



Municipality of Anchorage
Planning Department
Long-Range Planning Division
Memorandum



Date: July 20, 2023

To: Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission

From:  Kristine Bunnell, Long-Range Planning Manager

Subject: Public Hearing – Alaska Native Heritage Center Local Landmark Register Nomination

PURPOSE

The Local Landmark Ordinance adopted by the Anchorage Assembly allows the community to nominate historic and cultural landmarks (LLN) to the Anchorage Local Landmark Register for community recognition and celebration.

Local landmarks representing our unique Alaskan history and culture will be publicly recognized and approved to the Local Landmark Register by the Anchorage Assembly. The local landmark ordinance creates a voluntary program for anyone to nominate historic and cultural landmark resources with the owner's express permission.

The ordinance lists the types of landmark resources, including buildings, districts, structures, sites, landscapes, traditional cultural properties, objects, or travel routes. Each resource is described in detail with examples in the ordinance.

The ordinance also provides the criteria under which a resource may be evaluated, including by its history, architecture, geography, culture, or listing on the National Register of Historic Places or the Alaska State Landmark Register. Each criterion is described in detail with examples in the ordinance.

PUBLIC HEARING

The nomination process includes a review and recommendation by the Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and approval by the Anchorage Assembly. Public comments are considered that are made by interested parties, community councils, and the nomination proponents.

On July 20, 2023, the HPC will open a public hearing to take comment on the nomination of the Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) as a *landmark landscape*. The public hearing will be closed after all public comments have been received. The HPC will then deliberate the merits of the nomination packet information and any public comment received. A motion and a second will then be required to move the nomination packet and HPC recommendation forward to the Anchorage Assembly.

The motion will include findings by the HPC that will then be incorporated into the resolution that will be forwarded by staff to the Anchorage Assembly with the nomination packet.

PUBLIC NOTICING

The nomination was advertised to the public and the Northeast Community Council as required prior to the July 20, 2023, meeting. The public notice is found here: [Public Notice UPDATED: Historic Preservation Commission \(muni.org\)](#). The nomination and HPC agenda are also located on this same page.

LLN REQUIREMENTS

Local Landmarks are required to be at least 30 years old. A statement of significance and assessment of integrity are required for the nomination.

Thirty-Year Requirement

ANHC resides on land owned by the Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), and operates under the tribal authority of CIRI, which is recognized as a tribal entity under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (ISDEAA). The donation of the land from CIRI for the ANHC transpired in 1993. Staff recommends that the 30-year requirement is met with the land donation, as noted in the nomination packet (*page 2 – Statement of Significance*):

The Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) is living cultural center located in the northeast Anchorage, Alaska. It is a significant landscape within the Municipality of Anchorage with a period of significance that begins with the donation of the land for the center in 1993 through to the present day.

Statement of Significance

The nomination includes an extensive statement of significance going into the history of the formation of the ANHC and its meaning to the Alaska Native Peoples. Staff recommends the statement of significance, which includes the following excerpt, meets the requirement (*page 2 – Statement of Significance*):

The Alaska Native Heritage Center is a non-profit center owned and operated solely by Alaska: The center is dedicated to the promotion and preservation of all Alaska Native cultures from across the state, an undertaking that differentiates it from other cultural and heritage centers that only focus on a single culture (i.e., the Haida Heritage Center in Skidgate, British Columbia). The center operates with an advisory board made up of representatives from each of the five major cultural areas in Alaska and strives to preserve and strengthen “the traditions, languages, and art of Alaska Native peoples through statewide collaborations, celebration and education” (Alaska Native Heritage Center FY22 Strategic Plan, 1). The cultures represented at the center are alive throughout Alaska in the modern day. ANHC is the culmination of decades of work by Alaska Native peoples to take control of the cultural narrative surrounding their lifeways, the embodiment of the anthropological concept of Indigenous cosmopolitanism. The center does operate as a tourist destination, but it also actively works to engage young Alaska Native peoples with their cultures by connecting them with tribal Elders and cultural gatekeepers. These connections serve to educate the younger generations in traditional lifeways, connecting them to traditional heritage in such a way as to ground their identities in the past while also looking to the future.

Assessment of Integrity

Assessments of Integrity are based on how the landmark conveys its significance. What aspect(s) of integrity does the landmark retain and how does the landmark convey that information. Landmarks will retain enough physical qualities to tell the story of why they are significant. Physical features should be identifiable and unique. A landmark is not required to retain all seven aspects of integrity, which include *Location, Design, Setting, Materials,*

Workmanship, Feeling, or Association. Staff recommends the Assessment of Integrity is complete, compelling, and conveys the feeling of this nominated Landscape, which includes the following excerpt (Page 3 – Assessment of Integrity):

The Alaska Native Heritage Center is a cohesive landscape in Anchorage that is significant for its cultural significance under Landmark Criteria D. The planned landscape is made up of architectural, cultural, and national resources that work together to convey the cultures and traditional practices of Alaska Natives across the state. ANHC represents all four criteria under Landmark Criteria D:

- 1. Embody the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group shared by people in a place or time:*

ANHC is the physical manifestation of Alaska Native cultures from across the state. The representational format of the center, which contains five reconstructed village sites based on villages in rural Alaska, endeavor to show the traditional life ways of each of the five major cultural groups. This is undertaken by the construction of traditional housing structures and the inclusion of traditional cultural objects such as the house post totems in the Southeast clan house and the Eye of Awareness hanging in the qasigiq (men's house) in the Yup'ik/Cup'ik village.

- 2. Embody an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations:*

As a cultural and educational center, ANHC inherently embodies the passing of traditional culture, knowledge, history, and lifeways from older generations to the younger, ensuring that the Alaska Native cultures detailed at the center endure into the future.

- 3. Demonstrate an important association with customary practices or beliefs of a living community that are rooted in that community's history and are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community:*

ANHC specializes in the demonstration and representation of Alaska Native cultures from across the state. The center regularly brings in tribal elders and cultural practitioners to lead classes and workshops on traditional Alaska Native practices and arts and works closely with academic groups to ensure that languages and oral histories are recorded and passed down to the younger generations. ANHC is also the product of more than 40 years of effort on the part of Alaska Native groups for the establishment of a cultural center in the Anchorage area.

- 4. Exemplify social, cultural, ethnic, or historical heritage of the municipality or communities within:*

Anchorage is a metropolitan community with representatives from all of the Alaska Native cultures across the state. ANHC is a forum by which members of those disparate cultures can learn more about their histories and practice their traditional lifeways without having to travel to far-flung rural areas. It is also set up as a method by which information is disseminated to tourists and Alaska residents alike, furthering the connection with the larger metropolitan community.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission make a recommendation for approval of the Alaska Native Heritage Center Local Landmark Register nomination to the Anchorage Assembly.

SUGGESTED FINDINGS

1. The Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission finds the nomination to be complete and extensively tells the important story of the founding and establishment of the Alaska Native Heritage Center.
2. The Statement of Significance and the Assessment of Integrity meet the intent of the Anchorage Local Landmark Register ordinance.
3. Extensive research and evaluation have gone into the nomination packet, providing the community with a unique and formidable history of this Alaska Native cultural landscape.

Other Notes:

30-Year Evaluation Timeframe

The 50-year rule dates from the *Historic Sites Act of 1935* as a guideline for the National Park Service and its publicly owned sites. The National Park Service originally rejected all sites before 1870, and then revised the rule in 1952 to “50 years.” There was no evidence in the rule as to why 50 years was chosen. This is problem since and according to the National Trust for Historic Places most buildings are threatened with demolition or remodeling within 25 or 30 years of their initial construction.¹

Local landmark registers adopted throughout the United States usually use the 30-year timeframe for several reasons:

1. Many resources registered locally will be only significant to the local community and the timeframes or important periods-in-time the resource is important to.
2. The 50-year “waiting period” for evaluation of historic resources and the exceptional “importance” criterion are of central concern due to the remarkable rate at which younger resources are being lost with little or no consideration of their significance.²
3. The 50-year age guideline also increasingly places a barrier between preservation professionals and the public as the preservation field increasingly seeks to help people protect the places that matter to them. From Phillips Oil “76” Ball Signs to mid-century elementary schools, traditional and nontraditional preservationists are working to save places that they identify with personally and generationally.³
4. It is a mathematical fact that most of these places will be less than 50 years old, and an almost equal certainty that they will not qualify as “exceptionally important,” as required by the National Register of Historic Places.
5. With the 50-year time limit in place across much of the nation, preservationists and our communities have few options or tools at their disposal to protect those resources that fall through the 50-year crack. Local landmark registers help mitigate some of this loss.

¹ <https://vincemichael.wordpress.com/2010/08/13/age-value-and-the-50-year-rule/>

² <https://forum.savingplaces.org/viewdocument/50-years-reconsidered>

³ <https://forum.savingplaces.org/viewdocument/50-years-reconsidered>