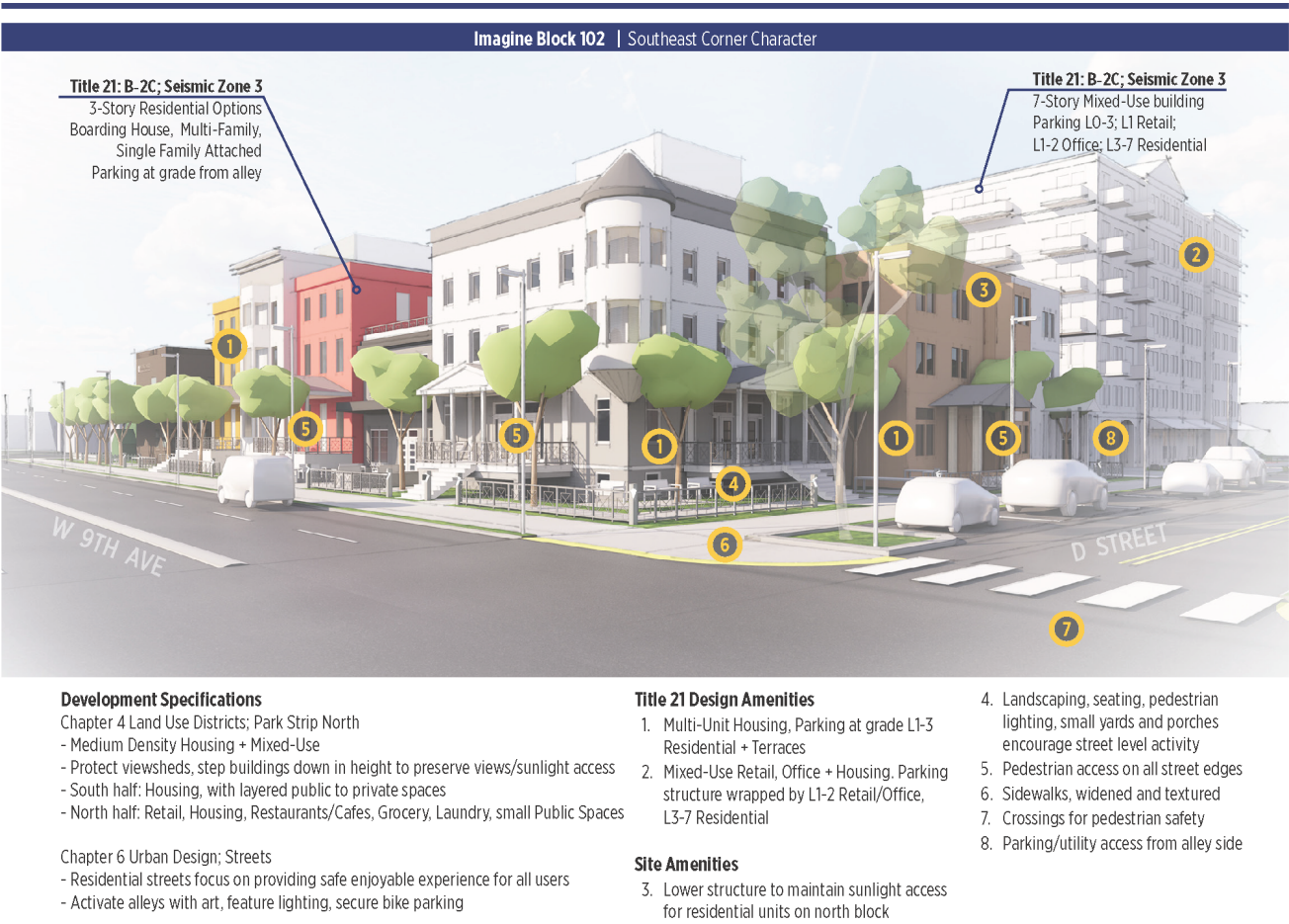


Figure #9: Draft concept for townhouses Downtown

Massing and Stepping

Massing is the three-dimensional form of buildings dictating its size, scale, character, and balance with the space the building is constructed. Stepping of taller buildings helps add dimension, balance, and character. Buildings that enhance the image of Downtown may use the following contextual design considerations:

- Provide human-scale buildings along sidewalks and public spaces, in part through variation in the massing of large buildings and stepping back the height of tall buildings.
- Medium- to high-rise buildings may feature slender towers with condensed floor plates. Slender towers stepped back from the street cast less shadow during summer, spring, and fall and allow more air, ambient daylight, and warm temperatures at the ground level.
- Step back medium- to high-rise buildings consistent with Downtown code requirements.
- Tower placement, spacing, and dimensions are encouraged to preserve views and daylight between tall buildings.
- Tower design should be of the highest quality and contribute to the Anchorage skyline. Massing, stepping, modulation, tapering, façade materials, colors, and articulation of prominent towers are encouraged to enhance the image of Downtown.
- Encourage roofs that are attractive and that can be used as outdoor spaces.

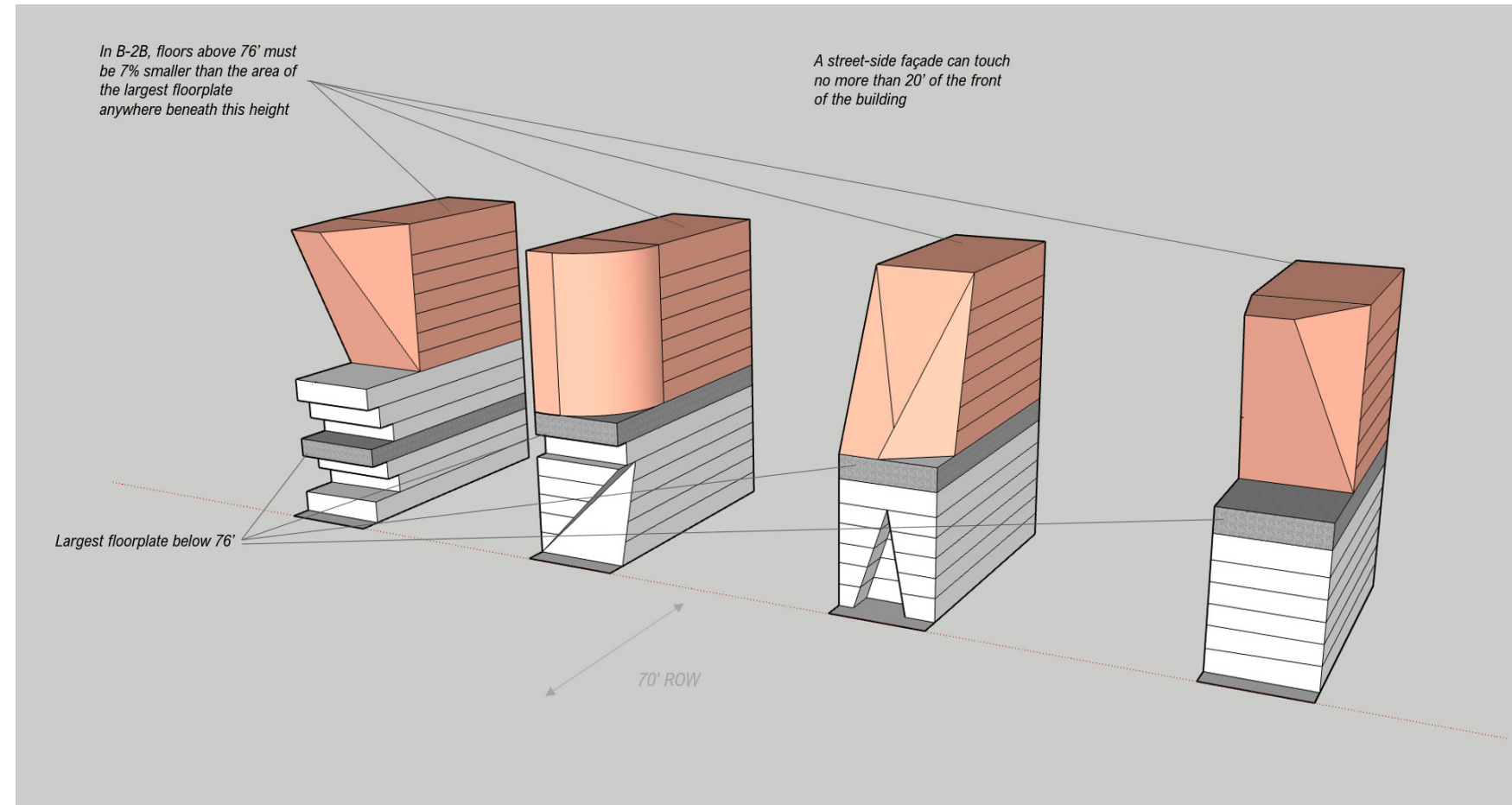


Figure #10: Draft concept of step-back and bulk form massing requirements shown during the code update process.

Sunlight Access

The lifeblood of Downtown is the pedestrians who enjoy and enliven its public spaces. Pedestrians feed businesses and cultural venues, bringing vitality, and have the potential to reduce crime by their presence. An important factor for a comfortable and attractive outdoor environment is access to sunlight.

- New buildings should minimize shadows cast on opposing sidewalks or nearby open spaces, particularly in the spring and fall, to extend the warmth, comfort, and activity level of the summer peak season.
- Minimize mid-day shadows on public open spaces between the spring and fall equinoxes.
- Preserve sunlight access to the following sites in Downtown:
 - Public parks and plazas, such as Town Square Park. Meet or exceed existing sunlight access protections for Town Square Park including the height limitations established by municipal ordinance (AO 85-173).
 - North side of east-west streets designated as primary pedestrian connections.
 - Important civic buildings with large numbers of visitors (e.g., Old Federal Building).
- Encourage the evaluation of the impact of medium- and high-rise development proposals on sun and shade conditions to help determine design measures that may reduce or mitigate shadow conditions.

Wind Protection

Building design is encouraged to help create a pedestrian-friendly sidewalk environment. Wind studies are not required in the Title 21 land use code. The Downtown code update will provide design standards to address this issue.



Anchorage Cider House on 5th Avenue. (Planning Department)

Ground Level Treatment

The plan encourages ground-level building treatments to contribute to a welcoming and safer Downtown by providing contextual and interesting design. This could include the following ground-level treatment options:

- Façade articulation and detailing at the ground-floor level to distinguish each from neighboring buildings.
- Building wall modulation to bring visual interest and a human scale to building frontages.
- Non-residential buildings will be physically and visually oriented toward the sidewalk to create interaction between the building and the sidewalk.
- Use the required glazing percentage from Title 21 in commercial buildings.
- Retail storefronts to be comprised mostly of windows, doors, and other openings.
- Windows should provide visual access to interior retail spaces and displays.



5th Avenue Key Bank Building Redevelopment Concept - Excellent example of a ground-level treatment. Sunlight access and wind protection are achieved with this redevelopment concept. (Peach Tree Investments)

Materials and Texture

Materials and textures are successful in Alaska when the arctic environment, cultural, and aesthetic conditions are factored into their use as a design element. Climate is one of the most important factors in material assembly and selection. This plan encourages a variety of textures, colors, and other design elements for Downtown, and this could include:

- Facade materials that create a warm, transparent building edge to bring warm light to the sidewalk environment by refracting ambient light or low-intensity façade illumination.
- Lighter colors and reflective materials on upper floors for aesthetic benefits and to redirect sunlight to public spaces below. Avoid reflective glass near the ground level as it limits pedestrians' ability to see into buildings and inhibits streetscape activity.
- Create light/shadow effects using minor recesses or projections in the façade.



Different types of existing building texture Downtown. (Planning Department)





Dena'ina Center lighting. (Planning Department)

Building Lighting

Beautiful and sustainable lighting design can be achieved at any scale and in any context. Creative illumination of buildings contributes to a positive community experience and interaction. The plan encourages integration of both daylight and architectural lighting in harmony with the Downtown context. This could include using building lighting to help wayfinding and/or enhance architectural distinction.



White Architecture, Sweden



Example of a skywalk downtown. (Planning Department)

Skywalks

Skywalks serve a utilitarian use in Downtown by providing connections between the 5th Avenue Mall and the 5th Avenue parking garage, 5th Avenue Mall and the Nordstrom building, and between the Egan Center and the Performing Arts Center. Future skywalks will be guided by a demonstrated need and benefit to the overall function of buildings, streets, and pedestrian facilities.

- Proposals demonstrate significant special need for a skywalk between related and important uses or functions.
- Street-level alternatives for protecting pedestrians from the elements are explored and exhausted.
- Skywalks are proposed for mid-block rather than at intersections to minimize impacts on views and sunlight access.
- Avoid skywalk crossings of north-south streets; the north-south street corridors are primary sources of winter sunlight into Downtown.
- Discourage skywalks across primary pedestrian connections and view corridors, such as 4th and 5th Avenues.
- Design skywalks with light-colored and transparent façade materials to minimize their impacts on sunlight and views.
- Limit skywalks to one story.
- Skywalks will not accommodate retail uses.

Parking Treatment

Developments are not required to provide parking spaces in Downtown. However, developments often provide parking for the convenience of their residents and customers. The following parking treatment guidance includes both structured and at-grade parking lot recommendations. Well-designed parking will provide adequate, safe, and visually appealing parking areas in Downtown.

- Above-grade parking structures should be wrapped with active uses on the ground floor, and preferably a second floor that opens to the street and conceals parking from the sidewalk.
- The upper floors of the parking structure should be concealed with interesting façade treatment.
- The design of underground parking structures beneath residential buildings is encouraged to provide welcoming building entrances, front stoops, first-floor living spaces with windows facing the street, streetscape amenities, and planting beds.
- Improve surface parking lots to accommodate landscaping, buffers, or ornamental fencing. Improvements can include:
 - ◊ Planters, shrubs, other landscaping, or fencing at least 3 feet tall.
 - ◊ Benches for seating.
 - ◊ Bicycle parking.
 - ◊ Trash receptacles.
 - ◊ Seat walls.
 - ◊ Light fixtures.
 - ◊ Public art.



5th Avenue at C Street in 2020. (Planning Department)



Example bicycle storage option that could be used inside buildings or parking garages. (Planning Department)

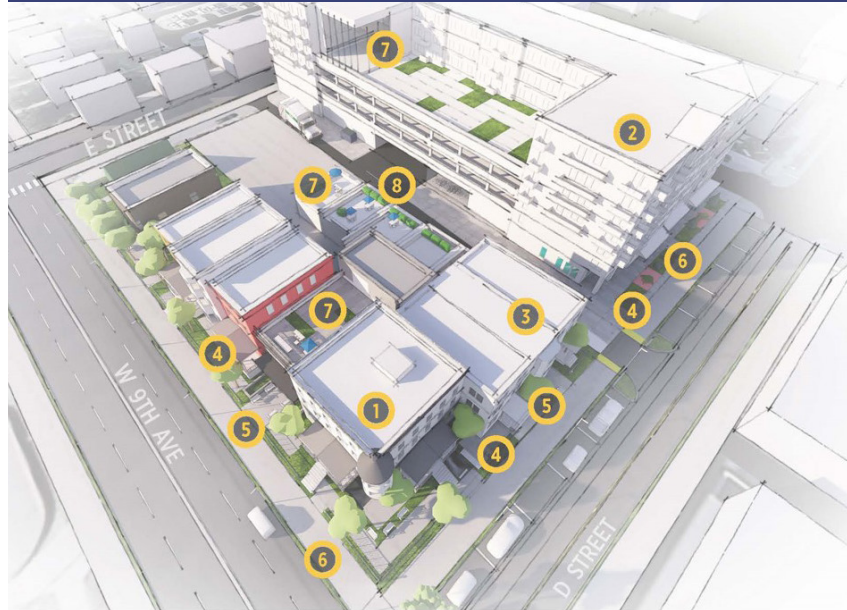


Example of monitored external bicycle storage. (Planning Department)



Example of secure external bicycle storage. (Planning Department)

Imagine Block 102 Southeast Corner Character

**Title 21: B-2C; Seismic Zone 3**

3-Story Residential Options
Boarding House, Multi-Family,
Single Family Attached
Parking at grade from alley

Title 21: B-2C; Seismic Zone 3

7-Story Mixed-Use building
Parking L0-3; L1 Retail;
L1-2 Office; L3-7 Residential

Residential Treatment

Residential building design in context with the Downtown urban environment is encouraged with interior and exterior elements intended to provide a variety of residential options to singles, couples, families, and seniors. Amenities that contribute to inviting and safe building entrances along with interesting building articulation with step-backs, windows, and arctic-compatible building materials are also encouraged.

- Design residential development to be varied in building form and include features such as front stoops, bay windows, façade articulation, balconies or sunrooms, and upper-level step-backs. Individual entrances should be raised several feet for privacy.
- Line residential streets with grass, landscaping, and more street trees to soften the urban environment.
- Provide open spaces, gardens, and pedestrian linkages through blocks or neighborhood parks as residential development occurs.

Development Specifications

Chapter 4 Land Use Districts; Park Strip North

- Medium Density Housing + Mixed-Use
- Protect viewsheds, step buildings down in height to preserve views/sunlight access
- South half: Housing, with layered public to private spaces
- North half: Retail, Housing, Restaurants/Cafes, Grocery, Laundry, small Public Spaces

Chapter 6 Urban Design; Streets

- Residential streets focus on providing safe enjoyable experience for all users
- Activate alleys with art, feature lighting, secure bike parking

Title 21 Design Amenities

1. Multi-Unit Housing, Parking at grade L1-3 Residential + Terraces
2. Mixed-Use Retail, Office + Housing. Parking structure wrapped by L1-2 Retail/Office, L3-7 Residential

Site Amenities

3. Lower structure to maintain sunlight access for residential units on north block

4. Landscaping, seating, pedestrian lighting, small yards and porches encourage street level activity
5. Pedestrian access on all street edges
6. Sidewalks, widened and textured
7. Crossings for pedestrian safety
8. Parking/utility access from alley side

Figure #11: Buildable Lots Capacity Study visualization. (Bettisworth North)

Imagine Block 56 Block Overall Character



Development Specifications

- Chapter 4 Land Use Districts; Denali View
- Medium to High Density Housing + Mixed-Use
 - Protect viewsheds and step buildings down in height to preserve view corridors
 - Housing, Office, Retail, Restaurants/Cafes, Grocery, Laundry, small public spaces

Chapter 6 Urban Design; Streets

- Mixed-Use streets focus on providing safe enjoyable experience for all users
- Bike Boulevard to connect to areas /regional trail network

Title 21 Design Amenities

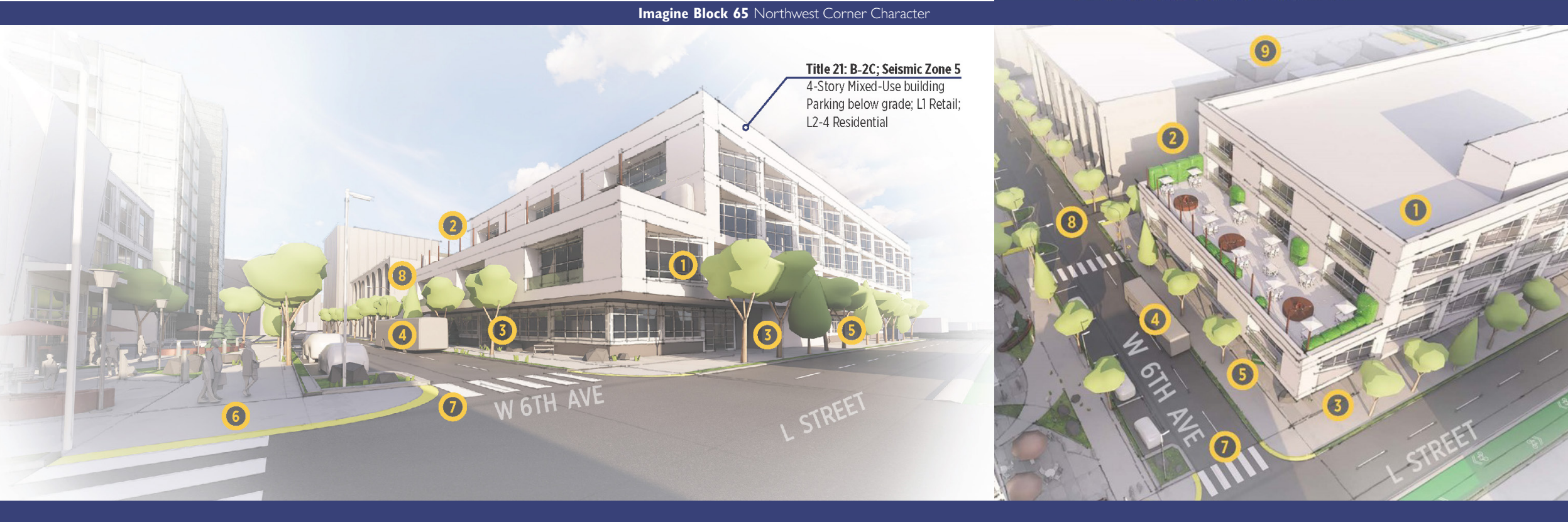
1. Mixed-Use building, parking below grade; L1 Retail; L2-3 Office; L4-5 Residential
2. Mixed-Use Tower; Parking below grade; L1 Retail; L2-5 Office; L6-9 Residential

Site Amenities

3. Entry Plaza, Retail + restaurant entries at street level
4. Exterior seating + plaza for dining

5. Street trees, seating, pedestrian lighting, Arcade/covered walkways and landscaping
6. Sidewalks, widened and textured
7. Crossings for pedestrian safety
8. Parking structure accessible from alley to minimize sidewalk crossing

Figure #12: Buildable Lots Capacity Study visualization. (Bettisworth North)



Development Specifications

- Chapter 4 Land Use Districts; Park Strip North
- Medium Density Housing + Mixed-Use
 - Protect viewsheds, step buildings down in height to preserve views/sunlight access
 - Housing, Retail, Restaurants/Cafes, Grocery, Laundry, small public spaces
- Chapter 6 Urban Design; Streets
- Mixed-Use streets focus on providing safe enjoyable experience for all users
 - Bike Boulevard to connect to areas/regional trail network

Title 21 Design Amenities

1. Mixed-Use building, parking below grade; L1 Retail + Grocery; L2-4 Residential + Terraces

Site Amenities

2. Stepped structure to maintain sunlight access for adjacent blocks
3. Retail + grocery entries at street level
4. Transit stops coordinated with amenities

5. Street trees, seating, pedestrian lighting, Arcade/covered walkways at retail entries and landscaping
6. Sidewalks, widened and textured
7. Crossings for pedestrian safety
8. Parking structure accessible from alley to minimize sidewalk crossings

Figure #13: Buildable Lots Capacity Study visualization. (Bettisworth North)

6-3 Encourage Accessible Interior Public and Semi-Public Spaces

The following are intended to address design options for our arctic environment in public and private buildings.

- Interior publicly accessible spaces such as atria or winter gardens are encouraged to allow sunlight, views, and wind protection.
- Connection of interior open spaces with Downtown's network of public sidewalks is encouraged.
- Design to provide northern climate development features to create welcoming entrances is encouraged.
- Arcades can provide additional protection for pedestrians. The interior of arcades may be wide enough for two couples to pass comfortably and may have high ceilings for ventilation and openness.
- Design awnings and canopies to avoid shedding snow and icy drip lines on the sidewalk. Canopies may have transparent roofs that allow sunlight to reach the sidewalk. Awnings and canopies may be designed to complement the architectural design of their buildings.
- Primary building entrances along major pedestrian routes, pick-up/ drop-off zones and next to transit stops should incorporate overhead protection.
- Encourage publicly-accessible indoor spaces and indoor/outdoor transition spaces with seating and amenities for building users. These spaces may be in areas that have a high level of public use, be directly connected to public streets and open spaces, be visually interesting, and afford views and sunlight access.



New atrium and entrance of the Z.J. Loussac Library in Anchorage. (Anchorage Library)

6-4 Activate Streets and Alleys

The plan encourages activating streets and alleys to provide economic development. Residents and visitors will benefit from a variety of offerings that can only occur outside.

Streets

- Continue to allow outside dining, open-air markets, music, and dance in cordoned-off streets with low traffic volumes year-round, especially streets adjacent to MOA parks or greenspaces.
- Create a community program with ADP and MOA Parks Department that incorporates limited closing of streets to provide economic opportunities for small Alaska-made and Alaska-owned businesses.

Alleys

- Activate alleys as a creative placemaking tool with short-term art, music, and dining experiences.
- Encourage mural projects in Downtown alleys.
- Provide adequate lighting in alleys by using string lighting, LED lighting or other comparable light options.
- Consider offering unique looks and experiences in different sections of the alley system Downtown.
- Consider alley makeovers as community events to create new sustainable areas to contribute to business retention.
- Use alleys for secure bicycle storage with appropriate signage and a mobile app user system to keep bicycles safe.

Urban Design and Utilities Subcommittees

Recommendations

The two subcommittees formed for this planning process had several in-detail recommendations for this plan. Those detailed recommendations are included in the public outreach report and will be used in the Downtown land use code update.

The subcommittees' recommendations generally included ideas around the following:

- Market-rate housing incentives.
- Parking management.
- Parking lot landscaping.
- A Downtown-specific sign code.
- Infrastructure and Utilities Capacity Study.
- New landscaping requirements.
- Setback reductions.
- Land assembly incentives.

Action Items

Chapter 6 action items are intended to provide economic development through design, streamlined communication processes, a context sensitive sign code, and studies to determine any gaps in services in collaboration with what land capacity there is for development. The actions also address the connection between the street and buildings and how that important connection supports all users on Downtown streets and sidewalks.

UD-1: Consider a Downtown-specific sign code or sign code section in Chapter 11: Downtown using the recommendations and best practices from other cities as recommended by the Urban Design Subcommittee (works with LU-12).

UD-2: Fund and complete a utility capacity study for Downtown as recommended by the Utilities Subcommittee or GAP analysis. Include all utility providers and the MOA in this capacity study. Determine upgrades to facilities to support new technologies, growing demand for higher speed internet, and new housing and businesses. Publish the results of the utility capacity study and any upgrade plans or recommendations.

UD-3: Fund and complete a land capacity study collaboratively with the utilities study. Use the study to determine the carrying capacity of available vacant or under-developed lands. Consider A Few Good Blocks 2021 as the pilot project area (completed Spring 2022).

UD-4: Fund, construct, and maintain ice-free sidewalks in areas of high pedestrian use. Determine the best agency or group to maintain the ice-free sidewalk system and provide the resources to that agency or group through a BID or other funding method.

UD-5: Incorporate the recommended street typologies from this chapter into any updates to the Anchorage Bowl Street Typologies study and map (works with AMATS Street Typology Study to kick-off in 2023).



Skywalk and Arcade Downtown. (Planning Department)

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CHAPTER 7: TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Overview

This chapter provides chapter-specific goals, policies, and action items to implement Strategy #4 – Focus the Effort and Strategy #5 – Make Connections to Surrounding Neighborhoods

This chapter addresses the complexity of Downtown's transportation and circulation system and the types of improvements that are needed to strengthen and support Downtown as a vital and welcoming place. This chapter also identifies specific planning considerations, outlines transportation goals to support the plan's vision, and recommends solutions based on public and agency input and the Our Downtown online survey results.

Our Forefathers Built the Road Grid to Meet the Needs of the Early 1900s

The city core of Anchorage, or Original Townsite, was platted and built for travel by foot, bicycle, horseback, horse-drawn wagon, and sled-dog team. The core Downtown infrastructure, as a result, should continue to lend itself to walking and bicycling as primary transportation modes.

Downtown streets were platted at 80 feet wide (numbered streets) and 60 feet wide (lettered streets) (**Figure #2**). Factoring in today's need for sidewalks, curb and gutter, parking, lighting, and travel lanes, there is not much space to work with when competing motorized and non-motorized uses attempt to travel safely in a timely manner in modern-day Anchorage. Travel times, delays, and the average number of vehicles using a street are major factors when determining street functions and speed limit. In modern times, these elements were used to classify the types of streets and uses in Downtown Anchorage.

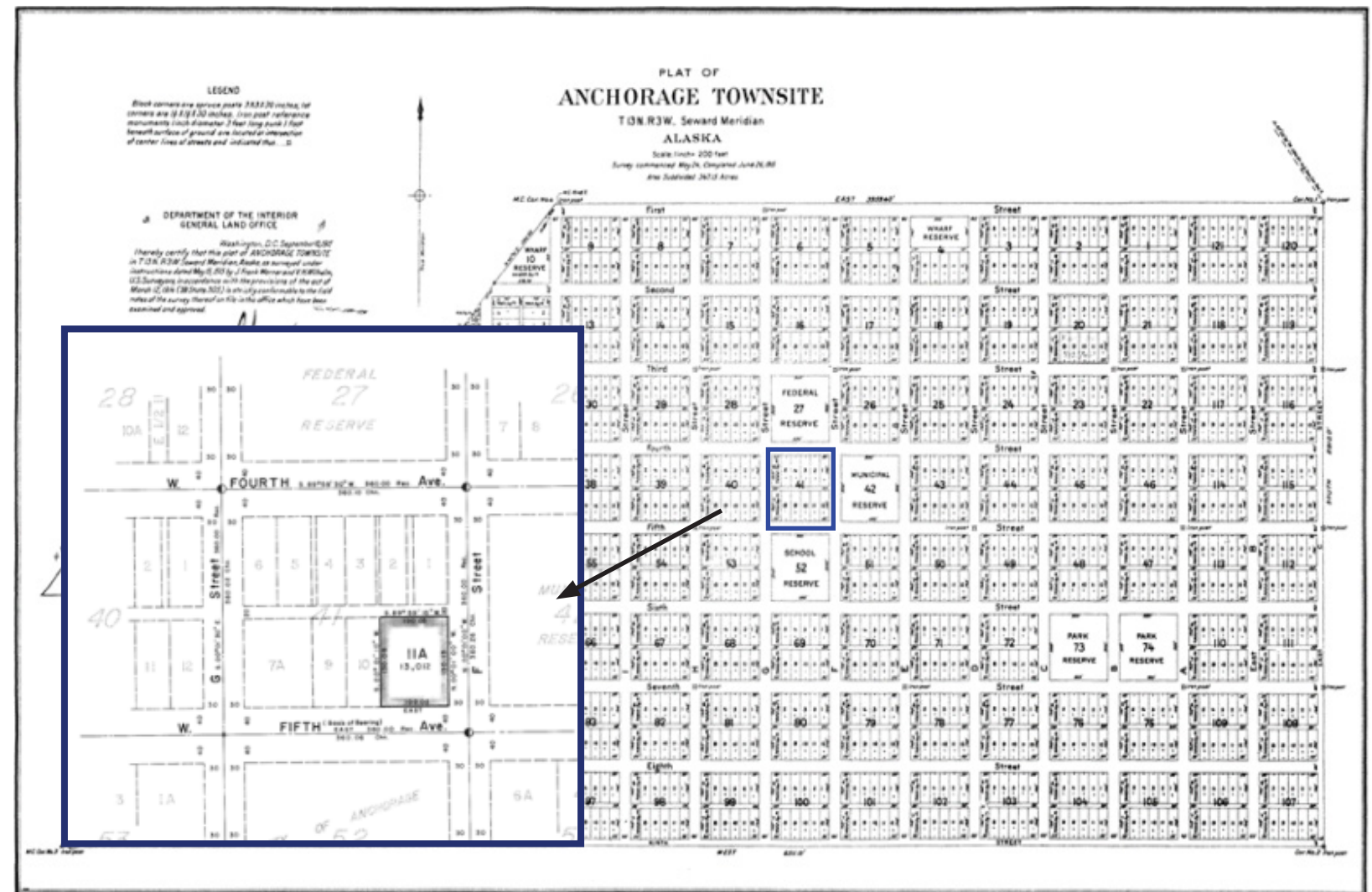


Figure #14: Original Townsite Plat 1915 – Approved by William C. Edes, Chairman – Alaska Engineering Commission.

Time means money for business, and every minute of delay impacts someone or a bottom line. Additionally, narrower streets create an urban experience at the pedestrian scale; the narrower streets in Downtown are an asset to redevelopment as an urban destination.

Adding Downtown streets to the National Highway System during the Eisenhower Administration has turned Downtown from a functioning Central Business District into a highway system pass-through with high-volume streets and speed limits too fast for the surrounding development and desired pedestrian environment.

The 1915 platted streets were just enough to support the development of that time. The Alaska Engineering Commission did not anticipate a future with 18-wheeled trucks and large bus coaches that journey the streets today. Moving forward from 1915, the automobile became the primary form of transportation and the quality of the pedestrian environment has steadily declined. This lament has been heard in every public meeting and in every survey offered for input.

Walking is more challenged as sidewalk conditions deteriorate or were not built to accommodate pedestrians safely in areas west of the Downtown Core, like 8th Avenue between H and L streets. Striped bicycle lanes do not exist in Downtown, despite 3rd and 4th avenues shown as “bike friendly” on the local [bike route map](#) published each year. Vehicles speeding by on one-way streets impact all modes. Pedestrian and ever-increasing bicycle travel remain important elements to the Downtown transportation system. Connecting Anchorage’s world-class trail system to Downtown is more than recreation, it also means commuters can ride bicycles year-round from all parts of our city to come to Downtown.

Interest and demand continue to grow with the public asking for agency and administrative support and funding to revitalize Downtown into a safe, interconnected, and welcoming place that supports walking and bicycles. Pedestrian users include walkers, people with strollers, and people in wheelchairs.

Times Change and It’s Time for New Solutions

This chapter started with a look back to gain a better understanding of why we have the public infrastructure and facilities that exist today and how we might make them better in a cost-effective way. Community comments and suggestions, and input from the Our Downtown online survey are factored into this chapter’s recommendations. Funding and completion of several Early Action Items to jump-start improvements in support of Anchorage’s economic recovery are encouraged.

Downtown Streets Engineering Study

This chapter also advocates for the funding of a study and proposed street improvement program similar to what Austin, Texas, and Oklahoma City adopted. In 2001, the city of Austin embarked on a rigorous public effort to better coordinate the various agencies and funding constraints to meet the travel demands of the community. The Austin Great Streets Program has helped them achieve greater efficiencies in project prioritization, programming, and building infrastructure that meets current and forecasted travel needs. Oklahoma City adopted the MAPs program to fix their downtown streets and initiate revitalization in the core.

This Plan advocates for an engineering study to better understand the vehicle, bicycle, and transit demands on the street system. The Engineering Study would provide information on how the system may need to be changed, managed, and upgraded and the timing and cost that it will entail. The Engineering Study could also identify what agencies are going to be responsible for overseeing proposed projects. Funding from AMATS is proposed to complete the Engineering Study.

2007 Plan Street Project Implementation

Transportation-related Recommendations and Implementation Actions in the *2007 Downtown Plan* were developed with the intent to create a more pedestrian, bicycle, transit-friendly, and safe connected Downtown. 31% of the 57 Implementation Actions were completed, 22% received little or no action, 47% received some action or are ongoing. Several Implementation Actions were not funded or completed. The unfunded actions include proposed street conversions, street reconstructions, speed limit reduction, and a Downtown Circulator. The following recaps the 2007 proposed transportation and circulation projects.

Pedestrian Improvements Completed

Several pedestrian-friendly street improvements were completed since 2007. This includes along 6th and 7th avenues, and E, F and D streets. These improvements included pedestrian crossings with bulb-outs and landscaping at several intersections. Heated sidewalks were completed around City Hall and the Dena’ina Center. However, the sidewalk heating system has since been turned off due to high maintenance and operation costs.

[Currently 4th Avenue](#) is undergoing reconstruction to replace traffic lights, pedestrian lighting, upgrade the tree wells, widen the sidewalk between C and A streets, provide curb ramps at B Street, and a 1% for Art project. This project is consistent with the scope of implementation action T-11 in the *2007 Downtown Plan*.

Street Improvements Completed

The 9th Avenue reconstruction and core streets pedestrian improvements on 4th, 6th, and 7th avenues and E Street were completed.

Transit Improvements and Parking Completed

A direct transit route to the UMED District is in operation with good ridership numbers, according to People Mover. In 2008, a new parking garage opened and was dedicated to Lenny Pacillo. Parking wayfinding, kiosk payment for parking, and new safety lighting in ACDA-owned garages are all operational. Tour bus operations are supported by Visit Anchorage, and the Anchorage Trolley Tour company continues to operate their family-owned business.

Proposed Projects Carried Forward with the Plan

Street conversions on portions of D and F streets and 5th and 6th avenues received positive feedback in the online survey to move forward in addition to the G Street improvements between 3rd and 5th avenues. Phase 2 of E Street and new ideas for 3rd Avenue are included in project recommendations in Chapter 8.

Upgrades to landscaping along some streets didn't work out due to sanding and other maintenance issues. The lack of once pretty and green landscape within street rights-of-way resonates with the public, and they have asked to bring trees back. Action items related to growing healthy trees Downtown are included.

The implementation action to reduce traffic speeds is recommended for an engineering study and desired by the public. The Planning Team received many comments about reducing traffic speeds.

The relocation of the transit center is still being considered as ACDA markets this 6th Avenue property as prime for redevelopment. The circulator bus route was popular in the survey. The circulator may be feasible operated by a smaller trolley.

Transportation Solutions and Improvements Support Our Economy

This plan also advocates for a compatible mix of transportation projects to support a system the public should expect from a metropolitan city.



People Mover route #10. (Planning Department)



Looking east up 5th Avenue in 2021. (Planning Department)

System Considerations

System Priorities

The first priority is to optimize multi-modal access to and within Downtown. The second priority is to create a place that is enjoyable and safe for walking, biking, and using public transit. These two priorities can be realized as development density increases in Downtown. These priorities, when implemented, will enhance the retail experience, support employers, create social equity for the lower-income demographic employees that work and live in the area, and make Downtown even more of a destination for cultural and social gatherings. Multi-modal system improvements are known contributors to downtown revitalization.⁶

In addition to meeting the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders, the transportation system must also serve local automobile and tour bus access and circulation while reducing the adverse impacts of cut-through traffic and freight movement.

Several factors should be considered in the proposed engineering study. Who lives Downtown, how do they travel, who travels to Downtown and when, who travels through Downtown and why, what modes are being used, and is the system meeting the traveler's needs?

Plan for Vehicles and for Physically-Active Transportation

A study of census data for this plan found roughly half of the households in Census Tract 11 (Downtown Core) have one vehicle. Another 20-30% of the Downtown households have two vehicles. Less than 7% of Census Tract 11 households have three or more vehicles. The share of households without a vehicle was at 22% in this central Downtown core. This 22% rate for Census Tract 11 is substantially higher than statistics municipal-wide at 6% of households without a vehicle.

This means two things. First, multi-modal transportation options are critical in Downtown. Second, it is important for new housing projects to offer some parking to meet the parking needs of those residents owning at least one car.

The provision of some parking in new projects will contribute to the project's competitiveness in the Downtown housing market. This premise meets what we heard from developers with recent 2021 Downtown housing projects in the A Few Good Blocks area.

These numbers also indicate there are many Downtown households that use active transportation such as transit, walking, or biking as their primary means of travel. New developments can meet those needs too, by providing indoor locked secured bicycle storage. The street network should have clearly marked bicycle paths and routes. Sidewalks should be maintained and free of utility boxes and poles. Good wayfinding and directional signage for those that might be walking or bicycling Downtown as visitors are also important.

Until transportation technology changes substantially, it is unlikely that housing without opportunities for parking will be desirable. Shared parking, off site but close by, or use of parking garages are viable solutions to ensure people opting to live in Downtown have access to parking.

The Agnew::Beck study selected four other downtowns to compare Anchorage to. These "benchmark communities" were like Downtown Anchorage in size, climate, or policies. The benchmark communities⁷ invested in "active transportation," which resulted in more "urban" housing for residents who relied less on automobiles and more on public transit. It is possible that as Anchorage's Downtown grows with additional housing, automobile use can decline.

6: *The necessary foundations for rural resilience: A flexible, accessible, and healthy built environment* (brookings.edu)

7: *In other comparison downtowns (Boise, Oklahoma City, Minneapolis, and Salt Lake City) between 53 and 61% of households have at least one car. Residents in downtowns appreciate multi-modal options but often still have a car to travel throughout their community and outside of downtowns.*

Opportunities for Improvement

Circulation

- Circulation constraints and high-volume streets within the Downtown Core may limit higher-density redevelopment opportunities.
- Through traffic and truck traffic adversely impact Downtown circulation, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit movements.
- High vehicular speeds on major couplets (A/C and 5th/6th) make pedestrians uncomfortable and deter pedestrian use.
- Downtown must facilitate easy circulation for tour companies, tour bus routes, bus queuing, and safe passenger drop-off.
- The current mixture of one- and two-way streets interrupts the street grid network and causes driver confusion and out-of-direction travel.
- Parade, race, and festival routes, as well as staging areas, are needed to preserve Downtown's role in promoting community identity.

Connectivity and Accessibility

- Pedestrian movement in many heavily traveled areas is constrained by narrow sidewalks, physical barriers, and piecemeal improvements.
- Lack of good pedestrian wayfinding in low-light conditions impedes pedestrian movement, especially between Downtown destinations.
- There is a lack of integration between the Transit Center, bus system, and parking lots.
- The Downtown Transit Center is approaching its operational capacity. Bus loading, unloading, and storage occupy street areas that should provide pedestrian and traffic circulation.
- Downtown lacks direct local transit connections to the airport.

- The Seward/Glenn Highways Connection will provide significant benefits to Downtown, increasing redevelopment potential here and in Fairview by alleviating the regional through traffic in these areas.
- Ownership of Downtown's streets is split between the Municipality and State, which impacts the form, function, and overall integration of the street system. National Highway System requirements prevent certain retail signage and building design.

Parking

- Downtown currently has an abundance of under-used surface parking lots according to the 2007 parking study by ACDA.
- Idle properties, including parking lots, sit for years without any visible improvements. This shows a lack of investment in the community.
- Parking facilities lack adequate wayfinding directional signage, good pedestrian connections to destinations, and affordable prices.
- A coordinated parking strategy that may include a smart phone app or other technology could be needed to solve some development issues as Downtown grows.
- A parking management coordinator would be helpful if public and private parking lot or garage owners can work together to solve certain issues identified as impacting new development. Parking coordination can help incentivize new development.



Large quantities of land are taken up by vehicle storage areas Downtown. (Planning Department)

Transportation and Circulation Goals

1. Promote and support walking and transit as the primary circulation modes within the Downtown Core: Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, comfort, and mobility. Minimize barriers to walking. Route buses such that transit can be used as a natural extension of the Downtown walking experience.

2. Provide access to Downtown via multiple modes of transportation: Downtown should be accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit riders, and motorists for a wide variety of trips, including employment, education, shopping, recreation, and tourism. Improve transit routing from outside the Downtown core to maximize efficiency and the number of destinations served.

3. Provide convenient public parking locations and wayfinding: Manage and market parking in Downtown to allow convenient access to destinations and seamlessly connect parking to pedestrian and transit systems.

4. Manage public rights-of-way: Downtown's rights-of-way widths are limited. To balance the quality of service provided for each mode, ensure that walking and transit are the priority for local access and circulation. Maintain sufficient capacity on appropriate corridors.

5. Provide a network of streets that is simple to navigate: Reduce the out-of-direction travel and confusion that results from the current mix of one- and two-way streets. Provide greater redundancy in the street grid to avoid and alleviate congestion. Reduce the number of blocks with "negative circulation," defined as a block that cannot be completely circumnavigated in either direction. Blocks with negative circulation increase out-of-direction travel.

Community Feedback

Community Comments

The Our Downtown planning process was initiated with an Anchorage Museum First Friday event in November 2019. Three community workshops quickly followed. Comments regarding transportation and circulation were received during the museum event and the workshops. Thirty-nine comments concerned with parking lots, snow storage, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, Coastal Trail connectivity, the enjoyment of being able to walk "everywhere," and completion of the Seward to Glenn highways connection were received.

One-on-one interviews were also held with Downtown project developers. Comments on convenient parking, the ability to provide parking for projects that are "for sale" vs. rental projects, pedestrian and bicycle network, and wayfinding were received. These comments are factored into the policies and action items along with the online survey comments.

Online Survey Results and Comments

Thirteen targeted questions in the online survey were devoted to street improvements, the look and function of streets, transit, and parking. Hundreds of comments received were devoted to streets, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities. Respondents felt strongly about fixing Our Downtown and have some great ideas on future improvements, including fixing the street network to make it more multi-modal, pedestrian, and bicycle friendly as this plan advocates for.

Street projects to make Our Downtown more pedestrian and bicycle friendly are expensive. Utility upgrades to support new development are expensive. Building materials are getting more expensive. However, revitalized streets will contribute to helping make the Heart of Anchorage "[Clean, Safe and Vital](#)."

Many of the transportation and circulation implementation actions from the *2007 Downtown Plan* will be carried forward in addition to new recommendations more focused on bicycle use, trail connectivity, lighting, and other safety issues also included.



Bike Anchorage leading a bike tour to the Grandma Olga statue as a passenger train returns to the City in the background. (Planning Department)

Online Survey Responses to Street Conversions

The *2007 Downtown Plan* identified multiple street upgrades by converting some of the one-way and two-way streets. The first six questions asked respondents' thoughts on those conversions and if traffic should be slowed down to 20-mph when moving through the Downtown core.

Reducing Speed Limits - Response: Definite Yes

Seventy percent (70%) of respondents stated that traffic signal timing should be adjusted to slow traffic down, and another 12% answered "Leave it to the Planning Team to recommend." The *2007 Downtown plan* recommended 20-mph for streets with lower traffic volume, and 25-mph for streets carrying larger volumes.

D, F, and E Street 2-way Conversions - Response: Maybe

Respondents seemed moderately in favor of converting D Street between 4th and 5th avenues to a two-way street, F Street to a two-way street, and E Street to a two-way street north of 4th Avenue, with 44%, 45%, and 54% of people saying yes, respectively.

3rd Avenue Conversion - Response: Definite No

Fifty-five percent (55%) of people responded no to converting 3rd Avenue to a one-way west-bound street and another 25% said leave it to the Planning Team to recommend. The *2007 Downtown Plan* only recommended converting 3rd Avenue to a one-way street between A and C if the Highway-2-Highway project was completed. The 2007 Plan also advocated for removing 3rd Avenue and L Street as a truck route.

5th Avenue Conversion - Response: Maybe

The conversion of 5th Avenue to two-way traffic was closer in results: 36% said yes, 47% said no, and 17% said the Planning Team should recommend. Several comments for this question mentioned adding more non-motorized infrastructure, such as bike lanes, or, in general, prioritizing the comfort and travel of pedestrians, such as closing roads to motorized traffic. There were some comments overall about ensuring the functionality of the traffic system.

Online Survey Responses to Core Streets Master Planned Improvements

Questions 7 through 11 concerned implementation items in the Downtown core that were identified in the Core Streets Streetscape Master Plan (Appendix C to the *2007 Downtown Plan*). Respondents' answers to these questions were very supportive of implementing the identified projects.

Fix G Street between 3rd and 5th Avenues - Response: Definite Yes

Sixty-nine percent (69%) of survey takers said yes to reconstructing G Street between 3rd and 5th avenues; 77% said yes to reconstructing 7th Avenue between the Dena'ina Convention Center and C Street; and 64% said yes to reconstructing 6th Avenue between E Street and D Street, as recommended in the Downtown Core Streetscape Streetscape Plan.

Phase 2 - E Street Improvements - Response: Definite Yes

Funding and reconstruction of Phase 2 of the E Street Corridor Enhancement Project with pedestrian connections to Delaney Park and the Alaska Railroad Intermodal Transportation Facility was supported by 76% of survey takers; 15% chose to leave it to the Planning Team, and 9% were not supportive of moving forward with Phase 2.

Bicycle Racks, Seating, Lighting, Trash Receptacles - Response: Definite Yes

Ninety percent (90%) of survey respondents support amenities such as bicycle racks, seating, lighting, and trash receptacles being funded and maintained in Downtown.

Many of the comments for this set of questions again emphasized the desire for safe pedestrian infrastructure, and there was strong desire for bicycling infrastructure to be included in these core street designs. A few people also said they would be interested in learning more or seeing more detailed designs.

Bicycle Routes / Connections to MOA Trails - Response: Definite Yes

Several comments came in on trail connectivity and adding bicycle routes and a bike boulevard.



Cyclists in 2021. (Planning Department)



Walking the alleys on an early spring day. (Planning Department)

Online Survey Responses to Transit and Parking

Questions 12 and 13 asked about establishing a Downtown Circulator Route through the Downtown Core and if a coordinated parking strategy should be developed.

Bus Circulator Route – Yes

Most respondents (56%) said a Downtown Circulator Route should be established, and another 29% responded to allow the Planning Team to recommend.

Coordinated Parking Strategy – Definite Yes

Eighty-four percent (84%) of survey takers were supportive of developing a coordinated parking strategy to help support new residential and commercial development. Only 8% said no and another 9% responded to leave it to the Planning Team.

Core Streets Master Plan Questions

The Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Master Plan, adopted in 2007 as Appendix C to the Downtown Comprehensive Plan, gives recommendations for street upgrades in the Downtown Core (C to G streets and 7th to 3rd avenues).

Should 6th Avenue be reconstructed between E and D Streets as recommended in the Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Master Plan? Response: Yes

Figure #15 at right is the concept drawing for the 6th Avenue improvements.

Should 7th Avenue be Improved as designed from the Core Streets Streetscape Master Plan? Response: Yes

Figure #16 at right is the concept drawing for the 7th Avenue improvements.

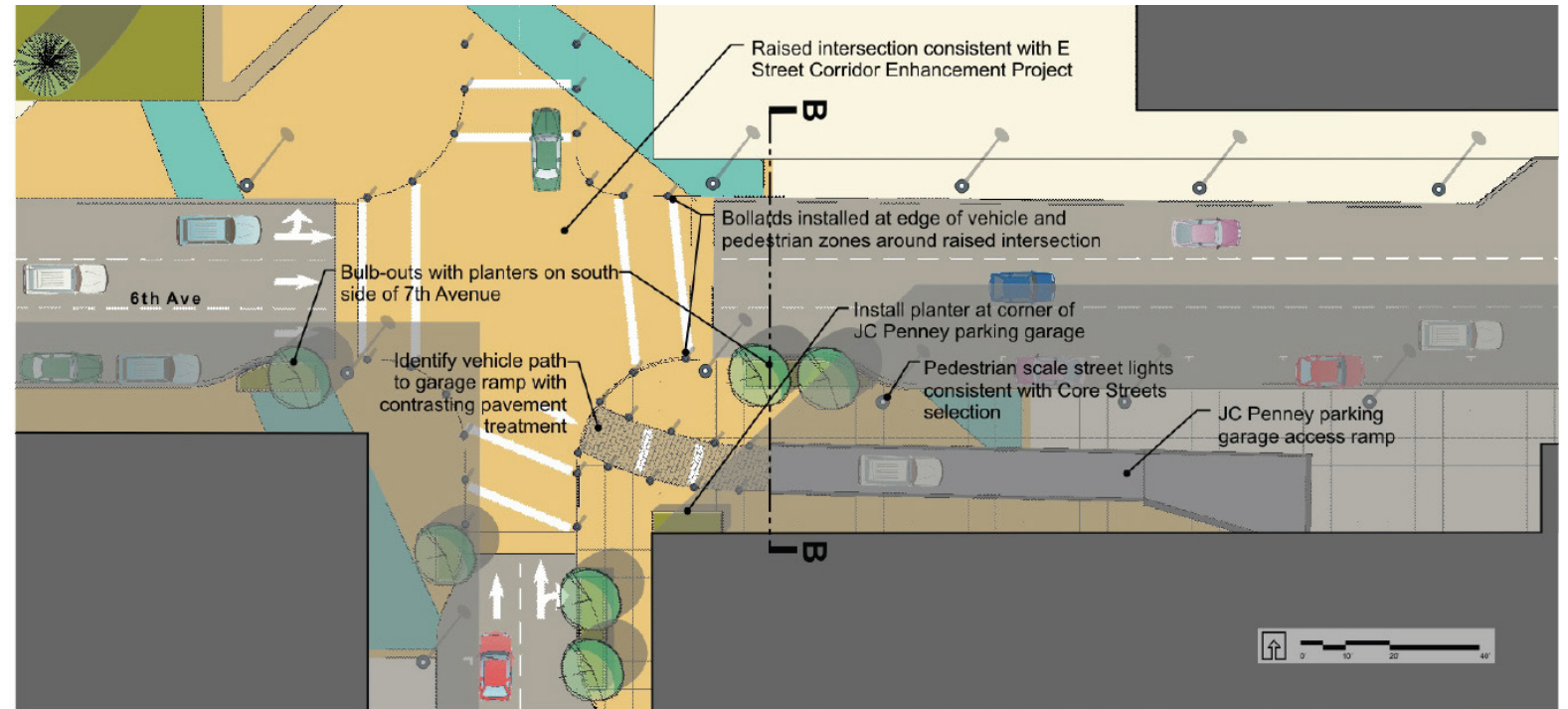


Figure #15: Proposed 6th Avenue layout

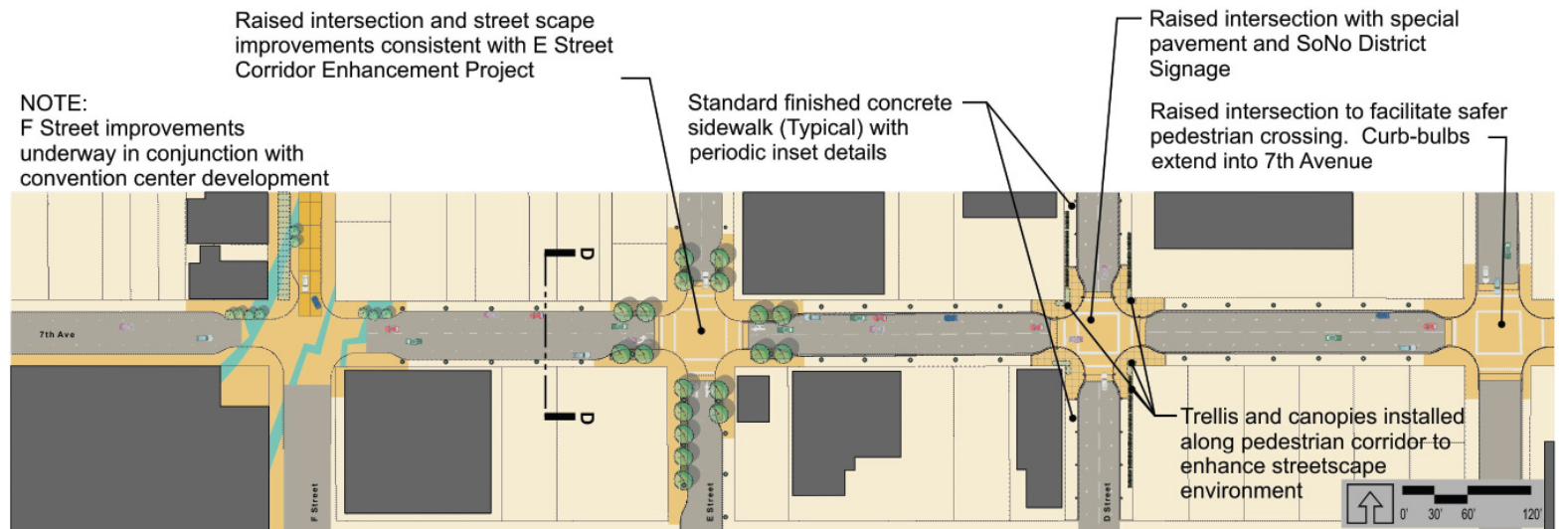


Figure #16: Proposed 7th Avenue layout

Should G Street Be Improved as Designed from the Core Streets Streetscape Master Plan? Response: Yes

G Street from 3rd – 5th Avenue Project (Implementation Action T-4): **(Figure #17)** depicts G Street from 3rd to 5th avenues improvement concept. G Street and 3rd to 5th avenues are busy pedestrian-oriented streets. Restaurants, galleries, 4th Avenue Historic District, Tourist Boutiques, federal agencies Visitor Center and offices, and stunning views draw residents and visitors alike to this area. Historic buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places include Cottage 23, Cottage 25, Alaska's Public Lands Information Center, and 4th Avenue Theatre. 327 people in the online survey answered G Street should be reconstructed.

Should 3rd Avenue Be Converted to a One-way Street?

Response: Definite No

Issues with truck traffic on 3rd Avenue came up several times during this planning process. The *2007 Downtown Plan* did not support truck traffic on 3rd Avenue and advocated for the removal of truck traffic between C and L streets. The upgrade to G Street including the pedestrian improvements at 3rd would make 3rd Avenue and G Street more pedestrian and bicycle friendly with safer access to the restaurants, commercial businesses, and housing from adjacent parking lots or on-street parking. The public agreed with this recommendation. Of the 366 survey respondents who answered this question, over 55% said no, over 25% said Leave it to the Planners. Additional comments during one-on-one meetings have expressed the same sentiment.

Recommendation: (#1) Do not convert 3rd Avenue to a one-way street. (#2) Discuss the elimination of 3rd Avenue as a truck freight route from C to L streets, consistent with the *2007 Downtown Plan*.

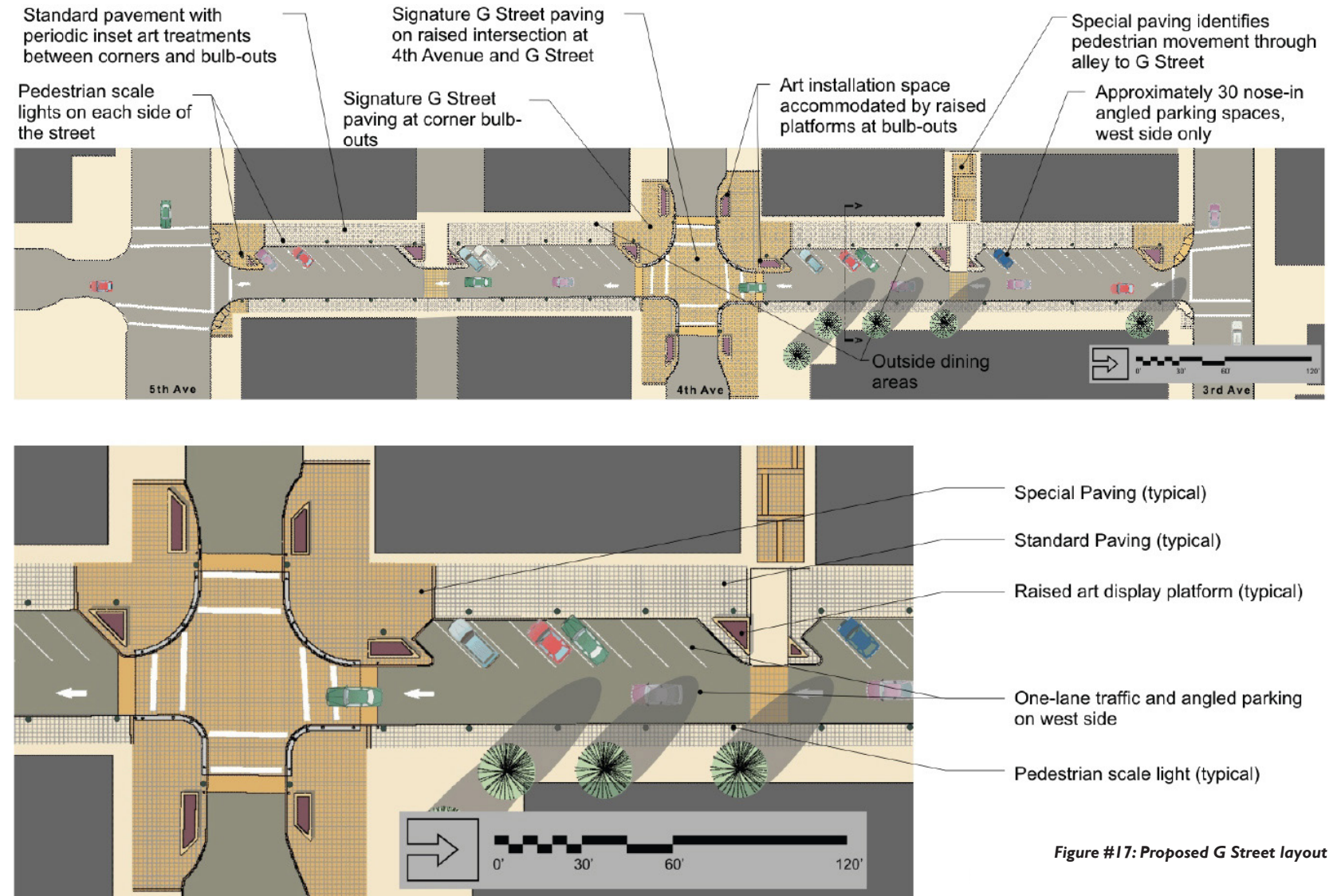


Figure #17: Proposed G Street layout

Should Traffic Signal Timing Be Adjusted to Slow Traffic Down?

Response: Definite Yes

Of the 362 who answered the question about adjusting the traffic signal timing to slow traffic down in the Downtown Core area almost 70% answered yes, with 18.23% answering No, and 12% saying “Leave it to the Planning Team to recommend.” Only 8 people skipped answering this question.

Nacto.org Guidance

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) minor and major downtown streets guidance below provides reference for downtown street speed limits based on street classifications and whether a street is 2 or 4 lanes.

Minor Streets⁸

A 20-mph speed limit on minor streets supports safe movement and contextually appropriate design on most city streets. Since minor streets tend to have either very low volumes or operate at the speed of the most cautious driver, cities can apply a category speed limit to minor streets without detailed review of street characteristics. Minor streets include physically small streets where low speeds are often already present, as well as low-vehicle-volume streets with few or no transit stops. Minor streets are often characterized by:

- A single moving vehicle lane (one- or two-way).
- Two moving vehicle lanes but fewer than 6,000 vehicles per day.
- A “minor” or “local” definition in a citywide street typology or street plan.
- Stop controls, all-way stop controls, or yield controls at multiple intersections.
- Yield streets, neighborhood streets, some residential boulevards, one-lane downtown one-way and two-lane downtown two-way streets as described in the NACTO Urban Street Design Guide, Lateral, service, or access roadways along multiway boulevards, and NACTO & public comment. Recommended speed for Minor Streets: 20-mph.

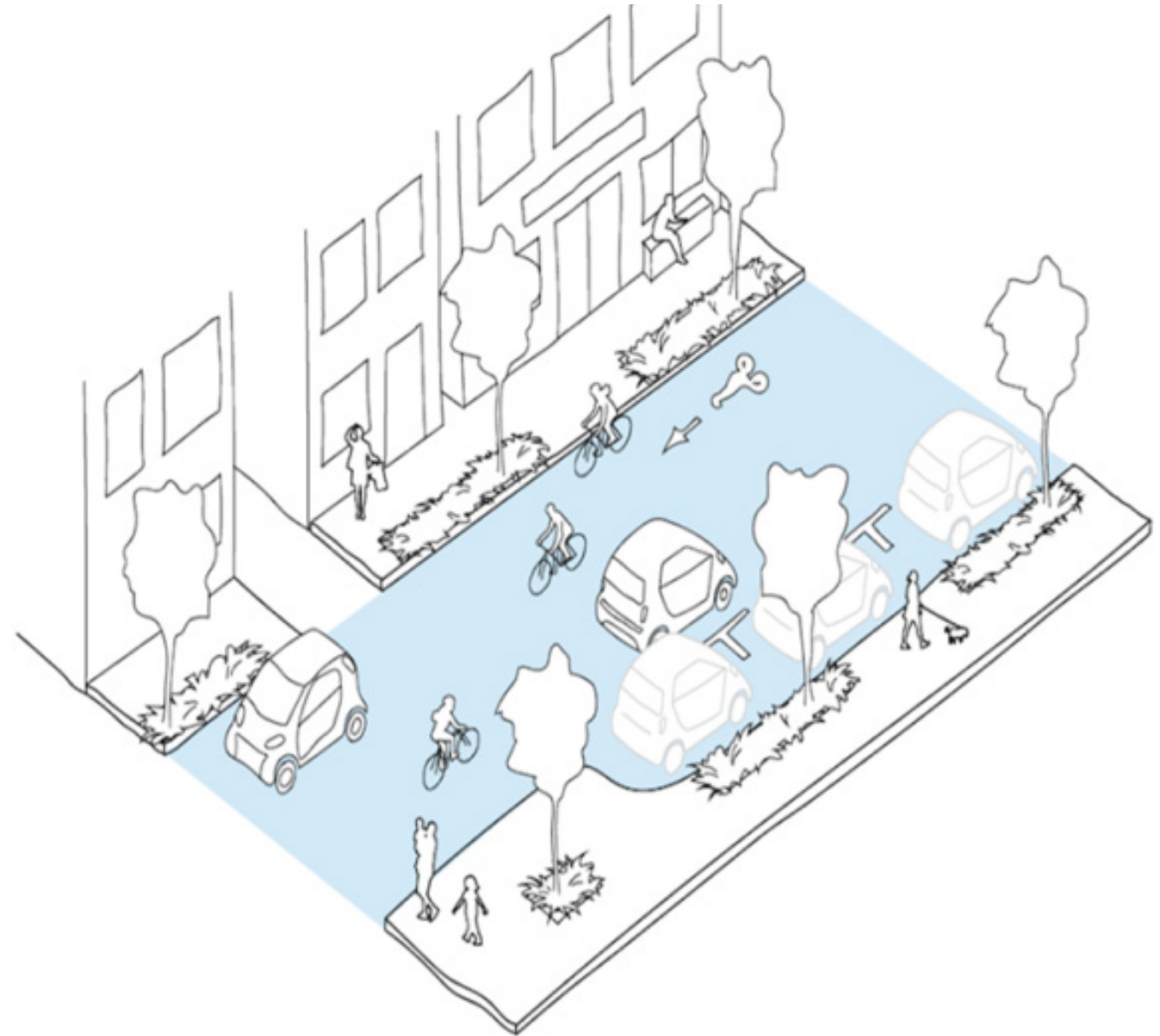


Figure #18: Minor Streets Recommendation from NACTO.org

8: [MINOR STREETS](#) | National Association of City Transportation Officials ([nacto.org](#))

Major Streets⁹

A 25-mph speed limit on urban multilane streets has demonstrated safety benefits for all users. Major streets feature a combination of high motor vehicle traffic volume, signalization of major intersections, and an inherently multi-modal street environment.

If unable to set a category speed limit for all major streets, cities should conduct a Safe Speed Study for high-priority major streets on an individual basis.

Major streets are often characterized by:

- Signalized intersections.
- Few, if any, all-way stop intersections.
- At least two formal (marked) motor vehicle traffic lanes, and usually more.
- Frequent transit stops.
- Moderate to high motor vehicle volumes.
- Multi-lane downtown one-way and downtown two-way streets, as well as many neighborhood main streets, multi-way boulevards, and transit boulevards as described in the NACTO Urban Street Design Guide.
- Recommended speed limit for Major Streets: 20-25 mph.¹⁰

Should a Downtown Circulator Route be Established?

Response: Yes

Questions 12 and 13 asked about establishing a Downtown Circulator Route through the Downtown Core and if a coordinated parking strategy should be developed. The majority of respondents (56%) said a Downtown Circulator Route should be established and another 29% responded to allow the Planning Team to recommend.

Downtown Circulator Route

The 2007 proposal for a circulator route was intended to connect the transit center to parking lots and destinations with a headway of “no more than 5 minutes.” Over half of the survey respondents thought this was still a good idea. Additionally, several comments related to increased transit capacity especially for tourists. The Downtown Engineering Study could consider this circulator bus or trolley service that would be cost-effective for year-round use.

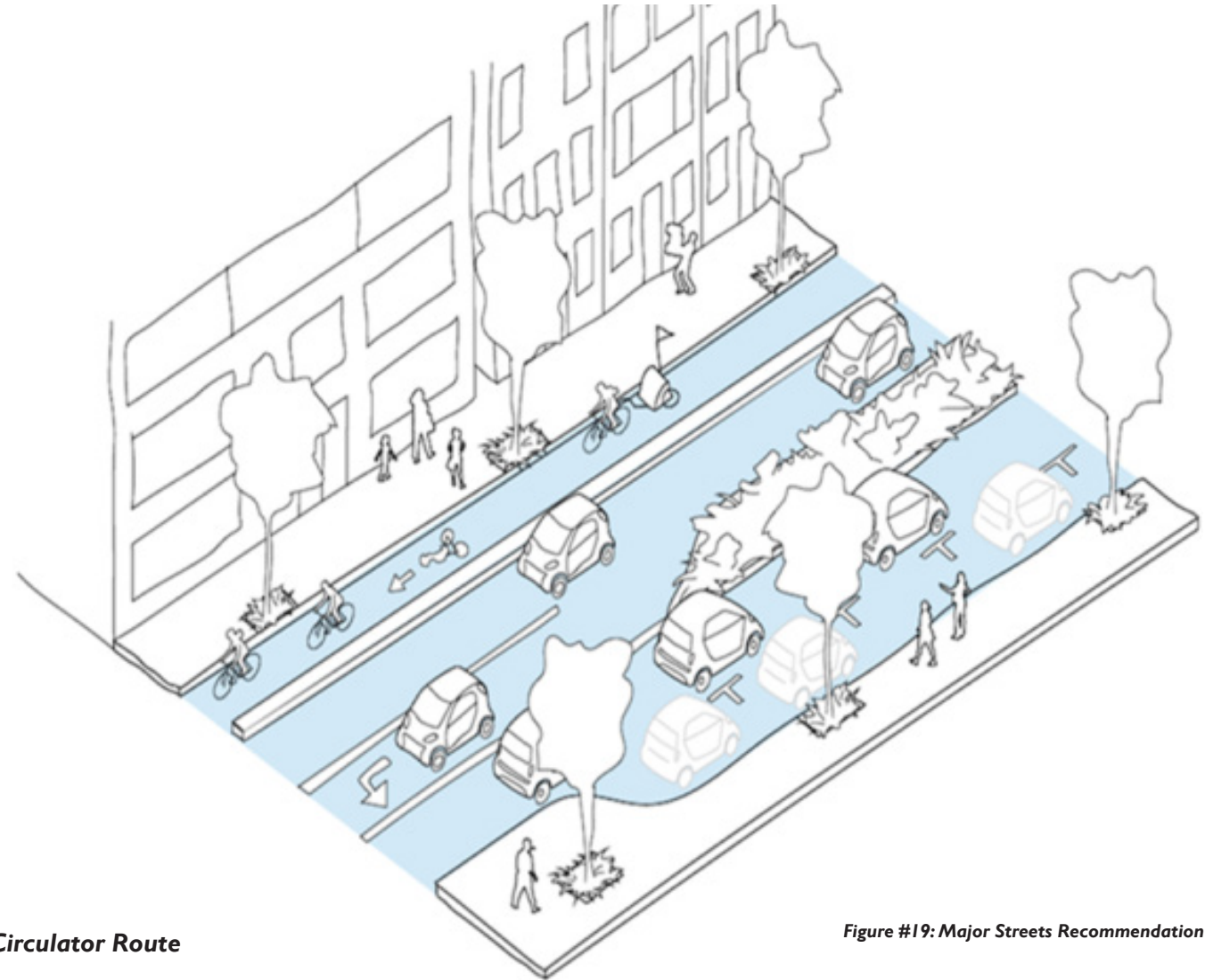


Figure #19: Major Streets Recommendation from NACTO.org

9: [MAJOR STREETS](#) | National Association of City Transportation Officials (nacto.org)

10: NATCO 2021 Policy #1: Eliminate traffic fatalities by making safety transportation's top priority - [State and Federal Policy](#) | [National Association of City Transportation Officials](#) (nacto.org)

Should a Coordinated Parking Strategy Be Developed?

Response: Definite Yes

Survey takers were 84% supportive of developing a coordinated parking strategy to help support new residential and commercial development. Only 8% said no, and another 9% responded to leave it to the Planning Team.

Parking management is one of the most important facets of an effective transportation and circulation system. Several of the parking-related Implementation Actions were completed by Anchorage Community Development Corporation from the 2007 Downtown Plan. In the one-on-one interviews, developers informed the Planning Team that available parking for leasing off site from their developments is important to providing adequate parking. Developers would like to provide parking but may not be able to on site due to cost.

Survey respondents and other public input came out in support of secure bike parking in all ACDA parking garages. Putting a freeze on any additional parking lots was mentioned. Many comments referred to too much parking in Downtown. A Downtown Circulator Route and a Coordinated Parking Strategy are elements that should also be included in the Downtown Streets Engineering Study to determine a wholistic program of solutions for meeting the transportation and circulation needs of Our Downtown.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Survey Comments

The online survey didn't specifically ask about bicycle facilities or use. However, several comments came in support of more bicycle facilities, 4th Avenue as a pedestrian-only street, a bicycle boulevard, maintaining trails for winter bike, pedestrian and other winter activities, street closures for outdoor dining. Secure, locked bike storage is an important way to support and increase bicycle usage. Respondents mentioned a need for connections to Ship Creek, Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, and the Gambell Street Greenway (proposed in the Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan).

Covered pleasant walkways were mentioned. Elimination of the de facto freeway running through Downtown was included. Steps should be taken to slow down traffic in the Downtown core. Some people love going downtown, but "traffic is way too fast." Downtown is recommended to be more pedestrian friendly for visitors, residents and the businesses who serve them.

This Anchorage Bicycle Map, which is updated each year, depicts Downtown Streets including 3rd and 4th avenues as "bicycle-friendly." None of these streets have striped bicycle lanes, nor are they signed to "share the road."

Planning, design, and funding need to be allocated before Downtown will be a bicycle-friendly place for commuters, visitors, and trail users.



Map #12: Bike routes downtown, Municipality of Anchorage.



Different users have different mobility needs downtown. (Planning Department)

Transportation and Circulation Policies and Action Items

Action Items from the *2007 Downtown Plan* covered the gamut of improvements, from street conversions, to pedestrian and bicycle improvements, increasing transit service, providing adequate parking, and expanding tourism-related capacity to provide a wholistic system to promote safety and economic development. The Core Streets Streetscape Plan, one appendix to the *2007 Downtown Plan*, also provided recommendations for street design. However, without a MOA Design Criteria Manual update to reflect the recommendations from the 2007 Downtown Core Street Master Plan, streets will continue to be developed to the DCM requirements despite the guidance from the 2007 plans.

7-1. Safe, convenient, and reliable transportation is the bedrock of a functioning city; therefore, this plan supports upgrades to the transportation system to achieve multi-modal projects and efficiencies integral to the revitalization of Downtown Anchorage.

T&C-1: Fund and complete the Downtown Streets Engineering Study. Fund, complete, and implement the recommendations of the engineering study prioritizing projects that can occur quickly without too much funding. Include the following action items in the scope of the engineering study (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11 and T&C-18).

T&C-2: Pedestrian-Friendly Streets Project - 2007 (T-12): Adjust the traffic signal timing to reduce average speeds to between 20 and 25 MPH within Downtown A to L streets and 9th to 3rd avenues. Adjust speed limit on 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, and 9th avenues to 20 MPH, 5th and 6th, to 25 MPH (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11 and T&C-18).

T&C-3: Historic 3rd Avenue Bikeway Pilot Project - Relocate large truck traffic to alternate routes and remove parking on the south side of 3rd Avenue between D Street and Christensen Drive, and create additional bicycle parking space for restaurants on 3rd Avenue (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11 and T&C-18).

T&C-4: Coastal Trail Connector to Historic 3rd Avenue Pilot Project - Stripe and sign bike lanes along 3rd Avenue from L Street to D Street and up G Street to 9th Avenue. Take parking off the south and west sides of the streets for the bike-only lanes (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11 and T&C-18).

7-2. Parking is an asset to be managed for the economic benefit of Downtown property owners, workers, residents, and visitors.

T&C-5: Maintain Low-Income Worker Relief Program - Issue reduced-rate parking garage passes and/or reduced-rate or free transit passes to anyone working in Downtown who earns \$15 per hour or less.

T&C-6: Fund a coordinated parking program within ACDA to provide real-time parking information in coordination with an updated parking study included as T&C-7.

T&C-7: Fund and publish a parking study.

7-3. Reducing single-occupant vehicles traveling to and from Downtown will provide environmental and economic benefits.

T&C-8: Fund and maintain striped bicycle lanes, install Share the Road signage on all proposed bicycle routes to encourage all-season bicycle commuting to and throughout Downtown from the trail system and on connected streets including A, C and L Streets, 5th, 6th, and 3rd Avenues (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11 and T&C-18).

T&C-9: Create a public outreach program for commuters from the MatSu Valley, Girdwood, South Anchorage, and Eagle River to encourage use of ride or van share to reduce single-occupant vehicles in Downtown.

T&C-10: Prioritize and fund secured bicycle parking throughout Downtown. Secured bicycle parking sites should be considered as an element of the Downtown Streets Engineering Study and should be included in several parking garages or with at-grade parking lots around town (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9 and T&C-18).

T&C-11: Prioritize and fund snow plowing of all bicycle lanes and trails leading into and out of Downtown. Priority snow plowing of bicycle lanes increases bicycle commuting year-round and supports all income sectors.

T&C-12: Consider and fund 15-minute transit headways to encourage transit ridership.

T&C-13: Plan and fund summertime trolley services from specific locations in and around Downtown, including hotels and motels, hostels, and Airbnbs; 4th Avenue Mushing District; Ship Creek area; Anchorage Museum; G Street Arts District; and Delaney Park Strip. Consider offsetting the costs with a small ride fee.

T&C-14: Fund and update the PM&E DCM consistent with the recommendations of the Downtown Core Streets Master Plan to provide clear direction on the design of streets as they are improved or rights-of-ways are redeveloped. Use context sensitive design for all streets in Downtown when adequate right-of-way exists to accommodate the 2007 Downtown Core Streets Master Plan design guidelines.

7-4. The MOA should prioritize project selection and development of Downtown street and transit projects that provide environmental and economic benefits to all demographic communities within Anchorage.

(NATCO Policy #6 - [State and Federal Policy | National Association of City Transportation Officials \(nacto.org\)](#))

T&C-15: Fund, Design, and Complete Historic 3rd Avenue Reconstruction lighting upgrade, wider sidewalks, remove parking both sides from D to L streets, complete Core Streets pedestrian upgrades at F and G streets. Replace staircases with long-term solutions at H and K streets, stripe and sign bike route along 3rd Avenue, G Street and Christensen Street to make continuous trail connection to Ship Creek Trail and ARRC Rail redevelopment area (works with T&C-17).

T&C-16: Fund, Design, and Complete G Street improvements proposed in the 2007 Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Master Plan (works with T&C 16).

T&C-17: Consider the conversion of 5th and 6th Avenues as proposed in the 2007 *Downtown Plan* as a study element of the Downtown Streets Engineering Study (works with T&C-1).

T&C-18: Prioritize infrastructure funding and improvements in the Focused Development Areas, Cultural Districts and in support of Opportunity Sites to achieve the goals of this plan as identified on the Revitalization Map included in Chapter 3.

Why Bicycling is in Demand in Denmark

- 9 out of 10 people in Denmark own a bike!
- Danes cycle 1.6 km per day!
- Cycling accounts for 25% of all personal transport within 5 km (approx. 3 miles)!
- During the 1920s and 1930s, the bicycle became a widespread symbol of equality and freedom in Denmark!
- Even in the snow, sleet, or freezing cold, you'll see more people biking to their destinations than you will see taking public transportation!

[Healthy Tips you can Learn from Scandinavians \(theculturetrip.com\)](#)



People biking in Denmark. (Cycling Embassy of Denmark)

CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Overview

This chapter compiles all the action items into one place for ease of review and implementation. This chapter should be referred to when agencies and partners are preparing a list of projects for their annual capital improvement programs.

Early Action Items

Several Early Action Items were proposed in the Introduction or Chapter I of this plan. The action items recommended for Early Action came from public input and proposals by the Utility Subcommittee and the Urban Design Subcommittee.

Tracking Plan Success

The 2007 Downtown Plan recommended a coordination process and regular review of the status of the plan. This plan update also recommends a coordination process to be led by a project manager hired into the Mayor’s Office, or the Planning Department to oversee timely and ongoing funding and completion of the action items. The coordination process would involve several agencies and partners committed to this plan’s success.

Implementation Time Frame

Time frames are approximate and dependent on prioritization, funding and the leadership role assumed by either agencies or partners to bring an action item to completion.

Goals, Strategies, Policies, and Action Items

The goals, strategies, policies, and action items are intended to work together to create new economic development opportunities in Our Downtown. A primary strategy of this plan is to *Focus the Effort*. This strategy was a primary recommendation from both the OKC delegation and SGA as discussed in detail in Chapters 3-7.

Focus the Effort

This plan recommends focusing the effort into Focused Development Areas, Cultural Districts, and Opportunity Sites. (See the Revitalization Map in Chapter 3). The MOA has already achieved some redevelopment success in the A Few Good Blocks Area of 5th-9th Avenues and I to K Streets. This plan advocates that focus continues forward.



New Development downtown. (ACDA partnerships)

Action Item Numbering

- EA** - Early Action Item (Chapter 1)
- RVS** - Revitalization Strategy (Chapter 3)
- LU** - Land Use and Economic Development (Chapter 4)
- QOL** - Quality of Life (Chapter 5)
- UD** - Urban Design (Chapter 6)
- T&C** - Transportation and Circulation (Chapter 7)

Action Item Time Frame

Actions are assigned a time frame intended to guide funding, agency or department priorities, Assembly and Mayor priorities. This is a 20-year plan with a large focus on completing the Early Action Items first to enable the community to realize some big gains in Downtown.

Action Item Cost

Action Items are only estimated in this plan. An in-depth estimate of projects would need to be completed for each to be funded and completed.

\$ = <\$100,000

\$\$ = \$100,000—\$500,000

\$\$\$ = > \$500,00

Action Item Proposed Implementers

The following proposed implementers will provide a wide range of experience and expertise. Some implementers may just be cheerleaders and advocates for the projects, while others may be the responsible party to provide funding and direct completion of the project.

MOA Agencies or Departments

- ACDA:** Anchorage Community Development Authority
- AHPC:** Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission
- AMATS:** Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions
- APD:** Anchorage Police Department
- GAC:** Geotechnical Advisory Commission
- Parks:** Parks and Recreation Department
- Planning:** Planning Department
- PM&E:** Project Management and Engineering Department
- Traffic:** Traffic Engineering Department
- Transit:** Public Transportation Department/People Mover

Community Partners

- Visit Anchorage:** Anchorage Convention & Visitors Bureau
- CHAMBER:** Anchorage Chamber of Commerce
- ADOT&PF:** Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
- AEDC:** Anchorage Economic Development Corporation
- AIDEA:** Alaskan Industrial Development and Export Authority
- AHFC:** Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
- Museum:** Anchorage Museum
- ARRC:** Alaska Railroad Corporation
- ADP:** Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Inc.
- DTCC:** Downtown Community Council
- FVCC:** Fairview Community Council
- NVE:** Native Village of Eklutna

Recommended Early Action Items

EA-1: Continue to Invest in the Few Good Blocks Area

Concentrate on an expansion of the pilot project area of the 2016 Smart Growth Few Good Blocks to include (9th to 2nd avenues and G to M streets). Elizabeth Place, Block 96 Lofts, 7th & L, 6th Avenue Hotel Project, 8th and I MOA properties, proposed 2nd Avenue project all within this area. Use the Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan land capacity determination to calculate the existing and up-front utility needs and upgrades. Seek funding to advance a utility survey and upgrade project in the Few Good Blocks through FEMA/HUD/CDBG or other agency funding. This project would further catalyze mixed-use and residential housing projects to help address housing and economic recovery (works with RVS-3 and LU-1).

EA-2: Develop a Downtown focused Capital Improvement Program

Work with each utility provider and in the MOA CIB/CIP to prioritize the Few Good Blocks Area for funding and upgrades by establishing a Utility Coordination Subcommittee that meets quarterly or as needed. The MOA would provide coordination of the committee either through the Planning or Project Management & Engineering departments (works with RVS-1).

EA-3: Create the Utility Coordination Subcommittee Liaison within Planning and/or PM&E

Establish the process to engage utility providers and developers at pre-application meetings for proposed projects in the Downtown area early in the exploratory phase of projects to identify missing or needed off-site improvements (works with RVS-1).

EA-4: Fund and Complete the Downtown Zoning Districts Update

Seek funding to complete the update to the Downtown Zoning Districts. Use LU-12, LU-18, and LU-20, UD-1, UD-2, UD-5 and QOL-14, along with specific recommendations from the Urban Design Subcommittee process. (See Appendix for the subcommittee's reports and recommendations.)

EA-5: Identify and Establish New Sources of Funding

Work to identify and establish new sources of revenue to assist in filling the financial gap (works with RVS-3 and LU-1). Possible sources of funding could include:

- State financing agencies, such as AIDEA and AHFC.
- Local funding, such as MESA payments by ACDA.
- Local, state, federal, and foundation funding to capitalize a Housing Trust Fund.
- Infrastructure funding, such as MAPS from Oklahoma City.

EA-6: Fairview/East Downtown Residential Property Tax Abatement

Renew both the Fairview/East Downtown tax abatement area for at least another 10 years; it is set to sunset in 2024 (A.O. 2014-71(S)) and the Downtown Housing Tax Incentive and Exemption (A.O. 2019-12 Amended) set to sunset in 2024. Consider extending the length of time for the abatement to 25 years and add mixed-use housing and commercial projects as eligible. When amending these timeframes, reduce the complicated and expensive submittal process incorporated in Chapter 12.35, by modeling the application process outlined in Downtown Housing Tax Incentive and Exemption ordinance (works with LU-3).

EA-7: Fund and Complete the Downtown Anchorage Streets Engineering Study

Seek funding for and complete the study with AMATS funding. To be completed by PM&E or the Planning Department with technical support from Public Works, MOA Traffic, AMATS and DOT&PF. The study would include street conversions, street closures, the Bike Boulevard concept, and Coastal Trail connectors (overlaps with T&C-1, T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11, and T&C-18).



6th & Cordova. (Planning Department)

EA-8: Historic and Cultural District Information Update

Complete the study to determine a recommendation on historic or cultural districts and contributing and non-contributing resources to complete Local Landmark Register historic or cultural district nominations for approval by the Anchorage Assembly (works with QOL-20).

Action Item Table

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
RVS-1	Prioritize capital improvement projects (CIP) in Downtown for the MOA, AWWU and other utility providers, DOT&PF, and PM&E to align agency CIPs with the development recommendations in the Focused Development Areas, Cultural Districts, and Opportunity Sites proposed in Chapter 3. This will leverage capital investments in areas where development is occurring. A review of this plan and input from private-property developers will be important to this annual CIP process.	Annually		Community Development partnering with PM&E, DTCC, ADP, ADOT&PF, ACDA, and Utility providers
RVS-2	Use the new policies adopted by this plan when the update to the 2020 Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan is undertaken.	Within 3 years		Planning
RVS-3	Create the Downtown New Investments Program. This may include establishing a Point of Contact within the MOA or Redevelopment Agency tasked with interacting with the financial and lending community and developers. The intent is to assist potential developers and investors by obtaining the most up-to-date information, contacts, resources, relationships, and local business endorsements the project may need to obtain funding and support for new housing and business proposals.	Within 1 year - 2022		Community Development, Planning, MOA Finance, MOA RED, ACDA
RVS-4	Establish the GAP Housing Trust Fund to be used to fill the gap between incentives and costs for new or redeveloped housing (works with RVS-3).	2022-2023	\$\$\$	Community Development, Planning, MOA Finance, MOA RED, ACDA
LU-1	Fund and Establish the Downtown Development Project Manager position within the Community Development Department to oversee and champion the ongoing implementation of this plan. The Program will be responsible for coordination of projects and may coordinate with the Downtown New Investments Point of Contact to facilitate implementation of this Plan (works with RVS-3).	Ongoing – Start at plan adoption	\$\$	Community Development may work with ACDA
LU-2	Fund and complete the 2040 LUP Housing Needs Update (LUP Action 4-16) to determine the capacity for affordable and market-rate housing options possible for Downtown.	2022	\$	Planning
LU-3	Amend Chapter 12.35 to incorporate a longer time frame for new commercial development and to create a streamlined application process.	2022		Assessor, Assembly
LU-4	Create land assembly and site control strategies through a public process managed by the Redevelopment Authority.	2024	\$	Planning, Community Development, RED, ACDA
LU-5	Create guidelines for short-term rentals in Downtown.	2024		Assessor, Assembly

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
LU-6	Establish the Municipal Downtown Capital Improvements Tax Zone, with Downtown business and property owner approval, to fund specific infrastructure improvements in support new housing in Downtown.	Ongoing	\$	DTCC, Assessor, ADP
LU-7	Incentivize the reuse and renovation of existing buildings to reduce landfill impacts and costs to help retain the historic fabric of Downtown.	2023		HPC, Planning
LU-8	Provide funding assistance and support to help maintain the AEDC Business Resources Program developed to encourage new and growing businesses in Anchorage.	Ongoing	\$	Assembly
LU-9	Encourage and incentivize civic and office employment in Downtown to retain all large employment sectors.	Ongoing		Assessor, Assembly
LU-10	Adopt an Idle Property Tax Abatement Program or similar program to catalyze redevelopment. Consider using the Ohio Idle Property Tax Abatement Program as a model to spur the redevelopment or shared use of excess parking lots. An IPTAP is a program that provides tax incentives for properties in predevelopment.	2024		Assessor, Assembly
LU-11	Consider the following to be included in the Downtown code update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow multifamily residential and live/work spaces in all districts. Allow the placement of active interiors to face the public realm on lower floors of buildings, conversely using the interior for storage. Allow for smaller-scale, light industrial production uses such as cottage crafts, maker spaces, studio spaces, work-live spaces that can fit into and contribute to activities and attractions in the Downtown urban mixed-use context. Incentivize developments with active ground floors. Provide a framework for addressing conflicts between nighttime and residential uses. Development protections in identified areas of Downtown may be required to address late-night impacts such as noise while providing stronger buffers for existing and future uses. The implementation of policies intending to increase residents in Downtown will lead to increased conflicts unless a thoughtful approach is established. 	2023-2024	\$	Planning
LU-12	Inform the public of the seismic zones in Downtown through the Seismic Hazard Map and Geographic Information Systems data available from the MOA.	Ongoing		GAC, Community Development
LU-13	Use recommendations from the 2013 Seismic Risk Assessment and the All Hazards Mitigation Plan for development requirements in seismic ground failure hazard zone #5 when the Downtown Zoning Districts are updated (works with LU-11).	2022-2023		GAC, Planning, Community Development

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
Q0L-1	Continue to promote Downtown funding marketing and branding efforts to correspond with the current demographic and economic elements influencing visitor and resident desires seeking a Downtown experience. Design marketing and branding programming consistent with the Downtown vernacular to create world-wide recognizable logos, publications, websites, and other print and online media. Fund and implement marketing outreach to increase Downtown's hotel supply and occupancy rates by marketing Downtown as a winter destination to tour and cruise operators. Provide parking and other incentives to hotel operators.	Ongoing	\$	Visit Anchorage, Chamber, ADP, Parks, Anchorage Museum
Q0L-2	Include honorary naming of parks after Alaska Native Tribal places or leaders like Peratrovich Park.	Ongoing	\$	Parks, Anchorage Museum
Q0L-3	Market Downtown's exceptional arts and cultural facilities including the Anchorage Museum, Anchorage SEED Lab, Performing Arts Center, and Alaska Public Lands Information Center in addition to the local art galleries and boutiques.	Ongoing	\$	Visit Anchorage, Chamber, ADP, Parks, Anchorage Museum, Federal Agencies, and the PAC
Q0L-4	Develop signage distinct from the rest of Anchorage, reflective of Alaskan culture and the Downtown cultural districts including the Mushing District on 4th Avenue, Anchorage Museum Design District, and the proposed 2nd to 4th Avenues historic district identified in the Anchorage Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan.	Ongoing	\$	HPC, Museum, ADP, Visit Anchorage, Fur Rondy, DTCC
Q0L-5	Determine buildings, sites, or other locations to direct pedestrians and bicyclists to in case of an emergency. Determine the locations where signs and audible warning systems can be installed to direct pedestrians and bicyclists to these locations. This action may be part of the wayfinding project. Distribute online and through social media the information developed by the wayfinding program.	2023	\$	MOA EOC, Community Development, Planning
Q0L-6	Fund, design and install the new sign and wayfinding system throughout Downtown. The design will be consistent with the Downtown vernacular. Certain existing interpretive panels and signs will be replaced. This may include an update to the historic walking tour map with information from the 2010 Historic Property Survey and indigenous place name information from Shem Pete's Alaska. The historic walking tour may also be included on the Alaska App.	2023-2024	\$\$	DTCC, ADP, AEDC, Parks, Visit Anchorage
Q0L-7	Continue to support ADP efforts for a Clean, Safe, Vibrant Downtown including funding of the ADP Business Improvement District.	Ongoing		ADP
Q0L-8	Fund and maintain MOA Community Service Patrols in Downtown.	Ongoing		APD

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
Q0L-9	Maintain a safe and clean environment by installing regularly spaced trash and recycling bins.	Ongoing		ADP
Q0L-10	Fund year-round street cleaning.	Ongoing		MOA M&O
Q0L-11	Fund, determine locations, install and maintain self-cleaning public restrooms.	2023	\$	ADP, Parks
Q0L-12	Continue implementation of a comprehensive street lighting upgrade program to increase visibility and safety on all streets.	Ongoing		PM&E
Q0L-13	Employ certain Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principals related to landscaping placement, access and maintaining line of sight to ensure places are used as they were intended.	Ongoing		Planning, APD
Q0L-14	Fund and provide support to planning and promoting Winter City themed events, shoulder season events, summer concerts, and parades.	Ongoing		ADP, Parks
Q0L-15	Plan and fund cultural and recreational activities for and by youth.	Ongoing		ADP, Parks
Q0L-16	Fund and implement the Town Square Park Master Plan.	Ongoing	\$\$	Assembly, Parks
Q0L-17	Consider the promotion of a new weekend market in Downtown.	Ongoing		ADP, Parks
Q0L-18	Adopt in the permitting processes the long-term use of low-traffic-volume streets to provide spaces for activities, dining and other special events as a normal event planning function supported by this plan.	2022-2023		Community Development, Traffic, ADP
Q0L-19	Promote the 13 National Register of Historic Places listed buildings through social media, tours, and the interpretive project.	Ongoing	\$	HPC
Q0L-20	Promote the use of the Anchorage Local Landmark Register in websites, interpretive programs, social media and other outreach to encourage nominations of historic and cultural resources to it (maintained by the MOA).	Ongoing	\$	HPC
Q0L-21	Review the action items in the 4NHPP to prioritize grant applications and project completions.	Ongoing		HPC
UD-1	Consider a Downtown-specific sign code or sign code section in Chapter 11: DOWNTOWN using the recommendations and best practices from other cities as recommended by the Urban Design Subcommittee (works with LU-12).	2022-2023		Planning

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
UD-2	Fund and complete a utility capacity study for Downtown as recommended by the Utilities Subcommittee, or GAP analysis. Include all utility providers and the MOA in this capacity study. Determine upgrades to facilities to support new technologies, growing demand for higher speed internet, and new housing and businesses. Publish the results of the utility capacity study and any upgrade plans or recommendations.	2023-2024	\$	Utility Providers, Planning, Community Development
UD-3	Fund and complete a land capacity study collaboratively with the utilities study. Use the study to determine the carrying capacity of available vacant or under-developed lands. Consider A Few Good Blocks 2021 as the pilot project area.	2022-2023	\$	Planning, Community Development
UD-4	Fund, construct and maintain ice-free sidewalks in areas of high pedestrian use. Determine the best agency or group to maintain the ice-free sidewalk system and provide the resources to that agency or group through a BID or other funding method.	Ongoing	\$\$	DT property owners, ADP
UD-5	Incorporate the recommended street typologies from this chapter into any updates to the Anchorage Bowl Street Typologies study and map (works with AMATS Street Typology Study to kick-off in 2023).	2023-2024		AMATS, Planning
T&C-1	Fund and complete the Downtown Streets Engineering Study. Fund, complete, and implement the recommendations of the engineering study prioritizing projects that can occur quickly without too much funding. Include the following action items in the scope of the engineering study (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11 and T&C-18).	2022-2025	\$\$	AMATS, Planning, Traffic, DOT&PF
T&C-2	Pedestrian-Friendly Streets Project - 2007 (T-12): Adjust the traffic signal timing to reduce average speeds to between 20 and 25 MPH within Downtown A to L streets and 9th to 3rd avenues. Adjust speed limit on 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, and 9th avenues to 20 MPH, 5th and 6th, to 25 MPH (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11 and T&C-18).	2022-2023	\$	AMATS, Planning, Traffic, DOT&PF
T&C-3	Historic 3rd Avenue Bikeway Pilot Project - Relocate large truck traffic to alternate routes and remove parking on the south side of 3rd Avenue between D Street and Christensen Drive, and create additional bicycle parking space for restaurants on 3rd Avenue (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11 and T&C-18).	2022-2023	\$	AMATS, Planning, Traffic, DOT&PF
T&C-4	Coastal Trail Connector to Historic 3rd Avenue Pilot Project - Stripe and sign bike lanes along 3rd Avenue from L Street to D Street and up G Street to 9th Avenue. Take parking off the south and west sides of the streets for the bike-only lanes (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11 and T&C-18).	2022-2023	\$	AMATS, Planning, Traffic

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
T&C-5	Maintain Low-Income Worker Relief Program - Issue reduced-rate parking garage passes and/or reduced-rate or free transit passes to anyone working in Downtown who earns \$20 or \$25 per hour or less.	Ongoing	\$	TRANSIT, ACDA
T&C-6	Fund a coordinated parking program within ACDA to provide real-time parking information in coordination with an updated parking study included as T&C-7.	2023 and Ongoing	\$	ACDA
T&C-7	Fund and publish a parking study.	2024	\$	ACDA
T&C-8	Fund and maintain striped bicycle lanes, install Share the Road signage on all proposed bicycle routes to encourage all-season bicycle commuting to and throughout Downtown from the trail system and on connected streets including A, C and L Streets, 5th, 6th, and 3rd Avenues (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, T&C-11 and T&C-18).	2024 and Ongoing	\$\$	PM&E, MOA M&O, DOT&PF, Traffic
T&C-9	Create a public outreach program for commuters from the MatSu Valley, Girdwood, South Anchorage, and Eagle River to encourage use of ride or van share to reduce single-occupant vehicles in Downtown.	Ongoing	\$	TRANSIT
T&C-10	Prioritize and fund secured bicycle parking throughout Downtown Secured bicycle parking sites should be considered as an element of the Downtown Streets Engineering Study and should be included in several parking garages or with at-grade parking lots around town (works with T&C-2, T&C-3, T&C-4, T&C-7, T&C-9, and T&C-18).	Ongoing	\$	ACDA, Private parking lots owners and managers
T&C-11	Prioritize and fund snowplowing of all bicycle lanes and trails leading into and out of Downtown Priority snow plowing of bicycle lanes increases bicycle commuting year-round and supports all income sectors.	Ongoing	\$	MOA M&O
T&C-12	Consider and fund 15-minute transit headways to encourage transit ridership.	Ongoing	\$\$	TRANSIT
T&C-13	Plan and fund summertime trolley services from specific locations in and around Downtown, including hotels and motels, hostels, and Airbnbs; 4th Avenue Mushing District; Ship Creek area; Anchorage Museum; G Street Arts District; and Delaney Park Strip. Consider offsetting the costs with a small ride fee.	Ongoing Seasonal	\$	TRANSIT, Visit Anchorage, Private Operator, ACDA
T&C-14	Fund and Update the PM&E Design Criteria Manual (DCM) consistent with the recommendations of the Downtown Core Streets Master Plan to provide clear direction on the design of streets as they are improved or rights-of-ways are redeveloped.	2025	\$	Assembly, PM&E

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
T&C-15	Fund, design, and complete Historic 3rd Avenue Reconstruction Lighting upgrade, wider sidewalks, remove parking both sides from D to L streets, complete Core Streets pedestrian upgrades at F and G streets. Replace staircases with long-term solutions at H and K streets, stripe and sign bike route along 3rd Avenue, G Street and Christensen Street to make continuous trail connection to Ship Creek Trail and ARRC Rail redevelopment area (works with T&C-17).	2023-2025	\$\$	AMATS, PM&E
T&C-16	Fund, design, and complete G Street improvements proposed in the 2007 Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Plan (works with T&C 16).	2023-2025	\$\$	AMATS, PM&E
T&C-17	Consider the conversion of 5th and 6th avenues as proposed in the 2007 Downtown Plan as a study element of the Downtown Streets Engineering Study (works with T&C-1).	2022-2023	\$	AMATS, Planning, Traffic, DOT&PF
T&C-18	Prioritize infrastructure funding and improvements in the Focused Development Areas, Cultural Districts and in support of Opportunity Sites to achieve the goals of this plan as identified on the Revitalization Map included in Chapter 3.	Ongoing	\$	AMATS, Planning, Traffic, DOT&PF

Plan References

The following references include information on a wide range of topics discussed in the plan. All were provided in a hyperlink in the body of the plan but are also included here for ease of information.

Chapter 1

- * [OKC-Report_FINAL.pdf \(aedcweb.com\)](#)
- * [Why It's Important to Have Women in Your Life Who Succeed - archive \(darlingmagazine.org\)](#)
- * [Microsoft Word - SGA Workshop-MOA FINAL Report-6-8-16.docx \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [Safety First - Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Ltd.](#)
- * [Live.Work.Play. - AEDC \(aedcweb.com\)](#)
- * [Property Taxes Downtown Improvement District Assessment \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [Downtown Edge](#)
- * [Publications Ship Creek Framework Plan \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [About MAPS3 | City of OKC](#)
- * [Anchorage Employment Report: June Issue - AEDC \(aedcweb.com\)](#)
- * [Open & Shut: A convenience store, a cocktail bar and a thrift shop to help charities will all open downtown, plus an Anchorage events planner calls it quits \(adn.com\)](#)
- * [Our Downtown Anchorage](#)
- * [Anchorage 2040 Anchorage 2040 Implementation Projects \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [Downtown Zoning Districts: Microsoft Word - Chapter 11 \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [Qualified Opportunity Zones In Anchorage, Alaska \(realized1031.com\)](#)
- * [Anchorage HPP.pdf \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [2019-04 hlb master plan_final_4-10-2019.pdf \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [Anchorage 2040 Action 3-2 \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [2021 AEDC Economic Forecast Report – AEDC \(aedcweb.com\)](#)
- * <https://www.outsideonline.com/adventure-travel/destinations/best-towns-2017/>
- * [Alaska Tourism Officials Say The State Is Open for Business | TravelPulse](#)
- * [Independent travelers pour into Anchorage as summer tourism season begins - Alaska PublicMedia](#)
- * [Anchorage employers have jobs, but few applicants, as the economy picks up. Where have workers gone? \(adn.com\)](#)

- * [Can a new housing development help pave the way for commercial growth in Downtown Anchorage? - Alaska Public Media](#)
- * [AEDC | Helping grow a prosperous, sustainable and diverse economy in Anchorage. \(aedcweb.com\)](#)
- * [www.ourdowntownanchorage.com or www.muni.org.](#)
- * [Clean, Safe and Vital: Facebook Watch](#)

Chapter 2

- * [Key Bank Building in downtown Anchorage under goes big remodel \(alaskanewssource.com\)](#)
- * [Present \(acda.net\)](#)
- * [Benefits of Cultural Heritage Tourism \(sd.gov\)](#)
- * [Where can digital nomads work? Croatia, Dubai, Estonia and tropical islands \(cnbc.com\)](#)
- * [www.Digitalnomads.world](#)
- * [* 0369 20 AEDC 2020-3-Year-Outlook_V5.pdf \(aedcweb.com\)](#)
- * [How Culture and Heritage Tourism Boosts More Than A Visitor Economy \(mytravelresearch.com\)](#)
- * [Planning Department Anch 2015 Centennial Plan \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [§ 12.35.050. Deteriorated property., Chapter 12.35. ECO-NOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROPERTY*, Title 12. TAXATION, Code of Ordinances, Anchorage \(elaws.us\)](#)
- * [§ 12.35.040. Economic development property., Chapter 12.35. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROPERTY*, Title 12. TAXATION, Code of Ordinances, Anchorage \(elaws.us\)](#)
- * [CPACE Financing: What is it and how does it work? \(liveoakbank.com\)](#)
- * [BILLS-115hr1enr.pdf \(congress.gov\)](#)

Chapter 3

- * [Cultural Districts_0.pdf \(americansforthearts.org\)](#)
- * [‘Only Connect’ - The social, economic and environmental benefits of cultural heritage](#)
- * [AnchorageHPP.pdf \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [THERAIL - DowntownEdge](#)
- * [What is land use planning | Planning Tank](#)
- * [Expanding Your Business | Learn about Alaska business resources at AEDCweb.com](#)

Chapter 4

- * [MINORSTREETS | National Association of City Transportation Officials \(nacto.org\) and](#)
- * [MAJORSTREETS | National Association of City Transportation Officials \(nacto.org\)](#)
- * [THE RAIL - Downtown Edge](#)
- * [Publications Ship Creek Framework Plan \(muni.org\)](#)
- * [ao2006-046_\(s\).pdf\(muni.org\)](#)
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OUR DOWNTOWN

The Heart of Anchorage

A Project to Implement the Downtown Comprehensive Plan