

SKAGWAY 2030 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

March Meeting Summary:

LAND USE

On a sunny March evening, about 35 residents gathered in the Training Room in the Public Safety Facility to discuss Skagway's future land use with Planning and Zoning Commissioners. In dialogue guided by the consultant team, participants discussed future residential, commercial, industrial, recreation, and open space needs and possible options for addressing these needs: infill development, development of Garden City, rezoning of the land from the bridge to the DOT shops, development along Dyea Road, and development of the land east of the river.



Benefits of infill development—construction of new buildings between existing structures in the townsite—that were offered by the group included: making best use of Skagway's flat land, addressing the vulnerability of renting, and capitalizing on owner's choice. The group cited several drawbacks for infill development including: the cost of vacant lots, the assumption that tour companies will purchase available lots, and aversion to greater density. Several questions about infill development arose through the conversation:

- When will a new wastewater plant be needed to handle volume added from here, across the bridge, and from more visitors?
- Are there ways to incentivize owners of vacant lots to sell or develop?
- Can we allow smaller lot sizes?
- What is the status of the conversation around higher density zoning?
- How will repaving State Street affect our ability to provide water service?

As part of this discussion, the high cost of land and construction were mentioned several times, as was the fact that there is so little land available that it is typically word-of-mouth to hear about opportunities to purchase a lot (or a home) and that the city's loan program is fantastic. We also discussed the fact that seasonal employee housing is spread throughout town (see photo of map, every star is a building or home where 1 to 180 seasonal employees are housed).

Next, the group discussed the merits and disadvantages of developing the Garden City RV Park site. The conversation of merits included support for mixed use and different types of housing, housing affordability, possible designs including with senior housing and a senior center, and shared recreation spaces. Disadvantages the group advanced were higher demand for parking, potential parking conflicts, and that some did not like higher density in the townsite. Information to be gathered around this option includes:

- Would a Housing Trust pay property taxes?
- Sketches of possible development options
- If developing without a through road would require ordinance

As the group considered water and sewer extension to the land from the bridge to the DOT

shops, which would enable higher density residential development, participants noted increased traffic at the bridge and increased policing needs as concerns, and offered the following as pros:

- Good land for development
- Could allow for more RVs than currently planned at “15-acre”
- Higher density development such as condos would increase affordability
- Better fit here for higher density than the townsite
- Preserves “small town” feel of town site if higher residential density is out here

During this part of the conversation, questions arose around zoning code changes needed to allow higher density development in general, and for condos and zero-lot lines, and what the Municipality can do to encourage year-round rentals and local ownership.

The group then discussed options for Dyea Road, including that this location is road accessible, that the Municipality could subdivide and sell additional land above existing development or off the lower end of the rifle range road, that this area is only suitable for low density development like single-family homes, that construction is expensive in this location making it cost prohibitive for most residents, and that access to water is challenging. One idea was to install a water tank to gravity feed homes. Another question was how close to the decommissioned landfill and the rifle range can drinking water wells be safely drilled.

The group largely did not support the possibility of residential development on the new city land east of the river due to being in or close to the Skagway River floodplain and the surrounding steep terrain and mass-wasting/rock slides, but participants did raise the merits of converting the old paintball course into a campground. It is reportedly being used in summer by those who drive up at night and sleep in their cars due to lack of housing, so why not install a port-a-potty, a 4,000 gallon water tank, and make it a temporary campground? Finally, the group brainstormed possibilities for city facilities and recreation. There was support for joint-use facilities such as combining any expansion of the recreation center with a commercial kitchen and a senior center. The former fire station is now being used to store public works vehicles; ideas for future use included converting it to support voc-tech training, or as a creator space/fab-lab/center for artists workshop. After the meeting it was noted that there is also a proposal to create a Vehicle Museum there. Formal designation of the dike trail as a recreational trail for ATVs, cyclists, and pedestrians seemed to have the support of all.



NEXT OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED

The work session was part of the ongoing Skagway 2030 Comprehensive Plan process, which encourages community members to share their aspirations and concerns. The next opportunities to get involved are:

- **Thursday, April 25, 5:30–7:30 pm**, Public Safety Facility Training Room, Topics: Housing (possibly adding Quality of Life to this agenda)
- **Saturday, April 27, 9:00 am–1:00 pm**, at the Health Fair, Recreation Center
- **Thursday, May 23, 5:30–7:30 pm**, Public Safety Facility Training Room, Topic: Economic Development
- More work sessions are planned on the fourth Thursday of most months to explore community priorities around transportation, public services and facilities, and natural and cultural resources.