

Alta Planning Commission Meeting Summary
Our Lady of the Snows, Alta, Utah
October 3rd, 2016, 4PM

IN ATTENDANCE:

Planning Commissioners: Joan Degiorgio (chair), Jon Nepstad (vice-chair), Rob Voyer, Dave Abraham, Roger Bourke, Mayor Tom Pollard (ex officio).

Town Council members in attendance: Mayor Tom Pollard (as ex officio planning commission), Cliff Curry, Harris Sondak, Elise Morgan.

Town of Alta staff: John Guldner, Chris Cawley.

Members of the public: Pat Shea, Scott Briggs, Maura Olivos, Jen Clancy, Onno Wieringa, Dave Eichel, Mimi Levitt, John Byrne, Skip Silloway, Margaret Bourke, Dan Schilling.

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Planning Commission Chair **Joan Degiorgio** opened the meeting and described the meeting agenda.

01:00 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 12 2016 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Roger Bourke made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 12, 2016 Alta Planning Commission Meeting. **Rob Voyer** seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

01:20 JOINT REVIEW/DISCUSSION OF COMMERCIAL CORE PLAN PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND FUTURE DIRECTION FOR THE PLAN.

Joan Degiorgio described that the planning commission and the community had been working on the Commercial Core project for a long time, and that at a previous meeting, the planning commission moved to pass along the Commercial Core Plan to the Town Council for their consideration. **Mayor Pollard** indicated the council had discussed the status of the plan at their September meeting, and agreed that it would be valuable to provide an additional opportunity for public input prior to discussing formal action.

Joan Degiorgio asked the audience for comments. **Skip Silloway** opined that the depiction of a town center along SR-210 between the Rustler and the Alta Lodge seemed unrealistic and potentially unsafe due to the volume of vehicular traffic in the area. **Mark Haik** indicated the preferred alternative was generally a good product and that it was developed within a good public process. **Mark** opined that there were important matters that had been absent from the discussion so far, including a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Town of Alta, Salt Lake City, United States Forest Service, and other agencies regarding Albion Basin, which may be at odds with the notion of development at the Albion Base Area. **Mark** suggested the plan needs more detail regarding how residents on the east and west ends of the Commercial Core will access the primary town center located along SR 210. **Mark** observed that the plan's depiction of two different transit centers or town centers—

Numerical annotation within section headings generally corresponds with audio recordings of Town of Alta meetings, which can be accessed at <https://soundcloud.com/townofalta>.

one at Albion Base and one along SR 210—could potentially dilute the critical mass necessary to activate either location. **Mark** recommended that the records of interviews with brokers, developers, and potential tenants referred to in a report from ZBPF be made available for public consumption; and opined that the summary of current demand for roughly 1500 square feet of additional commercial space indicated the Alta marketplace has additional problems that must be addressed.

Harris Sondak asked Mark to describe the MOU he'd mentioned earlier. **Mark Haik** described that a map within the MOU depicts Albion Basin as containing a land area east and south of a straight line drawn between a point low on the North Ridge of Patsy Marley Hill and the eastern shoulder of North Rustler, and that this line overlays areas depicted in the Commercial Core plan as being recommended for potential development. **John Guldner** indicated that the MOU represents an agreement supporting purchase of private lots in Albion Basin. **Mark Haik** disagreed with John's description, describing that the MOU was simply an agreement not to develop in Albion Basin.

Joan asked **Chris Cawley** to describe the report from ZBPF to which Mark Haik referred. **Chris** indicated that he had recently discussed ZBPF's role in the project with ZBPF staff, and obtained the report from their portion of the Commercial Core project, which had not previously been provided directly to the Town. **Chris** described that the report was provided to the Commercial Core Project Manager from Landmark Design, and that Landmark Design incorporated findings from the ZBPF study into their plan alternatives. **Chris** acknowledged the report's conclusion that the seasonality of Alta's current commercial market is not sufficient to entice developers to invest in significant commercial development in Alta.

Roger Bourke opined that the full version of the study was richer than the executive summary provided to the public. **Harris Sondak** described that he didn't understand the methods used to generate the study, and **Chris** described that the interviews were conducted during March and April, and that much of the raw data included in the full report was from the 2010 census and the current Town of Alta General Plan. **Chris** referred to key findings from the report, including that the current lack of an identifiable town center made commercial development unattractive, and that interview respondents generally indicated the need to have meeting or conference facilities, located in such a town center, in order to drive summer business.

Harris asked whether the construction costs described in the ZBPF report seemed accurate, and several individuals opined that the figures included are very low.

Mimi Levitt opined that the architectural renderings contained in the Commercial Core Plan are "un-Alta." **Joan** acknowledged that the planning commission, consultants, and town staff agree that the renderings are purely conceptual and that they do not represent any present direction toward design guidelines or imminent construction projects.

Joan Degiorgio asked Mark Haik to clarify his remarks on the connectivity of residential areas to the town center, and **Mark** described simply that the town center is a long way from the town's most concentrated residential areas. **John Guldner** described that the town center is located in the center of town because it is a natural area for some kind of center, which has been under consideration for many

years. **John** opined that the town is not seeking to build a shopping mall, and that it can pursue development of a community center on the parcel of land it acquired from USFS, regardless of whether other aspects of the plan become more feasible. **John** opined that due to the small size of the town, the residential areas in town are close enough to the town center location for it to be an attractive destination. **Cliff Curry** opined that he liked the plan, and recommended that the pedestrian connectivity between the west and east ends of town illustrated in the plan be emphasized. **Cliff** opined that making Alta more walkable could drive commercial demand. **John Guldner** described that the plan is phase-able, and that a community center and enhanced pedestrian features are the first phase. **Joan** agreed with John and describing the plan's intent to accommodate current demand, rather than driving additional demand.

Elise Morgan recommended the public provide not only negative comments but positive also comments. **John Byrne** stated that he liked the plan, particularly the connectivity it illustrates, and opined that the plan is functional regardless of whether a land swap between Alta Ski Area and USFS occurs. **Harris Sondak** opined that the most important aspects of the plan are the connectivity, the location of the town center, and the independence of the plan from the proposed land swap; **Harris** opined that the architectural renderings were independent of aspects of the plan which are intended for reflection in policy statements to be included in an amendment to the General Plan.

Onno Wieringa opined that while the town may not intend to drive additional demand, the impact of summer recreation on Albion Basin is a growing problem. **Onno** indicated that Alta Ski Area has discussed alternatives to summer management with USFS, and that Alta Ski Area hoped the ZBPF study would include more guidance for summer economic development, which would help the community contain some portion of summer recreation activity in the more developed areas within Alta's commercial core. **Onno** opined the plan acknowledges the possibility of a land exchange, and stated that pressure to restrict Alta Ski Area's receipt of land may preclude aspects of the town's plan from being realized. **Joan Degiorgio** described that the Commercial Core Plan is a vision for where the town would prefer to see additional commercial development should such development become feasible and desirable. **Mayor Pollard** stated that one goal of the commercial core plan is to envision development which could help the community achieve the goal of containing summer recreation demand in the commercial core, rather than pushing more visitors into Albion Basin. **Mayor Pollard** observed that the ZBPF report indicated initial commercial expansion would most likely feature current market participants. **Cliff Curry** opined that making the commercial area more walkable would make Alta more commercially viable during summer and winter.

Harris Sondak asked Onno Wieringa about Alta Ski Area's projections for skier growth. **Onno** suggested that rough projections for growth in skier-days are for up to fifty percent more skier days than Alta Ski Area has accommodated recently. **Onno** also stated that winter business growth will depend on improved transportation and the potential for ski resort expansion.

Pat Shea opined that the commercial core plan was generated within a rigid structure imposed upon the process by consultants, and that he recommends taking a more creative approach to envisioning Alta's future. **Joan Degiorgio** asked Pat what he thought the plan might depict if it had been generated through a process more to his liking. **Pat** opined that in the near future, virtual reality will allow people

to experience Alta without actually driving up Little Cottonwood Canyon to visit in-person (!). **Pat** opined that in the near future, USFS will require permits for those seeking to go hiking in Albion Basin, and recommended that responsible agencies recruit the Boy Scouts of America and the Girl Scouts of the USA to provide guided hiking services in Albion Basin. **Pat** recommended the Town of Alta pursue a fee-system for driving up the cottonwood canyons in conjunction with its jurisdictional partners.

Elise Morgan observed that the project included several public sessions where attendees provided creative input, and asked **Pat** what he felt was missing from this process. **Pat** opined that meetings do not often allow creative expression, and that the town should seek additional input.

Joan Degiorgio agreed with Pat Shea regarding the need to divert traffic from Albion Basin.

00:41:15 Margaret Bourke stated that she is in favor of the trash and recycling center at the west end of town. **Margaret** observed that the ZBPF study's finding of demand for under 2000' of additional retail space was not enough for the town to generate significant revenue. **Margaret** opined that encouraging loud social events in Alta during the summer season could detract from the scenic appeal that brings people to Alta to participate in Alta's economy.

Maura Olivos thanked the planning commission and the town council for their work on the plan and for listening actively to the discussions the plan has engendered. **Maura** opined that the commercial core plan is something like the infrastructure of the town's future vision, but observed that the vision the plan sets forth does not seem to be a deliberately adaptable vision. **Maura** recommended the planning commission consider possibilities including a significant drop in skier visits and a significant increase in summer visitation. **John Byrne** observed that the plan is intended to be the beginning, rather than the end, of shaping Alta's future, and suggested that, if various entities decide to move forward with elements of the plan, those entities will work with the Town to create more detailed development plans, which would involve public input. **John** recommended the town council adopt the Commercial Core Plan into the General Plan, and allow the plan to come to fruition naturally over time.

Mark Haik opined that the town council and the planning commission had not expressed their feedback on the plan openly enough. **Mark** asked the council and the planning commission to share their priorities amongst the various concepts presented in the plan. **Mark** recommended the town decide which center to designate the primary transit hub. **Mark** also suggested that the town prioritize a year-round "people mover" or vertical assist between the Wildcat Base and the town center location. **Joan** opined that the council and the commission had been actively engaged in the process and suggested the council members and commission members at the table would each state their perspectives on the plan before the end of the meeting. **Pat Shea** suggested the town's priority should be maintenance of open space, and opined that the plan should clearly state such a goal. **Joan Degiorgio** referred to the guiding principles developed as part of the plan, and opined that the principles reflected Pat's concern.

Harris observed that the plan reflects its guiding principles, and opined that while the preferred alternative may not explicitly articulate its reflection of the principles, it may not be critical for the plan to do so. **Harris** suggested that the guiding principles be highlighted in a potential general plan amendment. **John Guldner** observed that the General Plan already includes many of the sentiments

conveyed by the guiding principles. **Dan Schilling** asked whether the Commercial Core Plan includes any attempt to improve the Little Cottonwood Canyon road traffic situation, and **Joan Degiorgio** described that while Mountain Accord is primarily responsible for evaluating solutions to this problem, one goal of the plan is to provide the town of Alta a means to respond to potential future transportation projects.

Joan Degiorgio asked the planning commission and town council to respond to Mark Haik's suggestion to express their opinions on the plan. **Elise Morgan** opined that the community center is a priority, and that the transportation hub is also important, although the elements of the plan should be considered flexible pending transportation plans developed by Mountain Accord. **Elise** opined that there is more work to do to plan additional recreation attractions in the base area and connectivity to alternative destinations such as Grizzly Gulch. **Mayor Pollard** opined that the process followed to develop the plan justifies the elements presented in the plan, and stated that the plan is intended to present concepts for where improvements and some development should take place. **Roger Bourke** observed that "Barb's Trail," depicted on the plan, has already been enhanced, and suggested that the transportation concepts illustrated in the plan could improve traffic flow significantly. **Roger** opined that the location of a transit hub may be less important than planning to manage the impacts of passengers disembarking from transit. **Roger** opined that the General Plan, which dates to 2005, may be significantly out of date. **Roger** stated the town could establish a longer-term vision than the Commercial Core Plan is intended to provide.

Harris opined that the town council and planning commission had participated in the process vocally. **Harris** responded to Skip Silloway's earlier comments regarding the feasibility of placing a town center along the busy stretch of SR 210 through Alta, stating that simply making this placement could impose cause motorists to notice the need to slow down as they drive through town. **Harris** observed that given the constraints to development and planning in Alta, the Commercial Core Plan is a reasonably creative product. **Harris** commended the inclusion of housing in the plan, and opined that the town ought to contain housing available to employees and lower income people that is not conditioned upon employment with a particular business. **Chris** thanked Harris for pointing out this detail, observed that there are numerous public uses located on private property through Alta, and opined that a town center could provide a more sustainable location for such uses.

Dave Abraham commended the level of detail articulated in the plan, adding that the plan attempts to visually convey concepts and locations rather than represent firm development plans. **Dave** opined that the plan's basis in Alta's current infrastructure is prudent, and that the goal of creating modest additional density in the current nodes of activity throughout town is a logical way to activate those areas. **Jon Nepstad** observed that the decision of where to locate a town center is welcome after years of discussing the question, and concurred with previous comments regarding the strategic density and pedestrian enhancements represented in the plan. **Rob Voye** stated his support for the development of a town center and opined that the demand for a socially active space, accessible outside of ski season and after the lifts close for the day during ski season, is significant.

Mayor Pollard and **Elise Morgan** discussed the agenda for the upcoming October 2016 town council meeting, and **Chris Cawley** confirmed the commercial core plan would be on the agenda.

1:20:10 Planning Commission Review and discussion of proposed Zoning amendments.

Joan Degiorgio asked whether the planning commission wished to proceed with this agenda item or postpone this discussion until the November meeting. **John Guldner** described the project which led to the presentation of proposed changes to the zoning ordinance, and the commission agreed to postpone the discussion until the following meeting.

1:21:45 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Alta Planning Commission meeting will be November 7th.

1:21:56 NEW BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

No new business was introduced.

1:22:00 MOTION TO ADJOURN

Joan Degiorgio asked for a motion to adjourn the planning commission meeting. **Jon Nepstad** made a motion to adjourn, **Roger Bourke** seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

The content of the minutes are not a verbatim transcription of the meeting. These minutes are a general overview of what occurred at the meeting.

These minutes were approved on November 7, 2016.

S/ Chris Cawley
Assistant Town Administrator