



City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street • Sitka, Alaska 99835

Coast Guard City, USA

MEMORANDUM

To: Chris Duerksen, Clarion Associates
John Robert Smith, Smart Growth America

From: Michael Scarcelli, Planning and Community Development Department Director 

Subject: Progress Report for Next Steps from Smart Growth America Technical Assistance – Sustainable Land Use Code Audit

Date: December 21, 2017

Since the September 12-13 Smart Growth America workshop and Next Steps memo that laid out a variety of recommendations, the City and Borough of Sitka has continued to make major progress on its draft Comprehensive Plan and have adopted a 9 month game plan to begin discussion and adoption of several recommendations.

In mid-November, our Department received the “Next Steps” memo from SGA that details the 3 topic areas, gives a brief overview of challenges and opportunities, and makes formal recommendations, including implementation strategies.

The following is a CBS Staff Summary of SGA’s Recommendations:

I. Housing Choices

- a. Promote accessory dwelling units
- b. Regulation and tracking of short-term rentals
- c. Reduce lot size and revise development standards
- d. Off-street parking reductions

II. Downtown Development

- a. Explore increasing height maximum and setting a height minimum
- b. Incentives for multi-residential mixed use development
- c. Design standards
- d. Create bike and walk friendly downtown
- e. Create master plan for downtown

III. Economic Development

- a. Address nonconforming lots, setbacks, and development standards (explore contextual standards)
- b. Study parking and explore various options
- c. Create master plans for Jarvis/Price/Smith, Katlian, Downtown, Sheldon Jackson Campus, etc.
- d. Update planned unit development standards
- e. Protect commercial and industrial uses and areas

Staff have reviewed the recommendations and presented this information to the Planning Commission and Administrator. Staff have suggested the following broad 9 month game plan to address some issues quickly (low-hanging fruit) that could have major positive impact but also offer less negative impacts, controversy, or major dedication of time or other resources. In essence, these are the short-term, easier means to make some powerful changes. This plan is open-ended and each topic will be more fully vetted and will include City Assembly discussion and ultimate approval. The following has received the blessing of the City Assembly, Planning Commission, and the City Administrator.

Planning and Community Development Department Prospective Timeline for Next Steps

1. January - February 2018:

a. **Title 21: Subdivision – Required Monumentation of Plats.**

- i. This is a proposed amendment to Title 21 that would reduce and simplify the monumentation and flagging requirements for subdivisions. This could save a developer anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000 for most subdivisions, while also adequately ‘marking’ surveys and property lines. This would reduce the cost of developing land without material impact to property rights or survey quality.

b. **Title 22: Zoning Code Administration (Due Process – Required Notice)**

- i. This is an amendment to administrative provisions of Title 22 concerning due process notice requirements that aim to reduce advertising costs, increase use of social media, and increase overall notice to community and affected properties of proposed developments or actions. This would decrease costs to the City by about \$10,000 a year and increase notice through various media including newer media such as websites, email, and various social media.

2. February - March 2018:

a. **Title 22: Development Standards.**

- i. Reduce **lot size and setbacks** in various zones to meet more realistic lot size and create a **formulaic setback** (slightly different from recommended “contextual setback”) for existing nonconforming lots of record. This will reduce lot development costs, increase density, promote affordable housing and compact design, and will save a lot of staff time that can be refocused on other community development topics.

b. **Parking Survey.**

6. July - August 2018. Review of Business, Commercial, and Industrial Zoning Districts and Uses

- a. Staff will make suggestions for adoption to promote business development, protect commercial and industrial uses, and address disharmony of uses between residential, mixed use, and higher commercial/industrial uses (i.e. CBD, C-1, C-2, I, and GP zoning districts).
- b. This may entail greater study and master planning of the Jarvis/Price/Smith area.

7. September 2018. Master Plans/Complex Planning Topics

- a. Staff will begin laying out strategy and timeline to address the following complex topics:
 - i. Downtown Master Plan and Proposed Changes to Development Standards and Uses
 - ii. Sheldon Jackson Master Plan
 - iii. Review and Amend PUD standards and incentives
 - iv. Katlian Avenue/Marine Street Master Plan

Finally, as we kick off the start of our implementation strategy, CBS staff and the Sitka Community are very thankful for the opportunity to work with Smart Growth America and we look forward to a bright year ahead. This opportunity is made possible through funding from the US EPA and it is greatly appreciated.