



# Assessment Findings and Suggestions

## Anchorage, Alaska

January | July 2022



## INTRODUCTION

In performing the Destination Assessments, we looked at the area through the eyes of a first-time visitor during both the winter and summer seasons. No prior research was facilitated, and no community representatives were contacted except to set up the project. The city and surrounding areas were “secretly shopped.” Any person looking to relocate their business, industry, or residence will come to your community as a visitor first. Tourism is the front door to all your economic development efforts.

A typical community has five opportunities to close the sale:

- The marketing assessment determined how effective the marketing was in convincing a potential visitor that the area would be worth a special trip, a stop, or an overnight stay. The key to the marketing assessment is to see if you have a primary lure that makes you worth a special trip of a two-hour drive, or from further away. The question on most visitors' minds is: What do you have that I can't get closer to home? What makes you worth a special trip?

Always promote your primary lure first—what

makes you worth that special trip. THEN, promote your diversionary, or “complementary” activities. Would you go to Anaheim, California, if Disneyland wasn’t there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knotts Berry Farm mind that Disneyland gets all the glory? Of course not. Eighty percent of all tourism spending is with those secondary activities. Disney does the heavy lifting in terms of advertising and promotion, and the diversionary activities benefit as well.

In a nutshell, the marketing assessment looks for what makes your community worth a special trip, or a great place to live, or to do business. We look for details, details, details. Do you give a reason for visiting, and do you provide enough information to make it easy to plan a trip? Are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale?

The second part of the assessment process is the On-site Assessment. During this part of the assessments, we spent more than two weeks in the area, looking at enticements from the highways (signs, billboards, something that would get a visitor to stop), beautification and overall curb appeal, wayfinding (ease of getting around), visitor amenities (public restrooms, visitor information, parking), activities, overall appeal, retail mix (lodging, dining, shopping), critical mass, customer service, area attractions, pedestrian friendliness, gathering spaces, evening activities, and the availability of marketing materials and their effectiveness.

The area benefits from tourism when visitors spend money, and they do that in the local gift shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. Therefore, the On-site Assessment includes a candid look at private

businesses as much as public spaces and amenities.

For every shortcoming or challenge we note during the assessment process, we provide a low-cost “suggestion,” where possible, on how the challenge can be corrected or overcome. The suggestions are not termed “recommendations,” as they were developed without consulting the community first about possible constraints, future plans, or reasons why the suggestions may not be appropriate. Hopefully this assessment process will open dialogue within the community, leading people to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

It’s important to note that to increase the city’s tourism industry and economic development, and attract more residents, fulfilling one or two of the suggestions may have little impact, but implementing a number of them, if not all, can have a profoundly great impact on the city’s ability to be successful.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a region-wide effort, involving both privately owned businesses as well as local, county, and state agencies, where appropriate. Every local organization plays a role in tourism, downtown revitalization, or economic development efforts. A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO, CVB, Chamber, TPA, etc.) will not be successful if the effort is not region-wide.

In many cases, issues may come up that you are already aware of and are already working on. In that case, the assessment validates those efforts. But more often than not, the assessment will point out things that you are aware of but can’t mention





or bring up without paying a political price. Local politics can be a killer of the tourism industry.

While marketing efforts are important, product development is the most important factor of a successful tourism industry. Visitors want activities, not just things to look at. How much time can a visitor spend enjoying activities—that cater to their interests—in your area? Does your community have truly unique attractions the visitor can't get closer to home? You must be able to deliver on your marketing promises, otherwise visitors might come once, but they won't come back. It's much more cost effective to bring people back, than to always go out and entice new visitors into town. "Been there, done that" communities eventually run out of visitors and find they don't have a sustainable tourism industry, or they simply become pit stops or gateways on the way to somewhere else.

After spending several weeks reviewing marketing materials and assessing the community, we have looked at all of these issues, and have developed some suggestions and ideas the community can discuss and possibly implement to help increase tourism spending and attract new residents and businesses.

### **SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH**

Tourism is successful when the community imports more cash than it exports. When residents spend their hard-earned money outside the community, the community is exporting cash—often referred to as "leakage." Tourism helps fill that gap, importing cash into the local economy without the necessity of having to provide extended social and other services. Visitors come, spend

money, then go home. When you import more cash than you export, you have a positive "balance of trade." Communities with successful tourism programs easily see that the industry subsidizes the community, whereas other communities find that they subsidize visitors—providing services visitors use without them leaving enough money behind to cover the cost of those services.

The primary goal of the tourism industry is to bring more cash into the local economy. This doesn't happen when visitors come into the community, get out of their cars, and take photographs. And it doesn't happen when visitors go swimming in the lake at your park all day, sunning, and eating the lunch they brought from home. And it doesn't happen when visitors hike down your trails, enjoy your interpretive centers, or stroll through your lovely arboretums. These are all great things to do, and, of course, you do want your visitors to do these—but, you also want to entice them into your shops, your cafes, espresso stands, restaurants, galleries, B&B's, and hotels, ultimately opening their wallets to make purchases. That is what helps your local economy, your small merchants, your hoteliers, and your tax coffers.

To entice visitors to spend money in your community, you need to have places for them to spend it—you need to have the right mix of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and lodging facilities, all in an attractive setting, as well as attractions that make them want to visit you in the first place.





## THE THREE TYPES OF TOURISM

### 1. Visiting friends and family

The number one reason people travel is to visit friends and/or family. If you did nothing to promote tourism, you would still have tourism in your community. However, when friends and family come to visit, do your residents take them out to eat, shop, dine locally? Or do they head to a neighboring community? Do your locals even know what you have to offer? An effective tourism marketing effort also includes educating locals as to what you have and how to find it through effective wayfinding signage, gateways and advertising.

### 2. Business travel

The second most popular reason for travel is business. Included in this category is educational travel: colleges and universities, as well as conventions and meetings, corporate travel, vendor travel, etc. Like leisure travelers, this group is looking for things to do “after hours” while in the area. The most successful convention and trade show towns are the result of their secondary activities or “diversions,” not simply because of their convention and exhibition facilities. Think Disneyworld, Disneyland, San Antonio’s River Walk, Banff, to name a few.

### 3. Leisure travel

The third, and most lucrative of all types of visitors, is the leisure traveler. They have no personal connections to the community, but are coming purely to enjoy themselves. They stay in commercial lodging establishments, eat virtually all their meals in local restaurants, and their top diversionary

activity is shopping and dining in a pedestrian-friendly setting.

The average leisure visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet typically only spends four to six hours with the primary lure. They then spend eight to ten hours with diversionary activities—things they could do closer to home, but will do while in the area. A good example of this is Branson, Missouri, the “live music-theater capital of the world.” This town of 6,500 residents hosts 7.5 million visitors a year. The primary “lure” is the 49 music theaters. The average visitor attends two shows a day over about





four hours. During the other hours of the day, the visitor will shop in local outlet malls, head to the water parks, theme parks, and other attractions, play a round of golf, hike, bike, fish, do some bird watching, and participate in any number of other activities they could do closer to home, but will do while visiting Branson.

## THE THREE STAGES OF TOURISM

### 1. Status quo

If you take no action to develop the tourism industry, you will still have an element of tourism, simply because some travelers will pull off local highways or freeways for gas, food, or lodging, as well as the fact that the number one reason for travel is to visit friends or family. If you have residents, you will have some tourism.

### 2. Getting people to stop

The first priority of developing a successful tourism industry is getting people to stop. Imagine how successful businesses in the community would be if just 50% of the vehicles traveling through pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes in your community—buying gas, an ice cream cone, a sandwich, a gift or souvenir?

If there's a strong pull, imagine the money spent if visitors stayed two hours in the community, which nearly always translates to additional spending.

The first goal is to get those travelers to stop.

### 3. Becoming the destination

To become a destination community you must have attractions and supporting amenities that convince visitors to spend the night. And those attractions

must be different from what the visitor can get closer to home.

Overnight visitors spend four times that of day visitors, and nearly ten times that of visitors using your community as a pit stop on the way to somewhere else.

## THE FOUR-TIMES RULE

Visitors will make a point of stopping or staying in a community if it has enough activities that appeal specifically to them and will keep them busy four times longer than it took them to get there.

In other words, if a person has to drive 15 minutes to visit you, do you have enough for them to do to keep them busy for an hour? (4 times 15 minutes) If a visitor has to drive an hour, do you have the activities and amenities to keep them busy for four hours?

The more you have to offer, collectively, the further visitors will come, and the longer they will stay, and of course, the more they will spend. This is why it is so important for communities to market more than just their immediate geographic areas. By marketing neighboring activities and attractions, you present much more for a visitor to do, and you make the visit worth the trip.

Visitors don't care about city limits or county lines – so market the broader package and you'll be able to keep people in the area long enough to translate to another meal, some more shopping, and hopefully, an overnight stay.



## SELL THE EXPERIENCE, NOT GEOGRAPHY

Nearly every destination marketing organization is charged with promoting a geographic area, yet visitors couldn't care less about those boundaries. They are looking for activities that cater to their interests, and location is second to the experience. ALWAYS promote the primary lure first, then the location. People by the millions head to Disneyland, Disneyworld, Dollywood and other attractions. They are not going to Anaheim, Orlando or Pigeon Forge.

Always sell the activity - the experience - THEN the location.

## LURES, DIVERSIONS AND AMBIANCE

Too often communities promote the list of diversions that nearly every community has. The primary lure is the activity that a visitor can't find closer to home.

Always promote your primary lure, then the diversions. Do not try to be all things to all people. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had "something for everyone?" Of course not—you go there because they have something specific for you. Find your niche and promote it like crazy.

Historic downtowns provide ambiance—they are not attractions, diversions, nor are they a primary lure. It's what's in the buildings that makes a downtown a destination.

The same can be said for scenery. Unless your vista is a world-class scene, such as Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon, scenic vistas create wonderful ambiance, but don't translate to spending, and they only last a few minutes. Then what?

All too often communities promote their heritage as a primary draw. How far would you travel to visit a mining museum? A timber museum? An agricultural center? A county historical museum? Heritage must be outstanding and pervasive throughout the community to be a primary lure, such as Plimoth Plantation or Salem, Massachusetts.

Thousands of communities are the "capital" of something. For instance, in California, Borrego Springs is the grapefruit capital of the world. Gilroy is the garlic capital. Modesto is the tomato capital. Gridley is the kiwi capital. Oxnard is the strawberry capital. Fallbrook is the avocado capital. But here's the question: Have you ever gone anywhere because it was the capital of a fruit or vegetable?

Your local heritage is important to the community and can set the ambiance, even becoming a diversionary activity. For local heritage to be a major attraction, it needs to combine activities with ambiance, and it needs to be pervasive throughout the area.

## BE DIFFERENT OR THE BEST

Why should a visitor come to your community if they can enjoy the same activities closer to home? Too many communities promote "outdoor recreation" as their primary draw. Unfortunately, that is the same attraction promoted by nearly every community in North America.

If you are different, then you have a reason for travelers to choose to visit you. If you are the best, then visitors will generally flock to your doors.

If you have great hiking trails, then market their unique qualities. Be specific and paint the image





of how wonderful they are in the minds of your potential visitors. If you have one fantastic restaurant in town, let people know about it – a unique dining experience is something many people will travel far to enjoy.

Ashland, Oregon, previously a depressed timber town, began its Shakespeare Festival, which now runs nine months of the year and draws hundreds of thousands of visitors who spend an average of six nights in the community. The Shakespeare Festival made Ashland different from any other community.

Leavenworth, Washington, another dying timber town, adopted a Bavarian architectural theme and produces dozens of Bavarian events every year. Some now say the town looks more genuinely Bavarian than towns in Bavaria. It is now one of the primary tourist destinations in Washington state, hosting more than 2.5 million visitors annually. They offer a different experience, an experience that is pervasive throughout town.

Okanogan County, Washington is an outdoor recreational paradise—just like 37 of the 38 other counties in Washington. So why go to the Okanogan? Because they are the best. They researched guidebooks, newspaper and magazine articles, and pulled quotes they could use in their advertising efforts. Like, “Pinch yourself, you’re in Okanogan Country with perhaps the best cross country skiing on the continent.” This, and other quotes like it, make it worth the drive to visit Okanogan Country. The third-party endorsements show that they are the best.

Set yourself apart from everyone else, and you’ll see that by being unique, you’ll be a greater attraction.



## CRITICAL MASS MEANS CASH

Although it may not be the primary reason why visitors come to your community, shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity of visitors. Besides lodging, it is also how visitors spend the most amount of money.

Do you have a pedestrian-friendly shopping district? If not, can you create one? Many communities have been highly successful with the development of a two or three block long pedestrian “village” including visitor-oriented retail shops, dining, visitor information, washrooms, etc., all in an attractive, landscaped setting.

The general rule of thumb in those two or three blocks (not spread out all over town) is 10+10+10: Ten destination retail shops, which includes galleries, antiques, collectibles, home accents and furnishings, artists in action, book stores, logo gear (clothing), souvenirs, outfitters, tour operators, activity shops such as kites, jewelry, wine or tobacco shops, and other specialties. The second ten is for food: ice cream, fudge and candy stores, soda fountains, sit-down dining, coffee shops, cafes, bistros, delis, etc. And the final ten are businesses open after 6:00 pm. This includes entertainment: bars, dance clubs, theaters (movies and performing arts), retail shops with activities (piano bar in a wine shop), etc.

The important point is to group these businesses together to create the “critical mass” in a pedestrian-friendly setting. This will attract visitors as well as locals, and make it worth their while to stop and shop. People are always drawn to the critical



mass—the opportunity to have multiple choices, multiple experiences, all in a convenient and attractive setting.

### **TOURISM IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY**

The goal of successful tourism is for people to come into the community, spend money, and go home. Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries, and supports millions of jobs. Ninety percent of tourism industry businesses are small businesses of which 90% have less than 15 employees. Tourism provides the opportunity for entrepreneurs to get started, for small family-run businesses to thrive, for artisans and craftspeople to find a market, and creates a basis for unique niche-retail environment including wineries, artists, crafts, etc. Tourism provides a diverse market within the community, expanding its potential. Enhancing the community through beautification efforts creates an attractive setting for both locals and visitors, key in revitalizing a community's downtown. And a tourism-friendly town will attract non-tourism industries faster than others—new businesses will see the community as a visitor before they make a final determination about the community. Tourism is the front door to all your economic development efforts.

The benefits of a healthy tourism industry can rejuvenate a town, foster community pride, encourage economic diversity, and lead the way to a vital, successful community.



## NEXT STEPS

The findings and suggestions in this report will provide many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue and becomes a springboard for the community in enhancing the tourism industry and other economic development efforts, leading to greater prosperity, rejuvenation, and enjoyment by all the citizens.

This report offers a first step in reaching that goal. To fully realize the benefits of this assessment, the community should take these findings and suggestions, discuss them and evaluate them, and develop a plan for implementation.

Developing a detailed plan would help to build on the results of this assessment, adding in-depth research, evaluation, and local input to develop a unique implementation program. The assessment process essentially provides a look at where you are today.

Your implementation program should be an “action plan” as opposed to a “strategic plan.” You want a to do list, by organization, not just general strategies, goals and objectives.

The recommendations in your plan should provide all the necessary steps for Anchorage to be successful in attaining its goals of a more diverse economy with an enhanced tourism industry, attracting more residents and to be even more enjoyable for citizens and visitors.

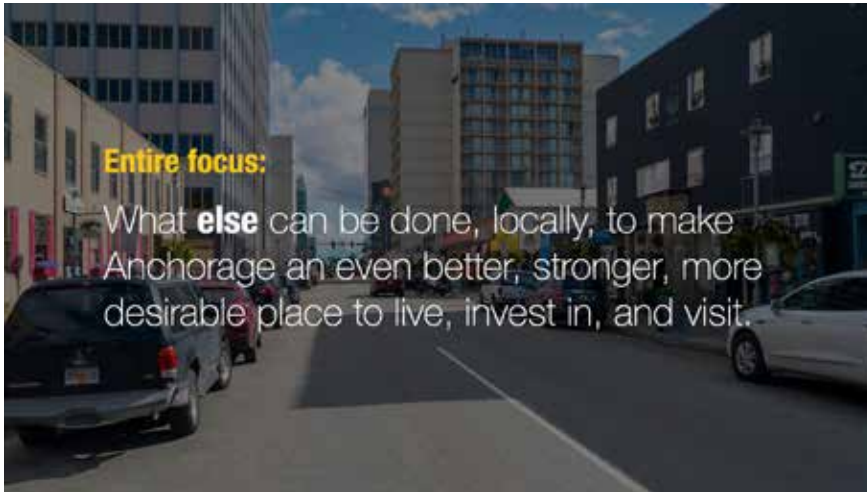
A good plan will provide a program to get local residents and the business community pulling together, building the city’s unique image in the minds of visitors and residents alike. The result of your efforts will be a prosperous, enjoyable environment in which to live, work, and visit.







## Findings & Suggestions



Our assessment process included reviewing Anchorage's marketing materials, plus your online presence, reviews on TripAdvisor and other information sites, as well as performing the "secret-shopping" on-site assessments in both winter and summer. We looked at signage and wayfinding (how easy was it to find your attractions and amenities?), appeal, critical mass (were there places in the city to spend money?), attractions, amenities, customer service, and more. We have a list of 60 key elements we review. Our experience includes assessing more than 2,200 communities in 45 states, across Canada, Western Europe, and Scandinavia.

We looked at Anchorage as: 1) a place to live and raise a family, 2) a place to

work, invest in, or bring a business, and 3) a place to visit. This assessment process included no "heads-up" interviews or correspondence, no advance input on attractions or places to stay or things to do. For an honest visitor's viewpoint, Anchorage was "secret-shopped."

Since Anchorage has been losing population, particularly young people, we focused a lot on quality of life--what would convince people to move to Anchorage or remain living in Anchorage--during both the winter and summer seasons. Anchorage has a labor shortage, so there is a great need to reverse the out-migration trend and encourage more people to move to Alaska.





## #1 bucket destination for RVers: The Lower 48 to Alaska

### About RVers:

- 2 million live in them full-time (U.S.)
- Digital nomads | Work-From-Anywhere
- 2021: More than 600,000 new unit sales
- Average age of an RVer: 38
- 40% of Americans own an RV
- Travel more than any other group
- They do spend money - like locals

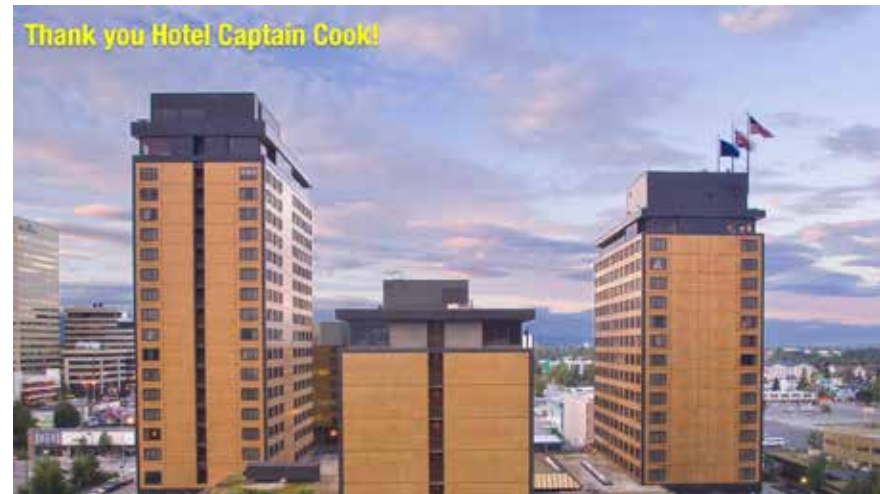
Since residents are in Anchorage all year long, it was important for us to explore the city in the winter as well as the summer. We found plenty to do in Anchorage in January (top left), and there were some distinct advantages to being there in the winter, such as shorter lines at restaurants! Winter was also beautiful there, just different. Summer was gorgeous (top right).

When we initially planned to travel to Anchorage in the summer, we thought we would RV there--after all, RVing to Alaska is a huge bucket-list item for many people in the lower 48. We had the trip planned out, but when fuel prices rose so dramatically, we realized it wasn't a good idea.



But keep in mind that RVing to Alaska is a big goal for many RVers. This is a huge travel demographic now: 2 million RVers live full-time in their RVs, and the sales of RVs has grown dramatically over the past few years. The average age of an RVer is 38 years--they're not just retired folks. And they do spend money, especially at gas stations and grocery stores.

Make sure you work to attract RVers to Anchorage, and that includes having ample RV campgrounds so they have a place to stay once they arrive!

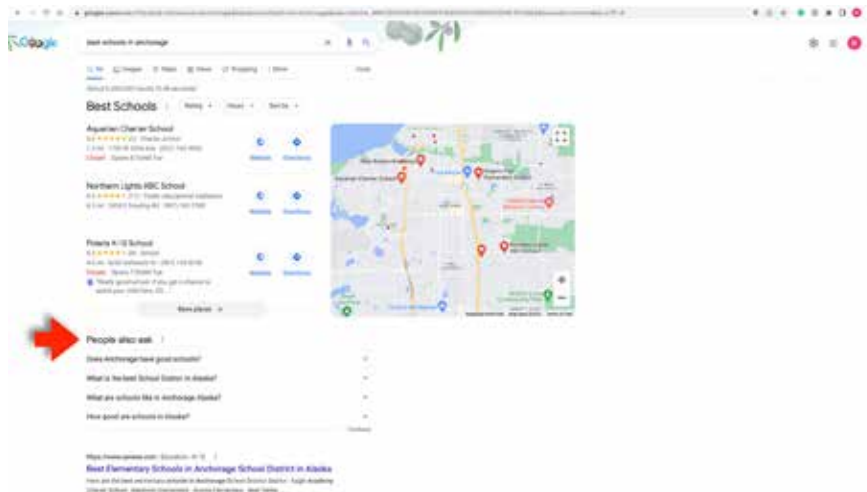
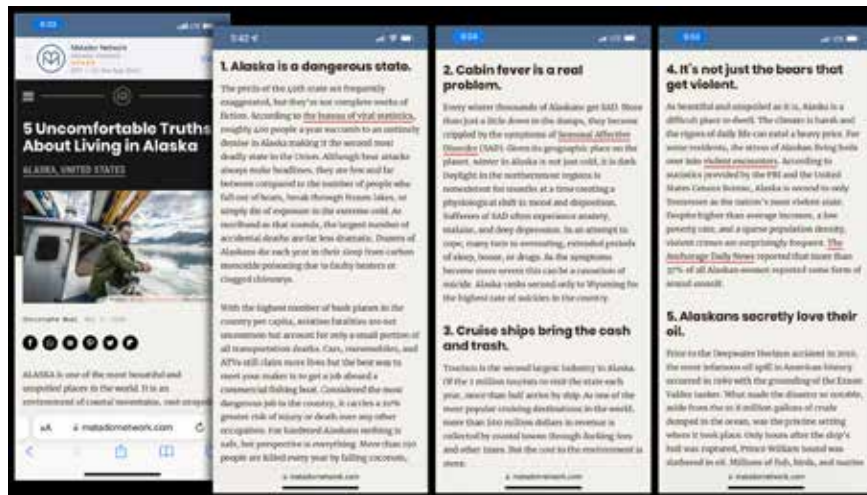


One other factor that determined our decision to fly, rather than drive, to Alaska this summer was the big washout of Richardson Highway (top left). Then, when we read about Anchorage's campground being closed to visitors so the homeless could stay there, we were very glad we didn't plan to RV there. We wouldn't have had a place to stay, and we can bet a lot of other campers were out of luck as well.

We want to thank Alaska Airlines for helping us get to Anchorage this summer!

And we want to thank Hotel Captain Cook for their incredible hospitality!





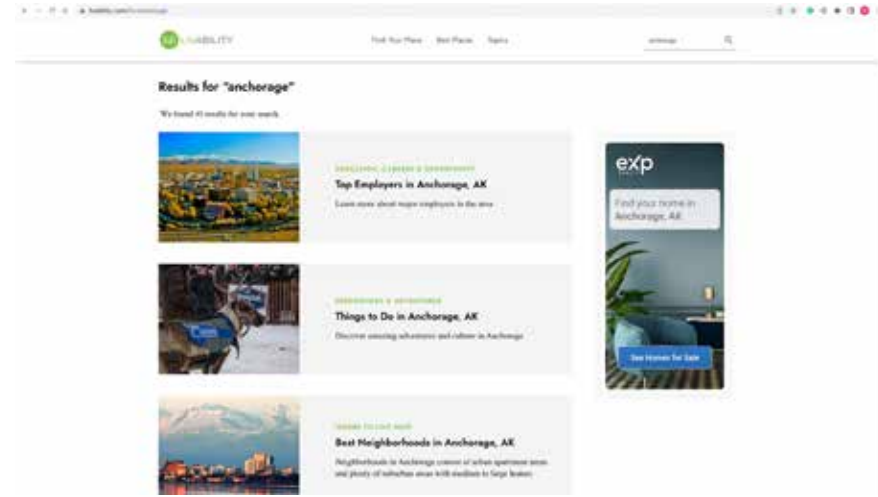
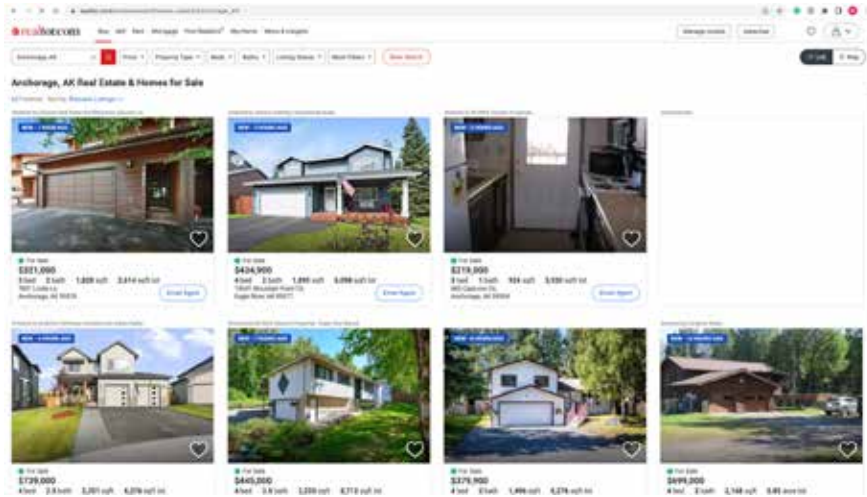
When we started our research into Anchorage, we found that when we searched online for Anchorage, we usually had results that included all of Alaska. We found quite a few web results that included many reasons to NOT move to Alaska (top left).

One of the top reasons to not move to Alaska is that it is dangerous. Not because of bears, but because of crime. We were surprised to learn that Alaska has the second highest crime rate in the US. This is a concern that people who are considering moving to Alaska will consider.



But we also saw a lot of positives for living in Alaska. We saw that Alaska will pay people to move there; some articles state that real estate is affordable. Alaska has amazing hunting and fishing; Alaska is incredibly beautiful.

We also looked at Anchorage schools online. When millennials are looking for a place to live, they want to find a place that has good schools and good healthcare. They look for quality of life features before looking for jobs. We didn't see any negatives about the quality of schools. Good healthcare is available, but we found that for specialty medicine, some people will go to Seattle.



We looked at real estate for sale websites as well. The housing “bubble” seems to be dropping in some places in the lower 48, but prices still seem fairly high in Anchorage, although not terrible. We wouldn’t classify housing affordability as being a positive feature though.

We looked at many other websites as well, such as “livability.com” (top right). Many people looking for a place to relocate will look at all of these to help them determine where they want to settle.

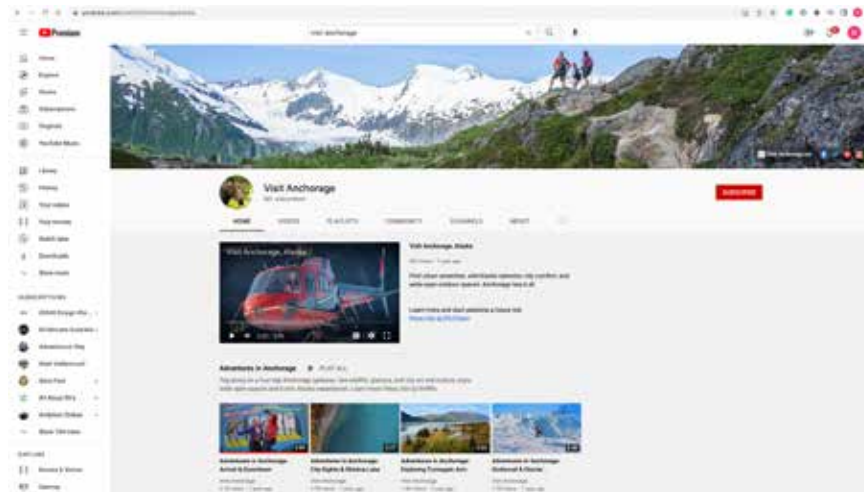
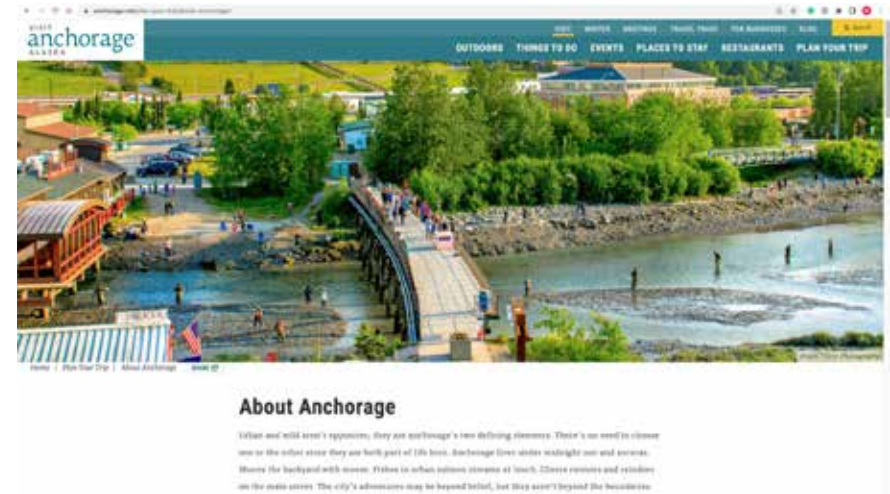
There are 19,500 cities and towns in the United States. According to livability.com, out of thousands of mid-size cities, Anchorage was rated number 23. That

is great.

We looked at things to do in Anchorage, top employers, best neighborhoods (top right and bottom left), and that is what most people will do when they are trying to decide if they want to move someplace. The information on the internet is very important to help people make their decisions.

We also found “Why Anchorage is one of the top 100 best places to live” (bottom right) on livability.com. They talk about the natural attractions, urban amenities, and diversity.





We also searched online for information on visiting Anchorage. Google provided a lot of information, including great lists of reasons to visit and things for a visitor to do (top left).

VisitAnchorage.com showed up right away in our search (top right and bottom left). It's critical that your home page capture the visitor's attention right away. Very few people look past the first page of search results, and Visit Anchorage does a great job of appealing to people.

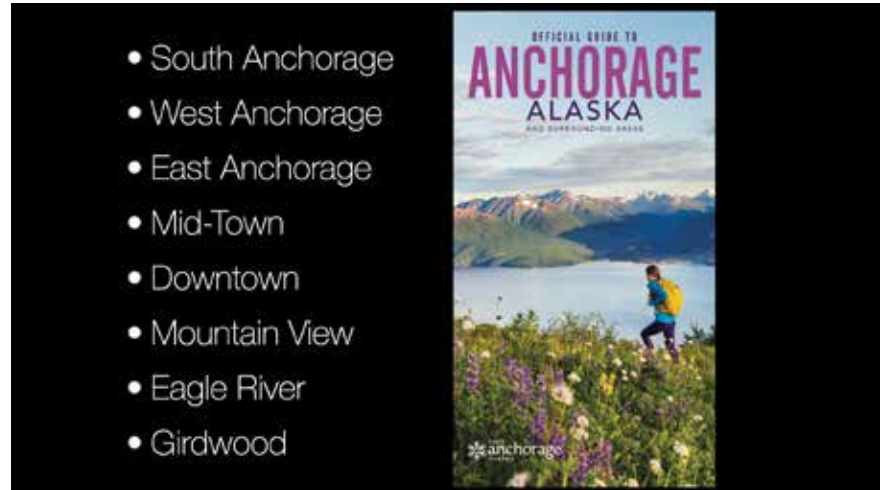
We did a lot of internet research, looking at websites, YouTube videos,

Facebook, and more.

Keep in mind that tourism is the front door to your non-tourism economic development efforts. Site selectors, people looking to relocate or move their business, investors, will all come to Anchorage as visitors first.

## Overall initial findings

- It's not very safe
- Schools are "ok"
- It's expensive to live here
- It's an expensive city to visit
- The recreation is world class
- Alaska is an "exotic" destination
- There are lots of jobs and opportunities



The overall findings from our research show that:

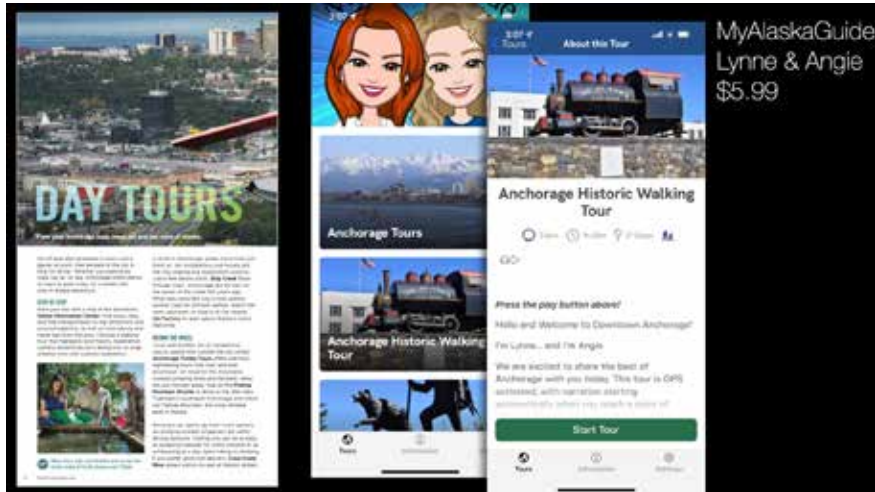
- Anchorage (and Alaska in general) is not very safe
- Schools are okay (charter schools are ranked highly)
- Anchorage is a more expensive place to live than average
- Anchorage is an expensive visitor destination
- Recreation is excellent
- Alaska is considered an "exotic" destination
- Alaska has lots of jobs and job opportunities

If a place is more expensive than average to live, people will still choose to

live there if the quality of life is excellent and if it has specific features that are attractive to those individuals. For example, Alaska's outdoor recreation and stunning beauty are excellent reasons to attract people and make it "worth" the extra expense.

First thing we did when we arrived in Anchorage, both winter and summer, was go to Visitor Information (top right and bottom left). We looked at maps of Anchorage and realized that Anchorage is enormous! So we checked with Bill to see if he might give us more of a focus. He told us to concentrate on these areas (bottom right). So this was pretty much everywhere.





We picked up the Welcome to Anchorage visitor guide (top left), and we think it is one of the best visitor guides in the United States. It was truly helpful, not just an advertising piece.

We loved how the guide showed visitors that Anchorage is actually open year-round. The Anchorage by Season section was great.

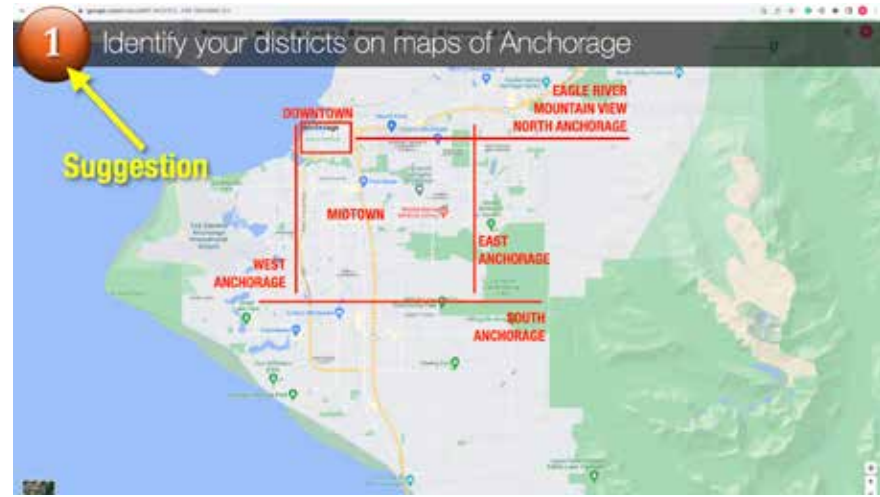
They've also included what to see and do for various activities and interests (top right), such as family trips, glaciers, fishing, Chugach Mountains, National Parks, culture and history, parks and trails, and wildlife. It's fantastic. It also

includes day tours. We think Anchorage has more to do within a 45-minute drive than any other community we've worked in. We had thought Anchorage was just a jumping off point for other places like Denali and Seward, but it turns out Anchorage has so much to offer itself.

We also downloaded a great App (bottom left) featuring Lynne and Angie, with walking tours through Anchorage. It is awesome.

We also used a map of Anchorage from the Visitor Center, plus maps from the visitor guide, and these helped us find our way around.

## INITIATIVE #1: IDENTIFYING YOUR DISTRICTS



Based on our findings, we came up with eight initiatives we suggest to help Anchorage with economic development and tourism efforts.

### Initiative #1: Identify your Districts

Anchorage is an enormous city, geographically. There are several districts that locals refer to, but visitors have no clue where these are. We had a tough time trying to figure out exactly what was included in West Anchorage, or Midtown, or any of the other districts. They are not named or outlined on any maps we could find, and they are not identified by signage. Make it easy on visitors and those exploring Anchorage with the thought of moving here by identifying

your districts. We used a map of Anchorage and guessed where we thought the districts were located (top right).

Suggestion 1: Identify your districts on maps. This is a suggestion--not a recommendation. We are only making suggestions in this assessment, since we have not consulted with you prior to making the suggestion. If there are reasons that would not make our suggestions practical or feasible, we don't know these, hence, we aren't making them recommendations.

We saw the signs for the Arts District (bottom left) and the Mushing District (bottom right), but we didn't know where they started or ended.





There are a number of ways to identify a district. Pedestrian wayfinding (top and bottom left) are one great way. The signs can be decorative to help incorporate the theme of the district, such as these in Asheville, NC. They include the “arts” theme, and include unique artistic finials at the top of each post.

Suggestion 2: Decorative crosswalks are another excellent way to designate a district (top and bottom right). Besides helping identify a district, these also enhance safety since they are easy for motorists to see.

These crosswalks were made using StreetPrint--or Duratherm. They are not

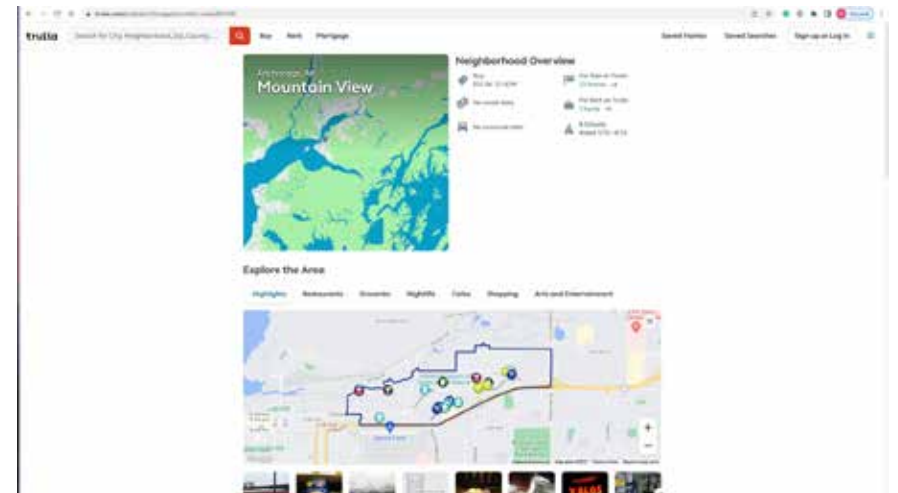
painted on; instead, they are stamped into the asphalt. They can be made using any design you like, and they last for 10 to 20 years, even with snow removal.

Once it is stamped into the asphalt, it's possible to drive over it within 10 minutes. It's a fantastic way to give your districts a sense of arrival, and a sense of place.







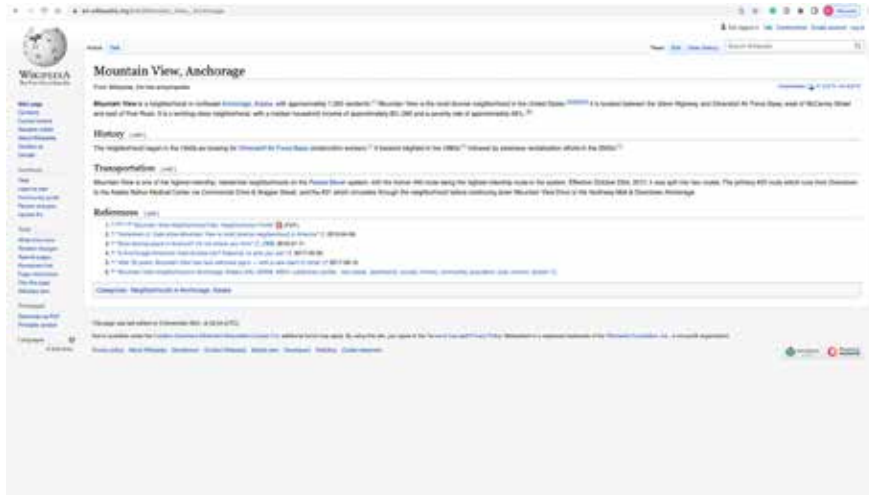


Using pole banners (top left) is another excellent way to let people know they are in a particular district.

One of the most spectacular ways to identify a district is through a gateway, like this gateway concept for the Mushing District (top right). It is great, and many communities have identified entertainment districts, shopping districts, financial districts, and more by using gateways.

We started our district exploration by finding Mountain View. We didn't know

where it was, so we had to do some online research first to even find where it is located. We saw that it is pretty much north of Glenn Highway and south of JBER (bottom right).



Mountain View shows up on Wikipedia, which states that the neighborhood is the most diverse neighborhood in the US--wow!

Suggestion 4: We saw a number of blown-out signs like this (top right). Anchorage most likely has abatement ordinances, and they should be enforced. If not, they should be created. We suggest that the city send a notice to the property owner giving them 90 to 180 days to either fix the sign or take it down. If they don't comply, the city takes it down and charges the owner.

Mountain View was the most easily identifiable district in Anchorage. The pole banners and hanging baskets are beautiful (bottom left).

We saw a lot of fairly new construction, like these apartments (bottom right), and it was obvious that a lot of effort has been going into revitalizing this neighborhood.

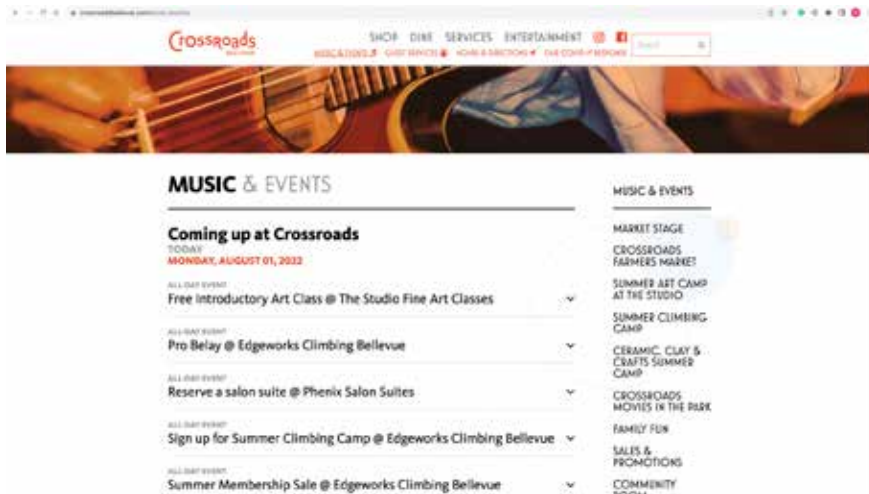




The Grow North Farm (top left) is really great. We found the community center (top right), which looks awesome, and the Alaska Museum of Science & Nature is wonderful (bottom left). It's obvious Mountain View has a lot of great community assets.

The Special Olympics center (bottom right) looks amazing!

Mountain View has a great "sense of place."



We did find the Northway Mall (top left). Shopping malls like this are dying across the country—one-third of them are already closed. But there are ways to breathe new life into these old malls.

Suggestion 5: Look into (and visit) Crossroads Mall in Bellevue, Washington (top right). Crossroads Mall was an old, small community mall on the eastern side of Bellevue. It thrived for many years, until times changed, and people avoided it. So the owners re-purposed it. They turned it into an active center for the community to enjoy, with events, entertainment, and international restaurants. The restaurants are casual, and the seating is shared in the center

of the mall. They aren't fast food, though. They feature unique, ethnic foods (bottom right). They provide entertainment and events (bottom left), and activities such as chess and other games. It is a great place for local residents to spend time.

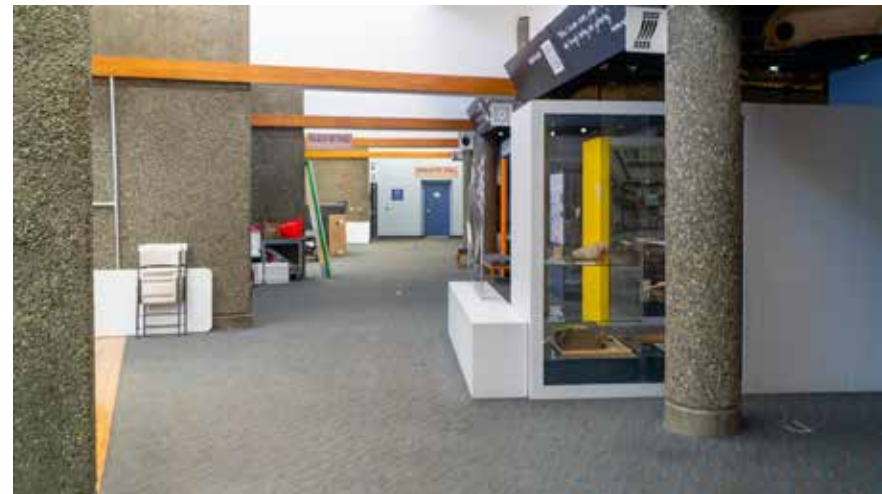


## EAST ANCHORAGE: MULDOON AREA



While we were in the Mountain View area, we thought we would check out the Muldoon area and East Anchorage. We weren't sure exactly where this area was, or what its boundaries are, but we set out to explore.

We were surprised to suddenly find Bass Pro Shops! (top right) We had no idea that was in the area. There is no wayfinding, so we don't know what we'll find. Then we came across The Shoppes at Glenn Square (bottom left) and Regal Cinemas (bottom right). We had no idea all that was in this area, and it's awesome! We wished we had time for shopping and watching a movie!



We continued exploring the area and found Bartlett High School (top left). They have wayfinding!

We also went to the Alaska Native Heritage Center (top right). In the winter, our online source said it was open, so we went to check it out—it is considered one of the top attractions in Anchorage. But when we went inside, it was open, but it seemed to be undergoing renovations, and the displays weren't lit (bottom left and right). So we were a bit confused. We assumed that nothing ever took place. When we returned in the summer, we saw the Heritage Center as it is meant to be—which is amazing!

Suggestion 6: Invite us back. In the winter, add signage that lets visitors know when the displays will be fully open, and when the events take place. We were confused in winter, thinking that's all there was. We're so glad we returned in summer and saw how wonderful a place the Heritage Center is.





When we returned to the Alaska Native Heritage Center in the summer, the parking lot was full (top left), and it was a fabulous experience.

Suggestion 7: These pole banners are fabulous (top left). Consider using pole banners like these to introduce your districts around Anchorage.

The entry is beautiful (top right) and is a fantastic introduction.

We were lucky to see dancers telling a story (bottom left) and the full displays (bottom right).



Absolutely fabulous! Loved the artisan booths. A great experience.



8 We found numerous markets - good if there was marketing...



We loved the outdoor displays at the Alaska Native Heritage Center (top left), and we enjoyed the artisan booths (we couldn't help but buy some art there). We could see why the Heritage Center is one of Anchorage's top attractions--it's amazing!

Suggestion 8: As we drove around, we found many small markets (top right). We never saw any promotions or signs telling us where and when these small markets took place--we just stumbled across them. Consider creating a small brochure and information on the city and visitor websites to let both residents and visitors know about these markets.

We looked at housing developments in the Muldoon area (bottom left), and they were very nice. We assumed that this area was part of east Anchorage.

In the winter we went to the Alaska Zoo (bottom right) and we were very happy to see it open daily, even in the winter.

In the winter we found plenty to do, plenty of great visitor attractions that were open, and we enjoyed visiting Anchorage as much then as in the summer.





We went back to the zoo in the summer (top left), and it was great. We didn't have time to go inside before the presentation, but the next day before we had to go to the airport, we went through the entire zoo, and it was excellent.

When we were in Anchorage in the winter, we drove out to Eagle River, but we thought it was too far away to be part of Anchorage, so we just took a quick look around. This summer, we knew Eagle River is part of Anchorage, so we explored it further.

Eagle River is a beautiful part of Anchorage. We love the gateway signage

(bottom left). The fence lining the streets are distinctive and give Eagle River a unique look (bottom right). There's a great sense of place.

**9** Nice town, but no real "downtown" or central gathering areas.



Eagle River seems like a very nice town in which to live, but there didn't seem to be any "downtown."

Suggestion 9: If Eagle River does have a downtown shopping area, put up wayfinding signage so visitors can find it.

While in Eagle River, we explored down several roads, and we came across Chugach State Park, North Fork Eagle River. We found the nature center (top right and bottom left), and it was great. A lot of visitors were asking about seeing bears. We didn't get a chance to hike the trail (bottom right), but it looks like a lot of fun and it's on our list to do next time we visit Anchorage.



# EAST ANCHORAGE

Let's go find "Flat Top"!



10

"Local lingo" - Website, Visitors Guide, social media (YouTube)



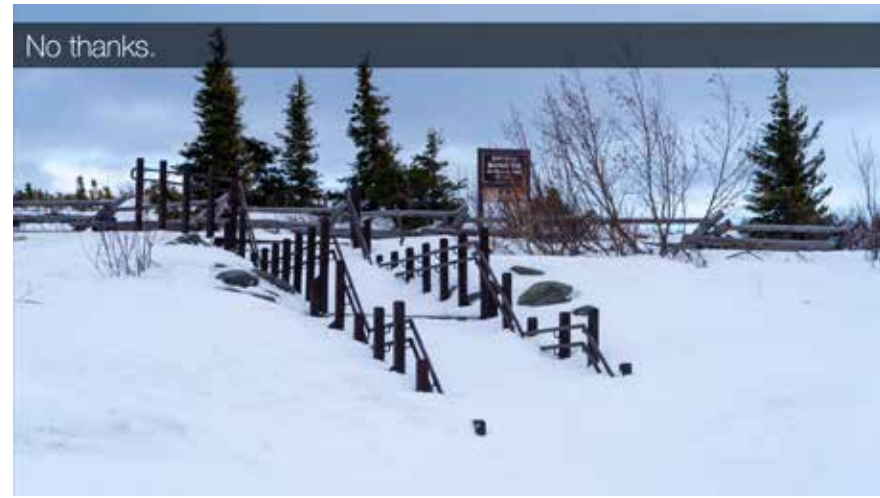
Do we still need to pay?



We went on to explore East Anchorage, and in the winter, we heard a lot of recommendations to visit Flat Top. We're not sure how we found it, but we did. When we got there, it was very windy and very cold, and the parking lot, stairs, and trails were covered with snow. We decided it wasn't a good day to spend much time there.

Locals consistently call it "Flat Top," but that's not its formal name. Suggestion 10: Make sure all your marketing materials--website, visitors guide, and social media--give the ACTUAL name. If a visitor tries to use their navigation system to find "Flat Top," they won't find it.

In the winter, there was one other car in the parking lot, but there was no way to really enjoy the view or the trails, since they were snow and cloud covered. Even the parking payment kiosk was frozen (bottom right).



Suggestion 11: If you do want people to enjoy this viewpoint and trail in the winter, be sure to have it snow plowed, and clean off the payment kiosk daily.

This summer we set out to visit Flat Top again. We didn't remember how we got there during the winter, and there is no wayfinding signage to Flat Top, so we tried to use our navigation system. Searching for Flat Top gave us directions to a restaurant in downtown.

We ended up being led to different places before we finally found Flat Top by wandering around the general area until we stumbled across it.

Suggestion 12: Be sure to promote trail heads and parks using their official names. Flat Top is actually Glen Alps. But how would a visitor know when they are told to go to Flat Top?

When we finally arrived, we could see what a popular spot this is in the summer (bottom right).





Flat Top was so busy there was a line of people waiting to pay for parking. Unfortunately, the cash box was so full, this person couldn't get her payment into the box (top right).

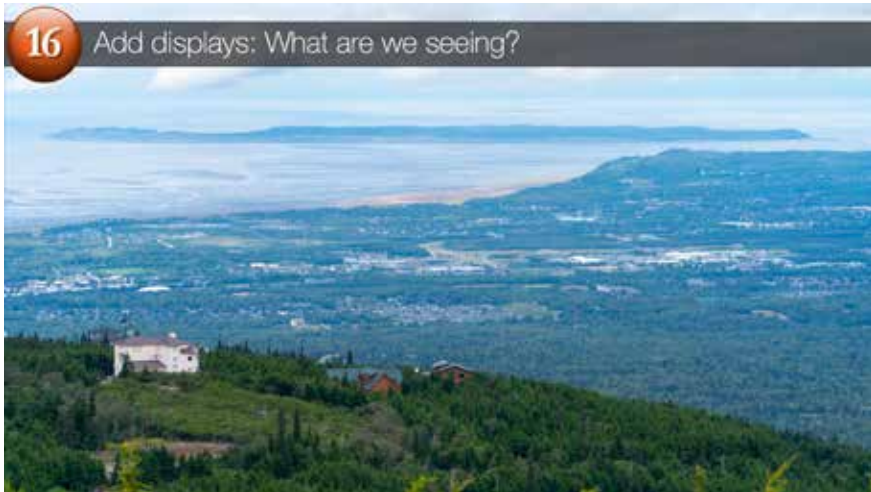
Suggestion 13: During the busy season, be sure there is staff to monitor the facilities, such as the cash box (bottom left) and the restrooms (bottom right). One of the restrooms was out of order, so there was quite a line of people waiting. This was a busy day!



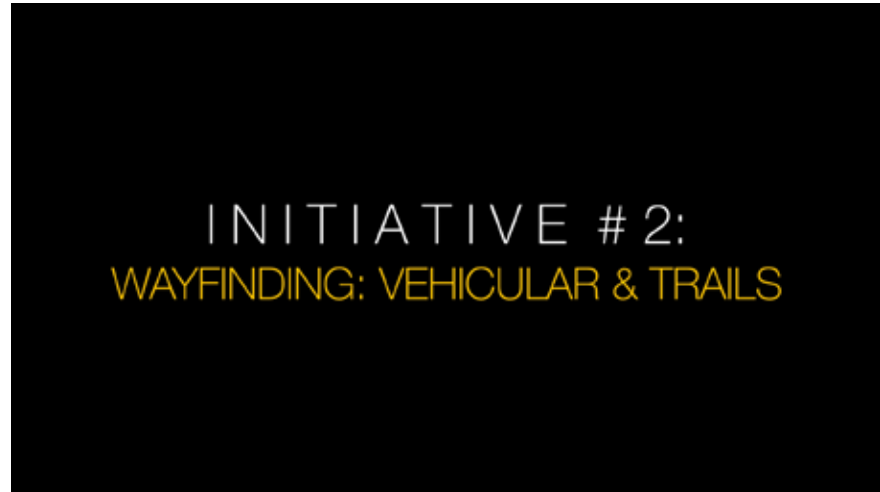
**14** Redevelop the signs and interpretive displays



**15** Tell us about the experience, not who made it happen.



**16** Add displays: What are we seeing?



We had a fantastic time at Flat Top--it is an amazing spot with incredible views. A couple of ideas to make it even better:

Suggestion 14: Some of the signs are very worn out and unreadable (top left). Refresh the signs.

Suggestion 15: On the interpretive signs (top right), in addition to telling us about who funded the place and how they made it happen, tell us about the experience. Tell us about the hike--how long it is; how difficult; what we'll see. We didn't know how long a hike it was, so we decided to skip the hike since our time was limited.

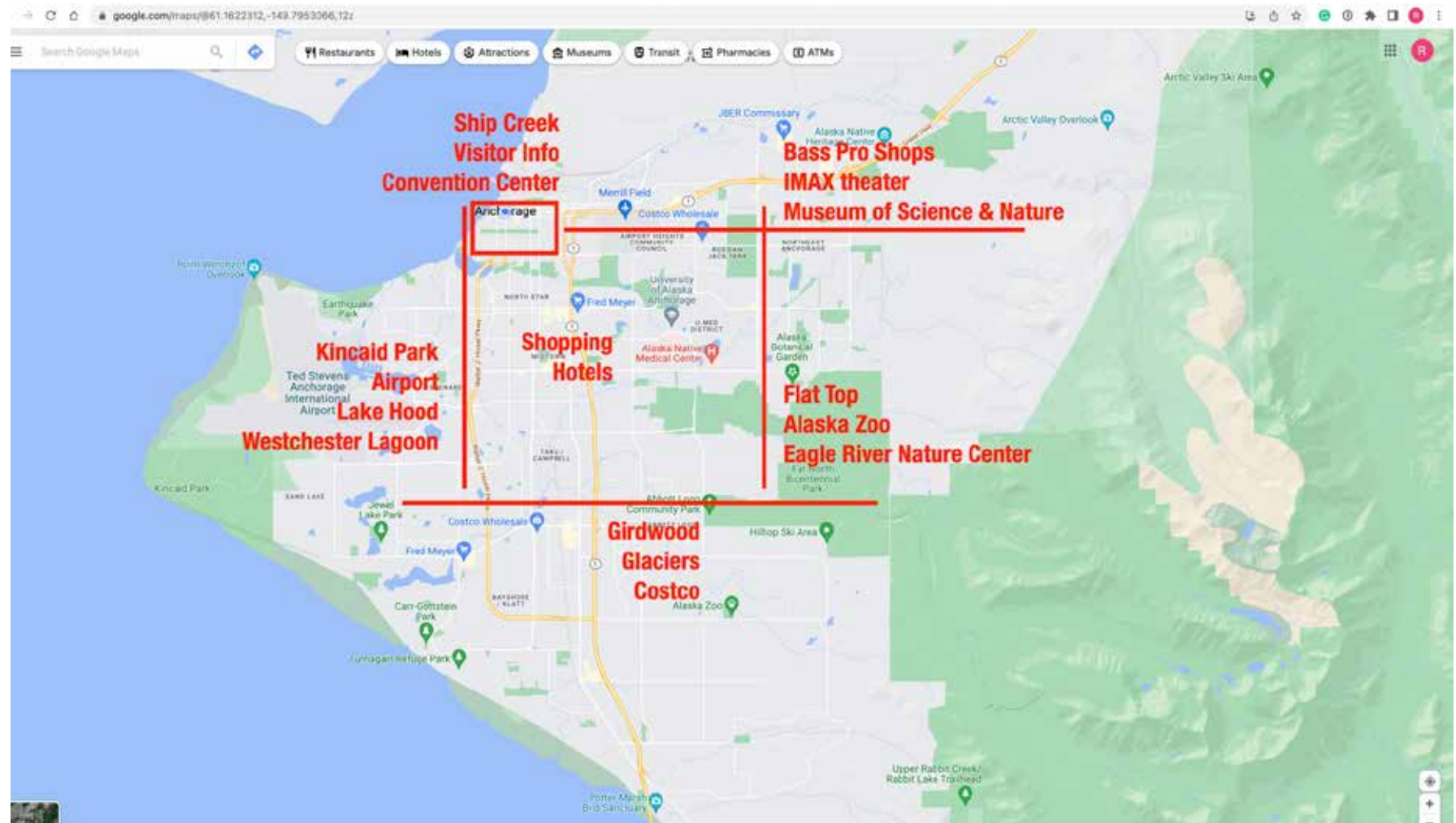
Suggestion 16: Add more interpretive displays that explain what we are seeing when we look out at the view (bottom left).

### Initiative #2:

#### Wayfinding: Vehicular and Trails

Helping people find what you have.





When we were in Anchorage during the winter, we tried to determine the “lay of the land” as best as we could. It was helpful for when we returned this summer, giving us a general idea of where different areas were located in Anchorage.

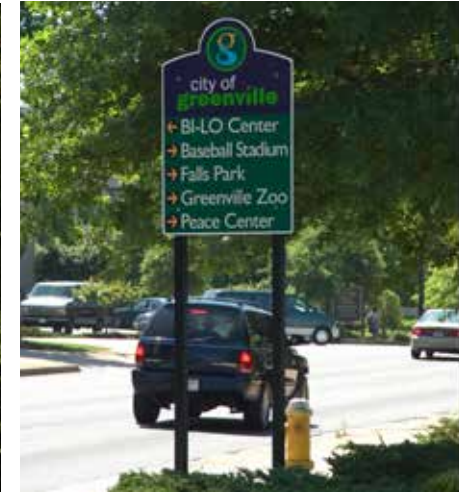
With Anchorage’s large size and huge number of wonderful attractions and amenities, it’s difficult for visitors to know where to find everything without a good wayfinding system.

17

The **number one**, very **top priority**  
for the City of Anchorage:  
**A comprehensive wayfinding system**

## Benefits of a wayfinding system

1. It creates a much **better** visitor **experience**
2. Visitors will **learn** what you have to offer and how to find it
3. It will **increase** visitor **spending** dramatically
4. It will keep visitors here **longer**
5. It will give them incentive to **come back** again
6. It will mitigate **traffic flow**
7. It will increase the **desire to live in Anchorage**



Suggestion 17: We suggest that the top priority for the City of Anchorage is to build a comprehensive wayfinding system.

Wayfinding systems create a much better visitor experience. Visitors don't have to try to figure out how to find places, like we did when trying to find Flat Top.

Visitors (and residents) will learn what you have and where to find it. They might notice an attraction on a sign that they hadn't known about before and decide they need to visit that.

Wayfinding systems increase visitor spending; they are an investment--not an expense.

Wayfinding systems help keep visitors longer, and they give visitors more reasons to come back so they can see the additional attractions they may not have had time to see before.

Wayfinding systems can help mitigate traffic flow, and by making it easier for people to find their way around, wayfinding can increase the desire for people to live in Anchorage.

These wayfinding signs are great examples from Logan, Utah (bottom left), Modesto, CA and Greenville, SC (bottom left).





### The Anchorage Wayfinding system:

1. Vehicular wayfinding: attractions, amenities, parking, visitor info
2. Pedestrian wayfinding: Downtown
3. Trail signage & markers
4. 24/7 Visitor info kiosks and trail guides

This wayfinding system in The Woodlands, Texas (top left) is decorative and easy to read. Kalamazoo, Michigan (top right) has pedestrian wayfinding that includes easy-to-follow maps to assist visitors downtown.

Wayfinding plays a role in your branding efforts and can be a major component of your marketing efforts. It reinforces a positive experience and increases community pride. It also educates visitors and locals about what you have and where it's located.

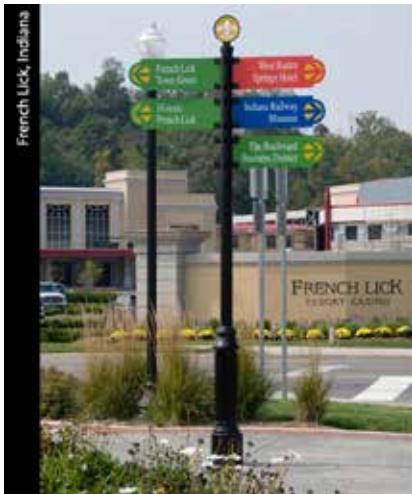
Navigation systems are not a substitute for wayfinding signs. We use



navigation systems to find things we know already exist, but wayfinding signs can tell us about things we don't even know you have and where they are located.

Disneyland is an expert at helping people navigate their parks, as this directory shows (bottom right).





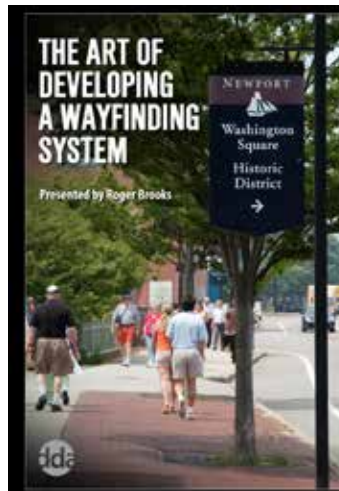


### Wayfinding needed for:

- Lake Hood | Airport
- Each district | Mushing | Arts...
- Medical facilities
- Visitor information
- Public parking
- Public restrooms
- Alaska Native Heritage Center
- Ship Creek
- Alaska Railroad Depot
- Westchester Lagoon
- Eagle River Nature Center
- Alyeska Resort
- Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center
- Flattop | Glen Alps Trail Head
- Coastal Trail (entrance/exit points)
- Captain Cook memorial
- Veterans Memorial
- Convention Center
- Alaska Zoo
- Kincaid Park
- Sports fields & facilities
- Earthquake Park
- Bass Pro
- Museum of Science & Nature
- Anchorage Museum
- Town Square Park
- Neighborhoods
- University

### Wayfinding needed for:

- Sullivan Park
- Chester Creek Trail
- Winner Creek Trail
- Crow Creek Mine
- Alaska Aviation Museum
- McHugh Creek Trailhead
- Alaska Botanic Garden
- Potter Marsh
- Far North Bicentennial Park
- Campbell Creek Science Center
- Hilltop Ski Area
- Flattop Mountain Shuttle
- Alaska Jewish Museum
- Alaska Veterans Museum
- Little Lithuanian Museum & Library
- Hilltop Bike Park
- Sport Fish Hatchery
- Campbell Point Lake
- Jewel Lake
- Sand Lake
- Goose Lake
- Valley of the Moon Park
- Eklutna Lake
- Alaska Center for the Performing Arts
- Police Officers Museum
- Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson



18

DestinationDevelopment.org  
 > The Vault  
 > Product Development: Tourism  
 > Developing a Wayfinding System

### Why develop a system?

- It educates locals & visitors of what you have.
- It delivers a pleasant visitor experience.
- It helps mitigate traffic flow.
- It introduces your brand.
- It creates a "sense of place" and a sense of arrival.
- It eliminates sign clutter and "broken" systems.

These pedestrian wayfinding signs are attractive, useful, and promote their communities' brands (left).

Never put more than five items on one wayfinding sign--people don't have time to read them all.

Suggestion 18: For detailed how-to instructions on developing a wayfinding system, watch the DestinationDevelopment.org streaming presentation "The Art of Developing a Wayfinding System" (bottom left).

There are almost no wayfinding signs for these attractions and amenities (top left and right). There should be signage for all of them. For some of them, there are signs right when you reach the destination, but there should be wayfinding from a distance away. This is a lot!

Nationwide, only 5% of travelers go into a visitor information center. The people who aren't getting visitor information are missing so much of what you have to offer. Wayfinding signage can help.



In Greenville, SC, their wayfinding system includes great pedestrian signage (both photos above). Note the signs saying “More to enjoy.” This is an excellent way to encourage visitors to get off the main street and explore the side streets.

These signs even include specific shop signage, which are replaceable. The business pays for their individual sign.





### What's typically included recap

- Vehicular wayfinding
- Pedestrian wayfinding, trail system signage
- Amenities, attractions, services
- Place identifiers
- Gateways: City, downtown/districts
- Auxiliary signage
- Pole banners (often seasonal)
- Visitor information



Appleton, Wisconsin (top left) installed these very effective and decorative wayfinding signs. They are mounted on existing poles, and they are easy to read. Their system includes an easy to follow map for pedestrians as well. This wayfinding system increased Appleton's retail sales by nearly 20%.

You can even use pole banners (top right) to supplement your wayfinding system. These trail signs from Devon, Alberta (bottom right) are great trail identifiers, and having an easy to find trail map is very helpful.

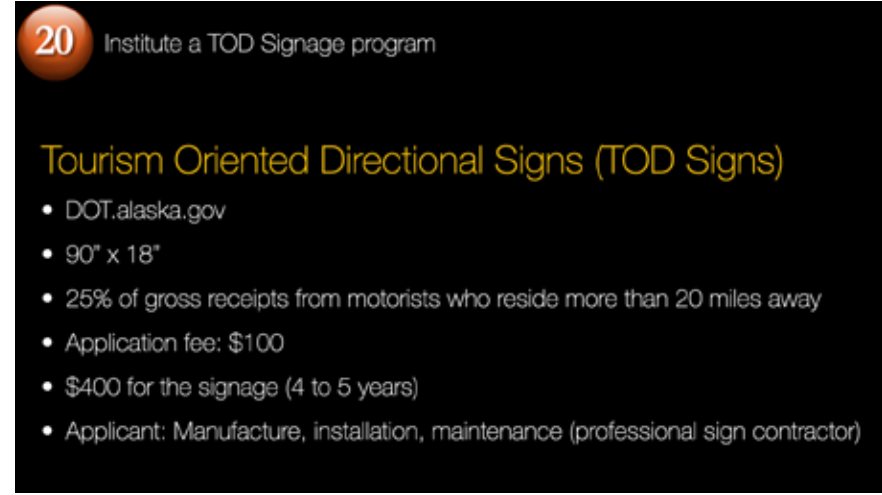
A good wayfinding system includes all these (bottom left).



**19** A good start, but they don't continue to the destination.



Paid by businesses with some restrictions.



Suggestion 19: These trail signs (top left) are a good start, but they don't continue to the destination. Finish the job all the way to the destination.

Suggestion 20: Institute a Tourism Oriented Directional signage program. Each state has a different way of managing TOD signs, and there are specific rules to follow and fees to pay. We suggest Alaska DOT take a look at Wisconsin's program. Alaska's program may be too expensive for many small businesses to take advantage of, and Wisconsin's program seems to work well (bottom left). The business pays for the signage, but it can be a tremendous boon for the business.

Anchorage has several excellent businesses that aren't all that easy to find which might benefit from TOD signage, such as The ULU Factory and Bass Pro Shops (bottom right).





Alaska Wild Berry Products (top left) is another business that might benefit from TOD signage.

We drove to Girdwood to check it out—we had spent some time there in 2019, and it has only gotten more beautiful. The Alyeska Resort (bottom left) is gorgeous, and we found the whole town, its shops, and even the school (bottom right) to be very beautiful.



The restaurants in Girdwood (top left and right, bottom left and right) do a wonderful job with beautification. They make visitors want to spend time there.

Have you ever said, "That looks like a nice place to eat." When restaurants look fabulous on the outside, they make people want to eat there. People judge a book by the cover, so making their entries look fantastic encourages people to come in.





The library in Girdwood (top left) is gorgeous. Overall, Girdwood does a fantastic job of making their town look like a great place to live and visit.

Suggestion 21: We found the Girdwood airport (top right), and it gave a different impression. It was overgrown, and some areas looked almost abandoned. Clean it up!

While we were in the Girdwood area, we visited the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center (bottom left and right). We didn't have the opportunity to spend as much time there as we would have liked, but it was great.





It was great to see the food and souvenir vendors at the Wildlife Conservation Center (top left). Having food and drinks available encourages people to spend more time there.

Suggestion 22: One of the most beautiful drives we found was the drive out to Portage Lake (top right). There are boat cruises on the lake, and the whole drive was a wonderful experience. We suggest adding wayfinding signage to Portage Lake and the Portage Lake Glacier cruises.

Then we headed to West Anchorage. We had explored the area in winter also, and we thought Earthquake Park (bottom right) was more beautiful in the winter than even in the summer. It seemed magical.





Earthquake Park (top right) was so serene in the winter. We saw some fat tire bikers out in the winter, and we saw many bikers there in the summer (bottom left). One advantage of being there in the winter, though, was there weren't any mosquitoes.

Suggestion 23: There were a lot of intersecting trails in Earthquake Park, but there was no signage letting us know where they went, or how far it was to any other locations along the trails. Add wayfinding signage and maps to help visitors find their way.





Earthquake Park (top left and right) was awe-inspiring. We remember the earthquake of 1964 and seeing the photographs of the terrible devastation the earthquake caused in Anchorage. When we were on our trolley tour, our guide brought us to the park and told us in detail how the people who lived in this neighborhood helped each other by linking arms together to keep their neighbors from falling down the collapsing hillside along with their houses. The story brought the devastation vividly to our minds and made us feel the fear and determination of the people who survived.

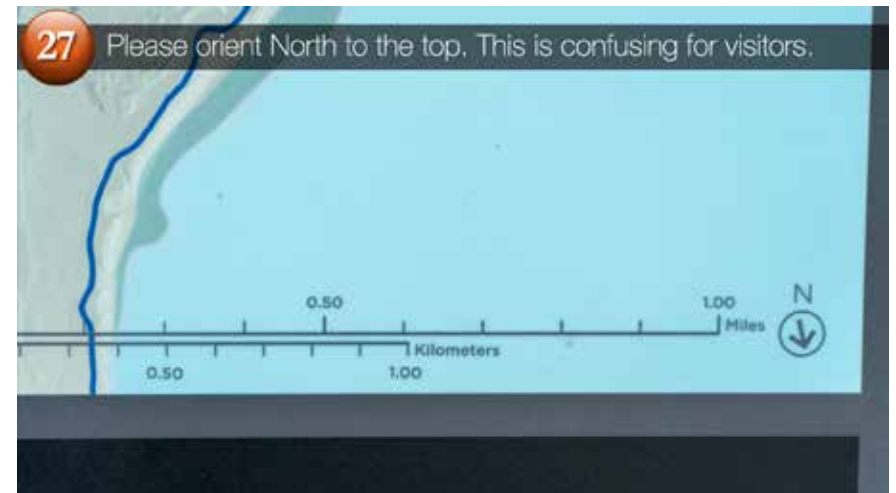
Be sure to tell the stories. Add more interpretive signage with the people's

stories as told in their own words.

When we were in Anchorage in the winter, we didn't find Kincade Park (bottom left). There is no wayfinding signage to it.

Suggestion 24: In Kincade Park, we came across this building (bottom right). We had no idea what it was. Add signage to let people know. We later learned it was rental event space.





The signage in Kincaid Park was excellent. This disc golf course sign (top left) was great.

The Coastal Trail map (top right and bottom left) was excellent. It was so helpful for us to see how the trail system worked, what the distances were, and so on.

Suggestion 25: Duplicate this sign at various places along the trails. People can't take this with them, and very likely can't remember all the details, so duplicates of the map should be placed along the trails.

Suggestion 26: We saw different names for what seemed to be the same trail: Tony Knowles Trail / Coastal Trail. Decide on one name and use it consistently. Don't make it confusing.

Suggestion 27: As we looked at the map, the orientation seemed confusing. Then we saw that the map doesn't have north at the top; north is directed to the bottom and a little to the right. That is very confusing. Most people are accustomed to reading maps with north at the top. Re-orient this map to make it easier to read.



The trail map was helpful, and we had to laugh seeing the names of some of these trails—they were so creative! (top right) "Toilet Bowl" "Second Breakfast" "Hanging Chad"

Suggestion 28: Add walking times or distances (top right). It's so much easier to plan a hike if you know the length of the route!

Make printed copies of these trail maps, and distribute them in small brochure holders here. People can't take these large map signs with them, and it's very helpful to have a map when you're walking.

Suggestion 29: We saw several of these types of signs (bottom left). They give distances, but they don't provide context. This sign says "9.5 Miles." But 9.5 miles from where? Let us know.

We walked down the trail that leads to the beach, and many people told us they had seen a moose down there. We didn't see it on the way down, but on the way back up, this huge moose stepped out onto the trail right in front of us! (bottom right)

Kincaid Park is stunning!





In the winter, we headed over to Lake Hood (top left). It was fascinating to see the planes--some of them with fat tires, some of them with skis.

We also went to Lake Hood in the summer (top right), and it was amazing then as well. It was fun to watch the planes take off and land, and there were many other people watching the planes as well.

We heard reference to Lake Spinard, and we were confused, because we had only heard about Lake Hood up till that point. We hadn't realized that Lake Spinard and Lake Hood are connected.

In the winter, somehow we found Sullivan Park (bottom left). We're not sure how we stumbled across it, because our navigation system couldn't find it when we looked for it in the summer.

The life vests (bottom right) weren't being used much then.



The lake at Sullivan Park was frozen over, and we were thrilled to see the lake being groomed (top left). People were ice skating (top right), and we could see that Anchorage would have a lot of good qualities in the winter. Might not be a bad place to live!

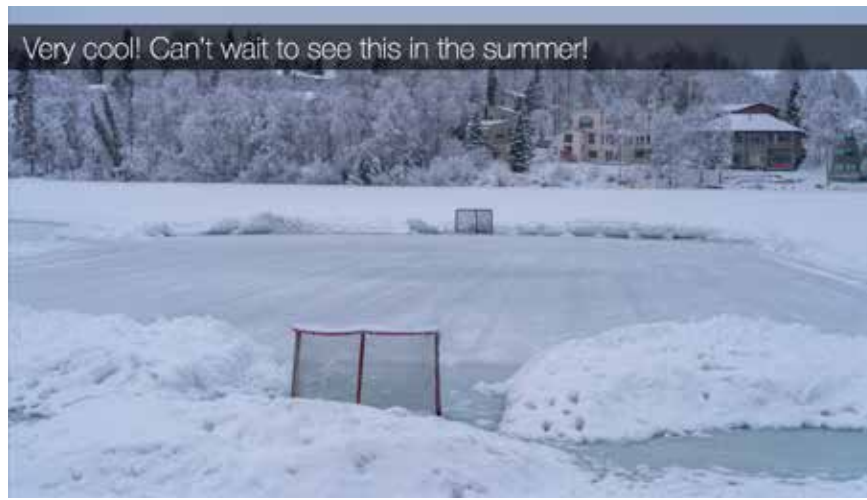
We saw people out walking their dogs (bottom left), and we could see that, even in the winter, life goes on and people are busy, not letting the cold and snow hamper their fun.

We were watching the local news in Anchorage, and the weather forecaster

said they were expecting rain. He commented that there's no such thing as bad weather, there's just bad gear. What a true statement!

We saw another trail map (bottom right), and we weren't sure what trail this was.





We saw part of the frozen lake groomed for hockey (top left)! That was great. There are lots of activities for people in the winter!

We tried to find Sullivan Park in the summer, but our navigation system didn't know where it was. We tried to remember another name for the park or the water, and finally remembered Westchester Lagoon. Our nav system directed us here (top right). It took us on a circuitous route through residential neighborhoods.

Suggestion 30: Another reason for a wayfinding system--navigation systems

don't always get it right. You can contact Google and Apple and other navigation systems to have them correct these locations so people can find them more easily.

This part of the park was gorgeous, and it was right along a trail (bottom left). We found that it was more of the Coastal Trail, and we decided we really wanted to rent bikes and ride the trail.

We still didn't know how to get over to the Sullivan Park that we had seen in the winter, but we could see it across the water (bottom right).

## MID-TOWN



31

University Medical District? Mid-Town? Not sure. No wayfinding.



We drove into Mid-Town--we weren't quite sure where the boundaries were because there are no wayfinding or gateway signs, but we thought the big box stores and the large shopping areas and the mall were a big part of Mid-Town.

We found the University Medical District (all photos this page), and we thought that was probably part of Mid-Town as well. It looked like a very nice campus, and the campus had plenty of its own wayfinding, so that was good.

Suggestion 31: Mid-Town and the University area need gateways and wayfinding to make it easy for visitors and residents to find these areas and know where the boundaries are.

The University and Medical Center look world-class, and that is a huge plus for attracting residents to Anchorage.

There are a lot of restaurants in Mid-Town, too, and we made sure to eat at a few of them. They were great, and most of the wait times weren't as long as the wait times in downtown restaurants in summer.





While we were in the Mid-Town area, we found one of our favorite places in Anchorage--the Alaska Wild Berry Products Store (top left and right). We weren't the only ones who loved this store--it was always busy. We visited in the summer too. Those chocolate-covered jelly candies are the best!

We stopped for lunch at the Moose's Tooth Pub and Pizzeria (bottom left and right). In the winter, it's easy to walk right in and be seated. However, in the summer, it's so busy you might have to wait an hour no matter what time of day you arrive. But we have to say, they have the best pizza we've ever had!



## Mid-Town Anchorage

- Mid-Town Mall
- Lots of big box retail
- Nordstrom Rack (Alaskans fly to Seattle for the real thing)
- Lots of lodging options
- The place you pass through to get to all the other places



Moose's Tooth treats their waiting guests very well, providing places to sit outside and cups of water. You can even grab a beer while waiting for your table, and that's nice (top left).

We went into the Mid-Town Mall (bottom left), found a lot of big box retail stores and lodging options, and found Nordstrom Rack. Mid-Town has a lot of practical shopping options for residents, but most visitors prefer to shop at local, unique-to-you shops, unless they have specific, practical needs.

We were glad to find City Market (bottom right), and we shopped there for a few grocery items while visiting. It's great that there is a market fairly close to downtown.





First thing we did when we arrived in Anchorage in the winter was to visit the Visitor Information Center (top right).

One big advantage of being there in the winter is there were few people in the visitor center. We were able to spend a lot of time talking with the staff about what to see and do while there (bottom left). And the staff is amazing! They were some of the most helpful visitor information staff we have ever talked to.

We also visited the Center in the summer, and, of course, it was much busier, but the staff was also very helpful then.

In the winter, Hotel Captain Cook has an incredible gingerbread village (bottom right). It was amazing, and that's another winter advantage. We had a lot of fun walking around the village finding all the details.



Hotel Captain Cook has three of the best galleries in Anchorage plus two great gift shop (top left). They also give a lot of good information about what else is available to see and do downtown.

We visited the downtown mall (top right), and it is a great asset for residents. Some visitors will go into malls, but most like to find the unique local shops. The mall wasn't crowded in the winter, so that was a plus.

We also found the skating rink in the mall (bottom left), That was fantastic, and it's another great asset for locals.

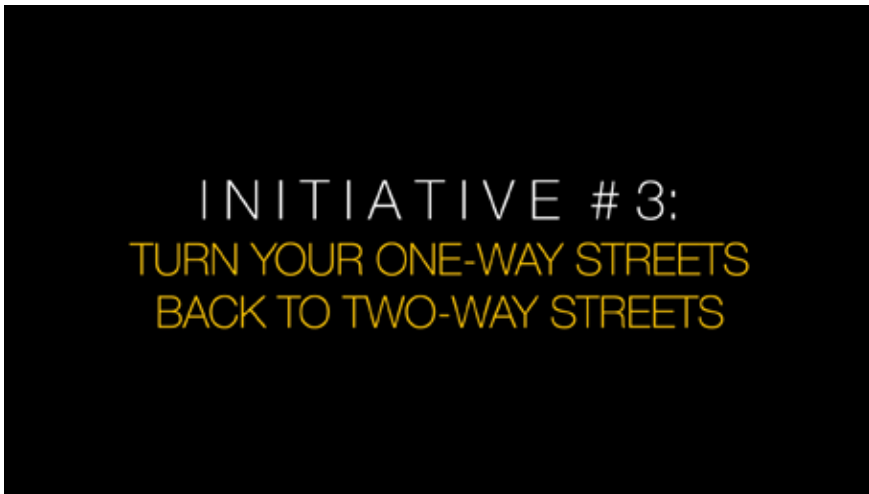
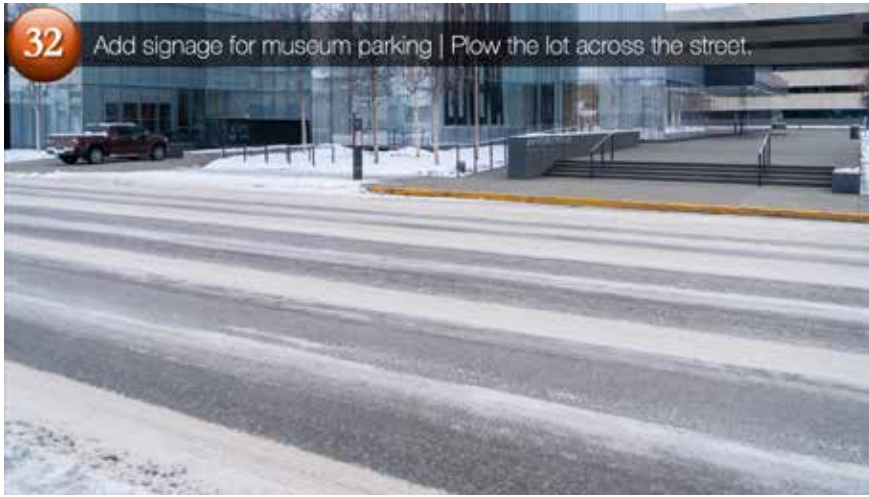
We found this beautiful restaurant setting in the winter (bottom right). What a great way to attract diners—it's gorgeous.





We were very lucky to be able to take a trolley tour and have Alice as our driver and guide (top left). Not only is she a great storyteller, comedienne, and guide, but she sings and dances! What a fantastic tour of Anchorage we had with her as our guide.

We went to the Ulu Factory (bottom left), and it was fantastic. We also visited the Anchorage Museum (bottom right), and it is world-class. These are a couple great attractions that are available to both residents and visitors in the winter as well as the summer



Trying to reach the Anchorage Museum in the winter is a challenge, though. The streets can be icy (top left), and the parking lot across the street from the museum was piled with snow.

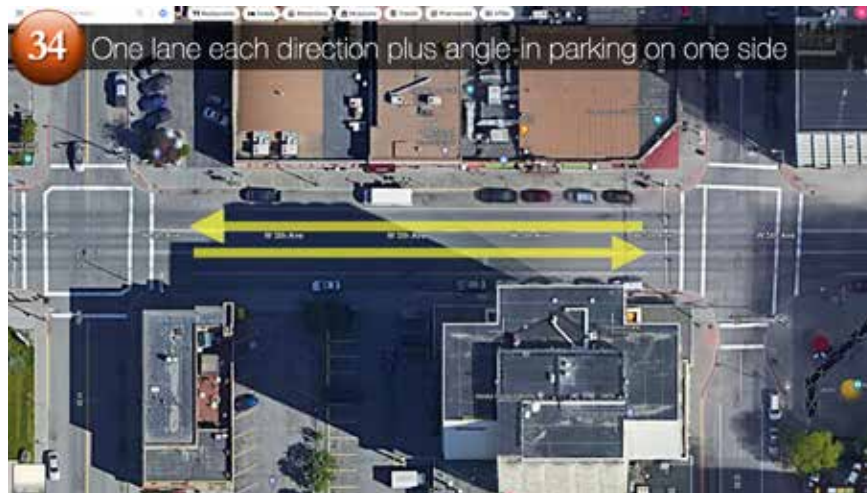
Suggestion 32: Add signage to let people know where to park when they go to the museum, and plow the parking lot in the winter. Don't make it difficult for people to enjoy your attractions.

We love the shops in downtown Anchorage! One of our favorites is Cabin Fever (top right). It has a great variety of high-quality Alaskan merchandise, and we

spent plenty of money there!

**Initiative #3: Turn your one-way streets back into two-way streets downtown.**





We think that Anchorage's core downtown district extends from Waterfront to D Street, and from 2nd Avenue to 9th. Having so many one-way streets in this district is confusing and makes it difficult to navigate.

And downtowns should be about people, not about cars.

Suggestion 33: Both 5th and 6th Avenues are currently one-way streets. Turn them back into two-way streets.

Suggestion 34: Turn the one-way streets into two-way streets by having one lane going each direction, plus have angle-in parking on one side of the street.

Angle-in parking increases spending by more than 20%, and it increases the number of parking spaces on a street by one third.

How many people like to parallel park? Angle-in parking is so much easier and makes it more likely people will stop to shop.

You don't want to have highways running through downtown, with traffic moving as fast as it can. Departments of Transportation have two primary goals: Public safety and moving traffic. We think they should add a third: Economic development. And congestion is a downtown's best friend.





As an example, here is downtown Greenville, South Carolina in the 1970s (top left). The street is two-way, but it is also four lanes wide. Huge street, difficult for pedestrians. It also looks stark and unfriendly.

The city decided to make their downtown more people-friendly, and here is downtown in the 1980s (top right). Two driving lanes, two-way, and angle-in parking. There are street trees.

Here is downtown Greenville today (bottom right). Two-lane streets with angle-in parking, just like in the 1980s, and the street trees have made a

beautiful canopy overhead. At first, the merchants were afraid these street trees would obscure their businesses, and that the tree roots would destroy the sidewalks.

Sales revenues increased so much after these changes, that merchants say it's the best thing the city has ever done. There is enough tax revenue to pay for the upkeep of the trees and maintenance.

The number of one-way streets in downtown (bottom right) was very confusing—even for pedestrians.





Suggestion 35: This map (above) shows the one-way streets in downtown Anchorage. We suggest converting these to two-way streets.

Of course, doing this would require studies into its feasibility, so this suggestion definitely needs research and work, but we think it would be well worth considering.

Remember: Congestion is a downtown's friend. And your goal should be to have people come TO downtown, not just going THROUGH downtown.

Downtowns should be about people, not cars.



### Note

Congestion is a downtown's best friend.

Goal: People coming TO downtown  
not THROUGH downtown



There doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason for the direction of the streets (above). It's just confusing.

Suggestion 36: We understand that the state has control over these streets (bottom photo). Take the streets back from the state. You need to be in control of your own city; you need to be in control of your own destiny.



## INITIATIVE #4: DOWNTOWN: BEAUTIFICATION



### Initiative #4: Downtown beautification

The curbside beautification downtown is amazing (top right). The hanging baskets throughout downtown are gorgeous (bottom left). We think the city is taking care of all this curbside beautification, and they are doing a fantastic job.

We always say that the city should be responsible for curbside beautification, and merchants or a downtown association should be responsible for facade-side beautification.



Some merchants do a great job making their facades attractive. Snow City is one (bottom right). They do a very good job, even in the winter, of making their storefront look attractive and inviting.





This is Snow City in the winter (top left). It has so much color and beautification, with the colored snowflakes, benches, and the pots.

Suggestion 37: Use color throughout downtown. No more beige, gray and brown.

Here is Snow City in the summer (top right). Doesn't it make you want to spend time there?

Right next door to Snow City is Pablo's Bike Rental (bottom left and right), It looks amazing with the hanging baskets, the pots, and the bright colors. Doesn't it look like a fantastic place to rent a bike?





This little park, only a block away from Snow City, is gorgeous (top left). Most people probably don't even know this is here--without wayfinding, how would people find it? It's a beautiful little park.

We thought for sure that we would find an entrance to the Coastal Trail here at this little park, but no. In fact, there is a gate that leads down, but it's locked and "Closed for the Season." (top right) This is summer--so when is it open?

Suggestion 38: Let us know when this is open and where this leads (top right),

Just across the street from Captain Cook's park is this beautiful little park area (bottom left).

This area of west downtown is gorgeous. Many businesses make an effort to beautify their storefronts.

The Visitor Center (bottom right) is beautiful year-round. It must be one of the most attractive visitor centers in the country. Great job!





We loved these totems downtown (top left). Suggestion 39: Consider adding more of these throughout downtown. We'd love to see 30 or 40 of them downtown.

Suggestion 40: Town Square Park is filled with flowers this time of year, but right across the street, the old convention center looks stark (top right). There is nothing to soften the transition between the sidewalk and the building facade. Add pots and benches along the building facade.

Some of the businesses downtown do a fantastic job with beautification. 49th State Brewing (bottom left) looks great. We love what they did with their colorful beautification. We tried eating there several times this summer, and it was so busy it was almost impossible to get a seat. Winter definitely has an advantage for dining at 49th State!

Bruins at the Hilton (bottom right) looks great.





This series of shops downtown (top left) is absolutely stunning.

We loved the colors at Humpy's (top right), and the planters are nice, but it would be nice if there was something along the sidewalk. Perhaps a couple of benches and a pot by the front door.

We loved these hanging baskets (bottom left). They look great with the awnings. Consider adding some benches or chairs along the facade.

Tiny Gallery (bottom right) is very attractive with the chairs out front. Some of the businesses downtown do a very good job with beautification.





Some great examples of beautification can be found in Luverne, Minnesota. This is a town of about 5,000 people, and they have very cold winters with lake effect snow. But the merchants' beautification efforts are wonderful.

These pots, tables, and chairs really dress up the entrance to this restaurant (top left). Luverne has a lot of outdoor dining, and we'd love to see Anchorage have outdoor dining in season as well. Remember, downtown should be about people, not cars.

Suggestion 41: Businesses should have about three feet from the facade for

beautification, including outdoor displays, seating, pots (top right).

This shop in Luverne (bottom left) has a table, two chairs, and two bright pots outside. This isn't a restaurant, but the furniture makes it feel welcoming.

This shop (bottom right) also looks welcoming and attractive with the table, chairs, and pot of petunias.





There's no reason merchants in Anchorage shouldn't be making their storefronts attractive and welcoming. This is another storefront in Luverne (top left).

This sidewalk in Luverne (top right) looks great. Doesn't it make you want to continue walking so you can see what's in these attractive shops?

We really like what Anchorage has done with the trash cans (bottom left). Adding colorful art to useful objects is fantastic. It makes the city look fun.

We were a bit troubled with this building downtown (bottom right). Sure, it's colorful, but there is no beautification along the whole block at the facade. We loved the street trees, and at first, we thought the trees were screened to keep the moose from eating them. Unfortunately, it was to prevent vandalism.

Suggestion 42: Add pots, planters, benches, etc. to the building facades. Look inviting.





It was sad to see the "Alaska Experience" (top left) where it's necessary to hose off the sidewalk, and it was right next to a person sleeping on the sidewalk (top right). We know there are no easy solutions to these types of problems, but it doesn't give a good impression. This makes people feel like it isn't safe to be here, and not many visitors will want to go into the building.

Suggestion 43: We believe that the city should be responsible for curbside beautification, and the merchants or a downtown association (the Downtown Partnership-BID) should be responsible for facade-side beautification (bottom left).

This curbside beautification is gorgeous (bottom right). But look at the building facades--absolutely no beautification at all.

Merchants or building owners should be allowed a minimum of two feet, perhaps three feet, from the facade for beautification.





The street trees look great (top left). Even adding pots, planters, and benches at the facades, there would still be enough room for ADA access.

This planter looks very nice (top right). Good job!

This is a photo of Neenah, Wisconsin before beautification (bottom left) and after shop-front beautification (bottom right). After they added the beautification, retail sales went up 30%.

Curb appeal can account for 70% of first-time sales; it's important!

We all travel. Have you ever said, "That looks like a nice place to eat." We all judge from outside appearances.



Suggestion 44: Consider creating a co-op for purchasing facade-side pots and planters.

Beautification is a great investment, and one way to help merchants make it more affordable is to organize a buying co-op. You could implement a beautification program similar to that of Fredericksburg, Texas (top right and bottom left and right).

Their merchants combined forces and funds to purchase pots, planters, planting soil, and shrubs for everyone, then had students and youth clubs

do the planting as fundraisers. Notice that most of the pots are filled with evergreen shrubs—that makes them low maintenance. Shops had the pots ready to plant in the autumn, but they waited until spring to plant them with shrubs and flowers. For winter they stuck colorful pinwheels into the dirt.

You need more than one or two pots on either side of shop doors. Fill in empty facade areas with pots and benches. That will cause visitors to slow down, get out of their cars and stop to take a look.





Another gorgeous storefront in Fredericksburg, Texas (left).



Suggestion 45: Add pots and benches along this building facade (top right).

Since women account for 80% of all consumer spending, make sure downtown and the shops there appeal to women: with beautification, safety, well-lit at night, and places to relax, like these benches (bottom right).





Suggestion 46: Add benches downtown. Make it easy for people to spend time shopping and relaxing. Benches should always be at the facade facing out.





Suggestion 47: Add benches between pots (top left).

Suggestion 48: This is a beautiful shop (top right), but adding benches flanked by pots of flowers would make it even more appealing.

This is an ice cream shop in Alberta, Canada (bottom left). Giving people a place to sit and eat their ice cream outside attracts more customers. The same is true with outdoor dining.

Isn't this street gorgeous (bottom right)? This is in Wickford, Rhode Island. The pots, benches, and awnings look amazing.





The reason we like to put chairs outside the front doors of our homes is because it is so welcoming (top left). The same is true for shops.

(top right). And Elora, Ontario in December (bottom left and right).

Beautification is important in the winter too. Many places just as cold and snowy as Anchorage don't skip beautification in the winter. Here's St. Jacobs, Ontario in December





We love these pots decorated to look like ladies' wear outside a women's boutique in Elora, Ontario in December (top left).

These pots on either side of the entrance to this shop in Erin, Ontario are amazing (top right).



The sidewalk on the main shopping street in Erin, Ontario looks beautiful (bottom left).

Another shop decorated for the holidays in Erin, Ontario (bottom right). Cold weather shouldn't be an excuse to not look good!





These photos are more examples of winter beautification in Ontario.

Anchorage is the service center for hundreds of thousands of people. Wouldn't it be great if these people came into Anchorage to do their holiday shopping? Beautification helps attract customers, and there's no reason Anchorage can't be beautiful in the winter, with gorgeous shops and restaurants.





Two more gorgeous examples of winter beautification in Ontario (top left and right). They use evergreen boughs, ribbons, berries, and decorative pots.

A lot of the merchants will shovel the snow in front of their own shops, just to keep it looking nice and making it easier for their customers. Many merchants in Europe sweep the sidewalks in front of their stores daily to keep them looking nice. It doesn't have to be left up to the city--downtowns need to be a public/private partnership.

Imagine how much better this sidewalk would look if there were some pots,

planters, and benches (bottom left).

Suggestion 49: Another way to add beautification is to extend window displays to exterior spaces (bottom right). This is using merchandise to make decorative displays right outside the shop's front door.





This merchant (top left) sets up this gorgeous display of merchandise every morning, and brings it back inside in the evening.

This is a wonderful way to display fashion (bottom left).

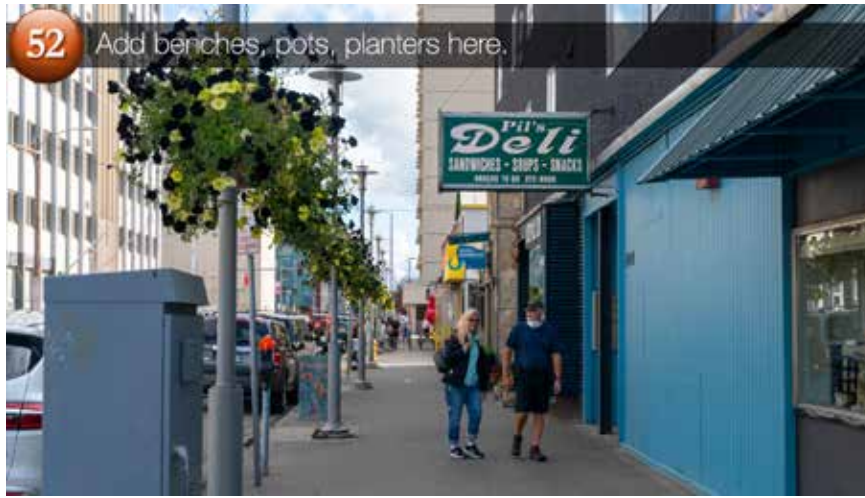
This does NOT mean setting up tables piled with merchandise or putting

out racks of clothes. That makes you look like a garage-sale city. These are decorative displays.

Suggestion 50: Add benches flanked with pots (top right).

Suggestion 51: Add a "Coming Soon" sign for this old movie theater that is under renovation. Invite us back!





Suggestion 52: Add benches, pots, and planters here (top left).

Suggestion 53: This broken sidewalk is a major hazard to safety (top right). It also looks terrible. We noticed several other broken sidewalks. These should be repaired as soon as possible.

Suggestion 54: This store (bottom left) uses a vinyl sign instead of a decorative permanent sign. That should not be allowed. Vinyl or plastic signs should only be allowed for special occasions for temporary use (perhaps limited to two weeks.)

Suggestion 55: These vinyl signs look terrible (bottom right). Again, vinyl signs should not be allowed for any longer than two weeks. A permit should be required for their use.

We noticed some businesses are using plastic banners as permanent signage, and it makes Anchorage look like a second-class city. But you're NOT. Anchorage is a wonderful city with many excellent shops and restaurants, plus so much beauty and fantastic recreation.



56 Sorry. This looks very tacky. Paint, Beautification, Etc.



57 A great shop in need of a signage and curb appeal makeover.

## INITIATIVE #5: DOWNTOWN: BLADE SIGNS

Suggestion 56: The front of this building looks very poor (top left). It needs to be cleaned up with fresh paint and beautification.

Suggestion 57: This is a great shop, but the signage looks very dated (top right). The facade should be freshened and the signage replaced. Add pots and benches.

### Initiative #5: Downtown Blade Signs

Use blade signs. These are signs that are perpendicular to the street. When we are walking or driving down a street, we see things that are perpendicular to



us. We don't see what is on the face of a building unless we drive very slowly and turn from side to side to see what is inside the shops. Blade signs make it easy for people to see what is in the shops ahead.

This is a good example of blade signs in Leavenworth, Washington (bottom right) that are on all of their shops. They make it easy to see what stores are available, let you know immediately what they sell, and entice you to continue down the street with the promise of more interesting shops.





These (top left) are in Canmore, Alberta. There are some general rules for blade signs: They should be no lower than seven feet, no higher than nine feet, and no wider than 42 inches. This will prevent sign clutter.

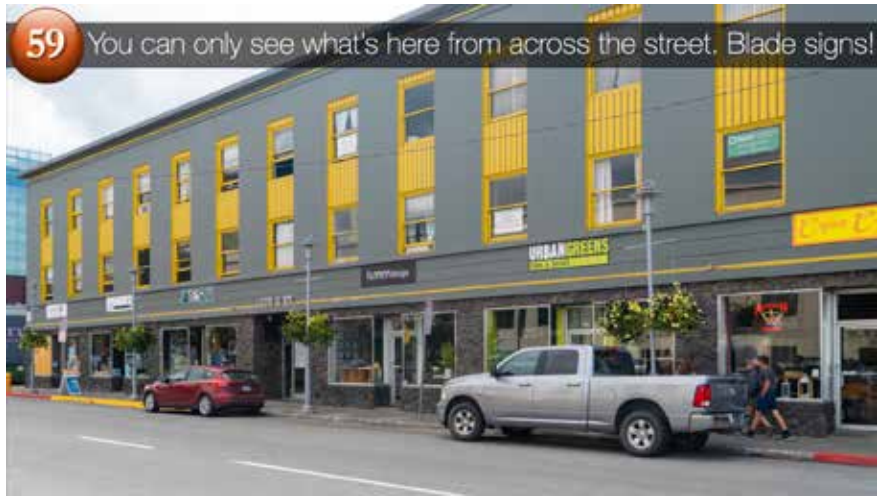
Blade signs don't have to be cookie-cutter. They can be very distinctive, decorative, and show off the business while sticking to general guidelines. You can work with your businesses to design and create effective blade signs. Be sure they promote what the business sells first, not just the name of the business.

Suggestion 58: Put together a blade sign buying co-op to get discounts on the signs.

Can you tell what is in any of the shops along this street? (bottom left) Do you see any reason why I should continue walking? There's no beautification, and I can't see any signs to let me know what shops or restaurants are there.

This gallery's sign (bottom right) is so high the only way I can read it is to stand out in the street.





Suggestion 59: Use blade signs. The only way to see the signs for these shops is to go across the street (top left).

We almost didn't even see Crush (top right). That would have been awful, it's such a great place! But it needs a blade sign.

We were glad to see this Brewhouse (bottom left) has a blade sign.

These are blade signs in Nantucket (bottom right).

Suggestion 60: There are some general rules for blade signs: They should be no lower than seven feet, no higher than nine feet, and no wider than 42 inches (bottom right).

Blade signs increase retail sales--they are a great investment.





More blade signs in Nantucket (top left). And more in Carmel, California (top right).

And on a larger scale, these (bottom left) are in Valparaiso, Indiana.



When you have awnings, you want the blade signs to be under the awning (bottom right).

## INITIATIVE #6: INVITE US BACK!



### Initiative #6: Invite Us Back!

Sunday we spent much of the day driving out to Girdwood, and when we got back into downtown Anchorage, we saw that there was a public market happening. Unfortunately, it was already 4:20, and many of the booths were packing up to close (top right).

We hadn't known there was going to be a market that day, otherwise we would have made sure to be there for the day. It looked like it was great!





Suggestion 61: Add readerboards for events that are happening throughout town. They could be at the visitor center, and at Town Square Park, and perhaps at a couple other locations. They don't have to be electronic--they can be simple, but easy to change. Include events happening all around town. Make it easy for visitors as well as residents to know what fun things are going on. Include other interesting things going on, like this Aurora show (top right).

We saw this little board sign (top left), but by the time it was out on Sunday, it was too late. Invite us back!

### Initiative #7: Downtown Activation

Communities spend a lot of time and money on streetscapes, facades, downtown events, marketing, beautification, parking, and business recruitment, and these are all important. But there is one thing usually missing from communities' to-do lists, and that is downtown programming.



Programming is for activities, not events. Look at these people having fun with hoola-hoops (top left). This is an activity you can easily do in downtown. You can buy a rack full hoola-hoops for about \$200. How much fun would people have doing hoola-hoops downtown? Make downtown a place where people can come to have fun trying different activities.

Take a look at the Destination Development Association's video library for a lot of great how-to ideas to accomplish this (top right).

In the meantime, we've got some ideas to help you get started. Downtown

needs to be the place people want to spend time in--having fun with family and friends. Besides events, there are so many activities that can be available that will attract residents and visitors to spend time downtown. You want your residents to be thinking, "I wonder what's going on downtown tonight."

Suggestion 62: Convert the lawn area to paver stones with raised planters (bottom left and right). If this lawn area were covered with paver stones, the vendors could set up their carts on the paver area instead of on the sidewalks.





You want downtown to be your "Community Living Room." Think of what activities you enjoy at home, especially when you have guests visiting. Those same activities, and more, could be downtown. Downtown should be the place your community and visitors gather for their leisure hours, to visit together, dine together, play games together, and shop.

In order to revitalize a downtown and help businesses be more successful, the first goal is to give residents and visitors reasons to spend their time downtown. Make downtown a gathering place with activities.





Suggestion 63: Start programming this space (top left) and other spaces downtown. First, cover much of the lawn area with paver stones--lawn can get mushy and trampled on, making it unusable.

Suggestion 64: Imagine having a gathering space downtown that is filled with tables, chairs, and umbrellas (top right). This would give people a place to sit while they eat their hot dogs or ice cream that they bought from the vendors. It could also be a setting for a "Taste of Anchorage" event.

It doesn't have to be expensive to add tables and chairs. In this plaza (bottom left), they used large wire reels as tables.

This little pop-up plaza (bottom right) is great. It takes up about three parking spaces, provides seating and games, and can be moved when necessary.

You should have gathering spaces like this all throughout downtown.





Imagine having fire pits surrounded by seating downtown in the fall, winter, and spring (top left). Wouldn't that be fun? That would turn a winter visit to Anchorage into a celebration of the cold.

We kept seeing so many wide open spaces downtown with nothing on them (top right). This space could have six or seven giant chess sets with a few benches.

This is in Seattle (bottom left and right). They took an open area and replaced the lawn with paver stones and added tables and chairs and games. There's even a foosball table in the summer.

Suggestion 65: Board games could be available for check out in these public gathering areas through the visitor information center or the chamber.





We want families to be motivated to move to Anchorage, and having family games in gathering spaces downtown will help. Have some games like this (top left) downtown.

Suggestion 66: Make sure you have some giant chess and checker sets downtown (top right and bottom left). People love these.

When we were in Anchorage in the winter, Town Square Park (bottom right) was pretty much abandoned.





There were some barricades and caution signs (top left and right), and it would be difficult to have chess sets and games there during the extreme cold and snow.

There were very few people even walking through Town Square Park in the winter, although we did see a pile of someone's clothes (bottom left). That was puzzling.

Suggestion 67: We wanted to come up with some ideas to enable this wonderful space to be usable year-round (bottom right). Consider developing this into a year-round activity center.



When we were working in Reston, Virginia, we saw how they had turned their town square park into a covered activity area (above). The glass roof is beautiful and decorative, and provides enough cover to enable many different activities to be held regardless of the weather.

They would have garden shows, music, and other events and activities in the summer. They have fire pits and restaurants surrounding it. They can remove the lawn to hold various shows, events, and activities (top right).

In the winter, they turn it into an ice skating rink (right). Wouldn't that be awesome?









Anchorage has so much empty space downtown--it's beautiful space, but there is rarely anything going on there. This space can be used for activities--and we don't mean more events--we mean activities.





Suggestion 68: For downtowns to be successful, they need to have people spend time there at least 250 days a year. Events can't do that, but with programmed activities, downtown can attract that many people.

One excellent example of seeing this in action is in Rapid City, SD (all photos this page). This is Main Street Square. Originally a parking lot, the city built this fabulous plaza. It has activities year-round, and they hold events here as well.

They have a beer garden during events, restaurants on the perimeter, and car clubs have events downtown. Build the plaza first for your residents, and

visitors will follow. Remember: If you hang out downtown, so will visitors.

The splash pad is 1,500 square feet, and now they feel it is way too small. Due to its popularity, they wish it were as big as the whole circle area (top left).

The whole oval becomes an ice rink in the winter (bottom left), and their first year, they made \$130,000 renting ice skates.

Every night at 9:00 pm, Rapid City turns on the fountains on their splash pad, turns on the LED lights and have music playing (bottom right).

## Destination Rapid City

### Programming Main Street Square and downtown:

- \$550,000 per year
- Five full-time staff

### Funding:

- City: \$50,000
- BID: \$50,000
- Ice skate rentals: \$130,000
- Beer garden events: \$120,000
- Vendor sales: \$100,000
- Sponsorships: \$160,000
- Grants, foundation support, misc: \$70,000

**\$680,000**



Funding for the operations of Rapid City's Main Street Square comes from several revenue-generating activities, as well as some sponsorships and grant funding (top left). The operational cost per year is \$550,000, and they have five full-time staff. But as you can see, they are able to fund most of these costs through their ice-skating rentals, beer garden sales, and other vendor sales.

People love outdoor dining spaces like this (top right).

Anchorage has so many open spaces downtown, like these spaces (bottom left and right) that it isn't necessary to build a new plaza. These spaces can have activities in both the summer and the winter.





While we have not seen the interiors of this building or the building next door, these could possibly be home to a fantastic year-round public market. With rotating seasonal vendors and artisans in action, this could be one of Alaska's great draws.

Public markets are hugely popular draws, like the Pike Place Market in Seattle which is the Northwestern five state's largest attraction, hosting more than 14 million shoppers a year.

A downtown public market is an excellent way to bring residents and visitors downtown on a consistent basis. The building could be a multi-purpose space, primarily a year-round public market. Inside, the main floor could primarily be a public market, while there could be a loft area upstairs, which could be a business incubator. There could be a stage on the main floor, and food vendors.

The space could be flexible for various uses.

There could be permanent vendor spaces around the perimeter, and then the interior space could be filled with tables and chairs. There could be permanent food prep areas, public restrooms, and storage space.

You could clear out the center area for events and exhibits, such as bridal fairs, art exhibits, home shows, Christmas tree forests, biking and recreation shows, and more.

And this would be downtown, so you'd be bringing residents downtown on



a consistent basis. With the ever-changing activities, people would want to come back again and again.

Take a look at the videos about Public Markets in the Destination Development Association's video vault to find out more details.

**Suggestion 61: Develop sponsored activities.** All of the activities for the gathering spaces downtown, such as the tables and chairs, umbrellas, chess sets, outdoor musical instruments, games, foosball tables, etc., could be sponsored by local businesses. To recognize the sponsors, create A-board signs acknowledging and thanking each sponsor for their contributions.

You want to change the activities about every two weeks, so downtown is always changing. People will always be able to enjoy new games or activities.

You'll need storage facilities to keep everything secure when it's not being used, and staff to set everything up and keep it organized.

Bring downtown to life. This will make downtown Anchorage a showcase for the entire country.

## Plaza sponsor menu



Six ECR4Kids 4-to-score giant game set @ \$200 each.  
Six Giant Jenga sets @ \$70 each.  
**Total investment: \$1,250**



Four MegaChess w/25" tall King @ \$750 each.  
**Total investment: \$1,800**

Option: 37" tall King \$1,100 each.  
**Total investment: \$3,500**



Four Playcraft Extera Outdoor Foosball tables @ \$1,200 each  
And four Joola Nova Outdoor table tennis tables, paddles, and covers, bag of balls @ \$700 each.  
**Total investment: \$7,600**

This page and the following pages show some examples of activities and approximate costs that would make great additions for downtown gathering spaces.



## Plaza sponsor menu



48 qty. US Games standard hula hoops, 36": \$164  
48 qty. Hoop bundle pack 32": \$200  
Three racks @ \$190 each: \$570  
**Total investment: \$950**



Six Magis Spun Armchairs @ \$400 each  
**Total investment: \$2,400**

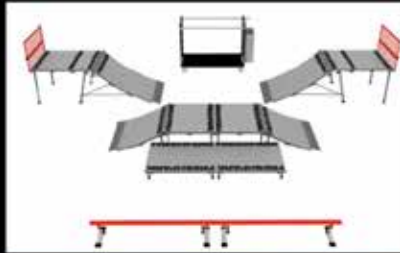


1 harp, 1 Pagoda bells, 1 Melody  
From Freenotes Harmony Park  
or Ensemble Collection (5 instruments)  
**Total investment: \$7,000 to \$20,000**

## Plaza sponsor menu



8 qty. 10'x10' Ez Pop-up Canopy Tent  
with removable end side walls, roller bag,  
four sand bags with each: \$290 each  
**Total investment: \$2,500**



Park In A Cart Portable Skatepark w/cart  
**Total investment: \$4,500 or \$9,000 for two**



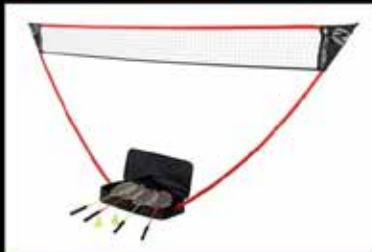
4 quantity Driveway Games all-weather  
corn hole set: \$120 each  
**Total investment: \$500**



## Plaza sponsor menu



8 qty. Tacklife Gas Fire Table, 28", 50,000 BTU  
Auto-ignition, propane tank, one fill: \$220 each  
**Total investment: \$1,800**



3 qty. (1 for parts) Zume Games portable  
badminton set w/freestanding base: \$40  
Extra rackets, shuttlecocks  
**Total investment: \$150**



1 Stamina outdoor fitness multi-station: \$240  
3 qty. Stamina outdoor fitness striders: \$440  
**Total investment: \$1,600**

## Plaza sponsor menu



200 qty. Value Series gray rattan indoor-outdoor stack chairs @ \$26 each: \$5,200  
50 qty. Round Coral steel patio table 32.5" @ \$60 ea: \$3,000  
50 qty. Jordan Mfg. 9' Market umbrella @ \$52 ea: \$2,600  
**Total investment: \$10,800**



4 qty. MegaChess Giant Checkers Set - 10" @ \$200  
This uses the same mats as the chess sets.  
Four separate mats @ \$65 each.  
**Total investment: \$1,060**



4 full Imagination Playground 105-piece sets \$4,975 ea.  
4 storage carts @ \$1,200 ea.  
**Total investment: \$24,700**





### Approximate cost:

6 4-to-score, 6 giant Jenga sets, 4 MegaChess sets, 4 MegaCheckers sets, 4 foosball tables, 4 ping pong tables, 96 hula hoops, 6 Spun Chairs, 5 musical instruments, 8 vendor tents, 2 portable skatepark kits, 4 corn hole sets, 8 fire pits, 3 badminton sets, 4 exercise machines, 4 105-piece Imagination Playground sets, 4 storage bins, 50 tables, 50 umbrellas, 200 stackable chairs.

### Consider:

For **everything** shown here: \$76,110  
Sponsor sandwich boards or plaques: \$2,000

### Adding it all up: the hard one-time costs

- Cleaning up the location	- \$3,000
- The plaza surface	- \$10,000 (largely self-funded)
- Power and water	- \$7,000 (added \$2,000 for water)
- Trash receptacles	- \$2,000
- Barrier planters	- \$8,000
- Public restrooms	- \$65,000* (portable trailer purchase)
- Stage or performance platform	- \$12,000
- Lighting	- \$800
- Security cameras	- \$3,500
- Activities	- \$76,110
	<hr/>
	- \$187,410

### Comparison

#### One varsity softball field:

Comparison	Cost:
Mobilization & mgmt.	\$77,500
Layout	\$7,000
Earthwork & drainage	\$82,000
Water, subgrade, final grade, turf	\$190,000
Dougouts	\$30,000
Fencing	\$28,000
Bleachers (600 seats)	<del>\$84,000</del>
Pre-fab press box	<del>\$60,000</del>
Storage bldg., batting cages	<del>\$87,500</del>
	<hr/>
	\$414,500 <del>\$646,000</del>

#### Does not include:

- Scoreboard
- Field lighting
- Parking (\$243,000)
- Restrooms
- Concessions
- Sidewalks
- Contingency (8%).



Suggestion 69: This shop has a lot of outdoor space (top left); use it! Add window displays, tables, chairs, pots and planters. These will also show that you're open.

Suggestion 70: We noticed that there was an event being held in this parking lot one day (top right and bottom left). We got there too late to check the event out, so we're not sure who hosted it. We suggest that activities and events should be held right in the heart of the downtown spending district, rather than in this parking lot. This is too removed from the core downtown.

Suggestion 71: Even parking lots between buildings, such as this (bottom right) would make a great little plaza with activities.



## INITIATIVE #8: DOWNTOWN: PARKING LOT INFILL



### Initiative #8: Downtown Parking Lot Infill

We had fantastic views from the windows in our hotel room at the Captain Cook (photos this page). But it really showed us that downtown Anchorage has an overabundance of surface parking lots. During our stays, these parking lots were never full.

The highest and best use of valuable downtown land is for condominiums, retail, restaurants, and hotels. Yet so much of downtown Anchorage is surface parking.



Anchorage has a lot of parking garages too, so we walked through some of them, and they were 90% empty when the surface parking lots had a lot of cars. So people are choosing to park on the surface lots while avoiding the garages.

Downtowns should be about people, not cars.

Suggestion 72: We agree with the AIA report--Anchorage should build housing and other developments rather than have so much surface parking.

If you eliminate most of your surface parking lots, it's possible you'll need to build another parking garage. But you can do that while still creating more retail space.

Stockton, CA (bottom left and right) has several parking garages where the first floor is full of retail. This can help pay for the cost of building the garage.





Suggestion 73: We had a hard time figuring out how much parking in the garages cost, and what the time limits were (top left and right). Add signage to let people know the hourly and daily cost, as well as the times.

Walnut Creek, California does a good thing with their parking garages. After paying for three hours of parking, any additional time is free. They incentivize people to stay longer--after all, the longer people stay, the more they spend, and that's good for businesses and downtown.

### Potpourri

We loved seeing the guided tours (bottom right). These are awesome.



We found the flea market (top left), but we didn't know when it operated or what we could expect when it is open. Add signage to let people know.

Suggestion 74: We were right next to the visitor center, when this individual (top right) started screaming profanities at people. Many people were frightened, not sure what he would do next, and everyone tried to get away from him. He may have mental or emotional issues, or perhaps drug or alcohol problems, and we hope he can get the help he needs. But he was causing an extreme disturbance and frightening many people, and he should have been arrested. This is the type of experience that can sour visitors on the whole city

of Anchorage. And social media users are always quicker to post something negative rather than something positive. There are no easy solutions, but the peaceful people spending time in downtown Anchorage have a right to feel safe; people don't have the right to disturb everyone else's peace and safety the way he did.

Suggestion 75: We weren't sure where the actual train depot is located--is this it? (bottom left) Add wayfinding signage.

We learned that this old train engine (bottom right) has a "moose catcher"!

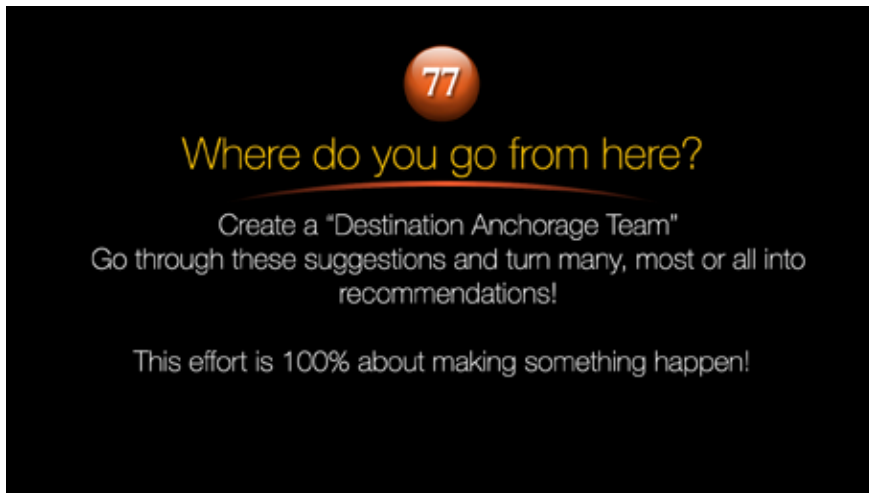




We went to Ship Creek in both the winter and summer, and we loved visiting it! It's a beautiful spot. We didn't know why the bridge was closed in the winter (top right), but people just stepped over the chain and walked across anyway.

In the summer it was so much fun to watch the fishermen (bottom left).

Suggestion 76: The interpretive signage didn't answer the questions we had, instead, they told basic information about the project. We were curious about the fish ladder, how it works, how often the fish try to go up the creek, and more about the fish. Add more information.



We were so curious about what all these fish were doing (top left). It seemed like they were waiting for something before continuing upstream. Add more information.

Give us more information about this structure (top right).

Suggestion 77: Where do you go from here?

Create a "Destination Anchorage Team" to go through these suggestions, discuss them, and see which ones make sense. Turn them into recommendations and organize the implementation of these.

You want to make something happen--to improve the quality of life for Anchorage, so that you can attract more residents, businesses, investment, and visitors.



## The order, by initiative

1. Invite us back: Readerboards at the VIC, Town Square Park
2. Blade sign program downtown | Buying co-op
3. Facade-side beautification | retail signage | benches
4. Parking lot infill (private-sector development)
5. One-way streets back to two-way streets
6. **Wayfinding:** Vehicular | Pedestrian | On-trail, trail heads
7. District identification
8. **Activate downtown** (Programming!)

## Timelines: 2022

1. Invite us back: Readerboards at the VIC, Town Square Park
2. Blade sign program downtown | Buying co-op
3. Facade-side beautification | retail signage | benches

## Timelines: 2023

1. One-way streets back to two-way streets
2. Wayfinding: Vehicular | Pedestrian | On-trail, trail heads
3. District identification
4. Downtown Programming

The food in Anchorage is as good as anywhere in the world. Really.



The recreation in and near Anchorage is simply world-class.



You are the home-base for the best fishing in the world.



You are the home-base for the best wildlife viewing on the planet.



You are home to the largest and busiest float-plane base in the world.





You'll find stunning beauty around nearly every corner.



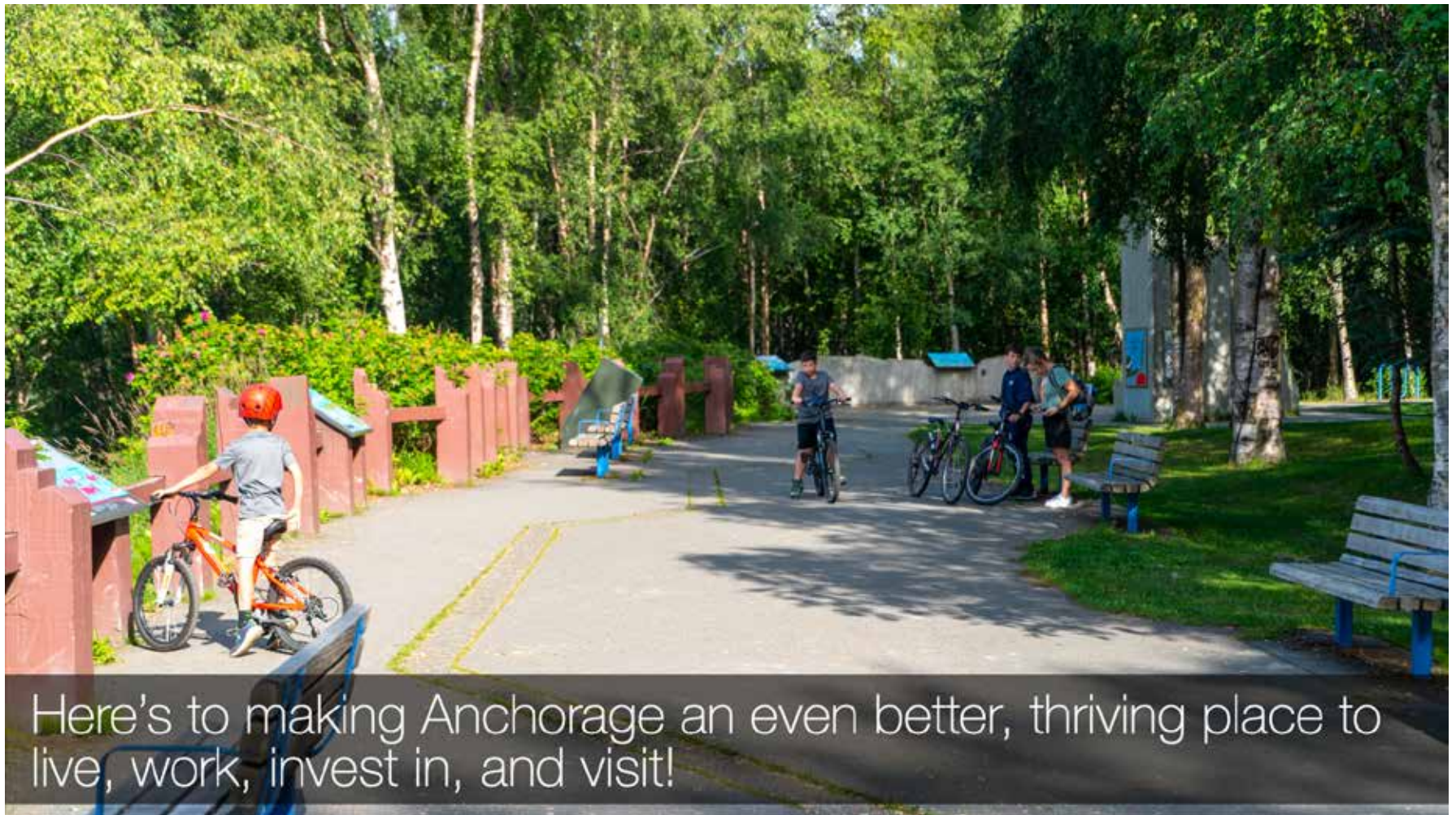
The art scene in Anchorage is world-class.















## Anchorage, Alaska Marketing Assessment

The following pages contain an assessment by our secret shoppers, who researched the area from a distance, reviewing marketing materials to see if they could find the area, and if the materials were convincing enough to make them want to visit.

### Anchorage, AK

Anchorage and Alaska in general have always been on my bucket list. The idea of mountains, wildlife, icebergs, the Northern Lights and much more makes it top of the list. Contemplating a vacation there, my first thoughts are the outdoor activities – seeing the wildlife and all the outdoors has to offer.

I began my planning by visiting the Visit Anchorage website ([www.anchorage.net](http://www.anchorage.net)) to find information, including the phone number and/or online place to request any information that would aid in my planning. Online, I was able to request the “Official Guide to Anchorage” visitor guide, which took 3 weeks to get to me.

I then called the Visit Anchorage Visitor Center at 907-276-4118. They also have an email address, however, the woman I spoke with on the phone was so helpful. She immediately encouraged me to come to the visitor center downtown when I arrive in Anchorage, for pamphlets and additional information. She arranged for me to receive the “Official Guide to Anchorage,” which I received in 2 weeks, which I thought was telling to the importance of the personal touch!

For lodging she said I needed to get on it ASAP, since I indicated my trip was going to be in August. But she offered a few suggestions with lodging that would be good for any of the three groups, these were her top two suggestions for lodging:

- Hotel Captain Cook – I smiled at this recommendation.
- Alyeska Resort – BUT only if prices weren’t really an object and if we didn’t mind driving a bit. Again, I smiled at this recommendation.



If I were traveling alone OR with a companion, I would love to stay at either of these hotels, as I have personal recommendations from people who stayed at these hotels. When I travel to a new place, I like staying at recommended hotels. If I were traveling with a child as my companion, I would probably stay at a cheaper hotel though, since I worry the two hotels recommended to me are fancy. A Hilton property would probably get my vote.

If my traveling companion is an adult, I am on board with either of the recommendations or an Airbnb so I can save money by cooking my own meals. But I know that Alyeska might be the farthest I'd actually stay in the area since Anchorage would be my hub for the trip. I also determined that just one day would NEVER be enough.

No matter who I am traveling with, I was thrilled to find suggested itineraries on the Visit Anchorage website. The activity that made the top of my list is the "Alaska Railroad Day". I love trains and would love to see the beauty of Alaska that way. The best part of the railroad day is that I could do this activity whether I'm traveling with a child OR adult.

This itinerary would allow me to see the spectacular views along the Turnagain Arm shoreline, giving me memories, I wouldn't soon forget. Then I can enjoy kayaking on Spencer Lake, or hike a glacier, before hopping back on the train to head back to Anchorage. This would be my day 1 in Anchorage.

On day 2, I'd explore downtown Anchorage, again planned with the help of Visit Anchorage's awesome itineraries. These itineraries helped me make sure I will see what I want. The itinerary includes starting the day at the Log Cabin Visitor Center, then hopping on the trolley to learn Anchorage's history, walking through the murals created by local muralists, taking in live music, and perhaps a lunchtime yoga session (just kidding.....I'll be eating lunch at one of the MANY highly recommended restaurants, Snow City Cafe). In the afternoon, I'd stroll through the Botanical Gardens closing out the day at another highly recommended restaurant, 49th State Brewing.

Day 3 would begin by renting a bicycle to travel down the 11 paved miles of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail that takes you on an adventure. From the coastal trail, I can "Choose my own Adventure", as it features connections to other trails and side trips full of detours, including Westchester Lagoon, and Earthquake Park.

Day 4 would take me to the Alaska Zoo. I LOVE zoos so much and would probably spend hours visiting the zoo's residents. After finishing up at the Zoo, or perhaps on Day 5, I would drive the 40-minute drive south to the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, a sprawling 200-acre habitat near the eastern tip of Turnagain Arm. According to the itinerary, there is a bear-viewing boardwalk.....I NEED TO BE THERE.

On my last full day of adventure in the Anchorage area, I would absolutely take a glacier cruise in Portage Valley, as it allows me to get back to Anchorage after the cruise in the same day. I would be nuts if I didn't take the opportunity to see the glaciers from the water.

I'm impressed by the Visit Anchorage website. It is user-friendly and easy to navigate. From the visitor's center, I hope to be able to get one of the official restaurant and entertainment guide. It is very informative and includes maps of "Local Flavor" by district, then another map of just the distilleries and breweries, that they entitled, "Sip and Savor".

I spent the majority of my time thus far on the Plan Your Trip page, and Restaurants page. But I wanted to explore the Visit Anchorage site further. When I went to the Outdoor page, I was impressed that they have their Instagram linked, and there are SO many posts featuring Alaska outdoors. These third-party endorsements make me even more excited for an outdoor adventure in Alaska. I can't imagine spending any less than a week in Alaska with all the outdoor activities. Add to that, all the OTHER activities they have to do, how does a person choose exactly what they do? For me, I'd use the itineraries on my first trip to get a variety.

Then my next trip.....because there will be a next trip.....I'd spend time doing more "off the beaten path" items, as well as visiting other regions of Alaska. In fact, I have a former boss who was a commercial fisherman and has friends who still are captains and love giving tours of their huge fishing/crabbing vessels. Think Deadliest Catch ships. That would be so interesting.

In addition to the Visit Anchorage website, I visited TripAdvisor and Instagram for inspiration. On TripAdvisor, I found something I didn't see in my exploration of the Visit Anchorage website. Alaska's Largest Open-Air Market. This is where I would go to try food unique to Alaska and buy all the souvenirs I could need. I am confident that if I searched specifically for the open-air market on the Visit Anchorage website, I would find it, however, with 55 pages of shopping in Anchorage, I would have to do a targeted search.

My next stop was google. I searched, "Anchorage, AK" just to be sure I wasn't missing anything, and I found a cool video by someone who visited Anchorage in AUGUST 2021. ONE YEAR AGO. And it hit the spot as he went through the 14 Things to do and eat in Anchorage, Alaska. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_G9ySMz8KM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_G9ySMz8KM) I found the video refreshing because so many videos are just elevator music with no narration. HE DID SUCH A GOOD JOB. Such a good job, that I found a new stop I had to go to. The Alaska Native Heritage Center. It covers the heritage and shows some example dwellings of the 11 major culture groups. Some of the replica dwellings can be entered to see how the groups survived in the winter.

The video also recommended another restaurant I want to go and live in. Fire Island Rustic Bakeshop, where they recommended getting breakfast sandwiches or scones. It is quick service. The last "food" location I saw in the video I'd definitely go based on his recommendation is a non-traditional food place, The Kobuk. It isn't a food place, but they do offer award winning donuts. Who wouldn't want that? Additionally, they have sought-after tea, which I'd purchase as a souvenir for some of my tea-loving friends.

Finally, I visited Instagram, with over one million tags, just typing in Anchorage gave me a handful of things I took note of for my trip. To start with, someone shared the daylight of summer solstice, which I will include. I also saw a post that includes a picture of a rock full of seals that tells about South Marble Island, who is home to sea lions, seals, otters, puffins and walrus.

The last thing that stood out to me is the various street art that I'll find in Anchorage. The most unique I saw was that of a dumpster.

All of my research should reflect that I plan to go to Anchorage for a week to 10-days. Those days would be in and around Anchorage itself, so if I wanted to explore other parts of the state, I'd have to take an extended holiday there.

The Anchorage brochure and visitor website are both excellent. They make it easy to find all the information I need to plan a trip. I love the "By Season" section; it shows that Anchorage is a good place to visit year-round.



informative.

Be sure to include information regarding seasonality. If there are certain places not open year-round, be sure to include that information

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL PRINT MATERIALS:**

Bentley University's Center for Marketing Technology found that 81% of visitors like to use printed brochures while traveling. So print materials are still a vital component of your marketing efforts.

We suggest that you create the following brochure in print AND have them available in PDF downloadable format on your websites.

### **1. The Very Best of Anchorage**

Anchorage has so many wonderful attractions, activities, and restaurants. It can be hard for visitors to know where the best places to go would be. Market your top:

- Restaurants
- Retail shops
- Attractions
- Activities

Use specific criteria to select the ones that are truly your "best of:"

- Must be open year round (at least 8 months)
- Must be open 6 days a week
- Must be highly regarded by third-party sources (reviews, etc.)
- Must have good curb appeal
- Must be open until at least 7:00 pm
- Must be unique to Anchorage and the area (no chains)

Invite the participants. Each should have an entire panel of the brochure, and they should pay for their panel. The panels should not look like ads, rather they should include professional photographs, specific, descriptive text, and be

### **2. Hidden Gems of Anchorage**

This could be a privately produced small book that promotes those places and things to do that are unique to Anchorage and less well known. This could include places like specific trails, selfie spots, and more. It could also include short itineraries.

The Hidden Gems would be sold as a small book to visitors.



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