

Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting
April 25, 2019, 6:00 p.m.
Downtown Fire Station Meeting Room

Steering Committee Members Present:

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

Michael Heumann
Wayne Jensen
Jill Ramiel
Meilani Schijvens
Ricardo Worl

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Lily Otsea
Patty Ware
Laura Martinson
Nathaniel Dye

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Senior Planner
Tim Felstead, Assistant Project Manager
Alix Pierce, Planning Manager
Marjorie Hamburger, Admin

Assembly Members:

Loren Jones

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm.

I. Welcome

II. Approval of Minutes

a. April 3, 2019 DRAFT minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting

MOTION: by Mr. Glidmann to approve the April 3, 2019 minutes with a minor edit. Mr. Kirby seconded.

The motion passed with no objection.

III. Ground Rules

Ms. McKibben reviewed the suggested ground rules to make sure all committee members were comfortable with them. Members felt they were sufficient at present and had no additions to suggest.

Ms. McKibben pointed out that the ground rules can be revisited and revised at any time if needed.

IV. Binders

All present were given a meeting binder to organize as they see fit. Meeting materials will be emailed out in advance and also posted to the website: <https://beta.juneau.org/community-development/blueprint-downtown>. Materials can be printed by staff, on demand, and either brought to

the meeting or individual arrangements can be made for pick up or delivery. Committee members were instructed to communicate with staff about what works best for them.

Members should also let staff know if they would like a printed agenda at each meeting.

Ms. McKibben is working with the CDD cartographer to produce 11x17 color maps and will bring these to the next meeting.

V. Review of Zoning Districts, Overlay Districts and Uses

Ms. McKibben said that the feedback from the last meeting was that it would be helpful to provide a closer and less academic view of the plans in use as relate to downtown Juneau. She brought her dog-eared copy of the Comprehensive Plan to demonstrate that as a planner, she consults it all the time, and it is not something that gathers dust on a shelf.

Adopted plans are used when staff write reports for Conditional Use Permits, variances, and other cases they review and bring before the Planning Commission. These plans are the policy documents for the community and the work of the city should align with the Comprehensive Plan. As membership on the CBJ Assembly and Planning Commission turns over frequently, these documents create continuity and consistency for the community to move forward. The Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee job is very important, she said, to create a vision for downtown that city staff and policy makers will use to make decisions. A good example is the Housing Action Plan which was adopted and is the reason why we have a Housing Officer for the city today.

She also pointed out that the committee is the voice of the community in this process and the members are very helpful in communicating the process with the variety of stakeholder groups that they may represent. Ms. Pierce said if the city knows where wants to be in 5 or 10 years, it helps with making decisions now.

Mr. Glidmann asked if there are times when a project or concept does not align with the Comprehensive Plan, and is there a process to deal with this? Ms. McKibben said no, not now, but there has been some talk about creating a specific process. Washington State has a growth management process but Alaska does not. The Comprehensive Plan says a review is needed every two and five years, but it is difficult for staff to have the time to do this. However, she said, the Comprehensive Plan contains something to support most things. When there are competing policies, the Assembly and/or the Planning Commission needs to weigh them as they come up.

Ms. Pierce said that the goal is to redo the Comprehensive Plan in the next few years and write it to be a higher level umbrella covering the more specific plans i.e. the Parks & Rec Master Plan. The Comprehensive Plan could become less specific, then, with recommendations coming from the specific plans which the Comprehensive Plan would point to. The Lemon Creek Area Plan spells this out pretty clearly, said Ms. McKibben.

Ms. Schijvens asked about the timeline at this point. Ms. McKibben said she hopes the consultants' report will be available at next meeting. She will also provide a draft table of contents for the Steering Committee to react to and this will help to establish a timeline. Ms. McKibben said that when the chapters are established, the committee can make plans for hosting focus groups.

Mr. Day asked about the timeline for getting materials prior to a meeting? Ms. McKibben said the goal is two weeks ahead of a meeting date.

Ms. Woll asked about the best guess of the timeline for completion? Ms. McKibben said she thinks it will be closer to 24 months to complete the process, so about 18 months more at this point. It is hard to predict because while the group will try to get through one chapter per meeting, more time may be required. It will be important to be flexible so as to get it right and not rush through and feel unsatisfied.

Downtown Comprehensive Plan Boundaries and Blueprint Boundary

Ms. McKibben noted that these land use designations are to be considered “aspirational”.

Description of Land Use Designations

As for the maps currently included in the Comprehensive Plan, the Steering Committee will discuss if they represent appropriate densities for downtown. City planners use these for zoning purposes. For example, she did a review of a request to rezone some property in the rock dump area in order to allow for some new development, and she recommended denial because that is a Heavy Industrial (HI) area. Residential units are not permitted in a HI zone, except for caretaker units, and the proposal was to rezone to General Commercial (GC) which does allow for a combination of residential and commercial uses, so that did not match with the surrounding area.

Downtown Zoning Map

Ms. McKibben pointed out the areas zoned WC (Waterfront Commercial) and WI (Waterfront Industrial). The language in the Table of Permissible Uses (TPU) includes a note that these districts “are established to accommodate those uses that are dependent or directly related to the water, a waterfront location, or both”. These words come from the Coastal Management Plan which does not exist anymore. She said a question before the committee is, does the community still want these areas to have this restriction? Right now there is some marijuana retail and there are jewelry stores in WC, for example, and they are not directly related to the water.

A zoning map is used to determine land use today. The other maps are aspirational, said Ms. McKibben. In Juneau most of the land use maps match the zoning maps. In the Steering Committee’s process the land use maps can be changed. Ms. Pierce pointed out that a property owner can apply to the Planning Commission and then the Assembly to change zoning, but cannot apply to change land use maps. However, the land use maps inform approval or denial of that request.

Mr. Day clarified his understanding that there is a process for the area of the Rock Dump to be industrial but somehow businesses were allowed to be in there that are commercial but not industrial. Ms. McKibben said that the TPU lists all the land uses in a table. Some retail uses are allowed in Industrial zones; Home Depot is an example. The marijuana committee worked on regulations and decided that these uses could also be allowed in an Industrial zone and added them to the TPU.

Zoning Table

Downtown there is a lot area zoned D5 and not much Rural Reserve (RR). Work is currently being done by CDD staff to propose more appropriate residential zoning for downtown, as discussed at the last meeting. D5 zoning fits the valley very well but doesn’t fit neighborhoods like the Federal Flats or Starr

Hill. There is some D10 downtown and quite a bit of D18 which fits land use Medium Density Residential (MDR, 5-20 units per acre). It could be that some downtown areas have a D20 zoning someday, in order to allow for High Density Residential to include multi-family dwellings, and more allowable uses like offices, healthcare clinics, etc. As an area becomes more urban, this is appropriate and in harmony with the neighborhood. Also, lots in some historic neighborhoods with nice homes have business uses that are not highly trafficked and are in harmony with that neighborhood such as an architect or lawyer office. These are things to think about, she said.

The central business district is MU (Mixed Use) and MU2. These designations allow for endless density and have no height or setback requirements. MU2 does have a height limit but is still dense.

Overlay Districts

Several of these types of districts encompass the Blueprint Downtown area. In an overlay district, the underlying zoning and all its rules and regulations still apply. But, for example, if there is an overlay hazard area, there may be additional restrictive rules for the parcels in that overlay district.

Fee in Lieu of Parking Spaces

This overlay district allows money to be paid to the city in exchange for a waiver of parking requirements for a business or development. The money goes to help fund public parking in the area like parking structures and lots and their management. Mr. Felstead said that some goes into the public transit budget also. Residential developments pay a lower fee than commercial. Mr. Felstead said that the calculation for building the Downtown Transit Center was about \$50,000 per parking space. Some developers suggest that the fee in lieu cost should be greater than it is.

PD-1 & PD-2

These parking designations are found in historic districts downtown. Mr. Felstead said a developer could combine a PD district with the fee in lieu option to further eliminate the need to dedicate land or space for parking. This has been done recognizing the land constraints downtown as well as the historic development already in place. There is also now a new process at CDD to apply for a parking waiver.

Historic District

Allison Eddins will come and talk to the committee at some point, as she is the planner with the most knowledge about Historic Districts. There are design regulations for this district, said Ms. McKibben. The Steering Committee can think about whether or not this district is the right size. Also, should some sort of historic district designation apply to historic buildings that live outside the defined district? Another consideration is that most of this district has been identified based on mining history - should that be expanded to include a broader and more diverse history of Juneau?

Landslide & Avalanche Areas

Currently the city has a FEMA grant to update the borough's hazard maps, and they will eventually be digitized. The department is only just getting started with this project; it is a 4 year grant. Ms. Pierce said it is hoped to have a draft by 2021. This effort is underway at the same time as this planning work. Ms. Brenneman said she knows of someone who wants to sell their house but is running into difficulty due to this hazard mapping process not being completed.

VI. Public Participation – None

VII. Committee Member Comments

Ms. McKibben said that at the next meeting she will provide the consultant's report and a draft table of contents for feedback. Once the chapters are identified, this will inform the committee's schedule. Likely work on each chapter will not be taken in order. For example, the Upstairs Downtown project is underway, and it will be very helpful to have those numbers before the committee works on the housing chapter. She intends to invite Docks & Harbors to talk to the committee, the Historic Resources Advisory Committee, Parks & Recreation – if there are entities that committee members want to hear from, please let her know.

Mr. Glidmann asked if there are teleconference capabilities in the meeting room. Staff will investigate.

Ms. Woll asked who should be contacted if a member cannot attend. Contact options include the blueprintdowntown@juneau.org email, and/or Beth McKibben and Marjorie Hamburger's email or phone. If contacting staff, it is good to cc: the other or the blueprint email just in case someone is away from the office.

Ms. Brenneman asked if the committee can recommend changes to the zoning code. Yes was the answer. Ms. McKibben said the final document will include an action plan/implementation table, and if the committee recommends zoning changes, this will get incorporated into the CDD work plan. The same is true for recommended overlay districts, etc. Ms. Pierce said an example is the work happening right now on changes to Auke Bay zoning. This was a recommendation from the Auke Bay Area Plan. Ms. McKibben said that land use designations can also be changed by this plan. But for zoning or overlay districts, the committee can only make recommendations.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6.56 pm.