

Alta Planning Commission Meeting Summary
Our Lady of the Snows, Alta, Utah
April, 18th 2016, 4PM

IN ATTENDANCE:

Planning Commissioners: Joan Degiorgio (chair), Roger Bourke (by phone), Rob Voye, Dave Abraham and Mayor Tom Pollard (ex-officio). Absent: Jon Nepstad

Town of Alta staff: Chris Cawley and Jon Guldner

Members of the public: Jen Clancy, Maura Olivos

ALTA PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION ON THE COMMERCIAL CORE

Joan Degiorgio opened the planning commission work session. **Joan** described precedents to the current Town of Alta Commercial Core planning project, which include long-term questions about how the area will change over time, where new or additional elements such as transit facilities might go, how the Town can shape the proposed land exchange between Alta Ski Lifts (ASL) and the United States Forest Service (USFS), and where the “center of town” really “is”. **Joan** indicated that the planning commission may be somewhat behind schedule in providing comment on plan alternative development but that there is still plenty of time to shape the draft plan. **Joan** indicated that the goal of the work session would be to review the 5 plan alternatives and describe questions, concerns, likes and dislikes among the alternatives.

Chris Cawley described the April 7th public workshop, at which the consultant project manager presented to roughly 50 attendees on the progress to date of the planning project, and introduced the 5 plan alternatives. **Joan** asked about the direction consultants received from the public meeting, and **Chris** indicated that roughly 15 formal comments were provided, with most people indicating support for individual elements of each alternative, rather than stating a preference for a single alternative. **Chris** described that the “mid-T” road shown on alternative 3 had elicited numerous comments, which seemed equally positive and negative. **Chris** added that a community center and possible limited commercial development along the SR 210 segment between Alta Lodge and the Rustler, along with “shared street” roadway treatment, was a popular concept, as was the notion of reconfiguring vehicular circulation in and near the Albion Base parking lot. **Chris** described that Alternative 1 is mostly focused on concepts that have been most widely discussed in the recent past, such as day skier facilities in the Wildcat base area, improved public space in the Albion Area, better trail connectivity, and a community center. **Chris** also described that Alternative 5 includes a less obtrusive version of the “mid-T” road, which could be some sort of non-vehicular pathway linking the southern aspect of the lodges in a more social, pedestrian, active manner, and suggested that some sort of transportation feature south of the current lodge properties would be included in the preferred alternative.

Joan asked the planning commission for comments on the alternatives. **Roger Bourke**, joining by phone, lamented the absence of detailed cost estimates for various plan elements. **Chris** described that the economic portion of the project scope focused on learning about current commercial conditions by

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interviewing Alta business operators regarding opportunities and constraints. **Dave Abraham** and **Roger** discussed the validity of parking structure cost estimates provided by the project team; **Dave** suggested that given his experience designing parking structures, the cost per space estimates provided were too high; **Roger** observed that construction costs are indeed very high in Alta. **Mayor Pollard** opined that the goal of the project is to identify at a conceptual level where improvements should happen and roughly what type of improvements would be preferable. **Roger** observed that the high cost of structured parking made the likelihood of generating a return on investment for building a parking structure seem very low. **Roger** asked if the planning commission needed to select a single alternative or if they could pick and choose plan elements, and the commission agreed that the planning commission could select plan elements.

Dave Abraham indicated he supports the notion of providing “vertical assist” infrastructure. **Dave** prefers the illustration of a more public system that could link the transfer tow area with the Community Center. **Mayor Pollard** discussed various potential locations for a community center, and referred to **Roger Bourke’s** suggestion from a previous meeting regarding the consideration of the current Shallow Shaft/Photohaus/Town of Alta development cluster together with the town-owned “community center parcel.” **Mayor Pollard** recommended that the planning commission leave the potential land exchange in the background to focus on goals; **Rob Voyer** concurred with the mayor.

Joan Degiorgio suggested the planning commission discuss “Alternative #1: Status Quo,” and several planning commission members indicated that several elements of the alternative are in fact not the current status quo in Alta, but that most of the elements were potentially actionable in the immediate future, including community center development and roadway improvements. **Roger** observed that the recycling center depicted in the Albion Parking Lot in Alternative #1 ought to be located on the west side of town, possibly on the “telephone lot.” **Roger** opined that an additional day lodge at the Wildcat Base Area would be redundant alongside services currently provided by the Goldminer’s Daughter, and expressed concern regarding the implication that a community center could disrupt the Flagstaff parking area. **Joan** opined that while parking is extremely valuable in Alta, losing a couple of spots to something as valuable to the community as a community center would be worthwhile. **Mayor Pollard** added that if high-capacity transit comes to fruition in Alta, there should not need to be as many parking spaces in Alta. **John Guldner** referred to a conceptual design for a trailhead/bus pull-out/bathroom on the community center parcel as an example of how parking and transit facilities could be designed differently. **Chris Cawley** discussed aspects of the transit and transportation work upcoming in Mountain Accord Phase II, and projected that a “priority” bus transit destination in Alta may be recommended during the study.

Roger Bourke opined that “sidewalk cafes” illustrated in the plan alternatives were infeasible in the community center location and provided the appearance of current northside parking areas, in which parked cars are occasionally submerged by settled snow and plow debris as an example. **Chris Cawley** observed that snow removal equipment operates in adjacent corridors continuously during snow storms and that, without cars parked for long periods of time in those areas, snow removal would happen as-needed. **Chris** also observed that retail facilities with outdoor spaces operate at various locations in Alta throughout the winter and that snow removal at those facilities is handled by respective staff. **Dave**

Abraham added that any future development near transportation corridors will need to be planned in conjunction with transportation service providers.

Roger added that concert/event spaces depicted in Alternative #1 would encourage too much noise-producing activity in an otherwise quiet community. **Rob Voyer** observed that many community members have indicated that event space was a high priority for Alta, and added that such an asset could be used by more than concerts. **Joan Degiorgio** observed that the “summer Event Zone” illustrated in Alternative #3 “Mid-T” might illustrate a functional “public space” better than the event space illustrated in Alternative #1.

Mayor Pollard indicated that he likes various illustrations of alternative transportation/circulation features such as the Mid-T road included in Alternative #3. **Joan** recommended that the plan include some kind of circulation enhancement in the Albion Parking Area.

Joan asked the commission to focus on remaining elements of Alternative #1, including trails. The planning commission discussed the Albion Meadows Trail, which may be decommissioned during summer 2016 as it has been problematic to work with private property owners along the trail to maintain access. **Maura Olivos** observed that one of the trail alignments shown in the plan alternatives indicates trail development in a wetland. **Dave Abraham** lamented the potential disruption of the current Albion Meadows Trail because it provides an experience of the south aspects of the lodge properties, adding further that the south aspects of these buildings are much more accessible, visually pleasing, and socially active than the north sides.

Maura added that the presence of the Alta Ski Area snowcat shop makes expanding social and public uses of the Albion parking lot area difficult, due to the operation of large equipment in that area.

The planning commission agreed to take a five minute break from discussion.

1:20:49--When discussion resumed, **Joan Degiorgio** commented on Alternative #2, “Connect the Dots.” Several commission members commented favorably on the notion of creating more continuous street presence along Highway 210 between Alta Lodge and the Rustler. Commission members discussed precedent images contained in the Alternative #2 cross-section illustrating the “shared street” concept. **Chris Cawley** suggested that vehicular & pedestrian mingling already occurs on this stretch of roadway to some extent, particularly when the roadside parking is full of cars, although the commission agreed that the speed at which motorists often travel through this portion of town is not conducive to social activity near the roadway.

Dave Abraham asked how the Peruvian Lodge and West Alta fit into the alternatives. **Joan, Dave** and **Mayor Pollard** discussed the Westward Ho Road and the connectivity between the portions of town west of the Wildcat Parking Lot. **Mayor Pollard** observed that considering the Alta Lodge-Rustler segment of Highway 210 a “center of town” location would be of more utility to the Peruvian Lodge and residents of west Alta than the Albion Base Area. **Dave Abraham** observed the illustration of a sidewalk along Highway 210 between Alta Lodge and the Peruvian Lodge and recommended such a concept be included in the preferred alternative. **Chris Cawley** observed that the Peruvian Lodge was physically

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remote from the rest of the commercial core and that the decision not to imply any future changes to the seven private commercial properties in Alta makes it difficult to incorporate the Peruvian Lodge area in particular in this project.

Joan asked the commission to discuss Alternative #3, "Mid-T," which illustrates a road linking the Wildcat and Albion bases which originates on the north side of the Goldminer's Daughter, and traverses the slope downhill or south of Alta Lodge, the Rustler Lodge, and the Snowpine Lodge. Alternative #3 also illustrates a community center on the south side of Highway 210, a trash & recycling center in the Albion Parking Lot, various commercial and lodging uses on the east end of the proposed road near the Albion Base Area, and an enlarged summer event zone in the Albion Base Area. The planning commission discussed potential use of the road for local or priority transit access, and the potential difficulty of maintaining ski-in, ski-out access across a plowed roadway during winter months. The planning commission agreed that such a concept would be difficult to implement given concerns regarding private and public property and skier access, and that it may simply be undesirable.

Rob Voye and **Mayor Pollard** agreed that the improved circulation in the Albion parking lot illustrated in Alternative #3 is an important goal, and acknowledged **Maura Olivos's** comment regarding the difficulty of incorporating the snowcat shop into concepts for the Albion Base Area given the operation of heavy equipment in that area.

The planning commission discussed the question of whether there would ever be a single location in Alta that would be considered *the* town center. **Mayor Pollard** opined that a community center facility located on the community center parcel between Alta Lodge and the Rustler would serve a distinct purpose from a commercial hub at the Albion Base Area, with the community center likely serving the Alta community and the Albion Base serving ski area customers and summertime visitors; several commissioners agreed with this assessment.

The planning commission discussed the feasibility of sidewalks illustrated in Alternative #4, "Town and Park," and observed that currently there is mostly likely not enough space to create an elevated sidewalk along the portion of Highway 210 near the Post Office. **Chris Cawley** opined that the planning commission could proceed with the goal of enhancing walkability along Highway 210 through Alta, and focus on segments of the roadway where enhancements are most feasible.

Joan Degiorgio asked the planning commission to turn to Alternative #5, "Ski Hubs." **Joan** noted that the town's most realistic, achievable goal may be to focus on the portion of town along Highway 210, and added that the planning commission seems to agree that a concept for additional development and enhanced transportation circulation in the Albion Base Area is acceptable. **Mayor Pollard** opined that the purpose of the plan was to provide the Town of Alta a mechanism of defense against future development pressure that may not fit the Town's preferred future condition, and expressed support for the notion that the Town would develop a community center on its parcel of land between Alta Lodge and the Rustler, and consider permitting additional development in the Albion Base Area.

Roger Bourke opined that Alternative #5 looks too much like Snowbird. **Dave Abraham** observed that Alternative #5's most pertinent element is the illustration of structured parking, and indicated that it is

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time for the Town of Alta to think about managing parking differently. Mayor Pollard stated that Alternative #5 illustrated a “building envelop” concept in the Albion Base Area, and recommended the planning commission consider this concept. **Dave Abraham** and **Rob Voyer** discussed the notion of “skinning” structured parking with mixed use development, and **Dave** observed that in urban settings, zoning regulations often prohibit parking frontage on a street edge, instead requiring developers incorporate retail space or something similar in order to hide a parking structure and maximize public spaces.

Joan Degiorgio began to summarize the discussion. **Joan** observed that the planning commission generally supports the notion of community center development in the Alta Lodge-Rustler corridor of Highway 210, and that the planning commission may also support the notion of establishing a building envelope in the Albion Base Area for future commercial development. **Rob Voyer** asked whether the “vertical assist” concept was favorable to the planning commission or not, and **Dave Abraham** indicated that some sort of enhanced connection between the transfer tow elevation and the potential community center location would be a significant benefit. **Dave** added that the “mode” of this connection may not be important at this stage.

Mayor Pollard discussed the status of the project, which as of the April 18th planning commission work session, was that the project team would present a “preferred alternative” based on comments received prior to April 14th at the Advisory Committee meeting on April 20th. **Chris** indicated the goal will be to present a draft plan at a public open house in June, which will then be presented to the planning commission. **Chris** indicated he was unsure how much revision of the substance of the plan will be possible at that point in the process. **Roger** asked whether comments during the April 20th meeting would be incorporated prior to the advisory committee meeting, and the planning commission suggested this seemed unlikely. **Chris** and **Mayor Pollard** discussed the future schedule of the project and agreed that the plan may not be presented to the planning commission until July.

Mayor Pollard discussed what he considered consensus items from the previous discussion: community center development on the parcel of land owned by the Town of Alta; a traffic and transit loop and destination in the Albion Base Area, and the notion of a building envelope in the Albion Base Area. **Roger Bourke** reminded the planning commission that moving the snowcat shop could potentially introduce environmental issues if the underlying soil contains chemicals remaining from the maintenance operations conducted in the cat shop.

Roger asked the planning commission to consider a quote from Alta Ski Lifts Company founder Jay Laughlin: “You’ve got to keep some places like God made them. Take pride in Alta, because it’s the one place left that’s a little bit like old skiing.” The planning commission agreed with this sentiment. **Joan Degiorgio** opined that the guiding principles developed by the project team speak effectively to maintaining community character. **Mayor Pollard** opined that Alta will probably change some day, and that the town should seek to honor the sentiment that **Roger** expressed in shaping future change. **Maura Olivos** and **Joan** discussed the issue of capacity in Albion Basin, and issues related to operating a ski lift in the summertime for access to Albion Basin.

2:17:50 MOTION TO ADJOURN

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Rob Voyer made a motion to adjourn the planning commission meeting, **Dave Abraham** seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

The content of the minutes is not intended, nor are they submitted, as a verbatim transcription of the meeting. These minutes are a general overview of what occurred at the meeting.

These minutes were passed and approved on May 2nd, 2016.

S/ Chris Cawley
Assistant Town Administrator