

Girdwood South Townsite Workshop Meeting NOTES

May 7, 2008

Our Lady of the Snows, Meadows Community Center

Welcome and Presentation: Overview

The Goals were reviewed and generally affirmed. Consultants gave an overview of how the Plan has evolved over the course of this planning effort.

Discussion of the Girdwood South Townsite Master Plan

The consultants reviewed major themes of the Girdwood South Townsite Master Plan, asking the group for ideas and feedback on the Plan so far.

- Why does Little Bears have to move from its current site?
 - The site is not large enough, and is the best location for commercial
- Could you show where, exactly, commercial would go?
 - Explained on map
- Why is the second access point off the highway still depicted as a dotted line?
 - There were two considerations on when/if that needs to become a hardened road – 1) fire access (if a certain quantity threshold of development is reached, you need a second fire access); 2) Title 21.09 says you can't have a cul-de-sac more than 450-feet without a second access
 - It would not have to be a paved, wide road; it can be gated, just needs to be plowed
 - We looked at other options, but this one works best; it's financially viable and can happen incrementally to serve as needed
- So proximity to the fire station doesn't matter?
 - We had the same thought, but regulations are what they are
- What do people think the character of the secondary road should be?
 - Grasscrete or gravel
 - Gated
 - This is a small area; a significant road would change the flow and pattern of what's there. It seems best to have a minimal road if at all, rather than another main street
 - If we have an intersection, it might get people to slow down on Alyeska
 - Make it a minimal road – more like a drive-able bike path
 - It should be good for pedestrians and bicyclists
 - Not a second main street



- Make it safe and compatible with the Alyeska Highway intersection
 - This road should be considered the lowest priority – hold for Phase 2 or beyond
- Where is the 450-foot trigger point?
 - Right across from the library
- What about building to a standard-sized road for emergency egress, but keep it gravel and more like a multi-use path for bikes & pedestrians
 - You could do that
- What's that going to cost?
 - About \$600-700 per foot
- How much money is available for this whole project? This road should be lowest priority of that –it adds the least to this project
 - We agree; that's why it's a dotted line.
- Is it going to be safe to have crosswalks at intersections on Alyeska? What about mid-block?
 - Mid-block crossings probably won't work for this situation, but creating very obvious intersections with crosswalks would probably slow down traffic on Alyeska enough to make it safe and still keep traffic moving at a reasonable pace (on Alyeska)
- Can we in this plan show a pedestrian crossing in the middle of the block?
 - Consultants are not totally convinced that's possible, but will note that and see if it might work
 - It might be possible to create an underpass at one of the intersections using the existing bridge
- Does anyone want the main street through the South Townsite (as opposed to the route along the creek)?
 - I like the Main Street rather than something haphazard; don't want Girdwood to be like Wasilla
 - Because of the safety issue with fire truck access, I like the main street through the center of site better; it's safer
 - I like the street through the center better; it's better and safer for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Would it extend over to the North Townsite?
 - For our project, we're not responsible for the North side, but the general idea is that both sides would be similar
- Parking: We're definitely going to have public parking around the ballfield, and that's within walking distance of the main street area...
 - There's adequate parking around the ballfield, but what about the grocery store?
- Shuttle turnaround
- Parking on periphery

- Parking could occur in the North Townsite with Glacier City Center...
- Could you create a pedestrian-oriented downtown, with public parking on the periphery somewhere, tucked out of the way where you could park and walk around the town area?
 - Main street with parking alongside gives access for retail, with overflow parking lots in other areas of the Townsite
- The main street looks like it joins up near the ballfield – could you clarify?
 - CB showed on map
- Would the back road/creekside road still remain in some form?
 - Probably you could close it off and have it be an access route for the fire station, or take advantage of it and have it be the trail
- Could that road meet the requirements for a second access?
 - No, we thought of that but it has to hit Alyeska twice, which that route wouldn't do.
- Lewis asked about where space could be created for the Community Club – Chris explained some general options of how that could happen
- What about Forest Fair?
 - We see this as an opportunity to work out some issues with the Fair. This plan is agnostic on whether the Fair should continue and how that would work. Some ideas for space that came up through this process – creating a larger site that is integrated with the South Townsite area
 - That second road would improve circulation and the wetness of the Fair grounds
 - Could plan some space for campsites, too
- Where would the audience be able to be for the Marlow pavilion? Is the development (buildings) too close to allow Marlow pavilion to be an adequate performance space?
 - That didn't move because people didn't want it to move; it could be an issue, so we will have to think about that in more depth
 - We did see Forest Fair as a park and as an event gradually moving south of the current/traditional location. Its facilities are over-loved and overused, creating some issues...
 - HLB is willing to work with the Parks Department and Forest Fair to figure out how it could be moved southward and work better. [People have said they don't want the pavilions to move, but that may change as the way that surrounding land is developed and used changes over time]
- We should not put our recreation developments in the floodway. You don't want to put people at risk who are camping there...
 - What is proposed is not in the floodway, but if we design developments correctly and locate them in the floodway fringe, it should be ok.

- Is the Iditarod Trail flexible enough to allow for erosion and relocation? We've got enough of an easement?
 - That's unclear at this point; we're still working with HLB to determine a reservation for the Iditarod Trail
- I love the concept of the housing, but how will it fit with HLB's role to maximize the city coffers? (Wasn't HLB sued for selling land below market value?) Is there a structure for financing things so that people are leasing the land on which their dwelling sits, rather than outright purchase of land?
 - To answer the second question, yes. HLB can hold land
 - To answer the first question, HLB does not have to maximize revenue.
- We had a hard time getting an industrial park from HLB when we tried to do this before; it takes a tremendous commitment – I would like to see more in writing, not just a policy document, because sometimes it doesn't translate across administrations
- The group was very supportive of more affordable housing
- The group was very supportive of detached housing; not sure about apartments or townhouses
- There was general agreement on a preference for detached housing
- What does the Planning Team consider affordable?
 - Market-rate housing within the reach of moderate-income folks; not the Federal definition as a percentage of area mean income
- What is that price range?
 - What do you think that would be, Tim?
 - These days you can't build for less than \$150/square foot, plus land costs would bring it to \$300,000 minimum
- In a resort community, if you're making \$10-15 an hour and single, you can't afford \$300,000 home.
- Affordable housing for most of the people in this Valley; people bought the land and spent the next 8 years building their own houses. Removing that possibility is not helping affordable housing
- Habitat for Humanity seemed ecstatic about the opportunity to work with HLB to do some HFH homes at about \$180,000
 - HFH is not subsidized; not HUD type housing and has to meet all architectural standards, etc. Think it would be a great option for families who would like to live here but can't afford it.
- Even if you build small detached houses and they're still out of range for most Girdwoodians, it's still a benefit to Girdwood because the people who will buy those are the Anchorage weekenders who want a vacation home and who will patronize local business, etc.
- Should we change or be more specific about the proposed housing in the South Townsite? (consultants asking community)

- Let's not put any houses on the ballfield. Who's going to pay for housing? I'm not against housing, but HLB's not going to write a check for it – who's going to pay for it? You have to make a choice: can let the housing go at market rate or do an affordable housing program and subsidize those houses.
- Include mechanisms for being able to offer housing at a moderate price
- The community would like to see more of a demonstration of commitment from HLB:
 - Partner with organizations like Habitat for Humanity
 - Something in writing that can carry across administrations
- Include design standards
- Land-leasing program
 - Low-rent to condo association
- Like the idea idea of detached, moderately-priced housing
- Not enthusiastic about multi-family
- Are additional design standards on top of existing design standards really necessary?
 - That's one thing we're trying to figure out; we don't want to replicate what's already there
- Were there any discussions on utilities?
 - CB explained on map – sewer line, electrical, road
 - Electrical easement, Chugach and AWWU sections of plan
 - Valley already has an underground requirement
 - Going to have to put a turnaround at first phase
- [Lewis asked a question about timing of utilities projects – didn't catch all of it.]

Next Steps

The next steps in the Girdwood South Townsite Master Plan process were reviewed by the group.

- Public Comments on Draft Plan (distributed at Workshop) accepted through May 16 (date later extended to May 23)
- Consultants will revise Draft Plan based on comments submitted and feedback from workshop.
- Second Draft Plan will be distributed for public review June 13
- Subcommittee Meeting tentatively June 25 to discuss revised Draft Plan (date later confirmed)

