

CHAPTER 5. LAND USE, NEIGHBORHOODS & HOUSING

The planning area for Blueprint Downtown extends beyond boundaries previously included in downtown planning. This expanded boundary reflects the surrounding areas' relevance to, and influence on, the downtown core. Land uses in the area are very diverse, including industrial, commercial, residential, mixed use and waterfront areas. The sub-districts reflect this diversity and provide a framework for and recommending actions tailored to their unique needs. This chapter describes the eight downtown sub-districts

Community Visioning Results

One of the nine focus areas established in the Blueprint Downtown Vision Report is Neighborhoods and Housing. The report supports a core concept established in the 2013 Economic Development Plan and the 2016 Housing Action Plan – housing is an important driver of overall community vitality. The Visioning Report suggests housing is the single most important instrument of economic vitality. Housing as economic development is discussed in Chapter 4.

Housing patterns in the Blueprint area have an unusual imbalance. Perimeter neighborhoods, the Flats, Starr Hill, Chicken Ridge and the Highlands are highly sought after, with most homes in good condition and increasing in value. Meanwhile, the central core has lost housing units through redevelopment, fire, or lack of maintenance. The perimeter neighborhoods are primarily single-family units, and core housing is mainly apartments. The Visioning Report also identifies the impact that short-term rentals (AirBnB and VBRO) have had on long-term rental housing. The loss of housing, predominantly apartments, has created a lack of affordable housing downtown. This segment of the housing market is attractive to younger residents, those interested in living a “car-free” life-style, and seasonal tenants (both legislative and tourism based). Making Downtown a great place to live by developing diverse housing options and resident serving amenities will boost commerce, build community, and create 18/365 vibrancy.

18/365 – an 18-hour downtown, 365 days a year

“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.”

Relevant Plans – Summaries useful for context now but move detailed descriptions to an appendix of all plans in final plan document. (Table to be provided later)

2013 Comprehensive Plan

As the overarching planning document for future development in the Borough, the Comprehensive Plan includes a number of economic policies, development guidelines, and implementing actions. Most relate

to Borough-wide recommendations, but many are specific to the Downtown area. The Comprehensive Plan includes guidelines for “sub areas.” The Blueprint planning area is included in sub area 6. The following guidelines are especially relevant to the Land Use, Housing, and Neighborhoods chapters of Blueprint:

1. Preserve the scale and densities of the older single family neighborhoods in the downtown area, including the Casey-Shattuck “Flats” and Star Hill historic districts, Chicken Ridge, Basin Road, Mt. Maria, the Highlands, and the higher density apartments and homes in the vicinity of the Federal Building.
2. Encourage the retention of existing dwelling units in or near the older residential neighborhoods to avoid exacerbating traffic and parking congestion, and to preserve the privacy and quiet of those neighborhoods.
3. Strengthen and enhance the Capitol Complex in the downtown Juneau area. Provide for orderly expansion of state government facilities in the vicinity of the State Capitol and the State Office Building.
4. Develop a cooperative agreement with owners and tenants of downtown buildings, as well as their lenders and insurance, legal, design, and construction professionals, for continuing incremental improvements, such as installation of sprinklers, to those buildings to lessen the threat of structural fires in and near the downtown historic area. Many of the buildings in this area are built with virtually no fire-resistant materials, are built too close to their property lines to allow a fire break or room for fire fighters to stop the spread of fire, and have openings such as doors, windows, and vents in their side walls that would allow fire to spread very quickly to adjacent buildings. Many are built on pilings, leaving a common crawl space that cannot be protected by fire fighters. Apart from the obvious negative impacts on the lives of individuals, loss of the downtown historic district in a fire would have significant negative impact to the aesthetics and economy of the CBJ, as one of its key tourist attractions is the historic character of the Downtown. A fire could spread through these wooden buildings very quickly and, despite the best efforts of fire fighters, probably could not be controlled.
5. Limit development in landslide/avalanche hazard areas; rezone publicly-owned land in those hazard areas as Resource Protection zones.
6. Preserve view corridors of the compact, historic downtown as viewed from the Channel toward the historic districts and their mountain backdrop, and preserve views of the Channel as viewed from public streets in the Downtown, through height restrictions, building orientation, and spacing guidelines along the downtown waterfront.
7. Preserve public access to the shoreline and waterfront areas. Provide for public access, open space/natural areas, and water-dependent and water-related uses on the downtown waterfront via the Seawalk with connections to the existing pedestrian system.

8. Support the establishment of a Cultural Campus anchored by the Alaska State Museum, the Alaska State Library in the State Office Building, the Convention Center, and a new Performing Arts Center at the former National Guard Armory site, inclusive of the area bordered by Gold Creek, Willoughby Avenue, Main Street, and Egan Drive. With Centennial Hall serving as the visitor and convention center and two hotels located within these boundaries, the area is readily accessible both to residents and visitors, and has some stature as the heart of our state's culture. Adding a performing arts center to this "campus" would solidify its position, drawing more people to the area and reinforcing the year-round health of the adjacent business district.
9. Protect and facilitate access to Mt. Juneau and Mt. Roberts trails.
10. Promote mixed uses downtown. Encourage small-scale neighborhood-serving retail and personal service businesses and increased multifamily development within the urban center. Encourage housing, such as Single-Room-Occupancy (SRO) dwellings and/or loft-style housing, over ground-floor retail space in the Downtown.
11. Encourage use of the downtown waterfront area as a mixed use waterfront serving residential, recreational, tourist, and maritime uses, as identified in the CBJ-adopted Long Range Waterfront Plan. Such development should avoid view blockage of the downtown historic districts as viewed from Gastineau Channel.
12. Develop design guidelines for buildings in the Downtown that create a year-round design aesthetic that is attractive and respects the historic and contemporary urban character of the district, particularly for display window treatments, signage, and outdoor lighting of downtown commercial buildings.
13. Provide additional parking and fast, mass transit opportunities, per the downtown subarea guidelines and implementation actions identified in the Transportation Chapter 8 of this Plan, and in the Willoughby District Land Use Plan. Develop a parking management component of a Downtown Juneau Transportation Management Program that could include the following elements:
 - A. Establish a covered walkway network throughout the Downtown.
 - B. Establish a parking policy that will guide planners in determining the amount of parking that should be provided for specific uses downtown. The CBJ government should re-examine the parking requirement for development of residential units and for tourist-oriented uses in the Downtown. In addition to the Fee-In-Lieu-of-Parking program, the CBJ government should provide alternatives, such as participation in a coordinated Downtown Transportation Management Program, for downtown developers whose proposals do not meet on-site parking requirements. Provisions should be added to accommodate use of parking structures, shuttles, and other means to meet the parking need. These provisions should be structured, however, to ensure that they do not

induce property owners to demolish historic structures to make way for higher intensity uses or taller structures.

- C. Modifications in the current management of the existing parking supply should be made to make parking more accessible to patrons of area cultural arts or commercial businesses, and for area residents. These modifications could include shared daytime, nighttime, week-day, and week-end parking.
- D. Development of additional parking supply: construction of centralized parking structures should be phased in and reevaluated on a case-by-case basis. Surface lots can be established on a temporary basis to act as place-holders for potential future structures and provide additional parking while a centralized structure is being developed, and while the initial use of the structure is evaluated.
- E. Management of downtown parking should be centralized, though still coordinated with other CBJ departments, to coordinate for all aspects of the parking program. The parking program should be continually monitored to determine its efficacy. The management of the downtown parking program is an on-going process that needs continuous review and revision. The CBJ government needs to involve the state and federal governments in shared development of solutions, since parking demand created by state and federal offices are a major factor in downtown parking shortfalls.
- F. The CBJ should continue its efforts to develop a convenient transportation terminal near the Downtown. The terminal should provide a transfer station for rapid mass public transit where commuter buses, and possibly a light rail system, connect to shuttle buses for localized distribution. Commuters may park their automobiles at the terminal, and catch a shuttle to the downtown core.
- G. Other methods suggested to ease the parking problem downtown include construction of a light rail or similar system between the valley and town, supplemented with fast, efficient, localized shuttles; and development of high-density mixed use, but predominantly residential, areas that would provide the opportunity for people to live near their work, shopping and recreation needs, thereby significantly reducing or eliminating the need for a private vehicle altogether.
- H. Another suggestion related to parking is to eliminate the parking requirement for certain affordable high-density dwelling units in the downtown core area, such as the small, Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units, other student housing, senior housing and/or seasonal worker housing whose occupants are likely not to own vehicles. This would facilitate the development of affordable housing downtown that, in turn, would create a more dynamic, 24-hour downtown and would free up rental housing elsewhere in the CBJ borough. This concept may not work for all types of dwelling units developed in the Downtown, such as loft housing, family-size housing or artist housing whose occupants

are more likely to own vehicles; those developments may participate in the downtown Fee-in-Lieu of Parking program established in 2006.

14. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Chapter 8, recommends a number of parks, trail, community garden, and stream corridor improvements. Those recommendations include: (a) advertise and schedule public use of the Terry Miller Legislative Affairs Building that is consistent with the office use therein; (b) implement the Cope Park Master Plan; (c) retain the Last Chance Basin in its undeveloped condition and allow for year-round recreation use where there are no avalanche hazards; (d) assist with the stabilization of historic buildings in Last Chance Basin; (e) support construction of a bicycle and pedestrian lane along Thane Road; and (f) designate a downtown community garden site on CBJ property. (note refers to 1996 PR Plan)
15. Consider establishment of an alternative local roadway from Egan Drive in downtown Juneau to the industrial barge terminal and Thane Road that by-passes the South Franklin/Cruise Ship Terminal area.
16. Consider mechanisms to encourage and allow residential development on Gastineau Avenue by eliminating the parking requirement for uses whose occupants or visitors would travel by walking, bicycling or by public transit.
17. Identify historic and cultural resources within the subarea. Projects that may impact historic resources identified within this subarea are to be reviewed by the Historic Resources Advisory Committee (HRAC) prior to issuance of a permit. When new historic or cultural resources are discovered or identified, the Juneau-Douglas City Museum should be contacted immediately for documentation and technical assistance toward preservation and/or curation of the resource. The demolition or removal of historic resources should be avoided and should only occur when no other option for its preservation or relocation to a suitable site exists.
18. Assure a Gold Creek Protection Zone, as shown on Map M, within which no structures or activities shall be allowed except as needed by the U.S. Coast Guard for its purposes, or as allowed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for habitat maintenance and enhancement.
(Gold Creek to be added to Natural Context Chapter 3)
19. When considering applications for building permits for commercial uses within the downtown Juneau area, consider the potential noise impacts of mechanical equipment or patrons on adjacent residential uses. It may be appropriate to establish a noise ordinance for the downtown Juneau subarea where case-by-case analysis, conditions of permits, and enforcement activities are not practical to solve noise problems. (Note – a noise ordinance has been adopted since 2013.)

2015 Economic Development Plan

This is a borough-wide plan that developed eight “initiatives” to foster Juneau’s economic growth. All eight of the initiatives touch Blueprint Downtown in some way, but two in particular focus on

Downtown – “Revitalize Downtown” and “Protect and Enhance Juneau’s Role as Capital City.” Appendix A of the Economic Development Plan is an analysis of “Juneau Land Consumption, Land Use, and Municipal Revenue.” This analysis shows that Downtown Juneau generates the highest property tax return per acre, especially the Historic District. Development in the Light Commercial zoning district produces twice the property tax revenue per acre compared to development in General Commercial Zoning District. The analysis suggests an evaluation of the waterfront commercial property to determine why the revenue per acre is not as high as expected.

2016 Housing Action Plan

This is a borough-wide plan focused on housing. The plan recommends nine primary solutions, with potential implementation steps needed to achieve the recommendation successfully. Adequate housing that is affordable to Juneau’s entire income array is imperative to Juneau’s economic success. All of the potential solutions affect Blueprint Downtown, but one is specific to Downtown – “Develop a Downtown strategy that has explicit housing elements.” Several implementation recommendations are relevant to land use, neighborhoods, and housing:

- Develop an inclusionary housing ordinance and bonus points for workforce and senior housing.
- Evaluate policies designed to encourage new development areas that already have infrastructure.
- Re-zone D18 zoning districts to Mixed Use.
- Evaluate other areas that need to be “up-zoned”: areas that would be appropriate for greater residential density, or for switching from residential only to mixed use zoning.
- Adjust the language in the zoning ordinance to require there be both housing and commercial uses in mixed-use zoning area.
- Consider reducing setbacks and minimum lot sizes for duplex, accessory dwelling units, and bungalow infill units.
- Complete the bonus section of T49 as envisioned by the 2013 Comprehensive Plan.

Willoughby District Area Plan

This is an area-specific plan for the area now called “Aak’w Kwaan Village District.” The Willoughby District Land Use Plan was developed by building upon direction found in other CBJ plans and following a process that included an inventory of current land uses and building conditions, traffic patterns and pedestrian facilities, employee numbers, existing parking spaces, community destinations, current CBJ Comprehensive Plan policies and zoning standards, and the District’s assets and challenges. The plan identifies the district as “the heart of Juneau’s Civic, Arts, and Cultural campus.” The overall emphasis for the district is on mixed-use development with a blend of market rate and affordable housing. The plan recommends design principles, development themes, and development considerations. Only Chapter 5, the Willoughby District Land Use Plan, has been adopted as an element of the Comprehensive Plan (ordinance 2012-14). This chapter recommends design principles, building heights, viewsheds, and a connected street grid.

Downtown

Juneau's downtown district forms the heart of Alaska's capital city. The bustling city center is full of shops, restaurants, performing arts venues, tourist attractions, and state government buildings. Residences surround the business center of Juneau, and apartment buildings mingle with the businesses that dominate the downtown core. Several downtown homes have been converted to offices, and historic buildings mix with their more modern counterparts. This sub-district includes the Governor's Mansion as well as several other historically significant mansions. Downtown Juneau has a good "walkability score". Walkability score is a measure of how friendly an area is to walking. Factors influencing walkability include the presence or absence and quality of footpaths and sidewalks, traffic and road conditions, land use patterns, building accessibility, and safety, among others. Capital City Transit provides access to other areas of Downtown and the rest of the borough.

This subarea also encompasses the nationally recognized Downtown Historic District. This is the only area with adopted design standards and guidelines for development. These standards and guidelines, adopted in 2009, strive to have new development and significant remodels/renovations maintain the integrity of the Historic District. The recently adopted Historic and Cultural Resources Plan recommends updating and revising these standards and guidelines to be clearer and to provide flexibility in their interpretation.

History

The Downtown Sub-district's history is that of the greater Juneau community. The area was originally inhabited by the Auk Nu Tlingits. In 1880, gold was discovered at the mouth of Gold Creek. The Bureau of Land Management surveyed the original town site, creating many of the familiar neighborhoods and streets. The City of Juneau was incorporated in 1900, and in 1906 became the State Capital.

Housing

There are **X** of housing units in the Downtown sub-district. With the current zoning there is a potential for up to **XX** units. In 2019 the CBJ completed the Upstairs Downtown Housing Inventory. (**MAP –how does the study area relate to the sub-district?**) Housing information was compiled from a wide-range of sources and mapped. The project set out to understand and show what the residential unit and population statistics are for the study area, whether property owners are local, what the building uses and characteristics are, and what the regulatory considerations for development are. The study estimated 358 residents, with 181 housing units in 33 buildings. Of the 181 housing units, 11 were being used as short term rentals. Of the 106 buildings on 183 lots, 22 buildings and 39 lots were owned by entities with out of town mailing addresses. (**Add chart building constructed by decade.**) Over half of the buildings are used strictly as business/commercial and six are only residential. The study identified several regulatory considerations for development: avalanche/mass wasting and flood hazard, fee in lieu parking, parking districts PD1 and PD2, Downtown Historic District, and zoning.

Placemaking

Many aspects of placemaking are already evident in the Downtown Sub-district. Events such as First Friday and Gallery Walk are examples of programming that creates a sense of place.

During the summer, the area is active and lively, teeming with tourists and the businesses that support them. Yet many more opportunities exist. Additionally, many residents choose not to visit Downtown during this time of year because of the crowds, and most businesses on South Franklin Street are shuttered during the winter months. Many of the recommendations in this plan will implement placemaking. Placemaking is discussed in detail in Chapter 6. **(SC do you want to make recommendations for specific project downtown – sidewalks etc?)**

Placemaking is the art of transforming public space into quality places in which people want to live, work, play, and learn.

Land Use

Most of the sub-district is zoned Mixed Use (MU), with a few D10 (10du/acre) enclaves. Additionally, most of the area is designated as Traditional Town Center (TTC) on the land use maps of the Comprehensive Plan. What isn't designated as TTC is identified as Medium Density Residential (MDR). As previously mentioned, the Downtown Historic District is encompassed in the Downtown sub-district. This overlay district establishes design guidelines with the intent to promote awareness of Juneau's heritage and maintain historical integrity. The recently adopted Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan seeks to update these design guidelines and standards without being overly prescriptive (see Chapter 3). The Downtown sub-district is also regulated by all three parking overlays: fee in lieu, PD 1, and PD 2. These districts reduce off street parking requirements either by simple reduction or the ability to pay a fee in place of providing off street parking. Areas in mapped avalanche/mass wasting areas are required to adhere to significant engineering and subsequent construction standards to withstand potential impacts from these hazards. Residential development is limited in this area as well to protect lives.

Waterfront

History

Housing

Placemaking

Land use –current and recommendations if any for changes

Rock Dump

History

Housing

Placemaking

Land use –current and recommendations if any for changes

Aak 'w Kwaan/Glacier Avenue

The Aak'w Kwaan/Glacier Avenue Commercial District is defined by the recently adopted Aak'w Village District boundary and the commercial areas adjacent to Glacier Avenue. Juneau's Comprehensive Plan has long supported the development of a "cultural campus" in the Aak'w Kwaan District (formerly the Willoughby District). The area was renamed to reflect the history of the area and acknowledge Native culture. Partly in response to the envisioned "cultural campus," the City commissioned the Willoughby District Plan, (of which only Chapter 5, Land Use Plan, was adopted as an element of the Comprehensive Plan).

History

According to the Willoughby District Plan, until about 120 years ago the area now known as the Aak 'w Kwaan District was the open waters of Gastineau Channel. (insert photo of this) The shoreline was the bluff that now runs behind Village Street. For years this area was the site of seasonal fishing camps of the Auk Nu Tlingits whose primary winter village was located north of Juneau near what is now called Auke Bay. The Tlingit name for the Willoughby area was Dzántik'i Héeni ("river where the flounders gather"). These seasonal fishing camps were the main use of the area until western expansion brought prospectors at the end of the 19th century. The plan outlines the history of that area to present in detail. Expansion and rapid development over the past 120 years occurred as the area's initial residential area and Indian Village grew to include industrial, military, civic, and cultural uses. Growth in this area has continued to the present day.

Housing

The Aak'w Kwaan District is zoned to allow X units per acre. There are now X dwelling units, an increase of X units since 2011 (2012?). The Willoughby District Area Plan seeks to add approximately 400 more residential units over 20 – 25 years. Increasing residential use will create an 18-hour district (as discussed in Chapter X Econ) by generating activity beyond regular work hours. The plan calls for denser residential development along Village Street, in mixed use buildings by Gold Creek, and above the first floor along Willoughby Avenue. Residential units are envisioned as a mix of market rate and affordable housing, made up of townhouses, apartments, condominiums, and loft style units, expected to house legislative staff, seasonal workers, and residents "downsizing."

Placemaking

Opportunities for placemaking abound in the Aak'w Kwaan District. As the home of Centennial Hall, Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall, the JACC, and the SLAM, the district is ripe for "creative placemaking" such as public art and outdoor concerts. Activating these public spaces and capitalizing on the creative energy of these district anchors can serve to improve viability and public safety in the immediate term. Outdoor music events, coupled with temporary street closures are both low cost and low risk. Inviting food carts, artists, and vendors enhance the event and provide revenue. **(Steering Committee – do you have**

specific types of placemaking you would like to see in this district? Do we want to encourage colorful crosswalks and outdoor programming, other? Specific projects?)

Land Use

The Aak'w Kwaan District zoning is a mixture. The majority of this area is zoned Mixed Use 2 (MU2). The Glacier Avenue area is primarily zoned Light Commercial (LC). There is some D18 (residential 18DU/acre) and a very small area of D5 (residential 5DU/acre) near the Highlands. **MAP?** The 2013 Comprehensive Plan Land Use Maps render the policies of the plan into specific land use designations. Rezoning decisions must be consistent with the land use maps of the comprehensive plan. The Aak'w Kwaan District is shown on Comprehensive Plan Map M. A majority of this sub-district has a future land use designation of Traditional Town Center. Traditional Town Center is described as areas suitable for a mixture of retail, office, general commercial, and high-density residential uses at densities of 18 units or more per acre. This land use envisions mixed uses, residential, and nonresidential uses combined in a single structure, with ground floor retail/commercial space facing streets, parking located behind structures, and with residential uses above. Currently zoning districts Light Commercial, General Commercial, Mixed Use and Mixed Use 2 can accommodate this type of development. However, these zoning districts do not guide or require development that embodies this traditional mixed use style of development with nonresidential uses on the ground floor, parking behind, and residential above. There are bonus provisions in the zoning code that, to a certain extent, incentivize this type of development. However, this option is rarely used. The Willoughby Plan suggests other ways to implement this vision. **(SC – do we want to endorse the WP vision and recommendations? Do we want to go further?)**

The Glacier Avenue commercial area has a future land use designation of Commercial (C). Commercial is described as lands devoted to retail, office, food service, or personal service uses including neighborhood retail and community commercial centers, shopping centers, malls, office complexes and large employment centers, and residential densities ranging from 18 to 60 units per acre. Mixed uses are appropriate. The plan states that ground floor commercial uses facing the street, with parking behind and residential above is an appropriate and efficient use of land. **(SC – we need to look at this area – do we want to keep the LU designation? Do we want to expand TTC? Do we want to make up something new? Primary differences are dwelling units per acre, malls/shopping centers).** The existing Light Commercial, General Commercial, Mixed Use and Mixed Use 2 zoning districts can accommodate this type of development. The area that is currently zoned D18 is also designated as Commercial on the land use designation map. D18 allows for up to 18 units per acre and limited retail and commercial uses. **(SC is this zoning appropriate for this area? Is the land use designation of C appropriate to this area?)**

The Comprehensive Plan land use maps also designate areas of the district as Institutional and Public Use (IPU). This is described as lands primarily in public ownership and dedicated for a variety of public uses. IPU lands can be under any zoning district. The plan states that the zoning of the IPU land should be the same as the surrounding or abutting lands.

The 2016 Housing Action Plan makes several recommendations that are relevant to the Aak'w Kwaan sub-district. Changing the zoning ordinance to require both residential and commercial uses in mixed

use districts, and upzoning D18 districts to mixed use would substantially affect this sub district. Revising the bonus section of the zoning ordinance is also recommended by the Willoughby Plan.

Harbors

History

Housing

Placemaking

Land use –current and recommendations if any for changes

Chicken Ridge/Starr Hill; Flats; Highlands

History – by neighborhood

Housing

Placemaking

Land use –current and recommendations if any for changes

Each section includes current LU designation and zoning

Recommendations for changes to designation and zoning, design guidelines