

**Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting Agenda
Downtown Juneau Fire Hall Meeting Room**

May 16, 2019, 6:00 p.m.

Steering Committee Members Present:

Christine Woll, Chair – *via phone*
Karena Perry, Vice Chair
Betsy Brenneman
Kirby Day
Daniel Glidmann – *via phone*

Laura Martinson
Jill Ramiel
Ricardo Worl
Patty Ware
Nathaniel Dye

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Lily Otsea
Michael Heumann
Meilani Schijvens
Wayne Jensen

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Senior Planner
Tim Felstead, Assistant Project Manager
Marjorie Hamburger, Admin

Assembly Members:

Loren Jones

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:16 pm

II. Approval of Minutes

a. April 25, 2019 DRAFT minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting

MOTION: By Mr. Day to approve, the April 25, 2019, minutes. Ms. Brenneman seconded.

The motion passed with no objection.

III. Review Table of Contents

Ms. McKibben presented slides of the draft Table of Contents and reviewed the content of suggested chapters. She said that staff had developed this draft by referencing the visioning document and organizing the information it contains in a way that is mostly consistent with the two other area plans that have been adopted. However, it was important to note that the downtown plan is very unique compared to other the other area plans.

Ms. McKibben said that working on the Table of Contents now frames the work for moving forward and will help the group decide what information is needed, who to talk to, what focus

groups should be organized, etc. It is the skeleton of the plan document. While not cast in concrete, it is something to start with.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Ms. Brenneman wondered about the “Decade of Downtown Accomplishments”. Ms. McKibben said that a decade seemed like a reasonable amount of time to review and celebrate accomplishments in the downtown area. She had seen a plan from another city that contained such a review, and she liked it so thought that might be of interest to include.

Chapter 2. Implementation/Action Plan

It would be unique to put the implementation plan at the front of the document in Chapter 2, said Ms. McKibben. Other CBJ departments are not likely to spend much time reading the plan in total, but they are interested in the action items it contains. Putting them first seems like a way to have them more easily accessible to users and deciders in the city.

Mr. Felstead had a comment about metrics and suggested not having too many as gathering that data requires lots of staff time, etc. Instead, it is a good idea to select 5-10. Keeping track of metrics is a great way to track the progress of a plan. Another idea he suggested was determining 2 or 3 indicators for each area to check in with over time. Ms. McKibben said that an example is housing, and soon there will be metrics from the Upstairs Downtown project to use. (*note: The Upstairs Downtown project involves taking inventory of vacant spaces downtown that have the potential to be used as housing.*) She suggested committee members keeping an eye out for good metrics that could be used as they move through the chapters.

Chapter 3. Natural and Historic Context

This type of information is often at the front of an area plan, said Ms. McKibben. There is a lot of diversity in neighborhoods or districts that comprise “downtown”, so it may be a good idea to determine some sub-areas within this area. Mr. Felstead said that the sub-headings under each chapter title are things that should be touched upon within each chapter, and these are the big topics that came out of the consultants work. The Steering Committee might have additional ideas of sub-headings to include within a chapter.

Chapter 4. Development, Design and Sustainability

Ms. McKibben said she was not particularly attached to this title but encouraged the committee to have the concept of sustainability woven throughout the whole document. Another useful word is “viability”, said Mr. Felstead. Ms. McKibben said that the concept of “Main Street” would be explained in this chapter but would also come up elsewhere in the document.

Mr. Worl said that in light of the recent incident of a murder downtown, at some point he would like to discuss the scope or capacity in regards to public safety. Page 42 of the report from the consultants contains language that seems to him mostly reactive. He knows that this is

a large issue and is maybe not appropriate to discuss at this meeting, but he would like it to be on the table to discuss at some time. Is there any role or expectation of the alcohol retail stores and bars, for example, and is there a correlation between these establishments with acts of violence? Also public safety is closely aligned with downtown beautification, he felt. Mr. Worl said he wants to make sure this is talked about at some point. Ms. McKibben said she would put it on the “parking lot” document so that it is not forgotten and can be scheduled for examination and discussion.

Ms. Ware said she thought this issue is a citywide concern, not just for residents and employees working downtown. People from other areas do not want to come downtown, and one reason is the perception of an unsafe environment. Ms. Perry noted that downtown is a “zombie zone” later in the night. Ms. McKibben suggested that the committee make arrangements to view a video produced by the Downtown Improvement Group.

Ms. Ramiel said that for this chapter she could not make sense of how these things relate to each other. Ms. McKibben said she can see a relationship but maybe it needs rethinking. Mr. Dye asked to clarify about “Main Street”. Is this a specific program? Yes, said Ms. McKibben, and it is part of viability and development for downtown. Mr. Felstead suggested a different title such as economic development. That is better, said Ms. Ramiel. Ms. Ware said when looking at the subheadings through an economic lens they make more sense. Mr. Dye said that the language needs to be clear concerning “District Heating” to be sure not to promote one business over any others, since there is a business that calls itself “District Heating”.

Chapter 5. Land Use, Neighborhoods & Housing

This is a big topic, said Ms. McKibben. In this chapter, these diverse districts will be described in detail in regards to housing, history, what placemaking can happen. Each one of the districts will be identified by their existing land use designation in the Comprehensive Plan and the Steering Committee will consider if any change is recommended. In addition, she said, this chapter would include any recommended any zoning changes. Ms. Ware asked about the difference between commercial core and commercial. Ms. McKibben said there could be a differentiation between the central downtown business district(s) and commercial activity that takes place in a primarily residential neighborhood, such as in the Casey Shattuck neighborhood.

Chapter 6. Downtown Activities and Tourism

Ms. McKibben said that chapter heading ties in with themes coming from the visioning document. The four topics captured seemed to fit together.

Chapter 7. Parks, Open Space and Recreation

Mr. Felstead stated that the term “placemaking” describes not only create an inviting physical space but includes the types of activities and programming that can happen in those spaces. The two elements of physical space and activities happening must work together to make it a

place where people want to be. From her former work with the Parks & Recreation Department, Ms. Pierce can share a lot of information about placemaking. A goal of downtown Juneau is to be an attraction for all residents of the borough, not just downtown residents. Ms. McKibben said that a specific neighborhood could do its own placemaking to increase the sense of community, bring neighbors together, etc. *Project for Public Places* (<https://www.pps.org/>) is an organization the committee should become familiar with for more information and help with this topic.

Ms. Ware asked if a “plaza” is a specific place. Mr. Felstead said that it is a generic idea.

Chapter 8. Transportation, Streetscape and Parking

Ms. McKibben said that staff did not want parking to create its own life and take over the document. It seems better to contain parking within the topic of transportation. Planners do not solve parking by talking about parking, said Mr. Felstead. It is better to talk about it within a bigger conversation and frame it within a conversation about transportation.

Appendices

Ms. Brenneman had a question concerning Chapter 7. She wondered why there was a question mark after programming and also wondered if programming belongs with placemaking, so should it be located in two different places? Ms. McKibben said she was not sure if the committee would want to include programming in this document. However, after conversation with colleagues she came away feeling that it does hold hands with placemaking, as programming is a way to do placemaking. Ms. Brenneman suggested taking the question mark away.

IV. Review/Discuss Vision Document

Mr. Felstead asked the Steering Committee members about the one or two top things that got their juices flowing when they reviewed the vision document.

Mr. Felstead said that as a downtown dweller without a garden, he was attracted to the bullet point about how to enable folks like himself to have a place to grow food.

Ms. Ramiel said she would join him in that garden. She was surprised that the things listed as achievements, and it jumped out to her the absence of mention that the Assembly has designated significant monies to working on downtown projects. She said she read this as a disconnect between the Assembly and the consultants and, perhaps, the planning department. She wondered how to bridge the gap.

Ms. Martinson said that it always jumps out at her the big need for year-round businesses. There is a lot of talk about it and the conversation seems “on repeat” but then no one comes downtown in the wintertime. She is a downtown business owner and does not know how to address this disconnect. She keeps her store, Caribou Crossings, open but people do not come.

She said she wonders what people in the community really want from downtown businesses. She said she looks forward to hearing more ideas on how to work on this, if it is in fact a goal.

Mr. Day said the topics that most attracted him were vehicular circulation, parking, and getting pedestrians around downtown. With the upcoming Department of Transportation project starting, this will not be easy. Restricting traffic in the summertime down to one lane will be difficult, and access to and from the Rock Dump area is of concern. How will circulation be addressed, he wondered.

Ms. Perry said her number one interest is bicycling. There is a big need for bike lockers, but it is only felt by bikers. If the community wants people to live in downtown apartments, these people need a place to store bikes and keep them secure. She said she has lived in Juneau for 16 years and has never driven a car here. One problem, though, is that there are many laws against biking; for example, a rider cannot take their bike off the bus at the Archive Building. She felt that biking was not much mentioned in the document.

Ms. Ware said that she was pleased about having a separate section to discuss carrying capacity. This topic cuts across many areas like housing, year-round businesses, etc. She was also impressed with Juneau's prioritization for the homelessness issue and providing services for those impacted by homeless. She said she felt proud to be part of a community that rates these concerns as high priorities.

Mr. Worl said one of his reasons for wanting to be on the committee is the transportation issue and moving volumes of people in the summer months. He is a downtown business owner, and it hurts to hear that other community members do not want to come downtown. The circulator concept ranked as number 2, he said, but he thinks this is a huge issue and is glad to have it on the table. He said he was surprised that the sea walk was ranked above that. He also liked the emphasis on access to downtown trails. He thinks downtown trails are undervalued and/or tourists are not made aware that they can easily get to a nature walk from downtown.

Mr. Glidmann said he wants both more bike access and more parking downtown. He said he likes the information on Page 28. The committee is tasked with planning for a large area, and he said he thinks some chapters might need to be broken down into smaller areas, because each area has different priorities. If a parking garage were to be put in the Willoughby District, he would like to see another place having a large area just for bicycles like those that other countries in world provide for commuters. Ms. McKibben said that there was talk during the review of the draft Table of Contents about breaking this large area into smaller areas that need individual attention. Mr. Glidmann commented that he felt the public was not given enough information when they participated in marking the chart about more or less parking downtown (seen on Page 45 of the report).

Mr. Dye said his biggest take-away, conceptually, is the need to separate between downtown and citywide issues. One of these issues is crime and how it relates to the downtown area. He said he felt the need to be aware of the interplay between downtown and the larger

community. People do not come downtown in the summer because it is too busy, and they do not come in the winter because it is not busy enough. For the actions and goals, he said he thinks the committee needs to be focused on downtown specifically.

Ms. Ramiel said that there is a lot of talk about pedestrian access in the document. The Downtown Business Association tried to tackle the issue about shoveling sidewalks more often, especially to attract conventions to Juneau, and was told by the city that sidewalks were not a priority – streets were. Mr. Dye said that he thinks Emergency Medical Services, Fire & Rescue, and Police push that preference.

Mr. Felstead asked if anything else was missing, or if committee members were surprised that something was not in the document. Ms. Ware missed seeing data, she said. When there is a statement that says, “it seemed to be supported”, she wanted to see actual data. The consultants were expected to provide that, said Ms. McKibben.

Mr. Dye said he was surprised that there was little mention of Juneau as the capital. Ms. Martinson said she thought this was based on public perception and the capital may be taken for granted. People were likely more focused on what they were unhappy about. At some point, she said she would love to discuss how to change the hearts and minds of the larger community to appreciate downtown. How can community habits change, like walking a short distance to find easier parking?

Mr. Day said that it was hard to extrapolate real hard data out of the document, because so much of the community input came from perceptions. For example, people like the idea of keeping a store open year round but do not understand the difficulty of that. He found that to be frustrating in the document.

Mr. Felstead said that there was no mention of the AJ mine. It is a presence but not mentioned.

Ms. Brenneman said that she wants to promote reusing and repurposing Juneau’s historic buildings. She felt the Gastineau Apartments building was a missed opportunity; the city should have taken that on after it burned. When people come to visit from outside, they always enjoy the historic nature of downtown, and she is worried that the community does not care enough about the actual buildings. She would like to see incentives for caring for them, not tearing them down and rebuilding. People do not come to Juneau to see the Spam Can building.

Ms. Ramiel said she was surprised to learn how much support there is for the seawalk. Ms. Ware said that her friends in the valley know about the seawalk but do not know about any restaurants, which surprises her.

How Going to Use This Document

Ms. McKibben praised the consultants’ engagement with the public and their creative ways to engage with the community. She said the committee should feel proud of this public outreach, which has set the bar high as we move forward. The document is to be used as a tool as the

plan is created. There are vision statements for the themes, but they can be modified, improved, or rejected by the Steering Committee. The document is a tool, not a “must do”.

Ms. McKibben said that staff needs to come up with other ways to inform the Steering Committee along with this document and so she is looking for suggestions of input committee members would like from other departments, agencies, community groups, etc. In addition, there will likely be more need for public engagement along the way.

Ms. Ware asked if members have specific suggestions about statements in the report, should we spend any time on restating or just move into drafting the plan. Mr. Felstead said that the vision document from the consultants is done and is just one of the guiding inputs. The Steering Committee’s focus is on the area plan, not on editing the report from consultants. Ms. McKibben said that the committee might choose to not put all of the consultants’ actions in the final plan.

Next Steps

1. Come up with an overarching vision for this downtown plan.
2. Meet with focus groups and do a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis to get data as the committee works through various topics.

Ms. Ramiel asked who would craft the vision. Ms. McKibben suggested that staff bring something for the Steering Committee to react to as a more efficient way to get it started. She will do this by looking at other plans’ visions, for examples.

3. Begin drafting chapters. An internal discussion at CDD is needed regarding the best order for working on the subject matter. Staff will bring drafts of chapters for feedback and reaction from the Steering Committee.
4. When the committee gets this far, new “next steps” will become clear.

Mr. Day suggested adding another public participation agenda spot at the beginning of each meeting so any members of the public in attendance do not need to wait to share their comments. Ms. McKibben said she thought this was fine, but as things go on the committee chair might need to limit the public’s time for speaking. Mr. Day wondered where additional people would fit in the room currently being used.

Ms. Ware suggested putting upcoming meetings in the Juneau Empire’s “Today” section. Ms. McKibben gave some suggestions for outreach including the upcoming Home Show. Ms. Brenneman suggested posting the dates to the community calendar maintained by the Juneau Arts and Humanities Council. Staff can also consult with the city’s Public Information Officer, Lisa Phu, for some publicity ideas.

Mr. Dye asked if in process of the chapters, would there be unique items per chapter for each sub-area downtown. He suggested looking at neighborhood boundaries early in the drafting

process to determine how the chapters might change or be defined. Ms. McKibben said she thought this should be on the next steps list. Some of the first things to look at are downtown zoning and conceptual neighborhood areas for the Steering Committee to respond to. Mr. Dye suggested it would be helpful to break areas into residential versus commercial and work along lines of zoning districts, not named neighborhoods.

Mr. Worl will be gone for the June 6 meeting and will not call in. Ms. Ramiel will call in to that meeting.

V. Public Participation - none

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 pm.

Next Meeting Date: June 6, 2019, 6 p.m., downtown Juneau Fire Hall