

**West Anchorage District Plan
Sand Lake Community Council
Visioning Workshop Minutes
April 13, 2009**

Introduction by Jon Isaacs of URS Alaska LLC, Senior Planner West Anchorage District Plan

Handouts about the Scope, Purpose & Need for the Project and Project Schedule were provided.

Comments from public participants

Boundary Comments

An explanation on planning area boundaries of other district plans in Anchorage was provided by Jon Isaacs, URS.

- Spenard is a different community than Sand Lake. The airport is the divider, not Dimond or Minnesota. International Airport road is a different road.
- We have 2 different town centers in the *Anchorage 2020 Comp Plan* version of West Anchorage. It is unusual that both town centers on the periphery of how *Anchorage 2020* defines West Anchorage.
- The *Anchorage 2020* plan says that there will be 40-50,000 people within 1 mile radius of the Dimond/Jewel Lake center. To reach this density, you'll need to increase density south and west of Sand Lake.
- The boundaries should go from International Airport Road, south to New Seward and all the way to Potter Marsh. The West Anchorage boundary should not go north of the airport.
- Extend the West Anchorage boundary further south to capture the "rural nature" that people desire for this community.
- We are very different from Turnagain and Spenard.
- The ARRC is not viable means of transportation in this area. The railroad blocks-off Arctic & C Street.
- Is Fire Island off- or on-the-table as a location to receive airport freight traffic?
- The proposed boundary would cut the Coastal Trail in half. When you fragment it, it makes it difficult to maintain its integrity.

Objectives for the Plan

Participants were asked to describe what they think should be objectives and vision for the WAD.

- Do a better job of integrating land use and transportation.
- Create a "blueprint" for vacant land development, particularly at Kincaid & West Sand Lake.
- Preserve the lifestyle of the residents. This end of town has been in a struggle about large scale condos that haven't been built here traditionally.
- Figure out a way to harmonize the future growth of the airport and the future growth of community. They have to be planned together, not in opposition.

- Define our community values. This planning process, including the public process of meetings or knocking on doors, is an opportunity for this community to do that.
- Define the character of this neighborhood. What makes Sand Lake/West Anchorage, “Sand Lake/West Anchorage”? Is it a nebulous neighborhood or is it about our parks and airport? Spenard gives you a certain image. Downtown gives you a certain image. What kind of character do you want?
- Safe, quiet neighborhood where family values can develop.
- Maintain the zoning we have and limit the changes to zoning that take place. There’s continuous pressure to change zoning, but zoning is the only control to disagreeable change that we have.
- Sand Lake is integral to South Anchorage because of the Coastal Trail and bike network in general. The coastal trail needs to be revisited in some way to maintain its integrity.
- Connect our neighborhood. There’s a history of the neighborhood, around Dimond High School, but it feels like we’re really spread-out.
- We need the Title 21 rewrite to speed-up so we can start looking at it and understand what kind of development it’s going to bring us.
- Bringing the estimated 20,000 new people [from the Anchorage 2020 Plan] to this area may change our kind-of rural quality of our life.
- Create the opportunity to have a discussion with the airport, our major geographical neighbor.
- Define the nuances of a neighborhood that exist beyond just the zoning definitions.
- Use fences or buffers to separate industrial uses from residential.
- Encourage urban “refreshing” (property improvement) on a resident-by-resident basis.
- Revisit the Knik Arm Crossing.
- Plan space to accommodate “Alaskan lifestyle”: boats, motors, snowmachines, 4-wheelers. Multi-family unit do not have adequate storage space, particularly.
- This is good opportunity to communicate with the State, the ARRC, TSAIA...other entities besides MOA that we have trouble communicating with.
- Maintain our rural character.
- Protect our drinking water.

Strengths and Values

Participants were then asked to describe the strengths of West Anchorage, and some of the values that are important to them, and should be supported through the planning process.

- Sand Lake’s Community Council is one of the strongest councils and has some of the largest attendance.
- Older established neighborhoods.
- There isn’t an overall community, but there are neighborhoods with distinct character.
- I choose to live here for the parks and recreation, the lakes, and bike trail system (which, even incomplete, is here and I enjoy using it).

- I just drove from the east side of town shopping and our community is cleaner, more pleasant to look at. Store fronts are not dilapidated; it's a higher quality curb appeal.
- When you travel around Sand Lake, you get a spacious, comfortable feeling. You don't get that on East side, Mountain View. We don't have the hill-thing going. We have lots of undeveloped land, trees, and lakes. It's a nice place to live.
- The recreation. All the lakes are connected, if you ski or walk. Visit with your neighbors
- Kincaid is a jewel- mountain biking, dog walking, whatever.
- Being on the edge- we have the water boundary.
- Rural character, low density, quiet.
- It's dark where I can enjoy the night sky. I didn't have this when I lived in Juneau.
- Older growth trees act as barriers to neighborhoods. Makes neighborhoods feel established. Wetlands throughout.
- Lakes, parks, bike rail, trees and birds are fabulous- they're really our jewels.
- Easy access to downtown; better than most communities, 5 minutes.
- Because of this big pit issue so it never developed. So this part of town is just getting ready to develop. Here we fought building stores and prevented little residential stores. Opportunity to develop things correctly- not looking like Muldoon. The Raspberry Road gas station was prevented for 17 years. It has tree boundaries, fence between residential.
- Airport proximity is convenient.
- Connors Bog, Jewel Lake.
- Minnesota is a strength because you can get north/south so fast.
- Bike paths on Jewel Lake Road and Raspberry Road make it safe for pedestrians easy and to get to midtown by bike.

Weaknesses and Issues

Participants were then asked to describe the weaknesses of West Anchorage, and some of the issues that should be addressed by the planning process.

- Development pressure poses risks to qualities we like.
- Crime. And it's going up.
- The new development is cookie-cutter, badly designed and does not give people a sense of community. They seem like places people do not want to be in so they trash them.
- There's been a lot of poor development and poor housing that's caused crime hot-spots. We need better solutions working with police and the community.
- We do need more amenities like stores and gas stations, but that are balanced with the character of the neighborhood.
- It was difficult just to get high speed internet where I live.
- Maintain fiscal structure so people can stay here. Continue to have healthy vibrant neighborhoods for 100 years.
- We need collaboration between different stakeholders. Not knowing how they're going to be developed is scary.

- Parks and trails are getting beat-up and overused.
- Airport owns Beer Can Lake and Connors Bog/Lake. Theoretically they could take them over and develop them. We need dialogue about this.
- Road maintenance.
- Traffic. The type of access we have. We're getting more traffic than we used to.
- Better coordination between Kincaid Park and community at large. Anchorage Nordic doesn't come to CC meetings. People want to walk their dogs but they can't.
- User conflicts between float planes
- Giving the airport the room to grow that it needs without impacting the neighborhoods.
- Difficult to get community involvement. Our CC has 20-40 people and it's supposed to represent 8,000 homes. We need a mechanism for people to connect and have a voice. Maybe people do not attend the CC because they are transitory or because they've had poor experiences so they feel their voice isn't heard.
- Water & sewer
- East/west transportation routes need to be improved. Raspberry Road needs to connect to the east.
- There are not a lot of small businesses where you can shop or eat and meet you neighbors. There are businesses that you can run in and grab something. This does not lend itself to a sense of community.
- Add a recreation center or a library where the community can gather.

Next Steps

Jon Isaacs of URS explained that Sand Lake CC could form a subcommittee to track the progress of the West Anchorage District Plan. Their role would be to provide feedback to the two Sand Lake CC representatives on the West Anchorage Planning Group and present updates to the CC on project milestones.

Sand Lake CC is encouraged to review these notes and make additions in order to capture the broad opinions of the community.