

**South Districts Neighborhood District Plan
Focus Group Meeting #1
February 8, 2011**

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

<i>Focus Group</i>		
▪ John Farber	▪ Dan O’Connell	▪ Bruce Woodward
▪ Bill Fischbeck	▪ Bill Sauser	
▪ Nick Holst	▪ Elaine Smith	
▪ Chuck Lande	▪ Bill Taylor	
▪ Ralph Lockhardt	▪ John Vereuck	
<i>Town Staff</i>		
▪ Mark Wardlaw	▪ Jessica Morriss	
▪ Ray Jarvis		
▪ Peter Bernasconi		
▪ Ellen Clark		

Introduction and Staff Presentation

Town staff Mark Wardlaw provided an overview of the project, reviewed the agenda, and presented a PowerPoint slide show to the Focus Group. The South Districts NDP will close out district planning for the South Old Mammoth Road, East Open Space Stream Corridor (EOSSC) and Mammoth Creek Park areas, and the Sierra Star and Bell-Shaped Parcel. The study will result in recommendations for land use, program and character, and facilities that are critical to the implementation of the Destination Resort Strategy and other economic development goals.

Mr. Wardlaw noted that draft NDPs for EOSSC and Sierra Star were previously prepared, and that the SDNDP process would confirm relevant parts of those studies and their recommendations. Zoning amendments previously proposed in the projects triggering those district plans are no longer on the table and will not be discussed in the SDNDP.

Mr. Wardlaw also presented an overview of the land use concepts and other recommendations related to town-wide mobility and wayfinding that were developed and confirmed through previous district planning efforts. He noted that these ideas will be reflected in the forthcoming Mobility Plan. Wayfinding and signage initial concepts, including the idea of gateway monumentation, community messaging, and district identifiers were also described, noting that these ideas would be further developed as a shorter term implementation action.

The group was also given a summary of existing physical conditions for the study areas, and the key issues, organized by theme and concept, that are included in the Framework approved by Planning Commission and Town Council. Various opportunity and catalyst sites were discussed; these include strategically located properties with the potential to influence or change surrounding properties within the district, or stimulate investment; these include properties like Mammoth Creek Park, the mall properties along Old Mammoth Road, and parcels slated for future development, among others.

Finally, Mr. Wardlaw introduced some key concepts related to sustainable economic development, including the idea of a “sustainable business plan” focused on the Triple-Bottom Line, and the ideas of “Assets” and “Attractions” that can bring new visitors to Mammoth Lakes, and enhance the visitor experience and quality of life that will retain those visitors and encourage them to return.

The group then took a 15 minute break, before the beginning of the working session.

Working Session

During this part of the meeting, a facilitated discussion was held to confirm issues and opportunities, and begin to identify preliminary options for the South Old Mammoth Road, East OSSC, Mammoth Creek Park (east and west), and Sierra Star and Bell-Shaped Parcel. Mr. Wardlaw suggested that these ideas could be thought of as being on a spectrum from least to most amount of change, which could help formulate the range of options to be considered at future meetings.

The group also reviewed the Framework approved by the Planning Commission and Town Council, and did not have any additional comments on the study area boundaries, guiding principles or key issues outlined in the Framework.

South Old Mammoth Road

The group discussed pros, cons, issues and preliminary alternatives for the South Old Mammoth Road District. (Some comments made in this part of the discussion related more closely to Mammoth Creek Park, and so are listed in the following section.)

Most of the issues identified focused on the difficulty in getting around the district, particularly for pedestrians, and lack of visual and physical connectivity between businesses. The poor aesthetics and visual character of development along Old Mammoth Road was noted, as was the lack of an anchor to draw people from one end of the district to the other was discussed. Focus Group members commented that there appears to be enough retail, and a good mixture, but it’s not functional or well organized, the current streetscape is not attractive, wayfinding does not help to orient people or help them get around, and Old Mammoth Road is hard to cross. The importance of looking at external connectivity from this to other districts and neighborhoods was noted.

“Doing nothing” as an alternative in this district was agreed to be unlikely to result in the type of changes that seem desirable. The group agreed that this is a district with a lot of potential to be pedestrian-friendly, given the flat topography, relatively positive existing

street width and configuration, the amount of existing retail, proximity to transportation and higher density residential development, and Mammoth Creek Park.

Suggestions made by the group included:

Mobility

- Create a better walking environment with wider sidewalks, and clear pedestrian routes through the large shopping centers.
- Provide additional safe pedestrian crossing opportunities on Old Mammoth Road.
- Consolidate driveways and curb cuts.
- Improve pedestrian circulation within existing shopping centers, especially the Minaret Village parking lot.

Streetscape/Character

- Have retail at the street front, with office or residential uses above.
- Re-orient existing shopping centers so retail is along the frontage and parking is in the back.
- Improve the streetscape with trees and other aesthetic enhancements.

Program/Land Use

- Create anchors (e.g. through improvements to Mammoth Creek Park) that will draw people from one end of the street to another.
- Capitalize on existing assets like the performance space and movie theater to create an arts and culture district.
- Provide more conference and meeting space.
- Create venues for music and events.

Mammoth Creek Park

The group's discussion focused primarily on improvements and potential for expanded recreation and event facilities at Mammoth Creek Park. There was a strong consensus that Mammoth Creek Park provides a significant opportunity to create new venues for music, performance and events that can anchor the Old Mammoth Road retail district, and act as a catalyst for redevelopment and change.

- Advantages offered by Mammoth Creek Park include views, available land, and proximity to recreation opportunities and to the Old Mammoth Road business district.
- Location of facilities needs to take account of wind, which can be significant, particularly south of Mammoth Creek.
- This may not be the right place for a very large outdoor event venue (>5,000 people). The group agreed that a single event venue can't "do it all" – multiple venues with different facilities, capacity and character may be needed at different locations in town.

- There was agreement that an indoor or indoor/outdoor event venue was needed (in general) in Mammoth, and that it could be accommodated within the Mammoth Creek Park area, perhaps east of Old Mammoth Road. Most agreed that it should be multipurpose (i.e. Accommodate a range of activities and events), with the caveat that a single venue probably couldn't do everything.
- There is a need for some kind of indoor staging area for winter activities.
- There are currently no suitable spaces available for 500-700 person events in the winter; the Mountain has the only venues, which are heavily used in winter and spring.
- The Mammoth Lakes Foundation is looking to build a performing arts facility that with flexible space for weddings, seminars, etc. This facility should be taken into account when considering a facility at Mammoth Creek Park.
- Pedestrian trails should be improved through this area to get people from Old Mammoth Road to and through the Park to the adjacent trail system.

Specific opportunities for facilities discussed by the group include:

Mammoth Creek Park East

- East Mammoth Creek Park provides a significant opportunity for a larger outdoor and/or indoor event complex situated north of Mammoth Creek, which could provide a venue for festivals and larger events.
- The Hayden Cabin area is an attractive location for small events, but can't accommodate more than a couple of hundred people, and parking is a significant limitation.

Mammoth Creek Park West

- Past proposals for higher intensity uses on the west side have been controversial, and may be less appropriate on the west side of the park. However, the right facilities and uses could be an asset for condo owners and their rental guests.
- Mammoth Creek Park West might work for an event like the Jazz Jubilee, with several smaller tents in one location.

Bell-Shaped Parcel

There was a discussion of the characteristics of the Bell-Shaped parcel, the known wetlands, and the history of the Town's ownership of the property.

Most agreed that the Bell-Shaped parcel, despite its location at the intersection of two major streets, is not convenient for most people to get to, and has limited suitability for recreation and more intensive uses, because of the wetlands and neighboring single family homes. It was noted that the density associated with this site is still "on the books" and its value should be explored.

Some on the Focus Group emphasized the need to complete a more in-depth study to identify the best use for the site. However, most of the group agreed that this property

will be hard to develop for a number of reasons, including neighboring single-family homes, and on-site wetlands, meaning the best option may be to leave it undeveloped and sell the rights to its density.

Sierra Star

The group identified the biggest challenge for Sierra Star is its lack of connectivity to surrounding areas, with the golf course acting as a barrier to pedestrian access. Future development should include better pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle connectivity and public access. For these reasons, Sierra Star was not considered by the group as a significant catalyst site, but will continue to function well as standalone golf and resort residential development.

Summary and Next Steps

Following the group discussion, Mark Wardlaw provided a re-cap of the Focus Group's comments and recommendations, and outlined the next steps in the process. These include:

- Public Workshop scheduled for February 24, 2011, which will include the same content as the February 8 Focus Group meeting.
- Development of a series of concept alternatives for each study area, based on the Focus Group and public input, and reflecting degrees of change from "Do Nothing" to more significant improvements.
- Focus Group and Public Workshop #2: Review of Conceptual Alternatives and Identification of Preferred Option.
- Develop Draft Recommendations for Focus Group, Public and Planning Commission Review in April/May.