

Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Work Session February 25, 2021

Introduction:

At the January 30th and February 17th Steering Committee meetings, the Committee asked to review priorities for Blueprint Downtown.

Based on this request and feedback from the last two meetings, staff proposes that instead of the Steering Committee reviewing the action tables for each chapter, staff will revise the actions tables and develop a draft Chapter 2 for Committee review. This will be completed using the comments already received on the tables and actions within the text of the document and the discussion on priorities. This will help facilitate the follow up discussion on priorities and recommendations. Additionally, the suggestions for reorganizing the chapters with introductory language and a summary paragraph before each action table would be implemented.

Below staff has summarized key ideas from the work of the Steering Committee. The focus areas developed through the visioning process are also included. These focus areas represent the key priorities of the visioning process. Staff has drafted an overarching goal for each chapter that incorporates the work of the visioning process and the Steering Committee.

Plan organization:

As the committee has reviewed draft chapters, some discussion has revolved around the organization of the document. Recognizing there are many different ways of organizing a plan, this format was agreed to at the beginning of the Steering Committee's work. At the January 30th meeting it was suggested that the plan no longer refer to the nine visions from the visioning report as that creates confusion with the primary vision. These visions can be reworked into goals, priorities and recommendations. The master implementation table in Chapter 2 will also note which of each of the nine focus areas each recommendation touches, acknowledging the public input through the visioning work

At the February 17th meeting it was suggested that each chapter open with "priorities" or a similar opening paragraph. Another alternative is to develop a goal for each chapter. The action table will then list actions in support of achieving the goal. Please review, and provide feedback for, the list of key priorities and draft goals.

Information in Chapter 3: History and Natural Context will be incorporated in Chapters 1, 5 and 7. The regional, natural and historic context will move to Chapter 1. Historic Preservation will move to Chapter 5: Land Use, and Natural Resources (landslide/avalanche/flood) to Chapter 7.

The priorities listed in this memo will be incorporated as follows.

- The key ideas from steering committee discussion will be incorporated into the introduction and Chapter 2 to show the broad themes that came up again and again as we worked through the process.

- The recommended actions from the visioning work will be identified as key actions in the action tables section of each chapter. Recommended actions are in some cases rephrased to match the document's voice and Steering Committee discussion, and some will not be carried forward as recommendations of the Steering Committee.
- The chapter goals will form an introduction to each chapter.

Key ideas from steering committee discussions:

Create a downtown for everyone

Juneau's diversity will be celebrated by offering services, activities, goods and amenities that appeal to all ages, backgrounds and incomes.

More housing of all types

Downtown will be a great place to live with diverse housing options, services and amenities that will stimulate commerce and community, and create an 18/365 downtown.

Activate the ground floor

The ground floor of buildings and sidewalk treatments will engage pedestrians and create an active inviting environment that is vibrant and safe year-round.

Spur Development

Coordinate and leverage public sector and private investment to catalyze desired development.

Enhance connectivity

Downtown will have clear and logical connections with a range of mobility options, where amenities, destinations, housing, retail, offices, parks and natural resources are linked. Walking and bicycling are prioritized.

Manage and diversify tourism

Tourism will continue to be managed to minimize impacts in a way that addresses concerns of residents and industry. Focused efforts to bring independent and business travelers to Juneau will diversify the sector and expand the season.

Economic Vitality

Year-round economic vitality is stimulated by more residents, diverse businesses, increased activity, improved access, greater safety, and enhanced aesthetics.

Visioning Work:

Through the intensive public visioning process nine focus areas were developed that capture the range of community concerns and issues. The Vision Report lists the public's most favored actions for each focus area as follows (Staff proposes that "Carrying Capacity" be called "Tourism Management"). The

actions have been incorporated into the actions tables, with some edits based on Steering Committee discussions. Modifications to the actions presented in the visioning report are shown with proposed modifications based on Steering Committee work. **Bold underlined** for new text and ~~strike through~~ for deleted text. There are several recommended actions that need additional discussion. These are highlighted below.

A. Business Vitality-

- Identify ~~underutilized~~ **underused** properties and promote redevelopment through meaningful tax benefits and/or cash incentives.
- Create a multi-vendor marketplace for local businesses, including food trucks. (*we've talked about centralized management*)
- ~~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. (*We've talked about accepting and embracing seasonality and finding ways to create balance and activity all year*)
- Encourage independent **and business** travelers (~~as they typically spend more time and money locally~~).
- Explore options, such as a West Douglas deep water port **and a second crossing**, to reduce industrial truck traffic ~~crossing through~~ Downtown. (*The approach to this topic needs more discussion*)

B. Identity and Culture-

- 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. (*We've talked about on a temporary basis for now*)
- Create incentive programs for adaptive reuse and modernization of ~~underutilized~~ **underused** 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. (*we've also talked about emphasizing winter sidewalk maintenance*)
- Connect Downtown activity with the waterfront, emphasizing water-front uses such as restaurants and the proposed Ocean Center.
- Complete the JACC expansion (*this will need to be revised to update current situation*)

C. Housing and Neighborhoods-

- Create more affordable entry level housing for young people. (*SC emphasis has been on ALL types of housing*)
- ~~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~~ **underused** downtown properties.
- ~~Prioritize year-round downtown housing over seasonal rentals.~~

- Provide an improved safe campground, including services and transportation for the homeless *(Needs to be discussed)*
- Change zoning to accommodate higher residential density in downtown neighborhoods. *(Concept of missing middle has been incorporated to maintain character)*

D. Vehicle Circulation and Parking, including Bicycles-

- Create an electric downtown Circulator to move people between S. Franklin, Transit Center, Willoughby District, and remote parking. *(to be discussed)*
- Use some of Downtown's vacant lots to add more parking in aesthetically pleasing multi-level
- parking garages. *(does SC support this?)*
- 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 emissions 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. *(again needs more discussion)*
- Stop investing in parking structures. Redevelop areas now used for surface parking lots, emphasizing transit, car pools, car-sharing, bicycling, and walking. *(Does this conflict w/bullet 2?)*
- 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. (banning on vehicles has not been supported by SC)~~

E. Pedestrian Access and Experience-

- 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. *(concept is endorsed, exact wording will differ)*
- Create a pedestrian-only destination area(s) in the Downtown core. *(SC discussion was on a temporary basis)*
- Add more historic informational 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

F. Sustainability-

- 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~~ use on-shore power. *(Recommendation will be consistent between chapters and will include developing the necessary infrastructure)*

- Work with business owners to develop more practical recycling and packaging practices for tourists and locals.
- Develop complete cycling infrastructures (e.g. bike lanes, lockers, covered stands) into a clear network that encourages cycling as a means of transportation. *(language will be consistent between chapters)*
- Develop a “Food Security” initiative; explore opportunities for local growers and neighborhood gardens.
- ~~Prioritize climate change mitigation and adaptation in all future city planning.~~ ***(Outside the scope of this plan. We can modify to fit if wanted)***
- 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.~~ *(Outside scope of this plan)*

G. ~~Carrying Capacity~~ **Tourism Management-**

- Encourage the installation of an electric downtown circulator to reduce congestion. *(Wording to be consistent)*
- Reduce congestion by developing more infrastructure like Seawalk and street improvements.
- Increase bus staging to locations outside the bottleneck. *(bottleneck needs to be more clear)*
- ~~Connect Gastineau Avenue to Thane Road as a bypass.~~
- Relocate/Rezone Rock Dump industrial area to reduce through-traffic **when an alternative deep water port is available.** *(Wording between chapters will be consistent – needs more discussion)*
- Require cruise ships to utilize **use** on-shore power.
- ~~Determine sustainable visitor capacity and set a limit on cruise ships and cruise ship passengers.~~ **Limit cruise port capacity to five large ships per day** *(modification consistent with VITF)*

H. **Natural Environment, Recreation-**

- Complete the Seawalk across the waterfront. *(wording to be consistent between chapters)*
- Require cruise ships to **use** ~~plug-in to~~ shore power while in town. *(Recommendation will be consistent between chapters and will include developing the necessary infrastructure)*
- Support development of the Sub-port. One alternative is the proposed Ocean Center, which will emphasize our connection to the water. *(this would be modified to reflect language in draft plan)*
- Electrify the public bus fleet, and incentivize tour groups to use electric vehicles. *(again wording to be consistent)*
- Reduce litter, and improve waste collection Downtown, with improved garbage, recycling, and compost containers.
- Build a park with green space along the Seawalk, 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. ***(we haven’t talked about this beyond supporting the recommendations of the Willoughby District Plan and the Waterfront Master Plan)***

I. Public Safety-

- 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. *(again consistent wording)*
- Increase funding for police and safety personnel.
- Increase winter activities in Downtown, thereby increasing public street presence, and decreasing vagrancy. *(to be modified to reflect draft plan)*
- Provide improved and attractive sidewalks and street lighting. *(to include stairways and references to CPTED for private development)*
- Improve bicycle safety with separated bike lanes.
- ~~Relocate the Glory Hall to a location further away from liquor stores and bars.~~

Potential Goals for each chapter

Economic Vitality goal – Downtown is an economic engine and destination for residents and visitors. Influences of culture, commerce, design and history are rooted here and celebrated through all activities, programming and the built environment. Economic vitality will be enhanced with more residents.

Land Use Neighborhoods and Housing Goal – Downtown’s neighborhoods are thriving places that provide housing and amenities for all cultures, ages and incomes. The character of the existing neighborhoods will be preserved while encouraging integrated residential growth and density. Mixed uses will be encouraged and facilitated where appropriate. Preservation and revitalization of historic resources will be encouraged.

Activities and Tourism Goal – Both locals and visitors enjoy the distinct experience that Juneau offers, with one of a kind cultural, artistic, historic, dining and shopping opportunities. Enhanced programming and activation of both public and private open spaces coupled with public recreation and cultural amenities create a variety of options for active and passive recreation downtown.

Parks Open Space and Rec goal – An interconnected system of parks, trails, open space and waterways supports a healthy, active lifestyle. Opportunities for organized events and community gathering places, such as community gardens will enhance community health and vitality.

Transportation Streetscape and Parking goal – Downtown will have a well-designed and maintained streets, sidewalks, trails and transit routes that provide access between all locations and destinations year-round providing mobility for all. Parking will be managed to balance access to downtown with the desire to prioritize vibrant streetscapes and amenities over surface parking.