

Mountain View Neighborhood Plan

Resident Focus Group

Location: ACLT Office

Date: October 15, 2008 6-8pm

NOTES

Attending:

- **Katch Bacheller:** Director of the Alaska Museum of Natural History; does projects with schools in Mountain View
- **Ceccilye Williams:** Clark Middle School Principal; believes in doing right by kids, families and community; attends the Baptist Church next to the Boys and Girls Club; there is a passion among local churches to do what they can to support the community; “Clark is a “safe haven” – it should be a magnet that helps, supports, and feeds back out to the community.”
- **Michael Evans:** resident, Chairperson for Weed ‘n Seed Grant (“It was a long hard road to get that done.”); has volunteered a lot of time with the Boys & Girls Club, Clark Middle School Design Committee, and the Alaska Housing Advisory Board
- **Marge Chord:** MOA Department of Neighborhoods, Mountain View resident (20 yrs off and on)
- **Scott Beninati:** owns four-plex; Alaska smoke-jumper and Chugiak Fire Department; wants to get more involved in community
- **Don Crandall:** Mountain View Community Council President, 4 years as a Mountain View resident; is on the Highway to Highway (H2H) Committee, the Mountain View Drive Task Force, the Glenn-Bragaw Overpass Task Force; “I look forward to seeing the neighborhood prosper and remain the interesting place that it is.”
- **Nikki Burrows:** Treasurer of the Mountain View Community Council, one-time manager of the community center; resident for 37 years; has been involved in most of the Mountain View plans in the last 20 years; is always looking for Mountain View to become a better place to live; would love to see a lot of the four-plexes go away and Mountain View become a more cohesive neighborhood; would love to see ethnic groups become more cohesive; is trying to get people involved and making it easier for others to get involved
- **Kathleen Hollett:** resident since 1991; works at the Air Force Base in domestic violence treatment; this is her first meeting; is interested in follow-through (“Don’t see a lot of follow-through: projects get started, the funding goes away, the process changes, and they’re still halfway done.”)
- **Sunny Mall:** math teacher; taught at Bartlett almost 10 years and one year at East; has lived in the neighborhood almost 16 years, is concerned that her neighbors might get priced out of the neighborhood. Believes we need to take responsibility as a community for low-income housing and generational poverty. Concerned about the school redesign plan being done partly in two separate MOA administrations (“Bartlett doesn’t fit well because it’s not integrated.”)
- **Jewel Jones:** Anchorage Community Land Trust
- **Chris Beck, Heather Stewart:** Agnew::Beck Consulting

Discussion – Progress over past 10 years

A draft list of completed projects was presented for review; comments are below.

- The Glenn Square Mall has also created some jobs
- Other housing improvements have been made by World Changers and other church groups; some people couldn't take advantage of these efforts because they couldn't read well enough to fill out the paperwork. They did work on houses such as new or repaired roofing, painting, fences, etc.
- Chanlyut is a Cook Inlet residential facility based on the Delancey Street Program; the residents run the Mountain View Diner.
- The Boys & Girls Club was rebuilt from the original building.
- An addition to the McPhee Gardens is the new refugee gardens; communal gardens run by Hmong refugees who sell the produce at farmers markets (check with MOA Parks & Recreation Department for more information)
- RurALCAP has some housing units in Mountain View: Housing First (100 Lane St) just completed, part of Homeward Bound
- The Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) has also developed some low-income housing (might not be new); some for people transitioning into Section 8; they have a social worker
- Bragaw-Glenn Interchange was a good process; they let residents help write the RFP and took more time talking and listening with residents; they also got artists involved in the design
- There has been neighborhood patrol for a long time
- The Weed 'n Seed program increased police presence (by paying for some of the police activity).
- Fraternities & sororities from the University send volunteers to tutor at the Boys & Girls Club
- Try not to duplicate what's already here
- With so many different nationalities, language becomes a barrier: **try to get materials printed in different languages** (this hasn't happened in the past).
- Major concerns include high land values, making housing unaffordable. Residents would also like to **change the image of the neighborhood**; stop using Mountain View as a "dangerous area" on TV and in police reports, etc.
- Add MTS gallery to the list of progress.

Goals & Strategies for Discussion

A PowerPoint slideshow was presented outlining draft goals and strategies, based on interviews and previous plans in the area; feedback is below.

Marketing and Mountain View Image

- The military used to send families to Mountain View. These days, the Air Force Base is still blacklisting Mountain View (any "view" neighborhood), though they deny it.
- "I have always felt safe in this neighborhood; I've never been a victim of crime. We don't need to drive out low-income housing to make place safer. People are already getting pushed east. If it gets gentrified to the point where all the interesting people leave, it won't be the place we want to be any more."
- Need to project a **sense of care** with beautification; make better first impressions on others. Things that attract people from outside the community – engages them to want to come over; address the needs of families and students who live here, but also fulfill needs from Anchorage as a city. We need **beautification**, a clean, crisp look to give others a good impression and get people through the door.
 - "My mother said that I can't go to school in Mountain View."
 - "We try to expose students and families here to what's 'over there' as well."

- “There is an Anchorage culture as well as Mountain View culture.”
- “It’s like that analogy of a salad, rather than melting pot – but let’s make it a nice crisp salad.”
- There’s also the issue of equity of Municipal attention.
- I’m not in favor of booting people out, but rather showing that this place is cared for.
- What we mean by beautification is the difference between the Rogers Park sign and benches that are Christmas color
- It’s also a matter of ‘vested interest’ – no one has touched (with graffiti) the electric boxes painted by local residents because there is a vested interest.
- “Glenn Square brings a lot of business, but did they have to clear-cut the entire forest? Other areas are getting all that grass, but do we want grass? It has to be watered, maintained...”
- Some landlords don’t care about the rentals as long as they’re rented (absentee landlords).
- **Landscaping** – grass seed trucks on; “Grass is good – where there’s a lawn mower”
- “I like that the intersection landscaping is sustainable, climate-appropriate, and hides trash in a way that lawns don’t.”
- There is a need to figure out a way to **pick up trash, and more often**, in this place. “I personally picked up 30 bags of trash, and I didn’t make it past my block.”
- “We pick up and haul out 100 tons of trash a year, and in a week you wouldn’t even know we’d been there.”
- Mountain View needs **more trash cans**.
- The **MOA Parks & Recreation Department** is not here picking up trash.
- If you put trash cans out, **make sure they are attractive trash cans**.
- The Davis Park trashcans all blew over during a windstorm and trash is everywhere; we don’t want more of that.
- **Real estate familiarization tours**: perception has a lot to do with real estate agents; as the neighborhood gets cleaned up you put them on a bus and take them around on a tour
- “Fairview happened, why not Mountain View?”

Summary: Goals and strategies in PowerPoint are going in the right direction, but make sure emphasis is placed on improving the reality and the perception of Mountain View

Human Capital

- There are already a good lot of programs today.
- I’m not happy with the revitalization and preventative measures taken so far because we haven’t exposed Mountain View people to the types of programs/programs in the community
 - Mountain View is a poor community, but I’d like to see a gifted kids program/school and send some Mountain View kids to it.
 - The idea of a multi-disciplinary arts center is not as an isolated closed center for artsy people from other places to do their thing; this is supposed to be a community effort – ideally a place that’s open and engaged with people who live in this neighborhood. It’s supposed to be coordinated with the schools and have artists who mentor students.
- Training and mentorships are already fairly well covered; just need Clark (the school)
- Possibly focus on safe haven programs (e.g. museum)
- Could we start a program for disaster safety? (Would Scott take that on?)
 - It would get youth thinking about others, foster a sense of responsibility in them, get some of them thinking about becoming fire-fighters, EMTs, police officers.
 - The Explorers program already exists – maybe there could be more recruiting here in Mountain View?
- Marge’s daughter is trying to create a website in Seattle to connect youth and elderly in mentoring relationships.

- We should make some discretionary funds available to get students earning money doing good things rather than illegal things.

Summary: Goals and strategies in PowerPoint are going in the right direction, but make sure to build from and incorporate existing programs

Residential

- Keep it affordable; provide for affordable housing – rentals & mixed housing
- Keep “Agnes” next door neighbor
- Better data; base strategies on good data
- Safe doesn’t have to mean upper income
- Scott – in the 4-plex business
- World Changers – church groups, southern churches, housing – B??
- Please add the idea of affordability to the residential goal.
- Great goals, but sometimes we say things without having the data – many neighbors are against adding more rental units, but I know many responsible landlords. We need to make a point to keep low-income options in the housing strategy – keep focused on that. I would like to see more of what Cook Inlet Housing did with their mixed income housing (larger, more expensive units for those who could afford them, but all of the units required applications)
 - People here could be taxed out of their homes, not just priced out of them.
 - If there are poor landowners or areas to be targeted for redevelopment, let’s locate them rather than making vague, generally applicable statements.
- A duplex is probably the most attractive low-income housing that you’d find, but is probably not likely to happen in this area. Single family housing is most attractive, but not very affordable.

Summary: Goals and strategies in PowerPoint are going in the right direction; attracting diverse income levels is OK, but make sure to emphasize the need to retain affordable housing for low income residents

Commercial (*discussion broadened to include urban design and transportation concerns*)

- Everything is really close together; Mountain View is a cultural center where people can walk to places easily; we need to build on that:
 - The Museum of Natural History wants to expand and get a big building, but there’s no place for parking. Thinking about a shared parking garage; the Museum would like to partner with everyone.
- If not a parking garage, there’d better be a train station.
 - Every city needs to think about light rail...
- I wanted a free bus shuttle paid for by merchants to go around Mountain View commercial areas.
- Everyone loves the public market idea:
 - I would love a co-op like the one in the 5th Avenue mall.
 - I love the idea of public markets – like Hong Kong
 - Bring the farmers market back
 - Many people in Mountain View have only one vehicle per family or rely solely on bus/taxi, so more variety of businesses helps them financially (more competition leads to lower prices)
 - Would the market be affordable? Would people visit this far from downtown? The Downtown Anchorage market is mainly supported by tourism...
 - The cultural diversity of Mountain View is the attraction

Summary: Goals and strategies in PowerPoint are going in the right direction; focus on parking, transit, walkability

Next Steps

- Please remember that the power of your voice is needed to make these plans happen. Mayoral administrations change, but that's why we have Assembly members. Make these concerns clear to your representatives.
- Should “marketing” the neighborhood as a desirable place should be a 5th goal and a separate work group? Or should marketing be something under each of the other goals/workgroups? Unclear, but it does need to be a priority.
- Open House
 - Good idea; we've already been thinking about it
 - We currently have a very popular Thanksgiving dinner at the Boys & Girls Club
 - Also the “Night Out” (Take Back the Night) in spring/summer
 - December at Tyson Elementary would be great.
 - Clark kids could be involved
- Could each person in this group bring 2 new people to meetings of this group?
 - Group agreed to try
- AB will take care of some administrative tasks:
 - send notes to the Focus Group (these notes)
 - update the “10 Years of Progress” list
 - get the full Mountain View Plan website up and running
 - schedule the next focus group meeting (late October/early November)
 - work with committee to plan the Open House for December

Notes:

Trends/Conclusions

- bulk of the AK market is increasingly focused into the main groove (track down older graphic)
- small, but potentially still lucrative markets on the side (e.g. bb sport fishing)
- rural economic problems may focus minds of nascent entrepreneurs
- rural village based tourism ventures have exceedingly poor AK track record
- European markets seek adventure off the beaten track
- competing destinations are out-hustling BB as a region

Goals

- add stewardship?

Looking Back

- chicken and eggs: businesses can't improve without customers; customers won't come without quality, well marketed businesses
- what's worked best:
 - one time projects: book, brochures
 - BBVC - as regional sounding board, information exchange,
- What's been less successful - actions built around expectations of local follow through
- Results unclear/not yet known - training, education

Looking ahead (exploratory, preliminary)

General strategies

- build regional institutional capacity
- find the magic draw, and market it like crazy (national parks are strong suit)
- aim at younger generation
- focus attention on entrepreneurial success stories
- realistic expectations
- consider specialty markets

Support to the region

- fly fishing camp
- other training/support to entrepreneurs
- fire up BBVC (with BBNA); find out what locals are thinking
- flesh out and better market website (with partners)
- explore new branding partnerships - salmon reserve (commercial fish, tourism, stewardship)
- fam trip
- better information - redo equivalent of 1994 tourism study

Business ventures

- lodge operation (not just another fishing lodge - seek out unique parcel, e.g.

Park Service inholding)

- set of lodges in key locations
- National Park Concession (e.g. Katmai)
- Best of Bristol Bay tour (bears, walrus, fishing, caribou, Lake Clark)
- High end custom educational tours - requires patience, highly credentialed tour guides
- take advantage of land base
- partners - fishing lodges in slow parts of year

Hybrids

- active partnerships with established tour companies to send visitors to Bristol Bay (bird tours, kayak tours)