



**Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting Agenda
CBJ Assembly Chambers**

September 17, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Steering Committee Members Present:

Christine Woll, Chair
Karena Perry, Vice Chair
Betsy Brenneman
Kirby Day
Daniel Glidmann
Jill Ramiel
Iris Matthews

Tahlia Gerger
Michael Heumann
Laura Martinson
Ricardo Worl
Nathaniel Dye
Patty Ware

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Tahlia Gerger, Daniel Glidmann

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Senior Planner
Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager

Assembly Members:

None

Members of the Public:

Pat Race, owner of Alaska Robotics Gallery
Crystal Worl, co-owner of Trickster Company

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 P.M.

II. Approval of Minutes

a. August 27, 2020 DRAFT minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting

MOTION: By Mr. Worl to approve the August 27, 2020 minutes. Mr. Heumann seconded.

The motion passed with no objection.

III. Public Participation

Pat Race & Crystal Worl – Mural on the Rockwell Building

Ms. McKibben explained that Ms. Worl and Mr. Race are working on a mural for the Rockwell building. They presented their concept to the Historic Resources Advisory Committee (HRAC) a few weeks ago, and thought the Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee would like to hear about it since the Committee has discussed murals as part of placemaking.

Mr. Race, who is the co-producer, said this project started in 2018. They have met with many groups since then. He shared a rough draft of an Elizabeth Peratrovich mural as it would be depicted on the side of the Rockwell building. He has had many conversations with people over the years, such as HRAC, the Downtown Business Association, and the downtown Rotary Club, who all want to do something with the wall. Ms. Worl has enlisted the help of Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) for planning and grant writing, and artist Lauren Brevner, who has helped with designing the image.

Ms. Worl, who is the Project Producer, said Lauren Brevner is based in Vancouver, BC. She met Ms. Brevner a few years ago, as she has been traveling to British Columbia the past three years to apprentice under Robert Davidson, who is an artist who specializes in Haida and formline design. Ms. Brevner's art specializes in women who are warriors, leaders, and important people in history. Ms. Worl's components will be the formline designs, which will be a modernized version of the formline crest. Mr. Race approached her two summers ago about the mural. This year she was awarded a Rasmuson Individual Artist Award, and decided to use the funding for this project.

Mr. Day asked how the design currently coincides with the Franklin Food Court – does some of it get covered up?

Ms. Worl said they talked to Dave McCasland, the owner of the food court. Mr. McCasland has a hut installed that cannot be moved. They discussed how they would address the scaffolding to paint on the wall and decided to paint the mural about ten feet up from ground-level so the food court would not obscure it.

Mr. Day asked if there was to be an accompanying message.

Ms. Worl said the piece would be commemorating Elizabeth Peratrovich as an advocate and a Tlingit icon figure. They intend to have a plaque visible nearby that describes what Elizabeth Peratrovich did to pass the first anti-discrimination law in America. The plaque will also give information about her, as well as about the artists and the intention of the piece.

Ms. Martinson asked when they thought it would be completed.

Ms. Worl said they intend to repair and prime the wall in early spring of 2021. They intend for Ms. Brevner to paint the wall with Ms. Worl in the summertime. They are hoping to have it ready for Celebration next summer, and to have an unveiling or opening ceremony.

Ms. Worl said a benefit of SHI's involvement is that they are familiar with grant writing and funding sources. This is important, since she would like to bring an apprentice to the project, as well as teach a workshop related to the project with Ms. Brevner.

Ms. Perry asked about the ownership of the building.

Mr. Pace said that they are working on an agreement with the building owner. Considering that the mural may be an impermanent installation of three to five years, the lot next to it might be developed.

Ms. McKibben asked if they have any plans for more murals.

Ms. Worl said she is talking to the Alaska Mural Project, based in Anchorage, which is working to put more murals in downtown Anchorage.

IV. Steering Committee Updates

None.

V. Draft Chapter 5 – Land Use, Neighborhoods, & Housing

a. Rock Dump, Waterfront and Harbor Subdistricts

Ms. McKibben said she would like the Steering Committee to focus on Rock Dump, Waterfront, and Harbors Subdistricts.

The Rock Dump is zoned Industrial. Waterfront Industrial, by contrast, has an emphasis on water uses. Industrial zoning does not allow for residential uses, and only allows for one caretaker unit per site. The activities taking place at the Rock Dump are important for the infrastructure of Juneau, and are not likely to change in the immediate future. Ms. McKibben said she would like to discuss what the future of this area might look like. She pointed out that the Seawalk would not continue all the way through the Rock Dump, and instead would turn into a recreational trail.

Mr. Day suggested finding a better name than the Rock Dump. He sees pitfalls for residential uses due to so many industrial uses.

Ms. McKibben said this is why housing is not allowed in industrials zoning districts: light, noise, traffic at odd hours, dust, fumes, etc.

Ms. Brenneman asked what the Little Rock Dump is.

Ms. McKibben said it is off the map, past the Rock Dump.

Mr. Dye said the Little Rock Dump is all Docks and Harbors storage and mining claim.

Ms. Brenneman suggested incorporating landscaping and benches in the recreation corridor that connects to the Rock Dump. She said that industrial uses are not ideal for waterfront, and suggested recommending that this area work towards not becoming Residential or Mixed Use rather than Industrial. Eventually it would be an ideal location for housing, but she recognizes that industrial uses are not compatible with housing.

Mr. Dye said how that recommendation is made is important. It is important to articulate what the land designation should be if it does change in the future. He recommended suggesting what future uses would be appropriate.

Regarding the Waterfront District, Ms. McKibben said the current Mixed Use (MU) and Mixed Use II (MU2) land designations allow for mixed uses but do not encourage or compel it. She asked if the Steering Committee wants to recommend changes that encourage or compel mixed uses in those zones.

Mr. Heumann said requiring it seems like too much. He supported incentivizing it. The structure of the incentives is the most important part.

Ms. Pierce said that at this stage, with the level of the plan, they are not making recommendations about specific incentives. It is important to note, however, that incentives need to be carefully evaluated.

Ms. McKibben affirmed that the past discussions they have had about mixed uses are appropriate for the Waterfront District. There have been discussions about partially or completely removing Merchants Wharf, and enlarging Marine Park as a village green.

Ms. Ware asked how that would be possible, since Merchant's Wharf is privately owned. She asked if the City would have to purchase that piece of property to demolish it.

Ms. McKibben said yes, something like that would happen.

Ms. Pierce said the City should look at purchasing part of all of it and turn it into a venue that would be valuable for the waterfront.

Mr. Dye said there are blurred lines with private property ownership. He expressed concern about being too prescribed in housing requirements in Mixed Use areas.

Mr. Heumann said he would be sad to see anything happen to Merchant's Wharf. It is difficult to talk about the subject without referencing Docks and Harbors Plans. He stated he would like to talk to Docks and Harbors because they have a say in how the waterfront is developed.

Ms. Ware said the central area of Marine Park is currently wasted by not having any seating or a village green area.

Ms. Brenneman expressed mixed feelings regarding Merchant's Wharf. She said she does not think the whole area should be a village green, and that there needs to be commercial space. Ms. Ramiel said if the plan is going to be aspirational and long range, they should be able to look at new uses for Merchant's Wharf. She encouraged the Steering Committee not to forget more visionary concepts.

Mr. Day agreed with Ms. Ware about missing the amphitheater and concerts at Marine Park; they were torn out due to the problems downtown. Until the City fixes those, it is difficult to talk about how to get back to the way Marine Park used to be.

Ms. Pierce said she does not think what people are talking about is mutually exclusive. They can have a village green area with some commercial activity. Merchant's Wharf is an old building that is not in great condition. At some point, that site will need to be redeveloped somehow, whether it is revitalized or changed in some other way. The City could work with the owners to create an area that combines village green area with commercial space.

Ms. Martinson said, for her, it all comes down to programming.

Ms. Pierce said having a vibrant downtown brings people into public spaces, making those spaces active. This deters people from engaging in negative behaviors. The more positive development, whether it's programming or events or public activity, the better.

Ms. Ramiel said there are cities that pay their business associations to hold events in parks. This is mutually beneficial because the businesses do well, and when there are people in the parks, there are fewer issues with them.

Ms. Brenneman said we should always be looking at a place for the public to access the water for kayaks and canoes.

Ms. Matthews said it is critical to address the intersection of homelessness and downtown vitality. In the visioning report, addressing homelessness was the most important issue identified by the public. Economic vitality and solving homelessness goes hand in hand.

Regarding the subport, Ms. McKibben said the Waterfront Plan and the Subport Revitalization Plan both talk about the subport being a gateway into downtown. The Waterfront Plan includes a cruise ship dock as one of the options for development.

Ms. Martinson said having a recommendation in place before they start developing is important. Norwegian Cruise Line has said they want to do something that benefits the community year round, so having some direction would be helpful.

Ms. Woll said the Visitor Industry Task Force had some specific recommendations that are worth revisiting.

Ms. McKibben said the Waterfront Plan makes recommendations for building design and heights. It calls for lower building height on the waterfront side than the street side, which is not mandated under the current zoning. The Steering Committee could endorse these recommendations.

Ms. Martinson agreed that it is important to have access to the water and to maintain sight lines to the water.

Ms. McKibben said the majority of the Harbors area is publicly owned. Some of the land is owned by Docks and Harbors, some by the University of Alaska Southeast, and some by the State of Alaska, with a couple areas of private land. Docks and Harbors has the most impact over future development.

Ms. Woll said her impression was that the Docks and Harbors Plan feels more accessible to pedestrians. She thought there would be placemaking opportunities.

Mr. Day asked if the zoning in this area allows for commercial use like retail. If the expansion of the harbors goes forward, having a marine-related store there would make sense.

Ms. McKibben said it is zoned Waterfront Commercial, which allows for water-related commercial and office spaces, as well as hotels. Everything that the Docks and Harbors Master Plan recommends is achievable in the zoning that exists today.

Ms. McKibben said the waterfront overlay design guidelines are not that different from the ones in the Willoughby District: screened parking, parking located behind buildings, windows and doorways at the front, recommendations for height, etc.

Ms. Brenneman suggested that the 14-year-old Waterfront Masterplan might not be relevant anymore.

Ms. Pierce said the Visitor Industry Task Force addressed the age of the Waterfront Masterplan frequently. Some of the things are no longer feasible, but the prescribed program for the Seawalk is something they have been following. They are still within the planning horizon for this plan.

Ms. McKibben said the planning area is bigger than the Willoughby District and the waterfront overlay, so their guidelines need to be expanded. Those two sets of guidelines are a good starting point since there is a lot of overlap.

Mr. Dye said it might be worth recommending a new zoning district that stretches through most of the Waterfront Commercial zones as well as some MU and MU2 districts, and that focuses on and encourages pedestrian-oriented development with access to the waterfront. This would incorporate those design standards in a more unifying way.

b. Priorities, goals, actions & recommendations

Ms. McKibben reported that the highest priorities identified by the Steering Committee are:

- Encouraging more and diverse housing
- Preserving public access to shoreline and waterfront areas
- Encouraging mixed use of the downtown waterfront
- Seawalk Phase 4, Marine Park to Subport extension

- Turning Willoughby Avenue into a pedestrian-oriented retail district
- More public space and pedestrian-friendly areas, public investment in streets
- Promoting small businesses

Ms. McKibben said many of the priorities were repetitive because they come from 20 years' worth of plans. One of the points of the Blueprint Downtown area plan is to knit together all of the preexisting plans and focus on what is relevant and important.

Ms. Pierce said the underscoring message is that the City has done a lot of planning over the years and many plans says the same things, so it's time to implement those recommendations.

Ms. Martinson asked if the COVID-19 pandemic is relevant to the Blueprint Downtown area plan, and if there is an appropriate place or section to address ways in which our community can be pandemic-resilient.

Ms. McKibben said she could do some research and see what is out there. Even if they cannot include specific language for how to be pandemic-resilient, they can put that concept in there.

Ms. Martinson recommended mentioning outdoor seating or something for new buildings and public spaces, like outdoor public patios and places to gather outside year round.

Ms. Pierce suggested a section called Planning for Resiliency to address that this plan was written during a time when planners needed to consider economic energy, public and mental health, and natural disasters. The section can make broad and global statements for how to keep Juneau as vibrant as possible.

Ms. Woll said she is looking forward to going back to new versions of the chapters and making sure that everything relevant is included.

VI. Future Meeting Schedule

Staff informed the Steering Committee that they would be taking a short break from meetings. This will allow staff to put together a draft version of the plan for the steering committee to review. The next meeting will be October 29, which would give them six weeks to work on it.

Ms. Woll said they would need time to review the draft once they get it.

The Steering Committee asked about deadlines. Will they finish by the end of the year?

Ms. Pierce said that the document is quite close, although the graphics need work and time. She suggested they keep the October 29 meeting date and send it out without much time for them to review it, with the intention of walking them through the format during the next meeting. Once they receive feedback on the format and a first reaction to graphics, they will give the Committee some time with the document. That will allow staff to fix issues and build

appendices. Staff are aiming to put the draft out at the end of the year and to go through adoption early next year.

Staff said the plan's release should not be hidden by the holidays, since it is something of which they are proud. They also want to gather public comment. Staff will need to rethink how they are going to have public meetings to launch it and present it to the public.

Ms. Woll suggested bringing the consultants back in to help with that.

Mr. Day said it is difficult to roll it out and get meaningful public comment without a big meeting.

Mr. Worl asked if the area plan would be presented to the Planning Commission or the Assembly.

Ms. McKibben said once the Steering Committee is comfortable, it will go out for public review and comment, which may be incorporated into the plan. In some past plans, they have created an appendix of comments, even if they are not included. The Planning Commission will review the plan and make recommendations. Then it goes to the Assembly, where it is formally adopted at a public hearing.

Ms. Woll said parts of the Willoughby plan were not adopted: why did this happen and how does the Steering Committee ensure that this doesn't happen to the Blueprint Downtown area plan?

Ms. McKibben said that it was part of the way the contract was created. Moving forward with Auke Bay and Lemon Creek, they did it as a package.

Mr. Dye said sometimes the Assembly adopts by resolution and not by ordinance.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 P.M.

Next Meeting Date: October 29, 2020, 6 P.M., Zoom Webinar