



**City of Valdez, City Council
Planning Retreat Report
Dates: June 20 & 21, 2025**

Participants:

- Dennis Fleming – Mayor
- James Devens – Council Member
- Olivia Foster – Council Member
- Austin Love – Council Member
- Joseph Lally - Council Member
- Joy Witte – Council Member

- Nathan Duval – City Manager
- Sheri Pierce – City Clerk
- Jordan Nelson – Finance Director

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Introduction Notes

• Organizational Foundation

- Objective: To revisit why we are here and review how 'what we do' fits into our organizational framework
 - A. Vision – Identifies direction, where we are going
 - *Not identified for City of Valdez*
 - B. Mission – Identifies purpose, why we are here
 - City of Valdez Mission:
To cultivate an environment of opportunity, sustained prosperity and well being for all people of Valdez
 - C. Values – Identifies what we 'stand for'; code of conduct; professional practices
 - *Not identified for City of Valdez*
 - *City Administration Values: Integrity – Celebrate – Innovate – Stewardship*
 - D. Goals/Priorities – Large scale initiatives which:
 - Get us closer to our Vision
 - Supports our Mission
 - Upholds our Values
- Note: Council sets Vision, Mission, Values and Goals
 - E. Objectives – Steps needed to achieve goals
 - F. Action Plans – The plan* needed to achieve an objective (*who does what by when)
- Note: City Administration identifies proposed objectives, which are presented to Council for approval / edit – then Administration develops action plans to achieve each objective

I. Councils Role

- **Objective:** To review what Council's role is and isn't, to ensure discussions stay within scope/parameters of Council authority
- **Process:** City Clerk reviewed Council's role

II. Financial Outlook

- **Objective:** To review fiscal outlook
- **Process:** Finance Director reviewed fiscal outlook
 - See Finance Director's ppt slide presentation (See email sent 7/16/25; Attachment: VdZA.FinancialOutlook...)

III. Status Updates

- **Objective:** To review progress on last years (2024) Action Items
- **Process:** City Manager provided status updates on 2024 action items
 - See City Manager handout (See email sent 7/16/25; Attachment: Vdz.BPlanningUpdates... p.2)



IV. SWOT Assessment

- **Objective:** To identify where we are now and what's coming up in the future, and use the results to drive relevant goals/priorities
- **Process:**
 - Council members worked in discussion groups to identify: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for /to Valdez
- **Outcomes:**
 - **A. All Raw-Results**

Please note: The number in () = the number of Council Members (out of 6) who identified this item as a high priority

 - **Strengths:**
 - (4) Port & transportation (Highway, Airport, Cruise Ships)
 - (4) High level city services & City Dept's
 - (4) Pipeline terminal
 - (2) World class visitor destination / Natural beauty
 - (1) CSO's
 - (1) Fisheries – sport and commercial
 - (1) Access to general medical care
 - (1) Schools
 - Financial resources
 - Coast Guard city
 - Quality of public utilities
 - **Weaknesses:**
 - (4) Housing and starter homes (cost to build)
 - (4) Childcare (cost to build)
 - (4) Maintenance (Port facilities / Kelsey dock / VCT/ Baler system - need modern facilities & updates)
 - (2) Heavy reliance on oil and gas revenue
 - (1) Transportation challenges (Airline, Thompson Pass, Weather)
 - (1) Demographic shifts and aging workforce
 - (1) Need trades people (PT's, carpenters, electricians, plumbers) and aging workforce within City
 - (1) Access to specialized healthcare
 - Airport
 - Small business development
 - Distance from major hubs
 - Inclement weather / challenging topography



- Opportunities:
 - (3) Great housing opportunities / Affordability
 - (3) Outdoor Recreation / Economy / Tourism opportunities
 - (2) Largest maritime industry in AK
 - (2) Great childcare
 - (2) Great city facilities
 - (2) Thriving small businesses (incentivize opportunities for small businesses)
 - (2) Education and training opportunities through College (Nursing, Construction, Marine resources, Millright)
 - (1) Increase oil in pipeline / growth
 - (1) Affordable renewable energy
 - Dependable, reliable air service
 - Use vast land resources (ie: Trails – motorized and nonmotorized)
 - Increase Coast Guard presence / More military / Navy with aircraft carrier
 - (Public relations) Promote Valdez as a place to live/visit
 - Food security
 - Increase family support
 - Minimize /eliminate poverty

- Threats:
 - (4) No increase in Housing
 - (4) Aging infrastructure (Roads, Ports, Terminal)
 - (3) Population / Demographic shift / Retirement – loss of expertise
 - (2) Hospital closure / Medicaid cuts impacting Hospital
 - (2) Federal and state funding / Reduced federal grants
 - (1) Pipeline closure / Decrease oil / Uncertain revenue
 - (1) Changes in state statutes
 - (1) Decline in fisheries
 - School closure / school funding uncertainty
 - Airline uncertainty
 - Natural disaster
 - Technological disaster
 - Poor city services due to reduction in city revenue
 - Tourist trap
 - Decreased value of TAPS
 - Coast Guard closure
 - Climate change



○ **B. Top-Priority Council 2025 SWOT Results**

Please note : The number in () = the number of Council Members (out of 6) who identified this item as a high priority

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (4) Port & Transportation (Highway, Airport, Cruise Ships) • (4) High Level City Services & City Dept's • (4) Pipeline Terminal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (4) Housing / + Starter Homes (Cost to Build) • (4) Childcare (Cost to Build) • (4) Maintenance (Port facilities / Kelsey Dock / VCT/ Baler - needs modern facilities & updates)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (3) Great Housing Opportunities / Affordability • (3) Outdoor Recreation / Economy / Tourism Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (4) No increase in Housing • (4) Aging infrastructure (Roads, Ports, Terminal) • (3) Population / Demographic shift / Retirement – loss of expertise

○ Note: Council members reviewed **previous SWOT**, conducted in **2021**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel and Administration • Savings and PFD • Good momentum re: current Council / well positioned for planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning & zoning • Housing opportunities • Historical spending
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government could be more efficient (not get in citizens way) • Savings and PFD • Look for efficiencies in each department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain current budget • Loss of oil/gas tax revenue • Community expectations



V. Goals/ Priorities Discussions

- **Objective:** To identify the best top focus areas / goals to support the City of Valdez mission
- **Process:**
 - Prior to Council discussing goals/ priorities for 2025:
 - Consultant identified tools typically used for goal discussions
 - Council reviewed past-years goals / priorities
 - City Manager provided updates on 2024 goals/priorities
- **A. 3 Tools for Goal Discussions**
 - **Objective:** To identify tools to use when considering/ determining goals
 - 1. Purpose of Goals
 - Goals need to do 1 of 5 things:
 - (1) Maintain the mission
 - (2) Get us closer to the vision
 - (3) Uphold our values
 - (4) Capitalize on strengths and opportunities
 - (5) Address or guard against weaknesses and threats
 - 2. Goal-Qualifiers
 - Qualifiers help filter suggestions for goals, by identifying ones which impact the majority of a population and are an effective use of resources
COV City Council Goal Qualifiers:
 - (1) # of people impacted
 - (2) Sustainability \$ / \$ to Maintain / Burden on personnel
 - (3) Budget \$ to build
 - (4) Impact to high-need service area
 - (5) Economic impactSupporting:
 - (6) Quality of life / Community enrichment / Attract & maintain workforce / Cultural equitability
 - (7) Conformance with established plans
 - (8) Risks
 - (9) R.O.I.
 - 3. Goal-Identifiers
 - Identifiers ensure a goal is clearly written (to increase accurate implementation)
 - (1) Topic
 - (2) What about that topic needs to be accomplished
 - (3) Action needed (ie: increase, decrease, build, develop, etc.)
 - (4) Measurability (ie: %, \$, # - if possible)
 - (5) Date goal is to be completed / achieved



- **B. Past-Years Priorities**

- **2020**

- *Develop long term, high level, budget strategy by the end of July 2020*
- *Use of PFD for long term financial plan (when craft 2022 budget)*
- *Sewer Force Main*
- *Additional goals (that did not receive majority vote)*
 - *New housing development by 2025*
 - *Create communication plan that improves communication with residents by 2021*
 - *Clear goals for City Manager for 2020 & develop process for prioritization by Dec 2020*

- **2021**

- *Council worked CompPlanValdez and identified top focus priorities out of said Plan*

- **2022**

- *Consultant did not facilitate this year and did not see a 'Goal Setting' section in the report*

- **2023**

- *Housing*
 - *Public, private partnerships; Title 17; State & federal grants and subsidies; (Woodside; Short-term rentals)*
- *Childcare*
- *Legislative coordination*
 - *Better access to information; specify goals; targeted objectives, organized bargaining with communication of similar needs; relationship building and top of mind awareness*
- *Additional goals (that did not receive majority vote)*
 - *Budget*
 - *Long term budget priorities; short-term stay within parameters; fiscal sustainability – how we strategize*
 - *Senior population strategy*
 - *Public education of available programs; staffing; in-home care; make people want to stay; assisted living; hospice*

- **2024**

- *Housing*
 - *Housing availability and affordability; PRICE/Mobile home solution; Open up land; Remove Title 17 and replace with Title 15; College construction program; Add Cottonwood expansion; Medium income housing; Workforce housing; AHFC/ACAH – low income housing by elementary school; Mutual self-help housing*
- *Childcare*
 - *Implement task-force recommendations; Consider creating a commission*
- *Healthcare*
 - *(Council will create subcategories)*
- *Business, economic and workforce development strategies*
 - *Strengthen maritime and outdoor recreation*
 - *Increase visitors*
- *Ongoing secondary focus:*
 - *Legislative coordination*
 - *Budget*



- **C. Updates on 2024 Top-4 Goals/Priorities**

- **Process:** City Manager provided updates on 2024 Top-4 goals/priorities
 - See City Manager handout (See email sent 7/16/25; Attachment: VdzB.PlanningUpdates... p.1)

- **D. Council's Top-4 Goals for 2025**

- **Process:**
 - Council members created a master-list of suggestions for 2025 goals/priorities
 - Goals were prioritized, which resulted in 4 top goals
 - The 4 top goals were fine-tuned using Goal-Identifiers; which resulted in the following Top-4 goals for 2025:
- Note: The number in () = the number of Council members who identified this topic as a high priority
- Note: The text in **blue** indicates high-level objectives re: each goal
- **(4) Housing**
 - *Increase housing stock by Fall 2027, utilizing the housing needs survey*
 - Availability and affordability
- **(4*)Childcare**
 - *Complete an operating, active, licensed childcare facility by Fall 2026*
 - The * means that 'Childcare' received 2 votes and the goal noted below: "Address critical housing...inadequate childcare..." also received 2 votes
 - Deploy available grant funds to support other childcare initiatives
- **(4) Maintenance**
 - *Annually appropriate funds toward deferred maintenance on critical infrastructure*
 - Baler, Dock
- **(4) Expand: Outdoor Recreation, Tourism, Maritime & Community**
 - *Annually modernize aging infrastructure, while leveraging natural and transportation assets, to expand: Outdoor recreation; Tourism; Maritime & Community*
 - Maximize current facilities usage
 - Outdoor recreation
 - Identify key projects in Master-Plan and recommend
 - Tourism
 - Look at infrastructure for cruise ships / downtown
 - Maritime
 - Follow developments of mariculture & assess if our assets can be leveraged
 - Sea Otter development
 - Ports and Harbor Commission recommendations
 - Community
 - Modernize aging schools (look to School Board for direction)
- Goals that did not receive majority vote:
 - (2) *Address critical housing shortage & inadequate childcare while supporting demographic sustainability*
 - (1) *Business, economic & workforce development*



VI. Parking Lot / Action Items

- Housing Committee Meeting
 - Schedule after 7/4/25 & before Report
- VCVB Concerns (Council, City Manager, & City Clerk only)
 - Schedule Executive Session, end of July
- Public Accommodation Tax
 - Schedule after VCVB discussion, at the end of July-Mid August
- 300M PFD Milestone
 - Schedule work session, Sept 2
- Collaborative discussion with PWSC & Council, re: identifying and leveraging interests
 - City Manager contacts College President
 - This summer (2025)
- Develop COV Vision Statement
 - Table for now

Additional Notes:

- Budget parameters work session
 - Already scheduled for August 5th
- PFD work session
 - Already scheduled for September