

Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting
April 3, 2019, 6:00 p.m.
Downtown Fire Station Meeting Room

Steering Committee Members Present:

Betsy Brenneman	Jill Ramiel
Kirby Day	Meilani Schijvens
Daniel Glidmann	Patty Ware
Michael Heumann	Ricardo Worl
Wayne Jensen	Karena Perry, Vice Chair
Laura Martinson	Shannon Crossley, Planning Commission (in for Mr. Dye)

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Lily Otsea
Christine Woll, Chair
Nathaniel Dye, Planning Commission Liaison

Staff:

Laura Boyce, Senior Planner, CDD
Alix Pierce, Planning Manager, CDD
Beth McKibben, Senior Planner, CDD
Marjorie Hamburger, Admin, CDD

Agenda:

I. Welcome

Ms. Boyce invited all to reintroduce themselves. She also introduced Ms. Pierce as the new Planning Manager at CDD. She announced that Ms. McKibben will be taking over as project manager on the Blueprint Downtown Project due to her imminent departure from CBJ. Mr. Felstead will continue as support to Ms. McKibben.

II. Quick Project Update – CDD Staff

Ms. Boyce hoped to provide the consultant's final report at this meeting but it is not yet final. Once the report is in hand, it will help to organize the development of the chapters for the Blueprint Plan.

Ms. Boyce showed a series of slides to refresh the committee members' memories about the purpose, scope, and area boundaries of the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan project:

- 1 Downtown Boundary
- 2 Overall approach – this area plan
- 3-4 List of other downtown area plans and studies in place, 1972-2018

III. Planning 101 – CDD Staff

Ms. Boyce gave the committee members an overview of some of the goals, objectives and methods of community planning.

What is an Area Plan/Neighborhood Plan?

An area plan falls somewhere between the Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) the Land Use Code. It is specific to one area within the larger municipality.

Area Plan Guidelines – Requests made by the Assembly

Staff begins working on neighborhood (area) plans as directed by the CBJ Assembly. In this specific instance, the Comp Plan directs staff to do a downtown plan, said Ms. McKibben. The same was true for the Lemon Creek and Auke Bay area plans. Douglas or downtown Douglas is next.

Area Plan Guidelines – Scheduling

Blueprint Downtown will be closer to a 24-month effort.

Area Plan Guidelines – Planning Team Appointment

Ms. Boyce thanked everyone for their commitment to the Steering Committee.

Area Plan Guidelines – Draft Plan Document

Ideally, a draft chapter document will be made available two weeks ahead of each committee meeting so as to allow time for members to develop comments and questions, said Ms. Boyce. The comments and questions will be compiled and returned to the committee for another review.

Area Plan Guidelines – Review and Recommendation

Depending on the result of the review, sections might be sent back to CDD staff for more work or be ready to move on to the Planning Commission.

Area Plan Guidelines – Public Hearings

There will be a public hearing process in front of the Planning Commission.

Area Plan Guidelines –Implementation and Monitoring

Once the plan is done and adopted, the implementation process will begin. It is hoped that the Steering Committee stays involved to help champion the plan. The Planning Commission and Assembly will receive an annual report on the status of the plan's implementation.

Area Plan Guidelines – Steering Committee Duties

A list of meeting norms was presented. The public is invited to meetings and can speak during the public participation section of each meeting. If a committee member cannot attend a meeting, s/he can still submit comments on the chapters.

PLANNING 101

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

It is a policy and goal document for entire borough and includes maps, goals, policies, and objectives. Ms. Boyce showed a slide with a list of the chapters in the document.

What is land use?

Examples of some of the ways people use the land in a community were listed. Land use is different from land cover.

Comp Plan Land Use Designations were reviewed indicating those that fall under the headings of Natural Resource Uses, Public Uses, Commercial/Industrial Uses and Residential Uses. The following slide indicated, by an underline, which ones are most seen in the downtown area. Mr. Heumann asked if density will be reviewed at a later time. There is high density residential use in the Comp Plan but it is not mapped anywhere in the borough, said Ms. Boyce. Ms. McKibben said when the committee discusses the land use chapter of the Blueprint Downtown Plan, density will be reviewed and discussed in detail. Ms. McKibben noted that the land use designations are intended to be “aspirational”.

Ms. Boyce said that ideally zoning should be consistent with land use designations. An example of a downtown area that is not this way is the Highlands; this is a residential area in need of a zoning fix.

What is zoning?

Zoning implements the policies and goals of the Comp Plan, said Ms. Boyce.

On the colored zoning map, “D” followed by a number designates density for residential zones as in units per acre. Starr Hill is an example where D5 does not fit what is on the ground, because in actuality it is much denser. Ms. Boyce said there currently is a rezoning project for downtown that is happening concurrently with this area plan. Mr. Day asked if the planning effort will be looking further down Thane Road than what is depicted on the colored map. Yes, said Ms. Boyce.

The table of permissible uses presented included descriptions of the districts and what they are intended to accommodate as well as other uses that are not strictly residential like a childcare facility or light manufacturing. In many cases, a use might need a Conditional Use Permit, which must be approved by the Planning Commission.

Upcoming Events

The final report from the consultants is much anticipated. Steering committee meetings are scheduled through November. All of these meetings are scheduled to take place at the Fire Hall on Thursday nights.

COMMITTEE MEMBER QUESTIONS

Patty Ware – Ms. Ware asked when the consultant’s report is coming. Ms. Boyce said “now”.

Kirby Day - Mr. Day asked if Blueprint Downtown will become part of the Comp Plan. Ms. Boyce said that when area plans are adopted, through ordinance they become part of the comp plan series. Ms. McKibben said the plan is kind of like a set of encyclopedias, a series of documents that make up a whole. Title 49 will list the adopted plan and future development will have to be consistent with this document. Ms. McKibben said that ideally the Blueprint Downtown document will state what to do when there is a conflict between the Comp Plan and the area plan. Mr. Day asked when the Comp Plan is updated does the area plan get reviewed again? Ms. Pierce said a process to update the Comp Plan is about to start, and the new document will give clearer direction regarding the Comp Plan and the relationship with the much more detailed area plans. Ms. McKibben suggested the committee members have a look at the Lemon Creek Area Plan, which is available on line. This is a good example explaining how the comp plan and area plan work together. Mr. Day asked how the other parallel efforts going on in terms of downtown, like the wayfinding project, fit in. Ms. Boyce said that all the other projects going

on that involve downtown such as the residential rezoning, the Front and Franklin Streets improvements, and the wayfinding project will be considered in this area plan document. As the committee gets to a specific theme, like transportation, all the subject matter experts working on that theme will be in same room so we can all be aligned.

Michael Heumann – Mr. Heumann asked how the timing will work. Ms. Boyce said the downtown residential rezone will be complete by August. She said she anticipates that this group will have additional recommendations on that topic.

Betsy Brenneman – Ms. Brenneman said that concerning rezoning downtown, it sounds like the city is trying to make what exists comply with new zones. She said it sounded more like change rather than a correction for what is currently in place. Ms. Boyce gave some background regarding the number of variances that have been requested for properties that do not fit their zoning. For example, a zone district tells a property owner where a house can be placed. If the siting of the house can't meet the setbacks required by the zoning, a property owner can request a variance and the Planning Commission says yes or no to that request. CDD looked at variance data for downtown and found hot spots for variance request which indicated that the zoning in place doesn't fit what is on the ground. It costs \$400 to apply for a variance for something that a neighboring property might already have grandfathered in, such as a deck. The planners working on this rezone project looked at the Highlands neighborhood, which was built later than the rest of downtown, and gave recommendations as well as for Starr Hill, the Casey Shattuck neighborhood, and multi-family zone districts. A lot of feedback has been received from the community, specifically from Highlands residents. As a result, there is now talk about splitting upper and lower portions of that neighborhood since there are different sizes of properties in those two areas of the Highlands neighborhood. The real intent is to make what has actually happened have zoning to match, not to change the zoning in a way that continues to not fit what is on the ground, said Ms. Boyce. Ms. McKibben commented that the planners are not looking at land uses but at setbacks and lot sizes. Ms. Pierce said hopefully there will be a baseline of correctness coming from the rezone project.

Laura Martinson – Ms. Martinson said she was curious about the rock dump and AML area; is that an Industrial zone? Ms. Boyce said some of it is. A zoning map can be found on the CDD the webpage.

Daniel Glidmann – Mr. Glidmann asked how a planning process intersects with policy, for example on the seawalk. This has a lot of potential uses, he said, and conflicting opinions about what should be there because there is no policy at present. Is it part of this committee's planning process to establish or direct policy such as that, he asked? Docks & Harbors has been unsuccessful so far. It could be, said Ms. Boyce. One aspect of this problem is the zone districts in place along the seawalk require a use that is supposed to be water-related. Those uses could be better defined by this group, for example, she said. Ms. McKibben noted that when the plan is adopted by ordinance, it becomes policy. Sometimes it is challenging to implement and make decisions if the plan is vague and/or conflicting. However, the waterfront plan has been adopted. Mr. Glidmann said he felt there was conflicting jurisdiction between the City Manager, Docks & Harbors, and Parks & Rec. Ms. McKibben suggested that this planning effort is an opportunity to have conversations with all those people and hopefully clarify jurisdiction through the planning process.

Laura Martinson – Ms. Martinson asked if the Blueprint plan will become a reference used by the Assembly when new businesses come before them? Ms. Boyce said that ideally when a plan is adopted

by ordinance development has to be consistent with the plan. Planners will evaluate whether or not a proposal is supported by this plan. Ms. McKibben said when a new business is proposed, the zoning determines if that type of business is allowable in that location. However, a plan or zoning does not determine how many of a particular type of business can be located there, for example the numbers of tee-shirt shops. Ms. Brenneman said doesn't politics come into it sometimes? Sometimes the plans are overridden, said Ms. Boyce, and laws can change. Ms. Pierce pointed out that CDD staff reviews plans and makes recommendations to the Planning Commission based on those plans. Ms. Martinson said she is excited about the process and wished it had been in place 30 years ago.

Kirby Day - Mr. Day asked if most of the waterfront is zoned Waterfront Commercial (WC). It is from the Merchants Wharf to the tram, then it changes to Waterfront Industrial (WI) was the reply. How does the seawalk that passes through fit into different zoning districts, he asked? Ms. Pierce said this is interesting because different city departments have jurisdiction over different parts of the waterfront. For example, Bernadette's food truck is on a parcel controlled by Parks & Rec, not Docks & Harbors. So there is a goal to have some sort of alignment with processes versus rules that differ from one department to another. Zoning doesn't come into play as much in these situations of businesses along the waterfront but it needs looking at, and the Blueprint Downtown area plan is a good venue for that. Ms. Boyce commented that WC allows up to 18 dwelling units per acre, but this has not come to pass at this point in time. Mr. Glidmann commented that there are other mitigating factors for development along the waterfront, such as FEMA.

Ms. McKibben said that FEMA is in the process of updating flood maps for Juneau. At some point Teri Camery, the planner working on that project, will come talk to the committee. CBJ received a grant to update hazards maps as well. This might relate to some recommendations in the zoning for downtown, she said. Ultimately there will be better maps in place but the committee might have recommendations regarding high-hazards areas. If the progress of these efforts don't neatly align, it might be necessary to put placeholders in the plan document. She said that a good tool to use along the process of creating the plan is "parking lots" – a place to store topics and ideas that come up in conversation yet are not appropriate to include in this plan but are good things to return to in a different format.

Betsy Brenneman - Ms. Brenneman asked when the last time mass wasting was done. Ms. Boyce said that bits and pieces have been adopted including in the 70's and 90's, if she recalled correctly. This new information will be digital and more comprehensive, said Ms. McKibben. Ms. Boyce noted that this planning effort should be completed before the reworking of the Comp Plan is done so it will filter nicely into changes to the Comp Plan. She also pointed out that there is a mixed-use zone district by S. Franklin Street where developers can build as high and dense as they want. There is also an overlay district there which includes some height limits. The Historic district might limit the mixed-use district.

Michael Heumann – Mr. Heumann asked if the committee should be wary of recommendations that effect things governed by Parks & Rec and Docks & Harbors. He wondered if that would be a waste of time. Ms. Boyce clarified that these departments will be partners in discussions when the steering committee works through the chapters. Ms. Pierce said that she just finished writing the Parks & Rec Master Plan and noted that it includes the recommendation for more harmony between city departments. Businesses should not go shopping between CBJ departments for the answer they want; policies and procedures should be aligned.

Patty Ware – Ms. Ware asked if there was somewhere to go to learn more about the various turfs of the city departments because she thought CBJ was a more cohesive team than she is now coming to understand. Mr. Glidmann echoed that and said as an example Tracy’s Crab Shack was given leased space from Docks & Harbors, but next to that parcel is a strip managed by the city manager so some of the space needs a yearly permit while another receives a long time lease. Who owns Overstreet Park, he asked? Parks & Rec does, but Docks & Harbors owns the portion under the bridge, said Ms. Pierce. Ms. Pierce reiterated that is necessary to work on having city departments talk to one another more. Ms. Boyce said that at the relevant chapters staff can provide a land ownership map to help committee members visualize the lay of the land. Ms. Martinson asked if there might be recommended readings provided ahead of time? Yes, said Ms. Boyce, and also staff will appreciate receiving emails with questions ahead of time so that information can be prepared and provided before or at the meetings. Ms. McKibben said she wanted to plant the seed that while the Historic District has design standards and the Willoughby District has some design recommendations, might the committee want to see more design standards than there currently are? She recommended that members take advantage of their visits to other communities to see how things play out there that might influence their thinking about Juneau’s downtown.

Laura Martinson – Ms. Martinson asked who determines what is an historic district? The city decides, said Ms. Boyce. As part of a certified local government there is access to federal grant monies. Ms. McKibben noted there are also historic properties outside the district, so the Historic & Preservation Plan that is in the works might offer opportunities for properties outside the defined historic district. Some of these properties are on the National Historic Register such as some on Kennedy Street, and the Valentine and Alaska Hotel buildings. Mr. Glidmann said he thinks it is important to know why those boundaries are where they are – he thinks the boundaries define the area before fill was placed and built upon. Ms. Brenneman asked if the historic district boundary is cast in concrete. No, said Ms. Boyce, it goes up to 2nd Street now but there is talk about expanding it up the hill. Some property owners do push back on that idea, but there are also benefits to having the designation. Mr. Glidmann pointed out that one side of 2nd Street has to have a canopy, on the Wells Fargo Bank side, while the other side has to apply for a permit for a canopy because it is considered to be encroaching. Mr. Worl asked if downtown Juneau is the only area with an historic district. Ms. Boyce said that Chicken Ridge is recognized but has no design standards. On Douglas the cemeteries are recognized as an historic district. Treadwell also, said Mr. Jensen, but it is not “designated” by the state or federal government.

Melani Schijvens – Ms. Schijvens wondered if it was allowable to build under a bridge – she thought she saw plans for ideas to do so. Mr. Glidmann said that is why the Marine Exchange building moved. What is the plan now, she asked? Mr. Glidmann said that is up to this committee.

IV. Public Participation – None

V. Committee Member Comments

Mr. Day said he hoped as the plan progresses that it will stick more than a few years. He has seen so many downtown signage projects pass through, for example.

Ms. Schijvens said that the main reason she is part of the committee is because she is the Chair of the Flats Family Association, and she wants to share what the committee is doing with people in that

neighborhood so they can be engaged and influence the process. Ms. Boyce said that the website is where all the materials for these meetings will be found and are accessible to anyone in the community.

Mr. Glidmann made the point that the work the committee will do is not just specific to planning but to where we all live. Downtown Juneau has a growing homeless issue which violates all zoning laws, and the problem is not likely to get better soon. He advised the group of the need to keep people and just not things in the forefront of the work. It is easy to talk about density and forget the people, he said.

Ms. Perry and Mr. Jensen said they had no comment at this time.

Ms. Martinson said she is looking forward to cohesion and having one place to look for “the plan” for what should happen downtown.

Ms. Pierce wanted to thank everyone for being part of the process.

Mr. Worl said he wanted to add on to Mr. Glidmann’s comments about the homeless population. He is involved with St. Vincent de Paul and the Glory Hall’s conversations about collaboration for meeting housing needs and connecting with other social services as well as government funding. Also, he has been asked by Sealaska Heritage Institute to be part of their arts campus planning committee. They envision a campus located where the parking lot at the corner of Seward and Front Streets is now with structures for art instruction, performances, and northwest coast art themes including a spruce root hat cover over it all. The first meeting for this committee is Friday, April 5th, so at the next Blueprint Downtown meeting he might have more to share.

Ms. Ramiel said she is the owner of the Silverbow Inn and sits on this committee to represent that neighborhood and the Downtown Business Association (DBA) which was just accredited as Alaska’s first Main Street Community. The Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC) helped with a lot of the work to obtain that accreditation, which was done at the request of the Assembly as part of Juneau’s Economic Plan. The strength of the program is that it can be a tool to collaborate with city government to work on downtown issues. Ms. Pierce commented that this program can easily be tailored for individual cities. Ms. Ramiel recently went to the convention in Seattle along with Ms. Maclean and Ms. Eddins from CDD.

Ms. Crossley wished the committee members good luck with the process.

Ms. Ware wanted to thank Mr. Glidmann and Mr. Worl for the reminder about the people who live, play, and walk downtown including the most vulnerable of community members.

Mr. Heumann said he had no comments.

Ms. McKibben asked Ms. Ramiel about the Willoughby district meeting she attended. The people who met are coordinators of things happening in that neighborhood, said Ms. Ramiel, and the group includes representatives from the Zach Gordon Youth Center, the Heating District, Sealaska Sacred Grounds, the transitional housing program getting established in the former Harbor Hotel, JACC, Centennial Hall and others. All gave 3 minute presentations. Ms. Brenneman asked if there was any movement about the renaming of the district. Ms. Ramiel said someone spoke about an initiative to rename it the Auk Village

District. Ms. Ware asked how the Willoughby District name came into being. Ms. McKibben said she checked with Barb Sheinberg of Sheinberg Associates about the name of the Willoughby District. Ms. Sheinberg was the lead in writing the Willoughby District Plan. She was told that the district name is not official. Now people are trying to figure out how a name can become official. Ms. Boyce said that the Historic Resources Advisory Committee (HRAC) is an entity that might choose to write a letter to the Assembly advocating renaming a district. Ms. Brenneman wondered if Starr Hill is an official name or just what it has been called forever.

Ms. Boyce said that the previous night she gave an update to the Parts & Rec Advisory Committee about Blueprint Downtown, and the CDD Director gave an update at the Willoughby meeting.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 pm.