

Opportunities to Strengthen and Grow the Sitka Economy, and Challenges to Overcome to Accomplish Growth

submitted by residents attending the September 6 meeting

OPPORTUNITIES

Develop local agriculture to a basic level, improve food security.

Recycling.

Get more young people involved in this process.

Fiber optics improvements needed, are difficult to get.

Why hasn't anyone mentioned marijuana revenue?

Put a plug in the "leaky" bucket:

- The average citizen spends \$50 a week on food = \$450,000 spent/week on food
- Average American spends 17% on fresh fruits/veggies = \$76,500/week spent in Sitka on fruits/veggies.
- Assuming half food bought from a conventional grocery store in Sitka goes south, that is about \$38,250 leaking from local economy.
- If those fresh fruits and veggies and other value added products could be grown in Sitka this very conservatively equals \$1,989,000 annually ($\$38,250 \times 52$) in lost potential revenue that could stay in Sitka.

Necessity: Sitka needs a city owned full-service haul-out owned at Sawmill Cove Industrial Center! Sitka hauled and worked on more boats than any other Southeast community until 2008. "Blue jobs" are the largest segment of our economy and we have not been supporting this. Last summer six Sitka seiners got \$50,000 paint jobs in Wrangell. A haul-out will create jobs and keep families in Sitka.

Develop more value added food products, such as smoked fish jams jellies etc.

Our healthy water will become increasingly desirable. This is an opportunity to effectively take hold (large reusable, clean containers and distribution for reusable bottles).

Focus on healthy sustainable sea-based foods. Benefit from STA/elder/Sitka Science Center etc. knowledge. For example, herring harvest.

Work on an assisted-living facility(s) and related services. This is need that is coming and not addressed yet.

Be open to groups like Habitat for Humanity to come and do higher density homes and smaller

homes.

There are much greater environmental impacts in other places such as sprawl, bad development, unmanaged and poor growth, spoiled ecosystems, divided communities. We do not have this and that is a competitive advantage. Other places have overfishing and environmental impacts in oceans that are much greater than we have in Sitka, so we have an advantage in providing sustainable seafood.

Sitka's good walkability and bike-ability helps local businesses and tourism.

Work to attract smaller boutique cruises, they keep more tourism dollars in Sitka.

We will need more senior care, elderly living centers.

Attract longer cruise layovers.

Value added to product services manufacturing

Extend the seasonal industries, encourage longer seasonal worker residency, possibly to become year-round residents.

Protect and nurture our manufacturing industries in Sitka as these do well during economic downturns; don't tax them to death.

Facilitate investment in workforce development. For example, businesses support hospitality training (Chamber of Commerce) or government/nonprofits invest in training for housing restoration to promote new building's use of local products, energy efficiency etc.

Make land available for local production of food; stop some leakage of food dollars from Sitka.

Invest in culture, arts, and traditions; develop the cultural historical tourism sector.

Improve fiber optics; this will encourage local businesses, individual and nonprofits to develop online work.

We need sustainable well-paying jobs that do not harm the environment.

Products that require shipment are a challenge because Sitka is remote and shipment costs are not competitive.

Legalize gambling. I know it's a state law issue but we should advocate for it as a city. Right now all the gamblers in Sitka send their money offshore; and one way or another they will gamble, so capture it locally.

Added-value fish products; use of more fish byproducts.

Boat manufacturing.

Provide utility discount to high-energy use businesses.

Levy a municipal income tax on the top income earners (the 17% than make \$100,000 or more).

Grow Sitka's arts and science programs.

Fine arts camp

Leverage our medical resources and infrastructure, such as SEARHC, Sitka Hospital, the property, buildings, and administrative structures, to offer rehabilitation and treatment services for opioid addiction etc. This is highly in demand, a source of leakage from local economy, is a highly in demand service in Southeast and the state, and would provide a critical service to many community members. Federal funding sources should be available.

Identify the biggest "leak" of medical money that is being spent down south. Then, attract those specialists to Sitka (100% coverage for region or state).

Better internet conductivity will allow job opportunities via the web such as telemedicine, consulting etc.

Create local business networking opportunities; for example, "Green Drinks" is an example of one in the Lower 48.

Sitka has the natural beauty, people pool, and need for reform to endeavor in economic development ideas. One statistic show only 10% of work is from tourist base. Culture is under-represented; we should consider enhancing of our cultural assets to become a respectful cultural tourist destination; this would create job growth. Utilize historical districts.

Build on "blue jobs":

- A haul-out and services for residents and regional fishermen, charters, etc.
- Protect the environmental inputs essential to salmon and other fisheries etc. (how to do more to improve resiliency for climate change)
- How to make it easier to start up an eco/adventure tourism businesses?
- More value added maritime products like seafood sales direct to cruise industry?, smoked fish to state, lodges, hotels?

Find out more about who Sitka's non-seafood manufacturers are. Can we help create and increase their customer base and build their exports? What's the biggest limitation for growth?

City of Sitka and SEDA should find local business opportunities for licensing and selling water. This would greatly strengthen the LOCAL economy, rather than sign an agreement with non-local businesses. This should apply for all city/ government activities: find local solutions first. It may be

difficult to do it that way, but it's not impossible.

Create small business and entrepreneurship classes for youth and adult young adults. I know local business owners and regional entities will provide free instruction for such courses.

Get next-generation Millennials involved; encourage them to return to Sitka. Have the high school career day focus on local jobs and business, invite business owners to share their stories of success.

Historic properties and cultural resources are assets for Sitka: They already exist, so there would be less investment to reap the benefits. They are an asset to heritage tourism, and especially attractive to the independent travelers - this type of tourist stays longer, spends more, and returns more. This translates to keeping money circulating in the economy longer. Historic properties have higher property value. Historic rehabilitation provides more jobs than new construction. The National Trust for Historic Preservation provides assistance to communities to develop. Also the Main Street Buy Local programs are resources. Sitka needs a strong socially and economically benefit-based historic preservation program.

Biggest benefit is social well-being, which makes people move and stay here.

CHALLENGES

The high cost of food, which then becomes an opportunity to grow our own.

Housing and care for an aging population. Can we turn this into a strength become a hub for Southeast elder care and services?

Housing for low income and new residents. Can we rezone to allow more apartment buildings and more efficient use of land?

Have to keep harbors in good condition to maintain blue job income; this can't be put off.

We need knowledge of what underlies processes that stop development. Is there a power structure that needs to be re-created?

Internet bandwidth is maxed out and the cost is high.

"Blue Sector" is threatened by negative environmental trends in the ocean such as warmer water temperature, acidity, and fisheries impacts.

Affordability - food costs are high, utility costs are high.

Housing - not enough and it costs a lot.

Alaska is a high-cost place because of the distance from goods and the free lunch of federal earmarks and abundant oil is over.

Store business hours for working individuals.

Need to figure out how to keep elders in town as hospital and nonprofit services to elders diminish.

Need public transit with a fixed route, 7 days a week, with extended hours.

Transportation is a challenge.

Challenges: High shipping costs, limited industrial space, high cost of living .

Building and housing restrictions are a challenge. It is difficult to build or place tiny homes. Lot size requirements are challenge.

Overcome the focus of "value-added" without acknowledging "value-subtracted" effects of certain economic "businesses."

All endeavors would best function if environmental and cultural aspects are included in the new business processes from beginning through fruition.

How to maintain diversity of thought and openness during community discussions (e.g. recent proposal to move seafood processing plants all out to Sawmill Cove Business Center and return Kalian waterfront to STA families whose land was kept after World War II and not given back).

People are against strategic infrastructure investment because they don't think the city should "compete with private business" e.g. a haul-out.