



AGENDA

Economic Development Advisory Commission Work Session

Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 5:30 PM

City Hall Conference Room In-Person & Via Zoom Webinar

Homer City Hall

491 E. Pioneer Avenue
Homer, Alaska 99603
www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

Zoom Webinar ID: 956 3140 0179 Password: 408263

<https://cityofhomer.zoom.us>
Dial: 346-248-7799 or 669-900-6833;
(Toll Free) 888-788-0099 or 877-853-5247

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1. **CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, 5:30 P.M.**
 2. **AGENDA APPROVAL**
 3. **DISCUSSION TOPIC(S)**
 - 3.A. Economic Development Advisory Commission & Homer Chamber of Commerce Conversation Regarding Economic Development in Homer **Page 2 - 9**
[Agenda Item Report EDC 23-010](#)
 4. **COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE** (3 minute time limit)
 5. **ADJOURNMENT** Next Regular Meeting is **Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.** All meetings scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar.



AGENDA ITEM REPORT

Economic Development Advisory Commission & Homer Chamber of Commerce Conversation Regarding Economic Development in Homer

Item Type: Informational Item
Prepared For: Economic Development Advisory Commission
Meeting Date: 28 Feb 2023
Staff Contact: Julie Engebretsen, Economic Development Manager

Summary Statement:

The Commission is scheduled to have a work session with Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Brad Anderson on Tuesday February 28, 2023 at 5:30 pm. Former EDC Commissioner Adele Person has agreed to facilitate the conversation.

At the work session we will talk about the role of each organization. This is an opportunity to have a conversation about how we can work together on some common goals.

Specifically from the EDC's Strategic Plan:

Task: Have a work session with the Chamber

Have a conversation with the Chamber of Commerce about other economic development beyond tourism. How can the City and the Chamber work together to promote quality of life, and economic development for industries other than tourism, including messaging?

Staff Recommendation:

Review the Chamber's Strategic Plan prior to the work session. The EDC's Strategic Plan and Goals is also included for easy reference.

Attachments:

[Homer Chamber 2027 Strategic Plan & 2022-2023 Priorities](#)

[EDC 2022-2023 Strategic Plan & Goals](#)

CORE PURPOSE Support members through cooperative economic development and service to the community

CORE VALUES Comprehensive Community Engagement ♦ Partnerships ♦ Non-Partisan ♦ Preserving “Homer Culture” ♦ Advocacy ♦ Quality of Life

CORE PROGRAMS Member Services ♦ Visitor Center ♦ Community Engagement ♦ Business Advocacy

LONG-TERM ENVISIONED FUTURE (2032) – Thriving, Multi-Dimensional Homer Economy: Through strong partnerships, the Homer Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center (HCOC and Visitor Center) envisions a thriving, multi-dimensional economy, highlighted by completion and operation of a Deep Water Port, with multiple outcomes for Homer – resolving housing and workforce issues, attracting more visitors, associated growth of the Coast Guard’s presence, and inspiring more year-round commerce.

MID-TERM ENVISIONED FUTURE (2027) – Sustainable Homer Economy: On the way to 2032, the HCOC and Visitor Center envisions an inspiring and exciting future in which it is being true to its name – as Homer’s Chamber of Commerce and Visitor’s Center – growing a balanced, sustainable Homer economy by focusing equally on sustainable year-round small business and an essential visitor industry. Achieving this Envisioned Future will result from focus on six Strategic Operating Priorities between now and 2027.

STRATEGIC OPERATING PRIORITIES (2022 – 2027)

- **Building a Diversified Homer Economy.** HCOC and Visitor Center is focused on bringing a balanced, sustainable year-round economy to Homer – one with full-time, year-round employment opportunities, built upon a thriving visitor industry, marine trades, and a business climate supporting economic growth during the year.
- **Growing Organizational Stability and Resilience:** HCOC and Visitor Center is building a robust organization, with greater financial stability, enabling it to leverage resources for members and the community, while establishing a sustainable human resources infrastructure.
- **Better Engaging the Homer Community:** HCOC and Visitor Center will continue to seek greater community engagement in economic development efforts through strategic events and programs.
- **Solid Reputation with Engaged Members:** HCOC and Visitor Center has become Homer’s go-to source for all things commerce – it has a growing reputation for getting things done, and expanding membership, such that HCOC has the highest number of members of any other Peninsula chamber.
- **Maximizing Effective, Mutually Beneficial Partnerships:** HCOC and Visitor Center continues to identify and pursue strategic partnerships that improve its ability to meet Core Purpose and achieve the Envisioned Futures for 2027 and 2032.
- **Improving Business Advocacy Impact:** HCOC and Visitor Center is a recognized advocate, among members and throughout the community and Peninsula, for addressing the most pressing commerce issues impacting the growth of Homer’s economy.

Under each of the above Strategic Operating Priorities, the Homer Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center will address specific objectives in 2022 and through 2023.

Implementation details on objectives are presented in the next section of the Strategic Plan.

**STRATEGIC OPERATING PRIORITIES (2022 - 2023)
(with Implementation Details)**

PRIORITY: Building a Diversified Homer Economy. HCOC and Visitor Center is focused on bringing a balanced, sustainable year-round economy to Homer – one with full-time, year-round employment opportunities – built upon a thriving visitor industry, marine trades, and a business climate supporting economic growth throughout the year.

- Identify and address the immediate economic concerns around Homer’s declining food/restaurant industry
 - Reconsider whether to hold the 2022 Restaurant Week event
- Focus on improving the presence of a Marine Trades voice in governance, programs and services, and ultimately HCOC and Visitor Center’s impact
 - Consider establishing a Marine Trades Advisory Group/Committee that specifically works to identify the tangible impacts of the marine trades on the year-round Homer economy, advocacy issues requiring action, and clarifying the role of a strong Marine Trades industry in bringing a Deep Water Port to Homer
- Help revitalize Pioneer Avenue as a central commercial hub and compelling destination for visitors, and better incorporate it into HCOC and Visitor Center marketing.
- Re-envision the website to ensure balance – encouraging small business/supporting the visitor industry

PRIORITY: Growing Organizational Stability and Resilience: HCOC and Visitor Center is building a robust organization, with greater financial stability and security, enabling it to best leverage resources for members and the community, while establishing a sustainable human resources infrastructure.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

- Board and leadership to focus on making decisions now to build future financial security
 - For instance, exploring a Trust or Foundation
- Determine what to do with the property, focusing on its potential for helping meet Core Purpose
 - Can the property be an enterprise part of HCOC and Visitor Center, generating unrestricted revenue?
- Develop a Sustainable Income Plan, identifying long-term potential for generating more, and more diverse revenue for HCOC and Visitor Center
 - Focus is one being more resilient, self-sustaining, encouraging innovation, building reserves
 - For instance, ad sales in the Homer Magazine, enhanced contract with the City of Homer to provide Visitor Center services, raffles, increased membership and associated fees, purposeful events, strategic grants, and increased corporate sponsorship
 - With respect to events, ensure there is an understanding of the true costs to HCOC and Visitor Center.
 - Establish financial metrics for all programs and events, to help evaluate success.
- Consider bringing back some sort of modified Halibut fund-raising event

SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RESOURCES

- In the long term, develop a Three-Year Sustainable Staffing Plan highlighting desired staffing infrastructure, and making HCOC and Visitor Center a first-choice employer in Homer
 - Complete a Compensation & Benefits Survey
 - Consider third-party technical assistance/consultancy to assist, i.e., Foraker Group
 - What positions should stay? Be adjusted? New positions? Outsourcing/contracting?

- In the short-term, consider adding a high-level marketing person to focus on members and events, from a 40,000 foot view versus a marketing technician
- Staff to clarify the preferred role of members with respect to projects
 - The aim is supplementing staff, providing opportunities for member engagement/volunteerism
- Explore backroom support/shared services opportunities to increase capacity

PRIORITY: Better Engaging the Homer Community: HCOC and Visitor Center will continue to seek greater community engagement in economic development efforts through strategic events and programs.

- Establish success metrics and rubrics to evaluate events and programs in ensure efforts align with Strategic Operating Priorities. A
- Establish a process to regularly survey the local business community, members and nonmembers, to identify local priorities and opportunities to better engage the Homer community
- Better community infrastructure to support business and the visitor industry
 - HCOC and Visitor Center to remain involved as a partner in the City’s “Way-Finding” project to promote commerce throughout Homer’s numerous business neighborhoods

PRIORITY: Solid Reputation with Engaged Members: HCOC and Visitor Center has become Homer’s go-to source for all things commerce – it has a growing reputation for getting things done, and expanding membership, such that HCOC has the highest number of members of any other Peninsula chamber.

- Visitor Center referrals that benefit member businesses, and commerce
- Commit to a formal plan aimed at increasing membership by 5-10% per year
- Begin focused efforts to retain and grow the local small business culture
 - Develop more business resources for local entrepreneurs
 - Develop Homer-specific educational offerings for start-up businesses, for instance:
 - Online curriculum: “So you want to start a year-round business in Homer!”
 - Complete inventory of small business financial support/start-up funding, grant resources, strategies, etc.
- Ensure HCOC and Visitor Center’s marketing and outreach is first, balanced, with equal parts visitor industry and small business support, and second, that it is effective, as demonstrated by best available data and metrics
 - Complete “About” portion of the website to better highlight small business aspects of HCOC and Visitor Center
 - Review current website for balance between the visitor industry and year-round commerce
 - Ensure the Homer Magazine – formerly the Visitor’s Guide – pays balanced attention to both the visitor industry and development of year-round commercial activity
 - Formalize name change from “Visitor Guide” to something with broader appeal, such as “Business and Visitor Magazine”
 - Feature Pioneer Avenue more prominently, as an example of year-round commerce

PRIORITY: Maximizing Effective, Mutually Beneficial Partnerships: HCOC and Visitor Center continues to identify and pursue strategic partnerships that improve its ability to meet Core Purpose and achieve the Envisioned Futures for 2027 and 2030.

- Clarify the partnership with the City of Homer regarding provision of Visitor Center services
 - Ensure a new contract with the city is negotiated for maximum benefit to HCOC and Visitor Center that it:
 - Is less proscriptive, and offering greater space for flexibility and innovations
 - That it reflects the “true costs” to HCOC and Visitor Center of providing Visitor Center services, without financially subsidizing the City of Homer
- Focus on ensuring a robust relationship between the HCOC and Visitor Center and the City of Homer’s new economic development staff, and the Homer Economic Development Advisory Commission
 - HCOC and Visitor Center to continue engaging in implementation of the 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) for Homer
- Continue efforts to build strong partnerships with local economic development organizations on the Kenai Peninsula and beyond, for instance:
 - The Kenai Peninsula Economic Development Corporation
 - The Anchorage Economic Development Corporation
 - The Kodiak Economic Development Corporation

PRIORITY: Improving Business Advocacy Impact: HCOC and Visitor Center is a recognized advocate, among members and throughout the community and Peninsula, for addressing the most pressing commerce issues impacting the growth of Homer’s economy.

- Board to clarify the importance of remaining non-partisan in all of its work, particularly its advocacy work, while affirming the essential role of active issue advocacy in meeting Core Purpose
- Clarify the role of the HCOC and Visitor Center as a leading advocate for the most essential issues affecting a sustainable economy in Homer – for instance:
 - Deep Water Port
 - Lack of Housing
 - Workforce Shortage
 - Local taxation issues that affect local commerce
- As part of formalizing its business advocacy, develop “Business Advocacy Criteria” aimed at helping HCOC and Visitor Center determine which issues require its advocacy, and at what level of engagement, for instance:
 1. Community wide economic impact?
 2. Expectation of significant member support?
 3. Is HCOC and Visitor Center the most relevant voice?
 4. Does HCOC and Visitor Center have the internal capacity – people and money – to commit fully to advocacy efforts?
 - And in those advocacy efforts, is HCOC and Visitor Center taking the lead? Is it partnering with others on shared advocacy? Is it convening a multitude of voices? Or is it monitoring?
 5. Is there a potential for generating unrestricted revenue?

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
2022-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN & GOALS**

<p>Ongoing Goals</p>	<p>1. Use the Commission’s SWOT analysis to develop strategies to implement policies that support Homer’s quality of life.</p>
	<p>2. Keep our ears to the ground and seek out areas of "lack." Confer with Julie about communicating with City Council and advising them on ways to overcome barriers- "the nexus of economic goals."</p>
<p>Near Term Goals < 6 Months</p>	<p>1. Familiarize with smart growth principles and best practices, and also green infrastructure concepts. Have these in our toolbox when development decisions come our way for consideration.</p> <p><i>Task:</i> Staff to provide smart growth resources.</p> <p><i>Task:</i> Promote energy resiliency through diversity and efficiency. Invite a speaker to talk about energy as that impacts cost of doing business and cost of living. (Perez)</p>
	<p>2. View economic development through the lens of balancing growth with quality of life.</p> <p><i>Task:</i> Create an EDC Mission statement as a guiding principle for what the EDC does.</p> <p><i>Task:</i> Define positive economic development, and what is the role of the EDC is in balancing growth and quality of life.</p> <p>(Perez volunteered, first quarter 2023)</p>
	<p>3. Housing: affordable short and long term housing. Seasonal workers, general work force, seniors, etc. affordable year round housing. (Marks)</p> <p><i>Task:</i> Stay engaged with the City for all housing conversations</p>
	<p>4. Present an annual report of EDC accomplishments to the City Council</p> <p><i>Task:</i> Approve memo to Council, read accomplishments to Council</p>
	<p>5. Have a conversation with the Chamber of Commerce about other economic development beyond tourism. How can the City and the Chamber work together to promote quality of life, and economic development for industries other than tourism, including messaging?</p> <p><i>Task:</i> Have a work session with the Chamber</p>
<p>Mid Term Goals 1 - 3 Years (2022 – 2025)</p>	<p>1. BR&E – review annually and plan for a new report (5 year mark is 2022-2023) <i>Opportunity:</i> Consider a funding request for the FY 2024-2025 budget</p>
	<p>2. Downtown vitalization momentum and wayfinding/streetscape plan</p> <p><i>Status:</i> Wayfinding and Streetscape work ongoing through 21 and implementation activities in 2022-2024</p> <p><i>Task:</i> Participate in the Transportation Plan, focusing on a walkable town with greenspace and connected business districts</p> <p><i>Longer term:</i> Consider storefront/Downtown and landscaping improvement program</p>

	<p>3. Economic resiliency planning.</p> <p><i>Opportunity:</i> EDC provide suggestions to KPEDD on the business tool box. EDC promote tool box to community.</p> <hr/> <p>4. Assess jobs training needs, workforce development, availability of workers and workforce supports including child care, housing.</p> <p><i>Opportunity:</i> Invite KBC Director Reid Brewer as speaker, how does the college make course offering decisions? How is work force development part of the planning? What does the KBC Advisory Board do?</p> <p><i>Opportunity:</i> Invite 9-Star to make a presentation</p> <p><i>Opportunity:</i> Brief survey to businesses and employees on their needs.</p>
<p>Long Term Goals 5 Years or More (2025+)</p>	<p>1. Multipurpose community center (HERC)</p> <p><i>Status:</i> Scoping study has been funded. Demolition of the smaller building has been funded; tear down planned in 2023.</p>

OVERALL EDC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Economic Development Advisory Commission will act in an advisory capacity to the City Manager and the City Council on the overall economic development planning for the City of Homer in accordance with Homer City Code Chapter 2.76; www.codepublishing.com/AK/Homer. The EDC also assists with official City planning documents including the following:

- Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) – Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (link will bring you to all KPEDD reports): <https://kpedd.org/reports>
- Homer’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/economicdevelopment/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy
- Business Retention and Expansion Survey Report (BR&E): <https://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/economicdevelopment/2017-business-retention-expansion-survey-report>
- Homer Comprehensive Plan: <https://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/planning/comprehensive-plan>

DUTIES OF COMMISSION/STAFF

Commissioners

- Attend City Council meetings as assigned.
- Attend work sessions and training opportunities.
- Come prepared to make a motion for action at meetings, or ask staff before the meeting for more information.
- Communicate with City Council members to gain support on EDC-related projects that need sponsorship at the Council level.

Staff (Julie Engebretsen)

- Aid the Chair in setting the agenda.
- Compile packet material from commissioners, write backup memos, and submit to Clerk.
- Provide information on items the commission needs to review annually.

- Inform the Commission of City Council actions and discussion of economic development related issues.

Clerk's Office

- Aid Staff in compiling packet materials and print/distribute them to the Commission.
- Aid Staff and Chair in setting the agenda.
- Tracking yearly items such as reappointments and elections.
- Help the Commission learn to be more efficient and effective in their meetings.
- Support the Commission's ability to communicate with the Mayor and City Council (through Memorandums, Resolutions, and Ordinances).