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155 S. Seward Street • Juneau, AK 99801

## **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?).



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## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT - REQUEST FOR AGENCY COMMENT**

**DEPARTMENT:** Historic Resources Advisory Committee

**STAFF PERSON/TITLE:** Shannon Crossley, Acting Chair

**DATE:** May 17, 2024

**APPLICANT:**

**TYPE OF APPLICATION:** AME 18-07 Blueprint Downtown Area Plan

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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 an advisory committee, your input on priorities, project updates, and other feedback will aide the LHED committee in making an informed decision.

Sections most relevant to HRAC are the "Historic Resource Preservation" section of Chapter 3, starting at p. 93, and the "Downtown" subdistrict section in Chapter 4, p. 121. Note the Action Charts at the end of each chapter outline anticipated implementing partners for the plan Goals and Actions. Please provide updates on HRAC's current priorities and/or projects that are relevant to action items outlined in the Blueprint plan.

### **AGENCY COMMENTS:**

The following comments were discussed at a 5/22/24 regular meeting of HRAC:

- p. 11 - Under Vision, add "collection of historic resources" in bold paragraph about Downtown Juneau.
- p. 12 - Under 4th priority for Action, add "preservation of historic buildings."
- p. 28 - Under Functional Plans, add Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan, adopted by Ordinance in 2020
- p. 31 - In Historic Context, paragraph 2, add "The oldest remaining houses occur on what was known as Courthouse Hill and in time, Telephone Hill."
- p. 31 - First sentence suggestion, "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."
- p. 31 - Remove "still" from "two smoke houses were still there in 1880, add "when Aak'w Tlingits led prospectors to gold deposits in Silver Bow basin." (Wording sounds like gold was discovered by prospectors alone.)
- p. 44 - Under anticipated partners, add HRAC
- p. 44 - Under actions, bullet 5, add "Promote and provide incentives to rehabilitate and preserve historic houses and buildings to provide additional housing."

**AGENCY COMMENTS (CONTINUED):**

p. 47 - We support the Main Street program, it's important as a means of preserving historic downtowns. Currently our downtown core is in danger due to significant number of vacant properties.

p. 85 - Another bullet under tasks "Promote downtown core as a vital economic generator throughout history and maintaining the historic character as a heritage tourism attraction."

p. 167 - In "related plans," add Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan, adopted in 2020



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## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT - REQUEST FOR AGENCY COMMENT**

**DEPARTMENT:** Greater Juneau Chamber of Commerce

**STAFF PERSON/TITLE:** Maggie McMillan, Executive Director

**DATE:** May 17, 2024

**APPLICANT:**

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### **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 an advisory committee, your input on priorities, project updates, and other feedback will aid the LHED committee in making an informed decision.

The Greater Juneau Chamber of Commerce is integral to the plan's Visions for a strong and stable economy, as outlined in Chapter 1. Because the plan is so large, we are asking you to focus your comments on Chapter 3 Economic Vitality and Chapter 5 Tourism. Note the Action Charts at the end of each chapter outline anticipated implementing partners for the plan Goals and Actions. Please provide updates on the Chamber's current policies and projects that are relevant to action items outlined in the Blueprint plan.

### **AGENCY COMMENTS:**

The chamber is a member advocacy organization that focuses on any issue that has a direct impact on the economic health of Juneau's overall economy. We work directly with the CBJ officials, participate in regularly scheduled meetings and facilitate solutions to issues that support the business community.

Specific to the comments and action items in chapter 3 of the plan, the Juneau Chamber has housing as one our top priorities, and to that end formed a Housing and Development Committee two years ago to bring developers and construction companies together to identify barriers to development. This group established regular meetings with CBJ officials (CDD, Engineering, City Manager) to discuss issues which led to recommending that there be a series of changes to Title 49 (and related regulation) that were viewed as unnecessary, outdated or overly restrictive to encourage development. (Interestingly JCC is not listed as one of the partners on this key initiative). Whether the needed modifications come from line-item changes, or a wholesale rewrite of Title 49, the chamber strongly believes that there needs to be more flexibility in zoning and building code regulations to meet the unique nature of the downtown area. One-size-fits-all doesn't work with such unique challenges to create mixed use housing, address parking issues and encourage the rehabilitation of underutilized buildings in downtown Juneau.

## **AGENCY COMMENTS (CONTINUED):**

Inherent in this same subject is ensuring that the approval process for development projects is consistent and timely. The limitations of developing any project with the seasonality of our climate demands a predictable process responsive to the needs of the construction industry. Tax incentives, tax abatement, qualifying low interest rate loans can all play a key role in incentivizing development, but it is still private money at risk to develop and operate any project profitably.

Public safety is also a top priority for the chamber, which has focused primarily on addressing the homeless population and it's impact on retail businesses – both in downtown Juneau and throughout the community. The chamber has had a second crossing as a priority for decades, recognizing that any meaningful economic development of North Douglas will require a second crossing.

The chamber was directly responsible for bringing the North Crossing back to life, working directly with the CBJ mayor and CIP budget, as well as Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

### Tourism

The chamber is directly involved in the many facets of both cruise and destination visitors to Juneau. Specific to the chamber's role as and advocate for a healthy business climate we created an organization called "Protect Juneau's Future," which brought together the various businesses and organizations who rely directly on the visitor industry to in turn educate the entire community on how reliant we all are on the dollars brought in from this industry. Protect Juneau's Future is now a separate organization with the same mission.

**From:** [Alexandra Pierce](#)  
**To:** [Minta Montalbo](#); [Forrest Courtney](#)  
**Cc:** [Scott Ciambor](#)  
**Subject:** Comments for LHED Committee  
**Date:** Wednesday, May 29, 2024 9:45:46 AM

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Hello Minta,

Please forward my below comments to the LHED committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan. I was involved in Blueprint during my time in CDD. Over three years (and through the pandemic) the Blueprint Steering Committee put in many hours of hard work evaluating downtown Juneau from every possible angle and the result is ambitious and comprehensive. It is unfortunate that due to staffing issues, the plan was not brought before the Planning Commission and Assembly for adoption when it was completed. I enjoyed re-reading the tourism-related sections and reflecting on what was happening in the community when those sections were drafted. I do not believe that we should revisit this plan and update the document to reflect what has transpired since it was completed. The plan is far too valuable to languish any longer and I urge the LHED Committee to move the plan to the Assembly for adoption.

For sake of context, I want to clarify one persistent component on the tourism front. The Planning Commission received public feedback about Blueprint's recommendation of a fifth cruise ship dock. At the time the plan was completed, the Visitor Industry Task Force had just wrapped up its work and submitted its final report. The steering committee elected to defer to the VITF as a concurrent process that looked more deeply into tourism management strategies. As you may recall, the VITF supported a dock if certain criteria are met. I believe the steering committee made the right decision in deferring to the more comprehensive process. This plan was never intended to be a vehicle for conducting public process on a fifth cruise ship dock. The VITF, and future public process around the tidelands lease are the appropriate forums for that discussion.

I am proud of CDD staff and the steering committee's hard work and again, I urge you to move this plan forward so we can hit the ground running on implementation and create a more vibrant and successful downtown.

Thanks,  
Alix

**Alexandra Pierce | Visitor Industry Director**

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