



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

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

Steering Committee Members Present:

Christine Woll, Chair
Karena Perry, Vice Chair
Betsy Brenneman
Kirby Day
Daniel Glidmann

Michael Heumann
Iris Matthews
Ricardo Worl
Patty Ware

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Jill Ramiel, Tahlia Gerger, Nathaniel Dye, Laura Martinson

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Senior Planner
Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager

Assembly Members:

None

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

II. Steering Committee Updates

Ms. McKibben informed the Steering Committee that Tim Felstead's last day working for the City and Borough of Juneau would be July 17, 2020.

Staff discussed the input from the Tourism Task Force's report that has already been included in the Blueprint Downtown plan document. They stated that, with the recent changes in the tourism sector due to COVID-19, it would be necessary to go back through the Tourism chapter. Staff reported that the Tourism Task Force discussed many of the topics that are already included in the Tourism chapter, as well as whether the current downtown zoning is appropriate with heavy tourism use.

Mr. Day stated that the Tourism Task Force report was always intended to be a draft, due to the disjointed nature of the end of the process and presenting it to the CBJ Assembly. He said that Mayor Beth Weldon has expressed the possibility of gathering a group in the fall of 2020 to revisit the topic, and that the Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee would have the opportunity to comment.

III. Carl Uchytel, Port Director – Presentation on Docks & Harbors Plans and Projects

Mr. Uchytel, the CBJ Port Director, reported that CBJ Docks & Harbors is a 16-person department, typically with 25 seasonal employees. There are only five seasonal employees

currently. He said that Docks & Harbors are essentially two enterprise operations. They are expected to operate on their own, raise revenue, and pay expenses without access to sales taxes, property taxes, or subsidies. The department spends a large amount of time applying for grants for its many projects.

Mr. Uchytel stated that if the department isn't building something, it's planning something. He listed several of the major projects that Docks & Harbors has completed in the past four years.

In the area of Bridge Point to Norway Point, Mr. Uchytel said that there has been substantial progress in recapitalizing Aurora Harbor. The downtown harbors are constrained by Egan Drive. He said that currently, Harris Harbor and Aurora Harbor are not functional. They were constructed decades ago. He stated that the harbors provide an opportunity to contribute to a vibrant downtown. Greater marine services and ship repair, for example, are two potential opportunities. There is a need to develop more opportunities for commercial fisherman in order for fishing patrons to thrive. The port of Juneau, he said, has the largest number of vessels over 25 feet in the state; Juneau is the 42nd largest fishing port in the United State.

Mr. Uchytel emphasized the importance of a functional marine services yard. He recommended connecting Aurora and Harris Harbors with a frontage road. He also suggested targeted infrastructure investment, such as community space for commerce, restaurants, and food trucks, in Harris Harbor in order to take advantage of the large variety of populations and uses in the area.

Mr. Uchytel said that Norway Point is the preferred option for filling in an area to create an opportunity for a five-acre facility for enhances ship repair and shipwright facilities, along with a 150-ton travel lift. Relocating the tidal grid that is currently at Harris Harbor would create room for more commercial development along the waterfront. The Juneau Yacht Club could be relocated to a smaller fill area, perhaps under the Douglas Bridge.

Some potential options for development that Mr. Uchytel identified for the fishermen's terminal area are: providing access to both sides of the crane dock area, replacing the Harbor office, and adding an ice house, drive down float, and net shed. He reported that Docks & Harbors has been pursuing several grant opportunities, such as the United States Department of Transportation bill grant for a \$25 million development. He said that there were possible future opportunities for CBJ to purchase areas owned by the University of Alaska Southeast as their leases expire.

Ms. Brenneman asked about the possibility of pushing the berths in the harbors farther into Gastineau Channel and placing more fill in between. She also asked Mr. Uchytel to clarify what he meant by "relocating the tidal grid."

Mr. Uchytel explained that the tidal grid is "a poor man's dry dock." At Harris Harbor, people bring their boats in at high tide so that they are sitting on timbers at low tide, allowing them to work on their vessels for the duration of the tidal cycle. Moving the tidal grid would allow space

to place commercial buildings on pilings. One limitation at Aurora Harbor is the breakwater; Docks & Harbors is currently working with the Army Corps of Engineers on the replacement of the timber breakwater, which was constructed in the early 1960s. Mr. Uchytel stated that it would be about a \$30 million project to move Aurora Harbor out farther.

Mr. Heumann asked about the potential for second floor retail and restaurant space, since they typically struggle to do as well as first floor businesses.

Mr. Uchytel said that it would be a public-private partnership, and that with such limited waterfront the space is valuable. Parking is always a constraining issue, so vertical construction should be considered.

Ms. Ware asked about the possibility of apartments or small housing in multi-story buildings on the waterfront.

Mr. Uchytel reported that the idea of condominiums at Norway Point had previously been discarded, as the waterfront should be used in more appropriate ways.

Mr. Glidmann asked why the pursuit of grant funding has been unsuccessful.

Mr. Uchytel stated that it is highly competitive and there are very few grants. He stated that one difficulty of attaining a federal-level harbor grant is that the City must show a return on investment. Therefore, the best grant opportunity is the expansion of the harbor fisheries terminal because they can easily show a return on investment, unlike with a boat yard.

Mr. Day asked if Docks & Harbors has a plan to work with the State of Alaska Department of Transportation on egress points in and out of Aurora Harbor and the Harbor office.

Mr. Uchytel said that they are looking at several roundabouts to address this issue. He also said that currently there are more ideas than money.

Mr. Worl asked if the demand for boat slips at Aurora and Harris Harbors is consistent.

Mr. Uchytel said that there is a wait list for vessels over 40 feet. He reported that the North end of Harris Harbor will be demolished and replaced starting in the fall of 2020, which will in total about a \$7 million project. All of the improvements will be for larger size vessels.

Mr. Uchytel moved on to the Marine Park at Taku Dock Urban Design Plan. He said that, now that Docks & Harbors has figured out how to tie up the large vessels, it had to figure out the rest of the waterfront. The Archipelago lot was the last undeveloped parcel along the waterfront. The current project on that lot has been a fortuitous development due to the long history of difficulty developing the lot.

Mr. Uchytel said that there are several other areas along the waterfront that could be decked over to place a park-like setting. There is also the potential for another waterfront attraction, such as a museum or an IMAX theater. Absent the development of that waterfront attraction,

there is the potential to create an area where people can congregate, with space for bands and concerts as well as a covered shelter with restrooms. This would be a simple building with doors that open up to create a welcoming atmosphere.

Ms. Perry asked if this proposed building would attract homeless people due to the covered shelter aspect of the designs.

Mr. Uchytel said they were cognizant of not including overhangs in the design. He also said it would not be a pavilion and would have doors that would lock at night.

Ms. Perry said that the Capital Transit area has doors that lock at night and currently has issues with homeless people.

Mr. Uchytel stated that this is a management issue. He also said that he doesn't believe it's a reason not to do something nice for the community and move forward with amenities for the waterfront.

Ms. Brenneman stated that she was disappointed that the Archipelago project doesn't include housing, and that the Steering Committee is interested in pursuing every possible housing opportunity.

Ms. Pierce said that the Planning Commission felt similarly when discussing the Archipelago project. There is the potential that the project will take a different form at a later date.

Mr. Uchytel reported that Docks & Harbors had recently completed security check stations at the approach docks. He also said that the next group of waterfront patrons it will be focusing on is small cruise ships. Docks & Harbors is engaging in a master planning effort to analyze how to best accommodate the 275-foot class of ship. They need 700 linear feet of additional moorage as well as an additional intermediate vessel float.

Mr. Uchytel said that the preferred option is to create a 350-foot Seadrome float. This would be moved 120 feet out into Gastineau Channel, and the corner would be decked over. This would allow for space for parking and a covered shelter or two, as well as an access gangway to the float. There would be eight spaces for buses, which would meet some of the needs of the small cruise ship operators.

Regarding other projects, Mr. Uchytel said that some possibilities include future expansion along Egan Drive for a seaplane base and a small marina for yachts. He reported that Docks & Harbors awarded a contract to advance a study regarding electrification of the two City-owned cruise ship berths. It is a complex project, and they hope that the study will be done by April 2021.

Ms. Brenneman expressed support for the majority of the plans, particularly endorsing commercial development of Aurora and Harris Harbors.

Ms. Ware asked how both CBJ Docks & Harbors and Parks & Recreation could be responsible for the maintenance of the Seawalk.

Mr. Uchytel explained that, by ordinance, the City Manager is responsible for the Seawalk. Docks & Harbors has a “handshake agreement” with Parks & Recreation. Even though it does make it more confusing when talking about who is responsible for maintenance, they make it work.

Ms. Ware asked if he would be opposed to a recommendation by the Steering Committee for a singular department with responsibility for the Seawalk.

Mr. Uchytel said that it’s a cooperative effort.

Ms. Brenneman asked about the possibility of public utilization of parking spaces that are typically reserved for tourism-related uses on days where there are no cruise ships.

Mr. Uchytel clarified that Ms. Brenneman meant during typical tourism years, and not the current year. He stated he believed Docks & Harbors does a good job managing parking, and that his experience is that there is a place to park about 90% of the time during the tourism season.

Mr. Day asked if there is any plan or discussion on the Fishermen’s Memorial, due to the warping of the dock underneath it.

Mr. Uchytel replied that it is privately owned, and the owners have turned down offers to relocate it.

IV. Draft Chapter 5 – Land Use

Ms. McKibben stated that the Land Use chapter is based on a table of contents created at the beginning of the Blueprint Downtown process. It became obvious as staff worked on the document that they don’t want to repeat district and sub-district information. Staff decided on an overview of the zoning districts, land use designations, and overlay districts so that the sub-district descriptions are self-explanatory. They placed these overviews at the beginning of the chapter since that seemed logical from a reading comprehension standpoint.

Ms. Woll asked if there was a way to represent the descriptions in a table format, to which staff replied in the affirmative. She stated that she likes the idea of having them at the beginning.

Ms. Brenneman disagreed, saying that readers are used to citations or notes at the end, such as a glossary.

Ms. Pierce said they need to define and clarify the zoning districts within the chapter. She suggested simplified graphics through tables, with supplemental information at the back.

Ms. Matthews suggested adding a map to show the different zones in the downtown area.

Ms. Pierce agreed that it was a good idea, and said that the maps portion of the presentation would be forthcoming.

Ms. McKibben said that staff are still working on the best way to represent all of the map information in paper format, but that the digital version is a series of overlays. She emphasized that land use designations are different from zoning. Zoning is the rules for implementing the land use designations. She said that hazard zones are included in the digital overlays as well. One of the challenges of the chapter is explaining what the rules are for each sub-district. The Steering Committee will need to decide whether it likes those current rules or if it wants to make recommendations for something different.

Ms. McKibben introduced a table of design guidelines. The table includes the Historic District Guidelines, the recommended guidelines of a recommended waterfront overlay and the guidelines recommended by the Willoughby Plan. There is a lot of overlap between CPTED principles, place making principles, and economic development principles and design principles. Some examples include open walkable spaces, no parking in front of a building, and certain types of landscaping. One of the ways to implement these principles is through design guidelines. The Willoughby Plan makes strong recommendations for design guidelines; most are recommended as mandates, but some utilize incentives. There is a need to consider how any potential design guidelines relate to those in the Historic District.

Staff said there are currently no landscaping requirements in the zoning ordinance. Certain landscaping principles are incentivized in the Auke Bay zoning, which is a concept that could also be applied downtown.

Ms. McKibben asked the Steering Committee to make place-making recommendations that are unique for each sub-district. Examples of neighborhood-specific place making include the Halloween celebration in the Casey Shattuck Flats, and the rainbow crosswalk at the intersection of Front Street and Main Street.

Ms. Pierce said that it took a significant amount of time and committee to install the rainbow crosswalk. She suggested creating a process for neighborhoods to make decisions about what kind of public art and community features they would like.

V. Committee Comments

Mr. Day suggested turning the Warner's Wharf alleyway into a place that is well lit and that has park features. It would provide another pedestrian thoroughfare between the Seawalk and South Franklin Street.

Ms. Brenneman suggested considering ways for the Downtown Library to utilize its space on the ground level, such as programming and activities. She also suggested resuming concerts in Marine Park, and lighting the stairway and Telephone Hill Park behind the Downtown Transportation Center.

Ms. Ware suggested upgrading the two bus shelters in the A'akw Kwaan District, as well as finding a way to better connect that area to the lit crosswalk that leads to the Seawalk and the Whale Park.

Ms. Brenneman suggested replacing the industrial-style fence along Gold Creek with something more attractive.

Mr. Day said that Telephone Hill Park is a good example of place that could benefit from better lighting and signage, as well as clearing out the landscaping.

Ms. Pierce said that, in the Parks and Recreation chapter, the Steering Committee had recommended turning that park into a historic viewpoint rather than somewhere with benches and places for people to hang out.

Ms. Brenneman suggested finding ways to make the area surrounding the Capitol more attractive.

Ms. Woll said it would be helpful to look at the Willoughby Plan and its process for design guidelines before proceeding.

Ms. McKibben asked the Steering Committee for opinions regarding design guidelines as a requirement, as well as regarding consolidation of some of the zoning and overlay districts. She explained that a basic zoning district has regulations associated with it, regardless of where the zoning district is located. An overlay district has regulations that are in addition to, or supersede, the regulations of the zoning district. She stated that one of the recommendations of the Housing Action Plan is to make mixed uses required within mixed-use (MU) zoning. Currently, there is nothing in the code that requires buildings in the MU zoning to have mixed uses. This is one possible recommendation for the Land Use chapter.

Ms. Ware said that she would like to discuss this topic more fully at the next meeting.

Ms. Pierce acknowledged that the topic is dense and complex. Staff wanted to give the Steering Committee some potential recommendations for consideration, and then give them some times to think about them.

Mr. Day said that he would like some examples of what other communities do, specifically focusing on how they prevent dis-incentivizing a developer.

Ms. Pierce encouraged the Steering Committee to re-read the article on zoning Ms. McKibben sent to them. She said that many places have a hybrid between traditional Euclidean zoning and more form-based zoning.

Ms. Matthews said that it was difficult for her to talk about details of the chapter before they had set the larger vision.

Ms. Pierce stated that this was why they wanted to talk about the big topics like zoning and design guidelines first.

Several Steering Committee members expressed the desire to understand zoning better, and to have more context in order to make appropriate recommendations.

Ms. Woll volunteered to work with staff to consider the best way to proceed with the topic.

Ms. Pierce said that it would be helpful to have laypersons help structure the conversation, since staff deal with the topics every day and therefore have a different perspective on what is helpful.

Ms. McKibben said that they'll engage in a greater depth analysis of certain sections of the chapter at the next meeting.

VI. Adjournment

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

Next Meeting Date: August 13, 3030, 6 p.m., Zoom Webinar & Telephonic