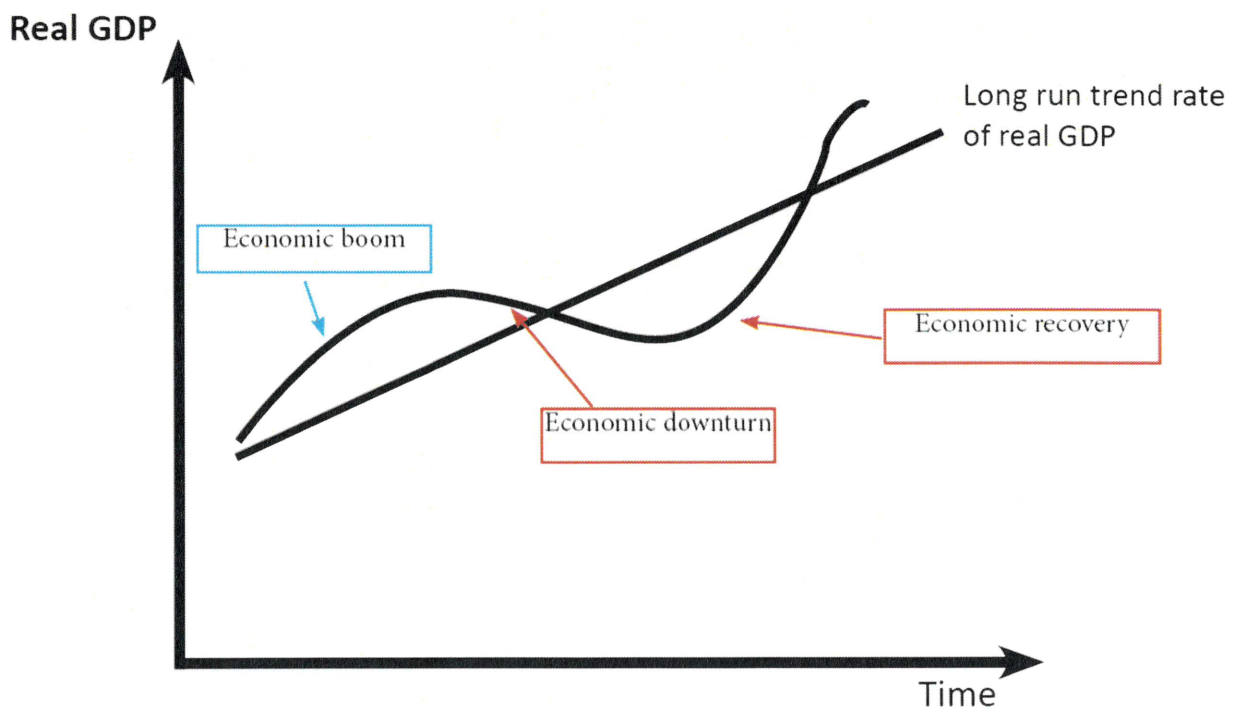




City of Palmer
Board of Economic Development

May 11, 2022



**BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 11, 2022 6 P.M.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
231 W. EVERGREEN AVENUE, PALMER
www.palmerak.org**



CHAIRMAN	Dusty Silva
BOARD MEMBER	Christopher Chappel
BOARD MEMBER	Barbara Hunt
BOARD MEMBER	Lorie Koppenberg
BOARD MEMBER	Ronalee Moses
BOARD MEMBER	Peter Christopher
BOARD MEMBER	Janet Kincaid

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:
CITY MANAGER – John Moosey

AGENDA

- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Pledge of Allegiance
- D. Organization of the Board
 - 1. Election of Chairperson
 - 2. Election of Vice Chairperson
- E. Approval of Agenda
- F. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings
- G. Reports
 - 1. Manager/Staff Report
- H. Audience Participation
- I. Unfinished Business
 - 1. Committee of the Whole: Discuss Resolution 22-001, Railroad Tracks and more effective use of that area, including Farmers Market, Community Stage area and parking (note: action may be taken by the board following the committee of the whole)
- J. New Business
- K. Board Member Comments
- L. Adjournment



Minutes



**Unfinished
Business**



**CITY OF PALMER
BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 22-003**

Substitute for 21-003

SUBJECT: Railroad Tracks Utilization

AGENDA OF: May 11, 2022
March 14, 2022
February 16, 2022
January 17, 2022
January 4, 2021
November 1, 2021

May 11 – Special Meeting Update

Included in the packet is a resolution for consideration. The resolution requests the council fund a downtown study that priorities improvements for downtown through a series of community meetings.W

March 14 Update

Bed members were requested to provide staff with their top five choices of project elements for the railroad right of way. Staff received Three responses. Their compiled prioritized responses are below:

- Community Event Space North of Depot
- Parking enhancements
- Motorized and non-motorized connectivity
- Park & Playground expansions in RR ROW
- Walkability and accessibility
- Branding and signage recognizing Palmer’s history
- Additional public restrooms

January 3 Update

Included in the packet is BED Resolution No. 21-001 that was passed and submitted to the City Council for consideration of improvements that would promote economic development in the city. Also provided are past studies that support railroad right of way improvements that improve the quality of life in Palmer. Excerpts from the Area Wide Plan and the Palmer Urban Revitalization are included to show efforts that have been made to increase the utility of the corridor. Both studies can be found at <https://www.palmerak.org/community-development/page/economic-development>. Support for railroad improvements can also be found in the Palmer Comprehensive Plan and the University of Washington plan.

The city has applied to the Alaska Railroad to renew the Permit for Grow Palmer and Shane

Woods Trail. If there any supplemental requests, now would be the time to approach the railroad.

The Parks and Recreational Advisory Board will be getting an update to the BED's progress on the railroad discussion at their January 6 meeting. The Parks and Recreational Advisory Board has not actively participated in the railroad discussion and will be presented similar information. A joint meeting should be considered if the BED wishes to pursue improvements further.

A strategic plan will help guide discussion and should include:

- Railroad corridor concept for elements/improvements
- Comprehensive approach to parking and circulation
- Preservation of historically important items, concepts, or architectural features
- Pre-approved specialty features the community members or groups can purchase or install
- Discussion and involvement of Planning and Zoning, Parks and Recreational Advisory Board
- Alaska Railroad concurrence

Archived information

Upon completion of the Downtown Palmer Brownfield Area-Wide Plan approval by the Mat-Su Borough and the Department of Environmental Protection, the BED should begin discussion about the economic and community impact of the railroad corridor in Palmer.

November 1 Update

The BED at the July meeting passed a resolution for the Palmer City Council recommending they consider implementation of elements of the Brownfield Area Wide Plan. The Resolution encouraged the city to pursue development and beautification of land within the railroad corridor for public use and enjoyment, now. The BED recognized when Resolution 21-001 was passed that the Alaska Railroad will retain within their existing leases with the city the right to rehabilitate the tracks and utilize them whenever they desire. Further, anything placed in the right of way would need to be relocated with no obligation to preserve or protect by the Alaska Railroad.

The question for the BED is should we pursue a strategy that will encourage development within the railroad right of way that benefits residents and visitors today?

CITY OF PALMER BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Resolution No. 22-001

A Resolution of the Palmer Board of Economic Development Recommending City Council Provide Funding for a Master Plan for the Railroad Right of Way to Implement Elements of the Brownfield Area Wide Plan.

WHEREAS, the purpose of the city of Palmer Board of Economic Development (BED) is to provide research, public input and disseminate information to the City Council to evaluate economic development opportunities and strategies; and,

WHEREAS, unique local events, tourism and recreational opportunities have a significant impact on the Palmer's quality of life and economy; and,

WHEREAS, Palmer has invested heavily in infrastructure, including the Community Center (Depot), MTA Events Center, Visitor Information Center, Palmer Airport, parks, bike paths, pedestrian access and downtown beautification projects; and,

WHEREAS, in 2020 a United States Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield Area Wide Planning Study was conducted for downtown Palmer which outlined improvements that could enhance the connectivity and economic opportunities; and,

WHEREAS, the BED unanimously passed Resolution No. 21-001 supporting improvements in the downtown railroad right of way; and,

WHEREAS, the BED recognizes that the Palmer Railroad branch MP A5.1 – MP A6.7 has been placed out of service by the Alaska Railroad and the branch beyond MP 6.7 is under longer term permit to the Mat-Su Borough for use as a trail; and

WHEREAS, the BED recognizes railroad reintroduction in downtown Palmer will require significant economic investment for reconstruction of the branch MP A5.1 – MP A6.7 and until this investment is made the community would benefit through utilization of this space NOW through a lease or permit from the ARRC and removal of the current railroad tracks; and,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Economic Development requests the Palmer City Council fund a Downtown Concept Master Plan with the assistance of a landscape architect and community meetings not to exceed \$20,000; and,

NOW THEREFORE, IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that the BED supports these prioritized projects that have been identified in the Palmer Comprehensive Plan, the Area Wide Plan – Eastern Downtown Palmer Study, and the Palmer Urban Revitalization plan, including.

1. Community Event Space (North of Depot)
2. Parking Enhancements on Colony Way and Valley Way
3. Motorized and Non-motorized connectivity
4. Park and Playground improvements in downtown
5. Branding and Signage recognizing Palmer's History

Dusty Silva, Chairperson

Brad Hanson, Director Community Development