

## **Parks and Rec Assembly Brief**

### **Hot topics**

Homelessness should not be pushed into the parks as a long term solution. Parks are a highly used shared public space for our community, with positive impacts on taxpayer well being. Parks are also a valuable asset for tourism.

### **Community engagement feedback for the Parks and Rec Commission in 2022**

There was much less engagement during Parks and Rec Commission meetings in 2022 than in pre-pandemic years; many meetings had no public engagement. The highest attended meeting in 2022 had roughly 5 public attendees. Pre-pandemic meetings more commonly had a maximum of 25 attendees, while meetings with no public participation were unusual.

### **Proposed recourses on how to leverage Parks and Rec in addressing the retention of people under 35 to Anchorage**

AEDC and the Anchorage Park Foundation have done considerable research looking at what it takes to create a vibrant city that attracts and keeps young talent. Their overall conclusion is that many people value Anchorage's open spaces. Quality open spaces are our unique identity that we fall in love with. Promoting our parks, trails and participating in national and international events that highlight our world class trails and parks will double down on an area of proven success.

Our second suggestion is the evaluation of design and project budget for a large event/entertainment, 3-4 season outdoor space in pursuit of the goal of attracting and retaining people under the age of 35 to Anchorage. The Commission's preference is that this work reside in an existing park if possible, and occur provided that the funding sources don't cut into current urban camper solutions. This is a wish that multiple unrelated people in the Anchorage community have raised. The long term goal for this facility is to have revenue exceed the operations and maintenance costs. Adding this type of facility to Anchorage would:

- 1) Allow larger concerts and outdoor oriented conferences or large business retreats to come to Anchorage.
- 2) Grow the diversity of offerings and extend the season for Anchorage's tourism industry.
- 3) Expand Anchorage's reputation from final frontier to an outdoor adventure and cultural destination, with something for everyone in the family.
- 4) Create a space for growth for our in-state talent and businesses. Alaska already produces top talent. This space would act as both a stronger launchpad and an incubator for homegrown support industries who could also be hired by the many movie

and TV productions in Alaska (professional audio engineering, lighting, stage management, emerging artists etc).

- 5) Increase opportunities and quality of life for taxpayers, with the goal of increasing retention of Anchorage's under 35 population and attracting new residents.

At this time commission members have heard ideas from the public ranging from a venue like Wolf Trap in Washington DC, to adding festival corridors connecting each downtown park and hardwiring connections for outdoor lighting and speaker systems throughout those corridors to build on and make easier events like the 2022 Summer Solstice festival. These varying design concepts can have a relatively low or higher capital cost, depending on what is ultimately selected based on the design process and public input. Supplemental information based on community interviews has been emailed for the Assembly members review.

The commission recognizes that these suggested efforts involve Parks and Rec, but the entirety of the effort would require cooperation and leadership from various departments and entities within the Municipality.

Overall the Parks and Rec Commission is eager to engage with the community and Municipality on exploring efforts that help to attract and retain people under 35 to Anchorage. This statement and supplemental resources were emailed out to Assembly members on 2/5/2023 in preparation for this discussion.

**Supplemental Resources Working Document:**  
**(compiled from early discussions with Anchorage community members)**

**Potential grant sources**

1. ACDA
2. Atwood Foundation
3. National Endowment for the Arts
4. Americans for the Arts
5. Alaska State Council on the Arts
6. Music Venue Trust
7. Live Music Society
8. Murdock Trust ([murdocktrust.org](http://murdocktrust.org))
9. Rasmuson Foundation
10. Anchorage Parks Foundation

**Other potential funding mechanisms**

1. Sell or Lease naming rights to venue
2. % of programming for a year (renewable annually if ticket sales are above median for that season - if not, can apply to renew the following year). So if a church wants to purchase 5% of the programming slots, they can do so as long as they have high ticket sales. The revenue from the ticket sales would still go to the Muni and venue upkeep.
3. Sponsor parts or areas of the venue (for example, if there is a skating ribbon/walking path around the perimeter of the grounds, it would be the Someone's Trust Skating Ribbon).

**Potential Concepts from Existing Spaces Outside (images at the end of the document)**

1. Veterans United Home Loans Amphitheater (Virginia Beach, VA) (20,000 seats total, 7,500 covered and 12,500 lawn)
2. Fiddler's Green Amphitheatre (Colorado) (18,000 seats)
3. Wolf Trap (Washington DC) (7,000 seats total, 4,000 covered and 3,000 lawn)

**Other Suggested Sites from Anchorage Community Input**

1. Kincaid Chalet by the hill
2. Downtown Park Strip - multiple stages for people to walk to
3. Further establish entertainment space downtown used by Williwaw (adding features such as retractable bollards, wiring for outdoor speakers and stage lighting, possibly different music "zones" to walk through), connecting a corridor to the Park Strip. Existing examples given of types of entertainment this concept are Tree Fort music festival in Boise and Airwaves music festival in Iceland.
  - a. This could also lend itself to a Pearl Street mall (Boulder, CO) walkable, casual performance and jam band space layout in between performances.

- b. Integrate Town Square Park, add esplanade in front of PAC that can close during indoor performances at PAC.
- c. Eventually connect all downtown parks with shared visual elements (Peratrovich, Town Square, Elderberry). The colorful, artistic gating system in Reykjavik was referenced for people/car management as well (pictures at end).
4. The hill above the railroad station next to downtown used in the Centennial Celebration - build it out.
5. Cuddy Park
6. Break ground on land near 100th for a larger event space.
  - a. The Commission would prefer to reactivate existing park space where practicable.

### Recurring themes in conversations

- People wanting to create/find a signature for Anchorage
  - Visual signature for event space, for downtown
  - Musical signature for Anchorage, non profit that helps with this is Music in Cities
- Plan for winter as well as summer programming and 4 season space activation
  - Skating rinks, wiring for plugging in amps, lights, speakers, passive water to ice features
  - Some covered seats, possibly heated
  - Embrace both the Midnight Sun and the Noon Moon sides of Anchorage

### Potential Concept Images

City Nicknames: "The City of Lights and Flowers", "Los Anchorage" ; Motto: Big Wild Life ; North to the Future



Wolf Trap Filene center, sloping lawn seats to the right



Day aerial view of Veterans United Home Loans Amphitheater



Night aerial view of Veterans United Home Loans Amphitheater



Image of the 2019 Tree Fort music festival transforming downtown Boise



Venue map of Airwaves music festival in Reykjavik

Pictures sent by a community member to show examples of Reykjavik pedestrian/traffic control gate system to re-route streets during events. What would something similar for Anchorage be made out of?

- Skis
- Snowmachine treads
- Fat bikes
- Metal flowers
- ??

