

## **STEP 2 ISSUES / COMMENTS OVERVIEW – Draft 4/6/2021**

The following is a synopsis of what the Planning team has heard so far about Downtown in one-on-one interviews in 2020 and 2021, and the museum Step 1 kick-off in 2019. Additionally, the street projects included in the 2007 Downtown Plan are listed in the Streets section for discussion.

### **URBAN DESIGN:**

1. Set back requirements for residential projects. Won't let you build to the sidewalk. (Table 21.11-4: Table of Dimensional Standards – Downtown Districts). Forces project to include a commercial space that takes away from the amount of housing units that could be provided.
2. Bulk Tower 130' – 150' restrictions. Discourages larger buildings that could get more housing. (Table 21.11-5: Building Tower Bulk (above 3 stories). If you want developers to build larger projects, the current parameters in the code will not let that happen. These dimensions max out buildings at about 50-odd units. That's not cost effective for larger builders. Only boutique builders can afford to build market-rate housing. You won't get workforce or low-income.
3. Parking Lot landscaping requirement.
4. Rentals do not require as much parking.
5. For Sale buildings will need to provide more parking.
6. Downtown needs a coordinated shared parking strategy.
7. Too much beige.
8. Should small areas with Mid Century Modern and 1920s cottages be saved [to provide Downtown with a mix of densities. Could allow access to sun and views].
9. Adjustments to Title 23 to allow for compact housing would be beneficial.

### **STREETS:**

1. Biking:
  - a. Business owners are interested in better biking through downtown and perhaps removing metered parking on some streets to create bike lanes.
  - b. Bike lane through Downtown – how does this play in together? And bike storage/ access.
2. Parking:
  - a. How can parking support new residential – what is needed for new residential?
  - b. Parking was and still is a need for us, yet structured parking (or even ground floor parking) drives costs even higher. Perhaps this works in market projects if you can charge a premium for the spaces.
  - c. I don't remember if there is a way to negotiate with ACDA to remove some metered spaces to allow for loading areas in front of residential.
  - d.
  - e. Public's Comment: ACDA parking is often full and unavailable.
  - f. Parking – perception that there is not enough parking downtown (from Laurel Cuddy). Discussion about how people don't perceive there is enough parking, not in the right location, parking lots need to be improved.
  - g. ACDA provides parking garages. The garages are not full.
  - h. Most new residential development in downtown, while not required to provide parking, are building parking with their projects because the market demands it.

- i. Is one parking “host” downtown the answer?
- j. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategy for downtown – perhaps a shuttle from garages to commerce?
- 3. Visit Anchorage anticipates more visitors that will require more curb space and more pedestrian amenities.
- 4. Maybe close the streets to cars on Saturdays. 😊
- 5. Snow Storage:
  - ✚ Is snow storage only on parking, or also sidewalks?
- 6. Buses / Trolleys:
  - ✚ There will be more coaches that pass through or need to park adjacent to Downtown.
- 7. Traffic - Transportation and access through and within Downtown is a big concern.
  - ✚ Adjust timing of traffic signals to reduce average speeds to approximately 26 MPH with the Downtown area bounded by and including A Street on the east,
- 8. The 2007 Downtown Plan proposed several street improvements that have not been funded or completed:
  - a. Convert D Street to a two-way traffic street, adhering to the Core Streets Streetscape Plan design guidelines.
  - b. Convert F Street to a two-way traffic street, adhering to the Core Streets Streetscape Plan design guidelines.
  - c. Reconstruct G Street between 3rd and 5th Avenues in accordance with the Core Streets Streetscape Plan.
  - d. Reconstruct 7th Avenue between the Dena’ina Convention Center and C Street in accordance with the Core Streets Streetscape Plan.
  - e. Make streetscape improvements to 6th Avenue between E and D Streets in accordance with the Core Streets Streetscape Plan.
  - f. Program the construction of Phase 2 of the E Street Corridor Enhancement Project including pedestrian connections to Delaney Park and the Alaska Railroad Intermodal Transportation Facility.
  - g. Convert 3rd Avenue to one-way westbound traffic. Prepare a 3rd Avenue one-way westbound traffic and pedestrian safety plan, and ensure redesign includes continuous sidewalks, pedestrian amenities, on-street parking, reduced travel speeds and areas for bus loading.
  - h. Convert 5th Avenue to two-way traffic, contingent on the conversion of 3rd Avenue.

## **UTILITIES:**

Several developers spoke about the lack of the utility company’s knowledge of where the facilities were actually located.

- a. Utilities and services are always tricky – shouldn’t be a big expense, but they are. We assume that in the Central Business District utilities should be developed and available to connect into, but that isn’t the case.
- b. [Latest project had a \$100,000 for electric that hadn’t been planned for]. Found out midway through the project the cost of installing electric upgrades for our project on 7th Avenue. This included road trenching, road repair, upstream facilities.
- c. Water and sewer weren’t an issue in this location.
- d. Storm drain is not well connected [in Downtown] – will require an investment to address stormwater.
- e. Pretty sure utilities are there for the project.
- f. It would be nice if our engineering team who carries E&O insurance while working on our buildings could interpret the building code within their competency. We installed the most complex and expensive shutoff valve possible to isolate the water main at the location where it enters the building. Some downtown locations have mains both in the alleys and in the streets. AWWU wants the new pipes in the streets. We would like to

exercise our judgement where the water service enters the building. The building code wants this to happen close to the service entrance with some engineering judgement, but with water mains in the street mechanical rooms would be on the street side. This is often not ideal.

- a. Storm sewer was not there (where it was supposed to be) so we had to build a much larger retention area underground. We were in the red on day 2 of construction.

Comment from Step 2 Planning Team member on how to pay for utility upgrades in other places:

*Cost sharing is an option where those who will benefit share the cost. Impact fees could add more costs for developers. Utility has a long-term way to recover costs. Why does the developer have to cover the cost of utility upgrades in an urban area where utilities should already be present? There may be a tariff that now allow AWWU to recover costs.*

### **QUALITY OF LIFE – Mostly comments:**

- a. I love the fam-friendly events, festivals, flowers. Easy parking w/less lots. Housing – affordable, and options for the house-less
- b. Housing for people experiencing homelessness
- c. Make the city more sustainable – charging for electric cars – bike lanes – solar
- d. More housing options!
- e. More public safety presence
- f. Better ADA access to the PAC
- g. Self-clean public restrooms
- h. Lots of summer and winter activities for families and everyone 😊 walking in parks, looking at pretty flowers
- i. View of mountains
- j. Food and fun
- k. Restaurants, cook inlet, paved trails
- l. I like being able to park and walk
- m. Sights and food
- n. Restaurants
- o. Mountain views and museums
- p. Community activities – shopping, flowers
- q. Art galleries and murals - Whale
- r. Flowers park strip
- s. Culture
- t. Small local GROCERY STORES
- u. Music
- v. Fun shops funky art
- w. Public basketball courts
- x. A library
- y. Drug store
- z. Activate Egan Center as true civic place
- aa. Host more community events
- bb. More language diversity programs
- cc. Greenhouse powered by renewable energy that could be a warm healing place in the winter/wedding event venue
- dd. Outdoor cafes

ee. Museum!

ff. Murals – whale!

**FIRST FRIDAY QUESTIONS:**

What do you come to Downtown for?

- a. Cultural: 20
- b. Dining: 26
- c. Entertainment: 45
- d. Home: 10.5
- e. Night Life: 12.5
- f. Shopping: 11
- g. Special Events: 27
- h. Work: 3
- i. Walking: 6
- j. Health Care: 1

**WAYFINDING:**

- a. Develop a comprehensive Downtown streetscape and way-finding signage design palette.
- b. Identify significant sites and event locations for interpretive signage.