



Meeting Summary

Downtown Revitalization

Built Environment Working Group

December 4, 2012, 6-8PM, The Rookery, 111 Seward St.

“Our vision is that Juneau borough residents will utilize the downtown area as the primary year-round hub for living, leisure, government and business.”

SUMMARY:

Intro:

Jill Ramiel welcomed attendees, with thanks for their already evident commitment to a vital downtown. Thanks were given to the Rookery for hosting tonight’s event.

Overview:

Brian Holst, JEDC Executive Director, gave an overview of the Downtown Revitalization project and its activities to date. The slides are available at jedc.org/juneau-downtown-revitalization. He introduced the “Champions” of the three working groups that have been collaborating to date: Dave Hurley, Housing; Greg Fisk, Downtown Circulator; and James Bibb, Built Environment. The focus of today’s discussion is on the work of the Built Environment group.

Built Environment Working Group:

James Bibb shared slides showing successful downtown streetscapes and the recommendations of the group (also available on the website) and strategies, such as awards, from other communities.

Feedback and Comments:

Brian facilitated an opportunity for attendees to give feedback and bring up additional issues.

Comments made by participants (with apologies because some were hard to hear):

- Juneau should celebrate winter. All trees should have lights.
- Downtown needs more family events and more gallery walk type events.
- Housing is needed for all demographic groups.
- Business plans should include expenses up to the curb and maintenance. Too many business people feel entitled to services because of property taxes that are actually their responsibility. Lead by example: pick up trash; clean sidewalks.



- Some times there's no place to put snow.
- The CBJ code for clean, safe streets and lighting isn't enforced. Business people should speak with those who disregard these issues.
- Too many owners don't care about their property; property should be transferred to a new generation willing to work on the property. Unfortunately, prices being asked are too high, as if every place could be a diamond store.
- CBJ should take responsibility from DOTPF for Egan Drive.
- A unified voice could set up a Business Improvement District that could take care of sidewalks, lighting, etc.
- A big hurdle is that tourist shops rent for big sums of money and this discourages locally oriented businesses.
- We need locally owned buildings where the owners care about Juneau.
- Remember that summer revenues also keep some stores open all year. We should not have a tourism versus others attitude.
- A "jewel of a business" will get the place next door rented.
- The issue is what is the community identity. Is it tourists? Locals are divergent. Tighten up Juneau's identity.
- We need more open space. The seawalk should connect with parks. The "gravel park" opened up space and made for good flow and brings people to businesses.
- Plans need to be centralized and learning what you can and can't do should be streamlined. There are more downtown rules and regulations than elsewhere in CBJ.

The recommendations for improvements to the Downtown Built Environment were reviewed. Four new recommendations were added:

- A. More open space in the downtown.
- B. CBJ should take over responsibility from DOTPF for the section of Egan Drive that goes from the bridge to Main Street.
- C. A Downtown Business Improvement District should be formed to take over such activities as street cleaning, snow removal and other maintenance issues.
- D. New owners are needed for under-utilized or unmaintained buildings in the downtown area, purchased at more reasonable prices.

The group was then asked to provide their feedback by choosing their top four priorities amongst the full list of recommendations (including the new ones added at the meeting). The Built Environment Working Group will use this feedback to further refine their list and help them to choose which recommendations to put their energy into first.

Wrap-up

Feedback from the participants was positive. Individuals were all invited to remain engaged with this process. Individuals interested in working further on Built



Environment issues can contact James Bibb directly. If interested in Housing or the Downtown Circulator, they can contact Dave Hurley or Greg Fisk, respectively. JEDC will continue to support this work and will help people to stay engaged. Please contact Jessy Post (jpost@jedc.org), Margo Waring (margowaring@ak.net), and/or Brian Holst (bholst@jedc.org) for more information.

The meeting concluded with thanks from James Bibb and Jill Ramiel.