

CHAPTER 2 Summary of Past Efforts, Recent Successes and Enduring Challenges



Typical diagonal diverter installed as a result of the Fairview Circulation and Safe Streets Study.

"One of the most innovative crime-fighting ideas in Anchorage comes from residents of the oft-troubled neighborhood of Fairview. Fairview is home to rampant drive-through drug dealing and has more than its share of crime and social problems. Some of the area's activists, led by Allen Kemplen, think part of the problem lies in the way Fairview's streets are laid out."

Anchorage Daily News, April 28, 1995



PAST EFFORTS

Neighborhood Improvement Workshop #1

Fairview's first town meeting as part of the Municipality was held in the fall of 1976. Mayor George Sullivan and Red Boucher attended the day-long event where participants developed a comprehensive approach that laid the groundwork for many positive changes.

The Fairview Strategy

Besieged by urban ills, concerned residents began working together to create a more livable community. An example was the development of the Fairview Strategy in November of 1991. The Strategy was produced by the Community Council and represented a cooperative effort to bring new life into one of Anchorage's oldest neighborhoods. It consisted of a blueprint for action; a guide for citizens, business people and developers.

The Strategy recognized that Fairview was experiencing an increase in crime, drug activity and the homeless. At the same time, the community had seen a decrease in property values, sense of individual well-being and a lower quality of life.

It did not call for temporary short-term fixes because people knew that one could not reverse years of neglect and mismanagement overnight. Rather, the Strategy called for the laying down of a foundation for the construction of strong, well-built neighborhoods to nurture the develop-

ment of healthy, educated and productive citizens.

The Fairview Strategy was updated in April 1992 with a list of specific ideas for improving the neighborhood. See Appendix YY.

Neighborhood Improvement Workshop #2

Neighborhood residents stayed committed to the goal of a revitalized community by helping to organize a Community Improvement Workshop on April 17, 1993. An important conclusion was that the neighborhood did not own itself. One of the more concrete action items to emerge was for a comprehensive transportation study focusing on creating a positive "circling of the wagons."

Fairview Community Patrol

Concerned residents made a fresh commitment to taking responsibility for the safety of neighborhood streets.

"On patrol Fairview citizens have the right idea. We're glad to see the people of Fairview care enough to help defend their neighborhood from crime, as highlighted in Sunday's We Alaskans.

Any police officer will tell you that even the biggest and best-trained police force can only do so much. Concerned citizens are a community's first line of defense."

Anchorage Daily News, Opinion, November 19, 1993

Revised Final Draft

Neighborhood Improvement Workshop #3

Anchorage Neighborhood Housing Services (ANHS) worked with the neighborhood in 1994 organizing a planning workshop attended by 96 individuals, including residents, business owners, municipal employees, government officials, mayoral candidates, bankers, and educators. This initial planning effort served as a catalyst for many changes that have occurred in Fairview in recent years.

Winter City District Design Charette

It soon became obvious that Fairview shared physical characteristics with other older Anchorage neighborhoods. Residents were active in organizing an event to incorporate the knowledge gained when Anchorage hosted the 1994 Winter Cities Conference. Fairview recognized that the neighborhood was a special area conducive to winter living. The Charette was held October 21-22, 1995 at the Fairview Recreation Center and was a grass-roots initiative by residents, property owners and businesses seeking to clarify their unique comparative advantage within the urban center of a winter city. The results are included in the Appendix.

Despite these successes, there was no single planning document to guide redevelopment of the Fairview community.

With the adoption of ANCHORAGE 2020 in February 2001, the citizens of Anchorage agreed on a blueprint to guide development

in the Anchorage Bowl over the next 20 years. As citizens embarked on reshaping the community to fit their aesthetic, social, and economic vision, each neighborhood is empowered to contribute a plan for its development that addresses the goals and objectives of ANCHORAGE 2020.

The Fairview Community Council established a Neighborhood Planning Committee in March 2001 and requested that Anchorage Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. (ANHS) work with them to develop the Fairview Neighborhood Plan. The success of this effort was based on citizen involvement. The Fairview Community Council Neighborhood Planning Committee, a small core of neighborhood residents, developed a process for engaging the citizens of Fairview. The Committee's weekly and then bi-weekly meetings were open to the public and advertised in the Council's newsletter, which is sent to Fairview residents.

Neighborhood Improvement Workshop #4

The fourth major planning event, a town meeting, was held on May 19, 2001. The meeting was facilitated by ANHS and culminated a three-day visit to Anchorage by David Boehlke, a nationally known consultant who specializes in effective strategies to return older neighborhood to healthy condition. Mr. Boehlke accompanied residents, ANHS staff, and municipal staff on a walk through Fairview. After an on-the-ground assessment of the physical conditions of

Residents in Action!

"Fairview residents are planning a second march this Saturday to protest drugs in their neighborhood. The march will start at 1 p.m. at 13th Avenue and Juneau Street. About 30 residents turned out for a similar protest last week at 10th Avenue and Juneau. Organizers hope the marches will reduce the amount of drug trafficking in the area."

Anchorage Daily News, Metro, September 23, 1994

Revised Final Draft



East Fairview residents participating in a 2001 neighborhood improvement workshop.



the neighborhood and workshops with residents, Mr. Boehlke offered a discussion of the Fairview neighborhood that applies the perspective of an outside observer. His approach is to focus on homeownership to stabilize the neighborhood and to treat the neighborhood holistically. His findings with regard to Fairview are found later in this document.

Community Preference Survey

This planning tool serves to facilitate citizen participation in developing community consensus regarding desirable and undesirable physical, visual and spatial features of both current and future development. The Survey was conducted in 2001 and the results are summarized in Table ZZ.

Neighborhood Improvement Workshop #5

The fifth major neighborhood planning event occurred March 12, 2005 organized by the Fairview Community Council. Mayor Begich spoke to approximately 60 people about the positive changes occurring in Fairview and stated his administration's support for continued revitalization of the area.

The State Department of Transportation and Public Facilities presented a new proposal for addressing traffic volumes along 5th/6th Avenue and Gambell/Ingra Street couplets. While the idea of a depressed freeway was not new (a concept strongly opposed by the neighborhood in the past), the addition of "cut-and-cover" caught the attention of residents and property own-

ers.

Workshop participants broke out into five groups in the afternoon, discussed past efforts and produced recommendations for the future. One of the more significant common outcomes resulting from this group decision-making process was conditional support for the Highway-to-Highway connection. If the neighborhood could get serious commitments from the DOT&PF and the Municipality for a win-win approach to design of the facility, then Fairview could support it. This workshop result produced a successful resolution to an issue that stood in the way of neighborhood revitalization.

There exists a significant concern that designation of the Highway-to-Highway connection in official Municipal plans may result in disinvestment within the corridor.



David Boehlke, Municipal staff and friends of Fairview discuss neighborhood conditions during field tour.

Revised Final Draft



DISCOVERING NEIGHBORHOODS

Streets and topographic features divide Fairview into four areas: East, West, North, and South. Each of these quadrants has some distinct development characteristics and, therefore, each will require a distinct approach to revitalization. The "bluff" is the topographical feature just south of 16th Avenue.

East Fairview

Boundaries: West: Gambell Street
East: Merrill Field
North: 8th Avenue
South: the bluff

Characteristics: This area is generally perceived as the Fairview neighborhood. It has the longest history of resident participation. Although this portion of Fairview has experienced the greatest impact of poorly planned growth, it has also seen the greatest improvement over the years.

This portion of Fairview is developed on a grid street pattern with small, attractive, original homes, as well as some newly constructed infill homes. There are several multi-family developments as well. Housing density varies between medium to high with many original single-family homes still standing. However the area also includes a significant number of four-plex rentals. This area contains various public facilities including the community center, the elementary school, and a neighborhood park.



Revised Final Draft



Figure 4

East Fairview Land Use - 2004



East Fairview has seen the greatest amount of redevelopment in recent years with the installation of innovative traffic calming devices that has discouraged through traffic, dampened criminal activity, and brought renewed pride to its homeowners.

Revised Final Draft

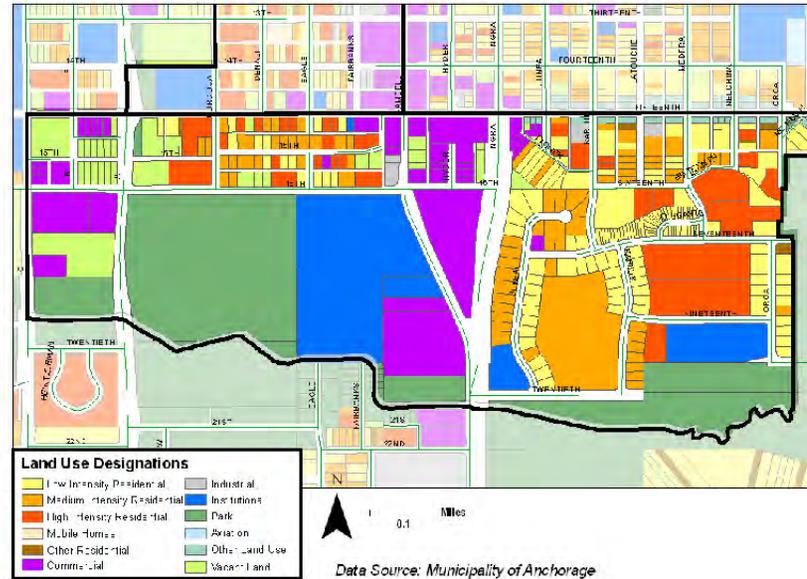
South Fairview

Boundaries: West: C Street
 East: Sitka Park
 North: 15th Avenue
 South: Chester Creek

Characteristics: This area has two distinct development sub-areas. One segment lies east of the New Seward Highway and was the subject of urban renewal in the 1960s. A significant number of public housing units managed by the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation are located west and north of the Anchorage Senior Center. A ring of large lot, single family lots exist within this sub-area. The bluff area has a significant number of higher quality condominium units. Between the bluff and 15th Avenue, residential types range from large lot single-family to four and eight plexes.

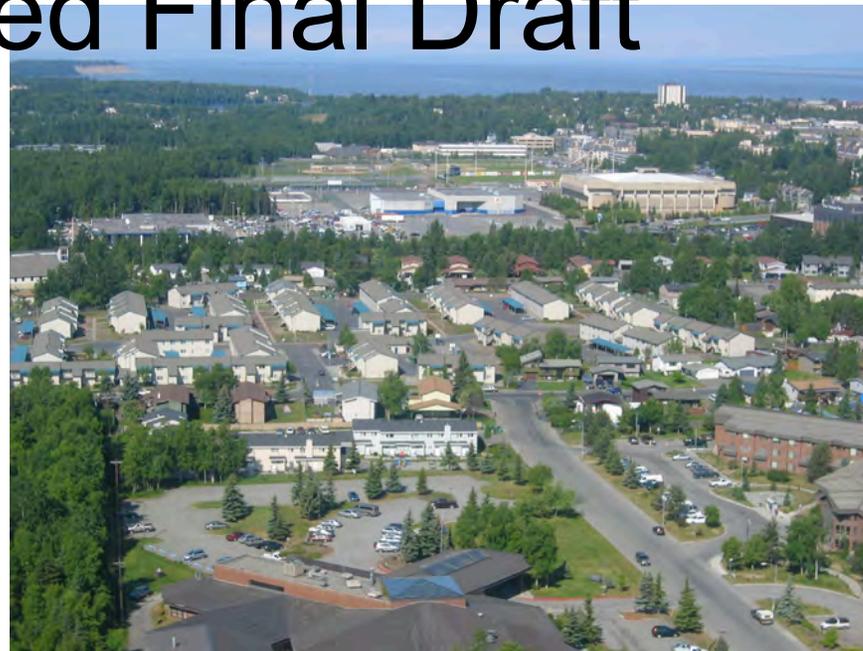
The second segment lies south of the bluff and is dominated by the regional sports facilities of Sullivan and Ben Boeke Arenas, the ball fields and the Mulcahy sports complex. Residential units range from small-lot single-family to luxury condominiums. The area west of A Street between 15th Avenue and Chester Creek consists of Office and Institutional uses.

South Fairview Land Use - 2004

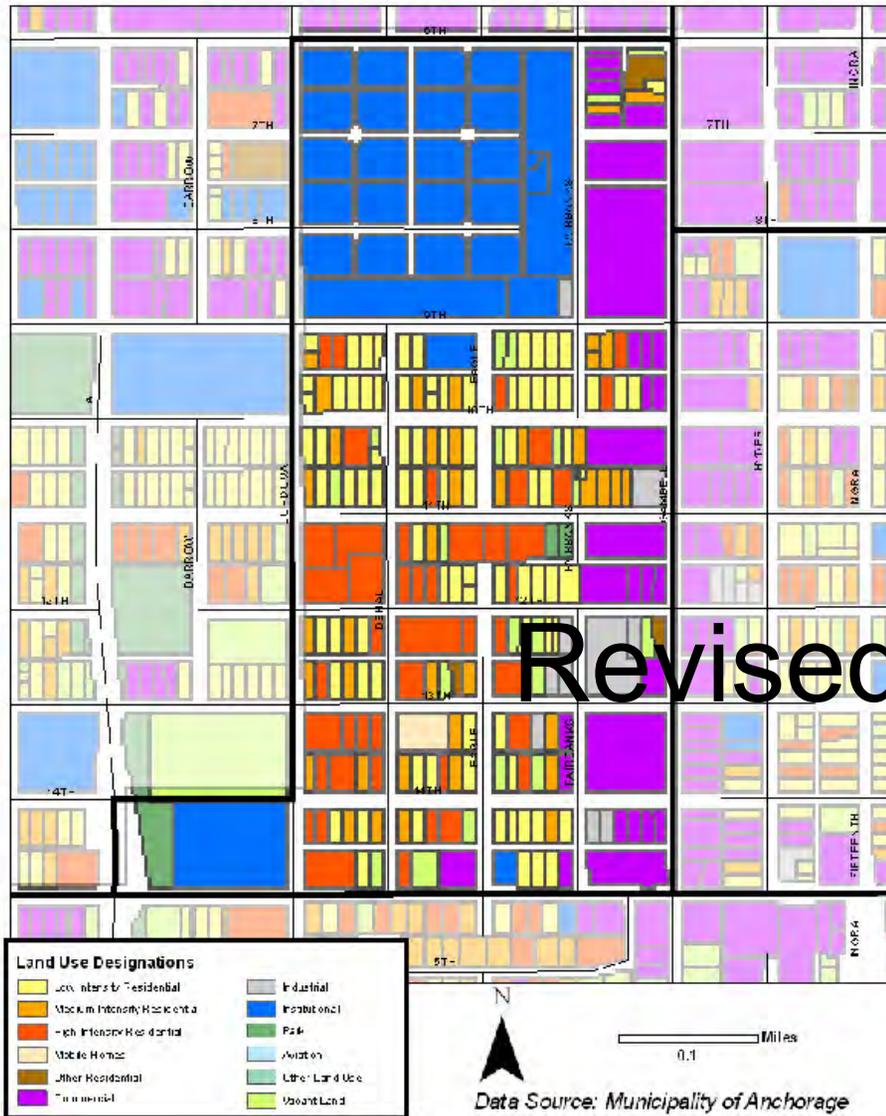


Data Source: Municipality of Anchorage

Revised Final Draft



West Fairview Land Use - 2004



Revised Final Draft

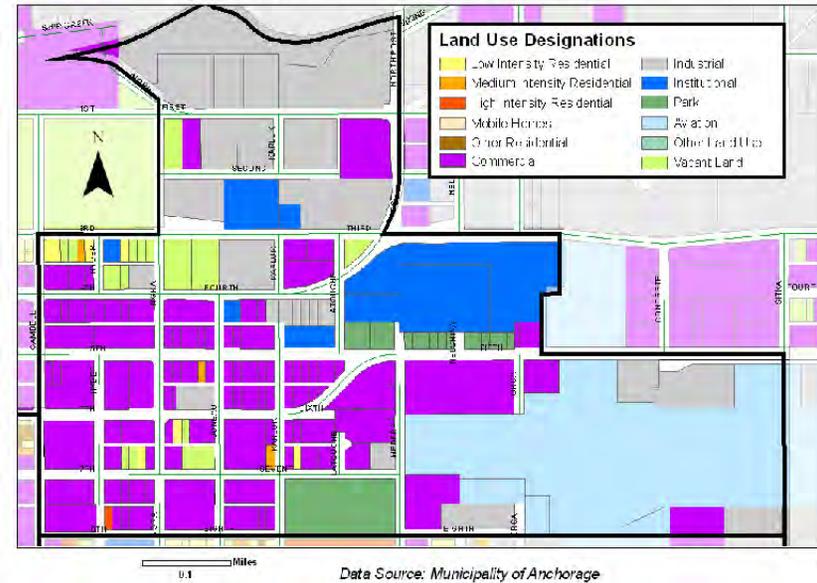
West Fairview

Boundaries: West: C Street
 East: Gambell Street
 North: 9th Avenue
 South: the bluff

Characteristics: This area is characterized by higher quality multi-family and single-family housing. There are also a number of poor quality single-family houses and several multi-family developments that would benefit from improved property management. This area continues to see infill development as shown by the recent conversion of a small mobile home park into site condominiums.



North Fairview Land Use - 2004

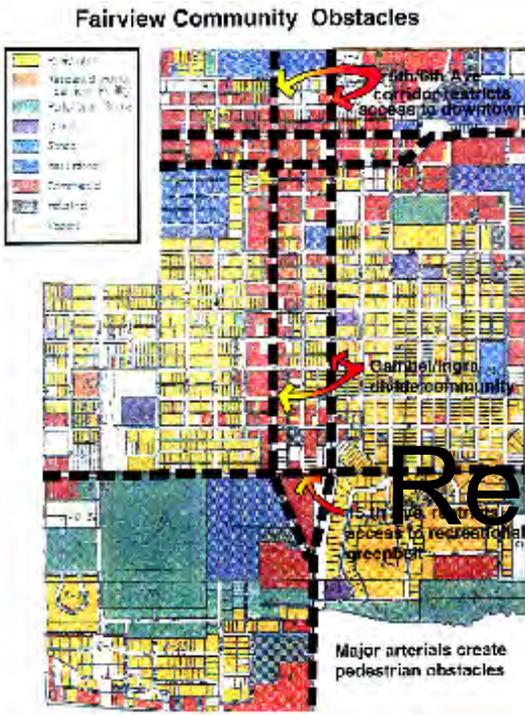


North Fairview Revised Final Draft

Boundaries: West: Gambell Street
 East: Orca Street
 North: Ship Creek
 South: 8th Avenue

Characteristics: This area is located between downtown Anchorage, East Fairview, and industrial development near, or associated with, the Alaska Railroad. The rezoning of this area to B-3 for business development has resulted in many of the older homes falling into disrepair. This area is also the site of institutional facilities such as the Job Center, City Jail, Sleep-Off Center, Bean's Cafe and the Brother Francis Center.





Revised Final Draft



Gambell/Ingra Couplet

Boundaries: West: Gambell Sreet
East: Ingra Street
North: 3rd Avenue
South: Chester Creek

Characteristics: This area is heavily impacted by the large traffic volumes. Both the Anchorage Pedestrian Plan and the Anchorage Bicycle Plan recommend Special Sub-Area Studies for this corridor due to identified safety issues between vehicular traffic, pedestrians and bicylists.

The land use along the couplet is subject to the same Title 21 requirements as midtown even though the physical layout of land is the same as the Central Business District. The off-street parking requirements are especially onerous for small business start-ups. For example, a typical 7,000 square foot lot cannot support development of a restaurant due to the trade-off between parking spaces and revenue generating building footage.

The residential properties along Ingra Street experience significant amounts of roadway related noise, vibration, and other air pollution.



1962 Aerial photo of the Fairview Community Council area prior to conversion of Ingra Street from a residential street to a major arterial.

Revised Final Draft





Celeste Benson speaks at the dedication ceremony for 15th Avenue as State and Municipal officials listen.

Revitalization Opportunities

Each quadrant of Fairview's will require a different path to revitalization. Any effort to use one comprehensive strategy will be inefficient and costly and it will be difficult to achieve a solid working consensus among residents. This situation presents an opportunity, however, to utilize a variety of strategies to address the unique needs of each quadrant, as well as singular strategies to address issues common to each.

Relationship to Neighboring Areas and City Context

- As the Municipality of Anchorage has grown outward to fill most of the Anchorage Bowl, the concept of downtown needs to move outward. The Fairview area shares many of the same characteristics as Downtown and the South Addition: small blocks, alleys and sidewalks. Realtors often advertise properties for sale in Fairview as being in an up-and-coming downtown neighborhood. As Anchorage grows in population and density, the community of Fairview should be thought of as part of the New Downtown and one of the Historic 4 neighborhoods.

RECENT SUCCESSES

Traffic Calming - Implementation of the Fairview Circulation and Safe Streets Study (completed in May of 1995) limited cut-through traffic, reduced street-corner drug dealing and improved pedestrian safety in East Fairview. The Study recommended closure of Nelchina, Latouche, and Juneau at 15th Avenue; narrowing

down of Karluk Street with a "chicane" to slow traffic; diagonal diverters at selected intersections. The recommendations were funded through local bonds. The improvements have made a significant difference in the quality of life for East Fairview residents.

15th Avenue Design - The original proposal by State traffic engineers called for putting in a Tudor Road type of design. This was strongly resisted by the community and residents advocated long and hard for a better design that balanced the needs of the neighborhood with that of moving cross-town traffic.

"Thanks to vigilant neighbors and some farsighted political supporters, a road project that could have slashed another scar across Fairview has been transformed."

"The original plan for upgrading 15th Avenue focused solely on moving more cars along the busy cross-town road. At one point, there was serious talk of installing a high-speed couplet that would have sliced through quiet residential areas"

Anchorage Daily News, March 5, 1997

New Elementary Schools -The new Fairview Elementary School that opened in 1998 is a one-of-a-kind facility in the Anchorage School District: a postmodern style, two-story schoolhouse. From the outside, the building resembles townhouses with rows of gables. Inside, the two-story entrance makes it feel like a cathedral.

The new 60,000 square foot, two story Denali Elementary school opened in Sep-

Revised Final Draft



tember 2003 replacing the original 1950 vintage facility.

Pedestrian/Trail Improvements

The reconstruction of Karluk Street included a bike trail to connect Chester Creek with Ship Creek. Separated multi-use trails on both sides of 15th from Juneau Street to Orca Street greatly enhances the streetscape environment. The construction of a trail link on the south side to, and through, Sitka Park provides a nice addition to the regional trail system.

New pedestrian facilities along Ingra Street south of 15th Avenue have made it safer for people walking to and from mid-town next to the high speed traffic of the New Seward Highway.

New Police Sub-Station - A new location was provided on Fairbanks Street by Carrs/Safeway. Improvements to the building were donated by the community.

Landlord Education - The Public Safety Committee hosts periodic educational workshops for new landlords. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of tenants as new landlords learn basic property management techniques.

Fairview Beautification - The Fairview Flower Patrol, consisting of local residents, maintains the summer landscaping with proceeds from the annual spring plant sale. They also take the lead in organizing Spring Clean-Up within the neighborhood.

Park Improvements - The parks have

received new improvements such as shelters and play equipment making them more attractive to residents.

Public Transit Improvements - People Mover has reconstructed a number of bus stops to include lighting, trash receptacles, benches and leaning rails within the Fairview area. The new bus stop improvements, like the one below on 15th Avenue attract even the most discerning riders.



An example of the attractive landscaping maintained by neighborhood volunteers.



Revised Final Draft

ENDURING CHALLENGES

Traffic Volumes - A significant volume of regional trips occur along the Gambell/Ingra Street Couplet, 15th Avenue and the 5th/6th Avenue Couplet and the numbers are projected to increase significantly. The traffic produces few benefits to the neighborhood and divides the Fairview community. Noise, vibration and dust generated by regional traffic volumes do not stop at the edge of the right-of-way. These negative externalities are absorbed by the adjacent property owners and result in reduced property values and a lower quality



Large volumes of regional traffic along the Gambell/Ingra Couplet create unfriendly streets.



of life for neighborhood residents.

Pedestrian Safety - The safety of pedestrians continues to be a challenge. According to the 2000 Census, 20% of residents depend on non-motorized alternatives to get around town. Mobility can be extremely difficult during the winter months when the sidewalks are used for snow storage and children, elders and the physically disabled must share the icy streets with vehicles.



The pedestrian experience in a City where sidewalk maintenance is a low priority.

Design of Multifamily Dwellings - East Fairview is starting to see, once again, development of multi-family structures with no face to the street. A blank wall presents a cold, aloof and sterile impression to those passing by and generates very little curb appeal. The lack of attention to how a structure relates to the street creates a zone of isolation and weakens the sense of neighborhood. This in turn increases tenant turnover as residents re-locate to more attractive parts of town.



Recently constructed (2005) four-plexes

at 9th Avenue and Medfra Street.

Multi-Family dwellings in an urban, downtown neighborhood where the streets have sidewalks and significant pedestrian traffic should present an open and engaging face to the street. If a goal is the creation of a neighborhood where people are open, friendly and supportive of one another, then the built environment needs to be designed to support this goal.



Recently constructed (2004) four-plex at Latouche Street north of 13th Avenue that replaced a small single-family home.

Attracting Quality Investment - It is difficult to find developers willing to spend a bit more money up front on their project. The typical pattern is that of keeping costs to the minimum and turning the property over as soon as possible to capture a profit and proceed on to the next development opportunity. The Fairview community needs civic minded developers who want to be good neighbors.

Disinvestment within the Highway-to-Highway Corridor - The

Revised Final Draft



placement of this major infrastructure improvement in the Long Range Transportation Plan means that investors will avoid constructing any quality, long term improvements along its future alignment. If the pattern holds true for other similar situations, property owners will not make any substantive improvements because the payback period is so uncertain. The high level of risk associated with a profitable payback means that properties will be kept up at the minimum level needed to maintain a serviceable cash flow. The ripple affect of these market decisions will be a steady and continued decline in the quality of the properties with a corresponding negative impact on the Fairview community.

Sports Complex - This major facility attracts residents from throughout the Municipality with the main spillover being parking congestion during big events. Very little evidence exists that the neighborhood is benefiting from this economic engine.

Merrill Field - Activity during the busy summer season requires more proactive management in order to minimize negative impacts on adjacent residential areas. According to studies on the relationship of aviation noise to property values, when a pattern of consistent and persistent noise from aviation activities exists, there is a documented reduction in the property values of impacted residential properties. This affects both homeowner equity by reducing the value of their most important physical asset but also the owners of

rental properties because they are forced to charge less than market rents to keep tenants. These negative impacts ripple out to the larger community because other property owners have to make up the difference.

These negative impacts are compounded by the increased risk assumed by adjacent properties due to the fact that owners of general aviation aircraft are not required to carry liability insurance. The documented historical record of aircraft crashes in the surrounding neighborhoods indicates that adjacent property owners are assuming a higher than normal risk premium.

Inebriates/Indigents/Panhandlers

- Brother Francis Shelter and Beans Café are located on the north end of Fairview. During the day, there is a fairly steady stream of people coming from and going to these facilities. A small percentage of the users of these agencies (as well as others who may or may not be homeless) loiter in various locations in the community. The most public of these areas is the 13th and Gambell intersection, where people congregate to drink and to panhandle. This corner is attractive because of its proximity to Fairview's two package liquor stores, the Carrs/Safeway grocery store, the Computer Connection drop-in center, and a large volume of passers-by, both in vehicles and on foot. Other intersections that typically feature panhandlers are 15th and Gambell and 15th and Ingra. While panhandlers prefer busy places, street inebriates often gather in more isolated areas. Some of the more common of

Revised Final Draft

"When Patty Browne looked out her office window Tuesday morning, she was appalled. Children on their way to school in the dark were squeezing alongside four lanes of fast-moving traffic on C Street by 16th Avenue. 'They were shrieking, terrified,' she said. 'Huge trucks full of snow were coming within inches of them. I'm sure the drivers didn't see them.'"
Anchorage Daily News, February 14, 1996





Typical winter conditions for Fairview pedestrians. Where is the sidewalk on Karluk Street south of 15th Avenue?



Heated sidewalks at the BP Energy Center create a different pedestrian experience.

such places in Fairview include the alleyway and loading docks around V.F. Grace, Fairbanks Park, and green space south of Brother Francis Shelter and west of Central Lutheran Church.

Civic Responsibility and Participation - The revitalization of the Fairview community is driven by residents, property owners and businesses taking responsibility, both individually and collectively, to change things for the better. The challenges that Fairview faces are large and require the participation of many. Engaging the citizenry to take responsibility for solving neighborhood issues is an important function of the Community Council system and requires ongoing commitment.

Fairview Community/Recreation Center - The facility is showing its age from extensive use. It has become evident that the complex needs more than just band-aids. The Center serves an extremely important civic/recreation/public safety purpose and deserves more Municipal support. A comprehensive evaluation of operations, maintenance and community needs is a priority.

Revised Final Draft

Fairview Faces



Revised Final Draft

