

An aerial photograph of Juneau, Alaska, showing a coastal town built on a steep hillside overlooking a large body of water. A red circle highlights a specific waterfront area containing several large industrial buildings, a dock with a large ship, and a curved road. The surrounding landscape is densely forested.

Subport Vicinity Revitalization Plan

a part of the

City and Borough of Juneau Comprehensive Plan

(Juneau Subarea 6)

April 2003

prepared by **Sheinberg Associates**
Juneau, Alaska

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Purpose and Boundary

As the largest landowner in the subport vicinity, the Alaska Mental Health Trust (AMHT) Trust Land Office (TLO) initiated the subport revitalization project in 1999 in order to develop a plan that would allow it to increase the revenues it generates for mental health programming in Alaska from its valuable downtown Juneau property.

Adjacent landowners and managers including the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ), CBJ Docks and Harbors Board, State of Alaska, Goldbelt Corporation, and Alaska Land and Pier Company joined TLO by signing a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperatively plan and fund the project because each recognized that:

- It was in their own and the community's best interest that area redevelopment be compatible and complementary;
- They wanted to avoid 'piecemeal' development; and
- It was important to ensure revitalization plans included the public infrastructure and amenities needed to implement "big-picture" downtown and waterfront redevelopment goals.

CBJ participants have included the Lands and Resources Department, Harbors and Docks Board, Port Development Committee, and Community Development Department. Occasional briefings with the CBJ Planning Commission and Assembly subcommittees also took place during plan development. State participants have included the Departments of Administration, Transportation and Public Facilities, Education, and Fish and Game. Adjacent landowners whom have also been actively involved in the planning effort include the U.S. Coast Guard and National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA/NMFS). Over the last three years these parties have been cooperating to prepare this plan to redevelop and revitalize the Subport vicinity of downtown Juneau's waterfront. The boundary of the area subject to this collaborative planning process is shown on Figure 1 and area land ownership is depicted on Figure 2.

Support vicinity revitalization will take place over the next 25 years as the public and private sector investments and actions identified in this CBJ Comprehensive Plan Amendment occur.

A. The Comprehensive Plan and Title 49 Amendment Process

Adopting this Plan as an element of the CBJ Comprehensive Plan clearly establishes the type of development that the City and Borough of Juneau desires and will encourage for this area. Simultaneously changing the regulatory code, as needed, will ensure that the City's regulatory regime allows development of the approved Plan's public facilities, marina, infrastructure, open space, and private developments including mixed-use buildings with certain design and use features. This gives assurance to the community that the anticipated public sector amenities and infrastructure will be developed or retained. It also establishes the rules for development in this area, which benefits the private sector by giving developers reasonable assurance that planned growth and facilities can proceed smoothly.

Plan adoption will set the stage for the CBJ (alone and with other public, private, or non-profit partners) to participate in infrastructure improvements, and will allow the private sector to begin pursuing funding and development opportunities.

This Plan identifies a sequence of public sector improvements that develop a marina, enhance pedestrian and vehicle circulation, provide community open space on the waterfront including a park and public plazas, expand Centennial Hall Convention Center, and develop other public facilities such as a multi-tenant museum-visitor center-native cultural center, and on the 'land' side of Egan, a parking garage(s). By making the public improvements outlined in this Plan, the City is "signals" to the private sector that it is serious about encouraging private sector investment in this area, which in turn encourages that investment to occur.

Figure 1

Figure 2

The challenge is that while this Comprehensive Plan Amendment provides surety for both the community and the private sector on how the area will develop, for development to occur over time the Plan must also be flexible enough to respond to changing community and economic conditions over the next 20 years. The overall goal is to facilitate desired growth and development in this area, as envisioned in this Plan.

1.2 Plan Development Process

Eight key steps were accomplished to develop this Subport Vicinity Revitalization Plan.

❶ **Review all plans, goals, policies, or regulations specific to this area to identify those that must or should be considered as area redevelopment plans proceed.**

These include (in chronological order):

- CBJ Docks and Harbors Department, *Waterfront Strategic Analysis and Improvement Plan*, Step 1, August 2001
- CBJ Docks and Harbors Department, *Master Plan and Tactical Plans*, July 1998
- Capital City Vision Project: *Juneau's 20/20 Vision for Downtown*, 1997
- Juneau Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, 1997
- 1995 Update to *CBJ Comprehensive Plan*, November 1996
- Juneau Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan, July 1996
- State of Alaska, *Juneau State Land Plan*, 1993
- Juneau Coastal Management Plan (JCMP), 1992 JCMP
- JCMP Downtown Waterfront Plan, 1986
- Juneau Municipal Code (JMC), Title 49 - Land Use chapters on Zoning (§49.25), Bonus Procedures (§49.60 and Title 4) , Parking (§49.40), Special Waterfront Policies (chapter §49.70), JCMP policies (§49.70.905 through 960)
- CBJ regulations for waterfront leasing at JMC Title 53
- CBJ Docks and Harbor Board regulations at JMC Title 85

Four common themes run throughout all these plans that this Subport Vicinity Revitalization Plan embraces:

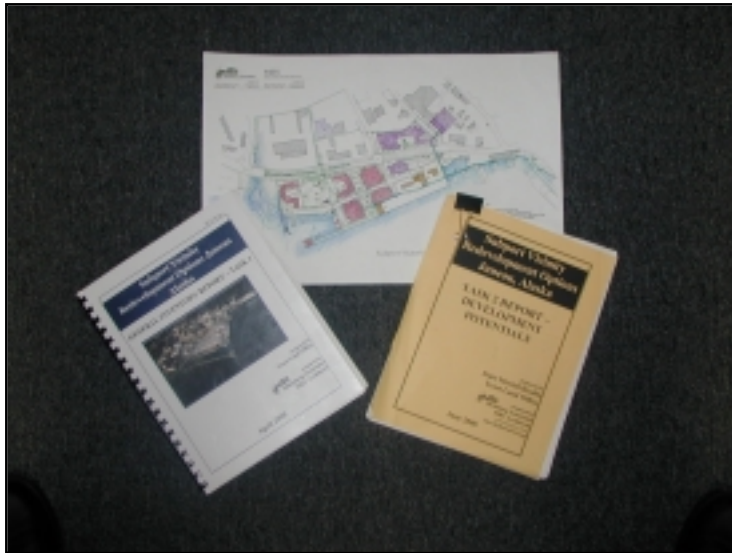
1. Use waterfront space for water dependent, related, oriented, and enjoyment uses.
2. Promote mixed-use development in downtown.
3. Extend the City's seawalk and make links between the waterfront and other pedestrian paths through town.
4. Promote public access to the waterfront.

❷ **Complete a detailed inventory of all area properties and landowner interests.**

This work, documented in the *General Inventory Report-Task 1, Subport Vicinity Redevelopment Options, April 2000, Sheinberg Associates*, groups current subport vicinity users into four types: planning and transportation interests, office/government users, those using the “working” waterfront interests, and the civic-cultural-recreational and visitor-oriented waterfront users.

Key issues, concerns, and opportunities that each group sees for the area are highlighted. This Subport Vicinity Revitalization Plan is built upon this understanding of area landowner, manager, and user's interests.

**Work Products from Phase I
Subport Revitalization Project,**



❸ **Complete an analysis of factors that could influence which redevelopment options are feasible, practical, and economic.**

This work is documented in the *Development Potentials-Task 2 Report, Subport Vicinity Redevelopment Options, June 2000, Sheinberg Associates*. This report looked at general economic trends and factors specific to the downtown waterfront that could influence the success of development in this location. Growth opportunities exist in maritime transportation, seafood, and visitor industries. The latter includes mooring cruise to mid-size vessels to yachts in the area, developing attractions that draw pedestrian or tour traffic from the large cruise market, and development that caters to the convention and meeting market. Other opportunities could take advantage of the area's telecommunications infrastructure. In summary, the analysis suggested that Subport development be mixed-use – including housing, draw on the

Subport's linkages to the waterfront, Centennial Hall, the Alaska State Museum, and fiber optic technology.

- ④ Prepare Subport Vicinity Redevelopment Concepts (June 2000) and host stakeholder meetings to review and refine the concepts (September 2000-June 2002).

Scenes from Subport Public Meetings



Meetings with stakeholders to review and refine the Plan included the following (note that all meetings were open to the public):

- with Project Cooperators on September 15, 2000, January 31, 2001, September 2001, February 8, 2002, June 12, 2002, and January 16, 2003.
- with Docks and Harbors Board, its subcommittees, or the Port Development Committee on February 18, 2000, April 27, 2000, December 4, 2001, February 21, 2002, August 29, 2002, January 9, 2003, and April 15, 2003.
- Others Meeting with the Planning Commission on October 23, 2001; Meetings with the Juneau Economic Development Committee on September 7, 2000, January 11, 2001; Meeting with the Assembly Planning and Policy Subcommittee on August 28, 2000.



- ⑤ Work with CBJ Community Development Department to identify a method for adopting and implementing the Subport Area Revitalization Plan under the CBJ land use regulations.

In August – October 2001, Sheinberg Associates and CBJ Community Development Department staff met to complete this task. An October 2001 memo summarizes the preferred method, which is to adopt this Plan by ordinance as a component of the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, the CBJ will change zoning and other land use regulations as needed in the Subport redevelopment area to effectively implement the Plan. This method was reviewed with and accepted by the CBJ Planning Commission.

⑥ Conduct a Public Involvement Process to Further Refine the Subport Area Redevelopment Concept Plan.

Sheinberg Associates and project cooperators hosted public meetings/workshops at Centennial Hall on February 12, 2002, and September 26, 2002. Both meetings were advertised on the radio, in the newspaper, and with flyers. Approximately 75 people attended the February meeting, which included breaking into four roundtable discussion groups on the topics of:

- Motorized and Non-Motorized Transportation, Transit, and Parking;
- Commercial - Retail - Light Industrial - Housing Opportunities;
- Public Facilities and Open Space; and
- Dock and Moorage Opportunities.

Approximately 50 people attended the September meeting, which focused on reviewing changes made to the Plan in response to earlier comments and regulatory changes that will be needed to ensure the type of development desired is what gets built and is also economically viable. After each public meeting materials were posted on the City website and an extended public comment period offered.

⑦ Conduct a series of work sessions with the CBJ Community Development Department.

At these work sessions aspects of the Plan and the regulatory tools needed to accomplish it were discussed, including a new Mixed Use Waterfront zoning district, changes to the Table of Permissible Uses, a bonus point system to add building height in certain areas in exchange for pedestrian oriented design and use features, parking requirements for the district, and how development permits will be reviewed in the district.

⑧ Submit the Subport Vicinity Revitalization Plan as a CBJ Comprehensive Plan Amendment, which includes regulatory changes needed to implement the Plan, to the CBJ for public hearing and adoption.

This Plan was submitted to the CBJ for review and adoption April 21, 2003.

2.0 PLANNING CONTEXT AND VISION

Consideration of the area's natural assets, community planning and design goals, landowner's interests, and public input during the review process, all shape this Plan's Development Vision. This section lists the areas intrinsic assets and identifies Support District revitalization design and planning goals as a prelude to a statement of the Plan's development vision.

2.1 Capitalize on the Area's Assets



Good planning takes advantage of and builds upon an area's natural assets. Some of the Support area assets that help shape this revitalization strategy are:

The area is on the waterfront, a natural feature to which people are intrinsically drawn.

The idea of area **redevelopment is supported by the community** – There is common feeling that there is a “higher and better use” for the area than the run down wood building, dilapidated fences, and outdoor storage there now.



This is the **only site of significant scale remaining in urban core of Juneau** – large enough (particularly with fill) to achieve full mixed-use development with public spaces.

The site is **very visible**, about 12,000 vehicles per day drive past it every day.

The area is ¼ mile (5 minute walk) from major work centers.

There are already area **“attractions” already nearby** - the waterfront, the Alaska State Museum, and the Visitors Center in Centennial Hall.

USCG Buoy Tender Olympics at Government Dock Subport Vicinity



There is an **authentic and interesting history** in the area to celebrate - the role of Juneau in WWII and our military and USCG past and present.

Area waters have a **deep draft**.

The area is south facing and exposed, which means both abundant sun when it's out, but also lots of wind and driving rain when it's stormy.

The area is **digitally "wired"** – fiber optic cable is hard-wired to the KTOO building across Egan, with lots of capacity and direct links possible to turn into opportunities.

2.2 Planning and Design Goals

Five "big picture" planning and design goals that helped shape the Subport Vicinity Revitalization Plan (Figure 3).

● Create a Gateway to Alaska's Capital, the Downtown, and the Waterfront.

Magnificent vistas of Gastineau Channel capture attention as people drive or walk down Egan Expressway toward town. The Gold Creek Bridge, just past the big bend beyond the Juneau Douglas Bridge is a natural location to create a Gateway that welcomes visitors and residents alike to downtown Juneau, Alaska's Capital. Many communities have gateways that combine sculpture, street art, and signage to signal the entrance to a special part of the community. Elements for the design theme in this area could include the Capital, the waterfront, and maritime transportation (floatplanes, cruise ships, Tlingit canoes, USGC cutters, fishing boats).

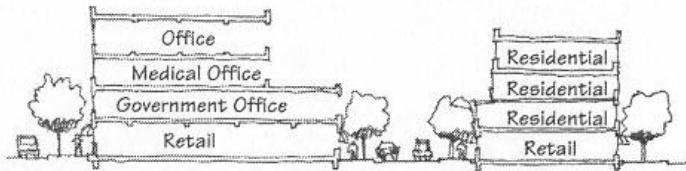


Insert 3

② Foster/Leverage Mixed-Use Development – Enhance Museum, Civic, Cultural and Entertainment Uses.

Revitalization in the Subport District is intended to create a lively, visually exciting mixed-use district for living, working and playing. This should prominently include housing, a key way to maintain vitality in the downtown core. Much of downtown Juneau's current waterfront development is limited by a single focus on seasonal visitor commercial properties. There are less and less attractions for the permanent population of Juneau, and many advantages to be gained by offering a diversity of development.

Typical Building Layout for Mixed Use Development



Mixed use development is pedestrian and transit-oriented. It will combine users of the area's working waterfront and government centers with new residential, cultural, recreational, office, retail uses and a marina together creating a lively urban environment. The area will be the heart of Juneau's civic-arts-cultural-museum and entertainment district, with strong links to historic downtown, the State Capital Campus, hotels, and visitor and cruise ship entry points.

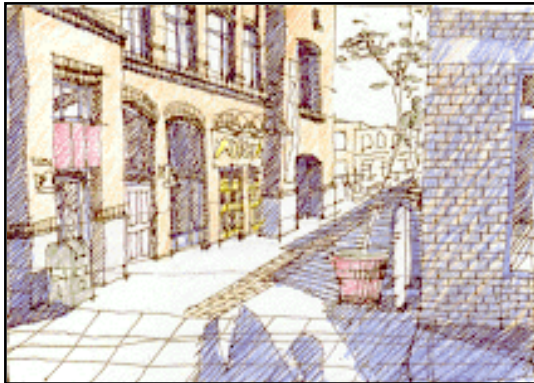


The Subport District will house multi-use buildings with professional offices, commercial, retail, entertainment establishments, and residences. Building first floors will be occupied by pedestrian and entertainment-oriented businesses and services, generally accessible from the adjacent public plazas. Commerce will "spill-out" from these businesses right onto the adjacent plazas where building canopies, awnings, café tables, storefront displays, street furnishings, and planters create interest and activity. Above building first floors there will be a mix of residential and commercial space. All these uses mingle with public facilities that are the heart of Juneau's civic, convention, arts, museum, and cultural life. The working waterfront is also a vital part of the areas' identify, as displays and signage interprets the NOAA and USCG missions in Southeast Alaska and the area's military history.

The area will be home to an expanded Centennial Hall Convention Center with more and larger meeting rooms including a mid-sized (200-500 seats), dual purpose, tiered meeting room and performing arts space. An expanded State Museum and Library is linked by a pedestrian

corridor under Egan Expressway to the Subport area. Other public or quasi-public facilities in this area might include a relocated City Museum possibly in combination with a floatplane-maritime transportation museum, a Visitor Center, a Native cultural center, and a new City Hall.

Varying Building Facades



On the 'land' side of Egan Expressway are two new parking garages, one next to the expanded State Museum-Library, and the other at Telephone Hill next to the State Office Building (where the State Archives is currently located).

Key views of Gastineau Channel will be maintained through view and waterfront access plazas, parks and corridors while varying building heights and urban densities create a city skyline and feel to the area. Dense mixed use development in 3-7 story buildings also ensures that this valuable, relatively high-priced waterfront land is able to sell, rent, and lease, at rates that are not higher than what the market can bear.

Buildings have individuality – there is no unifying design theme. Instead, design continuity is established with street furnishings, building awnings and canopies, lighting, connecting pedestrian links including the seawalk, and art, murals and signage that celebrate the area's rich history.

Park Overlooking Marina in Downtown Sitka

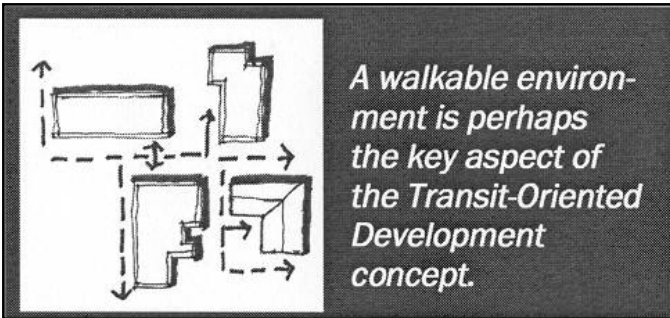


③ Develop a Marina.

The Subport Marina will help meet Juneau's need for private and public moorage and enhance marine transportation. It will cater to mid (30 ft.) to large (100+ ft) sized vessels for which there is a shortage of moorage. The presence of the Marina and its location as part of the Subport District is integral to the success of area revitalization. People are drawn to the water and love to look at harbors, boats, and associated activity. The presence of a marina and dock with an adjacent park and promenade so close to the urban center of downtown, hotels, convention areas, and major work places will draw people to this area as

well as becoming Juneau's main destination for the purchase of fresh seafood.

④ Focus on the Pedestrian Environment – Extend the Seawalk, Link Parks and Public Plazas.



Visually and physically, the Subport District’s seawalk, pedestrian links, and public space will connect and join it together with surrounding areas. A seawalk extension, sidewalks and walking paths will connect from the existing seawalk, and continue through the mixed use retail/office streetscape to the marina and new park. Awnings and canopies will flank buildings that abut public plazas providing continuous covered walking paths, and in places the seawalk will also be covered to encourage use regardless of the weather.

Egan Drive is a substantial obstacle to greater pedestrian mobility in the area, limiting the mutual benefits of greater pedestrian movement between the Subport District, the State Museum, Centennial Hall, the Goldbelt Hotel and other future attractions that straddle either side of Egan. Revitalization will stress multiple pedestrian crossings of Egan Drive, including a broad, well-lit underpass at the Prospector Hotel (already partly in place to accommodate old AL&P pipelines), overpasses, and crosswalks.



After revitalization, downtown will “start” at the Gold Creek Bridge where traffic is slowed due to street and sidewalk design and features such as wider sidewalks, different colored street and sidewalk pavement, street landscaping, crosswalks and a traffic signal at Whittier Street.

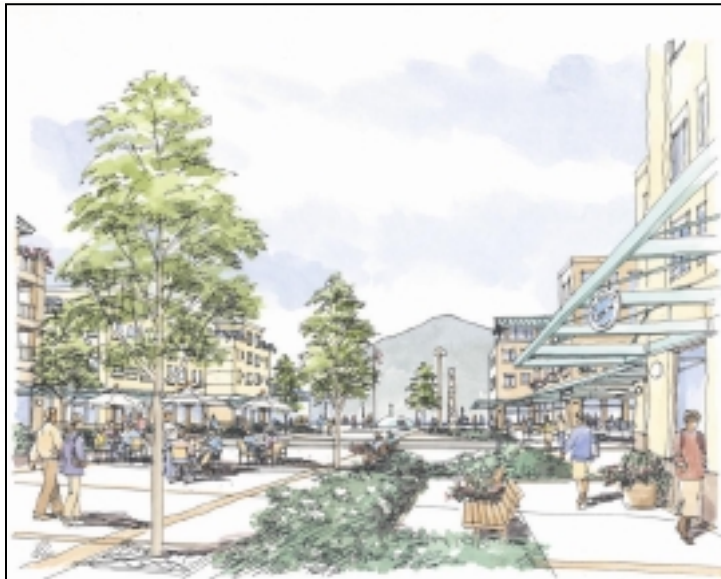
⑤ Create More Public Space on the Waterfront

Area residents, workers, those taking pleasure in the waterfront open space and views, and those seeking local art, museum and cultural entertainment, will set the area’s year-round ‘tone,’ with visits by cruise, destination, convention and other independent travelers adding vitality. An extended Juneau seawalk and other pedestrian paths will tie the area together and link it to our cruise ship area and across Egan Expressway to nearby museums and residential areas, historic downtown, and the

Capital. A public park with picnic shelters overlooks the marina will serve as a community gathering place.

Revitalization in the Subport District emphasizes open space and public access to the waterfront. This Subport Vicinity Revitalization Plan calls for 3.5 acres of combined green park space and adjacent landscaped urban plaza. Public space, parks and landscaped urban plazas on the Subport District waterfront draw the public to enjoy a festive urban waterfront scene. In order to provide public space (which also compliments private development) and still allow private and quasi-private landowners to use their Subport land to generate a profit requires tideland fill between the current Subport building and the Gold Creek Protection Zone.

2.3 Development Vision



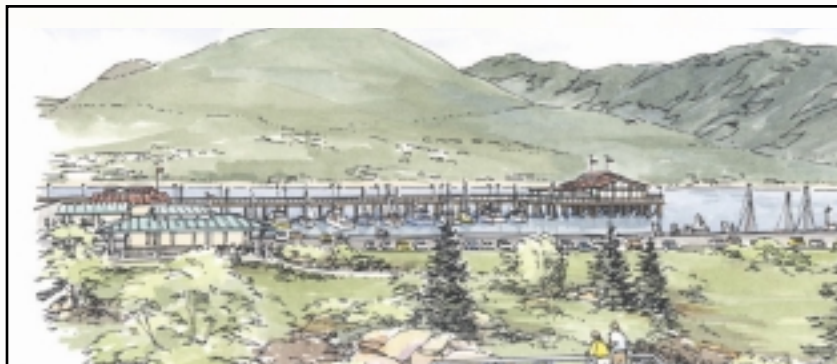
Subport District Public Plaza

The Subport Vicinity Development Vision and this Plan, define the end result that area redevelopment will accomplish.

- **The strategic location of the Subport vicinity and its buildings, streetscapes and character welcome all to Alaska's Capital City.**
- **The revitalized Subport vicinity is a vibrant mixed-use environment that celebrates Juneau, its waterfront, and its vitality.**
- **Buildings have urban development densities, varied heights, balanced by attractive public gathering spaces, and access to the waterfront.**



Expanded Centennial Hall
Convention Center, skybridge



Subport Park overlooking Marina

- Public facilities, festivals and entertainment, that are the heart of Juneau's civic, convention, arts, museum, and cultural life, are concentrated in this vicinity.
- A public park overlooks the marina and serves as a community place. It is linked by pedestrian paths to public plazas, pocket parks, and public facilities within the Subport revitalization area, to attractions across Egan Expressway, and to downtown.
- A Subport Marina and dock with moorage for mid-size vessels and day boats complements adjacent mixed-use commercial, retail and residential development, all of which benefit from proximity to the waterfront and the views of Gastineau Channel.

Subport Vicinity - Now and After Redevelopment

