Statement before Auke Bay Steering Committee
August 27, 2015

My name is Chuck Smythe, and I am Director of the Culture and History Dept. at SHI.

I know that you are focused on the Center planning area, overlooking the “inner bay,” but I am here to encourage you to ALSO look at this project in relation to the larger cultural landscape of Auk Bay, and in particular as part of an Indigenous Cultural Landscape of Auk Bay (see map).

A Cultural Landscape may be defined as the historical and cultural features of a landscape that provide its essential character and integrity. The elements of a cultural landscape are the human-made modifications to the natural landscape, what landscape architects describe as the designed landscape. An Indigenous Cultural Landscape refers to the landscape sites and features that are related to the lifeways of the people who lived in, shaped and were a part of the landscape prior to the arrival of Euro-Americans and others. The character of a cultural landscape refers to elements that we, as community members, wish to protect and preserve for the long term.

I wish to acknowledge the Auk Kwáan on whose land we are sitting at the present time. This is a traditional start to any discussion when on Tlingit land, to acknowledge that the land is traditionally owned by a specific group.

1. The issue of highest concern to SHI is the zoning of Indian Point, a traditional cultural property of the Auk Kwáan and the Juneau Indian community. In 1969, after much public testimony in favor, the CBJ re-classified Indian Point from a residential district to “recreation land to be used in its natural state,” and restricted recreational development (such as campgrounds, picnic areas, trails and other improvements) “except as expressly authorized by the Assembly by ordinance.” This protection was revoked by the Comprehensive Plan adopted in the 1980s, which re-zoned the area for residential use. This occurred without the knowledge or comment from the Juneau Indian community. SHI hopes that through the Auke Bay Area Planning process, this recreational classification a can be
restored to protect Indian Point from residential development now and in the future, as stated in the 1969 ordinance.

2. By looking at the greater Auk Bay as an Indigenous Cultural Landscape, I encourage the Steering Committee to consider this proposal in the context of mitigation for the proposed residential development in the Center planning area. That is, the development of the Center planning area should be considered in relation to sociocultural and environmental effects on the greater Auk Bay area, and that the development impacts in the Center area need to be OFFSET with protections for other portions of Auk Bay. SHI requests that the Steering Committee consider restoring the zoning protections for Indian Point as a means to promote and preserve the character and integrity of Auk Bay as a whole.

3. SHI has a major concern with encroachment on the historical, cultural and sacred sites within the Indigenous Cultural Landscape of Auk Bay. Many of these sites have been documented in the Nomination Form by which Indian Point has been proposed for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The placement of the Alaska Glacier Seafoods operation in close proximity to Indian Point is an egregious example of the growing encroachment that is occurring in Auk Bay. In particular, the float is placed very close to the shoreline of Indian Point and the site of human burials, canoe runs, and an important archaeological site, all of which have been registered with the State Office of History and Archaeology. It is extremely distressing that during the permit approval process for this facility, mitigation was included for adverse effects on eel grass in Indian Cove, but no consideration was given to the mitigation of negative effects on cultural and sacred sites located on Indian Point. Another private development in the vicinity of the Auk Nu site is another example of the alarming and unmitigated level of encroachment that is occurring. The fact that these two examples are very recent is an indication of the pressing need for protection and preservation of the indigenous sites that comprise the landscape.

4. SHI would like to work with the Steering Committee to come up with ideas for the protection of known cultural sites in Auk Bay, and for the identification of others that may yet be discovered.
5. SHI encourages the Steering Committee to come up with innovative ways to recognize the indigenous layers of history and culture in the Auk Bay Area Plan. In addition to signage, this might include installations of high quality NWC art. SHI notes that that in the current development projects in the downtown area, the CBJ and the state have ignored the vibrant NWC Native artist community and products, none of which will be represented in the new shoreline and dock walkways nor in the exterior features and yard of the SLAM project (nor were they recognized in the recent mayoral arts awards). SHI is sensitive to this issue since the CBJ Planning Commission was strongly opposed to the design of our new building. SHI is centrally engaged in efforts to promote the restoration and sustainability of traditional NWC art and artists through its art educational programs and the presentation of art in the new building, store and exhibits. For example, SHI is currently hosting the Northwest Coast Native Artist Gathering, a meeting of 30 established and emergent Native artists and educators from throughout Southeast, to discuss ways that SHI can continue to enhance and perpetuate the practice of NWC arts into future centuries.