



Community Vision Focus Groups



WELCOME

Welcome, and thank you for participating in our vision focus group for *Envision Soldotna 2030* – the City’s new comprehensive plan! City administration has invited you to participate because we value your contributions to our community, and need your input as we lay out the plan that will guide Soldotna over the next 20 years. Please know that you are a critically important player in the process of building our city.

OBJECTIVE

Our goal with these focus groups is to start identifying the community’s vision for the future, so that goals and policies can be drafted to reinforce that vision.

A ‘Vision Statement’ is a clear statement that reflects the MIND, HEART, and SPIRIT of the stakeholders (you!) in our community. Soldotna’s vision should be a collection of aspirations and priorities for future direction; should be community owned; and should provide a framework to guide decision-making. It should help define strategies the city takes to reach future goals.

The Vision Statement should capture a desired image of our community, and should be:

- Oriented to the future (think about what you want for the next 20 years);
- Idealistic in nature;
- A strong visual image;
- From the heart;
- Realistic – but set the bar high.

VISION BRAINSTORMING

The following exercise will last approximately two hours. During this time, we will ask you to brainstorm your thoughts on several topics, and share them with the group. We – as facilitators – will collect all of the ideas and help the group find consensus. These statements of our desired future will form the basis for our draft community vision statement.

- Please spend 3 minutes individually thinking about the topics listed on the following page (we will address them one at a time). Remember to think about your ideal community, whether now or in the future. Ideas can be written as single words or full sentences.

- Next we will spend approximately 5 minutes to allow people to go around the table, one-by-one, to list their ideas and statements. The facilitator will write these statements on a large paper that all can see that can be saved for revision later. We will continue around the table, allowing all members of the group to contribute their statements until time is short or until all ideas have been exhausted.
- Finally, we will take a look at the list generated by the group, and discuss. People will be able to ask questions, advocate for their favorite statement, or brainstorm any new ideas. We will then ask you to prioritize the statements by placing colored dots next to the ideas or statements you feel are most important.

We will aim to spend approximately 12 minutes on each of the discussion topics below.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Neighborhoods. *Items to consider may include: continuity; condition; linkage to parks and amenities; families and children; aesthetics; etc.*

Economic Development. *Should we try to attract certain types of development? What type of development is appropriate for Soldotna? Should we make/create space for larger developments? DO we need more of any particular type of development? Do we encourage economic development in Kenai instead of Soldotna?*

Natural Resources and the Environment. Consider parks and their use, rivers and water quality, habitat, access. Do we need more open space, parks, and natural areas? Do we need fewer?

The Sterling and Kenai Spur Highways. Consider appropriate uses/types of development, signage, aesthetics, proximity to the river, pedestrian access, "downtown," etc. Will the highways look the same in your ideal future? Is a by-pass needed? What about pedestrian overpasses?

The Hospital and Health Care Profession. What are the current trends in Soldotna in regards to the health care profession and medical offices? Should we continue down the same path? Does this topic require special attention? What does the Soldotna health care community look like in 20 years?

Regional growth and development. *How does the area just outside of the city look? How will it develop? Will these areas ever be part of Soldotna?*

Education, Arts, and Culture.

FIND CONSENSUS

We will now have prioritized lists from seven different discussion topics. When taken together, do any themes or concepts emerge? Are there ideas that are common to most of the statements? Find the areas of consensus, and identify any areas of disagreement. Focus on the areas of *some* consensus.

Using a different colored dot, we will again prioritize the ideas or statements – this time across all 7 categories. Cast your vote for the items that you feel are necessary components of the community vision statement.

DRAFT THE STATEMENTS

The final step is to draft the vision by combining the consensus ideas into fluid statements. We will make positive, declarative one-sentence statements about how the community will be in the future. Make the statements in the present tense, for example, “there are lots of bike trails,” “you can walk at night in safety,” or “transportation is fast and cheap.” Statements could begin, “We have become...” “Soldotna is known as...” “Our community offers...”