

BLUEPRINT DOWNTOWN FINAL REPORT

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1. Blueprint Downtown – Executive Summary

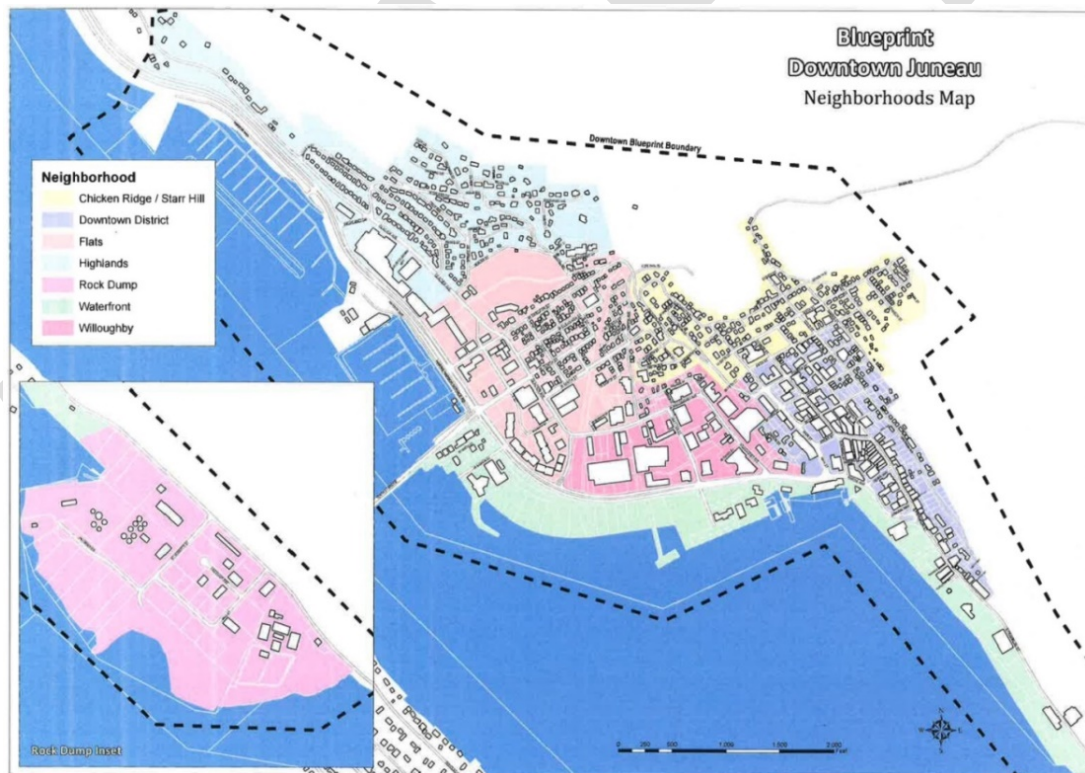
Project Purpose

The City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) is preparing an *Area Plan* for Downtown Juneau to establish the community’s 20-year vision, goals, priorities, and action strategies to guide downtown development into the future¹.

Work on *Blueprint Downtown* started in mid-2018 and is scheduled for completion in 2020. The first stage of *Blueprint Downtown* was completed in February 2019 by MRV Architects with sub-consultants Sheinberg Associates and Lucid Reverie. This first component establishes an overall community vision for *Blueprint Downtown*, which then informs details of the broader *Area Plan* as it is completed.

This vision document builds upon existing plans, augmented with substantial new public input. The goal is to identify a general vision for how downtown Juneau should grow and develop, with detailed backup materials to identify the range of concerns and input.

The completed vision summarizes planning results into nine focus areas that cover the range of issues. Each identifies vision priorities, as well as strategies for cultivating opportunities and addressing challenges, ensuring that downtown Juneau continues to be a place to live, work, visit, and play.



Downtown Focus Area and Neighborhoods

Downtown is broadly defined for this work, including the area from the “rock dump” to the south, and Norway Point to the north.

Vision Study Process

¹ The CBJ recently completed similar *Area Plans* for Auke Bay and Lemon Creek.

The *Blueprint Downtown* visioning process relied upon views gathered at a diverse set of meetings and interactions with a variety of different people who work, live, own businesses, visit, shop and play downtown and are passionate about its future. The visioning process focused on defining current community sentiment on the downtown area, as well as identifying top priorities for the next 20 years.

The *Blueprint Downtown* visioning process had three general phases, each amplified following:

1. Collecting Data, Comments, and Opinions.
2. Creating Focus Areas to Capture and Represent Broad Categories of Comments.
3. Testing and Refining Focus Areas and Establishing Priorities for Future Action.

1. Collecting Data, Comments, and Opinions

The *Blueprint* team used a diversity of outreach techniques to capture a broad cross-section of what downtown users felt was right and wrong with current conditions and what changes should be prioritized over the next 20 years.

These data collection efforts occurred during July through late October 2018, and included an initial community meeting (August 30) that about 120 attended; approximately 400 clip-board surveys of seasonal visitors, business owners and managers, and residents; and comment forms submitted by meeting attendees and submitted via the project's web page. In addition, a few groups conducted "meetings-in-a box" to provide their comments. Efforts also included outreach to social, fraternal, and non-profit groups to host additional meetings, including with Sealaska Heritage Institute, Filipino Community, Inc., and the Historic Resources Advisory Committee. Social media and website updates were ongoing throughout the process for additional comments.

The planning team also assembled information from the Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC) 2018 Alaska State Legislature Satisfaction Survey and the JEDC 2018 (winter) Business Visitor Satisfaction Survey, and collection of short surveys left in local businesses and public venues.

These efforts solicited unfiltered comment from as diverse an audience as possible and faithfully recorded and shared those results. The MRV Team's best estimate is that the data upon which this report is based reflects input from 800 to 900 unique individuals (many of whom provided multiple data points), a significant percentage of the individuals who use downtown.

2. Creating Focus Areas or Themes to Capture Comments

The second phase focused on review of thousands of individual comments and organizing them into categories (labeled *Focus Areas* in subsequent material) of similar topics. Comments covered how people see or define downtown now, what is thought to be working and not working downtown, the desired vision for the future, and what is needed to achieve this vision. As expected, a wide-ranging list of priorities and concerns were offered.

A second public meeting (October 30) was conducted during this phase to present an outline of focus areas and themes the design team was hearing from the community, and possible action items to improve downtown Juneau and achieve the goals. This meeting, with over 100 attendees, used an open house format to allow interactive opportunities to review the emerging focus areas, prioritize potential action items, suggest new actions, and provide feedback on a variety of potential CBJ capital and construction investments for downtown.

During the popular December Downtown *Gallery Walk* another 100 residents visited the Blueprint Downtown display area on the 3rd floor of the Senate Building and registered their opinions on priorities and issues; displays and topics were similar to that of the October 30 open house meeting.

3. Testing and Refining Focus Areas and Priority Direction.

The final phase of the *Blueprint* visioning process used feedback and results from Phase 2 efforts to further refine focus areas, and identifies the most universally-supported priorities for Downtown Juneau moving forward.

To further refine ideas and garner feedback, the MRV team conducted three different community “walkabouts,” where the group focused on two or three related planning themes while walking through different parts of the downtown. This allowed detailed conversations to discuss recommendations and priorities on-the-street with downtown users and residents to gauge opinions and reactions. Approximately 25-40 public members attended each walk-about, reflecting a strong cross section of residents, business interests, elected officials, and Steering Committee members.

Summary material for the entire visioning effort was presented in mid-January 2019 with separate meetings to both the Juneau Assembly and the 13-member Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee to provide an opportunity for both bodies to suggest changes or important steps to address. Several suggestions were made and incorporated in this final report.

A third *Blueprint Downtown* public meeting (January 24) summarized each focus area or theme, offered a vision for each, and priority implementation actions. After each focus area was discussed, a live poll was conducted via cellphone text voting to add more data and gain clarity on the priorities of the 78 residents in attendance.

Moving forward, the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan process will be guided by CBJ Community Development Department (CDD) staff and a community *Steering Committee*. The Steering Committee, a 13-member body representing individuals with a breadth of downtown experiences and backgrounds, was appointed by the Planning Commission in October 2018.

As noted, the Steering Committee participated in the last steps of the *Blueprint Downtown* visioning process, including a detailed presentation of near-final results. This allowed an opportunity to capture Steering Committee recommendations on any missing information and related matters for this *Downtown Blueprint vision* report.

Vision Results for Nine Downtown Focus Areas

From all the community data, meetings’ input, and other outreach, the planning team identified nine broad focus areas for the Downtown Area Plan that most logically capture the range of community concerns and issues. Each of the nine focus areas is summarized below, with a vision statement for each capturing community sentiment. Details for each focus area, including a contextual discussion, implementation actions, and action item priorities are found in the body of this *Blueprint Downtown* report.

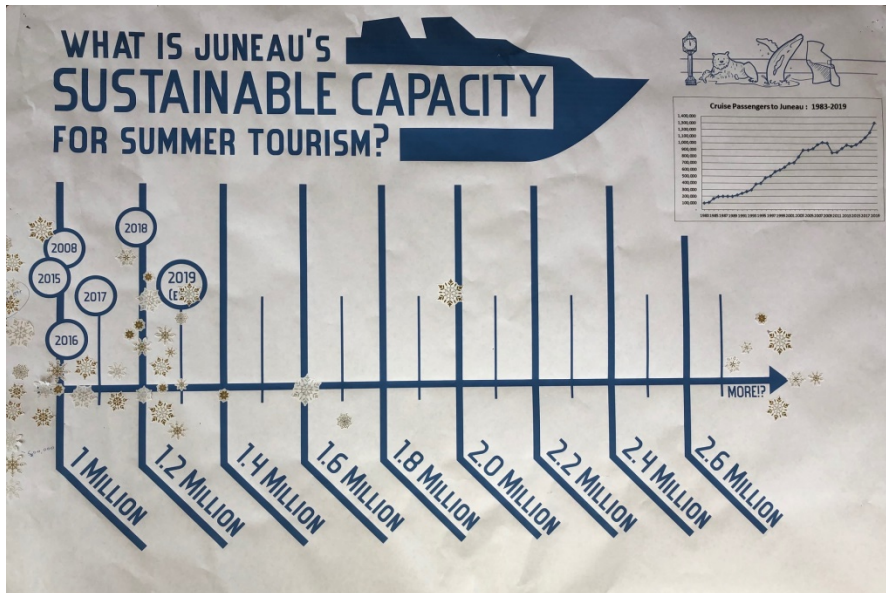
- A. Business Vitality- *Vision*:** Private and public investment downtown should focus on improving Juneau as a year-round commercial center for locals and visitors alike. Increased investment in and by locally-focused businesses will be self-reinforcing, creating greater vitality. Growth

should emphasize authenticity, highlighting Juneau’s setting, history, culture, and scale. Explore incentives or programs to reward businesses that are open year round.

- B. Identify and Culture- *Vision:*** Juneau’s appeal flows from the richness of our diverse cultures, our status as Alaska’s Capital, and the opportunity to showcase our compelling history. The real connection between people, cultures, water, and land provides an authenticity that differentiates Juneau from other communities. Our unique story should be emphasized in all downtown design and planning, building and construction, street improvements, and public art installations.
- C. Housing and Neighborhoods- *Vision:*** Increased housing in the downtown core is a cornerstone of increased downtown vitality, across all sectors. Increased housing will provide more business customers, better ability to attract workers, and greater street activity. New housing will include lower-income and seasonal housing, as well as improved high-end housing opportunities. The CBJ should pursue incentives that focus on rehabilitating underutilized existing buildings and empty lots to provide more housing stock, focused on a variety of income levels.
- D. Vehicle Circulation and Parking, including Bicycles- *Vision:*** Juneau downtown vitality and growth is critically linked to improving the vehicular movement through the downtown core. Given the limited space for roadways, and competing needs for pedestrian and cyclist flow, innovative ways to provide passage for critical buses, trucks, and automobiles will need to be implemented. A “Circulator” system to easily move pedestrians across the downtown core is a highly supported and critical step to reduce the number of vehicles on the street, as well as downtown parking demand.
- E. Pedestrian Access and Experience- *Vision:*** Pedestrian routes should continue to be improved to reduce summer congestion and flow smoothly and safely, linking the waterfront and various downtown destinations. Expanded canopies and improved streetscapes will enhance comfortable and safe routes in all weather conditions and times of the year. Pedestrian enhancements and congestion management should explore pedestrian only street areas for special activities and events. Greater ease of pedestrian links between the waterfront dock areas and downtown streets should be a focus.
- F. Sustainability- *Vision:*** Juneau has the opportunity to showcase best sustainable practices, focusing on a transition from fossil fuels to renewable hydroelectricity for heating and transportation. Mitigating cruise industry impacts, with steps such as increased shore-side power, is a key element of this shared focus on enhancing renewable energy. Sustainable practices are critical to maintaining our area’s intrinsic beauty, quality of our setting, and working with our local resources.
- G. Carrying Capacity- *Vision:*** Juneau must continue to balance the increasing demands of rapidly rising seasonal visitation with those of local residents. For Juneau to retain its enviable position as a top cruise destination, logistical challenges and impacts must be mitigated to retain the quality experienced by visitors. A key element of this success should focus on the authenticity of the experience in Juneau and sense of place.
- H. Natural Environment, Recreation- *Vision:*** The location and scale of Juneau offers an unrivaled opportunity to emphasize our setting between the mountains and sea, showcasing an unspoiled and pristine environment. A community and business focus on our setting, coupled with an authentic experience, can make Juneau a leading example of a community embracing residents and visitors ranging from “8 to 80” in a deeply beautiful place. A key community priority is the

waterfront, with needed steps to enhance recreation assets and opportunities along the waterfront for both visitors and residents, including families.

- I. **Public Safety- *Vision*:** Public safety and downtown vitality will improve hand in hand. The CBJ should continue to emphasize on-street neighborhood policing. This step, along with increased housing for the homeless, housing opportunities, and year-round uses, will improve real and perceived public safety, increase community pride, contribute to our community's health and wellness, and enhance economic opportunity.



Carrying Capacity Chart from Gallery Walk Respondents

2. *Blueprint Downtown*- Project Purpose and Process

Background

The City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Community Development Department (CDD) is developing an Area Plan for downtown Juneau to guide development over the next 20 years. The CBJ recently completed similar Area Plans for Auke Bay and Lemon Creek, though each was arguably simpler in scope and impact than that anticipated for the *Blueprint Downtown Plan*.

Organizational ground work for the *Blueprint Downtown Plan* began in early 2018. MRV Architects, with sub-consultants Sheinberg Associates and Lucid Reverie, were retained in August 2018 to prepare a Vision for the *Blueprint Downtown Plan* in collaboration with CBJ CDD.

This first vision stage was intended to identify broad community sentiment, and refine it to help define and guide the more detailed Area Plan. Work on the *Blueprint Downtown* visioning process occurred from August 2018 through February 2019. Mid-way through the initial *Blueprint Downtown* process, the Planning Commission appointed a Steering Committee to assist the CDD to prepare the *Blueprint Downtown Plan*. Each person on the 13-member Steering Committee has links to the Downtown Juneau area, drawing from business, personal, environmental, and cultural perspectives. The Steering Committee will guide and approve the Downtown Area Plan over the next 12 to 18 months until completion in early 2020.

Members of the Steering Committee were able to participate in two of the three public meetings and town “walk-about” thematic tours. A working meeting between the MRV planning team, CDD, and the Steering Committee occurred in January 2019, before the final public meeting and study completion. This process allowed the Steering Committee to understand the *Blueprint Downtown* visioning effort, help shape the emerging themes and vision, and request modifications or improvements to areas where more information or focus was required.

Process

The visioning process had several parallel goals. The first goal was depth and breadth of input. The process was structured to obtain substantial input from across the community, using different outreach mechanisms. The outreach process included advertised public meetings, on-line polling, social media links, outreach and participation with community organizations, comment boxes across town, in-person polling of residents, visitors, and merchants, neighborhood walks to discuss ideas on the ground, and formal milestone presentations to the CBJ Assembly and *Blueprint Steering Committee*.

A second goal was that the process be interactive and dynamic. Each of our meetings and public interactions were intended to be both fun and informative, working to create a sense of engagement and community spirit. Related, it was important to establish public confidence that their input was appreciated and was being used as the study moved forward.

As a third goal, it was important that the analysis and review - the evolution into the “vision” report - be well-documented and transparent. The validity of the study, and willingness of participants to provide their energy and insight, both flow from this careful refinement and presentation of the outreach results.

The first meetings and outreach were intended to focus heavily on listening to the community and facilitating methods to capture as much comment and thought as possible. As the *Blueprint Downtown* visioning process moved along, meetings and outreach included a blended presentation that identified

emerging themes and focus areas for comment, as well as provided opportunities for more raw input of concerns and suggestions for future improvements.

By the final stages of the visioning process, thematic focus areas were well-established. The priority for the public engagement process then shifted to finding consensus on vision language for each area, cementing an understanding of planning details, identifying and prioritizing potential implementation actions to achieve the desired vision and outcome, and implementation priorities.

At the final public meeting, the important step of testing public support of potential fiscal priorities was added. In addition, several polling questions dedicated to levels of support for different funding strategies. Each of these topics is included after the nine Focus Area summaries.



On-street surveys to seasonal visitors and merchants helped capture the “outside perspective.

3. *Blueprint Downtown* -- Relationship to Previous Studies

Blueprint Downtown provides a refreshed and current vision of downtown Juneau development goals and sets a new 20-year planning horizon. To provide appropriate background and context, CDD asked the *Blueprint Downtown* consultant team to provide a general review of studies from the last 20-30 years that addressed downtown Juneau development and growth. The intent was to capture, at a general level, the planning priorities from the recent past and identify what has been accomplished, and what remains to be accomplished.

Both the MRV Team and CDD spent time reviewing previous plans and studies related to downtown and further consideration of these studies will feature in the *Blueprint Downtown Plan*. One important take-away from the review is that general downtown planning goals have not fundamentally changed. Broad priorities in the past, for instance, focused on improved business vitality, the need for housing, and balancing resident versus seasonal visitation needs, are still priorities today. Further, many specific goals and actions identified in previous studies have been met, and that these successes increased the capacity, livability, and features of downtown in many positive ways.

One interesting example (detailed later in this report) is that a poll on cruise industry impacts from almost 20 years ago shows that public sentiment on Juneau's carrying capacity for visitation was about the same as the public perceives at present, even though the raw numbers of visitors have approximately doubled. Clearly, substantive improvements have been made over time.

The following is a summary of planning objectives from the past and actions that have occurred to implement and achieve them.

Tourism, Tourism Capacity

1. Tourism Best Management Practices created and updated regularly.
2. Wayfinding signage from AJ docks to S. Franklin to Willoughby District (underway now).
3. Waterfront wayfinding signage ~ 10 years.
4. Crossing guards in summer on Egan and S. Franklin.
5. 2 new visitor information buildings (underway now).
6. New Port Office/Customs and Border Protection office on the dock.
7. Built 2 new cruise ship docks, that in addition to facilitating larger vessels and better security and on/off passenger loading, also opened up light, air, access to water and docks.
8. Deck-over project on waterfront and Marine Park created more pedestrian space, and cruise ship tour bus parking.
9. Marine Park and Lightering Dock renovations.
10. Investment in private-public fish handling system to make commercial waterfront use and tourism compatible. Successfully led by Taku Fisheries.

Business Vitality, Design

1. New State Libraries, Archives, Museum facility
2. Capital Building renovations accomplished including safety and aesthetics
3. Area covered by Parking Management PD1 and PD2 zones (reduced parking required here for developers) extended
4. Created fee in lieu of parking ordinance and began collecting revenue to assist with future parking construction, management and transit.
5. Applications allowed now for parking waivers outside PD1, PD2 and "fee in lieu" zones.

6. Removed vegetative coverage required for mixed-use; reduced it for public bldgs.
7. Created rules for expanding accessory apartments in 2014 and have continued to liberalize rules to encourage more dwellings. Most recently changed rules to allow apartments on undersized or nonconforming lots, and reduced required parking from 2 to 1.
8. Code changes by both the State and Juneau now allow economic incentives via property tax reductions, and others. Juneau can now participate in cash incentive programs, given State and CBJ code changes.
9. Created an Alternative Development Overlay District (ADOD) in downtown to better recognize existing and historic development patterns, minimize need for variances, and facilitate renovation and redevelopment of downtown housing. The ADOD will sunset in August 2019, unless extended. The Blueprint Downtown area plan is working to create new zoning in lieu of the ADOD that more accurately reflects the existing nature of the Downtown housing development.
10. CDD and Assembly working on small area plans -- have completed Auke Bay and Lemon Creek, Downtown now underway.
11. Canopy ordinance adopted in 2004.
12. Design guidelines for historic district in 2009, updating it now.
13. Now accomplishing inventory of vacant residential units in downtown.
14. Renovation of First National Bank Building into apartments and businesses (PRIVATE SECTOR).
15. Demolished Support Building (STATE).
16. Sealaska Heritage Institute created a major new cultural attractor downtown (PRIVATE SECTOR).
17. Beautification of Manilla Square.
18. Accomplished a majority of the 2004 Waterfront Plan recommendations, including the following built components: The 16-B cruise ship dock reconstruction, Overstreet Park, extending the Seawalk from Taku Oil dock to Merchant's Wharf, and from north side of Gold Creek to Overstreet Park. Work still needed to finish the segment from AJ Dock to Taku Oil dock, and from Merchant's Wharf to Gold Creek.

Housing

1. CBJ at times gives accessory apartment grants, mobile home grants
2. Full time Housing Chief Housing Officer position created and filled. Completed Housing Action Plan.
3. Density was increased from 18 to 30 units in LC, and from 18 to 50 units in GC.
4. Housing First built, providing homes for 32 chronic homeless. Housing First Phase II under design for 32 additional units.
5. CBJ has provided a downtown temporary warming shelter for winter homeless survival in the old Public Safety Building. That building is slated for demolition, and the CBJ is exploring options to continue a winter temporary warming shelter program.

Transportation

1. Bike lanes added to Glacier Hwy.
2. Widened South Franklin sidewalk, added stylized lighting, incorporated public art.
3. Constructed downtown Transit Center and Parking Garage.
4. Improved Marine Park.
5. Widened Main Street sidewalks, added street trees, vegetated medians.
6. Canopy requirements have improved pedestrian shelter, at least one half of shops under canopy now.

Public Art, Green Space, Parks, Recreation

1. All-season turf field abutting Marie Drake and Augustus Brown Pool.
2. Public art along waterfront: lighted bollard sculptures, Tlingit design glass on covered pedestrian shelters; flag/whistling railings, and Overstreet Park whale fountain.
3. Native design motifs have been incorporated in new sidewalk and street reconstruction in the downtown core.

Environment, Energy

1. Adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2011 and the Juneau Renewable energy Strategy in 2018 with strong goal to obtain 80% of energy needs from renewable resources by 2045.
2. 2009 Juneau Unplugged – temporarily reduced electrical consumption city wide by 25% in response to a powerline crisis.
3. Received grant funds from FEMA to update avalanche and mass wasting maps for the downtown area.
4. Electrical cruise ship plug-in pioneered. CBJ initiatives underway to expand plug-in capability.
5. Electrical vehicle charging stations installed downtown, and funding for two electric buses in place.
6. Harborview Elementary School renovations designed to LEED-certified standards.

4. *Blueprint Downtown* - Details of Public Involvement and Input

A. Data Results from Surveys, Comments, and Interviews

An ongoing priority of the *Downtown Blueprint* visioning process was to facilitate maximum outreach and input, across the broadest possible network. Although additional data and input was incorporated by the team until the end of January 2019, the majority of data and data interpretation was processed and interpreted in mid-October so it could be used to clarify and re-enforce emerging themes and action items before the October 30 public meeting.

The exception to this was new information provided by community “walkabouts” conducted on three Saturdays in January, and the polling results from the final public meeting on January 24, 2019. That additional data is incorporated in the final report recommendations.

Data gathered included the following:

- 300 public participants from three public meetings (with attendance of 120+, 100, and 78).
- 426 online comment surveys, and emailed comments.
- 318 Interviews with seasonal visitors, mostly cruise ship passengers, on the street.
- 56 “nightlife” interviews, with individuals socializing downtown later at night.
- 46 interviews with downtown merchants and vendors.
- 130 participants in a Gallery Walk booth, similar input to Oct 30 meeting.
- 40 participants from “meetings-to-go,” or facilitated community group meetings.
- 55 responses to comment forms left in businesses downtown.
- 105 participants in three January theme-based walking tours (with many written comments and reflections).

This total data resulted in about 6,000 comments when sorted by individual topic. The best estimate is that the data reflects input from 800 to 900 unique individuals a significant percentage of the individuals who use downtown. Many individuals provided multiple data points. In addition, we also reviewed and used information from the Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC) 2018 Alaska State Legislature Satisfaction Survey and the JEDC 2018 (winter) Business Visitor Satisfaction Survey.

B. First Public Meeting

A fast-paced public meeting on August 30 at the Juneau Arts and Culture Center was attended by more than 120 people. Small table groups provided ideas on a desired 10-20 year vision, with concerns and desired improvements captured on a wide range of topics.

Wide-ranging discussions occurred at each of eight “Topic Tables” on downtown. Participants self-organized to participate at two tables, with quick prompt questions to identify top concerns and suggestions from every audience member. Topics were broken into the following initial content groups:

- Housing
- Traffic, Transit, and Parking
- Business Vitality and Well-being
- Residential Neighborhoods
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Movement
- Seasonal Visitors and Carrying Capacity
- Design, Culture, Identity/Values, Place-making
- Family-Friendly, Features, Open Space, and Recreation



Public Meeting participants at the JACC

Hundreds of comments were collected and assembled from the meeting, providing substantial initial data on community priorities and observations. This led to a revised thematic summary, better reflecting the range of issues raised from the public. For instance, Public Safety and Sustainability both emerged as distinct topics, in addition to the initial suggested categories.

C. October 30th Public Meeting

Blueprint Downtown hosted a public Open House on October 30th at the Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall from 6:30 – 8:30 pm. Over 100 people attended this lively meeting, walking around the room at their own pace and completing the activities on various topics.

The team used the comments received prior to the Open House to create these 10 activity stations, with participation structured as follows:

- Eight “Focus Area” Stations. Each had draft goal statements and 15-20 possible action items.
 - At each station, participants received three stickers – one to vote for their top priority, and two others to place on their next most important priorities.
 - At several of the stations there were some “pop-outs” where people could register ideas on very specific questions.
- Spend CBJ Money. Attendees each got 10 pennies to “spend” how they wished among 10 jars that represented different CBJ investments.
- Draft Downtown Vision Statements. Here, each participant was given 2 stickers and invited to vote for the vision statements that were most important to them. They could vote for two or put both their stickers on one, unlike at other stations. If they had suggested edits or amendments they were welcomed to write them on a sticky note and place them on the poster as well.




Glimpse of October 30 Open House


October 30 meeting top results: Out of 125 possible actions divided among eight theme tables, a few rose up to the top as the most important concerns and solutions. Each of these actions received at least 40 total votes or got at least 15 “this is my highest priority” votes. These priorities were:

- Opioid addiction, housing, and services for Juneau’s homeless population
- Completion of the Seawalk
- Increasing business vitality
- Electrifying public transit including a new downtown circulator as well as plugging cruise ships to shore power
- Creating more affordable housing

Mirroring the top priority action items, when each person at the meeting was given 10 pennies to spend however they wanted among 10 options, the jars with the most pennies (100 or more) were for:

170  **Services and Housing for Homeless:** Provide funding for increased services and housing with the goal of eliminating homelessness in downtown Juneau.

140  **Fund the Seawalk Completion:** A critical gap exists in the Seawalk between Merchant’s Wharf and Gold Creek. Fund property acquisition and construction to complete the Seawalk link

115  **Fund new Affordable Housing:** Either funded by the CBJ directly, or through a public/private partnership, construct additional new Downtown Housing. Housing would be focused on year-round vitality, and cover a range of rents.

114



Fund Electric Circulator Buses: To alleviate Downtown congestion, create a “Circulator” bus system that runs continuously through high-pedestrian seasons, linking the South Franklin tram area, Transit Center, and Willoughby District/ SLAM. (Circulator might work in conjunction with a new parking garage).

Full results for each theme and public interaction are included in the appendix to this study.

D. Gallery Walk Open House

The Blueprint team, along with CDD staff, organized a public booth for the popular community *Gallery Walk* event in early December. Easy-engagement materials from the October 30 public meeting were set up and show-cased, including “pop-up” questions to gauge sentiment on seasonal visitor carrying capacity, and the “pay with pennies” station where individuals could vote with their ten pennies on preferred potential CBJ capital improvement projects.



The booth was very successful, with 130 participants. It also was thought to capture a different audience than that which usually attends evening public meetings, with more emphasis during *Gallery Walk* on families, and residents from other parts of Juneau venturing downtown for the evening.

Results from this process were integrated into the final results for the October 30 meeting, including fiscal priorities and sentiment concerning carrying capacity, among other results.

E. Thematic Walking Tours of Downtown

Three downtown walking tours were conducted on successive Saturdays in January 2019. Each walk was organized to take about an hour, and focused on 2-3 focus area themes which were particularly relevant to different sections of downtown. All three walking tours were popular with 25-40 attending including members of the Assembly, and Blueprint Steering Committee.

People were quite pleased to be able to see and discuss different planning issues with their attendant choices, complexities, and opportunities in the field. Each walking tour ended with a coffee break to warm up and debrief. Some written comments were collected, and are located in the Appendix.

- **Tour One: Business Vitality, Housing, and Public Safety.** The walking route looped through the traditional downtown core, with stops along Front Street, Franklin Street, the Tram Plaza, North Franklin, and Seward Street. Discuss positive effects of having cultural institutions located in the business district. Should we encourage more to locate downtown (such as UAS or other tribal organizations)? Discuss winter housing and safety in the area. Legislative housing seems logical; however complaints around safety may be a deterrent.

- **Tour Two Vehicles, Parking, and Pedestrian Experience.** It also captured portions of South Franklin, with a focus then on docks and the connections for pedestrians and vehicles. A particular emphasis was placed on the difficult pedestrian links between the walking dock area, and onto Seward Street, Main Street, or the wharf. Discuss potential for circulator bus, summer links across town. Potential closure of Front Street or Seward Street for pedestrians only? Is a temporary street shutdown like “First Friday” a positive model?
- **Tour Three:** Juneau’s working waterfront – Must it be gated, barricaded, and hidden from view. Opportunities here in Indian Village to better understand Juneau’s Tlingit history and better integrate this as part of the Shoreline Arts & Culture District. (CCTHITA staff). Current and new JACC, economic & cultural role of arts in Juneau.

F. Final Public Meeting, January 24, 2019

The final public meeting was held at Centennial Hall, with 78 participants. By the final meeting, thematic categories and a range of potential action items were generally well-established. The list was expanded from eight to nine, adding a separate category for *Carrying Capacity*, rather than group this broad topic under Sustainability. This suggestion came from the Steering Committee in feedback during their January update presentation.

At the meeting, the priority for the public input shifted to consensus on vision language for each theme, cementing an understanding of theme details, potential implementation actions to achieve the desired vision and outcome, and identification of potential implementation priorities and revenue sources.

The meeting was structured with detailed information and background on each thematic category, and a review of previous identified vision statements and action items. To help assess public sentiment, an active crowd poll was conducted with several questions under each theme, capturing opinion on relative priorities, and preferred implementation steps.

At the end of the meeting, after themes were explored, polling was used to test community opinions on general vision plan priorities, and offer feedback on potential revenue sources for implementing actions.

5. Blueprint Vision Study Results, including Vision and Recommendations

As described previously, the Blueprint visioning team identified nine broad planning and development *Focus Areas* that most accurately captured the range of downtown concerns and issues.

Results for each focus area are broken out more explicitly in the following sections, with additional background and detail. Each focus area chapter is organized with *background, vision, action items, and recommendations*.

- *Background* offers a context of community opinion and cross currents that were derived on each of the themes.
- *Vision statement* reflects the aspirational goals articulated for how Juneau works toward the future best solution.
- *Action items* were developed directly from public comments received in our data collection phase of the process, and then prioritized by the public by individual voting. Audience polling was used in the final public meeting, diving a little deeper into public priorities and perceptions.
- *Recommendations* are the final “vision” results suggested by the team for use by the Borough and Steering Committee moving forward with details of the Downtown Area Plan.

To explain *Action items* and that process more fully, the individual items were not vetted by the team for reasonableness or appropriateness (unless clearly egregious). After reviewing the database, the top 10-12 potential action items for each theme were simply listed for the public to consider, then The public “voted on” potential action items at the October 30 meeting through the use of stickers to denote their preferred items within each of the thematic categories.

Interestingly, in some cases the action items were mutually opposed (i.e., create more parking, create less parking). The full reading of such responses in the appendix is recommended to get a broad picture of the responses.

Focus Area A: Business Vitality

Background

Business vitality in the downtown core is a perennial focus of downtown planning as was true for the Blueprint process. This issue is deeply enmeshed in the question of summer visitation versus year-round stability. The growth of South Franklin seasonal visitor shops has offered both wins and losses for Juneau, and created a substantial community dialogue on what future growth patterns the community should embrace.

In general, the majority express that too much seasonal-only development has occurred with a substantial erosion over time in the overall well-being of the downtown due to off-season “darkened” street life and vitality, and loss of year-round reasons for locals to embrace downtown.

Although there are many positive aspects of Juneau’s burgeoning summer visitor season, the over-accommodation of seasonal businesses (whether actively pursued by the community or not) has created negative consequences that many residents insist must be addressed. This includes suggestions to limit types of commercial activities such as caps on the number of jewelry stores, the imposition of extra taxes on shops that are only open in the summer, incentivizing year round business investment and activities, or preventing conversion of additional parts of town to seasonal stores.

While such active steps seem to be a minority opinion, there is a strong ground-swell sentiment that an appropriate balance has been lost, and that Juneau needs to be much more intentional moving forward to insure that the equally valid goals of year-round economic vitality are guaranteed by our planning, regulations, and tax policies.

Much public comment centered on positive steps to emphasize and cultivate the strengths of downtown in business opportunity. These included an understanding of our enviable walking scale, uniqueness of setting, and year-round benefits as Capital City.

To this end, there was a strong consensus that downtown Juneau could capitalize on greater redevelopment potential with some of the underutilized building stock and undeveloped parcels downtown, possibly through CBJ tax relief, creating a winning solution to greater utilization.



Front Street becomes a lively pedestrian street-market during a First Friday event.

Vision: Private and public investment downtown should focus on improving Juneau as a year-round commercial center for locals and visitors alike. Increased investment in and by locally-focused businesses will be self-reinforcing, creating greater vitality. Growth should emphasize authenticity, highlighting Juneau’s setting, history, culture, and scale. Explore incentives or programs to reward businesses that are open year round.

Action Items

The public’s most favored actions relative to Business Vitality are:

- Identify underutilized properties and promote redevelopment through meaningful tax benefits and/or cash incentives.
- Create a multi-vendor marketplace for local businesses, including food trucks.
- Limit number of seasonal jewelry stores downtown.
- Incentivize mixed-use developments, including zoning flexibility to bring businesses into some neighborhoods.
- Require, or strongly incentivize, a focus on year-round local businesses.
- Encourage independent travelers (as they typically spend more time and money locally).
- Explore options, such as a West Douglas deep water port, to reduce industrial truck traffic crossing through Downtown.

The final January 24 public meeting included a cellphone text poll, allowing a finer gradation of sentiment on potential actions to promote economic vitality. Of the 78 attending, by almost a 2:1 margin, the most preferred action step was to provide more housing on upper floors of buildings. This was followed by four actions with similar votes: tax incentives for businesses to stay open year-round, more events, festivals and conferences downtown, more support for start-ups which are typically owned by locals starting businesses (e.g., cart vending, pop-up shops, markets), and tax incentives for locally owned businesses. Lowest support was given to penalties for businesses not open year-round.

Recommendations

There is a broad community consensus that greater year-round vitality is paramount for Juneau downtown improvement as we look to the future. This complex issue crosses several related fields, particularly housing and its mutual impact on economic vitality, and the huge shifts in seasonal visitor counts with which the business district must contend.

There is clear public consensus that CBJ actions should focus on achieving greater utilization of older building stock and undeveloped parcels downtown, for both business and housing use. This is a step in the right direction for increased density and vitality. There is strong support for active CBJ policy steps to achieve redevelopment and revitalization, such as use CBJ tax abatement incentives.

Focus Area B: Identity and Culture

Background

A great source of optimism concerning the development potential of downtown Juneau relates to the opportunities available to further amplify our unique and compelling identity. Our status as Alaska’s Capital, our geography, our history and cultures, our picturesque setting, the walkability of downtown making Juneau a very accessible port of call, all give Juneau a strong hand to create a unique and marketable identity unlike any other location.



A Blueprint Downtown walking tour group discuss regional Alaska Native arts and culture.

An interesting result from interviews with seasonal visitors is that frequently the visitors have a more profound and fresh sense of what Juneau offers than the residents, who are sometimes prevented at seeing those strengths with a concern over other deficits.

There has been some expression of frustration with earlier attempts to over-label downtown Juneau as a Gold-rush town, to the expense of some other cultural richness, including Native indigenous values,

and the tapestry provided by other immigrant cultures over time, such as the Filipino community.

There was a lot of commonality in the opinion that Juneau could represent all of these cultural influences, not just one, and draw strengths from each. Significant steps have been taken with establishing Juneau’s cultural identity with new projects like the Andrew P Kashavareff (SLAM) Library and Museum, and the Soboleff Center for Sealaska Heritage Institute. Each facility has achieved an important milestone, helping position Juneau at the forefront of communities which embrace arts and culture².

There were also significant public statements to the value of the arts industry in Juneau, and that this “sleeper” economic driver plays an under-heralded part in Juneau’s economic stability. This, in turn, underpins broad support for initiatives like the proposed new JACC, and greater emphasis on Juneau as the “Northwest Native Arts Capital.”

A negative comparison was frequently made to Juneau’s growth to support the summer visitor, with a promulgation of storefronts and shops which do not represent Juneau, and in fact, could be mistaken for facilities in any number of other ports.

² A new Juneau Arts and Culture Center as well as Central Council’s focus on Delancy Street programming/businesses would complement these existing examples.

Vision: Juneau’s appeal flows from the richness of our diverse cultures, our status as Alaska’s Capital, and the opportunity to showcase our compelling history. The real connection between our people, cultures, water, and land provides an authenticity that differentiates Juneau from other communities. Our unique story should be emphasized in all downtown design and planning, building and construction, street improvements, and public art installations.

Action Items

The public’s most favored actions relative to Identify and Culture are:

- Incentivize year-round activity, with a focus on authenticity.
- Complete the Seawalk across the full Downtown waterfront.
- Define areas that can be closed to vehicles to emphasize pedestrian activities such as art markets, music, dances, and special events.
- Create incentive programs for adaptive reuse and modernization of underutilized downtown properties.
- Integrate art and culture elements, including a significant Alaska Native component, across the Downtown with art, murals, and interpretive panels.
- Prioritize clean streets and well-maintained buildings and infrastructure
- Connect Downtown activity with the waterfront, emphasizing water-front uses such as restaurants and the proposed Ocean Center.
- Complete the JACC expansion

The final January 24 public meeting included cellphone text polling of the 78 in attendance on two questions central to the Downtown Cultural Identify. The first asked a question concerning agreement with the following statement “*Public art, building design, wayfinding signage, and streetscape/infrastructure design should provide greater focus on Juneau’s Indigenous Cultures.*” 48% of those attending strongly agreed with this statement, and another 24% moderately agreed. Only 15% disagreed.

A second question asked about economic support for the proposed new Juneau Arts & Culture Center (JACC). That question, again, illustrated strong support with 71% of those attending either supporting or strongly supporting the JACC. 20% were opposed to JACC funding.

Recommendations

The Seawalk completion was highly-rated in this section (and others) because it is one of the most effective vehicles for both residents and visitors to experience the remarkable beauty and setting of Juneau. All reasonable steps should be pursued by the CBJ to complete the seawalk, and provide the benefits of our proximity to water, as well as convenient links to varied Juneau neighborhoods.

Proposed updates and refinements to the Downtown Historic District Standards should be completed with an eye toward increased breadth and acknowledgment of Native indigenous cultural contributions to the downtown, as well as contributions by other immigrant cultures which have added color and breadth to Juneau’s unique culture scene. All should be represented in requirements from the Historic District Standards.

Many suggestions were made that all Juneau planning and growth should start from the premise of making it 'authentic' to our place and history, with good consequences flowing from that integrity and focus on place.

The City and Borough of Juneau should actively support new initiatives that broaden cultural offerings, and which enliven the palette of downtown offerings. The successful First Friday gallery events could be expanded to emulate the more involved Gallery Walk, including selective street closing, possibly in conjunction with thematic emphasis, drawing from cultural precedents for food, dance, or season.

Finally, the public makes it clear that reasonable investments by the CBJ toward the cultural identity and arts economy of Juneau is both good economic sense, and supports the authenticity and sense of place that permeates public recommendations for capitalizing on this unique asset for Juneau.



Filipino July 4 Parade Entry

Focus Area C: Housing and Neighborhoods:

Background: Along with economic vitality, a focus on downtown housing is thoroughly embedded through past studies of Juneau’s downtown. For many residents and planners, it is the single most important driver of overall community vitality, the factor to which all other success is intimately linked.

Over time, it is clear that the downtown core has lost a significant percentage of the housing inventory demonstrated thirty or forty years ago. Although hard to quantify, it appears that most of the housing loss has occurred across the lower income and middle-income market sector, primarily apartments. This has the consequence of fewer people residing in the downtown core, creating a downtown which is less dynamic and vital, particularly in the evenings after businesses close.

Housing patterns across the overall downtown area also have an unusual asymmetry. While the perimeter neighborhoods of downtown remain popular and highly desirable, a hollowing out of housing in the central core has occurred. The flanking neighborhoods (i.e., the Flats, Starr Hill, the Highlands) have, if anything, increased in wealth and gentrification over the decades, with most homes relatively expensive and in good condition. At the same time, apartments downtown have tended to leave the market due to losses from redevelopment, fire, or simply age and lack of updates.

This has created a situation in the downtown core where many of the older buildings, frequently those with historic merit, have very low (or no) utilization on the upper levels, and where previously a significant portion of apartment housing had been available.



Downtown Juneau, with few housing accommodations

Another new variable is cutting in to the availability of long-term rental housing – that is the proliferation of downtown short-term rentals, including AirBnB, and VRBO. The popularity of this relatively new phenomena provides increased rental income opportunities for some owners, but also tends to reduce long-term apartment availability.

The consequence of overall loss of housing, predominantly apartments, and the lack of new development in this market sector, has created a critical lack of affordable housing downtown. This market sector is a vital piece of healthy housing market, and one that is particularly relevant to downtown Juneau because it is a logical location for more transient and lower-price housing options, supporting both seasonal work force, and younger residents.

Another interesting variable concerning downtown housing is parking supply and demand. Given the scarcity of land for parking, and the potential of new housing to appeal to people without a compelling need for a vehicle, arguments can be made that very low parking standards may be appropriate, if that created more housing inventory.

The CBJ, through CDD, is creating a field-verified data base that more accurately identifies under-utilized building stock in the downtown core. This inventory should provide a critical piece of information as steps are identified to increase housing stock across different market sectors.

Vision: Increased housing in the downtown core is a cornerstone of increased downtown vitality, across all sectors. Increased housing will provide more business customers, better ability to attract workers, and greater street activity. New housing will include lower-income and seasonal housing, as well as improved high-end housing opportunities. The CBJ should pursue incentives that focus on rehabilitating underutilized existing buildings and empty lots to provide more housing stock, focused on a variety of income levels.

Action Items: The public's most favored actions relative to Housing and Neighborhoods, as recorded by the October 30 public meeting, are as follows:

- Create more affordable entry level housing for young people.
- Find a new location for the Glory Hall where it can still achieve its mission to provide food, shelter, and compassion to those in need.
- Create incentive programs for adaptive reuse and modernization of underutilized downtown properties.
- Prioritize year-round downtown housing over seasonal rentals
- Provide an improved safe campground, including services and transportation for the homeless
- Change zoning to accommodate higher residential density in Downtown neighborhoods.

The final public meeting on January 24 including cellphone text polling for the 78 in attendance on a number of related issues. The first included a hypothetical prioritization for downtown properties which could provide more housing. Tied for first were the upper floors of the Gross Theatre Building, the site of the former Gastineau Apartments. Close behind was the lot at 4th and Franklin, across from Mendenhall Apartments. Interestingly, out of seven hypothetical locations, the parking lot at 2nd and Franklin, which the CBJ has explored for housing options, finished last in public priority.

A second text poll gauged sentiment on types of incentives the public felt were appropriate for the CBJ to utilize to create more housing inventory. 60% of participants supported property tax relief, cash, or low interest loans to incentivize mixed-use housing on upper levels. 26% thought the costs should come from a penalty for vacant or underutilized properties. 10% did not support use of incentives.

Finally, a poll was conducted on how short-term rentals (VRBO) should be regulated, if at all. At present, such rentals do pay bed tax. The highest block, at 39%, said STRs should be capped at a fixed percentage of total rental units, with the next highest group at 30% saying they should be left unregulated.

Recommendations:

A preponderance of public opinion agreed that a lack of housing, particularly affordable housing, was a critical impediment to achieving overall vitality and positive growth for the downtown. Furthermore, public sentiment from meetings and online data agree with the perception that underutilized properties exist in the downtown core, and that the CBJ had an appropriate role to play in potentially incentivizing

housing development, utilizing tools such as property tax credits, housing unit rebates, energy or code upgrade rebates, and similar economic drivers.

Initial conversations have occurred with the CBJ Chief Housing Officer on the potential for these goals to align with established CBJ housing initiatives, and the currently in-place housing funds. The consensus is that many of the suggestions are potentially workable, and should be pursued to a next level of feasibility analysis, and potential target programs. As the CDD inventory of under-utilized properties is completed, creating an incentive test program for new housing is seen as a logical top priority.

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Focus Area D: Vehicle Use and Parking, including Bicycles:

Background: This category of downtown planning need was more contentious than most. The issue is that downtown Juneau has a small and limited footprint, with an established street grid and not much room for significant expansion of the street infrastructure. Given the extremely high use of several key streets, and the certainty of more demand in the near-term, the problem will only grow.

The severity of current traffic problems, especially with “bottleneck areas” such as those near the stretch of South Franklin along the library, were obvious to all. One solution that does appear to have captured the public imagination over the last few years is the potential to implement a “circulator” bus system. While the details are unclear, a circulator would be a system, used in the peak summer season at least, that provided a fast and efficient hop-on hop-off utilization to move people without friction across the central downtown core. Stops would be very simple, and include perhaps just three locations, such as Tram Plaza, transit center, and the SLAM.

No other clear consensus on solutions appeared to emerge, with some recommending more incremental solutions (more traffic crossing guards), and others viewing the current pattern as broken, requiring more dramatic steps as we move into the future.



Downtown Juneau with summer vehicle congestion and scarce parking.

Parking is another thorny subset of the streets and transportation theme. This issue, more than most, shows a broad range of opinion. Many believe downtown Juneau provides plenty of parking, especially in comparison to other compact, pedestrian-friendly urban examples. An equal number believe that Juneau’s downtown vitality is critically hampered by a lack of convenient and predictable parking.

Bicycle capacity adds another element of disagreement. To some, greater bicycle accommodation is seen as the clearest method to change the paradigm downtown, with easier cross-town

mobility, lessened parking demand, and a friendlier environment. Others believe that such visions are mis-guided and don’t reflect the car-based reality of an Alaskan city, especially in non-summer seasons. Both opinions have merit, and the solutions are likely to be nuanced over time, with an eye toward what works.

Vision: Juneau downtown vitality and growth is critically linked to improving the vehicular movement through the downtown core. Given the limited space for roadways, and competing needs for pedestrian and cyclist flow, innovative ways to provide passage for critical buses, trucks, and automobiles will need to be implemented. A “Circulator” system to easily move pedestrians across the downtown core is a highly-supported and critical step to reduce the number of vehicles on the street, as well as downtown parking demand.

Action Items: The public’s most favored actions relative to Vehicle Use and Parking, as recorded by the October 30 public meeting are as follows:

- Create an electric downtown Circulator to move people between S. Franklin, Transit Center, Willoughby District, and remote parking.
- Use some of Downtown's vacant lots to add more parking in aesthetically pleasing multi-level parking garages.
- Create Park and Ride lots in the Valley and Douglas for transit and carpools to and from Downtown; incentivize large employers to use.
- Electrify both city buses and tour buses to reduce fumes in Downtown and at the Glacier.
- Provide Downtown bike lockers, bike parking, a bike share program, more bike racks with tools, and dedicated interconnected lanes for bicycling to/from and around town.
- In the long term, relocate AML and industrial truck traffic to an area outside of the Downtown Franklin Street bottleneck.
- Stop investing in parking structures. Redevelop areas now used for surface parking lots, emphasizing transit, car pools, car-sharing, bicycling, and walking.
- Improve Capital Transit bus stops/shelters to better meet year-round needs, including displays that show real time route status, security cameras, and better snow removal.
- Ban vehicles, except the Circulator, during tourist season in defined Downtown areas to allow people to move more freely and create a plaza atmosphere.

Text polling from the final public meeting January 24 included a question that identified seven strategies to reduce Franklin Street bottleneck problems between the Merchant's Wharf and the Archipelago Lot.

For the 78 in attendance, the preferred option, with 26% support, was development of a circulator system, including staging for cruise buses outside of the bottleneck region. This is important to consider in a planning context given that all of the cruise industry bus support occurs in staging areas trapped beyond the bottleneck areas at present. This suggestion is a fundamental new approach to rethink vehicle logistics downtown.

The second most popular, with 21%, was creation of cruise bus staging outside of the bottleneck areas without a circulator. This is telling, with the perception that visitor staging growth must be shifted out of the current focus area, even without the establishment of a circulator. There is a high conviction in the public's mind that the current approach to visitor vehicle support is not sustainable.

The third option was using the Seawalk more extensively as a way to move people linked with the use of bikes, covered golf carts, or other mode of transportation. This may or not prove practical, especially in the short term because the dock/Seawalk structure terminates just before Merchants' Wharf and bottlenecks would be unchanged.

Another interesting poll asked about planning steps that would make people willing to give up their car for coming downtown. Alternatives to cars break out two ways – ride the bus, or ride a bike. Interestingly, a circulator was the top determinant (supporting both bus and bicycle use), followed closely by more and better-connected bicycle lanes. Several issues then related cumulatively to more convenient and practical bus service.

Recommendations:

It is clear that a circulator needs to be implemented. Discussions have been underway at a CBJ management level for 2-3 years about options. Older CBJ buses could be pressed into service immediately, while other potentially attractive improvement, such as the much-requested electric system, was pursued.

From a planning level, a successful circulator system needs to be extremely simple, intuitive, predictable, and efficient. Buses should run on a continuous loop, and not charge for the service – with numerous headaches avoided.

There is anecdotal evidence that smaller “Disneyworld” semi-open slide-in vehicles are more inviting and potentially provide greater total pedestrian movement. Juneau’s street laws do not allow this vehicle type at present. That limitation should be researched and eliminated. The smaller-impact vehicles could also have potential application on the downtown docks, which have enough free width to utilize this alternative, which is certainly attractive, given traffic limitations on the streets.

One of the recommended solutions discussed by the public is the creation of improved bike lanes. While highly attractive as a goal, certain portions of Juneau roadway system are so critically constrained that creation of a dedicated bike lane is simply not possible. This does open the conversation to perhaps more unconventional solutions, such as raised pathways where necessary to get by bottlenecks, including multi-modal alternatives for both bicycles and pedestrians.

Finally, many opinions were offered that more surface parking should be provided downtown, using underutilized property. Others offered the opposite position, that surface parking should be reduced, and that downtown vitality would be enhanced by converting such space to greater-value pedestrian and/or business space.

On balance, it does not appear clear that significant unmet parking problems exist in the downtown core that would prioritize the creation of additional surface parking, particularly if a circulator serving visitors and residents and/or other vehicle reduction alternatives are pursued. Conversely, strong arguments exist that additional parking capacity in the “Willoughby” District, just outside of the urban core, may be very useful in conjunction with a circulator.

Focus Area E: Pedestrian Access and Experience:



(Photo from the Juneau Empire) Juneau youth roam downtown on Halloween 2018, when downtown businesses hosted trick or treating.

Background: Pedestrian needs were a key point of public engagement, with many issues related to current short-comings, and others referencing longer-range, more aspirational goals for the community.

Immediate concerns include congestion and vehicular conflicts in the most critical crossing portions of town – essentially identical to vehicular concerns, which arise from limited street and sidewalk widths which can't accommodate the surging numbers of people trying to use them.

Many of the public seemed to side with the importance of pedestrian safety and comfort, if the choice had to be made with vehicles. Fortunately, there are options for increased pedestrian efficiency, and the potential to use

alternate routes that aren't available to vehicles. Of obvious value is the newly-expanded downtown cruise ship dock, and its partially-complete seawalk extensions.

An extremely high level of response was offered on the value to Juneau from completing the seawalk, and further increasing the capacity of this signature community feature to compliment the assets of Juneau's waterfront setting, as well as move people more efficiently across the town.

A related issue concerned how the downtown core was linked to the surrounding neighborhoods by pedestrian routes. Certain areas, such as Starr Hill, work well. Others, like the general link between the central downtown and the Willoughby District simply do not. Capital Avenue was called out as an example of a very poor pedestrian link which can be readily remedied. The downtown walking tours were useful to spotlight troubling bottlenecks in the pedestrian routes across town, and solicit comments on potential solutions.

Other substantial community concerns were presented concerning year-round pedestrian accommodation and safety. Many were quite displeased with the nature of snow removal downtown, and the burden that placed, in certain areas, on the pedestrian. Related, positive comments were made on the increased implementation of canopies, and the hope that their use became more universal, and in association with increased ADA access. CBJ progress in street pedestrian upgrades in the downtown core were acknowledged.

Also on a positive side, public sentiment showed a high degree of receptivity to increased pedestrian-only use on key central street areas, particularly associated with special events or functions that created a draw for downtown visitation.

Vision: Pedestrian routes should continue to be improved to reduce summer congestion and flow smoothly and safely, linking the waterfront and various downtown destinations. Expanded canopies and improved streetscapes will enhance comfortable and safe routes in all weather conditions and times of the year. Pedestrian enhancements and congestion management should explore pedestrian-

only street areas for special activities and events. Greater ease of pedestrian links between the waterfront dock areas and downtown streets should be a focus.

Action Items: The public’s most favored actions relative to Pedestrian Access and Experience, as recorded by the October 30 public meeting, are as follows:

- Complete the Seawalk from the AJ Dock to Overstreet Park.
- Provide adequate, safe, clean, and well-identified public restrooms.
- Improve and expand sidewalk canopies and ensure that walking routes are accessible and passable year-round.
- Create a pedestrian-only destination area(s) in the Downtown core.
- Add more historic info signage and Tlingit place-name signs along streets.
- Support the creation of more indoor/outdoor dining and shopping experiences
- Provide seating throughout Downtown for pedestrians to comfortably rest and take in the scene.
- Build in more green space, art installations, and pedestrian amenities

Follow-up questions from the final public meeting of January 24 focused on potential steps to make portions of the downtown streets used for pedestrians only, most typically at limited closures or for special events.

For the 78 in attendance, a surprising 93% were in favor of initiating a trial period to study different options for expanding pedestrian street use. Of these options, closing Front Street on First Friday of every month for one year was the highest favorable mark, with 33%. Other combinations with significant support included closing portions of Front Street by itself, or in combinations with Shattuck Way, or the Southerly portions of Seward Street fronting the Soboleff Building.



Example of pedestrian street activities

An interesting anecdotal text poll question gauged the potential of Juneau residents to walk across town: “Would you walk to Whale Park on your lunch break if there were food trucks there?” A full 57%

said yes, with another 25% said maybe. Clearly, this is a population that is willing to walk, and loves to walk along their waterfront, given the choice and reason to do so.

Recommendations: The Seawalk was noted by the public as their highest priority. This was consistent, strong, and premiated across many different venues and categories. The Seawalk was cited in reference to many different benefits, including celebrating Juneau's setting, providing a serence and uncongested alternative to the chaotic street situation.

Related, and an item which should be relatively easy to implement, is to establish better linkages between the Seawalk and the adjoining upland neighborhoods and regions. In many areas downtown, especially along the Franklin Street corridor, Seawalk links work well. However, the potentially critical linkage from the Dock/Seawalk near Merchants' Wharf and the Transit Center is particularly grim. If and when the Seawalk can link across the Merchant's Wharf area, significant urban benefits, starting with enhanced pedestrian linkages, will occur.

Only 7% of all respondents were un-supportive of experimenting with increased pedestrian closures, with a nearly unanimous sentiment from meeting respondents to test ideas for Front Street, and possibly linked portions of Seward or Shattuck Way. This is one of the easiest, and potentially most engaging, of the study planning recommendations.

Data from other urban centers shows that pedestrian-only central core spaces are marked in general by very successful business metrics. The street can be the focus on themed events, with attractions that tend to pull participants from outlying areas. Juneau can expect the same results, if coordinated successfully with activities that validate the expanded pedestrian zone.

Focus Area F: Sustainability:

Background: Juneau has a mining history that is linked closely with clean hydroelectric power, coupled with a much older Native cultural sensitivity, working to balance human activities with our setting and resources. Given the value of our setting, the pristine nature of our environment, and our geographic isolation, the topic of sustainability is certainly critical to Juneau's future.

Given this, many parallel conversations are occurring in Juneau regarding community priorities and actions related to sustainability. The Juneau Commission on Sustainability has an active and growing presence, and a number of initiatives to broadly increase Juneau's sustainability are being explored.

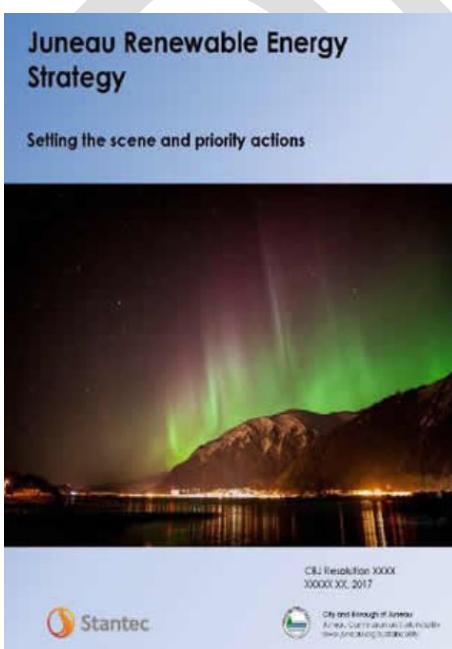
Juneau has incredible assets to develop relative to sustainability, such as our 100% hydroelectric production, and our relatively mild year-round temperatures, making the use of electric vehicles and electrically-powered heat pumps highly economical.

One of the items that polling of seasonal visitors starkly emphasized was their sensitivity to Juneau's environmental setting, and the fact that the popular Mendenhall Glacier was an iconic national symbol. The glacier and a visit to Juneau are co-joined in a national awareness of rapid overall environmental changes, and Alaska's status as an accelerated global warming indicator.

Related, the basic setting of Juneau, both for residents and visitors, presents an unrivaled pristine environmental context, with the incredible proximity of nature and natural forces to our community. Given this, a majority of the public response on the category of sustainability was highly supportive across a broad range of initiatives, making it clear that Juneau should continue to pursue strong environmental goals, and make sustainability a calling card of community identity.

Local citizens of Juneau are particularly concerned with emissions from cruise ships, and the resultant air quality concerns. This has led to a high level of community support for increased requirements for cruise ship connection to shore-side power, eliminating fuel burning while ships are tied up in town.

Other public comments and conversations concerned the related topic of resiliency, especially in relationship to food security, given our heavy reliance on food shipped thousands of miles. Questions were posed for economic and business resiliency, with great public support for strengthened year-round and locally-based business. The year-round economic model is in direct contrast to our increasing summer spike of commerce from the short summer season burst, leaving Juneau vulnerable to change in that industry.



Vision: Juneau has the opportunity to showcase best sustainable practices, focusing on a transition from fossil fuels to renewable hydroelectricity for heating and transportation. Mitigating cruise industry impacts, with steps such as increased shore-side power, is a key element of this shared focus on enhancing renewable energy. Sustainable practices are critical to maintaining our area's intrinsic beauty, quality of our setting, and working with our local resources.

Action Items: The public’s most favored actions relative to Sustainability, as recorded by the October 30 public meeting, are as follows:

- Use electric vehicles for all public transportation including a downtown circulator.
- Incentivize the installation of renewable energy heating systems, such as heat pumps, in residential and commercial buildings.
- Require cruise ships to utilize on-shore power.
- Work with business owners to develop more practical recycling and packaging practices for tourists and locals.
- Develop community bike lanes into a clear network that encourages cycling as a means of transportation.
- Develop a “Food Security” initiative; explore opportunities for local growers and neighborhood gardens.
- Prioritize climate change mitigation and adaptation in all future city planning.
- Support the development of District heating in Juneau’s downtown core.
- Foster greater support for the Juneau Commission on Sustainability recommendations on how to implement adopted sustainability plans.

Text polling at the final public meeting January 24 explored more closely the recent goal adopted by the Assembly of obtaining 80% of Juneau’s total energy needs by renewable resources by 2045. Not surprisingly, public support was high, in general, for this goal.

Public support was equal for converting vehicles to electrical sources (especially the CBJ fleet), requiring shoreside electrical power for all cruise ships, and converting buildings to heat-pump technology.

Recommendations: The significance of sustainability as a critical local goal should be present in the background on virtually all planning and development steps as Juneau moves forward. At an incremental level, this sentiment should play an increasing role across many sectors.

An example (which should be actively underway by the CBJ at present) is the provision of electrical vehicle charging stations, incorporated without fail in all new relevant city scape improvements. Many details still need resolution, such as the type and nature of charging stations, how costs are fairly allocated among the community, and similar trade-offs, but the large decision is established: the charging provisions will be installed.

At a more subtle level, another recommendation that the CBJ should implement is an energy conversion/upgrade program with a specific target for existing downtown properties. This step would achieve many outcomes, including the potential of more affordable housing, as well as more business establishment downtown. Both expansions would occur within the context of a significantly improved building stock which dropped total energy use, and converted such use to sustainable sources such as heat pumps.

Requiring all cruise ships to connect to shore-side electric power is a clear, bold step advocated by many in the community. While simple in principle, and obvious why it garners support, this issue is also more difficult to achieve than simpler small steps like electric vehicle charging stations, or heat pump conversions. Powering cruise ships requires substantial investment in transmission and distribution capacity, for what is only used for relatively little time. The benefits are perceived to be worth it though.

A more general concern is one of basic hydroelectric capacity for Juneau, particularly in the drier winter months with heaviest electrical load. Juneau has already seen limitations on AELP hydroelectric

generation capacity, with relative drought conditions this year requiring AELP to drop many interruptible loads, such as Greens Creek Mine.

However, Juneau has the likelihood of new hydroelectric capacity in the near-term through the completion of the Sweetheart hydroelectric project. Although not a certainty, many of the critical permits and economic thresholds have been met, and construction could proceed in earnest at any point.

If and when Sweetheart hydroelectric capacity comes on line, about 20% additional capacity will be added to the community. This certainly makes new initiatives feasible. Long-term, AELP also has raw assets that could provide additional capacity, with a timeline of five to seven years, best case, after the decision to add capacity.

The community has coalesced around the goal to increase reliance on hydro resources, and to move past our dependence on oil and fossil fuels for heating and transportation. To do so, our hydroelectric capacity must be increased.



Focus Area G: Carrying Capacity:

Background:

The creation of a separate Focus Area for *Carrying Capacity* was a recommendation of *Blueprint Downtown* Steering Committee during a January presentation to the Committee. Previously it was combined with *Sustainability*.

This was a good recommendation; *Carrying Capacity* is separate and distinct, even though aspects overlap with other downtown focus areas and themes. All in all, it likely presents the largest balancing act facing downtown Juneau, with both substantial challenges and opportunities.



The central issue is that Juneau remains the most popular Alaskan cruise destination, and is one of the top destinations in terms of visitor satisfaction of any port worldwide. As such, Juneau is the central element of virtually every Alaskan cruise, and is facing strong and sustained growth in cruise ship passenger counts for the near future.

At this point, the rate of growth is *increasing*, perhaps surprising given the 20-30 year growth pattern already behind us. In 2019, 12% more cruise passengers are expected in

On average, five major cruise ships a day visit Downtown Juneau

Juneau compared to 2018, and in 2020 early estimates are for an additional 3-5% increase above this.

Juneau has succeeded in accommodating this substantial increase through sizable infrastructure investments, including major dock facilities and shore-side visitor accommodations. These physical changes have been accompanied with equally significant incremental improvements, many captured through the “Tourism Best Management Practices” (TMBP) initiative that informs how vendors operate, how buses move through downtown, implemented crossing guards, and similar smart initiatives that have reduced the friction of accommodating ever-increasing numbers of visitors within the finite footprint of Juneau.

Several factors, however, suggest that Juneau can’t simply keep moving the dial into the future, with similar incremental solutions allowing a similar steady increase in total tourist counts as we’ve witnessed in the past two decades. The primary issue is the physical reality of the Port of Juneau, and the logistical realities of moving visitors through the downtown core.

At this point, docks have been rebuilt to best industry standards, such that four of the largest cruise ships can be tied up simultaneously, with a fifth or sixth ship, if in port, anchored up in the harbor and utilizing lighter boats to move people to shore. There is the potential for perhaps one more cruise dock in the downtown harbor, but that will be the finite limit.

Related, the majority of cruise ship shore-side infrastructure and support is located awkwardly on the wrong side of downtown street congestion – virtually all of the arriving passenger support facilities, including bus parking, vendor sales, queueing, and similar support, are on the far side of the “bottleneck” - Juneau streets that must be transited to move visitors to the critically-desired destinations. These destinations, including the Mendenhall Glacier, whale watching, hiking, and similar immersive Juneau wilderness experiences, are the central reason for a Juneau visit, and transportation links to these offerings are simply a mandatory requirement, regardless of other logistical impacts which may be caused.

Recent steps to develop one of the few under-utilized portions of the downtown dock and frontage area, the “Archipelago Property” has just been approved by the CBJ Docks and Harbors and Juneau Assembly. This decision will put more shops, and more visitor bus accommodations on the wrong side of the bottleneck, further exacerbating the concerns with people movement out of downtown.

This context explains the great public interest in the question of *Carrying Capacity*, and the concern expressed by many that visionary new solutions are needed, not just the past incremental solutions that have so far made Juneau visitation numbers supportable, even if not universally popular.

Finally, it is clearly in the interest of both the residents and the cruise industry to solve some of these increasingly intractable logistical questions. Summer visitation, even with its difficulties, provides Juneau with a growing revenue source in otherwise uncertain economic times in the State of Alaska. Similarly, the cruise industry has every reason to work to keep the visitor experience in Juneau popular, given the flagship status of this primary port.

***Vision:* Juneau must continue to balance the increasing demands of rapidly rising seasonal visitation with those of local residents. For Juneau to retain its enviable position as a top cruise destination, logistical challenges and impacts must be mitigated to retain the quality experienced by visitors. A key element of this success should focus on the authenticity of the experience in Juneau and sense of place.**

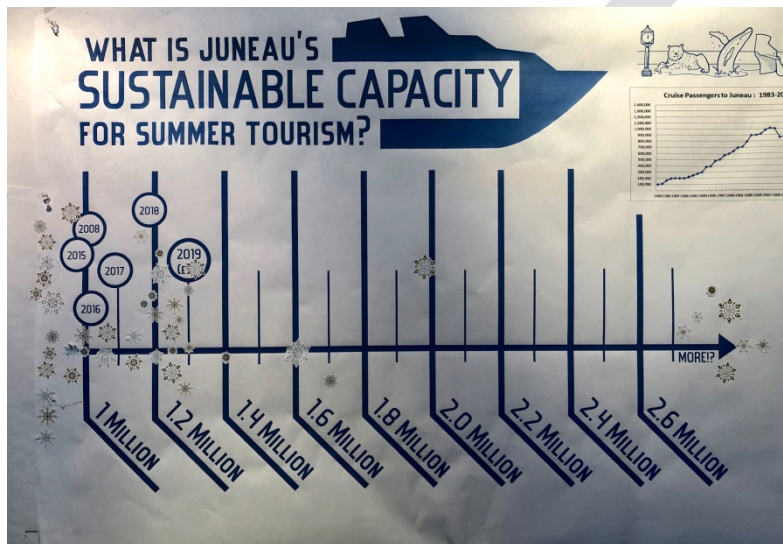
The public’s most favored actions relative to *Carrying Capacity*, as recorded by the October 30 public meeting, are as follows:

- Encourage the installation of an electric downtown circulator to reduced congestion.
- Reduce congestion by developing more infrastructure like Seawalk and street improvements.
- Increase bus staging to locations outside the bottleneck.
- Connect Gastineau Avenue to Thane Road as a bypass.
- Relocate/Rezone Rock Dump industrial area to reduce through-traffic.
- Require cruise ships to utilize on-shore power.
- Determine sustainable visitor capacity and set a limit on cruise ships and cruise ship passengers.

The text polling from the January 24 final public meeting added detail on public perception of *Carrying Capacity*. The following identical question was asked in 2002 and in 2019 - “How do you think the volume of cruise ship tourism compares to Juneau’s capacity to handle cruise visitor volume?”

Question	2002 Result	2019 Result
Juneau has about all the cruise ship passengers it can handle	32%	34%
Juneau has more cruise ship passengers than it can handle	30%	24%
Juneau could handle a few more cruise ship passengers	25%	31%
Juneau could handle substantially more cruise ship passengers	13%	11%

Another polling result concerns the public perception of most critical next steps to address Carrying Capacity. The question was phrased, with a bias, that the CBJ and Cruise Industry would need to work collaboratively on solutions.



This graph was a "Pop-up" opportunity for the public at the Gallery Walk presentation of Blueprint themes and questions. People would place their sticker on the chart at the optimum count. No easy consensus emerges!

The top priorities, with similar scores, were to implement infrastructure improvements to reduce congestion, and agreement on shared funding for visitor's on-shore needs. Hopefully, this top perception of the public for future success now aligns with the recent CLIA and CBJ expression of support to work together on the future allocation of passenger fee funds.

Strong support for funding next extended to creating cruise bus staging *outside* of the Franklin Street bottleneck, implementing shore-side hydro power connections for all ships, and reworking cruise schedules to eliminate high and low-visitation days.

Recommendations:

Results from the community indicate that while concerns exist for Carrying Capacity, and that for many, an appropriate balance point has been crossed, a majority of the community still believes that we can balance increasing seasonal visitation with the success and well-being of downtown Juneau.

However, it is also critical that clear-eyed decisions be made while changes are still possible. Those decisions must address the clearly articulated problems downtown that will, in fact, render increasing visitation impossible to accommodate if not addressed. Foremost among these implementing steps are features to move visitors out of the bottleneck areas – the status quo will not work, especially with new bus staging at the Archipelago development coming on line within two years, which will exacerbate the current bottleneck situation.

Two complimentary steps relative to this are viewed as absolute requirements. The first is the implementation of a downtown circulator, identified as critical in other thematic areas. To be effective to solve Carrying Capacity concerns, such a circulator must be developed in conjunction with new remote bus handling capability, such that people are truly able to bypass the bottleneck area, and vehicular counts through that area are reduced. Increasing counts simply will not work.

To further refine this paired need, such a circulator and support bus staging area is most likely to function well somewhere in the Willoughby District, near other obvious visitor nodes, such as the Andrew P. Kashavareff Library/Museum (SLAM), or the JACC. The footprint for such surface facilities are still available, and the capacity of Egan Drive and other surface streets will support the creation of this infrastructure.

Other secondary recommendations flow from this primary critical step. It will also be important for pedestrian routes to support visitors moving to the alternate bus hub, rather than relying solely on the circulator. Improvements to the Seawalk, also needed to cross the “bottleneck” region at Merchant’s Wharf, thus become critical as well.

With the completion of the Seawalk through this critical downtown juncture, other discussed improvements, such as increased visitor flow along the Seawalk, using bicycles, or other multi-modal transportation solutions, become increasingly possible.

At a broader level, this central solution to move arriving visitors outside of the bottleneck (at least in part) will have substantial secondary benefits associated with stronger linkages of the Willoughby District with other portions of the downtown, increasing the potential of loop visitation downtown, expanding the commercial market district, and creating better linkages across major downtown destinations.

Focus Area H: Natural Environment, Recreation:

Background: Universal among planning participants for *Blueprint Downtown Visioning* was an appreciation of Juneau’s fantastic setting, nestled between mountains and sea. If anything, this sense of wonder was even more pronounced with the seasonal visitors. This setting is a significant public benefit, and it is incumbent on the City to support and fund initiatives that maximize its potential.

Most conversations focusing on Juneau’s natural environment seemed to start with a focus on downtown’s relationship to the water. Again, the absolute priority of continued progress on Seawalk continuity was stressed. In general, sentiments included other details and unique ways for the community to capture more water-connection wherever possible. Popular ideas included expansions at the new Overstreet Park, picnic shelters sprinkled along the waterfront, performance spaces that captured a water backdrop, kayak launch areas, and even the potential for implementing water taxis.

One of the most popular action items, after Seawalk and cruise ship electrification, was to build the proposed Ocean Center on the old Subport site to emphasize Juneau’s connection to the water, and reinforce public use of the waterfront zone

Related, this theme extended to recreation potential for visitors and residents, and how such uses were a natural extension of the incredible variables that were already in place for Juneau, including the sizable harbor frontage, mountains, trails, and adjoining wilderness on virtually all sides. Coupled with this is the relatively compact, walkable Juneau core area.

These assets together make Juneau an ideal candidate to achieve many of the visitation ideals espoused in recent National planning initiatives stressing the test of recreational opportunity for all ages and abilities. This metric emphasizes a focus on communities that are fun and engaging for all ages, with issues like safety and accessibility solved in the background, so that the full opportunity for engagement and play is captured.

Vision: The location and scale of Juneau offers an unrivaled opportunity to emphasize our setting between the mountains and sea, showcasing an unspoiled and pristine environment. A community and business focus on our setting, coupled with an authentic experience, can make Juneau a leading example of a community embracing residents and visitors ranging from “8 to 80” in a deeply beautiful place. A key community priority is the waterfront, with needed steps to enhance recreation assets and opportunities along the waterfront for both visitors and residents, including families.

Action Items: The top action items from the October 30 public meeting included the following:

- Complete the Seawalk across the waterfront
- Require cruise ships to plug in to shore power while in town.
- Support development of the Sub-port. One alternative is the proposed Ocean Center, which will emphasize our connection to the water.
- Electrify the public bus fleet, and incentivize tour groups to use electric vehicles.
- Reduce litter, and improve waste collection Downtown, with improved garbage, recycling, and compost containers.
- Build a park with green space along the sea walk, capturing views and marine experience.
- Develop a recognition program that rewards businesses that participate in compost and recycling programs.

- Identify Downtown Juneau’s most valuable scenic view sheds, and develop guidelines to protect them.

Text polling from the January 24 public meeting was able to focus more closely on the types of water-dependent uses the public felt were most appealing. Top choice among the 78 in attendance was an expansion to the newly-opened Whale Park to add more play space, and even the potential for food carts.



Juneau's identity is linked to the surrounding natural wilderness.

Other popular choices, with nearly identical support include picnic shelters along the downtown waterfront, performance space along the waterfront, and the potential for kayak launch areas. People want true access to the water -- not just the vistas afforded by the raised cruise ship areas.

There was a certain degree of support for other recreational improvements sprinkled across the downtown, such as at Capital School playground, but such uses did not capture the imagination like the water-related uses.

Another interesting poll addressed the community support for plantings and landscaped areas that featured indigenous plants, such as spruce trees, blueberries, devil’s club, and similar species. This was strongly supported by a full 50% of respondents, with another 29% moderately supportive. 8 out of 10 residents want the exterior spaces of Juneau to feel more locally grounded, and perhaps more of an extension of our unaltered surroundings.

Another question that arose from public comment concerned Gold Creek, and the artificial concrete lining through its final route across downtown. With more and more people crossing to this part of downtown, Gold Creek, and the inability of salmon to move up the creek, even slightly, creates a lot of conversation. In polling, 50% of the public strongly supported restoring as much of the creek bed as possible to a natural habitat, including the potential for paths and access to the water edge. Another 18% were moderately supportive.

Recommendations: An important step as part of moving the downtown area plan to completion would be some research on National recommendations concerning the “8 to 80” recreational target initiative. Juneau already has many of these features imbedded in its planning goals, but a more careful analysis would be useful, and may refine steps for successful new projects.

An emphasis of Seawalk completion was central, of course, to this theme. However, it moves beyond just the completion of the Seawalk to add more texture and color. People are interested in the Seawalk achieving a true connection to the active sea edge, similar to what has been successfully started at Overstreet Park.

The ocean edge can include several more active components, including provisions for small hand-powered craft like kayaks and canoes, and special recreational venues, like covered shelters, picnic tables, and even performance venues. Imagine being able to participate in a Tlingit elder telling a story at sunset, with a water back-drop, or a Jazz and Classics string quartet playing in a small acoustic venue along the water and away from aviation noise.

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Focus Area I: Public Safety:

Background: “Public Safety” as a planning issue for downtown Juneau is a broad and somewhat ill-defined theme. In general, the concerns stem from a gradually increasing population of homeless individuals who spend the majority of their time downtown. Over time, as the numbers of homeless people downtown have grown, the perception of vagrancy and inappropriate behaviors have also grown.

Opinions vary as to whether an actual public safety problem exists, but there is general agreement that the behaviour of many vagrant individuals has definitely established an unpleasant experience for large numbers of the public using the downtown, as well as for seasonal visitors.

Given this, merchants in particular have been insistent that more active steps be taken to provide alternatives for the homeless population, and that off-putting social behaviour is really controlled through more active policing and other steps.

To this end, the CBJ and the community have worked together in very successful fashion to create active remedies to many of the underlying problems. Foremost is the funding and construction of “Housing First,” a facility dedicated to individuals with alcoholism and/or co-conditions of mental health, such that they are chronically homeless and at risk on the streets. The 32-bed unit was completed about two years ago, and is functioning quite successfully.



(Photo by KTOO) Downtown JPD Officer Ken Colón addresses a walking tour

In that period of time, downtown Juneau has seen somewhat less vagrancy. More significantly, social service programs for the CBJ, particularly Bartlett Hospital and the Police Department, have seen major reductions in service expenses to cover needs of this population. Based on the success of Phase I, an equivalent Phase II facility with another 32 beds has been designed, and will start construction this summer.

In spite of this major investment, there is still a very strong perception among the public that the downtown remains negatively affected by homelessness and undesirable behaviors. One obvious issue is that several types of individuals and behaviors are at play, and the population served by Housing First

is not necessarily a prime contributor to the on-going issues. Such on-going concerns include opioid addiction, and the social disruption that frequently occurs with that.

Several specific safety concerns were raised concerning the CBJ parking structures, especially the Marine Park Garage, as being a source of active risk, such that workers downtown would not enter the garages without a buddy system. Similar concerns were expressed for dimly lit alleys and stairways that serve the downtown.

Concerns with public safety are influenced by the seasonal variation in population counts downtown. According to officers that work the area, the increasing number of retail shops and businesses that aren't open during the winter months create more opportunity for mischief.

Finally, risk and perception are hard to define precisely. Officer Colon, who works the downtown core, has reported positive trends, and that he has seen the vagrancy and behavior issues downtown improve in the last year or two. However, many in the public, including merchants, do not necessarily share the same perceptions.

Vision: Public safety and downtown vitality will improve hand in hand. The CBJ should continue to emphasize on-street neighborhood policing. This step, along with increased housing for the homeless, housing opportunities, and year-round uses, will improve real and perceived public safety, increase community pride, contribute to our community's health and wellness, and enhance economic opportunity.

Action Items: Top-ranked action items from the October 24 public meeting include the following:

- Create more treatment centers and services for individuals with mental, drug, or alcohol behavioral problems.
- Incentivize building maintenance, and the upgrade of dilapidated buildings and facilities.
- Increase funding for police and safety personnel.
- Increase winter activities in Downtown, thereby increasing public street presence, and decreasing vagrancy.
- Provide improved and attractive sidewalks and street lighting.
- Improve bicycle safety with separated bike lanes.
- Relocate the Glory Hall to a location further away from liquor stores and bars.

Text polling from January 24 included a specific question on individual perception of public safety. Even with meaningful steps forward, such as Housing First, among the 78 in attendance, 42% believed that public safety concerns had gotten worse in the last one to two years. A third (34%) hadn't perceived a change, and only 19% perceived that things were improving.

The final polling question asked what people perceived as the most effective steps to take to improve public safety. The most favored response, by almost a 2:1 margin, was to create more housing and more vitality in the downtown core. Four other issues had roughly similar support, including increased lighting and visibility, increased neighborhood policing, focus on reducing on-street liquor consumption, and relocation of the Glory Hall facility from downtown.

Recommendations: The text polling top priority for a focus on housing and vitality downtown (promote redevelopment) is likely to be the single most effective step moving forward. It is a subtle step, but is probably going to be the most meaningful over time. If significant portions of the business district remain unoccupied and dark through much of the year, no amount of policing will make the area feel inviting or community-oriented.

Concurrent steps to simultaneously reinforce housing, such as building conversation, along with initiatives to support year-round commerce, will be necessary. The CBJ may find that an investment of funds pays a very positive dividend in reduced service costs in other arenas, just as it did with the success of Housing First.

There are certainly other supportive steps which should be identified and implemented, including better lighting in parking garages and alleys, and the potential for increased camera surveillance. But these steps are relatively peripheral to the deeper systemic changes in vitality that should be the first focus.

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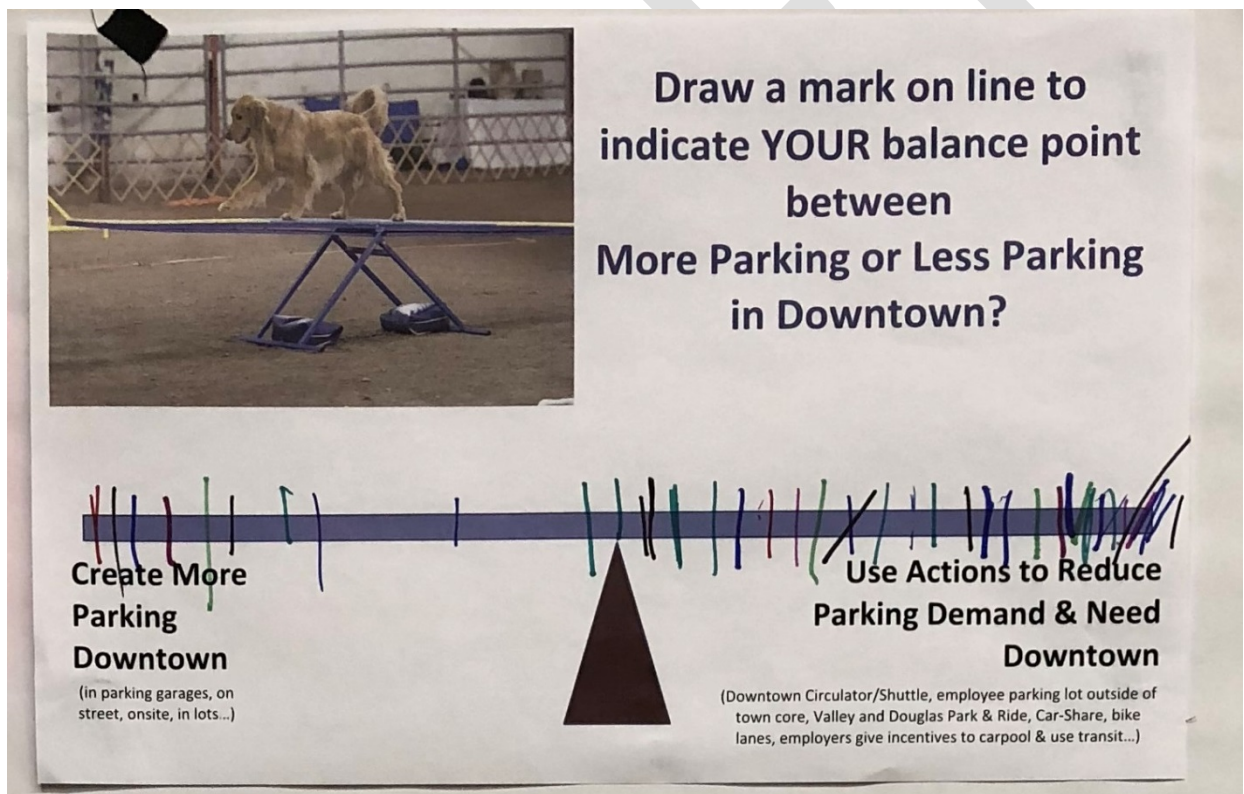
6. Additional Planning Results and Recommendations

Several other broad planning topics that did not fall logically within single “thematic” categories were discussed through the Blueprint Vision process, and received meaningful public input. Two such topics are elaborated following: the question of downtown parking, and protection of public viewsheds.

Parking Balance Downtown: The question of appropriate parking downtown is very difficult. As described elsewhere, public perception varies widely (and passionately) over the need for more or less parking in the the downtown core.

This issue becomes particularly pointed when parallel efforts to increase the housing stock downtown are initiated. Does the new housing stock require parking at standard levels? Reduced levels? Will the surface parking available for business use be negatively impacted by new residents grabbing up the parking?

The following graphic was used in the October 30 meeting to gauge perception on this issue. Somewhat surprisingly, the results from that meeting include approximately thirty marks on the side recommending the reduction of parking and parking demand, with about ten indicating that more parking was needed.



October 30th results concerning parking need perception

A range of written comments were also provided, with more individual detail. At a broad brush level, it is clear that for many in the community, parking in the downtown core is not perceived as a crisis. Many people left comments to the effect that Juneau has to get past an unrealistic expectation of having parking available outside of every business door.

Comparisons to other urban centers (typically larger) noted that greater time and energy was required in securing parking, or making other travel arrangements. In general, the value of the offering or event in the downtown are more important than the absolute convenience of parking.

That observation has value for Juneau. Our actual downtown footprint is very small, with little available surface land. With so many competing needs for that area, as articulated in the Thematic analysis above, most residents understand that using this space for surface parking is an inappropriate use of resources.

That said, other out-lying portions of the downtown, such as the Willoughby District, or near the Bill Ray Center, provide optimum locations to consider the provision of additional parking. In fact, creating additional parking is a powerful parallel development to go along with important steps like the creation of a transit system circulator. Judicious creation of more parking capacity at the working periphery of downtown will be very valuable. Issues like park and ride, or a circulator, start achieving effective status if meaningful external parking can be accessed, yet still allow convenient links to the central portion of downtown.

Viewshed Protection: Another important planning topic concerns viewshed. Juneau has had a relatively slow period of development, as least in respect to new projects in the downtown core that might impact viewsheds, particularly to the water. However, nothing in the CBJ planning requirements addresses viewshed protection, and that topic will be meaningful as the full Downtown Area Plan is developed. Currently, there are no height restrictions in MU zoning, and 45 foot maximum height in MU2 zoning.

A text polling question was included on the topic, asking about the level of agreement with an idea to identify and adopt regs to protect downtown's top "iconic" viewsheds. An overwhelming 81% of the 73 in attendance either strongly or moderately agreed with this idea.

Viewshed studies take time and careful definition is required. Work will be needed to define critical or iconic viewsheds and recognize that not every building or street view can, or should, be protected. Like many issues, public property rights must be balanced with private property rights. Without care, new development that exceeds current ridgeline heights could be stymied. viewshed protection could tend to favor building higher rather than wider in valued viewsheds.

7. Revenue Sources and Fiscal Priorities

Revenue Sources: With a downturn in State revenues to Juneau likely to continue for the foreseeable future, it may be appropriate for the City and Borough of Juneau to increase taxes and revenue to pay for the proposed downtown enhancements.

A text polling exercise asked the public members at the January 24 meeting to evaluate four possible additional revenue sources.

The most popular, with 39% support, was the imposition of an increased summer sales tax. Such a tax would capture a higher take from seasonal visitors and seasonal merchants. Conversely, the sales tax rate would decline in the off-season, imposing somewhat less of an operating burden on year-round merchants.

Close in popularity, with 31% support, was adding a transit tax on commercial vehicles used on the primary arterial streets through the “bottleneck” area between the Merchants’ Wharf and the Tram Plaza. This tax would generate revenue, while helping to discourage demand, and support for more efficient alternatives.

21% of participants supported the use of a Borough-wide dedicated sales tax percentage to pay for downtown improvements. This would be similar to dedicated sales tax dollars that currently are funding the affordable housing fund, for instance.

Least popular, with 8% support, was the creation of a downtown improvement district (LID) where property owners pay an additional tax to fund projects in a specific area, and where they will experience the benefits of the improvement.

Fiscal Priorities: A number of potentially popular and successful capital projects have been identified for the Downtown core development through this study. A text polling exercise at the January 24 meeting asked the audience members to prioritize ten potential projects.

- The most popular public item was completing the full Seawalk from the Rock Dump to Overstreet Park.
- Followed was followed closely by implementing the downtown Circulator to lessen traffic congestion.
- Tied for third ranking was the use of CBJ funds (or tax relief) to Renovate Downtown Buildings to add year-round housing inventory; and provide Electrical Hook-up for all cruise ships.
- The fifth ranked option was somewhat surprising – the potential to Extend Gastineau Avenue to the rock dump, creating an alternate route for both vehicles and pedestrians to bypass South Franklin Street.
- Lower-priority actions included assistance to the Glory Hall for relocation, Restoration of Gold Creek to a functional stream, acquisition of private property to Widen Bottleneck street areas, and bringing up the rear, a new Parking Structure.