

## **Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Work Session March 18, 2021**

### **Introduction:**

At the February 25<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee meeting it was decided to review a few topics that either need discussion by the Committee, or need a recommendation from the Committee. The Committee has been working primarily by reaching consensus, however, if it's not possible to reach consensus on a particular topic the Committee may vote. Below is a list of topics identified for additional discussion at our last three meetings. They are not in any priority order.

### **Topics:**

1. Trash and composting – the Visioning report includes the following actions related to trash and composting:
  - Work with business owners to develop more practical recycling and packaging practices for tourists and locals.
  - Develop a recognition program that rewards businesses that participate in compost and recycling programs.
  - Reduce litter, and improve waste collection Downtown, with improved garbage, recycling, and compost containers.

The Steering Committee has not had a focused discussion on this topic. Text can be added to the “Sustainability and Resiliency” section of the Economic Chapter.

2. View sheds – the Visioning report includes the following action related to view sheds:
  - Identify Downtown Juneau’s most valuable scenic view sheds, and develop guidelines to protect them.

We haven’t talked about view sheds beyond supporting the recommendations of the Willoughby District Plan and the Waterfront Master Plan. Both of these plans discuss views and view sheds. The LWRP has a “views and transparency” section for each area. The plan recommends maintaining specific views within each area. The Willoughby District Plan identifies key view sheds within the planning area and recommends building heights. The plan states that consideration to the orientation and height of buildings is needed to maintain important views, avoid undesired building shadows and provide for air circulation. Text specific to view sheds can be added to the Land Use Chapter.

3. Parking garages – The Visioning report includes the following actions related to parking garages:
  - Use some of Downtown’s vacant lots to add more parking in aesthetically pleasing multi-level parking garages.
  - Stop investing in parking structures. Redevelop areas now used for surface parking lots, emphasizing transit, car pools, car-sharing, bicycling, and walking.

The two actions appear to conflict. The draft plan includes extensive discussion about parking in general (attachment A). The Committee has not discussed their position on parking garages. Parking garages can accommodate more parking spaces than surface parking, which is important in a downtown where land is limited. However, parking garages are expensive to build. Mixed use structures, such as the downtown library, are an innovative use of limited land. Text specific to parking garages can be added to the Transportation chapter.

4. Circulator – the Visioning report includes the following actions related to a circulator:
  - Create an electric downtown Circulator to move people between S. Franklin, Transit Center, Willoughby District, and remote parking.
  - Use electric vehicles for all public transportation including a downtown circulator.
  - Encourage the installation of an electric downtown circulator to reduce congestion.
  - Ban vehicles, except the Circulator, during tourist season in defined Downtown areas to allow people to move more freely and create a plaza atmosphere.

Circulators have been discussed at several meetings. The draft plan includes circulators (attachment B). The concept of a circulator is divided into two types: one specifically for tourists, and one as part of the greater transit network. Another concept that could be considered is a circulator related to a park-and-ride parking lot outside the core downtown, bringing the downtown workforce into the core. Permanently banning vehicles from downtown has not been supported by the Steering Committee. However, allowing for short term street closures, similar to the annual gallery walk, has been supported.

5. Year-round and seasonal housing – the Visioning report include the following action:
  - Prioritize year-round downtown housing over seasonal rentals.

While we have had lengthy discussions about housing, and the support for more housing in the planning area is high priority, we have not specifically discussed seasonal rentals. The Committee has also discussed the need to house the seasonal workforce (both tourism and legislature related), and the need for additional workforce housing downtown. This seems at odds with the recommendation from the Visioning Report. Additionally, the Steering Committee has not touched on vacation rentals. CBJ is not currently regulating vacation rentals, however loss of workforce housing (particularly seasonal workforce housing) is an issue in many tourism oriented communities. Discussion on short-term, seasonal, and year-round housing can be added to the “housing as economic development” section of Chapter 4.

6. The future of the Rock Dump – the Visioning report includes the following actions related to the future of the Rock Dump:
  - Explore options, such as a West Douglas deep water port and a second crossing, to reduce industrial truck traffic crossing through Downtown.
  - In the long term, relocate AML and industrial truck traffic to an area outside of the Downtown Franklin Street bottleneck.
  - Relocate/Rezone Rock Dump industrial area to reduce through-traffic

This topic has been discussed multiple times by the Steering Committee. Initially, the recommendation from the committee was to rezone the Rock Dump and move the industrial uses when an alternative deep water port is available. One of the reasons raised during the initial discussion was maintaining a working

waterfront; currently, there is no alternative location for some of the industrial uses, such as AML. In later discussions it was suggested that one way to initiate change in the area is to rezone it now. There are pros and cons to this approach. There are several things to keep in mind as the Committee discusses this topic. The Comprehensive Plan speaks strongly to the need to maintain industrial land and to minimize conflicts between land uses. If the area was rezoned in the near future, before an alternative deep water port is available, land uses that might not be harmonious with some of the existing uses may be introduced to the area. Residential developments in Douglas have historically complained about AML activities, primarily noise and lights. Large truck traffic is associated with the barge and waste water treatment plant; this may be a safety concern to passenger vehicles and pedestrians, both of which may increase with changes in land use. Alternatively, introducing these conflicts could spur evaluation of a second crossing and deep water port. The draft plan discusses the Rock Dump in the Land Use chapter (attachment C).

### **Vision Statement:**

At the December 16<sup>th</sup> and January 30<sup>th</sup> meetings the committee agreed to put aside the discussion on the vision statement. The committee should vote on whether to reopen discussion on the vision statement. Below are Betsy's and Iris' suggested edits:

~~Maintain and strengthen~~ Downtown Juneau *is maintained and strengthened* as a vibrant, safe and accessible place to live, work, *learn*, play, *create* and explore. As home to *Alaska's capital* ~~the Capitol~~, *d*Downtown Juneau is a dynamic center of *g*Government and is welcoming and appealing to residents, visitors, innovators and investors. Its unique heritage and history, access to natural beauty, *arts and culture*, and urban amenities, provide opportunities for investment, *creativity* and sustainable growth.

*Downtown Juneau is a vibrant and welcoming place to live, work, play, invest, and explore. "or "Juneau's downtown core is a highly desirable place to live, work, play, raise a family and own a business"*

### Attachment A

#### Parking

During the visioning process, the topic of parking revealed polarized opinion. As long as personal vehicles are the dominant method of travel, parking will remain an issue for any community. Over the years, many studies have addressed parking in the downtown area, although these have mostly been limited to the Downtown District and the Aak'w Kwaan district. As areas of the greater downtown are redeveloped, the lots that provide off-street parking will also need to be restructured. The hope is to someday achieve the perfect parking status quo.

The downtown one-way circulation system has negative consequences for parking. Most Juneauites have experienced the downtown parking challenge: the possibility of a two-minute search for the ideal parking space immediately adjacent to the store, restaurant, office, etc. that they are visiting ends up as a 10-minute drive in ever-widening circuits before settling for a parking space that is a 3-5 minute walk from their destination. Going directly to a parking garage would have been a quicker solution, but the uncertainty that there will be a short-term space or that they have the correct (or any) cash acts as a deterrent.

On-street parking in residential areas is subject to all-day parking 'spill-over' from adjacent commercial uses. For example, workers from the downtown core park from Fifth Street to Chicken Ridge and Gastineau Avenue, and federal building workers park in the Casey Shattuck area. Residential parking zones have been recommended in the past to ensure residents have spaces, as well as management policies that require parking payment. Enforcement in the downtown core has also been recommended to ensure that all-day parkers do not relocate to unpaid parking spaces just outside the management zone. Parking management has a cost which may not always be completely covered by fees.

Past studies and plans have noted that it will be difficult to understand if there is indeed a parking shortage until the use of short-term on-street spaces is limited to downtown business patrons, rather than including long-term parkers shuffling between short-term spaces every 2 hours.

Occupancy data from the Marine Parking Garage structure and the Downtown Transit Center structure suggests that even though more parking passes are sold than there are spaces, there are currently available spaces between the two structures for the current demand.

The 2010 Downtown Parking Management Plan provides a summary of the history of parking management in the Downtown area.

- In the past, there was a period where there was no parking requirement for new buildings in downtown Juneau.
- Public parking has been significantly increased.
- Parking meters have come and gone.
- Perception that parking is hard to find still exists.
- Parking studies over the years identify 'a misuse of existing spaces, and not a shortage of parking overall.'

The 2010 Parking Management Plan set the following goals:

- 1. Reduce the number of vehicles that are parked all day (long-term) in hourly (short-term) spaces.*
- 2. Ensure that both the Marine Park Parking Garage and the Downtown Transportation Center Parking Garage are utilized at or near capacity year-round.*
- 3. Ensure that on-street parking spaces are available near all destinations at all times of the day for use by visitors who only need short-term parking.*

And three accompanying policies to help guide how the goals should be achieved:

- I. Manage on- and off-street parking resources so as to ensure that both long- and short-term parkers can find parking suitable to their needs at all times.*
- II. Manage parking as a component of a multi-modal transportation system, recognizing that adequate parking cannot be supplied at any destination in the downtown area for peak demand, and that walking, bicycling, use of shuttles/buses, carpooling, and other transportation tools are part of the solution to any parking problem.*
- III. Parking management must be simple enough that parkers can easily know how long they may park in any given space, and what the fee for parking in that space (if any) is.*

This plan was partially implemented, and for a time a pay parking system was installed downtown. Ultimately, the technology for payment and the enforcement system behind the payment system failed. The 'temporary' solution, in place since 2013, is:

- require cash payment into coin boxes for a limited number of short-term spaces,
- provide 2-hour free parking in on-street spaces in the downtown core,
- dedicate much of the MPG and DTC parking structures to permit holders who can apply for a weekly, monthly or yearly permit (although there is no guarantee that a space will be available to them).

In 2015, the city hired a consultant to recommend a replacement parking system design that would serve the downtown core. That study provided a number of management recommendations and ultimately noted that the 2010 concept and management approach was sound.

It should be recognized that surface parking is probably the cheapest to develop, but as a land use it offers limited tax revenue to the CBJ, and there is limited developable flat land in the downtown area. Surface parking is not desirable in creating a vibrant downtown. A cost of structured parking of \$50,000 per space is often used as a fair estimate based on the cost of the Downtown Transit Center and other engineering studies.

**Land Use Code parking requirements – (update based on PC action)** The CBJ Land Use Code provides minimum off-street parking requirements, with the number of spaces categorized by their use and the size of the development. Some reductions are provided to residential parking requirements apply to much of the Blueprint study area. In addition, various exceptions and overlay districts (PD1, PD2, and

Fee-in-lieu) in the Downtown Core and Aak'w Kwaan Village district provide relief from the parking requirements that apply elsewhere in the Borough. The Parking Districts serve two purposes:

- Recognize that a number of factors downtown, in theory, contribute to reduced parking demand. These factors include CBJ transit concentrating on the downtown area; higher residential densities combined with higher density of businesses/shopping/dining etc. resulting in a higher proportion of residents being within walking or cycling distance; and the walkable nature of the downtown area.
- Provide a historic preservation incentive in the PD1 area, unless a building footprint is expanded; then, regardless of changes in use of the building and even if it would normally require additional parking, no additional parking is required. This means that reuse of historic buildings does not have the burden of providing the parking that a new building would.

Under current parking requirements, downtown developers have expressed concern that is difficult to build an economically viable project that meets parking requirements, even with the existing parking reductions and the fee-in-lieu option. If parking requirements are reduced for development, it will also be important to address management by implementing the 2010 parking management plan or conducting a new study. Included in the land use code with the parking requirements are design requirements for parking layout, lighting and landscaping. These concepts are supported by the LRWP and Historic District guidelines.

# BLUEPRINT DOWNTOWN

DOWNTOWN JUNEAU'S AREA PLAN



### Attachment B

#### Transit Circulator

A Transit Circulator for the downtown area was mentioned frequently throughout the visioning process. A circulator is recommended in a number of past plans, including the Area-wide Transportation Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, and Juneau Parking Study, and was explored as part of both the 2008 Transit Development Plan (the same consultants provided a 2011 report on circulator options to DBA) and the 2014 Transit Development Plan.

The visioning results suggest that the public had two ideas for a circulator in mind:

- **Tourist circulator** - This would shuttle tourists to a staging area beyond the South Franklin Street/Marine Way corridor to a staging area elsewhere. Further study would need to be undertaken on this concept to understand what benefits it would deliver in terms of reduced vehicles in the corridor, logistical issues in terms of connecting with tour buses, costs, and options for alternate staging areas. A fixed route system (e.g. light rail) that would operate in the vehicle travel way with other traffic, moving all passengers to a staging area beyond the South Franklin Street/Marine Way corridor, is one possible concept.
- **Capital Transit circulator** – While primarily for residents, this service could also be available to tourists in summer months. This type of service is the one that has received the most study in recent plans, and was implemented in 1984 and ceased in 1987 as funding was cut. Most alignments studied would link the Flats/Aak'w Kwaan Village District with the Downtown District via South Franklin Street.

The 1984-1987 circulator utilized a dedicated circulator bus that filled in the headway gaps between standard Capital Transit routes connecting other parts of the Borough with downtown. A fare-free zone was implemented for all services and extended from the Bill Ray Center. As mentioned above, the standard Capital Transit services performed a more intricate route through the Downtown District than they do today and included a turnaround at the site of the Cruise Terminal Dock (which was then the Ferry Terminal). To provide a more frequent headway a single bus was added that only performed a circulator route – this delivered a separation between all buses doing a downtown loop of between 7-13 minutes during off-peak hours. This circulator route was similar to the Downtown loop that today's Capital Transit service performs, except it would terminate and turnaround at the Bill Ray Center. Part of the purpose of the circulator was to increase the market for users of the Marine Park Garage parking structure, which was under construction at the time.

The 2008 Transit Development Plan summarizes a 1986 operational report on the success of the 1984-1987 Circulator. Surveys of users showed that 40% of users indicated they would not have made the trip had they not had the free circulator service. However, only 5% of those surveyed said they would have used a private car to undertake the trip. This indicates the majority of the trips made on the downtown shuttle were made by patrons who were either transit-dependent, or would have taken transit or another alternative mode (i.e., biking or walking) regardless of the presence of a fare-free zone and circulator shuttle.

# BLUEPRINT DOWNTOWN

## DOWNTOWN JUNEAU'S AREA PLAN



The 2008 Transit Development Plan notes that there may be increased demand for a downtown circulator since the population in the Downtown area had increased by 38% between 1990 and 2000. The circulator could also link parking structures (both existing and future) to add convenience to additional visitors to Downtown. This plan examined three different scenarios. The recommended alternative provided a 15-minute headway at an annual cost of approximately \$886,140, approximately 85% of which would be covered by Federal Transit Agency pass-through funding. The 2008 Transit Development Plan examined using a Downtown Circulator as a standalone option from the rest of the Capital Transit service, but also as part of a service integrated into an 'optimum scenario' where a trunk route connected with a number of other loop services throughout the Borough.

In 2011, the 2008 Transit Development Plan consultants were asked to provide some new circulator alternatives that included extending a circulator service to the Franklin Dock or AJ Docks, running along Calhoun Avenue, and looping past Overstreet Park. This study presented similar costs as the 2008 study. A 10-minute headway was assumed; there would be no fare.

The 2014 Transit Development Plan stated that a circulator service would cost approximately \$600,000 per year but gave no routing recommendations.

Discussions continue at a city management level about options to introduce a circulator. Older city buses could be pressed into service immediately if funding and drivers were available, while other potentially attractive improvements, such as the much-requested electric system, are pursued.

### Attachment C

#### ROCK DUMP

The area known as the “Rock Dump” is located at the southern end of the Blueprint Downtown planning area and is Juneau’s industrial deep water port. Most goods arriving in Juneau are offloaded at the Rock Dump and trucked to businesses throughout the Borough. In addition to marine industrial assets, the area also includes a private cruise ship dock, a diversity of businesses, warehouse space, boat condominiums, and several fitness facilities. The area known as the “Little Rock Dump”, located just south of the Rock Dump, is outside the Blueprint Downtown study area.

**History** – The area is built on mine tailings from the Alaska Juneau Gold Mining, which was at one point the largest gold mine in the world. After the mine shut down in 1945 the area was vacant for many years. At one time it was the site of an ad-hoc golf course and an impromptu ATV track. In the early 1980s the mounds of tailings were graded to accommodate the current development.

**Housing** – The Rock Dump is zoned Industrial (I) and Waterfront Industrial (WI). These zoning districts do not allow residential uses. A single caretaker unit may be allowed as an accessory use to an industrial use. In general, residential uses are not compatible with industrial uses. Areas held for industrial use are intended to accommodate land uses that generate noise, odors, and dust, and have other impacts to the surrounding area. The Comprehensive Plan has many policies in place about the need to retain industrially zoned land throughout the borough. At such time as an alternate industrial area and deep water port is developed, it may be reasonable to revise the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Maps and rezone the area to allow housing and other mixed uses. Until then industrial uses should continue to have priority.

**Land Use** –The primary difference between the two zoning districts for the Rock Dump is that WI focuses on and prioritizes land uses that are “water dependent” or “water related.” The LRWP envisions this area continuing as an economic engine and logistics point for Juneau by preserving and continuing waterfront dependent and industrial uses. This plan also recommends removing tourism-related retail as a permissible use in this area, although the plan supports tourism-related retail as an accessory use to the existing cruise ship dock (AJ Dock/UNOCAL). The plan also calls for continued operation of the CBJ wastewater treatment facility with buffering and screening. The end of the Seawalk is planned for the area of the AJ Dock. The plan recommends a transition to a recreation corridor that would run along seaward of the uplands, connecting to the Little Rock Dump.

**Placemaking** – In general placemaking isn’t encouraged in Industrial Areas to maintain safety of the general public and those working in the area. There are placemaking opportunities where passengers disembark at the AJ Dock, along the Seawalk, along the envisioned recreation corridor along the southern edge of the Rock Dump. This area is one of the first views of Juneau that millions of visitors see.