



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

April 1, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Steering Committee Members Present:

Betsy Brenneman
Kirby Day
Daniel Glidmann
Michael Heumann
Laura Martinson

Ricardo Worl
Patty Ware
Nathaniel Dye
Jill Ramiel

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Iris Matthews, Karena Perry, Tahlia Gerger

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Project Manager
Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager

Assembly Members:

Loren Jones

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. Mr. Day chaired the meeting in Ms. Perry's absence.

II. Approval of Minutes

a. February 25, 2021 DRAFT minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting

Ms. Ware drew attention to a typo on page 2, and recommended changing "finding" to "funding." She also recommended amending Mr. Day's statement about Norwegian Cruise Lines not intending to include daycares, beaches, etc. to say that they are not going to fund those potential aspects of the project.

Ms. Brenneman noted that the Focus Report referenced throughout the draft minutes should be the Visioning Report. She also recommended changing the phrase "tourism management bypass" to "Gastineau Avenue/South Franklin Street bypass" on page 7.

MOTION: By Ms. Ware to approve the February 25, 2021 minutes as amended. Ms. Martinson seconded.

The motion passed with no objection.

III. Public Participation

None.

IV. Steering Committee Updates

None.

V. Chapter 2: Implementation

Pages 1 – 2

Ms. McKibben reported she had incorporated the key ideas discussed two meetings ago, as well as reworded the recommendations to make them more active.

Ms. Ware said she liked the idea of using broad themes as organizing principles. Ms. Martinson agreed.

Ms. Brenneman suggested replacing the title of “Implementation” with “Implementing This Plan.” She stated she disliked the interchangeable language, which includes the terms goals, strategies, actions, recommended actions, key ideas, and broad themes. She thinks they need to maintain consistency between terms. She suggested several changes to make the first two paragraphs stronger. She asked if the key ideas could be used to organize the table. Ms. McKibben said she did not think they would be a good organizational framework for the table.

Ms. Brenneman advocated for linguistic consistency between either “key ideas” or “key themes.” Mr. Day advocated for “broad themes” instead.

Pages 3 – 4

Staff asked the Steering Committee to send wordsmithing suggestions via email, and to focus on concepts and big picture ideas. Ms. McKibben said staff are not yet ready to discuss organization.

Ms. Ramiel asked about the possibility of retaining the services of the consultants they had hired previously to finish help finish the document and to make it look polished. Ms. Pierce said that it is a good idea, but that it is not realistic with the current budget situation. She also said that she thinks the document is close to completion. Funding will be going towards graphics and beautification.

Mr. Worl asked if the actions in the table are organized in priority order. Ms. McKibben replied they are in the order in which they appear in the plan, while deleting duplications.

Ms. Ware identified several opportunities to consolidate actions. She said she thinks the action “Develop strategies to address downtown issues” is too vague and all-encompassing.

Ms. Martinson asked what the Top Ten references. Ms. McKibben said these will be the ten most important actions identified by the Steering Committee, once they finish reviewing the actions.

Ms. Brenneman recommended, rather than the current column title "Action/Recommendation," they use either "Actions" or "Recommended Actions." She identified a lack of enforcement actions. She recommended that all actions start with an active verb. She asked what the action "Promote the connections between historic preservation and sustainability" means.

Ms. Pierce said that the most ecologically conscious building is the one that is already built. It is important to include sustainability in the discussion on historic preservation due grant opportunities that are restoration based. She suggested changing "sustainability" to "sustainable construction," or something similar.

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Mr. Glidmann asked what a FEMA Certified community is. He expressed concern that some downtown property owners are limited in their construction ability due to FEMA regulations. Staff said the certification does not affect property owners, but does help the City attain funding sources.

Mr. Glidmann disagreed with the conclusion that supporting and encouraging an 18/365 downtown would decrease undesirable behavior.

Ms. Ware identified several opportunities to consolidate actions, as well as some actions that are too detailed for inclusion in the table. Regarding Mr. Glidmann's comment, she recommended amending the action to focus on improving vibrancy and attractiveness of downtown to residents and visitors, rather than decreasing undesirable behavior. Ms. McKibben clarified that the actions related to CPTED concepts are separate due to their disparate intended audiences.

Ms. Ware recommended revising the action "In the immediate term, new development proposals should be encouraged to use CPTED consultations at the planning stages of development" to focus more on incentivizing new development projects rather than encouraging them. For the action "Provide an improved safe campground, which includes services and transportation for the homeless," she recommended changing "homeless" to "unsheltered population."

Ms. Martinson suggested changing State jobs to all jobs in the actions where it is referenced. She is of the opinion that they should be trying to keep all jobs in Juneau, including private sector jobs.

Ms. Brenneman stated she is uncomfortable with the recommendation to continue funding and otherwise supporting the Alaska Committee. She disagreed with Ms. Martinson, saying she

believes it is important to identify State jobs specifically. For the CPTED actions, she recommended combining all three actions and using the word “require” rather than “incentivize” for implementing CPTED principles in new construction.

Regarding the action “Support and expand events that bring visitors to the Downtown,” Mr. Day recommended replacing “visitors” with a term or phrase that includes people who live in the Valley.

Pages 7 – 8

Mr. Glidmann reported the State of Alaska is mandating a 20% reduction in lease space, which means relocating about 25% of the State workforce to working from home. This will have an impact on commercial real estate, as well as an increase potential areas of support for the people working from home. Ms. Ramiel said this is an opportunity to press for more downtown housing, since people working from home will likely want easy access to their community during their breaks and time off.

Ms. McKibben said staff will incorporate telecommuting into the plan document.

Ms. Ware identified several opportunities to consolidate actions, as well as some actions that are too detailed for inclusion in the table. She recommended including metrics in several actions to increase specificity. She said that the action “Undertake a market study to determine what types of businesses are needed downtown” is too vague to be meaningful.

Ms. Brenneman suggested incorporating the State lease information in the action regarding State workers. Regarding the action “Seek and assemble resources, including housing fund resources, to coordinate restoration for housing above the retail level within historic buildings,” she recommended removing “above the retail level” and to talk about incentivizing historic restoration for the whole building. She recommended changing the action “Implement a blighted properties ordinance to encourage owners to fix downtown buildings” to read “Implement and enforce.” Regarding the action referencing the 12-year tax abatement program, she stated that it should be more clear that this is the housing tax abatement. She disagreed with Ms. Ware about combining actions 42 and 43, because one focuses on electric vehicles and one focuses on district heating.

Pages 9 – 10

Mr. Glidmann said the action related to food security does not seem to be downtown-specific. He recommended adding a health security initiative to go with the food security initiative, due to the uncertainty of the future health landscape.

Regarding actions related to street reconstruction, Ms. Ramiel stated she would like to see specific language that recommends against street reconstruction that degrades neighborhood character. Mr. Day said he thinks that is what the entire document is trying to address.

Ms. Pierce said she thinks they can edit the relevant actions to incorporate Ms. Ramiel's concerns and to advocate incorporating public art.

Regarding the action recommending the relocation of City Hall, Mr. Worl said it could be helpful to expand or offer an explanation about the reasons behind this action. The idea is to open up City Hall's current location for something community-oriented. He also recommended including the intended relocation site. Ms. Pierce said the top of the Downtown Transit Center is the planned site.

Ms. Ware identified duplicated actions and suggested rewording several actions for greater specificity. Ms. McKibben cautioned that sometimes strong language is off-putting to policy makers; it may need to be changed to softer wording. Ms. Ware said she would prefer to have stronger language at the offset so that policy makers can soften as needed.

Ms. Martinson suggested that the action related to acknowledging Juneau's seasonal nature should incorporate legislative housing. She agreed with Ms. Ramiel's comments about incorporating character into street reconstruction, and stated she thinks businesses should be consulted prior to reconstruction due to the economic effects of extended street closures.

Ms. Brenneman recommended incorporating rental rates in the market study action. Rental rates limit the types of businesses that can survive downtown. Ms. Martinson disagreed, saying the demand is what is dictating the rental rates.

Ms. Ramiel said that the Main Street report from the consultants recommended a market gap study. Regarding construction-related street closures, she noted that there are many ways to market that the affected shops are still open for business.

Ms. Brenneman asked if the City Hall relocation to the site above the Downtown Transportation Center would intrude on Telephone Hill. Staff said they are unsure, as the planning process is still in the early stages.

Ms. Brenneman made several rewriting suggestions to incorporate stronger language.

Pages 11 – 12

Ms. Ware identified duplicated actions and made rewording recommendations to include stronger language.

Mr. Worl asked what minimizing the footprint of vendors entails in the action related to centralizing management of vendors. Ms. McKibben said that better management is needed to avoid food carts expanding into larger parts of the parks in which they are located.

Ms. Brenneman identified duplicative actions and suggested rewording for stronger language. She said she does not remember the Steering Committee discussing neighborhood associations, although she did not necessarily recommend removing the related action.

Ms. Pierce said there was a neighborhood association focus group during the focus group process. Staff said other cities have used these organizations more than CBJ does, and identified the potential to strengthen neighborhoods through these associations.

Ms. Ramiel stated she supports the benefits of neighborhood associations. A way to create a collective voice for everyone living in the downtown core would be useful. She asked if this is something the City could help organize. Staff stated they are unsure. The Steering Committee committed to discuss this recommendation further at a later date.

Ms., Brenneman recommended explaining “the power of ten” in the action in which it is referenced. She suggested an action to study the effects of providing seating downtown. She recommending adding permitting to the actions related to centralizing management of vendors.

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Regarding the actions related to cruise ship schedules, Ms. Ware recommended identifying who is responsible for scheduling. She asked if the Commercial Use Regulation referenced in one of the actions is new. Ms. Pierce replied that it is, and that Parks and Recreation has taken over permitting for commercial tour groups in parks.

Ms. Ware recommended moving the free wi-fi away from Marine Park. Ms. Pierce said that this solution was implemented to avoid excess congregation inside the downtown library.

Ms. Brenneman said she remembered that the Steering Committee had discussed limiting the wi-fi signal to the base of the library. Staff will look into past discussions, and the Steering Committee will discuss the issue further at a later date.

Mr. Worl asked if this project would be eligible to use cruise tax funds. Staff said it may be possible.

Ms. Brenneman said she does not agree with the recommendation for another cruise ship dock. Regarding the actions related to cruise ship scheduling, she recommended rewording to emphasize the need for the City’s involvement in the process. The action related to providing public restrooms should include language regarding enforcement and monitoring. Ms. Brenneman identified duplicative actions.

Mr. Day suggested removing the action “Scheduling of docks should stagger arrival and departure times to disperse impacts” because it is already occurring in cruise ship scheduling.

Ms. Brenneman said she does not agree with the actions recommending implementing whole plans because the Steering Committee disagrees with some of the recommendations in other plans.

Ms. McKibben clarified that the Steering Committee did recommend full implementation of the Willoughby Plan, the Harbors Management Plan, the Waterfront Management Plan, and the Historic Preservation Plan with one exception. The Housing Action Plan is borough-wide, so a downtown-specific plan does not necessarily need or want to endorse the whole plan.

VI. Committee Comments

Ms. McKibben said that the Steering Committee will continue to discuss the implementation table at the next meeting.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: April 15, 2021, 6 p.m., Zoom Webinar & Telephonic