

Breakout Room Visioning Exercise: You are a time traveling scout for the Better Futures Travel Agency. You've been placed in Midtown 2030 and are asked to report back about your experience there. As you go around Midtown,

- What do you see, hear, smell or sense?
- What words would you use to describe the place?
- What's still there from 2020?
- What's new? What's changed?
- What's being built, or what might happen by 2040?
- What do you like best about Midtown in 2030?

Spruce breakout room: Everyone's ideas/stories/vision	Common & noteworthy elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slower vehicle traffic, landscaping, welcoming signage, Native Alaskan culture recognition, more walkable and bikeable locations, Chester Creek is restored, outdoor events, music, outdoor BBQ.</li> <li>• 2040 – climate change failure, fossil fuels too little too late, sea level rise is dominating the funding, 2020 transportation funding dried up because traffic diverted, more pedestrian friendly, improved signal timing, reduced accidents, banned studded tires, snow reduced, electric cars, organic transformation, many and varied restaurants, solved the homeless problem, people feel good about Midtown, service industry is thriving, traffic speeds are a problem, noise and speeds detract from what Midtown should be.</li> <li>• Waterfront property in Midtown, see the mountains from most everywhere, walk almost everywhere, overpasses for peds/bikes, less population and less traffic, more design integrity for open space and structures.</li> <li>• Increased vehicle traffic, more delay, more peds and homeless camps, more strip malls. Would like to see greater sense of place and community – population living in Midtown with an obvious pride for their community – increase in pedestrian facilities and mixed use.</li> <li>• More housing in Midtown, more space for pedestrians.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More local stores</li> <li>• There may not be as many people</li> <li>• Pride in community</li> <li>• Chester Creek being safe and restored</li> <li>• Places for families to be together</li> <li>• Lots of electric cars</li> <li>• Design integrity - more attractive, more permanent</li> <li>• Larger spaces would be saved</li> <li>• Sense of place</li> <li>• Welcome to Anchorage – Dena'ina homeland</li> <li>• People feel safer walking around, biking</li> <li>• Less noisy</li> <li>• Slower traffic</li> <li>• Less space for traffic</li> <li>• Signal timing</li> </ul>



Birch breakout room: Everyone’s ideas/stories/vision	Common & noteworthy elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ease of access to grocery stores/shops, improved walkability.</li> <li>● Anchorage is a prosperous metropolitan area because we have taken a new strategic approach to what constitutes the core of our economic vitality. We are a trading hub, and a hub for innovation – east Asian/European/North American markets. We’re more multinational, more people from Europe, East Asia, more cosmopolitan feel.</li> <li>● We have embraced that we are the only major metro area that is located in a sub-Arctic environment. We celebrate that we are unique, and we celebrate it, not just endure it – in our physical landscapes, structures, the experience of pedestrians as they move around Midtown.</li> <li>● We envision that Midtown is the hub of this new, prosperous economic community.</li> <li>● Go for a walk through 2030/2040 Midtown, instead of walking on a sidewalk that’s immediately adjacent to the roadway we are walking amongst store frontages that are separated from snowplows, and we can enjoy the streetscapes/sounds/smells of shops.</li> <li>● As we stroll down Northern Lights we can peek into the shops. As we get into the junctions of the lots we don’t have to climb over demarcations or out to the roadway, we can enjoy a leisurely stroll adjacent to the shops.</li> <li>● Right now, Midtown feels like a place to drive through. In the future it will be more of a place to bike through and walk through with a central place to park and then travel through the area on foot. There might be some areas that are inside (i.e. a mall) so you don’t have to go outside in winter. Some areas would be denser and feel like a destination integrated with transit options, greenery, and connections to the trail system so there is a more direct, better connection.</li> <li>● There’s a focus on Midtown having more middle- to high-density residential opportunities. There are units that can serve for multi-generational living, including more multicultural, who are used to coming down to the main street from home for shopping, etc.</li> <li>● There is a central plaza area where people can meet up with friends to socialize, visit, exercise, etc. In the winter there’s a way to buffer light so people can experience the Northern Lights. Buildings are respectful of our wonderful mountains.</li> <li>● There are housing options available right in Midtown.</li> <li>● The pandemic has changed things, and a number of people of working age may see the possibilities of telecommuting and living in places where they really want to live.</li> <li>● Drawing on the three perfect days column – people come to scout out Midtown as a place to live. Urban enough to have connectivity but have the lifestyle that makes it a place where they</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Greenways, green connections, trails and green infrastructure are key to supporting a livable Midtown</li> <li>● Supporting improved housing opportunities for a range of lifestyles, ages, abilities</li> <li>● Ensuring the focus is on a livable winter city (year-round opportunities)</li> <li>● Embrace Anchorage as a winter city</li> <li>● Live and work in Midtown</li> <li>● Walkable, bikeable</li> <li>● Metropolitan - cosmopolitan</li> </ul>



want to live. People will spend time at a Midtown hotel where they will get breath-taking views of the Chugach. They can rent bicycles nearby (perhaps Cuddy Park), which has been supplemented with fruit trees that can support food for residents (including Food Banks) and are not strictly ornamental. The visitor can go to the Loussac library and can see how the community values this resource, they can visit restaurants, shops, experience international foods, coffee, and are excited to come back to Anchorage to see it in the winter (i.e., ice skating, etc). As a result of that experience they wanted to come with their families and lay down roots here.

- Building on Anchorage's greenway network is really important. To attract middle/upper income to Midtown there needs to be good quality public amenities, including green belts, bike trails, etc. It would be appropriate to have a Midtown Greenway, that connects to the proposed Fairview Greenway, to connect with the Chester/Campbell/Ship Creek greenbelts and have infrastructure that is quality, unique.
- The greenbelt is there for recreation, wildlife corridors, commuting, moving around in a more inviting way.
- All this needs to be accessible for all abilities, ages, etc. (not just able-bodied people).
- We need to promote Midtown as a quality, winter living experience.



Cottonwood breakout room: Everyone’s ideas/stories/vision	Common & noteworthy elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A desire for a safe environment.</li> <li>● Focus on multi-modal.</li> <li>● Space where everyone can engage from all walks of life. An example is a farmer’s market where food stamps can be used. This has been done elsewhere.</li> <li>● Build to take in the surrounding environment. Building in a fashion that takes into account the natural surrounding beauty.</li> <li>● Plan for technology without taking away from the natural environment. Charging stations, solar panels, or other technology that can be introduced into the space.</li> <li>● Noise - reduce traffic noise. The noise should be generated by people/activities and not vehicles.</li> <li>● Mixed use and shared green space. Create a destination for people to come to through open space, business, and housing.</li> <li>● Shared parking areas and pedestrian connectivity within parking areas.</li> <li>● Cuddy Park is a great example of what is being done right.</li> <li>● A place to Live.Work.Play.</li> <li>● Services for individuals - DMV and other amenities that will draw people to Midtown.</li> <li>● Pedestrian boulevards without vehicles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sound of children playing</li> <li>● Spaces inclusive of all demos</li> <li>● Seasonal activities that enliven spaces - especially in winter</li> <li>● Replacing car-centric with multi-modal</li> <li>● Caters more to people living there than passing through</li> <li>● Design for us.</li> <li>● Cultural representation</li> <li>● Honor and celebrate through sculpture, ceremony, knowledge - wayfinding opportunities for people to learn</li> <li>● Understand the significance</li> <li>● Acceptance of all people, all members of the community.</li> <li>● History that should be spoken.</li> <li>● Institutional access - schools, community center feel (e.g. New Amsterdam)</li> <li>● Scale things down and provide access</li> <li>● Closing off roads for pedestrian boulevards to allow people to experience the space</li> <li>● Community block party</li> </ul>



Aspen breakout room: Everyone's ideas/stories/vision	Common & noteworthy elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As I walk around Midtown the first thing I notice that's different is that we've moved away from the large C St./A St. corridor and it's been moved down to being less of a north-south arterial, it's more of a two-lane, two-lane. We have a bike lane going along both of those streets and it's actually being used. Since the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020 people are doing a lot more biking. There's also a lot of greenspace, which has been created in places that used to be parking lots that aren't used any more, like at the movie theater. On the 36th Ave. side some of the Loussac park area has been extended into ribbons that go all the way into the Walmart area, which has been beautified by taking advantage of local government incentives. I'm hearing a lot less traffic and a lot more nature. I'm hearing people and their families using these areas that have been created. I'm also seeing a lot of Alaska Native structures and cultural/artistic components along 36th. I feel like I finally have a city center, a center that feels, looks and sounds like what Anchorage, as the largest city in the state, ought to represent: a vibrant center of industry and commerce, and a community for the future where people feel integrated.</li> <li>● The Fireweed/Spenard Road area has been working for decades to improve Spenard road in this area. Finally, in 2011, we were able to make some changes with the development of a separated trail and narrowing up of the road. When that trail was opened there was a counter put on one side of the barrier that separates the wall from the road. They counted 1000 pedestrians a day going up and down that road. It was a pleasure to see how immediately the community accepted that trail. From there it was easier to make other changes to Spenard Road. Fireweed Lane in 2030 would look like a turn off Spenard – bikeable, walkable, safe. Northern Lights needs to have an alternative on 27th for bikes and pedestrians that is more pleasant than what it is in 2020. I want to see people being able to walk to and into restaurants and shops without having to compete with traffic. We need walkability.</li> <li>● I would see 8-foot sidewalks. With COVID-19, with the way we know businesses are changing, there will be a lot less vehicular traffic in 2030, especially with the North/South roads being down to smaller lanes and not enlarged into a giant freeway. Also, there will be a place for local snow storage so sidewalks remain accessible through winter, allowing for alternative transportation such as walking or e-bikes, which in turn keeps volumes lower and a more pleasant experience for people living and working and playing in Midtown.</li> <li>● Midtown will be more walkable and safer for bikes. I'd like to see more community resources like parks and expanded green spaces.</li> <li>● I would see the 2030 vision of Midtown as some sort of protected bike infrastructure. I love that route down Spenard into the park – I'd like to see more of that. We need to shift toward multimodal transportation options as opposed to the car-centric, pedestrian-killing version we</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reduction in traffic spaces; increases in walkability and bikeability</li> <li>● Make Midtown more of a destination for eating and shopping</li> <li>● Hearing a lot less traffic and lot more natures</li> <li>● Lot of native Alaska culture inspired architecture</li> <li>● Develop a City Center</li> <li>● Sidewalks need to be wide enough so you can store snow and still walk safely</li> <li>● Greenspace</li> </ul>



have now.

- The idea of a walkable boundary makes a lot of sense.



**Rough draft vision statement:** By 2030, Midtown will be greener, have less traffic, be more of a winter city, and accessible for all ages and physical abilities. It will:

- Have more sidewalk cafe seating
- Be a cosmopolitan area that is a great food destination “Anchorage’s appetite adventure”
- Honor its cultures and history
- Be a place to walk, talk, meet and eat
- Be a destination for “Meet me in Midtown!”
- Be walkable
- Hear more nature and less traffic
- Have lower traffic speeds
- Be pedestrian friendly
- Have more mixed-use development
- Be a source of intentional place making, making it feel like home
- Have events spaces, small stores, barbeque, gateway feeling, and better landscaping.
- Be a winter city
- Have walkways closer to buildings
- Be a destination
- Be developed with a pedestrian scale in mind
- Have a unique sense of space that accommodates pedestrians, bicyclists, and other modes of travel, as well as new technologies
- Accommodate autonomous vehicles, where AI controls traffic, and center lanes are created (enabling more throughput, more efficient vehicular traffic, wider sidewalks, more trees, and buildings can move to the back of ROW)
- Support sidewalk cafes, and be a place that is truly cosmopolitan, multicultural in nature and feel, vibrant and innovative
- Have ambience

*The CBWG were asked in the Kick-off Meeting to ask their neighbors/constituents what they think about Midtown and what Midtown could or should be. The following is a short summary of what was reported back by the CBWG participants in the Visioning Session.*

What do neighbors think? What most excites them?

- Midtown should become a place with potential - to walk, etc.
- We still need to be able to move traffic around and through Midtown. Like the direction the Seward Highway is taking, but around the edge of Midtown so Midtown Center core is separated, and traffic can move around it. Then the rest of the community won’t complain that things are being slowed in Midtown.



- We had pushback on three lanes in Spenard, but people were encouraged to use other routes.
- Loved hearing about narrowing lanes and freeing up space for other things/people within the ROW.
- For regional traffic - it doesn't necessarily all have to be at the surface. Corridors can be moved below grade, covered over, development put over caps to create opportunities for additional green space to offset large areas of asphalt.
- We want people to have pride in living and working in Midtown and feel safe there because there's an intentional, thoughtful design of streets/sidewalks/building façade interface for residents, employees, and visitors of Midtown.
- We want slower traffic, for the Seward Highway to not be turned into a freeway.

*Closing thoughts from the CBWG?*

- The vision needs to be presented to the greater public and community council members for their input, and also to the Native Village of Eklutna for their input.
- Existing land development patterns are expensive to change. It will take time, need to be patient.

*What are people skeptical about?*

- It's always challenging to talk green space, as they are not profit-making.
- Community oriented developers always incorporate green space in design, but some others are resistant to doing this.
- Beware the "Tragedy of the Horizon" when thinking about financing large infrastructure efforts that have 50+ years of life.
- Some building owners might be afraid that there wouldn't be adequate parking for patrons
- Biggest Challenge: Tyranny of custom. This is how we've always done it. It will happen through conversation, will take time. The vision is an important first step.
- We need to be excited about it to excite others.

