



**Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting Agenda
Webinar & Telephonic**

December 16, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Steering Committee Members Present:

Betsy Brenneman
Kirby Day
Daniel Glidmann
Laura Martinson

Ricardo Worl
Patty Ware
Nathaniel Dye
Iris Matthews

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Jill Ramiel, Tahlia Gerger, Karena Perry, Michael Heumann

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Project Manager
Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager

Assembly Members:

None

I. Roll Call

Mr. Day offered to act as the meeting chair in Ms. Perry's absence. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

II. Public Participation

Ms. Emily Ferry brought her comments regarding the Calhoun Avenue rebuild, case number CSP2020 0011, before the Committee. She stated she is hopeful about the project and Blueprint Downtown's ability to address some long-desired safety upgrades. The street is narrow, including the sidewalks; police have told her it is dangerous to walk on the sidewalk. Twenty years ago, this was the top priority. She is hoping to bring the two processes – planning and implementation – together.

Ms. Ferry suggested the Committee take into consideration stronger guidance regarding walkability and planning, in order to give city engineers clearer guidance. She suggested a pedestrian overlay, or endorsing a proposal for a one-way loop.

Mr. Glidmann said that several years ago the city was thinking about buying and demolishing the apartments near there in order to widen the road.

Ms. Ferry said the loop might affect other connector roads. The fire department's needs to be able to come up 9th Street. She suggested that Calhoun Avenue remain two-way until the Governor's Mansion, and make the narrowest stretch of road one-way going north, exiting downtown.

Ms. Brenneman supported greater walkability. She expressed concern that the area up 9th would have issues with the increase in traffic and with plowing in the winter.

Ms. Ferry said the slipperiness of the steep hill was why they proposed the original loop. She also suggested a bike/stroller lane. Pedestrians want to go the most direct route possible, so this would increase safety.

Ms. Martinson said this is a great example of how the Committee can emphasize walkability while allowing the city engineers to figure out how that best works.

Ms. Matthews asked staff why CBJ would have a redesign of a major arterial with so little public notice and opportunity for comments. She recommended that the Committee consider issues with communication that would lead to the plan not being consulted or the public not being noticed.

Mr. Day thanked Ms. Ferry for bringing this issue to the Committee. Engineers contacted him months ago asking how this would affect the tourism industry. At the time, the engineers were talking about making Calhoun Avenue one-way inbound to town and widening the sidewalks. Mr. Day said once the sidewalk was widened, they could not go back to narrower ones if there was an emergency.

Ms. Pierce said she appreciated Ms. Ferry attending the meeting and sharing ideas and concerns. What Ms. Ferry identified as an issue with communication is something CBJ has been working hard to correct. She said she is considering how they can do better on public notice for these types of projects, and how to get resident input in a timely way.

Mr. Dye said they need to come up with better public processes. He expressed a need to get public attention early and often for the steps relating to the Planning Commission and the Assembly, so that public input comes early in the process rather than at the end.

Ms. Pierce said that one way to improve implementation of plans is to frontload the Capital Improvement Program process with information about relevant plans so it is not an afterthought when planning.

Ms. Ferry said she is point of contact for the downtown neighborhood association; she suggested giving the Engineering & Public Works department the list of neighborhood associations as a means of public outreach. She suggested the Committee could identify highly trafficked pedestrian arterials and create an overlay district. She thanks the Committee members for their time.

III. Steering Committee Updates

Ms. McKibben said she would be sending out a poll with future potential meeting dates. She suggested having a four-hour meeting in order to foster greater progress, with the potential for

a hybrid meeting that involves both an in-person and a virtual component. The Committee expressed support for these ideas.

IV. Review of Steering Committee Comments on Draft Chapters 1 & 3 – 8

Chapter 1 Comments

Ms. McKibben presented a table of Committee comments about the most recent draft version of the plan. She asked if the Committee would like to revisit the vision statement now, or hold until they get to the end of the table.

Ms. Matthews thought the visioning statement should be more succinct with an active voice. She did not realize it had been voted on.

Ms. Brenneman said she proposed some language was incorporated into the visioning statement and some that was not. She agrees that the voice should be more active, and she would like the notion of creativity to be included. She thinks art and culture is a big part of downtown.

Mr. Day suggested coming back to the vision statement once they get through the table.

Ms. McKibben said there was a lot of confusion in the Committee comments about the vision statements from the visioning report and the guiding principles. She thinks they should not include them to avoid further confusion.

Ms. Pierce apologized for confusing anyone about the use of the phrase “guiding principles.” She thinks that sticking with the nine visions is better than also having guiding principles.

Ms. Brenneman asked what the concept of “fuzzy lines” for subareas means for maps, and for people who want to implement the plan.

Ms. McKibben said they presented a map that explained this to the Committee in June. The text does not discuss the fuzzy lines; staff can revisit how to use them.

Mr. Dye said it is important to figure out if that needs to be defined, and suggested a statement in the back of the plan that explains why the lines are fuzzy. Zoning lines are hard lines, while the lines from the Comprehensive Plan are fuzzy; they need to define it.

Ms. Pierce said she was going to suggest something similar, maybe in a map caption. She does not want to get rid of fuzzy lines entirely because what they discussed as a group was that the areas blend into each other, making it difficult to put a hard line between these neighborhoods. Staff could create some language that says these subareas flow into one another in form and character so while the zoning lines are hard, the neighborhood field is more fluid.

Ms. Matthews asked if the nine vision statements could be statements of purpose for each chapter.

Ms. McKibben said they decided not to structure the plan around the statements, so they occur in multiple chapters. The preference is to place all the vision statements at the beginning of the chapters, and to paraphrased or referenced them throughout the chapters.

Ms. Brenneman recommended that the beginning of the document emphasize maintaining quality of life for residents.

Regarding a comment Ms. Ware had made about Vision G – Carrying Capacity, Ms. McKibben said they could revisit the vision statements.

Ms. Ware discouraged the Committee from reopening the discussion on all of the vision statements. Regarding Vision G, she felt it was not enough about local residents. Her proposed change is adding a phrase that talks about balancing tourism experiences with local resident experiences.

Ms. Matthews asked about how all the vision statements work together to form a cohesive vision. Were the visions from consultants?

Ms. Pierce said yes, they are summarizing the outcomes of the public process. She stated she thinks that aspect is important to keep. They organized the visioning report around those nine keys areas; turning them into bullet points does them a bit of a disservice.

Ms. McKibben said the overall vision statement for the plan was a way encompass the whole document. The organization of the table in Chapter 2 has the vision statements woven in. Something that will be clearer about the master table is that the topics and visions are interrelated.

Ms. Matthews said the Committee needs to do more to synthesize visions and language because it is the first chapter. She said there is a need to cover what the Committee thinks is important so it is more cohesive for the reader.

Ms. McKibben said Ms. Matthews had suggested a land acknowledgement. Staff had reached out to Fran Houston of the L'eeneide Clan and spokesperson for the Aak'w Kwaan for the appropriate language. .

Ms. Brenneman said that by putting some recommendations in the text and some in the table, it created the impression that the ones in the text were more important.

Ms. Pierce suggested that when they have the complete plan to everyone, they highlight areas where there are statements that sound like a recommendation in the text, and then discuss how they want to treat them.

Chapter 3 Comments

Ms. Brenneman recommended adding "creative inspiration" to the bullet list of values. She also recommended adding information on when hazard maps are expected to be available to the public.

Ms. Pierce said that the process with the contractor is a little bumpy, and staff are not sure when the maps will be completed. Including this information may cause issues if the maps are delayed. She recommended talking about the hazard maps more holistically.

Ms. McKibben identified the need for greater consistency in the use of callout boxes, and how important recommendations are presented.

When asked to expand on her comment regarding historic resources and parking, Ms. Brenneman said she was talking about tradeoffs between parking and historic preservation and cultural resources, which add to business vitality.

Mr. Dye asked if she is concerned that increased vitality requires more parking.

Ms. Brenneman said that she does not think the plan does enough to recognize the tradeoffs inherent in the recommendations. She expressed a need to talk about the choices the community will need to make.

Mr. Worl had asked to review the section on the Tlingit village, commenting that he believe it needs a rewrite; he has suggested language. Mr. Worl had stated that he felt that the current language excludes some important elements and that some aspects required clarification, particularly related to occupation. His biggest concern was that the original statement claimed that the Native people did not really live downtown, when in fact the entire region was owned and occupied for several thousand years. Mr. Worl wished to add elements to the historic representation of downtown area. He worked with Dr. Chuck Smythe, who has offered a number of presentations on the Juneau area, on the suggested language.

Ms. Matthews emphasized the need for consistency in presenting important information throughout the chapters.

Ms. Brenneman expressed confusion regarding the difference between districts, subdistricts, subareas, area plans, and sub plans. Each chapter refers to things differently.

Ms. Pierce clarified that subdistricts are not zoning districts. The whole plan is a subarea plan. Then there are neighborhoods, which could be called subdistricts or subareas, as well as simply neighborhoods. Staff needs to decide on terms and then implement consistency throughout the document.

Ms. McKibben recommended creating a chart for commonly used term to foster better understanding of the terminology.

Chapter 4 Comments

Ms. Perry had suggested adding economic information about the arts to the Economic Development chapter.

Mr. Worl had commented that none of the recommendations addresses the homelessness issue. He said it is important for people reading the plan to have realistic expectations; until homelessness is addressed, downtown improvement will only go so far.

Ms. Martinson agreed that this plan is a good opportunity to address the issue. In the same way the Comprehensive Plan says we should be incentivizing local businesses, this plan can say that we should be incentivizing solutions to homelessness, since it impacts every single facet of life.

Mr. Worl said the CBJ and the community are addressing the issue with the Glory Hall relocation, as well as phase two of Forget-Me-Not Manor.

Ms. Brenneman thinks we should be able to say something, even if it is difficult to write about.

Ms. Martinson emphasized the importance of including the issue of homelessness within a plan that is intended to be used as a reference document. She thinks it belongs in every discussion in every level of our community.

Ms. McKibben said that discussing homelessness is difficult due to the challenge of addressing the overlapping issue of mental health.

Mr. Worl commented that Juneau's downtown employment is different from other state capitals. Ms. McKibben said that some of the things that make Juneau different are outside the downtown planning area, and asked if the Committee thought they should be included.

Mr. Worl said he isn't sure that we need a statement listing them all.

Ms. Martinson said she thinks each cruise port has its own attractions, but that many others do not have government activity in the downtown core.

V. Committee Comments

Ms. McKibben asked the Committee if they want to have another meeting sooner than usual to go through the rest of the table.

Ms. Ware asked if they need another meeting before they see the full draft document. She said she finds it difficult to remember what she said long ago, and that she would love to see the whole thing and figure out when they are going to hold their four-hour meeting.

Mr. Day asked if staff could put the document together, and then reference the areas that staff think the Committee needs to discuss.

Ms. McKibben said there are some areas that are more critical. For example, does the Committee want to be explicit about including recommendations from the Visitor Industry Task Force?

Ms. Brenneman said she is finding this process helpful because she can hear other Committee members' comments. She would prefer to continue as they are with one more meeting to go over the table. If we do what Ms. Ware says, she still think we need to go through line-by-line comments to be fair to people who put in the effort.

Ms. McKibben said the Committee needs to have one more meeting to finish the table in order to address all comments.

Ms. Matthews said she thinks that all of her comments are the same: that the plan does not have a cohesive vision. She advocated for spending the next meeting going over the vision rather than going over details.

Ms. Brenneman asked if she meant the vision statement or something bigger.

Ms. Matthews said she was referencing the way the whole document reads. She felt the document needs to do a better job of emphasizing ways to operationalize the big picture vision.

Ms. Pierce agreed with Ms. Matthews that staff need to place the major themes at the forefront, and said that this is the intention for the Implementation chapter. She said she finds these meetings very helpful because they are sorting through the details and refining the document to a version with which she is comfortable working.

Ms. McKibben said one her visions for the Implementation chapter is a top ten list of recommendations. She also suggested breaking down the recommendations into lists of short-term actions that are first priority, and long-term recommendations that are top priority.

Mr. Day asked if Ms. Emily Ferry had any expectations for the Committee regarding her comments.

Ms. Matthews said she thought Ms. Ferry was making sure that the Committee was cognizant about language in the plan regarding walkability.

Ms. Brenneman asked if Blueprint Downtown intended to comment on the current Norwegian Cruise Lines process as a committee, or only as individuals.

Ms. Martinson said she does not think the plan should comment on any one development, but the Committee could highlight the priorities for sections of town.

Mr. Glidmann said that a clear vision means everything else falls into place; having a clear plan means parking answers itself. He said that the Committee is doing reverse planning instead of establishing a vision that then informs the recommendations.

Ms. Pierce said she has been taking notes about item she wants to revisit and address. When the Committee pulls out the key themes, there will likely be a clear vision that emerges. What a good plan does is create a framework for the recommendations in the Blueprint plan. She said one of the things she wants to revisit is addressing the waterfront and tourism, and how to tie them together better.

Ms. McKibben said that they intend to reach out to Paul Voelckers and share with him the key themes that have come out of Blueprint.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: December 30, 2020