



2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

City Council & Planning Commission Interview Summary

January 27, 2014

The consultant team interviewed all City Council and Planning Commission members on January 13 and 16. Below is a summary of findings from those interviews.

Top Priorities for Anacortes

Based on these interviews, there are a number of priorities that stand out:

- **Maintain Anacortes' high quality of life and marine character.** Participants agreed that Anacortes is a unique community with a dramatic marine setting and a generous supply of parks, natural areas, and open spaces within and surrounding the city. While acknowledging the need to accommodate projected employment and residential growth, the City needs to protect these unique resources.
- **Develop a rational long term plan for the waterfront areas,** especially the CM and I zoned shoreline properties south of Cap Sante Marina. Participants stressed the need examine the market economics and trends associated with the existing permitted uses and other possible waterfront uses, to help the City make a wise, informed decision for the long term good of the community.
- **Focus on economic development.** Build on the Anacortes Futures Project work, and explore all types of jobs for the future, including manufacturing, industrial, and marine trade jobs, as well as technical IT and more 21st century jobs. The need for living wage jobs in the community is particularly important. The plan needs to include a strategy with actions to help achieve economic development goals.
- **Strengthen local retail opportunities.** Participants largely agreed that some changes were needed in order to promote more local retail opportunities – to provide more convenience to Anacortes citizens and reduce sales tax leakage. At the same time, chosen strategies should minimize negative impacts to existing businesses and design provisions should be included to ensure that such developments meet community design goals.
- **Maintain and enhance the character and identity of Anacortes.** Participants value the character of Anacortes' Downtown and its other historical neighborhoods. Considering that these areas present opportunities for infill development, thoughtful design is needed to ensure that new development is carefully integrated into the context of these areas. Participants also recognize that there is room for improvement along the city's more visible commercial corridors (including both the design of the streetscape and private development). Updated design standards were frequently mentioned as a tool to help improve the character of infill development in commercial and multifamily areas.
- **Enhance walkability and connectivity.** Participants were unanimous in their support for improving the walkability of the City. This includes safe and attractive sidewalks, good pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, the waterfront, and downtown, waterfront multi-purpose trails (Tommy Thompson – Guemes Channel Trails), and the ever expanding network of forest trails in Anacortes

parks. All felt strongly about the Guemes Channel Trail and are committed to seeing it completed in the near future. Multi-modal connectivity is also an important concept for the city. This includes enhancing bicycle access throughout the city and improving both local transit access and connections to Burlington/Mt Vernon.

Top Priorities for the Plan and Community Engagement Process

- **Create a vision.** This process is the City's chance to understand the community's vision for how Anacortes should change over time. Growth will come, so plan for change so that it happens the way we want it to happen through clear zoning and policies. Also, it's difficult to arbitrate development after-the-fact (i.e., through conditional use permits), so use this opportunity to set it up properly upfront to guide public decision-making. When people back a vision, they are vested in their community and understand how town management and public investment improve their property values and quality of life.
- **Make this a usable plan** with clear and tangible goals, actions, and milestones.
- **Broad public engagement** is key for allowing the Plan to represent the full Anacortes community. Participants would like to hear from more than a small vocal sub-set of the city's population. Therefore, the community engagement process needs to incorporate a range of events and input opportunities. This includes a combination of stakeholder interviews, meetings with community groups, surveys, and public meetings. Surveys were an important resource, and participants felt that a combination of public meeting surveys, online surveys, and even door to door surveys that volunteers could administer.
- **Provide clear and accurate information** throughout the planning process so that public perception on controversial issues is not clouded by rumors and misunderstandings.
- **Involve City Council throughout the process.** Have City Council and Planning Commission meet together often.

Another noteworthy priority was to facilitate discussion and coordination between the entrepreneurial community and environmental community on land use issues to seek common ground and make it so that both groups can win. Likewise, encourage businesses that are mindful of environmental practices.

Numbers in parentheses note the number of people who mentioned the issue or idea (when more than one person brought up the idea/issue).

Community engagement

Thoughts on process and timing

- Go beyond the few strong voices to **reach broad representation** by providing alternative methods to engage than just public meetings. (5) *Counter opinion—it doesn't matter what activities we do since the same few people will show up. Also, some people elect folks so that they don't have to attend meetings. Recognize this, and hold workshops for those who want to be involved (and make sure those interested are invited). Then do just a little bit of drumming up participation elsewhere.*
- The **Anacortes Futures Project is a great starting point**, but move beyond it. (5) People generally like the AFP, but there is some concern since MJB was involved.
- Get **City Council and Planning Commission in the same room** to work through issues together as much as possible. Use whatever format needed to meet the open meeting rules. (4)
- The community needs to feel heard. Do more than what State law requires for public process. Use this plan to show that the City listens to its constituents.
- Set the tone and expectation that this is a fresh start for Anacortes and will be done in a respectful way.
- Clearly explain the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan and what kind of input we're looking for. Create a basic memo with this information for social media.
- Provide clear and accurate information so people fully understand issues.
- Use quantitative detail to keep information specific to Anacortes. This helps people feel that they're being heard and shows that consultant work is tailored to Anacortes.
- Save some consultant time for the adoption and implementation phase.
- Council is eager to be regularly involved throughout the process.
- There is no need to rush the process; use all of 2015 to do a full update.
- Look for ways to collaborate with partners to help leverage City resources.
- Set aside \$50,000 each for the transportation and parks plans. There is sufficient money in the budget and support for this to make the Plan complete.

Ideas for engagement activities or ways of advertising

- For surveys and meetings, go to different locations at different times.
- Do unbiased, statistically valid surveys (not just sent to particular interest groups) that are simple, straightforward, and easy to tabulate with target topics to get people interested
 - Do phone surveys
 - Volunteers go door-to-door to distribute questionnaire and collected three days later (Forest Board got a great response in 1980, learned a lot, and educated people using this method) (3)
 - Send surveys via phone/utility bills

- Go to where people are
- Have a booth at the Anacortes Farmers Market. 1x mo; 2nd Saturday of each month.
- Provide child care at public meetings
- Sip and Speak in late evening to involve the 21-55 age group
- Utilize Johnny's coffee shop and other existing community gathering places (e.g., host small group discussions, leave surveys there, advertise events there)
- Do "Coffees with Laurie" to provide an informal venue for non-confrontational conversations in a relaxed atmosphere
- Work with graduate students out of UW (in 1950s, went door-to-door asking people about their interests)
- Do community meetings. The recent (Makers) Cap Sante Marina planning project is an example of a well-run series of workshops—from using previous work, to melding many ideas, to critiquing and refining into a workable concept. (2)
- Advertise meetings at "thrift shop row"—Kiwanis, Soroptimists, and Christ Church thrift shops
- Go to events like Oyster Run
- Advertise in the Anacortes American and Skagit Valley Herald, but also find alternative methods
- Distribute flyers at Council meetings (particularly when many people are attending)
- Use City Council/Planning Commission members' personal blogs and social media

Important groups to engage

- The 21-55 age group (2)
- Schools and youth (2) (Sheri, Liz, and Ryan have access to youth)
- Senior Center
- Public security (police?)
- Food banks
- Shelter (Eric Johnson)
- Boys and Girls Club
- Alternative schools
- NAMI Skagit (services for mentally ill)
- Arts Commission (arts festival)
- Young adults
- Anacortes Community Theatre
- Churches (Eric Johnson's group)
- Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL) (Councilman Laumbattus and Denise Crow are good contacts)
- Forest Board (Marty is a good contact)
- Anacortes Conservation Voters
- Transition Fidalgo
- Forest Land Supporters

- Evergreen Islands
- Two Rotary groups
- Two Kiwanis Clubs (one meets every Thursday at noon)
- Two Soroptimist groups
- Anacortes Housing Authority
- Hometruster of Skagit
- Marine-related businesses south of the Port property
- Small business owners (separately from/in addition to Chamber)
- Chamber of Commerce (about 2/3 of businesses involved with Chamber)
- Job seekers
- Port
- Large military presence (because of Whidbey Island base)

Land use, zoning, and growth

General considerations

- Anacortes has an extremely limited amount of land that is undeveloped. It's **critical for zoning to accommodate the projected growth**. (5) Likewise, more people in Anacortes is desirable. (2) *Counter opinion—perhaps annex more of the island to increase residential areas?*
- The undeveloped vacant properties are Anacortes' best hope for evolving. Their zoning should be flexible and encouraging of **infill development** for a better mix of uses and higher density town. (4)
- **Identify growth trends**. For example, is a retirement community an important factor in the future? Provide numbers on the senior population (active and those with limited mobility). (2)
- It is critical to **balance the City budget with the future build out**.
- Vertically mixed use development (e.g., Ballard and Maple Leaf) is good so that **people and activities are close together** and parking can be less of a constraint. This needs to be tied to better bus service or car sharing service and more amenities downtown (e.g., dry goods store).
- Require **development agreements** on undeveloped land so that controversial uses are accommodated in an intelligent way.
- **Match intense land uses with streets** that can support increased travel.

Industrial lands, including MJB discussion (also see Economic Development section)

The future of waterfront industrial lands (especially the MJB property) is controversial. Diverging views include:

1. Protect the land for marine industrial uses, and
2. Use the land for the highest and best use regardless of the need for water access.

Varying thoughts on ideal location of industrial lands include:

- East of R Ave should be industrial, but not big industry.

- The southern part of Commercial Ave should be industrial/light manufacturing and boat building, whereas the northern part should be retail, commercial marine, hotel, or convention center.
- Create a transitional zone between downtown and the waterfront to allow a greater mix of uses on industrial land, but restrict architectural and landscape elements.
- Industrial/manufacturing uses are good on large pieces of property on the highway.
- In town, industrial/manufacturing is good at Dakota Creek and on Port property.

Thoughts on industrial uses in general:

- Be careful with industrial zoning so that the industries match the skills of local graduates and pay well.
- Recognize that to get living wage jobs, Anacortes needs zoning that supports light manufacturing and industrial jobs.
- Consider that if any industrial lands are given to other uses, replace it with industrial land elsewhere (i.e., no net loss of industrial land).

Codify uses in the public interest

Figure out where the community wants different uses, tweak the zoning to codify the vision, and stop using conditional use permits. (3) Important considerations include:

- Create a plan for the north coast (Lovericks/Trident Seafoods area) so that current uses (residential) and zoning (commercial marine) are better synchronized. (5)
- Consider where large retail can be placed (also see Economic Development section regarding retail).
- Waterfront uses:
 - Present the right package of waterfront uses, and people will accept it.
 - Many people don't want condos on the waterfront, but it could be accepted if they're set back and attract people to live in Anacortes.
 - Put high density housing facing R Ave, and upscale housing facing T Ave to make use of waterfront views. (2)
 - Provide greater public access to the water.
 - Encourage more mixed use on the waterfront.
- Downtown development:
 - Commercial Ave should be the strongest commercial core. (2)
 - Look at barriers to mixed use development downtown. For example, rethink the parking requirements for new development. There's no need to require one level of parking. (3)
- Set development restrictions now on Guemes Trail properties so that compatible uses line the trail. (2)
- Focus higher density housing on the SR 20 corridor.
- Skyline and western Anacortes need a vision:
 - Capitalize on the Skyline waterfront.
 - This area needs commercial spaces, a grocery, and gathering spaces.
- Hospital overlay request:

- Consider emergency and general access and proximities to related medical support.
- Possibly prohibit other medical uses elsewhere on Commercial Ave.

Examples of past planning that highlight needs for change

- The **Tethys water bottling plant proposal** in an LM1 zone was highly controversial because it would sacrifice a large area of industrial land for little community benefit (i.e., low-paying jobs). (3) A placeholder ordinance (until the Comprehensive Plan process settles the issue) has been adopted that requires a conditional use process for anything over 300,000 SF outside of downtown and 200,000 SF in town.
- The **north coast** area is zoned commercial, but conditional use permits have led to primarily residential uses. Zoning and on-the-ground uses should be better synchronized. (5)
- Poorly written code led to the **Memory Care Facility** being built in an R3 zone (under a conditional use permit) with streets that could not support the more intense use. (2)

Housing

Affordable housing

Anacortes has a great need for affordable housing (as emphasized by the statistic that one third of school kids are on free or reduced lunch). Set a strategy for providing a greater diversity of housing. (6)

- Maintain mid- and low-income housing. Locals and hourly manufacturing workforce can't afford the \$450,000 median house price (so they move to Mt Vernon). (2)
- Define "affordable" housing.
- Revisit Ian Muntz's 2005 low-income housing study.
- Make sure affordable housing is placed where access to transit and non-motorized routes exists.
- Provide for homes with yards for families raising children.

Strategies for getting more affordable housing

- Work with Anacortes Housing Authority and Hometruster of Skagit.
- Explore community land trusts.
- Make accessory dwelling units easier to achieve and address their parcel ownership issue. (2)
- Revise covenants to allow mother-in-laws. Covenants are problematic, and are found on more than half of Anacortes' properties. (2)
- Explore Skagit County's rapid rehousing model, which aims for long term housing solutions rather than shelters or temporary housing. However, consider the potential ramifications of "ghetto-izing" an area.

Higher density housing

Single-family housing is no longer appropriate as the only housing type in Anacortes. (8) The following suggest ways to accommodate higher density housing:

- Reducing parking minimums or allowing a fee in lieu would make developing downtown housing more feasible. (3)

- Residential over commercial is already permitted in the CBD; remove any barriers to its development.
- Accommodate growth by allowing attractive high-rise apartments somewhere (e.g., in the R4 zone).
- Waterfront housing is fine. Taking advantage of views makes it attractive to new residents. (2)
- Improve the quality of non-single family housing types (e.g., refinery housing, split level).
- Townhomes are great.
- Choose appropriate locations for large multifamily housing, not in established residential areas.
- There is a lot of potential for infill housing in residential areas.
- The Old Town Overlay prohibits duplexes because it was being abused. The Overlay is restrictive but allows for second units.
- Housing near wildlife areas is not ideal because of rat infestations.
- There is no visible pressure on housing in the city right now.

Local examples of good housing

- Cottage housing at Anacopper Road and Oaks Ave near the airport.
- Cottage housing on J Ave.
- Archipelago across from Island View Elementary School at 26th
- Anacortes Family Center—neighbors pleasantly surprised by low-income housing development
- Townhomes off of Fidalgo Bay Road are attractive and in high demand
- Microresidences at 16th between M and N (in progress, but one is finished)—3 units on 6,000 SF lot, but looks nice.
- San Juan Passage—attractive, dense development near the ferry, may have LID features
- Condominiums on Storvik Park with underground parking.
- Multifamily development between the High School and the pool and diagonally on the lot.
- Apartments above rehabilitated New Wilson at 8th and Commercial (southwest corner) are affordable. This was a Housing Authority project paid for with a block grant.

Economic development

Big ideas

- People want to be able to live and work on the island, but housing needs to be affordable and living-wage jobs available. (4)
- Capitalize on the waterfront history and way of life. Similarly, use the waterfront as a jumping off point for revitalization to attract people to Anacortes. (3)
- Brand Anacortes to reinforce its values and identity (e.g., as an outdoor place that values sustainability). (See more about identity themes in the Community Design section.)
- Address poverty issues in Anacortes—maintain the local economy and be as vibrant as possible.
- Make it easy for people to come to town and spend money.

- Businesses that try to locate here are chased off by a small vocal minority (e.g., yacht builder about 10 years ago, recently the Tethys water bottling company).
- Attract people to Anacortes with its many amenities, such as the high quality school district, access to rail, access to water, bike trails, and off-the-beaten-path nature (so it's easier to hide secret work from competitors, as in the Boeing R&D project).
- **Clearly show needs, trends, and impacts to make educated decisions.** (4) Some issues and ideas needing support or more information include large format retail, best use of waterfront industrial lands, and ecotourism, discussed below. (Also, see Bob Berry's critiques on the Anacortes Futures Project economic analysis [get comments to Greg].)

Large format retail

- Provide facts and statistics explaining big box store impacts on small businesses. (2)
- Could retail produce enough good-paying jobs to be worthwhile?
- People need a dry goods store in town, and it would encourage locals, commuters, and visitors to spend more money in town.
- The current MJB proposal includes a grocery store, but this may put existing grocers out of business.
- Use negotiations to make new development meet the needs of the town. For example, if a large retail store comes, negotiate for them to not have a hardware section since there are already two hardware stores in town.
- Small businesses are more entwined with the community and create a greater benefit than larger stores.
- Fear that if we don't take advantage of what people want, customers will go to the Swinomish tribe or elsewhere.
- Previous Chamber study on retail leakage was not meaningful because the data was so urban based.

Industrial and marine jobs versus other types of jobs (also see the Land Use section above and waterfront industrial lands section below)

- There is a good maritime industry basis here—make full use of the sites already tailored to that use. (2)
- Focus on marine and aerospace tech jobs because they pay well and fit with the marine community (e.g., boatbuilding and airplane materials are similar). Note that Boeing is doing a 2-year research project in town.
- Consider the types of jobs as compared to housing affordability.
- Boating is no longer an income-generating industry, so don't count on it.
- People come from all over the world to buy boats here.
- It's easier to promote tourism here than industry.
- Consider 21st century jobs (e.g., technical IT).
- Invest in fiber optics to attract software/knowledge/tech-based industries.
- Consider businesses that can locate anywhere.

Utilizing waterfront industrial lands for economic development

Diverging viewpoints include “keep waterfront industrial lands” versus “the old guard needs to accept that this town will die if it doesn’t change” (also see Land Use section above).

- Invite industry that works. Find the highest and best use. Recognize if stacking boats is no longer this and that blue collar industry is a thing of the past. (4)
- Industrial zoning should be retained for jobs.
- Revitalize the Anacortes waterfront with more Anthony’s-style stuff, a mini-REI, hotels. Precedent: Fairhaven in Bellingham.
- Barstone (MJB’s developer) is a local guy, does good work, and is willing to invest. Why not let him?
- Respect the history of the 1960s waterfront urban renewal project. People who lived through it say, “those people didn’t lose their homes just so you can build a condo there.” (3)
- No property owners want their land zoned industrial because of its lower land value. All the vacant land has been owned by one owner.
- MJB and younger people say, “that land is just sitting vacant; move on.”
- Do *something* on the MJB property; it’s riskier to let it sit vacant as we wait for industrial growth. (2)
- Opportunity at the cleaned up old mill site for new development.

Making use of the natural setting for tourism

Capitalize on ecotourism and recreational opportunities. (7)

- Advertise the wonderful natural setting, parks, and recreational opportunities (e.g., 50 miles of trails in the City, forestland bike trails). Gain notoriety for being bicycle friendly. (4)
- Continue building the trails. Guemes Trail could be a great destination. (4)
- Connect downtown to the waterfront.
- Consider an aquarium as an anchor amenity.
- Encourage a high-end hotel that capitalizes on waterfront views. (2)
- Make Anacortes the jewel of the San Juans, and a destination in its own right. Capture the ferry traffic. (3)

Downtown and small businesses

- Improve the wintertime economy (particularly for restaurants).
- Set up zoning and regulations properly so that businesses have a predictable and easy process.
- Update the parking requirements for downtown development so that they are no longer an obstacle.
- Make downtown the highly visible central hub and gathering place. One way to reinforce the mindset of downtown as the place to be is to move the Farmers Market to Commercial Ave.
- Maintain a vibrant downtown Commercial Ave by creating more opportunities to live downtown and have a synergistic mix of uses.
- Reinvigorate Commercial Ave south of 12th Street (see Dan Burden’s walkability report).
- The Chamber of Commerce is understaffed to adequately do all the work needed.

- Hire economic development City staff to recruit businesses.
- The 2% hotel tax currently used by the Chamber for City advertising should be used to draw people into Anacortes in a more direct way, such as through street improvements.
- Strategically locate parking so that people use downtown and explore.
- Anthony's has attracted ferry traffic to downtown.

Community design

Reinforce Anacortes' identity

Look and feel

Define, encourage, and preserve Anacortes' "look and feel" through design guidelines and streetscape improvements. Anacortes' identity includes elements of:

- Art
- Marine/marinas/waterfront
- Agriculture
- Old town on Commercial Ave
- 12 St north
- Forestlands
- San Juan ferry hub
- Thommy Thompson and Guemes Trails
- Houses rehabilitated as businesses add to a desirable funky downtown feel.
- Cap Sante view
- Small town charm (2)

Social characteristics

Anacortes' identity is also dependent on fostering a "**community vibe**" with well-used **gathering places**. Provide more facilities for public gathering and meeting places that fit the town character. Have multi-purpose spaces for weddings, an enclosed farmers market, and other events.

Other characteristics important to Anacortes' character

- Be attractive to businesses that want a small town feel and are respectful to natural resources (i.e., building and streetscape standards should require ecologically-friendly design).
- A big box retail store would not retain small town character.
- Consider climatic differences between east and west sides of the island.

Hierarchy of places

1. Focus design standards and street beautification downtown. (3) *Counter opinion—old downtown already has a good design to it. It may not need new design standards.*
2. Commercial Ave should give a good impression as people enter town. (2)

Design guidelines and standards

Downtown and commercial areas

Design standards should be more stringent in the commercial areas where people gather and spend time. Commercial Ave should announce Anacortes' identity. (4) *Counter opinion—design standards for multifamily are completely acceptable while only possibly appropriate for commercial. (1) Another counter opinion—design standards may not be the right answer, but open to looking at the idea. (2)*

- Standards are important for preserving character downtown and getting higher density building to fit in.
- Avoid making everything look the same. An eclectic mix is good. (2)
- Work with the historical board to create guidelines that respect the existing character.
- Consider historic preservation measures for key downtown buildings, such as the Marine Supply and Hardware on 3rd Street with its iconic façade.
- Do not allow bad development (e.g., parking lot allowed in front of the strip mall on 17th and Commercial).
- Encourage growth and development in a way that is respectful of property rights; find a balance between needs.
- Architectural standards for old town should incorporate marine, agricultural, or artsy character.
- Make design standards as strong as Park City, Utah.
- Downtown property owners should be required to take care of their derelict buildings. (There's a property on 10th and Commercial that has been boarded up for several years.)
- Incorporate energy efficiency and ecological design in building code.

Housing

- Preserve the small town charm and character while providing for new housing. Design standards would help multifamily housing to fit into character and be more amenable. (3)
- Do not allow curb cuts on alleys in R3 and R4 zones.
- Minimize the appearance of parking, especially for apartment views.

Industrial

Industrial areas should be free to look how they want.

Public realm improvements

- Slow people down on Commercial Ave with streetscape elements.
- Plant more street trees.
- Underground wiring downtown and on Oakes Ave.
- Install landscaping, water features, seating, and gathering places (e.g., Camas, WA).
- Focus beautiful streetscapes downtown.
- How can we get important pedestrian links in already developed areas? The western neighborhoods feel like a hodgepodge of pieces plopped together with no flow.

- Perhaps leave Christmas lights up year-round or provide similar lighting.

Other

Look at plan holistically. (2)

Public facilities

- Set clear infrastructure goals based on hard data.
- The sewer plant is on a site where it can double its capacity.

Parks and recreation

- Anacortes is an outdoor recreation destination, as well as the reason for people living here. (4)
- The City's Parks Department has done a great job.
- Anacortes is blessed with a lot of parks; keep it up. (3) The community came together to build a massive jungle gym at Storvik Park. The High School has amazing baseball facilities.
- Increase access to the water.
- Allowing motorcycles on trails is unique to Anacortes and is working well.
- Add pocket parks and complete trails (also see the Transportation section).
- Purchase the empty lot on 9th Street between Commercial and Q Aves to build a park, and connect it to the Port's Cap Sante Marina North and West Basin concept.
- Identify a public pier and complete a nice waterfront trail like in Port Angeles.

Sustainability

- "Sustainability" is the community's mantra. Stewardship of the land, a healthy ecology, and being able to pass on resources to the next generations is important. (3)
- Sustain and create wildlife corridors and greenbelts, and make sure they connect to the water. (2)
- Improve the city-wide composting program. Locate recycling and composting adjacent to trash receptacles in visible places. Make it a natural process for business community and residents. (2)
- Look at the Transition Fidalgo document.
- Infuse economic, social, and environmental sustainability throughout the plan.
- Incorporate energy efficiency (e.g., passive solar) in the building code, and make it attractive to opt in.
- New developments are required to manage their own stormwater, but for existing developments, strategize and implement solutions over time.
- The Comprehensive Plan should reflect science on climate change and consider sea level rise.
- Evergreen Islands have done great work conserving forest lands.
- Continue encouraging people to certify their homes as National Wildlife Federation (NWF) conservation areas so that City itself becomes certified.
- Daylight Ace of Hearts Creek.
- Be as green as we can, but no sweeping legislation is needed.
- Build a bio-reactor to get energy back into the grid.

Transportation

Multi-modal opportunities

Focus on multi-modal opportunities (and reduce the need for parking and gas dependency). (5) Increase connectivity and accessibility, especially for low-income families, so that people can live near their needs and decrease fuel costs.

- Bicycling ideas:
 - Make walking and biking safer.
 - Finish the Guemes Trail. (4)
 - The Thommy Thompson Trail is the most popular thing the City has ever done.
 - Complete the Thommy Thompson Trail.
 - Improve connections through Anacortes; it has a “chopped up” feel with a street layout that ignores topography and deadends at the park. (2)
 - Identify key bicycle routes and provide the crossings, no bumps, etc.
 - Address residents’ worry that cyclists will park on Oakes Ave to access the trail.
- Walking ideas:
 - Create more walking areas.
 - Focus pedestrian activity on small local streets. Others may not have space for sidewalks and traffic, and the asphalt is hard to maintain.
 - Close streets more often for pedestrian-only traffic.
 - Consider making one-way streets so there is more space for pedestrians.
- Transit ideas:
 - Skagit Transit does not serve Anacortes well. (3)
 - Improve transit service from the ferry to downtown, the waterfront, and 12th Street. Make it easy for visitors and locals to get around without a car. Consider a trolley. (2)
 - Provide better bus access to services (e.g., Mt Vernon has all the services, but it takes a whole day to get there and back) (2)

Other considerations

- WSDOT will have an overlay on SR 20 in 2015 or 2016. Make use of this opportunity to make improvements to Commercial Ave.
- Match land use intensity with street capacity.
- The streets condition document Council recently received highlights the \$65 million in deferred maintenance. Maintain the streets, and improve them as possible. (6)
- Connecting the ferry terminal to downtown is an issue.
- Roundabouts are good.
- Transportation plan lacked community involvement and didn’t look at existing conditions.

Parking

- Remove the 2 hour parking time limit or extend it to 4 hours. Don’t allow employees to park on the street. (3)

- Remove back-in parking on 4th and 3rd Streets downtown. *Counter opinion—people will get used to the back end parking.*
- Paid parking is extremely undesirable.
- Study the parking issue to better understand it.
- Advocate for more flexibility.
- Explore opportunities for shared parking.

Public Safety

- Public safety is essential for attracting families and having a successful city.
- The Hospital is trying to build their way out of a deficit. Why are there medical buildings on Commercial Ave?

Miscellaneous

- Trainer came in to Planning Commission to give basics of Comprehensive Planning.
- AFP seen as too lofty and generalized.
- It's a great time for this project since so many CC and PC members are new and enthusiastic.
- This process may lead to bigger changes than what people anticipated. Doing the commercial areas and downtown, while leaving the residential the same, would still be a big project.
- The Capital Facilities Plan is not fully compliant—we need to compile all the elements together.
- Use a consistent format for the plan to easily roll all the pieces together.
- We are starting to see structured parking (e.g, the medical building).
- Four of the seven Planning Commissioners were appointed by the old mayor. Council sees this as an issue.