



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

August 13, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Steering Committee Members Present:

Christine Woll, Chair
Betsy Brenneman
Kirby Day
Michael Heumann
Laura Martinson

Tahlia Gerger
Patty Ware
Daniel Glidmann
Nathaniel Dye

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Karena Perry, Vice Chair, Ricardo Worl, Jill Ramiel, and Iris Matthews

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Senior Planner
Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager

Assembly Members:

None

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:13 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

a. June 11, 2020 DRAFT minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting

MOTION: By Mr. Day to approve the June 11, 2020, draft minutes.

The motion passed with no objection.

b. July 16, 2020 DRAFT minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting

MOTION: By Ms. Brenneman to approve the July 16, 2020, draft minutes.

The motion passed with no objection.

III. Public Participation – None

IV. Steering Committee Updates

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

Ms. McKibben gave a brief overview of what would be discussed at this meeting, including an update on action items and what items have been checked off that list. She stated that Staff was requesting feedback from the Committee on if the Housing and Land Use sections should be combined in Chapter 5. Staff felt this would make sense, since the section is dedicated to the residential neighborhoods, but wanted input from the Committee.

Ms. Woll felt that it made sense to combine the Housing and Land Use sections into Chapter 5.

Ms. Brenneman asked for clarification on what information this chapter would contain.

Ms. McKibben stated that Chapter 5 would include Housing, but Staff had hoped to be more specific with the recommendation on how to address housing in the individual subdistricts.

Ms. Pierce noted that a lot of the chapters are intertwined and some of the language may need to be worked on, along with edits to titles and headers, to make it more clear for what each chapter focused on, and what information was included. She stated that Chapter 5 would be centered around the legal framework regarding the management of land use, along with overlay districts, guidelines, items entrenched in Code, what the nature of housing looks like downtown, how housing is provided, and how to increase affordable housing. Some items have more legal aspects to them, while others are more conceptual. Staff can work to make this clearer for readers.

Due to the amount of material that would be included in Chapter 5, if the Housing and Land Use sections were combined, Ms. Martinson thought it might be better to separate the sections.

Ms. McKibben thanked the Committee for their input and stated that Staff would use this information to put the chapter together. She then moved forward to discuss the Missing Middle Housing concept. She noted that a speaker had presented information on this at the CBJ Housing and Building Forum that took place in February, and offered to send the presentation to anyone that was interested in reviewing it. Ms. McKibben stated that Missing Middle Housing is a range of multi-unit, or clustered housing, types – compatible in scale with detached single-family homes – that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living. The general concept is a way of increasing density so that doesn't feel different from the existing development; The Comprehensive Plan and other plans include policies with an emphasis on increasing housing and density. Missing Middle Housing is one way this increase could be accomplished within existing neighborhoods. Ms. McKibben asked for thoughts on this concept.

Mr. Day asked if this concept was to be used in neighborhoods where there is also commercial activity, similar to how Auke Bay has been developed.

Ms. McKibben stated that it could be used in that way. She stated that it would create more walkable areas, because the buildings would be closer together. She also noted that denser development means the cost of services goes down, and the value of land would go up, so there are economic advantages that come with this concept, as well.

Ms. Ware stated that she felt this type of development would be a nice addition to Juneau. Something like this, if the guidelines were followed correctly, could work in the Willoughby District, as well, where lots of open space could be utilized. She expressed some concerns that if zoning changes are proposed there is potential for a fair amount of public pushback. A lot of people might not like the denser housing development, even though it works well in other cities. However, Ms. Ware felt this was a good idea and it had a lot of potential to help Juneau.

To touch on the Alternative Development Overlay District (ADOD) rezoning proposal for downtown Juneau, Ms. Pierce stated that it does align with the Missing Middle Housing concept. The idea is to create zoning that matches what is already on the ground. It supports the idea of the Missing Middle Housing by creating more options for people living, and wanting to develop, downtown.

Ms. Martinson expressed support for the Missing Middle Housing concept, and felt that this is exactly what Juneau is missing and lacking. She believes that there is usually push back for anything new that is proposed, but if it is presented in the right way, this could be a well-thought-out concept for Juneau.

While this might not be hard to solve, Mr. Heumann asked where this concept might work in Juneau in all aspects, including zoning. He has seen a number of backyards turn into houses downtown and feels the big question to answer is how much needs to be done to make this attractive to someone. This may be a big hurdle to overcome, and there will probably be pushback, but the economics are true. Land values have to be high to justify tearing a development down. Mr. Heumann would like to hear more about how and what role the City and planning department have in incentivizing it. This could be very challenging for developers to make this work.

Ms. McKibben noted that this concept is a little hard to envision when an area is built out, but she was able to give some examples. She noted that she was just introducing this concept to the Committee at this time. If the Committee likes this idea, then Staff can start moving forward with it.

Mr. Dye gave some information on the downtown rezoning effort and thought this concept was a good one.

Ms. Ware thought Mr. Heumann made a good point, and noted that some areas of the Willoughby District might be well suited for this type of development. She does not want to see any developments torn down either. She suggested the plan include where this type of development might work well.

Ms. McKibben stated that this would be helpful and the areas could be identified as opportunities.

Mr. Heumann noted that it would be important to use very specific language when incentivizing this concept, so they did not wrongfully incentivize tearing down established developments. Juneau is short on housing and this concept may help bridge the gap that is being seen.

Ms. Pierce felt that Mr. Heumann and Ms. Ware made valid points, and could see that the group is in favor of this concept. Staff would work with the concept recognizing the concerns.

Ms. McKibben agreed and moved forward to discuss Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations in downtown Juneau and explained some aspects of the zoning districts downtown. Ms. McKibben noted that there are many lots in downtown Juneau that conform to the current code and the motivation behind the ADOD is to have zoning that more accurately reflects existing development. Most of downtown is Mixed Use (MU), there is no maximum limit for density or height. This allows for a large variety of uses. While MU zones can accommodate a lot of for the concepts the Committee has discussed, the zoning does not require that developments be of mixed use. Ms. McKibben also spoke on the Recreation Service Park (RS) and D10 – Multi-family zones. She asked if the Committee wanted to recommend a denser zoning district and suggested that some language be added to reevaluate development in hazard areas, after the hazard mapping and zoning is finished.

Mr. Day asked for clarification on how far the Resource Development(RD) zone extended down past the Franklin Dock.

Ms. McKibben stated that the RD zone ended at the Rock Dump.

Mr. Dye noted that the RD zone abuts Traditional Town Center (TTC), and Ms. McKibben confirmed this.

Referring to page 6 of 16 in the draft of Chapter 5, Ms. Martinson noted that it stated “Development in the Light Commercial (LC) zoning district produces twice the property tax revenue per acre compared to development in General Commercial (GC) Zoning District.” She asked where this area of LC zone is and if this should be part of the rezoning discussion.

Ms. McKibben stated that there aren’t any GC zones downtown. This information came from work on the Economic Development Plan which was boroughwide.

Referring to page 9 of 16 in the draft Chapter and the encouragement to develop with the option of using bonus points as an incentive, Ms. Ware noted that developers rarely use the bonus points and do not always develop in the manner that is hoped for. asked if Staff knew why this might be.

Ms. McKibben felt this was a great conversation to have. She agreed that bonus points aren’t always used. One reason may be, they are outdated and need to be revised.

Mr. Dye added that bonus provisions can leave uncertainty in what you a developer could get approved for. The Auke Bay Area Plan is also recommends bonus points and the Planning

Commission is in the process of developing the zoning language. He also noted that only the Nugget Mall and Wal-Mart are in the GC zone, whereas Costco, Safeway, Super Bear, Home Depot, are all in the LC zone (in response to Ms. Martinson's question about economic value).

Ms. Martinson asked if these topics were just information for the Committee, or if it would become part of the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan material.

Ms. McKibben stated that the discussion from past plans would be added to into the appendices section, and they would not be left in the chapter.

Adding to what Mr. Dye's comments, Mr. Heumann noted that if contractors are developing something that requires Planning Commission approval, there is a fair bit of financial burden that goes into this. So, developers will want to do something that they are highly confident in, and remove as much uncertainty as possible. It's an economic trade off.

Ms. McKibben asked Mr. Heumann, as a developer, if some concepts, such as building design, were expected of developers, would that be more acceptable to them.

Mr. Heumann replied that it all depended on the cost. If it were something small and not too expensive, then it would likely be more possible. If the requirement deviated strongly from what the developer wanted to build, then one would likely not want to move forward with the development. There is always a risk with tacking on more and more requirements.

Ms. Brenneman suggested that if bonus points were not being used to help embody the traditional styles, then it may be good to take a step back from them. She felt that it may be important to determine if guidelines and requirements are good or bad, and then try to work options for bonus points.

Ms. Woll stated that she agreed on an abstract level.

Mr. Dye noted that development in Juneau has been less single-family homes and more common wall developments, and sidewalks have become very expensive. He also pointed out that storage is prohibited on the first floor of buildings in the MU and MU2 zoning districts. However, there may be other ways to encourage other development. The Table of Permissible Uses (TPU) could be very useful for incentivizing other types of development, instead of rezoning.

Mr. Heumann feels that Juneau is in a weird situation. Some things may seem feasible for developers and specific features could be mandated, but somethings seem unreachable, because they can become so expensive. It may be worth asking people how far they are willing to go and spend, to get a better idea of how to move forward.

Ms. Pierce summarized that while bonus provisions can be helpful, underlying regulations and what items are actually feasible need to be considered. If bonus provisions are going to be retained, then a long hard look needs to be given at how to make them successful. Ms. McKibben agreed.

Ms. Woll asked for more information on what the impact would be regarding the recommendation about requiring true mixed use

Ms. Pierce stated that it is something Staff introduced with the concept of the Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zone in Auke Bay which does not allow single-family residential, MU does not require mixed use right now, it is allowed. This also relates to the Missing Middle Housing concept and provide a way of integrating more housing into downtown.

Ms. McKibben noted that there are a couple different ways this could be accomplished, and gave some examples. Staff wanted guidance as to whether the concept should be included in the plan, and that the details would be worked out later.

Mr. Dye stated that vertical development was being encouraged in Auke Bay, so bonus points were being used to incentivize this, which brings more certainty for developers.

Ms. Brenneman asked if the guidelines at the beginning of the chapter could have some strength added to them to give them more power.

Ms. McKibben replied that this could be done, and more discussion could be given to making some of the guidelines into action items.

Ms. Brenneman asked if there was a legal way to limit Airbnbs and other options like that. She was thinking it may be good to limit them in certain areas.

Ms. McKibben stated that she did not know the answer at this time, but would look into it and gather more information.

Mr. Dye noted that Airbnbs are not allowed in certain districts.

Ms. Pierce added that this is a very hot topic at the moment, and from what she has seen it is very difficult to enforce the limitation of Airbnbs.

Regarding the Missing Middle Housing concept, Mr. Glidmann asked if the house that was recently built near the Northern Lights Church was within the existing zoning laws.

Ms. McKibben stated that she was unfamiliar with this house. So, Ms. McKibben and Mr. Glidmann agreed to discuss it at a later time.

Ms. McKibben moved forward to discuss D18 and D5 zoning. She noted that there is some discussion around this in the draft chapter., Some areas of D18 zoning near the high school don't accommodate mixed use development. D5 zoning is low density. She asked for the Committee's thoughts on this.

The Committee and Staff discussed what areas of downtown Juneau are in which zone, to get a better idea of which areas could be improved if they were an LC zone.

Mr. Day noted that the area where the Franklin Dock resides is zoned Waterfront Industrial (WI). He asked if someone were to build a dock near the U.S. Coast Guard station along the waterfront, would it be zoned Waterfront Commercial (WC).

Ms. McKibben replied that this would be discussed more when the Waterfront and Rock Dump subdistricts were examined.

Ms. Brenneman asked what the legal relationship was between Indian Village in the Aak'w Kwaan district and the City.

Ms. McKibben stated that it depended on the ownership. Properties deeded from the Federal Government into Native ownership are not subject to zoning or taxation. When those properties are sold they are no longer in "restricted deed" status and become subject to zoning. In the Village, the Tlingit and Haida Central Council has been purchasing restricted deed lots, and more of the area is subject to City & Borough of Juneau regulations.

Ms. Pierce noted that Staff had asked some open-ended questions. She asked if the Committee had any questions on the packet materials, explanations of the different districts, or any other details.

Ms. Martinson felt that the section where Steering Committee feedback was requested was very helpful. She thought it may be good to take each area and look at it with the vision on the same page, to try to keep everything in the right perspective. While it seemed simple to break everything apart and keep the same mindset, she felt this was harder than expected.

Ms. Pierce stated that there had been some struggles with trying to produce all of this information in a virtual format, but Staff is open to suggestions and feedback.

Ms. McKibben noted that she could break everything down more, for easier viewing.

Ms. Woll suggested that Committee members email Staff with their suggestions and comments on how to present the information, to better suit the needs of everyone.

Ms. McKibben felt this would be very helpful. She then moved forward to discuss Placemaking. She stated that this had been discussed in great detail in Chapter 6. For this chapter does the Committee have specific recommendations for the individual subdistricts? If so, please send her those suggestions. She noted that there is not much information in the draft chapter regarding the history of the Highlands, and asked the Committee to let her know of any reliable material they may have.

Ms. Brenneman stated that she may have some information and would pass that on to Staff.

The Committee and Staff then reviewed what they would like to discuss at the next meeting, including the remaining sub areas, the introduction of Chapter 2, review of implementation table for the Parks, Open Space, and Recreation chapter, and scheduling future meetings.

Ms. Pierce asked if the Committee would like to see the implementation tables and information in an email first, and could decide at the next meeting if they would like to discuss them yet, or not.

The Committee agreed this would be good.

Ms. McKibben stated that the next meeting was scheduled for August 27, 2020, and Staff would work with the Committee to schedule more meetings.

The Committee thanked Staff and praised them for all their effort in presenting this information in a virtual format.

VI. Committee Comments

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: August 27, 2020, 6 p.m., Zoom webinar and telephonic.