

7 program strategies

OVERVIEW

Four overarching program strategies are identified in this chapter which accompany the recommendations listed in previous chapters. The four program strategies have been identified to help Downtown become Anchorage's residents favored place to live, work and play:

- Image and Branding Program
- Signage and Wayfinding Program
- Safety and Security Program
- Activity and Event Program

These strategies are necessary to enhance the Downtown experience for Alaskans and tourists, as well. From Downtown's image and reputation, to people's ease in getting around and their sense of comfort and security, these four programs can help weave the land use, economic development, transportation, and urban design recommendations into a comprehensive Downtown where everyone feels safe and welcome.





Banners throughout Downtown can help accentuate Downtown's distinct character, like these banners in Downtown Denver.

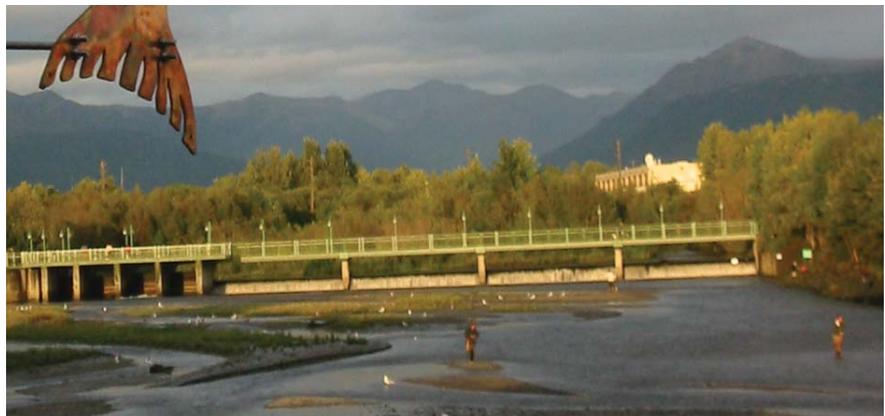
IMAGE AND BRANDING PROGRAM

An image and branding program is an important strategy in evolving the character and quality of Downtown's social, cultural and natural environments. This program will help to characterize the urban core and establish a distinct Downtown identity.

Recommendations for a complete image and branding program include:

- Promote distinct district characters with marketing, events and branding.
- Promote Anchorage's history and rich cultural diversity.
- Coordinate a marketing strategy to promote tourism nationally:
 - Create benefits for both the local community and out-of-state tourists.
 - Promote the theme of "Alaska's Downtown, America's Winter City."

- Create a task force to promote the "Stay an extra day in Anchorage" campaign.
- Promote Anchorage as Alaska's Downtown to rural communities:
 - Accentuate Downtown as a vibrant "urban oasis" that is safe and easy to visit.
 - Advertise access to the state's premier shopping options.
 - Incorporate shopping and medical visits with cultural and recreational activities.
 - Link with statewide athletic activities such as basketball and wrestling tournaments.
- Market Downtown as a point of entry to Alaska's activities:
 - Market the resource of salmon fishing at Ship Creek.
 - Advertise access to regional bike trails and biking opportunities.
 - Advertise access to regional hiking trails.



Branding Purpose

In late 2005, the Anchorage Downtown Partnership hired a marketing firm to determine how to best market Downtown. Together, they identified a number of distinguishing attributes of Downtown Anchorage that shape residents' perceptions and visitors' experiences. See Anchorage Brand Print for more details.

From this analysis, a comprehensive branding and positioning strategy was formed. The branding strategy for Downtown Anchorage aims to achieve the following:

- It fills the unmet expectations of Downtown residents, Alaska Natives and visitors.
- It is distinct and relevant; only Downtown Anchorage can own this territory as Alaska's Welcome Center.
- It packages together the many things already available that is authentic and fun in Downtown (Oomingmak, Ulu factory, railroad, Iditarod, restaurants, shops).
- Tourists get the Alaska experience even though they will never see all of Alaska's splendor.
- It attracts young, adventure-seeking travelers to visit Downtown on their way in and out of the state.

Branding Statement

The branding statement that was developed will help connect visitors experience with the soul of Alaska.

- No other Downtown provides the combination of an urban district and the Alaska experience.
- Anchorage residents get the culture and gathering place they expect.
- Alaska Natives can experience connection with one another and be proud of their home land.
- Alaska Natives can be proud of and celebrate their heritage.

Branding Methods

The next steps for the city are to utilize this branding message and incorporate it advertising, tourism and the Downtown environment, including:

- Package existing products together Downtown already has many cultural attractions and products.
- Focus advertising with a strong message.
- Develop signage distinct from the rest of Anchorage reflective of Alaskan culture and Downtown districts.
- Consider naming streets or parks after Alaska Native tribes or leaders.
- Market Downtown's exceptional arts and cultural facilities, especially the Anchorage Museum of History and Art and the Performing Arts Center.

The essence of Downtown Anchorage is:

"A metropolitan village where all of Alaska's cultures are celebrated so you feel connected to its soul."



This directional sign serves pedestrians in an active pedestrian area in Downtown Berkeley, CA.

SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING PROGRAM

Currently, Downtown’s wayfinding system is inconsistent and piecemeal. A comprehensive wayfinding system that establishes continuity in Downtown’s signs, street furniture and lighting is needed. This system will direct residents and visitors toward key destinations, advertise upcoming events and celebrate significant historic, cultural or natural sites and resources. The system should make travelling to desirable destinations easy—which is essential to attracting more locals and visitors Downtown.

Wayfinding signage is comprised of directional signs to orient and direct pedestrians and drivers (noted on the diagram below). Interpretive signage is in the form of a display board, which describes and illustrates a particular event or resource. Recommendations to help make this program possible, include:

- Establish a Signage and Wayfinding Committee to determine appropriate aesthetics and dimensions of new signage.



Legend

Downtown Study Area	Regional Signage & Wayfinding	Primary Pedestrian Connection
Downtown Core	Interpretive Signage	Secondary Pedestrian Connection
Park/Open Space	Gateway	On-Street Bicycle Connection
"Notable" Building Footprint	Transit Station	Bike/Pedestrian Trail

Wayfinding and Signage Diagram



Wayfinding and interpretive signage can take many forms. The example of the information kiosk (above left) can be used to supplement the visitor center elsewhere in Downtown. The historic interpretive sign (above right) is an example that exists in Downtown today. Such signs should be incorporated into the comprehensive signage program.

- Create district signage codes unique to their character to bolster their identities.
- Determine significant sites and events that are in need of interpretive signs to showcase their importance in Anchorage’s history.
- Integrate Alaska Native art and history into Downtown’s streetscape through signage design, particularly that of local/regional tribes. This is essential in distinguishing Anchorage from other cities and celebrating what makes it unique.
- Wayfinding should incorporate work from local artists wherever possible. Consider establishing public art competitions to increase the diversity and quality of Downtown’s public art.
- Ensure design guidelines for signage are implemented (See Chapter 6: Urban Design, page 101).
- Consider a “heritage trail” or “urban trail” with a sequence of interpretive signage.



Native Alaskan art should be integrated into Downtown Anchorage’s signage and wayfinding elements, such as the example above exhibiting S’Kallam Tribe Carvings from Olympic Peninsula, Washington.

SAFETY AND SECURITY PROGRAM

The real and perceived feelings of safety impact how visitors and residents experience Downtown. In addition to an increase in the number of “eyes on the street” and improved lighting Downtown, a number of recommendations are listed below.

- Address issues of safety and understanding for Alaska Natives through a comprehensive cultural sensitivity campaign.
- Provide wayfinding and welcoming outreach strategies for all rural visitors.
- Increase community policing to address public safety concerns in areas considered particularly unsafe, including 4th Avenue between C and E Streets, Town Square and the existing Transit Center.
- Provide distributed social service facilities throughout the city that offer shelter and care for homeless populations.
- Maintain a safe and clean environment by installing regularly-spaced trash and recycling bins and year-round street cleaning.
- Provide access to self-cleaning public restrooms within the Downtown Core.
- Prioritize implementation of a comprehensive street lighting program throughout Downtown to increase visibility and safety on all streets.



Self-cleaning public restrooms, such as this one in San Francisco (right) are attractive, safe, energy efficient and offer advertising and revenue opportunities for the city.

ACTIVITY AND EVENT PROGRAMMING STRATEGY

A coordinated approach to activity and event planning can help Downtown build upon existing events, such as First Fridays and the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, and create a range of spectator and participatory events for all user groups year-round.

- Develop strategies for planning and promoting Winter City themed events throughout the year.
- Determine appropriate activities during the shoulder seasons and promote them nationally.
- Promote healthy cultural and recreational activities for youth.
- Develop improvement plans based on a public process to improve Town Square Park, Delaney Park and the Weekend Market site to host large community events that generate city revenue and spark more interest in Downtown.



Events that embrace winter conditions can bring all ages together. Ranging from the small scale (above top) to the large scale (above and top right), community events engage residents, attract visitors and enliven the public spaces. Live music performances in Downtown parks (middle right) are a hit during spring and summer months. Informal events such as ice skating in Town Square (bottom right) will become more popular once perceptions of safety improve.



