



Municipality of Anchorage

Planning Department

Memorandum



G.1.

Date: December 6, 2021
To: Planning and Zoning Commission
Through:  Michelle J. McNulty, ACIP, Director
From:  Kristine Bunnell, Manager, Long-Range Planning Division
Subject: Case No. 2021-0119 – *Our Downtown – Downtown District Plan 2021*

Request

The Planning and Zoning Commission is scheduled to take public comment on the public hearing draft *Our Downtown – Downtown District Plan 2021 (DT Plan 2021)* on Monday, December 6, 2021. Included for your review are the public hearing draft Plan document, comment/response table. Staff recommendations and amendments for consideration by the Commission are included in this memo. After the public hearing closes, the Commission will deliberate the matter and forward its recommendations to the Assembly for consideration. The *DT Plan 2021* updates the 2007 Downtown Comprehensive Plan as directed by code in AMC 21.03.070.B.2. The *DT Plan 2021* will be adopted as an element of the comprehensive plan in the Anchorage Bowl section (AMC 21.01.080) in Table 21.01-1: Comprehensive Plan Elements.

Background

AMC 21.03.070.B.2. directs a “targeted review” of comprehensive plans in 10-year intervals. The 2007 *Downtown Comprehensive Plan* was updated pursuant to code. The planning process considered four contributing factors in the plan update as directed by Title 21. The latest demographic and economic information, land use decisions relevant to the Downtown area, and contributing plans or studies.

In-depth trends were reported considering the four contributing factors. This Trends Report discussed each factor and how they may influence the plan update. The Trends Report was published online at www.ourdowntownanchorage.com.

Economic and Demographic Information

Economic information considered in the Trends Report was completed during the height of the 2020 Covid-19 shutdown. Forecasting in job growth, business retention, and new services for Downtown remains positive despite the shutdown and gradual rebound of our economy. Downtown and Anchorage as a whole has hundreds of open positions that when filled will greatly contribute growth of our economy. The AEDC’s annual reporting and a Downtown Anchorage Housing Study completed by Agnew::Beck were used to inform the Trends Report and recommendations in the plan update.

Demographics within Anchorage are changing as we continue to lose population due to several factors including the loss of jobs and retirements, or aging population. However, the long-term projections for population growth remain a positive factor for new job, housing, recreational, and tourism opportunities in Downtown.

Land Use Decisions

Several land use decisions were adopted for the Downtown area since 2007. These include three different tax abatement ordinances to help stimulate new housing and businesses. Several plans and the update to the Downtown Title 21 Zoning Districts was completed. Plans include the *Ship Creek Framework Plan*, *Original Four Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan*, and *Fairview Neighborhood Plan*.

Contributing Plans or Studies

Contributing plans or studies are those efforts not adopted by the Assembly but were completed to provide direction to the use and development of an area. The Former Native Hospital Site Master Plan and the Gambell Street Corridor Study, and Anchor Home Homeless plan were completed. These documents also had influence on the update to the *DT Plan 2021*.

Plan Summary

Chapters 1 and 2 – Introduction and Existing Conditions – pp. 7-44

The first two chapters of the plan are the introduction, current conditions, and development factors considered in the plan. This included a brief overview of the economic and demographic changes we are experiencing. Chapter one also included the list of early action items proposed for the plan. Throughout the plan there are references to the Oklahoma City and Smart Growth America recommendations and redevelopment strategies. A compilation of their recommendations and strategies are used as the foundation of the plan to direct the goals, policies, and action items. The strategies include; Focus the Effort, Build Great Housing, Get important input from Women in the Community, Lead by Example, Make connections to surrounding neighborhoods, and Make Downtown safe. The strategies are introduced on page 47 carried across chapters 3-7.

Chapter 3 – Revitalization Strategy – pp. 45-55

A new planning area boundary was introduced into the plan to include East Downtown and part of Fairview. The boundary encompasses 9th Avenue north to Ship Creek, Coastal Place east to Gambell and then Ingra from 3rd to 1st Avenue. This was to ensure East Downtown including 3rd Avenue to Gambell and the Former Native Hospital site can capitalize on the goals, policies, and action items in the plan. Chapter 3's revitalization strategy is based on Oklahoma City and Smart Growth America recommendations. A new Revitalization Map was developed to incorporate two Focused Development Areas, three Cultural Districts, and fifteen Opportunity Sites. The Revitalization Map replaces the Strategy Diagram from 2007.

Focused Development Areas

Focused Development Areas include the Few Good Blocks 2021 and East Downtown/Fairview Tax Abatement Zone. These areas will be prioritized to receive utility and facility resources to leverage investments and incentives for Downtown revitalization.

Cultural Districts

The 4th Avenue Mushing District and Museum Design District were both proclaimed in 2018. The 2nd to 4th Avenues historic district areas were identified with the Original Four Neighborhood's Historic Preservation Plan. These three districts currently host activities and cultural events. Limited grant funding and community support may be directed to these areas to support Anchorage's unique cultures and history.

Opportunity Sites

Large and small lots and buildings were designated as opportunity sites because they may be ripe for new development or redevelopment. Designating certain properties or sites is consistent with the 2007 Downtown Plan.

Chapter 4 – Land Use and Economic Development – pp. 57-69

Chapter 4 includes a new land use plan revised from the Strategy Diagram adopted in 2007. The new Land Use Plan captures and refocuses the 2007 Strategy Diagram providing land use descriptions, development specifications including number of stories, units per acre, zoning districts and the types of uses allowed.

There are districts and sub-districts based on plans adopted since 2007 including the *Ship Creek Framework Plan*, *Fairview Neighborhood Plan*, and *Original Four Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan*. Two new districts include the Mushing District centered around historic 4th and 2nd Avenues and Denali View renamed from Legal/Office to reflect the view you see from this area of Downtown.

This chapter identifies several incentives and ideas that focus on economic development to provide new housing, retail and commercial while supporting cultural and historic resources. The seismic map is included in this chapter. Anchorage 2040 policies are implemented with this chapter.

Chapter 5 – Quality of Life – pp. 71-75

This is a new replacing the 2007 Chapter 7 Programs with Quality of Life.

This was done in response to the many quality of life comments received during this planning process. This chapter also responds to changes in visitor travel and makes a nod to nomad workers coming to Anchorage. Marketing, branding, events, safety, wayfinding and the proposed cultural districts are described and included with new policies and action items in this chapter.

Chapter 6 – Urban Design – pp. 77-95

Chapter 6 remains the Urban Design chapter with Northern City Design remaining a focus of the plan. The 2007 design guidelines are carried forward in this chapter. New to this chapter is the streets typology map to better articulate the connection between buildings and the streets. Two subcommittees provided several recommendations for this chapter to help streamline development and provide for great northern city design. Action Items from the subcommittees are included in this chapter and their input will also help inform Step 3 - Downtown code update.

Chapter 7 – Transportation and Circulation – pp. 97-111

Bicycle access and the importance of safe facilities for pedestrians guides this chapter. This chapter also incorporates new policies and actions for downtown streets with National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) recommendations for what major and minor streets should look like and function as. Transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and street action items are updated with this chapter. A primary action item is the funding and completion of the Downtown Streets Engineering Study proposed by this plan, which will review the 2007 recommendations for one- and two-way streets and consider a bicycle boulevard, pedestrian improvements, and trail connections.

Chapter 8 – Implementation Plan – pp. 113-123

Early Action Items are recommended in the Introduction Chapter of the Plan and repeated in Chapter 8. The Early Action Items are intended to be action-oriented and implemented in the very near term. The Early Action Items are based on input from our partners and the public and are intended to help jump-start new development, including how to fill the gaps currently occurring in infrastructure and funding.

In addition to the Early Action Items, there are implementation actions focused on all aspects of the plan identified in chapters 3-7. This includes revitalization, land use, quality of life, urban design, and transportation and circulation actions. Time frames, cost, and proposed implementers were included.

Public Engagement

A three-step process to include this plan update was initiated in the fall of 2019, in partnership with the Anchorage Museum at a First Friday event. Step 1 was the reformat of the Downtown Zoning Districts. This plan update is Step 2. Step 3 will be the update of the Downtown Zoning Districts and will follow this plan's adoption. The public engagement documentation for the plan update is included on pp.18-19.

Interviews

The planning team held one-on-one interviews with developers, all Downtown agencies, MOA Departments, AMATS, and the Downtown and Fairview community councils. The interviews identified issues to be addressed in the plan, as well as in the Step 3 zoning districts update.

Subcommittees

Two subcommittees were formed to assist the Planning Team in discussion of known issues related to the cost of development. The Utility Subcommittee and the Urban Design Subcommittee both provided invaluable input as utility providers and private-sector partners in making Downtown great, but more importantly contributed several ideas that can help make it financially feasible to build there. These two subcommittees added to the challenges noted in the plan from their experiences.

Online Survey (4/8-4/12/2021)

Over 300 people participated in the online survey, providing over 1,200 comments for the plan. Many comments were focused on pedestrian and bicycle use, trail connections, and urban design. These comments were used in the goals, policies, and implementation actions.

Project website and MOA project webpage – www.ourdowntownanchorage.com

The project website provided links to reports, meeting recordings, and documents. It is a one-stop place to find out about the plan, the planning process, and community announcements about public presentations and events. Email blasts were sent to people registering on the website, providing up-to-date information and status reports. A project webpage is also available at [Planning Department \(muni.org\)](http://Planning%20Department%20(muni.org))

Department Recommendation

The department recommends approval of the Public Hearing Draft *Our Downtown – Downtown District Plan 2021* to the Anchorage Assembly.

Recommended Findings

1. The plan meets the requirements of AMC 21.03.070.B.2. by providing an updated plan which considered current economic and demographic trends, Assembly-adopted land use actions, and recent plans and studies in the plan review process.
2. A set of recommended strategies from successful and revitalized downtowns throughout the United States was provided by teams from Oklahoma City and Smart Growth America during their visits to Anchorage in 2016. “Focus the effort” as the primary strategy in the plan update will bring incentives, utility upgrades, and capital improvements to the two designated Focused Development Areas recommended in the Chapter 3 Revitalization Map.

3. The planning process considered a large volume of community, subcommittee, agency, and developer input, which is reflected in the updated plan goals, policies, and action items, including monthly presentations to the Downtown Community Council, briefings with the Government Hill Community Council, and briefings and interviews with the Fairview Community Council.
4. The updated plan provides recommendations to the Assembly to approve timeline extensions for the 4-unit housing incentive (A.O. 2019-12 Amended) and Fairview/East Downtown Tax Abatement Zone (A.O. 2017-71(S)). Each ordinance is set to expire in 2024.
5. The updated plan recommends the Chief Fiscal Officer streamline the application process for property owners seeking tax abatement under AMC Chapter 12.35 Deteriorated and Economic Development properties exemption.
6. The updated plan provides a land use plan map to guide development which supports the unique land use districts found in Downtown, consistent with plans adopted since 2007, including the *Ship Creek Framework Plan*, *Fairview Neighborhood Plan*, *Original Four Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan*, and *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*.
7. The updated plan gives focus to Quality of Life strategies, policies and action items to help instill as sense of place, celebrate the diverse cultures and peoples of Anchorage and Alaska, provide for informational projects including wayfinding and interpretive information, and supports a variety of events and celebrations we Alaskans have come to love.
8. The updated plan carries forward a set of design guidelines from 2007, in addition to the several recommendations from the Urban Design Subcommittee and development community for use in updating the Downtown Zoning Districts Title 21 code, with the intention to enable more cost-effective development.
9. The updated plan addresses the need for the community's request to study how Downtown streets should function to provide safe pedestrian, bicycle, and trail connectivity in Downtown and to the adjacent neighborhoods and trail systems. The Downtown Streets Engineering Study will help the community to determine a list of recommended projects for capital improvements and long-term street management.
10. The updated plan includes a variety of Implementation actions needed to move the plan forward into the next 20 years to revitalize Downtown, making it a welcoming, vibrant place to live, work, and play.
11. The planning team has been thoughtfully engaged in communicating with many groups, agencies, residents, businesses, and developers to bring a plan forward that fully reflects the desires of the community while providing proven methods to bring new and redevelopment to Downtown.
12. Several edits recommended by staff in the attached Comment/Response Table should be included to improve the plan and provide additional clarity to the readers and implementers of this plan.

Attachments: Comment/Response Table
Comments Received
Public Hearing Draft Document (provided previously)

**Case No. 2021-0119, Our Downtown - Anchorage Downtown District Plan 2021
Comment-Response Table**

Page	Agency (if applicable), Commenter	Comment	Staff Response/Recommendation	PZC Concurrence	PZC Recommended Edits
9	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Create a Redevelopment Authority”: having the unique experience of recently working with the ACDA on the private-public development Block 96, I can unequivocally state that the ACDA is not a redevelopment authority. It took over two years for me to navigate through the process of getting final approval for our development agreement with the ACDA. The reasons for this are complex but the main reason is because the ACDA is not a redevelopment authority. • A properly functioning redevelopment authority will do more to bring development to downtown than any other item that is likely in this document. • I recommend that the ACDA does in fact become a redevelopment authority. In fact, I feel so strongly about it that I would add to the list of “things that should be done immediately”) 	<p>RESPONSE: This plan recommends leadership by several departments, including Community Development, Planning, Finance, and Real Estate to bring redevelopment to Downtown. These are the departments that review projects with proponents early on, assist in project approvals and permitting processes, and help facilitate development with a wide range of property owners.</p> <p>While we can’t speak for ACDA and what role or roles they may participate in as a redevelopment authority, according to ACDA’s website the “ACDA is a municipal corporation that works to encourage and facilitate responsible development and redevelopment in the Municipality of Anchorage by forming partnerships and working with the community.” We encourage ACDA’s mission and efforts in Downtown as the agency advocates for and helps bring more development to Downtown and the greater Anchorage area.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to text recommended.</p>		
12	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchorage Property Tax Assessment: the second paragraph states, “Downtown property owners pay into the Downtown Improvement District special assessments, which may result in Downtown properties paying the highest taxation in Anchorage.” • This is a significant statement that gets glossed over in the plan. If downtown wants more housing, 	<p>RESPONSE: The Assembly with Anchorage Assessor input set the taxation threshold for Anchorage. This plan points out the current taxable assessed value of property Downtown to support the notion that, “development in Downtown is good for all of Anchorage.”</p> <p>Regarding tax incentives: There are several tax abatement and tax incentive options available for Downtown development.</p>		

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		<p>then the plan needs to figure out a way that downtown property owners that provide housing don't pay "the highest taxation in Anchorage."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This plan should make this a priority and look at ways to alleviate the tax burden of trying to develop in downtown Anchorage. • Perhaps the Downtown Improvement District needs to be eliminated and the things that the DID currently does done by the MOA again. Are downtown property owners being double taxed? • Perhaps residential providers in downtown are exempt from the DID tax. This plan doesn't address taxation and how to lower the downtown burden. • I recommend that the downtown taxation burden be looked at and figure out a way to lessen the burden. This will lead to more development. 	<p>However, AMC Chapter 12.35 – Deteriorated and Economic Development Tax Abatement is available to any property throughout Anchorage with an up to 10-year tax abatement benefit. What this plan does is advocate that the AMC Chapter 12.35 application process be streamlined and made less onerous so more developers can apply for the tax abatement benefit. Action Item EA-6 will revise the tax abatement submittal process making it more convenient for anyone throughout Anchorage to use.</p> <p>Regarding the DID: The DID is managed by the Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Inc. and <u>is a voluntary program for business owners who wish to use the services provided by the DID</u>. This plan does not advocate for a change to the DID. Developers providing housing would only need to invest in the DID if they wished to use the services provided by ADP staff.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to text recommended.</p>		
13	Sightline Inst. Jeanette Lee	<p>Surface Parking</p> <p>There is solid data that establishes the overabundance of parking downtown (see p. 13 of the plan). Surface lots undermine the goal of creating a downtown that is inviting and safe for pedestrians. Large expanses of pavement are especially detrimental to the look and feel of downtown and the land they occupy could be used far more efficiently for housing,</p>	<p>RESPONSE: Thank you for your comments on the plan. The plan recognizes and discusses the many parking lots and parking spaces in Downtown and the benefits of all types of new development.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to text recommended.</p>		

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		<p>hotels, offices, or retail. Any of these uses would contribute more to the downtown economy and the property tax base than surface parking. The plan could state more strongly the need to look for ways to limit the construction of additional lots and/or to put in place policies that will lead to more development on the numerous surface lots blighting downtown. Here are some examples that other cities have used: https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/sep/27/cities-eliminating-car-parks-parking).</p> <p>Prettification of parking lots, as outlined in the urban design section of the plan, is a good intermediate step. But the end goal really should be to incentivize the development of surface lots into more valuable properties that contribute to the vibrance of downtown. Also, this may be outside the scope of the plan, but improvements to surface lots should be the responsibility of the landowners, not the city (not unlike the upkeep requirements for owners of deteriorated properties).</p> <p>We also support all elements of the plan that make travel to and navigation within downtown without a personal motorized vehicle easier, safer, and more desirable (e.g., more housing downtown; lowering speed limits; intra-downtown shuttle; better public transportation to downtown from the Valley and other parts of</p>			

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		Anchorage; heated sidewalks or other approaches to keeping sidewalks free of snow and ice).			
14	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking is a major cost driver for new residential development. If developers didn't have to provide onsite parking and could use off site or on street parking provided from the MOA or ACDA, that would go a long way to make downtown residential development more feasible. • This plan needs to dive into this more. The plan talks about using unused parking for additional development, but it doesn't do a great job looking at how to use existing parking to better support new development. • Bock 96 provides almost all its own parking onsite. It would have been awesome if the MOA or ACDA would have had an off-site parking option for us to use. • I recommend that the plan look at ways to use existing parking to help new developments with their needs of parking. 	<p>RESPONSE: This plan recognizes there is an over-adequate supply of parking in Downtown. Therefore, the plan advocates for parking to be managed and used on a 24-hour basis through Action Item T&C-6: "Fund a coordinated parking program".....Private and public parking lot owners are encouraged to work together to facilitate optimized use of existing parking so that parking may be used on a 24-hour basis. Essentially daytime for workers, nighttime for residents. However, while the plan advocates for such options as shared parking, tax incentives, and focused utility improvements, it is still the marker that will drive what new development comes to Our Downtown.</p> <p>This plan identifies ACDA as the agency to facilitate the conversation and a subsequent coordinated parking program. In 2007, ACDA conducted a parking study, which found there were several hundred parking spaces going unused during peak hour. This plan recommends an updated parking study to assist the Downtown community, ACDA, private developers, and the private parking lot owners to better manage the parking supply.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to text recommended.</p>		

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16	Shaina Kilcoyne, SWS	<p>First paragraph of the second column suggest changing to: “Also available but not shown on the map is new Anchorage Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) creative finance program that helps commercial business owners pay for energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades by providing financing and long-term loans for eligible projects. The program can replace aging HVAC, mechanical systems, lights, etc. The loan is tied to the property, not the owner.”</p> <p>The C-PACE link on p 16 and 122 should go to www.muni.org/cpace.</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION: We will edit the text to include this information on pages 16 and 122.</p>		
16	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant reason downtown housing is not viable and difficult lies with the bigger problem of housing on a larger scale throughout Anchorage. Housing throughout the Anchorage bowl is simply not economically viable. If we want to bring more housing to downtown Anchorage, a more conscientious look needs to be made of the economic viability of housing for the entire Anchorage Bowl. • We don't have a problem of too much housing in Anchorage being constructed outside the downtown. We have a problem in Anchorage of very little to no housing being constructed throughout the entire Anchorage Bowl. In the last 16 years there has only been a couple of market rate 	<p>RESPONSE: AMC Chapter 12.35 – Deteriorated and Economic Development Tax Abatement is available to any property throughout Anchorage with an up to 10-year tax abatement benefit. What this plan does is advocate that the AMC Chapter 12.35 application process be streamlined and made less onerous so more developers can apply for the tax abatement benefit. Action Item EA-6 will revise the tax abatement submittal process making it more convenient for anyone throughout Anchorage to use.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: MOA Finance will determine the feasibility of a Chapter 12.35 amended to the 10-year tax abatement and how that would impact the MOA budget. Action Item LU-3 would consider this change. No change in text recommended.</p>		

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		<p>housing project constructed. This has left Anchorage in dire need of a housing. If we can start to make strides in solving the larger housing problem throughout the Anchorage Bowl, this will lead to more housing in downtown as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that a property tax abatement for housing projects (10+ units in size) be made available throughout the Anchorage Bowl. To add extra incentive to downtown, I would increase the number of years for the abatement for downtown. An example would be: 15-year property tax abatement for residential projects throughout the Anchorage Bowl, however, downtown residential projects get a 20-year property tax abatement. 			
18	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downtown Anchorage already has highest taxation in Anchorage (see comment above). High taxation has led to no residential development downtown for a very long time. I am not sure how a second additional tax (the proposed MAPS tax) would add to the viability of downtown residential development. What is unclear to me in the paragraph is if the sales tax would be city wide or just in the downtown district. For this sales tax, would residential property owners be taxed on rents collected from tenants? It 	<p>RESPONSE: The MAPS tax used in Oklahoma City is an example of a focused-development 1% sale tax that successfully worked to revitalize downtown Oklahoma City. The City of Austin, TX has a similar sales tax program for their downtown. This example was included from a place that similarly relied on diminishing oil prices to fund its capital improvements.</p> <p>MAPS was funded by a temporary one-cent sales tax approved by city voters in December 1993, and later extended an additional six months. The tax expired on July 1, 1999. During the 66 months it was in effect, over \$309 million was collected. In</p>		

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		<p>seems like higher taxes would only lead to less development not more.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend thinking about other options to raise funds for a redevelopment authority to have money to do projects. 	<p>addition, the deposited tax revenue earned about \$54 million in interest. The interest was used for MAPS construction too. By funding the projects with a limited term, one-cent sales tax, the projects were built debt free. The U.S. Conference of Mayors noted, "Using a pay-as-you-go structure allowed Oklahoma City to build world-class facilities without the burden of debt for future generations and city leaders. Oklahoma City citizens made the historic decision to invest their own money in the city they called home."</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Action Items RVS-3, RVS-4, and LU-6 are intended to assist new development. No text amendment recommended.</p>		
22	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I like the idea of early action items. The problem is that most of the early actionable items are related to more "planning". At some point, the planning needs to stop, and something needs to be done. Actionable items that represent "doing something tangible" might be: 1) organize the ACDA so that it operates as a true redevelopment area, 2) fund and complete the Downtown Zoning Districts Update, 3) implement ways to close the "gap" in residential development, 4) work with AIDEA to allow AIDEA loans to be used for residential developments, 5) Streamline the development process and change 	<p>RESPONSE: EA-1 specifically addresses what all the utility providers directed as an action to make sure there are adequate utilities or known upgrades needed to bring in new development. We are in the process of updating our data for the development capacity of the proposed Few Good Blocks area. With this updated capacity information, utility providers will be able to direct their CIPs to support new development.</p> <p>EA-2: Directs the development of CIPs including the MOA's to the focused development areas to leverage limited resources. As articulated in meetings with the Oklahoma City delegation and Smart Growth America, when you revitalize your Downtown the rest of the community grows exponentially. The recommendations</p>		

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		<p>the regulatory environment to be more developer friendly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't "plan" development opportunities away. • My recommendation is that the top five items that are "early action items" be items that bring more development to the downtown area. 	<p>from these two groups are the foundation for this plan update. Using their recommendations and proven processes to update this plan brings in strategies that have worked across America in many downtowns.</p> <p>EA-3: The Utility providers specifically asked that the MOA provide a coordination process that would bring the utilities to the table with the developers early in the development process, with the intention to keep costs down for new development. Development Services and the Planning Department currently do this, however the utility providers felt there should be a formalized coordination process established to make sure projects don't slip through the cracks.</p> <p>EA-4: Is the Downtown Zoning Districts Update – This is not a plan – this is the code update identified in the 2040 land use plan and Step 3 in the 3-step process the Planning Department initiated to help revitalize and bring economic development to Downtown.</p> <p>EA-5: We resoundingly heard throughout the plan process that there is gap in funding to make projects pencil. This project would create a working group that would research and assist developers and the MOA with new sources of funding, while also extending the sunset dates on two current incentives areas.</p> <p>EA-7: Is the Downtown Streets Engineering Study. This is an engineering study to determine how our streets should be</p>		

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			<p>managed, who should manage the streets, where pedestrian and bicycle improvement and connections should be made and should speed limits be slowed in downtown. Community input again was resoundingly in support of the pedestrian and bicycle networks being improved. Improved pedestrian and bicycle access puts more people on the streets and is a proven to economic development element.</p> <p>EA-8: The MOA recently adopted a Local Landmark Register for the community to nominate historic and cultural resources as locally significant. The Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission is the advisory body to the Anchorage Assembly and would be the group that would complete an update to information from 2010, and that already exists. This is not a plan, but a historic and cultural resources survey and report that historic and cultural resources owners will use to nominate their properties to the Local Landmark Register. Again, this project was highly supported by public comment. Recognizing historic and cultural resources contribute positively to our tourism economy. It has been proven the historic preservation element contributes greatly to economic revitalization programs. Links to that information was provided in the plan.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No text amendments needed.</p>		
22	Sightline Inst. Jeanette Lee	Add MESA payment to list of acronyms (referred to on p. 22)	RECOMMENDATION: We will add this text amendment to the acronyms page 22.		

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30	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anchorage-wide Growth Predictions: The Anchorage population has declined for eight years after a high in 2013 (301,037). It is expected to continue to decline until 2023. This is a major “red flag”. Why is this happening? We know that the “valley” continues to grow at a healthy 5-6% per year. Why is the “middle class” driving an hour to live in the valley. This is a critical question and unless it is answered, downtown development is going to suffer. My guess is that since Anchorage has not been generating new housing over the last 20 years, that residents are choosing to go elsewhere. The question for Anchorage, again going back to the major questions, is how to get residential housing to be built in “significant” quantities throughout the Anchorage Bowl? Answer that question and the downtown question becomes much easier. I recommend that the plan investigates why Anchorage’s population is declining while other communities are significantly growing. 	<p>RESPONSE: The Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan, which is an Anchorage Bowl comprehensive plan, factored in the decline in population and provided an estimated growth rate. The Downtown District Plan is focused on the current population in Downtown and the potential for new residents supported by new housing and employment. The Trends Report, which accompanies this plan and is available online at www.ourdowntownanchorage.com goes into greater depth discussing population and job declines.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No text amendments needed.</p>		
40	Shaina Kilcoyne, SWS	Is it appropriate to refer to the Anchorage Climate Action Plan actions concerning clean energy design and retrofits starting on page 40? I do see the plan is referenced on	RECOMMENDATION: Add Climate Action Plan recommendations for building retrofits to bullets on page 95 first column as considerations to be		

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		page 36. Page 41 under Design Conditions notes that “Many existing buildings were poorly designed for the northern climate or pedestrian-friendly city center.” I’m happy to chat more about this if of interest.	discussed during the DT zoning code update.		
41	Jim Renkert	Pg. 41. Downtown Assets and Challenges “Trees are not supported with adequate subsurface soil cavities, resulting in lost landscaping investment – standards need to be changed for landscaping.” I concur with this assessment. The lack of proper subsurface soil is one of most important things to address. The new 4th Avenue project from A to E Streets is incorporating silva cell technology to improve subsurface soil cavities. This is an excellent investment.	RECOMMENDATION: Thank you for noting this important issue to allow trees to grow and thrive in Downtown. No text amendments needed.		
52	Sightline Inst. Jeanette Lee	Include a more precise definition of “Opportunity Sites” (p. 52)	RECOMMENDATION: An in-depth review of these sites was not completed for this plan. No text amendments needed.		
53	Begich	The plan identifies on page 53 a zone #2 Fairview and downtown revitalization. This plan continues to cut the Aviator in half, the map should be modified.	RESPONSE: The Fairview/East Downtown Tax Abatement Zone was adopted by the Assembly in 2014. This information provided is from the Assembly ordinance. Action Item LU-3 could also amend the boundary to include the entire Aviator property. MOA Finance would make that recommendation. RECOMMENDATION: No text amendments needed. Advise abatement boundary be amended as requested by the property owner		

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			when the Assembly amends Zone timeframe.		
64	Sightline Inst. Jeanette Lee	Include an appendix item with a list of the zoning districts that are included in the table on p. 64, along with their descriptions. Also, reference the appendix item in the “Downtown Land Use Districts Defined” section.	RECOMMENDATION: A sentence will be added on page 64, second paragraph, to refer the reader to Title 21, Chapter 11: DOWNTOWN, along with the link to the code. It is not necessary to include the full text of Title 21, Chapter 11, as an appendix.		
64-68	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I highly recommend eliminating “subdistricts”. Although in theory they sound good, it is too much “planning” that involves too much micromanaging that will have the unintended consequence of creating more barriers to development (the very thing we are trying to eliminate). • Creating differing story heights, density limits, etc. for each subdistrict is not needed. • Allow the overall zoning district B-2A, B-2B, B-2C provide limitations for height, density, etc. • I cannot stress enough that management at a micro level might in theory sound good but, it just doesn’t work. • I recommend, eliminate all subdistricts restrictions. 	<p>RESPONSE: All District and Neighborhood plans are required to include a land use plan map. The land use plan map helps to implement the Downtown Zoning Districts. The districts and sub-districts included in this plan were adopted in 2007 with the Strategy Framework (pg. 33 – 2007 Downtown Plan). This plan takes the strategy framework and updates it with essentially the same information from 2007. There are two exceptions: (1) Renaming of legal/office area to Denali View to better reflect the viewshed, and (2) Mushing District pulled out of the Downtown Core due to the historic district nature of the area and the recent Mushing District Proclamation in 2019.</p> <p>Differing stories and heights are needed and desired by the public, businesses, and residents to enable a variety of developments, solar access, and viewshed protection.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No text amendments needed.</p>		

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65	Sightline Inst. Jeanette Lee	This is more of a question than an edit: Certain parcels in the Mushing District might be appropriate for housing, but the zoning designations for the Mushing District don't appear to allow for residential in that area. Why not? Should a rezone be considered in that district?	RECOMMENDATION: Staff is not aware of any remaining residential uses in this district. However, Mixed-use residential can be added as bullet due to existing mixed-use buildings and the potential for development of open parking lots included in this district. Good catch.		
79	Jim Renkert	<i>Pg. 79 Urban Design, Urban Design Subcommittee, "Recommendations for landscaping to ensure healthy trees and shrubs survive with input from an arborist on technical specifications was also recommended."</i> Concur. The Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department has an arborist on staff. Please take an advantage of this staffing expertise.	RECOMMENDATION: Thank you for your concurrence. No text amendments needed.		
80, 82, 87	Jim Renkert	<i>Pg. 80 Pedestrian Environment. "Wider sidewalks allow room for on-street amenities like trees, benches, waste bins, or parking meters."</i> <i>Pg. 82 Mixed-use Streets provide alternative modes of travel and typically function with increased use of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit design amenities. Improvements such as trees, landscaping, and street furniture are desirable to make mixed use streets more attractive for pedestrians.</i> <i>Pg. 87 Plant and maintain street trees on sidewalks wide enough to accommodate the planter infrastructure.</i> Concur. On-street trees look better and live longer (cutting down on	RECOMMENDATION: Thank you for your concurrence. No text amendments needed.		

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		replacement costs) with wider sidewalks and regular maintenance. Moreover, trees not only make streets more attractive for pedestrians but also for business and tourism.			
85	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Design Goals: • Several years ago, I provided real construction costs for the added cost of the newly enacted Title 21 design guidelines for residential development. My analysis showed that the design guidelines increased the cost of construction for residential development by 10-15%. • Creating even more design guidelines for downtown development will only increase construction costs and make downtown an even less desirable location to do development. • The adage for planning holds true here, “You cannot legislate good design.” • I recommend taking out bullet #2 which recommends supporting “design guidelines”. 	<p>RESPONSE: The 2007 Downtown Plan urban design guidelines are being carried forward in this plan. These guidelines assist with new project development that can include streets and buildings. Title 21 and Title 23 ultimately directs how buildings are built in Downtown.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Design Guidelines will be used as discussion points when the DT Zoning Districts are updated following adoption of the plan. No text amendments needed.</p>		
85	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewshed protection measures sound good but they have the unintended cost of limiting property owners, adding cost, and making development more difficult. • I recommend taking out viewshed protection measures. 	<p>RESPONSE: The 2007 Downtown Plan urban design guidelines are being carried forward in this plan. These guidelines assist with new project development that can include streets and buildings. Title 21 and Title 23 ultimately directs how buildings are built in Downtown.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Design Guidelines will be used as discussion</p>		

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			points when the DT Zoning Districts are updated following adoption of the plan. No text amendments needed.		
89	Sightline Inst. Jeanette Lee	Residential Building Setback The downtown residential building setback requirement (see p. 89) should be eliminated, as proposed in AO 2021-89 proposed revisions to Title 21. Residential setbacks in urban environments make little sense and are a huge inducement to include commercial space, warranted or not, on the first floors of all residential buildings. Developers may prefer to put living space or a lobby on the first floor rather than a commercial business space that may or may not be used.	RECOMMENDATION: The Title 21, Chapter 11: DOWNTOWN building set back will be removed from code with approval by the Assembly. The Design Guidelines on page 89 “Improve the Quality of the Building Design,” are not a requirement but a guideline and discuss the potential benefit to a site if implemented. No text amendment needed.		
90-91	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massing, stepping, sunlight access, wind protection are all things that sound good, but they typically lead to more expensive construction and hence make downtown a less desirable location to develop. • I harp on this a lot, but we need to make it easy to development downtown, not harder. Downtown doesn't have a problem of lots of development going on that is in poor taste and has poor design. In fact, the limited downtown development we have had has been quite good. • I recommend taking out these three sections. 	<p>RESPONSE: The 2007 Downtown Plan urban design guidelines are being carried forward in this plan. These guidelines assist with new project development that can include streets and buildings. Title 21 and Title 23 ultimately directs how buildings are built in Downtown.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Design Guidelines will be used as discussion points when the DT Zoning Districts are updated following adoption of the plan. No text amendments needed.</p>		
92	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials and Texture: It is unclear here if these are recommendations or mandates 	RESPONSE: The 2007 Downtown Plan urban design guidelines are being carried forward in this plan. These guidelines assist		

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		<p>that will be incorporated into a future downtown design standards document. If they are nonbinding recommendations, I feel this can stay as is, if they will be used later to create a design standard document, then I recommend taking this out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let architects determine materials, texture, and coloring. I recommend taking this section out. 	<p>with new project development that can include streets and buildings. Title 21 and Title 23 ultimately directs how buildings are built in Downtown.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Design Guidelines will be used as discussion points when the DT Zoning Districts are updated following adoption of the plan. No text amendments needed.</p>		
95	Shaun Debenham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Items: UD-1: Change the wording. I recommend eliminating the “bonus point system” from the current Downtown Zoning Districts. Bonus systems in other cities work because a developer wants to construct more square footage than what is allowed “by right” because they want to increase their return on profit. In exchange for the city allowing more square footage, the developer in turn agrees to provide “extra” amenities, etc. We don’t have that case here in Anchorage. Anchorage has been unable to build any significant amount of market rate housing in over 20 years. For Anchorage, a developer needs “extra” square footage in order to make the project “pencil” not because they are looking for extraordinary returns. A developer is not able to incur the added cost of “bonus” items and still make it pencil. 	<p>RESPONSE: The Urban Design Subcommittee formed for this project made several recommendations on the bonus point system for later consideration when the Title 21, Chapter 11: DOWNTOWN is updated.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: The bonus point system will be thoroughly vetted to determine how the system may help projects succeed when the DT Zoning Districts are updated following adoption of the plan. No text amendments needed.</p>		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend changing this bonus point system for downtown zoning districts. 			
95	Sightline Inst. Jeanette Lee	Include an explainer of the Bonus Points system (p. 95)	<p>RESPONSE: Chapter 11: DOWNTOWN includes a set of bonus points intended for use by developers to achieve additional floor area or heights for the project. The Urban Design Subcommittee recommended a review of the bonus point system to discuss whether it works, can it be changed, what may or may not need to be added with developer input to achieve the intent of the system.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: The above response to be added to page 95.</p>		
95	Jim Renkert	<p><i>Pg. 95 Urban Design, Urban Design & Utilities Subcommittee Recommendations, "New landscaping requirements to achieve healthy viable trees and shrubs in the urban Downtown environment."</i></p> <p>Please develop and approve any new requirements that include things like more subsurface soil and silva cells, sidewalk planters, landscape strips and other green infrastructure techniques.</p>	<p>RESPONSE: This issue will be discussed during the update to the Downtown Zoning Districts.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No text amendments needed.</p>		
99	Jim Renkert	<p><i>Pg. 99 "Upgrades to landscaping along some streets didn't work out due to sanding [and salting] 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."</i></p>	<p>RESPONSE: This issue will be discussed during the update to the Downtown Zoning Districts.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No text amendments needed.</p>		

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		The public clearly wants trees brought back; however, I could not find any specific action items regarding trees in the Action Item Table.			
104, 109	Sightline Inst. Jeanette Lee	Explain the intent of the “coordinated parking strategy.” (p. 104; also p. 109)	RESPONSE: The coordinated parking strategy is Action Item T&C-6 RECOMMENDATION: No text amendments needed.		
109	Sightline Inst. Jeanette Lee	Explain the intent of the parking study (p. 109)	RESPONSE: Page 109 right column, paragraph titled Parking – discusses some opportunities for improvement related to parking. These bulleted items could be considered for the parking study. RECOMMENDATION: No text amendments needed.		
117	Nicole Dent, MOA Parks Dept.	QOL-6: PM&E could be considered as a partner to guide implementation? QOL-11: PM&E could be considered as a partner to guide implementation? QOL-13: Add Parks to proposed implementers. QOL-14: Could the Museum be considered a partner in winter city placemaking and events for 14 and 15? QOL-15: Add Anchorage Museum to proposed implementers.	RECOMMENDATION: The recommended edits by the Parks Department will be made to Chapter 5 and Chapter 8 if the Museum and PM&E provided support to be added as proposed implementers.		
118	Nicole Dent, MOA Parks Dept.	QOL-17 – Remove Parks from proposed implementers	RECOMMENDATION: Parks will be removed as a proposed implementer.		
119	Nicole Dent, MOA Parks Dept.	T&C-4: Add Parks to proposed implementers. Signage coordination?	RECOMMENDATION: Parks will be added as a proposed implementer.		

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120	Nicole Dent, MOA Parks Dept.	T&C-9: Add Parks to proposed implementers. Signage coordination? T&C-12: Parks not implementer but interest in coordinating with Nordic grooming	RECOMMENDATION: Parks will be added as a proposed implementer.		
122	Shaina Kilcoyne, SWS	The C-PACE link on p 16 and 122 should go to www.muni.org/cpace	RECOMMENDATION: Text amendment needed.		
n/a	Sightline Inst. Jeanette Lee	I support the plan's strong emphasis on bringing more housing to downtown and the policy changes that will achieve this goal, as described in this research piece I wrote on downtown Anchorage housing policy: https://www.SightlineInst. Jeanette Lee.org/2021/08/30/let-there-be-housing-in-downtown-anchorage/ . There is strong overlap between the policy changes proposed in my article and the policies outlined in the draft comprehensive plan, including lightening the costs of public infrastructure and looking to the state and other sources for financing. An accompanying op-ed, published in the Anchorage Daily News, also lays out the argument for more housing downtown: https://www.adn.com/opinions/2021/09/03/let-there-be-housing-downtown/ . (Both articles are attached as part of the testimony.)	RESPONSE: Thank you for your support of the plan and for the links to your articles they are very informative. RECOMMENDATION: No action recommended with this comment.		
n/a	Zack Fields	I'd like to understand what I can do to make sure any road resurfacing/reconstruction downtown adds at least some degree of pedestrian/bike safety improvements. Every single street downtown needs to be safe for all modes, and I've been	RESPONSE: Thank you Representative Zack Fields for your support of the plan. The Planning Department looks forward to your support and participation in the DT Streets Engineering Study.		

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		<p>very frustrated that DOTPF treats I/L/5th/6thA/C like highways. I like the visualization of a bike boulevard on L and would like to have the plan turn those aspirations into requirements. I'd also like to see the plan recommend adjusting traffic signals so no street with synchronized signals allows cars to maintain speeds more than 25mph. Current signal timing allows vehicles to go way too fast (37mph on 5th, for example). I also think we should look to the recent resurfacing of Commercial as an example of what not to do. How did the city just resurface that road without any/bike ped improvements? Total missed opportunity, and maybe by understanding that mistake we can avoid repeating it.</p>			
	Zack Fields	<p>Making 3rd/4th/Commercial functional urban streets is critical.</p>	<p>RESPONSE: Thank you Representative Zack Fields for your support of the plan. The Planning Department looks forward to your support and participation in the DT Streets Engineering Study.</p>		
n/a	Wadeen Hepworth	<p>1. Garage Parking - many of the buildings will require garage parking that I personally have not done for 30 years due to the danger, particularly for a woman alone at night. I propose that each parking garage be required to have two armed guards 24/7 with constant video of all floors. 2. Bus Stops - require buses stop every two blocks to pick up passengers. Single mothers with a toddler, a baby and a heavy bag</p>	<p>RESPONSE: Thank you Wadeen for your support of the plan. Regarding Garage Parking – We will forward your comments to the parking garage owners. Regarding Bus Stop locations – We will forward your comments to People Mover management.</p>		

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		<p>should not have to walk four to six blocks to catch a bus particularly in our cold weather. The people making the decision for bus stops should be required to experience what that same single mother does for seven continuous days before determining the stops.</p> <p>3. Bicycling - this is a good way for people to move around cities but that is basically from April to early September in Anchorage with a few exceptions. This is basically transportation for single people not single mothers with two toddlers. I'd like to see more emphasis on better, more affordable transportation for mothers with children within the Downtown area.</p> <p>4. Police Safe Places – women (and all people) need to have safe places in a city to run to should they encounter a dangerous situation - small Police Neighborhood Stations within the areas of Downtown districts are important since there is no escape when buildings and shops are closed.</p> <p>5. East Downtown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 3rd Ave. Post Road to A Street - no truck traffic - speed limit reduced to 20 miles per hour - this is a very dangerous street * Planning for East Downtown - was not mentioned in the plan - not even for the HLB property * Gardens and trees - should be planted in East Downtown in the exact same manner as the Downtown Streets. 	<p>Regarding Bicycling – Many comments in support of bicycling and bicycle facilities were received for this plan update. The Planning Department will use your recommendations in the completion of the DT Streets Engineering Study. We hope you will be able to participate in the study as part of a citizen advisory group as a Downtown property owner and long-time Anchorage business owner and resident.</p> <p>Regarding Police Safe Places – We will forward your comments to the Anchorage Police Department and also the Downtown Community Council, and Anchorage Downtown Partnership these two groups comprised of downtown business owners work closely with the police department to help downtown be safe. This plan supports safe streets and trails for all people.</p> <p>Regarding 3rd Avenue speed recommendations. This will be addressed in the DT Streets Engineering Study.</p> <p>Regarding Planning for East Downtown – We would like to note the planning area boundary for the plan includes much of East Downtown to Gambell Street, north to Ingra and up to Ship Creek. The goals, policies, and action items in this plan are just as relevant to East Downtown as they are to West Downtown. We are encouraged by the participation of all the East Downtown property owners, the and the Fairview Community Council.</p> <p>Several properties in Fairview are identified on the Chapter 3 – Revitalization Map on page 53. This includes the HLB Former</p>		

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			<p>Native Hospital Site, 3rd Avenue Post Road to C Street.</p> <p>Regarding Gardens and Trees - We also agree with your comment about landscaping improvements into East Downtown. Please see the new action item below. We will also be sending this comment to the Fairview Community Council.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Add Action Item T&C-19 to include 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th Avenues from C to Gambell Streets in MOA capital improvement design and construction projects focused on sidewalk, lighting, and landscape improvements.</p>		
n/a	Jim Renkert	<p>The following comments are specific to the 4th Avenue Downtown Lighting and Signals Upgrade – A MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE PROJECT (ancdowntownlights.com) project currently underway. I was very glad to see that this project is making street trees a priority. Until this 4th Avenue project I did not have high hopes that we would ever see the use of silva cells again after they were successfully used on the east side of Dena'ina Center. On September 15 I took part in an agency tour of the 4th Avenue project between C and E Streets organized by MOA Project Management and Engineering (PM&E). It was highly informative, not only to</p>	<p>Thank you Jim for your comments.</p> <p>We would like to note the planning area boundary for the plan includes much of East Downtown to Gambell Street, north to Ingra and up to Ship Creek. The goals, policies, and action items in this plan are just as relevant to East Downtown as they are to West Downtown. We are encouraged by the participation of all the East Downtown property owners, including the 3rd Avenue Radicals. We hope you and members of your group will participate in the DT Streets Engineering Study.</p> <p>We have proposed an additional action item: Add Action Item T&C-19: Include 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th Avenues from C to Gambell Streets in MOA capital improvement design</p>		

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		<p>see the silva cells being placed but also to hear about the overall plans to upgrade 4th Avenue.</p> <p>This is the brief history and timeline for future upgrades along 4th Avenue as I understand them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This past year they have completed the upgrades of 4th Avenue from A Street to Cordova. • They're nearing completion of the block between A and E. This block is getting the most deluxe upgrades and attention. • They're working on the design between E & G Streets. The MOA may need to bond for the final funding, but they hope to begin construction next year. • The funding for the blocks from Cordova westward has been a combination of federal highways, state, and municipal bonds. MOA PM&E oversaw the construction for these blocks. • According to PM&E they will not oversee the blocks from Cordova east to Ingra. It is slated to be a state DOT project and they are planning on doing it in 2023. <p>What concerns me is that according to PM&E, the blocks from Cordova to Ingra will be a "bare bones" project with a minimum of streetscape elements. There might not be any of the features recommended in the Plan and referenced above in Section I. No attractive amenities for pedestrians like wider sidewalks,</p>	<p>and construction projects focused on sidewalk, lighting and landscape improvements as noted above.</p> <p>Context Sensitive Design adopted by the MOA and implemented by the MOA and DOT&PF may be used to guide improvements from Cordova east to Ingra. The Planning Department will follow up with PM&E and request a meeting with an invite to you to discuss your concerns and ideas.</p> <p>The Eagle to Hyder area noted in your comments is included in the Focused Development Area #2 proposed on the Chapter 3 – Revitalization Map. Property owners within this area already have access to Chapter 12.35 Deteriorated and Economic Development Properties Tax Abatement. This plan proposes making the application process easier for owners to receive that tax incentive. Please be sure to let the PZC and Assembly know you are in support of this action item: LU-3.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Comments will be forwarded to PM&E and DOT&PF project managers. Staff will set a meeting as requested by Mr. Renkert. No edits recommended from these comments.</p>		

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		<p>decorative lampposts, hanging baskets, banners, and trees. There is apparently little effort to bring trees back; and no serious efforts to address and reinvest in this part of downtown.</p> <p>This would be a huge, missed opportunity. Putting on my community hat, and Third Avenue Radicals hat, I want to see East 4th Avenue receive nearly as much attention as the downtown core. It is certainly overdue.</p> <p>From Ingra to L Street 4th Avenue could truly be “Main Street USA” and help anchor the entirety of downtown, not just the western downtown core. Just think of how that could beautify and revitalize all of downtown for visitors, and for the residential development that is a stated need in the Plan, and that the Plan envisions and encourages (Pg. 36 “The housing goal of the 2007 Downtown Plan was to accommodate and encourage up to 4,000 housing units). Revitalization, including new housing, could branch out on the adjoining cross streets from Barrow to Hyder.</p> <p>One of the other stated goals of the Plan is to “Focus the Development Area.” With the proposed upgrades slated for 2023 focusing East 4th Avenue streetscape improvements project provides an opportunity to do just that – focus the development</p>			

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		<p>area on this long-neglected part of town. There are no blocks more barren, bleak and depressing – and with a high vacancy rate - in downtown than the stretch from Eagle to Hyder Streets.</p> <p>These are my personal comments; however, the 3rd Avenue Radicals share these concerns. We would like to meet with MOA planners and the MOA project managers to further discuss E. 4th Avenue improvements from Cordova to Ingra. We need to meet soon before this opportunity is lost.</p> <p>Could we arrange a meeting before the end of the year?</p>			
n/a	Jeff Urbanus, MOA Watershed Management	<p>Watershed Management Services has recently completed our review of the draft document. We believe that the document is lacking a discussion of stormwater management in the Downtown area, particularly as it relates to the inclusion of Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development (LID). These stormwater management practices are required by the MOA current stormwater discharge permit and the MOA Design Criteria Manual. LID and Green Infrastructure have the potential to integrate well with other elements and goals of the draft plan, such as green spaces, landscaping, and pedestrian friendly street design. Unfortunately, it has also been our observation that when stormwater management concerns are not</p>	<p>While the plan didn't specifically mention storm water, there was MOA staff at the meetings with the Utilities Subcommittee including Kristi and Christine Metcalf. The Utility Subcommittee members are listed in the Acknowledgements. The action items related to coordinating utility input includes the MOA. Please see page 95, UD-3. This action items includes all utilities in the capacity study. We didn't hear during the subcommittee meetings what is mentioned in your comments; however, it will be helpful information as we move the coordination process forward. We can add green infrastructure and LID to chapter 6 Urban Design guidelines and as a goal in Chapter 6.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Add Low Impact Development guidelines and a</p>		

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		considered, mandated design elements can make it difficult to implement LID and Green Infrastructure. We respectfully request the opportunity to discuss in more detail how stormwater management concerns might be included in the final plan.	Goal related to Low Impact Development and Green Infrastructure to Chapter 6: Urban Design.		
101	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	CONNECTIVITY: DOTPF concurs with the Seward – Glenn connection will provide significant vehicular change and benefit to other modes, speeds Downtown and in other neighborhoods along the route. With AMATS MTP modeling and VISSIM simulation, Task T&C-17 will confirm this opportunity as listed in this plan.	RESPONSE: We appreciate support of this project and look forward to working with DOT&PF on the Downtown Street Engineering Study.		
69	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	CONNECTIVITY: DOTPF concurs with a second travel route to the Port of Alaska . This would provide significant vehicular change and benefit to other modes, speeds Downtown and in other neighborhoods along the route. With modeling AMATS plan for this Port access, and simulation of Downtown as a subarea in VISSIM, Task T&C-17 will confirm this opportunity as listed in this plan.	RESPONSE: We appreciate support of this project and look forward to working with DOT&PF on the Downtown Street Engineering Study.		
101	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	CIRCULATION: DOTPF agrees the current mixture of one and two-way streets interrupts the street grid network. We find the 5 th 6th and I/L “Couplet” itself is a distinct and more clearly visible system. It is the side streets which can be more variable from	RESPONSE: We appreciate support of this project and look forward to working with DOT&PF on the Downtown Street Engineering Study.		

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		block to block and thus not consistent.			
9, 98, 109, 120, 121	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>T&C-I ENGINEERING STUDY VS. T&C-17: MODELING, SIMULATION, AND ENGINEERING: No concerns for T&C-I However, for the T&C 17 study element of 5th and 6th Ave, I and L Streets, DOTPF recommends a larger scope than a typical Engineering Study. Change to two \$\$ for T&C-17. Relabel it the Downtown Couplet Modeling, Simulation, and Engineering Study.(for 5th/6th and I/L as system. T&C 17 is listed as a study element of T&C-I but not listed here.</p> <p>1) Modeling is a critical first test of areawide impacts as per the attached chart. Modeling includes adjusting for land use and lane changes on a regional scale. This is put into the AMATS MTP model to make the high level screening for any spillover effects to the entire MTP model. If the main couplet changes to 2 way streets and less lanes passes the MTP model test without detrimental impacts to Gambell Street or Midtown, then this concept is ready for more detailed subarea modeling and engineering study.</p> <p>2) Subarea Simulation is the second step that produces a</p>	<p>RESPONSE: We appreciate support of this project and look forward to working with DOT&PF on the Downtown Street Engineering Study including the excellent recommendations for additional elements of the study including modeling and simulation.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Incorporate edits as suggested from DOT&PF.</p>		

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		<p>more accurate model of operational changes to Downtown. There are at least 3 options –</p> <p>a) Existing one-way grid - 5th/6th and I/L Couplets with the N-S one-way grid and signals every block,</p> <p>b) Modified Couplet only– 5th/6th and I/L Couplet alone, with lane reductions, and the rest of the grid is 2 way and simplified, or</p> <p>c) All Two-way – all of downtown is 2-way, including 5th and 6th and I/L Streets with lane reductions for bicycling, walking, and parking space.</p> <p>VISSIM is recommended as a higher-level subarea modeling tool, to consider parking, bus stops, and adjacent downtown uses that cause weaving in through lanes and reduce vehicular demand served. Simulation will reveal performance changes visually, measured and easily observable as gaps and queuing.</p> <p>3) Engineering Study and Evaluation only happens after adequate modeling of adjacent factors and land use adjustments above.</p> <p>Why do we want to stress modeling? Engineering study alone can be done without modeling at the MTP or</p>			

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		<p>subarea level. Linear modeling of 5th and 6th and I and L alone can be overly simplified and miss the impacts of parking, bike lanes, and lane reductions with adjacent friction. Downtown functions as a grid- signal timing on these main routes is the same change for the whole grid not just one corridor. The last Downtown Streets Study in 2005 was not finalized. It lacked a subarea model with enough detail to compare options. DOTPF did not accept two-way street performance measures were in place to demonstrate an improvement.</p>			
110, 115, 121	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>T&C-17, EA-7 STUDY: MODELING, SIMULATION AND ENGINEERING: DOTPF sees one-way vs two-way as options worth comparing for 5th and 6th Ave. But as arterials, they must be compared in detail and not accepted as good or bad on anecdotal measures alone. Some key performance metrics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed: Speed is regulated by signals primarily • Lane Widths: Lane widths affect speed as well and can be narrower at lower speeds. The DOTPF range is 11-12 feet for arterials, and down to 10 feet for turning lanes and very low speed maneuvers and side streets. • Gaps: Pedestrian gaps to cross the road should be measured in modeling each option. One-way 	<p>RESPONSE: We appreciate support of this project and look forward to working with DOT&PF on the Downtown Street Engineering Study including the excellent recommendations for additional elements of the study including modeling and simulation.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Incorporate edits as suggested from DOT&PF.</p>		

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		<p>streets platoon traffic and offer significant pedestrian gaps per minute, per hour, as is observed today, the entire system becomes crossable when traffic stops in one direction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps: Vehicular gaps to make turns and to cross the road should be measured in modeling each option. Vehicles require a shorter gap than pedestrians but will face a large difference in available gaps in one-way vs two-way. • Sight Distance. • Queuing and conflicts: a subarea model and simulation will show where vehicular traffic spills over, where it is not served. It will reveal what is acceptable and what is not. One-way Streets do not queue much and allow a signal per block, on every corner in Downtown, serving peds and vehicles. Two-way Streets require back-to-back left turn lanes of 100 feet in storage with 100 feet of taper, so 300 feet minimum. If they queue too much, they spill into and block through lanes. Nowhere in Anchorage do signals work well on 1 block spacing except one-way streets. There is a strong possibility with modeling and simulation that two-way streets will result in 2 block or greater signal spacing. This means half 			

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		<p>the signals Downtown may have to be removed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crash Prediction: Average crash rates for one-way intersections and crash rates for two-way intersections can be accumulated in total for downtown to compare options in terms of safety costs. 			
82, 120	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>T&C-8: Recommendation: Fund T&C-17 to test a street typology before approving a change to bike lanes on 5th and 6th Avenues. DOTPF expects an adequate NACTO bike lane recommendation will require redesignating sidewalks, parking lanes, or vehicular lanes to make space.</p> <p>If this solution requires a through lane removal on 5th and 6th Avenue, then Task T&C-17 must be completed first. Traffic volumes west of C street suggest a lane reduction is feasible. And may be feasible the full length – however, thorough modeling and simulation are needed to verify the tradeoffs measured in data driven performance measures.</p> <p>Note also – Share the Road signs and other optional devices will require a local maintenance agreement. DOTPF does not provide or maintain optional devices in Anchorage or other cities but will allow them as part of a strategic plan..</p>	<p>RESPONSE: We appreciate support of this project and look forward to working with DOT&PF on the Downtown Street Engineering Study including the excellent recommendations for additional elements of the study including modeling, and testing of street typology before approving the addition of bike lanes on Downtown streets.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Incorporate edits as suggested from DOT&PF.</p>		

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22, 121	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>T&C-19: Recommendation: DOTPF has recommended another option for a Downtown Safety Lighting project in the near term. Downtown is potentially eligible for federally funded lighting upgrades with HSIP funds, as a new funding source. This would address a high-ranking pedestrian crash area along 5th and 6th Avenue’s west end. However, those funds are limited in scope, and cannot deliver total downtown reconstruction. Given the timeline for total downtown signals, lighting, and multimodal needs –it is not feasible to expect all the changes to be made within 20 years of fiscal constraint.</p> <p>In the interim, if Code allowed a limited lighting project in higher pedestrian crash areas, an HSIP project is possible. An HSIP project would be deliverable in less than 5 years typically. An HSIP project would require a strict focus on lighting work only. To enable this, Downtown would have to allow for poles and overhead wiring to make the project cost effective. The overhead wiring need not be basic wiring. It could be LED and decorative since it is exposed. If such a project were cost-effective, it could be delivered and last over a sufficient design life until such time as a major reconstruction occurs.</p> <p>An interim lighting project would provide a greater period of benefit</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION: Planning will confirm with MOA PM&E their input and response to this action item to confirm the edits as suggested from DOT&PF.</p>		

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		towards a common safety factor of pedestrian conflicts and crashes during darkness. This could use federal funds and not take away from current AMATS or Downtown funds available. <i>Without an interim lighting project, pedestrian crash reductions are postponed while waiting for a major reconstruction effort.</i>			
101	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>CIRCULATION: High vehicular speeds are cited. Disagree that the 30 MPH and less postings downtown fall into the “high” category, even with speeding. Recommend the term “higher” as relative to the surrounding streets. High is relative and an absolute term. High is 50 MPH and above in AASHTO and on most major roads in Anchorage. Intermediate roads operate at 35-45 MPH. Lower speed roads are 30 and less.</p> <p>The survey results can represent the respondent group or a selected community group. But by AS 19.10.072, this cannot be interpreted as a definite response from the public. Motorists are also part of the public served by speed limit regulation. Many drivers are reasonable and prudent. They have a 4th priority input into speed limit outcomes through AS 19.10.072.</p> <p>Recommend a DOTPF Speed Limit Evaluation Form documenting AS 19.10.072 considerations be completed under Task T&C-2.</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION: Incorporate edits as suggested from DOT&PF.</p>		

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22, 65-67, 82, 120	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>T&C-2: PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY STREETS PROJECT:</p> <p>25 MPH for 5th and 6th appears feasible to DOT&PF. AK DOT&PF can assist in speeds; however, it will take more than signs alone. Note signal timing is operated by MOA and regulates signal progression that may affect this result. Other options include more bulb-outs, street furniture, speed feedback and progression signs, and other tools/typologies as well as enforcement to make the speed limit work. Safety Zones are a proven countermeasure with double fines. This could be an urban option for the high crash segments but requires new regulations and multi-agency support.</p> <p>Note that 20 MPH is also a default speed limit for a business district under 13 AAC 002.275 Maximum Limits. If this area is clearly defined and accepted by AMATS as a business district, then a 20 MPH speed limit may be set without further engineering study. 25 MPH is more likely to be acceptable by the motoring public than 20 MPH on 5th and 6th.</p> <p>Note a speed limit evaluation other than a code or statutory maximum has to be documented in an engineering study. Engineering study requires many documented inputs when setting speed limits other than the maximum limits defined in</p>	<p>RESPONSE: In reference to the comment “25 MPH is more likely to be acceptable by the motoring public than 20 MPH on 5th and 6th. Motorists are not the only users of our Downtown streets. Continuing to manage the streets to a single motorized user is directly opposite of what the 2007 Downtown Plan and this plan update advocates for. Slowing traffic down will make the streets feel and be safer for all users. The intent of the Chapter 7 action items is to finally get to entire community to realize the walking, biking, wheeled pedestrian user wants to feel safe Downtown. We anticipate there will be much input and discussion on this issue during the Downtown Streets Engineering Study, as there already has been in several public meetings, one-on-one interviews, and the online survey completed for the plan update.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Incorporate edits as suggested from DOT&PF.</p>		

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		<p>regulation. DOTPF has a speed limit evaluation form useful in documenting an engineering study consistent with AS 19.10.072.</p> <p>Recommendation: Use the DOTPF Speed Limit Evaluation Form be completed as part of the ped friendly streets project for DOTPF review and approval.</p>			
91-93	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>SKYWALKS: Concerned about discouraging skywalks impact on traffic safety. These offer pedestrians a crossing choice in winter conditions. Skywalks contribute to safety by reducing pedestrian-vehicle conflicts in winter conditions and during darkness. In highway safety, we find more than one solution is often necessary, and that one solution doesn't serve all users. Consider that some bicyclists prefer bike lanes while others prefer separated pathways. The current non-motorized methods find one facility does not serve all users well, instead we have to meet several different comfort levels. What would UAA or any northern city be without skywalks? Some arch designs are photo ops and are architecturally and aesthetically well done, and even destinations in themselves.</p> <p>Is there a way to have complementary systems instead of only one? Street frontage is uninviting not because of</p>	<p>RESPONSE: Skywalks take the walking public off the streets where first floor businesses are located. Skywalks are allowed but activating the street level needs to be a priority with Skywalk development. Downtowns with vibrant and active street culture and uses are usually safer and benefit to first floor businesses.</p> <p>Regarding complementary systems question – Yes, there is a way to have complementary systems. Some additional research and recommendations will be completed during the Downtown code update to provide guidance.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No changes to text.</p>		

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		<p>the skywalk option, but because of wind, snow, lack of awnings, darkness under awnings as pictured is not up to the airport visual task level we see at drop-off areas (security). More lighting, more buffering, less snow and ice, wind shielding, may all make street frontage more desirable as a destination or place to be. Page 79 recognizes the goal to make more inviting frontages.</p>			
14	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>PARKING: If parking is too high, would on-street parking removal increase options to meet goals for attractive pedestrian frontage and bicycle lanes, all with less conflict and “dooring”? A survey of non-downtown residents might reveal that ease of parking is one of their biggest concerns, along with all the one-way choices to get to covered or secured parking.</p> <p>Has there been a survey done to see where people are coming from to go to downtown? Perhaps some strategically-placed park-and-rides would help to reduce a feeling of parking stress downtown while simultaneously enhancing the walkable environment of downtown.</p> <p>There are cities that are looking into having downtowns that are free of personal vehicles (with the exception of people with disabilities), and this frees up valuable land space to engage in other activities, but in order to do</p>	<p>RESPONSE: ACDA completed a parking study in 2007 before the great recession hit Anchorage. At that time we had adequate parking spaces that were under-used. A new parking study is proposed to help the community understand the amount of parking and how it’s used. Whether that be by commuters, residents, etc. A coordinated parking program is also proposed that could come from recommendations and insight in the study.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to text.</p>		

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		this effectively you need a very robust public transportation network to and from the downtown core.			
86	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>DIAGRAM FROM 2007: Cross section of sidewalk for Downtown looks like what is there today. Will there be any new changes or is this still the typology?</p>	<p>RESPONSE: The diagram was carried forward from the 2007 Plan to keep this plan update consistent in its sidewalk typology guidance.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to text.</p>		
87	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS: DRIVEWAY ACROSS SIDEWALKS.</p> <p>MOA Driveway standards require “radius cuts” for commercial access more so than DOTPF standards. DOTPF is volume driven at commercial levels where 2 vehicles conflict more often on the drive – about 40 vehicles per hour. The problem with radius cuts vs driveways across sidewalks is radius drives “cut up” the pedestrian part of the sidewalk more often. “Curb cuts” maintain the concrete thruway for ped priority across low volume driveways.</p> <p>Recommendation: Add DOTPF and MOA consolidate driveway standards.</p>	<p>RESPONSE: This comment may not necessarily change the design guidelines and will be handed off to a different team in the Planning Department.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: This comment will be given to the MOA Planning Department staff who are currently working on updating the parking and driveway standards.</p>		
95, 99	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>HEATED SIDEWALKS: If the system was turned off, is it feasible to recommend more? Concur with the report recommending these extensive</p>	<p>RESPONSE: Sometime in the future the community may find it cost effective to introduce heating sidewalks back into the system. The plan wanted to support a</p>		

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		systems require local maintenance and funding, consistent with past agreements with DOTPF.	future project if it should be funded, constructed, and maintained. RECOMMENDATION: No change to text.		
118	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	QOL-6 WAYFINDING PROJECT: These agencies would provide engineering review in accordance with the MUTCD as it regulates wayfinding. The MUTCD Section 2D.50 is much more flexible on wayfinding compared to highway signs. A permit may not be required if wayfinding is outside the DOTPF managed portion of the ROW and within the MOA Townsite ROW instead. Recommend listing MOA and DOTPF.	RECOMMENDATION: Add MOA PM&E and DOT&PF as “proposed implementers” to this action item.		
24	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	Is Anchorage Today now more than 300,000 people?	RESPONSE: Anchorage has a little over 283,000 residents. We have lots several thousand residents over the past 10 years.		
8, 18, 22, 45, 48, 98, 100, 115	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	COMPARISON CITIES: Are there more comparison cities with comparable, desirable outcomes which are obvious through city maps, traffic counts, active business centers, housing, and pedestrian activity levels? I think the Downtown CBD relies too heavily on one comparison City – Oklahoma City, and does not report on the performance measures that make that a successful downtown. Including transportation measures –	RESPONSE: This plan did not compare Anchorage streets to Oklahoma City Streets. Oklahoma City and Smart Growth America references are included due to the revitalization strategy recommendations made by these two groups. Pg. 47: “Focus the Effort designates locations in Downtown recommended for concentrated resources and other investments...to create a critical mass needed to spark redevelopment and revitalization.”		

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		<p>one road or a hierarchy of roads? Core roads or core roads + ring roads? 2 lanes vs multilane density?</p> <p>Oklahoma City is stressed as a leading case for this Plan to show how to focus on a downtown. Oklahoma City enter is observed to have many 2 lane grid streets and on street parking, but also supported by a ring of arterials to feed more people/activity into the downtown. The same is true for the cities mentioned only once on page 100 by footnote Boise, Minneapolis, and Salt Lake City.. Otherwise, the Oklahoma City downtown grid does not appear to have a singular transportation network of only two-lane roads as proposed in Anchorage. Oklahoma City downtown 2 lane grid maintains 1 block signal spacing and appears to have very light downtown vehicular traffic on some roads, just like 4th, 7th, 8th Avenue in Anchorage. In Oklahoma City, nearby 4th Street and 6th Street remains multilane, 2-way, with short left turn lanes every block, much like 5th and 6th Avenue demand is multilane in Anchorage.</p> <p>In contrast, there must be many other cities with a 2-lane walkable downtown but are still dependent upon feeder arterials. How do other city systems compare as a whole network? Are they a mixture of some low speed, low volume two lane roads similar to 4th Ave and 7th Ave in Anchorage, but also with</p>	<p>Concentrated resources could include upgrades to sidewalks for example to support new development coming into a property. That doesn't mean the plan suggests we make Downtown Anchorage streets like downtown Oklahoma City streets.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No text changes.</p> <p>A follow up conversation by the Planning Department with DOT&PF and MOA PM&E should include the idea of using best practices from comparison cities in the Downtown Streets Engineering Study as an element of the scope.</p>		

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		<p>parallel higher volume multilane roads just like 5th or 6th Ave in Anchorage? Do these other cities depend on supporting arterials that carry high ADT's nearby in order to feed into or adjacent to a pedestrian core? Are there some cities with no supporting multilane arterials or couplets nearby, yet they maintain the density and parking goals of Downtown Anchorage?</p> <p>If the point of comparison cities is all things are possible in a downtown if an alternative vehicular network is in place, and if the point is to connect the Seward and Glenn Highways to all Anchorage employment centers (not only Downtown, but Midtown, U-Med, AIA, and S Anchorage), then DOTPF has no objection if a supportive network for the rest of area traffic and employment is met.</p>			
General	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>MAPS: The keys for the maps are very hard to read. Specifically, what brought this on is the Seismic Hazard Map on page 61. The inserted image makes the text below the map very small. Is it possible on all maps/diagrams (even if they are cut from somewhere else) to pull out the key/text and make it large enough to read/interpret?</p>	<p>RESPONSE: We agree the maps inserted didn't print as well as we anticipated.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Reformat maps to ensure the details can be easily read on each one.</p>		
82	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>STREET TYPOLOGIES: I might even go further with the Pedestrian-oriented streets than you already have. When I lived in Auckland (New Zealand) there were places downtown that were</p>	<p>RESPONSE: This would be a great topic to discuss during the Downtown Streets Engineering Study. Thank you for sharing your experience. The plan advocates for continuing the program of closing streets for events but didn't advocate for closures</p>		

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		<p>specifically dedicated only to pedestrians. It was a great place to hang out, with lots of little shops. In the winter the storeowners would put out heated torches for people to sit around. Some of these streets did allow cars, but only with very narrow spaces. It was specifically designed to be uncomfortable for cars. These were places that made excellent festival streets. They were often bustling with business. Part of creating parallel networks is not just creating high-speed roads for cars (where ostensibly there should be no pedestrians), but also creating spaces that cars are not meant to go into.</p>	<p>on a fulltime basis as seems to be your experience in New Zealand.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to text.</p>		
98	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>DOWNTOWN STREETS: I'm not sure that Austin and Oklahoma City make good analogies to Anchorage. Have you invited people from places like the Twin Cities, Burlington, VT, or maybe some cities in Michigan to come and talk? Ostensibly Anchorage is and will continue to be a winter city for some time, though perhaps an evaluation like Toronto recently did is in order (where they evaluated expected conditions for climate 50 years down the line and designed their plans to accommodate for that). Maybe ask some folks from Toronto up? They have some cutting-edge planning and design research there.</p>	<p>RESPONSE: This plan did not compare Anchorage streets to Oklahoma City Streets. Oklahoma City and Smart Growth America references are included due to the revitalization strategy recommendations made by these two groups. The Austin Great Streets program was mentioned as a potential program to <u>fund street improvements</u>. The demographic information shared on page 100 from the Agnew::Beck Housing Study was included to point out the percentage of residents in representative cities that still owned at least one car while still living downtown.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No text changes.</p> <p>A follow up conversation with DOT&PF and MOA PM&E should include the idea of using best practices from comparison cities in the DT Street Engineering Study as an</p>		

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			element of the scope including Toronto as noted by Shawn.		
100	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>PLAN FOR VEHICLES: Have you considered new housing developments (especially things like multi-use apartment complexes) with car-sharing schemes? This is a system wherein there is a garage below the apartment and there are several shared cars that can be checked out by residents at the apartment for when they need them. In this way you can give people access to cars while also encouraging a >1 car per household model.</p> <p>Usually these are paid through HOA fees. It is also cheaper for members of the car share to pay into the car share than to own a car and pay for insurance and maintenance.</p>	<p>RESPONSE: Thank you for this idea. We would like to add it to the menu of options for new development and in the commentary on page 100. This idea can also be used in the research for the Downtown Parking Study.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Add car-sharing as an option to be considered in the proposed parking study or as an item in a revised bonus point system.</p>		
General	Shawn Gardner, DOT&PF	<p>NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM: Agree that NHS designation downtown does not make sense and prevents development in the way that would be beneficial to downtown. I think it is likely that if MOA/AMATS were to support the construction of a highway-to-highway project that not only would this alleviate the need for large vehicles to use 5th/6th downtown, once those corridors are no longer essential for connection to the Mat-Su, it may be possible to work with FHWA to remove NHS classification.</p>	<p>RESPONSE: The Planning Department looks forward to participating in this discussion as part of the Downtown Streets Engineering Study.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to text.</p>		

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Alley activation	Karleen Wilson	If the plan utilizes alleys for more activity and people gathering, more alleys will need to be named to provide proper addressing and clarity of emergency response.	RESPONSE: This comment will be addressed before the plan is approved by the Anchorage Assembly. RECOMMENDATION: No change to text at this time.		
General	Lynn McGee	The Right of Way Section has no objections on the proposed action.	RESPONSE: Thank you for commenting.		
General	Judy Anunciacion	The Private Development Section has no comments to the Anchorage Downtown District Plan Draft.	RESPONSE: Thank you for commenting.		
General	Timothy Fisher	The Alaska State Fire Marshall's office has no comment or objections.	RESPONSE: Thank you for commenting.		
General	Janine Nesheim	The MOA Health Department has no comment.	RESPONSE: Thank you for commenting.		

Comments Received

Case 2021-0119

Kimmel, Corliss A.

From: Fisher, Timothy W (DPS) <timothy.fisher@alaska.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 21, 2021 4:17 PM
To: Kimmel, Corliss A.
Cc: Blake, Lori A.
Subject: RE: 2021-0119 Public Hearing Draft: Our Downtown-Anchorage Downtown District Plan 2021

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

Corliss and Lori;

Alaska State Fire Marshals Office has no comment or objections.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Take care;

Tim

Plans Examiner II
www.akburny.com ,
Plan Review Bureau
SOA, DPS, DFLS

From: Stewart, Gloria I. <gloria.stewart@anchorageak.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 21, 2021 2:49 PM
Cc: Stewart, Gloria I. <gloria.stewart@anchorageak.gov>
Subject: 2021-0119 Public Hearing Draft: Our Downtown-Anchorage Downtown District Plan 2021

Hello all. Attached please find Memorandum/Coversheet for the above referenced Public Hearing Draft (Case No. 2019-0119) scheduled for review and recommendation at a Public Hearing before the Planning and Zoning Commission on 12/06/2021. The routing material can be viewed by clicking on the project website link mentioned in the Memorandum or by clicking on the link below, scrolling to bottom of page and selecting 2021-0119 Reviewing Agency Routing. **Please submit comments as instructed in the Memorandum.**

<http://www.muni.org/CityViewPortal/Planning/Status?planningId=17438>.



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MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



Development Services Department
Addressing email: addressing@muni.org

Phone: 907 343-8466
Fax: 907 249-7868

Mayor Dave Bronson

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October 22, 2021

OCT 22 2021

Case 2021-0119, Our Downtown- Anchorage Downtown District Plan 2021

- a. Advisory Comments
 - i. If the plan utilizes alleys for more activity and people gathering, more alleys will need to be named to provide proper addressing and clarity for emergency responses.

Thanks,

Karleen Wilson
Addressing Official

Kimmel, Corliss A.

From: Right of Way Requests
Sent: Friday, October 22, 2021 2:49 PM
To: Stewart, Gloria I.
Cc: Blake, Lori A.; Kimmel, Corliss A.
Subject: RE: 2021-0119 Public Hearing Draft: Our Downtown-Anchorage Downtown District Plan 2021

RECEIVED

OCT 22 2021

All:

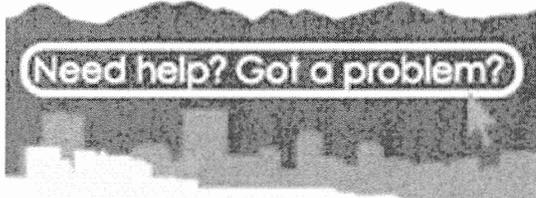
ROW has the following comments by case number:

2021-0119 ROW has no comment or objections on the proposed action.

Regards,

Lynn McGee
Senior Plan Reviewer
Right of Way Section
lynn.mcgee@anchorageak.gov
Office: 343-8226
Fax: 249-7340

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An online tool for Anchorage



From: Stewart, Gloria I. <gloria.stewart@anchorageak.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 21, 2021 2:49 PM
Cc: Stewart, Gloria I. <gloria.stewart@anchorageak.gov>
Subject: 2021-0119 Public Hearing Draft: Our Downtown-Anchorage Downtown District Plan 2021

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<http://www.muni.org/CityViewPortal/Planning/Status?planningId=17438>.

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



Development Services Department

Private Development Section

Mayor Dave Bronson

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MEMORANDUM

NOV 08 2021

Comments to Planning and Zoning Commission Applications/Petitions

DATE: November 8, 2021
TO: MOA Planning Department
FROM: Judy Anunciacion, Private Development Engineer
SUBJECT: PZC Case 2021-0119

Case 2021-0119 – Our Downtown – Anchorage Downtown District Plan Public Hearing Draft

Department Recommendations: The Private Development section has no comments to the Anchorage Downtown District Plan Draft.

Anchorage2040

From: Gardner, Shawn C (DOT) <shawn.gardner@alaska.gov>
Sent: Friday, November 12, 2021 6:47 AM
To: Anchorage2040
Cc: Thomas, Scott
Subject: Downtown District Plan Comments
Attachments: DOT Downtown District Plan Comments.docx

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

Shawn Gardner
(they/them)
State of Alaska DOT&PF
Anchorage Area Planner
907 269 0522

Dena'inaq e'nen'aq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu.(Dena'ina) *I live and work on the land of the Dena'ina. (English)*
Translation by J. Isaak and S. Shaginoff-Stuart

Anchorage Downtown District Plan
DOTPF Traffic Safety Review (set)

11/3/21

Pages	Topic	Comment	Reply
101	Connectivity	DOTPF concurs with the Seward – Glenn connection will provide significant vehicular change and benefit to other modes, speeds Downtown and in other neighborhoods along the route. With AMATS MTP modeling and VISSIM simulation, Task T&C-17 will confirm this opportunity as listed in this plan.	
69	Connectivity	DOTPF concurs with a second travel route to the Port of Alaska . This would provide significant vehicular change and benefit to other modes, speeds Downtown and in other neighborhoods along the route. With modeling AMATS plan for this Port access, and simulation of Downtown as a subarea in VISSIM, Task T&C-17 will confirm this opportunity as listed in this plan.	
101	Circulation	DOTPF agrees the current mixture of one and two-way streets interrupts the street grid network. We find the 5 th 6 th and I/L “Couplet” itself is a distinct and more clearly visible system. It is the sidestreets which can be more variable from block to block and thus not consistent.	
9, 98, 109, 120, 121	T&C-1 Study vs T&C 17: Modeling, Simulation, and Engineering	<p>No concerns for T&C-1 However, for the T&C 17 study element of 5th and 6th Ave, I and L Streets, DOTPF recommends a larger scope than a typical Engineering Study. Change to two \$\$ for T&C-17. Relabel it the Downtown Couplet Modeling, Simulation, and Engineering Study.(for 5th/6th and I/L as system. T&C 17 is listed as a study element of T&C-1 but not listed here.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Modeling is a critical first test of areawide impacts as per the attached chart. Modeling includes adjusting for land use and lane changes on a regional scale. This is put into the AMATS MTP model to make the high level screening for any spillover effects to the entire MTP model. If the main couplet changes to 2 way streets and less lanes passes the MTP model test without detrimental impacts to Gambell Street or Midtown, then this concept is ready for more detailed subarea modeling and engineering study. 2) Subarea Simulation is the second step that produces a more accurate model of operational changes to Downtown. There are at least 3 options – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Existing one-way grid - 5th/6th and I/L Couplets with the N-S one-way grid and signals every block, b) Modified Couplet only– 5th/6th and I/L Couplet alone, with lane reductions, and the rest of the grid is 2 way and simplified, or c) All Two-way – all of downtown is 2 way, including 5th and 6th and I/L Streets with lane reductions for bicycling, walking, and parking space. <p>VISSIM is recommended as a higher level subarea modeling tool, to take into account parking, bus stops, and adjacent downtown uses that cause weaving in through lanes and reduce vehicular demand served. Simulation will reveal performance changes visually, measured and easily observable as gaps and queuing.</p>	

		<p>3) Engineering Study and Evaluation only happens after adequate modeling of adjacent factors and land use adjustments above.</p> <p>Why do we want to stress modeling? Engineering study alone can be done without modeling at the MTP or subarea level. Linear modeling of 5th and 6th and I and L alone can be overly simplified and miss the impacts of parking, bike lanes, and lane reductions with adjacent friction. Downtown functions as a grid- signal timing on these main routes is the same change for the whole grid not just one corridor. The last Downtown Streets Study in 2005 was not finalized. It lacked a subarea model with enough detail to compare options. DOTPF did not accept two way street performance measures were in place to demonstrate an improvement.</p>	
<p>110, 115. 121</p>	<p>T&C-17, EA-7 Study: Modeling, Simulation, and Engineering</p>	<p>DOTPF sees one-way vs two-way as options worth comparing for 5th and 6th Ave. But as arterials, they must be compared in detail and not accepted as good or bad on anecdotal measures alone. Some key performance metrics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed: Speed is regulated by signals primarily • Lane Widths: Lane widths affect speed as well and can be narrower at lower speeds. The DOTPF range is 11-12 feet for arterials, and down to 10 feet for turning lanes and very low speed maneuvers and sidestreets. • Gaps: Pedestrian gaps to cross the road should be measured in modeling each option. One-way streets platoon traffic and offer significant pedestrian gaps per minute, per hour, as is observed today, the entire system becomes crossable when traffic stops in one direction. • Gaps: Vehicular gaps to make turns and to cross the road should be measured in modeling each option. Vehicles require a shorter gap than pedestrians, but will face a large difference in available gaps in one-way vs two-way. i • Sight Distance • Queuing and conflicts: a subarea model and simulation will show where vehicular traffic spills over, where it is not served. It will reveal what is acceptable and what is not. One-way Streets do not queue much and allow a signal per block, on every corner in Downtown, serving peds and vehicles. Two-way Streets require back to back left turn lanes of 100 feet in storage with 100 feet of taper, so 300 feet minimum. If they queue too much, they spill into and block through lanes. Nowhere in Anchorage do signals work well on 1 block spacing except one-way streets. There is a strong possibility with modeling and simulation that two-way streets will result in 2 block or greater signal spacing. This means half the signals Downtown may have to be removed. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crash Prediction: Average crash rates for one-way intersections and crash rates for two-way intersections can be accumulated in total for downtown to compare options in terms of safety costs. 	
82, 120	T&C-8	<p>Fund T&C-17 to test a street typology before approving a change to bike lanes on 5th and 6th Avenues. DOTPF expects an adequate NACTO bike lane recommendation will require redesignating sidewalks, parking lanes, or vehicular lanes to make space.</p> <p>If this solution requires a through lane removal on 5th and 6th Avenue, then Task T&C-17 has to be completed first. Traffic volumes west of C street suggest a lane reduction is feasible. And may be feasible the full length – however, thorough modeling and simulation are needed to verify the tradeoffs measured in data driven performance measures.</p> <p>Note also – Share the Road signs and other optional devices will require a local maintenance agreement. DOTPF does not provide or maintain optional devices in Anchorage or other cities, but will allow them as part of a strategic plan..</p>	
22, 121	T&C 19	<p>DOTPF has recommended another option for a Downtown Safety Lighting project in the near term Downtown is potentially eligible for federally funded lighting upgrades with HSIP funds, as a new funding source. This would address a high ranking pedestrian crash area along 5th and 6th Avenue’s west end. However, those funds are limited in scope, and cannot deliver total downtown reconstruction. Given the timeline for total downtown signals, lighting, and multimodal needs –it is not feasible to expect all the changes to be made within 20 year of fiscal constraint.</p> <p>In the interim, if Code allowed a limited lighting project in higher pedestrian crash areas, an HSIP project is possible. An HSIP project would be deliverable in less than 5 years typically. An HSIP project would require a strict focus on lighting work only. To enable this, Downtown would have to allow for poles and overhead wiring to make the project cost effective. The overhead wiring need not be basic wiring. It could be LED and decorative since it is exposed. If such a project were cost-effective, it could be delivered and last over a sufficient design life until such time as a major reconstruction occurs.</p> <p>An interim lighting project would provide a greater period of benefit towards a common safety factor of pedestrian conflicts and crashes during darkness. This could use federal funds and not take away from current AMATS or Downtown funds available. <i>Without an interim lighting project, pedestrian crash reductions are postponed while waiting for a major reconstruction effort.</i></p>	
101	Circulation	<p>High vehicular speeds are cited. Disagree that the 30 MPH and less postings downtown fall into the “high” category, even with speeding. Recommend the term “higher” as relative to the surrounding streets. High is relative and an absolute term. High is 50 MPH and above in AASHTO and on most major roads in Anchorage. Intermediate roads operate at 35-45 MPH. Lower speed roads are 30 and less.</p>	

103	Speed	<p>The survey results can definitely represent the respondent group or a selected community group. But by AS 19.10.072, this cannot be interpreted as a definite response from the public as a whole. Motorists are also part of the public served by speed limit regulation. Many drivers are reasonable and prudent. They have a 4th priority input into speed limit outcomes through AS 19.10.072.</p> <p>Recommend a DOTPF Speed Limit Evaluation Form documenting AS 19.10.072 considerations be completed under Task T&C-2.</p>	
22, 65-67, 82, 120	T&C-2 Ped Friendly Streets	<p>Recommend a DOTPF Speed Limit Evaluation Form be completed as part of the ped friendly streets project for DOTPF review and approval.</p> <p>25 MPH for 5th and 6th appears feasible to DOTPF. AK DOT&PF can assist in speeds, however, it will take more than signs alone. Note signal timing is operated by MOA and regulates signal progression that may affect this result. Other options include more bulbouts, street furniture, speed feedback and progression signs, and other tools/typologies as well as enforcement to make the speed limit work. Safety Zones are a proven countermeasure with double fines. This could be an urban option for the high crash segments, but requires new regulations and multi-agency support.</p> <p>Note that 20 MPH is also a default speed limit for a business district under 13 AAC 002.275 Maximum Limits. If this area is clearly defined and accepted by AMATS as a business district, then a 20 MPH speed limit may be set without further engineering study.</p> <p>25 MPH is more likely to be acceptable by the motoring public than 20 MPH on 5th and 6th.</p> <p>Note a speed limit evaluation other than a code or statutory maximum has to be documented in an engineering study. Engineering study requires many documented inputs when setting speed limits other than the maximum limits defined in regulation. DOTPF has a speed limit evaluation form useful in documenting an engineering study consistent with AS 19.10.072</p>	
91-93	Skywalks	<p>Concerned about discouraging skywalks impact on traffic safety. These offer pedestrians a crossing choice in winter conditions. Skywalks contribute to safety by reducing pedestrian-vehicle conflicts in winter conditions and during darkness. In highway safety, we find more than one solution is often necessary, and that one solution doesn't serve all users. Consider that some bicyclists prefer bike lanes while others prefer separated pathways. The current non-motorized methods find one facility does not serve all users well, instead we have to meet several different comfort levels.</p>	

		<p>What would UAA or any northern city be without skywalks? Some arch designs are photo ops and are architecturally and aesthetically well done, and even destinations in themselves.</p> <p>Is there a way to have complementary systems instead of only one? Street frontage is uninviting not because of the skywalk option, but because of wind, snow, lack of awnings, darkness under awnings as pictured is not up to the airport visual task level we see at dropoff areas (security). More lighting, more buffering, less snow and ice, windshielding, may all make street frontage more desirable as a destination or place to be. Page 79 recognizes the goal to make more inviting frontages.</p>	
14	Parking	<p>If parking is too high, would on-street parking removal increase options to meet goals for attractive pedestrian frontage and bicycle lanes, all with less conflict and “dooring”? A survey of non-downtown residents might reveal that ease of parking is one of their biggest concerns, along with all the one-way choices to get to covered or secured parking.</p> <p>Has there been a survey done to see where people are coming from to go to downtown? Perhaps some strategically-placed park-and-rides would help to reduce a feeling of parking stress downtown while simultaneously enhancing the walkable environment of downtown.</p> <p>There are cities that are looking into having downtowns that are free of personal vehicles (with the exception of people with disabilities), and this frees up valuable land space to engage in other activities, but in order to do this effectively you need a very robust public transportation network to and from the downtown core.</p>	
86	Diagram from 2007	<p>Cross section of sidewalk for Downtown looks like what is there today. Will there be any new changes or is this still the typology?</p>	
87q	Driveways	<p>Recommend DOTPF and MOA consolidate driveway standards.</p> <p>MOA Driveway standards require “radius cuts” for commercial access more so than DOTPF standards. DOTPF is volume driven at commercial levels where 2 vehicles conflict more often on the drive – about 40 vph. The problem with radius cuts vs driveways across sidewalks is radius drives “cut up” the pedestrian part of the sidewalk more often. “Curb cuts” maintain the concrete thruway for ped priority across low volume driveways.</p>	
95, 99	UD-5 Sidewalk Heating	<p>If the system was turned off, is it feasible to recommend more? Concur with the report recommending these extensive systems require local maintenance and funding, consistent with past agreements with DOTPF.</p>	
118	Q0L-6 Wayfinding	<p>Recommend listing MOA and DOTPF. These agencies would provide engineering review in accordance with the MUTCD as it regulates wayfinding. The MUTCD Section 2D.50 is much more flexible on wayfinding compared to highway signs. A permit may not be required if wayfinding is outside the DOTPF</p>	

		managed portion of the ROW and within the MOA Townsite ROW instead.	
24	Population	Is Anchorage Today now more than 300,000 people?	
8,18, 22, 45, 48, 98, 100, 115	Comparison Cities	<p>Are there more comparison cities with comparable, desirable outcomes which are obvious through city maps, traffic counts, active business centers, housing, and pedestrian activity levels?</p> <p>I think the Downtown CBD relies too heavily on one comparison City – Oklahoma City, and does not report on the performance measures that make that a successful downtown. Including transportation measures – one road or a hierarchy of roads? Core roads or core roads + ring roads? 2 lanes vs multilane density?</p> <p>Oklahoma City is stressed as a leading case for this Plan to show how to focus on a downtown. Oklahoma City enter is observed to have many 2 lane grid streets and onstreet parking, but also supported by a ring of arterials to feed more people/activity into the downtown. The same is true for the cities mentioned only once on page 100 by footnote Boise, Minneapolis, and Salt Lake City.. Otherwise, the Oklahoma City downtown grid does not appear to have a singular transportation network of only two lane roads as proposed in Anchorage. Oklahoma City downtown 2 lane grid maintains 1 block signal spacing and appears to have very light downtown vehicular traffic on some roads, just like 4th, 7th, 8th Avenue in Anchorage. In Oklahoma City, nearby 4th Street and 6th Street remains multilane, 2 way, with short left turn lanes every block, much like 5th and 6th Avenue demand is multilane in Anchorage.</p> <p>In contrast, there must be many other cities with a 2 lane walkable downtown, but are still dependent upon feeder arterials. How do other city systems compare as a whole network? Are they a mixture of some low speed, low volume two lane roads similar to 4th Ave and 7th Ave in Anchorage, but also with parallel higher volume multilane roads just like 5th or 6th Ave in Anchorage? Do these other cities depend on supporting arterials that carry high ADT’s nearby in order to feed into or adjacent to a pedestrian core? Are there some cities with no supporting multilane arterials or couplets nearby, yet they maintain the density and parking goals of Downtown Anchorage?</p> <p>If the point of comparison cities is all things are possible in a downtown as long as an alternative vehicular network is in place, and if the point is to connect the Seward and Glenn Highways to all Anchorage employment centers (not only Downtown, but Midtown, U-Med, AIA, and S Anchorage), then DOTPF has no objection as long as a supportive network for the rest of area traffic and employment is met.</p>	
General	Maps	The keys for the maps are very hard to read. Specifically what brought this on is the Seismic Hazard Map on page 61. The inserted image makes the text below the map very small. Is it possible on all maps/diagrams (even if they are cut from somewhere else) to pull out the key/text and make it large enough to actually read/interpret?	

Anchorage Downtown District Plan
DOTPF Traffic Safety Review (set)

11/3/21

82	Street Typologies	<p>I might even go further with the Pedestrian-oriented streets than you already have. When I lived in Auckland (New Zealand) there were places downtown that were specifically dedicated only to pedestrians. It was a great place to hang out, with lots of little shops. In the winter the store-owners would put out heated torches for people to sit around. Some of these streets did allow cars, but only with very narrow spaces. It was specifically designed to be uncomfortable for cars. These were places that made excellent festival streets. They were often bustling with business.</p> <p>Part of creating parallel networks is not just creating high-speed roads for cars (where ostensibly there should be no pedestrians), but also creating spaces that cars are not meant to go into.</p> <p>There is a lot of room on streets where you once allowed cars to then create a vibrant pedestrian atmosphere, and while it may sound extreme, Anchorage really does have the space to create a robust network of secondary streets that are dedicated to bikes, peds, and micromobility.</p>	
98	Downtown Streets	<p>I'm not really sure that Austin and Oklahoma City make good analogies to Anchorage. Have you invited people from places like the Twin Cities, Burlington, VT, or maybe some cities in Michigan to come and talk? Ostensibly Anchorage is and will continue to be a winter city for some time, though perhaps an evaluation like Toronto recently did is in order (where they evaluated expected conditions for climate 50 years down the line and designed their plans to accommodate for that). Maybe ask some folks from Toronto up? They have some pretty cutting-edge planning and design research there.</p>	
100	Plan for Vehicles	<p>Have you considered new housing developments (especially things like multi-use apartment complexes) with car-sharing schemes? This is a system wherein there is a garage below the apartment and there are several shared cars that can be checked out by residents at the apartment for when they need them. In this way you can give people access to cars while also encouraging a >1 car per household model.</p> <p>Usually these are paid through HOA fees. It is also cheaper for members of the car share to pay into the car share than to own a car and pay for insurance and maintenance.</p>	
General	National Highway System	<p>Agree that NHS designation downtown does not make sense and prevents development in the way that would be beneficial to downtown. I think it is likely that if MOA/AMATS were to support the construction of a highway-to-highway project that not only would this alleviate the need for large vehicles to use 5th/6th downtown, once those corridors are no longer essential for connection to the Mat-Su, it may be possible to work with FHWA to remove NHS classification.</p>	

Anchorage2040

From: Urbanus, Jeffrey D.
Sent: Monday, November 15, 2021 8:10 PM
To: Anchorage2040
Cc: Bischofberger, Kristi L.; Stewart, Gloria I.
Subject: Watershed Management Comments - PZC Case No. 2021-0119

Watershed Management Services has recently completed our review of the draft document. We believe that the document is lacking a discussion of stormwater management in the Downtown area, particularly as it relates to the inclusion of Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development (LID). These stormwater management practices are required by the MOA current stormwater discharge permit and the MOA Design Criteria Manual. LID and Green Infrastructure have the potential to integrate well with other elements and goals of the draft plan, such as green spaces, landscaping, and pedestrian friendly street design. Unfortunately, it has also been our observation that when stormwater management concerns are not taken into account, mandated design elements can make it difficult to implement LID and Green Infrastructure. We respectfully request the opportunity to discuss in more detail how stormwater management concerns might be included in the final plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,
Jeff

Jeffrey Urbanus
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Parks and Recreation Department Comments on pre-release draft

CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
LU-17	Update Anchorage's seismic ground failure mapping through individual on-site geotechnical investigations and other analyses and studies.	Ongoing	\$	GAC, Planning, Community Development
LU-18	Use recommendations from the Seismic Risk Assessment for development requirements in seismic ground failure hazard zone #5 when land use regulations are being updated (Works with LU-12).	2022-2023		GAC, Planning, Community Development
LU-19	Consider the possible reestablishment of development restrictions affecting the buttress area when land use regulations are being updated (Works with LU-12).	2022-2023		GAC, Planning, Community Development
LU-20	Incentivize developments that reduce life/safety and economic risks, by employing the incentives recommended in this plan (Works with LU-12)..	2022-2023		GAC, Planning, Community Development, Assessor, Assembly
QOL-1	Continue to promote Downtown by funding marketing and branding efforts to correspond with the current demographic and economic elements influencing visitor and resident desires seeking a Downtown experience. Consider Design marketing and branding programming consistent with the Downtown vernacular to create world-wide recognizable logos, publications, websites, and other print and online media. Include 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	\$	ACVB, Chamber, ADP, Parks
QOL-2	Include honorary naming of parks that may include Alaska Native Tribal places or leaders like Peratrovich Park.	Ongoing	\$	Parks
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.	Ongoing	\$	ACVB, Chamber, ADP, Parks, Anchorage Museum, Federal Agencies, and the PAC
QOL-4	Develop signage distinct from the rest of Anchorage, to identify and promote the Downtown cultural districts including the Mushing District on 4 th Avenue, Anchorage Museum Design District, and the proposed 2 nd to 4 th Avenues historic district identified in the <i>Anchorage Original Neighborhoods Historic Preservation Plan</i> and in this plan, may be like what is present in the G Street Arts District.	Ongoing	\$	HPC, Museum, ADP, ACVB, Fur Rondy, DTCC

CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
QOL-5	Determine buildings, sites, or other locations to direct pedestrians and bicyclists to in case of an emergency. Determine the locations where signage and audible warning systems can be installed to direct pedestrians and bicyclists to these locations. This action may be a part of the wayfinding project. Distribute online and through social media the information developed by the Wayfinding Program.	2023	\$\$	MOA EOC, Community Development, Planning
QOL-6	Fund, design and install a new signage and wayfinding system throughout Downtown consistent with the Downtown vernacular to replace existing certain interpretive panels and signs. Include information and directions on where to shelter in place should an earthquake or other type of emergency occur. 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 Walk may also be included in the Alaska App.	2023-2024	\$\$\$\$	DTCC, ADP, AEDC, ACDA, Parks, PM&E
QOL-7	Continue to support ADP efforts for a Clean, Safe, Vibrant Downtown including funding of the ADP Business Improvement District.	Ongoing		ADP
QOL-8	Fund and maintain MOA Community Service Patrols in Downtown.	Ongoing		APD
QOL-9	Maintain a safe and clean environment by installing regularly-spaced trash and recycling bins.	Ongoing		ADP
QOL-10	Fund year-round street cleaning.	Ongoing		MOA M&O
QOL-11	Fund, determine locations, install and maintain self-cleaning public restrooms.	2023	\$\$\$	ADP, ACDA, Parks, PM&E
QOL-12	Continue implementation of a comprehensive street lighting upgrade program to increase visibility and safety on all streets.	Ongoing		PM&E
QOL-13	Employ certain Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principals in public spaces related to landscaping placement, access and maintaining line of sight to ensure places are used as they were intended.	Ongoing		Planning, Parks
QOL-14	Fund and provide support to planning and promoting Winter City themed events, shoulder season events, summer concerts, and parades.	Ongoing		ADP, Parks, Anchorage Museum
QOL-15	Plan and fund cultural and recreational activities for and by youth.	Ongoing		ADP, Parks, Anchorage Museum

Commented [DNJ1]: PM&E could be considered as a partner to guide implementation?

Commented [DNJ2]: Same comment as QOL 6

Commented [DNJ3]: Could the Museum be considered a partner in winter city placemaking and events for 14 and 15?

CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
QOL-16	Fund and implement the Town Square Park Master Plan.	Ongoing	\$\$\$\$	Assembly, Parks
QOL-17	Promote a weekend market Downtown.	Ongoing		ADP,
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 (Works with LU-12).	2022-2023		Community Development, Traffic, ADP,
QOL-19	Promote the 13 National Register of Historic Places listed buildings through social media, tours, and the interpretive project proposed in QOL-6.	Ongoing	\$	HPC
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.	Ongoing	\$	HPC
QOL-21	Review the action items in the 4NHPP to prioritize grant applications and project completions in Downtown.	Ongoing		HPC
UD-1	Update the bonus point system for the Downtown Zoning Districts using the recommendations from this planning process brought forward by the Urban Design and Utilities Subcommittees formed for the Downtown Plan update (Works with LU-12).	2022-2023		Planning
UD-2	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
UD-3	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-4	Fund and complete a land capacity study collaboratively with the utilities study. Determine in the study 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-5	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

Deleted: , Parks

CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
UD-6	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 StudyFund, complete, and implement the recommendations of theengineering study prioritizing projects that can occur quickly without too much funding. Include the following action items in the scope of the engineering study: (Works withT&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 9 th to 3 rd avenues. Adjust speed limit on 2 nd , 3 rd , 4 th , 7 th , 8 th , and 9 th avenues to 20 MPH, 5 th and 6 th , to 25 MPH (Works withT&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-3	Historic 3 rd Avenue Bikeway Pilot Project - Relocate large truck traffic to alternate routes and remove parking on the south side of 3 rd Avenue between D Street and Christensen Drive, and create additional bicycle parking space for restaurants on 3 rd Avenue . (Works withT&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-4	Coastal Trail Connector to Historic 3 rd Avenue Pilot Project - Stripeand sign bike lanes along 3 rd Avenue from L Street to D Street and up G Street to 9 th Avenue. Take parking off the south and west sides of the streets for the bike-only lanes . (Works withT&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, Parks
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.	Ongoing		TRANSIT
T&C-6	Parking App - Fund a coordinated parking program within ACDA with parking app and other related online programs toprovide real-time parking information in coordination with an updated parking study included as T&C-7. Also incorporate the potential PCO position in T&C-8 as the manager of this program	2022-2025		ACDA
T&C-7	Fund and publish a parking study.	2022-2025	\$\$\$	ACDA

Commented [DNJ4]: Signage coordination?

CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

T&C-8	Parking Coordination Officer (PCO) - Fund a parking coordination officer within ACDA or the MOA to facilitate the creation of a Coordinated Parking Program.	Ongoing		ACDA
T&C-9	Fund and maintain striped bicycle lanes, install <i>Share the Road</i> 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).	2022-2025		PM&E, MOA M&O, DOT&PF, Parks
T&C-10	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-11	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, T&C-11 and T&C-18).	2022-2025		ACDA, Private parking lots owners and managers
T&C-12	Prioritize and fund snow plowing of all bicycle lanes and trails leading into and out of Downtown. Priority snow plowing of bicycle lanes <u>increases bicycle commuting year-round</u> and supports all income sectors.	2022-Ongoing		MOA M&O
T&C-13	Consider and fund 15-minute transit headways to encourage transit ridership.	Ongoing	\$\$\$\$	TRANSIT
T&C-14	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 off setting the costs with a small ride fee.	2022-Ongoing	\$\$	TRANSIT, ACVB, Private Operator
T&C-15	Fund and Update the PM&E Design Criteria Manual (DCM) consistent with the recommendations of the Downtown Core Streets Master Plan and with recommendations from the Downtown Streets Engineering Study to provide clear direction on the design of streets as they are improved or rights-of-ways are redeveloped.	2025	\$\$\$\$\$	Assembly, PM&E
T&C-16	Fund, Design, and Complete Historic 3 rd 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 3 rd Avenue, G Street and Christensen Street to make continuous trail connection to Ship Creek Trail and ARRC Rail redevelopment area.	2023-2024	\$\$\$\$\$\$	AMATS, PM&E
T&C-17	Fund, Design, and Complete G Street improvements proposed in the 2007 Downtown Core Streets Master Plan.	2023-2025		AMATS, PM&E

Commented [DNJ5]: Same comment as T&C 4

Commented [DNJ6]: Parks not implementer but interest in coordinating with Nordic grooming

#	ACTION ITEM	TIME FRAME	COST	PROPOSED IMPLEMENTERS
T&C-18	Consider the conversion of 5th and 6th Avenues as proposed in the <i>2007 Downtown Plan</i> as a study element of the Downtown Streets Engineering Study(Works withT&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-19	Prioritize infrastructure funding and improvements in the <i>Focused Development Areas, Cultural Districts</i> and in support of <i>Opportunity Sites</i> to achieve the goals of this plan as identified on the Revitalization Map included in Chapter 3.	Ongoing		AMATS, Planning, Traffic, DOT&PF

Pre-release PH
Draft

Anchorage2040

From: Riggs, Chelsea G
Sent: Tuesday, November 16, 2021 3:33 PM
To: Anchorage2040
Cc: Harris, Darcy B.
Subject: PZC 2021-0119 AHD Comments
Attachments: PZC 2021-0119 AHD Final Comments.pdf

Hello,

Please find the attached comments from AHD on PZC 2021-0119. Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Thank you!



Chelsea Riggs (she/her)
Senior Office Associate
Anchorage Health Department
825 L Street, Anchorage, AK 99501
Office: (907) 343-4244
muni.org/health



Dena'inaq etnen'aq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu. I live and work on the land of the Dena'ina.

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MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Anchorage Health Department



Anchorage
Health
Department

Date: November 10, 2021

To: Planning Department, Current Planning Division
Clerk's Office, Business License Official

Thru:  DeeAnn Fetko, Deputy Director

 Darcy Harris, Environmental Health Program Manager

 **From:** Janine Nesheim, Environmental Sanitarian III

Subject: Comments Regarding PZC Case 2021-0119, Our Downtown - Anchorage
Downtown District Plan Public Hearing Draft

This PZC Case reviews the Our Downtown – Anchorage Downtown District Plan, which is a “targeted” review and update of the 2007 *Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan*.

AHD Environmental Health has reviewed this case and has no comment.

**Jim Renkert
P.O. Box 90621
Anchorage, AK 99509**

November 15, 2021

Kristine Bunnell
Planning Manager
MOA Planning Department
P: 907-343-7920
E: kristine.bunnell@anchorageak.gov

Dear Ms. Bunnell:

Please accept these comments for the draft “Our Downtown, Anchorage Downtown District Plan 2021” (Plan). Thank you for all the work that has gone into this plan and for meeting with the Third Avenue Radicals on November 9th. The following are my personal comments.

One of the most exciting areas in community and urban development is the increased attention to creating holistic streetscapes through good design, the placement of green infrastructure, artwork, wayfaring signs and - trees!

These initial comments will focus on the references in the Plan to street trees and improvements to downtown streetscapes.

Section 1.

The importance of “street trees” in a downtown environment is well documented. Unfortunately, downtown Anchorage has seen an overall loss of trees. If you walk around parts of the downtown core on 5th and 6th Avenues you will notice filled in asphalt or concrete squares in the sidewalk and town square. These squares are planters that used to have trees.

The Plan references trees in 8 different places:

Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

Pg 41. Downtown Assets and Challenges “Trees are not supported with adequate subsurface soil cavities, resulting in lost landscaping investment – standards need to be changed for landscaping.”

- I concur with this assessment. The lack of proper subsurface soil is one of most important things to address. The new 4th Avenue project from A to E Streets is

incorporating silva cell technology to improve subsurface soil cavities. This is an excellent investment.

Chapter 6: Urban Design

*Pg. 79 Urban Design, Urban Design Subcommittee, "Recommendations for landscaping to ensure healthy **trees** and shrubs survive with **input from an arborist** on technical specifications was also recommended."*

- Concur. The Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department has an arborist on staff. Please take an advantage of this staffing expertise.

*Pg. 80 Pedestrian Environment. "Wider sidewalks allow room for **on-street amenities like trees, benches, waste bins, or parking meters.**"*

*Pg 82 Mixed-use Streets provide alternative modes of travel and typically function with increased use of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit design amenities. **Improvements such as trees, landscaping, and street furniture** are desirable to make mixed use streets more attractive for pedestrians.*

*Pg 87 Plant and **maintain street trees on sidewalks** wide enough to accommodate the planter infrastructure.*

- Concur. On-street trees look better and live longer (cutting down on replacement costs) with wider sidewalks and regular maintenance. Moreover, trees not only make streets more attractive for pedestrians but also for business and tourism.

Pg. 95 Urban Design, Urban Design & Utilities Subcommittee Recommendations, "New landscaping requirements to achieve healthy viable trees and shrubs in the urban Downtown environment."

- Please develop and approve any new requirements that include things like more subsurface soil and silva cells, sidewalk planters, landscape strips and other green infrastructure techniques.

Chapter 7: Transportation & Circulation

*Pg. 99 "Upgrades to landscaping along some streets didn't work out due to sanding [and salting] 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 public clearly wants trees brought back, however I could not find any specific action items regarding trees in the Action Item Table.

Section II.

The following comments are specific to the [4Downtown Lighting and Signals Upgrade – A MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE PROJECT \(ancdowntownlights.com\)th Avenue ppt 2-1-21 \(ancdowntownlights.com\)](#) project currently underway.

I was very glad to see that this project is making street trees a priority. Until this 4th Avenue project I did not have high hopes that we would ever see the use of silva cells again after they were successfully used on the east side of Dena'ina Center.

On September 15 I took part in an agency tour of the 4th Avenue project between C and E Streets organized by MOA Project Management and Engineering (PM&E). It was highly informative, not only to see the silva cells being placed but also to hear about the overall plans to upgrade 4th Avenue.

This is the brief history and timeline for future upgrades along 4th Avenue as I understand them

- This past year they have completed the upgrades of 4th Avenue from A Street to Cordova.
- They're nearing completion of the block between A and E. This block is getting the most deluxe upgrades and attention.
- They're working on the design between E & G Streets. The MOA may need to bond for the final funding, but they hope to begin construction next year.
- The funding for the blocks from Cordova westward has been a combination of federal highways, state, and municipal bonds. MOA PM&E was in charge of the construction for these blocks.
- According to PM&E they will not oversee the blocks from Cordova east to Ingra. It is slated to be a state DOT project and they are planning on doing it in 2023.

What concerns me is that according to PM&E, the blocks from Cordova to Ingra will be a "bare bones" project with a minimum of streetscape elements. There might not be *any* of the features recommended in the Plan and referenced above in Section 1. No attractive amenities for pedestrians like wider sidewalks, decorative lampposts, hanging baskets, banners and trees. There is apparently little effort to bring trees back; and no serious efforts to address and reinvest in this part of downtown.

This would be a huge, missed opportunity. Putting on my community hat, and Third Avenue Radicals hat, I want to see East 4th Avenue receive nearly as much attention as the downtown core. It is certainly overdue.

From Ingra to L Street 4th Avenue could truly be "Main Street USA" and help anchor the entirety of downtown, not just the western downtown core. Just think of how that could beautify and revitalize all of downtown for visitors, and for the residential development that is a stated need in the Plan, and that the Plan envisions and encourages (*Pg. 36 "The housing goal of the 2007 Downtown Plan was to accommodate and encourage up to 4,000 housing units*). Revitalization, including new housing, could branch out on the adjoining cross streets from Barrow to Hyder.

One of the other stated goals of the Plan is to “Focus the Development Area.” With the proposed upgrades slated for 2023 focusing East 4th Avenue streetscape improvements project provides an opportunity to do just that – focus the development area on this long neglected part of town. There are no blocks more barren, bleak and depressing – and with a high vacancy rate - in downtown than the stretch from Eagle to Hyder Streets.

These are my personal comments; however, the 3rd Avenue Radicals share these concerns. We would like to meet with MOA planners and the MOA project managers to further discuss E. 4th Avenue improvements from Cordova to Ingra. We need to meet soon before this opportunity is lost.

Could we arrange a meeting before the end of the year?

Warm Regards,

Jim Renkert



November 15, 2021

RE: Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan Rewrite

To the Planning and Zoning Commission,

I am writing in my capacities as a resident of Anchorage and a housing researcher at Sightline Institute, a nonpartisan public policy think tank. I support the vision of downtown as expressed in the most recent draft of the Comprehensive Plan (referred to below as “the plan”). My testimony will focus on additional suggestions to the policy approaches for achieving that vision and minor suggested edits to the document. I respect the fact that many experts have been working on these issues for decades and I present these observations in the spirit of adding to the conversation.

Surface Parking

There is solid data that establishes the overabundance of parking downtown (see p. 13 of the plan). Surface lots undermine the goal of creating a downtown that is inviting and safe for pedestrians. Large expanses of pavement are especially detrimental to the look and feel of downtown and the land they occupy could be used far more efficiently for housing, hotels, offices, or retail. Any of these uses would contribute more to the downtown economy and the property tax base than surface parking. The plan could state more strongly the need to look for ways to limit the construction of additional lots and/or to put in place policies that will lead to more development on the numerous surface lots blighting downtown. Here are some examples that other cities have used:

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/sep/27/cities-eliminating-car-parks-parking>)

Prettification of parking lots, as outlined in the urban design section of the plan, is a good intermediate step. But the end goal really should be to incentivize the development of surface lots into more valuable properties that contribute to the vibrance of downtown. Also, this may be outside the scope of the plan, but improvements to surface lots should be the responsibility of the landowners, not the city (not unlike the upkeep requirements for owners of deteriorated properties).

We also support all elements of the plan that make travel to and navigation within downtown without a personal motorized vehicle easier, safer, and more desirable (e.g. more housing downtown; lowering speed limits; intra-downtown shuttle; better public transportation to downtown from the Valley and other parts of Anchorage; heated sidewalks or other approaches to keeping sidewalks free of snow and ice).

Housing

I support the plan's strong emphasis on bringing more housing to downtown and the policy changes that will achieve this goal, as described in this research piece I wrote on downtown Anchorage housing policy: <https://www.sightline.org/2021/08/30/let-there-be-housing-in-downtown-anchorage/>. There is strong overlap between the policy changes proposed in my article and the policies outlined in the draft comprehensive plan, including lightening the costs of public infrastructure and looking to the state and other sources for financing. An accompanying op-ed, published in the Anchorage Daily News, also lays out the argument for more housing downtown: <https://www.adn.com/opinions/2021/09/03/let-there-be-housing-downtown/>. (Both articles are attached as part of the testimony.)

Residential Building Setback

The downtown residential building setback requirement (see p. 89) should be eliminated, as proposed in AO 2021-89 proposed revisions to Title 21. Residential setbacks in urban environments make little sense and are a huge inducement to include commercial space, warranted or not, on the first floors of all residential buildings. Developers may prefer to put living space or a lobby on the first floor rather than a commercial business space that may or may not be used.

Suggested Edits

- Add MESA payment to list of acronyms (referred to on p. 22)
- Include a more precise definition of "Opportunity Sites" (p. 52)
- Include an appendix item with a list of the zoning districts that are included in the table on p. 64, along with their descriptions. Also, reference the appendix item in the "Downtown Land Use Districts Defined" section.
- This is more of a question than an edit: Certain parcels in the Mushing District might be appropriate for housing, but the zoning designations for the Mushing District don't appear to allow for residential in that area. Why not? Should a rezone be considered in that district?
- Include an explainer of the Bonus Points system (p. 95)
- Explain the intent of the "coordinated parking strategy." (p. 104; also p. 109)
- Explain the intent of the parking study (p. 109)

Thank you to the drafters for putting together a plan that is both visionary and sensible, and to the Planning and Zoning Commission for considering these comments.

Jeannette Lee

*Sr. Researcher, Sightline Institute
Anchorage, Alaska*



LET THERE BE HOUSING IN DOWNTOWN ANCHORAGE

Anchorage's new mayor has the chance to make lasting and historic improvements to the heart of Alaska's largest city.



Author: **Jeannette Lee**

(@JLee907) on August 30, 2021 at 1:41 pm

Anchorage's new mayor, Dave Bronson, is on point in putting downtown near the top of his to-do list. A world-class urban center in Alaska's largest city has long been the Holy Grail for Anchorage leaders. The quest has brought some success: walkable blocks of office buildings, hotels, restaurants, and shops; the [Anchorage Museum](#) and the [Performing Arts Center](#); and, not far from City Hall, two trailheads to the "[Moose Loop](#)," a 32-mile paved trail network.

What no one has managed to figure out, though, is how to keep the downtown economy humming like it's always the peak of summer, when office workers, other Alaskans, and tourists are dining out, buying things, and paying for lodging in the downtown core. Achieving this feat would be a huge and historic accomplishment for the Bronson administration.

The mayor's [transition plan](#) focuses on downtown as a key driver of economic revitalization for the city. His team wants a vibrant year-round business environment and intends to focus on supporting tourism, filling office space, and boosting retail sales. This is a great start, but it is not enough to fulfill the goal of a four-season downtown. Tourists do not come in large numbers outside the May-to-September window. Office workers are only downtown on weekdays, not weekends, and the pandemic has made in-person work either optional or part-time for many. Downtown restaurants, shops, and service businesses need a steady demand base to flourish.

The only way to create that permanent pool of customers is to get more people living downtown.

Generating interest in downtown living will not be the issue. A [2018 survey](#) by the Anchorage Economic Development Corp's housing group found downtown was among the top three neighborhoods preferred by Anchorage residents. When asked to choose their top three neighborhoods from a menu of 17 choices, one third of 1,114 respondents included downtown in their lists. Of the 175 senior residents responding the survey, 30 percent said they would want to live downtown. Seniors were the group most likely to want to live in close proximity to shopping, with 46 percent saying that was a top priority.

And yet, Anchorage has missed out on the [nationwide shift](#) toward urban living. The list of recently constructed residential projects of any size is thin: Cook Inlet Housing Authority built the 50-unit [Elizabeth Place](#), a mix of affordable and market-rate apartments with ground-level retail space. It also transformed the former Duke's 8th Avenue Hotel into 28 one- and two-bedrooms that rent for \$750 to \$1,200. Over on 8th and K St, Developer Shaun Debenham plans to break ground next year on 44 apartments at [Block 96 Flats](#). The \$6.2 million complex is on track to be the first to offer all units at market rates downtown in four decades, but still needed some public financing from the Anchorage Community Development Authority to pencil out.

Helping developers build more housing to meet a range of consumer preferences and price points is a ripe opportunity for the Bronson administration to leave a lasting legacy downtown and boost the business environment citywide. The quality and quantity of housing are foundational to a solid local economy, affecting the ability of companies, government, and organizations to retain and recruit employees. A [2021 business confidence](#) report by the Anchorage Economic Development Corp found 32 percent of 210 employers surveyed said the availability and affordability of quality housing is either a significant or moderate barrier to growth.

The high costs of construction in Alaska present a major hurdle for builders downtown. Currently, the only projects that make financial sense target the upper tier of the housing market because those buyers can pay enough to give developers adequate return on their investment. But Anchorage can't depend on a small number of wealthy residents to revitalize the downtown economy. For retailers, restaurateurs and other businesses to truly thrive downtown, we need young people, seniors, and families across the income spectrum who consider the blocks north of 9th avenue home.

The city has put in place some policies to encourage housing downtown, including tax abatement and letting developers choose how much parking to build, but it can do more. A few suggestions include partnering with developers to invest in projects; incentivizing housing builds on downtown's numerous surface parking lots and other underdeveloped properties; mitigating offsite construction costs; zoning reform; and attracting foundational neighborhood businesses, like a grocery store. The Bronson administration has a [great opportunity](#) to improve the blocks surrounding City Hall. Here's hoping they'll take it.

WHY DOESN'T GREAT HOUSING DOWNTOWN ALREADY EXIST?

Downtown has the bones to become a true neighborhood, one where a significant number of people actually live. It has the typical canopy of an urban ecosystem: office buildings, a performing arts center, the museum, and a wide variety of bars and eateries. The gridded blocks are short, making walking easier. And while many other American cities have to contend with a "[moat](#)" of unappealing real estate surrounding their downtowns, Anchorage has desirable residential neighborhoods immediately adjacent to its city center, including South Addition and Government Hill.

Despite the apparent demand for living in the heart of downtown, Anchorage planners and developers have for decades prioritized single-detached housing on freshly cleared land. Residential

building has slowed significantly in the decades since the oil-driven **economic boom** (and subsequent bust) of the 1980s, but homes continue their spread into former wetlands and up the slopes of the Chugach mountains. The sprawl adds to the costs of providing city services, like police and fire protection, and road maintenance.

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The desire is there on the part of buyers and builders, but the cost of producing housing downtown has so far proven to be higher than what most potential residents seem willing to spend. For homebuilders, putting up a single detached home in suburban Anchorage and selling it for half a million dollars is a much surer bet and far less logistically challenging than a downtown apartment project. And so, in 2021, when the housing market in Anchorage is **going gangbusters**, the biggest project happening downtown is not housing, but the \$41 million refurbishment of the **Key Bank office building**.

The following factors contribute to the high project costs faced by homebuilders downtown:

Land is expensive. Underdeveloped land riddles downtown with **dead space**. While not technically vacant, many parcels are surface parking lots. Surface lots are lucrative and relatively cheap to maintain, giving owners little incentive to sell at prices that would make an urban residential project pencil out.

Construction is also expensive. In Anchorage, construction budgets are about 37 percent higher than the national average because of the cost of shipping building materials, labor costs, and the shortened construction season, according to a **2012 study** by the McDowell Group. Materials for the larger housing types that are appropriate for a downtown (e.g. concrete, steel, elevators) are more expensive than materials for a standard wood frame detached house.

Seismic concerns are very, very real. The Great Alaska earthquake of 1964 was the second-largest ever recorded in the world and devastated downtown. As a result, Anchorage has stringent seismic building codes that are expensive to meet for multi-story developments.

Developers are on the hook for building or upgrading city infrastructure. Anchorage requires builders to shoulder improvements to surrounding roads and sidewalks, as well as sewage, water, and utility systems. Such expenses, known as "off-site costs," can easily range into the tens of thousands of dollars per home.

WHAT HAS THE CITY DONE TO SPUR

HOMEBUILDING DOWNTOWN?

Non-profit developers can use government subsidies to fill the gap between the cost to build homes and prices people can afford. That's why the nonprofit [Cook Inlet Housing Authority](#) is the most active developer of housing downtown. In recent years, the housing authority has drawn on federal grants to build Elizabeth Place and Qanchi Place. Cook Inlet Housing is an undisputed force in Anchorage housing development, but it cannot singlehandedly make downtown a vibrant urban neighborhood. Private developers bring a wealth of expertise, supply chain access, and the workforce necessary for a wider variety of housing that appeals to homebuyers across the [economic spectrum](#).

The city has enacted a few key tax breaks and zoning allowances, but they have done little so far to entice a significant number of private developers.

No Parking Requirements

Excessive parking mandates routinely kill promising housing builds worldwide. Recognizing this, Anchorage did away with the policy of forcing builders to pave and paint a certain number of parking spots per residential unit. Instead in downtown the city allows for a "[market-based](#)" approach, that allows builders, not the city, decide how much parking to include based on their estimates of current and future demand.

Typically, adding denser housing options to an area leads to concerns about traffic congestion and parking shortages. But focusing on the downtown core as a site for housing that is more efficiently sized, less pricey, and close to amenities will remove at least some vehicles from the equation. At least a part of Anchorage can truly be a walking city, with the associated health benefits and fuel savings.

Property Tax Break

Developers who build a minimum of four new residential units in the heart of downtown, known as the "Central Business District," can obtain a [12-year property tax break](#) as long as they increase the total number of residential units on the property. The units can be priced at market rate and have no affordability requirements. The tax break applies to the value of all new units. Cook Inlet Housing Authority secured the tax break for its conversion of Duke's 8th Avenue Hotel into Qanchi Place.

Deteriorated Properties Tax Exemption

The city can also [defer or exempt taxes](#) on properties under improvement anywhere in Anchorage that it had ordered to be vacated, condemned, or demolished. With few downtown projects using the exemption, it may be worth reviewing and possibly rewriting (see below). A \$41 million office building renovation, which will not include residential space, is one of the few projects to use the [exemption](#).

In the Works

The city is updating its Downtown Comprehensive Plan with an emphasis on supporting residential development and a streetscape to match. The plan in turn will inform future changes to the land use (Title 21) and building (Title 23) codes. One good change the Bronson administration is already proposing would remove [residential setback requirements](#) in downtown. A setback is the distance

separating a structure from a street, other buildings, property lines, or natural features. Many of which have the potential to alleviate homebuilding costs downtown. Setbacks make little sense in downtowns because they reduce the amount of land available to build.

Another possible proposal involves rewriting rules on the size of the building allowed per square foot of land (also known as a “[floor area ratio](#)”). Developers can build bigger if they include certain amenities in and around their building. (This practice is called a “[floor area ratio bonus](#).”) The city could change the list from amenities that were desirable in the past to those that are more in demand today. For example, instead of rewarding builders for installing bollards, reward them for wider sidewalks and solar panels.

MORE WAYS TO HELP CREATE A THRIVING DOWNTOWN

The private sector in Anchorage is not going to revitalize downtown on its own. Much as Alaska has helped the oil industry thrive through tax breaks and other favorable policies, the state’s largest city and economic center needs to work with builders to boost housing supply downtown. The following policy proposals for downtown Anchorage lay out ways the municipality can improve the quality of life for residents and visitors by working in concert with the private sector.

Unleash the power of ACDA

Block 96 Flats, a complex of 44 studio and one-bedroom apartments, is set to break ground next year. It’s the first larger market-rate project to rise in downtown in 40 years, with each unit renting for \$1,100 to \$1,500 a month. The \$6.2 million project would not have been possible without \$1.8 million in investment and land from the city’s Anchorage Community Development Authority (ACDA). ACDA can continue catalyzing downtown redevelopment using policy tools outlined in the [2040 Land Use Plan](#), including investment in projects, providing land developers can afford through acquisition of vacant or underused properties, and using its authority to sell, issue, retire, or service bonds to mitigate offsite construction costs (see below).

Lighten the costs of public infrastructure

The city can help offset the cost of improvements to public infrastructure supporting a housing development. One option would be to borrow against the tax revenue the project will generate, a practice known as “[tax increment financing](#).” ACDA could take out a loan to say, build a water line, saving the developer from having to front the cash. The city would then designate the property taxes paid by future residents—revenue that would not have existed but for the housing development—to repay the loan principal and interest.

Advocate for cheaper public financing

The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), a state corporation whose mission is to foster economic growth and diversification, provides low-interest loans that beat what developers can obtain from banks and other standard sources. AIDEA has provided loans to hotels, restaurants, and resource development projects across the state, but it requires a simple change in

state statute to be able to finance multi-unit housing. The option to borrow from AIDEA would help housing developers immensely in simplifying the hunt for financing, both in Anchorage and statewide. The city of Anchorage and other members of the Alaska Municipal League could lobby the Legislature to allow for AIDEA to finance housing builds across Alaska.

Rewrite the Deteriorated Properties Tax Exemption

City officials could rewrite the requirements for obtaining a tax break on properties that have fallen into decay. The goal would be to make it easier for developers to apply and successfully obtain tax exemptions or deferrals. Currently, developers must submit detailed financial projections, which are typically confidential, proving to the city that the project would not be economically feasible without tax incentives. The requirements likely aim to prevent developers from receiving tax breaks on projects that would have happened without government assistance. But the practical consequence has been that developers very rarely use the incentive, calling it “burdensome,” according to the [Anchorage Daily News](#).

A more effective policy might be to create a second, simpler way to qualify for the tax break. In certain zones of the city that have received insufficient redevelopment, and where certain types of redevelopment would create tangible community benefits, developers would not have to reveal their confidential project finance information. Instead, they would only have to show how a project would increase the assessed value of the property and benefit the community. Limiting this more simplified process to targeted redevelopment areas chosen by the city, such as downtown, could allay concerns about incentivizing projects that would have occurred without government assistance. (The existing application process for receiving a tax break would still apply outside the redevelopment areas.)

Attract a Grocery Store and Other Neighborhood Businesses

A generality often made about Alaskans is that we didn’t move here to live in a city and instead prefer homes on large lots with plenty of room to store our outdoor gear. But Anchorage is a highly transient city whose residents have lived in urban centers all over the world. Not everyone is into the suburban existence and its attendant responsibilities: spending hours on yardwork and snow removal; shouldering the high costs of maintaining a house; and having to get in the car for every errand. Many would appreciate a lower maintenance lifestyle where they could pick up groceries on foot, avoid driving to their favorite bar, and divert their time and money from house projects to hobbies and travel. (Of course, we’d still like a place to store our gear.)

Expanding the selection of urban amenities is a crucial step to meeting demand from this category of housing consumer. People will be more willing to pay for downtown housing when amenities are close to their doorstep. But there are no grocery stores or pharmacies downtown. Pet, book, and music stores; clothing and shoe repair; housewares; and medical services are also in short supply. In concert with stimulating more housing development, the Bronson administration could explore ways to attract those and other foundational neighborhood businesses north of the Park Strip. Office workers and tourists would no doubt patronize them. But it’s residents who would keep them open.



Jeannette Lee

Jeannette Lee, senior researcher, focuses on democracy and housing issues from Sightline's office in Anchorage, Alaska. Her work before coming to Sightline included serving as a consultant at the Adaptation Fund and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a federal natural gas researcher, and a journalist for The Associated Press in Alaska and Hawai'i and Atlantic Media Company in Washington, DC. Born and raised in Hawai'i, she has lived in Alaska for a total of 10 years and has enthusiastically embraced cross-country skiing, packrafting, fat biking, and camping. Jeannette earned her B.A. in history from Yale University and her M.A. from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, where she focused on energy and climate issues in the Arctic. Find her latest research [here](#). Find her on Twitter at [@JLee907](#), or email her at Jeannette [at] sightline [dot] org.

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Opinions

Let there be housing downtown

By Jeannette Lee

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Downtown Anchorage, photographed on Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021. (Loren Holmes / ADN)

Anchorage's mayor, Dave Bronson, had downtown revitalization near the top of his to-do list when he took office in July 2021. Given the many issues facing the city, including homelessness and the resurgence of the pandemic, here's hoping downtown remains a high priority.

A world-class urban center in Alaska's largest city has long been the holy grail for Anchorage leaders. The quest has brought some success: walkable blocks of office buildings, hotels, restaurants and shops; the [Anchorage Museum](#) and the [Performing Arts Center](#); and, not far from City Hall, two trailheads to the "[Moose Loop](#)." What we still lack is a downtown economy humming like it's always the peak of summer. For that

base, and the only way to create that permanent pool of customers is to turn the downtown core into a real neighborhood Alaskans can actually call home. Achieving this feat would be a huge and historic accomplishment for the Bronson administration.

The mayor's [transition plan](#) singled out downtown as the driver for citywide economic revitalization. The plan's focus is on attracting more tourists and office workers. This is a great start, but it is not enough to fulfill the goal of a four-season downtown. Tourists don't visit in large numbers outside the May-to-September window. Office workers are only downtown on weekdays, and the pandemic has made in-person work either optional or part-time for many.

What downtown needs is more places to live. A [2018 survey](#) by the Anchorage Economic Development Corp.'s housing group found downtown was among the top three neighborhoods preferred by Anchorage residents. Seniors were the group most likely to want to live in close proximity to shopping, with 46% saying that was a top priority.

And yet, Anchorage has missed out on the [nationwide shift](#) toward city living. The list of recently constructed residential projects of any size is thin: Cook Inlet Housing Authority built the 50-unit [Elizabeth Place](#). It also transformed the former Duke's 8th Avenue Hotel into 28 units and renamed it [Qanchi Place](#). Over on 8th and K Street, developer Shaun Debenham plans to break ground next year on 44 apartments at [Block 96 Flats](#). The \$6.2 million complex will be the first purely market-rate housing project downtown in four decades.

Helping developers build more housing to meet a range of consumer preferences and price points can boost the business environment citywide. Housing affects the ability of companies, government, and organizations to retain and recruit employees. A [2021 business confidence](#) report by the Anchorage Economic Development Corp. found 32% of 210 employers said the availability and affordability of quality housing is either a significant or moderate barrier to growth in the city.

Alaska's high construction costs, caused in part by the brief building season and the premium on shipping materials here, are major hurdle for builders downtown. The only

truly thrive downtown. We also need young people, seniors and families across the income spectrum who consider the blocks north of 9th Avenue home.

Previous administrations have put in place policies to encourage housing downtown, including tax abatement and letting developers choose how much parking to build. But there's more to be done: partnering with developers to invest in projects; incentivizing housing builds on downtown's numerous surface parking lots and other underdeveloped properties; mitigating offsite construction costs; zoning reform; and attracting foundational neighborhood businesses, like a grocery store. The Bronson administration has a [great opportunity](#) to improve the blocks surrounding City Hall. Here's hoping they'll take it.

Jeannette Lee is an Anchorage-based housing and democracy researcher at Sightline Institute. For more on these policy proposals, see the full article at [Sightline's website](#).

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