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TO: Mandy Cole, Chair, Planning Commission

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THROUGH: Jill Lawhorne, AICP, Director
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FILE NO.: AME2018 0007

PROPOSAL: A Text Amendment to adopt the *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* as part of the CBJ Comprehensive Plan

This staff report provides details on the draft *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* planning process and includes attachments that provide responses to Planning Commission questions from the March 12, 2024, Committee of the Whole meeting, agency comments, and public comments.

These materials can be found on the CDD website at: <https://juneau.org/community-development/blueprint-downtown>.

PLANNING COMMISSION ROLE

Three sections of Title 49 cover the purpose of the *Comprehensive Plan* and the duties of the Planning Commission in the *Comprehensive Plan* review process.

- Section 49.05.200 (b) notes, "The comprehensive plan adopted by the assembly by ordinance contains the policies that guide and direct public and private land use activities in the City and Borough."
- Section 49.10.170 (a) notes, "The commission shall undertake a general review of the comprehensive plan two years after the adoption of the most recent update and shall recommend appropriate amendments to the assembly. Proposed map changes shall be reviewed on a neighborhood or community basis as directed by the planning commission."
- CBJ 49.10.170(d) states that the Commission shall make recommendations to the Assembly on all proposed amendments to this title, zonings and re-zonings, indicating compliance with the provisions of this title and the Comprehensive Plan.

The *Comprehensive Plan* and its additions are incorporated into Title 49 at CBJ 49.05.200.

PURPOSE OF THE BLUEPRINT DOWNTOWN PLAN

A major goal of the *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* (Blueprint Downtown) is to provide strategic direction for development and growth, while embracing livability and a sense of place, as well as maintaining quality of life for residents.

The plan provides a framework to guide the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Assembly, city departments, the Planning Commission, and CBJ boards and commissions that will refer to this document to:

- Make informed decisions concerning future growth and development while maintaining a positive quality of life for residents;
- Plan for projects more efficiently;
- Assign appropriate resources to community needs;
- Identify needs for new or revised zoning and/or development regulations; and
- Identify infrastructure priorities.

The plan also provides a framework to guide individuals, private companies, and other stakeholders when making investment and development decisions, and when questions affecting community development arise.

STEERING COMMITTEE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On October 23, 2018, at its public hearing, the CBJ Planning Commission appointed 13 community members to the Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee held 41 meetings over four years, fielded public testimony, and engaged in public meetings, online surveys, on-street interviews, pop-ups, radio shows, community presentations, and walking tours. The year-long Visioning Process led by Sheinberg Associates, lucid reverie, and MRV Architects won the 2019 Most Innovative award from the Alaska Chapter of the American Planning Association. Details on the visioning process and public comment are in the Plan, its Appendices, and the Blueprint Downtown webpage.

At the January 25, 2023, steering committee meeting, the group finished its work and motioned to approve the draft *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* and send it to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation to the Assembly for adoption as part of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On [March 12, 2024, at the Planning Commission Committee of the Whole meeting](#), staff provided a brief introduction and overview of the draft *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan*. Responses to Commissioner questions from that meeting are in **Attachment C**.

The Planning Commission set a special public hearing date for April 23, 2024. In preparation for this hearing, staff issued a Public Service Announcement inviting public comment and solicited comments and project updates from agencies. See **Attachment D**. Agency comments will be submitted with additional materials.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (COMP PLAN)

The *Comprehensive Plan* identifies the importance of downtown Juneau as the traditional economic, civic, historical, and cultural center of the community. The Comp Plan addresses this in multiple areas:

Chapter 5 Economic Development

- Policy 5.2 Through a cooperative effort with the State of Alaska, to plan for and support development of an attractive setting, facilities, and other services to enhance the state capital and to strive to provide an atmosphere conducive to good leadership in the state, accessible to and supportive of all people of the state of Alaska.
- Policy 5.5 To maintain and strengthen downtown Juneau as a safe, dynamic and pleasant center for government and legislative activities, public gatherings, cultural and entertainment events, and residential and commercial activities in a manner that complements its rich historic character and building forms.

Chapter 10 Land Use

- Policy 10.13. To provide for and encourage mixed use development that integrates residential, retail, and office use in *Downtown areas*, shopping centers, along transit corridors, and other suitable areas.
- Policy 10.15 To reserve sufficient lands and facilities to support the State Capital functions in Downtown Juneau, including the provision of adequate transportation, housing, commerce communications services, cultural and entertainment activities and other support services.

Guidelines and Considerations for Subarea 6 (Maps K, M, N)

- Preserve the scale and densities of the older single family neighborhoods in the downtown area, including the Casey-Shattuck “flats” and Starr Hill historic districts, Chicken Ridge, Basin Road, Mt Maria, the Highlands, and the higher density apartments and homes in the vicinity of the Federal Building.
- Encourage the retention of existing dwelling units in or near the older residential neighborhoods to avoid exacerbating traffic and parking congestion and to preserve the privacy and quiet of those neighborhoods.
- Strengthen and enhance the Capitol Complex in the downtown Juneau area. Provide for orderly expansion of state government facilities in the vicinity of the State Capitol and the State Office Building.

The Blueprint Downtown plan supports and implements these policies while providing more specific and responsive information. If adopted, Blueprint Downtown will be an addendum to the Comp Plan. Blueprint Downtown provides a 20-year vision to guide growth, protect natural resources, and enhance and maintain amenities for livability. Where Blueprint Downtown and the Comp Plan conflict, or where Blueprint Downtown is more specific, the *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* supersedes the *Comprehensive Plan*.

Findings

Based upon the information presented, the draft *Downtown Juneau Area Plan* conforms to the Comprehensive Plan.

COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER RELEVANT CBJ PLANS AND STUDIES

The draft *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* reviews relevant CBJ plans, studies, and other agencies' plans and projects.

Blueprint Downtown “incorporates past planning efforts by combining them with how downtown should continue to grow, develop, and harness opportunities...”, (Blueprint Downtown, p. 17) and includes a complete list of other plans reviewed during the process. (Blueprint Downtown, Appendix B)

A diagram showing how the draft *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* fits among other planning efforts and how the plan's components could be implemented is included. (Blueprint Downtown, Figure 1, p. 28)

Specific recommendations in Action Tables at the end of each chapter include a column referencing the existing plan that aligns with or suggests a similar idea included in Blueprint Downtown.

Findings

Based on the information presented, the draft *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* conforms to other relevant CBJ Plans and Studies.

RELEVANT UPDATES

Many actions identified in the *draft Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* were part of ongoing projects. Project updates will be submitted with additional materials.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review and consider the draft *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* and recommend to the Assembly its adoption as an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft Blueprint Downtown Area Plan

Attachment B: Draft Blueprint Downtown Appendices

Attachment C: Responses to Questions from the March 12, 2024, Planning Commission
Committee of the Whole Meeting

Attachment D: Public Comment