MEMORANDUM

CITY/BOROUGH OF JUNEAU
155 South Seward Street, Juneau, Alaska 99801

DATE: July 14, 2009

TO: City & Borough of Juneau Assembly

FROM: Daniel J. Sexton, Planner
Community Development Department


During the past two years, the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Community Development Department (CDD) has been working on new Downtown Historic District Design Standards & Guidelines (Attachment A) and updates to the Historic Preservation sections of the Land Use Code.

In the early 1980's, the CBJ was designated as a Certified Local Government (CLG). This designation allows the CBJ to apply for matching grant funds from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources – Office of History and Archaeology for historic preservation activities. To maintain this designation the community was required to pass a local historic preservation ordinance, establish a historic preservation commission, implement a historic resources inventory, and provide for public participation in the program. A component of the local historic preservation ordinance, adopted in 1984, included the establishment of guidelines and design standards intended to serve as an aid for applicants preparing construction and redevelopment proposals for buildings in the Downtown Historic District and to guide staff and the Design Review Board during the reviews these proposals (Attachment B).

In 1999, the Design Review Board, which reviewed all development and remodel applications borough-wide, was eliminated. But, the design standards were left in place for continued review of Historic District construction projects (04 CBJAC 080). The removal of the Design Review Board left the review of minor projects in the hands of CDD staff, and the Planning Commission reviewed major projects. The elimination of the Design Review Board, comprised of architects and other design professionals, resulted in a gap in expertise for the review of building projects within the Historic District. To improve design review in the Historic District, in 2004 a two-phase effort was initiated to evaluate and update the existing Juneau Downtown Historic District Design Standards Ordinance.

In Phase I of this effort Winter & Company, a consulting firm from Boulder, Colorado, developed a complete Design Review Evaluation of the Downtown Historic District. This evaluation identified strengths and weaknesses of the current standards and review process, as well as recommended solutions to problems identified within the existing review and standards framework. Those solutions included:
Updates to the existing historic preservation ordinance and guidelines;
Presented the concept of a Historic Preservation Review Board; and
Establishment of additional historic preservation incentives.

Phase II began in 2007. This phase included the development of new historic guidelines and revised code language. Winter & Company was hired to develop the new Historic District Design Standards & Guidelines (HDDS). Throughout the development of these new standards and guidelines, the consultant gathered input from three public workshops, multiple meetings with staff and key stakeholder groups including the Historic Resources Advisory Committee and Downtown Business Association. The State Office of History & Archaeology provided input at various stages of the project as well. During the process, staff accepted public comment regarding the content and layout of the document.

At the Assembly & Planning Commission Committee of the Whole meeting on May 27, 2008, Winter & Company gave a final presentation of the draft Downtown Historic District Design Standards and Guidelines. Following this presentation, staff has been working with local stakeholder groups and the CBJ Law Department to ensure the final document is amenable to all parties, yet is still enforceable/defendable in a court of law. Work has also progressed during this period on the development of revised code language that would replace the existing Historic Preservation sections of the Land Use code (Attachment C). Due to the current load of Land Use code sections being reviewed by the CBJ Law Department, CDD decided that it would be easier to move these items forward separately; therefore, not losing the momentum and community support for the new Downtown Historic District Design Standards and Guidelines that has been generated to this point.

Staff hopes to have the new Downtown Historic District Design Standards & Guidelines to the Assembly by the end of this summer for review and adoption.