

Roadmap to a Vital and Safe Anchorage

Municipality of Anchorage Assembly Introduction and Proposal

April 9, 2021

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Roadmap to a Vital and Safe Anchorage

MOA Assembly Presentation and Proposal Request

Prepared by RVSA Leadership Team + SALT

RVSA BEGINNINGS

The Roadmap to a Vital and Safe Anchorage was born out of a need defined by the Economic Resiliency Task Force (ERTF) to influence the future in a positive direction by making Anchorage more resilient and sustainable. A working group of the ERTF made up of businesses, non-profit organizations, and industry leaders grabbed hold of this call to action and began the process of developing a plan focused on implementation, execution, and clearly defined results. With a focused vision to guide reopening a safe and vibrant Anchorage in time for the 2021 spring/summer tourism season, the planning process includes the following criteria:

- **FULL PARTICIPATION:** The Municipality, business, and economic sectors will participate in the development *and implementation* of the plan. Participation in planning and implementation is diverse, inclusive, and represents the entire community of Anchorage. The plan spans any changes in leadership within the Municipality.
- **ACTION FOCUSED:** The plan is focused on implementation and action. The plan includes both short- and long-term actions contributing to economic sustainability during and after the Pandemic.
- **LEVERAGES BEST PRACTICES:** The plan leverages lessons learned from communities worldwide and seeks to adapt the best practices to benefit our community.

RVSA'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Throughout February 2021, over 110 business, non-profit, and organization leaders gathered four times to develop the Vision, barriers, strategic actions and begin focused implementation for the Roadmap to a Vital and Safe Anchorage.

1. Developing the Vision

During the first planning session, the group defined the following Vision for Anchorage from Portage to Peters Creek:

Vision

As a result of our actions, the Municipality of Anchorage's economy will be open, thriving, and diverse.

Our economy supports and is supported by capitalizing on our place, education and workforce development, government stability, and public/private partnerships. Our economy is underpinned by a focus on public welfare, access to housing and childcare, strong planning, and accessibility and equity for all.

2. Identifying the Barriers

At the second planning session, the group examined the barriers associated with reaching the vision. Based on the group's individual and small group thinking, strong themes emerged to create barriers to the vision.

Barriers to the Vision

- Our community is not **unified** because we have conflicting priorities, fragmented communication, and an uncoordinated vision.
- Our **government planning, regulations, and crisis response** are uncoordinated, unclear, and inflexible.
- Our community has devalued **workforce development**, retention, and education.
- Our community has neglected to invest in the **infrastructure** needed for growth.
- Our businesses cannot access the resources they need to create a **diverse economy**.
- Our community has neglected to create a **strong identity and vibrant Downtown**.
- We have a disjointed approach to **community and personal safety and security**.
- Our community has not addressed the **systematic reasons people become homeless**.

3. Defining the Action

During the third planning session, the group examined what innovative, substantial actions could be taken to deal with the barriers and move Anchorage toward the vision. The following strategic actions were defined:

Strategic Actions

- Make sure everyone is safe and has what they need,
- Have a diverse understanding of what we have and need,
- Focus on our assets and promote them everywhere,
- Encourage people to visit and stay,
- Activate Downtown and get people there,
- Incentivize investment,
- Make it easy to do business, and
- Make sure we have government buy-in on our priorities.

4. Focused Implementation

At the fourth planning session, the group prioritized their strategic actions and selected three strategies to focus on in the first six months of implementation. The three strategic priorities include:

- Activate Downtown and get people there,
- Incentivize investment, and
- Make it easy to do business.

Based on their area of interest, individuals broke into small implementation groups to identify actions that would catalyze movement towards the larger Vision.

RVSA IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout March of 2021, RVSA Implementation groups have met bi-weekly to define the accomplishments they would like to make in service to the larger Vision. The following is a snapshot of the current work implementation groups are doing:

1. Activating Downtown and Getting There

This group sees a need for activation and beautification in Downtown Anchorage. RVSA participants described Downtown's current reality as lacking energy, vibrancy, and perceived safety. They see a hesitancy to go Downtown and diminishing reasons to draw residents and visitors to the core.

The group believes that Activating Downtown means:

- Creating events and actions to celebrate identity and values.
- Supporting activations by improving infrastructure, incentivizing housing development, and improving security.
- Making Downtown beautiful and easy to navigate.
- Focusing on the pedestrian and rethinking parking.
- Activating outdoor spaces Downtown all year long.
- Supporting existing planning and funding its implementation.

To support the initiative to Activate Downtown, the group's focus over the next six months is:

- Finding ways to include east Downtown.
- Facilitating options for outdoor dining Downtown this summer.
- Engaging artists in short-term installations, as well as more permanent installation projects.
- Activating more police presence.
- Initiating both small and larger-scale façade improvements.

2. Making it Easier to do Business

This group evaluated the current realities of doing business in Anchorage and described three main issues.

Workforce: Anchorage has always had issues with maintaining an ample workforce. The Pandemic has shed light on some of our significant weaknesses in healthcare and education. Also, we cannot balance the supply and demand of our workforce and our training response. Finally, we haven't promoted the trades enough, leaving high-paying trade jobs unfilled.

Regulatory Process: There is a lack of flexibility for businesses to operate and far too much "red-tape" and bureaucratic process. This issue points to clear communication discrepancies between policy/process makers, enforcers, and the people impacted in business. Business owners don't clearly understand the cost and purpose of regulations.

COVID Readiness: As a community, we have been reactive to the impacts of COVID rather than proactive. Our communication has not always been clear, and there is not always an understanding of what is data-driven versus opinion-driven. Moving forward, we need more proactive communication between those creating health and safety regulations and those operating businesses to make regulations that make sense.

The group believes that Making it Easier to do Business in Anchorage means:

- More rapid, streamlined training
- Valuing and supporting all types of workforce development (trades, etc.)
- Making hiring easier
- Coordinated government working together towards a common goal
- A review of current government processes with a focus on streamlining them
- Increased access to resources and technical assistance for business
- Advocacy for access to all types of capital
- Clear data around public health

To support the initiative to Make it Easier to do Business, the group's focus over the next six months is:

- The development of a consumer and business confidence tool, the NorthStar Pledge, for the hospitality industry.
- Communication with the current and future MOA leadership to ensure continued support and engagement.
- Work to promote a review of MOA regulations and processes that affect business.
- Healthcare workforce development.
- The development of a public campaign for trades.

3. Incentivizing Investment

This group sees Anchorage as lacking the skilled and ready workforce needed to incentivize investment. They see people moving from Anchorage because it is expensive. They see a great deal of empty retail space and commercial space growing larger due to the pandemic.

To Incentivize Investment, Anchorage needs to attract new business and enable existing businesses to grow. We need to make progress in building the necessary infrastructure to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem. We need to provide tax incentives for development. To build our workforce, we need to increase enrollment in degree and certificate programs that lead to high-demand jobs and find ways to retain Alaska's students.

To support the initiative to Incentivize Investment, the group's focus over the next six months is:

- Aligning investments of the private industry for a public/private partnership.
- Aggregation of Business Resource Information.
- Activating a Federal Infrastructure Earmark Campaign.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

To provide the Assembly with more specific funding recommendations, we hosted an all-member meeting in early April to gather feedback, along with several follow-up small group meetings to refine these recommendations.

In addition to any funding that supports RVSA's strategic actions or that moves closer to our Vision that Anchorage's Economy is open, thriving, and diverse, we specifically support:

- Funding for infrastructure that will improve the Downtown experience. This can be wayfinding, façade improvement grants, public restrooms, murals, lighting and pedestrian experience improvements, access, and safety for all.
- Funding to organizations like the Anchorage Downtown Partnership, the Performing Arts Center, the Anchorage Museum, and others to keep Downtown activated through events, efforts to combat vacancy, increased opportunities to develop housing, and messaging to bring locals and visitors to Downtown. We need to remind people how fun it is to come Downtown!
- Funds to make Anchorage feel safe again. This can include things like investing in increased foot patrol, lighting, activation of space, design, and other proposals that promote safety for all.
- Funding to improve regulator processes like permitting, restrictions, and licensing to find the win/win between keeping Anchorage community members safe and allowing businesses to thrive.
- Funding for organizations like the Anchorage Community Land Trust, Foraker, the Small Business Development Center, SBA, the Chamber, and others to get rapid, equitable technical assistance out to our businesses so they can thrive.
- Continued support to make vaccinations accessible and even incentivized and funding for COVID public health campaigns!
- Continued support to Visit Anchorage and others to encourage state and out-of-state guests.
- Continued support to those out of work through training and educational opportunities, as well as childcare support.
- Funding for emergency planning and basic community needs.
- Funding to end homelessness and support people struggling.
- Finally, we'd like you to consider continued support for the RVSA process and the work associated with implementing larger priorities. The estimate for this work over the next 18 months will cost \$250,000, and we would like you to consider funding this effort.

RVSA AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT REQUEST

1. Description

Funding for the RVSA process and the work associated with implementing larger priorities. The cost for this work over the next 18 months is \$250K. We would like the MOA to consider funding this cost.

2. Priorities

The RVSA work fulfills the Anchorage Assembly COVID 19 Response Priorities of Economic Stimulus and Community Investment.

3. Timelines

The funding requested will be used to continue the RVSA process over the next 18 months.

Short-Term Focus

RVSA's implementation work has both short- and long-term impacts related to COVID-19. RVSA has a 6-month implementation focus to support economic stimulus and community investment. As previously reported, groups are specifically working on:

- Activate Downtown and get people there,
- Incentivize investment, and
- Make it easy to do business.

Long-Term Focus

To date, the RVSA's process has been about industry-led implementation, and for shorter-term initiatives, this is working well. However, the RVSA uncovered a need to make much more significant industry-led changes within our community to bring us closer to our Vision. To that end, RVSA's consultant SALT has included Northern Compass Group to assist with implementing more extensive actions identified through the RVSA process. The consultant scope includes:

- Continuing RVSA Engagement
- Leveraging Existing and On-Going Work
- Securing Private Match Funding for Implementation
- Coordinating with Local Government
- Coordinating Work Downtown

4. Proposal Cost

The RVSA Leadership group would like the MOA to invest \$250,000 in the RVSA over the next 18 months to support continued implementation.

5. Guiding Principles

Need:

The RVSA's actions result in better economic conditions in Anchorage, which aid all populations. Specifically, RVSA has implementation targets associated with the hospitality industry, one of the hardest-hit industries.

Geography:

Participation and implementation are focused in the entire Municipality of Anchorage from Portage to Peters Creek.

Alignment:

RVSA is an industry-led, implementation focused group specifically looking to fill gaps and find funding for larger initiatives that impact Anchorage's economy.

Feasibility:

RVSA was started with the Municipality of Anchorage's support and has included over 200 hours of investment and participation from the business community. Our request for phase 2 funding will be leveraged with funding from the business sector to drive implementation forward.

Informed:

RVSA is built on a process of public input and leverages existing planning, best practices, and data to implement strategic actions that benefit all of Anchorage.

Equity: RVSA welcomes anyone to join our process, provides complete transparency in our work and outcomes. We are a non-partisan group of community members interested in Anchorage's economic success. The process to gather information and select implementation priority is based on an equity-based facilitation framework called the Technology of Participation.

6. Who are your collaborators in your proposal?

The leadership group of the RVSA includes:

Bruce Bustamante, Anchorage Chamber of Commerce
Amanda Moser, Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Ltd.
Chris Anderson, Glacier BrewHouse/Orso
Debbie Rinckey, Chugiak Eagle River Chamber of Commerce
Julie Saupe, Visit Anchorage
Silvia Villamides, Alaska Hospitality Retailers
Bill Popp, Anchorage Economic Development Corporation
Chris Schutte, MOA Economic, and Community Development
Jeri Snyder, BOMA and Tatitlek Corporation

The consultant group of the RVSA includes:

SALT and Northern Compass Group

RVSA MEETING DATES

The RVSA continues to work through implementation. Each implementation group meets bi-monthly and the entire group meetings monthly for an update and information sharing. The meetings are scheduled as follows:

1. Implementation Groups

- **Activate Downtown and Get People There**
When: Virtually every other Wednesday, 11-12pm
Next: April 14, 2021
How: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85435689160>
- **Making it Easier to do Business**
When: Virtually every other Tuesday, 2-3pm
Next: April 20, 2021
How: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84501358246>
- **Incentivizing Investment**
When: Virtually every other Tuesday, 12-1pm
Next: April 13, 2021
How: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82043198408>

2. Monthly RVSA All Participant Check In

When: Virtually the 4th Tuesday, 4-5pm
Next: April 27, 2021
How: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83516163102>

INFORMATION SHARING

For a complete record of the RVSA's activities, including meeting summaries and recordings, please visit the groups shared files at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/n8rltg9yi4yvcak/AABCegx6GCH4ZahMivi0I5tKa?dl=0>

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions, concerns, and/or comments you can reach out to the following:

Bruce Bustamante, Chamber of Commerce
RVSA Lead
907.677.7109
bruce@anchoragechamber.org

Michael Fredericks, SALT
Consultant
907.223.3493
mfedericks@salt-ak.com



April 7, 2021

Amanda Moser
Anchorage Downtown Partnership

Bruce Bustamante
Anchorage Chamber of Commerce

Chris Anderson
Brew Brothers LLC.

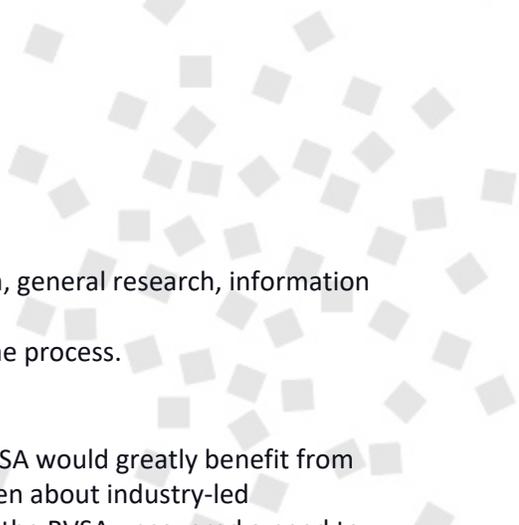
RE: Roadmap to a Vital and Safe Anchorage Phase 2, 3 and 4
SALT Project Number: 205090

Dear Ms. Moser, Mr. Bustamante, and Mr. Anderson:

Thank you for inviting SALT to provide this scope of work and fee for continued facilitation and implementation of the Roadmap to a Vital and Safe Anchorage. Based on our conversations, I have prepared the following scope of work.

PROJECT UNDERSTANDING

1. The Municipality of Anchorage has provided funds for facilitating a planning process to develop a Roadmap to a Vital and Safe Anchorage (RVSA).
2. Throughout February 2021, over 110 business, non-profit, and organization leaders gathered four times to develop the Vision, barriers, strategic actions and begin focused implementation for the Roadmap to a Vital and Safe Anchorage.
3. Throughout March of 2021, RVSA Implementation groups have met bi-weekly to define the accomplishments they would like to make in service to the larger Vision. To that end, three implementation groups have formed to work towards the strategic priorities of the group.
4. Continued support and facilitation services are needed as the group continued to catalyze implementation.
5. Currently, the following implementation processes have been occurring:
 1. Monthly All Member Check-In Meeting: All RVSA participants meet once a month for 1-hour to review the progress made on each group's implementation accomplishments.
 2. Monthly Group Update: SALT provides an updated White Paper and Presentation about RVSA and the progress made to all RVSA participants.
 3. Monthly Leadership Check-In Meeting: SALT hosts a monthly 1-hour check-in with RVSA leadership to ensure the overall process meets the group's needs and implementation is on track.
 4. Bi-Monthly Implementation Meetings: Each implementation group meets for 1-hour every other week to discuss its implementation efforts. Implementation groups currently include:
 1. Making it Easier to do Business

- 
2. Incentivizing Investment
 3. Activating Downtown and Getting People There
- e. Services As Needed: SALT currently provides best practices research, general research, information sharing, meeting as needed for overall implementation.
 - f. Meeting Summaries for all meetings are provided to memorialize the process.

SCOPE OF WORK

In addition to the Project Understanding described above, SALT believed the RVSA would greatly benefit from another level of implementation assistance. To date, the RVSA's process has been about industry-led implementation, and for shorter-term initiatives, this is working well. However, the RVSA uncovered a need to make much more significant industry-led changes within our community to bring us closer to our Vision. To that end, SALT has included Northern Compass Group to assist with implementing more extensive actions identified through the RVSA process.

Northern Compass Group LLC (NCG), led by businessman and former U.S. Senator Mark Begich, is a full-service consulting firm that helps clients develop tailored, strategic plans to achieve sustainable solutions for even the most daunting business challenges. Both Mark, NCG's President, and Shawna Thoma, NCG's Vice President, have participated in the RVSA to date.

NCG will use their collective experience in commercial real estate, regulator review, finance, government, private development, travel, tourism, problem-solving and applying it to the already established RVSA process.

The SALT/NCG team will provide five specific work products:

Work Product 1: Continuing RVSA Engagement

To date, SALT has successfully engaged over 100 people representing businesses and organizations to identify both near-and long-term strategies needed in Anchorage. Hundreds of hours have been invested by participants to date to begin an industry lead the implementation of these strategic priorities.

SALT/NCG will continue to facilitate and coordinate all of the RVSA meetings thru August 2021 to ensure that this process is driven by the business community and the Vision they created.

In August 2021, SALT will host a 6th Month Implementation Refocus with the entire RVSA group. The purpose of this session is to evaluate the work of the implementation groups over the first six months of RVSA's existence and activate the work and engagement needs moving forward.

Work Product 2: Leveraging Existing and On-Going Work

To date, SALT has compiled research and connected specific RVSA initiatives to existing plans and organizations to catalyze the implementation groups' accomplishments.

SALT/NCG will work with existing groups and organizations in Anchorage who have poured effort and money into documents and plans for our city to ensure their goals are known and that more, not less, communication happens as implementation proceeds. From the Anchorage 2020 plan through today, hundreds of people have spent thousands of hours bringing forth great ideas, and it is time to make sure the best ideas are integrated.

Work Product 3: Funding

SALT/NCG realizes the importance of maximizing public investment to implement the RVSA goals and pay for projects identified.

First, NCG will work to secure private match money to bolster funds invested by the municipality to pay for this oversight and management of the implementation phase by SALT and NCG.

Second, NCG will work with the Roadmap to a Vital & Safe Anchorage (RVSA) Leadership Group and review the priorities identified throughout the process, then identify possible funding sources to pay for upgrades, improvements, and needed tourism infrastructure downtown needs to attract and retain business.

NCG will map out all potential funding sources and timelines and rank them from most to least realistic with possible amounts attached.

Funding will include but is not limited to public money such as federal infrastructure dollars, tax incentives and financing programs for downtown redevelopment, other federal agency funding. Also, NCG will survey banks and lenders, and other private investors and work to connect and secure the commitments needed. We will discuss opportunities such as façade improvement loan bank, security & lighting loan bank, other downtown business incubator programs, downtown land trust investments for key land purchases, and more.

We see the need for immediate funds and money allocated for the next 3-5 years for significant implementation.

Work Product 4: Coordinate with Local Government

We understand the value of communication, consistency, and continuity. We will serve in that role to ensure the needs of the business community are fully conveyed to City Hall and in a manner that transcends elections and politics of the day.

NCG understands local government processes, relationships with elected leaders and agencies, and working with city agencies to get things done.

The private sector has led successful revitalization in other cities across the U.S. with extensive community input. We know an effort like this must include the municipality but led from the outside.

The RVSA process has proven that groups such as the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, Visit Anchorage, Anchorage Downtown Partnership, The Foraker Group, and Alaska Hospitality Retail Association and many businesses are committed to this effort, and SALT/NCG will work with them to see it through.

We will advocate for a new internal process within the municipality where the mayor identifies a point person and a team brought together from various city agencies that will troubleshoot and streamline systems for maximum benefit to business investment as efficiently as possible.

Community leaders and the business community see how a partnership like this can be beneficial to elected leaders and the community at large as well. As seen in the approval of capital campaigns in the past, the business community brought success to investments such as the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center and the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. If this is done thoughtfully, the same kind of community support may be had and successfully realized.

Work Product 5: Coordinating Work Downtown

The most essential tools for reimagining, redeveloping, and reopening Anchorage is a positive attitude and believing in what is possible.

Both NCG and SALT believe in what is possible and will use that attitude when approaching potential investors.

We will focus on enticing and recruiting new businesses, work with developers interested in projects downtown, and work quickly to acquire money for tourism infrastructure needed as soon as possible for things like wayfinding, Indigenous placemaking, security, streetscape, and pedestrian improvements.

It is in all of our best interests to ensure projects are coordinated and streets not blocked or businesses negatively impacted. Throughout this redevelopment, we will provide good communication between all organizations and parties, including the municipality.

We have realized through the RVSA process we need to support activating spaces downtown as a community and market these events to our community in a positive way. We will help ensure organizations are doing all they can toward this effort and advocate for marketing and communication funding as well.

We know from recent experience with our own projects that businesses need support for specific things, even as simple as outdoor dining or entertainment. NCG and SALT can be the go-to group to hear, handle and solve issues as they arise throughout the implementation process.

NCG has nearly completed an extensive inventory of active and underutilized properties on the east end of downtown. As part of this process, we see high value in expanding the mapped area to include the entire downtown area and augmenting the process with surveys to have near and longer-term development projects. This information will leverage other investments, connect investors with government entities, and garner support from the public and private sectors. We hope to help them identify and establish revenue streams for downtown and other aspects of Anchorage that help with upkeep/maintenance/new projects for years to come.

INVESTMENT

SALT and NCG believe that RVSA's project implementation and continued engagement should be funded through at least the next 18 months to make measurable progress towards RVSA's Vision.

Based on our experience to date, we believe this will require a total investment of \$250,000. As stated earlier, NCG will work to secure private match money to bolster funds invested by the municipality to pay for this oversight and management of the implementation phase by SALT and NCG.

We are thankful for this opportunity to work with you and the participants of RVSA. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Michael Fredericks
President