

## **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION GROUP HISTORIC DISTRICT UPDATE – 2/20/2013**

### **Project Background:**

The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office is now accepting grant applications for preservation projects such as creating a historic district. This Historic Preservation Fund Grant will go to the Sitka Historic Preservation Commission for approval and the City of Sitka Assembly for approval for matching funds. Grant deadline is March 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Downtown Revitalization Group would like to apply for this grant to fund the hiring of a consultant to conduct a historic survey of properties on Lincoln Street from St. Michael's Cathedral to the Petro Marine Dock for a historic district with the option to extend the district boundary down Lincoln Street. Using the survey information, as well as archival research, the consultant will write a nomination to the National Park Service to get the district on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Link to grant <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/grant/akclg.htm>.

### **Historic District Brief:**

The group is going for National Register status (less restrictive) rather than Local District Ordinance.

In gaining this status, no property owner is required to do or change anything about their property. No building codes are being enacted. However, when an owner proposes renovations, the Sitka Historic Preservation Commission may make recommendations to help maintain the historic character of the property, in effect the district -- albeit private property and there is no written obligation to follow any suggestion unless funding sources dictate as such. There are general national standards and guidelines written by the National Park Service to aid in recommendations. If the historic character of the district is not kept, status is lost.

Historic districts have proven to be a keen marketing tool for the visitor industry, stabilize or raise property values, offer federal tax incentives, open opportunity for grants and other funding, as well as a profound positive social and environmental impact within a community. Mitigation measures with Federal and State funded projects may also result in benefit.

### **Action Accomplished To Date:**

Stephanie Brenner has collected signatures from a majority of the property owners in the area of initial consideration (St. Michael's Cathedral to Petro Dock) in favor of a historic district.

Anne, Stephanie, and Bob Medinger met with the Commission February 13<sup>th</sup>. Unanimously, Commission members agreed the project fit with their mission and are supportive (noted in meeting minutes). We are to work out budgetary and staffing details of the grant with City Officials and Commission Chair, Jay Kinsman, has a copy of the grant for further comment and edits. We will then present a finalized version at their next meeting for an official motion of support. Assembly member Michele Putz was in attendance and said she too appreciates the project but warned it is going to be a "hard sell" to the assembly because of the match funding request.

Today, Anne spoke to CBS Administrator, Mr. Dinley for verbal approval to work with Mr. Sweeney, CBS Finance Director, on a budget for the proposed project. He agreed to allow Anne Pollnow to offer professional in-kind services to manage the grant on behalf of the City in an effort to lessen the amount requested of the City. He mentioned the downtown merchants are "in need of help" and to "go for it".

### **Future Action:**

1. Anne will work with Mr. Sweeney to finalize a budget.
2. Secure letters of support – Alaska Association for Historic Preservation (Anne) , Sitka Historical Society (Bob), brainstorm other entities
3. Edit/finalize grant application
4. Prepare materials (due March 5<sup>th</sup>) for Assembly (March 12) and Commission (March 13) meetings.

Respectfully submitted by Anne Pollnow