

Report of the South Addition Draft Neighborhood Plan Comments Committee

First, we would like to thank the many neighbors who took the time to read the Draft Plan and submit their thoughtful comments. We understand the effort and challenge it takes to appreciate the details contained in the Draft Plan, and to form opinions based on different but shared experiences. As one of our neighbors wrote, “rigorous neighborhood participation is critical to the ultimate success of the Plan.”

This report is an effort to summarize and distill information from the comments and present it in a cogent and manageable way. It is not intended to be a definitive analysis. We encourage everyone to read all the comments for themselves.

Overall, many of our neighbors have read the South Addition Draft Neighborhood Plan and have made focused comments. There have been forty-one comments submitted from thirty-six households. Several households commented more than once.

The consensus is residents feel the process to produce the plan was lacking in ways including transparency, lack of public meetings, and the difference in the Draft Plan as compared to the work of the pre-draft committees. Over half of our neighbors specifically mentioned preservation of the unique and historic character of South Addition, and an adherence to design standards in keeping with this character. Residents are against rezoning areas in South Addition to encourage commercial development, specifically mentioning support of the Downtown Business District and the Fairview Plan that include commercial areas. Residents wish the content of committee work, and passed resolutions to be included in the full plan.

There were several comments on technical issues, such as the size of the print on maps making them difficult to read and understand, to the exclusion of Kedaya Park, to mislabeling of avenues, to the shaded zoning areas, to the plan being difficult to download (that issue was resolved).

One writer who is not a SA resident, but a frequent visitor via the trail system, pointed to a table on page 35, “Population Growth Forecasts in the Municipality of Anchorage for 2015-2040,” as being unrealistic, out-of-date, and not accurate in its forecasts. The data referenced should be examined, researched, and updated to reflect the most current data.

There was a call to hire a professional, unbiased facilitator to help the Neighborhood Plan process go forward. One writer asked for the SACC Executive Committee to resign.

PROCESS: Twenty-two residents felt there were problems with the process, from feeling rushed, to a lack of transparency, to credibility problems, to not enough meetings to explain the draft plan or take questions and input from residents.

PRESERVATION OF SOUTH ADDITION’S UNIQUE CHARACTER: Twenty-one people commented on the historic and unique character of South Addition, from long-time residents’ overview of the area, homes listed on the National Register of Historic Houses (Pilots Row), the small-scale one and two-story homes, feelings of small-town friendliness, front yards with landscaping, walkability etc., - and wished to preserve that character. One resident recounted her work as a teacher of the blind and visually impaired and how the level sidewalks and lack of driveway cuts, among other details of South Addition, made it easier for her students to learn to navigate the city.

CONTENT: Fourteen neighbors were disturbed by the omission of previous work done by committees that produced conclusive reports and numerous resolutions, that are published on the SACC website, and information gathered from previous meetings held on the plan in 2016 and 2017.

REZONING AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT: At least sixteen respondents are opposed to rezoning areas to R4, and specifically against encouraging small-scale commercial development in areas between 10th and 15th Avenues between I and L Streets, and between A and C Streets. Residents mention appropriate mixed use development already present in South Addition such as in the Fire Island Bakery area. Some residents feel South Addition already has what it needs, but specifically do not want to see liquor stores or a “pot shop” in the neighborhood. There were several residents of Park Place condos who responded specifically against the rezoning of the area north of the condos, and the lack of detail on the proposed “Neighborhood Centers.” One writer suggested that the Park Strip could be used for “mixed business and residential” development, although it was unclear if the writer meant the Park Strip itself or the streets bordering it.

DESIGN STANDARDS: Twenty writers were concerned about design standards, and felt it important to include restrictions on home height and bulk in keeping with the neighborhood’s character. To encourage “eyes on the street” windows with garages on alleys. To emphasize front yards, landscaping and level sidewalks. To notify neighbors when a builder requests an exemption from the zoning laws. One resident objected to any kind of design standards and wondered who would make those decisions. There is some support for **ADU’s** and/or MIL apartments as long as they are sensitively designed to fit in with the surrounding homes, and preserve solar access and privacy.

SOLAR ACCESS: Twelve neighbors talked specifically about preserving access to sunlight, especially with many homes having recently installed solar panels on their roofs, and the proliferation of bulkier and taller homes being built over a larger footprint on neighboring lots.

OVERLAYS: Seven people were worried about the length of the overlay process, and that if overlays were to be utilized, they needed to happen quickly. One writer objected to overlays outright because of the time issue.

SNOW REMOVAL: Two residents said that snow storage on lots has become a problem due to infill and larger homes leaving no room on their lots for storage. Three residents said snow removal on streets was a problem due to increased on-street parking, and providing on-site parking should be a requirement. The writer mentioned above cited the walkability of shoveled sidewalks and how it helped her work with teaching the blind to navigate the city streets. One resident said requiring sidewalk snow shoveling was unenforceable and should not be specifically covered in the plan.

TRAFFIC CALMING: Two residents would like to see more traffic calming, especially in the Fire Island area (citing her child had been hit by a car in the area), and along the major roads, I, L, A and C, dissecting the neighborhood. One resident cited a 2015 resolution on traffic calming.

STOLT LANE PAVING: Three people were adamantly opposed to paving Stolt Lane and the installation of parking meters.

AIR BNBS: Two neighbors complained about the concentration of AirBnBs in the Bootlegger Cove area resulting in more noise and traffic.

UNDERGROUNDING UTILITIES: Three people cited undergrounding of utilities has long been promised for South Addition.

MISCELLANEOUS: One neighbor suggested the addition of a covered pavilion near Westchester Lagoon similar to the one at Valley of the Moon Park. A neighbor suggested shuttle service between the Park Strip and Westchester Lagoon during events to help with parking overflow.

CONCLUSION: It is evident from the comments received that the process to form the South Addition Draft Neighborhood Plan has taken many hours, over several years. We give big thanks to our neighbors for their personal involvement. It is evident that our neighbors feel strongly about the growing pains we face, and the direction the way forward from this point will take. It is evident that the way forward will demand a rigorous, inclusive, and transparent process.

Thank you again to all our neighbors; we sincerely hope you will continue to be involved in the process, and development, of the South Addition Neighborhood Plan.

Respectfully,

Fran Durner

Dr. Daniel Volland

Kathie Veltre