

COMMENTS ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND LAND ISSUES  
PREPARED FOR THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
JANUARY 31, 2012, JUNEAU ASSEMBLY AND PLANNING COMMISSION  
By Marsha E Bennett, Planning Commissioner

I am writing this because I will be traveling on January 31<sup>st</sup> and will be unable to attend the COW. Since I have been outspoken on the issue of Affordable Housing and also Planning Commission Goals and the Willoughby Plan, here are some things I would like the Assembly and Planning Commission to think about:

1. The 400 housing units that were identified as needed in the City's Land Management Plan of 1999 seem to still be an allusive goal, as described in the JEDC Affordable Housing report of 2010. New housing has gone down steadily since 2006 from 90 new units in 2006 to only 40 in 2009. Remodels have been the primary permits given out by CDD, from 330 in 2006 to 475 in 2009, or a total of 1685 permits for remodels from 2006 to 2009.
2. The City is concerned about declining revenues from both sales tax and property taxes, but remodels do not generate any new homes. They just improve the homes that are already in place. How many of these remodels have resulted in additional property tax to the City? I know mine hasn't.
3. Another area of growth has been added apartments to single family homes. These apartments help provide more efficiency and one bedroom apartments, where the vacancy rate is near zero, but they probably don't add to CBJ's tax base either. Over the three years that I have been on the Planning Commission virtually all the remodels that have come before the PC have been these apartment add-ons to single family homes. Do these additional units create additional taxes?
4. One of the primary recommendations of the Affordable Housing Report is support for the Bungalow Housing for private lots subdivided by owners. According to PC Commissioner Miller, this ordinance needs work to make it attractive for builders and private property owners. I support surveying builders to discuss ways to improve the ordinance so that more of these homes can come on the market. These smaller housing units would satisfy both the pent up demand for senior and small family housing, but would also provide badly needed new tax revenue. And jobs and further multipliers.
5. After all the rezoning of North Douglas Highway, following installation of new water and sewer lines, new building seems at a near standstill. Why? Are we too busy responding to new infrastructure projects like new docks and road projects? Where is the vision to provide decent housing for our citizens to keep them here? People stay in a community that provides them with homes for their families, not because of a new road or dock.

6. The same city lands identified for potential development in the 1999 Land Management Plan are still those identified in the 2010 Affordable Housing Report. None have been built upon. Why not?
7. The new Willoughby District Plan is being considered by the PC as part of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, following great progress in the funding for the new Alaska State Museum-Archives-Library Building. Once these impressive buildings are under way it is likely that redevelopment of the Willoughby District will begin to take off, hopefully with mixed use buildings, greater densities and new rentals and/or condos. This plan needs to be guided by city staff or an appointed coordinator, to encourage the best possible mix of housing and retail, rather than haphazard development. And it needs to involve its current residents.
8. Through the efforts of the Affordable Housing coordinator, Scott Ciambor, and an active commission, progress in providing housing for Reach consumers, Polaris House club members and substantial new affordable housing units built by Tlingit and Haida Housing Authority are bright spots in the housing picture. Attention to housing of chronic inebriates is also moving forward. The Trust established, if sufficiently funded, will spur this process along..
9. What seems to be stalled are the homes and apartments for middle level state workers and others making salaries below median income. A substantial number of Juneau home-owners and renters pay more than 30 percent of their income in rent or home mortgages for smaller than average homes or small apartments. This is a burden on many residents, but it also saps the city of revenue that could have been obtained from sales taxes on items people learn to live without due to housing costs.  
Without more moderate income housing, Juneau won't be attractive to longer term residents and will continue to see substantial transiency, short term stays in motels and hotels and too many young and old living in group housing rather than buying a home or condo. The community loses the add-on tax revenue from new jobs and families in the community spending sales taxed goods, but also the property tax that could have been obtained from new homes, condos or other new units. Without adequate housing for its middle class, Juneau will continue attracting fewer long-term residents, see a declining tax base, and fewer businesses due to decreased demand.

10. If both the Assembly and Planning Commission and CDD continue to focus on middle income housing, and push for solutions that encourage new housing for our long term permanent residents, then I feel confident the community will grow and support more businesses, a growing tax base and more prosperous life for all of us. I urge both bodies to consider a housing coordinator for the new Willoughby plan who begins by working more generally to increase middle income and mixed use housing construction all over the Borough.