

Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Work Session May 6, 2021

Introduction:

At the April 15th meeting, the Committee completed preliminary review of the draft actions. At that meeting the Committee had a substantial discussion about the unsheltered population downtown. For this meeting, CBJ staff from the Housing Office will be available to explain what programs and services are in place and answer questions you may have about these programs.

The following information items are attached:

- Recommendations from the Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness
- Juneau Coalition on Housing and Homelessness Principles and Strategies
- Memorandum from Chief Housing Officer to Assembly Lands, Housing and Economic Development Committee on the Housing Action Plan task list
- Housing First Check List

Unsheltered:

The most recent draft of the Blueprint Downtown Plan speaks most directly to the unsheltered population in Chapter 4, Economic Vitality in the section "A Safe and Welcoming Downtown". Attachment A indicates recommended changes to the plan text based on the Steering Committee discussion and collaboration with Scott Ciambor and Jesse Perry.

Actions:

The current draft plan includes a number of recommendations that address the issue of homelessness. The following are recommended as additions:

- Continue to support for the local homeless continuum of care, shelters and service providers as they improve housing and service programs in the community (including food, medical, behavioral health).
- Continue to work with the community and homeless housing and service partners toward a housing first homeless response system, including outreach and shelter, short-term interventions like rapid re-housing and longer term interventions like permanent supportive housing.
- Support the Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness recommendations.
- Support efforts to increase the availability of affordable housing, outside of those targeting the homeless. (this can be integrated into actions about more housing of all types)
- Provide a safe summer campground with support services for homeless individuals.
- Increase the number of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and rapid re-housing units in the community for those experiencing homelessness

BLUEPRINT DOWNTOWN

DOWNTOWN JUNEAU'S AREA PLAN



- Further develop the capacity of Juneau's Coordinated Entry System to house Juneau's most vulnerable homeless citizens.
- Strengthen the partnership and dialogue between CBJ and the Juneau Coalition on Housing & Homelessness.

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 Committee recommended rezoning the Rock Dump and moving the industrial uses when an alternative deep water port is available. During the initial discussion, one of the reasons raised for this recommendation 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 B).

Vision Statement:

At the December 16th and January 30th 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.

BLUEPRINT DOWNTOWN

DOWNTOWN JUNEAU'S AREA PLAN



*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"*

Next Steps:

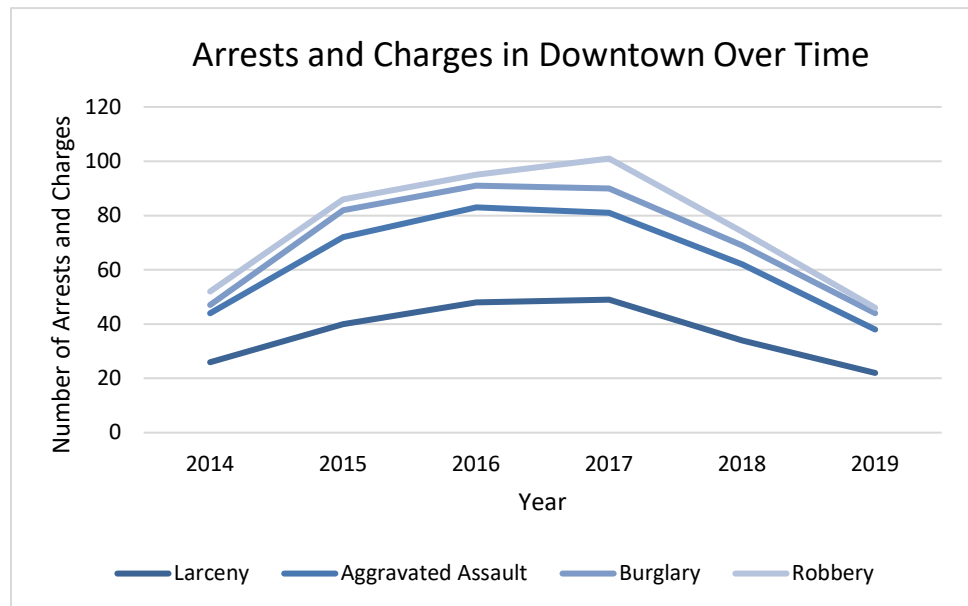
The revised action table and Chapter 2 text will come back to the Committee for review. The actions in the individual chapters will be updated to be consistent. The master implementation table will be organized, and the columns for chapter(s), page(s), proposed implementing partner, and cost will be filled out. The priority projects will be determined. Whether or not to include metrics, and if so which, will be decided.

Attachment A

A Safe and Welcoming Downtown

The cleanliness, comfort, and safety of Downtown are key to attracting residential, business, and tourism investment. Additionally, accessible tourist resources are essential to a positive visitor experience, and influence the likelihood of a future visit or positive recommendation. Because the perception of safety has an impact on the economic health of downtown; public safety emerged as one of the nine core focus areas through the Blueprint Downtown visioning process.

The city and its partners in mental health, homelessness, low-income housing, and other human services must continue to work together to address broad societal issues that tend to manifest in an urban environment. Funding and construction of "Housing First," a facility dedicated to housing the chronically homeless,



is the single largest effort to this end. Following the completion of Phase 1, Bartlett Hospital and JPD have seen a reduction in service expenses for this population. Phase 2 was completed in 2020. The Glory Hall, a homeless shelter, is working with a group of social service partners to co-locate on a site in the Mendenhall Valley. Additionally, in 2019 CBJ Capital City Fire and Rescue (CCFR) took over management of the CBJ Sleep-off Center and the CARES Program from Bartlett, which connects people to services and reduces dependence on emergency services downtown and throughout the borough. The Sleep-off Center is located in the St. Vincent de Paul complex near the future Glory Hall site. In 2019 St. Vincent de Paul took over management of the cold weather shelter, which is housed in their valley complex. [Due to the COVID pandemic the Sleep-off Center is operating at Centennial Hall and the cold weather shelter at the JAHC.](#)

Data shows that crime in the downtown area is trending down. However, public perception about crime does not reflect this reality. (Map for this data and BPDT boundaries will be provided similar but not quite the same.)

Public comment received during the visioning process indicated that there is a strong public perception that downtown is negatively affected by homelessness and undesirable behaviors, despite declines in

vagrancy and behavior issues. A challenge to both public safety, and the perception of public safety, is that those being served by Housing First, Glory Hall, and other providers with zero tolerance drug policies may not be the population responsible for on-going issues. Opioid addiction, and the issues that occur with it, are of growing concern. Additionally, officers who work downtown have reported that there is more opportunity for misconduct during the winter months when more retail shops are closed and there is **generally less activity downtown (update as needed post 2020)**.

Supporting community partnerships is a key economic development activity for local governments. CBJ has the unique capacity to interact in some way with each member of the web of social service providers, mental health organizations, and local business networks. Community partnerships are relationships with non-CBJ organizations to further a community goal or need. Partnerships are mutually beneficial and represent a collaboration to support sustainability of a program and help create citizen and business engagement around certain activities or projects. Over the coming years, it will be important to continue to deepen relationships with existing community partners and to grow relationships with new ones. Partnerships are particularly vital to linking CBJ's management and regulatory role with its human service role, ensuring that all community members have access to support services. Businesses – both individually and collectively – play an important role in ensuring downtown is clean and attractive, working with government and service agencies to report problems; this is especially critical for businesses operating during the winter.

Housing and support services for vulnerable populations are foundational components of a safe and welcoming downtown continuing to work with the community and homeless housing and service partners toward a housing first homeless response system, including outreach and shelter, short-term interventions such as rapid re-housing, and longer term interventions such as supportive housing is paramount. Safe downtowns also need a number of ingredients including a variety of housing types, year round businesses, attractive public spaces, and other amenities that make the area attractive for people to live and visit. Another important factor is low vacancy rates and redevelopment of existing buildings. Revitalization of vacant spaces and increased activity deters loitering. However, without support services, reinvestment projects further displace residents experiencing homelessness. With a robust service network a vibrant and prosperous downtown can be welcoming for all ages, incomes, and abilities.

Some communities have successfully developed safety and security programs. Elements of these plans include many items recommended throughout this plan, such as additional activity, housing and improved lighting, and “community policing”. This is not necessarily increased police presence. In many communities, the safety program is a collaboration with and complement to the police department, providing an extra set of eyes and ears, with paid or volunteer staff that provide services such as safety assistance, or addressing disorderly/ suspicious behavior, panhandling, public drinking/inebriates and suspicion of drug dealing/use. They may also address graffiti, trash removal, sidewalk cleaning, and similar issues. This type of approach could be incorporated into the Main Street organization.

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED)

The Juneau Police Department (JPD) also helps contribute to the sense of safety downtown by offering free services such as consultation to property and business owners on Crime Prevention through

BLUEPRINT DOWNTOWN

DOWNTOWN JUNEAU'S AREA PLAN



Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques. The goal of CPTED is to prevent crime by designing a physical environment that positively influences human behavior. The proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a decrease in crime and fear of crime, and can improve quality of life. Principles of CPTED include:

- Continue to maintain a clean, attractive downtown streetscape that includes hanging flower baskets, landscaped flowerbeds, street trees, and potted plants.
- Encourage property owners to activate dead spaces and blank walls by adding exterior windows, removing tinting from windows, and improving the space in front of their buildings using placemaking and CPTED tactics.
- Partner with downtown business owners, property owners, and organizations to provide services to maintain and improve the cleanliness and environmental health of downtown.
- Support initiatives to create a downtown business improvement district (BID) to fund projects and provide services such as cleaning streets, providing security, making capital improvements, and marketing the area.

These actions could be coordinated through the implementation of a Main Street program (discussed below), and by collaborating with downtown neighborhood associations. CPTED techniques and principles could be incorporated into design guidelines, incentivized or become requirements for redevelopment or new development. In the near term, downtown developers should be encouraged to contact JPD for CPTED consultations at the planning stages of development. The safety and security program discussed above is supported by CPTED principles.

Attachment B

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.