



Homer City Hall

491 E. Pioneer Avenue

Homer, Alaska 99603

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

City of Homer Agenda

**Joint Worksession - Economic Development Advisory Commission, Planning
Commission, and the Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission**

Wednesday, October 16, 2019 at 5:30 PM

City Hall Cowles Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER, 5:30 P.M.

AGENDA APPROVAL

DISCUSSION TOPIC(S)

- [A](#) Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan: Moving Forward. Memo from Jenny Carroll, Special Projects & Communications Coordinator for the City of Homer

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COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE (3 minute time limit)

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

ADJOURNMENT, 6:20 P.M.

Next Regular Meeting is Wednesday, November 6, at 6:30 p.m. All meetings scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.



City of Homer

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

Administration

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Homer, Alaska 99603

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Memorandum

TO: Economic Development, Planning and Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commissions

FROM: Jenny Carroll, Special Projects & Communications Coordinator

DATE: October 8, 2019

SUBJECT: Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan: Moving Forward

Goals for the Worksession:

1. Review WF-SS Plan proposed scope and recommendations to City Council.
2. Reach consensus on next steps for Council approval.

Background:

In 2017, in response to comments in the Business, Retention & Expansion Survey advocating a more vibrant Pioneer Avenue business district, beautification improvements and improved walkability, the EDC started exploring the development of a Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan for the City of Homer.

As envisioned, the plan will

- a) provide the City with a strategic plan for utilizing landmarks, city signage, pathways, trails and streetscape elements to help visitors and residents more easily navigate and more fully experience Homer; and
- b) support a vibrant Pioneer Avenue corridor and central business district, and it's connections to the Homer Spit and Old Town.

Spreading the economic benefits of visitor spending among Homer's commercial districts requires the confidence to make the journey and comforts along the way, as well as knowledge of the opportunities.

Proposed WF-SS Project Scope

The EDC proposes developing a **Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan Proposal** with an emphasis on:

- 1) Pedestrian experience with continuity with vehicle signage, particularly at Homer's gateways;
- 2) Wayfinding design that is cohesive, but not necessarily identical and that enhances and reflects the distinctive and creative character of Homer; and
- 3) Considering all aspects of technological and physical wayfinding signage and tools.

Wayfinding Scope

- 1) Assist pedestrians navigating Pioneer Avenue and area trail systems to points of interest in the Central Business District;
- 2) Orientation wayfinding at Homer's gateways;
- 3) Making connections between Homer's destination areas (i.e. Old Town, the Spit, Farmer's Market, and others as identified and agreed upon.) for pedestrians and motorists.

Streetscape Scope

- 1) Plan should propose realistic streetscape and public space improvement options along Pioneer Avenue and to points of interest within the Central Business District
- 2) A strategic approach for implementation of any combination of the following possible elements:
 - Accessibility
 - Banners
 - Bicycle amenities
 - Trash cans
 - Landscaping (plant lists, use of gardens)
 - Pedestrian rest stops and street furniture: bench locations for rest, for view
 - Pedestrian crossings – safety and aesthetics, decorative hardscapes

In developing the concept, the EDC:

- Developed support, potential stakeholder group membership and collected letters of support for the concept;
- Established project scope recommendations;
- Inventoried types and locations of signs that currently comprise Homer's ad hoc 'wayfinding system';
- Identified that a wayfinding/streetscape plan is consistent with City of Homer planning documents including:
 - City of Homer and Homer Spit Comprehensive Plans
 - Policy 3 Recommendation in Homer's Non-Motorized Transportation & Trail Plan;
- Made presentations about the concept to City Council, PARC AC and the Planning Commission.

In the spring of 2019, the EDC was considering seeking a sponsor for an Ordinance appropriating funds to put the WF-SS plan out for an RFP. At this same time, City Council was considering an update of the Transportation Plan. The Wayfinding-Streetscape plan, rather than going before Council on its own, was rather proposed as one component to be considered in the scope of a multi-modal update of the City's Transportation Plan and referred to the Planning Department.

After review, City Planner Rick Abboud suggested that the Planning Commission "recommend to the council that a Wayfinding-Streetscape plan is best addressed separately from the Transportation Plan and a stakeholder task force should be created for plan input."

The reasoning behind the recommendation is that:

(1) typically Transportation Plans are developed by engineering firms while Wayfinding-Streetscape plans are typically developed by Landscape Architects;

(2) the timeframe for a Wayfinding-Streetscape planning is significantly shorter than transportation planning; and

(3) the planning process is a bit different from a transportation plan and may have more decision points that require inputs from stakeholders. (See City Planner Abboud's staff report PL 19-63 to the Planning Commission, attached.)

This was the last action taken on moving the WF-SS Plan proposal forward. Given that WF-SS planning and resulting amenities uniquely engage the missions of the EDC, Planning Commission and PARCAC, and that City Council is considering an Ordinance to inactivate the EDC, the EDC would like to work together with PARCAC and the Planning Commission to move the WF-SS plan proposal forward to City Council.

EDC WF-SS Plan Recommendations for City Council to Consider:

The EDC recognizes that Homer is a small city with relatively few main thoroughfares. A limited City budget and staff capacity does not allow for a huge rollout and likewise requires consideration of maintenance costs over time.

The EDC recommends the planning process be carried out by a qualified professional (landscape designer/architect) in conjunction with a stakeholder input group and develops:

- 1) a modest wayfinding plan to help people orient themselves to where they are and helps people get where they want to be;
- 2) a family of wayfinding designs that could include community-representative art; and
- 3) reasonable streetscape plan for amenities that encourage people to get out of their vehicles and make longer journeys on foot, increasing their exposure to businesses and enjoyment of interests along the way.

The RFP should outline specific requirements for the Consultant to develop a program to work with a stakeholder group, members of the public, Commissions and/or City staff to build upon previous community work to refine and articulate a shared vision of streetscape and wayfinding improvements through a process that is transparent and inclusive.

The plan will be used by City staff to guide future purchases and placement of enhancements such as trash receptacles, benches, pocket parks, etc., to inform landscaping decisions, and to fund and install wayfinding signage.

Private businesses and other community organizations may choose to augment the City's efforts by purchasing coordinating trash receptacles, benches, style of wayfinding sign etc., by hosting a wayfinding location or utilizing a plant list.

The wayfinding-streetscape program should be able to be implemented over multiple years as budget becomes available. The plan produced should ideally prioritize improvements, identify potential funding sources and consider existing City resources and equipment to ensure effective ongoing maintenance.

Cost Estimates:

Last year I reached out informally to consultant firms to get cost estimates of developing a City of Homer Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan with the Economic Development Commission.

I gave them the general project scope, which included working with an active Stakeholders Task Force group to help develop background materials, the need to engage the public and to provide design options and specifications.

Please keep in mind that without a specific RFP for the firms to respond to, the job description and estimates are **ballpark**.

- Wayfinding and Pedestrian Improvements Plan: \$40,000 - \$50,000
- Wayfinding Materials Design Development: \$15,000 - \$20,000.

Other communities have developed wayfinding plans in the recent past. Cost of plans ranged from \$45,000 for Soldotna's Downtown Improvement Plan two years ago, to Palmer's at \$35,000, to Juneau's at \$75,000.

\$50,000 may be a good budget estimate to complete the wayfinding/streetscape analysis, plan and some wayfinding/streetscape design and specs. The budget for the fabrication and installation of signs can be determined once a preferred design option is selected. The project can be completed in phases.

Next Steps:

Please discuss the next steps for moving the Streetscape-Wayfinding Plan proposal forward.

Staff recommendations include:

- 1) Discuss draft Ordinance as way to move the proposal forward.
 - Sufficiency of Ordinance clauses
 - Funding level (ask for just planning funds or also some implementation funds?)
 - Authorization to prepare an RFP for consultant services
 - Establishment of Task Force (Stakeholder group to work with consultant)
- 2) Consider presenting a draft Ordinance at the next EDC, PARC AC and Planning Commission meetings for discussion and formal Commission endorsement.
- 3) Commissions seek out Councilmember(s) willing to sponsor the Ordinance.
- 4) According to the following timeline:
 - PARC AC Meeting - October 17, 2019
 - Planning Commission Meeting - November 6, 2019
 - EDC Meeting - November 12, 2019
 - Ordinance Introduction - November 25, 2019 City Council Meeting

Staff recommends that if there is no Councilmember sponsor by February 2020, the effort should conclude for now.



City of Homer

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Plan 117

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Staff Report PL 19-63

TO: Homer Advisory Planning Commission
FROM: Rick Abboud, City Planner
DATE: July 17, 2019
SUBJECT: Transportation Planning

Introduction

The Commission has been tasked with transportation planning input. At this point, we are looking to develop a time frame and consider various scenarios relating to the level of update. The City Council forwarded memo 19-014 to the Commission.

Analysis

I have contacted an engineering firm to give consideration to the transportation needs of the City. This includes the priorities for transportation plan revision from Council Member Erickson. One thing I have found is that the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan Proposal is a separate plan produced with different personnel and planning objectives.

Wayfinding-Streetscape planning is typically produced with the input of Landscape Architect. Most engineering firms would have to enter into a contract with one, as they are not typically on staff. The process and timeline for this type of plan is a bit different from a transportation plan and may have more decision points that require inputs from stakeholders.

Additionally, the EDC has already put for significant effort into development of a scope and has worked on components of Sign and Streetscape audit. With the working knowledge of wayfinding, some members of EDC can team up with other stakeholders to provide valuable input in the process. We will be able to produce saving in the plan in consideration of the past and future efforts of the EDC, as not all components of the plan needs to be accomplished by a contractor.

The other proposed elements of the transportation plan will generally be more focused on traffic counts, population projections, land use, economic drivers, traffic routes, and other engineering thought. The timeframe for the gathering and processing of all the data will be significantly longer than a wayfinding-streetscape plan and will require a different skill set than that of a wayfinding plan. If more traffic counts are found necessary, we will have to avoid times of major disruption, such as the paving of Pioneer Avenue.

For the reasons stated above, I suggest that we recommend to the council that the Wayfinding-Streetscape proposition be separated from the Transportation Plan and bid separately. The Transportation Plan RFP can be developed over the next year for a timeframe to start after the completion of the Pioneer Avenue project and possible the Lake Street project.

Staff Recommendation

Discuss option for moving forward with transportation planning and make motion for recommendation to the City Council.

Attachments

Memo 19-014

CITY OF HOMER
HOMER, ALASKA

XXXXXXX

ORDINANCE 19-XX

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA
AMENDING THE 2020 OPERATING BUDGET TO APPROPRIATE AN
AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$50,000 FROM THE HART FUND FOR
THE PURPOSE OF DEVELOPING A WAYFINDING-STREETScape
PLAN FOR THE CITY OF HOMER, AUTHORIZING THE CITY
MANAGER TO PREPARE AN RFP FOR CONSULTANT SERVICES AND
AUTHORIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WAYFINDING-
STREETScape TASK FORCE TO WORK WITH THE CONSULTANT.

WHEREAS, The Homer City Council established the Economic Development Advisory
Commission (EDC) to advise City Council on ways to improve the local business climate; and

WHEREAS, The EDC completed a Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) Survey with
the goal of identifying areas where the EDC can work to help improve the local business
climate; and

WHEREAS, Improved walkability, greenspace and initiatives that showcase Homer's
beauty (particularly in the Pioneer Avenue/Central Business District) were the most frequently
mentioned ideas for improving Homer's business climate and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, While a range of factors are important to business success, knowledge of
Homer's various commercial districts, ease of navigation, quality of the street environment
and pedestrian experience are critical to attracting business tenants and customers and
encouraging consumer engagement and business investment in Homer's commercial districts;
and

WHEREAS, The EDC has determined that a wayfinding-streetscape plan (a plan and
design standards to guide City improvements and enhancements such as wayfinding signage,
landscaping, benches, trash receptacles, pocket parks, etc.) will support BR&E business
climate goals and be a catalyst for economic activity; and

WHEREAS, Establishing a wayfinding-streetscape (WF-SS) system is consistent with
goals in the City of Homer Comprehensive Plan and the Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, A WF-SS plan builds upon the citizen interest in Pioneer Avenue through the Pioneer Avenue Revitalization Task Force efforts to make a more attractive, vibrant Pioneer Avenue business district; and

WHEREAS, A WF-SS Plan objectives and scope have been developed by the EDC and have been endorsed by the Homer Planning Commission, Park Arts, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission and by community organizations and businesses; and

WHEREAS, Best practices for WF-SS plan development utilize input from a broad-based local steering committee and the design and outreach expertise of a professional consultant to work with the public, the City and State agencies responsible for managing public right-of-ways.

NOW THEREFORE, The City of Homer supports the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan proposal and Ordains:

Section 1. The FY2020 Operating budget is hereby amended by appropriating no more than \$50,000 from the HART Fund to secure the services of a professional consultant to facilitate the development of a WF-SS Plan through a competitive bidding process, as follows:

Account No.	Description:	Amount:
xxx-xxxx	Professional Services	\$50,000

Section 2. City Council authorizes the City Manager to prepare a Request for Proposals to secure these consultant services.

Section 3. City Council further authorizes formation of a WF-SS Task Force to work with the consultant as needed on the WF-SS Plan development.

This is a budget amendment ordinance is temporary in nature, and shall not be codified.

CITY OF HOMER

KEN CASTNER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK

82 YES:

83 NO:

84 ABSTAIN:

85 ABSENT:

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87 First Reading:

88 Public Hearing:

89 Second Reading:

90 Effective Date:

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93 Reviewed and approved as to form:

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95

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97 _____
Katie Koester, City Manager

Michael Gatti, City Attorney

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99 Date: _____

Date: _____

