

West Anchorage District Plan
Quality of Place Focus Group Minutes
Thursday, May 28, 2009, 7-9 pm
URS Conference Room, 560 E 34th Avenue, Suite 100

BOUNDARY DISCUSSION

- Frank has seen a lot changes seaview homeowners association, on a well, works fir access Alaska, anchorage homeless coalition
- A Street could be a good east boundary, short discussion
- Anchorage has grown like a house being remodeled piecemeal

Objectives

Strengths and Values

- High percentage of Hispanics live in the areas
- Accessibility for bike trails and transportation to the church; Our Lady of Guadalupe, it is a regional, predominantly Hispanic church
- Maintain integrity of trails- residents do a lot of biking and walking
- Area revolves around families; West Anchorage is a great place to raise families, relative quiet of neighborhoods
- Schools have a large influence of the schools; the Japanese immersion program is strong which draws a unique population (regional asset)
- Safety: Some residents liked getting away from higher crime area, relatively safe neighborhood, safety is taken for granted
- Proximity:
 - To the airport and work is convenient; I knew the airport was there and can live with it
 - Proximity to commercial and business places; Close to downtown but you don't have to fool with the downtown traffic
 - Proximity to the lakes, wildlife, Kincaid Park, lakes, little green spaces and parks, connected trails,
- Neighborhoods:
 - Grandfathered land use pattern leads to patchwork development which has character;
 - it has it's own unique feeling;
 - longevity,
 - historical place;
 - sense of established neighborhoods,
 - landscaping is mature,
 - high rate of home ownership
 - mixture of multiple generations
- West Anchorage has pretty clean air

Issues, Weaknesses, and Problems

- Transportation:
 - For seniors is a very difficult thing, trying to get to the buses in the winter time,
 - snow removal and sidewalks
 - Anchor rides does not get close enough to many people and waiting is a problem; also a problem for people with disabilities (drive off policy strands people)
 - roads generate too much pollution – dust and exhaust
 - speed of the roads are too high, health issue in the spring due to dust issues
 - some conflicts with bikes in the road
 - Strengthen sidewalk and trail areas; there are no sidewalks or shoulders for bikes and pedestrians on Lois Drive, we need a better place for them on roads
 - We're wasting money on road design by building "little taj mahals" when bus service isn't even up to 1980's standards
 - poor roads devalues the neighborhood, engineering is a problem and needs to be looked
 - transit system is not easy to access or use, not convenient
 - no bus stop on Sand Lake Road, have to get to Jewell Lake; can only get Anchor rides – supposed to be one within ½ of each home
- Airport:
 - air quality issues at the airport, bad actor, too much idling
 - High population lives near the airport, noise issues
 - Security fences around the airport are an impediment to walking, trash collector, need a gate to get through
 - smell of diesel and jet fuel in neighborhood coming from the airport under certain conditions, inversions
 - Lack of bike connectivity between the post office and north terminal
- General Aviation: single small plane is more of a problem;
- Recreation:
 - no place for skate board enthusiasts in proximity, use public spaces and are not popular... not activities for that kind of activities for younger people.
 - No recreational facility
 - We are failing to use the existing public and private facilities we have (schools, churches); use of schools has decreased with available funding; Community Schools were a good program that should be continued
 - We need parks that attract families;
- Social Issues
 - problem in the area near post office in Sand Lake with gang related violence; large multifamily complex with car fires, drug dealing
 - concentrated low/high density income housing on 88th with no parks or recreation,
 - parents forced to work multiple jobs, no day care facilities
 - air of distrust moved into the community; no sense of community and place
 - people talk nothing happens... good plans on paper, will it get done
- Housing
 - multi-family housing has no character, buffers, landscaping; this seems to be linked to crime
 - affordable housing is an issues, used to dispersed through town rather than concentrated; needs to be better designed

- no overall plan for housing
- Land Use & Design
 - There is a potential conflict with new city parking requirements (in Title 21) and older neighborhoods...
 - The overuse of asphalt is out of character with our neighborhoods and business centers
 - Blocking off communities, roads is restrictive (connectivity problem in Spenard)
 - road reconstruction requires changes in driving habits and make sit an obstacle course
 - need to rethink where we want our neighborhood centers in west anchorage; clustered development
 - Ease of show removal and variances need to be looked at very hard;
 - need plenty of off street parking
 - density is increasing without amenities or design, changes made after approval

Trends

- Disconnect between bus stops and access
- Need for a neighborhood hub
- We will see more growth and crime/safety issues moving into new areas; solutions needs to evolve or problems simply migrate to new neighborhoods.
- Different types of people are coming to Anchorage who have difference values than in the past.
- Baby boomers will be seniors soon that we need to plan for
- Anchorage has changed for the better in terms of amenities

Solutions

- Airport:
 - Reduce air pollution with strategies like less idling, use of tugs
 - Airport is using landing/takeoff pattern to abate??
- General Aviation:
 - In the housing development near Lake Hood strip, [create a zoning overlay] that would allow people to put hangers next to houses; this would create additional value to the properties, create maintenance services and business opportunities
- Transportation:
 - Offer free buses (in certain areas (Denver, Olympia, Utah buses)
 - Accommodate more bikes and pedestrians; it has been done in places like Las Vegas and Copenhagen
 - Strawberry Road bus stop design is an example to something working
 - sell the bike plans and make maps accessible
 - Create shuttles on smaller routes
 - put a small trains with stations running north south and buses going east/west as a combined system
- Achieve goals in midtown plan and this will benefit West Anchorage
- Social Issues
 - Southeast corner of Jewel Lake and Dimond; make it a collaborative effort between public servants (police training center) and youth. Make the police more

visible. Put a bus depot there with downtown bus service, put a recreation center to service all ages. Could tie in with a school

- Need employment centers to help kids find jobs... Muldoon jobs center, daycare facility combined with senior center
- We need to keep family values
- Future Development
 - Access to arts and culture, social center place to meet, the type of commercial where people congregate...
 - Multi-use neighborhood centers/smaller nodes: reshape commercial strips. An example of a location would be the new gas station at Raspberry and Strawberry, the Tastee Freeze mall at Raspberry and Jewel Lake
 - Identify areas for redevelopment
 - Encourage more small business in Sand Lake area; Spenard seems to be doing pretty well
 - Put limits on certain types of development
 - Define and locate recreational facilities for young people;
 - Sand Lake needs a recreation center
 - Compensate for higher residential density with additional indoor/outdoor recreational facilities
 - need more dense housing for seniors, proximity to public facilities

Follow-up

Notify participants of Focus Groups by email of upcoming meetings.