



TOWN SQUARE PARK

MASTER PLAN

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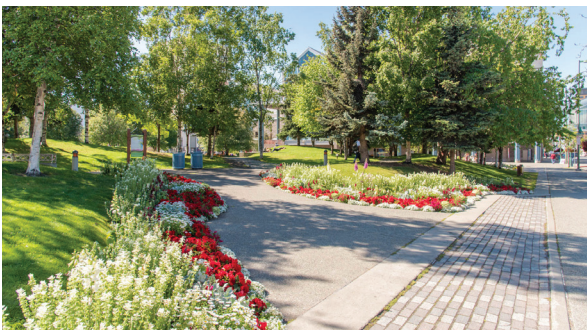


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TOWN SQUARE PARK | master plan

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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Town Square Park is an important park and civic space located in the heart of downtown Anchorage. At just over two acres, Town Square Park is a mix of plazas, greenspaces, and celebrated seasonal flower displays.

Town Square Park was created in 1984 through a citizen led initiative. At the time the park was envisioned as an oasis from the urban environment of Alaska's largest city. Over the years, use of the park has evolved as have public preferences for what Town Square Park should be.

Today, Anchorage residents envision Town Square Park not only as a green oasis but also an active and vibrant public space, a hub for activity downtown, and a place where friends meet, families gather, and the community celebrates.



What is a master plan?

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* provides a guiding vision for the next 20 years at Town Square Park. It identifies current and future needs, addresses issues and concerns, and establishes a framework for the future management, development and programming of Town Square Park.

Why are we developing a master plan?

In recent years, there has been renewed public interest in upgrading Town Square Park. Concerns over disorder and illegal activity have kept many people away and have impacted the image, use and function of Town Square Park. This has resulted in calls for the Municipality to take action, and to make new investments that activate the park with positive use.

One of the main goals of the *Town Square Park Master Plan* is to address issues impacting visitors experience at the park. While safety and security are a high priority, this master plan also takes a critical look at the physical design, programming, and management of the park to identify strategies to improve park user's experience.

What does the master plan do?

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* seeks to address issues and create an active and attractive public space where all residents and visitors feel welcome. Recommendations provided in this document are intended to guide future planners and policy makers in the decision making process.

More importantly, the *Town Square Park Master Plan* is a reflection of community identified priorities and a vision for positive change. This master plan recognizes and honors the past while bringing forth the community's vision for a vibrant Town Square Park of tomorrow.

GOALS OF THE MASTER PLAN

The primary goal of the Town Square Park Master Plan is to create a Town Square Park that is safe, attractive, and well-used.

Additionally, this master plan aims to achieve the following six goals:

1. Develop strategies to **address** public **safety concerns** in Town Square Park
2. Develop a **community vision** for the future of Town Square Park
3. Identify and prioritize **future improvements** consistent with the community vision for the park
4. **Improve access** to the park for all residents and visitors to Anchorage
5. Identify and develop **strategic partnerships** with public and private organizations to better manage, program, and invest in Town Square Park
6. Create a tool for **future fundraising**





The Town Square Park Master Plan provides a vision for the future built on the community's aspiration for positive change. This vision recognizes the contributions of the park founders, while envisioning a safe and vibrant Town Square Park of tomorrow.

The Vision

“Town Square Park is a safe and welcoming destination in the heart of downtown Anchorage where residents and visitors gather year round for celebration, socializing, cultural exchange and community building.”

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Ten guiding principles establish both the main issues this master plan seeks to address as well as desired outcomes. These guiding principles are based on the vision, goals, and key themes expressed during the planning process. Guiding principles provide the foundation by which recommendations are formulated and future decisions are made. These guiding principles include:

- Improve the Relationship of the Park to Surroundings “and Surroundings to the Park”
- Activate Town Square Park with Programming and Events
- Create a Park for All Seasons
- Manage the Park as an Important Asset
- Provide Amenities
- Incorporate an Iconic Feature
- Improve Access, Circulation, and Connectivity
- Improve Safety and Security
- Flowers and Green Space are a Valued Asset
- Promote a Strong Identity and Purpose

KEY THEMES



Town Square Park as a Catalyst

Town Square Park is a popular destination and central feature of downtown. Revitalization of the park would act as a catalyst for positive change in downtown.



Identity and Purpose

Town Square Park currently lacks a strong identity and sense of purpose. Existing features such as the flower gardens are iconic; however, features that celebrate Alaska Native cultures or the history and diversity of Anchorage would create a strong identity for the park and sense of community ownership.



Activating Town Square Park

People would like to see more events and activities in Town Square Park throughout the year. Currently, the park has few amenities to attract visitors and lacks "things to do" when programmed events are not taking place.



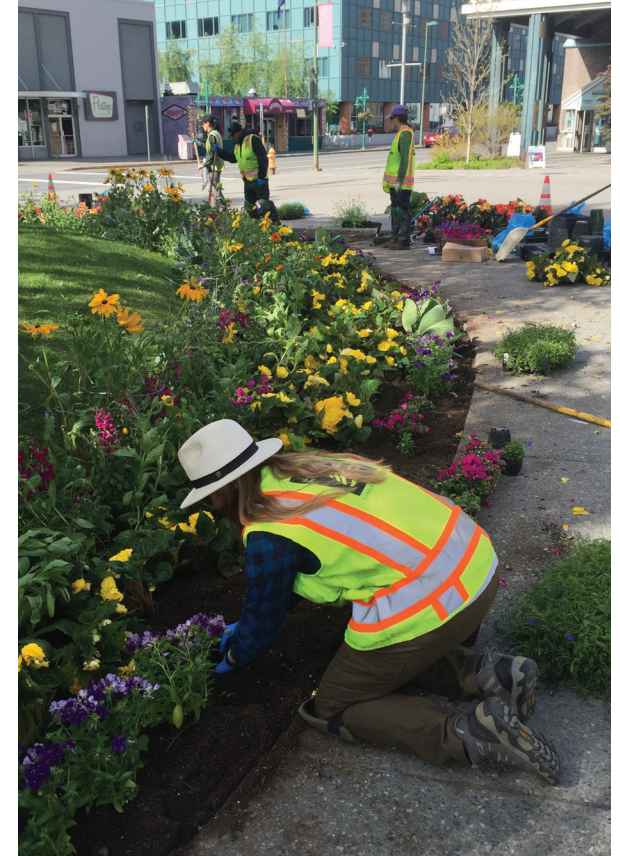
Public Safety

The planning process revealed that many people have a negative perception of Town Square Park and downtown and are staying away. Addressing public safety concerns and providing positive activity in the park will go a long way to improving the public image and perception of Town Square Park.



Design and Usability

The physical design, character, and relationship of the park to surrounding businesses and streets impact how people access and use Town Square Park. Addressing design related issues to improve safety, connectivity, and usability are a high priority.



Management and Maintenance

Town Square Park is one of the centerpieces of Anchorage's parks system and downtown. The park needs a long-term sustainable model that considers security, programming, management, and maintenance.

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PLANS AND POLICIES

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* is the guiding document for the future of Town Square Park and one of several documents providing a planning and policy framework for the Downtown area. The following documents contain specific goals, strategies, and recommendations that relate directly to Town Square Park. These documents were considered during the development of this master plan and should be further consulted during the implementation phase. (*plan recommendations on pages 97-102*)

ANCHORAGE 2020

Anchorage 2020 is the comprehensive land use plan for the Anchorage Bowl. The “*Comp Plan*” was adopted in 2001 and is intended to guide growth and development in Anchorage through a series of goals, objectives, and policies on land use. The plan identifies the importance of northern city design; parks, trails, and year-round recreation; arts and culture; civic engagement; and public safety. The “*Comp Plan*” also includes a series of policies related to Town Square Park. (*see pages 99-100*)

DOWNTOWN CORE STREETS STREETSCAPE PLAN

The *Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Plan* is a supplement to the *Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan* and is intended to “provide a coordinated streetscape vision that enhances the safety, comfort, wayfinding, and visual experience of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists in Downtown Anchorage”. The “*Core Streets Plan*” supports themes identified in this master plan and provides useful information on public art in Town Square Park. (*see page 101*)

ANCHORAGE BOWL PARK, NATURAL RESOURCE, AND RECREATION FACILITY PLAN

The 2006 *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resources, and Recreation Facility Plan* is the guiding planning document for parks and recreation facilities in Anchorage. Town Square Park is classified as a Community Use Park and is considered a Town Center Park. These parks provide for a mix of social and economic opportunities and feature plazas, outdoor seating, concerts and events. The “*Park Plan*” recommends continued upgrades to Town Square Park.

ANCHORAGE DOWNTOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2006 *Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan* provides a strategic direction for growth and development in Anchorage’s downtown core. The plan recognizes Town Square Park as an important civic and cultural asset that contributes to the vitality of downtown. The “*Downtown Comp Plan*” includes numerous goals and strategies related to Town Square Park. (*see pages 97-98*) The plan describes Town Square Park in the following way:

“The Downtown Plan strategy for Town Square Park builds on Town Square’s current role and function as a community gathering area with programmed events on weekends and holidays and more informal community use during the week. This strategy is consistent with the 2006 *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource and Recreational Facility Plan*, which designates Town Square Park as a ‘Community Use: Town Center Park’.

The management intent is to have Town Square remain as a desirable place for the community to gather and to participate in special events and also as a place for active and/or passive use the majority of the time. The programs and use areas in the park should continue to serve all members of the community.

The Downtown Plan recommends consideration of improvements to Town Square Park that can support and enhance these functions. The Downtown Plan also recommends that an overall parks and open space plan be developed for Downtown. That process will identify long-term future open space needs and enhancements in Downtown.”



RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PLANS AND POLICIES

ANCHORAGE CHARTER, ARTICLE XX. BLOCK 51 TOWN SQUARE DEDICATION

The *Anchorage Charter* was amended in 1984 to include the dedication of Block 51 as Town Square Park. (Section 20.01.04) The *Charter* amendment prohibits the construction of new buildings on site and limits development underground from changing the grade of the park to above or below street level.

ASSEMBLY ORDINANCE 85-173, DEFINING BUILDING HEIGHTS NEAR TOWN SQUARE PARK

In 1985, the Anchorage Assembly passed *Ordinance 85-173*, amending Title 21 to define maximum building heights near Town Square Park. Section 1.5.a states that the maximum height of structures in Block 69 through 71 to limit Anchorage Original Townsite, “will not cast a shadow greater than that cast by existing structures on the Town Square Park on Block 51, Anchorage Original Townsite, from April 21 to August 21 between the hours of 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM, solar time”

UDC RESOLUTION NO. 2008-003, E STREET CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

On January 9, 2008 the Urban Design Commission passed *Resolution No. 2008-003* granting approval for the *E Street Downtown Corridor Enhancement Project*. This project brought pedestrian and street level improvements to E Street which included the development of the E Street Plaza in Town Square Park.

PZC COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 81-104C, FINAL CONDITIONAL USE FOR THE PAC

PZC Resolution No. 81-104C provides “a resolution approving the final conditional use for the Performing Arts Center on Block 52 Anchorage Original Townsite between F and G Streets and 5th and 6th Avenues”. This resolution enabled the Performing Arts Center to vacate F Street to allow for development of the PAC in the former right-of-way. The resolution states that “the design of the Performing Arts Center will integrate with the Town Square” and “the F Street lobby will compliment and become a part of the Town Square” and that the “concerns with loading and drop off have been resolved”.

The Planning & Zoning Commission granted the final approval for conditional use subject to the following conditions that are directly related to Town Square Park:

Condition 2. Any portion of the former F Street not occupied by improvements shall be integrated into and be a part of the Town Center Park on Block 51

Condition 5. Prior to the issuance of anything other than a shell permit, detailed landscaping plans for this site, fully integrated with the final plans for the Town Center Park on Block 51 will be submitted for review and comment by the Urban Design Commission and reviewed and approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission

Condition 11. No extensions of these uses into Block 51, as platted on the date of this approval, shall be approved without a public hearing and concurrence from the Planning and Zoning Commission

Condition 14. Decisions respecting public access to portions of the street level within the former F Street are subject to the review and approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

ASSEMBLY ORDINANCE 2007-216, MEMORIALS HONORING THE LEADERS IN THE CREATION OF TOWN SQUARE PARK

Assembly Resolution 2007-216 recognizes Ruth Moulton, Shirley Brundage, and Avis Cupples for their work in the creation of Town Square Park. The resolution approves the designation of areas within Town Square, to include commemorative plaques describing the early history, public initiative, and individual efforts leading to the creation of the park.

DOWNTOWN ADVISORY GROUP TRANSITION REPORT

In 2015, the Downtown Advisory Group developed a list of their top five recommendations for downtown Anchorage. The group consisted of downtown businesses, organizations, and developers and was chaired by two former Anchorage mayors. Three of the top five recommendations related to Town Square Park or reinforced priorities identified during the master planning process. The report recommended a task force for Town Square Park, improving public safety, as well as pedestrian improvements in the downtown core.

URBAN IN ALASKA: RE-IMAGINE TOWN SQUARE PARK CHARRETTE

The Urban in Alaska: Re-imagine Town Square Park Charrette was held in 2014. Organized by UAA, the event was a call to action in response to what many in the community regarded as the steady decline of Town Square Park. Approximately 90 people attended the all-day event. The charrette offered people from throughout the community an opportunity share their ideas about what Town Square Park is and to explore ideas about what it could be. This effort illustrated both the need and the demand for a larger, more comprehensive master planning process. Subsequently, many of the themes expressed during the charrette were echoed during the master planning process and have been incorporated into more formal recommendations.





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TOWN SQUARE PARK TODAY

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ALASKA

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE & ARTS

OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of Town Square Park today and the history that has helped shape the park. It describes the uses, features, and conditions that make up the park today.

LOCATION AND CONTEXT

Located in the heart of downtown Anchorage, Town Square Park is a popular destination and central gathering space. The park is situated between 5th and 6th Avenues, west of E Street and adjacent to the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts (PAC). The park is part of the original Anchorage Town Site and, prior to development in the 1980s, was occupied by small businesses and a parking lot.

Town Square Park is classified as a Community Use Park and is intended to meet the recreational needs of the larger community. Unlike other Community Use Parks, Town Square Park is unique in its urban setting and role as a hub for citywide events.

Town Square Park is surrounded by a mix of land uses including civic and cultural institutions, office, retail, restaurants, and transportation. Major civic and cultural institutions include the PAC to the west, the Egan Center to the north, and the Dena'ina Center one block to the south. Other major institutions include City Hall to the west and the Anchorage Museum two blocks east of the park.

In addition to its close proximity to major civic and cultural institutions, Town Square Park benefits from having a wealth of eating and shopping options within a few blocks of the park. Directly south of the park, at F St and 6th Avenue, is a cluster of bars, restaurants, and live music venues. East of the park is the 5th Avenue Mall, a regional shopping center featuring over 100 stores. One block north of the park is 4th Avenue, Anchorage's historic main street. 4th Avenue is a hub for tourist activity and features gift shops and fine art galleries as well as popular bars and restaurants.

Town Square Park benefits from its central location and close proximity to complimentary land uses. However, busy transportation corridors bordering the park impact overall connectivity. Town Square Park is bordered to the north and south by 5th and 6th Avenues. These major one-way arterial roadways bring high volumes of traffic past the park creating a disconnection between the park and the rest of downtown.

HISTORY

Town Square Park sits on Block 51 of the Original Anchorage Town Site. Establishing a Town Square Park was not an easy nor quick process. The first citizen led initiative to create Town Square Park was in 1965, led by Shirley Brundage and Avis Cupples of the Anchorage Garden Club.

However, it wasn't until the 1980s that Town Square Park came to be. In 1981, Lanie Fleischer and Ruth Moulton prepared a ballot initiative to block development of the Egan Civic and Convention Center on Block 42, arguing that the space was dedicated in 1965 as open space and should be the home of Town Square Park.

In 1982, the Anchorage Assembly recommended the dedication of Block 51 as Town Square and began acquiring properties. Two years later, the Municipal Charter was amended and Block 51 was formally dedicated as Town Square Park.

In 1984, Mayor Tony Knowles appointed a 30 member Town Square Citizen's Committee to begin work on a design for Town Square Park. To guide the design process, the Municipality hired local consultants Land Design North (LDN) and California-based Danadjieva and Koenig.

This work coincided with the planning and design of the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts (PAC) which was led by a separate firm. During this time, there was concern that the development of the PAC would take precedence over Town Square Park. The Town Square Citizen's Committee fought vigorously to ensure that Town Square Park maintained its own identity and would not be overshadowed by the PAC.

In 1987-88, the Town Square Citizen's Committee finalized design criteria, paving the way for park construction in 1989.



In 1991, the Friends of Town Square Park began selling bricks to raise money for additional park improvements. Trees were also sold by the Downtown Anchorage Association. In the end, over 13,000 bricks and 100 trees were sold.

In 1997, electrical outlets were installed to light trees as part of the City of Lights kick off. In 1998, the fountain was dedicated to the memory of Dick Silberer whose family donated \$150,000 towards its construction.

In 2008-09, the Municipality began making pedestrian upgrades to E St. and F St. This included the addition of the E St. Plaza in Town Square Park.

In the years that followed, Town Square Park began a slow but steady decline that culminated in several well documented incidents in the park.

In 2014, over 100 people came together for the Urban in Alaska: Re-imagining Town Square Park Charrette organized by UAA. The event focused on developing solutions to the on-going safety and social issues impacting the park.

In 2016, the Municipality removed the fountain which had been inoperable for several years and had become an attractant for negative activity.

In 2017, the Municipality began master planning.



Original Design Criteria

In 1984, the Town Square Citizen's Advisory Committee formulated a series of design criteria to guide the development of Town Square Park. This criteria provided the groundwork for the development of Town Square Park. Many of these criteria are still relevant today and are captured in this master plan's guiding principles.

1. Importance of Maintaining the Park's Identity
2. Importance of Park's Relation to the PAC
3. Importance of Sunlight
4. Importance of Color – Seasonal and Summer
5. Importance of Day and Night Time Activities
6. Importance of Relief from Rigid Urban Grid
7. Importance of Safety

EVOLUTION OF TOWN SQUARE PARK

Great public places change over time. Since Town Square Park's creation, Anchorage has grown, and the community's expectations for the park have evolved. Early park founders envisioned Town Square Park to be an urban oasis. As time has passed, people have sought a more vibrant and active Town Square Park. Today, people seek a Town Square Park that is the centerpiece of our downtown and is home to daily events and community wide celebrations.



TOWN SQUARE PARK 1980

Town Square Park has been a central community gathering place since its creation in the 1980s. Since that time, the park has experienced incremental change, evolving into the park we see today. For most of the 1980s, the site of Town Square Park was occupied by retail and a parking lot.



TOWN SQUARE PARK 1990

Construction of Town Square Park began in the late 1980s and by 1990 the first iteration of the park had taken shape. During this time, Town Square Park was a large treeless open lawn with mounds and meandering pathways. Flower beds were located at the entrances and picnic tables and benches were placed throughout the park.



TOWN SQUARE PARK 2002

The 1990s saw the most significant development of Town Square Park with the addition of over 100 trees, the “sun bowl”, the fountain, lawn, seat walls, lighting, donor bricks and new pathways. By 2000, major development of the park was complete.



TOWN SQUARE PARK 2014

Construction at the park picked up again in 2008 when the E Street Plaza was constructed as part of a larger project to upgrade pedestrian facilities along E Street. Around the same time, the lawn was removed in front of the fountain. Around 2010, the fountain became inoperable and in 2016 was removed and replaced with a stage.

SEASONAL USE

Town Square Park is used throughout the year as a public space for both passive activities such as sitting, socializing, and enjoying the flowers as well as for more active uses such as events, concerts, and programmed activities.

Town Square Park is the home of some of Anchorage's favorite annual events such as the Holiday Tree Lighting and the New Year's Eve Fire and Ice Celebration. When not programmed with events, Town Square Park's seasonal attractions draw visitors to the park. Most notably are the summer flower displays and winter ice sculptures.



SUMMER

Summer is high use season at Town Square Park due to its central location, exceptional flower displays, and regularly scheduled events. Use of the park is bolstered by increased tourist activity in downtown and generally favorable weather for being outdoors. Town Square Park's flower displays make the park a destination for residents and tourists who come to see the exceptionally large blooms of long Alaskan summer days. Seating and lawn areas provide spaces for relaxing and enjoying the sun.

Town Square Park really comes alive when programmed events bring live music, beer gardens and food vendors into the park. Marketing of these events by the Anchorage Downtown Partnership has been highly successful in drawing large numbers of people into the downtown core which has resulted in positive economic and social activity.





WINTER

Winter is a major part of Anchorage's identity as a northern city. With this comes both opportunities as well as challenges to use at Town Square Park. Winter in Town Square Park kicks-off with the annual Holiday Tree Lighting celebration in November. This event marks the start of winter and holiday festivities, giving people a visual warmth through the seasonal lights and a reason to be outside as temperatures drop and the days shorten.

Town Square Park also hosts the annual Fire and Ice New Year's Eve celebration that has drawn estimated crowds of 15,000 people, many of which are families with small children.

The annual Fur Rendezvous, a 10-day festival taking place in late-February and early-March, draws locals and international visitors to Downtown Anchorage with events and activities in and around Town Square Park.

Outside of events, daily use of Town Square Park is often limited in the winter. In years past, the Anchorage Downtown Partnership has sponsored the annual ice carving competition "Crystal Gallery of Ice" in Town Square Park. This event provided a draw for visitors to the park during the 1-2 months the ice sculptures were on display. Other historic uses include ice skating at the park. While this was a popular use during events, day to day use of the ice rink was minimal.

SHOULDER SEASONS

Town Square Park is a quieter and more serene place during the shoulder seasons. During the spring and fall, the weather is often the driving factor in determining how much time people spend at Town Square Park. Seating can be wet from rain in the fall or snow-melt in the spring. When combined with cooler temperatures, use of the park tends to be more limited. The shoulder seasons also see fewer tourists and less programming in Town Square than during the busier summer months.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS

ROADWAYS

Town Square Park is located between 5th and 6th Avenue to the north and south and E Street to the east. All three streets are designed for one-way vehicle traffic.

5th and 6th Avenues are classified as Class IIIC Major Arterial roadways with over 20,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) each. According to the Official Streets and Highways Plan "major arterials are designed to rapidly move large volumes of traffic" with a secondary function to provide access to other land uses such as local businesses. The location of Town Square Park between two major roadways creates challenging conditions for pedestrians accessing the park and further limits the interaction between the park and neighboring businesses.

E Street is classified as an IC Neighborhood Collector with 2,000 – 10,000 ADT. In 2008-09, E Street was redesigned as a part of a downtown corridor enhancement project aimed at improving pedestrian circulation. Observations of traffic patterns show generally low traffic volumes along the E Street corridor east of the park.

PARKING

Parking for Town Square Park is available in nearby parking garages, surface parking lots, and on-street parking. There are four multi-story parking garages and five surface parking lots which provide approximately 3,000 parking spaces within a two block radius of Town Square Park. On-street parking is also available on many streets in the downtown core. Park side on-street parking along 5th Avenue provides convenient access and serves as a buffer between the street and park, which does not exist along 6th Avenue.

Parking is generally considered sufficient to accommodate events in the downtown core including larger celebrations such as the Summer Solstice Block Party and the New Year's Eve Fire and Ice Celebration.

Despite the availability of convenient parking, there is a strong public perception that there is a lack of parking in the city center. This was identified in the 2006 Downtown Comprehensive Plan and for many this perception still exists today.



PARKING WITHIN 2 BLOCKS OF TOWN SQUARE PARK

CASE STUDY: PITTSBURGH MARKET SQUARE

PITTSBURGH, PA

*Prioritizing People in Public Space over the Automobile
A Catalyst for Downtown Redevelopment*

Market Square is situated in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh's business and cultural districts. The square consists of four separate blocks with two major vehicle corridors running through.

After years of decline and inactivity, the City of Pittsburgh began engaging citizens on ways to revitalize Market Square. Citizens advocated for more activities and events, and design changes that prioritized people over the automobile.

In 2010, the City of Pittsburgh invested \$5 million in the re-design of Market Square. This included the elimination of traffic from the center of the square opening up the space to events and markets. The success of these improvements proved to be a catalyst for new investment and redevelopment in Pittsburgh's downtown. Today, Market Square is a vibrant public space and hub of activity in downtown Pittsburgh.



PUBLIC TRANSIT

Town Square Park is located one block east of the Downtown Transit Center and is easily accessible by public transit. The Downtown Transit Center is the central hub for People Mover bus routes throughout the city with most trips beginning or ending downtown.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

The main access points to Town Square Park are located at the four corners of the park. Bicyclists and pedestrians can access Town Square Park at signalized crosswalks located at the intersections of 5th and 6th Avenue at E and F Street. Crosswalks are striped and include countdown timers.

Bicycle and pedestrian connections to Town Square Park can be difficult due to traffic and circulation patterns around the park. To access Town Square Park from 5th or 6th Avenue, bicyclist and pedestrians must cross three lanes of traffic. As major one-way arterial roadways, 5th and 6th Avenues are intended to move vehicles quickly through downtown, resulting in limited pedestrian activity at the street level and a fragmentation of downtown.

Throughout the planning process, residents and businesses cited high speeds and traffic volumes as a primary safety concern.

The Downtown Comprehensive Plan identifies E Street as an "On-Street Bicycle Connection". However, inadequate bicycle infrastructure and a prohibition of bicycling on sidewalks in the downtown core limit access to the park for many cyclists.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

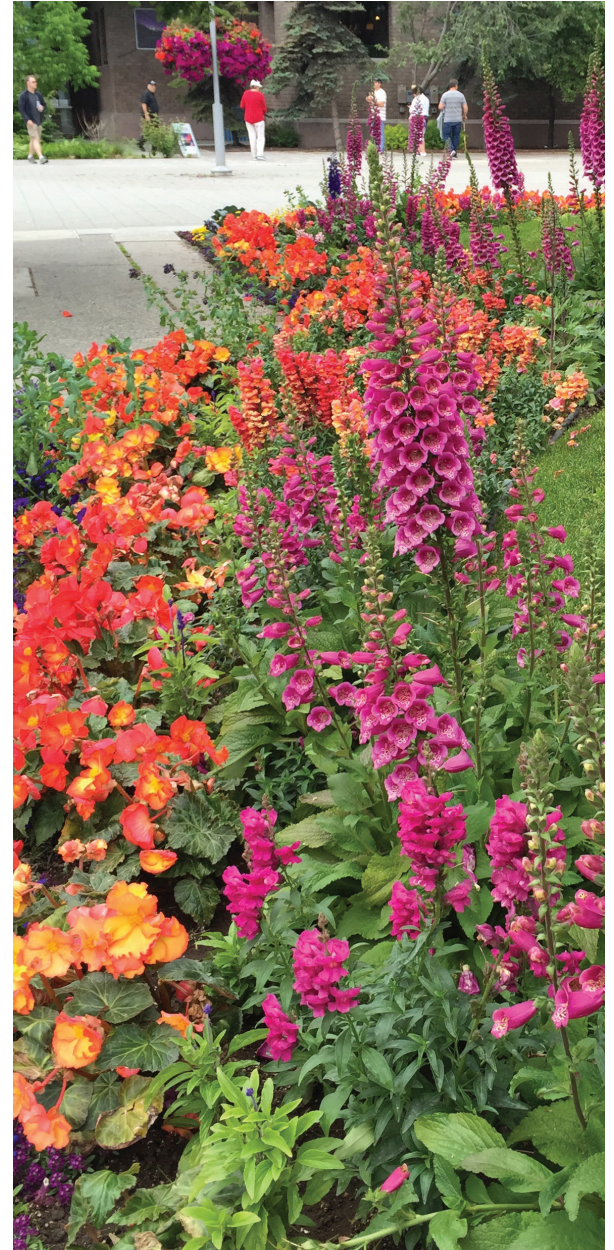
LANDSCAPE

FLOWERS BEDS

The flowers at Town Square Park are one of the defining features of the park and downtown Anchorage. The flowers are a showcase of our unique northern climate and provide extraordinary displays of color enjoyed by visitors and residents alike.

Flower beds greet visitors at the entrances to the park and are located in front of the stage and in the two beds just east of the PAC. Flower beds currently occupy approximately 3,350 square feet or roughly 4% of the total area of the park.

Flowers are grown in the Municipal greenhouses before being transplanted to the park in May. Parks and Recreation horticulturists maintain the flowers throughout the summer. Flowers are removed in the fall around the time of first frost.





GREENSPACES AND LAWN

Town Square Park's greenspaces occupy roughly half of the park and feature grass mounds and lawn areas with mature trees. Greenspaces are situated around the central plaza and along the edges of the park providing a buffer between the interior of the park and street. The largest greenspaces are to the north and south of the central plaza with the north lawn extending down to the east of the stage.

The greenspaces to the north and south of the central plaza consist of rolling grass mounds four to seven feet high interspersed with trees and a walking path. The trees and mounds provide a buffer from noise and traffic along 5th and 6th Ave. However, these features also limit visibility into the park which park visitors and public safety professionals have cited as a key safety concern.

Because of the topography, density of trees, and relatively small lawn areas, Town Square Park's greenspaces are mostly used for viewing events and are not well suited for other activities.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

LANDSCAPE

TREES

Trees were first planting in Town Square Park in the mid-1990s and are now at or close to full maturity. Today, there are 127 trees in the park comprised of 10 different species. Below is a list of trees and the number of each identified in the park.

- Colorado Green Spruce (22)
- Colorado Blue Spruce (9)
- European Mountain Ash (21)
- Paper Birch (32)
- Amur Chokecherry (4)
- European Bird Cherry (9)
- Canada Red Chokecherry (1)
- Maple (2)
- Crabapple (10)
- Columnar Aspen (8)



An evaluation of tree health was conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department's arborist to determine the general health of trees in Town Square Park. The following is a list of general observations and issues impacting tree health in Town Square Park.

1. Foot traffic in high use areas has resulted in the compaction of soils and damaging of roots
2. Damage to the base of trees from seasonal maintenance activities: weed-whacking, mowing, snow/ice removal
3. Competition for sunlight – the canopy of larger trees is crowding out smaller species
4. Trees planted close together have reached maturity and are now competing for space and sunlight
5. Damage to trees from vandalism including the peeling of bark, carving, spray painting, and stressing
6. Some evergreen trees are dying off (visible branch defoliation) - possible infestation of yellow headed spruce sawfly, spruce budworm, or spruce bark beetle
7. Some deciduous trees have a multiple-stem growth pattern resulting in less structural integrity making trees vulnerable to failure in a windstorm
8. Lack of pruning in early years has resulted in some deciduous trees with less structural integrity over time
9. Several trees are dying or dead and need to be removed
10. European Bird Cherry is considered an invasive, non-native species and is linked to larger negative impacts to native species and natural ecosystems
11. The holiday tree has been pruned at the top which will eventually lead to decay from the top-down



THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

HARDSCAPES AND PLAZAS

Hardscape areas and plazas account for roughly half of Town Square Park's total area. These areas serve a variety of functions and are designed and maintained for use throughout the year.

Concrete is the most common material found in Town Square Park and is used for walkways, plazas, and seating. Throughout the planning process, many people remarked that the extensive application of concrete makes the park feel cold and uninviting. In areas developed during the 1990s, such as the "sun bowl" and seat walls, signs of wear are clearly visible.

CENTRAL PLAZA

One of Town Square Park's main features is the large central plaza. At roughly 15,000 square feet in size, the plaza serves as the venue for popular community wide events such as the Live at Five summer concert series, Fur Rondy, and the Holiday Tree Lighting.

The central plaza is wide open and features a stage and seating areas. The stage is located at the east end of the plaza in the location of the former fountain. Concrete seat walls are located along the periphery.

While the central plaza functions well for events, many people have remarked that the space feels empty and uninviting when it is not programmed.

THE "SUN BOWL"

A key feature of the central plaza is the "sun bowl", an elevated (8'h) seating area with southern exposure and multiple levels of seating for relaxing and watching events. Built in the 1990s and constructed entirely out of concrete, visible signs of cracking and chipping are beginning to appear.

East of the "sun bowl" is a small elevated brick plaza which connects to the stage. This area provides additional viewing for concerts and events. Surface materials and changes in elevation make this area difficult to access for those with limited mobility.





SEATING AREAS

Seating areas within Town Square Park consists primarily of concrete seat walls located along pathways and on the periphery of plazas. In recent years, movable café tables have been brought into the park to provide additional seating and to support food carts. Concrete seat walls are in fair condition with visible signs of chipping, wear, and the occasional graffiti.



STAGE

The stage is located at the east end of the central plaza in the location of the former fountain. The stage was installed in 2016 and is approximately 25' x 25' in size and is four feet above the central plaza.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

HARDSCAPES AND PLAZAS

E STREET PLAZA

The smaller E Street Plaza (also known as the Ruth Moulton Plaza) functions as a secondary space, and typically houses food trucks and vendors during larger events. Surface materials consist of concrete paving stones that are arranged in a pattern representative of an Athabaskan fish basket trap.

ENTRANCE PLAZAS

Entrance plazas greet visitors entering Town Square Park providing a transition space from street to park. Each entrance plaza varies in size, layout and surface materials depending on the specific entrance and relationship to the street.

The F Street plaza at 6th Ave provides a space that serves both Town Square Park and the PAC, and is one of the most coveted "sun spots" in downtown Anchorage.



The E Street Plaza is a wide open and has few amenities to draw visitors into the park. The plaza functions best during events providing a space for vendors and food trucks.

WALKWAYS

Walkways bring visitors into the park and enable circulation through the space. The main walkways are eight to ten feet wide and connect entrance plazas to the interior of the park. These walkways are heavily used by park visitors as well as people cutting through the park.



In areas where these walkways narrow and seat walls are present, large groups will occasionally congregate, impacting circulation and the perception of safety. Examples include the walkway into the park from 6th Avenue and E Street and the walkway between the E Street Plaza and the central plaza.



Town Square Park also features two meandering pathways which traverse the north and south greenspaces. These pathways have pedestrian level lighting and seat walls. In areas along these paths where there is topography and dense trees, visibility is limited.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CASE STUDY: ROOSEVELT PARK PLAZA

CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY

*Placemaking through Pop-Up Activities and Amenities:
A lighter, cheaper, quicker approach*

In 2012, Roosevelt Plaza Park was re-opened to the public after the demolition of a parking garage occupying the historic site. The 75,000 square foot park provided important investment and

valuable greenspace in the heart of downtown Camden, yet lacked amenities that would make it a destination.

Using a simple and inexpensive approach, the city began adding pop-up elements such as interactive lighting displays, custom planters, Adirondack chairs, a piano, and picnic tables to see what works and what does not. Commonly referred to as “iterative placemaking”, this approach allowed the city and residents to test-drive ideas prior to making large capital investments.



MEMORIALS & DONOR BRICKS

Town Square Park has a proud history of citizen activism and community financial support. The Ruth Moulton memorial rock is located at the entrance of 6th Ave and E Street and serves as a reminder to all who visit the park of the power of citizen action.

Additional memorial areas are set aside for Avis Cupples and Shirley Brundage for their work with the Anchorage Garden Club to help establish a Town Square Park. Appropriate recognition has yet to be installed and should be included in future upgrades to the park.

Donor bricks bearing the names of individuals and organizations who provided early financial contributions are located at the entrances to the park from 5th Ave and along the western side of the PAC plaza. Donor bricks are also located in the elevated plaza between the stage and the “sun spot”. Some bricks are beginning to show signs of wear after years of snow and ice removal. Options should be considered to move or elevate the bricks to prevent further wear from seasonal maintenance.



AMENITIES

Town Square Park has a range of amenities to support use of the park. Amenities are a mix of design standards and lack overall cohesion. Many amenities, such as trash cans and seating areas are in poor condition.

Bike racks, trash cans, park signs, and park rules kiosks are located at various entrances to the park. Seating within the park consists primarily of concrete seat walls and a few café tables. Electrical outlets are located throughout the park to provide power for tree lights during winter.

Upgrades to amenities are needed to improve the use, function, and appearance of Town Square Park. Upgrading park amenities provides an opportunity for a low cost/high return investment that can be implemented quickly.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

UTILITIES

UTILITY EASEMENTS

Town Square Park is located on Block 51 and consists of five parcels and an alleyway which has historically provided access for utilities. Currently, a 10' x 20' Electric & Telecom easement runs east-west through the center of the park in the location of the former alleyway. A 30' Sanitary Sewer easement runs from NE to SW in the western third of the park, where it aligns north-south with F Street.

WATER AND IRRIGATION

Water is available in Town Square Park. Irrigation lines run throughout the park providing water to maintain flower beds, lawn, and trees.

LIGHTING AND POWER

Town Square Park has lighting and power outlets throughout the park. Lighting consists of bollard style pedestrian lighting, small area pedestrian level lighting, seasonal flood lights, and tree lights.

Lighting is a mix of styles and generally considered insufficient for safe winter use. A comprehensive and cohesive lighting scheme is necessary to increasing winter use, improving safety, and creating a welcoming park atmosphere.

Bollard style pedestrian lighting, 42" in height, is located along the north and south footpaths. Small area pedestrian level lighting is located along E Street and the adjacent plaza. Seasonal tree lights are strung up throughout the park and serve as a winter attraction. Four flood lights illuminate the main plaza area. These lights are installed and removed with the seasonal tree lights.

Electrical outlets are located throughout the park to provide power for tree lighting and events.

UNDERGROUND UTILITIES & VAULT

A major electric utility corridor runs east-west down the center of the park carrying the primary voltage supply from I street, through a large vault in the PAC.

Located in the center of the park, under the current stage, is a large vault managed by Municipal Light & Power (ML&P). The vault is 8'x14' in size, accessed by a manhole, and sits just below the elevation of the plaza.

Conversations with ML&P following a visual inspection of the vault, reveal that the vault could be removed if new conduits were connected across and new cable pulled in. ML&P does not currently have plans to change the vault but indicated that they would be willing to work with the Municipality to accommodate future development. However, it may not be necessary to remove the vault if future changes call for an expansion of the plaza, as the top of the vault sits below the current grade of the plaza.



Tuba
Christmas
SUNDAY
Sunday, December 13
6:00 PM
Admission Free

PUBLIC SAFETY

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety and security are two of the main reasons people are not visiting Town Square Park. In recent years, increases in disorder and illegal activity have impacted the image, use and function of the park. This has led many people to form a negative perception of the safety in the park.

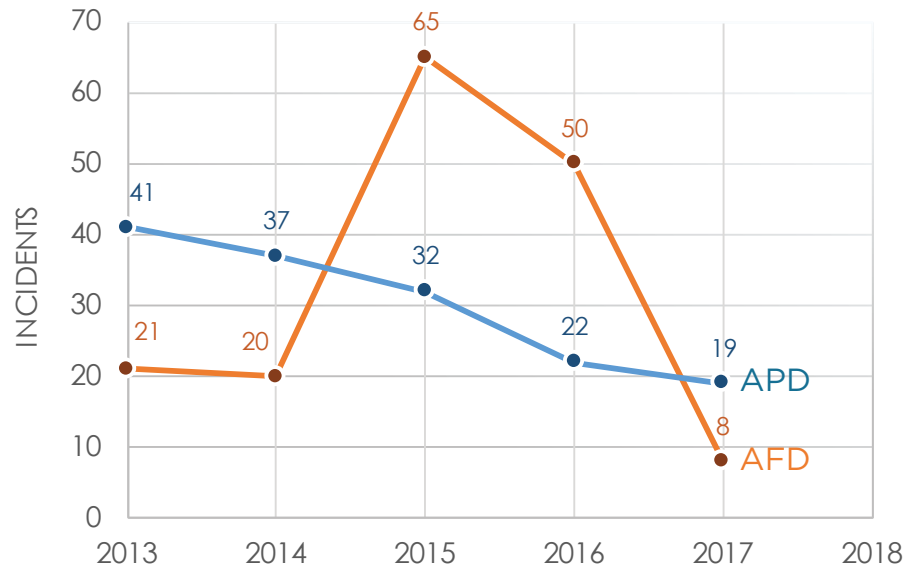
The security issues impacting the park are exacerbated by some of the park's physical attributes such as trees and mounds which offer places for illegal activity to occur out of sight. Other attributes such as seating areas and narrow pathways have become areas of territorial prominence for large groups congregating in the park.

Design interventions to improve visibility and eliminate hiding spaces combined with increased activity in the park and the presence of security will go a long way to improving both real and perceived safety in Town Square Park.

SYNTHESIS OF PUBLIC INPUT ILLUSTRATING THE LEVEL OF COMFORT IN TOWN SQUARE PARK WHEN NOT PROGRAMMED



REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES AND RECORDED INCIDENTS AT TOWN SQUARE PARK FROM 2013-18



Between 2013 and 2018, the Anchorage Police Department (APD) recorded a total of 164 incidents from within one block of Town Square Park. From a high of 41 in 2014, the number of recorded incidents have dropped an average of 22% year over year.

Over that same time period, the Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) received 169 calls for emergency services. The number of calls peaked in 2015 at 65, followed by 50 calls in 2016, before falling dramatically in 2017 to just eight calls. The spike in calls in 2015 and 2016 likely correspond to an up-tick in the use of the synthetic drug "Spice" during that time.

Additionally, the Anchorage Safety Patrol (ASP) responded to a total of 254 calls to the area around Town Square Park during the same five year time period.

CASE STUDY: BRYANT PARK

NEW YORK, NY

Revitalization through Management, Programming, and Design Interventions

Bryant Park is often considered one of the great success stories of a seedy urban park turned iconic community asset. In the 1980s, Bryant Park had a bad reputation for drug deals and



poor maintenance. Many of the problems occurring in the park related to critical design flaws. Poor visibility into the park, elevated areas, constricted entrances, and few amenities created the preconditions for disorder and crime to occur out of sight.

Recognizing these flaws, the city made positive steps to improving the park through design interventions, the addition of new amenities and concessions, and the hosting of daily events.

Today, Bryant Park is managed by the Bryant Park Corporation (BPC), a business improvement district. The BPC provides security, sanitation, landscaping, concessions, and special events to support positive use of the park.



TOWN SQUARE PARK | master plan

3

MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

IN THIS CHAPTER

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51 Plan Development Process



OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of public involvement and includes findings and key takeaways from that process. It is followed by a discussion of best practices and case studies which were used to inform the development of concepts and master plan recommendations. Also included, is a summary of the master plan and concept development process.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement in the planning process is essential to the long-term success of the Town Square Park Master Plan. Meaningful public involvement ensures that the future management and development of Town Square Park is consistent with the desires of the community.

The Town Square Park Master Plan is the product of a comprehensive and collaborative year long process driven by public engagement and stakeholder input at each stage. Public involvement in the creation of the Town Square Park Master Plan included:

- ▶ 7 Advisory Group Meetings
- ▶ 4 Public Workshops
- ▶ 2 Roundtable Meetings
- ▶ 7 Stakeholder Interviews
- ▶ 2 Online Surveys

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

OUTREACH AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The planning team conducted outreach throughout the planning process to engage stakeholders and encourage participation. Social media as well as targeted and direct outreach were used to promote workshops, advertise surveys, and solicit input.

Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, and the Parks and Recreation webpage were used to reach a large cross-section of Anchorage residents. Television interviews were also common during the public involvement phase which enabled the planning team to reach a larger viewing audience.

The planning team also targeted outreach to downtown stakeholders with presentations to groups such as the Downtown Community Council and the Anchorage Downtown Partnership monthly membership meeting. Direct outreach was conducted with door-to-door visits to local businesses prior to public workshops.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with stakeholders having historic and practical knowledge of Town Square Park. Interviews were held with three groups; the first with Anchorage residents with historic knowledge of the park; the second with past Town Square Park designers and landscape architects; and the third with local stakeholders including the Performing Arts Center, the Kobuk, and the Anchorage Downtown Partnership.

ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS

The planning team facilitated roundtable meetings with public safety and social service providers, as well as downtown businesses to better understand the perspectives of key stakeholder groups.

These meetings had two goals. The first, to understand the social and safety issues impacting Town Square Park and what efforts are currently underway to address those issues. And second, to engage local businesses in finding solutions to issues related to Town Square Park and to identify opportunities for positive change, particularly related to economic and community development.



MOST COMMON WORDS USED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS TO DESCRIBE WHAT THEY "LIKE" ABOUT TOWN SQUARE PARK

ONLINE SURVEYS

Online surveys were administered to better understand perceptions of the park and to gather information on preferences for future management, programming, and development of Town Square Park. Online surveys provided valuable feedback to the project team and were used to inform the development of the master plan.

Online Survey 1: User Perception Survey

The first survey was administered early in the planning process to better understand people's perception of Town Square Park. Survey questions were open-ended and asked:

- What do you like about Town Square Park?
- What issues or concerns should be addressed in the master plan?
- What types of changes or new activities would encourage you to visit Town Square Park more often?

Between April 5th and May 5th, 2017, 635 survey responses were submitted. The results were summarized into common themes and shared with the advisory groups and public at future workshops.

Online Survey 2: Design Concept Survey

The second survey was administered at the concept development stage to solicit feedback on concept alternatives. This information was used to revise concepts into a preferred concept design.

Between September 25th and October 25th, 2017, 80 survey responses were submitted.

INTERCEPT SURVEY

The planning team worked with a student intern from the University of Alaska Anchorage to conduct informal intercept surveys at the park. Surveys were administered at various times of day and during programmed events. The informal nature of these surveys provided a range of perspectives in real time from people who might otherwise not attend a public workshop or complete an online survey.



MOST COMMON WORDS USED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS TO DESCRIBE “TYPES OF CHANGES” OR DESIRED “NEW ACTIVITIES” AT TOWN SQUARE PARK

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

ADVISORY GROUP MEETINGS

Two advisory groups were formed to help guide the development of the Town Square Park Master Plan. Advisory group members were selected from submitted applications and assigned to an advisory group based on interest and expertise. A total of seven meetings were held with the advisory groups during the master planning process.

The **Citizen's Advisory Group (CAG)** acted in the capacity of a steering committee to assist the planning team as a sounding board and to ensure that development of the master plan aligns with the interest of the community.

The **Technical Advisory Group (TAG)** was comprised of a small group of designers, landscape architects, engineers, developers, and professionals to provide technical assistance and expertise to the CAG and planning team.

CAG AND TAG GOALS:

- Define the issues to be addressed
- Develop a vision for Town Square Park based on community input
- Build consensus on guiding principles for future programming, design, and management recommendations



PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Public workshops were hosted at key project milestones to inform the development of the master plan.

Workshop 1: Visioning & Positive Change

Goals and Objectives:

To identify issues as well as opportunities for positive change, and to begin the process of developing a vision for the future of Town Square Park.



Workshop 2: Place Audit

Goals and Objectives:

To better understand how the physical attributes of Town Square Park and surrounding areas influence park user's overall experience, use, and level of comfort.



Workshop 3: Design Workshop

Goals and Objectives:

To develop programmatic and design solutions utilizing identified elements such as amenities, uses and activities to inform the development of concept design alternatives.



Workshop 4: Concept Design Review

Goals and Objectives:

To share concept alternatives and solicit feedback needed to refine and advance a preferred concept alternative.



FINDINGS AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

Public input gathered during the planning process yielded a series of common themes which were used to inform the development of this master plan. Through a variety of methods such as online surveys, public workshops, and advisory group meetings; community members provided valuable information, helping the planning team to identify issues to be addressed and priorities for future management and development.

The following is a summary of common themes or key takeaways from the public involvement process.



Town Square Park as a Catalyst

Town Square Park is a popular destination and central feature of downtown. Revitalization of the park would act as a catalyst for positive change downtown with the potential to spur investment and redevelopment in the surrounding area.

Adding elements that connect the park to the larger downtown through wayfinding signage, district branding, common amenities and design elements would create a sense of place and more inviting downtown.

Identity and Purpose

Town Square Park currently lacks a strong identity and sense of purpose. Existing features such as the flower gardens are iconic; however, features that celebrate Alaska Native cultures, the history of Anchorage, and our diverse community would create a strong identity and build community ownership in the park. Also, important is remembering and honoring the legacy of park founders.

Activating Town Square Park

People would like to see more events and activities in Town Square Park throughout the year. Currently, the park has few amenities to attract visitors and lacks “things to do” when programmed events are not taking place.

Providing amenities and activating spaces with pop-ups, activities, vendors, and events would encourage more people to visit the park and help mitigate negative use. Regularly scheduled family friendly events are desired. Working with partners and considering ways to activate the park in all seasons is a community priority.



Public Safety

The planning process revealed that many people have a negative perception of Town Square Park and downtown, and are choosing to stay away. Many of the safety and security concerns are part of a larger downtown issue. However, some issues such as limited visibility into and through the park as well as large groups congregating in the park have created an environment where not all people feel comfortable and welcome in Town Square Park. Addressing public safety concerns and providing positive activity in the park will go a long way to improving the public image and perception of Town Square Park.

Design and Usability

The physical design, character, and relationship of Town Square Park to surrounding businesses and streets impact how people access and use the park. Currently, there is little connectivity or physical relationship between the park and surrounding streets, businesses and civic institutions.

People want an active, vibrant, and attractive park with lots of things to do; however, the current design of the park limits the use and range of activities. Trees and mounds restrict visibility into the park while the prominence of large interior plazas create a space that is uninviting when not used for events. Addressing design related issues to improve safety, connectivity, and usability are a high priority. Future design should consider flexible spaces that can accommodate a variety of activities.

Management and Maintenance

Town Square Park needs a long-term sustainable model that considers security, programming, management and maintenance of the park. This will ensure that the park remains one of the centerpieces of Anchorage's park system and downtown.

BEST PRACTICES AND CASE STUDIES

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* seeks to address issues and to create a welcoming, safe, and attractive park that is the centerpiece of our downtown. To achieve this, the planning team reviewed best practices and case studies to identify strategies that are consistent with the community's vision and could be applied to Town Square Park.

Best practices and case studies provide tested strategies that help address issues and inform the development of Town Square Park.

CASE STUDIES

Case studies provide valuable examples of how other cities have addressed similar issues and applied strategies to revitalize their public spaces. Five urban parks were evaluated based on size, civic role, context, issues, and history.

These case studies highlight several important lessons such as the role of partnerships, the importance of programming and amenities, the potential of a public space to be a catalyst for downtown redevelopment, and the value of community ownership and investment. Lessons learned from these case studies help to inform recommendations in this master plan.



Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an approach to designing public spaces to enhance public safety and reduce the occurrence of crime. CPTED is based on four principles: natural surveillance, natural access control, territorial reinforcement, and maintenance/management.

BEST PRACTICES IN DESIGNING SAFE PUBLIC SPACES

One of the primary goals of the Town Square Park Master Plan is to address issues impacting the park. Best practices in designing safe public spaces provide important lessons that can be applied to Town Square Park. Application of best practices have proven successful in addressing issues and revitalizing public spaces.

Best practices point to a series of factors to consider in designing safe public spaces. These strategies inform the development of the preferred concept and master plan and should be further consulted in the design development phase of implementation.

Reducing or eliminating isolated places follows the principle of “eyes on the park”, referring to the planning and design approach to increasing opportunities for informal surveillance and reducing isolated, hidden spaces which foster crime.

The **layout and legibility** of a park contributes to a user's sense of security and comfort. When the layout of the park is intuitive and easy to navigate, users are able to orientate themselves and move through the space with ease.

Visibility and sightlines are important factors to enhancing park users' feeling of security and comfort. Maintaining clear sightlines in a park enables visitors to make decisions prior to entering a space and discourages negative activity from occurring in areas that are easily visible from the perimeter.

Activating the perimeter of the park with activity encourages use and increases accessibility for groups who may feel more vulnerable such as women and children, older adults, and people with disabilities.

Access and circulation influence a person's ability to move through the park safely and efficiently, contributing to the user's perception of security and comfort. When combined with clear lines of sight, an efficient and well-design circulation system can help improve perceptions of safety and individual levels of comfort.

Lighting is an important component of public safety in park design. Lighting, when planned as a coordinated system, creates a more inviting atmosphere, encouraging new activities and increasing seasonal use. Lighting can also help clarify the layout of the park by emphasizing walkways, focal points, use areas, and access points.

A **diversity of things to do** is a common element of successful parks. Providing a mix of activities, uses and features to appeal to a broad range of users will attract visitors throughout the seasons and encourage greater community ownership.

Signage and park information provide a sense of order and clarity that can improve the perception of safety in a park. Signage helps park visitors navigate the park and can be used to highlight assets or promote programmed activities.

The **ability to find help** when needed impacts how people perceive the safety of a public space. The presence of regular police patrols, downtown ambassadors, and/or park staff can provide a sense of security and help if needed in an emergency.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* was developed utilizing an incremental three step approach. Each step or phase included milestones and opportunities for community input. This input was used to guide the development of concepts and ultimately recommendations.

The three phase plan development process:

1. Information Gathering
2. Visioning
3. Concept Development and Master Plan

INFORMATION GATHERING

Information was gathered early in the planning process to provide a foundation for public involvement and plan development. The information gathering phase focused on understanding public perceptions of Town Square Park, identifying issues to be addressed, and inventorying existing uses and conditions.

The planning team began with a review of land use plans and policy documents related to Town Square Park. This included municipal planning and development cases, permits, and Assembly actions; providing a contextual understanding of the creation, maintenance, and historical use of Town Square Park.

The planning team met with the Citizen's Advisory Group to begin the process of identifying issues and opportunities at the park. Interviews and roundtable meetings were held with key stakeholders to better understand the perspectives of downtown businesses, social and safety service providers and individuals with historical and practical knowledge of Town Square Park.

During this time, the planning team conducted field research to identify use patterns and inventory existing conditions. Additionally, an online survey was administered to better understand user perceptions and preferences for the future management, programming, and development of Town Square Park.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



VISIONING

Building upon information gathered early in the planning process, the planning team facilitated a community wide visioning process. Visioning enables the community to identify shared values and define what they want for the future of Town Square Park.

Through an online survey and two public workshops, members of the public provided meaningful input that helped inform the development of this master plan. This input was shared with the Citizen's and Technical Advisory Groups and developed into a series of guiding principles and vision statements. These guiding principles (see next chapter) provided the foundation for concepts and recommendations in this master plan.

CASE STUDY: CONGRESS SQUARE

PORTLAND, ME

Community Ownership to Revitalize a Public Space

Throughout the 1980's and 90's, Congress Square was Portland, Maine's "showplace of the city". Located in the Arts District, Congress Square was the premier public space in Portland.



However, investment in the square began to decline in the early 2000's, and programming was abandoned completely.

After years of decline, the City prepared plans to sell the property to a developer. In opposition to this, the Friends of Congress Square Park formed to advocate for re-investment in the square.

The group worked with the City on a public visioning process. As a result, the Friends of Congress Square Park began adding amenities such as movable furniture, free WI-Fi, and food trucks to bring people into the park. The group also began organizing events in the park. Today, Congress Square is a success story in community ownership and collaborative placemaking.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND MASTER PLAN

The concept development and master plan phase utilized an iterative design approach informed by public preferences and best practices to develop programmatic, management, and design solutions to address identified issues and fulfill the guiding principles.

Using information gathered throughout the planning process, the CAG and TAG developed a series of conceptual alternatives that illustrate the community identified needs, desires and vision for Town Square Park. Through this effort, potential uses, program elements and activities were identified and later presented to the public at a design workshop.

At the design workshop, members of the public worked in groups to develop concepts that consider the use, function, and safety of Town Square Park. Groups developed concepts by placing pieces representing various park elements over a drawing of Town Square Park. These elements included active and passive green spaces, flexible open space, performance spaces, market spaces, iconic features, circulation, and amenities. At the end of the workshop, each group presented their concept and common themes were distilled to identify areas/elements of general consensus.

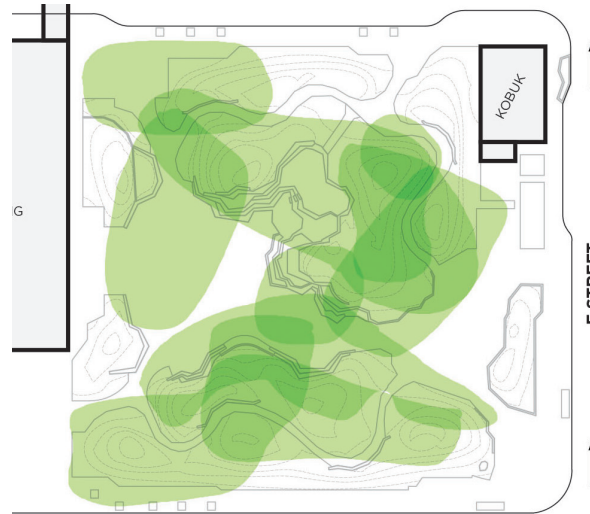


Workshop participants developing concepts for Town Square Park

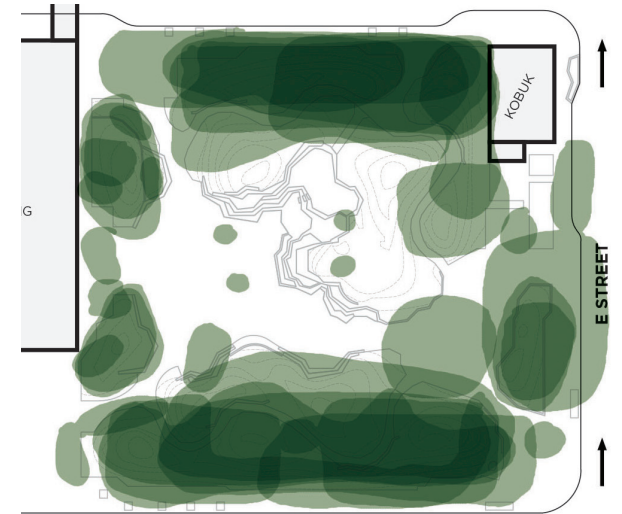


Group concept from public workshop for Town Square Park

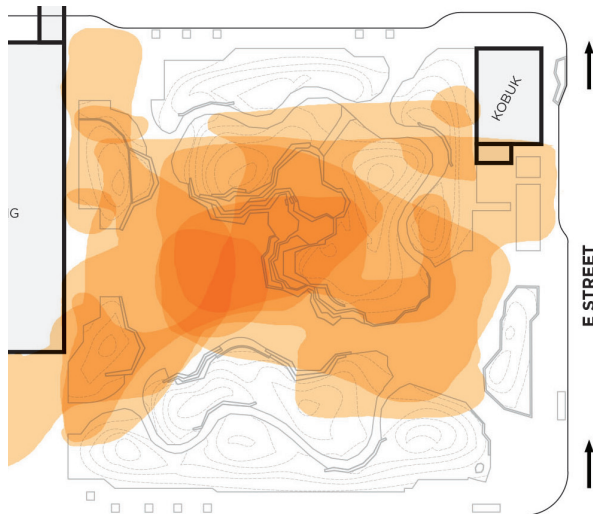
**SYNTHESIS OF PUBLIC WORKSHOP
CONCEPTS BY USE AREA**



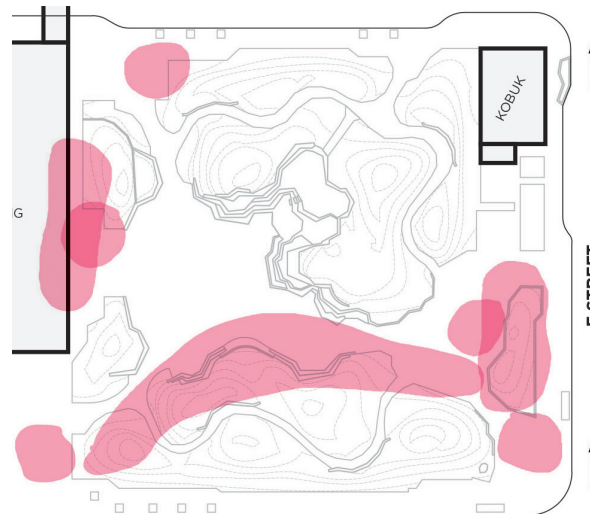
Active Greenspace



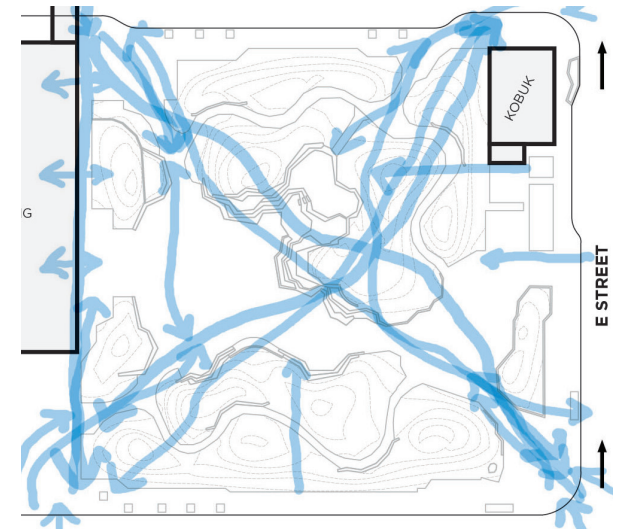
Passive Greenspace



Flexible Open Space



Market Space



Circulation

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND MASTER PLAN

Following the public design workshop, the planning team held an internal design charrette to review comments and refine workshop concepts into two concept alternatives. The two concepts were then presented to the CAG and TAG for review and further revisions were made prior to final public workshop.

The fourth and final public workshop was held during Anchorage Design Week and was organized in an open house format so that participants could provide input and speak directly with the planning team. Two concept alternatives were presented alongside inspiration image boards. Members of the public were encouraged to provide feedback and identify their preferences for amenities and design elements.

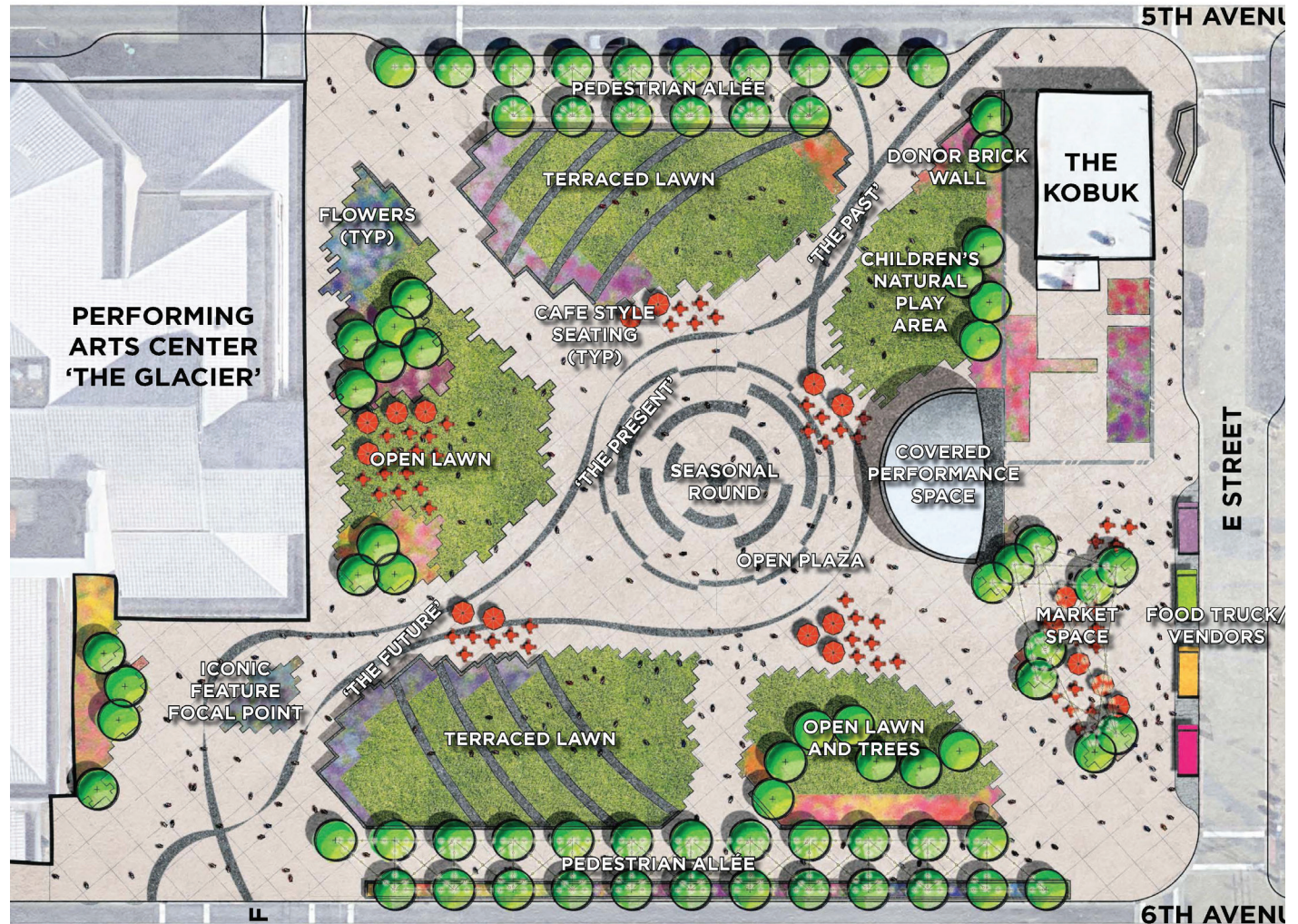


ILLUSTRATION OF CONCEPT A

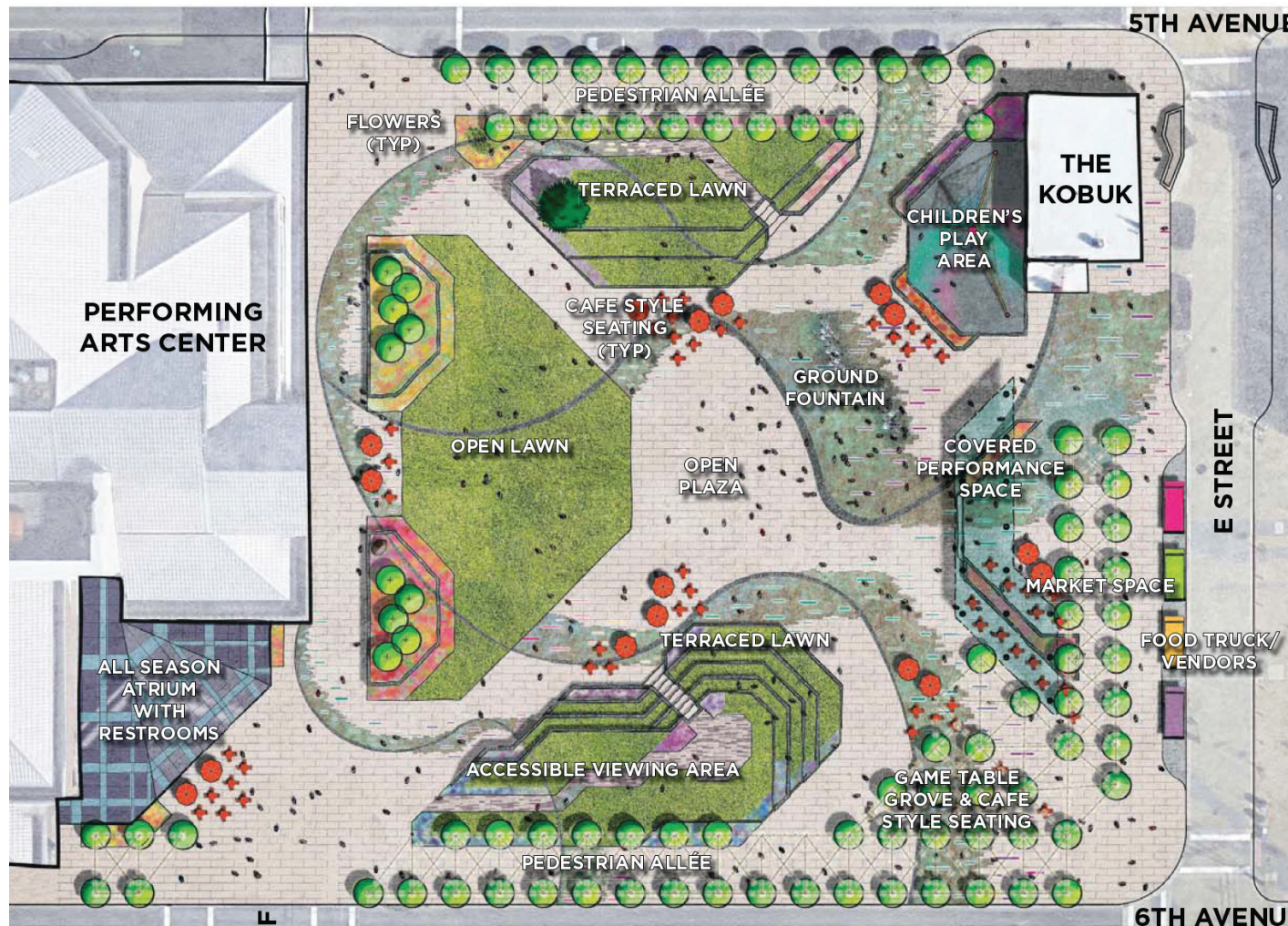


ILLUSTRATION OF CONCEPT B

Following the final workshop, a second online survey was administered to provide additional opportunities for feedback on each design.

The project team worked to refine the two concepts alternatives into a final preferred concept (see next chapter), which was reviewed by the CAG/TAG. The preferred concept was evaluated for conformance with the community vision and guiding principles.

A final review process was conducted to verify that issues and areas of concern have been addressed, and that best practices in design, public safety, and programming were incorporated.



TOWN SQUARE PARK | master plan

4

TOWN SQUARE PARK TOMORROW

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83 Programming

87 Management



OVERVIEW

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* provides a vision for the future founded on the community's desire for positive change. It envisions a Town Square Park that is attractive and well-used; a place that is safe, welcoming, and a source of community pride. To achieve this vision, the master plan recommends a combination of policies, design improvements, programming and management actions.

Recommendations in this chapter are organized into four categories and are informed by best practices and the original design criteria:

- Public Safety
- Design
- Programming
- Management

Recommendations are based on the community's vision for Town Square Park and were developed from a series of guiding principles.

VISION

Town Square Park was originally envisioned to be an urban oasis. However, Anchorage as a city has grown and evolved, and residents today envision a more dynamic Town Square Park that is a hub for activity and is safe and family friendly.

Looking to the next 20 years, the vision for Town Square Park builds upon the elements that continue to make Town Square Park special. Flowers and open space are maintained and enhanced, new desired amenities are added, and flexible spaces that can support a variety of activities are incorporated.

The vision statement describes the desired future of Town Square Park and is used to guide the planning, design and development of the park. The community's vision for Town Square Park is summarized in the following vision statement.

“Town Square Park is a safe and welcoming destination in the heart of downtown Anchorage where residents and visitors gather year-round for celebration, socializing, cultural exchange and community building.”

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

There are a number of themes in which there was general agreement regarding the qualities that make Town Square Park special. These qualities reflect the core values of Town Square Park users and have been developed into a series of guiding principles.

The guiding principles establish the main issues this master plan seeks to address as well as the desired outcomes. They provide the foundation of this document and guide recommendations.

Improve the Relationship of the Park to Surroundings "and Surroundings to the Park"



- Support measures that improve the physical relationship and connectivity of the park to surrounding businesses, streets, and institutions
- Connect Town Square Park with surrounding businesses and institutions through street network changes and pedestrian infrastructure improvements
- Support economic development and revitalization near Town Square Park

Activate Town Square Park with Programming and Events



- Provide programming and events that help activate the park with positive use, improving safety and reducing undesirable activity in the park
- Support popular events and community celebrations and encourage new events and community traditions
- Support and promote events that celebrate Anchorage's history, identity, diversity and native cultures
- Support public-private partnerships that work with local businesses and non-profits to sponsor activities and events in Town Square Park

Create a Park for All Seasons



- Support and promote events that celebrate Anchorage as a winter city
- Activate Town Square Park in the shoulder seasons with events and new amenities
- Incorporate lighting and other features to support use in winter months
- Maintain the park for use in all seasons

Manage the Park as an Important Asset



- Recognize and celebrate Town Square Park as an important community asset and public space
- Provide sustainable funding for management, maintenance, programming, and security
- Encourage community ownership and stewardship in Town Square Park
- Engage community members and stakeholders to invest, program, plan, and celebrate Town Square Park

Provide Amenities to Support Use



- Provide amenities that support positive use and meet the needs of diverse park users
- Incorporate amenities that provide "something to do" in the park when events are not programmed
- Consider amenities such as café seating, food vendors, games tables, restrooms, playful features, arts and live music

Incorporate an Iconic Feature



- Recognize Town Square Park as an important public space for Anchorage and a centerpiece of Downtown
- Incorporate an iconic feature that gives the park a distinct identity and reflects the identity of Anchorage
- Consider a feature or features that provide a focal point or point of interest within the park

Improve Access, Circulation and Connectivity



- Upgrade pathways and eliminate barriers to access, circulation, and mobility within Town Square Park
- Maintain pathways and plazas for use in all seasons
- Improve connectivity within downtown and Town Square Park by reverting traffic on 5th and 6th Avenue to two-way, as part of a larger downtown street network reprogramming
- Consider drop-off locations with street changes to improve ADA access to both the PAC and Town Square Park

Improve Safety and Security



- Address safety and security concerns impacting the park
- Provide amenities and regularly programmed events to activate the park and reduce undesirable activity
- Improve visibility into and through the park and eliminate hiding spaces
- Create a welcoming and safe space for all residents and visitors
- Improve the public perception of Town Square Park
- Incorporate security and social services to address safety issues and provide needed services

Flowers and Green Space are a Valued Asset



- Maintain and enhance the summer flower displays
- Celebrate the seasonal flowers as an iconic and defining feature of Town Square Park
- Provide for green spaces that support use and provide spaces for relief from the urban environment

Promote a Strong Identity and Sense of Purpose



- Revitalize Town Square Park as an iconic destination and vibrant public space that celebrates the park's assets, the city's history and diverse community
- Invest in Town Square Park as a catalyst for positive change and revitalization downtown
- Recognize Town Square Park as a valued community asset and anchor for downtown
- Promote Town Square Park as a destination of choice
- Create a strong sense of place
- Be inclusive and think big!

PUBLIC SAFETY

A safe and secure environment is essential to the continued use and long-term success of Town Square Park. This master plan recognizes that addressing the issue of safety is a complex task that requires a comprehensive strategy.

This master plan recommends a multi-pronged approach to public safety involving design, programming, management, and security. The combination of these elements provide a range of tools to ensure that the park is safe for all users.

SAFETY THROUGH DESIGN

Addressing safety through design is one of several strategies to improving security in Town Square Park. The preferred concept illustrates a more open and welcoming park layout that is intended to improve visitor's sense of security in the park. The master plan identifies design solutions to reduce hiding spaces and improve visibility into the park. The master plan also calls for the addition of lighting, signage, and amenities to support positive use of the park throughout the seasons (*see pages 67-81 for more on Design*).

SAFETY THROUGH MANAGEMENT

A well-managed and maintained park demonstrates stewardship and community ownership and is likely to be a safer public space. The master plan recommends a comprehensive and sustainable management structure that is proactive in addressing issues yet has sufficient resources to manage assets and program activities (*see pages 87-88 for more on Management*).





SAFETY THROUGH PROGRAMMING

Programming and events generate activity and has been shown to increase positive use of Town Square Park. Programming generally refers to anything that can be considered an activity generator. This includes everything from large annual events such as the holiday tree lighting, weekly activities like Zumba and Live after Five, as well as daily food trucks and flower tours. The master plan identifies strategies to support programming of the park as a generator of positive activity (see pages 81-86 for more on Programming).

SAFETY THROUGH SECURITY

The presence of regular police patrols, downtown ambassadors, and park staff provides a sense of security and oversight that helps to re-enforce positive use of the park. The master plan recommends continued coordination with the Anchorage Police Department and the Downtown Partnership to regularly monitor and patrol the park and address concerns as they arise.

DESIGN

The physical layout and design of Town Square Park influences the overall use, function, and security of the park. The master plan proposes design changes that both addresses issues and works to achieve the community's vision for a welcoming, safe, and attractive park.

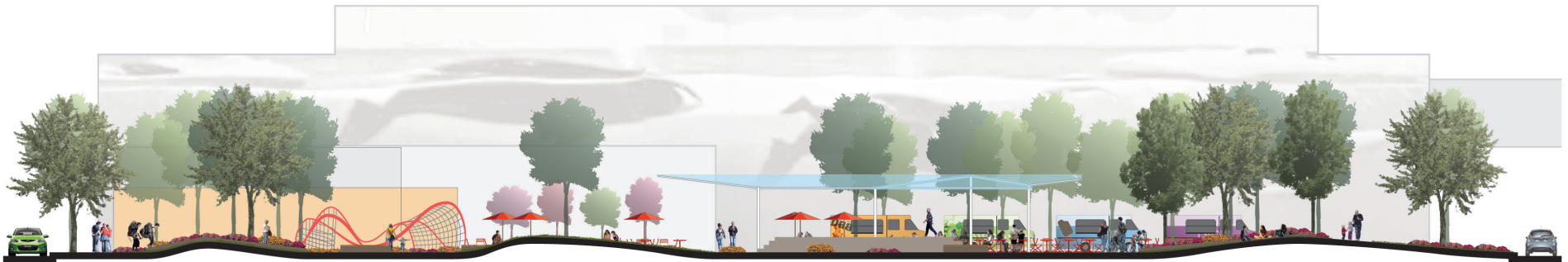
These design changes are illustrated in the preferred concept graphic and are described on the following pages.

PREFERRED CONCEPT

The preferred design concept provides a graphic representation of the community's vision for Town Square Park. Time honored elements such as flowers and green space are enhanced and expanded while new features and amenities generate positive activity in the park.

The preferred concept maintains the general layout of the park as it exists today, with flowers and green spaces located along the edges of the park and hardscaped flexible areas located within the interior of the park.

Features and elements illustrated in the preferred concept are based on public preferences for the management, programming, and development of the park.





5TH AVENUE

NORTH LAWN

PLAY
AREA

THE
KNOLL

SEASONAL
ROUND

FLEX AREA

STAGE

RAIN
GARDEN

FOOD TRUCKS
& MARKET
SPACE

E STREET

PERFORMING
ARTS CENTER

WEST LAWN

SOUTH LAWN

PAC PLAZA

FLOWER
BED (TYP)

PEDESTRIAN ALLEE

6TH AVENUE

DESIGN

ENTRANCES/ACCESS POINTS

E Street and F Street at the corners of 5th and 6th Avenue are the primary access points and serve as gateways to Town Square Park. Open and welcoming entrances bring people in from the street, creating a seamless transition from the street to park. Flower beds greet visitors at the main entrances, inviting people to explore further into the park. Entrances are designed to allow for clear lines of sight into and through the park, enabling visitors to feel safe and comfortable as they travel through the park.

An open plaza provides access to Town Square Park from E Street, creating a seamless transition into the park that can easily support events such as markets and street fairs as well as food trucks.



CIRCULATION

Walkways are designed for visitors to move freely through the park. Pathways are ADA accessible and vertical obstructions such as stairs are removed. Circulation bottlenecks are also eliminated in favor of wider pathways into and through the park. Trees, shrubs and flowers provide visual interest along pathways and are arranged to allow for clear lines of sight. Pathways are also aligned to enable circulation directly through the park.





TOWN SQUARE PARK AND THE KOBUK

The master plan envisions a stronger physical and visual relationship between the Kobuk and Town Square Park. As a historic property and the only private business abutting the park, the Kobuk is uniquely situated to provide highly sought after concessions to park visitors. An improved physical and visual relationship helps to support park use and improve safety, providing a consistent source of activity and “eyes on the park”.



MARKET SPACE & FOOD TRUCK VENDORS

A market space is set aside for vendors and food trucks to support events and help activate the park in times when programmed activities are not scheduled. The market space is located along E Street creating a seamless and inviting connection between the street and park. Café tables are provided to support food consumption and social activity. Vendor spaces should be provided along the street or directly within the park to support food trucks or vendors.



DESIGN

PLAY AREA

A modern and attractive play area provides a destination for families who would like to visit Town Square Park. Situated next to the Kobuk, the play area activates a historically problematic area of the park, bringing positive activity to the park in times when events are not programmed. The design of the play area should match the character and scale of the park and should not be an overwhelming or dominant feature.

THE KNOLL

Bridging the space between the seasonal round and the play area is a small knoll. “The Knoll” serves as a sun spot and front row seat for viewing concerts, eating lunch, and relaxing. The knoll also provides a buffer to the play area and functions to channel circulation away from the front of the stage during live events.

FLEX AREA

The central plaza or flex area provides flexible open space in the heart the park to support a variety of programmed events and activities. The flex area encompasses the seasonal round providing durable hardscape materials to support circulation and events. Materials should be visually interesting and easy to maintain in all seasons.



(above) Modern play structure and plaza at South Park in San Francisco (photo Fletcher Studio); (above right) Example of knolls at Perk Park in Cleveland (photo Scott Pease); (below right) Example of flexible spaces with a mix of greenspace and hardscapes (photo PWP Landscape Architecture)

PAC Access

The master planning process revived calls for improvements to the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts (PAC) passenger drop off and loading zones, particularly for persons with limited mobility. Today, the PAC recommends F Street south of 6th Avenue and the 5th Ave Egan Center loading zone for drop-offs. Both of which require the signalized crossing of 5th or 6th Avenue, or use of the sky bridge.

The planning team conducted a technical review of alternative drop off areas to evaluate the potential impacts on traffic operations and use of the park. Of the alternatives considered, none of them adequately address PAC access concerns without significant negative impact to the size, use and pedestrian safety of Town Square Park.

While this Master Plan recognizes the need for internal and external ADA access issues at the PAC to be resolved, these issues are beyond the scope of a park master plan. Rather, the park master plan addresses issues, identifies needs, and provides a framework for management, development and programming within the park property boundaries.

Additionally, there are several limitations that prevent this master plan from fully resolving access issues to the PAC:

- The PAC is an independent entity, on a separate parcel, with different land use, goals, and objectives than those of Town Square Park; therefore proposing an alternative solution to the loading zone would be beyond the ability and intent of a park master plan.
- PZC Resolution No. 81-104C specifically prohibits the use of Town Square Park for the purposes of passenger loading and is a requirement of the conditional use sought by the PAC for the vacation of the F Street Right of Way
- PZC Resolution No. 81-104C calls for the portion of the former F Street not occupied by the PAC to be integrated into Town Square Park
- ADA access and circulation limitations exist within the PAC between its three theaters and lobbies, in addition to the external access concerns; a comprehensive site redesign is required to address both internal and external access concerns

DESIGN

COVERED PERFORMANCE SPACE

A covered performance space serves as a stage for events in Town Square Park. The covered performance space is located east of the seasonal round providing ample space for both large and small events. Direct access to E Street enables loading and unloading with minimal impact to the use of the park before and after events.

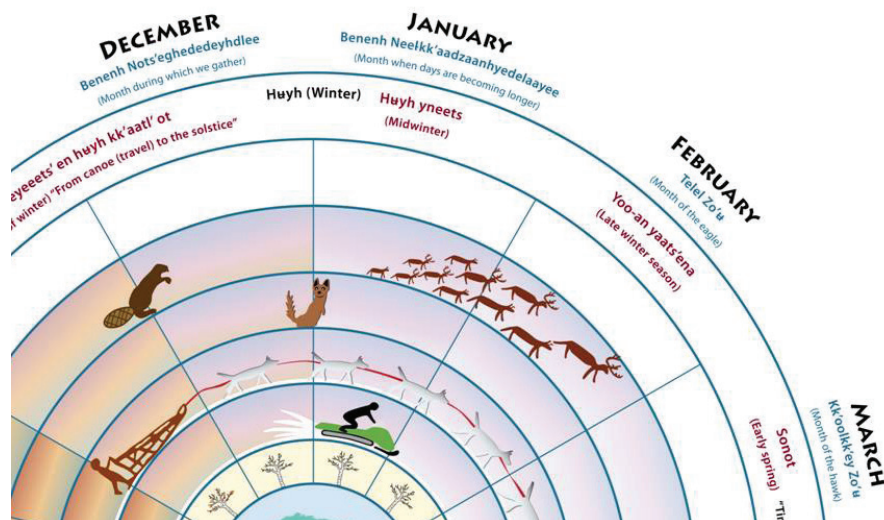
The design of the covered performance space should draw upon architectural elements found along the periphery of the park. One example supported by the public was a tensile structure similar to the awnings located on F Street that could serve as a seasonal or permanent structure.

Consideration should be made to incorporate a rain garden to capture stormwater runoff from the covered performance space. The design of the rain garden may also provide an opportunity to locate utility boxes in a less visually intrusive location.



This page: (above) Outdoor performance stage at the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Amphitheater at Lakewood Heritage Center in Colorado; (left) Example of a tensile material awning on F Street across from Town Square Park

Next page: (top) Example of a traditional Athabascan seasonal round; (left above) Example of a contemporary wood bench; (left below) Example of a circular seasonal landscape (photo *Toronto Botanical Garden*); (right) Example of mixed materials used to replicate the natural environment and treat stormwater



SEASONAL ROUND

The seasonal round serves as an iconic focal point for Town Square Park. This feature is inspired by the traditional Athabascan seasonal round used to document and share knowledge of seasonal activities. Building upon this concept, the seasonal round at Town Square Park should be culturally relevant and reflect Anchorage's unique seasonal and cultural qualities. Historically, seasonal focal points for Town Square Park have included flowers in the summer and ice sculptures in winter.

The design of the space should consider the range of uses from large events and concerts to smaller more intimate events, such as public art displays. The seasonal round presents an opportunity to engage local artists in the design process either through the development of a permanent feature or as a location for temporary public art displays.

The *Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Plan* provides useful information and some helpful guidelines for incorporating Athabascan/Dena'ina artwork in public places (see *Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Plan* p54 & Appendix B).



DESIGN

PEDESTRIAN ALLEE

A pedestrian allee or tree lined walkway brings visitors into the park and away from traffic providing physical separation from vehicles while visually connecting the interior of the park to the surroundings. The sweeping walk connects west to east, rising up gradually in the center where visitors are brought into the park via the south lawn. Trees line each side of the walkway providing a sense of order to the pedestrian experience. String lighting or other pedestrian level lighting helps make the space feel inviting and safe.



WEST LAWN

A large lawn provides flexible open space and an inviting transition between the Performing Arts Center and Town Square Park. The lawn is framed by trees and flower beds, and provides a softening contrast to the large facade of the PAC.



(above) Visitors enjoying the Lunch on the Lawn event at the Anchorage Museum (photo Anchorage Museum); (right) Example of a tree lined pedestrian allee at Jamison Square in Portland, OR

NORTH AND SOUTH LAWNS

The north and south lawns provide flexible open space to support a variety of activities from passive recreation to event viewing. Each lawn rises gently providing a physical buffer between the park and 5th and 6th Ave. while maintaining clear visibility into and out of the park.

These green spaces provide places for passive recreation such as socializing with friends and enjoying the sun. They also provide additional space for viewing larger events such as concerts. Design of this space should consider the following:

- Visibility into and through the park
- Seating for viewing concerts and events
- Seating for informal socializing
- Seating to enjoy the sun

CASE STUDY: PIONEER COURTHOUSE SQUARE PORTLAND, OREGON

Programming and Public-Private Partnerships to Activate Portland's Living Room

Located in the heart of downtown Portland, Pioneer Courthouse Square is often referred to as "Portland's living room". At one square block, Pioneer Courthouse Square is similar in size and context to Anchorage's Town



Square Park. Both parks were established in 1984, borne out of a desire by citizens to prioritize public space over parking.

Pioneer Courthouse Square is one of the most successful public squares in the United States. Each year, the park hosts over 300 days of programming and events bringing in over 10 million visitors annually and resulting in over \$20 million in economic activity.

Pioneer Courthouse Square is managed by a private 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the programming and daily operations of the park. The group works in partnership with the City of Portland to organize community volunteers and solicit private sector contributions which generate 79% of the Park's annual operating revenue. In 2014, Portland voters supported a bond package with \$10 million to upgrade aging infrastructure in the park.

DESIGN

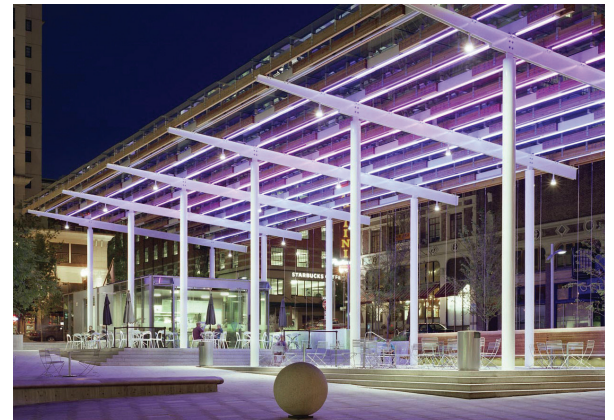
LIGHTING

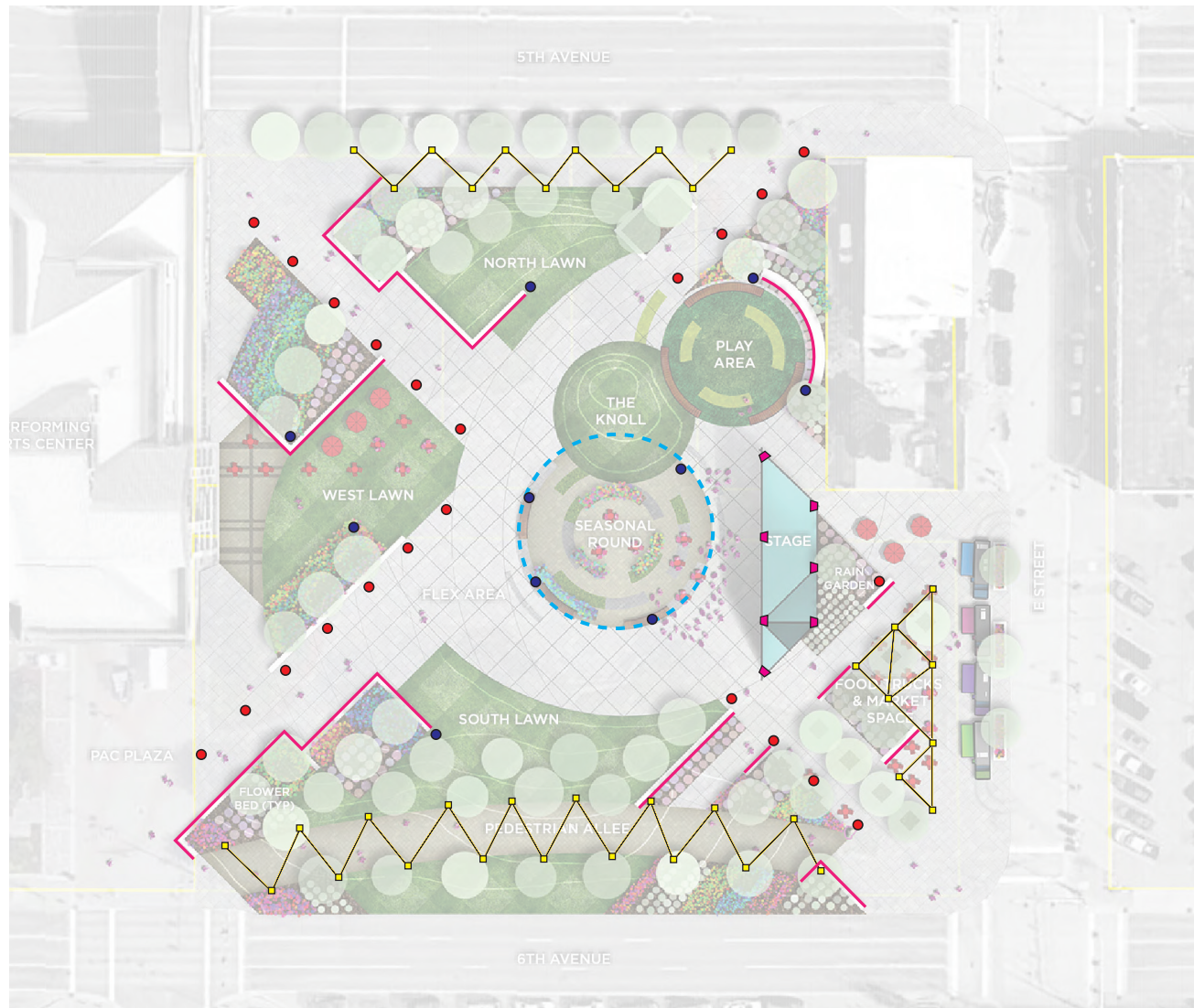
The preferred concept identifies a comprehensive lighting system to improve safety and winter use. A hierarchy of lighting helps to clarify the layout of the park by emphasizing walkways, focal points, use areas, and access points. Opportunities for artistic expression should be incorporated into the final design to provide areas of visual interest.



Examples of park lighting that could be applied to Town Square Park (above) Pedestrian alley with uplighting; (center top) Area lighting with directional spot lights (*photo Selux Olivio*); (center bottom) Example of a suspended light installation;

(right top) Seawall lighting (*photo Tomas C, project Lawa Lukasz Kilarski*); (right middle) String lighting (*photo Ryan Fischer/Focus Lighting*); (right bottom) Pavilion uplighting in Director Park in Portland (*photo ZGF Architects*)





Symbol Legend

- Area Light
- Area Light w/ Directional Spot Fixtures
- ◆ Pavilion Uplight
- String Light Mounted on Poles
- Continuous Wall Wash Lighting
- Alternate-Suspended Iconic Feature with Dynamic Lighting (would replace (4) directional spot area lights at seasonal round)

PREFERRED CONCEPT LIGHTING PLAN

DESIGN

AMENITIES

Amenities should be upgraded to improve the overall use, function, and appearance of Town Square Park. Upgrading amenities was identified as a high priority throughout the planning process. Adding new amenities such as game tables, wifi, and cafe seating give people a reason to visit the park. While upgrades to existing amenities such as trash cans, lighting, and signage help to improve the overall image of the park. Amenities should be of high quality and crafted from durable materials.

Upgrading park amenities also provides an opportunity for a low cost/high return investment that can be implemented quickly.

Below is a list of recommended amenities that should be added or upgraded at Town Square Park. Additional amenities should also be considered during the design development phase as appropriate.

- ▶ Café Style Seating
- ▶ Park Benches
- ▶ Seat Walls
- ▶ Trash and Recycling Bins
- ▶ Game Tables
- ▶ Bike Racks



- ▶ Lighting and Power
- ▶ Wifi
- ▶ Restrooms
- ▶ Public Art
- ▶ Information Kiosks
- ▶ Park Welcome and Rules Sign

- ▶ Interpretive Information
- ▶ Event Information/Calendar
- ▶ Public Safety Contact Info
- ▶ Downtown Area Wayfinding

RESTROOMS

Restrooms are not identified in the preferred concept graphic but should be considered for Town Square Park. Throughout the planning process, members of the public voiced a strong desire for public restrooms in the park and more generally downtown. Restrooms are an important amenity necessary to support events as well as day to day activities. The lobby and restrooms located in the PAC were originally intended to support use of Town Square Park. However, management and maintenance have proven challenging, as restrooms in the PAC lobby are no longer available for use by park patrons.

A permanent restroom in Town Square Park must resolve restrictions on new buildings established in the Anchorage Charter amendment dedicating Block 51 Town Square.

Any provision of restrooms in Town Square Park should adequately consider the long-term management and maintenance of the facility prior to installation.



Several options exist for providing restrooms:

1. Amend the Anchorage Charter to allow for a permanent restroom building
2. Explore feasibility of self-contained restroom facilities that are not considered permanent buildings
3. Use the existing facilities in the PAC
4. Provide temporary restrooms such as port-o-potties with decorative screening
5. Locate restrooms off-site



HOLIDAY TREE

The master plan recognizes the importance of the holiday tree at Town Square Park and proposes three options for the future. The first option is to maintain the holiday tree as-is in its current location. The second option proposes to replace the holiday tree at or close to its current location. The third option proposes a model similar to the National Christmas Tree, where a new tree is brought to Town Square Park each winter. Trees could be sourced from a local municipal park, creating a source of pride among neighbors whose park and tree were selected.

FLOWER DISPLAYS

Town Square Park's flower displays are the most iconic and celebrated feature of the park. The flowers showcase Anchorage's unique seasonal beauty and are an attraction for visitors and residents alike. The preferred concept builds upon the success of the flower displays by expanding planting areas within the park. Flower beds are concentrated at the entrances and along walkways to draw visitors into the park. Perennial plantings and shrubs should also be considered to provide added texture and color in the shoulder seasons. The seasonal round also provides an opportunity for a showcase flower display in the heart of the park.



TREES

Trees are an important part of Town Square Park's identity and are revered by some in the community. Trees and other landscape plantings are identified throughout the preferred concept. Trees should be predominantly deciduous with a mix of native and non-invasive decorative species. Deciduous trees are preferred as they bring seasonal color and have a branch structure that enables clear lines of sight. With the implementation of the preferred concept, care should be taken to keep healthy trees when possible. Further, trees impacted by future changes should be replaced and located in areas identified in the preferred concept. In the meantime, consideration should also be made to remedy issues identified on page 24 of this document.

MEMORIAL AREAS

The master plan recognizes the park founders who led the way in the creation of Town Square Park. The Ruth Moulton memorial rock should remain at entrance of 6th Ave and E Street to greet visitors as they enter the park. The master plan also recognizes Avis Cupples and Shirley Brundage in their work with the Anchorage Garden Club to establish a Town Square Park, and proposes the naming of a flower bed with boulder and/or plaque commemorating the legacy of these individuals. This recognition fulfills the resolution of the Anchorage Assembly AR 2007-216 honoring the contributions of these individuals.

DONOR BRICK WALLS

Donor bricks should be re-located to the vertical face of low retaining walls at gateways into the park. This maintains the legacy of park supporters while preserving the bricks from further degradation resulting from snow removal and ice maintenance.



PROGRAMMING

Programmed events and activities are essential to creating a vibrant atmosphere in Town Square Park. Programmed activities establish a community presence in the park and reinforces the interconnection between use and safety.

Programming in parks has been shown to reduce disorder and improve public safety, further economic activity, and create a sense of community and spirit of place.

Programming includes a wide range of activities from annual events to weekly concerts to daily activities. Specific examples include the annual Fur Rondy festival, weekly summer 'Live after Five' concerts, and a whole host of other daily activities such as food trucks, flower tours, informal street performances, pop up events, and outdoor group fitness classes.





PROGRAMMING AS AN ECONOMIC DRIVER

Programmed events have been shown to drive economic activity and commerce in the downtown core. According to a 2017 survey by the Anchorage Downtown Partnership, 82% of respondents indicated they ate or shopped downtown before or after a 'Live after Five' concert.

PROGRAMMING TO BUILD COMMUNITY

Programmed events create opportunities for people of all ages and diverse backgrounds to build community through shared experience. Survey responses collected during the planning process show that Anchorage residents recognize the value of programmed events to bring the community together and would like to see more events at Town Square Park that are inclusive and welcoming to all.

PROGRAMMING TO IMPROVE SAFETY

Programming has also been shown to improve safety in the park. According to a 2015 study by the University of Alaska, programmed events in Town Square Park accounted for an 85% increase in the number of people in the park, a 200% increase in the presence of children, and a 33% decrease in instances of disorder.

PROGRAMMING TO ACTIVATE THE PARK IN ALL SEASONS

Programmed events bring people into the park in all seasons. While day to day use of the park slows down after summer, some of Town Square Park's most popular events take place in the shoulder seasons and in winter. This includes the Holiday Tree lighting (November), the New Year's Eve Fire and Ice Celebration (December), and Fur Rondy (February). Interest in other events such as a winter holiday market, Oktoberfest, ice sculptures, winter movies and light displays were expressed during the planning process.

PROGRAMMING

The master plan recommends the continuation of successful events and the addition of new programming in Town Square Park. Programming and events have been shown to be successful in reducing disorder and increasing economic and social activity.

The Anchorage Downtown Partnership (ADP) is currently the main sponsor of programming in Town Square Park. The master plan recommends that the Municipality continue to work with community partners to bring more consistent programming into the park.

To support programming and events in Town Square Park, the master plan recommends the following:

- Develop an annual calendar of events to promote activities in Town Square Park
- Support the Anchorage Downtown Partnership efforts to program events in Town Square Park
- Develop partnerships with local non-profits and other organizations to sponsor signature events at Town Square Park
- Encourage and support small-scale activities, such as entertainers, retail carts, and food trucks, to provide day-to-day programming of the park
- Provide resources to guide organizations and individuals through the permitting process to support community-driven events
- Encourage events that activate the park in shoulder seasons and winter
- Support public art and seasonal displays in the park
- Install amenities to support programming in the park





Anchorage Downtown Partnership

The Anchorage Downtown Partnership (ADP) is the managing body for the Downtown Improvement District. ADP's mission is to transform downtown into a clean, safe and vibrant neighborhood. Over the years, the ADP has worked with the Municipality to sponsor concerts and events in Town Square Park. Many of these events, such as Live after Five, have become important staples of downtown life and have helped to activate Town Square Park with positive activity.

In addition to events at Town Square Park, ADP helps promote public safety in downtown. ADP Security Ambassadors provide valuable "eyes and ears", reporting issues and providing support to emergency services providers.

MANAGEMENT

A comprehensive and sustainable management approach is needed to ensure the long-term success of Town Square Park. Residents and businesses alike recognize that Town Square Park is more than just a park, it is an important civic and cultural institution with the potential to be a catalyst for economic development downtown.

The need for a long-term funding and management approach was cited throughout the planning process as critical to the success of Town Square Park. The original planning of Town Square Park focused primarily on design considerations and the importance of various elements such as color, sunlight, physical form, and relationships to surrounding institutions. However, a lasting management structure has not been established leaving management and maintenance of the park dependent upon fluctuations in municipal budgeting and administration priorities.

Future management of Town Square Park should include the following elements to ensure longevity, continuity, and success:

- Sustainable funding for maintenance and operations
- Resources for programming and events
- Security and resources for public safety
- A 2-3 year operational plan
- Outline of organizational roles and responsibilities
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement
- Public-private and community partnerships



OPERATIONAL PLAN

This master plan recommends the implementation of a 2-3 year operational plan, to be reviewed and updated annually or biennially. The operational plan should outline the day-to-day operations of the park including management, programming, security, and maintenance.

The operational plan should be guided by the principles and recommendations outlined in this master plan. It should include measurable objectives and performance standards that can be used to inform policy and plan updates.

Elements of an operational plan should consider:

- Performance measures
- Maintenance standards
- Work order management system
- Organizational roles and responsibilities
- Staffing and resource requirements
- Monitoring and reporting process
- Programming and events calendar
- Budget, funding sources, and revenue

MAINTENANCE

Envisioned as the premier park in downtown Anchorage, residents expect a well maintained, high quality park. Litter, graffiti and broken park furniture can often suggest that a place is uncared for and potentially unsafe. Regular maintenance, on the other hand, demonstrates stewardship, protects investments, and enhances the user experience.

The master plan recommends an operational plan that identifies both the daily maintenance needs of the park as well as the long-term management of assets. This includes funding for trash pick-up and snow removal as well as repairs to protect capital investments in expensive infrastructure.

A comprehensive maintenance and asset management strategy minimizes the long-term costs of deferred maintenance that often results in the deterioration of assets. Such a strategy would help to eliminate future occurrences of major infrastructure failures, such as the former fountain at Town Square Park, by funding ongoing maintenance and repairs. As this master plan identifies new investments in infrastructure, ongoing maintenance is needed to protect those investments over time.

Regular maintenance of Town Square Park should support the use and programming of the park throughout the seasons. Daily maintenance needs will vary depending on the time of year and should be outlined in the operational plan.

Summer maintenance should typically include trash pick-up, graffiti removal, lawn/turf care, maintaining hardscapes, setting up café furniture, and horticulture.

Winter maintenance typically includes snow and ice removal, lighting upkeep, and trash pick-up. In addition to these daily tasks, regular inspection and repair of park facilities should be performed.



TOWN SQUARE PARK | master plan

5

IMPLEMENTATION

IN THIS CHAPTER

92 Overview / Plan Approval and Adoption Process

93 Park Development Strategy / Costs Estimates

94 Capital Improvement Funding Strategies

95 Implementation Table

97 Supporting Plans and Policy Recommendations



OVERVIEW

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* provides a blueprint for the management, maintenance, and development of the park. The following implementation section describes the steps needed to realize the community's vision identified in this master plan.

Timelines for implementation strategies are approximate and based on the information, knowledge, and priorities of the community at the time of the master plan development. Priorities may shift and time frames may change with them.

PLAN APPROVAL AND ADOPTION PROCESS

The approval and adoption of the *Town Square Park Master Plan* requires a public hearing at the Parks and Recreation Commission and a public hearing at the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Implementation of major physical improvements to the park will require additional public hearings at the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Urban Design Commission.

Building Momentum

One of the primary goals of the *Town Square Park Master Plan* has been to address issues and promote positive change at Town Square Park. The master planning process has renewed public interest in Town Square Park and has resulted in an increase in stakeholder engagement.

Many of the programmatic, management, and public safety recommendations identified in this master plan have already begun to take shape through ongoing conversations with partners. One notable example is the Anchorage Downtown Partnership which has stepped up programming and events bringing more people into Town Square Park.

PARK DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Future implementation of the preferred concept will be driven by social, economic, and political factors. The costs for capital development will require broad public support. Further, political support is needed as implementation will likely extend beyond the current administration.

Several strategies for the implementation of design upgrades were considered with the development of this master plan. Strategies ranged from a multi-year phased approach to a large single capital improvement project. While a multi-year phased approach provides more easily attainable fundraising targets, it would render the park unusable for multiple seasons as construction proceeded.

For this reason, the master plan recommends a large single capital improvement approach. Under this strategy, the Municipality would use existing funds to add new amenities and address problem areas within the park in the near-term. This strategy enables quick action to address issues and improve public safety, providing the catalyst for full implementation of the preferred concept.



COST ESTIMATES

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* provides a framework for development of the park over the next decade. Implementation of the preferred concept should be phased over the life of the plan with priorities being refined through additional planning at the site plan level.

Funding for implementation is expected to be a combination of public and private monies and possibly the contributions from philanthropic interests. Estimated project costs total \$5.4 million in 2018 dollars. The following is a summary of cost estimates:

Design & Engineering	\$250,000
Demolition	\$300,000
Civil Site Development	\$1,750,000
Landscaping	\$500,000
Play Features	\$500,000
Lighting	\$750,000
Donor Recognition	\$150,000
Stage	\$500,000
Site Amenities	\$275,000
Irrigation	\$200,000
Event Infrastructure	\$225,000
TOTAL	\$5,400,000

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUNDING STRATEGIES

MUNICIPAL BONDS

Historically, park improvement projects have been funded in large part by the passage of voter supported Municipal Park Bonds. Continued engagement with the public and successful implementation of park projects demonstrates the value of investments in park improvement projects.

A Municipal Bond for improvements at Town Square Park could be structured in one of several ways:

(1) as a standalone bond item, (2) as part of a larger downtown improvement package, or (3) as one part of a citywide Park Bond package.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Municipality of Anchorage uses the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as the main planning and budgeting tool to identify desired public facilities and capital improvements over a six year cycle.

FEES AND REVENUE

Event fees provide a modest revenue that can help support the maintenance and operation of Town Square Park. However, these fees are unlikely to produce the amounts needed to fund large capital improvement projects.

STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS

State and federal grants provide various levels of funding for capital improvement projects in parks. In recent years, state legislative grants have helped fund millions of dollars in investments in Anchorage parks. However, this source of funding has proven less reliable in times of budgetary uncertainty.

A variety of federal grants are also available and worth pursuing. For example, the recently completed Muldoon Town Square Park Master Plan (now Chanshtnu Muldoon Park) was used to support a successful Land Water and Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant application, which yielded \$750,000 in funding to further park development.

FUNDRAISING

Town Square Park has a proud history of community support and financial giving. Local business owners, private citizens, and community organizations who support the vision of Town Square Park may be inclined to contribute to the future programming and park development. The master plan supports continued engagement with local interest groups to build community ownership and leverage funds to provide added value to park improvement projects.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Implementation of the improvements identified in this master plan would benefit from funding from non-governmental sources. Collaboration with community partners such as the Anchorage Park Foundation have proven successful in leveraging available funds and matching grants.

Philanthropic interests provide another potential source of funding for park improvements. Organizations such as the Rasmuson Foundation have worked closely with the Anchorage Park Foundation to invest millions of dollars into improving Anchorage parks. Local businesses and major corporations have also contributed to park improvement projects over the years and provide another avenue for funding.

Partnerships with other organizations with interest Town Square Park and Downtown also provide opportunities for partnerships. Groups such as Visit Anchorage, the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, Downtown Rotary, Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, and the Anchorage Downtown Partnership all have interests in the success of Downtown and have the potential to be champions for positive change at Town Square Park.

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

PLAN ELEMENT	TASK/DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	IMPLEMENTER
		ongoing 1-2 years 3-5 years 5+ years	
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Implementation of Programming, Management, Design recommendations to improve built environment and safety ▶ Ongoing and seasonal ADP/APD security 		APD, Anchorage Downtown Partnership, MOA P&R w/ support from Administration
Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop an annual calendar of events to promote activities in Town Square Park ▶ Support the Anchorage Downtown Partnership efforts to program events in Town Square Park ▶ Develop partnerships with local non-profits and other organizations to sponsor signature events at Town Square Park ▶ Encourage and support small-scale activities, such as entertainers, retail carts, and food trucks, to provide day-to-day programming of the park ▶ Provide resources to guide organizations and individuals through the permitting process to support community-driven events ▶ Encourage events that activate the park in shoulder seasons and winter ▶ Support public art in the park ▶ Install amenities to support programming in the park 		Anchorage Downtown Partnership, MOA P&R, Anchorage Park Foundation, Downtown Rotary, Visit Anchorage
Management & Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop an Operational Plan that lays out management and maintenance responsibilities and timelines ▶ Perform seasonal maintenance activities for tree and plant health, visibility and aesthetic of Town Square Park ▶ Limb trees, remove dead/damaged trees 		MOA P&R, Anchorage Downtown Partnership

PLAN ELEMENT	TASK/DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME				IMPLEMENTER
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Phase I: Interim Solutions to Address Problem Areas with Available Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Design interventions to improve safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + SE Corner: Remove dense stand of spruce trees where groups congregate to engage in illegal activity – replace with deciduous trees and/or shrubs/flowers + NE Corner: Reduce mounds and selectively thin vegetation to eliminate hiding places where illegal activity occurs unseen + North Pathway: Selectively thin trees to increase visibility and improve tree health + Pathways: Widen pathways to eliminate choke points ▶ Upgrade existing and add new amenities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Upgrade concrete seating to improve usability and aesthetics + Add additional cafe seating + Replace trash cans, benches, and other amenities + Add signage ▶ Formalize memorial areas for Shirley Brundage and Avis Cupples ▶ Add lighting to improve safety ○ Phase II: Full implementation of Preferred Concept 	ongoing	1-2 years	3-5 years	5+ years	Planning and Project Management: MOA P&R Advocacy and Fundraising: Anchorage Park Foundation, Downtown Rotary, Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, Visit Anchorage

SUPPORTING PLANS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Several adopted plans contain specific goals, strategies, and recommendations that directly relate to Town Square Park. This master plan recognizes and supports the recommendations outlined in these plans and seeks to advance these goals for the betterment of Downtown and the Town Square Park.

ANCHORAGE DOWNTOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, 2006

The 2006 *Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan* provides a strategic direction for growth and development in Anchorage's downtown core. The plan recognizes Town Square Park as an important civic and cultural asset, contributing to the vitality of downtown (p14).

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* supports the following goals and strategies of the *Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan*:

Land Use and Economic Development Goals

Goal 2: Establish Economic Development Strategies

- ▶ Enhance Downtown's arts, cultural and entertainment focus
 - + Provide fun attractions and events to draw visitors Downtown (p45)

Goal 4: Move Forward on Catalytic Development Sites (p56)

- ▶ Site 2: E Street Infill Development Site
- ▶ Site 3: Sixth Avenue Infill Development Site
 - + The areas east and south of Town Square Park offer "prime opportunities for mixed-use development".

Goal 6: Establish Strategies for Parks and Open Spaces (p66)

- ▶ Maintain and enhance strong pedestrian and bike connections
- ▶ Provide space for outdoor recreation within the Downtown area.
 - + Complete the Delaney Park Master Plan and a plan for improvements to Town Square Park.

Land Use and Economic Development Implementation Strategies

Maintain and Enhance Parks and Open Space (p133)

- ▶ LU-13: Complete a public process to create an improvement plan for Town Square Park.

Program Strategies

Safety and Security Program (p126)

- ▶ Increase community policing to address public safety concerns in areas considered particularly unsafe, including Town Square and the existing Transit Center, provide wayfinding and welcoming outreach strategies for all rural visitors

Activity and Event Programming Strategy (p127)

- ▶ Develop improvement plans based on a public process to improve Town Square Park, Delaney and the Weekend Market site to host large community events that generate city revenue and spark more interest in Downtown. (p127)

Transportation and Circulation Goals

Goal 1: Street Conversions

- ▶ Convert 5th Ave to two-way traffic (p81)
 - + Conversion of 5th and 3rd would result in an attractive walking district being created for the entire Downtown area west of C Street between 3rd and 6th Avenues.
 - + Reconfiguring 5th Avenue to a two-way road similar to 4th Ave will allow for convenient passenger drop-off (at the Alaska Center for Performing Arts.
 - + Two-way traffic on 5th Avenue will potentially reduce auto traffic around the Egan Center, Performing Arts Center and other destinations that receive high foot-traffic

Goal 3: Improve the pedestrian and bicycle environment (p. 84)

- ▶ Create a network of high quality street environments that provide continuous, safe, and universal pedestrian access
 - + Manage traffic speed and volunteers on Downtown streets to minimize the perceptions of pedestrian barriers

Goal 5: Develop a coordinated parking strategy (p89)

SUPPORTING PLANS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ANCHORAGE 2020

Anchorage 2020 is the comprehensive land use plan for the Anchorage Bowl and was adopted by the Anchorage Assembly in 2001. This comprehensive plan is intended to guide development in Anchorage as the city continues to grow. The “*Comp Plan*” provides general goals, objectives and policies on land use and recommends specific actions to guide decision makers over the life of the plan.

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* supports the following goals identified in the *Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan*:

Northern City: Well-planned development based on a design aesthetic that creates a sense of place and incorporates Anchorage's unique northern setting.

Parks, Trails, and Recreation: A sustainable and accessible system of recreational facilities, parks, trails, and open spaces that meets year-round neighborhood and community-wide needs.

Arts and Culture: A community that encourages arts and cultural activities as a catalyst for education, communication, economic development, and social progress.

Social Environment: A welcoming, culturally diverse community with opportunities for all residents to be responsible and active participants in a caring community.

Civic Involvement: A civic community that encourages public involvement in decision-making.

Safety: A community where people and property are safe.

The *Town Square Park Master Plan* supports the following policies identified in the *Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan*:

Policy 18: Strengthen the Central Business District's role as the regional center for commerce, services, finance, arts and culture, government offices, and medium- to high-density residential development

Policy 23: Major Employment Centers, shown on the Land use Policy Map, exist at the Downtown, Midtown, and University/Medical areas. Characteristics of these centers are as follows:

D) Creation or enhancement of public focal points such as plazas or parks, including public art

F) A Pedestrian-oriented environment including expanded sidewalks, crosswalks, street furniture, bus shelters, and landscaping

Policy 38: Design, construct and maintain roadways or rights-of-ways to promote and enhance physical connectivity within and between neighborhoods

Policy 42: Northern city design concepts shall guide the design of all public facility project, including parks and roads.

Policy 44: Design and build public improvements for long-term use.

Policy 45: Connect local activity centers, such as neighborhood schools and community centers with parks, sports fields, greenbelts, and trails, where feasible.

Policy 47: Provide distinctive public landmarks and other public places in neighborhoods

Policy 78: Design municipal facilities frequented by the public, particularly schools, to accommodate year-round multi-purpose activities.

Policy 86: Encourage public/private collaboration for acquisition, development and maintenance for recreational spaces, parks, sports fields, public use facilities, and trails.

Policy 88: Provide opportunities for integrating arts and culture in developments throughout the community



SUPPORTING PLANS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

DOWNTOWN CORE STREETS STREETSCAPE PLAN, 2007

The *Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Plan* is a supplement to the *Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan* and is intended to “provide a coordinated streetscape vision that enhances the safety, comfort, wayfinding, and visual experience of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists in Downtown Anchorage”.

The following goals of the *Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Plan* apply to the *Town Square Park Master Plan*:

- + Create a safe, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere
- + Reinforce the cohesion and identity of special districts
- + Facilitate Connectivity and Wayfinding
- + Develop a unified set of streetscape standards
- + Promote private investment and redevelopment

The *Downtown Core Streets Streetscape Plan* provides a good discussion on public artwork including a summary of specific elements with significance to the local Athabascan culture that could be incorporated into design elements or public art at Town Square Park (p54 & Appendix B).

- ▶ Public Art: Town Square will serve as a focal point for the artwork concept and may include commissioned large scale sculptural elements (p54)

DOWNTOWN ADVISORY GROUP TRANSITION REPORT, 2015

In 2015, the Downtown Advisory Group developed a list of their top 5 recommendations for downtown Anchorage. The group consisted of downtown businesses, organizations, and developers and was chaired by two former Anchorage mayors. Three of the top 5 recommendations related to Town Square Park or reinforced priorities identified during the master planning process for Town Square Park.

The *Downtown Advisory Group Transition Report* recommends:

Town Square Reformed and/or reimaged via task force

- ▶ Consider redesigning the park, making it more open, visible, promoting multiple public activities, based on designs from the many successful town square nationally and in other countries
 - + Reimagining the space to make it safer & more welcoming
 - + Consider safety concerns (groups)
 - + Improved lighting
 - + More amenities like tables/chairs
 - + Currently it is a hard space to use and hidden areas make public users uncomfortable
 - + Encourage more activities by groups
 - + Explore additional rental options beyond just additional food carts

Improved Public Safety

- ▶ Aggressively pursue the changes recommended in areas that have been used for illegal and unsafe activities in the past
 - + Such as Town Square, Transit Center

Pedestrian Amenities Task Force

- ▶ Pedestrian safety improvements such as additional pedestrian crosswalks, slowing speed on 5th and 6th Ave.
- ▶ Develop wayfinding & signage
- ▶ Pursue public (for a fee) restrooms

APPENDIX A: RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

BEST PRACTICES

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15. Sikora Wells Appel, 2015, *Roosevelt Plaza Park Pop-up Report*

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- 22.** Downtown Advisory Group, 2015, *Transition Report*
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- 24.** Municipality of Anchorage, 2001, *Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan*
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- 27.** Anchorage Municipal Assembly, 1985, *Ordinance 85-175, Neighborhood Improvement Program*
- 28.** Anchorage Municipal Assembly, 1990 *Ordinance 90-71(S), Dedicating Municipal Lands for Park or Recreational Purposes*
- 29.** Anchorage Municipal Assembly, 2007, *Resolution 2007-216, Honoring Ruth Moulton, Shirley Brundage, and Avis Cupples as Leaders in the Creation of Town Square Park*
- 30.** Municipality of Anchorage Urban Design Commission, 2008, *Resolution No. 2008-003, Approval of the Site Plan and Landscape Plan for the E Street Downtown Corridor Enhancement Project- Phase I*

PAST TOWN SQUARE PARK DESIGN EFFORTS

- 31.** Town Square Park Citizens Design Advisory Committee, 1988, *Town Square Park Design Criteria*
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