



Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee DRAFT Meeting Minutes CBJ Assembly Chambers

October 10, 2019, 6:00 p.m.

Steering Committee Members Present:

Christine Woll, Chair
Daniel Glidmann
Michael Heumann
Wayne Jensen
Karena Perry

Jill Ramiel
Meilani Schijvens
Patty Ware
Ricardo Worl

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Betsy Brenneman, Kirby Day, Laura Martinson, and Lily Otsea

Planning Commission Liaison:

Nathaniel Dye

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Senior Planner, Project Manager
Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager
Tim Felstead, Planner
Brenwynne Grigg, Administrative Officer

I. Roll Call

Ms. Woll called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

August 28, 2019 Draft Minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting

MOTION: *By Mr. Jensen to approve the August 28, 2019, minutes without changes. Mr. Heumann seconded.*

The motion passed with no objection.

III. Public Participation

none

IV. Steering Committee Updates

Ms. McKibben informed the Committee of two more focus group meetings planned, one on art, culture, and history, and the other on youth and education.

Staff will send an update on the progress of the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan to the interested parties that signed up on our email lists within the next couple of weeks.

Ms. McKibben also reached out to the Juneau Douglas High School Student Council President, in an effort to recruit a youth representative for the Committee, replacing Ms. Otsea's seat.

V. Draft Chapter 7: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

Ms. Pierce recapped that she distributed chapter 7 after the last meeting, which reflected the revisions requested from the Committee at that meeting. She asked the Committee if anyone had any further comments, suggestions, or changes, recognizing we will come back to this chapter as complimentary planning processes progress.

Ms. Woll brought up ways to address reducing single use plastics, such as plastic bags and plastic bottles, with methods like water refilling stations, and was not sure which chapter this initiative should live in.

Ms. Ramiel thought these and other sustainability policies might co-exist well with sections relating to tourism, as there is potential for a lot of plastic waste.

Mr. Pierce suggested language such as, "Consider sustainability in park design (water refilling stations, etc.)", to which the Committee agreed. The Committee also agreed to look for other places in the Plan this might fit.

VI. Draft Chapter 3: Natural and Historic Context

Flood Mapping and Mass Wasting Assessment

Ms. McKibben opened with a brief overview of the FEMA Flood Mapping project, and the Mass Wasting Assessment project that CDD has underway. She explained that these projects would allow us to have maps that integrate with our GIS technology. Then, planning will review the zoning regulations for development standards in the various hazard areas.

Ms. McKibben spoke about the various historic districts recognized in the downtown, displayed a map of the areas, and introduced Ms. Eddins to speak further on the topic.

Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan

Ms. Eddins, CDD staff liaison to the Historic Resources Advisory Committee, opened the conversation with an overview of the Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan, a background on its creation, and the public process pursued for input into the Plan.

Recognizing that the majority of historic neighborhoods existing in Juneau today are located in the downtown area, she stressed the importance of the two plans being in harmony concerning historic areas.

The tangible benefit of an adopted Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan is that it allows us to be eligible to apply for federal funding for historic preservation projects. The National Park Service created the Preservation Act in 1966, seeking to ensure that projects using federal funding did not harm historic resources. A later amendment to the Act created State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) that would serve as a pass through for the federal funding. A requirement of SHPO is that only Certified Local Governments (CLG's) may apply for historic preservation funds, and in order to be a CLG, there must be an adopted historic preservation plan.

The intangible benefit of an adopted Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan is to preserve the authenticity of Juneau. The ability to preserve certain charming and quaint aspects of our town, which are more often than not, historic, and to preserve our culture, ensure quality of life and a connection to our past.

Current action items recommended in the Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan, relating to the focus area of Blueprint Downtown, are:

1. Allocate additional staff time to apply for funding that would allow for updated historical surveys. The intended outcome of this action item is to list historic buildings and/or historic neighborhoods on the Historic National Register. If listed in the register, the area is eligible for federal funding, to update and preserve historic buildings.
2. Allocate increased funding to create incentives for property owners to restore the blighted buildings in the downtown.

Juneau has two historic district listed on the register currently - the Downtown Historic District, and the Chicken Ridge Neighborhood.

Mr. Heumann asked for an estimated range of funding typically allocated to CGL's from the program. Ms. Eddins replied the amount of funding could be upwards of \$750,000 directly from the federal government, or upwards of \$25,000 through SHPO. She elaborated on other benefits as well, such as a property receiving federal tax credits for rehabilitation work on historic properties. Additionally, it would open up the possibility of creating a heritage tourism program.

Ms. Eddins moved on to the Main Street American program, and how it partners well with the Historic Cultural and Preservation Plan's recommendations for utilizing funding to create vitality in the historic downtown, while also creating strategies for economic development.

Ms. McKibben thanked the Downtown Business Association for spearheading the Main Street America initiative in Juneau.

Mr. Worl asked what sort of funding might be available that is associated with the Main Street program. Ms. Eddins replied that since Juneau is Alaska's first Main Street Community, there is not yet a state coordinator. Therefore, there is no funding at this time. However, the national program offers technical assistance on how to grow the program, and we have started the process. Ms. Ramiel replied that we are also able to use the SHPO office at this time.

Ms. Ramiel also informed the Committee that Ms. Crossley is a historical architect, and is working on a document that lists all the funding opportunities available to Juneau, now that we are a Main Street Community.

Ms. Ramiel then asked staff about the status of the Upstairs Downtown project. She is looking forward to the data showing housing potential of many of the downtown buildings. Ms. Eddins replied that the data is complete, and the CBJ Cartographer is putting the data into a story map, which will be available very soon.

Mr. Heumann asked about parking in relation to adding housing. Ms. Eddins said that if you are not enlarging the building, you are not required to add parking, but if you expand the building, or build a new building, then parking requirements kick in, although most of the study area is in a parking district that allows for parking reductions.

Ms. Woll asked how the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan could better inform what is already occurring in the Historic Preservation Program. Ms. Eddins replied that it could be helpful for this Committee to look at all the action items in the Plan, and provide input into the prioritization of the items in the downtown.

Ms. McKibben suggested the Committee could recommend which historic neighborhoods should pursue placement on the National Historic Register.

Ms. Pierce suggested that the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan could focus on more than just historic preservation, because topics such as housing, parking, business and economic vitality, etc., may also have some historic components.

Mr. Dye asked if the Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan mentions short-term rentals, in relation to their use in historic buildings. Ms. Eddins replied that the Plan focuses on helping people accomplish the task of restoring historic buildings. The Plan does not address activity held in those buildings, but perhaps that is something the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan could do.

Mr. Heumann asked whether Historic Preservation funds are available to initiate a project, or whether it was more to reimburse or complete a project. For example, would funding be available for the planning phase of a preservation project, or would planning need to be in place prior to applying for the funds. Ms. Eddins replied that in order to submit an application for funding to the granting agency, they will need to see architectural plans, engineered plans, site plan, etc.; therefore, project planning would need to be independently funded.

Ms. McKibben stated that the Comprehensive Plan and the Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan both promote heritage tourism, and she asked the Committee what their thoughts might be on this topic.

Ms. Eddins said the Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan ties heritage tourism to economic development. The study conducted by SHPO and Alaska Tourism, shows that more and more tourists are coming to Alaska by plane, and spending a week or so, rather than just a partial day as a cruise ship passenger. Heritage tourism will draw more of that type of tourist to Juneau, potentially even in the winter months, in addition to the summer months.

Ms. Pierce spoke about a study in another community she worked, which showed that tourists, who participate in heritage tourism, tend to spend more money in local stores than traditional tourists do.

Mr. Worl stated that in terms of the downtown core, he hopes Juneau can be a place that is modern and futuristic, attracting the adventurous crowds, but he is also interested in preserving the historic elements of Juneau, and is interested in how the two can blend, while not becoming stuck in the past.

Ms. Eddins stated that the Plan recommends revisiting the historic guidelines, and expanding the types and timeframes of historic design so they are not all 1800's euro-centric. She went on to speak about how the use of the building drives the vibrant, energetic, quality, and how that can exist well in old buildings.

Mr. Heumann said that he could see how some buildings would be worth preserving, but some perhaps not, and if the ones not worth saving could be torn down, and a new modern structure erected in its place, it would be better for the downtown. He wondered how we would regulate a historic district that is flexible to allow for both.

Mr. Glidmann suggested that we should also focus on the fact that we are making our own history, now. This community is no longer a community to build a temporary house, dig for gold, get rich, and then leave. Locals today are looking for a way to make something of Juneau and improve our quality of life. We are creating our own history, now.

Ms. McKibben concluded the conversation by stating that she heard some thoughts around merging historic with modern, creating our own history, opportunities for new structures, murals, etc., and she will recommend some action items that she will bring before the Committee at the next meeting.

Mr. Worl asked if there had been buildings in the downtown, identified as high value historic buildings. Ms. Eddins said there are, but to prove it to and acquire the needed funds to preserve them, we need to update our historic surveys.

Ms. Ramiel brought the Committee's attention back to a historical timeline that will appear in the historic chapter of the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan, and recommended adding the date when the Ferry moved from Downtown Juneau to Auke Bay. Mr. Jensen also recommended adding the date of construction of the Capital Building.

VII. Steering Committee Meeting Schedule beyond November 7

Future meeting dates were determined as November 20 and December 12.

VIII. Public Participation

IX. Committee Comments

X. Adjournment

MOTION: *By Ms. Ware to adjourn the meeting*

The motion passed with no objection.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m., and the next meeting date is November 7, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. in Assembly Chambers.