

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
491 E. PIONEER AVENUE
HOMER, ALASKA
www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

WORKSESSION
TUESDAY 12:00 P.M.
FEBRUARY 5, 2019
CITY HALL COWLES COUNCIL CHAMBERS

NOTICE OF MEETING
WORKSESSION AGENDA

- 1. CALL TO ORDER, 12:00 P.M.**
- 2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
- 3. PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA** *(3 Minute Time Limit)*
- 4. WAYFINDING/STREETScape PLAN PROPOSAL**
 - A. Memo from Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Re: Worksession
 - B. Draft Memo and Resolution to City Council & Mayor Re: Proposal
- 5. COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE** *(3 Minute Time Limit)*
- 6. COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**
- 7. ADJOURNMENT/NEXT REGULAR MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.** at the Homer City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.



City of Homer

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

Administration

491 East Pioneer Avenue
Homer, Alaska 99603

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Memorandum

TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
FROM: JENNY CARROLL, SPECIAL PROJECTS & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR
DATE: JANUARY 31, 2019
SUBJECT: WAYFINDING-STREETScape PLAN RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL

The purpose of the February 5th EDC worksession is to review a draft resolution and back-up memo which would be presented to City Council after formal EDC approval at the regularly scheduled February 12, 2019 commission meeting.

The EDC, after working on the Wayfinding-Streetscape proposal for eleven months, has developed a well-reasoned project scope to recommend to City Council, has solidified the economic/quality of life reasons to support a Wayfinding-Streetscape plan for Homer, and opened discussions of how to fund the plan's development.

Three funding approaches have been considered. Option one and two: Council appropriation of funds to contract a design firm to complete a Homer Wayfinding-Streetscape plan and design specifications, and completing the Wayfinding-Streetscape plan as part of an update of the City of Homer Transportation Plan, do not seem feasible.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey and I met with EDC Chair Karin Marks to discuss options for moving the WF-SS Plan proposal forward. The draft resolution and backup memo in your packet (recommending that City Council appoint a Task Force to initiate work on the WF-SS Plan) is the result of that meeting.

This option implements the third funding option EDC Commissioners considered: bringing the cost of the plan down by utilizing local expertise and planning capacity to gather baseline information, which hones the project scope and the number of deliverables requested of a contractor.

RECOMMENDATION

Please review the attached draft resolution and back-up memo. Commissioners have the opportunity to provide input on these items at the worksession before it is considered as a motion to take action on at the February 12, 2019 EDC regular meeting.



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Memorandum

TO: MAYOR CASTNER AND HOMER CITY COUNCIL
FROM: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
THRU: JENNY CARROLL, SPECIAL PROJECTS & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR
DATE: FEBRUARY 13, 2019
SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR A WAYFINDING-STREETScape PLAN TASK FORCE

This memorandum provides back up information about the EDC's recommendation for developing a Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan for the City of Homer.

Since March 2018, after completing the Business Retention & Expansion Survey Report, the EDC has been exploring how a Homer Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan addresses the top suggestions on how to improve Homer's business climate and quality of life. Those suggestions from the BR&E Survey are: "Beautification improvements", and "Improved walkability and greenspace".

What is Wayfinding and Streetscape?

Wayfinding is the art of using landmarks, signage, and pathways to help people navigate and experience a place.

Streetscape refers to landscape amenities that reinforce safety and comfort, and that help secure pedestrians' interest in exploring Homer on foot.

Why Does Homer Need a Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan?

Economic Justification

The Homer Spit and 'Old Town' have been areas of renewed public interest thanks to place making and investments in pedestrian facilities. Interest in improving Pioneer Avenue has been growing, as evidenced by the Pioneer Avenue Revitalization Task Force's efforts to create a more attractive, vibrant business district. And while the City and other organizations have invested recently in footpaths and sidewalks, Homer still lacks a wayfinding system so that the traveling public can easily navigate those paths. Furthermore, Homer was developed in the automobile age: Pioneer Avenue is over a mile long and Homer's destination districts (Homer Spit, Old Town, and Pioneer) are quite spread out.

Spreading the economic benefits of visitor spending across Homer requires the confidence to make the journey and comforts along the way, as well as knowledge of the opportunities. The EDC recommends (1) a good wayfinding plan that quietly helps people orient themselves to where they are and helps people get where they want to be; and (2) have streetscape 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.

A Wayfinding-Streetscape system for Homer supports economic development:

- Improved pedestrian understanding of neighborhoods, landmarks, and amenities increases the opportunities for people finding and using commercial resources in these areas.
- Positive maneuverability contributes to positive experiences in Homer, making Homer a place people want to visit, return to, and live in.
- Cohesive, thoughtful designs that reflect the distinctive and creative character of Homer will contribute to Homer's reputation as an attractive destination and increase activity on the street; people that visit and patronize Homer's three distinct business 'districts' do so partly for the unique experience they offer.
- These factors in turn encourage business investments.

Examples of Application

The plan would be used by the City to guide future City purchases and placement of enhancements such as trash receptacles, benches, pocket parks, etc.; to make landscaping decisions; and to fund and install wayfinding signage. Having such a comprehensive signage/wayfinding plan will save the City staff time and money in the long run: as the need to make decisions arise, they will be easily addressed with an easy-to-follow plan that makes the overall process less time-consuming and difficult for City Staff.

Additionally, private businesses may choose to augment the City's efforts by utilizing the plant list; by purchasing coordinating trash receptacles, benches, etc.; or by hosting a wayfinding location. For example, the Realtors Association offered the City funds to purchase benches around town. Kachemak Heritage Land Trust asked what the City's general wayfinding sign design would be for Pioneer Avenue since they're developing signage for a new Poopdeck Trail and want to provide a coherent look.

Is there Support for a Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan?

Consistent with City of Homer Plans

A Wayfinding-Streetscape system in Homer is consistent with already-established City of Homer Plans: Goal 5 of the Homer Comprehensive Plan, Goal 1 of the Comp Plan's Economic Vitality Plan, and Goal 2.5 of the Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan. Development goals outlined in the Town Center Development Plan also included enhancing signage and streetscape amenities.

Community Support

The following organizations are in support of a Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan for the above-mentioned reasons:

[List here]

Why Is a Task Force the Right Way to Proceed?

EDC has been working on a strategy to make a Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan a reality. Through their regular meetings, they have formulated a Scope of Work and suggested Project Area. What the project really needs now though is broader community input, involvement of other commissions such as Planning and PARCAC, and the expertise of City Staff that would be implementing the plan, such as Parks and Rec/Public Works Staff.

The most efficient way to bring all these groups together would be through a Task Force. To include all of the key groups in discussions through joint worksessions or regular monthly meetings would require a significant amount of time, coordinating efforts, and costs. It would be much easier and cost-effective to have selected individuals from each of these groups/areas participate in a task force to focus on the project's details and write the plan.

What is EDC Recommending the Task Force Focus On?

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 Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan should be able to be implemented in phases 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.

EDC's Project Area Recommendation

The area covered by this plan includes Pioneer Avenue from the Sterling Highway to Lake Street, and its connections to points of interest within the Central Business District. While there will be a concentration on Pioneer Avenue, connections to and wayfinding between the Central Business District, Old Town, Ocean Drive and the Homer Spit should be evaluated and included, as well as orientation wayfinding at Baycrest Overlook, Homer Airport Terminal and the Pioneer/Deep Water Dock, Homer's three main gateways. The project area includes local and State rights-of-way.

EDC's Project Scope Recommendations

The Wayfinding/Streetscape Plan will primarily emphasize

- 1) Pedestrian experience, with attention to continuity of vehicle signage, particularly at route decision points and Homer's gateways; and
- 2) Design that is cohesive, but not necessarily identical and that enhances and reflects the distinctive and creative character of Homer.

The plan should consider all aspects of technological and physical wayfinding signage and tools, keeping signage 'clutter' to a minimum.

Wayfinding Scope:

- 1) Assist pedestrians navigating Pioneer Avenue and 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.)

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, landscaping (plant lists, use of gardens), bench locations for rests/view, pocket

parks, pedestrian crossings/safety and aesthetics including the possibility of decorative crosswalks/hardscapes, trashcans.

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt Resolution 19-XX, approving a Wayfinding-Streetscape System Task Force to collaborate on and initiate a Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan proposal.

DRAFT

1 **CITY OF HOMER**
2 **HOMER, ALASKA**

3 **Sponsor (Smith?)**/Economic Development
4 Advisory Commission

5 **RESOLUTION 19-XX**
6

7 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA,
8 APPROVING A WAYFINDING-STREETScape SYSTEM TASK FORCE
9 TO COLLABORATE ON AND INITIATE A WAYFINDING-
10 STREETScape PLAN PROPOSAL.
11

12 WHEREAS, The Homer City Council established the Economic Development Advisory
13 Commission (EDC) to advise City Council on ways to improve the local business climate; and
14

15 WHEREAS, The EDC completed a Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) Survey with
16 the goal of identifying areas where the EDC can work to help improve the local business
17 climate; and
18

19 WHEREAS, Improved walkability, greenspace and initiatives that showcase Homer's
20 beauty (particularly in the Pioneer Avenue/Central Business District) were the most frequently
21 mentioned ideas for improving Homer's business climate and quality of life; and
22

23 WHEREAS, The EDC has determined that a wayfinding-streetscape plan (a plan and
24 design standards to guide future City improvements and enhancements such as wayfinding
25 signage, landscaping, benches, trash receptacles, pocket parks, etc.) will support these
26 business climate goals and be a catalyst for economic activity; and
27

28 WHEREAS, Establishing a wayfinding-streetscape system is consistent with goals in the
29 City of Homer Comprehensive Plan and the Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan; and
30

31 WHEREAS, A wayfinding-streetscape plan builds upon the citizen interest in Pioneer
32 Avenue through the Pioneer Avenue Revitalization Task Force efforts to make a more
33 attractive, vibrant Pioneer Avenue business district; and
34

35 WHEREAS, The EDC has received letters from community organizations and businesses
36 supporting development and implementation of a wayfinding-streetscape plan; and
37

38 WHEREAS, Homer is a small city requiring a relatively small scale plan; and
39

40 WHEREAS, Wayfinding-streetscape plan development best practices utilize input from
41 a broad-based steering committee; and

42 WHEREAS, Significant local expertise and planning capacity exists in the Homer
43 community that could greatly assist the development of a wayfinding-streetscape plan and
44 help keep consultant costs down; and
45

46 WHEREAS, Advisory bodies have to obtain approval from City Council to establish a
47 committee or task force.
48

49 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Homer City Council supports the
50 establishment of a task force to gather baseline information, inventories and public input to
51 initiate and guide the development of a City of Homer Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan according
52 to the EDC's project scope recommendations.
53

54 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force will consist of seven members:

- 55 • Two representatives from the Economic Development Advisory Commission,
- 56 • One representative from the Planning Commission,
- 57 • One representative from the Park, Arts, Recreation and Culture Commission,
- 58 • The City of Homer Parks Maintenance Manager,
- 59 • One representative from the Pioneer Avenue Revitalization Task Force and
- 60 • One at-large community member.

61 Other staff members may consult and/or provide administrative support.
62

63 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Task Force meetings will commence April 1, 2019 and
64 will set its own meeting schedule during regular business hours and will disband June 1, 2019
65 unless extended by City Council.
66

67 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Clerk is authorized to advertise for parties
68 interested in serving as representatives.
69

70 PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Homer City Council this ___ day of _____, 2019.
71

72 CITY OF HOMER
73
74

75 _____
76 KEN CASTNER, MAYOR
77

78 ATTEST:
79
80

81 _____
82 MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK

Fiscal Note: N/A