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**DATE:** August 29, 2024

**TO:** Michelle Hale, Chair, Committee of the Whole

**BY:** Scott Ciambor, Planning Manager  
Community Development Department

**THROUGH:** Jill Lawhorne, AICP, Director  
Community Development Department

**FILE NO.:** AME2018 0007

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

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This staff report provides details on the draft *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* planning process and includes attachments that provide a copy of the plan and appendices, responses to questions from the Planning Commission (Commission), proposed revisions, and department and public comment. Physical copies of the Plan have been provided for the Assembly.

This information was provided to the June 3, 2024 Lands, Housing, and Economic Development Committee and was moved to the Committee of the Whole for further discussion.

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

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Assembly Committee of the Whole (COW) discuss the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan as a potential addendum to the CBJ Comprehensive Plan --- taking into consideration the Planning Commission Notice of Recommendation (NOR) to encourage a stronger focus on housing with preference language for projects involving housing downtown.

### **CBJ ASSEMBLY ROLE**

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." (emphasis added)

The *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* (Plan) is an area plan for downtown Juneau to establish the community's 20-year vision, goals, priorities, and action strategies to guide downtown development. The Assembly is being asked to consider the Plan as an addition to the Comprehensive Plan. Additions to the Comprehensive Plan are adopted by ordinance and are listed in Section 49.05.200 (b). Previous additions (A-K) include the Lemon Creek Area Plan, the Juneau Economic Development Plan, and Chapter 5 of the Willoughby District Land Use Plan.

### **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.

### **PURPOSE OF THE BLUEPRINT DOWNTOWN PLAN**

A major goal of the Plan 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 other 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, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, AND PUBLIC INPUT**

Most of this information is available [on the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan website](#).

- In 2017 the Assembly approved the budget for a downtown Juneau area plan.
- In October 2018 the Commission reviewed applications and appointed 13 members to the steering committee. ([agendas/minutes](#))
- 2018-2020: CDD staff put out an RFP for public outreach, consultation. (MRV Architects, Sheinberg Associates, Lucid Reverie Creative Design) This team, CDD, and the Steering Committee [completed a 1-year visioning report](#) that summarizes process, participation, and public feedback on components to add to the Plan.
- 2020-2022: COVID delays, Steering Committee meetings.
- 2022-2023: Draft Plan made available for public comment by CDD. Public comments received were collected and made part of the [draft Plan in Appendix A](#).
- 2023-2024: Steering Committee considers public input, finalizes the draft Plan. CDD works with technical writer to finalize graphics and layout.

### **PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION AND NOTICE OF RECOMMENDATION**

With the draft *Blueprint Downtown Juneau Area Plan* available, the Commission held the following public meetings on the topic:

- 3.12.2024: [Introduction to draft Blueprint Downtown Juneau Area Plan and](#) Commission role in the process; and
- 4.23.2024: Special Commission Meeting held for a public [draft Plan](#). Important items to highlight from meeting:
  - Answers to Commissioners questions (Attachment C in this packet)
  - [Agency Comments received for the meeting in supplemental](#) materials.

Staff encourages the Assembly to read the Answers to Commissioners and Agency Comments as background material on the public conversation to date.

### **Planning Commission Notice of Recommendation**

At the 4.23.2024 Special Meeting, the Commission provided the following recommendation to the Assembly:

The Planning Commission, at its Special Public meeting, adopted the analysis and findings listed in the attached memorandum dated April 16, 2024, and recommended that the City and Borough Assembly adopt staff's recommendation for a text amendment to adopt the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan as an addendum to the CBJ Comprehensive Plan with revisions noted in the staff report. The Commission added a recommendation to encourage a stronger focus on housing with preference language for projects involving housing downtown.

Proposed revisions mentioned in the Notice of Recommendation (NOR) can be found in Attachment D: Proposed Revisions.

### **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 Plan supports and implements these policies while providing more specific and responsive information. If adopted, the Plan will be an addition to the Comp Plan. The Plan 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 *Blueprint 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(s) 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.

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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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: Proposed Revisions  
Attachment E: Additional Comments  
Attachment F: Powerpoint Slides