

West Anchorage District Plan
Turnagain Community Council
Visioning Workshop Minutes
April 3, 2009

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

Comments from public participants

Boundary Comments & Questions

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

- Question on community councils involved - is North Star Community Council (CC) involved as well?
- Should the eastern boundary be A Street or Minnesota?
- Once this West Anchorage District Plan is approved and goes on a desk, how does that go from a well developed plan to getting implemented? Does it get codified in some way?
- I would like to know how the new Title 21 is going to impact this plan. How will this plan protect us from something like that where we're going to get rezoned if we're near a bus stop.
- West High School should be the focal point for the community center shown in the Anchorage 2020 plan.

Objectives for the Plan

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

- Utilize Benson and Northern Lights and make a new traffic plan to leave West High School.
- Improve traffic flow off of Northern Lights to the Airport.
- Improve drainage at road intersections and underneath bridges on Northern Lights that get flooded when they shouldn't be. Certainly on the southside of Northern Lights going under the railroad bridge and at W 34th and Seppala.
- Preserving the greenbelts and coastal trails, our recreation arterials. Preserve Fish Creek, it's a pretty threatened drainage that needs protection.
- Safe places to walk and ride bikes in summer and winter.
- Water Quality: It would be interesting if Chester Creek and West Chester Lagoon were swimmable like Lake Lucille [Wasilla].
- There is a North/south bus station 6th Avenue Station through Anchorage but none east to west making it hard to get to those parts of town. I would like a hub that we could use as a Park and Ride.
- Improve Minnesota from L Street to Northern Lights. I drive that road a lot and the potholes are horrible. Maybe it needs better drainage.

- Maintain and enhance the wonderful neighborhood character. I think all of it, whether you consider “Spenardagain”, etc.
- We don’t have a lot of businesses other than home businesses and schools and churches.
- Improve roads for safety and aesthetics, not speeding.
- Preserving the coastal trails and all the trails that tie together.
- Watershed- preserve the creeks, make sure that estuaries are known about and useable to walk around
- Improve mass transit in general.
- Airport Solutions: Reduce traffic impacts on Northern Lights. We need overpasses on Northern Lights with lights. I think we need to make sure that the airport becomes a good community neighbor. That they listen and understand what we need as a neighbor and that means planning, proper development, and treatment of their pollution.
- Preserving recreation trail arterials, greenbelts, and expending recreational arterials.
- Limitations to general aviation (GA) and traffic.
- Permanent preservation of historical features.
- Bear Tooth Theatre and Grill.
- Address offsite conflicts of the airport.
- Improve water quality at Lake Hood is a big one.
- I like to protect the residential areas. It’s so easy to go anywhere but at the same time I would like to see a major improvement in the traffic corridor to protect those areas. There’s a lot of bottlenecks.
- Coastal Trail encroachment: Some private landowners extend fences towards the trail.
- Encourage individual wind energy and other alternative energy systems built along the coast and having residential houses hooked up to the grid or set up so they can sell extra energy to the grid.
- Don’t tear apart Kincaid.
- Create a localized bus loop for our town center.
- Recycling that is widespread and that makes sense.
- City bike pools so that you can take a bus from Chugach and then get a bike from the bus stop downtown that you’ll return at the end of the day.
- Protecting the little parks that we have around here.
- Improve the sub-standard roads in the Spenard area. Some are oiled. They should be brought up to the standards of the rest of the city.
- Increase the amount of parks. If residential density is needed, don’t limit it to single family homes. 4-plex and 8-plex multi-family buildings are environmentally friendly and not too big for the neighborhood. I wouldn’t want to see really big buildings.
- International Airport Road should be designed to allow traffic to extend under the airport to access the west side, then extend a causeway to Fire Island. That would keep the airport out of Kincaid Park and out of Raspberry Road.

- Tie the zoning of houses low density, high density, to a road plan so that people in high density can have access to the roads. So you don't have bottlenecks as you get into the high density housing and it's a mess because they don't have the roads for that area.
- Create more off-leash dog areas. Not necessarily large parks but small parks too so that we don't have to break the law all the time.
- No new parks without a commitment to maintain and take care of existing parks.
- Maintain Conner's Bog for dogs and Little Campbell Lake to fish.
- Establish of permanently protected easement greenbelt areas along coastal trail and airport property.

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.

- Good schools.
- Easy to get everywhere.
- Feeling of relaxed neighborhoods. Maintain feeling of peace and quiet.
- Access to Cook Inlet.
- Community atmosphere. Everyone complains that they are no sidewalks but that forces everyone into the street where we talk. It requires forward thinking.
- West High School gives you the best education for both academics and recreation. It's a focal point for the whole city.
- Safety and security in West Anchorage; it's better than in other parts of town.
- Safety and security. We can leave kids at home for a few hours and not worry about it. We can get downtown quickly and walk to the gym. People have pride in home ownership and keep yards well maintained.
- The look of it. I like walking in a neighborhood that looks family-ish, with kids, and yards. Drivers will slow down for my kids.
- I am just out of college and can afford to own my own house here.
- I moved here from over Muldoon and it took me a while to get used to not hearing sirens all night. It's nice that it's quiet and we're on the four month rotation for a drug bust [Community Action Police (CAP) Team program].
- I really like that we have a fire station and a police substation so close by.
- It's convenient, it's close to everything. We're always going against the major traffic flow.
- There's a number of churches that you could walk to.
- When my kids were little I could put them on the bus and they could go to the university and I didn't worry about them.
- The improvements to Northern Lights have helped to improve the flow of transportation. Convenience to the airport has helped the community. It's a balance.
- Don't have to drive to exercise or recreate with my kids.
- New and viable businesses that have moved into the area: Bear Tooth, Tidal Wave, etc.

- Natural open space areas. The good things about them are they provide wildlife habitats, buffers from airport impacts, and maintain good air quality.
- It's clean/cleaner.
- Your neighbors know you and look out for you.
- Coastal trail. If that trail didn't exist we wouldn't have as much exposure to the coastal environment.

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.

- Traffic: Road use should match its road designation/classification. For example, buses and heavy trucks should not be on Northern Lights.
- Airport and FAA. The airport has to change. You cannot deal with the staff at the airport.
- The general aviation airport closed on March 10 to avoid Iditarod and they didn't open it again until the 17th when the government made them. There was an incursion meeting because staff wanted to fence off Lake Hood and Lake Spenard.
- Airport impacts. Frequent jet fumes, air noise, inconsiderate General Aviation pilots, and all the environmental impacts at all hours.
- [West] High School students—They don't follow the speed limits in the greenbelt area and the route [bike path] from the high school to the lake [lagoon] is very polluted [lots of trash]. People let their kids play in the alley because they know where their kids are and its safe but then high school students speed down at 25mph. It's not safe if a kid chases after a ball.
- High School traffic—I wish they didn't drive through the residential area at all.
- I know that we have bike lanes but it's not wide enough and it doesn't have enough signage/markings. Put logos or something on the road and if there's no room for bikers, they need to get off the road.
- Better enforcement of the hours for the parks. Balto Seppala Park on the Milky Way Street side of it there's a lot of cars until midnight doing "stuff"
- Finish the LED light replacement program. They're not all the same color.
- W. 34th avenue—there's not adequate monitors to allow crossing the street and when school gets out there's a lot of traffic but also a lot of kids trying to pass through.
- Mass transit—we have a good bus route that runs perfect for me but it doesn't run often enough.
- I don't see the leadership being behind this district plan. We need the commitment of Municipal leaders to see this plan through to an ordinance.
- Maintenance of park land, in particular the pavement on the coastal trail.
- Intersection of International and Spenard Road. In the long term, the railroad needs to address going through that area.
- Lack of high-grade landscaping in the commercial areas. There doesn't seem to be any sort of incentive for businesses to go beyond what the minimum is.
- Drainage/water quality. Do we have the utilities to deal with sewer?

- The block by the ice hockey arena, between Minnesota and Forest Park, needs to be addressed to improve traffic.
- Snowplowing off of Northern Lights needs improvement. In our neighborhood, by the north side, the streets are a mess.
- Airport Noise - Aerial easements may allow air waves to move over the neighborhood.
- More doggie bag stations along the trails and more garbage cans, because you don't want to walk a mile with dog removal in your hand.
- The smell of West Chester lagoon—but that's not normal. It was a once-a-year thing.
- Animals running loose. Some of my neighbors aren't good about keeping their dogs contained.
- We need to make sure that we plan to upgrade our infrastructure—sewer, water, drainage, buildings—so that they can be there for the next 100 years. I look at our infrastructure from when it was built, for example after the earthquake when improvements were temporary; however, new infrastructure needs to be able to handle city growth as it progresses.
- Maintain the character with all of these changes.
- Pave alleyways to keep dust down.
- Large wild animal control plan and execution. Too many moose.

Next Step

The Turnagain CC West Anchorage District Plan Task Force will get a copy of these notes for review and to make additions.