

# Hopkins introduces Fairbanks development standards

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FAIRBANKS — Borough Mayor Luke Hopkins introduced development standards Thursday aimed at making downtown Fairbanks a hub of commerce and culture.

The standards are the result of the Vision Fairbanks revitalization project, which is backed by the City of Fairbanks, the Downtown Association of Fairbanks and various private interests.

The standards provide a direction for future development in downtown Fairbanks.

“It doesn’t re-zone any property,” Hopkins said.

His measure calls for a retail hot spot district and lists 70 types of land uses meant to “meet the day-to-day needs of workers, residents and hotels that cater to business travelers and tourists,” the ordinance states.

Bars, pull tab joints, tattoo parlors and massage parlors merit no mention on the list, which calls for many of the types of businesses already available downtown, such as eateries, jewelry stores and tailor shops, and a few that are not, such as record stores, pet shops and tanning parlors. The list endorses tobacco shops but not liquor stores.

The ordinance also sets guidelines for building facades, prohibiting frosted, tinted and reflective glass.

“The idea is to create an environment for downtown that’s inviting for people to shop and be there,” borough Planning Director Bernardo Hernandez said. “It’s going to be pedestrian friendly. That’s a key characteristic.”

Officials are hoping the new development standards attract investment to downtown Fairbanks.

Critics believe the overall revitalization plan, which calls for other changes, such as two-way traffic, is a gamble.

An Oregon consulting firm, Crandall Arambula, helped shape the plan. Debbie Ames, the firm’s marketing director, said the consultants’ advice to other cities has paid off.

In Oak Park, Ill., the community opened a pedestrian mall to traffic, helping retailers on that street, Ames said.

In Racine, Wis., the city built more parks, paving the way for an art museum and conference center, Ames said.

Hopkins’ measure was advanced to the Planning Commission and the City Council for input before it goes before the Borough Assembly, whose final approval is needed.

Efforts to fashion a revitalization plan for downtown have been ongoing since 2005, Hopkins said.

