



Community Strategic Planning

**Community of Valdez
Strategic Planning Weekend #1: Goals**

Planning Cells Summary

October 15, 2011

More than 50 residents of Valdez joined together on October 15, 2011 to launch the Community of Valdez Strategic Plan process. The purpose of the first meeting was to begin to identify broad, future-looking, community-wide goals and planning assumptions for Planning Core consideration. The day was divided into two parts: a large group morning session and small group/Planning Cell afternoon sessions.

The first half of the morning session, attended by all Planning Cell and Planning Core participants, concentrated on setting the stage. Strategic planning terms were shared with the group and information about both the City (the government entity) and the Community (city, residents, agencies, businesses, etc.) was presented. The group learned that while City spending per capita has been increasing, revenues have started to decrease. Today, the City spends roughly twice as much per capita than other Alaskan cities of similar size. The consensus is that the current level of spending is not sustainable in the long term. The City and Community, however, have the advantage of looking ahead to address potential changes proactively, before change is forced upon the Community.

The second portion of the morning session concentrated on identifying community values and exploring the ideal “look” of Valdez as it might be in 2031.

Values are unchanging. No matter what happens, our values remain the same. In strategic planning, values shape the community’s goals and direction. The group was asked to identify community values, characteristics, and attributes that define the community. It was noted that some of these values are what the Community aspires to, not necessarily where it really is.

Value: a principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable.

Values:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Equality | Responsibility | Generosity |
| Diversity | Resourcefulness | Adaptability |
| Tolerance | Respect | Learning |
| Compassion and Caring | Open-minded | Giving |
| Loyalty | Friendliness | Mutual Support |

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Other Valdez Characteristics and Attributes

Close-knit	Inclusive	Connected –
Safe	Multi-generational	past/present/future
Hopeful	Pride (for community)	Interconnected
Inquisitive	Traditional	Historically aware
Practical	Alaskan – independent,	Volunteer community
Talented, artistic, and	tough, frontier-spirit	Fortunate
creative	Naturalist	High expectations
Unique	Moral	Sustainability
Natural beauty	Understanding	Recognition
Content	Resilient	Accessibility
Environmental quality	Proud/pride	(government and others)
Recreation-oriented	Honorable	Personable
Family-oriented	Active	
Energetic	Forward thinkers	

“Future Valdez”

The group was also asked to imagine the “look” of Valdez in 2031, not just the physical appearance but the sense of place. They described a potential Future Valdez in the following terms (brainstorming):

- Self-sustaining
- Financially independent from oil and gas industry
- Diversified economy
- Having a vibrant arts community
- 6,000 to 8,000 people
- Cohesive
- Having cheap and clean energy
- Having more than one grocery store
- Keeping its small town feel and improving on it
- Having more oil company infrastructure
- Providing year-round recreation for all

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- Where no one goes to sleep hungry or cold
- With no trailer parks due to affordable housing initiatives
- Being a museum without walls
 - Build partnerships
 - Embrace living history
- Having an improved highway, 65 miles per hour between Valdez and Anchorage and without avalanche risks
- Refocused on being the Gateway to the Interior
 - Be regional hub
- Having a railroad and an international port
 - Building transportation connections
- Serving as a communications hub
- Interconnected
 - To other communities including Anchorage
 - Corridor planning
- Having complete education – from Kindergarten to Masters programs
- Being a premium winter destination for ski and snowboard
- Being more efficient than other communities
- Having a built environment that matches the natural environment
- Being the premier health care hub
- Developed in an orderly fashion (not hodge podge)
- Being the premier year-round tourism destination in Alaska
- Having a connecting trail to Cordova – bike, ski, hut to hut
- Having a year-round vibrant downtown that is affordable
- Having a real downtown
- Open to ideas from future residents
- 10,000 King salmon
- Having a greater percent of fish from Prince William Sound processed in Valdez
- Having increased manufacturing opportunities
- Supporting life long residences
 - Birth, schools, jobs, senior services
- Having a relevant position in a global economy
- Having school classrooms with Pacific centered maps
- Still caring about and taking care of the natural environment
- Having a model waterfront
- Be a model community
- Being the best at everything!

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Following lunch, the participants split into small Planning Cell groups for more focused discussions. At the end of the day, the facilitation team reviewed and consolidated the information gathered. This information was shared with the Planning Core on October 16 and is summarized below.

Assumptions, SWOT and Goal Statements/Topics

The first exercise identified the community’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats/challenges. These characteristics identify what may be important for the community to maintain over time, as well as opportunities for change. A number of overarching themes developed across cell topic areas.

*Community of Valdez
Planning Cells:*

*Business/Economic Development
Healthcare
Social Services
Utilities/Energy/Infrastructure
Military
Education
Culture/Recreation
Land Use/Waterfront*

SWOT—Overarching Themes

- Our Strengths
 - Safety
 - Small town environment
 - Natural setting
 - Strong foundation from which to build (economic health, infrastructure)
 - Natural setting and natural resources
 - Location (ice free port)
- Our Weaknesses
 - High cost of living, including cost of energy
 - Location
 - Lack of opportunities (medical specialties, stores, contractors, etc.—lack of competition, diversity)
- Our Opportunities
 - Locations (“beginning” of the road)
 - “Hub” location
- Our Challenges
 - Transportation costs
 - Natural Hazards
 - Weather

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SWOT—Cell-specific

Business/Economic Development

- Strengths
 - Financial resources
 - Communications network
 - Location as a transportation hub and beginning of the road
 - Infrastructure
 - Ice free port
 - Room to grow
 - Entrepreneurial spirit
 - Seafood industry, commercial and sport
 - Oil industry
- Weaknesses
 - Promoting community (lack of pride and promotion of community)
 - No common development theme
 - Poor small business support
 - Diversification
 - Disconnected from waterfront
 - Poor or no planning (implementation)
 - Lack of sense of urgency
 - Energy costs
- Opportunities
 - Snow
 - Grow the visitor industry
 - Natural resources
 - Water front
 - Opportunity to develop community pride
 - Training opportunities
 - Timing of this plan (act before hit bottom)
 - Younger generation
- Challenges
 - Snow
 - Fiscal constraints and responsibilities
 - Access to dollars for investment
 - Community involvement (by business)

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- Affordable housing and cost of living
- Planning follow through
- Labor pool
- Politics
- Perception that the city is spoiled
- Shrinking tax base

Healthcare

- Strengths
 - Doing what we do for others
 - Good economy because of oil industry
 - Good schools
 - People are willing to participate
 - Modern health care facilities
 - Valdez has money to implement things
 - Good functioning hospital
 - Highly qualified health care professionals
 - Variety of services and service providers
 - Good cooperation and coordination among health care partners
 - Good EMS with Advanced Life Support capabilities
 - Good fire and hazmat support
 - Good staff and volunteers
- Weaknesses
 - People not participated in government/lack of civic involvement
 - Hoarding of city money
 - Cost and availability of services (lack of specialists and difficulty attracting—cost to go to Anchorage)
 - Aging population
 - No assisted living/long term care opportunities
 - Lack of competition
 - No universal health care
 - Lack of cultural cache
 - Not enough economic diversity (population of haves and have-nots)
- Opportunities
 - Natural recreation
 - Increase access to health care
 - Expand coordination and connections
 - Expand services
 - Focus on healthy living and prevention
 - Regional healthcare hub
 - Diversify employment and economy

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- Increase cultural and arts communities
- Challenges
 - Increasing costs
 - Increasing uninsured population
 - Decrease in state and federal reimbursement
 - Uncertainty about health care reform
 - If Providence calls it quits
 - Transportation in case of emergency or for other health care needs
 - High cost of healthy food and lack of choice

Social Services

- Strengths
 - Someone will be there to help
 - Understanding of community needs
 - Volunteerism
 - A great need for services
 - A lot of social services organizations (30+)
 - Citizenship
 - People (elders, guidance, wisdom)
 - History knowledge, mentors
 - College (human services field/education ops)
 - Safe environment
 - Awareness and acceptance
 - Caring for and by people
 - Access to support
 - Community partnerships, working together
 - Small nature of community
 - Flexibility
 - Access to real life
 - Responsive
- Weaknesses
 - Mobile homes
 - Need for low income housing options
 - Grant requirements
 - Weather
 - Medical needs—coordination with other towns
 - Changes in requirements
 - Funding
 - Staff burnout
 - Turnover
 - Lack of understanding

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- Emotional ties (connection to patients)
- Need support
- Opportunities
 - Ability to be a regional hub for services
 - More collaboration (match needs)
 - Services can grow
 - Educate/recruit volunteers
- Challenges
 - Federal fiscal climate
 - Local and state funding
 - Population aging/need growing
 - No backup services
 - Not enough volunteers (recycling people)
 - Aging infrastructure

Military

- Strengths
 - Small town
 - Safe community
 - Beautiful natural setting
 - Recreational opportunities
 - Small classroom size
 - No state income taxes
 - Opportunities to learn (schools, community, museums)
 - Welcoming community
 - Connection to highway system
- Weaknesses
 - Cultural shock (families and kids feel lost)
 - Cost of living
 - Difficult transportation
 - No commissary (shopping opportunities)
 - Lack of communication and responsiveness from government
 - Military leadership is not as engaged in community as it could be.
- Opportunities
 - Military discounts
 - Opportunities to participate in local government
 - Portable nuclear plant
- Challenges
 - Nothing to do for younger activity duty members

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Land Use/Waterfront

- Strengths
 - Good infrastructure
 - Container port
 - Land availability
 - Access to ocean
 - Good city services
 - Strong fishing
 - Amazing terrain—location—for recreational facilities
- Weaknesses
 - Land is already built out/limited waterfront available
 - Land use plan is outdated
 - Projects not implemented
 - Waterfront is ugly, no set character
 - Waiting list at harbor
 - Lack of reliable transportation (ferry type, weather delays)
- Opportunities
 - Year-round recreation
 - Fishing/Fish processing
 - Shipping hub
 - Increase business
 - Opportunities for development at the waterfront
 - LNG
 - Marine industrial park
 - Recreational opportunities
 - Improve downtown
 - Testing and training platform
 - City owned property
- Challenges
 - Aging infrastructure
 - Loss of jobs and businesses
 - Utility costs
 - Climate change
 - Attracting development and businesses
 - Lack of competition
 - Environmental impacts (e.g., potential impacts)
 - Developing a new harbor and having it pay for itself
 - Government subsidized railroad

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- Economy

Utilities/Infrastructure/Energy

- Strengths
 - Good infrastructure
 - Many types and routes of communication
 - Ground water
 - Geographic service area
 - Co-op utilities
 -
- Weaknesses
 - Limited user based (small population)
 - Limited available commercial developable land
 - High cost of energy
 - Short construction season
 - Lack of funding for green power
 - Age of equipment
 - No energy strategy
 - No competition
- Opportunities
 - To modernize and expand
 - Renewable energy sources
 - Partnerships
 - Grant opportunities
 - Energy credits
 - Leverage conservation
 - Opportunity to be a test bed for pilot programs
 - Natural gas pipeline
- Challenges
 - Environmental stewardship and safety
 - Natural disasters
 - Loss of pipeline
 - Reliance on energy credits
 - Oil use for energy production
 - Geographic distribution
 - Distance to other infrastructure

Culture and Recreation

- Strengths
 - Existing infrastructure (pool, skiing, trails, civic center)
 - Natural beauty

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- Reputation (for extreme skiing)
- Climate
- Human resources
- City support
- Weaknesses
 - More infrastructure needed (better use of infrastructure currently)
 - Funding
 - Lack of community cohesion
 - Lack of community communication
 - Lack of community partnerships
 - Weather/temperatures
- Opportunities
 - Winter tourism (backcountry skiing)
 - Culture awareness/identity
 - Interest and enthusiasm for Valdez
 - Room to expand and use existing activities
- Challenges
 - Bears
 - Earthquake zone
 - “We’ve tried that” mentality
 - Funding
 - Volunteer and donor fatigue

Education

- Strengths
 - Faster intervention
 - Parental involvement and community partnerships
 - Quality educators
 - Community support
 - Small classroom sizes
- Weaknesses
 - Facility conditions
 - Remote distance to other resources (teachers and students)
 - Cost of living
 - Scheduling (electives)
- Opportunities
 - Online education
 - Career/tech/vo-tech potential pathways
 - School facility maintenance
 - Expand Associate of Arts degree dual credit system
 - New middle school

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- Partnerships
- Challenges
 - Aging facilities
 - Declining populations
 - Declining resources (from city and state)
 - Cost of living

Goal Statements

The individual Planning Cells were asked to identify overarching, community wide goal statements that describe the community's future state. "Valdez will..." The resulting thoughts included not only overarching goals, but some potential cell-specific objectives, and even actions as to how to achieve the overarching goals.

Cell Identified Goal Statements/Topics

- Valdez will be a community with self sustaining, economical, and earth friendly/utility infrastructures
- Will become a leader in environmental stewardship, renewable resources, and cutting edge technologies.
- Will pave the way for fiscal, social and environmental resourcefulness and responsibility.
 - Become a model community using a majority of sustainable renewable resources and attract business investment through eco-friendly opportunities.
- Have career opportunities for a wide spectrum of people
- Will be financially stable and diverse
- Will be healthy wealthy community with opportunities for growth and prosperity for all its citizens
- Will have exceptional quality of life for all residents
- Will be a community where citizens are safe, healthy, well cared for and engaged in life in a beautiful setting.
- Will maintain its environmental quality.
- Citizen participation and open government
- Will be a community where residents and organizations work together effectively partnering for the greater good of community and beyond
- Will be a model community for integrated vibrant, co existence of all its people, long term residents, people, visitors and military
- Will capitalize on its natural setting

Goal: A projected state of affairs well into the future

Objective: Specific strategies toward attaining a goal

Milestone: Discreet deliverable toward an objective

Actions: Specific short-term tasks toward a milestone that can be completed within 1 -2 years

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- Will attract a more diversified economic base (will be a diverse community socially, economically, educationally...)
- Will maintain the best quality of life.
- Will become the model for all other cities for business, tourism, infrastructure, transportation and education.
- Is a place where businesses invest and thrive.
- Will develop its resources in an environmentally and economically sustainable way.
- Will be affordable
- Will be a place to go, to learn and grow.
- Will have enough resources and infrastructure to provide for every citizen in our community
- Will solve social needs through innovative solutions
- Will continue to strive to find ways to provide for community growth
- Will plan and update for future needs
- Will understand the needs and provides for the needs of its citizens
- Will be accessible
- Will understand the obligation of providing full services to the community
- Will be a model community for safe, adequate, sustainable housing for all it's citizens
- Will be a regional hub for continuing technical education
- Will be a leader in the education field (holistic—schools, other)
- Will have a sustainable excellence in education program
- Will maximize community partnerships (for educational opportunities)
- Will provide quality, year-round recreation programs/activities that enhance the quality of life
- Will improve it's recreational infrastructure for residents and visitors, for all generations
- Will promote a life-long benefits of cultural and recreational involvement for all ages
- Will communicate clearly within and between (cultural and recreational providers)
- Will cultivate arts to promote health, education, welfare, and partnerships
- Will develop in a sustainable and ecological manner
- Will develop in a responsible and sustainable way
- Will have waterfront for all
- Will become a single borough (city and borough of Valdez)—objective?
- Will be a regional hub
- Will have responsible city growth
- Will work with business sector to promote economic diversification
- Will be a premier regional healthcare hub
- Will look after citizens from cradle to grave (physically, social, spiritual, mental, educational needs)
- Will promote healthy lifestyle, healthy living
- Will provide education to keep people in Valdez (sustain replenish workforce needs)
- Will be better connected (technology, communications, economy)

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- Will provide infrastructure (tourism in particular)
- Will have access to government/civic involvement, responsiveness of government

Assumptions

Planning Cells were also asked to identify their planning assumptions—the parameters under which they were shaping their goal statements. Certain themes developed across multiple cells:

- Current staffing levels remain stable
- Technology will continue to develop
- Population will be stable or increase
- Resources will be available to capture the opportunities
- Good citizen involvement/engagement
- Plans will be based on information and data available
- No certainty in economic future
- Funding will be consistent
- Good community partnerships exist
- Costs will increase
- Priorities will be based on capabilities

Cell-specific assumptions

- Some one or some organization will be there to help
- Community will understand the magnitude of needs
- Education will continue to evolve
- Funding opportunities will be there for scholarships
- Good people and communication
- Some people will drop off and some will come in
- Community remains engaged in planning processes
- Increase economic base will need infrastructure
- Don't count on a natural gas pipeline
- Coast guard will remain a presence in Valdez—enough oil in pipeline to support presence
- Military—families, retirees, logistics, training, and active duty personnel

Next Steps

The information in this summary is only meant to capture the flow of ideas during the various meetings and do not represent any final conclusions for either the Cells or the Core. This document is intended to be used to assist in the continuation of the discussions necessary to take the process to the next steps.

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