

MEETING SUMMARY

Peratrovich Park Advisory Group (AG) Meeting #1

Date | Time: May 24, 2023 (11AM – 12:30PM) |

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

Meeting Overview

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

Meeting Goal: First meeting of the Community Advisory Group (CAG), a group of stakeholders that will work closely with the planning team to identify park issues, community needs, and design priorities that should be considered in a site plan. The CAG will contribute a variety of perspectives and help find solutions that make Peratrovich Park a more positive place in Downtown Anchorage.

Participants

Mike Braniff, MOA Parks and Recreation
Steve Rafuse, MOA Parks and Recreation
Nicolette Dent, MOA Parks and Recreation
Van Le, R&M Consultants Inc.
Taryn Oleson-Yelle, R&M Consultants Inc.
Peter Briggs, Corvus Designs

Leah Boltz, Downtown Rotary
Melinda Gant, Anchorage Community Development Association
Radhika Krishna, Anchorage Downtown Partnership
Julie Saupe, Visit Anchorage
Danica Shirayayev, Anchorage Chamber of Commerce

Discussion Questions

1. Issues and Concerns:

- What additional issues and concerns would you like to see addressed through an improved park design? Are there any we missed?
- Outside of park design, what are the greater issues that need to be tackled to ensure future success of Peratrovich Park & Downtown Anchorage?

2. Strengths and Opportunities:

- What do you value about Peratrovich Park? Consider both physical features and experiences in the park.
- What changes will improve the experience in Peratrovich Park?

3. Vision:

- How will Peratrovich Park support both visitors and locals in all four seasons?
- What is your vision for a positive and welcoming Peratrovich Park?

Strengths

- Benches are needed for visitors
- Grass is an asset for events
- Grass and Log Cabin bring an Alaskan feel to downtown, a “breath of fresh air” from urban area
- Park provides spectating space for the Iditarod
- Food vendors activate the area (currently in ROW)

Issues and Concerns

- **“Lacking moments of color and beauty”**
- **Lack of authority/enforcement presence**
 - i. Creates feeling of discomfort for visitors
 - ii. Perception of instability and more negative uses than positive
 - iii. If Old City Hall becomes vacant, this could attract more negative use
 - iv. Families are not coming here any more
- **Hygiene and cleaning issues**
 - i. Dumpster behind amphitheatre attracts misuse and mess
 - ii. Lack of public restroom and a demand for one
 - iii. A sweep of the area for public health and safety happens before every event here
- **Challenges with activating the park**
 - i. Activation is expensive
 - ii. ADP can't do it alone
 - iii. Attendance ebbs and flows with programs; for example, Kids Music in the Park is now cancelled because attendance dropped significantly (450 to 50)
- **Challenges around the park**
 - i. Grass is not suited for bringing vendors into park
 - ii. Vendors on sidewalk (plus street trees) can create choke points and obstacles for users, especially those using mobility devices
 - iii. Construction on F Street has created inconsistent traffic patterns
 - iv. Alleyway is secluded and attracts misuse, but might be difficult to change due to its use as loading area for Egan
 - v. The parking in front of the park is used as short-term shuttle space, preventing folks from parking here to use park

Opportunities and Vision

- **Peratovich Park as the front yard of Anchorage**
 - i. Should feel like a warm welcome, comfortable, and relaxed
 - ii. Town Square Park as the livelier backyard
- **Year-round design**
 - i. Consider a shelter for shoulder season events
 - ii. Incentivize bringing vendors into the park
 - iii. Create demonstration gardens or find volunteers who could adopt a garden (i.e. Master Gardeners)
 - iv. Incorporate native plants, perennials, and vertical plant features
 - v. Expand the amphitheatre into a lighted plaza
 - vi. Celebrate the Mushing District here: “Puppies in the Park”
 - vii. Put up a light canopy with string lights to create a “guaranteed sense of place”
 - viii. Consider a self-activating design (think: the Gulch in Nashville). Murals that make great photos keep people cycling through the space, makes it feel safe, and iconic features serve as easy gathering places
- **Design for program ebb and flow**
 - i. The park design should work for many different types of programs and should not be a detriment when unused

- ii. What would lower-resource programs and pop-ups look like here – “passive” activation?
 - iii. ADP needs partners to bring resources to the table to continue activation
- **Evolve with the future uses of Old City Hall**
 - i. Create a daily usable site
 - ii. \$2.5 million from state budget for the building
 - iii. Children's Museum (something like the Imaginarium) is looking for space downtown, would be an ideal program partner for the park
- **Design for changing park user demographics**
 - i. “If it is good for locals, it will be good for visitors”
 - ii. Adapt to new demographics: consider new single bedroom apartments being built downtown and who that will attract
 - iii. Families are not coming downtown consistently anymore
 - iv. Consider a design that accommodates programs
- **Tell a story of Alaska**
 - i. Design iconic features that celebrate Alaska, especially indigenous art, placenames, and culture
 - ii. Celebrate the park's connection/relationship with the Log Cabin
 - iii. Create a partnership to celebrate Elizabeth Peratrovich Day in the park
- **Create something special, accessible, and inclusive**
 - i. Enhance connectivity through park/to Downtown, and create more inclusive access for all mobilities
- **Additional opportunities**
 - i. Alleyway: Could this become more part of the park rather than secluded/cut off area?
 - ii. Parking: Curb design should be responsive to bus, trolley, and large vehicle use
 - iii. Concrete: Doesn't have to be gray! Consider colorful surfacing
 - iv. Benches: Can be a positive in the summer, have been a negative in the winter, and should be designed to prevent loitering

Next Steps

1. For the next CAG Meeting:
 - How will partnerships support the vision for the park?
 - What are examples of other parks that get it right?
 - In 10 years, what 3 activities or features do you want to see in this park?
 - Is there anyone else we should talk to?
 - Homework: try and attend Music in the Park or Jazz in the Park!