

City of Homer Parks, Arts, Recreation, and Culture Advisory Committee (PARCAC) SWOT Analysis

8/15/2024 (4:30 PM - 5:30 PM)



Overview

The City of Homer Parks, Arts, Recreation, and Culture Advisory Committee (PARCAC) represents a wide range of interests within the community. In preparation for the City of Homer's Strategic Planning process, PARCAC wanted to develop a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. With a completed SWOT analysis, the committee seeks to create short, medium, and long-term goals to recommend to the City Council and community as part of the Strategic Planning efforts.

The SWOT analysis focused on answering the question: **"What key information from our past, present, and anticipated future will help inform our planning"**? By framing the process in this way, a group can better understand and anticipate changes over time and create a shared context for moving forward.

SWOT Event

Nine individuals participated in the SWOT event held on August 15th, 2024 from 4:30 PM - 5:30 PM at Homer City Hall.

During the meeting, participants were asked to individually brainstorm their ideas for each of six themes across three "eras": past (accomplishments and setbacks), present (strengths and weaknesses), and future (opportunities and threats). They then formed groups of three to focus on one era and generate as many ideas as they could for each. Afterward, groups had the opportunity to do a gallery walk to view other eras. They could then add on or highlight ideas that were particularly meaningful or important to keep in mind. Once the gallery walk was completed, groups reported out on their highlights. The meeting closed with reflections on what participants felt most proud of and brainstormed next steps for integrating the SWOT with the current Strategic Planning effort.

Below are the ideas generated for each era. Check marks (✓) indicate that an individual outside of the original group found this to be an important idea. The number of check marks equates to the number of individuals who found importance in the idea. Additionally, those ideas that are **BOLDED IN RED TEXT** are the ideas that each group identified as a highlight for reporting.

"What key information from our past, present, and anticipated future will help inform our planning"?

PAST	
Accomplishments	Setbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Playground at Karen Hornaday Park ✓✓• Beach policy• Sidewalk on Main Street ✓• Trails/parks -Jack Gist• Playground equipment• Community Recreation• Trail development ✓• HERC building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of Parks and Maintenance staffing/funding ✓• Lack of space for community recreation ✓• Small tax base servicing large area• Loss of state funding• Small budget ✓✓• Merging arts and parks without guidance• Staff turnover, reorganizing of department ✓✓• Not prioritized, funding-wise ✓

PRESENT

Strengths

- **Strong advocacy and support from community** ✓✓✓
- Some successful funding for some projects
- **Knowledgeable and motivated staff** ✓✓
- Staff cooperation
- **Numerous community partnerships (schools, Chamber, etc.)** ✓
- Expanding attention for accessibility
- Seed money for Rec Center
- Ben Walters sidewalk
- New KHP Master Plan
- **Small but important improvements to parks**
- Have Strategic Plan drafted
- Have Trails financial plan
- Have HART funding for trails and sidewalks
- Everyone loves parks
- Increased use of outdoor spaces
- Rec program highly regarded/used
- Need/desire for activities

Weaknesses

- **Need more designated funding and staff** ✓✓
- **Resources don't support expectations** ✓✓✓
- Parks still need more work
- **Lack of effective, cohesive organizational structure (e.g. Parks and Rec Department)** ✓✓
- **Skepticism about follow through with Strategic Plan**
- Need advocacy and outreach at parks
- No trail connectivity ✓
- Deferred maintenance
- Need to merge arts and support better
- Lack of engagement at PARCAC from public
- Misunderstanding between Parks and Recreation and Economic Development
- Comprehensive Plan doesn't take into account practicality of implementation
- Need/desire for activities

FUTURE

Opportunities

- Allocation of funding for new facility
- Increased demand for community recreation ✓
- Growing, active population ✓
- Community recreation is more accessible
- New City staff with interest in Parks and Recreation ✓
- **Collaborative efforts between City clubs and organizations (fundraising and planning)** ✓✓
- **Working with City to prioritize land for future parks** ✓
- **Working closer with the Planning Commission** ✓✓✓
- Working towards a more walkable city ✓
- We have abundant natural assets and resources we could leverage and invest in

Threats

- Lack of green space access ✓
- Increased development without planning for open spaces ✓✓
- **Lack of funding** ✓✓✓✓
- Deferred maintenance ✓✓
- Lack of indoor recreation space ✓
- Borough and City funding
- Staffing ✓✓
- Accessibility issues ✓
- **Organizational structure (or lack thereof)** ✓✓✓✓
- Advocacy for the arts and parks
- Disconnect between ideal (recreation, beauty) and implementation, prioritization
- Ideas about economic values sometimes at odds with ideas about space, movement, and beauty
- Loss of space, competition for space (e.g. housing, vessel haul out)

SWOT Integration

Following report outs, the group was asked to look across the documented landscape and **reflect on what makes them feel proud**. Answers included:

- Community recreation
- Sidewalks
- Amazing strides with the resources we do have
- Increased walkability
- Plowing of sidewalks in winter
- Positive, healthy relationships
 - Special events
 - Bringing people together, returning people
 - Value of community relationships
- Community organizations like Little League and adult softball-these are opportunities that would not be available if there were no public parks that were free, accessible, and maintained.

Next, participants were asked, **“having heard the report outs, what insights can inform planning”**? Participants shared:

- More staffing
- Funding is crucial-staffing, resources
 - Funding base
- Leveraging and messaging the importance of parks in our lives
- Intangibles-not everything is just about economic value, there is value beyond economics
- Scarcity mindsets?
- Structures: prioritizing recreation as a culture of Homer, elevating that culture to get more support
- Importance of parks for mental health, physical health, and they also have economic impacts.

Analysis

PARCAC identified many areas for celebration as well as areas for concern, now and into the future. Participants shared that they are proud of playgrounds, trails, sidewalks, and increased walkability and accessibility of public spaces. They cite strong partnerships, community support, high-quality staff, and efficient and effective utilization of available resources. However, loss of staffing and resources, insufficient funding, and the lack of an organizational structure for Parks and Recreation pose threats to present and future progress. Participants, too, reflected deeply on values misalignment and the gap that is created between expectations and reality. This can fuel skepticism about follow-through on elements of the Strategic Plan.

Areas for Exploration

PARCAC is a high-functioning group with great potential for impact. Through discussion, key themes emerged around the lack of public knowledge about-and engagement with- PARCAC; mental models around concepts like intangibles (e.g. mental health, wellness) and scarcity mindsets (there isn't enough to go around); and how those things feed into (or not) a culture in Homer around recreation and also the prioritization of recreation when it comes to allocation of resources.

Digging into the underlying contradictions present would be a fruitful avenue for the City of Homer. Underlying contradictions are blocks or barriers that prevent an organization from realizing its vision and can be found in attitudes, beliefs, and structures/ways of operating. Contradictions are existing realities that can be internal or external factors (or both) that can block the way forward. Integrating a session that addresses Underlying Contradictions and Strategic Directions (ways of navigating Underlying Contradictions) would be a beneficial part of the ongoing Strategic Planning process.

It is abundantly clear that relationships hold immense power for PARCAC. Building on the strength of existing and potential relationships should continue to propel the work of PARCAC. PARCAC, too, should celebrate its achievements. Find ways to publicly celebrate the many successes of PARCAC and use that as a way to build transparency and make strides towards a community culture built around arts and recreation.

Next Steps

- Draft of the Strategic Plan needs to take a second look at (this) and consider re-prioritization of PARCAC; this SWOT analysis can help that process;
- Can potentially use this SWOT analysis effectively for PARCAC's space in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Addendum: Potential Strategic Planning Next Steps: **DISCUSSED WITH PARCAC 9/19/2024**

- **Examine underlying contradictions during the broader City of Homer Strategic Planning process**
 - Unless the underlying contradictions present within the organizational structure of the City of Homer (inclusive of Council and Commissions) are addressed, the same patterns will repeat into the future
 - Acknowledge the disconnect between the prioritization of parks and recreation in the Comprehensive Plan and the allocation of resources for parks and recreation in Homer
- **Explore the development of a Parks and Recreation Department to provide needed organizational structure**
 - Dedicate staffing to develop and maintain services
- **Examine adequate funding for a Parks and Recreation Department**
 - Examine the current and aspirational allocation of resources in the budget for parks and recreation and consider how that aligns with public feedback on parks and recreation
 - Ensure sustainability of funding for Parks and Recreation
- **Continue building relationships with other local organizations to drive a culture that supports parks and recreation in Homer**
 - Marketing/awareness-raising (e.g. Chamber of Commerce)
 - Celebrations of collaborations and projects can elevate public awareness
 - Implementation of programs (e.g. Homer Council on the Arts, Little League, Rotary)
- **Explore community engagement as an activity for parks and recreation and strategies for engaging with the community**