

**Downtown NDPs
Focus Group Meeting #1
September 17, 2009**

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

<i>Focus Group</i>		
▪ Bill Sauser	▪ Elizabeth Tenney	▪ John Walter
▪ Bill Taylor	▪ Eric Wasserman	▪ Mary Handel
▪ Bruce Woodward	▪ Gary Small	▪ Rick Wood
▪ Chuck Lande	▪ John Mueller	▪ Tom Cage
▪ Dan Dawson	▪ John Vereuck	▪ Tony Colasardo
<i>Town Staff</i>	<i>MMSA</i>	
▪ Mark Wardlaw	▪ Rebecca Paranick-Poiset	
▪ Ellen Clark	▪ Jim Smith	

Meeting Introduction

Town staff Mark Wardlaw and Ellen Clark reviewed the agenda and meeting materials, including an overview of the NDP objectives, process, and Framework approved by the Planning Commission and Town Council.

The importance of the Focus Group as a group of engaged individuals, representing significant knowledge and a diversity of interests was noted. The purpose of the study and its intended outcome is to come up with consensus-based solutions for the future of Main Street Corridor and for Shady Rest as separate but related districts, with land use ideas expressed as zoning changes, and not placing specific buildings on pieces of property.

The study will recommend changes (if needed) or refinements to existing land use, mobility and infrastructure in the downtown area to address identified issues. The Guiding Principles accepted by Town Council, and the General Plan already provide many ideas about what the future of the downtown could be. The Hart Howerton plan is one proposed concept, and there are others possible, including ones that could involve much less extensive change. The Town Council directed that the alternatives considered for Main Street include a plan involving smaller changes and improvements to existing conditions along Main Street.

The Downtown NDPs must tackle a range of complex and controversial issues. Some concerns, like the burden of costs for improvement, property takings and downzoning have been expressed already; others will come up in the process and will need to be addressed. The NDPs process will include review of issues and opportunities, alternatives, and recommendations for a preferred plan based on public and Focus Group input. It will be important to have a thorough process but also meet the expectation of the Town Council that the process will be completed efficiently over the next few months. Ultimately,

implementing a successful plan will require partnership between property owners, outside investors, the Town and other agency stakeholders.

Focus Group Discussion

There was discussion about the relationship and use of the Hart Howerton (H/H) concept in the NDP planning effort. Some commented that there are many good ideas in that plan that could be useful for the Downtown NDPs (DNDPs) process, recognizing that H/H is a well-qualified firm that brought significant planning expertise in developing their concept.

The Focus Group generally agreed that the H/H concept should be “up on the wall” among the ideas and alternatives for the Downtown, and was a useful starting point for discussion. Even if the plan’s concepts aren’t quite right, it will be useful to consider the basis and intent of the concepts are (eg. improved connectivity). The H/H plan will be translated to a more diagrammatic form showing land use, rather than buildings.

The group discussed the importance of setting clear expectations and goals for the districts and subareas, to understand what the desired outcomes are, then work on solutions. The need to have early input from condo owners, and from agencies was also discussed. Town staff noted that they will be coordinating with these groups.

Guiding Principles

The group reviewed and made the following comments on the eleven guiding principles set out in the Framework. Comments on the guiding principles are shown in italics below:

1. Vibrant mix of uses (retail, commercial, hotel/lodging, workforce housing, parks, etc). Uses should allow offices, residential housing and visitor accommodations above ground floor retail oriented to the street.
2. Active day and evening and through all four seasons (e.g. anchor retail, services, open space and parks, entertainment uses/special events, workforce housing, art, etc)
 - *General agreement on Guiding Principles 1 and 2*
 - *Vibrant was defined as “lively, animated” with people on the street.*
 - *Principles 1 and 2 may not be applicable to all areas of downtown.*
 - *Principles should minimize use of adjectives – sufficient to state “Mixed Use” as a goal.*
3. Grand boulevard, most significant entry and exit for the town; determine how to improve the appearance of State Route 203 and the entrance to town (“sense of arrival”).
 - *General agreement with the need for better gateway to town and “welcome to Mammoth.”*
 - *Guiding Principle 3 should also address traffic calming to slow traffic as it enters town, while recognizing the need to move people through.*

4. Improve connectivity and circulation with bike and pedestrian paths, sidewalks, roads, and transit. Incorporate suitable traffic calming measures and innovative snow management.
5. Attractive and pedestrian-oriented streetscape that is walkable year-round, vibrant, landscaped, accessible and safe.
 - *General agreement with Guiding Principles 4 and 5.*
 - *Emphasize connection to North Village along resort corridor, including ways that get people out of their cars, and improve unsafe walking conditions.*
 - *Discussion of what “creative snow management” means (could be more clearly stated as “snow removal”), and use of assessment districts for snow removal, which is successful on Old Mammoth Rd.*
6. Maintain views of the Sherwin Range, the Knolls and Mammoth Mountain from public spaces and include significant tree preservation.
 - *General agreement, no changes.*
7. Assess strategically located public parking facilities to serve commercial areas. Convenient structured parking, small-scale surface parking, and shared and pooled parking.
8. Strip mall development pattern shifted to a pattern of commercial in front and parking in back.
 - *Guiding Principles 7 and 8 should be combined.*
 - *Principles should recognize the need for appropriate, strategic parking solutions, tailored to context and location within district including both underground and at-grade parking. One size doesn't fit all – underground or parking in rear not necessarily the right solution everywhere.*
 - *Good transitions to neighboring properties need to be provided from parking areas – appropriate screening .*
9. Provide public access to surrounding forest lands.
 - *General agreement, no changes.*
10. Energy efficient design and high quality architecture.
 - *General agreement.*
 - *“Quality Architecture” defined as site and Mammoth appropriate, quality materials and finishes.*
 - *Heating district/geothermal noted as part of energy conservation*
11. Emphasize the unique qualities of and provide a sense of arrival, transition and connection to each subarea within the district (see specific characteristics in the Neighborhood and District Character Element of the General Plan).
 - *Not every subarea or type of area needs a gateway.*
 - *Different land use and development types will naturally help to create definition between subareas.*
 - *Emphasis on successful transitions from area to area, and avoidance of a “hodgepodge” of development types and uses like there is today.*

Critique of Hart/Howerton Plan

The group provided their top “likes” and “dislikes” of the concepts in the H/H plan, including the following:

Likes	Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town square ▪ Retail area ▪ Strong emphasis on entry to town/sense of arrival ▪ Emphasis on distinctive qualities for each area ▪ Sports fields/venue at entry to town ▪ Concentrated and mixed-use pedestrian/ commercial district ▪ Gondola extension ▪ That Shady Rest is being considered in the plan ▪ Emphasis on connectivity up Main Street to the Village/resort corridor ▪ Clustering of sports fields with civic center - convenience and proximity. ▪ Reduction in width of 203 ▪ Mixed use downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linear open space south of Main Street near Sierra Valley Sites ▪ No workforce housing on Shady Rest site ▪ Feasibility/cost of gondola station and potential effect on views ▪ “Hotel only” district, and lack of mixed use transition to retail area. ▪ Potential effect of gondola in taking people off the street and bypassing commercial areas ▪ Divisiveness that H/H plan seems to have caused ▪ 9-lane Main Street ▪ “Wasted” real estate under Main Street ▪ “Barracks”-like appearance of hotel district ▪ Lack of mixed use extending west along Main Street from Old Mammoth Road

Other Comments

- Shady Rest should be a combination of park and housing.
- Consider entry/gateway at Meridian/203.
- Mixed-use area should extend up further up Main Street.
- “Hotel district” should be more inclusive (ie. not just hotel, but a broader range of uses).
- How will ball-fields be animated in winter?

Followups/Next Meeting

- PDFs of H/H plan and list of Focus Group members to be emailed (RP) and posted on the web. (TML)
- Doodle poll for next meeting to be emailed (RP), targeting week of 10/12