

Approximately 40 people attended the Kick-off workshop for the Homer City Hall • Town Square • Master Plan Project held at the Homer City Council Chambers. The workshop was facilitated by Brian Meissner of ECI Hyer and Chris Beck of Agnew::Beck Consulting, LLC. In addition, three break-out sessions were facilitated around the specific project components as follows:

- City Hall: Brian Meissner and David Porter, ECI Hyer
- Town Square: Peter Briggs and Laura Minski, Corvus Design
- Master Plan: Chris Beck and Tanya Iden, Agnew::Beck Consulting LLC

Following are the large themes and major points from each of the evening’s breakout sessions.

WORDS FOR HOMER’S TOWN CENTER

1. OVERARCHING GOAL (Tin Woodsman’s wish)

Create a civic/commercial/social heart for Homer; so the community has a center instead of being a place "that feels like outskirts of a town you never get to".

Developing connections to people.

2. WHY?

A. Economic health

- ensure commercial uses spurred by local growth locate in the heart of Homer
- capture spending that would otherwise leave town (e.g. Soldotna Fred Meyer)
- create opportunities for local businesses - new spending, places to expand existing/locate new businesses
- attract and hold tourists; increase tourism spending
- provide nexus for downtown attractions (Pratt, Theater, Oceans & Islands, etc.)
- increase resident spending

B. Quality of life

- place for art & events
- place to meet friends and acquaintances, place for "public life,"
- create community identity

C. Environment

- avoid sprawl
- reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions
- integrate open space, streams, sustainability in design

3. STRATEGIES

- maximum magnetism - give people many, many different reasons to visit
- pedestrians have primacy
- maximize number of users within walking distance - residents, businesses

- benefit existing businesses, especially Pioneer biz
- concentration and linkages; create critical mass
- recognize fundamental challenges - not easy, quick to create lively center
- phasing; design responds to use

4. ROLES

- public sector: investments to establish a flexible framework - roads, trails, zoning, parking, civic anchors, attractions - that support and promote private investment
- public sector: guide growth and investment so private sector actions work towards community goals
- private sector: partners in delivering buildings, uses, (majority of required magnetism...)

5. MASTER PLAN PROGRAM

- commercial uses
- housing – mixed densities, affordable; located over business
- entertainment
- tourist accommodations
- roads – not boulevards; trails; parking – on-street, off-street public, rv
- kids park; link to KHLT park

6. DESIGN

- north south greenway corridor (“string of pearls”)
- uses around square: civic side, commercial side (food, drink); roadside
- variable character: events, summer/winter, tarps over performing arts space...
- grain – smaller lots, smaller buildings, more roads
- move dirt

7. CITY HALL

The essential points from the City Hall Discussion group were:

- City Hall should be a LEED quality building, which has some element that visually states its sustainability. Sustainable topics centered on Energy Use but other elements of sustainability would be expected to be incorporated.
- The building height should stay somewhat low, yet read as a civic landmark.
- Precedents mentioned had a very coherent progression between landscape and architecture.
- The desired look and feel of City Hall really is a metaphorical city-sized front porch. The offices should be as unobtrusive as possible.
- Primarily the public would like to see the Council chambers tied closely with the Plaza. It should reinforce the edge of the plaza, both physically and experientially, yet not enter. The building and parking could reinforce existing business on Pioneer Ave, though pedestrian use is more important.

Removal of any trees, except for the Alder really has to be handled delicately with public buy in.

8. TOWN CENTER

- the plaza is a user-friendly space, not to be dominated by vehicles.
- very lively, people-friendly destination while still maintaining its natural systems, character, and ‘accommodating Homer residents’ love of the outdoors’.

IN THE COMMUNITY’S WORDS – MASTER PLAN

Places Mentioned as having good town centers

- Ojai – business on the street, children’s playground, residences
- Ashland – small businesses together, low speed traffic, walkable, residences
- W. Palm Beach – fountain, seating, good street network leading to surrounding housing
- Taos – pocket parks, housing, river, seating, central plaza, city hall, businesses all around, walkable
- Whistler – pedestrian only zones

Suggested Uses for Homer Town Center:

Workshop participants expressed wide support for a mixture of uses in Homer’s Town Center with success depending on the big 3 – civic, commercial, and residential.

- **RESIDENTIAL**
 - Tasteful
 - Affordable - High demand
 - Co-housing
 - Higher density but maintain natural features – Homer style, shifting demographic may be ready to support this.
 - Built on top of other uses
- **COMMERCIAL**
 - No big box/small scale commercial
 - Homer is a tough market
 - need to make it easy for local business
 - need small lots
 - Live/work
 - Support Pioneer Ave. existing commercial – tie it into Town Center
 - Lodging
 - Bar
 - “Attractions”
- **PUBLIC BUILDINGS-**
 - Arts/ Recreation center/café/education for kids
 - Multi-use facility
 - “multi-generational” youth/family center
 - Do not “deaden” with day time only building
 - European model Inter-generational, i.e., Barcelona
 - Conference facility
- **PARKING-**
 - Support Pioneer businesses w/ parking , currently they have to waste property on Pioneer for parking
 - Include RV parking also
 - Covered parking/green roof underground (shops on top)
 - On-street parking

- Pocket parking lots/split shuttle
- Load/unload zones for merchants/buildings/farmers market
- Pedestrians king/queen – cars secondary
- Do not want asphalt football fields
- Park behind buildings – reduce set-back
- Parking – how to accommodate big event? (overflow into lawns)
- Fairness to existing merchants
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- ACCESS/ROADS
 - Destination roads not thoroughfare
 - do west access
 - Develop a circular road around the town center
 - Consider reality of Alaska winter – people can’t walk easily all the time
 - Transit
- TRAILS-
 - As many as possible
 - Create trail above save-u-more-to project
 - Trail to Theater and along creek – n/s parallel to main street
 - A lot of people walk in Homer even without good sidewalks and trails
- OPEN SPACE/RECREATION
 - Some trees will have to go, but think long term
 - Develop combination of open space and developed areas
 - Good landscape design
 - Preserve drainage corridors and streams
 - Preserve views and sunlight

Special Features for Town Center

- Develop a uniform identifier
- Shared bikes/strollers
- Water Feature- i.e., fish pond with trout
- Highlight existing natural features i.e., wetlands – work with site hydrology

IN THE COMMUNITY'S WORDS – CITY HALL

- **GREEN BUILDING ISSUES**
 - Lighting; Air Quality; Energy Use; Composting important
 - Carbon neutral, Fully integrated green building
 - Double skin facades represent ideals of the community; looking for a low carbon footprint
 - Double skin walls and building could act as a Storm Shield, Homer's “2030 Imperative” is important in the building project.
 - Energy Efficiency a definite goal
 - Would like to see a comparison of energy efficiency of building to the ultra compact, most efficient case.
 - Micro-hydro power generation is a good idea
 - Alternative energy incorporated as much as possible, as a goal which is more important than strict dollar value of energy saved/produced, or initial capital cost.
 - A renewable energy consultant, an expert could be involved in the process
 - “Active” water for renewable energy
 - Could a thermal mass be incorporated in the building? A Trombe wall with a water storage reservoir?
 - Could the ground be used as a heat mass?
 - LEED qualified building designed to draw in users.
 - The least resources used is the best.
- **BUILDING HEIGHT**
 - Low Profile; Contemporary
 - Height is OK, but keep as low as possible
- **PRECEDENTS**
 - Incline Village-Sierra Nevada College – Logs Rock Bell Towers
 - Sierra Nevada college is a good precedent.
 - Portage Glacier – Begich Boggs Visitors Center
 - Vancouver Public Library
 - Boston City Hall Is a bad city hall example, want equal footing for the Public and the city Officials
- **LOOK AND FEEL**

*Unspoken, or hard for public to say, – the building needs to hold its presence as a landmark civic building, particularly in the “city council chambers” which is seen primarily as a public meeting hall.

 - Green House; Winter Garden
 - Stone and Timber, but looking Forwards
 - Glass and winter gardens for the special Areas, but basic spaces for the offices
 - Could Incorporate Moving Public Art
 - Buildings are about people
 - Homer is about the people, and so should the building

- COUNCIL CHAMBERS AS A CONVENIENT PUBLIC GATHERING SPOT
 - City Hall Council Chambers, public hall needs easy usability, easy access, ½ the size of the theater, space for 200 people, with no door keys if possible
 - Could be a city anchor if easy to use
 - City council chambers separated from city hall offices, for ease of public use.
 - City Hall should be a gathering place, the city’s “Crow Jewel”
 - Views should be specific to council chambers
- PORCHES
 - Cupola; Hitching Post
 - Could have rockers on the porch?
 - Homer buildings, old town style, such as Inlet trading post, The Rose Compass by two sisters
 - Need a place to sit on the plaza.
 - City hall should be warm and welcoming, a front porch, a building which envelops a visitor and invites them to enter.
- GREEN ROOF
 - Green roof with a garden on top would be desirable.
 - Gable roofs are OK; Asphalt shingles are not OK; a Green roof would be OK
 - Green Roof would be nice if they work as roofs.
- BUILDING POSITIONING
 - *Unspoken, the building should not enter on plaza at all
 - Need to keep the integrity of the amphitheater
 - Could compress edge and protect from the North West winter winds.
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 - Raising the building up on top becomes the building on the Hill placing the building lower integrates the building into the plaza activity.
 - Landscape and building should be integrated and monumental
 - Can we make the less good Spot more Beautiful? or should we use the more beautiful location.
 - High School seems like the “Big House on the Hill
 - Needs to find the appropriate distance to integrate building with plaza, closer seems better.
 - City Hall needs to be accessible from the plaza.
 - City Hall and the plaza should blend as one, and allow future development
 - Should be a way to block the wind on the Plaza with the building
 - Should keep trees, particularly the old trees the Alder is not so important.
 - We should loose as few trees as possible.
 - Best Solar Orientation is a South East orientation
 - Southern orientation is a good solar orientation
 - Walk-ability relating to Pioneer Ave
 - Parking lots for “Downtown” parking use.

- Underground parking would be good idea.
- A horseshoe shaped building could work.
- HELPFUL INFORMATION
 - Stairs can get icy in the winter.
 - General Question – what is buildings use? What is the square footage?
 - The history of the site is that the trees attract homeless.

IN THE COMMUNITY’S WORDS – TOWN SQUARE

- **EXAMPLES OF GOOD PLAZAS**
 - -Santa Fe, NM: Connectors, Open space in large area of hotels/retail
 - -Madison, WI: brings city into Capitol Square, no vehicles on State Street, pedestrians and bikes are priority
 - Vancouver, BC: convertible spaces
 - Prescott, AZ; water feature, statue
 - Europe: traditional square, heart of cathedral, anchors
 - St. Martin: Good historical examples
 - Winnipeg, Manitoba: skating area with fabric structure
 - Vail, CO: Completely designed for cars on perimeter, great example
 - San Rafael, CA: main drag, commercial centers and plaza
 - Saint Lene: very developed, buildings frame / enclose spaces
 - San Francisco, CA: terminus of Market St. (cable car), Holiday plaza, eddy spaces off of main drag, Stern Grove picnic tables
 - Prescott AZ: old courthouse, historic
 - Whistler, BC: Good access from road, Vehicles and pedestrians are integrated
 - Ft. Collins, CO: Main drag
 - Boulder, CO: the “experience”, better than Wal-Mart
 - Denver, CO: 16th St., working backward
 - Berkley, CO: Greek Theater has gently graded lawn
- What is our Anchor?
- **GOALS:**
 - Traditional Square
 - Natural
 - Make it a destination
 - Long Term Ideal: 20 Years = Success
 - Multigenerational, accessible to all
 - All Weather / All Season
 - Flexible Spaces, Mixed Uses
 - Accommodate Homer Residents’ love of the outdoors, biking and walking
 - Venue for performances and events
 - Sports and Recreation
 - Opportunity for Education and Arts
 - Commercial opportunity
- **COMPONENTS**

Traditional Square:

 - Gazebo
 - Park
 - Water Feature
 - Fountain
 - Pond

- Footbridges
- Bamboo pipes and drums
- Aesthetics
- Water feature becomes small winter skating rink
- Water feature is Anchor

Multigenerational and Accessible:

- Children / Play equipment
- Main road access
- Parking
 - Parking for pioneer
 - Shared parking
 - Pocket parking (20 spaces)
- Public Restrooms (for users when bldg is closed)
- Slow traffic
- On street parking

Natural:

- Responsible landscape
- Keep natural features
- Reduce pavement
- Trees on sidewalks
- keep large trees
- plant large trees
 - (south side of site was clear cut so no old growth; aerials from 60's show this)
- plant fast-growing species
- wood, stone, rock walls

All Weather / All Season:

- Fire Pit / Warming Place
- Aesthetic Lighting
 - LED
 - spit is NOT a model
- Covered Areas
 - Seating, tables, and spaces, still outside but protected
 - Trellis or Covered walk
 - tensile fabric shade for rain or snow
- Maximize solar (solar power good in Winter)
- Amphitheater doubles as a sledding route or skating rink

Flexible Spaces, Mixed Uses:

- Community greenhouse/gardens (sustainable)
- Pocket parks
 - Broken up smaller spaces within larger
- Storage
- Friday Events
 - First Friday Art Migration
 - Gallery Connections
- Community News

- Centralized Kiosk for Information Exchange for non-profits
 - Festivals
 - jazz fest
 - Meeting Spaces
 - Weddings
 - Boulders
 - good for climbing
 - better than structured play equipment
 - Integral structures for climbing and play throughout
 - - seating, standing for demonstrations, etc.
 - - large blocks or rocks
 - - not specifically tot lot
 - Stairs as informal seating (would need to be covered for ice) and to accommodate elevation changes
 - Benches (seating)
 - Edge with human scale features / edge that opens to large plaza space (trees, covered area, etc)
 - Integrated with building systems
- Accommodate Homer Residents’ love of outdoors, biking, and walking:*
- View
 - Amphitheater / Bandshell has good view
 - Auditorium in Kresge Michigan has a good view of lake
 - Walkways / trails
 - natural trails
 - E/W trail access
 - N/S trail access
 - trail around site (loop / perimeter)
 - dog trails
 - Maritime museum connection (islands and oceans?)
 - stepping stones
 - Less car emphasis
 - Hitching posts for horses and bikes
- Venue for performances and events:*
- lawn concerts (500 - 1500 people)
 - amphitheater / steps / Terraces
 - bandshell (visual anchor, multiple uses, conversions)
 - sculptural not just a shell
 - interactive....climbing wall?
 - Bandstand / Stage
 - outdoor theater
 - use / engage movie theater crowd
 - activities before/after theater use
- Sports and Recreation:*
- Volleyball
 - Ultimate Frisbee
 - Frisbee Golf

- Bocce ball
- Basketball
- Skate park
 - set boundaries so they don't interfere with pedestrians
- Horseshoe pit
- Games tables (chess boards)
- Playground
- labyrinth (contact mavis)
- ping pong tables (convertible)
- ice skate rink / pond
 - suitable for 100 people
 - retention pond
 - maintained
- WIFI
- tables and chairs, not for specific restaurant

Opportunity for Education and Arts:

- Visible education about sustainability
- Demonstration garden
- Workshop Space (hands-on opportunities)
- Sister city monument
- Integrate public art

Commercial opportunity:

- Café Space
- Farmers market
- (current at 50,000 sq ft)
- Continuous front of commercial
- shop fronts
- vendors (carts?) that spill out into plaza

• CONCERNS

- Drainage / streams
- Wind
 - Can be a problem, need to plan around
 - Wind protection
 - East in Winter
 - West in Summer
- Safety / Security
- Pioneer and Main, want Node
 - Need Residential development to feed activities