

# SUMMARY



## Town Square Park Master Plan

### Public Safety and Social Services Roundtable #1

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

**Location:** City Hall, 632 W 6<sup>th</sup> Ave |  
Mayor's Conference Room 830

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### Meeting Overview

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**Outreach Objective:** Public safety agencies and social service organizations are invited to participate in a roundtable discussion to better understand the safety and social issues impacting Town Square Park. These safety and social service stakeholders will participate in two coordination meetings; once during the data collection and problem identification phase of the master plan; and again, to review design alternatives to ensure their perspective is reflected.

**Project Objective:** To better understand both real and perceived safety issues as well as the social service needs as they relate to Town Square Park. Coordinating with public safety agencies and social service organizations during the issues identifications phase will provide a framework for the concept design phase and how Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies can be implemented early in the planning and design process.

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### Attendees (See Sign in Sheet)

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#### MOA & Staff:

- Steve Rafuse, Project Manager, MOA Parks and Recreation Department
- Van Le, AICP, R&M Consultants, Inc. Planning Project Manager
- Chris Schutte, Director, MOA Department of Economic Development
- Felix Rivera – Assembly Elect (Midtown)

#### Town Square Park Advisory Committee:

- Radhika Krishna – Citizen's Advisory Group (CAG)
- Dianne Holmes – CAG
- Shannon Kuhn - CAG
- Nancy Harbour – CAG
- Sharon Chamard – Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

#### Public Safety and Social Services:

- Justin Doll – Anchorage Police Department (APD)
- Rod Harris – Anchorage Fire Department (AFD), EMT, First Responders
- Jack Carson – APD
- Mark Lessard – MOA Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS), Safety Patrol
- Jason Cates – Anchorage Safety Patrol/Securitas, Inc.
- Jamie Boring – Anchorage Downtown Partnership
- Lisa Aquino – Catholic Social Services
- Laura Rice – Lutheran Social Services

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## Agenda

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### Introductions

Steve began the meeting by thanking everyone for attending the first of two public safety and social services stakeholder meetings. Steve introduced himself, introduced Van as the consultant project manager. Each person introduced themselves and which agency or organization they represented.

### Overview of Town Square Park Master Plan

Steve provided an overview of the Master Planning process and timeline. Steve identified December 2017 as the target for a preferred alternative concept master plan.

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## Discussion Summary

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Van began the discussion by providing an overview of the round table format. Each attendee was given an opportunity to provide input on three topics related to public safety and social services in Town Square Park.

Comments are recorded below and organized by theme or topic.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1) What issues would you like to see addressed through this master plan?
- 2) What efforts or strategies are currently underway to address safety and social issues related to Town Square Park?
- 3) What are the opportunities for positive change?

### Issues and Concerns:

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

- Types of crime in park that APD has responded to:
  - Spice overdose
  - Fighting and assaults
  - Alcohol and Drug use
  - Victimization of intoxicated or people under the influence
  - Younger and more violent group in the early 20s
  - In 2015, Spice calls tripled
    - Most individuals getting picked up for Spice are between 23-29 years old
    - Incidences of issues with Spice ebbs and flows over time depending on the quality of the product and the availability of the product on the street
    - “spice affects everybody”
- Population causing issues in the park is younger than in the past
  - More violent assaults
- In reference to young people downtown - there is an “increase in people downtown who are looking for happenstance”
- Perceived threat, especially at night when there are no events or programmed activities
- There’s a good side to Town Square: could be beautiful space but it has a dark side
- Town Square has stigma of being an unsafe and unwelcoming space
- Downtown wants to be able to use the park but perceptions keep people away which elevates the problems
- 3 groups observed at Town Square Park:

- Mental Health (legitimate users, need help)
- Homeless (legitimate users, need help)
- Criminals (illegitimate user, need to be policed)
- Non-legitimate and criminal activities need to be pushed out by more active uses of the park
- If bad activities and characters related to those bad activities are driven out, good things can happen at the park that will attract positive uses
- When it is active (i.e. during programmed events) it works, but not all other times
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles applied will help deter future crime
- Design of park has created hiding spaces and shelters for illegal activities
- Design flaws; there is no connection to the surroundings and there is a feeling that it is “easy to get trapped” in the park
- Need visibility while inside park and visibility into the park from the sidewalks, streets
- Open it up so it can be vibrant again
- Sanctuary for downtown users but also for criminal activity
- Vandalism
- Homeless people are legitimate users of the park; being homeless is not a crime
- Homeless users at Town Square is a result of not enough shelter beds. Town Square provides one of the few spaces downtown that has a bench and people can be outside in a safe space.
- Trash and maintenance issues
- Need plan for management, maintenance and upkeep of park
- Police presence long term is not sustainable; reactive approach
- Proactive approach needed so park is safe by itself
- Elements that will improve the park for residents and visitors:
  - Access to public restrooms
  - Trash cans
  - Water and drinking fountains
  - Enforce Smoking Ban in Town Square Park
- Power supply at parks can add to issues of illegitimate users congregating and “taking over” spaces from legitimate users; territorial issues
- Movable picnic tables in Delaney Park has created opportunities for drug dealers to become territorial with space and crowd out other users

### Current Efforts:

#### What efforts or strategies are currently underway to address safety and social issues related to Town Square Park?

- No comprehensive strategy is in place currently
- APD has bicycle patrol from May to end of August (School Resource Officers)
  - 12-13 do bike patrols downtown, in parks and along trails in summer
- TSP “cornerstone of making downtown a destination for Anchorage residents” how do we make downtown and TSP a destination that encourages people to spend an afternoon in downtown
- Connect TSP to other public spaces downtown
- APD has foot patrol officers in downtown blocks to provide a presence and respond to emergencies
- Anchorage Downtown Partnership Ambassadors asking people what they need and direct them to the right agency/organization for the resources they need
  - 8 Safety Ambassadors that walk the downtown blocks each day from 5 am to 9pm
  - Working in grid structure downtown

- ADP has plans to train Ambassadors as an EMT
- Catholic Social Services (CSS) is developing a brochure for other organizations to give out about the different services available
  - CSS has 8 programs (homeless, refugee, other...)
  - Will be doing more outreach about what services are available - this summer in parks
- Homeless coalition needs more downtown presence
- ADP is interested in creating an activity guide for people to know what is happening in downtown (i.e. events at parks and businesses)
- Keep TSP accessible for community patrol vans to access park to help people including loading up injured people onto stretchers for both EMS and community patrol

### Future Opportunities:

#### What are the opportunities for positive change?

- Negative activities tend to be seasonal; increased illegal activities in the summer months
- Use “pop-up” events to bring more activities into the park, especially for social service groups to provide information for people who need help (mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, homeless etc.)
- Park needs to be well lit and open to prevent illegal activity
- CPTED
  - The last 20-30 years of design – parks have been designed as sheltered secluded places
  - “this experience has taught us different” – sheltered secluded places allow for criminal activity
  - Open up the park and add lighting – people avoid dark places where they don’t feel safe
  - “The more open the park is, the less desirable it is to criminal activity”
  - Plan beyond just design – plan for the upkeep of the park
- External opportunities:
  - One way streets need reduced speeds or to become two way streets
  - Sight lines into park are poor from the sidewalks and streets
  - Eyes on the park: people can see streets from adjacent businesses but cannot see into park
  - Access into park is currently limited to only a few locations
- Incentivize more use through programs or planned events:
  - Street/food vendors
  - Street entertainers
  - More positive presence
  - Need community ownership incentives
  - Anchorage Downtown Partnership has plans for 144 days of activities
    - Need streamlined permitting for this to happen
    - Will be permit holder for activities and other individuals, groups can be part of the activities by applying for multiple hourly slots
    - Street piano in the park
- Flex space
- Give people a reason to go to Town Square Park – destination of choice
- Connect to other downtown spaces including the Anchorage Museum
- Most of the kids in the park are not from Covenant House
- We need more positive activities for youth in downtown

### Next Steps

- Next Public Safety and Social Services Roundtable Meeting (July 25, 2017)