

Revitalize Sitka: Creating a Vibrant Downtown

Draft Five Plan – Public Emphasis (23 May 2013)

Doug Osborne, Angela McGraw – facilitators.

“Research shows that a healthy and vibrant downtown boosts the economic health and the quality of life in a community”



(Sitka Health Summit Planning Day participants – Oct 2012)

At the 2012 Sitka Health Summit Planning day a diverse group of 55 local residents brainstormed, evaluated and eventually selected three wellness goals to focus on for the upcoming year. Revitalizing Sitka's downtown was selected as a top goal.

Since then a volunteer group has gathered to craft a downtown revitalization plan that would fit and work for Sitka. Revitalization project usually involve public and private components. Sitka's project is no different and already the private sector has made contributions of time and resources (count the light contest, evergreens downtown, a community mural project, Spring Spruce up, plan creation, shop locally education etc)

What follows is the prioritized list of ideas that the Revitalize Sitka: Creating a Vibrant Downtown volunteer group has endorsed and we would like the City to consider and ideally support.

#1) Attractive new litter and recycling containers for downtown, especially on Lincoln Street

Details: Purchase and strategically place 12 trash receptacles and 4 recycling containers that will hold up to the weather, be attractive and be located out of the way of foot traffic. The downtown revitalization group has locations in mind and has talked with Stagier Sanitation.

Reason: The current containers are unattractive and are seen as being few and far between.

Benefits: Improve aesthetic beauty, Increase the number of receptacles, Promote recycling

Considerations: The smaller and more frequently placed cans will require labor and being emptied by hand. Nearby businesses could commit to emptying the smaller cans by hand and put the bag into bigger dumpsters, like one's behind Lincoln Street. The city would just provide liners and the decorative cans, the public works is looking at models and will make a recommendation. At present the city pays over \$18.00 per pick up for the blue cans on Lincoln. With this strategy the city would just pay for liners and current weekly pick up fee would be gone.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Approve locations, plus \$4,200 for one time buy (estimated \$350 per receptacle) + liners on an on-going basis.



MAY 3RD UPDATE BY ANNE POLLNOW

Stagier Sanitation (SS) is very supportive of the Downtown Revitalization Group's efforts!

- The Blue cans are the property of the City – when these receptacles first came in they had a hole with black plastic lining that the birds tore up and proceeded to get in the garbage. SS took the initiative to screw on a small round black plastic lid with a handle to cover the hole but allow people to open it. In their experience, people will not/do not like to lift up an entire lid which is why they went with the smaller round second opening cut into the main lid.
- They would like new cans too!! – They agree those cans are older and unattractive. Criteria for new cans are:

- Bird proof not bear – There has been no incident of a bear in the trash downtown.

PROPOSAL FOR THIS GOAL

If approved the downtown revitalization group will draw up a simple contract and work at finding local businesses to sponsor the maintenance portion. A small plaque could be added with wording like, "This is can is emptied by Keep Sitka Beautiful supporter (business name)" An alternate proposal is to have a downtown maintenance worker (proposal #5 in this document) to take the lead on emptying the bins.

The recycling component is to have one recycling station next to the Sitka Lutheran Church at 224 Lincoln. This will help with education and provide recycling for paper, plastic, aluminum and glass. Deliveries to the recycling center could be done by recycling staff, a seasonal worker with a downtown focus or by a local green business who could add the Lincoln Street pick-up to their regular run. A decorative recycling sign could be added and would highlight the town's commitment to being responsible stewards.

Prototypes for cans:



REGARDING -

Support Painting and Strategically locating big trash bins (No longer on our list but somewhat coinciding with the goal above)

- We are welcome to paint over "City of Saint Mary's"!! – This was an error by the supplier. These were supposed to go to Saint Mary's Georgia but since they got all the way up here, instead of incurring the cost of sending them back, they gave SS a discount to keep them.

#2) Hire Pete Hagan to clean the green slime and power wash city sidewalks and property

Pete Hagan has cleaned nearly all of the buildings over time, and painted many of them. The City would clean their footprint and the downtown revitalization group will encourage local businesses to do their buildings as well.

This idea includes: A pre-wash with a power washer, with Bleach. Hot-water spray is key.

- The entire sidewalk would be cleaned
- Property owners would be notified so they could they could coordinate and put a towel under their door.
- Warm/Hot water pressure washing, with possible "green" chemicals.
- With the equipment and a trained three person crew the cost is \$200 per hour.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Approve up to \$11.950 for cities portion. Decide on green chemicals. See attachment for more details.



#3 Six Artistic Salmon-Shaped Bicycle Racks for downtown core

Details: Precision Boatworks (747-3660) can custom make bicycle racks that double as public art. Instead of a circle with a bike (picture #1), imagine a salmon instead.

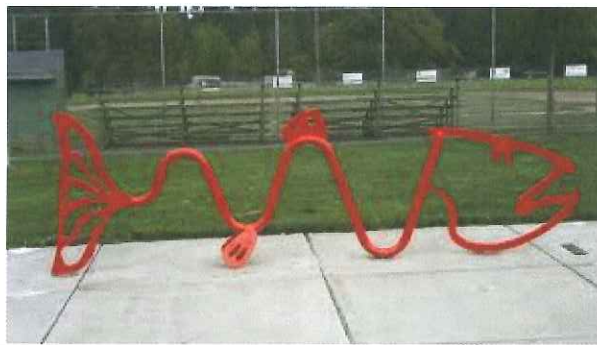
Reason: We don't have much public art downtown and we don't have many places to securely chain up bicycles.

Cost: \$3,800 (based on Mike Litman's estimate on 5/1/13)

Benefits: Promotes bicycling, salmon and art.

Considerations: Sitkans bike to work at 10 times the National average. Offering secure bike parking in public is something municipalities do, especially in bicycle friendly communities. The downtown revitalization group will help with placement options; seven potential spots that are out of the flow of traffic have been identified.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Pay Precision Boat works \$3,800 plus approve 6 placements spots.



#4 Try Closing part of Lincoln Street on four busy Wednesdays this summer

Details: Lincoln Street from the church to the book store would be closed

Reason: Happy visitors spend more, stay longer and come back more often. The group thinks that closing Lincoln and having music, safe places to take pictures of the church and more elbow room will make for a better experience.

Benefits: Improved flow, enhanced experience for visitors, better economic activity.

Considerations: Traffic would need to be rerouted. Lincoln Street is closed at different times throughout the year, the Running of the Boots, parades, sidewalk sales, etc. Police and Fire would need to be included. **Cyndy Gibson (738-0655) is the project lead for this proposal.**

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Give approval/permission, the dates are June 12, 19, 26 and July 10

Special Note: The pedestrian walkway will be from roughly 8am – 4pm, only 16 parking spots would be unavailable. Come back to Sitka cards will be distributed in the walkway.



**All members
of the public
are welcome
to attend**

**Kick-Off Gathering
Tuesday, October 30
5:30pm to 6:30 pm
Centennial Hall**

Research shows that a healthy and vibrant downtown boosts the economic health and the quality of life in a community. A new action group is being formed to study successful revitalization projects and then to craft a project that will bring similar benefits to Sitka.

For more information
call Angela McGraw at 747-1737 or angelam@sitkahospital.org

Revitalizing Sitka's
downtown was selected as
a top goal at the 2012 Sitka
Health Summit Planning Day

Working Together
for a Healthier Sitka

#5 Hire temporary city grounds person with focus on downtown maintenance

Details: Hire a temporary worker under the umbrella of the City Parks and Rec. Dept.

Reason: Having a paid person will be essential to keeping the Sea Walk and Centennial Hall maintained. That person's duties could be expanded to include the downtown core. Job duties will primarily include taking care of greenery and new and existing flower beds plus keeping streets and restrooms clean, litter pick up, recycling pick up, way finding signs and other tourism related duties as assigned by Parks and Rec. Director. City's like Juneau and Anchorage have made similar moves for their downtown.

Benefits: Improve aesthetic beauty, supports tourism related maintenance needs.

Considerations: The Parks Department only has 2 permanent and two to four summer seasonal staff to cover over 50 public grounds, landscape areas, parks, trails, playgrounds, ballfields, and other recreational areas. An extra set of hands with a focus on cruise ship visitors and downtown will help greatly to make many aspects of this plan happen. This position would have gardening skills. The Tree and Landscape committee spoke in favor of this approach.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Approve head tax money (approximately \$28,000) to hire a seasonal employee (March 15-Oct. 15) who can support maintenance of the Sea Walk, Harrigan Centennial Hall and the downtown core.



#6 Pretty evergreens/ greenery in decorative pots

Details: Garden Ventures, Penny Brown, could provide technical assistance with purchasing and strategically placing 25 pots in the downtown core.

Reason: Having more greenery was selected as a top goal. Several people in and out of the workgroup have commented that we have an unpleasant lack of greenery downtown.

Benefits: Improve aesthetic beauty, cleans air, make walking more pleasant which promotes foot traffic.

Considerations: Having an additional temporary grounds worker will help with maintenance. Having plants in pots, like what Penny Brown did this winter, gives flexibility in placement and moving them if need be.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: approve placement, approve \$5000 to a local place like Garden Ventures or True Value, for plants and shrubs. The seasonal downtown maintenance person would work with local businesses and volunteer groups to keep the greenery looking good and would work in conjunction with the Revitalizer's and the Tree and Landscape on selection and placement.



#7 Plant a new bed at Harbor Drive and landscape narrow strip near city hall

Details: Put in a new bed in the unused area between the chain link fence and sidewalk. The area is on Harbor drive after Bev's Flower Shop and before the bridge. Landscape the thin strip between the parking lot and road in the back of City Hall. (see picture below)

Reason: This is a high visibility area and it could benefit from some greenery.

Benefits: Clean air, area beautification.

Considerations: This new planting could be maintained by the downtown temporary maintenance worker. The tree and Landscape Committee could be part of the planning and execution. Perhaps city hall could "adopt" the plants next to their parking lot. Beverly Frost-Wright from Bev's Flower's agreed to help maintain the area behind the Ben Franklin parking lot, the property owners, Steve and Linda Andersons, have been contacted (see attached).

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Approve up to \$1,800 for one time buy (soil, plants, borders, etc) and delegate planning to tree and landscape committee.





#8a Make Lincoln Street one way from the St. Michaels Church to the light at Lake and Lincoln

Details: Lincoln Street would be made into a one way street

Reason: This creates space and gives options that will make walking downtown a better experience.

Benefits: Improve traffic flow, enhance safety, provides more room for walking

Considerations: This proposal has been included in previous visitor industry plans. This would require design work and may not happen as quickly as other actions. Diagonal parking has been discussed. Also, if the street became a one way it would create space on either side. Potted Evergreens could be put on either side to help beautify and to create a green barrier for walkers, which is a common practice in walk friendly downtowns.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Approve and assign design and implementation to public works



#8b, Employ Local artist to Paint two unique murals at the start of Lincoln Street – the grey “jersey barrier” and retaining wall at city hall (SEE PICTURES BELOW)

Details: Local artist will be hired to design two long unique and attractive murals that celebrate local life. One will be across from the Cable House on the concrete retaining wall that is connected to the City Parking Lot. The other will be on the concrete “jersey barrier” the starts at the end of Totem Square and goes toward the gas station.

Reason: This is a high visibility area

Benefits: Area beautification, supports local artists, strengths the communities commitment to the arts

Considerations: Many local artists have expressed interest. Designs will be review and approved via a transparent public process. This may not be an appropriate City expenditure so at the least the City could give approval for the revitalizers to do the painting. Stencils of fish are the top idea for of these areas.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Give approval/permission to downtown revitalization group and support all wall preparation with item #2 downtown deep clean



#8 c) Employ a Local Artist to Paint a Bird on the Bird Box

Details: The box could be painted, with eagles and ravens painted on the top portion.

Reason: It would turn an eye sore into something people would take a picture of.

Benefits: Improved aesthetics

Considerations: This could be rolled into a project that has the retaining wall and jersey barrier. Local artist DJ Robidou has a design in mind and could turn the box into a useful piece of public art

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Give permission/approval + \$125.



Hire Local Artist to Paint Five Transformer Boxes in downtown area.

Details: Local artist will be hired to design murals that celebrate local life.

Reason: This has worked in other communities turning something that is not noteworthy into piece of art.

Benefits: Area beautification, supports local artists, shows commitment to the arts

Considerations: Many local artists have expressed interest. Designs will be reviewed and approved via a transparent public process. Sitka Bike and Hike has added an "art walk tour" so having the box on that route would be a natural.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Give approval to do one pilot box. Roger Schmidt at the Sitka Fine Arts Camp has been contacted and will check with faculty for doing the art work.



Promote Clean Air Downtown with Idle Fee Signs and policy

Details: The City Assembly could pass an idle free policy and put up sign in the downtown core.

Reason: It's common to see parked vehicles unnecessarily polluting the air downtown (see picture below). This is unpleasant and harmful to pedestrians.

Benefits: cleaner air, increase public awareness.

Considerations: Children, the elderly, and individuals with asthma are especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of idling. The Climate Action Plan estimates that local taxpayers spend \$7,000 a year in fuel and maintenance cost for parked city vehicles that are idling.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Purchase and mount six signs, adopt an idle-free ordinance (see Burlington, Vermont) Inform staff and post reminders in all city vehicles.



Support Housing Downtown

Details: The CBS can support efficient, high density housing downtown through policy.

Reason: It's more efficient to build up then to sprawl out. Many people live downtown and Sitka has the potential to add more. Adding a second or third story for an apartment would go along ways towards helping to revitalize downtown. This can be done in places that won't affect the view or require more tax payer subsidized parking.

Benefits: Increased vibrancy helps with affordable housing

Considerations: Many people in Sitka cannot afford and do not own cars. Many people live downtown and walk, bike, take the community ride, or taxi. Planners often factor in a level of car dependence that is unnecessary and counterproductive. Putting in housing that is geared towards 20 something's and the growing number of considerate car-less people is the idea.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Provide verbal endorsement and prepare for policy changes as needed.



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Eight New Colorful Banners in 2014

Details: The banners that have been used in past years are old and worn out

Reason: This adds a splash of color and shows Sitka's uniqueness and commitment to the arts.

Benefits: Aesthetic improvement

Considerations: Jill Scheidt at Abby's Quilts is the lead on this project, she has volunteered to store and maintain the banners on an on-going basis. The local artists have made designs for and initial run of 8 banners, scheduled to go up on Flag Day June 14th. The group would like to keep them up, weather permitting, through the big ATI conference the second week in October.

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Encourage cooperation with the 2013 banner instillation, Jill and the artists have a particular plan that will need some hardware help and city staff support. Plus approve purchase of 8 additional banners for 2014 approximately \$4,228.



Other Ideas, Your Ideas....That fit into our Vision for downtown: Hire Pete Hagan to clean the
slime

Attractive

Vibrant

Sustainable

Healthy

Accessible

Please add your ideas and together we can help our downtown go from good to GREAT!

