

Appendix B Public Involvement

Public Involvement was a critical component of the development of this plan. This appendix chronologically compiles the notes from each public participation opportunity and also includes the newsletters that were distributed to Wasilla residents for this planning project.

The page numbers in this appendix are not in keeping with the remainder of the document because this section includes the original notes that were widely distributed throughout the planning process.

In the order of appearance, documents in this section include:

- Newsletter, September 2006
- Summary of Comments Received During Saturday Visioning Committee Workshop, November 18, 2006
- Focus Group Summary Notes: Arts, Culture, History, Volunteers, Faith Community/ Parks and Recreation, Outdoor Interest Groups, January 24, 2007
- Focus Group Summary Notes: Real Estate, Developers, Architects, Designers/ Property Owners, January 25, 2007
- Focus Group Summary Notes: Business Community and Transportation Industry, January 27, 2007
- Charrette Summary Notes, March 31, 2007
- Public Meeting, May 1, 2007



Wasilla Area Plans

September 2006

Wasilla's Vision: We want to hear from you!

The City of Wasilla is developing area plans for Downtown, South Wasilla Heights, and Airport and Transportation Museum area. These plans will define a vision for each area and help to guide decisions for future growth and development. Additionally, policies will be developed to help realize the community vision. The City has formed a *Vision Steering Team* to guide and review the planning process. The team is composed of community residents from various stakeholder groups who will work to represent all interests in the process including youth, seniors, minority groups, business and visitor interests, environmental groups, educators, developers, art and cultural groups, and other diverse community perspectives. Three *focus groups* will be used to address four specific questions regarding areas of pride, regret, community trends, and major issues.

Why are area plans needed?

The City provides residents a distinctive rural Alaskan lifestyle with urban amenities. Wasilla has many local assets, including two museums, a multi-sports complex, a library, great schools, convenient access to higher education, and multi-modal transportation connections. Residents enjoy a high quality of life, with year-round recreation opportunities, abundant wildlife, a mild coastal climate, educational opportunities, and a rapidly growing economy that promotes small business. The City's most valuable assets today may be location and available space. As Wasilla continues to grow, these plans are needed to maintain the value and utility of Wasilla's many assets, while creating new opportunities.

There are challenges to maintaining Wasilla's values, assets, and resources. With continuing growth, the attributes that originally drew today's residents to the area could be transformed as additional land is developed. Early planning and citizen involvement is crucial to maintaining the quality of life that drew us to this community.



Wasilla residents enjoy the local parks and open space.

Where are the three planning areas?

The City has identified three specific areas where existing and future growth need guidance from the community. The following boundaries are *preliminary guidelines* for discussion purposes, and may change based on public input.

Downtown – This area is the oldest part of Wasilla and is situated between Crusey and Lucille Streets to the east and west, Nelson Street to the north, and Park Avenue to the south. It is an area of mixed use, without a specific identity or vision.

South Wasilla Heights – The Palmer-Wasilla Highway extension, the Parks Highway, and Knik-Goose Bay Road frame the South Wasilla Heights area. Home Depot is located along the eastern boundary of this area. Currently this area is mixed use, with both commercial and rural residential development.

Airport and Transportation Museum – This industrial section of Wasilla is located around the east side of South Mack Drive, the Alaska Railroad right-of-way, Aviation Avenue, and Lucille Creek. The Multi-Use Sports Complex, Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry, and the Wasilla Airport are located in this planning area.

What will the plans do?

The community area plans will help guide Wasilla's future development and growth. The planning process will provide a means for residents and other stakeholders to share their opinions and to develop the community's vision—or future idea—for each area. The plans will identify issues, goals, objectives, and priorities for implementation. The plans will also aim to provide policies for decision-making that will ultimately achieve the community's vision for the future.

Key topics to be addressed include:

- Growth
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Community Character

Wasilla's population grew more than 35 percent between 1990 and 2000. This growth is placing increasing pressure on transportation systems, water and sewer systems, and other public services. Continued growth will inevitably transform Wasilla's suburban character to a more urban setting. It is important to establish a vision for our community now, to provide guidelines for future development, and to build upon our natural assets.

Many cities throughout the country have found a balance of residential and commercial development that fits their needs and desires. Wasilla residents will be asked how they visualize this balance. What is the best way to accomplish that balance through realistic goals and objectives? How can Wasilla retain its natural character and still have a strong economy? How do residents envision the design and distribution of future subdivisions, businesses, and parks?

Who can participate in the process?

You! The City of Wasilla Community and Economic Development Department, Planning Commission, and City Council will guide the process. The primary participants are the residents of Wasilla whose needs and suggestions must be addressed by the plan. Other participants will include various community business and interest groups, such as the Homebuilders Association, Chamber of Commerce, real estate and resource development interests, Knik Tribal Council, City volunteers, local organizations and merchants, the senior community, and the Mat-Su Visitor and Convention Bureau.

We also plan to directly involve the City's high

school students in the planning process. When today's high school students enter the workforce and become part of the local leadership, the area plans will be in effect. We hope to increase students' awareness of local government and incorporate their visions for their community into the plans. Their future will be shaped by decisions made today.

When are the opportunities for public participation?

The schedule below outlines our expectations for the planning process. We will provide notices of public meetings in the Anchorage Daily News and the Frontiersman. Flyers will also be posted on local bulletin boards in the Post Office, Carrs, and Wal-Mart. Planning updates will be available on the City of Wasilla website: <http://www.cityofwasilla.com/planning/>. You can use the comment sheet in this newsletter, or directly contact the Wasilla Community and Economic Development Department at (907) 373-9020 or e-mail sgarley@ci.wasilla.ak.us.

Action	Schedule
Establish Steering Team and focus groups	Aug – Sept 2006
School Project	Sept – Nov 2006
Public Workshops	Oct – Nov 2006
Newsletters	November 2006, January 2007
Draft Plans for Public Review	February 2007
Public and Internal Workshops	February 2007
Final Plans	April 2007



Business development continues to grow in Wasilla.



Wasilla Area Plans

August 2006

SHARE YOUR COMMENTS, IDEAS, AND QUESTIONS


What are the most important issues and needs in the Downtown area?

What are the most important issues and needs in the South Wasilla Heights area?

What are the most important issues and needs in the Airport and Transportation Museum area?

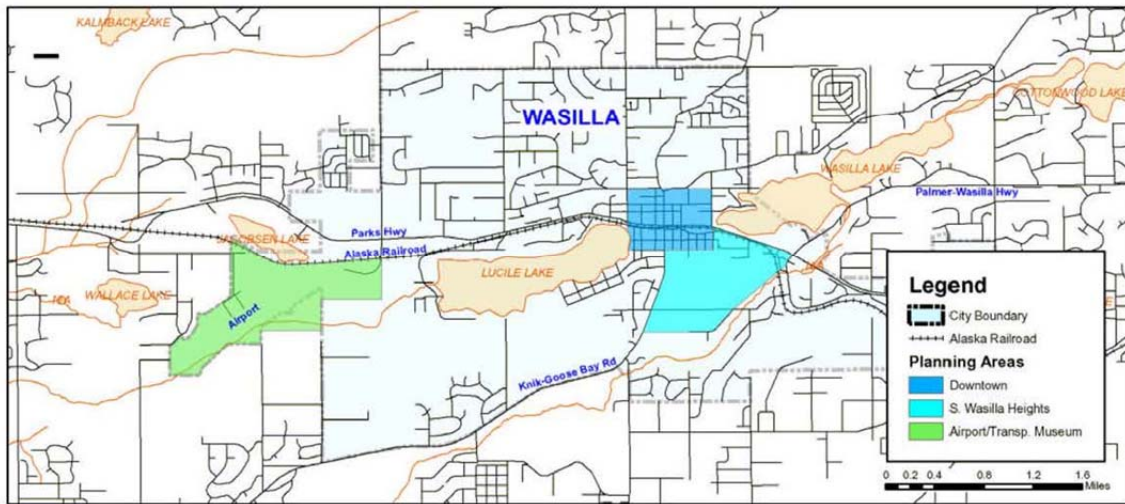
Comments or questions for the planning team:

*Please add additional pages if necessary.
To mail, fold so that the City Planning Department address is visible.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Please keep me informed of opportunities to participate in the planning process. 	
Name:	_____
Address:	_____ _____
E-mail:	_____
Telephone:	_____
I am most interested in:	<input type="checkbox"/> Downtown <input type="checkbox"/> South Wasilla Heights <input type="checkbox"/> Airport and Transportation Museum

Place
stamp
here

Sandra Garley, Deputy Administrator
City of Wasilla
290 East Herning Avenue
Wasilla, AK 99654-7091



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WASILLA AREA PLANS

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING SATURDAY VISIONING COMMITTEE WORKSHOP NOVEMBER 18, 2006

In Attendance:

Visioning Committee: Bill Bear, Laura Bedard, Bob Fassino, Louis Friend, Josh Fryfogle, Theodore Garcia, Debbie Harrison, Stan Hooley, Taffina Katkus, Dan Kennedy, Greg Koskela, Phil Lockwood, Michael Norton, Alex Rakhmanov, Kristi Shea, Chas St. George, Berkley Tilton, Dave Tuttle, Ron Wendt, Steve Glos, and Dick Wilson

City Planning Team: Sandra Garley, Deputy Administrator; Jim Holycross, City Planner; Casey Reynolds, Economic Development Planner; Jill Carricaburu, Planning Clerk

Facilitators and Planning Team: Dick LaFever, Crossroads Institute; Jon Isaacs, Joan Kluwe, and April Brehm, URS Corporation

Purpose:

The City of Wasilla has formed a Visioning Committee to guide and review the planning process for development of the area plans within the City of Wasilla. The Committee is composed of a broad cross-section of community residents who will work to represent all interests in the process (e.g., a teacher, a former airport manager, and developers).

The session opened with a discussion of the purpose of the workshop, including addressing, "Why are we here? What will the plans accomplish?" Group responses included:

- Establish a vision
- Action, Wasilla is a bright spot
- Residents follow through on plans and commitments
- Develop goals/objectives/actions
- Analyze infrastructure needs
- Identify preferred land uses
- Recommend actions and follow-up
- Develop community awareness
- Learn from others' mistakes
- "Just make something happen"
- Develop a road map
- Prepare for growth responsibly – Let's not come back in 5 years and say, "*how did that happen?*"
- Conserve resources
- Create something we can be proud of that will encourage our youth to remain in the community and raise their children
- Be proactive instead of reactive
- Do something to make people see Wasilla as a destination

Introductions:

All participants in the workshops introduced themselves, including name, job, and special area of interest in Wasilla (Downtown, Airport and Transportation Museum, South Wasilla Heights). Participants also described their overall vision for the city.

Committee members shared common visions and concerns for Wasilla. Recurring themes included:

- Growth
- Communication
- Cooperation
- City enhancement
- Transportation, access and infrastructure
- Public safety
- Community strengths

Members felt that there are changes occurring in the community that are both positive and negative. The community is growing and has great potential for continued growth, including industrial and economic growth. Planning and growth that will bring quality to Wasilla and encourage the children to stay in the community was mentioned by most Committee members. One person thinks that the community is outgrowing its government and infrastructure from within and outside the community. Some think that annexation needs to be examined as a possibility. Some people want to see more growth drawn to the Valley.

Communication was a theme that was touched on by some Committee members. One person expressed that the media needs to be based in the community to speak from the perspective of the Valley. A broader definition of communication was suggested to include transportation in the form of roads, air, and rail. Many people spoke of the need for cooperation. The city boundaries sometimes create obstacles for leadership. Cooperation with the Mat-Su Borough (MSB) and surrounding communities could remove some of these obstacles. For instance, Palmer and Wasilla seem to compete for services, when they should cooperate. Also, incorporating the FireWise program into appropriate aspects of the city could be beneficial.

Several Committee members expressed that they would like to see the city enhance services. Many would like to see Wasilla become an attractive, full-service community that is a destination and not just a "pass-through" city. By creating aesthetic qualities, services, and hospitality (e.g., parking and shopping), it is possible that Wasilla will expand tourism and have a way to keep tourists in the community. Along these same lines, many transportation, access, and infrastructure issues could be resolved to encourage tourism and to create the feeling that Wasilla is a destination. Many people think that Wasilla needs to be a user-friendly community that is easy to navigate. Suggestions were made for improved sidewalks and public transportation within the core area and improved public transit to move residents inside and outside of the city and region. These comments highlight the need for road, rail, airport, and infrastructure plans to address issues such as traffic and construction impacts.

There were also concerns about public safety, increases in crime, and the potential for gangs to form and become a problem in Wasilla. People want safe communities that

include safe sidewalks and streets. Many Committee members emphasized the strong points of the community that should be built upon, including historic attributes, a unique downtown, great trails and natural areas, youth potential, and sports and recreation opportunities. Wasilla is a community to be proud of with tremendous momentum politically and a potential for investment.

The Committee was asked if there were any additional thoughts or comments.

Concern was expressed that the 3 to 4 large property owners of undeveloped property in South Wasilla Heights and Kevin Baker, a large property owner in the airport area, are not part of the Committee. It is important to have these property owners as part of the discussion because they have development plans for these areas. In addition, the downtown planning area should include areas west of Lucile Street and the Swanson and Kennedy addition. The biggest obstacle to development is the small lots and hooking up to the city sewer, which is extremely cost prohibitive for developers. The Downtown area is fractured and in order to accomplish infill, infrastructure is needed.

Dick LaFever and Jon Isaacs explained that there will be focus groups assembled that will be made up of specific stakeholders. These key property owners will be asked to be a part of the plan.

One Committee member thinks it would be helpful if the Committee had access to older plans (i.e., development plans such as the Iditarod Park Plan) in addition to the official planning documents that the planning team has reviewed.

The Committee was asked how can we add strength to this planning process and increase the success of the plans?

- › Set specific priorities and milestones. It is often overwhelming to see such a broad range of goals, objectives, strategies, and projects.
- › Lay out growth implications
- › Provide options for addressing

Questions and Comments from the Committee:

Will the MSB be an obstacle in implementing these plans, because parts of Wasilla are outside its official city boundaries?

What are the procedures for annexation?

Neil Fried predicts that by 2045 the core area of Wasilla will outgrow Anchorage. What we do today will play a big role years from now.

Less tax is paid within Wasilla City boundaries than outside the boundaries. Generally the perception is the opposite.

It is important for us to look at what is currently working, and what types of businesses Wasilla wants to attract.

There was concern that the terms "Core Area," "Wasilla," and "Small Town" are being tossed around, and that these terms are applicable now, but may not be later. We cannot think of Wasilla and plan for it as a small town, if in as little as 40 years Wasilla could be larger than Anchorage. Wasilla currently has a great sports complex that will not meet the needs of the community in 30 to 40 years.

How big is Wasilla going to be? We need to think bigger than we have in the past. For example, the Airport Master Plan should have addressed more issues and prepared Wasilla for jet service.

We need a regional vision because all roads lead to Wasilla. How can we capitalize on our location? There will be a golden triangle if the bridge is constructed. Mack Avenue needs to be rerouted so traffic is not going through two residential subdivisions, instead traffic should route through by the Multi-Use Sports Complex (MUSC).

Before beginning the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, the boundaries for the Downtown area were roughly defined for this exercise. For the SWOT exercise, Downtown will include Nelson Avenue and southward, including Swanson Avenue, excluding the residential properties to the north.

SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats):

For each area, the Committee was asked to provide their thoughts regarding the particular area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The outcome of the exercise is summarized in the attached tables.

Closing Remarks and Comments:

It was requested that the planning team provide a list of resources for the Committee.

The Committee was asked to help determine appropriate focus group topics (e.g., borough, community council, land owner focus groups) and gather names for focus groups by mid-December. The planning team will then populate and schedule the focus groups.

The Committee was encouraged to plan to attend the upcoming focus group meetings, which are planned for January.

After the focus groups meet and the school project is underway, the planning team intends to reconvene the visioning Committee (likely in February) to review the results. After this, the charettes will be held.

It was suggested to reach out to the Boy Scouts for involvement in the school project that is planned as a component of the planning process.

The planning team identified its next steps as:

- Write up today's product
- Establish Focus Groups – expect to hold focus groups in January/February 2007, so names are needed in early December
 - Identify who should be involved (names)
 - Group compositions (such as land owners)
 - Recommend vision Committee attendance
- Implement school project
- Distribute results of focus groups to vision Committee in late February
- Public charettes/workshops

The Committee was asked to rate this process on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 indicating great)? Mostly '5's were given. Reasons shared for this rating were that public involvement is crucial and it has begun; and there was open exchange with a lot of participation today.

The '4' ratings were given because there is a thought that the footprint (i.e., planning area) needs to be expanded. Also, there is cautious optimism with bringing this Committee together and beginning the process.

The '3' ratings were given because 1) there is a lack of confidence that it will be done right; 2) there are limited areas of Wasilla being planned for; 3) planning needs to move faster because South Wasilla Heights has a huge number of development proposals at once.

Sandra Garley explained that the planning areas are limited now because these plans will lead into the update for the comprehensive plan and will help guide decisions in that plan.

STRENGTHS: Downtown						
Historical Features	Parks & Open Space	Location	Municipal Services & Infrastructure	Shopping & Services	Economic & Development Potential	Other
Historical buildings	Wasilla Lake Park, even if on the other side of Crusey Street	Centrally located	Local government, police department, and fire department	Variety of small businesses	High traffic count (good for business)	Growing media attention and visibility
Historical area – Dorothy Page, Herning/Feeland, etc.	Lake recreation	Geographic center of the universe	Post office	Useful small businesses with loyal customers	Economic growth	Some sidewalks
Holds a lot of historic process	Iditapark is well planned and appeals to a variety of interests		Library	Access to a variety of (small & large) businesses and services	Available land to develop	Something for teenagers to do and place to hang out
Historic/culture	Park with amphitheater and skate park		City services	Diverse small businesses		Not presently an "old" downtown
Historical value	Wonderland Park		Water system, sewer system, power	Parking lot location for multiple shopping stores		Wide open to new ideas
Dorothy Page Museum	Parks, lakes, greenbelts, and open areas		City gives small rebate for sewer hookup for residential	Centralized shopping and services; can fill need for all family members		Area members are open to enhancement
				Destination for services, people desire to go there		Railroad

WEAKNESSES: DOWNTOWN							
Traffic	Parking	Access	Pedestrian Access	Parks & Trails	Identity and Appearance	Existing Structures	Other
Traffic	Parking	Access	Lack of sidewalks	No travel ways for snow machines and ATVs from north of city (outside) to south of city (outside) Parks not connected Lack of trails	No theme No architectural appeal Not well planned No defined process	Outgrowing library and post office Move library Move post office	City water issues Fees and water and sewer hookup costs for small lots
Poor traffic flow, too many stops	Limited and lack of parking	Ease of accessibility	Not pedestrian friendly				
No traffic plan	No parking and access	Access to library museums, parks, post office	Difficult for pedestrian movement	Nunley Park is in the wrong area	Lack of "want to be there" feel Can't identify feeling or place which is "downtown"	Library is too small and outdated Historic buildings are taking prime real estate	Limited hours/days to Dorothy Page Museum
The non-Parks Highway east-west connections are only partially set up for commercial through streets	A parking garage would be excellent, centrally located in downtown area, close to historic town site Lack of parking outside of Carr's, D&A Grocery, and around Crusey Street	Connectivity of businesses and services Too spread out; must move your car for every stop			Unattractive, unwelcoming, dirty Condition/appeal of Carr's Mall Too many car lots/used car lots	The old museum is taking up prime real estate; the museum should be moved to a site near the Transportation Museum	Level playing field for downtown businesses
					Not a good representation of the citizens and skills in one given area. craftsmanship, doctors, architects, artists, vendors		

OPPORTUNITIES: Downtown							
Potential Facilities/Services	Themes	Landscaping	Promote Tourism	Traffic and Roads	Pedestrian Access	Development Incentives	Other
Library/new library location	There is potential to develop marketing themes (e.g., Soulang, CA)	Beautification with landscaping	Tourist destination as historic Old Town	Accommodate growing traffic problem to better serve business growth	Foot traffic between businesses	With incentives the smaller lots could be developed for smaller businesses that want to be in the town center	City has to expand borders, mainly to the west to be more effective in new growth direction
Theater					People-friendly sidewalk availability		
New civic center	Opportunity to create a focal point which would involve starting (almost) over	Use of landscaping to capitalize on strengths	Directory to valley tourist sites	Bypass for Fairbanks traffic		Incentives for enhancements	Shape the area for the future needs, plan for growth
Transit center							
Urban renewal grants for community assets like a new library/cultural arts center/theater/community rooms	Downtown is encapsulated, take advantage of this in creating the big picture rooms	Beautify into park-like setting intertwined with residential and commercial	Tourist stop; become sightseeing rest stop	Smaller area can be easier to control traffic with one way streets			Technology/electronics could get more people involved from home or business
Convention center for artist and event performances							Greater diversity
Small unique shops and stores, activities							Wasilla is young
Visitors from out of state/special speakers							
Blend of commercial and residential							
More registered historic sites							
New parking if historic buildings are relocated							
Lake recreation							
Continued development of park area							
Develop an outdoor amphitheater							
Idiapark as heart of family-friendly downtown							

THREATS: Downtown				
Transportation and Parking	Lack of Public Support and Cooperation	Lack of Vision and Planning	Existing Structures	Other
Traffic flow; people avoid downtown	Not able to annex; not enough public support	Building out of necessity, rather than through planning	Buildings that block the view	Need for new/different city government structure
Poor access; congestion	Lack of support for change	Lack of planning	What already exists – a lack of continuity	The number of subdivisions are large for Borough approval
Traffic congestion; too much traffic on limited roads	Not enough cooperation between public and City Council/local government	Lack of vision	Limited by pre-existing structures to develop a more attractive destination	Trying to compete with other areas
Frustration with traffic, which will/may divert businesses elsewhere	Protectionist view of the temporary location of the Dorothy Page museum	If there is not a common vision, it will be hit or miss; there must be a complete buy-in from the city	Too congested to re-mold into a more accessible area	Crime
Development of the Parks Highway as a "throughway"	Lack of involvement from residents; preconceived ideas about processes	Unable to keep pace with growth		Noise
Train tracks (Parks Highway & Main Street)	Unwillingness to think about new concepts	Not putting a plan into action or not meeting basic community needs		
Railroad/highway bypass may decrease potential as a tourism destination				
Lack of parking				
Lack of pedestrian access				
Current land ownership and physical structures limit cost effective additions of sidewalks south of the tracks in the downtown, as well as on-street parking				
Post office parking facility is too small				

CITY OF WASILLA AREA PLANS FOCUS GROUPS
ARTS, CULTURE, HISTORY, VOLUNTEERS, FAITH COMMUNITY / PARKS AND RECREATION,
OUTDOOR INTEREST GROUPS
Wasilla City Hall
Wednesday, January 24, 2007
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Purpose

The City of Wasilla has formed focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of community attitudes and opinions and gather information and constituent perspectives. The focus groups will meet only one-time and have no formal decision-making or advisory authority; however, the results will be incorporated into the planning process. The results will help shape area concepts, which will be presented to the community during the mini-charrettes. Originally, five focus groups were proposed. However, due to participant availability, the focus groups were collapsed into three:

- Real Estate, Developers, Architects, Designers / Property Owners
- Arts, History, Culture, Volunteers, Faith Community / Parks, Recreation, and Outdoor Interest Groups
- Business Community and Transportation Industry

INTRODUCTIONS

All participants introduced themselves, including name and special interests. Participants were also asked to complete the following phrase:

In 10 to 15 years, I see Wasilla (as)...

- a more walkable community.
- more attractive for tourism.
- youth friendly.
- a great place to see concerts.
- youth and family friendly.
- with quality growth in the general downtown community.
- with four times the population it currently has.
- the most wonderful community in Alaska.
- a tourism hub for day trips.
- larger with more parks.

- a hub, a destination with quality involvement with citizens.
- a center of recreation for the Borough.
- with more trails connecting parks and family friendly.
- integrating parks into subdivisions.

For each area, the participants were asked to provide their thoughts regarding the particular area's strengths and weaknesses, as well as provide responses to six specific questions. The outcome of the exercise is summarized in the following tables.

DOWNTOWN: STRENGTHS			
Facilities	Shopping & Services	Connectivity	Miscellaneous
Dorothy Page Museum	Shopping	Potential to be pedestrian friendly	Feels like a community
Old Wasilla townsite	Restaurants	Walkable—easy to get around	Some attractive landscaping
Historical buildings / attractions	Lack of chain restaurants—unique local venues	Sidewalks throughout downtown	Cultural center, including the Valley Performing Arts
The history	Mix of services and businesses		
Parks (e.g., Iditapark)	Development on many streets, not on a strip		
Playgrounds	Core area for general services (e.g., Post Office, government, police, fire, general shopping)		
Lake and Park on Crusey			
Library			

DOWNTOWN: WEAKNESSES				
Transportation	Access / Parking	Facilities	Boundaries	Miscellaneous
Need a better traffic plan	No parking near library and historic attractions	Need something like the sports complex to showcase the arts	Unidentifiable / no signage to welcome residents to the downtown area	Lack of planning
Need more stop lights	Limited parking	Need something more youth friendly	Boundary should extend to Lucas	Small lot size
Traffic congestion	Need better sidewalks		Boundary should extend as far as the sidewalks go	Not enough trees
Potential for accidents				Cluttered / too much going on in the same areas
Bad traffic (e.g., 4-way stop by the Post Office and Library)				
Roads are too wide, making them unsafe to cross				
Traffic / safety hazard with rail				
Public transportation				

DOWNTOWN: WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN WASILLA THAT MAKES THIS AREA SPECIAL AND UNIQUE?		
Facilities	Social Aspects	Miscellaneous
History	Still has a small town feel (i.e., we still have a personality and can express it unlike people in Anchorage or the mass volume of New Yorkers)	Close proximity to parks, post office, grocery store
Old townsite	Friendly and caring people	Unique eateries
Original buildings	Close knit community	4 th of July Parade
Museum	The long time residence of many people provides an opportunity to run into friends at Carr's and chat for a while	
Library	Local community	
Parks (i.e., Wonderland)	Connection / interaction	

DOWNTOWN: ARE THERE SPECIFIC PLACES WITHIN THIS AREA THAT ARE SPECIAL TO YOU AND THAT YOU LIKE TO TAKE OUT-OF-TOWN VISITORS?			
Facilities	Shops/Services	Events	Parks
Rail Depot	Teeland Building	Live community theatre (6 shows per year is a wonderful idea if the weather is poor)	Carter Park
Wasilla Museum		Summer outdoor events	Iditapark Complex (in particular Wonderland Park)
Old Townsite		Farmer's Market	Nunley Park

DOWNTOWN: ARE THERE SPECIFIC PLACES WITHIN THIS AREA THAT YOU AVOID AND DO NOT LIKE TO TAKE OUT-OF-TOWN VISITORS?		
Facilities	Shops/Services	General Areas
Library	Pawn shops Storage sheds The bars	Parks Highway through town (treeless) Main Street (too congested) Downtown traffic Williwaw subdivision (not in current boundaries). Areas with limited parking

DOWNTOWN: WHERE ARE THE PUBLIC PLACES IN THIS AREA WHERE PEOPLE CAN MEET TO DISCUSS COMMUNITY ISSUES?			
Facilities	Shops/Services	Parks/Open Areas	Miscellaneous
Library	Teeland building/Valley Bistro Area churches VFW	Iditapark (e.g. pavilion at Wonderland Park and summertime amphitheatre) Snider Park Wasilla Lake	Historic townsite Farmer's Market

DOWNTOWN: WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE ROLES OF PARKS, ARTS, HISTORY, ETC. IN THIS AREA?	
Parks	Arts (i.e., Valley Performing Arts)
Recreation opportunities	Activities for the community
Relaxation and fun	Entertainment
Family-oriented	Growth and development for our youth
Positive place to be	
	All Gathering places

DOWNTOWN: WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE PLANNING PRIORITIES IN THIS AREA?				
Access	Transportation	Regulatory	Facilities	Miscellaneous
Provide safe and walkable access to services	Traffic	Landscaping	Secure funding for land acquisition for parks and trails	Turn library into a parking lot
Provide connectivity by sidewalks making easier access to destinations	Roads	Create a greater sense of community by requiring trees and sidewalks	Parks	Signage and identity for area—make it feel like a downtown
Consider pedestrian friendly areas	Better traffic plan		Open spaces	
			Create a community center that is focused on families, youth and the arts	
			Build a structure that matches the quality of arts and culture existing in the Valley	

CLOSING REMARKS AND COMMENTS

Overwhelmingly, parks and lakes are important to this sector of the community, although many are located outside of the current planning boundaries.

It may be helpful to have a winter vision and a summer vision, particularly when speaking of parks because activities are limited in the winter. Perhaps there could be designs developed that accommodate winter activities.

The City should not focus so much on single vehicular transportation. There should be a focus on “green parking lots.”

The City should provide incentives for green building, especially when large businesses come in.

The planning team identified its next steps as:

- Write up today’s product
- Continue implementation of school project
- Distribute results of focus groups
- Public charrettes/workshops (March)
- Draft area plans (spring)
- Public review of draft plans (early summer)
- Release of final plans (late summer)

CITY OF WASILLA AREA PLANS FOCUS GROUPS
REAL ESTATE, DEVELOPERS, ARCHITECTS, DESIGNERS / PROPERTY OWNERS
Wasilla City Hall
Thursday, January 25, 2007
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Purpose

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- Arts, History, Culture, Volunteers, Faith Community / Parks, Recreation, and Outdoor Interest Groups
- Business Community and Transportation Industry

INTRODUCTIONS

All participants introduced themselves, including name and special interests. Participants were also asked to complete the following phrase:

In 10 to 15 years, I see Wasilla (as)...

Someone asked the question: As if things remain on the path they are now or how I would like things to be?

- a 25 to 30 mile strip mall (if trends continue down the path they are now).
- a town that is spread out more.
- with clusters of mixed development for young and old—walkable.
- with developed cross streets.
- with a central business district.
- with more north/south roads.
- with another “downtown” that is pedestrian-friendly—maybe in South Wasilla Heights.
- with a small hotel out by the Airport and Transportation Museum area.
- more walkable.

- with major roads that tie into the area.
- with a transportation corridor running south would be nice.
- with a larger airport including a 6,000-foot runway that would accommodate jet service and a hotel.
- with a rail spur connecting to Port MacKenzie.
- with a prison.
- the economic engine for south central Alaska.
- competing with Fairbanks for arts and trade shows.

Additional comments that were shared include:

- the town is too spread out, particularly from the perspective of mail delivery
- a bypass through the city would be nice (e.g., such as the one through Fairbanks).

For each area, the participants were asked to provide their thoughts regarding the particular area's strengths and weaknesses, as well as provide responses to six specific questions. The outcome of the exercise is summarized in the following tables.

DOWNTOWN: STRENGTHS	
Transportation	Area
Major street lights to control and flow traffic	Consolidated service area

DOWNTOWN: WEAKNESSES			
Traffic	Infrastructure	Recreation	Access / Parking
Vehicle traffic	Narrow streets	Bicycle paths	No parking
	Roads		No sidewalks
			Area is undefined

DOWNTOWN: WHAT DRAWS YOU TO THIS AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT/BUILDING?	
Identity / Atmosphere	Facilities
Small town feeling	Library
Slower pace (well, it was)	Post Office
More room between houses	Museum
	Park (e.g., park on Nelson and Lucille)
	Shopping
	Cars / shopping area

DOWNTOWN: WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST IN THIS AREA THAT ARE NOT TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF?	
Land	Access
Combine smaller lots into larger parcels	Needs sidewalks
	Small specialty stores
	Mark phone poles with signs showing what is downtown
	Movie theatre (something for people to do)
	Get community involvement to solicit Post Office to relocate to a larger building and use existing building for the library or something else

DOWNTOWN: WHAT CAN THE CITY DO TO PROMOTE GOOD DEVELOPMENT IN THIS AREA?			
Regulations	Building Standards	Infrastructure	Parks / Open Space
Zoning	Require builders to leave a lot of trees	Good sewage	Park improvements
Make sure zoning is specific for the area	Don't mix apartments and single-family homes without requirements in place for upkeep of yard	Road improvements	Require drivers of ATVs and snow machines to have valid drivers license and insurance
Require building permits	Get rid of dead cars and junk in yards and property	Underground utilities	Protect viewsheds
Require valid inspections	No more box stores		Event themes

DOWNTOWN: SHOULD SPECIFIC PARTS OF THIS AREA BE OFF-LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT?
Nothing identified

DOWNTOWN: WHERE ARE THE PUBLIC PLACES IN THIS AREA WHERE PEOPLE CAN MEET TO DISCUSS COMMUNITY ISSUES?	
Library	
City Hall	Cottonwood Creek Mall (outside of current planning boundaries)
Fire Department	

DOWNTOWN: WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE PLANNING PRIORITIES IN THIS AREA?			
Connectivity	Transportation	Funding	Miscellaneous
Sidewalks	Larger streets	Funding	People's perception of this being their town— <i>home</i>
Walking and bike paths			Preserving the integrity of our state beauty

CLOSING REMARKS AND COMMENTS

There is an RS2477 Trail in the Airport and Transportation Museum area commonly referred to as Wet Gulch Trail.

What is the zoning downtown? There are businesses and now there are apartments or condos going up on Yenlo Street. What's up with that?

There is a lack of an art district in Wasilla.

Building permits are needed to gauge growth and plan for infrastructure.

The City should take advantage of existing assets to promote the arts.

The City should consider inviting more events to take place here (e.g., buying the rights to Fur Rondy).

The planning team identified its next steps as:

- Write up today's product
- Continue implementation of school project
- Distribute results of focus groups
- Public charrettes/workshops (March)
- Draft area plans (spring)
- Public review of draft plans (early summer)
- Release of final plans (late summer)

**CITY OF WASILLA AREA PLANS FOCUS GROUP
BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRY
Wasilla City Hall
Saturday, January 27, 2007
9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**

Purpose

The City of Wasilla has formed focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of community attitudes and opinions and gather information and constituent perspectives. The focus groups will meet only one-time and have no formal decision-making or advisory authority; however, the results will be incorporated into the planning process. The results will help shape area concepts, which will be presented to the community during the mini-charrettes. Originally, five focus groups were proposed. However, due to participant availability, the focus groups were collapsed into three:

- Real Estate, Developers, Architects, Designers / Property Owners
- Arts, History, Culture, Volunteers, Faith Community / Parks, Recreation, and Outdoor Interest Groups
- Business Community and Transportation Industry

INTRODUCTIONS

All participants introduced themselves, including name and special interests. Participants were also asked to complete the following phrase:

In 10 to 15 years, I see Wasilla (as)...

- an improved, more organized city with a reputation for attractive planned development; a city that has a more positive reputation than it does currently.
- more of a tourist attraction, particularly the airport and transportation area. However, access to develop the area as a tourist attraction is a primary concern.
- a city with a museum that draws all the tourists that travel to Alaska. The Museum of Alaska Transportation Industry (MATI) contains many things that appeal to the older demographic, which is probably the majority of the tourists.
- a home; let it grow.
- a cultural center.
- a city where transportation helps people and businesses function better.
- a city where transportation positively contributes to development.
- with a state office building.

- with a high speed transportation corridor.
- with the Iditarod and a hotel(s) in the Airport and Transportation Museum area.
- with an expanded airport that is the focal point of the entire Matanuska-Susitna Valley.
- with a variety of transportation options that can residents and tourists anywhere.
- a community that is proactive to transportation.
- a city that is supportive of commuter rail.
- a sustainable community that includes not only services, but a variety of professional employment options.

For each area, the participants were asked to provide their thoughts regarding the particular area's strengths and weaknesses, as well as provide responses to six specific questions. The outcome of the exercise is summarized in the following tables.

DOWNTOWN: STRENGTHS		
Location	Shops / Services	Miscellaneous
Natural government locations	Variety of services	Small town name recognition within rest of state
Home town of Gov. Palin	Compact	Exists

DOWNTOWN: WEAKNESSES				
Traffic	Safety	Shops / Services	Access / Parking	Miscellaneous
Bottleneck traffic because this area provides the only north/south road on this side of the Valley	Dangerous railroad crossing in town center	Lacks good mix of shopping and dining	Lacks parking for available services	Lacks character
Summer tourists add to existing traffic congestion			Over-abundance of access to services	
Disjointed traffic flow			Lack of sidewalks	

DOWNTOWN: WHAT DRAWS BUSINESSES TO THIS AREA?			
Access	Traffic	Shops / Services	Miscellaneous
Better access (maybe a two-way frontage road and RR)	High visibility in high traffic area	Close proximity to like businesses	Property values
	High traffic flow draws small businesses (which need traffic in lieu of advertising)		Opportunity for building
	Parks Highway goes directly through town so travelers have access to businesses; but traffic congestion goes hand-in-hand with this		

DOWNTOWN: WHAT SHOULD COMMUNITY LEADERS BE MINDFUL OF? WHAT WOULD PROMOTE BUSINESS GROWTH IN THIS AREA?	
Identity / Atmosphere	Miscellaneous
Area identity	Small businesses need traffic control

DOWNTOWN: WHAT WOULD INHIBIT BUSINESS GROWTH IN THIS AREA?		
Access	Traffic	Property Infrastructure
Off the highway	Traffic flow	Water drainage
	Lot size and block size are too small	
	High market price of property	

DOWNTOWN: WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST THAT ARE NOT TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF IN THIS AREA?
Miscellaneous
Public relations plan or other promotion for downtown assets

DOWNTOWN: WHERE ARE THE PUBLIC PLACES IN THIS AREA WHERE PEOPLE CAN MEET TO DISCUSS COMMUNITY ISSUES?	
Parks/Open Space	Facilities/Services
Iditapark	Lake Lucille Inn

DOWNTOWN: WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE PLANNING PRIORITIES IN THIS AREA?		
Transportation	Safety	Infrastructure
Traffic congestion	Unsafe railroad crossings	Infrastructure congestion

Wasilla Area Plans Charrette
Saturday, March 31, 2007
Multi-Use Sports Complex

Summary

As part of the Wasilla Areas Planning Project, the City of Wasilla and URS Corporation conducted a planning charrette with three separate sessions to identify visions and goals for each the three planning areas: Downtown, South Wasilla Heights, and the Airport and Transportation Museum area. The sessions were advertised in the *Frontiersman* and *Anchorage Daily News*, and publicized on local radio. The charrette brought together interested members of the public, key stakeholders, city planners, and planning team members. Attendees included a broad mix of city residents, including property owners, real estate and land developers, retirees, and students. Some Visioning Committee members and focus group participants also attended.

The charrette was divided into two hour sessions to focus on each planning area. Each session began with a brief presentation that summarized the purpose of the area plans, role of the Visioning Committee, and purpose of the focus groups. The planning team provided a brief synopsis of Visioning Committee and focus group comments to date regarding the planning area strengths and weaknesses and the stakeholders' ideas for area planning priorities.

Each two hour session was divided into three separate exercises: state a vision of a development emphasis, identify preferred land uses that support the development emphasis, and draw recommended spatial locations of preferred land uses on the map. The map exercise was a collaborative group activity. The groups then reported out and presented their map results to the rest of the participants.

The planning team recorded development vision concepts and potential land use elements. Many ideas were shared, with detailed suggestions for potential development. Participants were then asked to take part in a mapping exercise to transcribe their visions and preferred land uses onto maps of the planning areas.

The planning team has synthesized the charrette proceedings: a table of vision themes, list of potential land uses, and narrative conclusions were developed for each planning area. Several suggestions for goals and objectives were woven through the visions and potential land uses. The planning team will build upon the information provided to date to develop goals, objectives, and specific implementation action items. The implementation tables will be developed to pursue opportunities, overcome obstacles, and encourage development within preferred vision. The draft tables and land use maps will be presented and reviewed at the next public meeting, to be held on Tuesday, May 1, 2007.

Downtown: Vision*					
Community Character / Lifestyle	Infrastructure / Transportation	Services	Connectivity	Assets	Regulation / Building Restraints
Pedestrian friendly with mix of community-centered services (e.g., restaurants and shops; should be able to spend the afternoon downtown) Enhance and maintain the community atmosphere	The city should involve and coordinate with the Borough and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities New streets should be required to include sidewalks	Expand the library Locate government buildings downtown, with historic character—not high-rises	Sidewalks, ATV and bike paths should be developed Three schools outside the core downtown area need to be connected to downtown area and library Trail connectivity; provide trail access throughout town	Encourage use of current facilities and services Build on the current assets—lakes, Cottonwood Creek, railroad, road	Parcels are too little and incentives should be developed to vacate lot line and develop small lots Develop creative non-mail mixed use
Incorporate "Alaska heritage" into design	Opportunity to get from outlying areas into downtown area (transportation options)		Trail connectivity; provide trail access throughout town Pedestrian overpass on the Parks Highway is needed		Zoning codes should be developed that have foresight; accommodate future growth Be aware of geologic hazards and constraints
Future designs address healthy lifestyle issues; encourage walking	Many problems stem from transportation; start with transportation and work backwards from that				Railroad needs to move in order to distribute growth Implement regulations to maintain the community character (e.g., consider the impacts of the proposed Knik Arm Bridge)
Keep it friendly (i.e., don't go too industrial)	Land for parking area should be set aside by the City (this would be developed by City)				
Design standards should include green parking lots and landscape minimums	Mini bus				
Aesthetics should be maintained	Street lights				
Keep historical vision	Frontage and thru roads Improve streets				

* Area development emphasis suggestions are organized by theme in each column; there is no intended correlation across rows

Downtown should include the following land uses:

- Large library
- Teen center (near library and located among other fun, interesting services; promote it)
- Government office buildings
- Meeting spaces
- Road upgrades that include ATV trails and bike trails
- Multi-use meeting facilities: Trade shows (e.g., craft shows)
- Mixed retail/office space
- Parking area
- Movie theatre
- Co-locate tourist information center and museum

Analysis and Synthesis for Downtown:

Based on the mapping exercise and prior comments from the Visioning Committee and focus groups, the boundaries for the Downtown planning area should be adjusted. Nearly all participants have expressed that the planning boundaries of Downtown should change. The mapping exercise during the charrette clearly illustrated that people identify the downtown core of Wasilla encompassing the Iditapark, the western shoreline of Wasilla Lake, and the schools north of the current downtown boundary. It was also clear during the mapping exercise that participants did not envision much, if any, development related to the Downtown to occur south of the Parks Highway.

The Parks Highway divides the community; such a large transportation corridor does not lend to developing a downtown identity. The area to the north of the highway has the majority of the facilities and attractions that people associate with the Downtown. Few connections were identified between services and facilities on the north and south sides of the highway. The City may wish to reconsider the planning area boundaries; the area to the south of the highway could be combined with the South Wasilla Heights planning area.

If we were to move forward with redesigning the planning area boundaries, the southern boundary for the Downtown planning area could be the Parks Highway, from North Weber Drive to the western shore of Wasilla Lake. The western boundary would zigzag from North Weber Drive to West Nelson Avenue and North Lucille Street. The northern border could follow lot lines from North Lucille Street (just north of East Glen Circle) to the Wasilla-Fishhook Road and continue east on Aspen Avenue. The eastern border would not neatly follow a road, but rather lot lines that are west of East Dellwood Street between Aspen Avenue and the Parks Highway.

Some participants envisioned Swanson Avenue being developed and shaped into a “main street,” and that the Parks Highway become more of a bypass. Also, any new commercial development should be accompanied with planned and adequate parking. The land use visions of the participants are not drastically different from current zoning. However, there are some areas in direct conflict including the area by Wasilla-Fishhook Road and Aspen Avenue. A part of this area is currently zoned for rural residential, and participants envision this area as one where the schools can expand. Also, there are areas that were identified for recreational use that are currently zoned commercial. In addition to zoning conflicts, there may be land ownership conflicts that would also have to be addressed.

**WASILLA AREA PLANS PUBLIC MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 1, 2007
WASILLA CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Purpose

The City of Wasilla and URS Corporation organized a public meeting to review the products of the planning process to date and solicit further comments to incorporate in the draft area plans. The public meeting was advertised in the *Frontiersman* and the *Anchorage Daily News*, and noticed at the City Council Chambers. In addition, the *Anchorage Daily News* published an article on the planning process the Friday prior to the meeting. Members of the Visioning Committee, participants in the focus groups and charrette, and interested members of the public attended the meeting.

As participants arrived, they were able to view suggested land use maps that were developed from a mapping exercise during the charrette. Participants in the charrette illustrated their visions for growth and preferred land uses on maps for each planning area. Three maps of suggested land uses were developed for Downtown and South Wasilla Heights; and two maps were developed for the Airport and Transportation Museum area.

Next, a brief presentation provided an overview of the area plans and the key topics that will be addressed in the plans. The public participation steps in the process as well as the significance and results of each step were also explained, including the Visioning Committee, the focus groups, the charrette, the school project, and the public meeting that night.

After the presentation, there was a question and answer session. The participants were encouraged to share comments and/or ask questions about the process to date and the maps with suggested land uses in each area developed at the charrette. Following this, participants were invited to study the suggested land use maps further and provide written comments identifying what they like and dislike about each. Blank maps of each area were also provided for participants to draw new ideas on. Several participants requested that maps be mailed to them so they could make suggestions and/or give friends and neighbors an additional opportunity to comment also.

Summary of Comments

Question and Answer Session

As the plan progresses and the City of Wasilla identifies specific parcels of land for future development, can the City purchase those parcels and charge rent for a different use until the City can develop the parcel(s) for its identified use?

Currently, the planning team is identifying and reviewing tools and implementation methods that can be used to attain the community vision for each of the three areas. Funding will often be an issue and potential obstacle for scenarios like this. However, this is the “out-of-the-box” thinking that should be presented to the City Council. The City Council may be reluctant to advise spending tax dollars this way, but if the idea originates with the citizens and citizens are supportive of it, then the City Council may see opportunities like this differently. Ideas like this should be shared throughout the

remainder of the process, as well as after adoption of the plans.

Will goals and objectives that are identified in these plans be executed? For instance, there has been a lot of talk throughout the years about an expanded/new library, yet it does not appear to be going anywhere. Will this happen with these plans?

The library issues are being addressed, and an architect has been hired. Regarding these area plans, it will be important to establish priorities. These plans are a roadmap for the future of the three areas. Wasilla is developing two factors that are necessary to achieve the goals identified in the plans: continued public support and enthusiasm demonstrated to the Planning Commission and City Council, coupled with suitable and realistic implementation mechanisms. Plans often fail because of lack of specificity regarding responsibilities for implementing actions identified in the plan. Completing basic and straightforward tasks early on help achieve larger successes in the long-term.

Written Comment Session (maps are attached at the end for more detail)

Downtown (D1)

Note: ATV crossings were suggested on this map at the Parks Highway and Crusey Street, and at the Parks Highway and Wasair Drive.

Things I LIKE about the suggested land uses	Things I do NOT LIKE about the suggested land uses
Nothing identified	ATV crossings should be located only at current at-grade railroad crossings. There should be no new crossings of the railroad in the core area.

Downtown (D2)

Note: There were no suggested changes to the location of historical buildings on this map.

Things I LIKE about the suggested land uses	Things I do NOT LIKE about the suggested land uses
I second keeping historical buildings left where they are for a place to go to “see” old Wasilla.	Nothing identified
Keep current City Hall building where it is as it is—a historic building.	

Downtown (D3)

Note: There were no suggested changes to the location of historical buildings on this map. It was suggested that the post office move across the Parks Highway to a lot by Iliamna Street and Susitna Avenue. City and state government offices were suggested to be located between Knik Avenue and Willow Street, off of Herning Avenue.

Things I LIKE about the suggested land uses	Things I do NOT LIKE about the suggested land uses
Leaving museum and historic park where they are.	Nothing identified
Yes, post office needs to be moved.	
Current City Hall building should remain where it is as one of the historic buildings in the original Wasilla downtown area.	

Blank Maps and General Comments

DOWNTOWN

Parking is suggested at the corner of West Herning Avenue and Lucille Street.

An existing plan identifies the Synder Road railroad crossing is unsafe and should be closed. Alternative access should be provided. Access could be rerouted from Pioneer Drive located at the northeast end of Lucille Lake through Hallea Lane located at the northwest end of Lucille Lake. There is a utility easement adjacent to Lucas Road that crosses the Parks Highway and ties into Selina Lane that could provide alternate access across the railroad.

Need walkability in downtown area to get around better; make it a more pleasurable experience.

Move the old fire station (now used as a repair shop) and make it corner parking for the museum and historic park and small shops in the area.

Perhaps use the (existing) post office for a library.

Once vacated, the post office building should be reused for something compatible with schools and historic area.

When the new library is built, have the “old” library building become part of the museum for use of 1) art display, 2) historic research, and 3) possible small meeting area.

Some streets in downtown area should be one way and accommodate heavy traffic use.

Wonderland Park is a great asset to the City. There should be signage on the Parks Highway indicating where it is

There should be a walking/skate corridor between Wonderland Park and the schools.

THROUGHOUT WASILLA

Move forward with the plan that the railroad would not relocate and elevate track through Wasilla.

Plan for access across the tracks during a 2-year construction period of elevating the tracks.

Review the Downtown Couplet Study.

The City may have concepts identified if the railroad right-of-way was vacated.

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