



Welcoming Anchorage Roadmap

Our roadmap for an equitable, inclusive, diverse Anchorage



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Our Intention

Anchorage, Alaska is the gateway to America's Arctic, and among the most ethnically diverse cities in the United States. We are home to the most diverse neighborhoods and the most diverse schools in the country. More than 100 languages are spoken on our streets and in our city. Those languages represent cultures from around the globe and from across the North – and our city is especially honored to sit on the traditional homelands of the Dena'ina Athabaskans, where people have lived and welcomed newcomers for thousands of years.



This tradition and spirit of welcoming is a value that defines us. Without it, we would not exist. Anchorage is a welcoming city because we understand that being far away, in the remote northern corner of the U.S., we rely on each other not just for success, but for survival. As Alaskans, we know that when a snowstorm or cold weather threatens our safety, what matters is our willingness to extend a hand, not what color or political persuasion or sexual orientation may be on the other end of that hand.

When Anchorage became a member of Welcoming America in 2014, we joined other cities in recognizing that inclusivity – the tangible expression of equality and equity -- is a foundation for prosperity. We know that pride of place means pride of place for all our residents, and that the many heritages that weave together to become Anchorage make us a culturally vibrant and globally connected city. In a remote city, on the periphery of the continent, we practice inclusivity because it is our way of respecting the values that America stands for, and because we know that living those values is the surest way to achieve our promise.

Welcoming Anchorage is a collaboration between the Municipality of Anchorage, the Anchorage School District, local businesses and organizations, and the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation. In 2016, the Mayor's Office, supported by Wells Fargo, the State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, and the Alaska Community Foundation was awarded a Gateways for Growth grant from Welcoming America and the New American Economy. The grant supported Welcoming Anchorage's multi-sector strategic planning process. This document is a culmination of that process - an action-oriented strategic integration plan to identify policy changes, guide implementation activities, and ultimately serve to remove barriers to Anchorage becoming a more welcoming community in which all residents are fully integrated into economic, cultural, and linguistic life.

This is only the beginning. Anchorage is a dynamic, changing city and this "living" Roadmap is a starting point for change. More voices are encouraged to engage in the processes and actions needed to make Anchorage a community that reflects our shared values of inclusivity, equity and justice for all residents. Please, join your neighbors in this welcoming work!

Our Process

The People

A **Core Team** brought the resources and energy to drive the development of the roadmap. The core team consisted of the major partners in the grant:

- First Lady of Anchorage Mara Kimmel
- The Municipality of Anchorage, Office of the Mayor staff Amy Coffman, George Martinez, and Municipal Ombudsman Darrel Hess
- The Anchorage School District, specifically Katie Bisson of the English Language Learners Program
- The Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, Moira Sullivan.



A representative, knowledgeable, and engaged **Steering Committee** was developed to include community leaders, policy makers, service agency representatives, educators, business community members and other individuals and organizations who represent Anchorage's diverse communities. The Steering Committee helped to guide the effort and provide leadership and perspective to roadmap development. They were a sounding board and creative problem solver as well as a liaison between the planning process and the community. The steering committee galvanized community stakeholders to work together to make Anchorage a welcoming community for refugees, immigrants, Alaska Native people, people of color, differently abled and LGBTQ people.

A broad, ever-evolving and growing group of **community members** and **stakeholders** have been engaged throughout the development of the roadmap providing critical input and insight and shaping the direction of this initiative. Interested community members have been encouraged to sign up to be involved through the Welcoming Anchorage page on the Municipality's website as well as follow activities on the Welcoming Anchorage Facebook page. Approximately 800 people have signed up to be involved in the work of Welcoming Anchorage and receive updates on progress through the Municipality's webpage.

The Gatherings

There were numerous opportunities for people to play a role in the development of the roadmap for a more equitable, inclusive, and diverse Anchorage. The process began in September 2016 with a kick off Steering Committee meeting on September 1st, followed by a large stakeholder gathering on September 29th with over 65 attendees. To honor the welcome extended by the Denai'na Athabaskans whose traditional lands surround Anchorage, the gathering occurred at the Alaska Native Heritage Center. Throughout the seven months that followed, two additional large stakeholder meetings were held along with numerous smaller work group meetings to refine the vision, values, and vehicles. A summary of the public events can be found in the appendices.

The Priorities

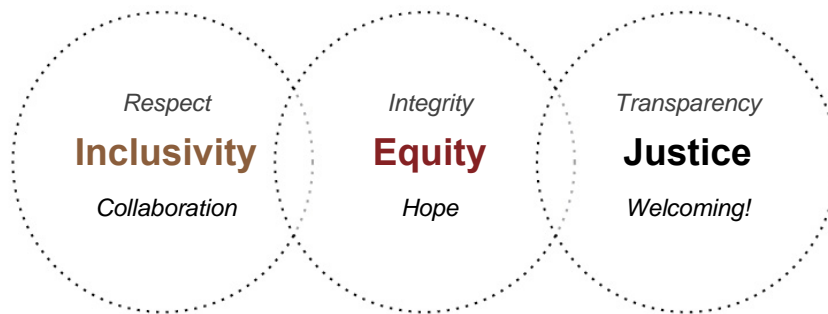
The Process culminated in a final meeting on April 24th, 2017 at Mountain View Library. Over 40 community members attended and voted on solutions generated by the work groups for each pillar. The attendees helped to prioritize and provide feedback on over 40 solutions. The results of the meeting are presented as an appendix.

Our Roadmap



Our **VISION** is that Anchorage is a globally competitive, culturally vibrant community where every resident feels a sense of belonging and has equal opportunity to access all the community offers.

Our efforts to create a more welcoming community are instilled with the following shared **VALUES**



Five pillars organize and drive our welcoming activities to the **VEHICLE** for change in our community.

Civic Engagement

.....
Anchorage residents are equally able to participate in civic life.



Connected, Safe, & Healthy Communities

.....
Anchorage is a safe community that is strong, resilient, and fosters a culture of non-violence. Anchorage promotes the health and welfare of all its residents including its most vulnerable.



Education

.....
Newcomers to Anchorage, along with longtime diverse community members, find cradle to career opportunities within a thriving education system.



Economic Development & Entrepreneurship

.....
We activate the full and diverse economic potential of Anchorage by removing all barriers and providing resources to achieve meaningful work and entrepreneurial opportunities for our diverse community members.



Equitable Access

.....
All Anchorage residents have equal access to governmental and community based services (by removing institutional, systemic barriers.)




Civic Engagement


Vision: Anchorage residents are equally able to participate in civic life.


Values:


- The Municipality of Anchorage endeavors to remove barriers to civic engagement so that all residents have the knowledge and opportunity to engage in the community and its processes, organizations, and institutions.
- Elected decision makers, local boards, commissions, community councils, and organizations look like the community and reflect the Municipality of Anchorage’s vibrant diversity.


Vehicles for Civic Engagement

 Enhance public transportation, ride-share, alternative forms of transportation and improve walking and biking infrastructure to make it easier to participate in public/ community events. (Locate meetings near public transportation routes, share the information).

 Develop Anchorage Welcome Guide to include information on how to participate, get engaged, guide to government, Muni 101.


 Provide childcare at public meetings/community events at low or no cost.

 Develop a civic engagement academy.

 Better use boards and commissions to contribute to local decision making and work to make sure they reflect the diversity of Anchorage.

 Rethink community council system to engage more diverse membership and involvement in local decision making.

 Go to where people congregate – mini meetings on bus, government on the go, assembly meetings in the schools.

 Provide translation services at public meetings (starting with Anchorage Assembly).




Connected, Safe + Healthy Communities



Vision: Anchorage is a safe community that is strong, resilient, and fosters a culture of non-violence. Anchorage promotes the health and welfare of all its residents including its most vulnerable.


Values:



- Anchorage’s diverse communities connect to each other and people are connected to services, jobs, housing, education, healthcare, and events.
- Anchorage residents come together, connect, and meet in public spaces throughout the day and year-round.
- All Anchorage residents have access to safe and healthy housing and affordable health care.
- Anchorage honors its First People, strives to increase the social connectedness of all residents, and welcomes its newcomers.

Vehicles for Connected, Safe + Healthy Communities


   Raise awareness about and increase use of public spaces (libraries, schools, parks) by diverse community groups (amend ASD policy to remove barriers to using schools for meeting places).

  Collaborate with Anchorage Police Department to improve outreach to youth and minorities and encourage hiring from within neighborhoods to police the neighborhood.

 Decentralize health services, so that clinics operate in neighborhoods throughout the Municipality of Anchorage and/or improve public transportation to health care services.

  Increase affordable housing stock.

  Improve land use policies to encourage mixed use, more compact development (vs. sprawl).

 Host community sponsored citywide block parties with city participation/attendance.

Education

Vision: Newcomers to Anchorage, along with longtime community members, find cradle to career opportunities within a thriving education system.

Values:

- From birth through adulthood, Anchorage’s diverse residents have equitable access to a wide range of formal and informal educational opportunities that further their academic, personal, and professional development.
- Educational programs in our community embrace the cultural and linguistic diversity of students and families, and provide meaningful supports to accommodate inclusion.

Vehicles for Education Overall



Engage teachers, staff, and educational leaders in ongoing high-quality professional development focused on working successfully and respectfully with diverse populations and English language learners.



Provide effective English language learning supports in all educational programs to ensure meaningful access to curriculum and resources.



Use targeted data to improve outcomes for diverse learners, working to address disparities through culturally-informed outreach and capacity-building.

Vehicles for Early Childhood Education + K-12



Allow for equal access to the ASD alternative programs for all families by addressing transportation barriers and bringing successful alternative educational models into neighborhood schools, to strengthen and diversify options for all families.



Structure schools to serve as hubs for wrap-around services for students and families, playing an integral role in a well-integrated and coordinated system of support.



Partner with linguistically and culturally diverse families to support student success, foster reciprocal learning, promote leadership skills, and increase access to learning.

Vehicles for Post-Secondary, Workforce + Adult Education



Collaborate with industry to provide wide range of certificate and credentialing opportunities to all residents, removing barriers to professional credential transferring for new arrivals.



Create pathways for older youth and adults seeking high school completion, with targeted supports for language learners and those with limited formal schooling.



Provide community schools programming at neighborhood schools with after-hours learning opportunities accessible by community members of all ages.




Economic Development + Entrepreneurship



Vision: We activate the full and diverse economic potential of Anchorage by removing all barriers and providing resources to achieve meaningful work and entrepreneurial opportunities for our diverse community members.


Values:


- Everyone has access to and opportunity for meaningful work and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- There is no brain waste in Anchorage and residents can find a job in their field of expertise.
- Anchorage has mentoring and internship opportunities for community residents.
- We activate economic capacity through our global and statewide relationships that rest on our diverse and multi-linguistic workforce.
- There are no institutional and structural barriers to enter the workforce.



Vehicles for Economic Development + Entrepreneurship


 Cultivate micro-lending opportunities and access to capital to support entrepreneurship and small business development.


  Develop financial literacy and management training to assist residents in starting small businesses.

 Link employers to the skills and talent of Anchorage's new arrivals, promote their hiring.

 Reignite the Municipality's commitment to DBE (disadvantaged business enterprise) and diversity contracting to foster a system that supports a range of contractors.

  Create community-wide job mentorship program that matches mentees and mentors (engage retirees).

 Require businesses within the Municipality to adopt nondiscriminatory hiring practices.

 Create a certification for welcoming businesses in Anchorage (see Atlanta "You're Welcome" project).

 Encourage community marketplaces (farmer's markets, informal pop-up markets) to generate economic growth.


Equitable Access


Vision: All Anchorage residents have equal access to governmental and community based services (by removing institutional, systemic barriers.)


Values:


- We remove language barriers with trained language service providers, by educating non-English speakers about their right to language services, with service providers aware of the need, how to, and the why they should seek to provide language services.
- We remove physical barriers by providing affordable public transportation, improving sidewalks and bike trails, removing snow, and providing access to technology that links people to services.
- We remove systemic and institutional, cultural barriers through kind, competent, compassionate service which supports and encourages access to government and community-based programs.



Vehicles for Equitable Access

 Require a cultural competency training academy for public service sector jobs: police, firefighters, doctors, job assistance program staff, general city employees.

 Offer on-demand access to qualified, trained language interpreters (by phone, creative technology/Google translate) throughout the city.

 Provide access to free, high-speed internet.

 Advocate for improving non-motorized infrastructure – trails, sidewalks, paths, parks.

  Develop cultural center or increase use of school spaces, community centers for cultural groups to host events, activities together.