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Attachment A - Draft Blueprint Downtown Area Plan

# Reader's Guide to Blueprint Downtown

Blueprint Downtown is Juneau's sub-area plan for the portion of the community extending from the "Rock Dump" to the south and Norway Point to the north. Blueprint Downtown is a unique and wide reaching plan that encompasses components of both an area plan and a strategic plan. It is a comprehensive action-oriented plan that promotes a vibrant, year-round downtown for locals and visitors. The planning area is incredibly diverse, including industrial areas, a compact business district, dense high-demand residential neighborhoods in various stages of revitalization, a working waterfront, and local, state, federal and tribal government offices. To recognize this diversity the planning area has been divided into eight subdistricts.

Blueprint quilts together past initiatives, synthesizes past plans and brings forward many previously recommended actions as well as new ideas. This approach allows Blueprint Downtown to work with existing plans and studies to create a cohesive and comprehensive downtown plan with a unified vision. More than 100 actions are recommended and each, when implemented, will help downtown Juneau become the vibrant community envisioned.

The plan provides:

- Introduction to downtown and overview of the planning process;
- Vision and six goals;
- Five top priorities for action;
- Recommended actions for implementation;
- Seven initial indicators to measure success.

## Vision

Blueprint Downtown creates an overall vision for downtown that builds on previous planning efforts.

**Downtown Juneau is a vibrant, welcoming, safe and accessible place to live, work, learn, play, create and explore. As the heart of Alaska's capital city and dynamic center of government, its unique heritage and history, access to natural beauty, arts and culture, urban amenities and waterfront setting provide opportunities for an exemplary quality of life and sustainable growth.**

The renewed vision for downtown Juneau is to be used as a filter for future decisions within the planning area:

*“Does this fit with our stated vision? Will this help us achieve our vision?”*

## Goals

The steering committee set six overarching goals that support the vision for downtown Juneau. All of Blueprint’s recommended actions seek to achieve the goals. (page 7)

### Top Five Priorities For Action

The Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee identified five priorities as the most critical to advance downtown. Highlighting these topics helps to ensure attention and concentrate limited resources to make a meaningful and lasting difference. Multiple recommended actions will achieve these priorities. The five transformative areas of focus are listed in priority order:

- **Provide an adequate supply of various housing types and sizes to accommodate present and future housing needs for all economic and age groups;**

- **Establish an integrated tourism management program;**
- **Stimulate year-round business vitality and reduce vacant storefronts;**
- **Fund and staff a dedicated entity to advocate for downtown Juneau, be a positive and energetic source for the long-term revitalization of downtown and launch Main Street, or similar program;**
- **Complete the Seawalk and Harborwalk.**

### Measuring Success

Developing the plan and a list of recommended actions is an important first step, but the real work is putting the plan into motion, and knowing if course corrections are needed. Annually measuring and highlighting progress towards achieving the plan’s vision and goals, publishing performance reports and recognizing partners who contributed towards this work is imperative to staying focused and making progress. What gets measured gets done. The following indicators are recommended as initial measures:

- **Number of housing units, by type, added per year;**
- **12 year housing tax abatement program – number of applications per year, number of new housing units and total tax dollars abated annually;**
- **Tourism Best Management Practices Community Hotline Annual Data and Trends;**
- **Number of independent visitors per year by tracking hotel bed tax and convention/conference attendance rates;**
- **Annual Community Tourism Survey Results;**
- **Annual report of Parking Use Surveys;**
- **Annual Crime Rates.**

## Organization

**Chapter 1** - Provides an introduction to downtown and an overview of the planning process.

**Chapter 2** - Focuses on implementation, actions, and measuring success. Emphasizing the importance of implementation and action at the beginning of the plan is intended to make the plan useful and accessible.

**Chapters 3-7** - The remaining chapters are topic focused. Each chapter includes a list of past plans relevant to the topic and a table of recommended actions specific to that topic. Many of the actions are repeated throughout the plan, in multiple chapters. Each of the topics are interconnected and interrelated. Therefore many of the actions will help achieve multiple goals of the plan.

**Action Tables** - Both the overall action table and the chapter specific action tables are organized by how many of the six goals the action will serve, with those touching on all six goals at the beginning, and those touching only one goal at the end. Fresh ideas created from the Blueprint Downtown planning process, both the public visioning and the work of the steering committee, are identified by a blue box and the Blueprint icon. The chapter action tables identify anticipated implementation partners, the time frame for the action (on-going, near, mid or long term) and relevant plans. The overall action table in Chapter 2 also identifies in which chapters of the plan the action is found.

**Appendices** - Include details about the public process, public comments received and previous plans referenced throughout the document. Also included are reports on the visioning process, focus groups and the Main Street Technical Assistance Report and a series of materials that may be useful moving forward to implement the plan, such as example job descriptions for a downtown coordinator.

## Community Engagement

Blueprint Downtown began with a year-long visioning process. The vision process was completed in February 2019 by MRV Architects with sub-consultants Sheinberg Associates and Lucid Reverie. The vision component received the 2020 Most Innovative award from the Alaska Chapter of the American Planning Association. A diversity of outreach techniques was used to capture a broad cross-section of what downtown users felt was right and wrong with current conditions and what changes should be prioritized over the next 20 years. The best estimate is that input was received from 800 to 900 unique individuals through the following:



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- 300 public participants at three public meetings (with attendance of 120+, 100, and 78);
- 426 on-line surveys comments and emailed comments;
- 318 street interviews with seasonal visitors (mostly cruise ship passengers);
- 56 “nightlife” interviews, with individuals socializing downtown later at night;
- 46 interviews with downtown merchants and vendors;
- 130 participants in a Gallery Walk “pop up” booth;
- 40 participants from “meetings-to-go,” or facilitated community group meetings;

- 55 responses to comment forms left in businesses downtown;
- 105 participants in three January theme-based walking tours.

The steering committee was appointed by the Planning Commission in October 2018, to guide and inform Blueprint Downtown. The steering committee is a dynamic, well balanced, informed and dedicated group representing a wide variety of interests and perspectives. The Steering Committee held 41 meetings over 4 years and provided review and direction that was essential for a plan of Blueprint's scope and profile.

The CBJ Community Development Department conducted seven focus group meetings in 2019 and 2020. These focus groups included experts and professionals in transportation and infrastructure, natural resources and recreation, human services, business and economic development, arts, history and culture, housing and staff in CBJ departments. Information gathered from the focus groups was used to develop the plan and guide the steering committee.

Following development of the plan document, public outreach included website and social media updates, a "pop up" at Foodland IGA, and a KTOO Juneau Afternoon radio interview. Additionally, presentations were given to the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, Rotary, Juneau Economic Development Council, CBJ Docks and Harbors Board and Juneau Commission on Sustainability.

## HARBORS

The Harbors subdistrict begins at the Juneau- Douglas Bridge and stretches north to the end of the Blueprint Downtown planning area at Norway Point. The subdistrict is bounded by Egan Drive on the upland side and Gastineau Channel on the shore side. The majority of this subdistrict is owned by the city. Uplands development is constrained by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities right-of-way. The University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) and the federal government are also landowners, and there are two small areas in private ownership. Aurora Harbor and Harris Harbor provide moorage for much of Juneau's commercial fishing fleet, as well as small to mid-size recreational vessels, a number of which are live-aboards. The area also includes the Juneau Yacht Club, the UAS Technical Education Center, and a variety of marine-related services.

Aurora Harbor has twelve main floats (A-N) that extend from a long headwalk float near shore to accommodate nearly 500 vessels ranging in length between 16 and 100 feet. The moorage system is constructed from a



Photo Credit: Pat McGonagel

combination of wood and concrete floats. Twenty-one covered float houses provide moorage capacity for about 42 vessels. Power, lighting, and potable water utilities are available on all moorage floats.

Harris Harbor has 5 main floats (1-5) that extend from a headwalk float near shore to accommodate nearly 200 vessels. Power, lighting, and potable water utilities are available on all moorage floats.

The 2017 Downtown Harbors Uplands Master Plan, Bridge Park to Norway Point (DHMP) is a development plan with

a phased approach to enhancing the Juneau downtown harbor uplands. The document establishes a vision and master plan. When implemented it will provide facilities to support harbor users, the fishing fleet, and the community. Blueprint Downtown supports implementation of the DHMP.

**History:** Aurora Harbor is Juneau’s largest downtown harbor, featuring a 19-acre basin located just north of Harris Harbor and south of the Yacht Club. This central harbor was constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1962 and 1964 and is formed by a stone jetty to the north and a detached breakwater and timber wave barrier along Gastineau Channel. Harris Harbor was constructed in 1968 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is formed by the Juneau-Douglas Bridge abutment to the south and a stone jetty along Gastineau Channel.

Following the construction of Aurora and Harris Harbors, in 1968 the first phase of the “Juneau Outer Drive” Project began. This is now known as Egan Drive and limits uplands development at both harbors.

**Housing:** Housing in the subdistrict is primarily “live-aboard” which is the use of a boat as permanent housing. Currently there are 40 vessels in Harris Harbor and 34 vessels in Aurora Harbor registered as live-aboard vessels. Live-aboards pay an additional fee for their moorage and are required to have a U.S. Coast Guard-approved marine sanitation device onboard. There are currently no policies or limits on the number of live-aboards that may be moored in Harris and Aurora Harbors.

The DHMP envisions housing above commercial uses in Harris Harbor. As the owner/land manager, the city is in a unique position to require mixed-use development. However, housing is outside the mission and scope of authority of the Docks and Harbors Department, the managing entity. Mixed-use development could be required through the lease process. Mechanisms to require the desired mixed-use development should be explored.

**Land Use:** Because the Harbors subdistrict is zoned Waterfront Commercial it can accommodate all the development called for in the DHMP, with residential density up to 18 units per acre. There is potential for



increasing residential density in the Waterfront Commercial zoning district. The Comprehensive Plan designates the majority of the subdistrict as Marine Commercial, while the area of Norway Point is designated Waterfront Commercial/Industrial. The Waterfront Commercial zoning district aligns well with these designations.

The Harbors Uplands Master Plan envisions the following:

- **Norway Point as a marine service center to increase local capacity for vessel repair and maintenance. It is estimated this would provide \$2 to \$3.5 million annually in increased economic activity.**
- **Aurora Harbor and Harris Harbors would have improved access from the harbors to Egan Drive with a harbor road connecting both harbors and one main access point at the Fisherman’s Terminal.**
- **Parking would be reconfigured.**
- **A “Harbor Walk” would connect to the Seawalk at the Juneau Douglas Bridge, providing uninterrupted pedestrian access from the Harbors all the way to the Rock Dump.**

- **Harris Harbor uplands would be redeveloped and leased. The area could accommodate food trucks and small retail, or professional maritime related businesses and housing could be offered on the upper level. This mixed-use scenario is seen as a way to make the harbor a destination and a vibrant part of the community.**

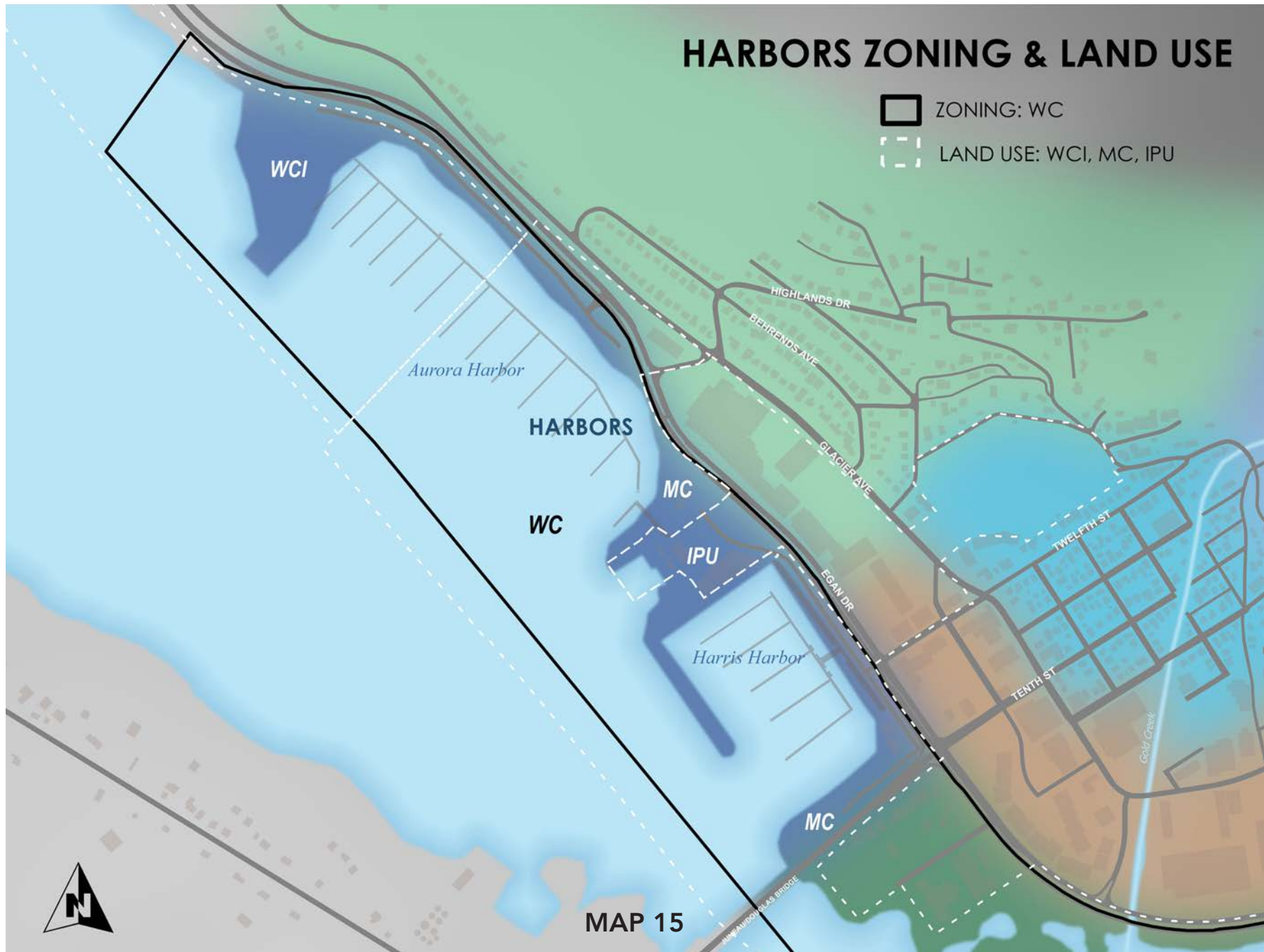
In recognition of the economic value of commercial fishing to Juneau, Fisherman’s Terminal would consolidate commercial fishing activity in the area adjacent to the UAS Tech Center while providing necessary facilities. Direct fish



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sales would be allowed here as well. A new harbormaster office is envisioned, with commercial retail space, public restrooms, and a laundry.

**Placemaking:** A working waterfront is often a destination for those not working in the industry. Adding direct fish sales, retail, restaurants, food trucks, and housing with better vehicular and pedestrian access will enhance this area. Improvements should include integrated art as an element of placemaking.



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