

Sitka



Gateway Community Planning Assistance • Design Workshop Recommendations • Range of Alternatives

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Part I: Design Workshop Recommendations

About This Document

This is a collection of ideas for addressing problems related to visitor use management. It contains two different products:

PART I: Design Workshop Recommendations

The result of a one-week design workshop held in Sitka in August 1996 that examined those aspects that community members identified as being primary issues: visitor distribution, transportation, and community image. This is presented on pages 1-38.

Although the National Park Service provided design assistance, this is **not** a National Park Service plan. The community will make the decisions and take the lead in implementing any desired changes. Sitkans are encouraged to select from the ideas, add other options, and experiment with a variety of problem-solving approaches to arrive at a preferred direction for the community.

PART II: The Range of Planning Alternatives

A series of four narrative alternatives aimed at providing direction for improvements to Sitka National Historical Park and the community of Sitka. Based on citizen input and revised after feedback from ComIT members, the alternatives provide a range of possibilities with varying levels of complexity. Background information about the planning relationship between the City and Borough of Sitka and the National Park Service is also provided. The range of alternatives was prepared in the spring and summer of 1996 and is presented on pages 39-47.

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PART II: The Range of Planning Alternatives

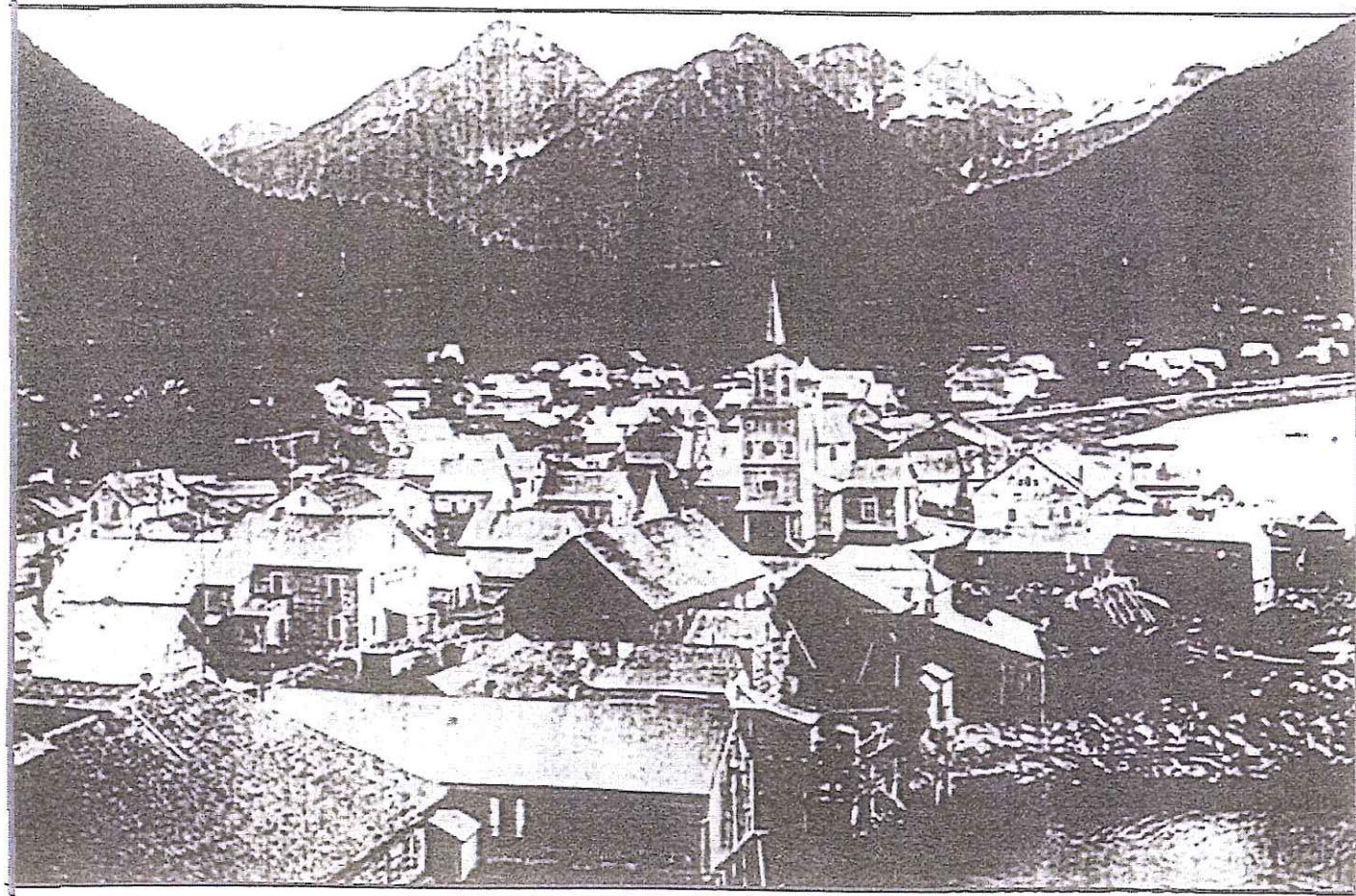
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Introduction

Gateway Planning



BACKGROUND

The City and Borough of Sitka and Sitka National Historical Park are participating in a pilot project through the National Park Service's Gateway Community Planning Initiative, in which parks work with adjacent towns to address common interests. The National Park Service and community members identified the following areas on which to focus their joint planning efforts:

- Working with Alaska Natives to convey their cultural connections to the area, including tourism, subsistence, and cultural center activities
- Providing assistance in designing and locating signs and other orientation elements or facilities
- Conducting interpretive planning with agencies and interests as part of a community-wide effort
- Assisting in programming the overall Sitka visitor experience, such as: sequencing, movement, capacities, and length of stay
- Coordinating planning of the diverse types and locations of Sitka visitor facilities, such as: orientation, interpretation, gift and book sales, restrooms, food service, emergency services, and transportation
- Assisting in planning for the preservation of the visual and environmental quality of the park and those community components shared with the park
- Planning an orchestrated system of access and circulation, including: auto, bus, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic routes and linkages
- Addressing visitor distribution, particularly related to overcrowding at certain times of day during the high visitor use season, mid-May to mid-September

Workshops with community representatives in 1995 and 1996 identified important attributes to be preserved, problems to be addressed, and potential solutions. This document illustrates those ideas, values, and concerns expressed by Sitka residents and provides additional recommendations from the objective viewpoint of planners and designers from the National Park Service. This is a book of ideas. Future implementation will require the City and Borough of Sitka, local interests, and other involved entities to reach consensus on the larger issues of desired futures for the community.

Overview of Recommendations

Design workshop participants adhered to the following principles, or givens as they analyzed and provided recommendations for Sitka:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Preserve the unique historical and cultural character of Sitka.
- Recognize the seasonal aspect of visitation. Nine months of the year Sitka is a small town that needs to satisfy the day-to-day needs of its residents. Businesses depend upon locals as well as tourists for economic survival (studies indicate that only 6% of revenue comes from tourism).
- A new lightering facility under the O'Connell bridge will be in operation in the near future.

With the guiding principles in mind and the objectives of reducing congestion, highlighting Sitka's character, improving the visitor experience, and reducing residents' frustrations, the following list is a summary of the major recommendations included in this document:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Visitor gateway zones

- Provide information about visitor options, directions, and restrooms at all entry points.
- Organize circulation so that lightering areas are safe, congestion is minimal, and options are clear. Consider a separate staging area or lightering site for tour operators.
- Redesign and eventually redevelop the Centennial Hall area to be a hub of visitor activities, transportation, orientation, and information.

- Improve the appearance of Harbor Drive with landscaping, screening of undesirable views, a gateway treatment, and more active uses such as retail and recreation.

Pedestrian ways

- Provide clear, attractive pedestrian connections from the shoreline and lightering docks to downtown areas.
- Emphasize primary pedestrian corridors with wider sidewalks and amenities.
- Enhance the relationship of pedestrian corridors to views, existing open space and special features.
- Improve the visibility and appearance of existing secondary pedestrian corridors.

Core downtown area

- Emphasize entry points with special landmarks.
- Place signs and/or orientation kiosks at several locations.
- Eliminate vehicles and parking around St. Michael's cathedral.
- Establish criteria so that new infill development will maximize space, meet community needs, and provide parking.

Transportation

- Take a comprehensive approach to moving visitors around Sitka. Augment bus tours with a shuttle loop system that connects points of interest.
- Manage traffic on Lincoln Street to improve circulation and minimize congestion.
- Reorganize parking to provide short-term parking near downtown businesses and long-term parking in less utilized areas.

Information and Orientation

- Manage information and outreach to ensure that visitors understand the full range of options and can make choices based on their available time and interests.
- Coordinate interpretation to highlight the relationships between points of interest.



Circulation

Proposed Transit Routes

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

The dramatic setting, colorful history, and vibrant presence of Sitka combine to create a special community feeling for residents and a memorable experience for visitors. However, as the number of residents and visitors increases, people are beginning to notice changes that detract from Sitka's special character and quality of life.

Conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles frustrate drivers and endanger pedestrians. Pedestrians overflow into roadways and cause traffic congestion along Harbor Drive, between Crescent Harbor and downtown, at the intersection of Lincoln Street and Harbor, and all along the Lincoln Street corridor. Many areas are unsafe for pedestrians, including most intersections, Harbor Drive, and the waterfront. Tour buses add to traffic congestion, especially at Crescent Harbor, downtown, and on Harbor Drive.

PROPOSED TRANSIT ROUTES

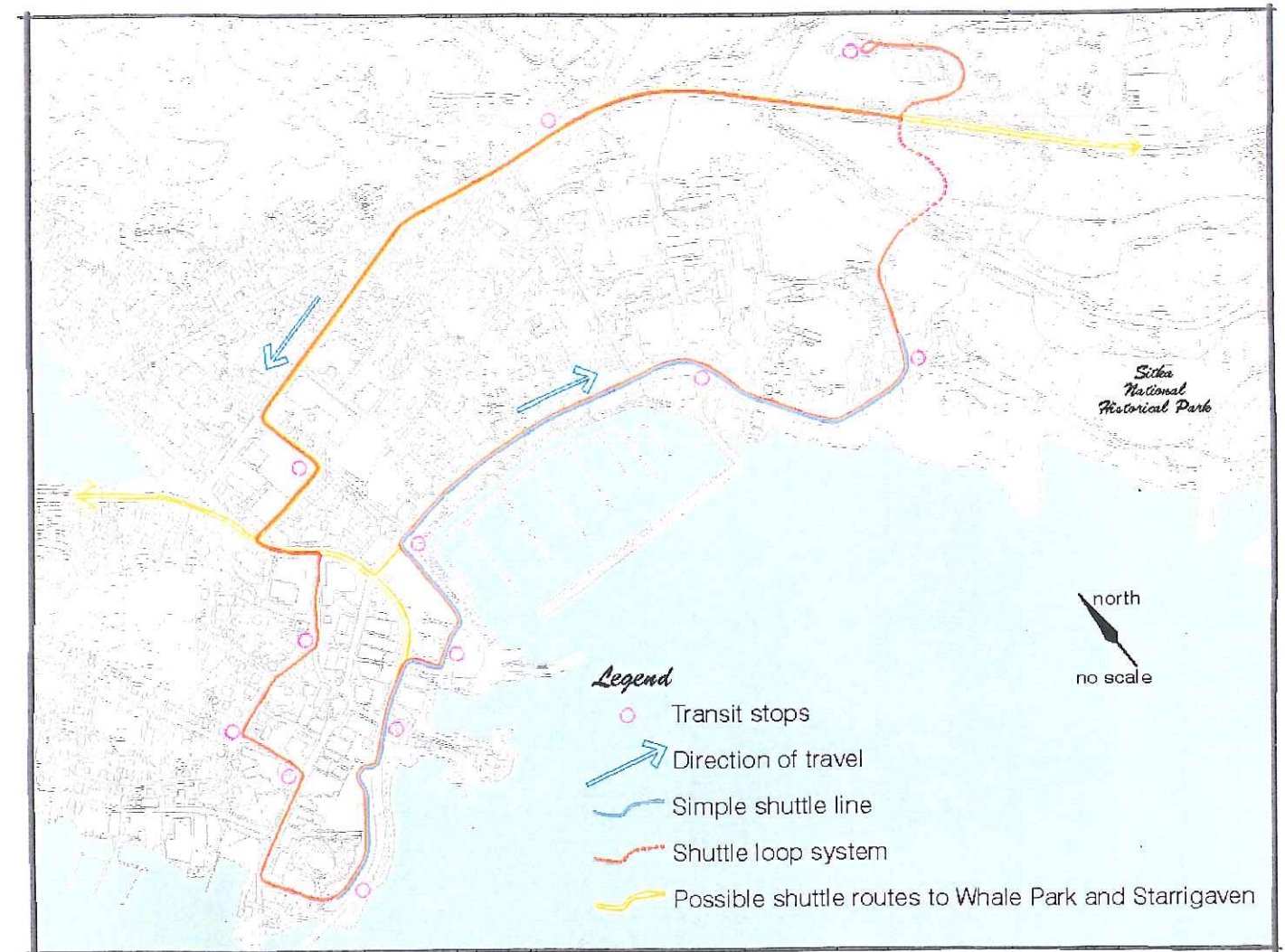
A shuttle system is proposed to reduce traffic bottlenecks and give visitors opportunities to spend more time at the attractions they are most interested in. The shuttle would reduce but not replace bus tours. It would increase the transportation options for both visitors and residents.

Shuttle vehicles would be designed for easy access and egress; the purchase of one ticket would enable riders to hop on or off at any designated stop. Shuttle vehicles could run every 5-10 minutes in a counter-clockwise direction around town, making the entire loop in about 30 minutes. A new road extension between east Lincoln Street and Sawmill Creek Boulevard could make the shuttle system circulation much smoother. It could be a 1-lane, 1-way road, or a road designated for buses only, with pedestrian and bicycle lanes.

As a first phase, a more simple shuttle route could be tried. This route would run back and forth from the proposed lightering at O'Connell bridge on Harbor Drive and Lincoln Street to Sitka National Historical Park – with stops for the central business district, Centennial Hall, the Russian Bishop's House, and Sheldon Jackson College. To reduce congestion and safety hazards, the shuttle routes would purposely avoid Lincoln Street downtown. Instead, three different shuttle stops would drop visitors within a block of the downtown area.

Either shuttle system is intended to be used in combination with walking tour routes, improved pedestrian corridors, improved directional signs, and interpretation at each site to better organize the visitor experience.

If demand is sufficient, the shuttle system could be expanded to include routes to Whale Park, Starrigavan, and ideally, the ferry terminal and remote parking along Halibut Point Road. It could potentially be used by residents, and this too could help reduce congestion in the downtown area.



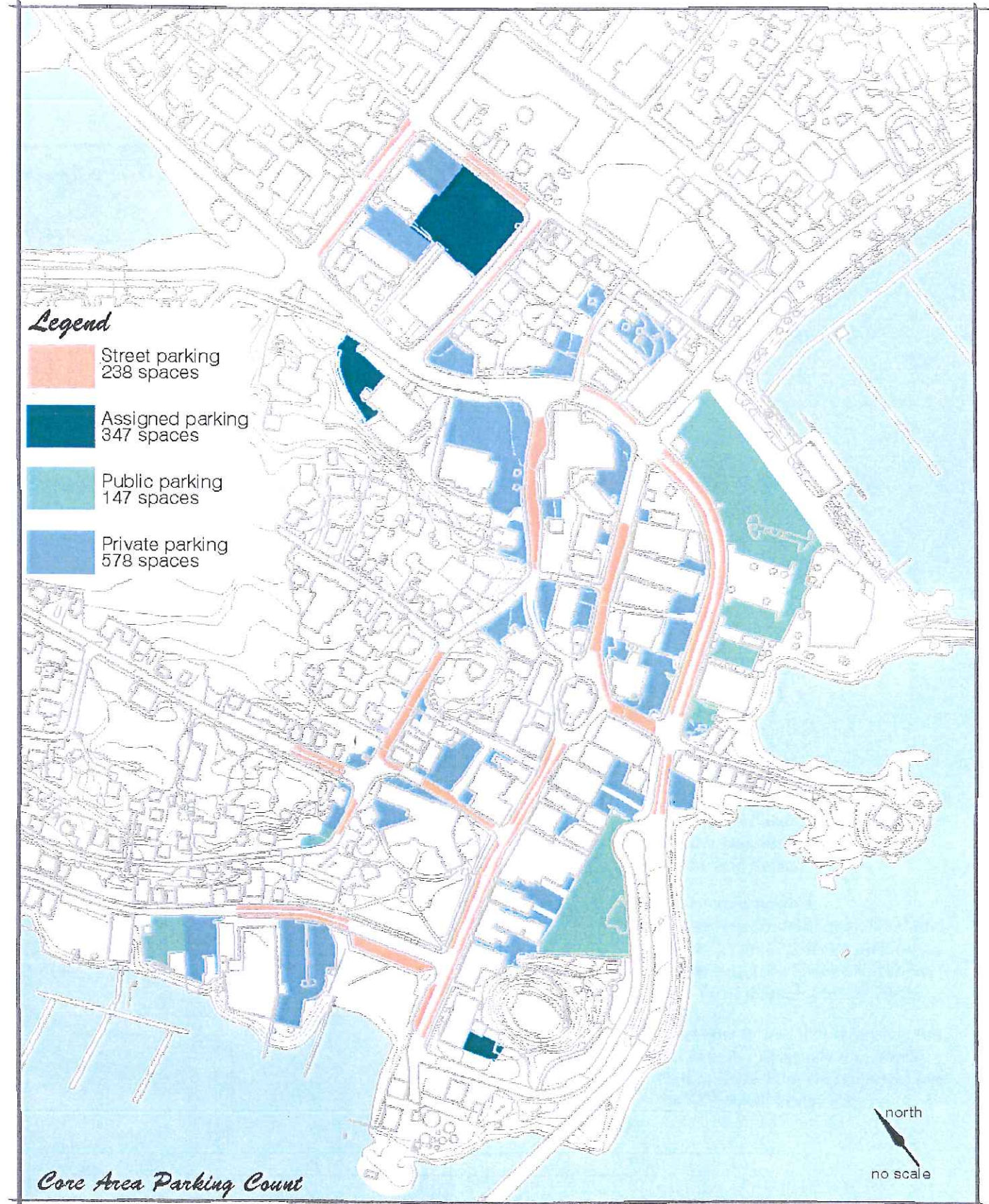
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Parking Analysis

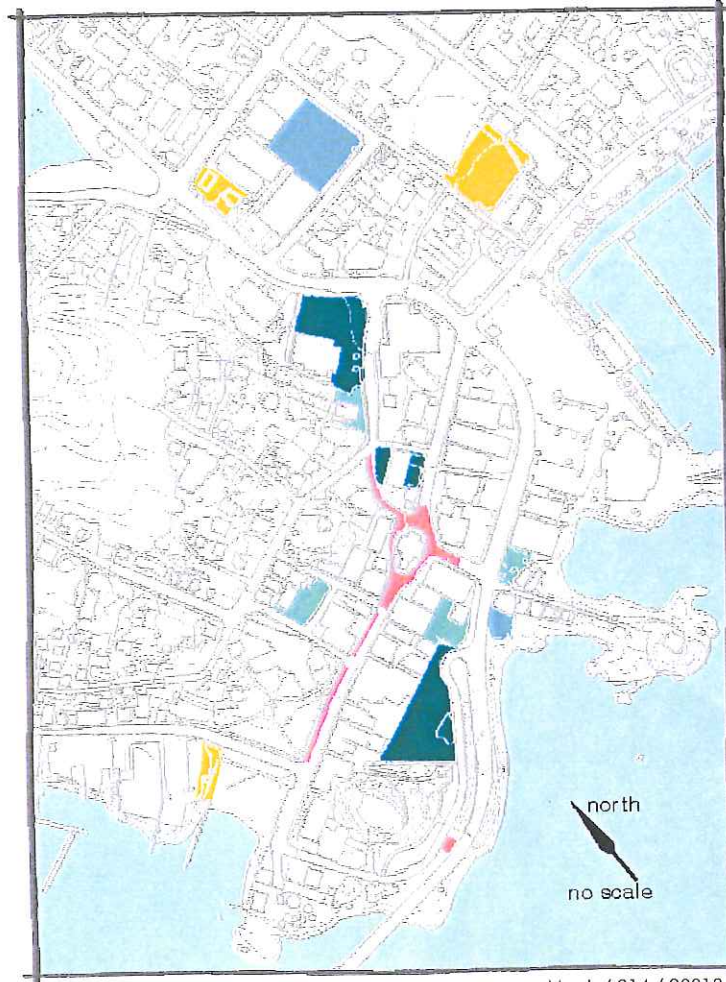
With the continued growth in numbers of vehicles on the island and their impacts on access to the town and traffic within, it was necessary to understand and evaluate the current parking situation.

A count of 1300 available parking spaces suggests that there are sufficient parking spaces in downtown Sitka, even though residents perceive differently. Perhaps efforts to make small changes in people's current parking habits and to move toward a more cooperative approach could result in a more even distribution of parking in the core area.



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Parking Opportunities



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Legend

- Vacant areas that could be developed as parking, or that could include parking with future uses
- Car and bus parking that should be eliminated
- Owners of adjacent lots could cooperatively join parking to use the space more efficiently
- Existing lots could be reconfigured into more efficient patterns
- Parking lot owners could negotiate parking agreements with people who are in need of parking space

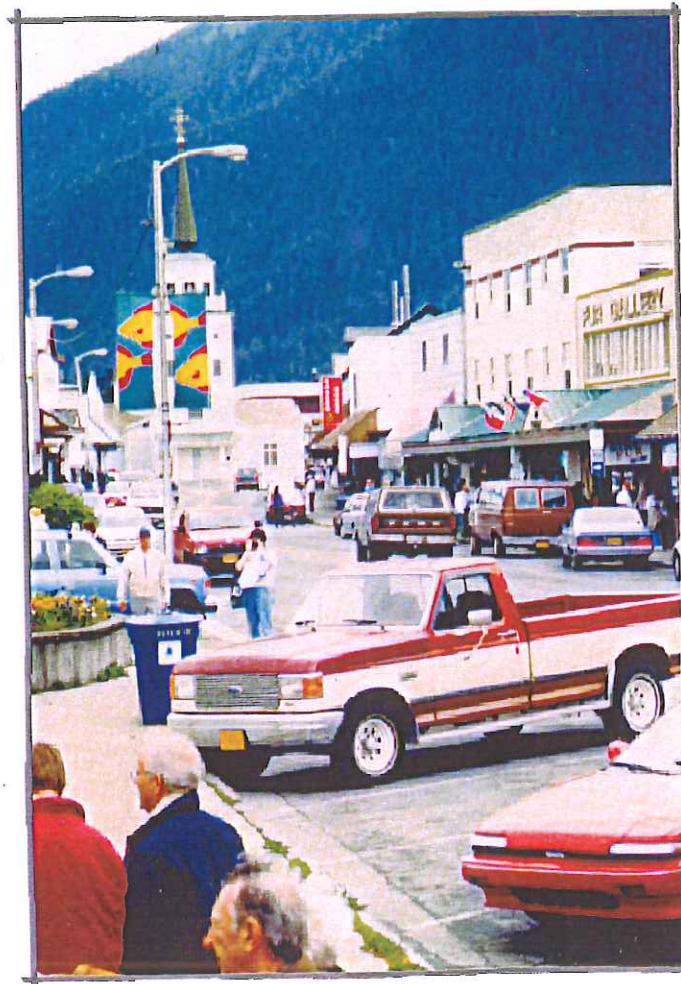
Opportunities for allocating existing parking more efficiently include, but are not limited to:

- Striping spaces for parallel parking on streets and enforcing a time limit on street parking.
- Posting information about parking locations and regulations in Sitka at the airport and ferry terminal.
- Developing parking strategies in association with a shuttle system.
- Allocating a specific number of parking spaces for long-term, hourly, and employee parking in each lot to more evenly disperse the different types of parking throughout Sitka.
- Combining separately-owned adjacent parking lots into one larger lot to increase efficiency.

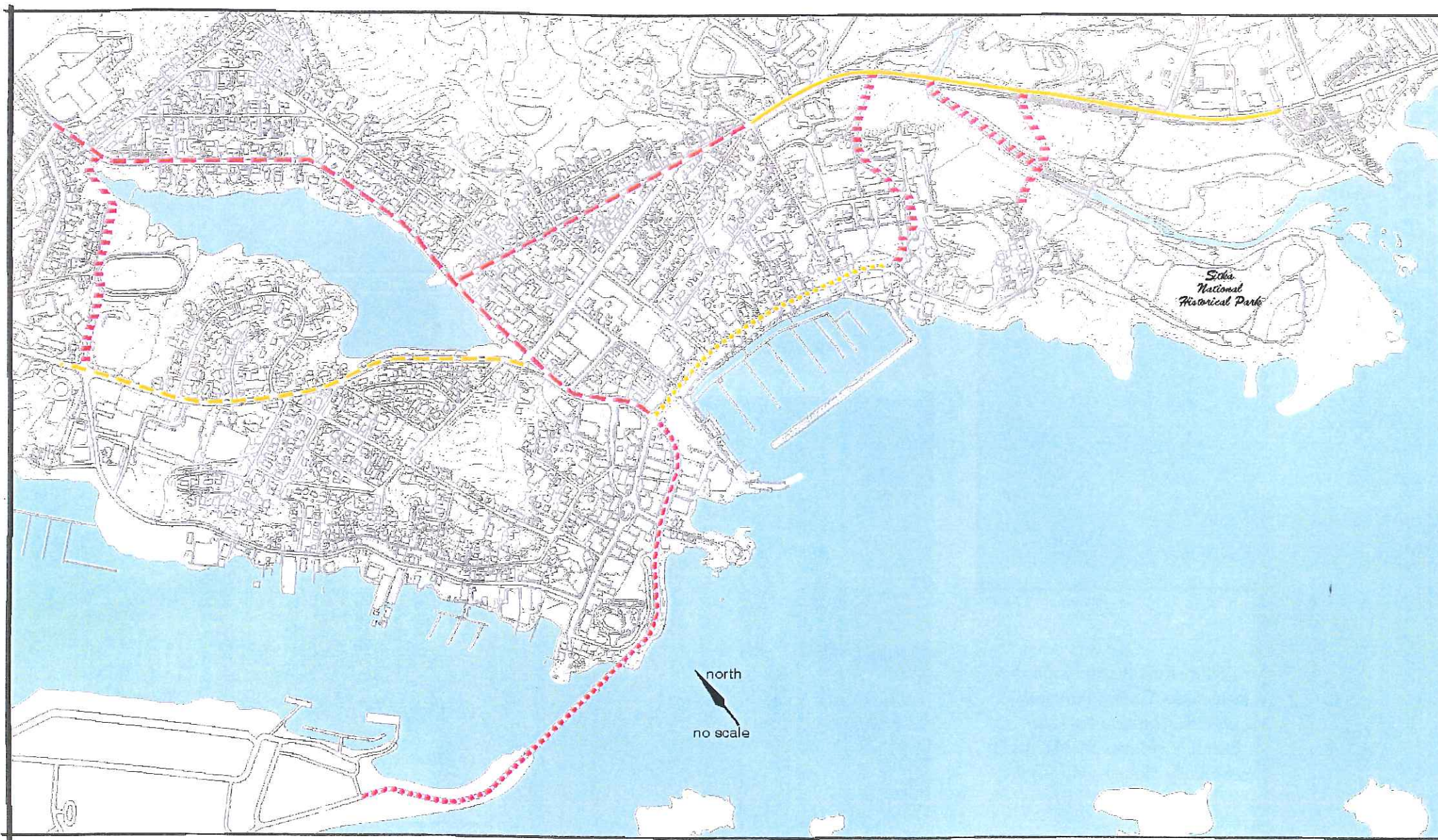
- Redesigning existing lots to gain more parking spaces.
- In lots that have available spaces, negotiating leasing arrangements with people who are in need of parking space.

Areas where parking should be eliminated to relieve congestion and provide an enhanced design treatment are:

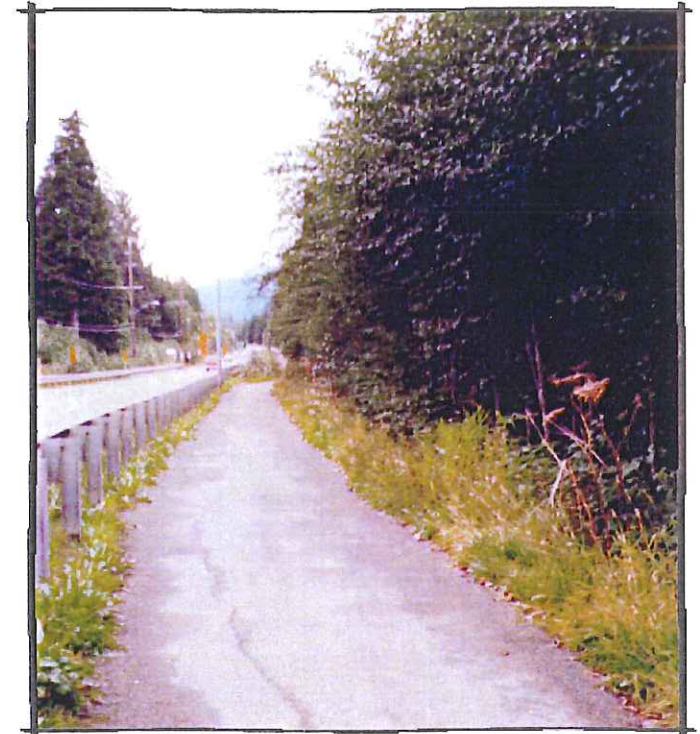
- Around St. Michael's cathedral (15 spaces)
- On one side of Lincoln Street between the cathedral and the Pioneer's Home (10 spaces)
- Underneath O'Connell bridge at the proposed lightering site (10 spaces)








Bicycle System Recommendations



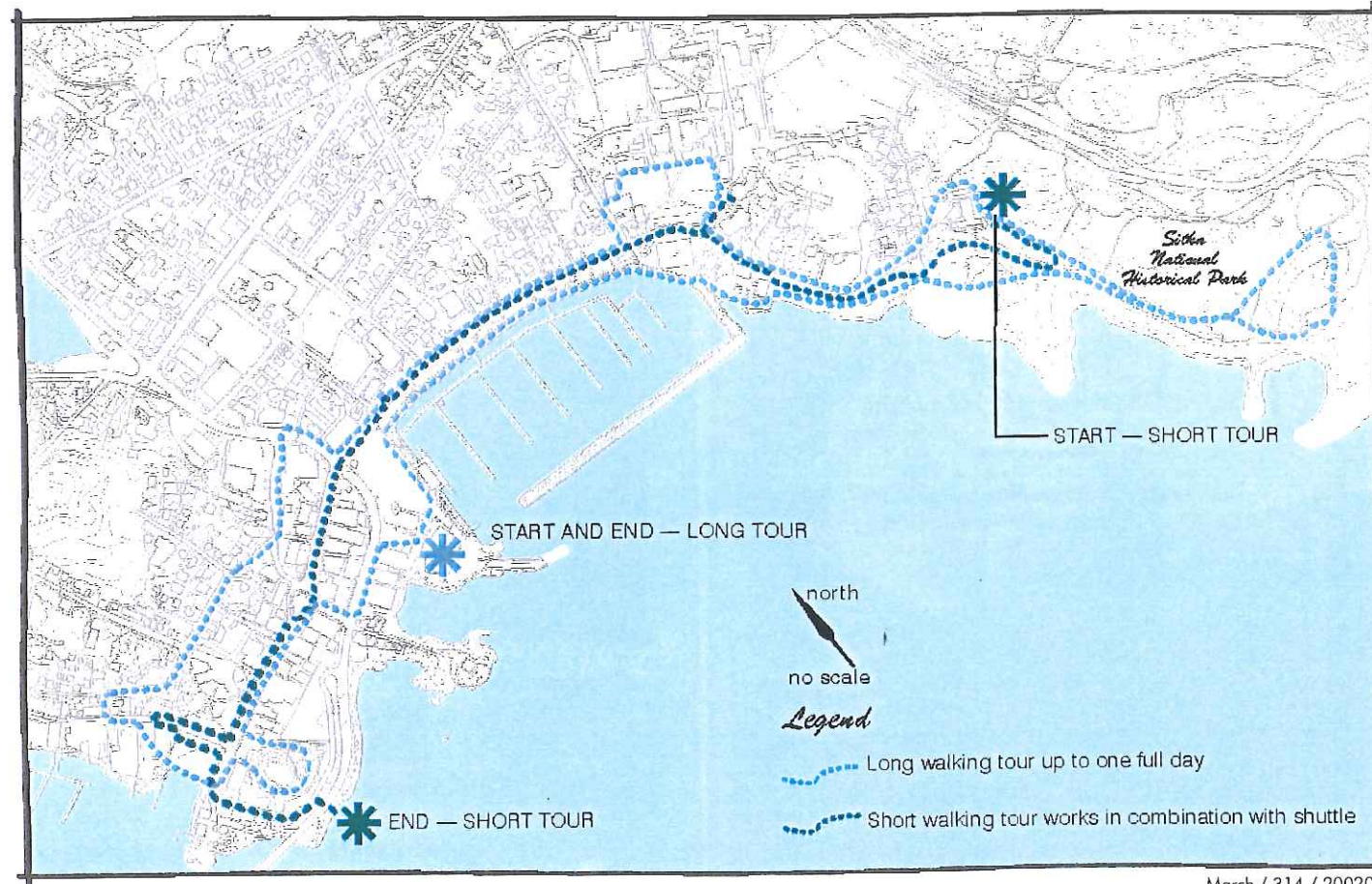
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Legend

-  Existing bicycle trail (separate from street)
-  Existing bicycle lane
-  Needed signing for bike routes on existing streets:
 - Lincoln Street east of Harbor Drive
 - Other potential routes such as Seward and Marine Streets to provide a bypass of more congested streets such as Lincoln and Katlian
-  New bike trails needed:
 - Connecting Sawmill Creek Road and Lincoln Street (3 different options)
 - Connecting Lake Street with Halibut Point Road through Moeller Field
-  Needed lane or trail that is feasible but would require more study and design:
 - Harbor Drive from Lincoln Street over the O'Connell Bridge

Walking Tour Options



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There are several opportunities for establishing different walking tours in Sitka. A long tour, requiring up to one full day, could begin at Centennial Hall and the Isabel Miller museum, then take in Sitka National Historical Park including the totem trail, the Raptor Center, Sheldon-Jackson Museum and campus, the Russian Bishop's House, the Blockhouse, the STA Community House, the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall (with an option to tour the Katlian district to Thomsen Harbor), Castle Hill, and St. Michael's Cathedral, ending at Centennial Hall. Historic buildings would also be points of interest along the route.

A shorter walking tour could work in combination with a shuttle system to include Centennial Hall, Sitka National Historical Park, Sheldon-Jackson Museum, the Russian Bishop's House, St. Michael's Cathedral, the STA Community House, and Castle Hill.

Other options for theme-related shorter tours include: Native American culture past and present, Russian American culture past and present, natural history of Sitka, and a brief overview of Sitka.





Information and Orientation

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Sitka's Stories

Education and information can expand visitors' experiences by increasing their awareness and understanding of a place. The following statements represent the essential things Sitka residents want visitors to know:

1. The story of Sitka revolves around the interaction between the Russian colonists, other Europeans, Alaska Natives, persons of mixed race (primarily Alaska Native/Russian), and Americans.
2. The Tlingit and Czarist Russia's colonists had their own distinct identities but similar wealth

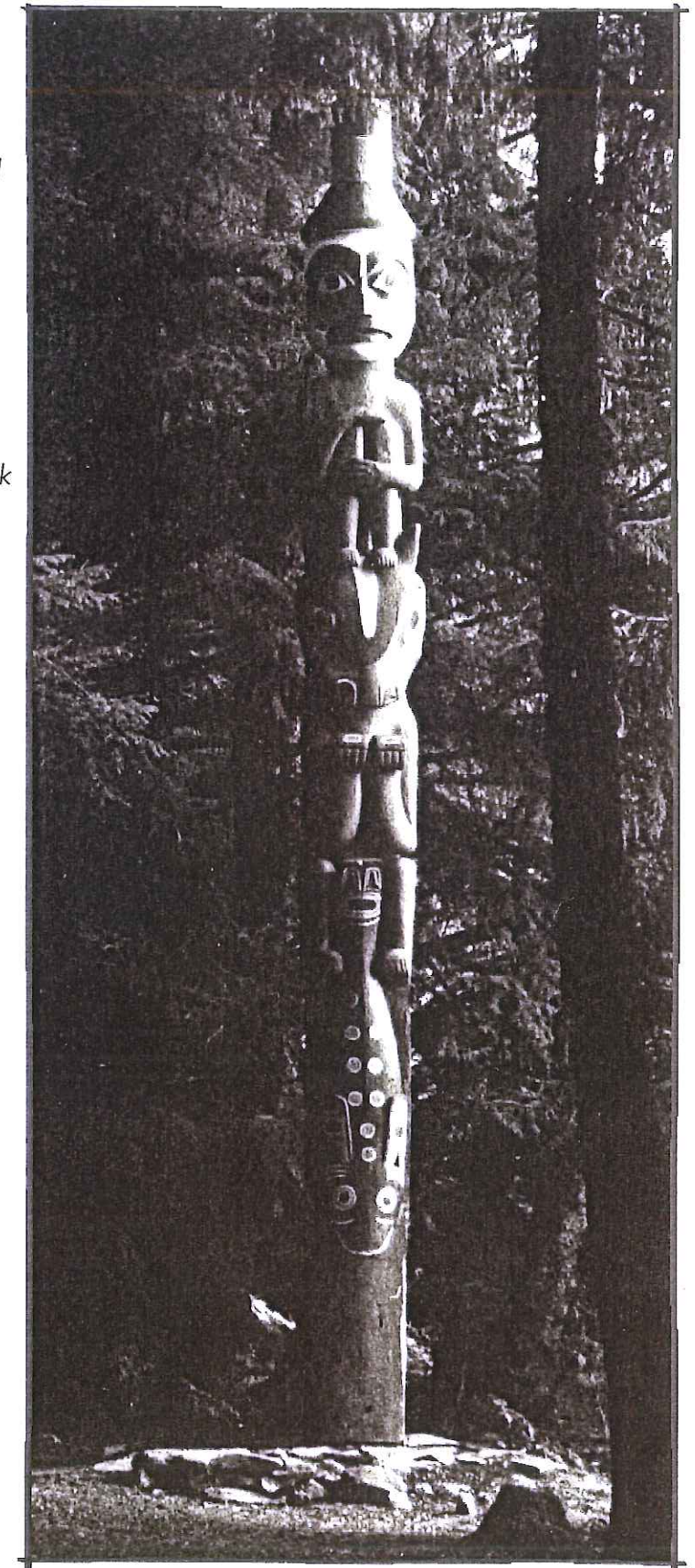
producing goals. The Battle of 1804 occurred because the Russians wanted to acquire the wealth associated with the fur trade.

3. The land and the sea provided a rich natural environment which attracted the Tlingit, their predecessors, the European colonists, and present day residents and visitors.
4. To the Tlingit people, Sitka has long been a major center of culture.
5. For Russia, New Archangel (Sitka) was the colonial capital for reaping the rich bounty of Alaska.

6. Brought by the Russians to Alaska, Eastern Orthodoxy was adopted by many Natives, and retains an active presence in the state today.

7. The transfer of Alaska to the United States in 1867 occurred in Sitka as a result of mutual Russian and American interests, a close friendship, and geopolitical rivalries with other countries.

8. During World War II Sitka was an important link in America's chain of coastal defenses.



Informational System

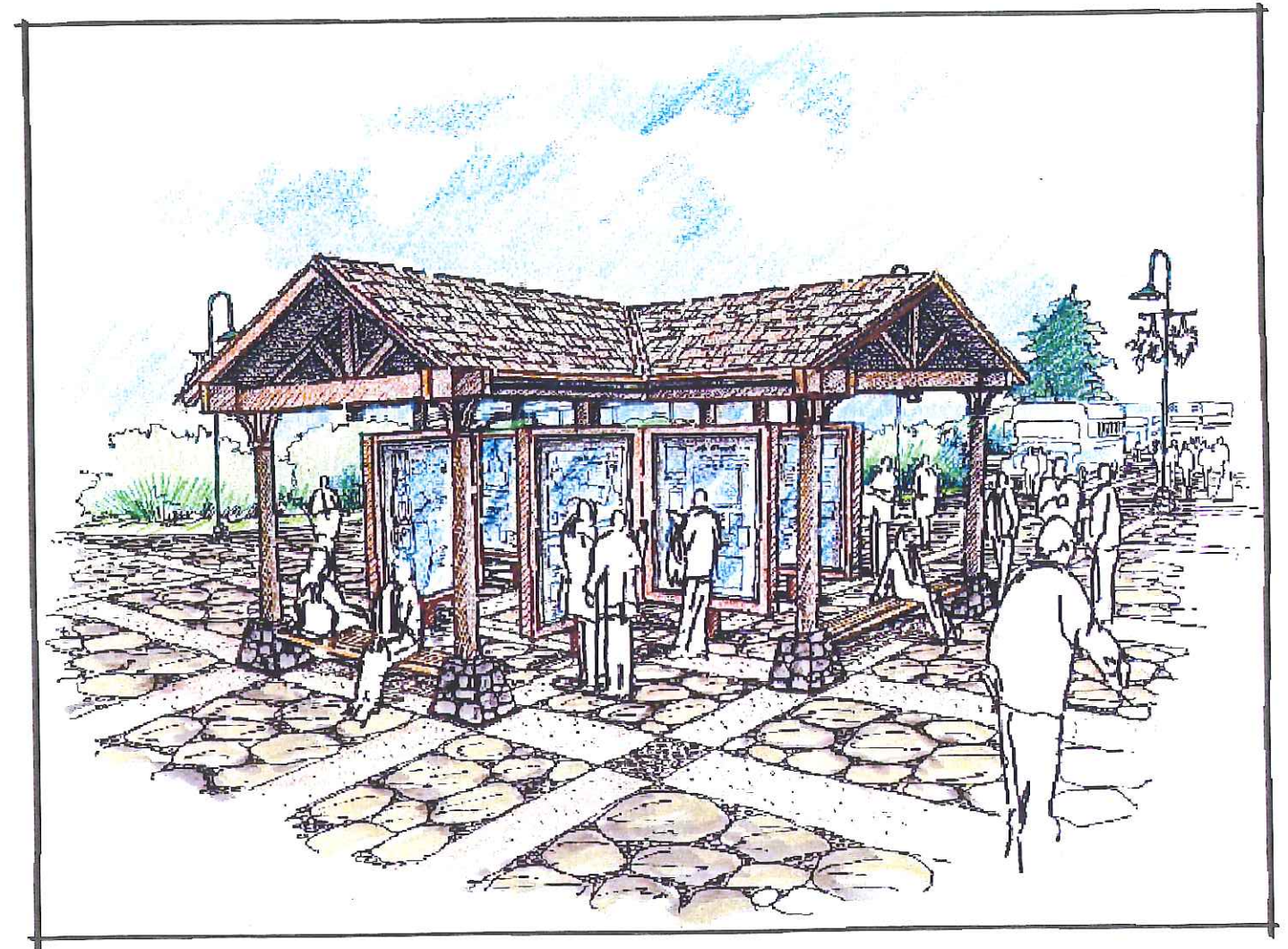
Since the visitor's time in Sitka is limited, it is important that information about activities and choices of things to see and do be presented in an effective and simple way. A system of signs is needed to inform, orient, and provide information in a clear, concise, organized fashion. This "family of signs" would include information/orientation kiosks, interpretive signs, directional signs, and tour route signs.

Information and orientation kiosks would provide basic information about Sitka and what makes it significant as well as brief information about various attractions and how to get to them. The kiosks would be placed at major disembarking and assembly points such as Centennial Hall and the lightering facilities.

Signs should be fabricated of natural weathered wood with colorful procelain inserts and routed graphics as portrayed in the sketches on the next page. Color-coded symbols are very important to effectively highlight different areas, activity zones, and districts.

In addition to the information/orientation kiosks, interpretive signs should be incorporated along walking tour routes and tour bus stops. The same materials and color schemes should be used.

Signage should also be incorporated with pedestrian light fixtures to reflect districts and/or tour routes. The design of the pedestrian light fixtures should reflect the character of the district. To reinforce the color-coded approach of this signage system, color-coded glazed pavers embedded in the sidewalks should also be considered. It is important to consider a graphic logo for the city of Sitka. This design element will provide continuity in the signage system.

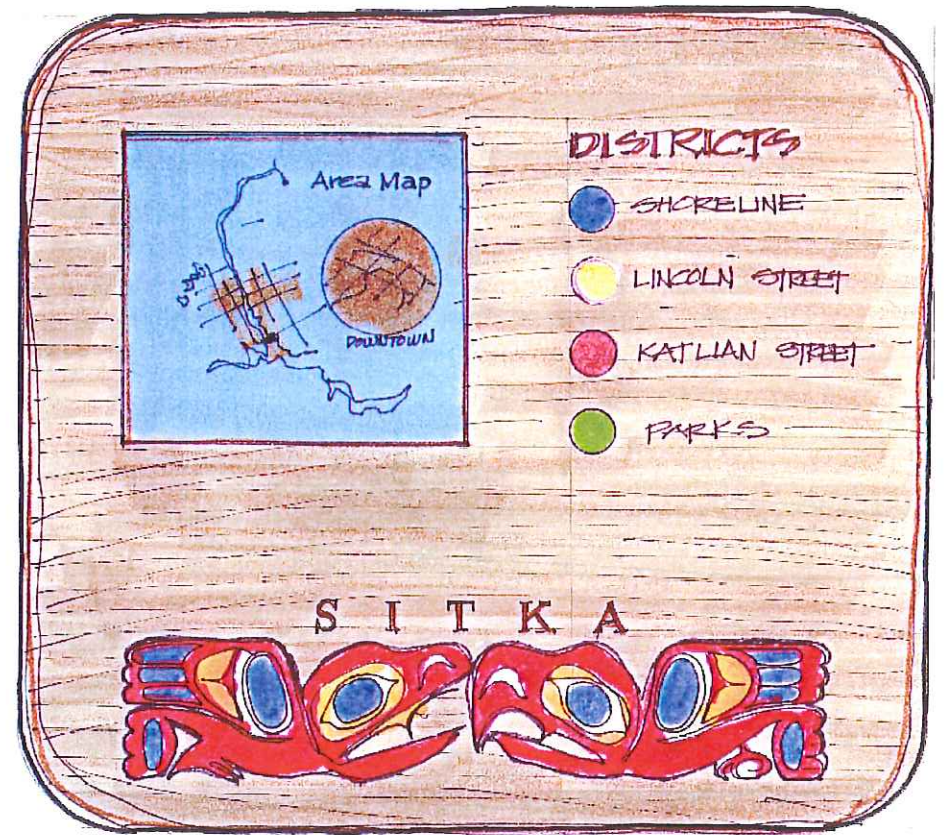
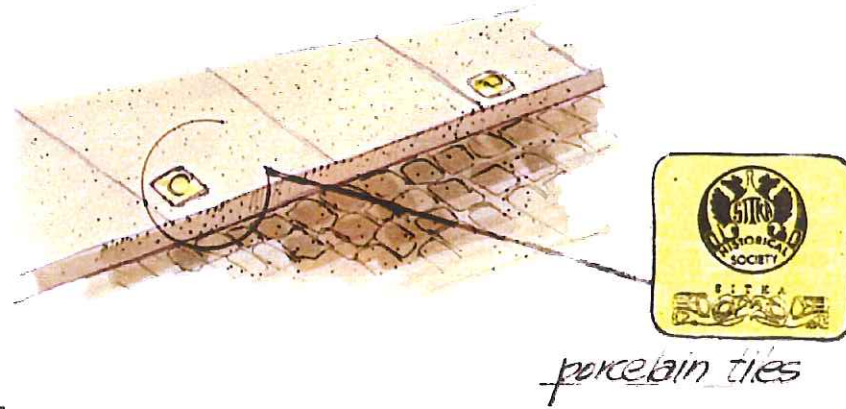
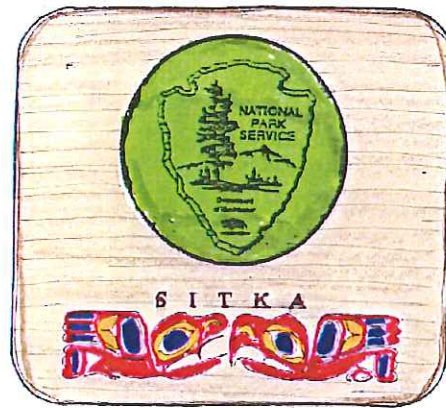


This is an example of an information and orientation kiosk. The structure is constructed of wood and stone and includes signs, benches, and lighting.



DISTRICT/
ACTIVITY MARKERS

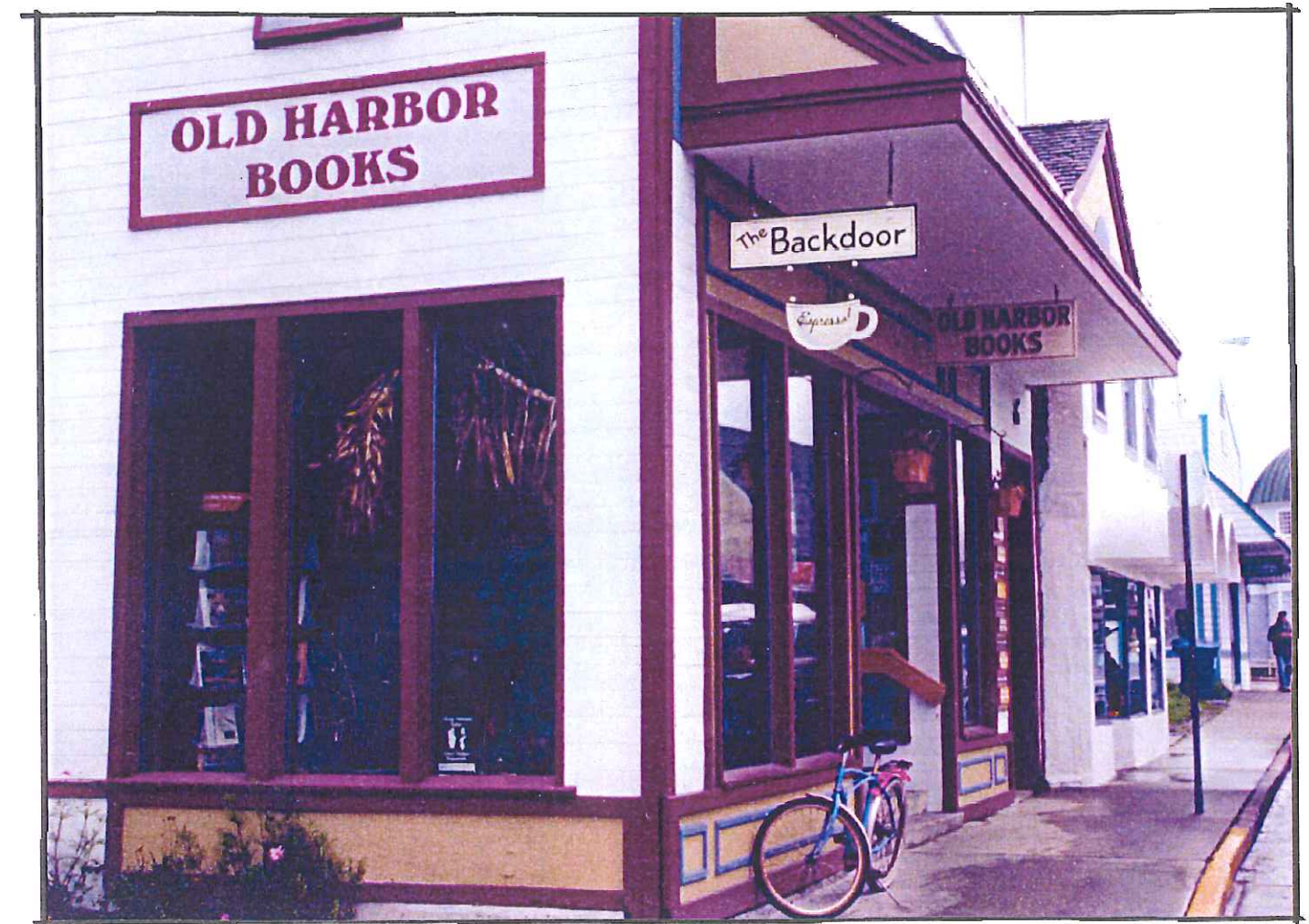
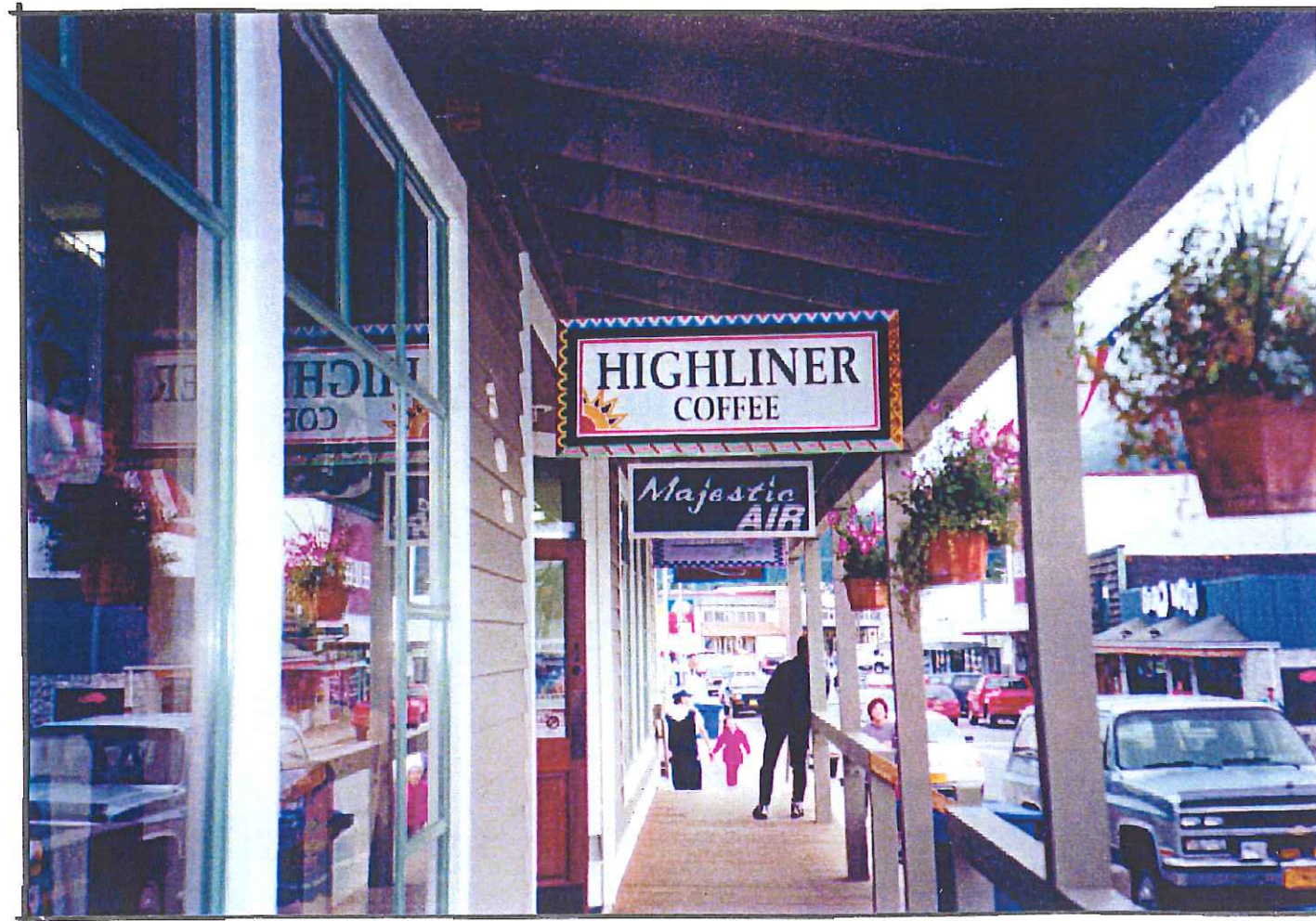
• porcelain inserts
on weathered wood
panels, top.



Commercial Signs

Sitka has an established tradition of using simple well designed pedestrian-oriented signs throughout the downtown. These signs are either placed on the building or hung from arcades. The result is harmonious and in tune with the character of Sitka. The use of small signs made of indigenous materials such as rock bases and wood faces should be continued. Because of Sitka's small size, typical large-scale signs found in other cities are not needed or desirable.

The existing signs pictured here illustrate desirable features for commercial signs: an appropriate size and shape that is in scale with the pedestrian atmosphere of the street, creative designs, subdued colors, and exemplary craftsmanship.





Character Districts and Design Recommendations

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Character Districts

In an effort to develop recommendations for preserving the unique character of Sitka while at the same time allowing for acceptable growth and change, three distinct landscape character districts were identified. They are Lincoln Street, Katlian Street and the Shoreline District. Character districts are used to highlight what makes an area special and distinct.

The character districts were identified after walking the areas, photographing views, examining historical photographs of the community and doing analytical sketches and mapping. The analysis looked at building placement, streetscape elements, views, building styles, building materials, signs, and landscaping.

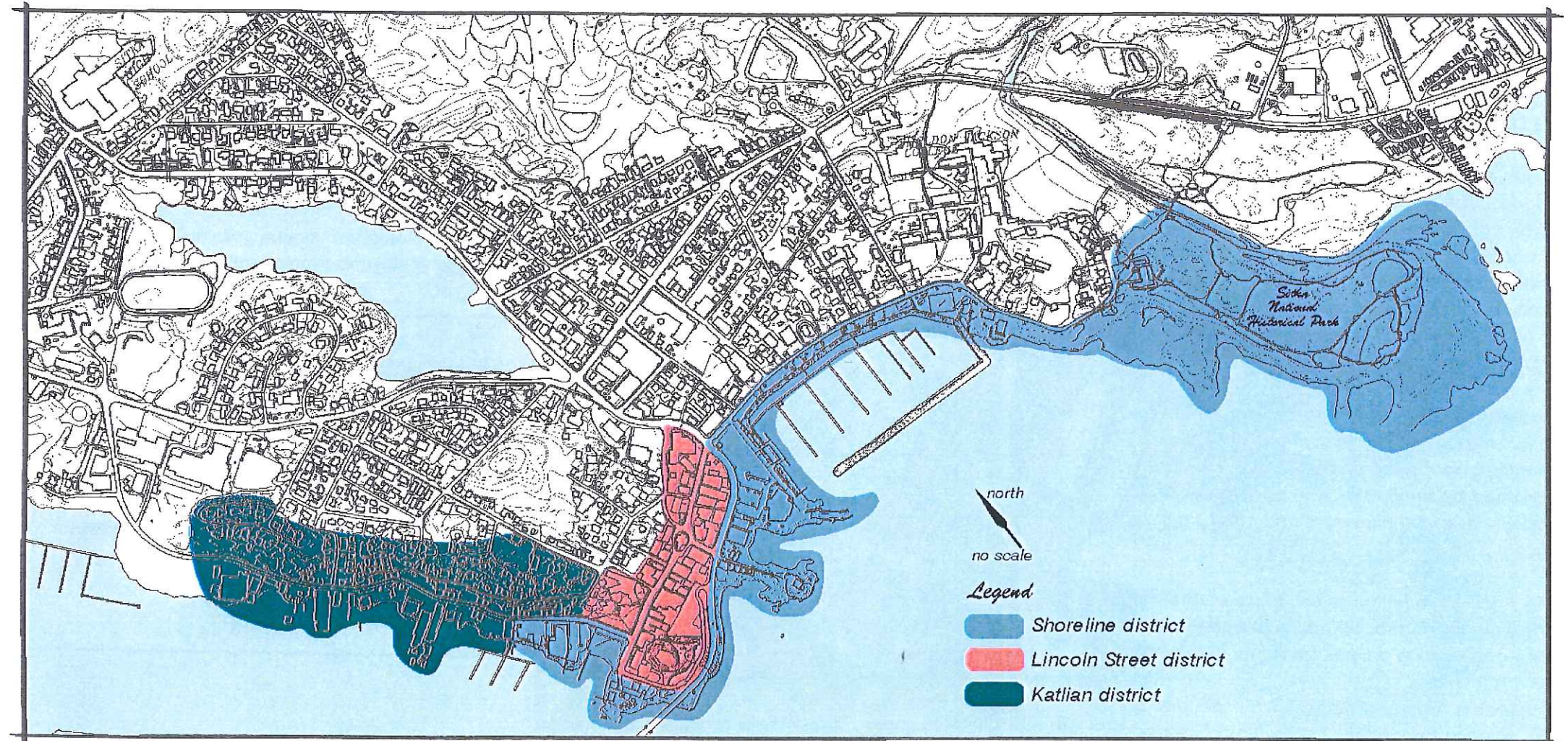
The following recommendations and guidelines for developing or redeveloping are a means of protecting the character of the districts and ensuring that new development is compatible with character. They are intended to complement the earlier recommendations regarding circulation and information and orientation.

In addition to the general guidelines below, design concepts and the more detailed design guidelines are based on the character-defining elements in each district.

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

When building or developing, respect and design with the natural features. Protect watersheds and wetlands, and avoid steep slopes. Retain vegetation.

Use colors and materials that blend with or complement the surrounding neighborhood and natural landscape.



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Regardless of the location, development should respect the character of Sitka by using scale, location on the site, and materials appropriate to the context of the development.

The City should consider the adoption of an overlay zone for each character district based on these concepts and guidelines to ensure that the character of

the district is not incrementally lost over time. As part of the zoning laws for the community, an overlay district would delineate the boundaries of the areas receiving special consideration and set parameters for the character of buildings, streetscape, signage and vegetation that would be allowed to occur in these zones. The areas of Katlian and Lincoln Streets and the Shoreline District as

shown are the principal locations that are being impacted by new development and would constitute the overlay district.

The Lincoln Street District

ANALYSIS

The Lincoln Street District offers several opportunities and problems. The character of the street is unique in the town of Sitka, as well as most of America. The street splits and curves around the Cathedral, focusing attention to it. This lends a European feel and pedestrian scale to the narrow crooked street. Most of the buildings maintain the traditional building line along the sidewalk. The fabric of the street is rarely interrupted by parking lots or by buildings set back from the sidewalk.

Most but not all of the buildings respect the traditional small scale and placement, window treatment, roof style, and materials. The street is enlivened by small well-done signs and hanging baskets. Even the alleyways and other small places have plants.

The small-scale buildings are placed just behind the sidewalk, making for an optimum pedestrian experience and lending a small town feel to the street.

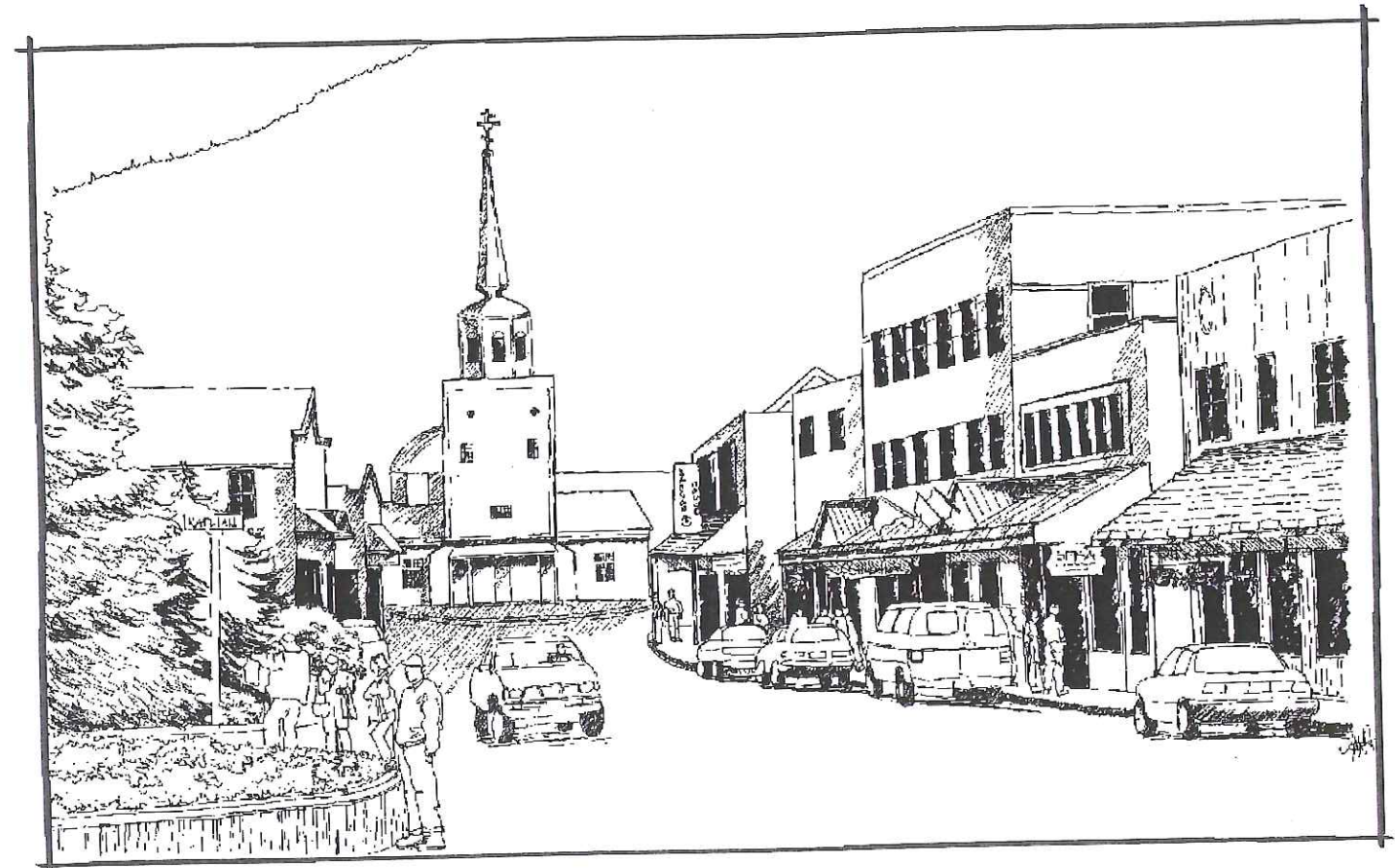
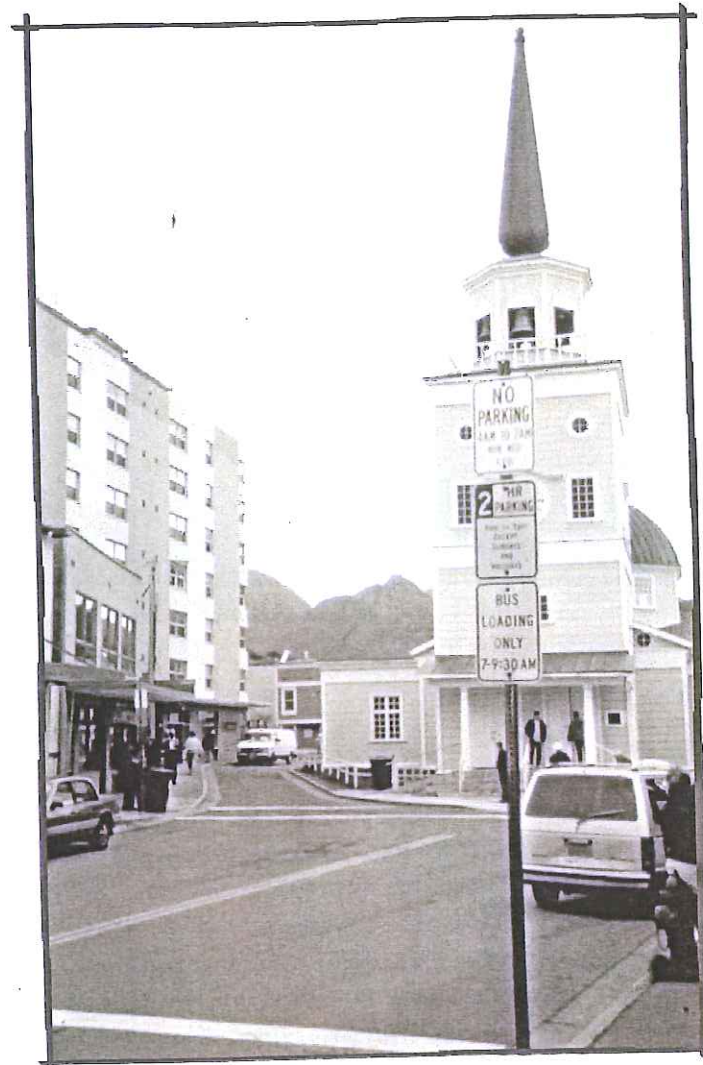
Constraints include a potentially unsafe and confusing situation for visitors, and traffic congestion for both visitors and residents. Other problems include some modern buildings which do not complement the character of the street, and spaces where buildings are missing, or are set back on the lot with parking in front. Although St. Michael's Cathedral is a focal point for Sitka and particularly the district, it is difficult to see from some directions because of intrusive buildings.

The following design concepts and guidelines would help the city of Sitka maximize the opportunities and minimize the constraints of the Lincoln Street District.

GOALS

Capitalize on the unique small-scale character of the street and the European flavor of the cathedral area.

Provide a better visitor experience while accommodating the practical needs of the residents



DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to meet the above goals, the City of Sitka could take the following actions:

- Maintain the narrow width of Lincoln Street consistent with safety considerations.
- Pave Lincoln Street with granite pavers around the cathedral to emphasize the area.
- Widen sidewalks to 8 feet wherever possible. In order to do this and maintain safety in the street, some on-street parking may need to be removed, but it can be replaced by off-street parking nearby.
- Pave sidewalks with aggregate or other special paving compatible with the street paving to define the district for pedestrians.
- Provide more off-street parking by consolidating parking lots and constructing a parking lot or garage for long-term parking. Short-term parking could be better served in other parking lots adjacent to businesses and along the street.

- Convert vacant lots to plazas, seating areas, and interpretive kiosks. Take advantage of other large open spaces or vacant lots along the street with new buildings or additions.
- Line the streets with decorative pedestrian lighting along the sidewalk to enliven the area.
- Take advantage of alleys or spaces between buildings to provide pedestrian connections from Lincoln to the shoreline district. Treat these spaces with distinctive pavers and planted flower strips. Some could be covered providing shelter for pedestrians during heavy rains.
- Commercial uses like the movie theater, which provide vital activities for residents could be multi-use enterprises, offering informational films for visitors during the day and movies for residents at night. Other functions such as video rental and music sales could also be included to help insure economic survival of the theater function.



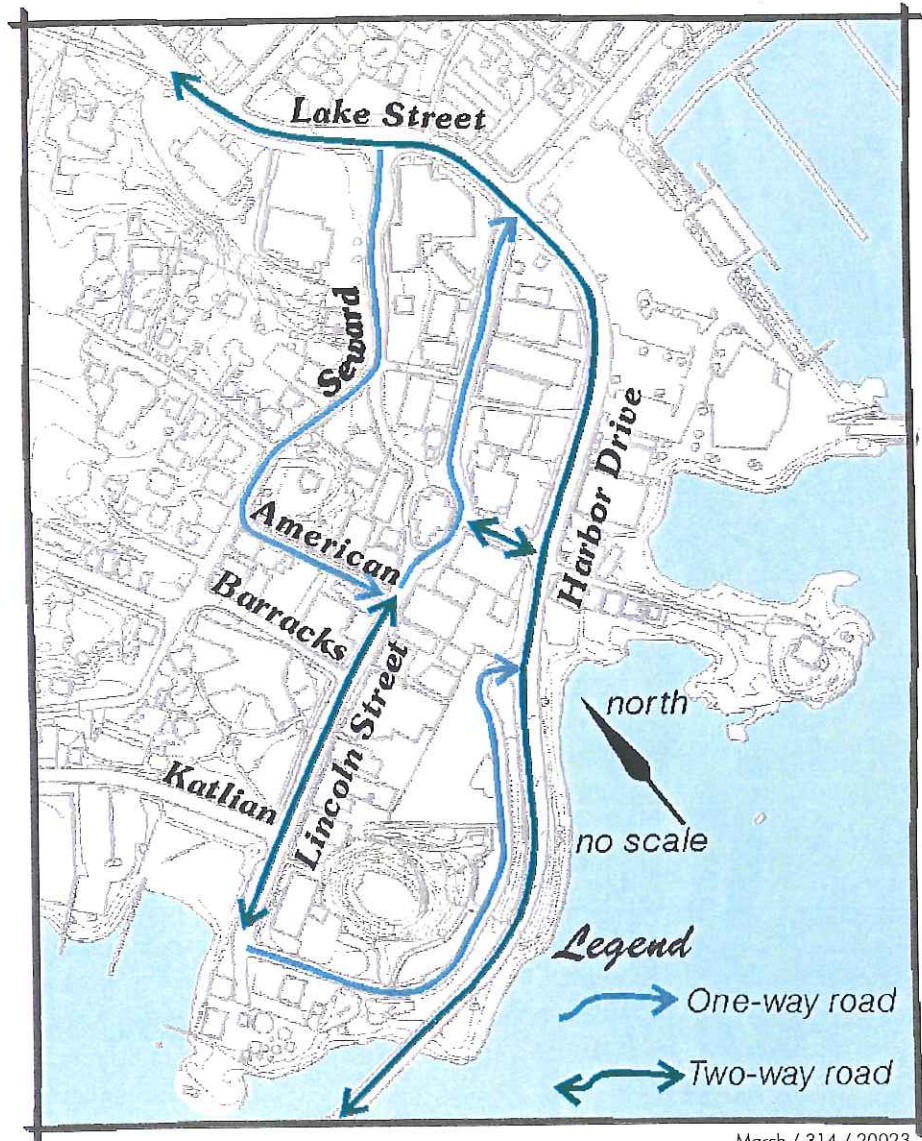
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Ideas for Lincoln Street

During the tourist season the pedestrian experience is marred by conflicts with traffic. Traffic congestion makes it difficult to appreciate St. Michael's Cathedral, as well as the shops and appearance of

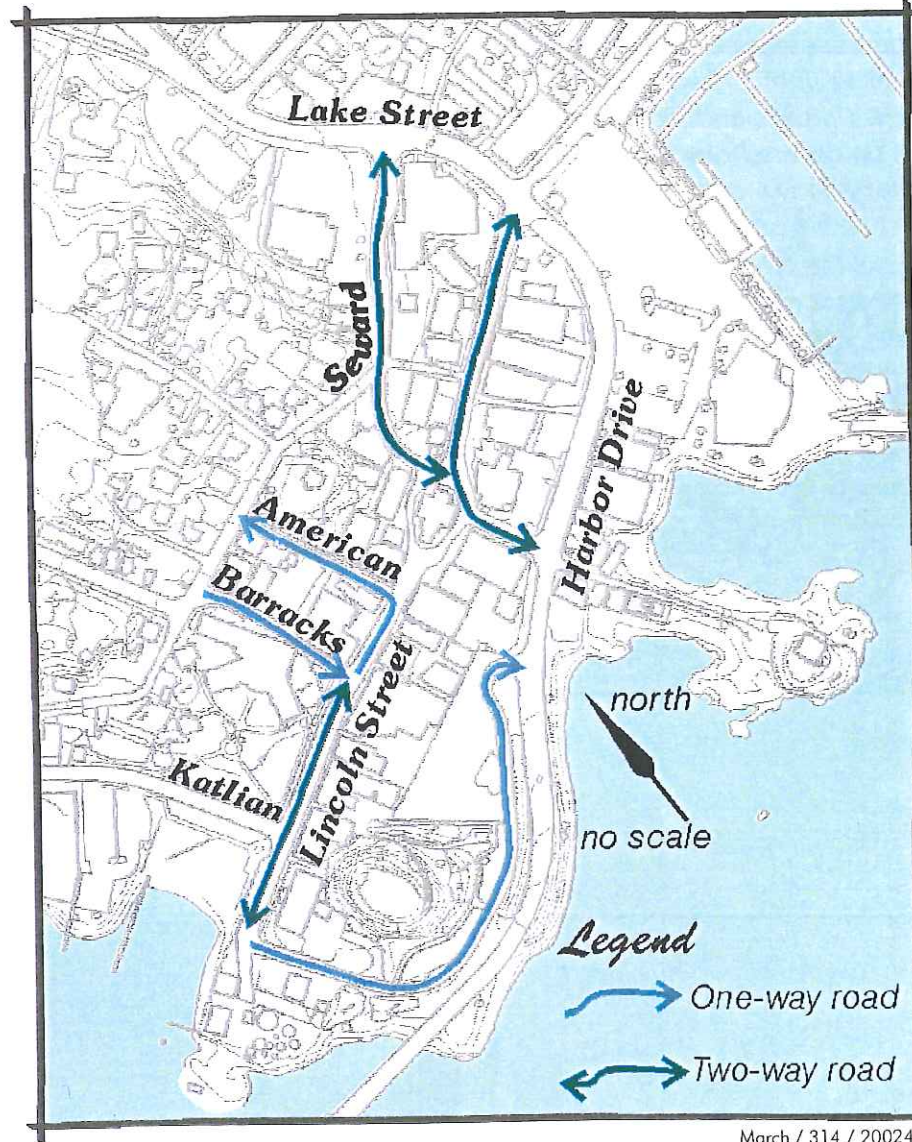
Lincoln St. Congestion also makes it difficult for local drivers, many of whom say they avoid downtown during the tourist season. There are many options for improving the situation which can be

evaluated during a trial period using temporary barriers. Three options for reducing congestion while allowing vehicular access to the downtown area are illustrated on this page.



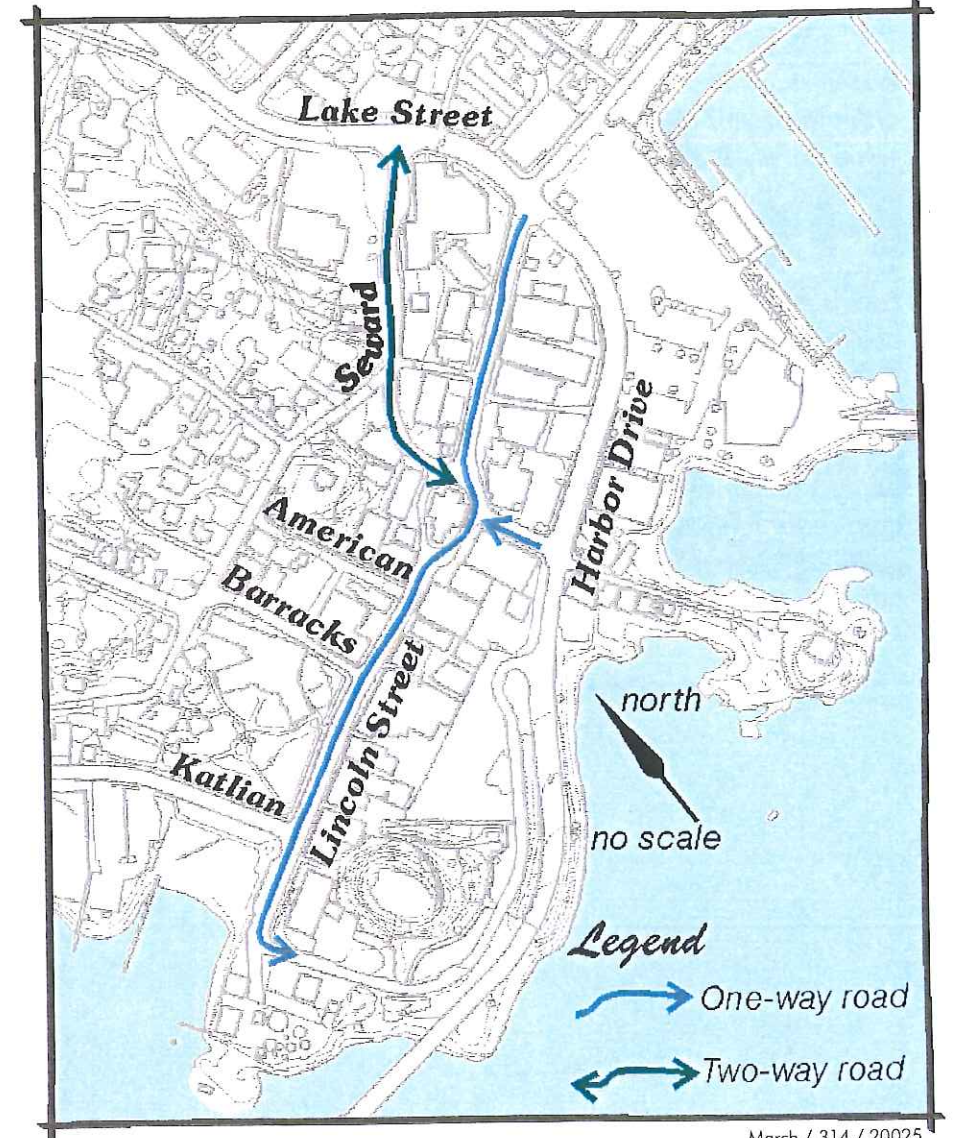
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Lincoln Street is two-way between Katlian and American; it becomes a one-way from American to Harbor Drive for east-bound traffic. West-bound traffic enters Lincoln via Seward and American streets. To make more room for wider sidewalks, on street parking is removed from one side of Lincoln and accommodated in the Castle Hill lot.



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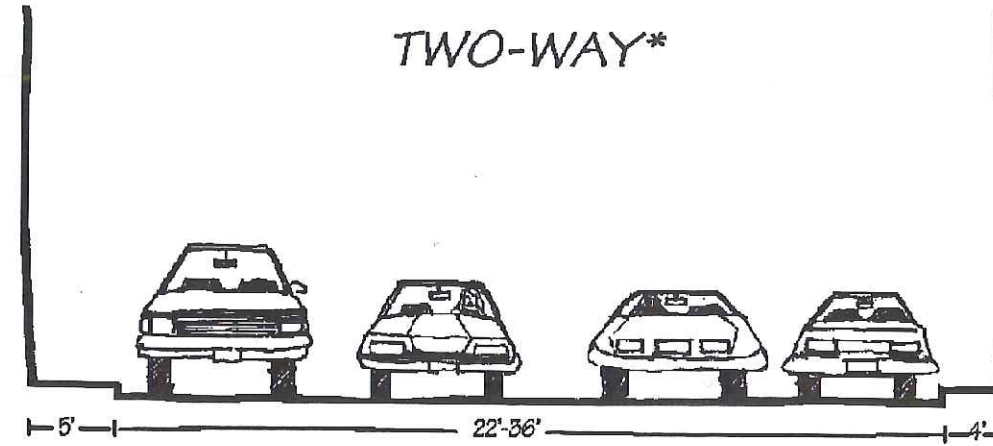
There is 2-way traffic on Lincoln Street between Katlian and Barracks; American becomes one-way going north and Barracks becomes one-way going south. Lincoln is closed around St. Michael's except on the southeast side.



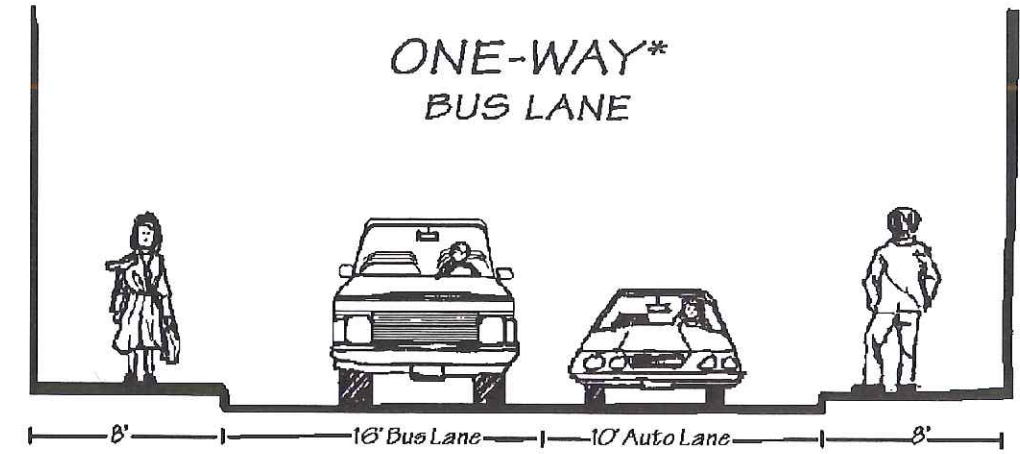
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Lincoln Street is one-way, running from east to west. All traffic flows around the south side of St. Michael's, leaving room for pedestrians on the north.

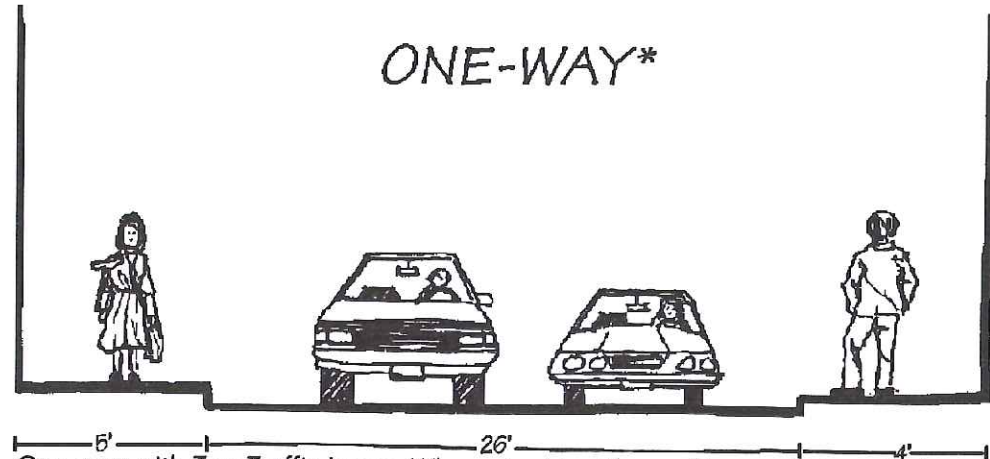
The cross-sections on this page illustrate ways that Lincoln Street could be reconfigured to meet the needs of businesses, motorists, and pedestrians.



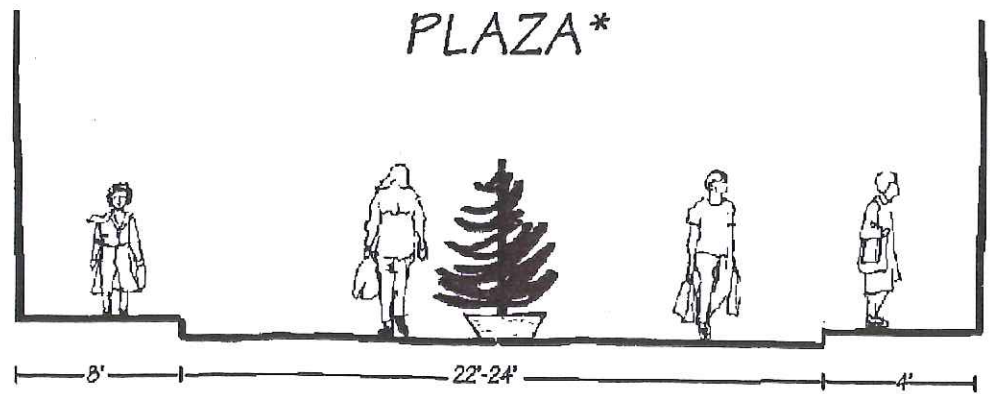
Existing Condition: parking on both sides and narrow sidewalks of varying widths. To achieve an 8' sidewalk, roadway width must be narrowed.



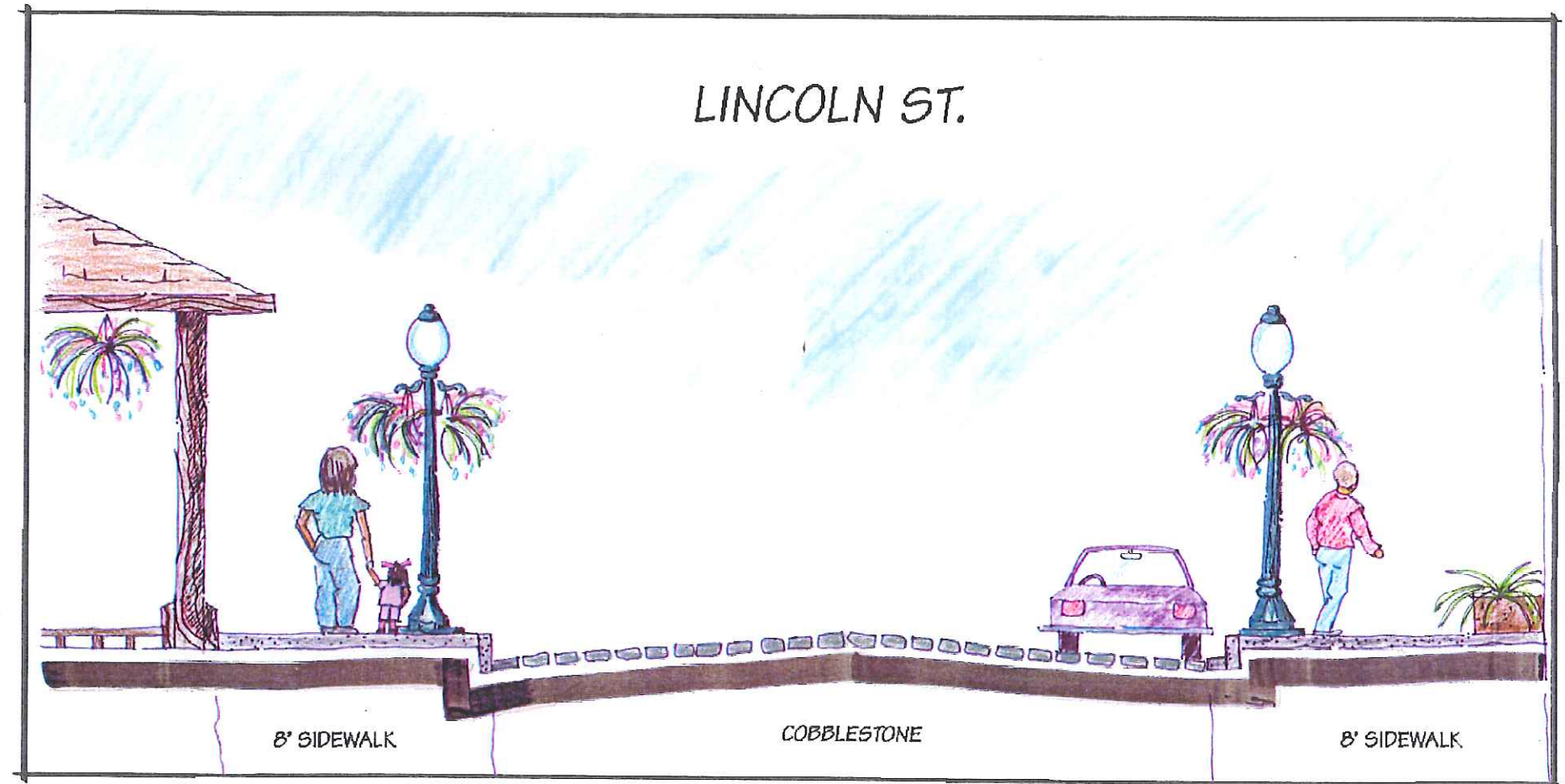
One-way with Bus Lane: No on-street parking in most areas; where street is wider, parking could be added.



One-way with Two Traffic Lanes: Where street is wider, parking could be added.



Plaza Around Cathedral: can be seasonal or permanent.



Cross-section through Lincoln Street illustrates widened sidewalks and streetscape amenities such as pedestrian-scale lights that incorporate signs and hanging flower baskets.



Infill development should complement the established two- to three-story height, roof shape, and window patterns of adjacent existing structures along Lincoln Street. This sketch shows how a new building would replace a vacant lot and create a continuous building facade along the sidewalk edge.





This sketch illustrates another example of infill development in the Lincoln Street area. Instead of filling a vacant lot with a building, occasional breaks in the continuity of building facades provide interest and opportunities to create park-like spaces with seating, lighting, and landscaping.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT IN THE LINCOLN STREET DISTRICT

Developers, builders and remodelers should strive to maintain the character of the district by using the following guidelines:

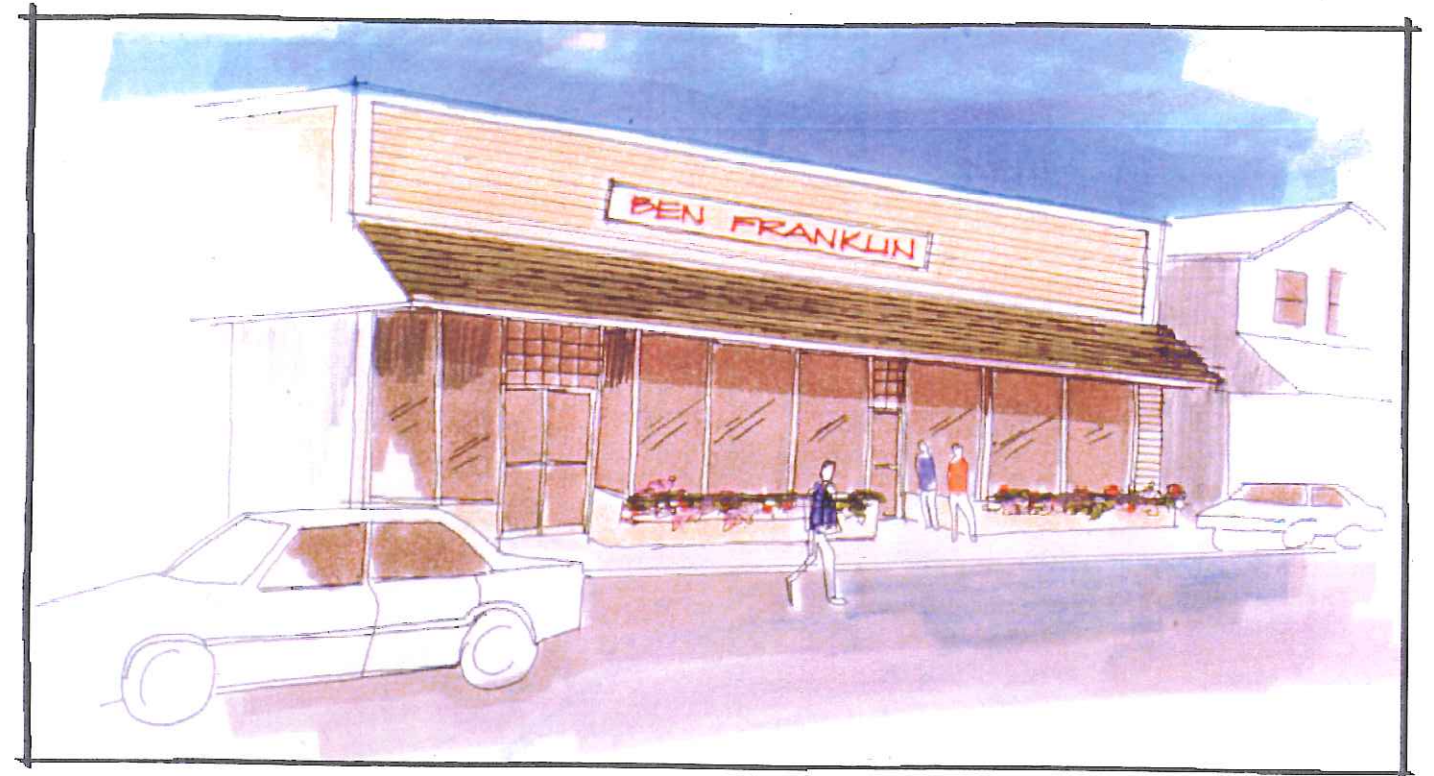
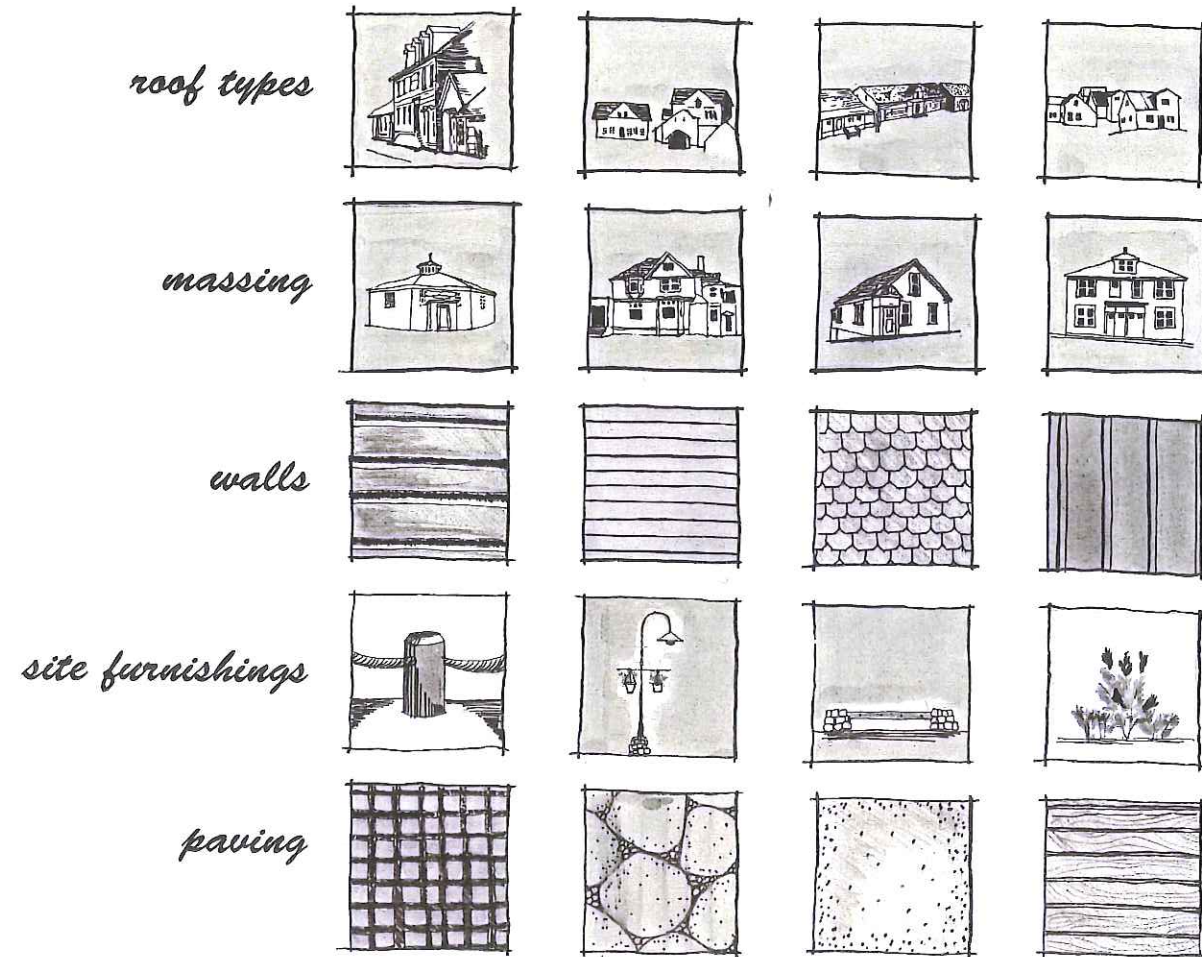
Infill buildings and redevelopment should maintain the setback next to the sidewalk established by the older buildings. Parking lots should be in the rear of buildings and shared with other buildings.

Continue the practice of using small well designed signs and hanging flower baskets.

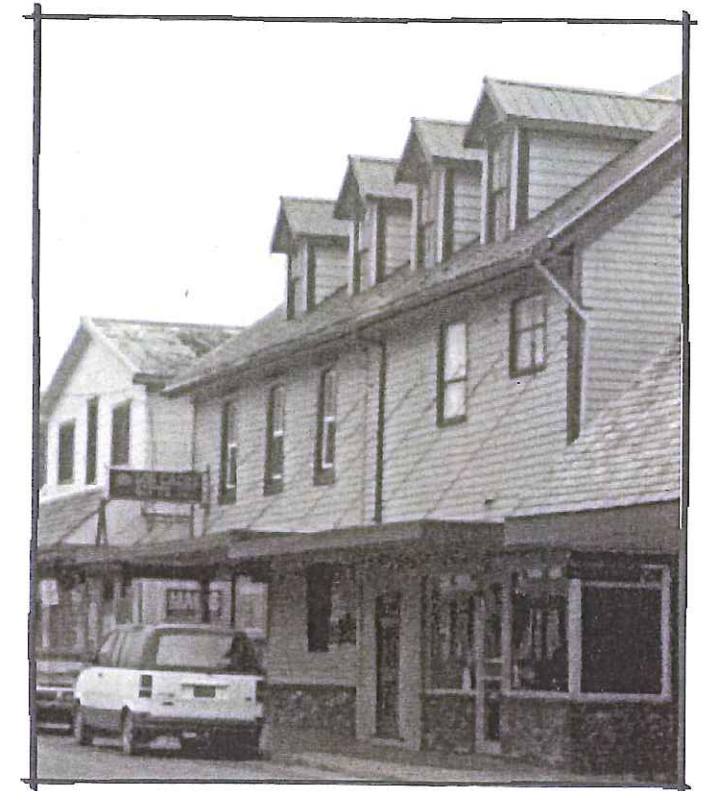
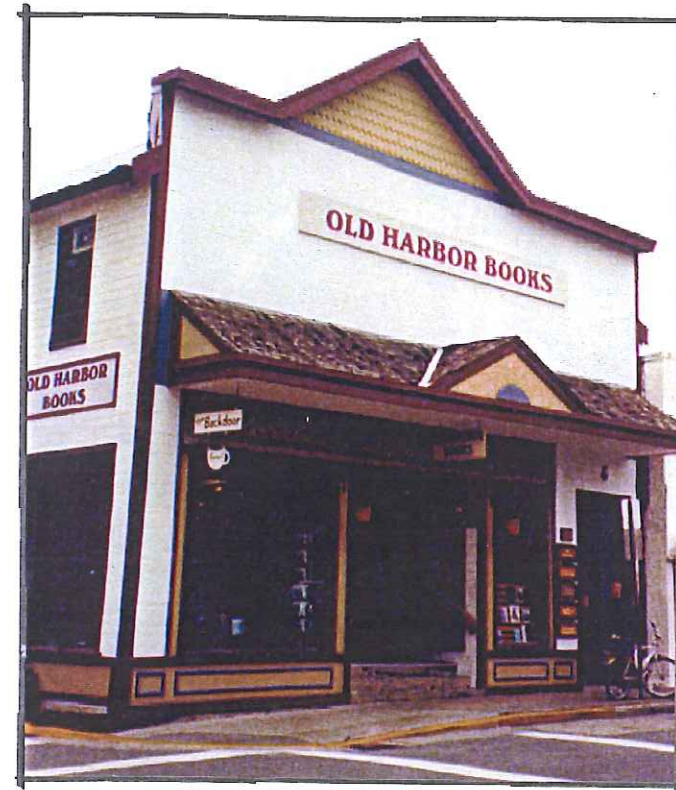
Maintain the established 2-3 story height, small scale, roof shape and window patterns when remodeling or building as illustrated.

Continue the pattern of commercial use at street level with residential space on upper stories.

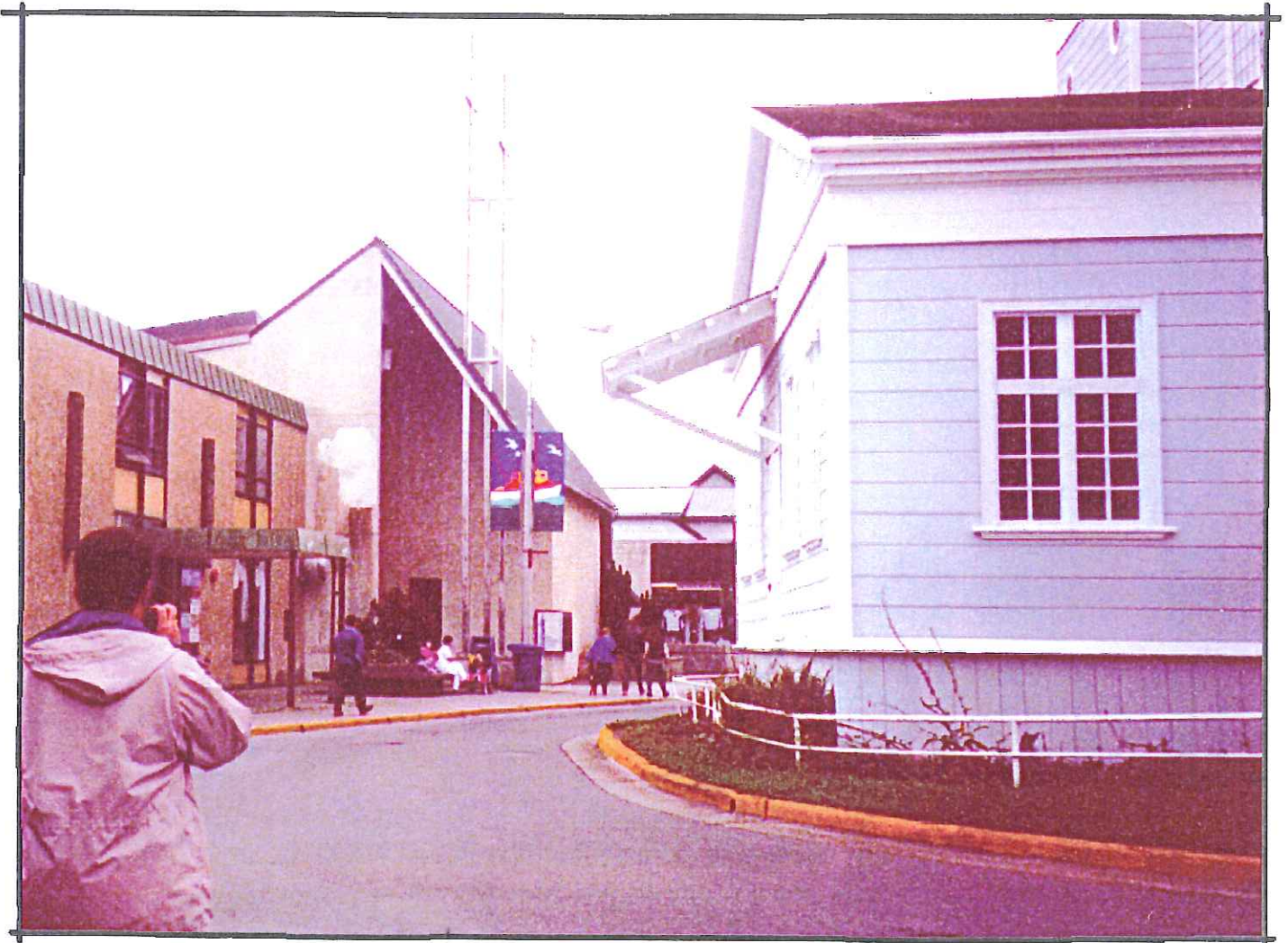
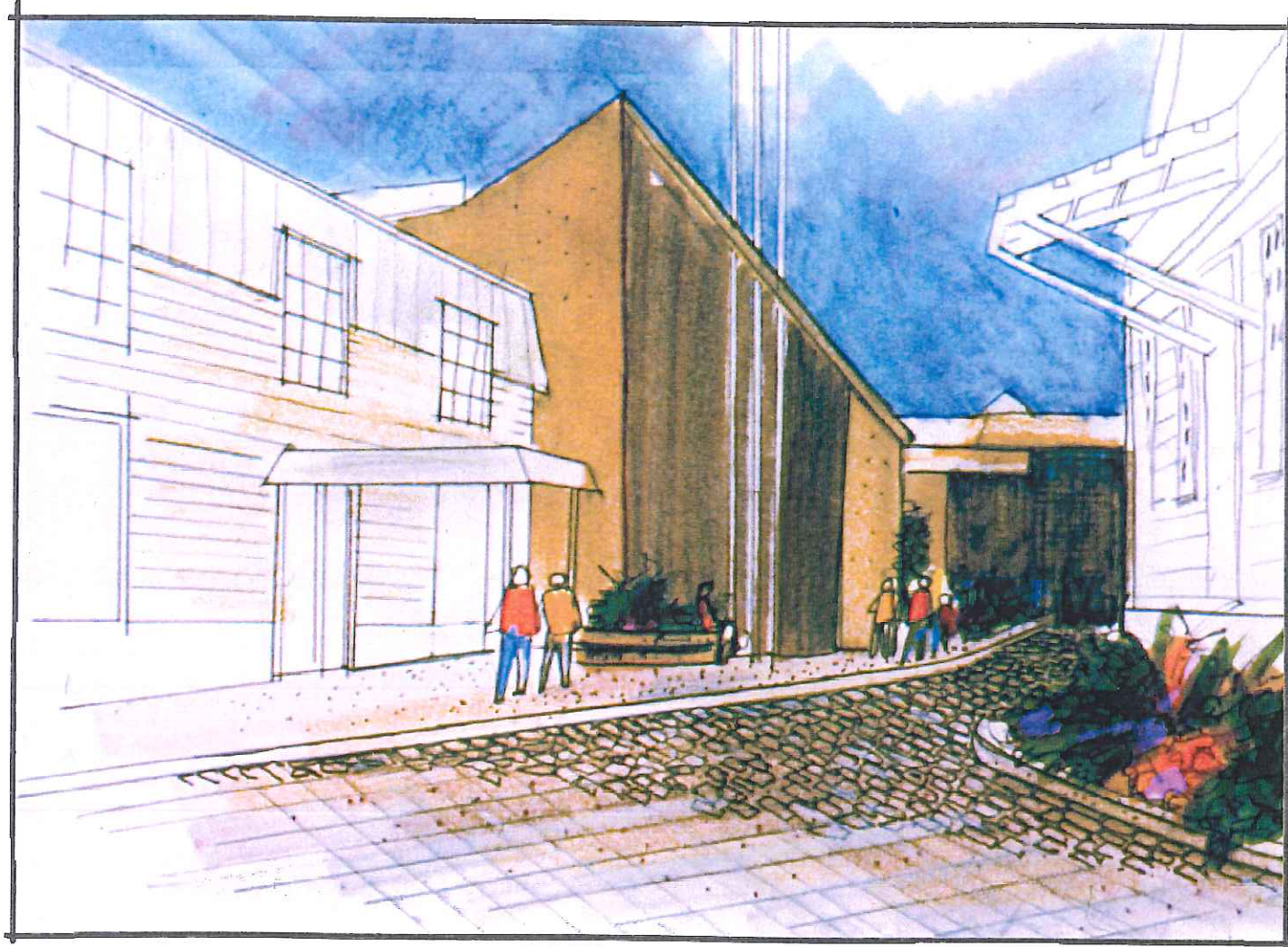
Use compatible building materials such as wood siding, metal or shingle roofs, and non-reflective glass.



This drawing shows how an existing building facade could be modified to complement the historic character of Lincoln Street.



The scale, building materials, and roofline of these existing buildings are elements that define the historic character in the Lincoln Street district.



These before and after images illustrate how existing building facades can be made to fit more with the historic character through the use of compatible building materials such as wood siding, metal or shingle roofs, and non-reflective glass.

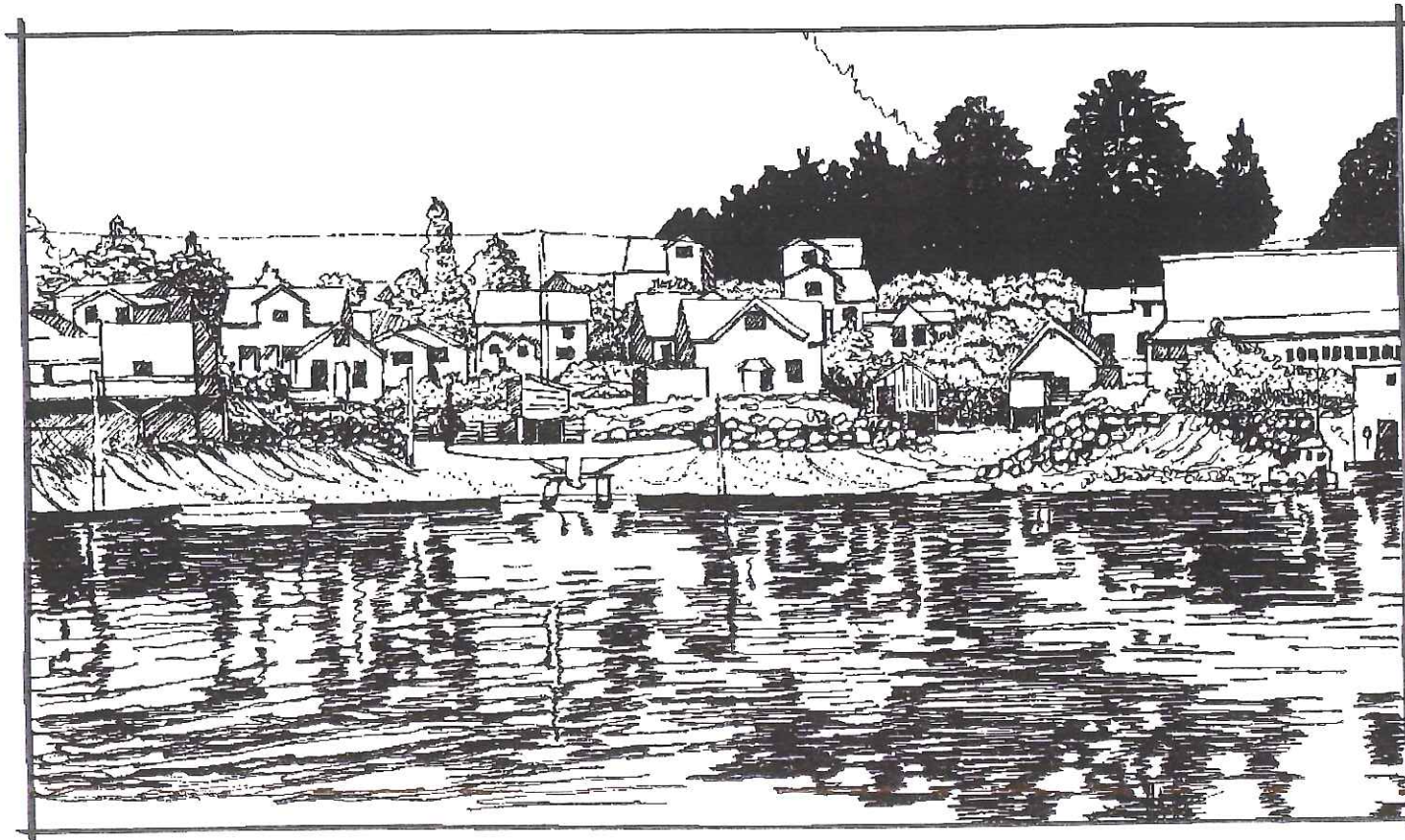
The Katlian Street District

ANALYSIS

This district is characterized by the industrial waterfront, with its own style of buildings and materials reflecting the commercial and residential land uses. The street is narrow with buildings generally lined up along the sidewalk. There is considerable traffic and sidewalks are narrow. Industrial equipment is evident and there is a feeling of a real working district, rather than a tourist district.

GOALS

To deal with visitor safety and allow incremental growth without altering the rich industrial and residential character of this district.



DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of its special character and residential use, few changes are recommended for this district. It is important for the City to preserve and protect its character through zoning ordinances and the application of design guidelines.

The City of Sitka could meet the goals for the Katlian District by taking the following actions:

- Construct a gateway which reflects the sense of the district.
- Wherever possible, widen the sidewalks to 6 feet.
- Install pedestrian lighting that reflects the sense of the district.

- Maintain the narrow width of Katlian Street if consistent with safety.
- Provide a public signage system with orientation, interpretation and direction.
- Provide a continuous sidewalk and a waterfront walkway whenever possible.

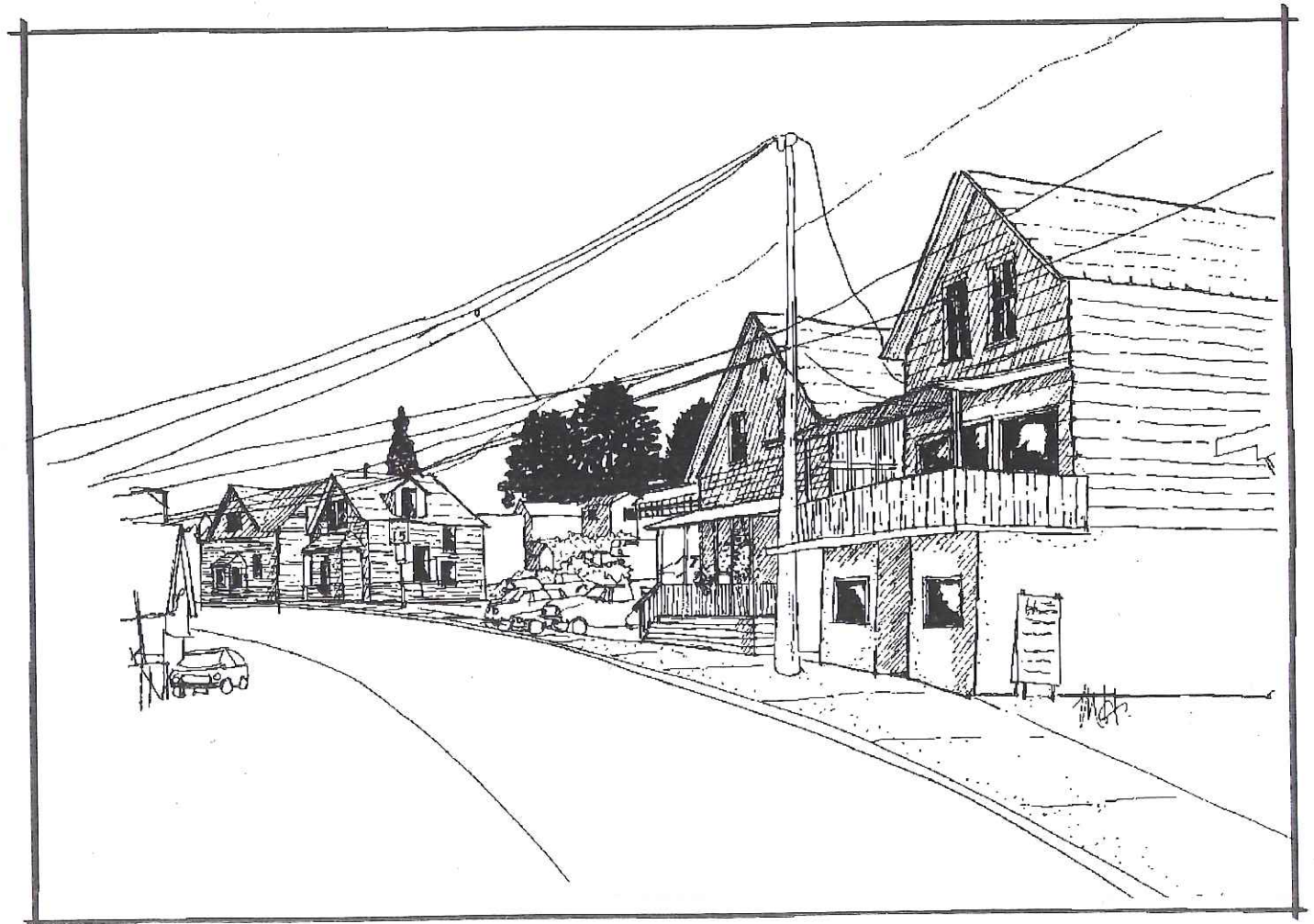
GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT IN THE KATLIAN STREET DISTRICT

For new construction or remodeling, maintain the established building character with similar place-

ment on the lot, maintaining 2-3 story height, a similar scale, roof style and materials.

Use building materials compatible with the district, such as metal and rough wood on the harbor side, and wood siding and metal or shingle roofs on the inland side.

Provide parking to the side or rear of buildings and in consolidated parking lots.



The Shoreline District

This area encompasses the coastal edge from Sitka National Historical Park to the new lightering located at the end of Harbor Drive under O'Connell Bridge.

ANALYSIS

The shoreline is characterized by a variety of land uses and styles, but is predominated by an open feeling with dramatic views. Some views are impacted by massive parking lots. Pedestrian connections to Lincoln Street are difficult. There is little sense of arrival when entering Sitka from O'Connell Bridge along Harbor Drive.

Arrival by lighter can be confusing for tourists because of lack of orientation and information about their choices of destination.

GOALS

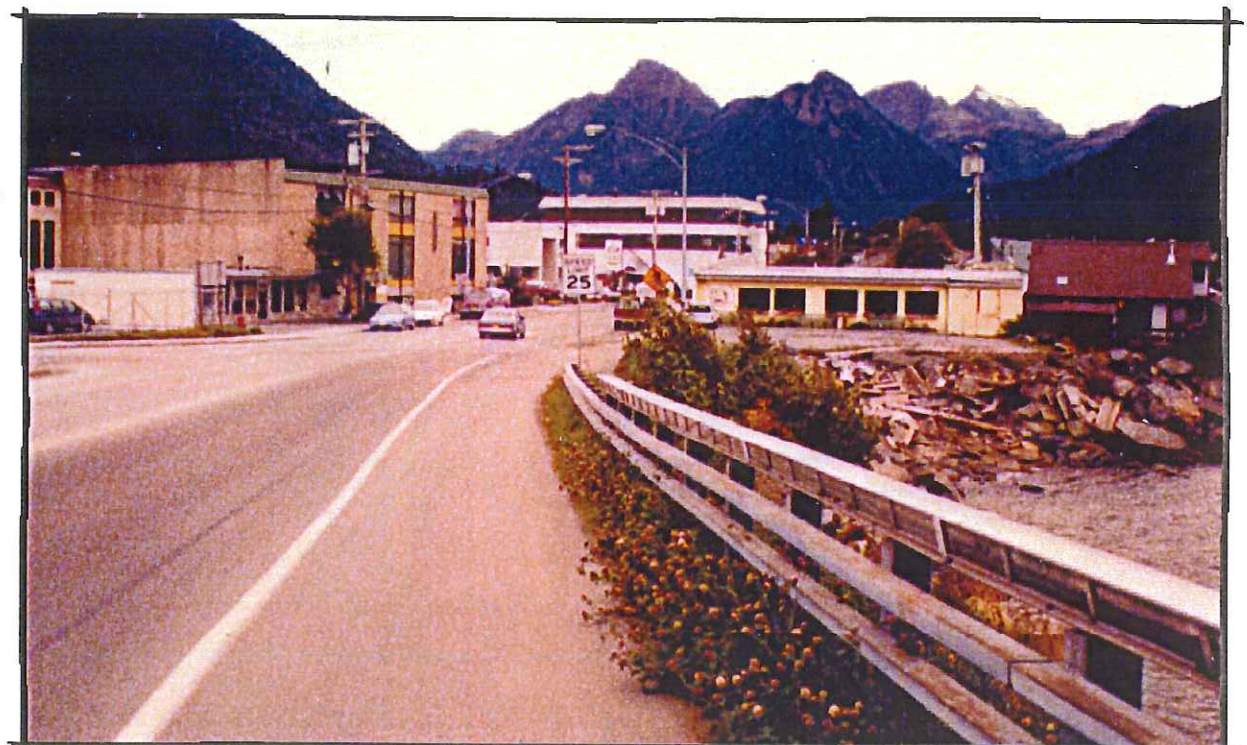
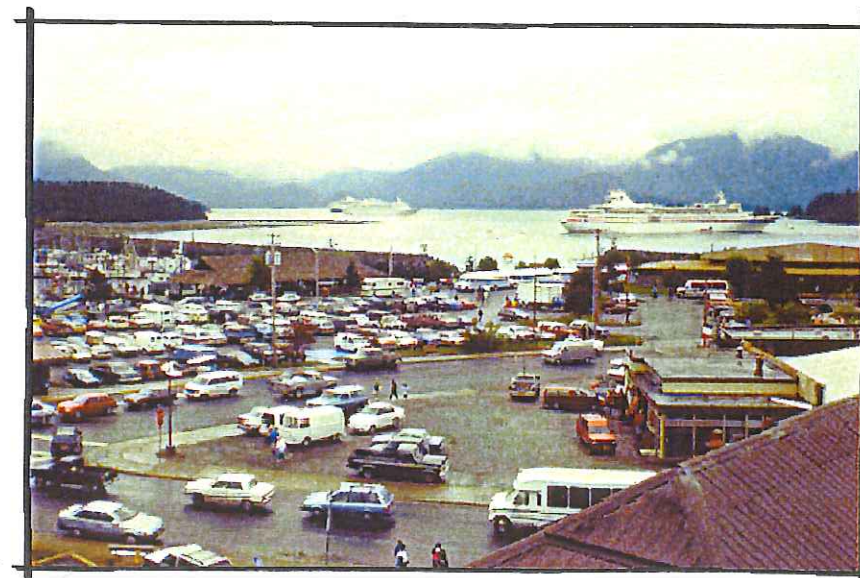
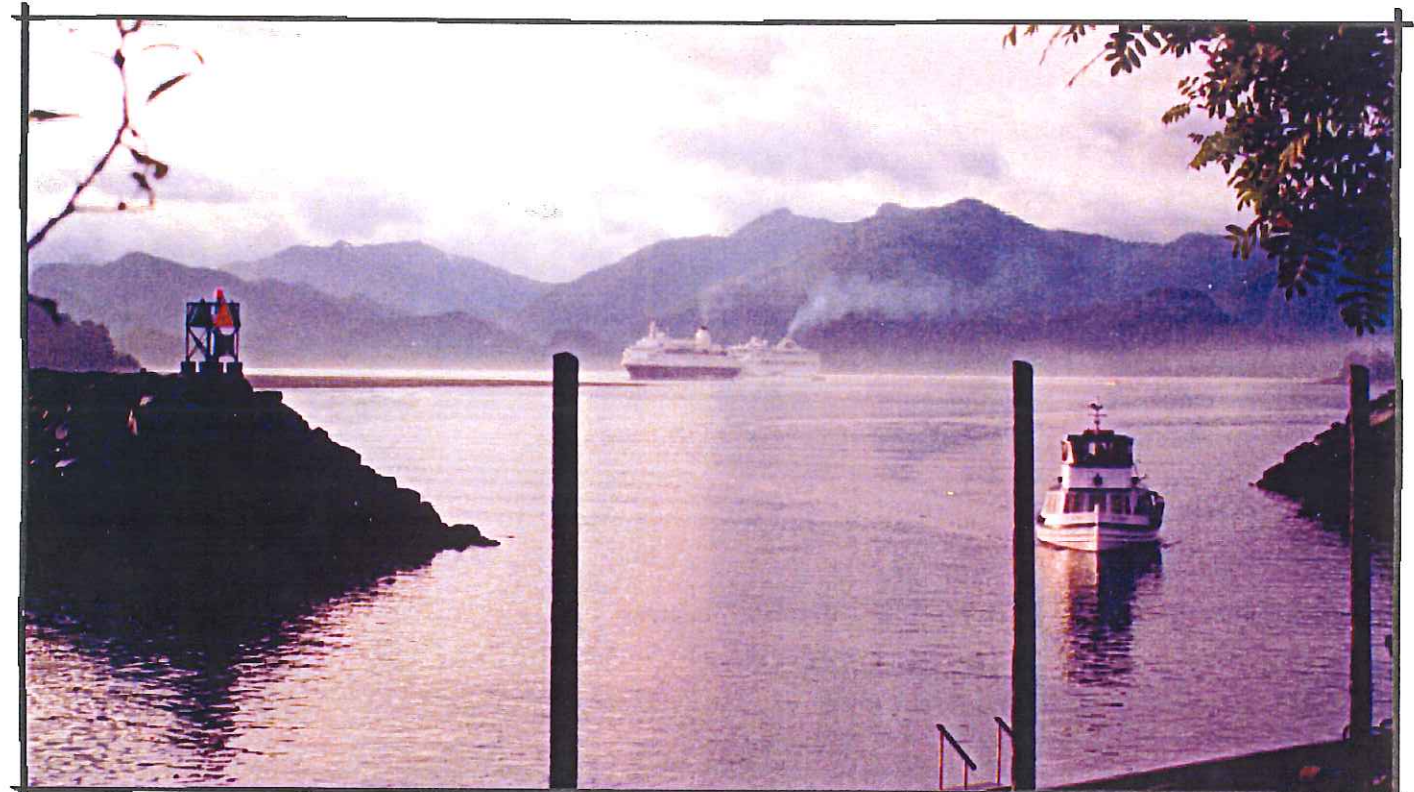
Create a setting where the central business district, the new lightering facility, the existing lightering facility, and pedestrian and vehicular circulation work together to enhance visitor experience and the economic development of the community while minimizing disruption for residents.

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Sitka could meet the goals for the Shoreline District by taking the following actions:

- Landscaping along Harbor Drive which is a main entry to Sitka.
- Providing a coherent public signage system, providing orientation, interpretation and direction.

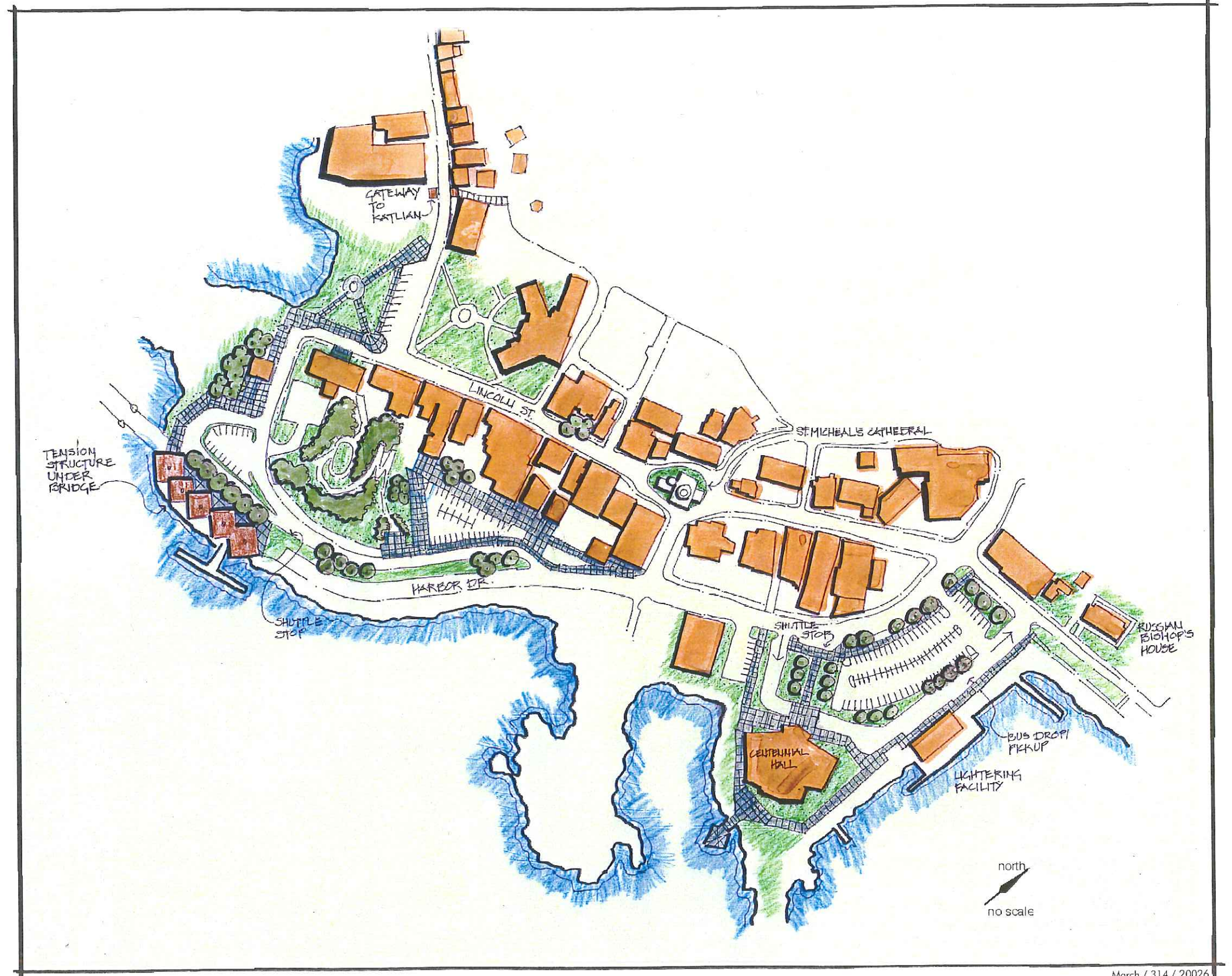
- Installing pedestrian-scale lighting to enliven and unify the district.
- Providing a continuous open space link and boardwalk trail from Centennial Hall to Sitka National Park, including landscaping and interpretive signs and kiosks; and using characteristic materials such as heavy wood timbers, rock walls and sign bases, and railings consisting of pilings and rope.
- Preserving the stunning harbor and island views by requiring developers to carefully place buildings and parking lots.
- Expanding the open space and trail system to connect all points of interest and major shuttle stops.
- Making transportation improvements including providing a shuttle system for visitors and residents alike.
- Using and enhancing Centennial Hall as the primary information and orientation location as well as the hub for transportation.

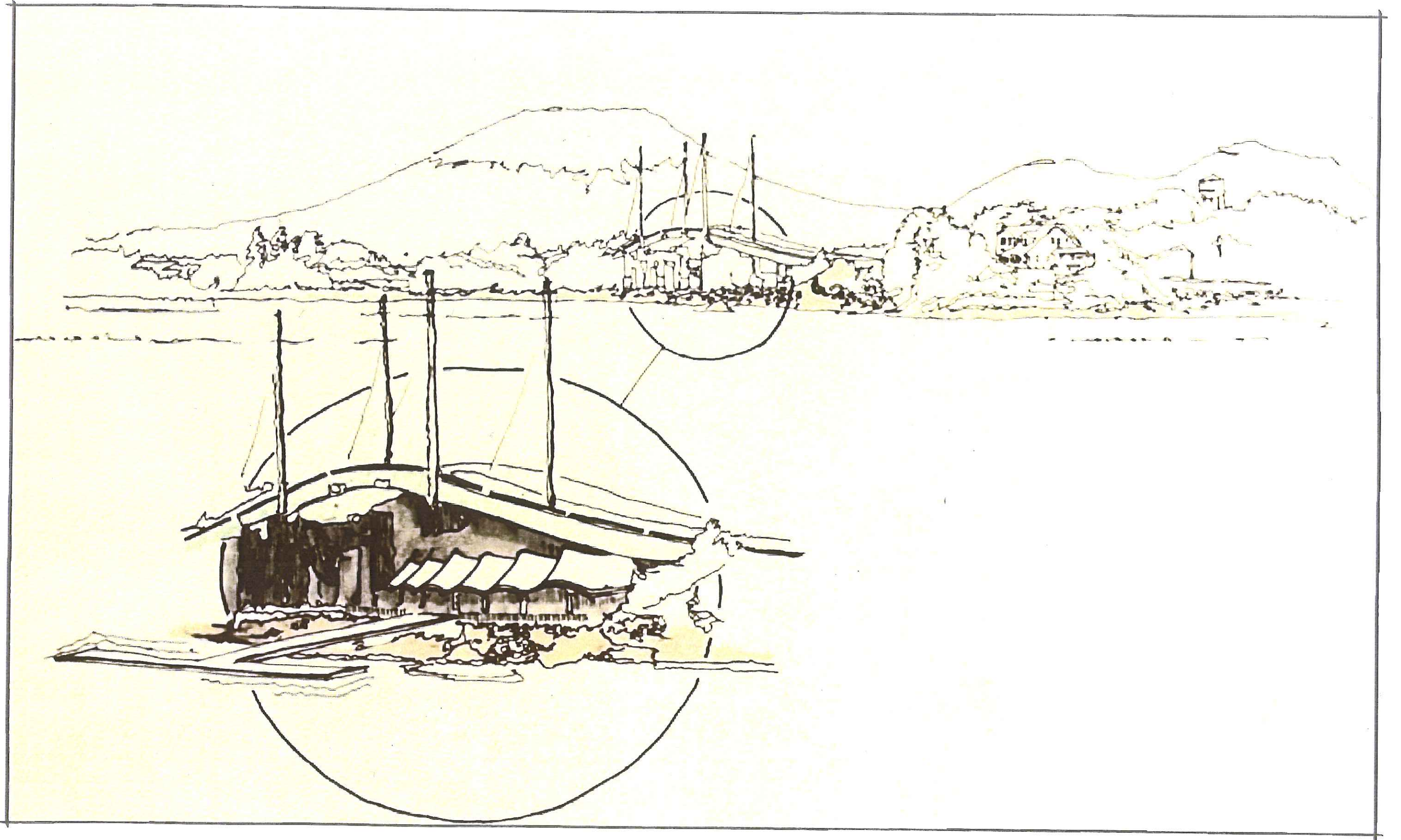


Option A

The following are recommendations for actions that could be accomplished in a short time frame. Options B and C could be later phases of this option.

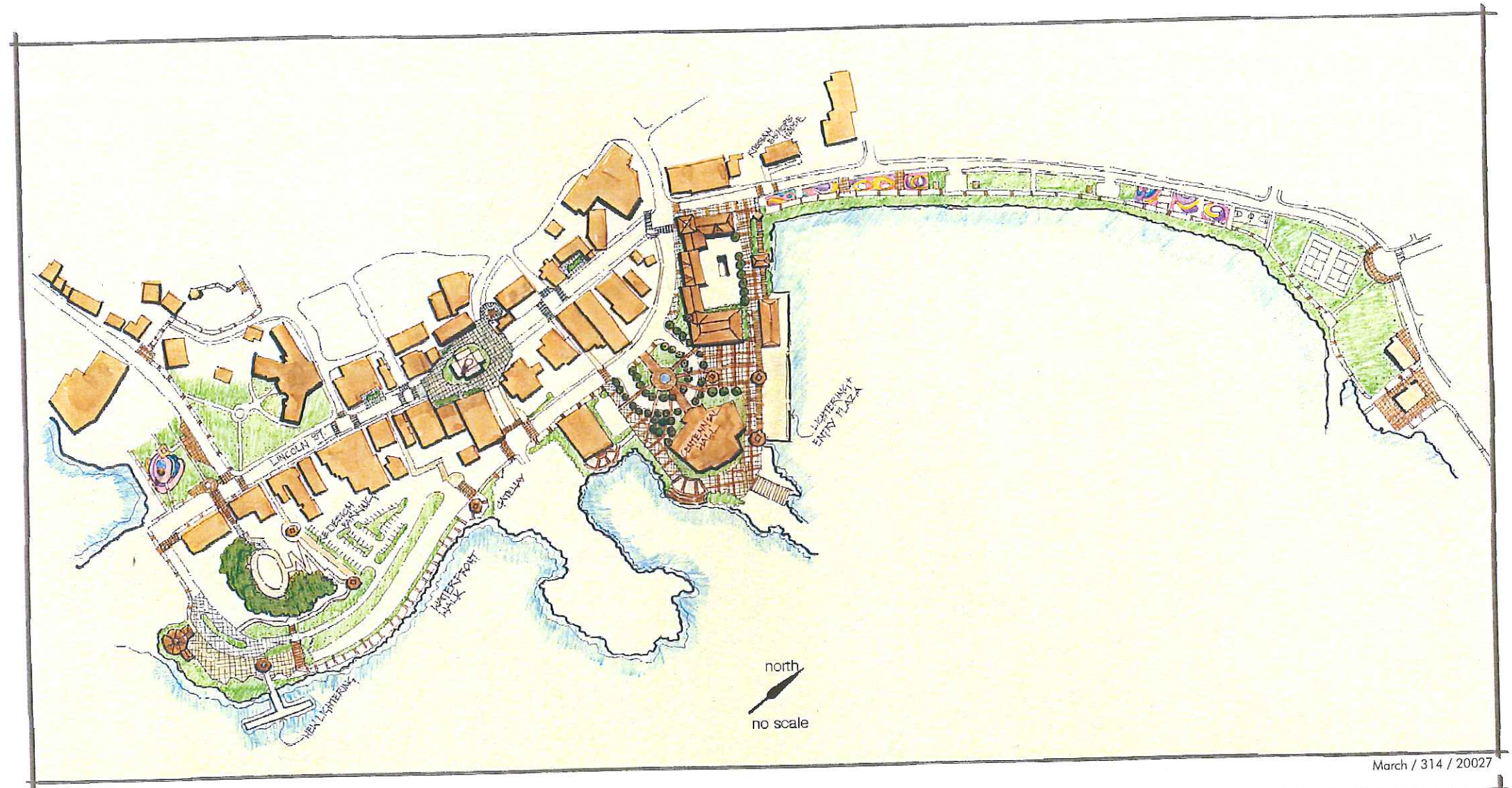
- The Centennial Hall parking area is reconfigured to improve efficiency and landscaped to make it visually more appealing.
- The bus loop drive in front of Centennial Hall provides for tour drop-off and pick-up points at the pavilion.
- Staging capacity for at least 14 buses.
- Pedestrians are kept to the perimeter of the site with parking and bus traffic on the inside thereby minimizing conflicts.
- Centennial Hall remains the primary information/orientation and transportation hub.
- The existing pavilion continues to function as a multi-purpose structure, serving both the community and visitors.
- Truck access to pavilion is maintained.
- The new lightering features a tent like structure designed to provide a pedestrian scale gateway to welcome arriving visitors and to shelter them while waiting for the tour buses.
- The street adjacent to the lightering remains one-way east bound.
- The public parking area adjacent to Harbor Drive is reconfigured creating additional parking capacity and landscaped to improve its appearance and provide visual screening. A pedestrian linkage from Lincoln Street ties the central business district to the lot and provides access to the waterfront.
- Pedestrian walkways at the west end of the lightering lead visitors to Lincoln Street and the redeveloped Totem Square. A new gateway treatment acts as the threshold to Katlian Street.



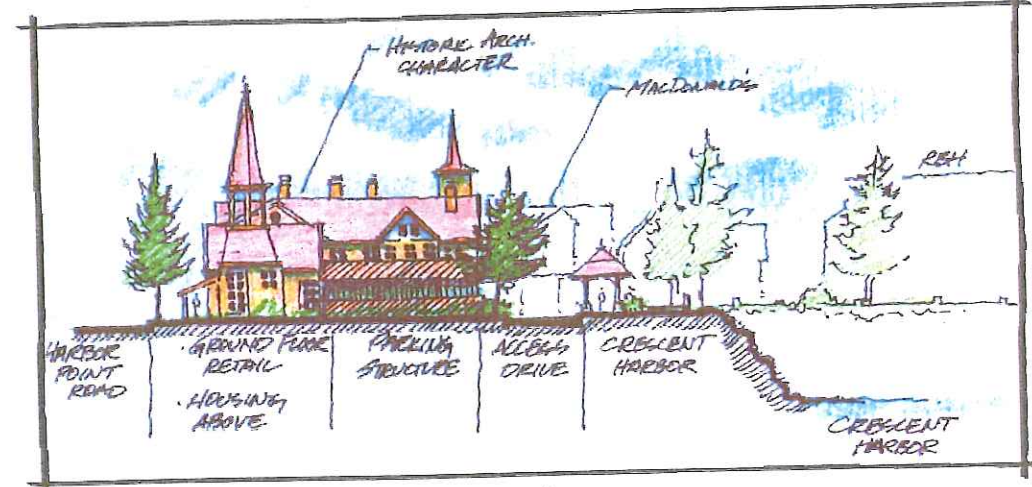


Option B

- The Centennial Hall parking area is redeveloped in to a retail/residential village complex with retail shops at street level and housing above. An underground parking garage in the center of the complex serves both the retail and residential users.
- Well defined pedestrian walkways connect to large plazas around the existing pavilion and Centennial Hall, enhancing the waterfront experience and making the entire site pedestrian oriented.
- Crescent Harbor Park is redeveloped to feature totem gardens. Stories rich in culture will be told through the design of unique flower beds and interpretive signage.
- The existing lightering facility remains and is linked to Centennial Hall by pedestrian plazas. Centennial Hall will continue as the primary visitor orientation/ information and transportation hub.
- Truck access to pavilion is maintained.
- A new bus loop is developed in front of Centennial Hall and serves as a drop-off and pick-up stop on the tour route. Staging capacity for at least eight buses.
- The new lightering at the west end of Harbor Drive also serves as a bus pick-up and drop-off stop for visitors arriving at these docks. Large plazas and informational kiosks direct visitors into town or along a scenic shoreline walkway running the full extent along Crescent Harbor.
- The one-way east bound street adjacent to Harbor Drive minimizes the conflicts between visitors and local traffic and improves the flow of bus traffic.



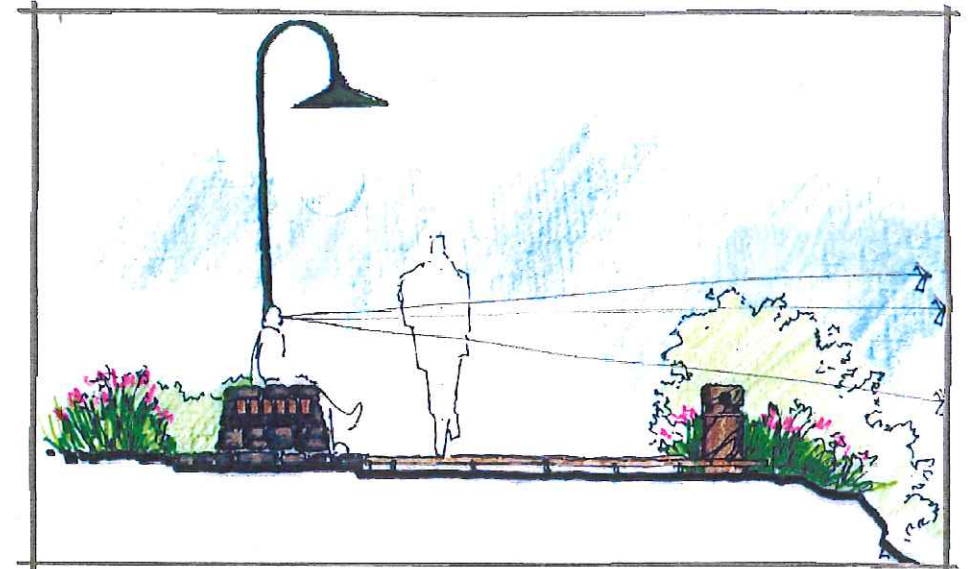
March / 314 / 20027





Cross-section through the pedestrian walkway showing how plantings can be used to either screen undesirable view or open up and enhance desirable views.

This sketch shows a new pedestrian walkway passing through the new Totem Gardens connecting the Centennial Hall Complex with Sitka National Historical Park.



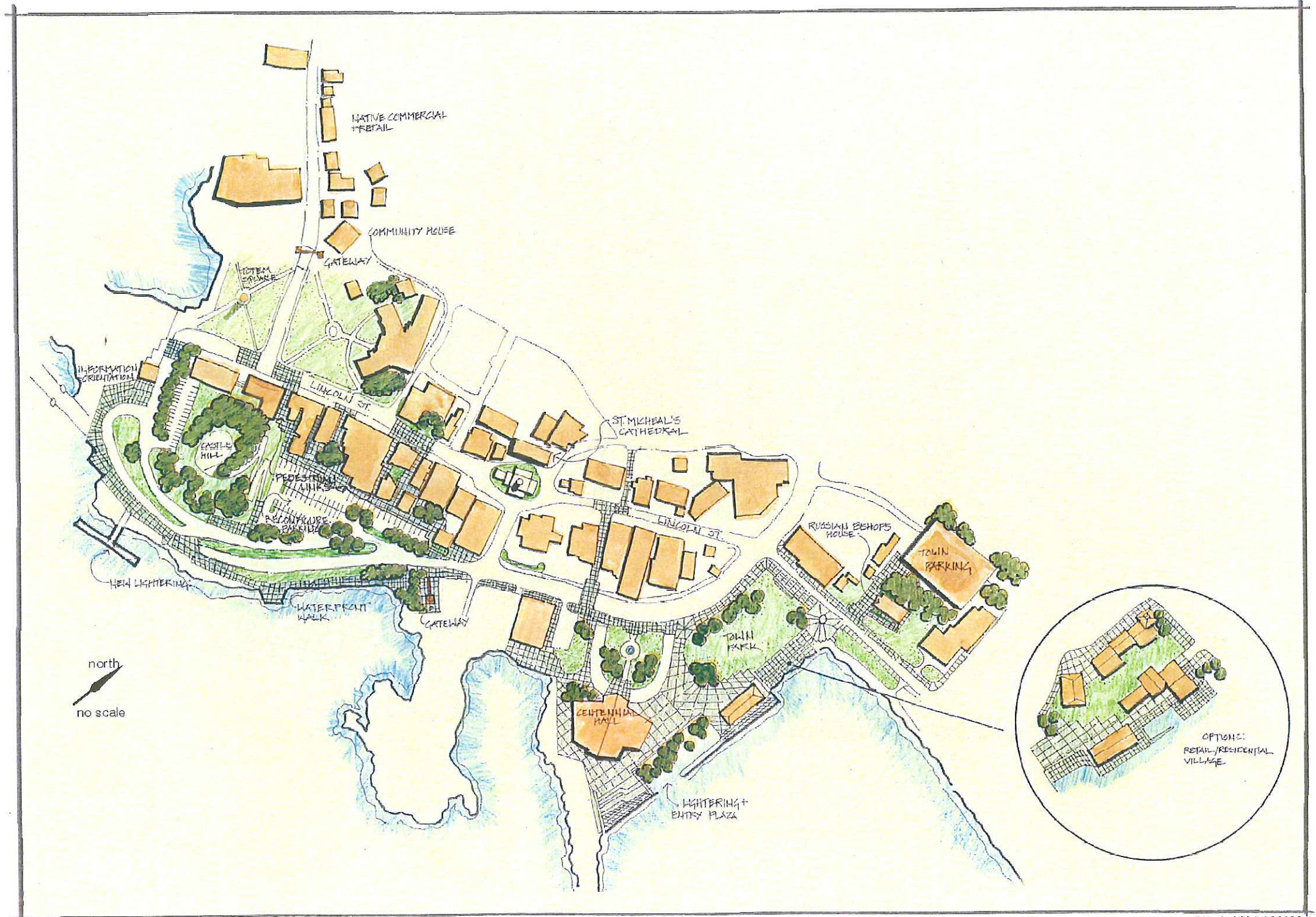
Option C

- The entire site becomes a pedestrian-oriented space with plazas and lawn areas that combine with the lightering dock and Centennial Hall to create an exciting visitor arrival with dramatic views of the waterfront, the city and the mountains beyond.
- Parking could be placed either in a parking structure below the open space park or removed and relocated into a new parking structure located across the street and behind the Russian Bishop's House.
- New walkways lead from the parking structure to Lake and Lincoln Streets.
- The park, lightering dock, Centennial Hall and library become unified by large plazas, landscaping and open space. The entire area takes on a civic center feeling and serves as a gathering point for local residents, an arrival and departure area for visitors and a public space where activities and culture can be enjoyed.
- Truck access to pavilion is maintained.
- The new west end lightering is developed with large plazas that lead visitors to a new welcoming center (remodeled house) with information and orientation displays and brochures.
- From the new lightering facility a walkway leads pedestrians along the shoreline toward Centennial Hall and culminates at a gateway plaza. The walkway provides an opportunity for both visitors and the local residents to experience waterfront views and scenery in a pedestrian environment.
- The public parking behind the retail shops adjacent to Castle Hill is reconfigured to provide more parking. New landscaping, entry plazas and pedestrian corridors connect Lincoln Street to the south side of the retail shops.

- Tour bus passenger pickup and drop off is in front of the Centennial Hall building which continues to act as the primary information/ orientation and activities hub. Staging for at least eight buses.

- The new lightering facility is developed with wide walkways, informational signs and landscaping to direct visitors to the orientation center north of the docks.

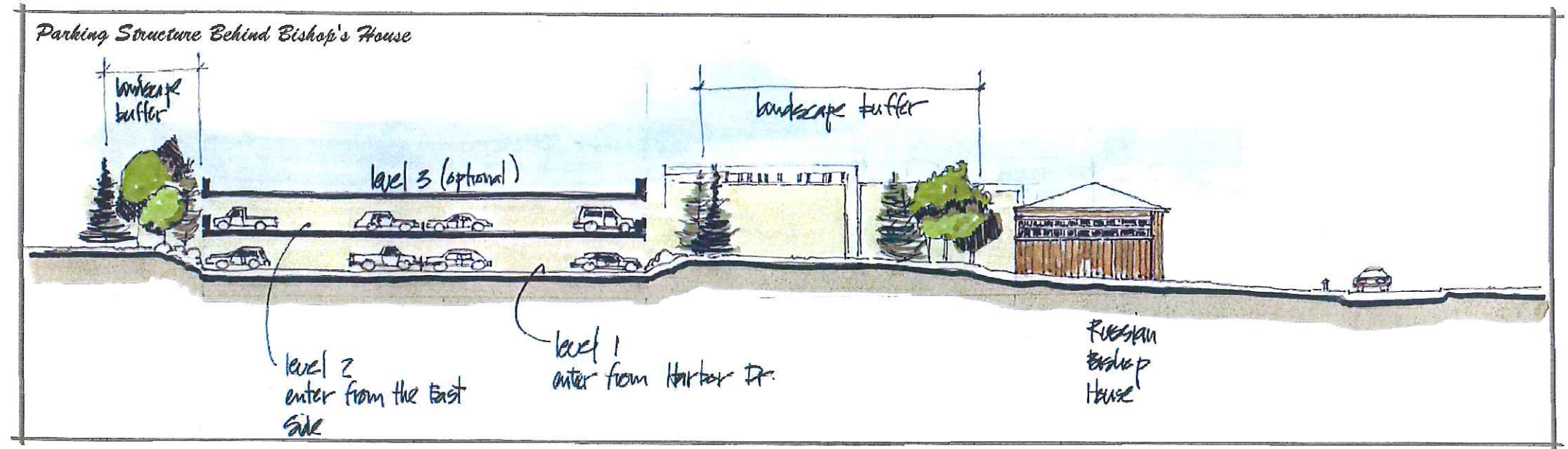
- Totem Square Park and Katlian Street are redeveloped to generate more visitor traffic and retail development. The park is redesigned to better highlight cultural history. A new gateway is established near the Community House on Katlian Street to emphasize the district.



Another idea:

The Centennial Hall site is redeveloped into a residential/retail village with the shops at street level and apartments above. The development is architecturally scaled to typify the early Sitka village. (This concept could work elsewhere along the shoreline if this site is deemed to be inappropriate).

This cross-section shows the new parking structure located behind the Russian Bishop's House. New walkways will lead from this structure to Lake and Lincoln streets making the connections to downtown and the town park convenient and attractive.





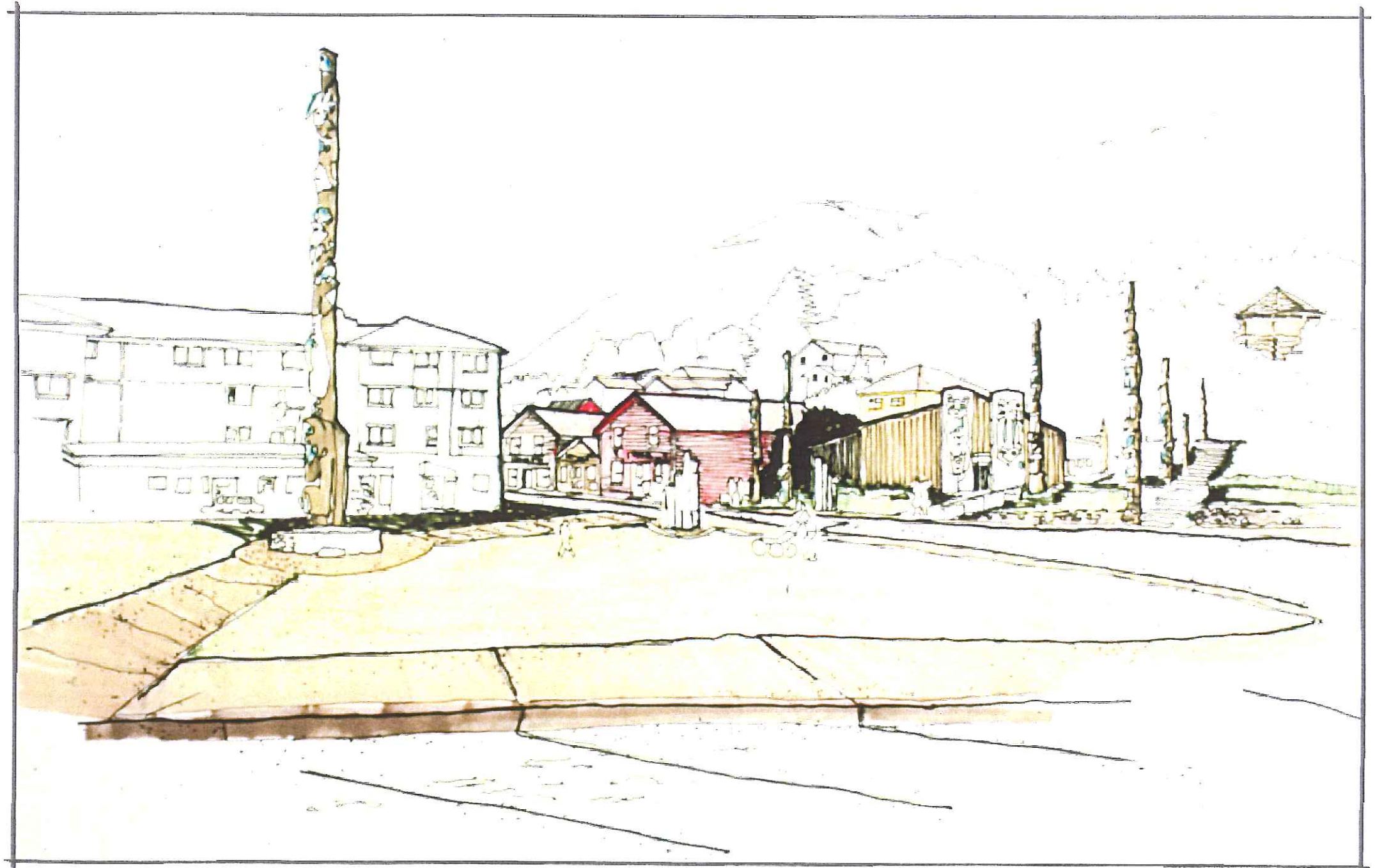
The pedestrian walkway connecting Centennial Hall complex with Sitka National Historical Park will also provide access to the proposed aquarium facility opposite Sheldon Jackson College.



GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT IN THE SHORELINE DISTRICT

Developers, builders and remodelers should strive to maintain the character of the district by using the following guidelines:

- Minimize the visual impact of parking by combining and reorganizing parking lots, placing parking at the side or rear of buildings, or providing underground parking.
- Continue the use of wood or stone when building or remodeling.
- Maintain view corridors from designated places to the harbor by careful building placement and limiting height to 3 stories.
- Provide landscaping for existing and new parking lots.
- Cluster development in groups of small-scale buildings with open space to provide visual access to the water and to complement the character of Sitka.
- Provide landscaped access to Lincoln street, using alleys or side streets.



Important Choices for Sitka's Future

In closing, it is important to reflect on what this document has not addressed. The focus of this effort was intentionally limited – to study the issues of physical design and organization related to visitor use and local concerns. Therefore, the larger driving issues such as economics and desired futures have not been addressed. However, this is not meant to dismiss the importance of the larger issues before the community.

Sitka is at a turning point. There is a need for Sitkans to consider as a whole, who will be in charge of the destiny of their community?

Sitka can retain its unique character or become just like everyplace. Although each individual change may seem minor, the cumulative affect of many small changes over a long period of time can be a significant loss of the original community fabric. Will residents be mindful of this as the town changes? Will there be an overall vision to guide community growth and change so that the special character does not get diluted by a series of incremental actions?

Final recommendations that are beyond the scope of this effort but the team feels should be addressed in the near future include:

- Coordinate with the cruise ship industry to try to have ships spend more time in Sitka and to spread arrival times more evenly throughout the week.
- Consider targeting other tourism markets and activities that would enable visitors to spend a longer time in Sitka and provide revenue to other sectors.
- Continue to seek ways for the tourism industry to pay for visitor-related facilities such as restrooms and informational signs.
- Monitor and evaluate the impacts of cruise ship tourism on the character and quality of life in Sitka and formulate strategies to lessen the impacts.
- Recognize that a key aspect of maintaining Sitka's vibrancy is keeping functions for the residents downtown, such as the bowling alley and movie theater. Seek creative ways to keep them open.

Part II: The Range of Planning Alternatives

Background

The National Park Service and the City of Sitka initiated cooperative planning because they are both affected by the growing tourism industry in south-east Alaska. Both entities share common problems and opportunities associated with tourism and visitor use, and are currently conducting long-range planning efforts for future management of their respective functions. Both parties agree that efficiencies can be obtained by working cooperatively to address common issues.

Sitka National Historical Park is preparing a General Management Plan to establish the future direction for the Park over the next 10 to 15 years. The plan is being developed in a coordinated effort with the community of Sitka as a pilot project for the National Park Service's Gateway Community Planning Initiative. The park and community have agreed to work jointly on planning issues related to transportation, interpretation, land use, orientation, and visitor experience. During a meeting on Tuesday, November 24, 1992 the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka (City and Borough) gave their approval for Sitka to be nominated as a pilot project for which the National Park Service would provide technical assistance in visitor use management. On March 30, 1994 Sitka National Historical Park was notified of its selection as a pilot park that would work cooperatively with the community surrounding the Park on planning for land use, visitor facilities, alternative transportation, community services, and similar issues.

Two workshops with community representatives occurred in 1995. The first workshop was held on June 13, 1995, at the Shee Atika Hotel, and the second workshop was held on September 29, 1995, at the same site. Facilitated by the National Park Service, both workshops were attended by a variety of interests including the City and Borough of Sitka, the U.S. Forest Service, the Alaska State Parks, the University of Alaska Southeast, Sheldon

Jackson College, Sheldon Jackson Museum, the Raptor Rehabilitation Center, the Sitka Sentinel, the Sitka Police Department, the Alaska Native Brotherhood, the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, and the Sitka Convention and Visitor's Bureau. The workshops identified important attributes that the community felt should be preserved, problems requiring attention, and important places where visitors and residents partake in a variety of recreational, leisure, and tourism activities.

During the two 1995 workshops, the community of Sitka identified visitor distribution, particularly the overcrowding of facilities and areas at certain times of the day during the peak visitation season (mid-May to mid-September), as a primary issue to be addressed as part of the Gateway Planning Initiative. As partners in the planning process, the City and Borough of Sitka, local business interests, and the U.S. Forest Service contributed funds for a Visitor Utilization Study, that was prepared by Operations Research Consulting Associates.

In February, 1996 the City and Borough of Sitka Assembly established the comprehensive Plan Implementation Team (ComIT), to review, revise, and offer an implementation strategy for Sitka's Comprehensive Plan. This group was also designated as the principal point of contact between the National Park Service and the community for the gateway planning effort. The range of alternatives is the result of close cooperation and partnering with ComIT, public and private entities, and local citizens.

The Memorandum of Understanding

A Memorandum of Understanding – Scope of Services for Gateway Planning Assistance Between the National Park Service and the City and Borough of Sitka was signed in 1996. It outlines the Gateway planning commitments that the National Park Service and the City and Borough of Sitka made. Key points are summarized below:

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The National Park Service, in cooperation with the City and Borough of Sitka, will assist with planning for future tourism management in the following manner:

- Preparing and conducting public meetings and focused workshops with members of the community on issues related to tourism and its associated resource planning considerations.
- Administering the Visitor Utilization Study contract with the consultant, Al Shacklett of Operations Research Consulting Associates. This includes oversight of the study, contract administration, summary document publication, and meetings and presentations to the City and Borough, ComIT, the Assembly, and the public related to the study. The National Park Service will work closely with the City and Borough to determine assumptions for alternatives modeling, including such variables as the proposed lightening facility and transportation systems.
- Developing a range of alternatives for visitor use management to be considered on a city-wide scale. This includes leading focused workshops on visitor use management and some assistance with graphics in depicting the alternatives for presentation to the various groups.

The City and Borough of Sitka is responsible for:

- Coordinating the meetings and workshops with the Assembly, ComIT, and other interest groups to be included in the visitor use management planning efforts.
- Participating in the development of a range of alternatives to be considered, including the preferred alternative. The City and Borough will also distribute alternative summaries to ComIT and others and be responsible for reaching consensus and recommending a preferred alternative, once the City and Borough has evaluated the options and presented them to the Assembly.
- Ensuring that the draft joint Gateway planning document provided by the National Park Service is consistent with the existing text and graphics of the Comprehensive Plan. This narrowly focused document could be incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan or stand alone as a planning document.
- Printing and disseminating the draft joint Gateway planning document.

SCHEDULE AND SUMMARY OF MILESTONES

The current schedule for completion of Sitka National Historical Park's General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement is December 1997. The National Park Service will work with the City and Borough to coordinate meeting schedules and obtain closure on both planning efforts simultaneously, or as closely in conjunction with one another as possible. If, in the event that the City and Borough's schedule or the National Park Service schedule changes drastically from the overall milestones and project completion dates identified, the

Memorandum of Understanding will be reevaluated by both signatories and can be revised, continued, or terminated as appropriate.

SUMMARY OF THE 1995 GATEWAY PLANNING WORKSHOPS

Two workshops held in 1995 resulted in a compilation of General Opportunities and Constraints for residents and visitors. These findings have direct application to both the Park and the community, and were considered in the preparation of the four change alternatives. There are numerous opportunities for visitor orientation and information, design continuity/character, visitor safety, lightening facilities, the waterfront, Lincoln Street corridor, community recreation, visitor attraction, Sheldon Jackson College, the Sitka Youth Center and schools as well as the Park's two units: the Russian Bishop's House and the Fort Site Unit. Workshop participants viewed costs and conflicting interests between the private and public sectors, and were concerned with additional regulations and controls.

March 14, 1996

National Park Service presentations to ComIT addressed the Visitor Utilization Study, planning process, and provided a recommended course of action to work with ComIT.

May 1996 Workshop Summary

On May 21, 1996 planners presented a matrix featuring the range of alternatives, describing varying levels of change that could be considered as a basis for further improvements in Sitka. The alternatives ranged from Basic (No Change or status quo), Limited Change, Moderate Change, and Maximum Change. The alternatives provided a range of quantitative as well as qualitative rec-

ommendations and addressed the topics of: Information and Orientation; Orientation and Education; Transportation; Cultural Resources Management; Natural Resources Management; and Recreation. Where possible, the comments and ideas received at the workshop have been incorporated.

August 25-30th, 1996 Design Workshop

Participants at the August, 1996 Design Workshop used the range of alternatives as the fundamental direction for the week-long effort. The participation focused on circulation, information and orientation, and design recommendations. Recommendations from the design workshop were combined with this document and presented to ComIT for review and revision. Later, as per the Memorandum of Understanding, the package will be submitted to the City and Borough Assembly jointly by ComIT and the National Park Service for its consideration and use.

November 19, 1996

Joint National Park Service/ComIT workshop to revise draft alternatives package.

Late Winter/Early Spring, 1997 (specific date to be announced)

Joint ComIT/National Park Service presentation to the Assembly.

Alternatives

Information and Orientation

Visitor Experience Goals

Visitor experience goals guided development of the alternatives in this section. The goals briefly portray a total range of visitor experience prior to arrival, the actual visit to Sitka, and what visitors in the ideal take with them. These goals also have direct application to local residents who view Sitka as a special place with a rich quality of life:

- Visitors would have opportunities to develop an understanding and appreciation of the contributions made to Sitka's culture and history by the Tlingit, Russian, other European, and American residents of the area.
- Visitors will develop an understanding and appreciation of the area's natural resources and the relationship between the natural resources and Sitka's diverse cultural heritage.
- Before and upon arrival, visitors will have immediate and convenient access to information on a variety of activities, attractions, and touring options geared to a variety of interests, and that will ensure an enjoyable and safe visit.
- Information/orientation activities and interpretive/educational programs will establish links within the community and the region and will present a complete and coordinated picture of Sitka's rich character, resources, and heritage.
- Community-wide coordination efforts will result in better visitor distribution, reduced crowding, and increased experiences for visitors.

Information and Orientation

The 1996 Sitka Visitor Utilization Study states that 60% of cruise ship passengers and 11% of the ferry and airline visitors take a bus tour during their visit to Sitka. While others may go on different types of tours (e.g. walking or kayaking), this leaves a significant number of people who may need assistance in planning their visit. Most of the proposals described in the following alternatives address ways of meeting the needs of this group.

Alternative 1: Basic

To reach many potential visitors while they are still making vacation plans, provide information about Sitka via on-line computer network systems. In addition to marketing cruise ship, ferry, and air travel opportunities, net users will learn about sightseeing options, including self-guiding tours, available in Sitka. Text and graphics could highlight Sitka's important cultural and natural attractions, special events, and visitor services with phone numbers for making travel, lodging, and tour reservations. The success of an on-line system, however, would depend upon frequent updating to keep the information current and accurate.

Information programs and literature about Sitka will continue to be provided on board the cruise ships and ferries. In addition to the package tours offered by the cruise ship companies, additional information will be available to passengers not opting for a package tour. Implied in each of the alternatives is the recognition that information must be effectively presented and conveyed to non-English speaking visitors. Also, information will be effectively presented and conveyed to special populations such as the visually or hearing impaired.

Upon arrival, signs direct people to visitor facilities and major points of interest. Since many visitors are on strict time schedules, distances on the signs will be denoted in miles/kilometers and walking time.

Alternative 2: Limited Change

A key feature of this alternative is the organization and consolidation of the wealth and diversity of information about visiting Sitka. Information regarding sightseeing options and other activities is organized so visitors go to a single source to learn of options and time commitments for planning their stay. The success of this venture depends upon funding and the creation of an entity charged with developing, marketing and insuring that materials are kept current, accurate, and complete. The organizers manage the on-line computer information described in Alternative 1.

The consolidated information is distributed on cruise ships and ferries, at the airport, and at major visitor facilities in Sitka. Individuals, organizations, businesses, and travel companies can access this information world-wide by computer.

A coordinated directional/orientation sign and map system assists people in locating sites and provides a unified design linking visitor attractions. With a unified sign design, the community pools its resources and reduces production, maintenance, and replacement costs.

Alternative 3: Moderate Change

In addition to the proposals outlined in Alternative 2, outdoor orientation exhibit panels are installed at each arrival point to Sitka. These vertical format displays, often referred to as wayside exhibits or kiosks, help people locate visitor facilities, services,

major attractions, and activities; introduce Sitka's key interpretive stories; outline self-guiding tour and transit options; and provide a detailed map oriented to the scenery.

Kiosk information is limited to that which remains consistent throughout the year. Bulletin cases are included in the kiosks allowing for the placement of changeable information. This requires regular maintenance to ensure that the information displayed is up-to-date and to replace items damaged by sun fading and humidity.

Alternative 4: Maximum Change

This alternative adds the development of one or more staffed visitor contact centers to the previous proposals. While the center(s) will perform some interpretive services, such as introducing the primary interpretive stories related to Sitka, the main function is visitor orientation and information. Exhibits, computer terminals, and publications provide visitors with more detailed descriptions of what to see and do, and specific questions are answered by information desk staff. If visitation increases significantly to warrant it, a central reservation system for Sitka attractions could be housed here.

The location of the center(s) is critical to efficiently serving visitors. Providing the correct information at the right time and place is the key to success. Visitors with a lot of time, such as those arriving by air or ferry, often seek out an information center no matter where it is located. Those visitors with limited time, e.g. cruise ship passengers, need to find the facility as soon as possible or it will not be used effectively. Consequently, the best location(s) are where people come ashore, and since there is more than one main arrival point from the ships, more than one center may be needed.

To make it easy for visitors to find the visitor contact centers, facilities should be easily identified, inviting, and accessible to visitors and staff with disabilities. To avoid congestion, all media are designed so visitors get the information they need quickly. The information desk is large enough for at least two employees and equipped with a phone, computer terminal, and storage for brochures, maps, and other handouts. A sheltered outdoor area assists in meeting the needs of large groups and organized tours.

Although these centers provide detailed information and cater to individual visitor needs, they require considerable financial resources to build, staff and maintain.

Interpretation and Education

The previous section focused on strategies to help visitors discover and decide what to see and do in Sitka and to assist with finding sites and attractions. This section concentrates on alternatives to help visitors understand and appreciate the breadth and diversity of Sitka's cultural and natural heritage.

Few visitors will ever absorb or appreciate all the important aspects of Sitka's significance, but there are some primary stories that most people should learn something about during their visit. The following statements, except for #8, were developed for the Sitka National Historical Park. A committee of Sitka-wide interpreters believes these statements, along with the one addition, also apply to the community as a whole:

1. The story of Sitka revolves around the interaction between Russia's colonists, other Europeans, Alaska Natives, persons of mixed race (primarily Alaska Native/Russian) and Americans.
2. The Tlingit and Czarist Russia colonists had their own distinct identities but similar wealth producing goals. The Battle of 1804 occurred

because the Russians wanted to acquire the wealth associated with the fur trade.

3. The land and the sea provided a rich natural environment which attracted the Tlingit, their predecessors, the European colonists, and present day residents and visitors.
4. To the Tlingit people, Sitka has long been a major center of culture.
5. For Russia, New Archangel (Sitka) was the colonial capital for reaping the rich bounty of Alaska.
6. Brought by the Russians to Alaska, Eastern Orthodoxy was adopted by many Natives and retains an active presence in the state today.
7. The transfer of Alaska to the United States in 1867 occurred in Sitka as a result of mutual Russian and American interests and geopolitical rivalries with other countries.
8. During World War II Sitka was an important link in America's chain of coastal defenses.

Alternative 1: Basic

Give interpretive talks on board the cruise ships and ferries. These programs include video programs shown at special gatherings or over ship cable television channels. The funding and production of such programs could be a joint interagency and tourism industry effort involving those in the fields of interpretation, education, history, and cultural and natural resource preservation. Make these programs available to schools, libraries, and television stations throughout the region.

Distribute interpretive and educational programs through on-line computer networks. Since most users are in the comfort of their homes or in schools, the computer medium can be effective in helping people learn more about Sitka's heritage,

even if they are not able to visit. Such programs generally require less updating than information/orientation data.

The wide variety of public and commercial interpretive options for visitors and residents will continue. An effort is made to offer more in-depth experiences for visitors with special interests, e.g. Tlingit culture, the history of Russian America or the history of World War II, and temperate rain forest ecology.

Alternative 2: Limited Change

In addition to the proposals outlined in Alternative 1, develop a system of story related self-guiding walking tour publications and maps. Comprehensive tours that cover the major interpretive stories and specific tours focusing on Tlingit culture and history, Russian/American interaction, and natural resources are also developed. Accompany each tour with a sign system that lets people know when they arrive at designated stops.

Another option is providing similar tours in an audio format. While this has some advantages over printed materials, the initial costs may be greater and equipment maintenance and replacement expenses need to be considered.

To make visitors aware of the self-guided tours, marketing strategies are needed to make the materials available for distribution or purchase on the cruise ships and ferries as well as in hotels, gift shops, and other visitor facilities. These and other materials can also be marketed through the Internet.

Alternative 3: Moderate Change

In addition to the proposals outlined in the previous alternatives, develop a series of wayside exhibit panels to interpret key natural and cultural features throughout Sitka. These low profile panels complement the self-guiding tour stop and provide on-the-spot interpretation. A system of these exhibits

provides a design consistency to the interpretive media. They are relatively inexpensive to produce and, given the town's low vandalism rate, are also easy to maintain.

Person to person communication offers the most flexible and interactive means of interpretation. Organized tours, talks, and demonstrations are popular forms of what the National Park Service refers to as personal services interpretation. A less formal method of providing this type of service is termed roving interpretation. During peak visitor periods easily identified staff members are assigned to high use areas to greet visitors, answer questions, and present short informal talks. The distribution of resources in Sitka makes this a viable form of interpretation.

While personal services are considered one of the more desirable forms of interpretation, they can also create the greatest problems. Sometimes interpreters are poor communicators or may appear uninspired and bored. In addition, care must be taken to insure that interpreters provide complete, accurate, and unbiased information. An interpretive skills training program will help alleviate problems and develop a cadre of effective interpreters.

In Sitka there are currently many public, private, and commercial entities involved in providing interpretive services to visitors. A series of joint training programs, managed through a partnership agreement, will focus on interpreting history, cultural diversity, natural resources, and provide skill instruction in communication and interpretive techniques. A communication network will also be formed ensuring that visitors receive consistent information regarding scheduled activities and hours of operation of the various interpretive services providers in Sitka.

Alternative 4: Maximum Change

This alternative adds the development of one or more staffed visitor contact centers, as described in the Information/Orientation section, to the propos-

als already described. Exhibits in these centers provide brief introductions to the primary stories related to Sitka and show visitors where they can go to learn more about them. The centers also provide a central point for the distribution/sale of self-guiding tour materials and serve as a meeting location for guided walking tours.

The cultural and natural resources of Sitka managed by various public and private organizations lend themselves to the establishment of an integrated environmental education program. Programs geared to children, college students, families, organized groups, and seniors offer opportunities for in-depth study of Sitka's history, people, natural resources, and the interactions, issues, and opportunities facing them all. A partnership among the various interpretation/ education entities defines the roles, capabilities, responsibilities, and contributions of each participant. Programs address local, regional, national, and international audiences.

Transportation

The transportation alternative is broken down into four areas: Pedestrians and bicycles, Parking, Roadways, and Transit. These areas address the current conflicts between pedestrians and automobiles, pedestrians overflowing into the roadways, and the lack of available parking for long term, short term and the tour bus use, all of which adds to the overall traffic congestion in Sitka.

Alternative 1: Basic

Pedestrians and Bicycles

Conflicts between pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles frustrate drivers and endanger pedestrians. Most of the sidewalks are narrow, and pedestrians overflow into the streets and cause traffic congestion. Street rights-of-ways are shared by bicyclists, parked vehicles, service trucks, buses and commuting motorists. The heaviest conflicts between pedestrians and vehi-

cles occur along sections of Harbor Drive, Halibut Point Road and Sawmill Creek Road, Lincoln Street (both east and west) and to some extent Katlian Street. These areas receive the highest concentration of visitors, contain most of the retail shops and serve as a funnel for a majority of the local traffic impacting the downtown area.

Under this alternative improvements are limited to improving safety education for cyclists, law enforcement and walkway maintenance. This encompasses wearing helmets, obeying traffic laws, establishing public education programs, improving directional signs, delineation of year-round road and bicycle lanes, and maintaining existing walkways and pedestrian crossings. Enhance the pedestrian connection to Lincoln Street from the Centennial Hall parking lot by signs, permanent markings and traffic controls.

To minimize confusion for arriving visitors, provide information on walking and bicycle tour routes either on board the cruise ships prior to arrival or at various locations in town.

The Sitka Bicycle Plan serves as the guide for specific recommendations and identification of lanes, paths and routes.

Parking

The existing public lots and curbside parking serve a variety of uses including long-term parking for charter fishing, employee parking, visitors parking and private parking. The lots are sufficiently dispersed throughout the downtown area but are generally small in size and not designed to maximize capacity. The largest lots are near the docks and marinas of Crescent Harbor, Totem Square and Thomsen Harbor. Curbside parking is limited to the downtown area and often competes with tour buses for parking spaces.

Reconfigure the existing lots to maximize capacity, and set aside an appropriate number of spaces in

the Castle Hill lot for short-term (2-hour) parking. Limit parking duration in the Centennial lot to 24 hours, and provide directions to longer term parking options. Encourage use of the outlying lots.

Establish time limits for all public parking (lot or street parking) and accommodate all the current uses. However, designate areas and numbers of parking spaces for the different uses (long term, hourly, employee) within each lot. This would disperse use in a more even fashion. Locate long term parking so as to not interfere with short term parking vehicles and in close proximity to the boats for loading and unloading supplies. Hourly parking will typically be located on the streets and in the smaller lots providing close-in access to the stores and shops, accommodating the resident and visitor. Make information on the location of the public lots, type of parking, and time limits available at the airport, ferry dock and various locations throughout Sitka.

Roadways

Five streets carry a majority of the pedestrian, vehicular and bicycle traffic with only one traffic light. Each street is two lanes with two-way traffic. All of the streets either run into the downtown area or end within a block of it. Narrow streets in the central business district are congested by tour buses and local traffic creating conflicts with pedestrians. The roadways leading out of downtown to the ends of the island are connected by many side streets serving residential property and commercial/industrial land uses.

Without making substantial modifications to the existing rights-of-way, improving maintenance is the most effective way to enhance safety and the visitor experience. This entails installing painted pedestrian crossings, adding appropriate signs, providing traffic control devices and expanding education and safety enforcement. Maintenance functions such as curbside uses for loading, trash removal and other miscellaneous activities interrupt the flow of pedes-

trians and vehicles creating hazards. Pedestrian and bicycle routes need to be clearly marked and maintained.

Transit

Currently, there are two tour operators taking visitors from one lightering facility to various designated points of interest. One of these operators has a direct relationship with the cruise ship companies. Several of the tour stops have limited capacity for the tour buses including the downtown area. The tour length ranges from about 1 to 2 hours.

In order to enhance the tour services and plan for a second lightering facility, several changes are recommended. Information about tour options needs to be improved. The Centennial lot needs to be reconfigured improving bus flow and reducing pedestrian/vehicle conflicts. Changes in the tour scheduling would help to reduce crowding and conflicts. Adding an area for smaller tour operators to load passengers safely without conflicting with the larger operator is desirable. A method of separating the visitors taking the bus tour from those seeking other tour information is needed.

Currently, only one of the two tour operators coordinates tour information with the cruise ship industry. When passengers arrive at the lightering site, those not going on the tour (approximately 50%) need to make choices regarding their visit in Sitka. This causes a lot of milling around creating congestion and inhibiting the flow of tour buses. An information system reaching the majority of the visitors as outlined in the Information/Orientation Alternatives will enable visitors to quickly assess their choices and decide on their visit itinerary getting them out into the community thereby minimizing congestion and conflicts.

Alternative 2: Limited Change

This alternative builds on the educational and safety elements outlined in Alternative 1 and begins to establish limited physical improvements to each of the four areas.

Pedestrians and Bicycles

Bicycle lanes on high traffic streets are identified by pavement markings and minor widening within the existing right-of-way. This is particularly true along sections of Halibut Point Road, Harbor Drive and Sawmill Creek Road. Develop alternative routes whenever possible in order to by-pass the congested areas such as the downtown Lincoln and Katlian streets. Bicycle paths would connect from on-street designations to existing off-street routes.

Increase maintenance for both walkways and bike trails from routine seasonal to year-around including winter snow and ice removal. Vertical and horizontal obstacles on bike trails and paths should be removed, repaired and maintained eliminating hazards.

Improve the pedestrian linkages between Harbor Drive, Crescent Harbor and Lincoln Street.

Parking

Under this alternative, reduce parking in Centennial lot to allow for more extensive improvements for bus staging, loading and pedestrian flow. Replace the lost parking with spaces in lots near downtown. Use parking lots farthest from the downtown for remote parking. These lots serve as the long-term parking areas for employees, commercial fishers, island commuters, and recreational vehicles. Make provisions to accommodate the loading and unloading of equipment and supplies at Crescent Harbor docks for the fishers and vendors. Improve pedestrian connections to all lots.

Remove parking from one side of the street along Lincoln Street and relocate to an expanded short-term lot at Castle Hill. Move the current long-term parking at Castle Hill to a new remote lot. The Castle Hill lot would serve the short-term parking needs for the new lightering facility.

Roadways

In order to maximize use of the major streets in Sitka and reduce the congestion created by peak visitor use, tour buses and local commuters, convert selected existing streets to a one-way or restricted use system. Harbor Drive between Lincoln Street, the new lightering and Castle Hill parking lot will be converted to one-way east-bound only to improve tour bus loading and unloading.

Transit

Make physical improvements to the major tour bus loading areas. The tour bus schedules and operations need to match the visitor carrying capacity of Sitka National Historical Park and other attractions. Modifications and refinements to the tour operations will reduce crowding and improve vehicular circulation. Park employees will use the parking lot accessed from Sawmill Creek Road during peak visitor use in order to minimize traffic flow at the visitor center. Restrict bus parking and loading to key designated areas. In the downtown area, have buses unload visitors and stage at an off-site location, returning at a specified time for passenger pick-up. Relocate tour bus stops along Lincoln to serve the downtown and the cathedral to Harbor Drive.

Alternative 3: Moderate Change

It is important to note that when the second lightering becomes operational, improvements to parking, transit, pedestrian ways and roadways will need to be at the moderate level in order to serve the increased visitation.

Pedestrians and Bicycles

The current bike routes, lanes and paths are not continuous and leave many gaps in the overall system. Under a moderate approach these gaps will start to be filled. The pedestrian system of sidewalks, crosswalks and pathways are not well signed or otherwise defined and in some cases need to be improved for safety and convenience.

Suggested improvements include designating new by-pass or alternate routes for bicycles around congested areas, increasing the number of lanes on the street system while staying within the existing rights-of-way. New connections are needed to City parks, through open space, to and within the Sheldon Jackson College Campus, to new residential areas. For example, complete the gap between Sawmill Creek Road path and Halibut Point Road with a by-pass route on Lake Street and a new connection through Moeller Field.

The pedestrian system will be more visible through the development of pedestrian linkages from Lincoln Street to the waterfront, Centennial lot and the new lightering facility. Physical improvements to sidewalks, pedestrian crossings and walkways improve the visibility, use and the safety of the linkages. Adopt design guidelines to define the materials, signs, lighting and landscaping appropriate for each area.

Parking

A more concentrated design focus is given to parking under this alternative. Public parking lots will be reconfigured, enlarged and possibly expanded to gain more efficiency in the number of cars being parked. Reconfigure Centennial lot reducing parking to improve tour and shuttle bus loading and staging needed as a result of the new lightering facility and the introduction of a new limited shuttle system. In the downtown area remove all street parking from Lincoln Street during peak visitor hours. Reserve the Castle Hill lot for short-term parking for both downtown customers and the new lightering. These

restrictions eliminate some parking spaces in return for improved pedestrian crosswalks and wider sidewalks. This increases safety, minimizes conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians and enhances the visitor experience. Remote surface parking will be developed as needed to meet the long-term parking demand.

Improve tour bus operations at Sitka National Historical Park through scheduling, redesign of the upper lot or off-site bus parking. Move employee parking to the lot off Sawmill Creek Road or to Sheldon Jackson College. Maintain limited on-site visitor parking.

Roadways

A new roadway connection from Lincoln Street to Sawmill Creek needs to be considered in light of the increased traffic generated by the new lightering and the limited space available for improving the existing parking lot at Sitka National Historical Park. Make minor widening changes where possible along Halibut Point Road and Sawmill Creek Road establishing a safer roadway for both motorists and the bicyclists. Close Lincoln Street to traffic during peak visitor hours and make other required street improvements to accommodate the closure of Lincoln Street.

Transit

In combination with the proposed parking solutions outlined in this alternative, a transit system could play a major role in resolving many of the transportation issues.

Implement a shuttle system with limited service. The shuttle could operate at short intervals (10 minutes) facilitating on-and-off use on a route from Totem Square to the new lightering dock, Centennial Hall, the Russian Bishop's House, Sheldon Jackson College, and Sitka National Historical Park. Tour bus service will be reduced in response to the number of visitors accommodated by the shuttle bus. To

compensate for the losses to tour bus operators, the shuttle service could be provided by a private entrepreneur. Coordinate shuttle and tour bus schedules to minimize crowding and congestion. Improve passenger waiting areas at both lightering areas.

Alternative 4: Maximum Change

Pedestrians and Bicycles

Under this Alternative a number of key bicycle and pedestrian recommendations would come to fruition. The comprehensive Bike Plan with an ongoing educational component would be in place. New bike trails from the Sheldon Jackson campus, subdivisions, and outlying areas such as Starrigavan would be implemented and connected with existing trails. Areas for mountain bikes would be developed. Perhaps the most important undertaking would be the establishment of full-width bicycle lanes on Halibut Point Road, Sawmill Creek Road, and a designated bike route from town to the airport. The "gaps" would be filled and a continuous system would be in place.

The pedestrian walkways will be integrated with the downtown improvements, the waterfront, the new lightering and Sitka National Historical Park. The downtown area will maintain adequate or increased sidewalk widths to effectively accommodate pedestrian use. Linkages to the lightering areas, docks and wharfs from the downtown will be enhanced with plazas, boardwalks, plantings, signs, and lighting. A new walkway, separate from the city streets, will be created along the waterfront from the downtown area to Sitka National Historical Park.

Parking

The solutions for parking will continue to evolve, focusing on consolidating uses, developing new parking garages, and removing curb-side parking in the downtown area.

Centennial lot will be redeveloped into a community park. Short-term loading/unloading and service access for the fishers will always be maintained at the docks. A new loop drive will be developed at Centennial Hall to improve the boarding of tour and shuttle buses. Parking for the new lightering is in the Castle Hill lot and a new loading/unloading area is developed accommodating the increase in tour and shuttle bus passengers. A low profile parking garage is built behind the Russian Bishop's House accommodating the parking displaced from the Centennial Lot. In selected areas along Lincoln Street parking is removed from the streets providing safer pedestrian crossings and wider sidewalks thereby easing the congestion during peak use. The bus lot at Sitka National Historical Park is reconfigured only for drop-off and pick-up of passengers. The staff parks either at Sheldon Jackson College or off Sawmill Creek Road.

Roadways

The current road system undergoes several changes including: the widening of Halibut and Sawmill Creed roads in conjunction with the bike plan, and developing a new one-way street West of Sitka National Historical Park. Other street improvements will be made as necessary to serve the new parking garage as per the recommendations from the ComIT/Design Workshop.

Transit

Expand the shuttle system adding stops at the STA Community Center, the Raptor Center and other areas such as the outlying RV parking to the previously discussed route. Encourage visitors with private vehicles to park in remote lots and take the shuttle. It is expected that tour bus use will decline as a result of the expanded shuttle service.

Cultural Resources Management

Alternative 1: Basic

Under the basic alternative, local groups such as the Allen Memorial Preservation Society, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, the National Park Service, the Sitka Historical Preservation Commission, the Sitka Historical Society, the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center, the State of Alaska, and the U.S. Forest Service develop, coordinate, and distribute information about the community's collective cultural resources, including topics in archeology, history, and ethnography. Resource management data is shared on inventorying, protection, and preservation. Collaborative efforts are required to achieve effective results in dealing with the preservation of cultural and historic resources. Typical projects needing such a strategy are the preservation of Building 29 from the Russian-American period and the Allen Memorial Building of Sheldon Jackson College from the American period. Research is encouraged exploring traditional uses and the interaction and overlap of the Tlingit, Russian, other European, and American cultures. Research is shared and findings condensed to develop more complete interpretive materials on Sitka's cultures.

Promoting cultural resource education, programs are developed coordinating interpretive brochures with guided and self-guided walking tours of different themes and lengths. Interpretive information is integrated with visitor orientation information. The cultural resource organizations work with the community's visitor service organizations to develop a concise but comprehensive visitor orientation package, providing a Sitka map delineating walking tours with historical, cultural, and environmental information. Tour lengths, times, and points of interest will be identified.

Alternative 2: Limited Change

Same as alternative 1 but with the following additions: use advertising to generate revenue required to produce a more complete and integrated orientation/interpretive visitor handbook. Establish a clearing house to share information about historic preservation grants and technical assistance.

To help foster more resource appreciation and stewardship, a combined cultural resource and natural resource walking tour is added to the other walking tours – with short and long options. To promote cultural resource awareness and education, provide guided tours and open houses of Sitka properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This list encompasses public and private properties. Functions can be held annually or semi-annually as appropriate. The community should consider nominating additional buildings and districts to the National Register.

Alternative 3: Moderate Change

Same as alternatives 1 and 2 but with the following additions: the historical/cultural walking tours in the city are marked with distinctive, attractive signs. The city, through the combined and cooperating cultural resources groups, launches a historic preservation campaign to involve as many interested citizens as possible. Tax incentives and a seminar series with outside experts are created as part of the outreach program. The seminars provide information to residents on how to preserve cultural resources. Special historic/cultural festivals and other events are sponsored and linked to school programs promoting cultural resources awareness and an appreciation of how cultural resources overlap and interact with natural resources.

An awareness of Tlingit culture and history becomes more predominant as greater cooperation occurs between the City of Sitka and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. Recognizing the original and continuing inhabitants of the area, programs could emphasize

Tlingit cultural survival and adaptation over time and important events such as the 1804 survival march route.

Alternative 4: Maximum Change

Same as alternatives 1, 2, and 3 with the following additions. If necessary, acquire, protect, preserve, and rehabilitate important cultural resources such as Building 29 or the Allen Memorial Building as appropriate. Present living history and live cultural demonstration programs involving the Sitka Tribe of Alaska highlighting the sense of place that visitors experience in Sitka. This will increase the role of the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center in living history and live cultural demonstration programs geared toward resource management and conservation.

Natural Resources Management

Alternative 1: Basic

Many locally based agencies, institutions, and organizations, such as the U.S. Forest Service, Sheldon Jackson College, State Parks, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Raptor Center, possess a broad range of expertise and knowledge about the area's natural resources. These entities could develop information and make it available to citizens fostering an appreciation of and stewardship for the community's natural resources. Growth in tourism, particularly in the numbers and size of cruise ships to Sitka, poses potential environmental problems such as maintenance of water and air quality and providing adequate disposal of solid waste.

Implementation of a coordinated monitoring system is recommended to identify impending environmental issues. Interagency partnerships with local government and other community groups could be used to focus financial and technical resources in order to identify and monitor adverse threats and impacts to the resources of concern. Enforcement of

existing federal, state, and local standards, and regulations could also be used to protect resources.

Alternative 2: Limited Change

A citizen information/education initiative is a key ingredient of this alternative. The Indian River is a prominent and universally enjoyed resource within the community. The river is influenced by what happens in its surrounding watershed. Guidelines need to be developed to assist landowners within the watershed in their efforts as stewards of the river and watershed, and to help them maintain or enhance the economic and ecological values of their own properties. Existing information such as best management practices available through the Department of Environmental Conservation could be drawn upon in developing these guidelines. Options for development and publication of these guidelines might include creation of partnerships or a nonprofit organization.

Applying the technical expertise of local agencies for input and guidance on natural resource related issues or concerns, such as urban forestry is an option to investigate. Community members as well as visitors would benefit from information and interpretive publications, maps, and/or signs that comprehensively cover the array of natural resource related sites throughout the area. This could be accomplished through a cooperative effort of local interests that manage the various resource sites. To further develop an understanding of the community's resources, environmental education programs for both school children and adults could be expanded.

Alternative 3 – Moderate Change

As an adjunct to expanded environmental education programs, establish an environmental education camp focused principally on the Indian River and its watershed in cooperation with local schools, Sheldon Jackson College, or other interested educa-

tional organizations. Cooperative programs with the U.S. Forest Service, Coast Guard, National Park Service, the State of Alaska, and others would be established to provide practical technical assistance to landowners and the city regarding natural resource management. Promote and expand the existing naturalist classes developed by the University of Alaska, Southeast as an important link in raising community awareness of natural resources. Pursue protection of the Indian River watershed through enactment of city ordinances or zoning.

Alternative 4 – Maximum Change

Pursue additional protection of the Indian River watershed through the acquisition of land from willing sellers or conservation/scenic easements. In addition to fostering stewardship of the Indian River and watershed, promote stewardship of a broader spectrum of natural resources and environments, such as shoreline, intertidal areas, and off shore/sound environments. Expand previously mentioned information, interpretation, education, and technical assistance programs for this purpose.

Explore the educational capabilities of Sheldon Jackson College in such fields as fisheries/hatchery management as a means of promoting community awareness and understanding of natural resources. Encourage workshops, field trips, public presentations, and similar approaches.

Recreation

Alternative 1: Basic

There are a number of recreational opportunities available throughout Sitka. Develop visitor information to encourage visitors to experience a wider range of recreational locations and discourage them from visiting areas that are heavily used or favored by residents.

Alternative 2: Limited Change

Update the City's 1991 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan to address all types of recreational uses and facilities including trails. Seek assistance in trail planning from the National Park Service (River and Trails Conservation Assistance program) and the U.S. Forest Service. Develop a city Parks and Recreation Department to manage the recreation program and facilities and to oversee the plan.

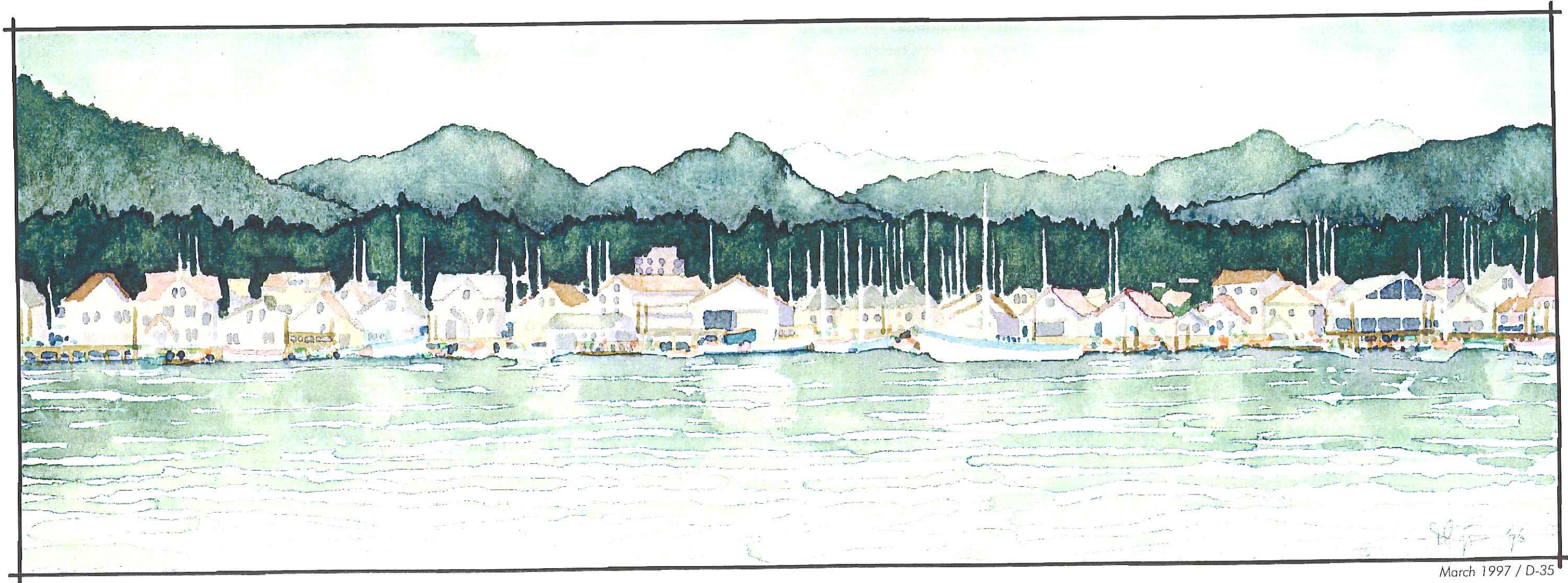
Alternative 3: Moderate Change

Identify missing links and complete segments within the existing city trail system through further trail designation routes and signing. Improve the existing trail system through maintenance opportunities, such as upgrading trail surfaces. Consider an ordinance in the City and Borough of Sitka requiring greenbelt and/or park designations to be part of any new subdivision/housing development.

Alternative 4: Maximum Change

Develop an open space system or greenway program to augment existing parks and recreation areas and to protect lands with important natural, scenic, and recreational values. Use easements or land acquisition to support establishment of such a system. Expand the existing trail system to connect the open space system.

Evaluate the opportunity of integrating Sheldon Jackson College's recreation facilities as part of the City and Borough's comprehensive recreational system. Enact an ordinance requiring that greenbelt and/or park designations be part of any new subdivision/housing development.



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