



City of Valdez
Beautification Task Force
Frequently Asked Questions

Why aren't all areas of the city being considered for beautification?

All areas of the city will eventually be considered. However, for this round of work the Task Force has set its sights on the core downtown business district. This seemed to be a logical progression from the work that has already been done around the Harbor area and the Kelsey Dock – Ruth Pond area. Once the downtown area is addressed, the Task Force will start looking at other areas, especially along the Richardson Highway out to the city limits.

What is the reasoning behind a Town Square/Plaza?

The city currently has many parks and public spaces spread throughout the community. But none of these spaces are available for use in the winter (which is most of the year). A town square/plaza located in the downtown area could not only provide a year round gathering place, but help draw attention to the central business district and assist in the economic revitalization of this area.

Why locate the Town Square/Plaza between city hall and the library?

When considering location options, the Task Force wanted to minimize effects on existing land use in the downtown area. The idea of using land that could otherwise be developed for commercial purposes was not desirable; nor was taking any land that is currently needed for snow storage. Since the volume of traffic on Fairbanks Street between city hall and the library is extremely low, taking just that one block of the street would have the smallest impact on existing (and potential future) land uses in the area. Additionally, that block already has significant municipal infrastructure immediately adjacent to it, maximizing utility. Finally, it is geographically located in the exact center of the core downtown area.

(Over)

What is the benefit to narrowing Egan Drive?

Egan Drive is our downtown “Main Street”, but due to it receiving traffic directly from the Richardson Highway, the volume and speed of vehicles on that section of road is not conducive to easy or safe pedestrian traffic; nor does it have any Main Street “feel” to it. In an effort to kill two birds with one stone, the narrowing of the corridor from three lanes to two, will slow traffic without the need for traffic signals or signs, and it will provide the room necessary to install aesthetic amenities that will provide a sense of “arrival” when reaching that span of road. It is important to note that the remaining two traffic lanes will not be narrowed. The overall narrowing will result from the loss of the middle turn lane (though small sections of turn lanes may still be possible at high volume intersections).

Why should the city spend money on beautification over more basic needs?

Beautification is being considered an investment for our community. Like any investment, the city expects to see a return or dividend from that investment. City beautification, or urban re-vitalization, has been proven nation-wide to increase area property values, improve utilization and traffic flow of the subject area, create additional economic opportunities, and enhance community pride. These things have already been experienced right here in Valdez as a result of the beautification improvements the city constructed along the harbor and at the Kelsey Dock – Ruth Pond area.

What is the make-up and history of the City Beautification Task Force?

This Task Force was convened by Mayor Cobb in early 2011 and represented a re-convening of the same Task Force that was active in the 1990’s. Mayor Cobb invited the original members to participate again, as well as soliciting volunteers from the business community, the school district, the hospital, the college, the museum, city departments, and the general public. However, despite this broad outreach, the only community members who were able to put in the time needed to serve on this Task Force included representatives from the city, the museum, and local business. The Mayor continues to recruit for this effort and new members, including additional representation from the business community and from the public have recently joined the group.