



JEDC.org
612 West Willoughby Ave. Suite A
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone 907-523-2300
Fax 907-463-3929

**Willoughby District meeting
Prospector Hotel, Douglas Room
August 29, 2013
Summary**

Meeting Goal: Attendees have greater awareness of the plans for the Willoughby District, activities underway and meet other stakeholders in the District.

A. Overview of Meeting and Introductions

Brian Holst, Executive Director, JEDC, stressed that we are seeing changes in the Willoughby District. The meeting is to go over what is happening and where attendees might fit in: not much is “set in stone” yet and there are many opportunities. Brian reviewed the agenda and said that at the end, attendees will be asked if the meeting was useful and worth quarterly meetings for collaboration.

Attendees introduced themselves.

I. Role of JEDC and Downtown Revitalization efforts

JEDC has been working on downtown revitalization with support from CBJ. Brian reviewed the effort’s problem statement, vision statement and three initiatives: housing, circulator, and streetscape. Information is available at www.jedc.org under “programs.”

B. Presentation of CBJ Willoughby District Plan

- *Greg Chaney and Hal Hart, CBJ*

Greg Chaney reviewed the Willoughby District Plan and other adopted plans, such as the Waterfront plan. Hal Hart discussed steps in development and changes at Community Development: the building permit process now includes accelerated plan review, fast track review and special expedited plan review. The approach is collaborative.

C. Aspirations for the Willoughby District

- *James Bibb, Northwind Architects and Member of the Downtown Revitalization Working Group*

James Bibb spoke about the District as an opportunity to enhance the community and leave a legacy for the future. Development also poses opportunities for recognizing historical and cultural ties to the District.

D. Questions/Answers.

Q: How can we disincentivize turning the District into South Franklin’s tourist zone?

A: In South Franklin tourism displaced all uses, but the Willoughby District has strong office and commercial uses and, hopefully, more housing that stabilize the area.

Q: Are there plans to rehabilitate Capital Avenue? This street is dangerous.

A: Hal said that Community Development is now preparing its Community Improvement Program report for the Planning Commission. He encouraged people to convey to the Commission those projects that support the Willoughby District and to make their concerns known now.

Q: Parking is projected to decrease while demand increases, if things happen per the plan.

A: The goal is to have a walkable city and a circulator to cut down on demand for cars.

Q: What about parking for employees? Are there parking solutions out there?

A: The state seems committed to adding two floors to the parking garage, once the foundation is enhanced and allowing 24-hour use. Federal GSA is considering a structure where the parking lot is, perhaps with four levels. Currently only one-third of federal employees have parking and they, therefore, park throughout the neighborhood.

E. Updates on development activities in the District (3 minutes each)

- Arts Complex—Ruth Kostik and Nancy DeCherney

Handouts regarding Arts Complex which would be privately built and accommodate Perseverance Theater and the JACC through a private/public partnership (leased municipal land). There is a five-year window for fundraising. They need to figure out the parking situation. Design work is preliminary and calls for 27,000 square feet with three theaters, classrooms, storage, work rooms, meeting rooms, a café and apartments on the top floor. This will cost between \$13-16 million and \$18 million with the apartments. They are looking to hire a project manager, hire a theater consultant, host meetings and raise money.

- SLAM Project, Linda Thibodeau, Director, Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums

The first story of the back part, the vault, is now being built. Next, they will put holdings into the vault via a tunnel. Starting in February 2014, museum holdings will be transferred over 6 weeks into the vault. Then the tunnel and the museum will be destroyed and the main part of the museum will be finished in 2016, assuming all the funding is granted. The project received \$20 million last year--\$30 million short of project cost. The \$30 million is for the shell only, not the interior.

- 917 Glacier Avenue, Paul Voelckers

This is a small-scale project. Mark Wheeler is a new tenant, offering a new café and ice cream parlor. They had a great concern to add to the streetscape with attractive frontage, canopies, and planters. There are four apartments, rented prior to building completion. Paul encourages anyone to have housing: this was filled instantly. It is important to get people back into the District.

- Heritage Coffee, Grady Saunders

Heritage has been in the district for 22 years. They have expanded the coffee roasting building out to the street, which was once the Salvation Army store. Bruce Abel has constructed four apartments. He invites everyone to come by and see the inside, the roasting plant, and educational displays. He is working with Tyler Myers of Foodland IGA, to develop a small café, accessible from inside Foodland and from outside. Work will start on this once the new bank is completed. The front of the building will also be upgraded and attractive.

- Foodland IGA, Mark Graham, Manager

Mark said Foodland would expand to include Heritage Coffee, True North and, in the rest of the store, a pharmacy, more natural foods, bulk foods, expanded deli and bakery, full service meat and seafood and a smokehouse. The outside will be re-faced and re-modeled inside. There will be a community meeting room. They are investing \$1 million.

F. Open Discussion on Willoughby

Ken Hill, Prospector Hotel Manager, noted that the museum crew has been great hotel guests. He hopes that a safer way to access the Capitol than Egan can be available during the legislative session. Greg Chaney said this was coming; and a circulator would be even more help.

Salvation Army representatives spoke about concern for residents. Greg said the plan does not call for anyone to move or be moved, only for more residents. Will gentrification move people out? Greg said that CBJ is interested in assuring low-income housing. James Bibb said a broad cross section of interests have been involved and will continue to be.

Brad Cure built Patagonia Condos and owns Willoughby Place, home to Polaris House. This 9-5 day program helps people who need structure in their lives.

A question was asked about the circulator that existed 40 years ago, before Capital Transit, and took people from Foodland to their homes. Will this return? Hal Hart said funds are limited for public transportation; one of the alternatives being considered is a downtown circulator. Ultimately, the CBJ Assembly will decide, considering Planning Commission recommendations. In the third week of October, there will be public meetings.

Joanne Witta, Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority, stated that she is looking forward the addition of Alaska Native values and presence in the process.

Parking seems to be an issue with the closing of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority lot. The Bill Ray Center is on the periphery of the Willoughby District. The Bill Ray Center has been sold. UAS and First National Bank have come to an agreement. A federal building parking structure would be great, especially if it meets community needs, also.

Brian Holst asked if attendees had found the meeting useful. There was general assent that information exchange was useful. JEDC has a list of businesses in the area. If people have been left out, please let JEDC know.

It was decided to reconvene in early November or December.

G. Close