

SUMMARY



Town Square Park Master Plan

Business Roundtable #1

Date | Time: April 12, 2017 (10AM-12PM) |

Location: City Hall, 632 W 6th Ave |
Mayor's Conference Room 830

Meeting Objectives

Outreach Objective: The business roundtable will specifically solicit and document Town Square Park's future through the business and economic development perspective. This helps to ensure that private enterprises and organizations are heard and can positively contribute to finding solutions to issues related to Town Square Park in the unique context of downtown Anchorage.

Project Objective: To understand the business community's perspective in the context of downtown and the potential for Town Square Park to be a catalyst for economic development in downtown Anchorage.

Attendees

Staff:

- Steve Rafuse, Project Manager, MOA Parks and Recreation Department
- Taylor Keegan, MOA Parks and Recreation Department
- Van Le, AICP, R&M Consultants, Inc. Planning Project Manager
- Chris Schutte, Director, MOA Office of Economic & Community Development

Business Representatives

- Emma Kelly, AEDC
- Jason Bookman, Holland America Princess
- Melinda Gant, ACDA
- Anita Nelson, Visit Anchorage
- Steve Halloran, Visit Anchorage
- Jose Martignon, Pangea Restaurant
- Derrick Chang, Peach investments LLC
- Terence Chang, Peach Investments LLC
- Dwaine Schuldt, SMG, Anchorage Convention Centers
- Matt Samuel, Diamond Parking
- Cliff Brown, Diamond Parking
- Jamie Boring, Anchorage Downtown Partnership

Steering Committee Members:

- Dianne Holmes
- Nancy Harbour
- Radhika Krishna

Meeting Summary

Steve began the meeting by thanking everyone for attending the first of two business roundtable meetings for the Town Square Park Master Plan. Introductions began with Steve introducing himself as the MOA Parks & Recreation project manager and Van as the consultant project manager. Each person in attendance then introduced themselves and which agency or organization they represented.

Steve provided an overview of the Master Planning process and timeline. Steve identified December 2017 as the target for a preferred alternative concept master plan. The meeting then opened up into a roundtable discussion, with attendees taking turns providing their ideas and thoughts on targeted questions ask by Steve and Van.

Comments and discussion points are summarized below and are organized by theme or topic.

1. What issues and concerns would you like to see addressed through this master plan?
2. What are Town Square Park's best assets and what are the opportunities for positive change?
3. What is your ideal Town Square Park?
4. How can Town Square Park support economic development downtown
5. How can your business be a partner with Town Square Park to further revitalization of downtown?

Discussion Summary

Issues and Concerns:

What issues and concerns would you like to see addressed through this master plan?

- Public Safety is the #1 issue at the Park
 - "if you don't feel safe, you won't go to the park and you are not going to come downtown"
- People have a negative perception of downtown – "why would you want to come downtown?"
- Lack of policing in downtown – foot patrols and ADP ambassadors have helped reduce concerns, but that is only a temporary solution
- Crime and property damage, vandalism
- APD is the only entity who can police the park, as a public space
- Town Square Park is a microcosm of what is happening in the city
- Issues in Town Square Park are really area-wide and social issues
 - Holistic approach will need to be taken to address the issues associated with the park – housing, social services, involvement of other agencies, etc.
- Availability of public restrooms
- Downtown doesn't have vibrancy – there's a lack of cohesiveness and character
- Design is dated and the park is in need of a makeover
- Topography of the park is problematic – people can't see into the park
- Park is closed off from the surrounding businesses
- Purpose of the park is unknown – public spaces need to have an identifiable purpose
- Park was not designed for families and kids, it is not a place that little kids want to go
 - Park is not relaxing
 - Does not promote comradery
- There was not a high value placed on public spaces and pedestrian activity when Anchorage was built and Downtown reflects that struggle
- Relationship between the Park and the PAC does not currently benefit either use
 - As people leave PAC events and perceive negative activities occurring in the park, it perpetuates the bad reputation of the Park and the downtown experience as a whole
- There is no active side to the park
- Town Square Park is a beautiful downtown park
 - Currently a "sanctuary for the wrong kind of people"
- Change is difficult in this town – have we asked 'is the community ready for the change that is needed?'
- Security is needed in surrounding parking lots as well, not just in the park
- Hotels are warning visitors not to go to Town Square Park
- Wayfinding is difficult

Assets and Opportunities:

What are Town Square Park's best assets and what are the opportunities for positive change?

- Community involvement and process
- Park was part of the Project 80s - History is important and is a way to link the community to the park
- Creative Placemaking
- Invert the topography to increase visibility by making the center of the park the high point (example: Union Square S.F.)
- "Activate the Park" - Supportive of activities in the park
- Park is a 'welcome mat' for everything surrounding it, but should be a destination in itself
- Businesses in the Downtown are currently working together
- Room for positive activities
- Park needs to be managed as an asset, not by the whims of local government, politicians, and changing administrations
- Shared enforcement between APD and ADP Ambassadors
- Increase the amount of people in the park to deter crime – anything we can do to make the park more active without programming or major set-up is needed
- More artists and musicians
- Winter activities
- Need to have three active sides to the park – activate the empty spaces
- Change 5th and 6th Avenue to two-way streets and slow traffic speeds
- Develop F Street for a PAC drop-off area
- Add lighting
- Reinforce Town Square Park as a sanctuary
- Consider a management plan with continuous funding for future improvements
- "Take Back Our Park"
- The Egan Center is open from 7am-7pm – people use the restrooms and the Center is a welcoming place
- Location and size of the park are its best assets
- Think about community buy-in, be sure to include non-profits
- Winter uses for residents – people love the ice sculptures
- Summer uses for more tourists
- Opportunities to locate activities along the borders of the park to draw people in
- More seating in the park for people to eat and enjoy the summer sun
- Revitalizing the park is the first step to cleaning up Downtown – it is the catalyst for downtown and is serving as 'ground zero' for change
- Movable furniture in the Park
- Everyone recognizes the park is underutilized - so there is consensus to start
- Atrium/library at the F Street sun spot
- Flowers are a well-known, major asset for the park
- Keep some of the nice big trees
- Wayfinding as part of Downtown identity, creating linkages, and placemaking

Vision for Town Square Park:

What is your ideal Town Square Park? How can Town Square Park support economic development downtown?

- Town Square Park should be a clean and safe place that the community can enjoy year-round
- Creative Placemaking
- Implementing a new vision will be difficult and long – it's about more than changing the park itself, it's about changing the community's perception of the park and downtown

- Activated with positive activities: pop-up boutiques, information kiosks, non-profit events, etc.
 - Need to consider impact of pop-ups on brick and mortar businesses paying into the Downtown Improvement District Assessment
- Town Square Park as a “Destination of Choice” – all the time, not just for events,
- Make it an iconic destination
- Regularly occurring family events and activities
- Think beyond just the next 20 years – consider the needs of the next several generations and plan for uses by everyone
- Town Square Park as a vibrant space
- Revitalize the park and downtown as a whole
 - Security, activities, maintenance – year round in the park will make the park successful and downtown a thriving place
- Alaska Native Culture and the History of Anchorage should be the focal point or theme of the park
 - Salmon as a link to the past, present and future
- Iconic feature – when people see it they know that it is Anchorage (Seattle has the Space Needle, Philadelphia has the LOVE sign)
- Park will provide needed open gathering space for downtown residents, especially with new housing additions downtown
- Park needs to be for everyone in our diverse community and should embody a whole community feel
- The park should be a ‘multi-use’, flexible area for downtown

How can your business be a partner with Town Square Park to further revitalization of downtown?

- Work with the 100+ non-profits for art and music and provide the pop-up spaces to them
- Change the permitting process to make it easier
- Increase marketing and outreach of the park by Parks and Recreation
- Opportunity to include TSP as part of a digital walking tour of Anchorage (use of an app and technology trends)
- PAC and Library/literacy campaigns
- Ownership of the park – community oriented instead of just Parks and Rec via “Adopt a Park” to eliminate the ‘not my problem’ attitude towards the public space

Next Steps

1. Next Business Roundtable Meeting
 - Alternatives (Solutions) Phase
 - Scheduled for July 11, 2017