

MEETING SUMMARY

Peratrovich Park Business Roundtable

Date | Time: May 3, 2023 | 2 – 4 p.m.

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

Overview

Project Summary: The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department is upgrading Peratrovich Park to improve user experience and activate the space as a popular downtown destination.

Meeting Goal: Business owners will help identify issues in the park, share what they like about this space, and imagine what the park could be like in the future.

Participants

Van Le, R&M Consultants Inc

Taryn Oleson-Yelle, R&M Consultants Inc

Steve Rafuse, MOA Parks and Recreation

Mike Braniff, MOA Parks and Recreation

Nicolette Dent, MOA Parks and Recreation

Scott Groves, Phillips Cruises & Tours

Lisa Kruse, Phillips Cruises & Tours

Gayle M. Gates, Grizzly's Inc/Phillips Cruises & Tours

Christa Chavez, Great Northern Cannabis Retail

John Redden, Great Northern Cannabis

Michele Robuck, Alaska Mint

Hunter Robuck, Alaska Mint

JC Snead, Tent City Taphouse

John Snead, Tent City Taphouse

Gabriel Collins, Wild Scoops

Terri Russi, Historic Anchorage Hotel

Alex Perez, Haute Quarter Grill

Roundtable Discussion Questions

- Issues and Concerns:**
 - What issues and concerns can we address through park design and improvements?
- Strengths and Opportunities:**
 - What are the best things about Peratrovich Park?
 - What are opportunities for positive change?
- Vision:**
 - What is your vision for a positive and welcoming Peratrovich Park?
 - What do we want Peratrovich Park to be like 20 years from now?
 - How can Peratrovich Park support the daily needs of your business and clients?

Strengths

- Live music at the Amphitheatre is well-attended and enjoyed by many
- Programs bring positive use to space – 144 events was a success and Saturday Market when it was downtown brought more people onto 4th Avenue
- Event such as Fur Rondy activate the space and bring people downtown in the winter
- Grass is nice to enjoy a sunny day
- Nearby investment is happening (Block 41)
- Ongoing sidewalk improvements on 4th Ave

Issues and Concerns

- **People are using the park for basic needs**
 - Hygiene
 - Phone/electronic charging
 - Vendors are giving out food
- **Behavior in park threatens personal safety**
 - Employees and visitors are being yelled at, harassed, and physically threatened
 - Fights are breaking out in the park
 - Amphitheatre corner (SE corner of park) attracts problem behavior
 - Plaza in front of Tequila 61 is also a problem area
- **“A place to stay, no reason to leave”**
 - Seating attracts unwanted behavior and long-term congregating
 - People are sitting both in the park and on front steps of businesses
 - Congregations seem to be growing larger and older
 - Concrete does not prevent congregating—still happens in Town Square Park
 - Problems are happening after hours
- **“Don’t want to chase everyone out”**
 - Balance of removing problem behavior but allowing room for positive use
 - Seating is important for tourists, seniors, people eating, people waiting for restaurants or shows
- **Limitations of enforcement**
 - Limited repercussions
 - Slow response times from APD
 - Unwanted behavior might just move to another location
 - Downtown ambassadors were helpful for escorting employees and tourists, but not equipped for enforcement
- **Lack of year-round use**
 - Without programs, park provides space for unacceptable behaviors
 - Food vendors only provide activation in the summer
 - Not a park use in the winter
- **Bigger issues that threaten success**
 - Lack of social service resources
 - Potential temporary vacancy of Old City Hall might make existing problems worse

Opportunities and Future Vision

- **Keep people moving through the park**
 - A dynamic place, not a place to stay for a long time
 - Replace current seating with something that does not encourage sleeping or long-term use, like a stool
 - Use mobile patio furniture that is removed each night

- **Downtown as a place you want to be**
 - People should feel like cool things are happening here
 - Park as a launching point for tours
 - A rallying point for intended audiences
 - Old City Hall + Mushing District are opportunities for emphasizing history
 - By attracting positive behavior here, we can disrupt a pattern
 - A pedestrianized 4th Avenue would make this a nice place to be
 - Curb space is valuable for visibility into the park
- **Create a multi-use, all-day park**
 - Planned activities all day
 - Serve business needs
 - Pickleball
 - Play areas, something for kids and families
 - Splashpad
 - Corn hole
 - Outdoor heaters
 - Farmer's Markets and craft vendors
 - Bring existing vendors into the park, reinvest the cost of permits
 - Streamlined permitting process (or better shared understanding of this)
 - Use experience from COVID for activation ideas
- **Use landscaping and maintenance to prevent unwanted behavior**
 - More flower beds
 - Offer something beautiful here
 - Less trees and more visibility
 - Don't use small rocks that can be thrown at windows
 - Decorative perimeter fence and close the park at night
 - Move horticulture staff duties to peak hours
 - Water the grass to disrupt groups lingering
 - Rules signage is posted on the log cabin, could be relocated
 - Add cameras, lighting, and signage
- **Change enforcement patterns**
 - APD is allowing overtime shifts to assist in early morning around park
 - More passive observation needed
 - More foot patrols