

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Ethan Berkowitz, Resilience Team Lead Mara Kimmel, Office of Economic and Community Development Director Christopher Schutte, Planning Department Director Hal Hart and OECD Project manager/ community development specialist Katie Dougherty

From: Gideon Berger, Daniel Rose Land Use Fellowship Program Director and Jess Zimbabwe, Director of Urban Development and Education at the National League of Cities; Carlton Brown, Principal, Direct Investment Development, LLC; and Frank Fuller, Partner, Urban Field Studio

cc: Kirk Rose, Executive Director, Anchorage Community Land Trust; Matt Haynes, Principal, Fehr & Peers San Jose office; and Dan Pitera, Executive Director, Detroit Collaborative Design Center, University of Detroit Mercy

Date: August 24, 2017

Re: Daniel Rose Land Use Fellowship Anchorage Follow-up Visit Summary

Background

The Rose Center's Daniel Rose Land Use Fellowship program returned to Anchorage from August 14-16 for a follow-up visit to their April 4-7 study visit panel on helping the Municipality (Muni) develop a place-based strategy and community-based process to leverage public, private and philanthropic investment that enhances resilience in the Mountain View and Muldoon neighborhoods—that could be replicated citywide. The follow-up visit was focused on advising Muni how it could be a stronger implementation partner for the *Mountain View Targeted Neighborhood Plan*, which was adopted by the Muni Assembly in September 2016, and analyzing how the plan's goals align with the city's urban resilience policy goals and strategies.

On the original study visit, the panel (co-chaired by New York-based real estate developer Carlton Brown and San Francisco-based architect Frank Fuller) presented three key aspects of urban resilience for consideration by Anchorage's Rose Fellowship team and the assembled stakeholders, partners and Muni staff: cultural and community, environmental (both the built and natural environments) and economic. The panel presented a long list of observations, ideas and recommendations in all three areas along with suggestions for how they could be implemented as part of a broader community development agenda in Mountain View and Muldoon.

Follow-up visit process and participants

For the follow-up visit, Rose Center staff (Jess Zimbabwe and Gideon Berger) returned in the company of Brown and Fuller, and recruited Michigan-based community engagement expert Dan Pitera and California-based transportation expert Matt Haynes.

The Anchorage Community Land Trust (ACLT), which led the neighborhood plan effort in partnership with Muni, served as the Rose Center's host in Mountain View and helped Muni facilitate meetings with the following stakeholders:

- David Adkins-Brown of the Mountain View Library Branch
- Christine Crossen of the Alaska Museum of Science and Nature
- Daniel George of the Mountain View Community Council
- Abbe Hensley of Best Beginnings
- Allen Kemplen, former state Representative and Fairview Community Council member
- Radhika Krishna of ACLT
- William Lucas with Nine Start Education and Employment Services
- Heidi McLay from the Brown Jug
- Melinda Meyers with thread Alaska
- Amy Simpson from Program for Infants and Children
- Ron Pickles with Price Busters
- Tyler Robinson of Cook Inlet Housing Association (CIHA)
- Kirk Rose of ACLT
- Polly Smith of the Alaska Literacy Program
- Cessilye Williams, Principal, Clark Middle School
- Laurie Wolf of the Foraker Group

The Rose Center visiting team also attended the monthly Mountain View Community Council meeting on August 14, where they were offered a valuable window into current opportunities and challenges in the neighborhood, and Katie Dougherty facilitated meetings with the following Muni staff (in addition to the city's Rose Fellowship team): Nicole Jones-Vogel of the Department of Real Estate/Heritage Land Bank; Stephanie Mormilo from the Traffic Department; Carol Wong, Jon Cecil, Kristine Bunnell and Francis McLaughlin from the Planning Department; and Alan Czajkowski from the Maintenance and Operations Department. All the above persons provided valuable local expertise and insights to the visiting team.

City policy considerations to support neighborhood resilience and plan implementation

In Alaska there are nearly as many people employed in the non-profit sector as in local government, according to a 2014 study by the Foraker Group, which perhaps even understates the role of non-profits in providing services more often under the direct jurisdiction of local municipalities in other states. There are both practical and political reasons for this legacy in Alaska, and inherent strengths as well as weaknesses of this structural relationship. But the Rose Center's visiting team sees the urban development challenges and opportunities in Anchorage, as a principal city of a large metropolitan area, to be more like other large central cities in the Lower 48. That means Anchorage needs tools at its disposal that can provide the

community development capacity that other big US cities have, especially in light of the state's fiscal challenges, which will certainly result in reduced capacity among its partners in the non-profit sector. Looking to the future, the city cannot take the present capacity of its non-profit community development intermediaries and partners for granted.

One potential source of city capacity that may not be fully utilized by Muni today is the Anchorage Community Development Authority (ACDA). In the past, ACDA has acted as the development entity for larger-scale redevelopment projects, such as the Glenn Square shopping center, receiving land assembled by the Heritage Land Bank. The Rose Center believes the city could use ACDA more for its community development goals, especially in partnership with non-profit entities like ACLT and CIHA. For example, in metropolitan Denver, a partnership between the city, national and local philanthropies and non-profits created a fund for the acquisition of strategic site to preserve or build new affordable housing new planned transit expansion, with different partners playing the roles of seed money provider, land bank, vertical developer and property manager. Similar efforts exist in the Twin Cities and San Francisco Bay Area around transit oriented development sites.

Another relationship worth re-examining is Muni's economic development functions versus those of its regional partner at the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC). In the Rose Center's experience, regional economic development entities such as AEDC excel at marketing, attraction and retention functions, but are usually ill-suited for neighborhood-scale economic development. When it comes to cultivating entrepreneurship, supporting small businesses, creating jobs in specific neighborhoods, workforce development and job training, cities—and their non-profit partners, major private-sector employers and institutional employers—have to lead. While we do not know the full economic development portfolio at Muni's Office of Economic and Community Development (OEDC), we strongly believe that it is the city's role to serve as the convener to make sure there is alignment between workforce development programs, what sectors there are labor shortages and which ones are the region's economic engines, and finding the best real estate locations for firms to locate and expand to in the city. Finding this kind of alignment and orchestrating all the players in these roles to be successful is extremely difficult work, and requires the expertise of city staff who understand the policy goals, institutional relationships, market forces and local opportunities. It is far beyond the portfolio and capacity of most regional economic development entities. Therefore we recommend Muni reconsider what resources it provides AEDC as part of an analysis of how to meet its neighborhood economic development goals.

Elements of a resilient neighborhood

Muni has not fully defined how it will measure and address urban resilience at the neighborhood and citywide scales beyond redefining Maslow's hierarchy of needs for Alaska (community, innovation/ entrepreneurship, inclusivity/ engagement/ education, resilience and health, and access to basic needs) and recognizing resilience as the skills, institutions and infrastructure needed to overcome the chronic stresses (i.e., unemployment, homelessness and economic inequities) and acute shocks (i.e., as floods, earthquakes and fires) that Anchorage communities face.

It has been well documented (including by the Rose Center's parent organizations, ULI and NLC) that local efforts to prepare for and mitigate disasters are at least four times more cost-effective than post-disaster

response and recovery. This is because acute shocks to a community do not simply create new problems that did not previously exist, rather, they expose and amplify challenging conditions already prevalent. Therefore, the broader goal of strengthening resilience can best be achieved by identifying, measuring, and pursuing a specific set of community development objectives. Equity is critical to achieving resilience, given that communities with the least financial resources are typically most at risk to sudden shocks.

At the citywide scale, the previous study visit panel suggested: 1. culture and community, 2. environment (both the built and natural environments), and 3. economy as three possible elements for the city to use. Urban resilience begins at a neighborhood scale by identifying and developing actionable initiatives that benefit citywide practices and policies as a whole. Newly adopted processes of inclusion and access to community development plans will help the city address systemic and structural challenges while rebuilding trust and strengthening citywide resilience. Looking at Mountain View and its recently adopted neighborhood plan, the visiting team sees five elements the city could use as a framework:

- Identity and Narrative
- Public Realm
- Land Use
- Economic Development
- Access and Mobility

all supported by and based on a process of Participatory Planning AND Implementation

Questions for the city to consider and some ideas about how each can be addressed in Mountain View, and support implementing its neighborhood plan, are presented below.

Reclaiming Mountain View's Identity and Narrative

Mountain View has historically been negatively portrayed in the media, although that narrative appears to be starting to shift. But based on the interviews we conducted, there is a sense that until recently (the Anchorage Dispatch News article on the community's new signs celebrating its uniquely diverse composition, which were juxtaposed with a series of crime reports in other parts of the city), media outlets seemed to go out of their way to portray Mountain View as a crime-ridden community compared to other parts of the city with higher actual crime rates, such as Downtown and Midtown. Furthermore, we heard from several stakeholders who were former military or are from military families that there continues to be informal guidance to newcomers at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) to avoid the neighborhood—although there is acknowledgement that base personnel increasingly do eat and shop in Mountain View.

The current trends offer an opportunity for the city to play a stronger role with its soft powers as an official voice and a convener to help remove the stigma Mountain View has acquired in the past decades as it struggled with high transiency and crime. It should take every opportunity to stamp out continued slandering of the community's reputation, and reinforce the progress being made. Perhaps this could be part of the city's new Welcoming Anchorage initiative work? If this isn't already happening, we recommend that the mayor, as the official voice of the city, schedule regular meetings with the commander of JBER and perhaps a US Senator or Representative to get their support of the Welcoming Anchorage initiative and their commitment to change their messaging (whether its formal or informal) to service men and women arriving at the base. This effort is going to take more than a single visit and a welcoming package. Similarly, the

mayor needs to meet with the editorial boards of the television stations, newspaper and radio stations to give them the facts and the new messaging of Welcoming Anchorage initiative as it pertains to Mountain View.

The visiting team was also struck by the observations of a few stakeholders about marketing “diversity” as Mountain View’s identity. There is a big difference between an identity and a brand, and we are speaking of identity here, not a branding or marketing campaign. There is always risk in using a one-dimensional definition of a community, even if that dimension is diversity itself. If “diversity” is what gets you to Mountain View, what makes you stay? What are the opportunities that diversity presents for Mountain View’s competitive advantages? We encourage the city and its partners to continue the work on iterating the next level of defining the role of diversity in Mountain View’s identity and how it can continue to be an asset for the community’s development.

For example, despite all the diversity in Mountain View, how economically diverse is the neighborhood? There are some for whom it is a way-station as they climb the economic ladder and “move on up” to other parts of the city. Does Mountain View have to function this way? Does the community want to have more opportunities for folks who “don’t have to leave to do better”? No community can afford to lose its best assets. We believe there is room—and a need for—people in Mountain View who can contribute missing financial resources in the community, such as economic power.

The neighborhood plan speaks to the aspiration for “gateway features” to help identify the formal entrance to the neighborhood. While the new signs that were installed the week of our visit were a move in that direction, the visitors believe this concept is deserving of a larger, more symbolic installation. Similarly, we heard at the Community Council meeting of the widespread desire for billboards with information about what is happening in the neighborhood. Perhaps these needs could be combined in a design solution? They also speak to the next topic, which is the public realm.

Embracing the Public Realm

Responsibility, accountability and management of the public realm may be the biggest challenge facing Mountain View today. The community’s leaders have been put in a terrible conundrum about the public realm: On the one hand, there is a great need for more public realm amenities, such as bus shelters for the many transit riders in cold weather, or parks and playgrounds for the growing population of children; but on the other there is a large group of transients who are frequently inebriated in the public realm. In addition to witnessing this for ourselves on our few days in Mountain View in April and August, we heard from stakeholders who call Mizelle Park—a crucial piece of green infrastructure that will eventually connect the Glenn Highway Trail to the Ship Creek Trail via a new on-street bike facility along Peterkin Avenue—“Pass-out Park” due to the number of people lying unconscious there.

This challenge is related to perceptions of safety in Mountain View, which belie the actual crime data in the neighborhood. But it’s not enough to have lower crime: people need to *feel* safe as well for a community to be functioning at its capacity and achieve its potential, and can be a different standard depending on if you are man or woman, white or minority, adult or child or senior, or whether or not you have a physical disability.

We encourage the city and its partners to better understand what levels of public realm management are needed to enable its most vulnerable groups to feel safe. This is not an easy task, as one of the most-used tools—management districts—are most often in central business districts or high-value neighborhood business districts and led by businesses that may fund this work. Other models that might be more applicable for Mountain View are philanthropically funded by foundations or nearby institutions, at least to seed the effort until a more sustainable fiscal source can be created. It might be fruitful to reach out to potential partners among Native Alaskan organizations based on the number we observed on the street—and their lack of representation in the community organizations we met with. Similar efforts among African-American community organizations in Brooklyn, such as the Brooklyn Movement Center and Malcom X Grassroots Movement (MXGM), have been effective and continue to do this self-organizing that at this point may have some foundation support.

The public realm is not just the parks and open space, but the streets themselves. And when we speak of the streets, we mean from building face to building face, not from curb to curb. That includes the sidewalks and street furniture as well as privately owned set-backs. The design and function of these spaces give cues to the community and passersby about how well the neighborhood is cared for and how to behave in it. Children—particularly refugees and immigrants from other cultures—may not differentiate between public and private space, which creates the need to calm traffic to reduce the risk of multi-modal conflicts. This may be exacerbated by the fact that most of the formal parks and playgrounds in Mountain View lie at the perimeter of the neighborhood or across Mountain Drive. Indoor facilities in cold weather, such as the Community Center that houses the Boys and Girls Club, or the Library, according to stakeholders, are frequently oversubscribed in the winter.

These observations underscore the need to look at publicly accessible privately owned space and public space in a hierarchical network that addresses community needs. While Mountain View may have more park land per capita than other Anchorage neighborhoods, that doesn't mean the needs of its children and other residents are being adequately met. Again, we encourage the city and its partners to survey and inventory the use of the public realm to better understand those gaps and how to more efficiently utilize and manage its assets. While, Muni deserves praise for successfully negotiating with the federal government and moving ahead on the new plan for Davis Park—one of the top priorities of the neighborhood plan—when that new facility is built it will not solve all of these challenges. What else is missing, and are there still accessibility barriers to what exists?

Shaping Land Use

Learning about the history of the neighborhood's development raised the question of whether the current zoning is compatible with its lot sizes and its future land use plan and goals. This was originally a single-family neighborhood that was rezoned for multi-family to accommodate construction workers at JBER and for oil pipeline companies. In response to the neighborhood's physical decline, actors such as CIHA and ACLT and Muni have redeveloped more than 10 percent of the housing stock along with many commercial buildings in the past ten years. While many multi-family units have been built, which has given parts of the neighborhood a new character, Muni is undertaking a survey of structures to see if any historic ones are

deserving or recognition or protection. It may be valuable for the neighborhood to formally preserve some important remaining structures that help tell the story of its origins and progress.

Community leaders also told the visiting team about the prevalence of home-based businesses, some legally licensed, others more opportunistically operated, whether these are textiles, car repair, or cottage food production and sales. This trend speaks to the potential mismatches in the future land use map, which has a strong single-use approach defining almost everything north of Mountain View Drive as residential, without recognizing current behavior and desired economic activity and development.

The Municipality and its partners should conduct more detailed analysis to understand the compatibility of the original single-family lot sizes with the current R-3 and especially R-4 zoning and how setbacks and other requirements may hinder desired redevelopment. For instance, it may be necessary to aggregate several parcels to redevelop under the present zoning, which is beyond the reach of most non-institutional landowners and may hinder reinvestment in the neighborhood. Does the zoning allow for the development or use of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) such as carriage houses, which can be a valuable way for property owners to afford their mortgages or finance critical systems repairs or access capital for other purposes? (ADUs are also a way to hide density without impacting community character.)

We encourage the city to look critically at the zoning and consider any targeted rezoning proposed under new Muni land use planning efforts to make sure the future land use map is implementable and consistent with the neighborhood's goals, including the ability of households to generate wealth. Don't let outdated regulation be the barrier to progress.

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), in addition to neighboring Mountain View to the north, owns a large amount of land in the neighborhood, including Mountain View Elementary School, McPhee Park, the Catholic Social Services Fresh International and McPhee community gardens, Davis Park and Lions Park. Muni and the Department of Defense recently negotiated a new long-term lease agreement that will enable development of the new plan for Davis Park, one of the biggest priorities in the neighborhood plan. This a major step forward for progress in Mountain View.

In addition to the noise from F-22's flying over the neighborhood (an impressive sight that we observed on our visit), there are potential land use impacts due to the base's proximity. About one-quarter of the residential part of Mountain View lies in JBER's Accident Potential Zone (APZ) because of its proximity to the north-south runways. The federal government's suggested land use compatibility within this part of the APZ calls for no residential uses, although it allows some kinds of lower-density commercial uses such as manufacturing, utilities, trade and services. Given that Mountain View was developed decades prior to the APZ designation in the 1970s, its properties in the zone are grandfathered from those restrictions. According to neighborhood developers such as ACLT and CIHA, the APZ has not impeded their ability to reinvest in the eastern quarter of the neighborhood other than making federal funding ineligible for those projects.

At the Community Council meeting, the visiting team learned about JBER's draft Environmental Impact Statement process (EIS, in accordance with NEPA regulations) regarding potential improvements to the runways. Because some of the alternatives could impact the neighborhood, it will be critical for Muni and its

partners in Mountain View to provide as much official input about the alternatives, their potential impacts and possible mitigations that would be required by DoD in the EIS process, and to leverage their strong relationship with the base to ensure the best possible outcomes for Mountain View.

Fostering Neighborhood Economic Development

Unsurprisingly in a neighborhood with so many immigrants, the visiting team learned that there is a strong informal economy in Mountain View—which may result in a slight overstatement of its unemployment rate. We heard that there are many residents who operate business out of their homes, probably unlicensed, such as textile manufacture, hair styling, cottage food production and retailing, and auto and other types of mechanical repair. Some of these uses are permitted under the residential zone districts, others may not be. The question for visiting team offers for consideration by the city and its partners is: How can more formal efforts be made to support and encourage this entrepreneurship that enables its growth in the neighborhood? This is a unique type of entrepreneur whose needs are likely not being met by the current economic development support structure in the city, or may have no way of learning about those supports, but we believe the former is more likely. Could the city and its partners work to incubate these home businesses by developing shared space for them to access tools and build a clientele and learn small business management skills? We suspect there may be a lot of untapped potential neighborhood economic development here.

Building on that approach, there is a difficult policy question of how the city can connect the myriad workforce development efforts in Mountain View and Anchorage to the sectors of the economy experiencing labor shortages and the sectors that represent its economic engine and likely future growth. We can't identify those on based on these two short visits, but suspect Muni's OECD and the AEDC have a strong sense of where those are, or at least have the relationships with private sector employers to convene a discussion to learn and make those workforce development connections. Because these portfolios have different implementation parts and different sources of funding, many cities struggle with connecting and aligning their workforce development programs to their economic development agenda.

The final piece of that puzzle is helping both new businesses and growing ones find the real estate they need to be successful. As stated at the top of this memo, we believe that identifying appropriate sites is the kind of function best addressed by the city rather than a regional economic development entity, because of the required knowledge of local neighborhood conditions, the relationships with land owners, commercial real estate brokers and neighborhood leaders, and the consistency of real estate locations with the community's vision.

While we were visiting, the team heard that Aero Farms had apparently expressed an interest in developing a 70,000 square-foot indoor vertical farm that could provide fresh food for 100,000-200,000 people while creating 130 living-wage jobs, and that another food producer had also expressed interest in expanding to Anchorage. The neighborhood plan did not address the industrial area in West Mountain View, because no land use changes were foreseen there. But underutilized or vacant land in the Ship Creek industrial area is owned by the Alaska Railroad but needs basic infrastructure to unlock its development value. Building on a recommendation by the panel during the study visit in April, the follow-up visit team wondered whether this could present the kind of capital-intensive but high-return investment opportunity for which an Alaska

Native Corporation would want to partner with the city and the Railroad. Based on some unsolicited interest the city recently received from out-of-state food production firms, we think it would be wise to prioritize exploring this opportunity and engage the Railroad and an Native Corporation to understand potential alignment with their business priorities or obstacles. The ability to create possibly hundreds of new jobs in Mountain View, especially in a growing or sustainable sector like food production, could be a game-changer for the neighborhood's economic trajectory. These types of opportunities cannot be counted on in a plan, but need to be fully exploited when they arise because of their unique real estate needs. As the city continues to explore this potential, it will be critical to keep its economic equity goals paramount in negotiations as well.

Improving Access and Mobility (of people, goods and information)

Mountain View is one of the most transit dependent neighborhoods in Anchorage, with among the lowest rates of access to private vehicles by its households. Beginning in October, the Anchorage People Mover bus system will be relaunched to rationalize its routes, to provide shorter headways between buses and to offer longer operating hours. From the visiting team's cursory assessment, this will provide some improvements for riders in Mountain View, including better connectivity to Downtown and the University Medical (UMed) district. These districts are two of the largest employment centers in the region and are destinations for services not available in the neighborhood; now they will be accessible via the new high-frequency Route 20 with 15 minute headways in the peak period. New neighborhood Route 21 with 30-minute headways will provide access to the Glenn Square shopping center and Northway Mall.

Another concern by the visiting team is the lack of bus shelters in such a transit-dependent neighborhood with harsh winter weather. We addressed this issue in the section on the public realm, but want to underscore that for transit to be successful it needs to serve and treat people in a dignified manner, including meeting their physical needs as well as their travel needs. We heard some talk from the community and some city staff about the desire for transit-oriented development (TOD) in Mountain View to take advantage of its high-frequency bus service. The design of Mountain View Drive, bus facilities, and land use regulations may not currently enable that kind of development, especially if it is intended to attract choice residents who self-select as transit riders, as about 40 percent of TOD does according to studies in California. However, the very transit dependency of Mountain View, its grid network, its sidewalk network (apparently rare for Anchorage neighborhoods) and its collection of neighborhood-serving businesses allows it to function similar to TOD today. All of these conditions could be enhanced, however, under the suggestions that follow.

As the new system begins service, it will be imperative for the People Mover and Mountain View's advocacy organizations to track the quantitative and qualitative performance of the changes in riders' needs. Typically adjustments are required for new systems when rider behavior does not precisely meet planners' expectations, or if there are unanticipated operational challenges to the new service plan.

The visiting team's time at the Community Council meeting underscored that there are widespread concerns about potential multi-modal conflicts at intersections of local streets and portions of Mountain View Drive. Some of these concerns come from previously mentioned conditions: children utilizing the informal public realm of streets for play (especially if they are from other cultures where there is less formal differentiation

between private and public space), the oversubscription of neighborhood recreation and community centers, and the location of formal park and playground space on the periphery of the neighborhood.

Another contributing factor to this neighborhood concern is simply the width of the typical street sections in the neighborhood, which enables higher vehicle speeds regardless of the speed limit. There was much discussion at the Community Council meeting about the need for greater enforcement of vehicular speed limits, but the visiting team believes that design solutions may be more effective. The challenge for Muni is whether the typical design solutions (i.e., curb bulb-outs at intersections, speed tables, etc.) can work with the amount of snow plowing required in Anchorage. At present, the visiting team got the impression that there is an abundance of caution about any design solution that changes the street elevation. That may well be warranted, but we encourage the city to discuss trade offs and opportunities, as we fundamentally believe that enforcement alone is not enough to solve this concern. (There are five “E’s” of improving non-motorized safety: engineering/design, enforcement, education, encouragement, evaluation. Each of these plays a role to reinforce that solutions should not focus on just one area without considering others.) Members of the community also raised concern about reckless behavior by children on bicycles. We also recommend continued and more formal safety training at the neighborhood schools, community centers and library, and distribution of free safety gear, such as bike helmets.

Mountain View Drive presents a physical boundary between the residential portion of the neighborhood and many destinations for children and families, such as Clark Middle School, the library, and Red Apple grocery store. On the previous study visit, our panel was eager to redesign key intersections of Mountain View Drive to allow for pedestrian prioritization treatments that would make crossing the street feel more comfortable. The panel was particularly drawn to the segment between Taylor and Pine, which functions in some ways as the neighborhood’s main street. In particular, the attached narrow sidewalks on the north side of the street, especially between Bragaw and Taylor, were deemed challenging and unfriendly to pedestrians on both of our visits.

However, based on feedback from stakeholders about the relatively recent investment in redesign to Mountain View Drive (the construction of wide sidewalks on the south side of the street, where these destinations are based), there is higher-priority need for more social services, economic development and community development. Therefore, the visiting team de-prioritized the street improvement ideas. It is likely that the sidewalks on the segment mentioned above will be improved dramatically as those blocks redevelop, and they are currently being assembled by ACLT and CIHA for that very purpose. But on that topic, we would encourage Muni to examine its current street standards and compare them to other cities that are emphasizing Vision Zero campaigns, such as Chicago and New York, to see if any changes to the city’s design standards are warranted for new and re-development.

Nevertheless, there are many improvements to Mountain View Drive (and other streets) that could be implemented without the costly impact of changing the curbs and drainage flow lines. Simply with the use of paint, cones and other temporary tactical urbanism techniques, Anchorage could test potential low-cost design solutions with pilot projects.

The neighborhood plan calls for the construction of a bike facility along Peterkin Avenue to connect the two regional off-street trail facilities that terminate on the western and eastern edges of the neighborhood, the

Ship Creek and Glenn Highway trails. We understand that the Traffic Department is developing those plans with the assistance of a consulting team. Based on the concerns we heard about multi-modal conflicts at local street intersections, including Peterkin, we strongly urge Muni to engage the community in a collaborative design process for that new facility, for two reasons: One is to tap the community's expertise about how these intersections function today, the other is to collaboratively educate the community about how the proposed design solutions would function, especially if they are unfamiliar with the residents and their concerns today. Tactical urbanism could be used to pilot design ideas and get feedback from the community.

We recommend these approaches because even in our limited time in the neighborhood, we already anticipate conflicts. For example, if the facility will result in priority flow for Peterkin, some stakeholders may have fears about eliminating stop signs at intersections with other local streets. Also, there are many multi-family buildings along Peterkin that currently park along the street and have services like trash removal collected there, so elimination of travel or parking lanes could also meet with community resistance. We are not proposing any design solutions here, but hoping to alert Muni staff to potential conflicts and suggest a more collaborative design process to approach resolving them.

Another type of infrastructure that is clearly scarce in Mountain View is WiFi access. On our visit there were groups of people both in the library and around the outside of the library utilizing the WiFi. Digital access is critical to connect people economically and with information. It seems clear that Mountain View suffers from a lack of digital infrastructure connectivity, and any improvements would be welcome from stakeholders. Public WiFi is often a service provided by a business improvement district (BID), like the discussion in the public realm section above, or provided on the new People Mover Route 20 and other high frequency routes. If a management entity could be created in Mountain View we think WiFi access should be one of its key infrastructure goals. You may find philanthropic funders who are keen to help you address this neighborhood need and could help fund such an entity by way of solving this problem.

Participatory Planning and Participatory Implementation

The visiting team conducted a workshop for staff and city partners on this topic during our follow-up visit, so it will not be discussed in detail here, other than to reiterate that collaborative planning is not just a process for plan creation, but an active exchange of information between city staff and the community. Participatory planning is a step toward empowering stakeholders not only to better understand the levels of city government to help address their needs, but also to take more control of their own destinies, and of course, to develop trust between the community and city government.

The Mountain View Community Council meeting was in many ways a model of neighborhood governance, with at least 15 agenda items discussed in about two hours' time, actual debate between residents and other attendees, and real listening and a desire to find compromise. It is a testimony to the community and the council leaders to have such a high-functioning group, and should not be surprising given the excellence of the neighborhood plan they helped develop over the past four years.

One suggestion the visiting team has to enhance the level of participation (and diversity of voices) at Community Council meetings all over the city, is for Muni to think about using its Welcoming Anchorage

program to host a Civic Academy geared toward teaching new arrivals how city government works in Anchorage that will help seed their participation in Community Councils. Based on conversations with Mara Kimmel about the Welcoming Anchorage initiative, you may already be considering such an approach.

Caveats and In Conclusion

We are outsiders to Anchorage and Mountain View. We have spent a total of eight days here on two visits. All cities and neighborhoods are unique, but Alaska, and Anchorage and Mountain View are on the “exceptionally unique” end of that spectrum, simply given the context of where you are compared to cities and communities in the Lower 48. But as stated earlier, from our experience it is clear that Anchorage, like other big cities we have worked with, needs big-city community development tools.

While we may be experts and practitioners in the fields of urban, community and economic development with a wealth of knowledge about approaches that have worked and failed in other places, those lessons may be more or less applicable for you here. We believe Anchorage has learned over the last few decades that the best approach is to STEAL and ADAPT solutions from other places to fit your own unique needs and values. This memo intended to memorialize our work on this visit, and give you “food for thought” about how to take the next steps you need to give Mountain View the best chance to achieve its goals, and by extension have a clearer understanding of Muni’s role in implementing community plans and supporting its resilience policy agenda through those actions at the neighborhood scale citywide. We are confident you are up for the challenge: You are 10,000 years resilient; we believe you will continue to thrive long into the future.