



Municipality of Anchorage

Ethan Berkowitz, Mayor

---Planning Department---
Long-Range Planning Division

SENT VIA EMAIL

June 11, 2016

Chris Zimmerman, Smart Growth America

RE: One Month Report

Dear Chris,

We are writing to give a one-month report on efforts accomplished on the key action items determined from community input and Smart Growth America staff recommendations received at the May 10, 2016, Smart Growth America Workshop. These Action Items were included in the workshop report published in June 2016, provided to Smart Growth America and the community.

Focus the Effort

1. Publish an Incentives Handbook: Include all known adopted incentives such as Chapter 12.36 Deteriorated Properties, and Title 21 Floor Area Ratio incentives. Overhaul each of the incentives and enabling State Legislation to ensure that they can be used in an efficient manner reducing costs to the municipality and the development community. *Fund and complete the Incentives Handbook in the next 12 months.*

Status: The Anchorage Community Development Authority (ACDA) contracted to complete a determination of all available incentives, and what changes in State or Municipal legislation is needed. The final report and recommendations are in draft awaiting ACDA action. From that final report an Incentives Handbook will be drafted and finalized in the estimated timeframe.

2. Create a Redevelopment Authority: Staff, fund, give bonding authority, and provide the ability to acquire property for development. Require that the Redevelopment Authority report out its progress to the Assembly and the community on a semi-annual or annual basis to determine what progress has been achieved in implementing the Downtown Comprehensive Plan. *Determine necessary actions and implement within 24 months.*

Status: This item is up for review.

3. Action Item: Define a specific redevelopment area that includes the MOA-owned 7th Avenue and I Street property as an anchor for a redevelopment pilot project: Use the existing fiscal tools to incentivize the pilot project.

This includes making decisions in a timely manner on tax abatement, utility and infrastructure investments, Return on Investment, Pro Forma, permitting and any other incentives deemed appropriate to the project.

MOA commits as a participant. Complete a Special Area Study to refine recommendations and report out on ROI and Pro Forma within 12 months.

Status: The redevelopment area was discussed with, and approved by Mayor Berkowitz in June. GIS analysis is under way on the project area to determine property ownership, taxation data, utilities, rights-of-way and other relevant data. The project area was photographed and research is underway on feasible walkability projects for inclusion in the Municipal Capital Improvements Program. Several properties in the project area are owned by the Municipality and to ignite redevelopment in this area, the Municipality issued a Request for Proposal on what will be a catalytic project site at 7th Avenue and I Street.

Make Connections to Surrounding Neighborhoods

4. Make Downtown a Walkable and Desirable place to live, work, and play. Fund and complete a feasibility study for the Municipality to assume ownership and management of Downtown Streets. This may include the funding prioritization an update to the Highway-2-Highway (Seward to Glenn Highways) Environmental Impact Statement and construction back into the 5-year AMATS Transportation Improvement Program. Give the State-controlled streets to the Municipality of Anchorage in Downtown and Fairview to enable redevelopment to a walkable, safe community area, desirable for housing, and businesses.

This also includes funding and implementation of the Gambell Street Corridor Plan, the Fairview Neighborhood Plan, and the Downtown Comprehensive Plan. *Fund and complete this study in the next 24 months.*

Status: The AK Department of Transportation submitted comments on this action item to the Municipality in June. A follow-up meeting with the Municipality and Department of Transportation was held mid-July. There are many issues to be resolved with this action item. However, the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee approved a resolution at their August meeting to request that the AK Department of Transportation fund, and reopen the Seward to Glenn Highways Environmental Impact Statement.

Resolve Outstanding Issues to Stabilize the Neighborhoods

5. Fund and Implement Community Homeless Plan. See <http://anchoragehomeless.org/get-the-facts/> for more information. Also work with and support the Downtown Partnership, Ltd. in their efforts to mitigate some of the issues that they manage on a daily basis. *Apply for grants, and consider sales tax or other alternatives for funding within 18 months to begin plan implementation.*

Status: Work is ongoing on this effort. A voucher-housing program was initiated, several homeless camps have been removed and the areas cleaned up, and many social service organizations are stepping up their outreach and assistance. There is always more to be done, however, the Municipality with its partners is taking great strides to assist this underserved segment of our community.

6. Make Downtown Safe. Complete research on impacts to Downtown caused by several reasons including; late night bar patrons, camping in public areas, mitigate known drug use areas, increase lighting, patrols, etc. *Update code and regulations to manage these issues within the next 18 months.*

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Status: A public park located in the Central Business District had an unsightly fountain as its centerpiece. The fountain had not worked in several years and became a central location for unsavory activities. The Municipality recently demolished the fountain. This simple action gives the park a new look and feel, and a positive response from visitors and business owners has been heard.

The Anchorage Downtown Partnership continues to host community events in the evenings, and on weekends in this park area, as well as throughout Downtown Anchorage. An unusual bright spot for Downtown is the Pokemon Go craze. Downtown is experiencing much higher visitation due to the Pokemon phenomenon!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hal H. Hart". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Hal H. Hart, AICP
Planning Director

Cc: Kristine Bunnell
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