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Responses to March 12, 2024, Planning Commissioner Questions

At the March 12, 2024, Planning Commission Committee of the Whole on the draft *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan*, commissioners asked questions for follow-up response. These inquiries can be categorized as questions about the planning process, the Planning Commission role, and the contents of the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan. Below are the questions and responses.

Planning Process

1. **What prompts CDD to start an area plan process?** Direction from the Assembly.
2. **What if the area plan recommendations are not the same as the Comprehensive Plan?** The Assembly has two ways to adopt an area plan into the Comprehensive Plan, by Resolution or Ordinance.
 - If the plan is adopted by Resolution, it is not adopted into the Comprehensive Plan. It is advisory for CBJ but not a requirement for private property owners. (i.e., Housing Action Plan)
 - If the plan is adopted by Ordinance into the Comprehensive Plan, it could trump the land use code. It is whichever is more specific. See CBJ 49.05.200(b)
3. **The Plan speaks to a number of current construction and sewer projects. Are you coordinating with the Steering Committee on current projects?** CDD coordinates with other CBJ departments on projects involving zoning or other planning activities. Project updates that were provided by CBJ departments are included with the AME18-07 staff report.
4. **What kind of public outreach is taking place?** Public outreach conducted prior to Steering Committee member selection and throughout the Steering Committee process is well documented in the plan.
Public Outreach for the April 23, 2024, Planning Commission Special Hearing
 - Public Service Announcement – 20 Days Prior
 - Newspaper Ad – 10 Days Prior
 - Public Posting of Meeting Packet – 7 Days Prior
 - Newspaper Ad – 1 Day Prior
 - Staff Report that will include Agency/CBJ Department comment and Public Comment

5. **Blueprint Downtown Area Plan is a large document. What can the Planning Commission expect from the public?** In addition to the public outreach outline above, CDD has actively reached out to stakeholders requesting they provide comments to the Planning Commission. Appendix A in the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan provides a summary of public comments.

Planning Commission Role/Use of the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan

1. **There are a number of goals that seem tangentially related to the Planning Commission role. How can the Planning Commission as a body facilitate goals of the plan?** The role of the Planning Commission in review of the Comprehensive Plan comes from language in Title 49 and has been summarized in AME18-07 staff report. As an area plan is being developed, the role of the Commission is to provide recommendations and highlight important components of the plan as it moves toward adoption by the CBJ Assembly. If adopted by the Assembly and becomes a part of the Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission will refer to the document to make informed decisions on cases, use of land use code, and other matters that typically come before the Planning Commission.
2. **This plan is based on 35 different plans.**
 - a. **How does it work when older plans sunset?**
 - b. **What if new plans have contradicting info?**
 - c. **Is there guidance on how this plan overlays on older plans?**
 - d. **What happens to the older plans?**

In general, newer plans should consider older plans and when there are changes – the newer superseded the older. A stated goal for Blueprint Downtown was to utilize past plans as a starting point to update the goals and prioritize needs for downtown for the next 20 years – creating a new vision. Appendix B provides a complete list of all plans reviewed.

Plans are guiding documents used by a wide range of stakeholders. It is recognized that communities are always changing so there will be action items that are actively pursued and implemented and others that fall out of favor. Blueprint Downtown aims to be an updated vision with fresh ideas for the next 20 years. Older plans still exist and the relevant components have been reviewed and incorporated into the Downtown Blueprint Area Plan.

3. **Past Planning Commissioners played a role in this Plan. Can you highlight their involvement in the input/involvement?** On October 23, 2018, the Planning Commission selected 13 members for the Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee. Commissioner Dye was named as the Planning Commission Liaison and participated in that role up until the final few steering committee meetings. Planning Commission members also participated in the Blueprint Downtown visioning process event in February 2019 at Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall and received periodic updates on the plan.

4. **This plan doesn't change any Title 49 code. Would you think this plan going forward will be something the Planning Commission needs to consult/look at before changing code?** If adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission should consider the plan for business that comes before the Commission. If adopted, CDD staff will refer to the Plan and incorporate it into staff reports, case review, code rewrite suggestions –relevant activities within the department.
5. **In Conditional Use Permits (CUP), does CDD look at plans that are in force and make recommendations accordingly?** Yes, in each conditional use permit staff report there is a section titled "Conformity With Adopted Plans" that summarizes and cites pertinent policy items in those plans for the requested permit. If adopted, the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan will be part of the standard review process.
6. **In Planning Commission discussions of development proposals, can the Planning Commission point at the plan and tell the developer the PC prefers the developer to do x because x is on the plan? Or, to recommend changes to code?** Once the *Blueprint Downtown Area Plan* is adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission can utilize its contents to deliberate, make decisions, and/or provide conditions for development proposals that come to the Commission. These discussions might lead to potential changes needed to the land use code and the Planning Commission could through its standard tools (Title 49 Committee, recommendation to staff, Assembly).

Contents of the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan

1. **Chapter 1, p. 40 includes an action item to encourage year-round businesses so the area remains active. Was there discussion on how to go about that, what's the plan?** The 2019 community Visioning Process identified nine focus areas, including Business Vitality. Additional information can be found in Chapter 3's "Main Street" section, as well as Appendix D of the Blueprint Downtown Appendices document.
2. **The Plan mentions a downtown point person – where would that be headquartered? Non-profit?** To the best of CDD's understanding, the Steering Committee decided to allow decision-makers to determine the best path forward on this recommendation. Several examples of "Job Descriptions for a Downtown Coordinator" are included in Appendix I of the Blueprint Downtown Appendices document.
3. **The measuring/metrics the plan centers on quality of life. There is a disconnect between the measurements and most goals. How can the Planning Commission provide meaningful data to Assembly?** The plan identifies sources of data that are readily available as measuring metrics. Additionally, CBJ departments can provide project updates to the PC and the Assembly related to Blueprint Goals and Actions. The Planning Commission may include recommendations for additional data sources in their final report to the Assembly.

4. **Are there parts of the Plan that the Planning Commission should expect lots of public comment or were controversial for the Steering Committee?** The plan was created from an extensive public engagement process and includes Visions, Goals, and Actions identified in that process. Additional reports on public comments, focus groups, and the visioning process can be found in the Blueprint Appendices document.