



# PARKS, ARTS, RECREATION AND CULTURE (RECREATION AND CULTURE) NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Prepared for the City of Homer, Alaska  
by Agnew::Beck Consulting  
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- Kate Crowley, ReCreate Rec
- Asia Freeman, Bunnell Arts Center
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## HOMER RECREATION AND CULTURE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture (PARC) Needs Assessment is intended to determine the resources and prioritize the needs for the area community (including the City of Homer and four neighboring census tracts: Anchor Point, Fritz Creek, Diamond Ridge and Kachemak City) concerning parks, arts, recreation and culture (PARC) facilities and programs. To accomplish this, the project involved:

1. Assessing community values, wants and needs related to PARC resources, based on feedback from a broad range of organizations, individuals, and businesses;
2. Identifying gaps between identified needs and existing facilities and programs; and
3. Investigating strategies for meeting priority needs, recognizing the realities of finite resources (e.g., funding, volunteers, profitable business opportunities) and Homer's relatively small population. Strategies include better use of existing facilities, while investigating options for new resources to support future recreation and culture improvements.

The results reflect the reality that many residents, businesses, organizations of and visitors to the greater Homer area deeply value PARC resources for their social, health and quality of life benefits, for the economic opportunities they provide, and because they make greater Homer the community and the place in which they choose to live. The greater Homer area has attracted a community of people with great vision and capacity to make things happen: community members dedicate a remarkable number of volunteer hours, have started and maintained numerous nonprofits, hosted community events, and donated materials and funding toward various community resources.

### AMBITIOUS, REALISTIC AND STRATEGIC

With all this community effort, greater Homer already has a wealth of PARC resources. The needs assessment reveals a desire for even more: a broad and ambitious list of ways to further expand and fill PARC gaps. At the same time, it is clear that there are limits in the community's ability to meet all expressed wishes, and that there is a desire to be realistic about how much the community is able to take on and sustain over time. To satisfy these goals, this summary of identified needs is presented within the context of an overall set of strategies:

1. Maximize the use of existing public resources.
2. Look for and take advantage of opportunities for the private sector to fill gaps.
3. Explore new ways to improve the efficiency and coordination of providing PARC resources and related information sharing.

4. Maintain existing facilities while developing funding strategies for highest priority future expansion or renewal projects.

## SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED PRIORITY NEEDS

A full list of identified needs is included in the attached Identified Needs Inventory. This list was generated from a review of previous relevant plans and studies, an online community survey, an online provider questionnaire, community workshop and focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. From this inventory, a set of priorities was determined by filtering the identified needs based on whether they had:

1. Broad support from multiple user groups and the general public and therefore would directly serve the largest portion of the community, *or*
2. High level of support from one or more organized user group(s) and therefore already has a project champion, although it may directly serve a smaller subset of the community.

The identified needs were also filtered through a set of specific criteria developed by the community as the basis for prioritization; these criteria determined that priorities should:

1. Contribute to the economic vitality of the community.
2. Bring together multiple organizations and user groups (such as seniors and youth).
3. Support the capacity and mission of existing organizations.
4. Be affordable to users.
5. Be able to be staffed and maintained.
6. Have a user group.
7. Be physically accessible to community members, in a central location, and complement adjacent land uses (if applicable).
8. Include both passive and active recreation together.

The priorities that emerged through this filtering process focus on the need for indoor facilities/activities and improvements to PARC resource coordination, and also included a number of more modest of outdoor facilities and programming needs.

## INDOOR FACILITIES

Of the priorities that filtered to the top, the most significant was space for indoor activities. The most pressing needs are for a general-purpose gymnasium and a multi-purpose space for dance, martial arts, performing arts (rehearsals, performances), and community events. It will be difficult for the community to meet these types of programming needs until adequate space is created. Specific identified needs include:

- Active recreation space: large multi-purpose gymnasium, indoor walking track, affordable weight room, martial arts gym, indoor (and outdoor) racket sports-
- Space for the arts: centralized location for music activities (including practice studio, recording studio and/or programming), more spaces for making art, 200-300 seat performance space, and
- Spaces for youth: toddler and family spaces,<sup>1</sup> teen space while school is not in session.
- Space that can support varied community events and gatherings.

Depending on specific designs, many or even all of these needs might be met in a single facility. A multi-purpose community center was the most frequently identified need across providers, user groups, existing plans and the general public. Although frequently mentioned, a new multipurpose facility would be costly. Considering the other identified needs, this project might best be deferred to a medium or long-term status, giving time to raise the necessary funding as well as time for the area's population, industry and tax base to grow. The next step for the community will be to determine how best to meet priority indoor space needs through existing facilities, new discrete facilities or grouped within a single multi-use project. Investigating options will include consideration of: the availability of existing spaces and their ability to adequately meet the identified needs; potential project providers (who will own and operate the space, who will run the activities), their responsibilities, level of commitment and ability to sustain use/participation; potential funding mechanisms and willingness to pay; and which uses will be compatible or incompatible in a multi-use facility. While these decisions are being made, the City should investigate ways to keep the HERC open (e.g., for another 10 years) to help meet indoor space needs.

Another priority that came up repeatedly during the needs assessment is the need to stabilize the financial future of the Kevin Bell Ice Arena. Though the City is not responsible for this facility, thousands of people use the facility (up to 800 in a week). The facility supports local users and also attracts teams from outside the community who spend time (and money) in Homer. Aside from the debt of the building and land, the rink's revenue has supported its yearly operations since it opened in 2005. Current debt totals \$2.74 million, and it will require \$60,000 per year to repay. The rink has become an institution in Homer, providing healthy lifestyle choices and also important winter revenue with the annual tournaments and games, bringing visitors from other cities. The Needs Assessment is not the forum in which to work out the specific near term strategies on this time-sensitive issue. The community can continue to seek opportunities to meet existing user needs at the hockey arena (e.g., indoor walking, climbing) as well as investigate longer term revenue sources that could help sustain the facility. The idea was raised to consider dedicating some amount of City funds to cover a portion of the \$60,000 annual debt payment.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of these space needs may be fulfilled by better communication about existing toddler-friendly spaces and activities; many programs are already offered and new activities starting.



## OUTDOOR FACILITIES

Priority outdoor facilities include: upgrading the softball fields, car-free ice skating at Beluga Lake, a warming hut on the spit, an outdoor amphitheater, and multi-use trail connections. These outdoor improvements, while important, present a much lower threshold of cost and complexity than the possible need for some form of new, multipurpose indoor facility(ies).

## ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, PROGRAMING

A number of programming needs were identified, listed below. Exploring options to meet these identified needs is important, but must be considered in the context of the management and/or addition of indoor facilities, which is closely tied to many of these identified needs.

- Indoor, winter event space and programing, activities (e.g. laser tag, bumper cars, go cart track, child play area), and longer hours for programs or facilities (e.g. late night and/or early morning).
- Multi-generational activities, for parents and toddlers, for mentally and physical disabled older people, for seniors in general.
- Activities at McNeil Canyon School and in Anchor Point, specifically.
- Short courses/workshops (one day or less), with smaller time and financial commitment.
- Specific activities/classes: folk school, healthy cooking, lifelong learning programs, Zumba, wildfoods safety, marine safety, adult indoor soccer.

## MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Outreach results make clear that participants recognize the need for new strategies to meet these priorities and identified the following solutions:

- Make better use of what already is available:
  - Centralized community calendar and information sharing (e.g., via mobile phone app).
  - Transportation improvements to get people to activities/events (e.g., affordable cross-bay transportation, rides for youth and seniors who do not drive).
  - Continued coordination and access to school district resources, particularly the high school.
- Improve the delivery of PARC resources:
  - Centralized meeting room list/scheduler.



- Consolidated community PARC leadership to reduce the number of volunteer boards and enable better coordination among providers (e.g., calendaring, networking, partnerships on projects, joint fundraising or grant applications, reciprocal membership agreements).
  - Consider a centralized City Parks and Recreation Department with additional City of Homer recreation staff (existing staff are currently at capacity, and the City could potentially leverage increased community involvement toward providing services and completing park improvement projects with additional staff.).
  - Consider ways to maintain the PARC Committee and continued City involvement in PARC resource management.
- Investigate new funding options (e.g., service area); consistent capital funding is needed, whether for the HERC, ballfields, or park improvements.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO USE EXISTING FACILITIES

The community felt strongly that Homer’s many existing resources should be used to meet existing needs before any new facilities were built or programs started. The Needs Assessment included an analysis of the extent to which priority needs could be met with existing resources, based on the needs and existing resources inventories generated through the needs assessment process. Many identified needs could potentially be met through existing or new resources, depending on the will of the community.

## NEXT STEPS AND IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

Parks, art, recreation and culture are important enough to area residents that a majority support some degree of increased public funding for recreation and culture facilities and services through various means. In the near term, recreation and culture leaders could continue to focus on the operational and organizational priority needs to better coordinate and consolidate existing resources in terms of space, funding and fundraising efforts, information sharing, and planning for longer-term priorities, such as a new multi-purpose facility or addressing the future ownership of the Kevin Bell Ice Arena.

The statistically valid survey indicates a level of support and willingness to dedicate City funds toward these two large capital projects. Just over half of the statistically-valid telephone survey respondents (56.8 percent) said that a new multi-purpose community center should be a City priority within the next 10 years and indicated a willingness to contribute some amount of property taxes to its development. Similarly, just over half of the statistically-valid telephone survey respondents (53.6 percent) indicated that the City should provide approximately \$10,000-\$15,000 per year in new funding to help cover a portion of the loan payment on the hockey arena, and look to the Homer Hockey Association to find the remaining funding for the Kevin Bell Ice Arena. Another 20.1 percent of survey respondents indicated a willingness to dedicate city funding to pay the entire \$60,000 annual mortgage payment on the ice arena.

The statistically valid survey also indicates a level of support for different potential funding mechanisms. The most frequently indicated choice of municipal funding mechanism for new recreation and culture services was to reallocate existing funding from other municipal sources (25 percent). Support for taxes (property, sales, other) as the preferred funding mechanism ranged from approximately 12-18 percent, while survey results also indicate that over 55 percent of area residents would to some degree favor the creation of a service area in the Homer area to fund new recreation and culture services. The most likely and robust strategy for funding existing and new recreation and culture facilities and services is to leverage funding from a variety of sources, including city tax funding, user fees, grants and continued volunteer support.

## INTRODUCTION

For a long time, the Homer area has had a rich offering of recreation and culture amenities. Community parks and beaches, indoor and outdoor sports, visual and performing arts, cultural events and festivals are all part of the local quality of life for residents of all ages. This is part of what makes Homer what it is, part of what brings new friends and family to live in the area, and part of what keeps residents healthy and engaged in community life.

While the community is abundant in recreation and culture resources, the City and a number of community organizations face tight budgets, overcommitted or inadequate physical facilities, and other limitations to their ability to sustain programming and facilities. The Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment is intended to help the greater community to get creatively organized about how to make the most of what Homer has already, to build on that foundation to provide new amenities, or to move existing programs and facilities in new directions. The needs assessment also provides greater clarity about the value of recreation and culture activities to the community and identifies potential resources and strategies to sustain and grow the amenities that make Homer the place residents want to live. The needs assessment does this by:

1. Assessing community values, wants and needs related to PARC resources, based on feedback from a broad range of organizations, individuals, and businesses;
2. Identifying gaps between identified needs and existing facilities and programs; and
3. Investigating strategies for meeting priority needs, recognizing the realities of finite resources (e.g., funding, volunteers, profitable business opportunities) and Homer's relatively small population. Strategies include better use of existing facilities, while investigating options for new resources to support future recreation and culture improvements.

The results of the needs assessment reflect the reality that many residents, businesses, organizations of and visitors deeply value recreation and culture resources for their social, health and quality of life benefits, for the economic opportunities they provide, and because they make Homer the community and the place in which they choose to live. Homer has attracted a community of people with great vision and capacity to make things happen: community members dedicate a remarkable number of volunteer hours, have started and maintained numerous nonprofits, hosted community events, and donated materials and funding toward various community resources.

With all this community effort, Homer already has a wealth of parks, art, recreation, and cultural resources. The needs assessment reveals a desire for even more: a broad and ambitious list of ways to further expand and fill recreation and culture gaps. At the same time, it is clear that there are limits in the community's ability to meet all expressed wishes, and that there is a desire to be realistic about how much the community is able to take on and sustain over time. To satisfy these goals, identified needs are presented within the context of an overall set of strategies:

1. Maximize the use of existing public resources.
2. Look for and take advantage of opportunities for the private sector to fill gaps.
3. Explore new ways to improve the efficiency and coordination of providing recreation and culture resources and related information sharing.
4. Maintain existing facilities while developing funding strategies for highest priority future expansion or renewal projects.

## METHODOLOGY

A full list of identified needs was generated from a review of previous relevant plans and studies, an online community survey (989 responses, representing approximately 1,700 people), an online provider questionnaire (21 responses), community workshop (approximately 40 participants) and focus group discussions (approximately 55 participants), and key informant interviews. From this inventory, a set of priorities was determined by filtering the identified needs based on whether they had:

1. Broad support from multiple user groups and the general public and therefore would directly serve the largest portion of the community, or
2. High level of support from one or more organized user group(s) and therefore already has a project champion, although it would directly serve a smaller subset of the community.

The identified needs were also filtered through a set of specific criteria developed by the community as the basis for prioritization; these criteria determined that priorities should:

1. Contribute to the economic vitality of the community.
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4. Be affordable to users.
5. Be able to be staffed and maintained.
6. Have a user group.
7. Be physically accessible to community members, in a central location, and complement adjacent land uses (if applicable).
8. Include both passive and active recreation together.

A gap analysis of recreation and culture needs was performed with the priorities that emerged through this filtering process. The City of Homer oversaw the process, with staff support and project management provided by Walt Wrede and Julie Engebretsen, and guidance from the Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture (PARC) Advisory Committee, which represented perspectives from the Homer Council on the Arts (HCOA), Parks and Recreation Commission, Homer Hockey, MAPP of the Southern Kenai Peninsula, Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly, ReCreate Rec, Bunnell Arts

Center, City of Homer Community Recreation, Homer Voice for Business, and motorized sports groups (e.g., Snomads).

A statistically valid telephone survey was conducted by Ivan Moore Research, primarily to assess the community's willingness to pay for identified recreation and culture needs. Survey results indicated that recreation and culture are important to the majority of area residents and that there is some support for increasing public funding for recreation and culture facilities and services through various means. The full survey report cross-tabulates responses by categories such as zip code, age, and income for a more detailed picture of how people value recreation and culture resources, as well as funding options at the time of the survey.

# RECREATION AND CULTURE IN GREATER HOMER

## THE GREATER HOMER COMMUNITY

Residents, businesses, organizations of and visitors to the greater Homer area deeply value recreation and culture resources for their social, health and quality of life benefits, for the economic opportunities they provide, and because they make greater Homer the community and the place in which they choose to live. The greater Homer area has attracted a community of people with great vision and capacity to make things happen: community members dedicate a remarkable number of volunteer hours, have started and maintained numerous nonprofits, hosted community events, and donated materials and funding toward various community resources.

Figure 1: Greater Homer Area Population, 2013



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Census Bureau

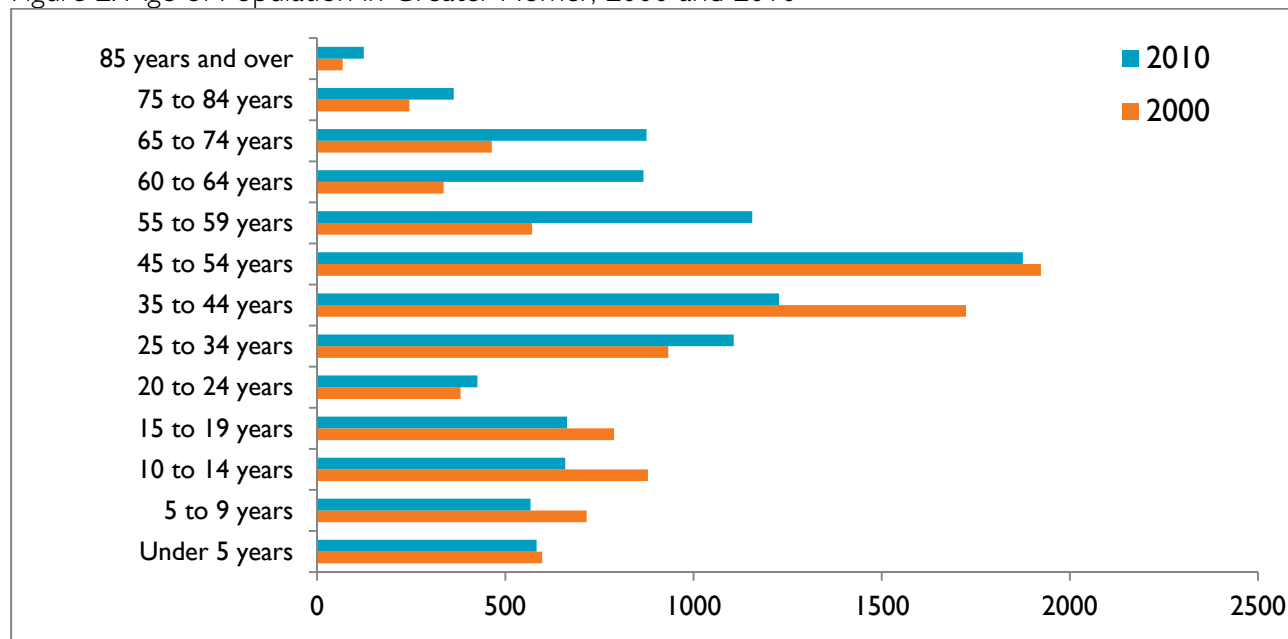
## POPULATION TRENDS

The Homer Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment focuses on the City of Homer and four neighboring census tracts: Anchor Point, Fritz Creek, Diamond Ridge and Kachemak City. The population of this area totaled 10,842 in 2013.<sup>2</sup> Changing age distribution in this area between 2000 and 2010 suggests that it will see greater recreation and culture participation by seniors and stable or decreased participation by other age groups. The population of people age 55 to 74 nearly doubled during that time, while the population age 35-44 decreased by almost 500.

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<sup>2</sup> Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 2: Age of Population in Greater Homer, 2000 and 2010



Sources: 2000 Census, 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimate; Greater Homer area includes Homer city, Kachemak city, Diamond Ridge, Fritz Creek, and Anchor Point.

The population over 65 is projected to almost double in the next forty years. This trend suggests that the greater Homer area is likely to see more recreation and culture participation by seniors; this increase could include more potential volunteers among active seniors.

Figure 3: Projected senior population 2012-2042

	2012	2017	2022	2032	2042	annual increase	total increase
Homer Population	10,783	11,217	11,628	12,183	12,434	1%	15%
Homer Population 65+	1,733	2,150	2,789	3,325	3,094	3%	78%
65+ percent of total population	16%	19%	24%	27%	25%		

This projection method assumes the Homer population will remain the same size relative to the Kenai Peninsula Borough (19 percent of total population) and applies the 65 and older population annual increase in the Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) to the Homer population.

Source: 2010, Census, 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimate; Alaska Population Estimates by Borough, Census Area, City, and Census Designated Place (CDP), 2010-2013; State of Alaska Population Projections 2012-42



Youth population trends are less clear, suggesting that recreation and culture resources should remain flexible to accommodate changing youth populations. While the number of the young people under age 19 living in greater Homer decreased dramatically between 2000 and 2010, the population under five years old has decreased by a significantly smaller amount than the older youth population, indicating that the decrease in youth population may be slowing. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of young people is (or will soon be) increasing because of the number of infants that have been born within the last two to three years. The Kenai Peninsula Borough is projected to have an overall increase in young people.

Figure 4: Population Change in the Greater Homer Area, Age 19 and Under, 2000-2010

Age	2000	2010	Change
Under 5 years	598	583	-3%
5 to 9 years	716	567	-21%
10 to 14 years	879	659	-25%
15 to 19 years	789	664	-16%
<b>All age 19 and under</b>	<b>2,982</b>	<b>2,473</b>	<b>-17%</b>

Source: 2010, Census, 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimate; Alaska Population Estimates by Borough, Census Area, City, and Census Designated Place (CDP), 2010-2013

Figure 5: Kenai Peninsula Borough population projections 2012-2042

	2012	2022	2032	2042	% increase
Kenai Peninsula Borough	56,718	61,391	64,321	65,647	16%
19 and under	14,423	15,483	16,865	17,403	21%

Source: State of Alaska Population Projections 2012-42

## THE VALUE OF RECREATION AND CULTURE

Results from both an online (non-statistically valid) survey and a telephone (statistically-valid) survey indicate that recreation and culture activities are important to Homer community members. Seventy five percent of online community survey respondents (self-selected) said arts and recreation activities were important or very important to them and their immediate family.<sup>3</sup> Just over 59 percent of statistically-valid telephone survey respondents indicated that recreation and culture activities are important or very important to them and their immediate family and friends.

Figure 6: Importance of arts and recreation activities to immediate family and friends? (online survey)

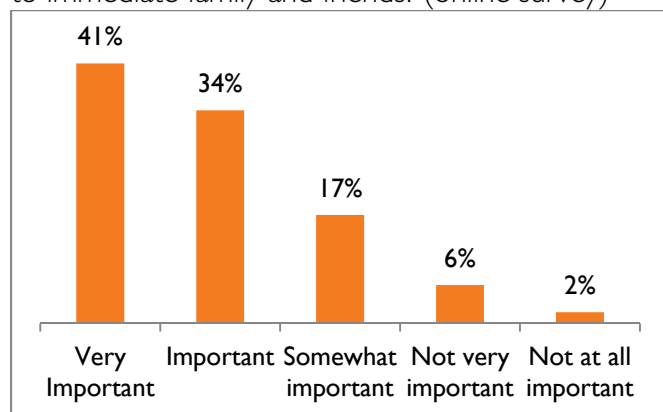


Figure 7: Importance of Recreation and Culture Activities

**How important are the availability of recreation and culture activities to you and your immediate family and friends?**

Response	Percent	Number
Very important	43.6%	113
Important	15.7%	41
Somewhat important	24.3%	63
Not very important	7.1%	18
Not at all important	8.7%	23
Not sure.	0.6%	2

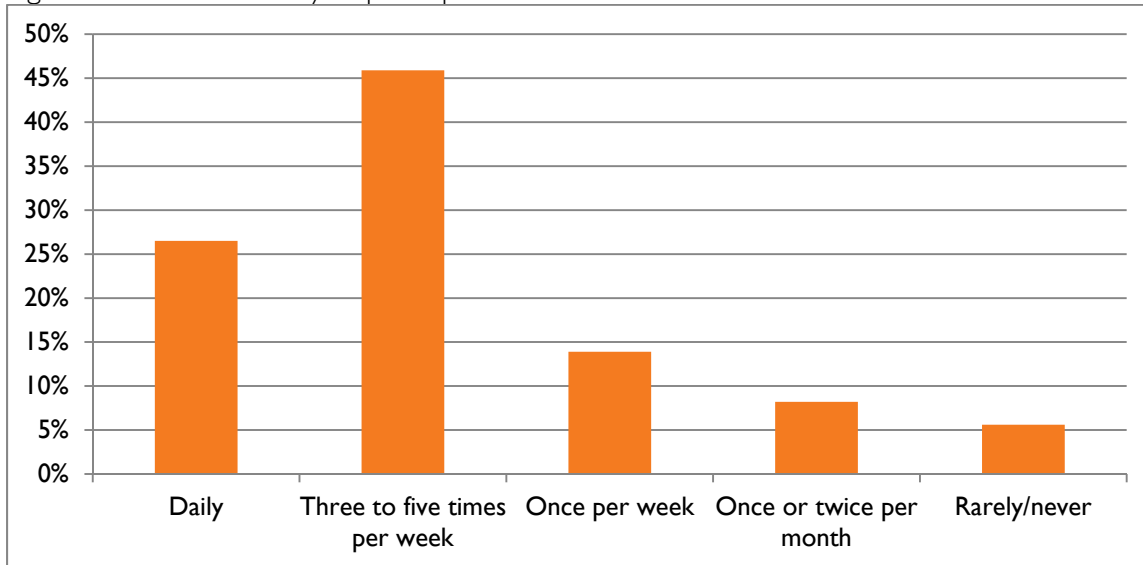
Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Public Opinion Survey, Ivan Moore Research. Raw survey results are weighted according to the following: 1) Responses apportioned by zip code according to the adult population in each; 2) Marital status balanced by gender in both zip codes (i.e., the percentage of married men equals that of married women

<sup>3</sup> The online survey asked residents to rate the importance of arts and recreation separately. To compare results with the statistically valid survey, respondent answers to the importance of art and recreation were combined to create an index representing the combined importance of recreation and arts.

and the percentage of single men equals that of single women); 3) The age distribution is weighted to match the census distribution of head of household; 4) Cellphone-only responses were appropriately weighted against landline responses.

Survey results also suggest that recreation and culture are an important part of residents' daily life. Around 75 percent of online community survey respondents participate in a recreation and culture activity three or more times per week.

Figure 8: How often do you participate in activities?



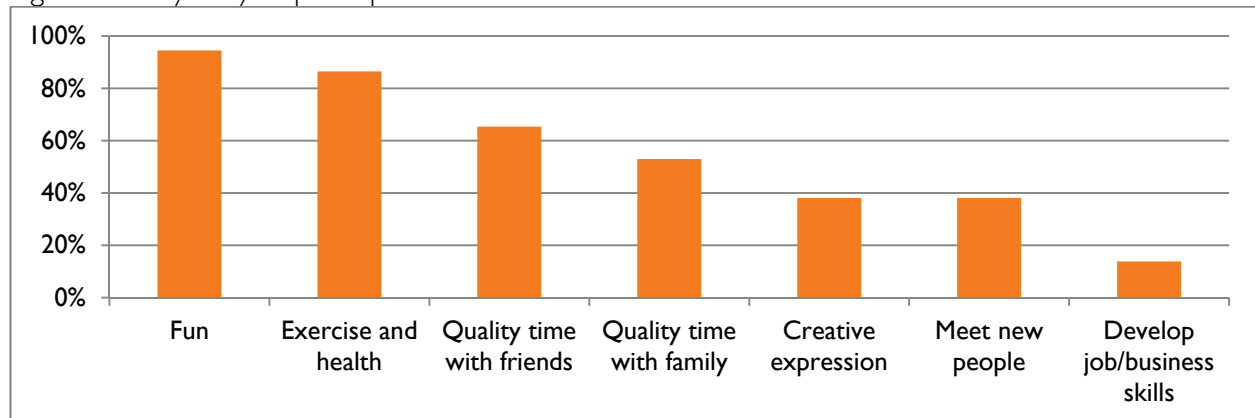
Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Online Community Survey

## COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Fun is the number one reason Homer residents participate in recreation and culture activities. Ninety percent of the nearly 1,000 survey respondents said fun was one reason they participated in recreation and culture activities. Recreation and culture activities provide utilitarian benefits as well: nearly 85 percent of respondents said they participated for exercise and health benefits. Respondents said that recreation and culture activities help with stress management, spiritual health and quality of life during the winter months.

*Recreation is a quality of life priority for my family and I value youth activity opportunities above almost all else.*

Figure 9: Why do you participate in recreation and culture activities?



Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Online Community Survey

Community workshop participants identified these intangible benefits of recreation and culture to the Homer community:

- **Health benefits** | Community safety; mental and physical health.
- **Family and social wellbeing** | Networking, role modeling, having places for people to interact, as an extended family, especially when many people have family far away.
- **Education** | Opportunities for young people to spend free time and/or to develop their vocations; contributes to a great school system.
- **Natural resource conservation** | Opportunities to learn about and experience the natural environment, fosters conservation.
- **Economic wellbeing** | Generates business opportunities and is a visitor destination.

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Recreation and culture amenities also provide direct and indirect economic benefits. Respondents to the Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Provider Survey reported that recreation and culture resources provide about 175 full-time, part-time, or contracted jobs in the Homer community. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development estimates that around 300 people have experience in this job category.

Figure 10: Number of Workers with Experience in PARC Industries, 2009–2013

Place	Arts, entertainment, recreation employment experience by place of residence
Homer city	181
Anchor Point	28
Diamond Ridge	27
Fritz Creek	50
Kachemak city	15
<b>All</b>	<b>301</b>

Source: Number of Workers with Experience in Industry 2009–2013, Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section. Last updated on August 26, 2014.

Indirect economic benefits come mainly through the visitor industry. The average visitor to Homer spends \$257 per trip, including \$87 on tours, activities and entertainment; 16 percent of Homer workers are employed in leisure and hospitality.<sup>4</sup> The Provider Survey also indicated that recreation and culture resources do attract visitors who support the Homer economy, drawing anywhere from 500-600 attendees to recreation and culture events, with the average event drawing about 115 people in addition to the people producing, performing or competing in the event. Other providers indicate that:

- Nearly 90 percent of campground users come from outside of Homer (City of Homer Parks Maintenance).
- About 10 percent of the Kachemak Wooden Boat Society festival attendees come from out of town.
- Every Saturday visiting Little League teams from the Kenai Peninsula or Anchorage visit Homer to play ball, eat lunch and dinner. Many spend the night and plan a fishing trip (Homer Little League).

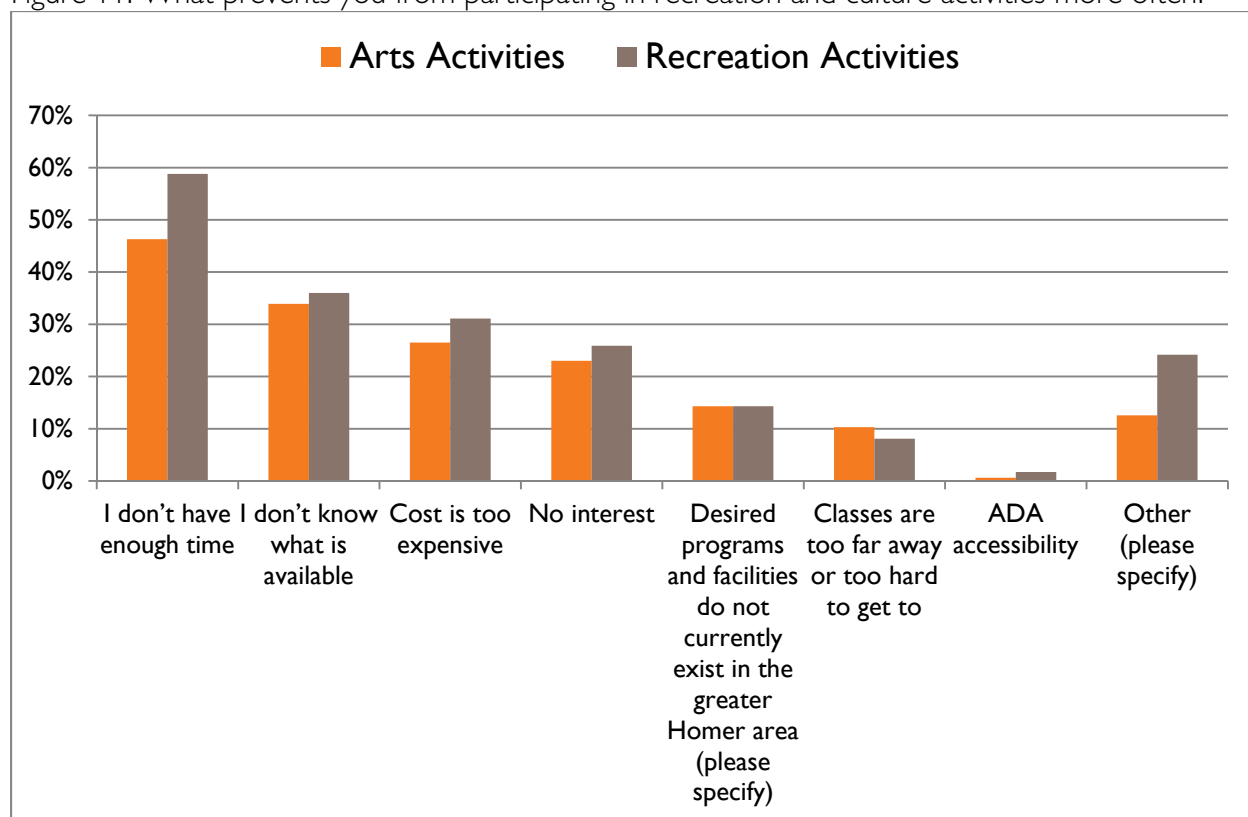
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<sup>4</sup> Source: Alaska Economic Trends, June 2013, AKDOLWD; Alaska Visitor Statistics Program VI: Summer 2011, McDowell Group.

## BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Through the online community survey (self-selected), the needs assessment identified a number of barriers to participation in recreation and culture activities, as well as common themes for overcoming these barriers. A number of survey respondents also indicated that they are fully satisfied with recreation and culture offerings in the Homer area and believed that no changes are needed.

Figure 11: What prevents you from participating in recreation and culture activities more often?



Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Online Community Survey

The assessment identified several common themes for overcoming these barriers to participation:

- **Time** | Lack of time or scheduling conflicts prevent people from participating in what is available. Sometimes there are too many things happening at the same time.
- **Space** | Some spaces (e.g., open gym, publicly-accessible workshop) are unavailable when people want to use them; some are not available at all.
- **Communication** | People don't always know what is available to them, and/or don't know where to find out about events, classes, and other resources that might interest them.
- **Location/Transportation** | Some people indicated that they live too far away, or have no transportation to get to the programs and facilities they want to use. Several

also mentioned a lack of safe pedestrian and bicyclist routes in town, where most of Homer's recreation and culture opportunities exist.

- **Money** | Some don't have the money needed to participate in all the activities they are interested in. For some, rising land values and a lack of the right job opportunities have made it difficult to afford to even live in Homer, particularly for young families.
- **Youth and Childcare** | Some people said they need more childcare options or supervised activities for children; some young people said they need more places to go outside of school hours.
- **Volunteers** | Some said more volunteers are needed, there too many opportunities and people are getting burned out, others said they need to volunteer less in order to have more time available for PARC activities.

**Youth and seniors echoed many of these common themes.** Among youth, the most common barriers to participating in more recreation and culture activities include transportation, money and weather. Seniors mentioned the need for more ways for new arrivals to Homer to connect with recreation and culture activities and groups. Caregivers for less active seniors pointed out that because it takes extra time and energy to help these less independent elders out of the house, planned activities and events are better for outings, while short unstructured activities are easier at home or in places like the Senior Center.

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*We visit Homer at least twice a year so more festivals would be nice so we can plan a little getaway from Anchorage. As for arts, they are pretty expensive, because it is worth it.*

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## EXISTING RECREATION AND CULTURE

The Homer has many existing recreation and culture resources. The Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment indicated a few common overarching themes:

- A number of space constraints were identified for indoor activities.
- Outdoor facilities are well used.
- A large number and wide variety of activities, events and programming are available; there appears to be more participation in outdoor than indoor activities.
- There is a desire for more consolidation and leveraging resources to more effectively manage and advertise recreation and culture facilities, activities, events and programming.

An inventory of recreation and culture resources is included in Appendix A.

### SUMMARY OF EXISTING RECREATION AND CULTURE RESOURCES

#### INDOOR FACILITIES

The Needs Assessment confirms that Homer currently has a number of different indoor recreation and culture spaces, yet there are also space constraints, scheduling conflicts and a lack of certain types of indoor facilities. These space constraints exist in part because some existing facilities, such as the HERC and the High School, are already used to their current capacity. The gap analysis provides more information about the capacity of different spaces to meet identified needs.

Existing large indoor multi-purpose spaces include the Homer High School gym, the HERC building and middle and elementary school multipurpose rooms. The Mariner Theater hosts large performances; Pier 1 puts on productions in the summer; and smaller winter season shows use spaces like the Bunnell Street Arts Center, the Homer Council on the Arts (HCOA) Gallery, the Homer Theater, the Pratt Museum, and bars/restaurants. Smaller indoor recreation spaces for dance and yoga include the Bay Club, the High School, private yoga studios, and the HERC building. There are spaces for specific activities, like pottery or woodworking, throughout Homer, but the most accessible studio spaces are at the High School and have experienced a number of scheduling conflicts. Homer also has a number of flexible spaces, which offer the potential to be temporarily or permanently reconceived to meet the demand for additional specialized spaces that are currently unavailable. For example, Kachemak Bay Campus, the Pratt Museum and Homer Council on the Arts already host multiple types of events. See Appendix A, Indoor Flexible Spaces, for an additional list of spaces that can meet the needs of a variety of events and uses.

## OUTDOOR FACILITIES

The Needs Assessment confirmed that the area’s existing parks, trails and other outdoor spaces are well-used and that a number of projects have benefitted from the coordination of various public and outdoor interest groups to plan and raise funding for improvements.

The City provides 17 dedicated parks and seven park areas for recreational purposes. The Kenai Peninsula School District maintains outdoor fields and tennis courts at the High School. The Homer area also has a number of year-round multi-use trails. Outdoor facilities also include:

- Homer Ski Club rope tow
- Kachemak Bay Equestrian Association Cottonwood Horse Park
- Outdoor basketball courts at the HERC and High School
- Softball, baseball, football, and soccer fields
- Multiuse trails (for mountain biking, cross country skiing, hiking, and other activities)
- Disc golf course
- Street art
- Outdoor space at the Pratt Museum (10 acres)
- Outdoor amphitheaters at the library, Pratt Museum, and Islands and Ocean Center.

Figure 12: Participation in Outdoor Activities

Outdoor Activity	Responses (Percent)	Responses (Raw number)
Walking	71%	646
Recreational Fishing	58%	531
Camping	58%	530
Bicycling	56%	510
Recreational Boating	48%	435
Cross Country Skiing	46%	416
Gardening	45%	405
Wildfood Harvesting	41%	377
Festivals	38%	342
Photography	37%	339

Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Online Community Survey

## ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, PROGRAMMING

The Needs Assessment confirmed that the greater Homer community offers a relatively large number and variety of recreation and culture activities, events and programming. Residents and visitors are very involved in recreation and culture activities, as participants or users, as providers and as volunteers. The activities and events that draw the most frequent and steady participation tend to change over time as new activities are introduced and others fade in popularity. Some

Figure 13: Participation in Indoor Activities

Indoor Activity	Responses (Percent)	Responses (Raw number)
Swimming	43%	365
Performance Art	40%	344
Gym	38%	321
Lifelong Learning	33%	280
Hockey/Ice Sports	28%	242
Yoga/tai chi/meditation	28%	237
Cooking	25%	216
Visual Arts	23%	193
Basketball	20%	168
Card and board games	18%	155

Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Online Community Survey

outdoor activities and use outdoor spaces. Outdoor activities could be more popular in general. They may also be more accessible: often there is no membership or user fee involved for outdoor activities, and there may be fewer scheduling constraints because people can usually participate in outdoor activities at any time of day. Greater participation in outdoor activities may also be an indication of the shortage of indoor facilities reported by the community.

## MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

A desire for consolidation and simplification was the overall theme that emerged from the Needs Assessment about the state of provider management of and communication about recreation and culture resources in the Homer area. Although Homer has a robust volunteer base and a community culture that supports volunteerism, some providers have been challenged to find volunteer staff and board members, and expressed a desire for consolidation. The community also recognizes that pooling efforts and resources may allow providers to leverage even more resources. For instance, some providers suggested the benefits of working together to pursue funding for joint projects.

activities/events have seen a decline in participation, but many providers reported steady or growing participation. For example, Concert on the Lawn will be discontinued in 2015 because of decreased attendance, while Colors of Homer is thriving as a shared community arts event that includes music.

Providers and users emphasize that these activities and events bring new people to visit or even live in the Homer area. Some providers indicated the desire to expand their programming, but have encountered space constraints.

Community survey results<sup>5</sup> suggest that more people participate in

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<sup>5</sup> 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Online Community Survey.

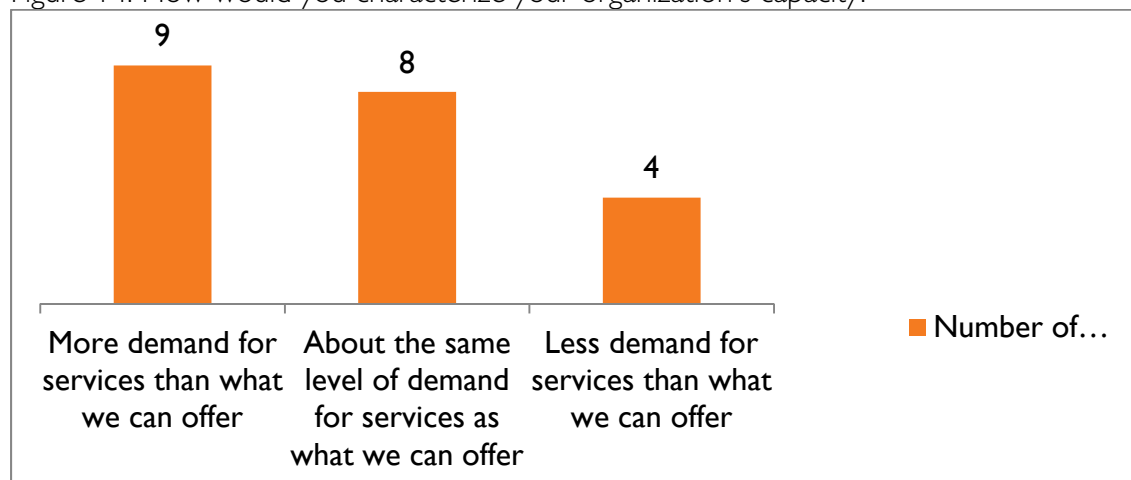
Existing City staff managing parks and City recreation programs are at or above capacity to meet local demand for these programs, and could benefit from partnerships with providers.

While participation in specific events and activities naturally ebbs and flows, most of Homer's recreation and culture providers indicated that interest in their programs has been strong. Yet Homer has so much recreation and culture that residents and visitors are not always aware of what is available to them. Some of the most frequently identified needs are not for new programs and facilities, but for more centralized and internet-based communication about what is happening and available.

**Providers** | In addition to the Homer area's stunning natural landscape, provider organizations are the engine of arts and recreation opportunities. For the purposes of this needs assessment, the Recreation and Culture Committee defined recreation and culture providers as a business or organization that provides classes or puts on performances or events. Activity user groups (e.g., Snomads) were also considered recreation and culture providers. Churches and civic groups are also recognized as providing valuable recreation and culture opportunities for adults and young people alike. Additionally, sole proprietor artists, co-ops, and galleries add to making Homer the rich recreation and culture community that it is.

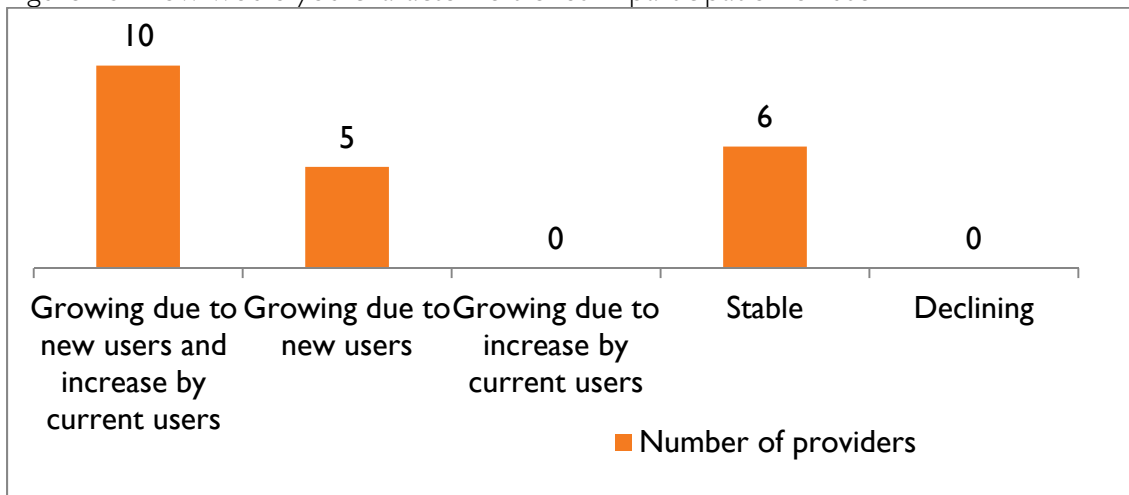
Twenty one providers responded to the provider questionnaire. Most providers are stable or growing. Figure 14 shows that less than half of the providers surveyed were operating at a capacity that fit their organization. Nine said they had more demand for services than they could provide and four said they had less demand than they could provide. Providers highlighted the importance of their volunteers, the difficulty of finding heated indoor space, and the difficulty of finding funding.

Figure 14: How would you characterize your organization's capacity?



Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Provider Survey

Figure 15: How would you characterize trends in participation or use?



Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Provider Survey

**The City of Homer and Community Recreation** | Recreation services are supported by two departments and three divisions of the City of Homer. The Community Recreation program, under the direction of the Department of Administration, provides programming and facility access in two main non-municipal locations and one city-owned property, the HERC building. The Division of Parks in the Public Works Department maintains recreation facilities, primarily parks, trails and campgrounds. Some stakeholders advocated consolidating these functions under a single Parks and Recreation Department to provide better services. Figure 16 shows that of the 25 largest cities in Alaska in 2010, approximately 76 percent had local parks and recreation departments and 76 percent had a community or recreation center in 2010. Only three of communities (Homer, Dillingham and Houston) had neither a Parks and Recreation Department nor a Borough to provide coordinated park and recreation services. Homer is one of three of Alaska’s 25 largest cities that uses local schools as a recreation center.

Figure 16: Recreation and Culture Services in Alaska's 25 Largest Cities

City	Population	Parks and Recreation Department	Borough provides?	Community/ Recreation Center
Anchorage	291,826	Yes	No	Yes
Fairbanks	31,535	No	Yes	Yes
Juneau	31,275	Yes	Combined city/borough	Yes
Sitka	8,881	Yes	Combined city/borough	No
Ketchikan	8,050	No	No	Yes
Wasilla	7,831	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kenai	7,100	Yes	No	No
Kodiak	6,130	Yes	Combined city/borough	No (schools)
Bethel	6,080	Yes	No	Yes
Palmer	5,937	Yes	Yes	Yes
Homer	5,003	No	No	No (schools)
Unalaska	4,376	Yes	No	Yes
Barrow	4,212	Yes	No	Yes
Soldotna	4,163	Yes	No	Yes
Valdez	3,976	Yes	No	Yes
Nome	3,598	Yes	No	Yes
Kotzebue	3,201	Yes	No	Yes
Petersburg	2,948	Yes	Combined city/borough	Yes
Seward	2,693	Yes	No	Yes
Wrangell	2,369	Yes	Combined city/borough	Yes
Dillingham	2,329	No	No	No
Cordova	2,239	Yes	No	Yes
North Pole	2,117	No	Yes	No
Houston	1,912	No	No	No (schools)
Craig	1,201	Yes	No	Yes

Source: City of Homer Community Recreation, 2010 Census.

**Other Recreation and Culture Coordinators** | In addition to the City, several organizations coordinate and facilitate multiple types of recreation and culture opportunities and bring user groups and spectators together across activities. These coordinators include:

- MAPP of Homer
- Homer Arts and Culture Alliance
- Homer Council on the Arts, including Artist Registry
- Kenai Peninsula School District
- Homer Chamber of Commerce

**Information and Advertising** | Getting the word out about recreation and culture facilities and programs is just as important as having the resources to begin with. Participation might be low for some programming because people are unaware of what is available, especially for visitors and new residents who are just learning about the community and what it has to offer. Providers, users and the general public repeatedly mentioned the need for a centralized community calendar. MAPP of Homer is currently working on an integrated web based calendar that providers can use, so meeting the need for more coordinated information sharing might be close. Existing community calendars and information sources include:

- Homer News
- City of Homer
- Individual arts, recreation, civic organizations
- Homer Council on the Arts website, arts calendar and e-news and artist registry
- Homer Public Radio AM 890
- Pop411.org
- KBBI calendar

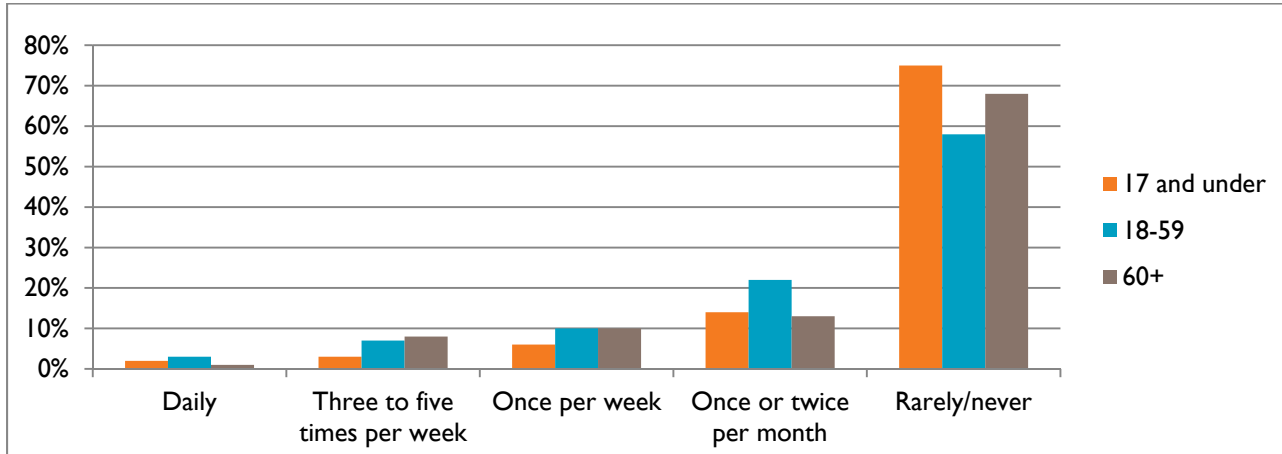
**Volunteers** | Providers and community members highlighted the importance of volunteers in sustaining recreation and culture activities and amenities in Homer. Recreation and culture provider survey respondents totaled:

- 52,742 volunteers hours per year, or 144 hours per day (not including the organization that approximated “literally thousands” of volunteer hours annually).
- At least 85 board member positions.
- At least 133 formal volunteer positions.
- Recreation and culture providers rely on at least 796 informal or event specific volunteer positions.



Community respondents also reported volunteering. Fifteen percent volunteer once per week or more, and 65 percent rarely or never volunteer. Working age survey respondents reported volunteering more frequently than youth or seniors.

Figure 17: On average, how often do you volunteer at recreation and culture programs and activities?



Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Online Community Survey

# GAP ANALYSIS OF RECREATION AND CULTURE NEEDS

To be realistic about how much the greater Homer community is able to take on and sustain over time, identified needs are presented within the context of an overall set of strategies:

1. Maximize the use of existing public resources.
2. Look for and take advantage of opportunities for the private sector to fill gaps.
3. Explore new ways to improve the efficiency and coordination of providing recreation and culture resources and related information sharing.
4. Maintain existing facilities while developing funding strategies for highest priority future expansion or renewal projects.

## SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED PRIORITY NEEDS

Identified priority needs focus on the need for indoor facilities/activities and improvements to recreation and culture resource coordination, and also included a number of more modest of outdoor facilities and programming needs.

Figure 18: Provider Space Needs

Facility need	Providers	Percent
We need more heated indoor space	11	52%
We need more outdoor space	9	53%
We need specialized space	12	57%
We currently do not have any space needs.	2	10%
Other [1]	9	53%

[1] Includes: Access at high priority times (e.g., right after school); ADA accessible space; Access to calendar and coordinating for space that is available; Headquarters/space that different user groups can overlap and interact in; Childcare space.

Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Provider Survey

## INDOOR FACILITIES

Of the priorities that filtered to the top, the most significant was space for indoor activities. The most pressing needs are for a general-purpose gymnasium and a multi-purpose space for dance, martial arts, and performing arts rehearsals. The City will be unable to expand these types of programming until adequate space is created. Specific identified needs include:

- Active recreation space: large multi-purpose gymnasium, indoor walking track, affordable weight room, martial arts gym, indoor (and outdoor) racket sports.

- Space for the arts: centralized location for music activities (including practice studio, recording studio and/or programming), more spaces for making art, 200-300 seat performance space, and
- Spaces for youth: toddler and family spaces,<sup>6</sup> teen space while school is not in session.

Depending on specific designs, many or even all of these needs might be met in a single facility. A multi-purpose community center was the most frequently identified need across providers, user groups, existing plans and the general public. Although frequently mentioned, a new multipurpose facility would be costly. Considering the other identified needs, this project should be

*Looking forward to retirement and would really like to see a community facility with many activities available under one roof and a park facility for multipurpose outdoor activities*

deferred to a medium or long-term status, giving the area population, industry and tax base time to grow. In the near term, the next step for the community will be to determine whether to meet priority indoor space needs through existing facilities, new discrete facilities or grouped within a single multi-use project. This discussion will involve consideration of: the availability of existing spaces and their ability to adequately meet the identified needs; potential project providers (who will own and operate the space, who will run the activities), their responsibilities, level of commitment and ability to sustain use/participation; potential funding mechanisms and willingness to pay; and which uses will be compatible or incompatible in a multi-use facility. While these decisions are being made, the City should investigate ways to keep the HERC open (e.g., for another 10 years) to help meet indoor space needs. The Pratt Museum might also be able to fulfill some of these needs in the interim and in future. The Museum is currently conducting a capital campaign to build a new building in the near future. The existing building could be repurposed to provide artist space, art and culture space, and potentially a small theater.

Another priority that came up repeatedly during the needs assessment is the need to stabilize the financial future of the Kevin Bell Ice Arena. Though the City is not responsible for this facility, thousands of people use the facility (up to 800 in a week). The facility supports local users and also attracts teams from outside the community who spend time (and money) in Homer. Aside from the debt of the building and land, the rink's revenue has supported its yearly operations since it opened in 2005. Current debt totals \$2.74 million, and it will require \$60,000 per year to repay. The rink has become an institution in Homer, providing healthy lifestyle choices and also important winter revenue with the annual tournaments and games, bringing visitors from other cities. The Needs Assessment is not the forum in which to work out the specific near term strategies on this time-sensitive issue. The community can continue to seek opportunities to match existing user needs to

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<sup>6</sup> Some of these space needs may be fulfilled by better communication about existing toddler-friendly spaces and activities; many programs are already offered and new activities starting.

the arena (e.g., indoor walking, climbing) as well as investigate longer term revenue sources that could help sustain the facility. Consider expanding City funding to cover a portion of the \$60,000 annual debt payment.

## OUTDOOR FACILITIES

Priority outdoor facilities include: upgrading the softball fields, car-free ice skating at Beluga Lake, a warming hut on the spit, an outdoor amphitheater, and multi-use trail connections. These outdoor improvements, while important, present a much lower threshold of cost and complexity than the possible need for some form of new, multipurpose indoor facility(ies).

## ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, PROGRAMING

A number of programming needs were identified, listed below. Exploring options to meet these identified needs is important, but must be considered in the context of the management and/or addition of indoor facilities, which is closely tied to many of these identified needs.

- Indoor, winter event space and programing, activities (e.g. laser tag, bumper cars, go cart track, child play area), and longer hours for programs or facilities (e.g. late night and/or early morning).
- Multi-generational activities, for parents and toddlers, for mentally and physical disabled older people, for seniors in general.
- Activities at McNeil Canyon School and in Anchor Point, specifically.
- Short courses/workshops (one day or less), with smaller time and financial commitment.
- Specific activities/classes: folk school, healthy cooking, lifelong learning programs, Zumba, wildfoods safety, marine safety, adult indoor soccer.

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*I think it would be great to offer a space that could accommodate children's activities and parent activities that run in conjunction. So kids have an opportunity to socialize and play while parents get time to exercise or take a class in their area of interest. For those of us who do not have extended family around, our friends are our family. We live here for the unmatched quality of life and sometimes need a little extra community support to pursue our own health and learning goals. – Survey Respondent*

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## MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Outreach results make clear that participants recognize the need for new strategies to meet these priorities and identified the following solutions:

- Make better use of what already is available:

- Centralized community calendar and information sharing (e.g., via mobile phone app).
- Transportation improvements to get people to activities/events (e.g., affordable cross-bay transportation, rides for youth and seniors who do not drive).
- Continued coordination and access to school district resources, particularly the high school.
- Improve the delivery of recreation and culture resources:
  - Centralized meeting room list/scheduler.
  - Consolidated community recreation and culture leadership to reduce the number of volunteer boards and enable better coordination among providers (e.g., calendaring, networking, partnerships on projects, joint fundraising or grant applications, reciprocal membership agreements).
  - Consider a centralized City Parks and Recreation Department with additional City of Homer recreation staff (existing staff are currently at capacity, and the City could potentially leverage increased community involvement toward providing services and completing park improvement projects with additional staff.).
  - Consider ways to maintain the Recreation and Culture Committee and continued City involvement in recreation and culture resource management.
- Investigate new funding options (e.g., service area); consistent capital funding is needed, whether for the HERC, ballfields, or park improvements.

*If we had another gym, we could fill that with more school activities, let alone more community rec activities. There are a lot of groups that would like to be in there, just don't have time or space for them. - Douglas Waclawski, Principal, Homer High School*

Figure 19: Priority Identified Needs

Table Key							
●	Indicates primary tier priority						
◆	Indicates secondary tier priority						
Project				Outreach Source			
Priority	Project	Category	Potential Community Center Element	Fall 2014 Outreach	Community Survey	Provider Survey	Previous Planning
●	Community recreation facility	Multi-purpose Indoor		■	■	■	
●	Multi-purpose gym	Multi-purpose Indoor	○	■	■	■	■
●	Convention center	Multi-purpose Indoor	○	■			
●	Multi-purpose community art space and more art classroom space (e.g., wood shop, kiln, press, darkroom)	Multi-purpose Indoor		■	■	■	■
●			○	■	■	■	■
●	200-250 person theater	Specialized Indoor		■	■	■	
●	Children's art space; toddler/family/pre-school space, indoor play structure	Specialized Indoor		■	■	■	
●	Indoor walking facility/track	Specialized Indoor		■	■		■
●	Kevin Bell Arena financial support	Specialized Indoor		■	■	■	■
◆	Affordable weight room	Specialized Indoor		■	■		■
◆	Indoor and outdoor racket sports, including tennis	Specialized Indoor		■	■		
◆	Martial arts gym	Specialized Indoor	○		■		
◆	Music/recording studio	Specialized Indoor	○	■	■	■	
◆	Private music and art studios	Specialized Indoor	○	■			

Project				Outreach Source			
Priority	Project	Category	Potential Community Center Element	Fall 2014 Outreach	Community Survey	Provider Survey	Previous Planning
●	Space and programming for children and teens when school is not in session (e.g. Boys and Girls Club)	Central space/ headquarters (Indoor)	○	■	■	■	■
◆	Space and/or programs for music (e.g. open jam, mentoring/volunteer taught lessons, community band, practice spaces)	Central space/ headquarters (Indoor)	○	■	■	■	
●	Maintained, car free ice skating at Beluga Lake	Outdoor			■		
◆	Outdoor stage/amphitheater	Outdoor	○	■		■	■
◆	Warming hut on spit for water sports	Outdoor		■	■		
◆	Adequate parking at some facilities (e.g., Karen Hornaday Park, Jack Gist Park).	Outdoor		■		■	■
◆	Upgrade softball fields	Outdoor		■	■	■	■
●	Construct more non-motorized trails; bike and walking trails throughout the city and on main roads and neighborhoods; enhanced trail connections	Trails		■	■	■	■
●	Provide more ski trails in Anchor Point	Trails		■	■		■
◆	Improved maintenance for trails	Trails		■	■		
◆	Move toward multi-use trails in future	Trails		■	■	■	
●	Multi-generational activities	Programing		■			
●	Longer hours for programs or facilities (e.g. late night and/or early morning)	Programing		■	■		
●	More indoor activities (e.g. laser tag, bumper cars, go cart track, child play area)	Programing		■		■	■

Project				Outreach Source			
Priority	Project	Category	Potential Community Center Element	Fall 2014 Outreach	Community Survey	Provider Survey	Previous Planning
●	More for mentally and physical disabled older people, and for seniors in general	Programing	○	■			■
●	Marine safety programing	Programing		■	■		
●	More activities at McNeil Canyon School	Programing			■		
●	More activities in Anchor Point	Programing		■	■		
●	Parent-toddler classes	Programing			■		
◆	Folk school classes	Programing			■		
◆	Healthy cooking classes	Programing		■	■		
◆	Indoor soccer (adults only)	Programing			■		
◆	More short courses/workshops (1 day or less) with smaller time and financial commitment (e.g. at the University)	Programing		■	■		
◆	Vocational-technical classes and apprenticeship programs	Programing		■		■	■
◆	Wildfoods safety class	Programing			■		
◆	Zumba	Programing			■		
●	Improved, central community calendar (flyers, website, email updates, social media)	Coordination + Information		■	■		■
●	Continue to work with school district to enable off hours and off season use to the extent possible; Elementary, Middle and/or High School open to public for community schools or evening programs, as possible	Coordination + Information		■	■	■	■
●	Centralized Parks and Recreation Department	Coordination + Information		■		■	■
●	Expand capacity to maintain facilities and offer programs	Coordination + Information		■		■	■
●	Consolidate recreation and culture leadership. Reduce the number of volunteer boards; more coordination among providers (e.g., calendaring, networking, partnerships on projects, joint fundraising or grant applications, reciprocal membership agreements)	Coordination + Information		■	■	■	■
◆	More recreation and culture employees to provide project coordination and fundraising support, particularly grantwriting; could be	Coordination + Information		■		■	■



Project				Outreach Source			
Priority	Project	Category	Potential Community Center Element	Fall 2014 Outreach	Community Survey	Provider Survey	Previous Planning
	shared by various providers.						
◆	Meeting room List	Coordination + Information		■		■	
●	Park endowment fund	Funding		■			■
●	Park, Arts, Recreation and Culture, and Trails Foundation	Funding		■			
●	Sliding payment scale for participation in sporting activities and equipment, lower gym fees, including teen discount	Funding		■	■	■	■
◆	Recreation Service District	Funding		■			
◆	Reevaluate senior property tax exemption	Funding		■			
◆	Charge people who live outside of the city more to use city facilities and programs	Funding			■		
●	Transportation improvements, especially for those who don't drive (e.g. carpooling/ridesharing, improvements to trails and sidewalks, bike lanes, road crossings, better signage, connecting trails and paths through town, make places for people to park and walk)	Supporting		■	■	■	■
◆	Affordable transport across the bay	Programing		■	■		■
◆	Town center/square/plaza	Supporting	○	■			■

## OPPORTUNITIES TO USE EXISTING FACILITIES

The community felt strongly that Homer’s many existing resources should be used to meet existing needs before any new facilities were built or programs started. Agnew::Beck analyzed the extent to which priority needs could be met with existing resources, based on the needs and existing resources inventories generated through the needs assessment process. The results are summarized in the table below. Many identified needs could potentially be met through existing or new resources, depending on the will of the community.

Figure 20: Opportunities to Use Existing Resources to Meet Priority Recreation and Culture Needs

Identified Need	Improve Coordination, Calendaring and Communication			Existing Resource(s)
	Space Dependent	New Facility		
<b>Community Center</b>				
Multi-purpose facility with gymnasium	Yes	Yes	Yes	HERC, High School, Middle School
Centrally located convention center	No	Yes	Yes (for larger events that require a central location)	Land’s End, Bidarka Hotel, Islands and Ocean, Kevin Bell Ice Arena (with flooring), Pratt Museum
200-300 seat performance venue <sup>7</sup>	No	Yes	Yes	Mariner Theater, Pier One, Homer Theater, Homer Council on the Arts, Pratt Museum (if renovated)
Martial arts gymnasium/mat room <sup>8</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	High School, private businesses
Toddler-family spaces	Yes	Yes	Maybe (depends on specific activities)	Senior Center, Library, Islands and Ocean , Homer Council on the Arts, Pratt Museum, Kevin Bell Arena, Pool, Schools, private businesses.
Teen space	Yes	Yes	Yes	High School, others (e.g., rec room)
Music hub	Yes	Yes	Yes	High School, private

<sup>7</sup> 200-300 seat performance venue could be integrated with a main multi-purpose space, with green room (backstage warm-up/dressing room/rehearsal space for performers) as auxiliary space or additional black box (flexible space that is less constrained for other uses than the typical raised stage, permanent seating of a traditional theater).

<sup>8</sup> A martial arts gymnasium/mat room could be designed to also serve as the green room noted above.

Identified Need	Improve Coordination, Calendaring and Communication			
	Space Dependent	New Facility	Existing Resource(s)	
				businesses (e.g., Lindianne’s Music Garden)
Art studios and art classroom space	Yes	Yes	Yes	Schools, Kachemak Bay Campus, Homer Council on the Arts, Pratt Museum
Affordable weight room	Yes	Yes	Maybe	High School
Indoor walking track	Yes	Yes	Yes	High School, Kevin Bell, Elementary Schools
Outdoor amphitheater	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Pratt Museum, Library, Islands and Ocean
<b>Other Projects</b>				
Community calendar MAPP Calendar	Yes	No	No	Homer News, City of Homer, Individual arts, recreation, civic organizations, Homer Council on the Arts, Homer Public Radio AM 890, Pop411.org, KBBI calendar
Address scheduling conflicts with Kenai Peninsula Borough District Resources. <sup>9</sup>	Yes	Yes	Maybe	High School (has scheduling application), other schools, Community Recreation, others
Consolidated community recreation and culture leadership	Yes	No	No	Recreation and Culture Committee
Centralized City Park and Recreation Department <sup>10</sup>	Yes	No	No	City of Homer Park Maintenance, Community Recreation

<sup>9</sup> Schools may already be used to capacity. The high school is used for school, Kachemak Bay Campus, Community Recreation activities and other community events. All space availability is dependent on scheduling and budgets for the associated operations and maintenance costs.

<sup>10</sup> A centralized City Park and Recreation Department would be a new City department; it would require additional staff members, who could potentially leverage additional community involvement/coordination.

Identified Need	Improve Coordination, Calendaring and Communication			New Facility	Existing Resource(s)
	Space Dependent				
<b>Programming</b>					
Indoor soccer (adults only)	Yes	Yes	Yes		Community Recreation
More indoor activities (e.g. laser tag, bumper cars, go cart track, child play area)	Yes	Yes	Yes (at a large scale)		At a limited scale, opportunity for future offerings by new or existing providers. Community Recreation
Winter event space and programming	Yes	Yes	Maybe (depends on specific activities)		Community Recreation, Schools, Kachemak Bay Campus, Bunnell St. Art, Homer Council on the Art Center, Islands and Ocean, Pratt Museum
More for mentally and physical disabled older people, and for seniors in general	Yes	Yes	Maybe (depends on specific activities)		Community Recreation, Independent Living Center TRAILS Program
More activities in Anchor Point <sup>11</sup>	Yes	Yes	Maybe (depends on specific activities)		Anchor Point library, senior center
Longer hours for programs or facilities (e.g. late night and/or early morning)	Yes	Yes	Maybe		Private businesses and various providers
Multi-generational activities	Yes	No	Maybe (depends on specific activities)		Community Recreation, Senior center, non-profits, library
Marine safety programming <sup>12</sup>	Yes	No	No		High School (pool), Kachemak Bay Campus, boat harbor (working boats and boat yard businesses)

11 Specifically: general and summer-specific activities, swimming at the Anchor Point pond, bike route to Anchor Point, trails in Anchor Point.

12 The high school and college are already working to increase marine-industry related curricula and secure appropriate space(s).

Identified Need	Improve Coordination, Calendaring and Communication			
	Space Dependent	New Facility	Existing Resource(s)	
More activities at McNeil Canyon School	Yes	Yes	No	McNeil Canyon School
Parent-toddler classes	Yes	No	Maybe (depends on specific activities)	Community Recreation, SPROUT, Pratt Museum, Harbor School of Music and Dance, Homer Soccer Assoc., other providers
Folk school classes	Yes	No	Maybe (depends on specific activities)	North Pacific Folk School, Kachemak Bay Campus, High School classrooms
Healthy cooking classes	Yes	No	No	SVT Health and Wellness, South Peninsula Hospital, local churches
Short courses/ workshops (1 day or less) with smaller time and financial commitment	Yes	Maybe	No	Kachemak Bay Campus, various providers
Vocational-technical classes and apprenticeship programs	Yes	Maybe	Maybe <sup>13</sup>	Kachemak Bay Campus, High School
Wildfoods safety class	Yes	No	No	
Zumba	Yes	No	No	Community Recreation, Bay Club, Senior Center

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<sup>13</sup> The college and High School work together to fulfill their space needs.

# IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

Fulfilling priority identified needs will involve some smaller, more easily-implemented improvements (low-hanging fruit) and larger projects that require significant planning, coordination and financial investment. The Needs Assessment was also used as an opportunity to learn more about how the greater Homer community could and would be willing to support these larger recreation and culture projects in the future. The bulk of this chapter focuses on financing for larger, mostly capital projects, or ongoing coordinated service and facility provision (e.g., an area-wide Parks and Recreation department).

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Homer area has seen a growing interest in community parks, indoor and outdoor sports, visual and performing arts, cultural events and festivals, which are all part of the local quality of life for residents of all ages. Community organizations and municipalities face financial and space limitations to sustain programming and facilities. Maintaining and improving these resources requires funding and other forms of support.

Results from both an online (self-selected) survey and a telephone (statistically-valid) survey revealed that recreation and culture are important to the majority of area residents, and that there is community support for exploring options to fund new recreation and culture services and facilities.

Figure 21: Support for New Funding Strategies

**Maintaining and/or improving recreation and culture opportunities requires funding and other forms of support. Do you support exploring new strategies to maintain and/or expand recreation and culture opportunities in the greater Homer area?**

Response	Percent	Number
Yes, it is important to explore new resources and strategies	69%	604
Maybe, depends on what the options are.	21%	187
No, I think what is spent today is adequate or more than adequate.	4%	34
Not sure, need to learn more about current resources, and future options.	6%	51

Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Online Community Survey

## SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC PROJECTS

The statistically-valid telephone survey was used to better understand the level of community support for funding two projects in particular: the creation of a new multi-purpose community center that could fulfill a number of the space needs identified during the Needs Assessment, and the willingness to dedicate public funding to assist with mortgage payments on the Kevin Bell Ice Hockey Arena.

**Multi-purpose community center** | One proposal is to build a multi-purpose community center in Homer to provide a year-round facility for indoor activities like recreation, performing arts, community gatherings, education and specialty activities. Such a facility will cost at least 18 million dollars to build. Funding for construction would come from several sources but would certainly require area residents to contribute, on average, several hundred dollars a year per household through both user fees and increased taxes.

Figure 22: Support for City Funding New Multi-purpose Community Center

Response	Percent	Number
This is a desirable facility; it should be a priority <b>within the next 5 years</b> ; and I would be willing to contribute to support its development.	30.1%	78
This is a desirable facility; it should be a priority <b>5-10 years from now</b> , providing time for the community to grow and increase the tax base.	26.7%	69
This facility should <b>not be a priority</b> , and I would not be willing to contribute any amount of additional taxes to support its development.	39.2%	101
<b>Not sure.</b>	3.9%	10

Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Public Opinion Survey, Ivan Moore Research. Raw survey results have been weighted according to the following: 1) Responses apportioned by zip code according to the adult population in each; 2) Marital status balanced by gender in both zip codes (i.e., the percentage of married men equals that of married women and the percentage of single men equals that of single women); 3) The age distribution is weighted to match the census distribution of head of household; 4) Cellphone-only responses were appropriately weighted against landline responses.

**Kevin Bell Ice Hockey Arena** | The Kevin Bell Ice Hockey Arena is well used, with programs serving 800 people each week. The loan to pay for the building is now due, requiring mortgage payments of approximately \$60,000 per year for the next 20 years. User fees can cover operations costs, but won't cover the building loan payments.

Figure 23: Support for City Funding Kevin Bell Ice Hockey Arena

Response	Percent	Number
The City of Homer should <b>not put any funding into the building</b> , even if this means the facility will close.	20.4%	52
The City should <b>provide approximately \$10,000-\$15,000 per year</b> in new funding to help cover a portion of the loan payment, and look to the Homer Hockey Association to find the remaining funding.	53.6%	136
The City should <b>pay the full \$60,000</b> per year loan payment, and fund this expenditure with tax revenues.	20.1%	51
<b>Not sure.</b>	5.9%	15

Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Public Opinion Survey, Ivan Moore Research. Raw survey results have been weighted according to the following: 1) Responses apportioned by zip code according to the adult population in each; 2) Marital status balanced by gender in both zip codes (i.e., the percentage of married men equals that of married women and the percentage of single men equals that of single women); 3) The age distribution is weighted to match the census distribution of head of household; 4) Cellphone-only responses were appropriately weighted against landline responses.

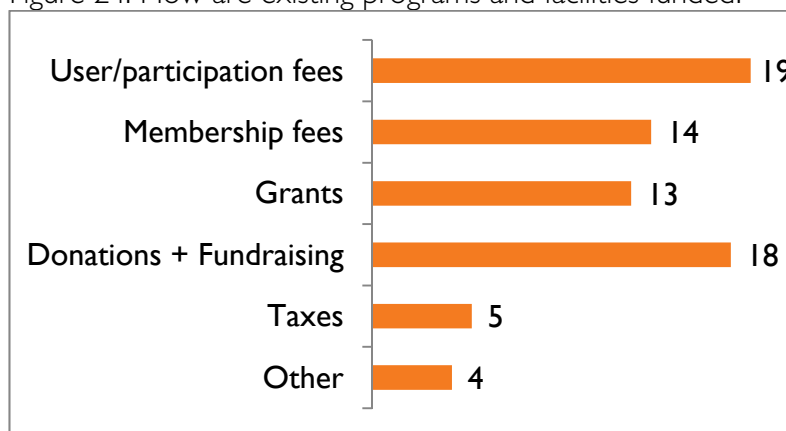
## FINANCING LOCAL RECREATION AND CULTURE

A variety of financing tools could be used for large capital projects, to help support ongoing operations, and for helping to subsidize activities for those who would not otherwise have the financial means to participate. A few examples of ideas brought up during the Needs Assessment are explained in this chapter. Residents and local business owners also emphasized the importance of growing the area population and economy through new industry and job opportunities in order to build a solid base of participation and tax base for recreation and culture facilities and programs.

### Existing Financial Support |

The provider survey indicated that Homer’s existing recreation and culture programming and facilities are supported by a number of sources. In general, that support is stable or growing more often than it is in decline. These findings suggest that providers are effectively managing their day-to-day operations.

Figure 24: How are existing programs and facilities funded?

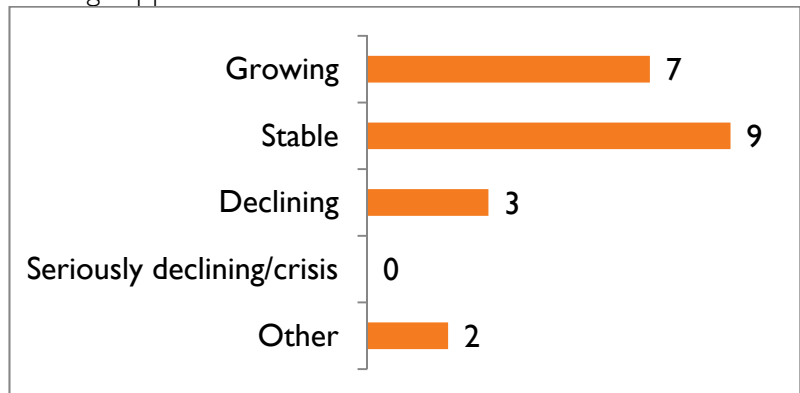


Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Provider Survey



**Support for Future Funding Mechanisms** | Telephone (statistically-valid) survey results indicate that area residents would prefer to see a variety of taxes used to fund new recreation and culture services funded. Only 18 percent of survey respondents indicated that they would prefer that the City not fund new recreation and culture services at all.

Figure 25: How would you characterize your current funding/support resources?



Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Provider Survey

Figure 26: Support for Specific Funding Sources

**Which funding source would you most prefer to see used to fund new recreation and culture services in the Homer area?**

Response	Percent	Number
Property taxes	12.2%	31
Sales tax	17.2%	44
Other taxes	18.3%	47
Reallocate existing funding from other municipal sources	25.0%	64
Don't fund new recreation and culture services at all	18.0%	46
Not sure	9.3%	24

Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Public Opinion Survey, Ivan Moore Research. Raw survey results weighted according to: 1) Responses apportioned by zip code according to the adult population in each; 2) Marital status balanced by gender in both zip codes; 3) The age distribution is weighted to match the census distribution of head of household; 4) Cellphone-only responses weighted against landline responses.

## DEDICATED SERVICE AREA

One funding option used in the Kenai Peninsula Borough to pay for a desired service is the creation of a service area. Nikiski and Seldovia, for example, both have recreational service areas that pay for services provided in their communities. Residents within the service area would vote to approve property taxes to pay for recreation and culture services (i.e., facilities, programs, staff) to be provided in that area. These taxes would be collected and spent from their own separate fund. They would only be used to pay for allowable recreation and culture services or facilities provided within the service area. For instance, property taxes could be used to pay for a community center that would serve the entire service area.

Property taxes are collected in the form of a mill levy (or tax rate). The property tax amount due each year is based on adding together the mill levy for each service area in which the property lies. To calculate the property tax, the taxing authority multiplies the assessed value of the property by the mill rate and then divides by 1,000. For example, a property with an assessed value of \$50,000 located in a municipality with a mill rate of 20 mills would have a property tax bill of \$1,000 per year. If the City had a dedicated recreation and culture service area, a mill levy would be set for the service area, and would be added to any other mill levies collected by the City, then multiplied by the property's assessed value and divided by 1,000 to arrive at the overall property tax.

**Current taxes** | “The property tax rate in Homer totals 11.3 mills (4.5 City of Homer, 4.5 Kenai Peninsula Borough, and 2.3 South Peninsula Hospital). This translates to a tax levy of \$1,130 for every \$100,000 in assessed valuation. However, the first \$20,000 in valuation is tax exempt for most residents who request the exemption. In addition, senior citizens (age 65 and older) benefit from an exemption on the first \$150,000 in valuation for the City of Homer portion and on the first \$300,000 in valuation for the Kenai Peninsula Borough portion. The KPB exemption applies to service area tax assessments as well; for example, the one which supports South Peninsula Hospital.” (2014 City of Homer Budget, p25)

**Who pays** | A dedicated service area would allow the City to collect taxes for recreation and culture services directly from property owners.

Statistically-valid telephone survey results indicate that over 55 percent of area residents would to some degree favor the creation of a service area in the Homer area to fund new recreation and culture services.

Figure 27: Support for Recreation and Culture Service Area

Response	Percent	Number
Strongly favor	27.5%	71
Mildly favor	27.8%	72
Neutral	3.7%	9
Mildly oppose	17.7%	45
Strongly oppose	18.9%	49
Not sure	4.4%	11

Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Public Opinion Survey, Ivan Moore Research. Raw survey results weighted according to: 1) Responses apportioned by zip code according to the adult population in each; 2) Marital status balanced by gender in both zip codes; 3) Age distribution matches head of household census distribution; 4) Cellphone-only responses against landline responses.

**REALLOCATE EXISTING FUNDING**

The City of Homer receives funding from taxes and other funding mechanisms. These revenues are allocated to the City’s the General Fund and to special funds dedicated for specific services or capital improvements (facilities). With voter approval, some of these existing funds could be appropriately reallocated specifically to fund new recreation and culture services. Statistically-valid telephone survey results indicate that 25 percent of area residents would most prefer to see new recreation and culture services in the Homer area funded through reallocation of existing funding from other municipal sources.

One example of a dedicated fund that might be reallocated (with voter approval) is known as the HART Fund. Voters within the City of Homer approved to dedicate three-quarters of one percent (or 0.0075 percent) of all sales tax for the Homer Accelerated Roads and Trails (HART) Program. The HART Program calls for 90 percent of the revenue to be allocated towards road improvements and 10 percent of the annual revenue to be spent on trails and sidewalk projects. The HART Program only pays for capital projects (facilities); the funding does not pay for ongoing operating costs, such as utilities or salaries for trail planning and maintenance staff (City residents would have to vote to allow the HART Fund pay for operating costs for any facilities).

The City uses these funds to leverage grants, to cost share with land owners on road projects, and has considered using the funds to match state road funding for local roads through legislative appropriations on City of Homer roads.

Figure 28: Current HART Fund Allocation

	<u>Roads</u> (.9 of .0075)	<u>Trails</u> (.1 of .0075)	<u>Total</u> (.0075)
2012:	\$1,045,653	\$116,184	\$1,161,837
2013:	\$1,210,734	\$134,526	\$1,345,260
2014:	\$1,115,005	\$123,889	\$1,238,894
<b>Total 2012-2014:</b>	<b>\$3,371,392</b>	<b>\$374,599</b>	<b>\$3,745,991</b>

The existing HART fund could be re-allocated so that a portion of it was also dedicated to recreation capital (facility) improvements. For example, if 67.5 percent (about two-thirds) of the .0075 percent HART Fund was allocated to roads, 7.5 percent to trails, and 25 percent to recreation, the funding distribution would look like this:

Figure 29: Hypothetical HART Fund Reallocation to Include Recreation

	<u>Roads</u> (.675 of .0075)	<u>Trails</u> (.075 of .0075)	<u>Recreation</u> (.25 of .0075)	<u>Total</u> (.0075)
2012:	\$784,240	\$87,138	\$290,459	\$1,161,837
2013:	\$908,051	\$100,895	\$336,315	\$1,345,260
2014:	\$836,253	\$92,917	\$309,724	\$1,238,894
<b>Total 2012-2014:</b>	<b>\$2,528,544</b>	<b>\$280,949</b>	<b>\$936,498</b>	<b>\$3,745,991</b>

These funds could be used for capital improvements only, but much of the deferred maintenance to Homer’s public parks could be quickly addressed if the City dedicated \$100,000 each year in capital funds for recreation facilities, particularly if the City followed an endowment model and awarded matching grants to community organizations to complete projects in city parks. Re-allocating the funding in this way would also require voter approval.

### DEDICATED SALES TAX

The City could also establish a dedicated sales tax specifically for recreation and culture services. This tax would be collected at the point of sale on retail goods and services by the retailer and passed on to the municipality. It would be charged as a percentage of the cost of goods and services sold, e.g., 1% recreation and culture tax. This would be in addition to any other sales tax the City collects. Statistically-valid telephone survey results indicate that 17.2 percent of area residents would most prefer to see new recreation and culture services in the Homer area funded through a sales tax.

**Current taxes** | “The sales tax in Homer is 7.5% (4.5% City of Homer and 3% Kenai Peninsula Borough). Non-prepared foods are exempt from sales tax from September through May.” (2014 City of Homer Budget, p25)

**Who pays** | A dedicated sales tax would allow the City to collect revenue for recreation and culture services from Homer residents and non-residents who patronize businesses in the City of Homer. The sales tax is one of the few financing mechanisms described here that would draw funding from visitors to Homer. Though visitation numbers fluctuate from year to year, visitors to Alaska are expected to increase in 2015 because of improvements in the national economy and lower fuel prices. In the near term, Homer may see a rise in sales tax receipts from increased visitor traffic, which could be invested into recreation and culture resources that would continue to draw visitors to the area.

## USER FEES

Providers of recreation and culture programs and facilities may charge fees to users, such as facility rental fees, class tuition and fees, membership fees (e.g., gym membership fees), or ticket sales to events. For facility-based events (e.g., sport stadium, theater) the organization operating the facility might also sell concessions (food, drink, other merchandise, gift shop) as a way of increasing revenue for facility operations. State and national parks may also charge fees for licensing activities like guiding, fishing and hunting; these license fees also help to manage the number of people doing a particular activity within the park during a given time period.

As one recreation and culture provider, the City of Homer could consider adjusting or instituting new user fees for recreation and culture facilities and services (e.g., higher community recreation fees for non-city residents). Other recreation and culture providers could also consider changes to their user fees to support their facilities and programs.

**Current fees** | There are too many recreation and culture providers in Homer to list all of the fees, but as an example, The City of Homer charges fees to individuals who sign up for community recreation programs. The fees are set for each individual class or program, and include monthly fees, punch-cards, and per-class fees.

**Who pays** | Users of the facility or program would pay. Fees could be tiered based on resident/non-resident status, age, income or other characteristic. The Needs Assessment revealed a desire for free or low cost programs, events, and facility access, particularly for those with low income, families (e.g., discounted family rate), and youth. Community members also suggested offering annual membership fees for facilities such as the hockey arena and the pool.

## GRANTS AND LOCAL PHILANTHROPY

The Homer Foundation currently supports a number of community members, non-profits and initiatives through scholarships and small grants toward things like education, healthcare, the library, food security, animal welfare, recreation and the arts. The foundation responds to the applications that come in, so the distribution of awards changes from year to year. According to last year's annual report, approximately 42 percent of the Homer Foundation's awards went toward recreation and culture (14 percent to sports and recreation, eight percent to arts and culture, 20 percent to youth). These funds help pay for youth to participate in programs and contribute to local non-profits.

- The Homer Foundation also raised \$50,000 locally in order to leverage larger funding commitments from donors like the Rasmuson Foundation for the Homer library project. Because Homer has a relatively small base of potential funders and tax base, this model is unlikely to be duplicated anytime soon.
- The Homer Foundation could be a fiscal agent, or pass-through for grant funding toward recreation and culture programs and facilities.

The Homer Foundation is not set up to take on managing facilities or programs. However these other community foundation examples provide some inspiration for how different entities within the Homer area could work together in new ways to provide programs and facilities.

- Juneau built a field house through a community foundation, then created an oversight administrative organization to manage the facility. Homer could adopt a similar arrangement to build a new facility, with the City or a quasi-nonprofit entity to manage the facility once built.
- The Anchorage Park Foundation goes beyond funding through grants and scholarships to leverage support for parks, trails and recreation opportunities through several programs, including Challenge Grants (in which community members apply for grants from the APF to match their own fundraising efforts for park and trail improvement projects), Youth Employment in Parks (in which teens are hired to complete park improvement projects, including trail building, forestry, waterway restoration, and urban park improvements) and neighborhood park fix-its (in which the APF selects park improvement projects based on community input and coordinates community volunteers to carry them out). Other organizations in Homer could consider similar programs to sustain and maintain facilities.

Through the Needs Assessment outreach process, community members identified other related ideas, such as collaboration among providers to apply for grants, helping people find volunteer opportunities, and monthly fundraisers to benefit folks who want to participate, but can't necessarily afford it. The senior focus group referenced a program a real estate agent ran, which gave new property owners a free one-year membership to a community organization in Homer. The program was paid for through the property sale commission. Reviving this program could be a way to invite new residents into the community and establish a pattern of supporting recreation and arts organizations through private giving.

## PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Homer could also engage in public-private partnerships to provide desired recreation and culture facilities and programs. For example, a community recreation center could be planned to be linked to a hotel that could subsidize the recreation center costs and attract more non-resident users able and willing to pay a user fee for the facility. In Anchorage, the Dimond Center followed a similar model, building a hotel into a shopping mall plan. In Togiak, a Family Resource Center included a few rooms of lodging that provide an operating subsidy that, along with other sources of building revenue (e.g., rents from non-profit service providers), more than covers the building's operating costs (which include staffing).

## NEW PATHWAYS

Rasmuson Foundation, EmcArts, the Foraker Group, and the Alaska State Council on the Arts offer a program for and with Alaska's arts and cultural organizations, called New Pathways Alaska. The

program is designed to help participant organizations better sustain themselves organizationally and financially through workshops and participant forums, coaching, project facilitation, capital grants and online learning tools.

# APPENDIX A. EXISTING RESOURCES INVENTORY

## INDOOR FACILITIES

### Large Indoor Multi-Purpose

Anchor Point Gym  
McNeil Canyon School Multi-Purpose Room  
HERC Building  
Homer High School Gym  
Homer Middle School Gym  
Paul Banks Elementary School Gym  
West Homer Elementary School Gym

### Performance/Presentation

Islands and Ocean Theater (60-Person Capacity)  
Mariner Theater at Homer High (400-Person Capacity)  
Pier One Theater (100-Person Capacity)  
Homer Council on The Arts (70-Person Capacity)  
Homer Theater (250-Person Capacity)  
Pratt Museum and Amphitheater

### Small Indoor Recreation

Art Barn  
Bay Club  
HERC Building  
Many Rivers  
Private Dance Studio(s)

### Flexible Spaces (Meeting, Classroom, Event, Office)

Bayview And Pioneer Halls (Kachemak Bay Campus, 100-Person Capacity, Each)  
Bunnell Street Gallery  
Churches  
City Hall  
Elementary, Middle, High School Classrooms  
HERC Building, Classrooms  
Homer Council on the Arts, Gallery and Back Room  
Kachemak Bay Campus, Commons and Additional Classrooms  
Kachemak Bay Equestrian Association Cabins (20)  
Kachemak Community Center  
Kachemak Ski Club Lodge  
Library  
Pratt Museum

### Specialized Spaces

Art classrooms (Homer High School, Paul Banks Elementary School, West Homer Elementary School, Homer Middle School)  
Art studio (Kachemak Bay Campus)  
Auto shop (Homer High School)  
Computer Room (Kachemak Bay Campus)  
Gymnastics Room (Homer High School)  
Kevin Bell Hockey Arena  
Kitchen (HERC building)  
Individual Art or Music Studios (Homer High)



Pools (Homer High School, Bay Club)  
Pottery Room (Homer High School)  
Practice Rooms (Homer High)  
Racquetball Court (Bay Club)  
Weight Room (Homer High School, Bay Club)  
Wrestling Room (Homer High School)  
Welding Shop (Homer High School)  
Wood Working Shop (Homer High School)

### **Youth Oriented Indoor Spaces**

Schools  
Rec Room

### **Senior Oriented Indoor Spaces**

Homer Senior Center

## **OUTDOOR FACILITIES**

### **KPB School District**

Artificial Turf (Homer High School)  
Tennis Courts (4, Homer High School)

### **City of Homer**

Campgrounds (4)  
Trails (5.41 miles on 6 trails)  
Other area trails (3)

17 dedicated parks and 7 park areas for recreational purposes:

Baycrest	Jeffrey
Bayview	Karen Hornaday
Ben Walters	Louie's Lagoon
Bishops Beach	Mariner Park
Coal Point	Skatepark
Diamond Creek Recreation Area	Triangle
End of the Road	W.R. Bell
Fishing Lagoon	WKFL
Jack Gist	Woodside

### **Other**

Cottonwood Horse Park (Kachemak Bay Equestrian Association)  
Disc Golf Course  
Fields: Softball, baseball, football, soccer  
Kachemak City Picnic Shelter and Park  
Outdoor Basketball Court (HERC, schools)  
Rope Tow (Homer Ski Club)  
Street Art  
Pratt Museum 10 acres outdoor space  
Tennis Courts (2, Kachemak City)  
Trails: mountain bike, cross country, multiuse

## EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, PROGRAMING (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

### Event/Festival

Burning Basket  
Farmer's Market  
Homer Epic 100  
Homer Gardener's Weekend  
Homer Highland Games  
Homer Jackpot Halibut Derby  
Homer Yacht Club Races  
Hunter Safety  
Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival  
Kachemak Bay Wooden Boat Festival  
Kenai Pen. Orchestra Summer Music Festival

Nutcracker  
Safe Kids Fair/Bike Rodeo  
Ski Swap  
Seldovia Summer Solstice Music Festival  
Spit Run  
Tamamta Katurlluta: A Gathering of Native Tradition  
Telluride Film Fest  
Winter Bike Fest  
Wrestling Tournament  
Writer Conference

### Formal programs (youth, adult, mixed age)

Adult Performing Arts Show  
Art Shop  
Artquest  
Ballroom Dance  
Basketball (General, Bruin, Youth, Girls', Pick Up)  
Bellydance  
Blues In The Schools  
Climbing  
Creative Communities and Cart  
Dodgeball  
Fencing  
Hunter Education  
Jubilee  
Lost Wax Casting  
Karate (Youth, Adult)  
Kayaking (Youth)  
Musical Theatre  
Nature Art Summer Workshop (Youth)  
Pickleball

Pilates  
Ping Pong  
Play Group  
Pratt Play Dates  
Refurbish Class  
Silversmith  
Soccer (General, Youth, Indoor Adult)  
Spanish  
Summer Music Camps  
Summer Circus Arts Camp  
Tai Chi  
Tango Dance  
Theatre Shakes  
Tumbling & Gymnastics  
Volleyball  
Weight Training  
Wrestling (Popeye, Youth)  
Zumba  
Online Classes (Various)

## **Users Groups/Activities**

Alaska Training Room  
Backcountry Skiing  
Bird Monitoring  
Baseball  
Beach Walking, Bonfires  
Birding  
Boat Building  
Boating, Recreational  
Bowling  
Boy Scouts  
Camping  
Card and Board Games  
Community Dancing and Drumming  
Community Fundraising  
Contra Dancing  
Cooking  
Cross Country Skiing  
Dog Mushing  
Downhill Skiing  
Disc Sports  
Dog Training  
Exhibits and Art Shows  
Festival Attendance  
Fiber Arts  
Figure Skating  
Fish Feeding  
Fishing (Subsistence, Recreational)  
Football  
Four Wheeling  
Frisbee Disc Golf  
Functional Arts  
Gardening  
Geocaching  
Go Carts  
Ham Radio Club  
Hiking  
Hockey  
Indoor Climbing  
Indoor Soccer  
Indoor Walking  
Kayaking  
Lacrosse  
Legos  
Lifelong Learning  
Literary Arts  
Martial Arts  
Motorcycle Riding  
Movies  
Museum  
Music Production  
Native Arts and Crafts  
Open Gym  
Outdoor Education  
Outdoor Ice Skating, Hockey  
Parkour  
PE Class  
Performing Arts, Attendance  
Photography  
Picknicking  
Playground  
Pony Club  
Public Art  
Racquetball  
Recreational Hunting  
Remote control cars/airplanes  
Running  
Shooting  
Skateboarding  
Slacklining  
Sledding  
Snowboarding  
Snowshoeing  
Softball  
Strong Homer Women  
Surfing  
Swimming  
Tree Climbing  
Video Games  
Video Streaming  
Visual Arts  
Wake Boarding  
Watch Wildlife  
Water Aerobics  
Weaving  
Welding  
Wildfood Harvesting  
Wood Carving  
Writing  
Youth Group Worship

## MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

### **Coordinators**

City of Homer Community Recreation  
Homer Arts and Culture Alliance  
Homer Chamber of Commerce  
Homer Council on the Arts, Artist Registry  
Kenai Peninsula School District  
MaPP of the Southern Kenai Peninsula

### **Community Calendars**

City of Homer  
Homer News  
Homer Council on the Arts website, arts calendar and e-news and artist registry  
Homer Public Radio AM 890  
Individual arts, recreation, civic organizations  
KBBJ calendar  
Pop411.org

## APPENDIX B: IDENTIFIED NEEDS

### PRIORITY IDENTIFIED NEEDS

#### INDOOR FACILITIES

**Multi-purpose community center** | A multi-purpose community center facility was the most frequently identified need across providers, user groups, existing plans and the general public. The current demand for multi-purpose space for activities like soccer, basketball, pickleball and wrestling make community access to a large gym a very high priority. The uncertain future of the HERC building leaves users worried that if it closes, many activities will be left without a space. Providers and the business community expressed the desire to generate new economic development opportunities through a community center that could also serve as a convention center or attract visitors to attend sports and other events. The City commissioned a convention center feasibility study in 2005, which concluded that (at the time) Homer possessed a number of facilities that could host various events, but that a number of issues constrained their ability to effectively accommodate traditional meetings and conferences, and that a more traditional convention center would likely be utilized comparable to similar facilities in Sitka, Ketchikan and Valdez. The facility could possibly contain these auxiliary spaces: performance or theater space, including a backstage rehearsal space, weight room, studio space for art, music, woodworking, etc., and incubator or headquarter space for various recreation and culture program providers. A multi-purpose community center in a central downtown location could also respond to community desire to create a town center.

**Indoor walking track** | Walking is one of the most outdoor activities, and most desired indoor and outdoor activities. Indoor walking serves all ages, and in particular, seniors who desire an ice free location for exercise in the winter. Schools offer uninterrupted, flat surfaces for walking. However, access to schools is limited during school hours. The Kevin Bell Arena might have a large enough space for a seasonal walking loop. A calendar that identifies locations and times for walking indoors could help leverage existing resources to meet this need.

**Kevin Bell Hockey Arena** | There is an acute need to address the financial future of the Kevin Bell Hockey Arena. While the City is not responsible for this project directly, thousands of people use the facility, and it provides a public recreational benefit. The location makes it less appealing as a location for uses that would drive economic development in a more central location, such as a convention center. But there may be opportunities for the arena to host some identified needs, such as an indoor walking area.

**Toddler and family spaces** | There is anecdotal evidence of growth in the number of young families in Homer. The Needs Assessment findings reveal significant demand for play spaces and programs for young families. Ideally, a children's play space is easily accessible and integrated with

parent routines. Existing providers, such as the Senior Center, Kachemak Bay Campus, Library, Islands and Ocean, Homer Council on the Arts, Pratt Museum, Schools, may have spaces that could be creatively reinterpreted as a mixed-age learning and play experience.<sup>14</sup>

**Teen space while school is out of session** | Teenagers often do not have their own transportation and are limited to accessing recreation and culture resources outside of school. Creating an interesting, safe place for teens to linger between town outings is beneficial for teens, parents, and community members. There may be opportunities for flexible and underused spaces to be adapted for this use.

**Centralized music studio** | The Needs Assessment revealed a desire for co-location of music instruction, practice studio space, recording studio and related programming. Many people, especially teens, identified a recording studio as one component of a needed community music space. This space could meet at least some of the need for teen space outside of school and provide the mentors and mixed-age interaction that the community desires. The provider questionnaire indicated that a local business may expand to meet some or all of this identified need.

**Art workshop or studio space** | Providers and users expressed interest for more art classrooms and studios for individuals and to offer classes for youth and children. Art classrooms currently exist in the schools and at Kachemak Bay College, although scheduling constraints may prevent them from meeting this identified need. The Kachemak Wholesale Building was also identified as a potential space for art classrooms.

**Performance space with capacity for 200-300 people** | This need could be met in a number of ways, such as a simple “black box” theater for 250 people with wings, theater lighting, a backstage rehearsal area, and bathrooms. Spaces exist in Homer that could somewhat meet this identified need, but they lack some of the specific amenities or access needs that potential users desire. For example, the Mariner Theater is too large for most events, Pier One is used seasonally in summer only, the Homer Theater has film programming during evening hours, private restaurants or bars may not be family-friendly, and although the Homer Council on the Arts has a portable stage, it has none of the audience and backstage amenities. There may be existing spaces in the area that could be improved or retrofitted to accommodate the desired performance space, or it could be designed as part of a new facility.

**Affordable weight room** | Ready access to a low-cost weight room was a frequently identified need. The Homer Community Recreation program offers limited access to weightlifting facilities at the Homer High School for a relatively low fee, but the hours are limited by the school’s scheduling constraints. The Bay Club currently offers weightlifting facilities for a monthly membership fee,

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<sup>14</sup> The Imaginarium at Anchorage Museum is one model for mixed-age learning and play experience.

which may be higher than some community members are able or willing to pay. Private business owners have opened lower-cost fitness facilities in the past, and may be able to do so in the future.

**Martial arts gymnasium/practice space** | Martial arts are enjoyed by multiple ages and have sustained steady participation as after-school programming, so would fulfill some of the identified broad programming needs. A martial arts practice space could also be used by Popeye Wrestling to host out of town teams. This identified need may also be met through private business: a martial arts program for youth has been privately operated out of the Kachemak Wholesale building.

**Courts for racket sport** | Racket sports, including tennis, pickleball and other sports, are popular activities for many area residents. The HERC building and Bay Club currently offer the only indoor facilities for racket sports, and Homer also has a number of outdoor tennis courts at the high school. Additional indoor and/or outdoor facilities could be included in plans for new recreational facilities. There may also be plans to complete construction of additional courts from the past.

## OUTDOOR FACILITIES

**Upgrade softball fields** | This identified need reflects a desire to complete improvements to existing facilities. The costs to improve and maintain the softball fields would be somewhat balanced by the benefits of additional games and events that would bring out-of-town visitors to Homer.

**Car free ice skating at Beluga Lake** | Outdoor ice skating is a low-cost, health-promoting community activity that was identified in the survey several times. Creating a designated skating area at Beluga Lake would be primarily a policy change that would require some enforcement but few capital costs.

**Outdoor amphitheater** | This identified need could reflect a lack of communication about existing resources. Outdoor amphitheaters currently exist at the Pratt Museum, the Homer Library, and Islands and Ocean Center; similar facilities exist at the Homer Farmer's Market and Karen Hornaday park.

**Multi-use trails** | Trails were frequently identified as recreation needs, and reflected the popularity of outdoor trail-based activities as well as the desire for more pedestrian and non-motorized transportation routes in order to attend recreation and culture events and programs. The community online survey results indicated that walking, bicycling and cross country skiing were among the most popular outdoor activities in Homer: 71 percent of survey respondents indicated that they walk for recreational purposes, 56 percent ride a bicycle and 46 percent cross country ski. Biking, walking and cross country skiing were also among the most-frequently identified activities that survey respondents wanted to do more often. Related identified needs include: the desire for shared multi-use trailheads, streamlined trail easements and acquisition, and single track trails on Diamond Ridge (which could also serve as an economic driver given the growth of bike-packing and snow biking in recent years). Because trails are addressed specifically in the Homer Non-Motorized Transportation

Plan, the Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment focuses on other types of recreation and culture facilities.

## ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, PROGRAMING

The specific programs offered in Homer will fluctuate with need and popularity. Decisions about which programs to offer will balance a number of different factors: the desire for new programs, to expand already popular activities, possibly discontinue programs that are challenged to bring in enough participants to sustain themselves, availability of appropriate space, and availability of appropriate staff (teachers, coaches, administrators, etc.), among others. The identified needs included a variety of desired programing, some of which is already provided in Homer. Existing providers could better meet some of these needs by improving their coordination and information sharing efforts, discussed in the following section.

## MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

**Improved community calendar and information sharing** | The Needs Assessment revealed that community members do not always know which activities and events are available to them, or that there is too much going on and overlapping events lower participation from what it would otherwise be. A centralized community calendar would help users, providers and visitors better coordinate existing recreation and culture programing. Potential visitors could also use a centralized calendar to plan visits to Homer around recreation and culture activities. MAPP is already working on a centralized calendar that could be used for this purpose, and the Homer Tribune maintains a community calendar. Community members also suggested a weekly subscription-based email that would advertise local programming.

A mobile phone application could also solve the need for “one stop” access to information about recreation and culture resources. An app could provide different levels of access for providers and users, including a calendar to promote better scheduling and learn about existing activities. There could be a social media component to facilitate space sharing. The app could also be integrated with a visitor website and be used to help orient visitors to resources in and around Homer. The app could be financed through advertising or user/subscription fees.<sup>15</sup>

**Transportation improvements** | Additional options for non-motorized, public or shared transportation would increase access to existing facilities and resources, particularly for those who do not drive. This identified need could be met through a local bus system, expanding the taxi voucher program, an improved in-town ride share.

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<sup>15</sup> A number of other cities in the U.S. and Canada have created similar apps:  
<http://www.activenetwork.com/blog/city-and-recreation-mobile-apps/>



**Continued coordination and access to school district resources** | Area schools can provide a popular and relatively low-cost location for community programs and activities, particularly the Homer High School. The high school is a well-loved community resource that was built and bonded with the intention of serving as a community school. It is possible that the High School has reached its use capacity, especially for spaces such as the gymnasium, weight room, art studios and performing arts rehearsal spaces. All facilities must be closed for maintenance periodically, and the more often the facilities are used, the more maintenance they require, which drives up the facility operating costs. The Needs Assessment identified continued interest in the Homer High School, Anchor Point and McNeil Canyon schools as venues for community programming. To the extent that scheduling conflicts, cost or liability concerns prevent these schools from being used for community events, alternatives will have to be considered.

**Centralized system for booking facilities** | Spaces for different events and programs are offered by a variety of public and private providers in the Homer area. A centralized booking system could connect recreation and culture providers with rentable spaces, helping to reduce the number of under-used spaces and relieve pressure on popular facilities.

**Consolidated PARC leadership** | Providers and community members expressed a desire to reduce the number of volunteer boards, consolidate and coordinate among existing providers to offer more programming with less administration (e.g., calendaring, networking, partnerships on projects, joint fundraising or grant applications, reciprocal membership agreements). Some form of consolidated or more coordinated leadership would allow providers to avoid duplication among organizations, share administrative staff, and better leverage existing resources. Community members stressed the importance of having a coalition effort for any large new facility project. Meeting this identified need could take several different forms, such as:

- The Recreation and Culture Committee that formed to guide this Needs Assessment could be formalized and continue to work closely with the City to manage recreation and culture resources.
- A more centralized City Parks and Recreation Department could work with other provider organizations to support coordination efforts.
- MAPP's existing efforts to coordinate among various community service organizations could be expanded to act as a hub for recreation and culture organizations.
- An umbrella organization could be designated or created to stabilize some of the smaller non-profit initiatives, acting as a fiscal agent and charging an indirect rate in exchange for a package of support mechanisms, including space and administrative support.

**Centralized City Parks and Recreation Department** | Recreation management at the City of Homer is dispersed across two departments in three physical locations. A centralized department could facilitate partnerships with other providers for obtaining funding, constructing new facilities or upgrading existing facilities, and providing services.

**More PARC employees** | Existing City of Homer recreation staff are currently at capacity. With additional staff, the City could potentially leverage increased community involvement toward providing services and completing park improvement projects. Provider organizations also identified a desire to share the costs of employing grantwriters to help them access new sources of funding.

## THE POTENTIAL OF A MULTI-PURPOSE COMMUNITY CENTER

Many of the recreation and cultural needs identified as part of this process could be met through existing resources or in a single multi-purpose center. Figure 26 indicates identified needs that could most likely benefit from co-location in a multi-purpose center, though not all of these uses are expected to be accommodated by a single new facility.

Figure 30: Identified needs that could be met by a multi-purpose community center

Table Key		
●	Indicates primary tier priority identified need	
◆	Indicates secondary tier priority identified need	
□	Indicates non-priority identified need	

Priority Level	Identified Need	Notes
<b>Possible primary uses in new multi-purpose facility</b>		
●	Multi-purpose gym	
●	Convention center	
●	200-250 person theater	Integrated with main multi-purpose space, with auxiliary multi-purpose space for use as backstage/green room or additional black box
	Town center/square plaza	
	Multi-generational activities	
	Winter event space and programming	
	More indoor activities (e.g. laser tag, bumper cars, go cart track, child play area)	
	Longer hours for programs or facilities (e.g. late night and/or early morning)	
	More for mentally and physical disabled older people, and for seniors in general	
	Parent-toddler classes	
	Indoor soccer (adults only)	
<b>Possible secondary uses in new multi-purpose facility</b>		
◆	Martial arts gym/wrestling/mat room	Auxiliary space (could also be used as “green room” or backstage area)
●	Children’s art space; toddler/family/pre-school space, indoor play structure	
●	Space and programming for children and teens when school is not in session (e.g. Boys and Girls Club)	
◆	Music/recording studio	

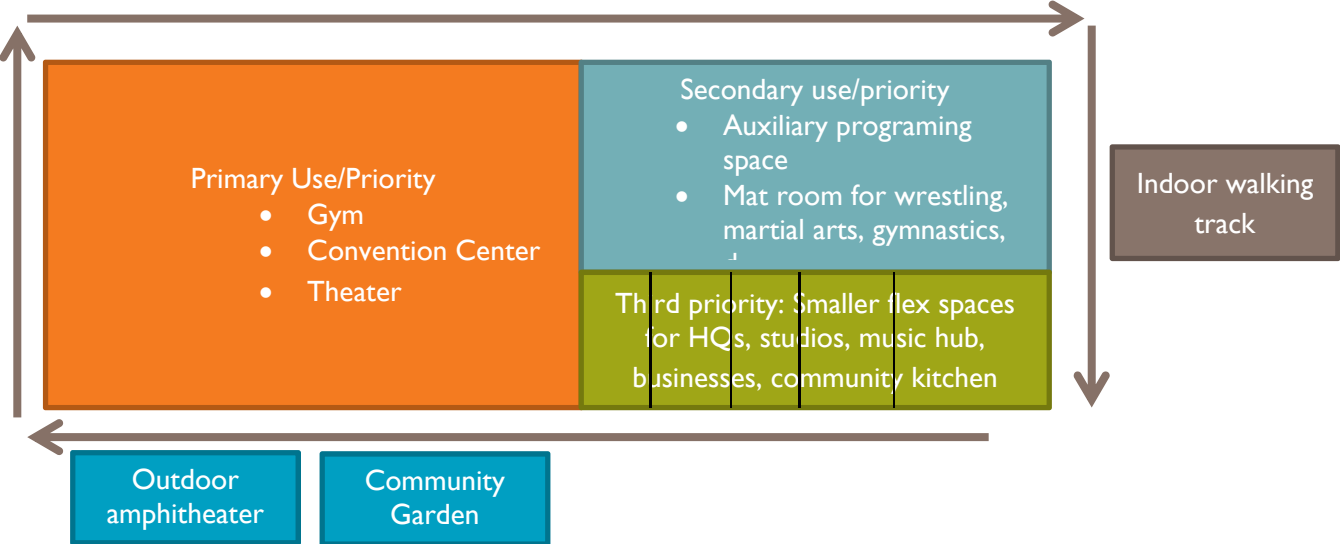
Priority Level	Identified Need	Notes
♦	Private music and art studios	
♦	Space and/or programs for music (e.g. open jam, mentoring/volunteer taught lessons, community band, practice spaces)	
	Dance hall with wooden floor	
<b>Possible tertiary uses in new multi-purpose facility</b>		
●	Multi-purpose community art space and more art classroom space (e.g., wood shop, kiln, press, darkroom)	
♦	Affordable weight room	
●	Indoor walking facility/track	
♦	Outdoor amphitheater	If part of a town plaza
	Community kitchen	
	Indoor climbing facility	
	Maker space	
	Incubator space for recreation and culture providers and/or small businesses	
	Community garden	
	Healthy cooking classes	
	Short courses/workshops	

The center could be designed to fulfill the need for additional gymnasium space, a performance venue, and smaller flexible spaces that could meet the needs for a variety of specific programming needs like music recording, art studios and/or PARC headquarters and businesses. A smaller auxiliary space could serve as a mat room for wrestling, martial arts, and yoga, with a removable floor and a “back stage” to the main space for performances.



These images illustrate examples of multi-purpose gymnasium and performance spaces. The image on the far left seats 300 people; the image on the far right seats 100 people.

An indoor walking track could be included in the design of the main gymnasium space or around the entire building envelope. Outdoor projects, such as an outdoor amphitheater and additional community gardens could also be integrated into the design. The following diagram illustrates how spaces can be combined in a multi-use facility to meet several needs at once.



NON-PRIORITY IDENTIFIED NEEDS

**Multi-purpose Indoor**

- Basketball court
- Dance hall with wooden floor
- Provide gym in Anchor Point

**Specialized Indoor**

- Arcade
- Community bike shop
- Community kitchen
- Community wood working shop
- Curling
- Futsal court (indoor soccer)
- Indoor climbing facility
- Indoor skate park
- Maker space
- Robotics/auto shop
- Water park

**Central space/ headquarters (Indoor)**

- Circumpolar educational center with sailing classes
- Folk School headquarters
- HQ for recreation and culture provider organizations
- Incubator space for new businesses
- Wooden Boat Society headquarters (library and meeting space, shop, boat and equipment storage)

## Outdoor

Paintball/airsoft course  
Another disc golf course at Hornaday Park or Bishop's Beach  
Buy land for parks (e.g. at the bottom of West Hill)  
Community garden (greenhouse, high tunnels, rented to people for growing their own food)  
Covered Park and Ride for bikes  
Covered, unheated shelter near athletic fields  
Flag football  
More sports fields  
Motocross track  
Playground on the spit  
Public outdoor swimming (e.g. an Anchor Point pond, Lampert Lake)  
RC flying field/track  
Shooting range  
Sledding hill  
ATV programs or facilities  
Helicopter access to backcountry (e.g., for heli-skiing)  
Improve the boat ramp ("speed divots" between every concrete log)  
Jet skiing programs or facilities  
Expand outdoor activities/facilities across the bay  
Warming hut on spit (*There is a plan and seed money in place for this project as of 2015. No action required from City.*)

## Trails

Develop a non-motorized path/trail adjacent to Kachemak Drive connecting the Homer Spit Trail to the EER pathway.  
Light ski trails at McNeil  
Mountain bike single track trails (Diamond Ridge)  
More multi-use access at Ohlson Mt Road

## Programming

3-D Printer	Lacrosse
Classes for adults	Mini golf
Affordable art classes	Rentals on the spit (kayaks, boats)
Basket weaving	Sailing
Boxing	Childcare while adult recreation activities are happening
Circus arts	Community stitching/knitting
Dodgeball	Tennis lessons
Field Hockey	Tournaments (e.g. pickle ball, tennis, ping pong, martial arts)
Film school	Video gaming club
Food preservation	Weaving
Game library	Wildflower identification
Golf lessons	Ski loan program
Indoor shooting	
Industrial art classes	
Jewelry class	

## Coordination and Information

Consolidated advertising  
Cultivate recreation and culture leadership  
More volunteer and service organization coordination (e.g., adopt a park)  
Bathrooms at the base of the spit

## APPENDIX C: COMMUNITY OUTREACH

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCESS

The Homer Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment is a thoughtful look forward over the next 10 to 15 years to understand the big picture of our existing recreation and culture activities and resources, what is missing, and which changes the community would like to see. For this endeavor to be meaningful, it was important that the variety of activities and viewpoints of the greater community were included. Outreach to providers, users, the general public and other stakeholders informed much of the study, and with key informant interviews, focus groups, a community workshop, several planning documents, and almost 1,000 survey responses, there was no shortage of information. The City of Homer oversaw the process, with staff support and project management provided by Walt Wrede and Julie Engebretsen, and guidance from the Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture (PARC) Advisory Committee. The involved three target populations: recreation and culture providers, recreation and culture users, and the general public. The Needs Assessment included a special focus to reach out to young people and seniors in the study area. The outreach activities described below were used to understand the particular needs and potential resources of these target populations.

### RECREATION AND CULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Recreation and Culture Advisory Committee included: Gail Edgerly (Homer Council on the Arts, HCOA), Matt Steffy (Parks and Recreation Commission), Jan Rumble (Kevin Bell Arena/Homer Hockey), Megan Murphy (MAPP of the Southern Kenai Peninsula), Kate Crowley (ReCreate Rec), Asia Freeman (Bunnell Arts Center), Mike Illg (City of Homer Community Recreation Coordinator), Corbin Arno (Homer Voice for Business, Motorized Sports), Karin Marks (Art Shop Gallery, Homer Voice for Business, volunteer), and Kelly Cooper (Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly, Homer Voice for Business, volunteer).

The Recreation and Culture Advisory Committee provided context for overarching issues to be addressed through the Needs Assessment process, as well as guidance for how the Needs Assessment can be a useful tool to meet the goals of the City, Homer community and recreation and culture providers. The group also guided the statistically valid survey, informed the gap analysis of identified needs, and helped to identify initial funding and implementation strategies for meeting priority needs.

## ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY

For this Needs Assessment, an online community survey gathered the input of 989 respondents, representing approximately 1,700 people.<sup>16</sup> The City publicized the survey in newspapers and community events. The Recreation and Culture Committee also facilitated the online community survey at Homer Middle School and Homer High School during Physical Education classes to better understand the youth perspective on Homer’s recreation and culture needs.

## PROVIDER QUESTIONNAIRE

Twenty one recreation and culture providers filled out an online questionnaire to inform how they use volunteers and paid staff, what they anticipated their needs to be and identify potential resources they could contribute toward meeting community recreation and culture needs. The survey also helped to understand the potential secondary economic impacts of recreation and culture in Homer. Providers included: City of Homer Community Recreation, Bruins Basketball, Homer Council on the Arts, Homer Softball Association, Kachemak Bay Wooden Boat Society, Lindianne's Music Garden, Homer Little League, Kachemak Ski Club, Soccer Association of Homer, Kachemak Bay Campus, Kachemak Swim Club, North Pacific Folk School, Popeye Wrestling, Homer Cycling Club, Homer Hockey Association, Many Rivers Yoga (with Healing Transformations, The Floating Leaf Sangha, Homer Center for Spiritual Living, and The Artful Eddy), Kachemak Bay Equestrian Association, Bunnell Street Arts Center, Pratt Museum, Snomads Inc., and City of Homer Parks Maintenance.

Figure 31: Where do you live?

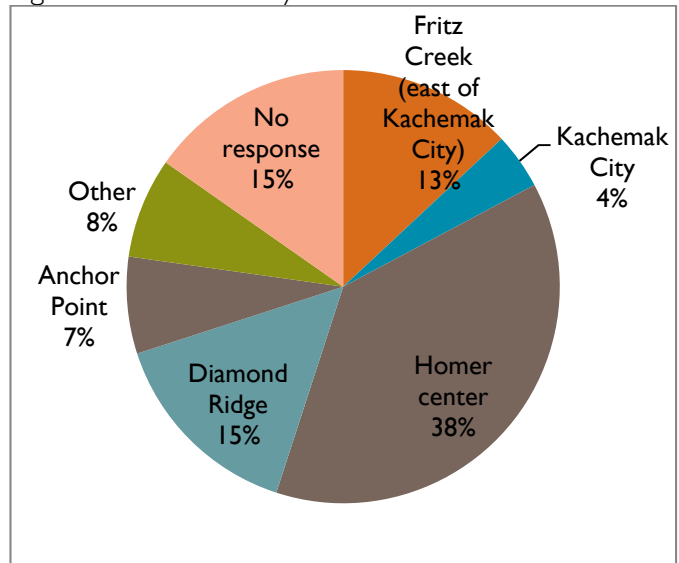
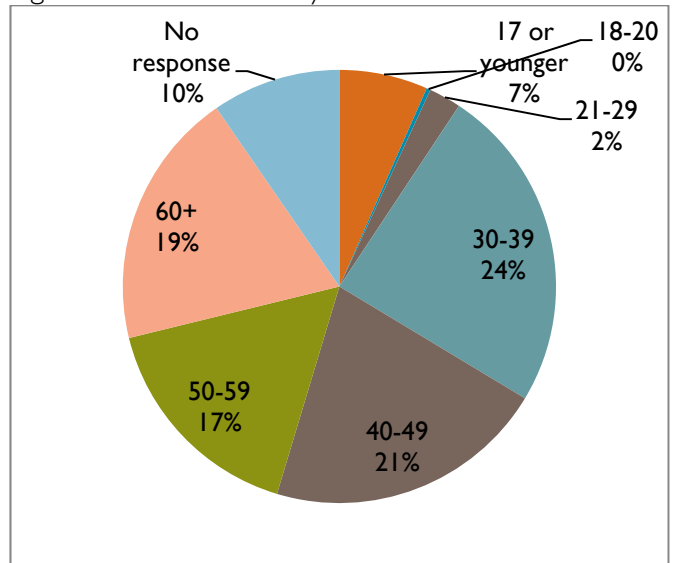


Figure 32: How old are you?



Source: 2014 Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment Online Community Survey

<sup>16</sup> Respondents were able to respond for themselves or household, and then indicate their household size.



## NOVEMBER 12-14, 2014 SITE VISIT

**Ski Swap Outreach** | 6-8 p.m., Wednesday, November 12, 2014. This activity allowed the project team to connect with recreation and culture users who might not otherwise come to a public meeting or fill out survey. A poster display shared the results of the Needs Assessment to date, including a list of identified needs categorized by facility, program or management strategy. Participants were invited to indicate whether identified needs were best met using existing resources or whether a new facility was truly needed. Participants commonly noted the need for a new affordable gym space, more opportunities for toddlers and parents to recreate together, and transportation improvements. Participants also indicated the desire to improve the coordination of existing organizational structures, such as calendars, funding opportunities and nonprofit boards to improve access and availability of recreation and culture resources.

**Business Community Focus Group** | 12-1 p.m. Thursday, November 13, 2014. The Business Focus Group discussed a number of strategies for recreation and culture resources:

- Improve information sharing: include education; consolidate advertising and communication tools.
- For both organizations and businesses: cultivate leadership; coordinate among silos; identify who has responsibility for implementing projects (building new or improving existing facilities, starting new or changing existing programs, etc.).
- For facilities: make better use of existing facilities if possible; for proposed new facilities, assess the financial feasibility of projects and ensure there is the means to cover costs.

The group emphasized that these strategies all work toward the goal of strengthening the local economy and growing the population, particularly younger people and families.

**High School Focus Groups** | 1-4pm Thursday, November 14. The Planning Team conducted two focus groups. The first group was with the Homer High Symphonic Band. About 40 students worked together to create a list of their top recreation and culture activities

Figure 33: Where do Homer High students participate in recreation and culture activities?





(playing music, drawing and sketching, playing video games, creative writing and poetry, skiing, hiking, walking the dog) and map where they do them. Then the students worked together to answer three questions: What do we need or want more of? What are barriers to meeting those needs? What are possible solutions to overcome the barriers? After presenting and discussing their work, the students asked the facilitators to describe how arts and recreation are currently funded. Recreation and Culture Committee members Mike Illg and Asia Freeman reviewed the funding mechanisms for the organizations they represented. The second focus group helped to review the previous group's list of identified needs and synthesize the findings into three highest-priority needs, which included:

- 1) A multi-use, mixed-age space including the following amenities:
  - Publicly-accessible music recording studio
  - Practice rooms
  - Games/game library
  - Pottery
  - 3-D printer
  - Maker space
- 2) A performance space, for activities like Color of Homer
- 3) Maintaining the trails

Teens listed transportation, time, money and weather as barriers to participation. They indicated that a multi-use space would provide a place to be if they did not want to go in and out of town. The taxi voucher program was offered as a model for solving the transportation barrier.

**Community Workshop** | 5:30-8:15.p.m, Thursday, November 14. Around 40 people, five Parks and Recreation Commissioners and five Recreation and Culture Committee members attended the workshop. The workshop began with an open house where people could review research and work to date. The planning team presented the results of the demographic and survey analyses with small group breakout to discuss guiding questions. Discussion focused on identifying high priority projects and the characteristics that they would need to move forward. Participants also expressed a desire to focus recreation and culture resources around a walkable downtown and to pursue sport and tourism events. The idea of a town center or plaza anchored by multi-purpose recreation and culture space or convention center emerged as a popular desire. Participants also discussed implementation strategies such as public-private partnerships and coordinating with a private foundation to help leverage funding and volunteer efforts to develop a new multi-purpose facility. Other identified needs highlighted in workshop discussions included:

- A Medium-sized theater for 250 people with wings, black box, lighting, bathrooms, heat, beer and alcohol permits, accessible, maintained
- In and outdoor racket sports

- Maker space; communal art studio space for 15- 20 studios
- A dance hall with a wooden floor
- A community kitchen
- A meeting room list
- A centralized calendar
- Area for walking indoors
- A couple more recreation and culture employees (city)
- Non-motorized routes for walking and skiing through town, sidewalks to public buildings; trail network that isn't tied to the road system
- Bathrooms at the base of the spit

Community Workshop



**Senior Focus Group** | 10-11 a.m. Friday, November 15. Seniors are a diverse group, including people who have raised families and now are aging in Homer, retirees from other parts of the state, and less able individuals and their caregivers who use services like the Friendship Center adult day program and assisted living. The focus group attendees all agreed that the growing population of this diverse group will have an impact on the Homer community in the coming years.

The focus group highlighted the importance of a centralized calendar to share activities with new retirees to town. The multitude of events each weekend is a draw for retirees. One person said she could easily come up with 12 people who were visitors in town for pickleball alone. The group referenced a program a real estate agent ran that gave new property owners a free one-year membership to a community organization in Homer (paid for through the property sale commission). Reviving this program could be a way to invite new residents into the community and establish a pattern of supporting recreation and arts organizations through private giving. There was also discussion of the senior tax exemption. Both seniors and non-seniors expressed discomfort that because of the exemption, some seniors are not contributing as much as they would like to city and borough services.

The senior focus group also liked the idea of an intergenerational space with mixed programming, and remarked on the popularity of the paved multi-use trails for walking. They noted that people become tired of “fighting the snow” in winter, though the City has been good about keeping the trails clear. An indoor space for walking would be used frequently by active seniors and provide a place for assisted living, adult day providers and caregivers to bring less mobile seniors out in the winter, either for a safe walk, or to be around other people in an unstructured environment.

However, they also maintained that scheduled activities work well for less independent individuals, as caretakers must plan extra time to get less mobile residents to an activity.

### **Recreation and Culture Committee**

#### **Work Session | 12 noon – 2 p.m.**

Friday, November 15. The Recreation and Culture Committee decided to invite more representatives from the business community to bring their expertise in economic development and private-sector project financing to discussions about the direction of the Needs Assessment and any large-scale priority projects that might come out of it. The Committee discussed previous successful projects in which the City was a partner, and how lessons learned from those projects (e.g., the animal shelter, library, Old Town) could be applied to the Needs Assessment project. Past successful efforts had a lead organization with goals, plans, volunteers and seed money; the City was better able to contribute as a partner with an outside lead organization (for instance, the City provided land for the hospital).

Community Workshop



## **INTERVIEWS**

The planning team conducted key informant interviews with all members of the Recreation and Culture Committee as well as a few key providers including, Carol Swartz (Kachemak Bay Campus), Douglas Waclawski (Homer High School Principal), Joy Steward (Homer Foundations), and Rick Malley (Independent Living Center).

## **STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY**

A statistically valid telephone survey was conducted by Ivan Moore Research, primarily to assess the community's willingness to pay for identified recreation and culture needs. Survey results indicated that recreation and culture are important to the majority of area residents and that there is some support for increasing public funding for recreation and culture facilities and services through various means. The full survey report cross-tabulates responses by categories such as zip code, age, and income for a more detailed picture of how people value recreation and culture resources, as well as funding options at the time of the survey.

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