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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT - REQUEST FOR AGENCY COMMENT

ORGANIZATION: Sealaska Heritage Institute
STAFF PERSON/TITLE: Chuck Smythe, Senior Ethnologist
DATE: May 29, 2024
APPLICANT:
TYPE OF APPLICATION: AME 18-07 Blueprint Downtown Area Plan

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The draft Blueprint Downtown Area Plan was forwarded to the Assembly by the Planning Commission on Tuesday, April 23, with a recommendation to adopt by ordinance, with amendments. If adopted, this plan will be used by decision-making bodies to make informed decisions about development projects and priorities.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

PARCEL NUMBER(S):

PHYSICAL ADDRESS:

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FROM PLANNER:

The Assembly Lands, Housing, and Economic Development (LHED) committee will provide a recommendation to the full Assembly on the adoption of the Blueprint Downtown area plan. As a stakeholder, your input on the plan's goals and action items will aid the PC in making an informed decision.

Sealaska Heritage Institute is integral to the plan's Visions for a vibrant downtown. Please provide comments or updates you would like to share on your current priorities and/or projects related to action items outlined in the Blueprint.

AGENCY COMMENTS:

p. 29 title: suggest reversing the order of the section title "Juneau's History and Natural Context" as the section starts with the environment. It could read, "Juneau's Natural and Historic Context"

P. 31 Historic Context: Suggested revisions:

Sentence 1: replace this sentence with the following:

Southeast Alaska has been inhabited by Indigenous populations for more than 10,000 years. Tlingit culture emerged about 6,000-6,500 years ago. The Tlingit have owned and occupied this region since that time.

Sentence 3, starting with the words Dzantik'i Héeni to the end: Revise the final clause so it reads, "...a seasonal village with two smoke houses was located there in 1880 when Áak'w Tlingits led prospectors to gold deposits in Silver Bow basin, starting the gold stampede the following year.'

Sentence 4: revise end of sentence with this text: '... to encourage residents to relocate and seek employment in the mines.'

Sentence 5, end: replace '...on the tidelands adjacent to Dzantik'i Héeni' with: 'along the shore above the tidelands between the creek and the bluff overlooking the growing town of Juneau.'

Bottom of page (31), replace the sentence starting: 'As the adjacent land grew in value... with this:

"First with the construction of a plank road that eventually became Willoughby Avenue, and later as the tidelands

AGENCY COMMENTS (CONTINUED):

were filled in with tailings from the gold mines, the Áak'w village was cut off from the open water. During this time the tidelands remained under the control of the federal government for the use and benefit of the Áak'w people. In the 1960s, when the City of Juneau sought to "redevelop" the area, the tidelands were opened to development by an Act of Congress and the village was subdivided, allowing for the expropriation of land owned by Áak'w people. The removal of Áak'w people from the village continued in subsequent years as "urban development" projects brought further changes to the village area."

Additional comments:

There are a number of goals/actions calling for plans to revitalize downtown. SHI recommends there needs to be a study of the vacant buildings/storefronts to determine why they have remained vacant for a long time (more than a year) and to present actions that could be taken to re-open them to re-vitalize the business district, such an ordinance penalizing no vacancy:

- Galligaskins building

- Triangle Bldg

- Gross Alaska theater/apartments

Comments on ACTIONS:

P. 45: SHI supports efforts to expand and promote the Juneau arts community including a new vision for the JACC and replacement of the existing building

P. 45: SHI recommends that the designation of the the Áak'w Kwáan Village District as an 'arts and cultural campus" is not well thought out, and is ahistorical. There is another campus of arts and culture in the downtown and Heritage Square was designated to celebrate the multi-ethnicity of Juneau's cultural groups.

P. 49: SHI supports the the idea to "Soften the visual character of Gold Creek" but we are left with the question, what does this actually mean? There should be some examples given here. SHI supports the idea of creating another configuration of the mouth of the creek that would promote public access, but recognizes the need for some sort of flood control.

P. 49: Redevelop Marine Park: this is already underway?

P. 50: SHI supports the action plan to "Preserve and Provide public access to the shoreline," but the question is how to do this?

P. 54: Relocate City Hall and develop the area as a connector to Marine Park: we are not sure what is meant here (connector?).