

Sitka Long-Range Tourism Plan Collaborative Process
Stakeholder Meeting #30
13 January 2007 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Centennial Hall

Summary: The Stakeholders spend the morning working in small groups to further refine the Strategic Directions. After lunch, the whole group looks at all the benchmarks together and places them on a 2-year+ timeline.

In attendance: Lisa Brendle, Chris Bryner, Jeff Budd, Ken Corson, Vern Culp, John Delong, Greg Dudgeon, Angela Filler, Peter Gorman, Scott Harris, Eric Jordan, Mike Litman, Bill Marx, Dorik Mechau, Mim McConnell, Liz McKenzie, Mary Jo McNally, Mary Beth Nelson, Mike Nurco, Lucy Phillips, Ken Rear, Andrew Thoms, Floyd Tomkins.
Steering Committee: Stef Steffen, Cleo Brylinsky, Julia Smith
Facilitation team: Matthew Turner and Kayla Boettcher

MT: After sitting down with the SC on Thursday and talking through this day – I feel great about this. We are entirely in a position to get this to a place that is as clean and polished as it can be.

MT: Today we're going to break into groups to focus on the Strategic Directions that you see posted around the room – we'll do 2 rounds of 3 groups each to polish each SD. During lunch, we'll do a "chew and review" – I hope you'll look at all the things around the room, especially those you haven't seen yet, and note your questions. Then we'll come back together as a whole group and look at all the components together on one timeline.

MT: Before we move into groups, I'll do a brief overview. A year's worth of collaborative meetings have culminated into 7 core components. There is a lot of context and background behind all of them, but really, there are 7 key things that are the outcome of this process. One arches over the whole thing, the Overarching Principles – those are the things we hold as self-evident, and we communicate our intent that any decisions in the future will abide by these principles. All other things fall under those statements. Then there are 6 Strategic Directions – 6 ways that move us from where we are to our vision of Sitka. All of this moves us from where we are now, which is a place of no plan, where we're responding to external forces and internal desires without looking at the community as a whole...and we begin an intentional way of moving the community forward that benefits all the players of this community. Within those SDs, there are areas of focus – if we focus on those, we'll be moving forward and moving towards a more intentional vision for Sitka. Under each of the SD there are benchmarks, goals that say "if we achieve this, we know we're moving forward." That's our work for today. In groups, you'll look at those benchmarks and make sure they're SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely. After lunch, we're going to do a full timeline review – we're going to take all those benchmarks and set them out across a two-year timeline, or beyond. Then, you can look at the whole plan and see how it fits together and review if there are benchmarks that rely on each other, and how they exist on a timeline together. Then, also you'll be setting realistic timelines for what can happen within the first year – all of this will help us lay out an achievable plan. If we see that too

many things have landed in the same quarter, we'll be able to reevaluate whether that's a reasonable expectation, and readjust accordingly.

MT: One thing I want to be clear on – I may have misled you with a little language I used. When we think of these 6 SDs, it doesn't mean that in the implementation of this plan, that there are 6 standing committees for this work. There is not necessarily going to be an "incentives committee." Sometimes it's apparent that we need a new group to oversee one of the SDs – for example, it seems a board needs to be created for the Oversight direction to focus on this plan. Some other things may be able to exist in existing city structures, or a group may just need to meet occasionally, rather than in an ongoing fashion.

Q: You're talking about establishing this Oversight committee, and it sounds like you're saying that structure will develop later. This group is meeting for the last time today, and I think we need to be part of the discussion about how to form that Oversight group.

Steering Committee member: At our last SC meeting, we talked a lot about what happens next – we decided the SC needs to have 3-4 more meetings over the next month. There will be a sign-up sheet later for the "enhanced SC" – if you're interested in discussing what happens in the next month, I really hope you'll sign on. Part of the conversation will be about what we'll ask of the assembly, and we need to work with Kayla as she finalizes the written part of the plan. The SC needs help with that, and we encourage you to sign on to help with that.

MT: What I'm trying to make clear is that, yes, Oversight clearly needs to have a standing committee. But let's not assume the others will have a committee. Let's just know these things need to happen. There is one standing committee – the Long-Range Planning Commission, who commissioned this plan – many of these things may become part of their purview. There are different strategies – I just want to unstick us from the assumption that we're creating 6 different committees.

MT: When we go into smaller groups and looking at the Benchmarks, one other thing I want to make sure that this group is being very conscious of is if the right Perspectives and Experiences are available today to make good decisions, if the necessary information is there, and that the intention is clear. Ask yourselves if we're making a Benchmark based on good info and the right Perspectives and Experiences, or are we just guessing? I'm going to challenge you – instead of just putting an idea up there, name the needed Perspectives and Information that's needed to craft the right Benchmark. If we're talking about building and buying, we may need some other people in the room to make those decisions. Just ask yourselves if you have the right people here to make those decisions...if not, put those requests in the plan. Maybe you'll know after a survey or an assessment. Those will still be benchmarks – the benchmark will be to seek out that information as the first step.

[The Stakeholders move into the first round of small groups. They choose a group to participate from the following three options: Oversight, Transportation & Infrastructure, and Overarching Principles. After 45 minutes in these groups, they move again into the second round, choosing from the following: Incentives & Policies, Marketing & Promotion, and the Strategic Direction that's been called "Partnerships" (but may need a different name.) After 45 minutes in this round, the Stakeholders have lunch, then reconvene into one

large group facing a wall where Matthew has started a grid. Vertically, on the left side of the wall, he has placed the titles of the 6 Strategic Directions. Horizontally along the top, he has signs that say 2007 Quarter 1; 2007 Quarter 2, etc., through 2008, and then a sign for “beyond.”]

MT: It’s been a joy to watch and be a part of what’s happening here today – there have been some awesome conversations. First of all, you know a lot about at least two of these SDs now. Hopefully, also, you’re starting to see how they all fit together and work together towards moving this community towards a common vision. Now, I’d like to see how well these things work together.

Matthew starts with **VI Plan Oversight**, and reads through all the Benchmarks that have been developed for that Strategic Direction. As he reads each one, the group decides where it should be placed on the timeline.

Next, the group hears about the **Marketing and Promotion SD**. The small group has added an intent, and altered some of the action areas. The Stakeholders have a few questions about benchmarks in this SD. One is about whether all the necessary benchmarks are there; for example, does it say anything anywhere about defining how we want to market Sitka? Through group discussion, another benchmark is added early in the timeline about identifying what the community wants to market about itself. Another SH says we’ve been talking about including the natural environment as something to market, and he wonders if that’s in there anywhere. Matthew encourages him to hold on to that idea as he puts all the benchmarks up for all the areas and see if it gets covered.

The Marketing benchmark that says “Cruise industry ensures equitable access to Sitka businesses” generates quite a bit of discussion with the group. There is some discussion about whether that is most appropriate in Marketing, or if it should be in the Oversight, or if it ties in with the dialogues with the cruise industry, and therefore should be part of the “partnerships” SD. Someone expresses doubt that it’s an achievable benchmark. Someone else responds to this by saying that even though there’s an overriding perception that it’s impossible to approach the cruise lines about issues of schedules or promotion, that its more important to have the conversation and to document that the community approached the industry and voiced concerns. If we don’t tell them, we’re not being proactive.

The group seems to agree that they’d like Sitka to make some expression of disapproval to the industry about their process for selective marketing. Someone suggests that there’s no reason Sitka couldn’t do it’s own “preferred business” marketing campaign by giving hand outs to visitors as they disembark. Another person wonders if it’s really “selective promotion,” since the cruise lines offer the marketing opportunity to everyone – it’s just that it may be cost-prohibitive to some. Matthew draws this discussion to a close, noting that there’s clearly an intent here for a benchmark, but we can’t take too much time crafting this particular benchmark today, and we may not have all the information we need to do that reasonably, anyway. He says that a place-holder will go here to indicate that we need a benchmark along these lines, but we need to move on for now.

Transportation and Infrastructure

MT reads the Action Areas and Benchmarks for this SD. The SH who were in this small group note that the benchmark about “mitigating impact on heavy congestion days” may be redundant, and they felt they didn’t have enough information to complete it.

Incentives and Policies

The facilitator of this small group said the first step for this SD should be to form a committee tasked to research what other communities have done about creating incentives on these various ideas. The other, subsequent benchmarks need more specificity, but that will be driven by the group that’s convened to think more about this.

The group also suggested a gem about drawing attention to the importance of maintaining a stable cost of living – they weren’t sure if something about that already exists in the plan, or even if it’s appropriate to include that idea here. Matthew said that may be a challenge for this group to understand how to measure quality of life issues in a way that intersects with the VI plan.

Information and Data

This SD will essentially be driven by the need of the other SDs. Matthew reads the benchmarks that exist so far and adds them to the timeline.

Finally, the Strategic Direction formerly called “partnerships”

MT: The partnerships idea is so integrated throughout the plan that “partnerships” has now been included as an overall principle. The new action areas for this strategic direction now go back to some of the original intents from the very beginning of this process – the initial concerns about divisive issues in community. We’ve also including some action areas focused on how we work with other entities, like STA and federal/state entities – how are they integrated in our efforts to move forward?

Matthew reads all the action areas and benchmarks for this SD. There is some discussion about the benchmark: “citizen group advises assembly in dialogue with cruise...” The group is unclear about whether that means the citizen group speaks directly to the cruise industry together with the Assembly, or if they just advise the Assembly on the topics they wish to have covered in their dialogues. One person said the intention is to not let cruise call the shots, and empower the Assembly to do everything they can to advocate for Sitka and this plan. Similar to the other issue about approaching the cruise industry in the marketing SD, there is some sense of hopelessness about the achievability of this one, but one of the SC members points out that Chris Beck told us about other communities that do have an ongoing dialogue with the industry, and they’ve also heard from the SCVB that they don’t even touch this issue right now. The citizen group would be about having a group of concerned people, not just people who run lightering, who are involved with this dialogue. It may be that this benchmark isn’t worded correctly yet, and the responsibilities of the citizen group are not articulated well. This intent will also be registered through a place-holder, until there is better information to suggest the benchmark.

The other benchmark that is clarified from this SD is the one about “controversial/divisive issues regarding the VI go through this process before major Assembly decisions.” The small group clarifies that by providing opportunities for collaborative dialogue through this group

could help avoid future citizen initiatives – for example, the fish box tax issue could have gone through this group first, to allow the community a wider voice and dialogue about these issues.

The group agrees to call this Strategic Direction “Conflict Resolution and Collaboration,” and it is also suggested that a benchmark be added to create a committee specific to this Strategic Direction.

Overarching Principles:

The group that worked on refining these statements shared their work with the rest of the group. They said they talked about using “no place remains special by accident” as a tagline for the plan overall. A few SH comment that they’re not sure what the statement about “optimizing benefits to residents” means – the intent is to have a direct line between list of contributions to the residents.

Conclusion

MT: One thing this process hasn’t done enough to honor your participation in it. This is the last time this group will be together in this format, and I want to speak to that a little. Look at what’s been accomplished. It may just look like pieces of paper on a wall, but when you think about the conversations that went into those, and what’s underneath each of those items – it’s an incredible history. You understand what that means. We’ve created a bit of a bubble around it, but this was commissioned by the city, and will be owned by the city and the LRPC. But your responsibility and participation in this is really not over, because you know what’s behind all these papers, and also because you practiced a way to engage in conversation about this – in a uniting rather than dividing energy in this community. You have an obligation to carry that forward. Personally, this has been one of the most challenging years of my life. Just in review:

Nov. 15, 2005, Assembly tasked LRPC to do a plan.

Dec 19, LRPC decided to do a collaborative process.

Jan 12, LRPC named a Steering Committee

Feb 2, the Conveners started to name Perspectives and Experiences, which would help form the Stakeholder group.

March 14 was the first Stakeholder meeting.

I hope you acknowledge the effort you’ve done here. There was no plan before this, before you came together and started a meaningful dialogue.

[The meeting concludes with several rounds of applause for the Steering Committee and facilitators, and congratulations to one another for the work that was accomplished.]