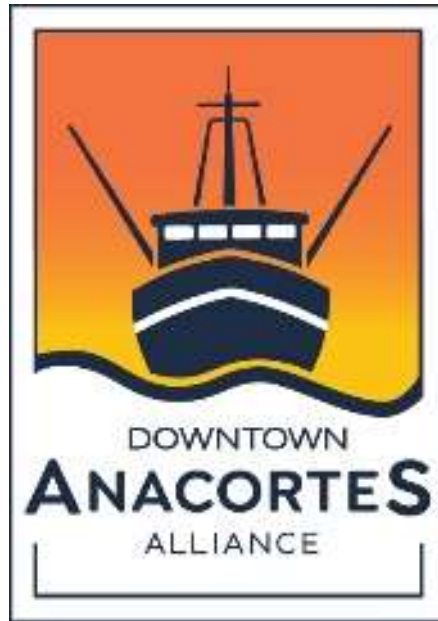
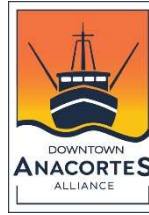




Downtown Anacortes Alliance

Historic Downtown Planning Report

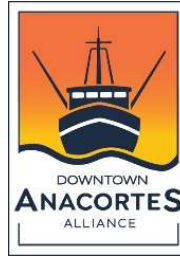
(04/06/23)



**Downtown Anacortes Alliance
Historic Downtown Planning Report
(04/06/23)**

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Downtown Anacortes Alliance Historic Downtown Planning Report (04/06/23)

Executive Summary

About the Downtown Anacortes Alliance

Introduction: The Downtown Anacortes Alliance was formed in 2021 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the overall goal of implementing the community's vision and goals for Historic Downtown Anacortes. The 2016 Comprehensive Plan and the 2019 update of Building and Development ordinances provide the foundation for its work.

Mission: Cultivating a vibrant, thriving downtown district where we all come together to live, work, shop, and play.

Planning Area: Alliance activities focus on the Historic Downtown portion of Anacortes known as the Central Business District plus the transition zones leading to the Port and Highway 20 (just outside the CBD but related to the Historic Downtown plan).

Approach: The Downtown Anacortes Alliance is an affiliate member community of the [Washington Main Street Program](#) and follows the guiding principles of the [National Main Street Program](#), used successfully for more than 40 years to revitalize Historic Downtowns across the United States. Main Street encourages communities to follow a four-point approach to revitalization of historic downtowns with a focus on outreach, promotion, design, and economic vitality.

Committee Structure: The Alliance has committees working on the four Main Street focus areas, with goals that reflect local vision and priorities.

- **Outreach:** Bring together community members, businesses, property owners, non-profit organizations, and the City, Port, and Chamber and others to carry out shared goals and projects that improve our downtown.
- **Promotion:** Maintain, strengthen, and market historic downtown Anacortes as our city's "living room", reinforcing and enhancing its character and scale.
- **Design:** Preserve and maintain historic buildings, encourage new development that fits into the environment, and support a mixture of uses, activities and amenities that benefit the entire community and make the Downtown streetscape a vital, attractive, and pedestrian friendly environment.
- **Economic Vitality:** Support economic development and a sound economic base through new projects, historic building renovations, assisting businesses, and promoting opportunities for people to live and work downtown.

Leadership Structure: Committees are supported and coordinated by the Alliance's Executive Director (Jordan Hay) and the Board of Directors (Eli Barrett, Kathy Dickinson, Laurie Gere, Janet Gifford, Frank Jeretzky, Chris MacKenzie, Ward MacKenzie, and Lori Maul).

Focus on Projects: The Alliance is focused on completing projects that will make the vision of the Comprehensive Plan a reality. Each of the committees has completed a guided planning process for their area that established goals, identified stakeholders and requirements, analyzed needs and opportunities, and determined specific projects to work on that would achieve the goals and implement the vision.

Project Lists: A summary of each Committee's work follows.

Outreach and Promotion Committee

Members: Kimberly Contreras, Cathy Enns, Aggie Frizzell, Laurel Harrison, Jennifer Juckett, John Lovric, Duby Petit, Jessica Slocum, Mary Staley

Outreach and Promotion Goals

Outreach:

- Build a well-known and respected community organization with clear goals and demonstrated results.
- Create effective partnerships with the community (including business and property owners, citizens, entrepreneurs, public officials, chamber, other organizations) and work together to improve our downtown.
- Establish a sustainable funding stream to support a strong organization and maintain a long-term effort.
- For local residents, focus on “Graceful Changes” and our Downtown’s “Living Room” to reinforce local values.
- For tourists, focus on Downtown as a place to come and stay awhile (because it’s a delightful place to shop and play).

Promotion:

- Promote the value of the organization’s focus on supporting business and providing resources to help them succeed.
- Leverage our cultural history to market an authentic, unique, and enticing image to shoppers, investors, and visitors and create excitement and vibrancy downtown.
- Educate people about what’s happening downtown and encourage increased customer traffic. Examples include street festivals, parades, retail events, and image development campaigns.

Outreach Committee Project List (Updated as of 02/28/23)	
Focus Area: Outreach	
•	Communication Plan
•	Partnerships and Collaborations
•	Media Channels
Focus Area: Fundraising	
•	Friends of Downtown Anacortes (\$5 - \$10 / Month from 1,000 residents)
•	B&O Tax Credit (Plan for future B&O Tax Credit availability ETA Jan 2024)
•	Sustaining business contributions and major gifts (5 to 10 @ 3-year commitments for \$2,000+/year)
•	Individual project funding mechanism
Focus Area: Promotion (Marketing the Downtown)	
•	Branding
•	Partner with Chamber (share responsibility for promotional efforts)
•	Enhance current promotional efforts (analyze gaps, make improvements)

Design Committee

Members: Eli Barrett, Daniel Conrardy, Kathy Dickinson, Jackie Dunlap, Karen Durham, Steve Lange, Steve Lange, Chris MacKenzie, Lori Maul, Lea Mayberry, Meredith McIlmoyle, Gary Molyneaux, Patti Pattee, Helen Prier, Sarah Ruether, Terry Schoenthal, Karen Thomson

Design Goals

- Establish recommended design features and execute projects that enhance the look and feel of the downtown district.
- Propose and implement streetscape, amenities, public spaces and building design features, historic building rehabilitation, street and alley clean-up, landscaping, street furniture, signage, visual merchandising, and lighting.
- Improve the physical image of the downtown as a quality place to shop, work, walk, invest in, and live.

Design Committee Project List (Updated as of 03/01/23)	
Focus Area: Gateway Projects	
• Arch revitalization and placemaking (includes testing Downtown streetscape and amenities ideas)	
• North Commercial and Marina gateways to Port	
Focus Area: Streetscape and Amenities	
• Parking Signage	
• Wayfinding	
• Public Art	
• Buildings and Storefronts	
• Green Up Downtown	
• Lighting and Electrical	
• Public Seating	
Focus Area: Traffic and Parking	
• Minimize auto impacts and increase pedestrian access	
• Optimize downtown parking	
• Pedestrian Circulator	
Focus Area: Policies	
• Sidewalk and Street Uses (Includes input on new Parklets policy)	
• Vacant Buildings	
Focus Area: Public Spaces	
• Town Square – Public Plaza	
• Gathering spots	

Economic Vitality Committee

Members: Eli Barrett, Bonnie Bowers, Janet Gifford, Heather Jennings, Jessica Kiser, Kaia Matheny, Karla Nelson, John Sternlicht, Lisa Strandberg, Glenn Szerlong

Economic Vitality Goals

- Establish a business-friendly, resilient, diverse, and economically successful business environment
- Support existing businesses and attract sustainable new businesses.
- Create new and entrepreneurial approaches to business incubation and startups.
- Build community and density by attracting professionals and laborers to family wage jobs and adequate housing options.
- Build business community relationships and provide support to sharpen the competitiveness of local merchants.
- Encourage investment in Downtown buildings, ensuring the integrity and enhancement of our commercial building stock.
- Facilitate rehabilitation of older buildings when viable.
- Assist owners and developers in analyzing costs and benefits, financing options, and doing building pro-forma analyses.

Economic Committee Projects (Updated as of 03/02/23)	
Focus Area: Buildings / Development	
•	Conduct a rental market analysis (survey) and publish the results
•	Set up a clearinghouse system to connect building owners with renters
•	Hold periodic informational seminars for business and building owners
•	Develop a pro-forma tool for analyzing building rehabilitation or ownership costs and options
•	Advocate for economic incentive programs such as resumption of the Development Tax Credit Program
Focus Area: Business Support	
•	Develop an information and referral system to provide business owners with technical resources
•	Organize local affiliate groups (by business types) to provide support and B to B coaching and informal advising
•	Work with building owner(s) to establish pop-up / test spaces that reduce startup risks for owners and landlords.
•	Establish a system to match prospective businesses with available building spaces
Focus Area: Workforce Housing	
•	Identify underutilized properties and spaces and encourage owners to consider redevelopment
•	Find and share creative options to finance local projects
•	Encourage increased density and workforce housing options
•	Encourage City and County to create new or enhanced tax incentive and financial assistance programs

Next Steps

Reviews

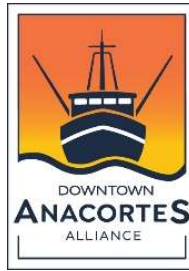
- Committees will keep stakeholders and other committees informed and listen to feedback about proposed projects, consider suggested changes, and adjust as needed.
- The Board will review committee plans to confirm they meet the vision, mission, and Comprehensive Plan, fit together and are ready for implementation.

Implementation

- Each committee will manage implementation of its projects with the support of the board and Executive Director.
- Projects will depend on priorities, scheduling, available resources, and opportunities.
- “Quick Wins” can happen immediately with minimum effort.
- Short to medium range projects require more in-depth project planning.
- Long-term projects require a continuing and sustained effort toward achieving identified goals and policies.
- Project teams have access to a project management model to help in prioritizing, organizing, and managing resources.

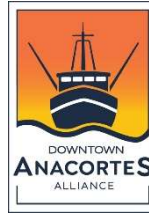
Sustainability

- Committees sustain work by maintaining project oversight, reviewing results, and adjusting plans and priorities as needed.
- Individual projects may be done by the committee of the whole, or designated subcommittees and project teams, with additional volunteers added as appropriate.
- Committees have a chair and designated board contact to maintain communication, identify resources and opportunities, and coordinate their work with the other committees.



**Downtown Anacortes Alliance
Historic Downtown Planning Report
(04/06/23)**

Committee Reports (Summaries)



Downtown Anacortes Alliance Historic Downtown Planning Report (04/06/23)

Outreach and Promotion Committee Report (Summary)

Members

Kimberly Contreras, Cathy Enns, Aggie Frizzell, Laurel Harrison, Jennifer Juckett, John Lovric, Chris MacKenzie (Board Rep.), Duby Petit, Jessica Slocum, Mary Staley

Mission

Outreach: Collaborate with community members, businesses, property owners, non-profit organizations, and the City, Port, and Chamber and others to work together on shared goals and projects that improve our downtown.

Promotion: Maintain, strengthen, and market historic downtown Anacortes as our city's "living room", reinforcing and enhancing its character and scale.

Goals

Outreach:

- Build a well-known and respected community organization with clear goals and demonstrated results.
- Create effective partnerships with the community (including business and property owners, citizens, entrepreneurs, public officials, chamber, other organizations) and work together to improve our downtown.
- Establish a sustainable funding stream to support a strong organization and maintain a long-term effort.
- For local residents, focus on "Graceful Changes" and our Downtown's "Living Room" to reinforce local values.
- For tourists, focus on Downtown as a place to come and stay awhile (because it's a delightful place to shop and play).

Promotion:

- Promote the value of the organization's focus on supporting business and providing resources to help them succeed.

- Leverage our cultural history to market an authentic, unique, and enticing image to shoppers, investors, and visitors and create excitement and vibrancy downtown.
- Educate people about what's happening downtown and encourage increased customer traffic. Examples include street festivals, parades, retail events, and image development campaigns.

Critical Success Factors

Outreach:

- The organization communicates effectively with the community about its mission.
- Concentrate on developing effective partnerships and gaining participation of community stakeholders.

Fundraising:

- Keep fundraising efforts sustainable, low cost, and reaching the right people.
- Show how donations will produce results that benefit private or community interests.

Promotion:

- Promotional plans match community goals and demonstrate our interest in facilitating graceful growth and helping businesses thrive.
- Promotion reinforces the “branding” and identity of the Downtown.

Stakeholders

- Overall Approach Reach out to all stakeholders with the message that the Downtown Alliance is citizen driven and focused on the community and local interests. The overall goal is to facilitate Downtown success by sharing information and resources, facilitating improved communications, and engaging in effective partnerships to accomplish shared goals.
- Residents perceptions and approaches may be different, but the underlying values and interests are similar. We need to recognize the diverse interests and demographics of target groups, such as people with long history in Anacortes, families, and age groups with interests from preschoolers to antique cars.
- Businesses have similar desires to residents but are more focused on factors leading to economic success – theirs and the community's. Messaging focuses on individual business success, Downtown business collaboration, problem solving and shared resources.
- Chamber of Commerce It's important in our messaging to differentiate our mission from the Chamber. They do calendar, promotion, get \$ to bring in more business and consider this part of their area of practice, so promotion will be a partnering and shared activity. Historically, their focus has been primarily on business members citywide, although the Chamber participates in or sponsors events that are focused on the Downtown area.
- Port of Anacortes Messaging to and about the Port needs to recognize their needs and interests. What are our shared interests? How will our work benefit them? How do we help them show how they are benefitting the city?

- City of Anacortes Effective relationships with the City are a key driver in our messaging. The City politicians and staff have their own goals and plans that need community (and political) support. Our messaging can reinforce the shared interests and plans evident in a public / private partnership.
- Other Groups, Agencies and Organizations may not have a direct intersection with the Downtown, but have missions and activities that influence its success.
 - Anacortes Housing Authority – Programs to provide affordable housing affect the ability to increase housing options close to the Downtown.
 - Arts Festival, Anacortes Music Project and others – Events and cultural activities often centered on the Downtown provide attractions and sustained interest.
 - LTAC – Funding source for promotion, typically provided by a number of recipients, with the Chamber a large factor in use of these funds.
 - Other clubs, organizations and groups – The city has numerous groups that support and fund activities that benefit the Downtown environment.
 - Samish Tribe – Taking a more active role in the city with participation in development, programs, and arts.

Strengths

- Anacortes residents resonate to its long history and community identity.
- High level of civic engagement and love of community.
- Strong business identity related to a maritime environment.
- Name recognition – “Island gateway to the San Juans” and the ability to identify as being one of the more accessible islands.
- Off the beaten path with a small town feel but enough business to provide for most needs.
- Unique blend of walkability, amenities, and natural beauty “Where the forest meets the sea.”

Weaknesses

- Difficult to show how revitalizing downtown is improving, helping, and making changes that benefit all.
- Growth, density, and the resulting increase in foot traffic hasn’t yet reached critical mass.

Opportunities

- Use messaging about the Downtown to reinforce its local character as the city’s “Living Room” and event center.
- Opportunities for business to experiment with new methods, ideas and products.

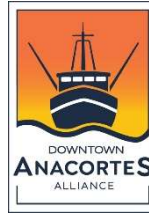
Challenges

- How to effectively use the local character and new opportunities to recruit / attract new business.
- Getting support for change efforts to facilitate a rising tide despite economic swings, scarce resources, and previous failed efforts.

- Population increases and housing supply can have dramatic effects on the rate and nature of changes in the Downtown.

Outreach Committee Focus Areas and Projects (Updated as of 02/28/23)

Outreach Committee Project List	Priority	Lead
Focus Area: Outreach		
• Communication Plan		
• Partnerships and Collaborations		
• Media Channels		
Focus Area: Fundraising		
• Friends of Downtown Anacortes (\$5 - \$10 / Month from 1,000 residents)		
• B&O Tax Credit (Plan for future B&O Tax Credit availability ETA Jan 2024)		
• Sustaining business contributions and major gifts (5 to 10 @ 3-year commitments for \$2,000+/year)		
• Individual project funding mechanism		
Focus Area: Promotion (Marketing the Downtown)		
• Branding		
• Partner with Chamber (share responsibility for promotional efforts)		
• Enhance current promotional efforts (analyze gaps, make improvements)		



Downtown Anacortes Alliance Historic Downtown Planning Report (04/06/23)

Design Committee Report (Summary)

Mission

Preserve and maintain historic buildings, encourage new development that fits into the environment, and support a mixture of uses and activities that benefit the entire community.

Members

Eli Barrett, Daniel Conrardy, Kathy Dickinson, Jackie Dunlap, Karen Durham, Chris MacKenzie (Board Rep.), Lori Maul, Lea Mayberry, Meredith McIlmoyle, Gary Molyneaux, Helen Prier, Sarah Ruether, Karen Thomson

Design Goals

- Execute projects that enhance the look and feel of the downtown district.
- Improve the physical image of the downtown as a quality place to shop, work, walk, invest in, and live.

Success Factors

- Overall factors that combine to make the Downtown function well include density and compactness, pedestrian focus, diversity of activities, public spaces, ease of access, effective circulation, wayfinding, parking, transit.
- The Downtown looks successful and busy – a vibrant, attractive and interesting place.
- Downtown is an inviting destination for visitors and residents.
- There is a clear and recognizable identity to the Downtown with improvements that enhance the area while maintaining its maritime identity, historical focus, and small-town feeling.
- Plans for the Downtown have broad, strong community support with significant organizations (such as the City, Port, Chamber, Arts, etc.) working together as partners.
- The Downtown has consistent placemaking features and is pedestrian focused.

- Design, placemaking, promotions and events enhance the business environment.
- Avoid any perception that we could be creating a Leavenworth (theme park) type of atmosphere.
- Make sure that the design process results in a shared vision of beneficial changes and improvements.
- Encourage a shared sense of community responsibility to fund the implementation of plans and projects.

Stakeholders and Requirements

- Business Owners / Retail Shops are more successful with maximized foot traffic and increased sales. Many are trying to make a living doing their passion and may struggle to control costs and hire employees. They would benefit from a “rising tide” business environment where building owners do building maintenance and make improvements to justify higher rents, while businesses have a high-quality space in a high-volume location that makes them more profitable.
- Restaurants are especially sensitive to having a good environment for their business. Despite slim margins, a desirable destination makes it easier to stay busy and schedule more hours. Public amenities like sidewalk seating and nighttime lighting provide additional benefits.
- Building Owners are concerned about the costs and benefits of ownership, with a conflict between having successful tenant businesses but little ability or incentive to do upgrades and maintenance. This is mitigated by evidence that the city is invested in making improvements to the streetscape and is trying to make it easier and less expensive to operate.
- Community Members have a sense of connection to Downtown and view it as a special gathering place, worthy of preserving the history and small-town environment. To make it more popular and useful, customers want to see more consistent open hours for local businesses, easier access, and continuation of popular events.
- City of Anacortes is interested in implementing the area’s long-term vision connected to the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations. Constituent support and recognition for city leadership and contributions reinforces participation. Financially, economic development and success maintains or increases tax revenues, helps pay for improvements, and provides the opportunity to provide staffing and in-kind services in support.
- Chamber of Commerce has a direct interest in promoting, maintaining, and improving business activity across the city and for its members. The vitality of the Downtown is an important part of the overall success of city businesses, and they are interested in an active partnership with shared responsibility and credit.
- Port of Anacortes is a significant actor, with facilities and operations contiguous to (although outside of) the Downtown area. The Port supports economic development Downtown and is interested in improving interactions with downtown and City but does not want it to interfere with their business.
- Community Organizations including non-profit, informal and fraternal groups support and participate in the Downtown through shared projects, downtown events and general efforts to benefit the community. It is important to recognize their contributions to the community, engaging in and maintaining partnerships that integrate with their activities.
- Local Tribes value community recognition of their local history and influence. The Samish and Swinomish tribes have both engaged in economic activities and provided services within the city.

- Businesses Outside of Downtown benefit from a successful Downtown. They are able to attract and house new employees and have access to goods, services and professional expertise to support their business needs.

Strengths

- Downtown has potential for great character and vibrancy. Everybody wants to be here – older families and businesses remained here, and newer residents and businesses came here by choice.
- People come downtown for a purpose. Lively at times, the downtown atmosphere has cute old buildings, relatively dense buildings, unique quality businesses, and a generally affluent market.
- The wide streets and sidewalks with little through traffic and good walkability provide a good base for optimizing the Downtown experience.
- The Downtown location is unmatched, with water views, access to marine-based activities (fishing, boating, etc.) and an active port and marina nearby.

Weaknesses

- With changing economics and markets, it is unclear what businesses and customers we are trying to attract.
- The building stock suffers from mismatched architecture, inconsistent maintenance, and dated building fronts, with conditions complicated by absentee owners and narrow, constrained building lots.
- Downtown public amenities are limited, with a dearth of public seating, varying accessibility, limited access to public bathrooms, and a need for more public and green spaces.
- There is no system to pay for upgrades to the Downtown. Not having a Local Improvement District (or similar funding stream) means that costs are borne by individual businesses, the city, grants, or local sponsors.
- The Washington State Ferry and cruise lines have a mixed impact. It brings many people to town, but the large proportion of riders are just travelling through, and the Downtown has not capitalized on this opportunity.

Opportunities

- There is a real opportunity for improved street use, traffic, and parking management strategies (such as slowing speeds to 15 mph, increasing parking enforcement, and increasing public areas) that would give the Downtown a better pedestrian focus.
- Wide rights of way provide space for walking flow, spaces for public gatherings, parklets, open seating, and pocket parks.
- Code changes could facilitate improvements by reducing barriers to development and renovations, allowing more use of alleys and “back of building” spaces, and reducing the number of blank walls and spaces on buildings.
- The Downtown location could be marketed to tourists and Ferry travelers as a place to come and spend quality time.

Challenges

- Building owners face multiple challenges. Redeveloping or improving buildings are hampered by regulations, maintenance and improvement costs that cannot be covered by increased rents, and buildings with structural and seismic problems.

- There is little in the way of targeted efforts to attract new types of businesses that “fit” the potential Downtown market.
- Changing shopping trends are a challenge to local business success.
- The overall business environment is subject to the impacts of economic cycles, growth and development.

Success Measures

- Retail and marketing studies (economic growth and improvement)
- Transportation studies (success of streetscape, traffic and parking changes)
- Planning documents (comparison to historical planning goals and outcomes)

Root Cause Issues

- The economics and markets for Downtown have been changing over time, putting new demands and challenges on both business and building owners.
- There is a long history of support for Downtown, with an effective city government, strong Maritime environment, many private and non-profit groups, multiple community events, and engaged citizens.
- The city’s reputation (“Cantaffordus”, Ferry transit “drive through”, resistance to change) can inhibit growth and success.

Focus Areas and Brainstorm Ideas

NOTE: The following is a partial (edited) list of Focus Areas and Brainstorm Ideas considered by the Design Committee. The Full Text version of this report contains a complete set of ideas.

- Land Use and Development Policies, Regulations, Recommendations
 - Parklet policies
 - Improved guidance for outdoor seating
 - Require empty buildings to install window coverings, clings, art (advertising?)
 - Re-define the CBD to include transitional areas at each end of Commercial (3rd to 2nd, 10th to 12th)
 - Provide height bonus for building public amenities
 - Review code changes and enforcement to identify how they help or hinder businesses
 - Allow “grab and go” food businesses for tourists (“food truck” or similar)
 - Code changes to allow structural supports in the right of way (ex.: awnings)
- Street Level Design
 - This is a major focus of the committee, with a focus on do-able projects.
 - Decorate Commercial with a cohesive appearance.
 - Create focal points at each end of Commercial
 - Improve wayfinding signage.
 - Provide infrastructure and policies about flags and banners
 - Green up the downtown with year-round foliage and more plantings

- Cleanup and expand the number and variety of downtown murals.
- Narrow the streets and widen the sidewalks
- Encourage density and use of side streets
- Improve bike parking (fewer spots, more locations – close to stores being visited)
- Clean up areas in alleys and behind buildings
- Provide more “street furniture” with appropriate design and seating that encourages visiting and people watching
- Light up the street level with sidewalk lighting and provide power (brick strip where it is installed)
- Buildings and Storefronts
 - Encourage building owners to maintain their buildings
 - Conduct interviews to decide what will help and establish grants and volunteer guidelines to improve maintenance
 - Add architectural details or improve facades to look more “historic”
 - Support use of good quality awnings with design and engineering assistance and cost sharing
- Transportation, Circulation, Parking
 - Improve traffic flow and management, including narrowing Commercial to two narrow traffic lanes with sharrows and a 15-mph speed limit, using street painting, crosswalk bulbs, painting, textures and other features to support traffic calming, and consider selected street closures
 - Improve use of available parking, including enforcing parking before making changes, establishing angle parking with landscaping, requiring assigned parking for business owners and employees to open street parking for customers
 - Make better use of public transportation, including coordinating with Skagit Transit re: public transit routes to facilitate pedestrian uses, or providing a public “trolley” circulator connecting MJB, Port, Downtown, Guemes and San Juan ferries
 - Enhance pedestrian circulation with an obvious pedestrian connection to the Marina, and a pathway from the Port to Downtown (cruise customers, tourist viewing, etc.)
- Parks, Open space, Community facilities
 - Public Plaza with location TBD. Integrated space for arts, city hall, parking structure, outdoor commons, indoor community events. Possibly use street end at 4th between Commercial and O Street.
 - Public Spaces and Amenities including public bathrooms, covered arcades (large awnings), interactive elements in (unused) sidewalk areas, pocket parks, public seating areas
 - Encourage non-vehicle street uses
 - Beautify the gateway arch to be more pedestrian friendly and artistic and improve the entry to downtown

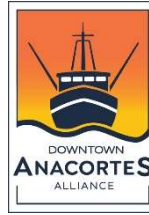
NOTE: City of Anacortes staff shared many brainstorm ideas and blue-sky plans discussed at the city level at a meeting on 01/27/23. There is a great deal of consistency between City and Alliance thinking about how to improve our Historic Downtown. The following is an edited list of brainstorm ideas discussed:

- The 2016 Comprehensive Plan is “official policy” for downtown development
- Focus is changing from cars to people / bikes / pedestrians with continuing allowance for the needs of commercial traffic and access. Features that are encouraged include a checklist of priorities for transportation including “Complete Streets” model with priorities to pedestrians, bikes and cars in that order. Traffic elements that result in traffic calming such as narrowed lanes, traffic circles elsewhere may open doors to creative street intersections, taking back more open space from cars
- The 2016 S Commercial Corridor plan is representative of current thinking and includes extending the main street into Downtown. Phase I is the roundabout at 12th and Commercial plus the transition zone to 10th and 11th. The project is currently in process with funding delays. Plan for Arch to 12th includes widening sidewalks, adding bikeways, landscaping
- City is interested in steps toward the ideal
- Spruce up intersections with “Branding”, reorienting crosswalks, activating alleys
- Increase pedestrian friendly elements, with flexible use to balance open space and car uses (ex: movable bollards)
- Parking can be costly – need to rethink how it’s done
- Potential for one-way streets for special cases downtown
- Idea for pedestrian plaza on side streets – example would be at 4th and O to take advantage of city property, possible Arts structure and connect it with the Heart

Design Committee Focus Areas and Projects (Updated as of 03/01/23)

Design Committee Project List	Priority	Lead	Start
Focus Area: Gateway Projects			
• Arch revitalization and placemaking (includes tests for streetscape and amenities)	In Process		
• Port gateway			
• Marina gateway			
Focus Area: Streetscape and Amenities			
• Parking Signage	In Process		
• Wayfinding			
• Public Art			
• Buildings and Storefronts			
• Green Up Downtown			
• Lighting and Electrical			
• Public Seating			
• Misc. Amenities			

Focus Area: Traffic and Parking			
• Traffic Flow and Management - Redesign traffic flow to minimize auto impacts and increase pedestrian access			
• Parking – Redesign / reallocate parking Downtown			
• Pedestrian Circulator			
Focus Area: Policies			
• Parklets (Note: City is currently working on this item)			
• Vacant Buildings			
• Misc. Policy Ideas			
Focus Area: Public Spaces			
• Town Square – Public Plaza	Long Term		



Downtown Anacortes Alliance Historic Downtown Planning Report (04/06/23)

Economic Vitality Committee Report (Summary)

Mission

Support economic development and a sound economic base through new projects, historic building renovations, assisting businesses, and promoting opportunities for people to live and work downtown.

Members

Eli Barrett, Bonnie Bowers, Janet Gifford, Jesica Kiser, Chris MacKenzie, Kaia Matheny, Lisa Strandberg, Glenn Szerlong

Economic Vitality Goals

- Establish a business-friendly, resilient, diverse, and economically successful business environment that supports existing business and attracts sustainable new businesses.
- Create new and entrepreneurial approaches to business incubation and startups.
- Build community and density by attracting professionals and laborers to family wage jobs and adequate housing options.
- Build business community relationships and provide services and supports to sharpen the competitiveness of local merchants.
- Encourage investment in Downtown buildings, ensuring the integrity and enhancement of our commercial building stock.

Critical Success Factors

- Strategies for nurturing new and ongoing businesses, including providing coaching, technical support, resources, information, and community relationship building.
- Actionable data on gaps and barriers to business success and strategies to mitigate them, including workforce housing, development and growth, and the impact of city and other government policies.

- Ability to provide guidance and resources to existing and prospective new building owners.

Stakeholders

- Small businesses (especially storefront retail and restaurants) are core stakeholders for Downtown economic vitality. Existing small businesses want affordable rents, well maintained buildings, and a location and building that attracts customers. In addition, new “startup” business needs more support and guidance.
- Building owners are another core stakeholder. Building owners are particularly interested in a return on investment. Non-resident owners may be more motivated by how the building fits into their investment portfolio and concentrate on risk tolerance, minimizing costs, and tax avoidance. Local owners may have greater incentive and find it easier to invest in and maintain their buildings but need access to a good rental market and cash flow to support investing in improvements. Current owners of under-developed (ex.: SFR) properties who focus primarily on appreciation and income may resist making changes.
- The City of Anacortes is a key stakeholder, responsible for policies and much of the (non-building) capital improvements Downtown. The city would like to see increased tax revenue and to see the city thriving. They want alignment with the Comprehensive Plan and support from the community for improvement plans. City policies, spending and services have a big influence over the Alliance’s mission.
- Employers want a desirable downtown that helps attract employees and need more workforce availability.
- The Port of Anacortes wants connectivity and good traffic flow for operations and customers, mitigate any negative impacts of operations, and to manage expectations of the community.
- Citizens and Tourists want an attractive and accessible downtown with a variety of products and services.
- Developers of Downtown properties want ease of entry, reasonable and clear regulations, economic certainty, and access to financing. Cash flow drives their ability to get financing and drives value, so business viability is important. New developers and building owners who are aware of, and respect local community expectations and standards are more likely to be welcome in the Downtown business environment.

Influencers

- Big industries affect and are affected by economic conditions. In particular, the number of employees and local purchases are large factors in the local economy.
- Chamber and local organizations influence policies, activities, and business success across the community, including operating events, assisting local businesses, and advocating for or supporting projects that contribute to the local economy.

Strengths

- Its unique and strong industrial base (shipbuilding, refineries, fisheries, and other maritime dependent businesses) provides jobs and tax revenues and is part of the community’s long-term history.

- A large portion of the population is highly educated, professionally skilled, affluent and community oriented, with strong social and relationship structures. The character of people and place create a natural tendency to collaborate with others to support businesses and community activities.
- The natural environment is attractive and a desirable place for recreation, bringing visitors and locals together to play.
- Overall, our community is a rural oasis – distant and protected from the worst of urban problems but providing the benefits and resources and services of larger cities, including a foodie friendly area to eat local, great quality offerings and established interest groups such as arts, music and fraternal organizations that bring culture and events.

Weaknesses

- New businesses can find it hard to enter the local business “fellowship”, where there is resistance to “newbies” who talk about change.
- The Downtown competes with a “Gateway” mentality where the city is seen as a place to travel through to other destinations.
- The population (especially downtown) is not dense enough to support a market “critical mass”.

Opportunities

- We can focus on “Discover Downtown” to counteract the “Gateway” phenomenon.
- There is a lot of under-developed real estate in town and plenty of “room to grow” the population by encouraging housing density and businesses that get more people living and working here.
- There is a largely untapped customer base if we can attract more locals downtown in the off season and get ferry and cruise ship riders to stay over during the tourist season.
- There is room to use entrepreneurial approaches by exploring market studies, methods to incubate new business, and making creative use of existing spaces.
- Employer housing

Challenges

- Economic factors are the greatest challenges. Depending on where we are in the economic cycle, there may be businesses on the edge, vacant buildings and spaces, costs and rents rising faster than revenues.
- The fast rise in the housing market, and development that responds to higher income buyers has led to a housing crunch for lower- and middle-income individuals and families. This impacts local businesses in finding and retaining employees to provide essential work and services.
- The Downtown has buildings with one or more challenges – older and in need of maintenance, valued for their historical qualities, too expensive to be rehabilitated economically, subject to turnover in ownership – all factors contributing to an uncertain future.

Success Measures

- Broad measures of the Downtown business environment may include increases or decreases in the number of successful businesses, sales tax revenues, and market and sales trends.
- More detailed measures that reflect local business success may include customer counts (number of businesses visited and time spent downtown), customer satisfaction (service satisfaction and the ability to get the goods and services they want), and overall business supports (clusters or business types and business to business communication).

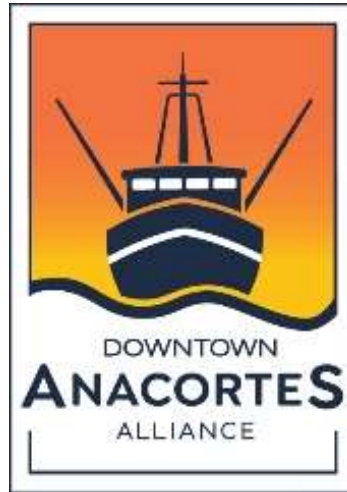
Root Causes

- Much of the economic activity Downtown is seasonal, with tourist and holiday seasons that have a marked impact on local businesses being driven by economic cycles.
- The sense of community has a big impact on the overall economic vitality. The integration (public and private acceptance) of new residents and businesses can be a big plus.
- A tight labor and housing market inhibits local growth through simple lack of people to staff businesses and sustain sales, especially through the “off season”.

Economic Vitality Focus Areas and Projects (Updated as of 03/02/23)

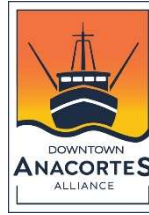
Economic Vitality Committee Projects	Priority	Lead	Start
Focus Area: Buildings / Development			
• Conduct a rental market analysis (survey) and publish the results			
• Set up a clearinghouse system to connect building owners with renters			
• Hold periodic informational seminars for business and building owners			
• Develop a pro-forma tool for analyzing building rehabilitation or ownership costs and options			
• Advocate for building owners’ economic incentive programs such as resumption of the Development Tax Credit Program			
Focus Area: Businesses and Support			
• Develop an information and referral system to provide business owners with technical resources (financial and business planning, banking and lending, marketing, buying and selling businesses, and other decisions)			
• Organize local affiliate groups (by business types) to provide support and B to B coaching and informal advising			
• Work with one or more building owner(s) to establish pop-up / test spaces that reduce startup risks for owners and landlords.			

Establish a system to match prospective businesses with available building spaces			
Focus Area: Housing			
Identify underutilized properties and spaces and encourage owners to consider redevelopment			
Find and share creative options to finance local projects			
Encourage increased density and workforce housing options (Check with Outreach Committee on this project)			
Encourage City and County to create new or enhanced tax incentive and financial assistance programs			



**Downtown Anacortes Alliance
Historic Downtown Planning Report
(04/06/23)**

Full Text of Committee Reports



Downtown Anacortes Alliance Historic Downtown Planning Report (04/06/23)

Outreach and Promotion Committee Report (Full Text)

Mission

Outreach: Collaborate with community members, businesses, property owners, non-profit organizations, and the City, Port, and Chamber and others to work together on shared goals and projects that improve our downtown.

Promotion: Maintain, strengthen, and market historic downtown Anacortes as our city's "living room", reinforcing and enhancing its character and scale.

Members

Kimberly Contreras, Cathy Enns, Aggie Frizzell, Laurel Harrison, Jennifer Juckett, John Lovric, Chris MacKenzie (Board Rep.), Duby Petit, Jessica Slocum, Mary Staley

Outreach and Promotion Goals

Outreach:

Build a well-known and respected community organization with clear goals and demonstrated results.

Create effective partnerships with the community (including business and property owners, citizens, entrepreneurs, public officials, chamber, other organizations) and work together to improve our downtown.

Establish a sustainable funding stream to support a strong organization and provide the stability to build and maintain a long-term effort.

Create different messaging for locals and tourists. For local residents, focus on concepts of “Graceful Changes” and our Downtown “Living Room” to reinforce value added (as opposed to changing our local culture). For tourists, focus on Downtown as a place to come and stay awhile (because it’s a delightful place to shop and play).

Promotion:

Promote the value of the organization’s focus on supporting business and providing resources to help them succeed.

Leverage our cultural history to market an authentic, unique, and enticing image to shoppers, investors, and visitors and create excitement and vibrancy downtown.

Educate people about what’s happening downtown and encourage increased customer traffic. Examples include street festivals, parades, retail events, and image development campaigns.

Critical Success Factors

Outreach:

The Outreach Committee is well informed about plans and projects and able to connect with the whole community to give and receive information.

The communication plan incorporates multiple channels including social media to get the widest reach.

Outreach to community stakeholders concentrates on developing effective partnerships and participation.

Fundraising:

Fundraising efforts are sustainable, low cost, fun and easy.

The organization clearly shows how donations will help meet its goals and produce results that benefit private or community interests.

Fundraising communications reach the right people with the right message, including those “historic” donors who have little time and prefer to give money instead.

Promotion:

Promotional plans match community goals and demonstrate our interest in facilitating graceful growth and helping businesses thrive.

Promotion reinforces the “branding” and identity of both the organization and the Downtown.

Failure Factors:

The organization risks failure if it is not good at communicating the positive value of graceful change or is perceived as “newbies changing things” with results not valued by the community.

Reaching Stakeholders

Overall Approach

At the 30,000-foot level, we want to reach out to all stakeholders with the message that the Downtown Alliance is citizen driven and focused on the community and local interests. The overall goal is to facilitate Downtown success by communicating across the community, acting as the Downtown's "glue", sharing information and resources, and facilitating improved communications and effective partnerships to accomplish shared goals.

To reach the widest audience, there needs to be a strategy for multiple channels, including social media, email, website, personal contacts, etc. This message must be deliverable in a clear and succinct manner – the "elevator speech" used by everyone involved in the organization.

Effective messaging uses a common and recognizable language with the same general wording for all audiences. It may be customized to reflect the differing interests and needs of various groups (see below), but not segment / classify groups in a manner that reduces a shared sense of community.

Residents: For residents, there are two separate focus areas – messaging and fundraising. The approaches may be different, but the underlying values and interests are similar. Messaging needs to recognize the demographics of target groups, such as people with long history in Anacortes, families, and age groups with interests from preschoolers to antique cars. There is a lot of support for using community events for exposure.

Businesses: Local businesses have similar desires to residents but are more focused on factors leading to economic success – theirs and the community's. Messaging focuses on individual business success, Downtown business collaboration, problem solving and shared resources.

Facilitator's note: So far, there has been little interest in fundraising from small businesses. Larger businesses (even those outside of the Downtown) may be willing to participate in the B&O tax credit program when it becomes available.

Chamber: It is important in our messaging to differentiate our mission from the Chamber. They do calendar, promotion, get \$ to bring in more business and consider this part of their area of practice, so promotion will be a partnering and shared activity. Historically, their focus has been primarily on business members citywide, although the Chamber participates in or sponsors events that are focused on the Downtown area.

Facilitator's note: In other committee work, the Chamber is characterized as member driven but interested in the overall economic success of the community. The concept of a rising tide benefiting the entire community seems to resonate with their overall mission and an incentive to partner with the Alliance.

Port: Messaging to and about the Port needs to recognize their needs and interests. What are our shared interests? How will our work benefit them? How do we help them show how they are benefitting the city?

City: Effective relationships with the City are a key driver in our messaging. The City politicians and staff have their own goals and plans that need community (and political) support. Our messaging can reinforce the shared interests and plans evident in a public / private partnership.

Influencers

There are a number of groups, agencies and organizations that may not have a direct intersection with the Downtown, but whose missions and activities influence its success.

- Anacortes Housing Authority – Programs to provide affordable housing affect the ability to increase housing options close to the Downtown.
- Arts Festival, Anacortes Music Project and others – Events and cultural activities often centered on the Downtown provide attractions and sustained interest.
- LTAC – Funding source for promotion, typically provided by a number of recipients, with the Chamber a large factor in use of these funds.
- Other clubs, organizations and groups – The city has numerous groups that support and fund activities that benefit the Downtown environment.
- Samish Tribe – Taking a more active role in the city with participation in development, programs, and arts.

Strengths

Anacortes residents resonate to its long history and community identity, coupled with a high level of civic engagement and love of community.

There is a strong business identity related to a maritime environment, marine based industries and one of only a few deep-water ports in the area.

The area has strong name recognition – “Island gateway to the San Juans” and the ability to identify as being one of the more accessible islands.

It is off the beaten path but centrally located (I-5, border, big city all accessible), with a small town feel but enough business to provide for most needs – “Everything you need is here.”

There is a unique blend of walkability, amenities, and natural beauty “Where the forest meets the sea.”

Weaknesses

The current social and political environment tends to concentrate on differences – between “newbies” and old timers, affluent and marginalized, retirees and working people, locals and tourists, etc. It will be difficult to break through the perceptions to get across the message that revitalizing downtown is improving, helping, and making changes that benefit all.

Messaging about the Downtown’s walkability and accessibility will be difficult due to perceptions that foot traffic hasn’t reached critical mass, and current experience with it not being easily accessible from one block to another – “I can’t just walk around with coffee.”

Opportunities

There are opportunities to use messaging about the Downtown to reinforce its local character as the city’s “Living Room” and event center.

With a relatively affluent community, there are opportunities for business to experiment with new methods, ideas and products. Remote work is an example of a game changer that makes it possible to live, work and shop here instead of commuting.

We can message to the external market about our “featured attractions” that make this a cool place to visit and stay.

Planning a “Coming out” party will help with organization branding and recognition.

Although there have been some inter-organizational conflicts in the past (for example people have been critical of the Chamber), recent leadership changes in multiple organizations have provided greater opportunity to facilitate public / private partnerships.

Challenges / Threats

One big question is how to effectively use the local character and new business opportunities (above) to recruit / attract business (especially desired retail / service).

There is a risk for insufficient numbers of businesses buying in and supporting change efforts. It’s a chicken / egg conundrum - how to facilitate a rising tide despite economic swings, scarce resources, and competition for funding.

Stories / Narrative

We have heard lots of “We’ve tried that” responses to change or improvement initiatives – previous change efforts that may have failed due to lack of time, resources, support or teamwork.

Outreach and promotion methods are changing, but the population demographics demand that we “cover all the bases”. Historical newspapers are less “viewed” but still used for local advertising and outreach. Electronic communications such as email and social media work with varying degrees of success. As an example, the newsletter is currently sent to 157 but the last issue was opened by over 400.

There have been some good examples of local marketing initiatives. The Tulip Farm launched a “come for more than the day” campaign. The Port had a “Fill the slips” strategy.

Messaging opportunities range from using highly technical marketing analytics to creating a “word of mouth” campaign.

There is an opportunity to build an experience for visitors, and provide customized businesses

Measures

Possible “hard” measures that could track results of our outreach efforts include:

- Geo-targeting information (available via cell phone tracking from advertising)
- Online analytics, including QR code tracking, click counts for website, social media, ads
- Newsletter data
- Others may be developed as part of a project plan

Possible “soft” measures that could track processes of our outreach efforts include:

- Number of people in our contact database / number who are actively participating
- Social media (span of influence network results)
- Outreach to service organizations
- Measure “awareness” – name recognition
- Anecdotal information from personal contacts

Root Causes

Politics of change (see above) can impact projects

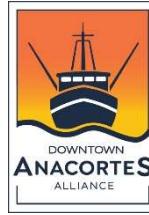
Population increases and housing supply can have dramatic effects on the rate and nature of changes in the Downtown (density, workforce, affordability, business economics, etc.)

Facilitator’s note: In another committee, the changing marketplace is identified as a factor in planning – some recognize and embrace graceful growth and opportunities, others see it as detracting from historical expectations about the community.

Focus Areas and Projects (Updated as of 02/28/23)

Outreach Committee Project List	Priority	Lead	Start
Focus Area: Outreach			
• Communication Plan			
• Partnerships and Collaborations			
• Media Channels			

Focus Area: Fundraising			
• Friends of Downtown Anacortes (\$5 - \$10 / Month from 1,000 residents)	Immediate		
• B&O Tax Credit (Plan for future B&O Tax Credit availability ETA Jan 2024)			
• Sustaining business contributions and major gifts (5 to 10 @ 3-year commitments for \$2,000+/year)	Immediate		
• Individual project funding mechanism			
Focus Area: Promotion (Marketing the Downtown)			
• Branding			
• Partner with Chamber (share responsibility for promotional efforts)			
• Enhance current promotional efforts (analyze gaps, make improvements)			



Downtown Anacortes Alliance Historic Downtown Planning Report (04/06/23)

Design Committee Report (Full Text)

Mission

Preserve and maintain historic buildings, encourage new development that fits into the environment, and support a mixture of uses and activities that benefit the entire community.

Members

Eli Barrett, Daniel Conrardy, Kathy Dickinson, Jackie Dunlap, Karen Durham, Chris MacKenzie (Board Rep.), Lori Maul, Lea Mayberry, Meredith McIlmoyle, Gary Molyneaux, Helen Prier, Sarah Ruether, Karen Thomson

Design Goals

The committee goal is to establish a set of recommended design features and plan for and execute projects that enhance the look and feel of the downtown district. This may include proposed streetscape, amenities, public spaces and building design features, historic building rehabilitation, street and alley clean-up, landscaping, street furniture, signage, visual merchandising, and lighting. These will improve the physical image of the downtown as a quality place to shop, work, walk, invest in, and live, and are expected to result in increased investment of public and private dollars in downtown.

Critical Success Factors

Overall factors that combine to make the Downtown function to achieve the stated vision and goals:

- Density and compactness to support pedestrian activity and diversity of activities.
- Public spaces and public design, including programming, art, and maintenance.
- Ease of access and effective circulation, wayfinding, parking, transit.

The Downtown looks successful and busy. A vibrant, attractive and interesting place makes Downtown an inviting destination and provides the incentive for visitors and residents to come.

There is a clear and recognizable identity to the Downtown. We make improvements and enhance the area while maintaining its maritime identity, historical focus, and small-town feeling.

Plans for the Downtown have broad, strong community support and acceptance, with significant organizations (such as the City, Port, Chamber, Arts, etc.) working together as partners.

The Downtown has consistent placemaking features, including amenities and dedicated, accessible, public community spaces from 12th to the water along Commercial, and is pedestrian focused, with high walkability, connections and wayfinding.

Design, placemaking, promotions and events are coordinated to enhance the business environment.

Failure Factors (Things to Avoid or Mitigate)

Public perception: Address the concern that we could be creating a Leavenworth (theme park) type of atmosphere.

Lack of shared vision: The design process can be harmed by conflicts between stakeholders and groups, new development that doesn't fit, and possible rejection by business and others who don't see how changes / improvements can benefit them.

Lack of funding: It will be important to encourage a shared sense of community responsibility to fund the implementation of plans and projects.

Stakeholders

Business Owners / Retail Shops are typically more successful with maximized foot traffic and increased sales. Many are not exceptionally profitable, seeking to make a living doing their passion. Key variables include the ability to control costs and hire employees when needed. In an ideal world, there is a "rising tide" business environment where building owners are motivated to do general building maintenance and make improvements that justify higher rents, while businesses have a high-quality space in a high-volume location that makes them more profitable. Some opportunities include assistance planning and doing building upgrades, 2nd story business opportunities, availability of financial and business management assistance, and increases in local housing to increase the availability of labor.

Restaurants are especially sensitive to having a good environment for their business. Despite slim margins, a desirable destination makes it easier to stay busy and schedule more hours. Public amenities like sidewalk seating and nighttime lighting provide additional benefits.

Building Owners are concerned about the costs and benefits of ownership. Many are dealing with the conflict between having successful tenant businesses but little ability or incentive to do upgrades and maintenance. This can be mitigated if they know the city is invested in making improvements to the streetscape and is trying to make it easier and less expensive to do upgrades through supportive code enforcement methods.

Community:

The community has a sense of connection to Downtown and views it as a special gathering place, worthy of preserving the history and small-town environment. To make it more popular and useful, customers want to see more and consistent open hours for local businesses, easier access, and continuation of popular events.

City:

The City of Anacortes plays a large part in the Downtown and is interested in supporting efforts to implement the area's long-term vision connected to the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations. This is helped by getting constituent support and recognition and credit for city leadership and contributions. Financially, the city is interested in overall economic development and success that maintains or increases tax revenues, helps pay for improvements without blowing a hole in city budget, and provides the opportunity to provide staffing and in-kind services in support.

Chamber:

The Chamber of Commerce has a direct interest in promoting, maintaining, and improving business activity across the city and for its members, and their work spans beyond the limits (boundaries) of our work area. The vitality of the Downtown is an important part of the overall success of city businesses, and they are interested in an active partnership with shared responsibility and credit.

Port:

The Port is a significant actor in the Downtown. Port facilities and operations are directly contiguous to (although outside of) the Downtown area. The Port has a goal to provide public access (part of their strategic plan) and supports economic development Downtown and in their area. As a separate entity, the Port is interested in improving the interface / interactions with downtown and City but does not want it to interfere with their business.

Organizations:

Numerous organizations, including non-profit, informal and fraternal groups support and participate in the Downtown through shared projects, downtown events and general efforts to benefit the community. It is important to recognize their contributions to the community, engaging in and maintaining partnerships that integrate with their activities.

Local Tribes:

Native tribes value community recognition of their local history and influence. The Samish and Swinomish tribes have both engaged in economic activities and provided services within the City. Outreach efforts will need to further focus on their overall goals and interest in Downtown.

Businesses Outside of Downtown

A successful Downtown benefits business in the rest of the City and beyond. By ensuring Anacortes is a great location in which to live and do business, they are more easily able to attract and house new employees and have access to goods, services and professional expertise to support their business needs.

Strengths

Downtown has potential for great character and vibrancy. Everybody wants to be here – older families and businesses remained here, and newer residents and businesses came here by choice.

People come downtown for a purpose. Lively at times, the downtown atmosphere has cute old buildings, relatively dense buildings, unique quality businesses, and a generally affluent market.

The wide streets and sidewalks with little through traffic and good walkability provide a good base for optimizing the Downtown experience.

The Downtown location is unmatched, with great views to water, access to water-based activities (fishing, boating, etc.) and an active port and marina nearby.

Weaknesses

With changing economics and markets, it is unclear what businesses and customers we are trying to attract.

The building stock is generally good, but suffers from mismatched architecture, inconsistent maintenance, and dated building fronts (including mismatched awnings and inconsistently maintained store fronts). This is complicated by absentee owners and narrow, constrained building lots.

Downtown public amenities are limited. There is a dearth of public seating, accessibility varies, access to public bathrooms for visitors is limited, and it needs more public and green spaces. There are zones where the streetscape is relatively sterile, and this is made worse by any obvious empty spots (unoccupied store fronts).

There is no system to pay for upgrades to the Downtown. Not having a Local Improvement District (or similar funding stream) means that costs are borne by individual businesses, the city, grants, or local sponsors.

The Washington State Ferry and cruise lines have a mixed impact. It brings many people to town, but the large proportion of riders are just travelling through, and the Downtown has not capitalized on this opportunity.

Opportunities

Based on discussions with the city, there is a real opportunity for street use, traffic, and parking management strategies (such as slowing speeds to 15 mph or eliminating auto traffic, increasing parking enforcement, increasing pedestrian areas) that would give the Downtown a better pedestrian focus.

Wide rights of way provide plenty of space to improve walking flow (esp. connections to marina, port, etc.), using street spaces for public space / plaza, parklets, open seating, and pocket parks.

Code changes could facilitate improvements. Examples include reducing barriers to development and renovations, allowing more use of alleys and “back of building” spaces, and reducing the number of blank walls and spaces on buildings.

The Downtown location could be used as an advantage, marketing it to tourists and Ferry travelers as a place to come and spend quality time.

Threats / Challenges

Building owners may be hard to engage. They face multiple challenges and can be defensive about pressure to redevelop or improve their buildings because of regulations that constrain choices, maintenance and improvement costs that cannot be covered by increased rents and dealing with old buildings with structural and seismic problems.

There is a perceived lack of business diversity and little in the way of targeted efforts to attract new types of businesses that “fit” the potential Downtown market. Changing shopping trends are a challenge to local business success and are feared to result in the potential loss of “anchor” businesses.

The overall business environment is subject to several impact areas. Economic cycles create winners and losers, growth and money can change the character, and the impact of Port and MJB development are largely unknown.

Additional Narrative

There are a lot of buildings with older owners and the potential for turnover in ownership. Decisions are often affected by tax or investment factors, and properties could end up being owned by a family member or buyer who does not have the same investment in the building.

People tend to like the European style streetscapes, with areas for pedestrian intersections, gathering places, and art. It would be useful to look at other cities’ downtowns for ideas.

Parking has always been a big deal.

Success Measures

Ideas to track the success of Downtown design ideas includes:

- Retail and marketing studies (economic growth and improvement)
- Transportation studies (success of streetscape, traffic and parking changes)
- Planning documents (comparison to historical planning goals and outcomes)

Root Causes

The economics and markets for Downtown has been changing over time, putting new demands and challenges on both business and building owners.

There is a long history of support for Downtown, with an effective city government, strong Maritime environment, many private and non-profit groups, multiple community events, and especially, very engaged citizens.

On the downside, the city's reputations ("Cantaffordus", Ferry transit "drive through", resistance to change) can inhibit its growth and success.

Focus Areas and Brainstorm Ideas

Land Use and Development Policies, Regulations, Recommendations (Including allowable uses, building inventory, Intensity, volume, development/design regulations, points or centers of connectivity, design guidance for new and renovated buildings, public vs private responsibility for owners of land, buildings and businesses)

Parklet policies:

Parklet policy re: costs / uses

Limit to public use and spread them around

Reduce the visual impacts – reducing size and eliminate roofs

Use for public seating (need maintenance plan)

Consider replace or repurpose with "food truck" for street food access

Allow businesses to pay "street use" fees to use a parklet

Narrow the streets and widen the sidewalks

Encourage density and use of side streets

Bike parking is not used consistently

Improved guidance for outdoor seating

- No brown paper in empty storefronts
- Require empty buildings to install window coverings, clings, art (advertising?)
- Allow “grab and go” food businesses for tourists (“food truck” or similar)
- Encourage landlords to maintain their buildings
- Re-define the CBD to include transitional areas at each end of Commercial (3rd to 2nd, 10th to 12th)
- Code changes and enforcement can help or hinder businesses
- Code changes to allow structural supports in the right of way (ex.: awnings)
- Business recruitment strategies
- MJB planning impact
- Selected street closures
- Provide height bonus for building public amenities

Street Level Design (Includes store fronts, alleys, sidewalks, signage and wayfinding and pedestrian amenities)

Scope

- Major focus of this committee
- Do-able projects
- Decorate all of Commercial
- Cohesive appearance for street (i.e. lights)

Focal Points

- Create a focal point at the ends of Commercial (boat themed?)
- Fix the arch
- Viewing area(s) to look at action at the port (Dakota Creek fence with peep holes)
- Bring more about what’s happening on the water into downtown (maritime pictures, screens)

Signage

- People look from ground level to 15’ up
- Pedestrian level signage / wayfinding
- Fun and funky pedestrian level signs
- Have grants and guidelines for pedestrian level signs (balance business needs / consistency)

Flags and banners

- Make a stanchion system to install event and information banners across the street
- Add street pole flags (welcome, event, art)

Green

- Year-round foliage
- Eliminate mismatched planter pots
- Plant winter greens in planters

Murals

- Paint by number murals
- Trompe l'oeil murals in alleys
- Cleanup and expand murals

Buildings and Storefronts

- Interview building owners to decide what will help
- Establish grants and volunteer guidelines to improve maintenance
- Add or improve facades to look more “historic”
- Add architectural details to flat front buildings
- Support use of awnings with design and engineering assistance and cost sharing
- No fake or cheap awnings

Seating

- Backless benches to encourage visiting and people watching
- More “street furniture” with appropriate design

Lighting

- Light up the street level
- Sidewalk lighting and power (brick strip where it is installed)

Misc. Amenities

- More trash cans (at least one per block on both sides of the street)
- Sound system to play music on the street
- Lots of bike parking (fewer spots, more locations – close to stores being visited)
- Clean up the alleys and streets

Transportation, Circulation, Parking (Including street uses and classifications, alleys, vehicle access, pedestrian, transit stops and hubs, linkages, accessibility)

Traffic Flow and Management

Selected street closures

Shut down Commercial to vehicles

Narrow Commercial to two narrow traffic lanes / sharrows with 15 mph speed limit

Traffic calming strategies (ex.: circles at intersections)

Use street painting, textures and other features to slow traffic

Create small traffic circles / roundabouts to calm traffic

Parking

Enforce parking before making changes

Enforce parking

Angle parking with landscaping

Parking (owners, employees, customers)

Assigned parking for business owners and employees to open street parking for customers

Alleys

Areas in alleys and behind buildings influence perceptions

Alley plan

Public / Private Transportation

Public “trolley” circle connecting MJB, Port, Downtown, Guemes and San Juan ferries

Coordinate with Skagit Transit re: public transit routes to facilitate pedestrian uses

Pedestrian Circulation

Make an obvious pedestrian connection to the Marina “Yellow Brick Road”

Well defined walking path from Downtown to Marina

Pathway from Port to Downtown (cruise customers, tourist viewing, etc.)

Parks, Open space, Community facilities (Includes private outdoor spaces, public plaza, non-vehicle street uses, public facilities)

Public Plaza

Plaza would be good with location TBD

Possibly use arts / theater / street end / Heart area

Pedestrian plaza between new arts center and the Heart of Anacortes

Integrated space for arts, city hall, parking structure, outdoor commons, indoor community events
Public courtyard with storage, seating and park space (like Fairhaven)

Public Spaces and Amenities

Provide height bonus for building public amenities

Public bathrooms

Covered arcades (large awnings)

Interactive elements in dead zone (unused) sidewalk areas (art, chairs, chess boards, other street games etc.)

Pocket parks

Public seating areas

Non-Vehicle Street Uses

How can we experiment with closing streets

Oak Harbor has a good example street

Arch

Beautify the gateway to be more pedestrian friendly and artistic

Improve the entry to downtown past the arch

Visualization – 3 dimensional forms and the urban experience (Creating a picture of our vision for Historic Downtown)

Downtown “thrive” vs “upgrade”

Welcome Sign on Hwy20

Majestic Hotel

Panoramic photos with Marina included

“Whole Town”

Arch to Port

Fewer cars, more amenities

Wide streets look impersonal

More events with street food options

Like the look of the Rope company

Banner over Commercial to announce events

Street dance, pet parade

Gather visitor statistics

01/27/23 Special Meeting with Tim Hohmann, City Engineer about current City of Anacortes staff brainstorm ideas and blue-sky plans

Alliance can help develop political will for improvements

The 2016 S Commercial Corridor plan is representative of current thinking and includes extending the main street into Downtown

Focus is changing from cars to people / bikes / pedestrians with continuing allowance for the needs of commercial traffic and access

Phase I is the roundabout at 12th and Commercial plus the transition zone to 10th and 11th

Project currently in process with funding delays

Plan for Arch to 12th includes widening sidewalks, adding bikeways, landscaping

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan is “official policy” for downtown development

Features that are encouraged include a checklist of priorities for transportation including “Complete Streets” model with priorities to pedestrians, bikes and cars in that order

City is interested in steps toward the ideal

Spruce up intersections

Traffic elements that result in traffic calming such as narrowed lanes, traffic circles elsewhere may open doors to creative street intersections, taking back more open space from cars

“Branding” intersections

Reorienting crosswalks

Activate alleys

Increase pedestrian friendly elements

Flexible use to balance open space and car uses

Movable bollards

Parking can be costly – need to rethink how it’s done

Potential for one-way streets for special cases downtown

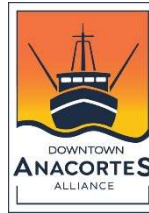
Idea for pedestrian plaza on side streets – example would be at 4th and O to take advantage of city property, possible Arts structure and connect it with the Heart

See more ideas from the email sent by Grace to provide talking points (requested by WM on 01/31/23)

Focus Areas and Projects (Updated as of 03/01/23)

Design Committee Project List	Priority	Lead	Start
Focus Area: Gateway Projects			
Arch revitalization and placemaking (includes tests for streetscape and amenities)	In Process	Exec Dir, Dickinson (arch), Ruether (place)	Feb 2023
Port gateway			
Marina gateway			

Focus Area: Streetscape and Amenities			
• Garage Signage	In Process		Mar 2023
• Wayfinding			
• Public Art			
• Buildings and Storefronts			
• Green Up Downtown			
• Lighting and Electrical			
• Public Seating			
• Misc. Amenities			
Focus Area: Traffic and Parking			
• Traffic Flow and Management - Redesign traffic flow to minimize auto impacts and increase pedestrian access			
• Parking – Redesign / reallocate parking Downtown			
• Pedestrian Circulator			
Focus Area: Policies			
• Parklets (Note: City is currently working on this item)			
• Vacant Buildings			
• Misc. Policy Ideas			
Focus Area: Public Spaces			
• Town Square – Public Plaza	Long Term		



Downtown Anacortes Alliance Historic Downtown Planning Report (04/06/23)

Economic Vitality Committee Report (Full Text)

Mission

Support economic development and a sound economic base through new projects, historic building renovations, assisting businesses, and promoting opportunities for people to live and work downtown.

Members

Eli Barrett, Bonnie Bowers, Janet Gifford, Jesica Kiser, Chris MacKenzie, Kaia Matheny, Lisa Strandberg, Glenn Szerlong

Economic Vitality Goals

Establish a business-friendly, resilient, diverse, and economically successful business environment that supports existing business and attracts sustainable new businesses.

Create new and entrepreneurial approaches to business incubation and startups.

Build community and density by attracting professionals and laborers to family wage jobs and adequate housing options.

Build business community relationships and provide services and supports to sharpen the competitiveness of local merchants.

Engage in strategies that provide a steadier volume customer base, focusing on the local market (keeping local people shopping here for goods and services) and adding tourists (as an additional market). (NOTE: This goal is being addressed by the Outreach Committee.)

Encourage investment in Downtown buildings, ensuring the integrity and enhancement of our commercial building stock. Facilitate rehabilitation of older buildings when viable and assist owners and developers in analyzing costs and benefits, financing options, and doing building pro-forma analyses.

Critical Success Factors

Strategies for nurturing new and ongoing businesses, including providing coaching, technical support, resources, information, and community relationship building.

Actionable data on gaps and barriers to business success and strategies to mitigate them, including workforce housing, development and growth, and the impact of city and other government policies.

Ability to provide guidance and resources to existing and prospective new building owners.

Stakeholders

Small businesses (especially storefront retail and restaurants) are one of the core stakeholders for Downtown economic vitality. Existing small business wants affordable rents, well maintained buildings, and a location and building that attracts customers. In addition, new “startup” business needs more support and guidance.

Building owners are another core stakeholder. Building owners are particularly interested in a return on investment. Non-resident owners may be motivated more by how the building fits into their investment portfolio and concentrate on risk tolerance, minimizing costs, and tax avoidance. Local owners may have greater incentive and find it easier to invest in and maintain their buildings but need access to a good rental market and cash flow to support investing in improvements. Some current owners of under-developed (ex.: SFR) properties who focus primarily on appreciation and income may resist making changes.

The City of Anacortes is a key stakeholder, responsible for policies and much of the (non-building) capital improvements Downtown. The city would like to see increased tax revenue and to see the city thriving. They want alignment with the Comprehensive Plan and support from the community for improvement plans. City policies, spending and services have a big influence over the Alliance’s mission.

Employers want a desirable downtown that helps attract employees and need more workforce availability.

The Port of Anacortes wants connectivity and good traffic flow for operations and customers, mitigate any negative impacts of operations, and manage expectations of the community.

Citizens and tourists

want an attractive and accessible downtown with a variety of products and services.

Developers of Downtown properties are incented by better ease of entry, reasonable and clear regulations, economic certainty, and access to financing. Cash flow drives their ability to get financing and drives value, so business viability is important. New developers and building owners who are aware of, and respect local community expectations and standards are more likely to be welcome in the Downtown business environment.

Influencers

Big industries affect and are affected by economic conditions. In particular, the number of employees and local purchases are large factors in the local economy.

Chamber and local organizations influence policies, activities, and business success across the community, including operating events, assisting local businesses, and advocating for or supporting projects that contribute to the local economy.

Analysis Strengths

Its unique and strong industrial base (shipbuilding, refineries, fisheries, and other maritime dependent businesses) provides jobs and tax revenues and is part of the community's long-term history.

A large portion of the population is highly educated, professionally skilled, affluent and community oriented, with strong social and relationship structures. The character of people and place create a natural tendency to collaborate with others to support businesses and community activities.

The natural environment is attractive and a desirable place for recreation, bringing visitors and locals together to play.

Overall, our community is a rural oasis – distant and protected from the worst of urban problems but providing the benefits and resources and services of larger cities, including a foodie friendly area to eat local, great quality offerings and established interest groups such as arts, music and fraternal organizations that bring culture and events.

Weaknesses

New businesses can find it hard to enter the local business “fellowship”, where there is resistance to “newbies” who talk about change.

The Downtown competes with a “Gateway” mentality where the city is seen as a place to travel through to other destinations.

The population (especially downtown) is not dense enough to support a market “critical mass”.

Opportunities

We can focus on “Discover Downtown” to counteract the “Gateway” phenomenon.

There is a lot of under-developed real estate in town and plenty of “room to grow” the population by encouraging housing density and businesses that get more people living and working here.

There is a largely untapped customer base if we can attract more locals downtown in the off season and get ferry and cruise ship riders to stay over during the tourist season.

There is room to use entrepreneurial approaches by exploring market studies, methods to incubate new business, and making creative use of existing spaces.

Employer housing

Challenges / Threats

Economic factors are the greatest challenges. Depending on where we are in the economic cycle, there may be businesses on the edge, vacant buildings and spaces, costs and rents rising faster than revenues.

The fast rise in the housing market, and development that responds to higher income buyers has led to a housing crunch for lower- and middle-income individuals and families. This impacts local businesses in finding and retaining employees to provide essential work and services.

The Downtown has buildings with one or more of several challenges – older and in need of maintenance, valued for their historical qualities, too expensive to be rehabilitated economically, subject to turnover in ownership – all factors contributing to an uncertain future.

Stories and Narratives

The numerous events and festivals have varied impacts on downtown business depending on the focus and products, but they all contribute to fun and community building.

The refineries have been “boom and bust”, and their long-term future economic impact on the community is uncertain.

Community has a reputation as an affluent retirement location, a perception reinforced by high-cost residential real estate. Many families and working individuals find it harder to reside and do business in the community due to high housing costs.

The marina and other marine related business is a big economic driver and brings lots of people downtown.

Success Measures

Broad measures of the Downtown business environment may include increases or decreases in the number of successful businesses, sales tax revenues, and market and sales trends.

More detailed measures that reflect local business success may include customer counts (number of businesses visited and time spent downtown), customer satisfaction (service satisfaction and the ability to get the goods and services they want), and overall business supports (clusters or business types and business to business communication).

Facilitator's note: Are there measures that would show results or changes in how commercial spaces and buildings are contributing to the economic vitality of the Downtown?

Root Causes

Much of the economic activity Downtown is seasonal, with tourist and holiday seasons that have a marked impact on local businesses being driven by economic cycles.

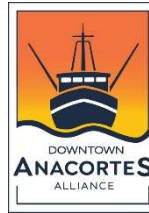
The sense of community has a big impact on the overall economic vitality. The integration (public and private acceptance) of new residents and businesses can be a big plus.

A tight labor and housing market inhibits local growth through simple lack of people to staff businesses and sustain sales, especially through the "off season".

Focus Areas and Projects (Updated as of 03/02/23)

Economic Vitality Committee Projects	Priority	Lead	Start
Focus Area: Buildings / Development			
• Conduct a rental market analysis (survey) and publish the results			
• Set up a clearinghouse system to connect building owners with renters			
• Hold periodic informational seminars for business and building owners			
• Develop a pro-forma tool for analyzing building rehabilitation or ownership costs and options			
• Advocate for building owners' economic incentive programs such as resumption of the Development Tax Credit Program			
Focus Area: Businesses and Support			

Develop an information and referral system to provide business owners with technical resources (financial and business planning, banking and lending, marketing, buying and selling businesses, and other decisions)			
Organize local affiliate groups (by business types) to provide support and B to B coaching and informal advising			
Work with one or more building owner(s) to establish pop-up / test spaces that reduce startup risks for owners and landlords.			
Establish a system to match prospective businesses with available building spaces			
Focus Area: Housing			
Identify underutilized properties and spaces and encourage owners to consider redevelopment			
Find and share creative options to finance local projects			
Encourage increased density and workforce housing options (Check with Outreach Committee on this project)			
Encourage City and County to create new or enhanced tax incentive and financial assistance programs			



Downtown Anacortes Alliance Historic Downtown Planning Report (04/06/23)

Next Steps

Committee Organization

As of the date of this report, each committee is in the process of selecting a chair and identifying project priorities and leaders.

Reviews

- Committees will keep stakeholders and other committees informed and listen to feedback about proposed projects, consider suggested changes, and adjust as needed.
- The Board will review committee plans to confirm they meet the vision, mission, and Comprehensive Plan, fit together and are ready for implementation.

Implementation

- Each committee will manage implementation of its projects with the support of the board and Executive Director.
- Projects done will depend on priorities, scheduling, available resources, and opportunities.
- “Quick Wins” can happen immediately with minimum effort.
- Short to medium range projects require more in-depth project planning.
- Long-term projects require a continuing and sustained effort toward achieving identified goals and policies.
- Project teams have access to a project management tool to help in prioritizing, organizing, and managing resources (sample below).

Sustainability

- Committees sustain work by maintaining project oversight, reviewing results, and adjusting plans and priorities as needed.

- Individual projects are done by the committee of the whole, or designated subcommittees and project teams, with additional volunteers added as appropriate.
- Committees have a chair and designated board contact to maintain communication, identify resources and opportunities, and coordinate their work with the other committees.

Sample Project Management Tracking Tool

Project Plan	
Committee:	
Project Name:	
Project Manager:	
Project Team:	
Project Goal: (How this project relates to the Downtown plan)	
Project Outcome: (Products or results expected when the project is completed)	
Customers / Requirements: (Stakeholders / groups served and their expectations)	
Dependencies: (Groups or conditions that influence or control this project)	
Resources: (Source of funds or other resources needed to accomplish this project)	
Budget: (Estimated cost, attach detailed budget sheet as needed)	
Planned Start Date:	
Projected End Date:	
Project Plan and Schedule	
Planned Activity / Deliverable Product	Due Date

Progress Notes	Review Date
Final Project Report	
Results Achieved: (How well the project achieved goals and met requirements)	
Schedule / Budget: (How closely the project kept on schedule and budget)	
Lessons Learned:	