



# MEMORANDUM

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## Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission Strategic Plan and Goals

**Item Type:** Informational  
**Prepared For:** Mayor Lord and Homer City Council  
**Thru:** Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager  
**Date:** December 6, 2024  
**From:** Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission

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### Background

City Council through Resolution 24-019 directed the Commission to:

- Develop a Strategic Plan to guide the Commission work through 2024 and beyond that includes indoor recreation, outdoor parks, trails and sidewalks
- Develop and review policies related to community recreation and parks
- Develop a prioritized list of parks and recreation needs and associated costs that the City Council and City Manager can use to evaluate the CIP and prepare annual budgets.
- Evaluate the role that PARCAC should play in the arts in Homer
- Review the recreation fee schedule and evaluate opportunities for a scholarship fund.

Throughout 2024 the Commission focused on reviewing and developing a revised strategic plan and determined that a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was required. The Commission contracted with a local consultant to assist in facilitating a SWOT. The Commission completed the SWOT Analysis as a prelude to defining and establishing their strategic plan including ongoing, short term and long term goals.

At their regular meeting on November 21, 2024 the Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission unanimously approved their 2025-2026 Strategic Plan. Following is the SWOT Analysis results provided by the Consultant, the final draft of the Commission Strategic Plan and Goals for 2025-2026 and relevant minutes.



# **PARKS, ART, RECREATION, & CULTURE ADVISORY COMMISSION (PARCAC)**

## **2025-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN - FINAL DRAFT FOR COUNCIL APPROVAL**

### **1. On-going goals.**

- a. **On-going Goal #1. Open Communications.** Provide timely, relevant comment to the City Council and as appropriate, other Commissions and Boards, on Parks, Art, Recreation & Cultural issues.
  - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to help inform the City Council and other Commissions and Boards, about matters within PARCAC's purview.
  - ii. **Actions:**
    1. PARCAC members will use staff reports and meeting minutes to stay informed about activities within the City that fall within PARCAC purview, discuss the activities, , at PARCAC meetings and forward appropriate comments to the City Council.
    2. At each PARCAC meeting, a PARCAC member will volunteer to make a report about the PARCAC meeting at the next available City Council meeting.
- b. **On-going Goal #2. Parks & Recreation Budget.** Gain a better understanding of the process, have more communication on budget/projects between City Staff and review budget at least annually.
  - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to serve as an advocate for the fiscal needs of items/programs that fall within PARCAC purview.
  - ii. **Actions:**
    1. PARCAC will conduct an annual review of the budget information and determine items to for endorsement.
    2. PARCAC will review the budget information and provide comments and recommendations to the City Manager and the City Council during the development of the new budgets.
    3. PARCAC supports the concept of a sustainable source of funding for Parks and Recreation and will advocate for this.
- c. **On-going Goal #3. Public Art.** Support inclusion of Public Art in City Facilities when planning upgrades, renovations and new projects.
  - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to ensure public art is included in City buildings on a consistent basis.
  - ii. **Actions:**
    1. PARCAC recognized the City has a standing operating procedure for accepting and decommissioning public art.
- d. **On-going Goal #4: Parks/Recreation/Arts/Culture Community.** Maintain working relationships with various cultural entities.
  - i. **Objective:** PARCAC will maintain relationships with Homer's arts and cultural community.
  - ii. **Actions:**
    1. PARCAC will invite community organizations involved with arts, culture, parks, trails and other matters within PARCAC's purview PARCAC meetings.
- e. **On-going Goal #5: Open & Green Spaces.** Preservation of areas of natural beauty and open green spaces throughout the City.
  - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objectives are to (a) protect space designated within the City as open or green space and (b) increase the City's ownership of such spaces consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

ii. **Actions:**

1. PARCAC will review land allocation plan and make recommendations.
2. PARCAC welcomes recommendations from the public or staff regarding lands that would best serve the community as open or green space.

2. **Short Term Goals:** These are intended to be goals that can be accomplished within 1-2 years.

a. **Short Term Goal #1: Organizational Issues.** Continue working with the City Council and the City Manager with the goal of the development of a Parks & Recreation Department.

- i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to support an organizational structure for providing parks facilities and recreation services in a cost effective and efficient manner.

ii. **Actions:**

1. PARCAC will review and comment on options for an organizational structure for providing parks facilities and recreational services.

b. **Short Term Goal #2. Community Recreation Center.** Support and advocate for a new Community Recreation Center including a capital campaign.

- i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to develop a short- term and long-term plan for developing and operating a Community Recreation Center.

ii. **Actions:**

1. PARCAC will keep informed of decisions and recommendations emanating from the Council's Recreation Champions by maintaining communication with them.
2. PARCAC will review and comment on the draft Community Recreation Center Development Plan when it's developed.
3. PARCAC will review and comment on the draft Community Recreational Center Operational Plan when it's developed.

c. **Short Term Goal #3: Operational Policies.** Support the development of policies for Parks and Community Recreation Programs.

- i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to ensure the City's Parks and Community Recreation Programs are operating in accordance with reasonable municipal practices.

ii. **Actions:**

1. PARCAC will review and comment on any Operational Policies for the Use of Parks and Operational Policies for Community Recreation that are developed.

d. **Short Term Goal #4: Park Planning.** Support the update and development of Master Park Plans.

- i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to promote the maintenance and capital needs of the City's parks are being provided for in a proactive matter.

ii. **Actions:**

1. PARCAC will review and comment on the Park Development Plan for each park that will include a list of capital and maintenance activities for each park once developed.
2. PARCAC acknowledges that a budget for accomplishing such maintenance and capital needs will need to be developed and will review and comment on this once a draft is developed.

- e. **Short Term Goal #5: Sustainable budgeting.** Research and advocate for the development or creation of depreciation reserves to maintain parks and recreation facilities.
    - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to support the City in creating a sustainable funding source for developing and maintaining parks and recreation facilities.
    - ii. **Actions:**
      - 1. PARCAC will review and comment on any funding plan for parks and recreation facilities that may be developed.
3. **Long Term Goals.** The long term goals, with are intended to be goals that can be accomplished within a 3-5 year timeframe.
- a. **Long Term Goal #1: Staffing.** Support staffing requests made by Staff or advocate for staffing as identified.
    - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to see that the staff developing and maintaining parks facilities and providing community recreation services is cost effective and provides the determined desired level of service
    - ii. **Actions:**
      - 1. PARCAC will review and discuss staffing levels with staff and advocate for additional staff as needed.
  - b. **Long Term Goal #2: Non-motorized Transportation.** Advocate for City Code to be updated to include sidewalks as well as parks & trails are identified as falling under PARCAC auspices.
    - i. **Objectives:** PARCAC's objective is to advocate for non-motorized transportation options in accordance with the City's Transportation Plan.
    - ii. **Actions:**
      - 1. PARCAC will advocate for the finalization and adoption of the Transportation Plan, and its eventual incorporation into the new Comprehensive Plan.
  - c. **Long Term Goal #3: Non-motorized Transportation.** Advocate for City Code or processes to include an opportunity for PARCAC to review and comment on proposed subdivisions for recommended trail and or sidewalk facilities and associated easements prior to the preliminary plat being submitted to the Kenai Peninsula Borough for approval.
    - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to be more proactive about identifying opportunities for non-motorized transportation.
    - ii. **Actions:**
      - 1. PARCAC will advocate that the Homer City Code be updated to accomplish the goals/objectives set forth in the new planning documents.

**PARCAC Strategic Goals 2024**

**Ongoing Goals**

<b>Communication*</b>	Provide timely, relevant comment to the City Council on Parks, Art, Recreation & Cultural Issues.
<b>Budget*</b>	Review & advocate for operational and capital budget items related to P&R
<b>Public Art</b>	Advocating for inclusion of Public Art in City Facilities and or placed in or on City Parks and land.
<b>Community Partnerships*</b>	Maintain working relationships with various cultural entities such as Homer Council on the Arts, Local Art Galleries, The Pratt Museum, Pier One Theater, etc.
<b>Open &amp; Green Spaces</b>	Preservation of areas of natural beauty and open green spaces throughout the City.

**Short Term Goals: 1-2 years**

<b>Organizational Issues *</b>	Establish a new Parks & Recreation Department
<b>Community Recreation Center</b>	Select site & facility design, begin capital campaign, operational & development plan
<b>Operational Policies</b>	Begin creating P&R policies and procedures document for parks and recreation
<b>Park Planning</b>	Review existing park plans and consider developing npark plans for all parks
<b>Sustainable Budgeting</b>	Research the development or creation of depreciation reserves to maintain parks and recreation facilities, continue to understand the budget, include setting fees and dedication of sales tax to fund projects and programs.

**Long Term Goals: 3-5 years**

<b>Staffing</b>	Review staffing plans and needs Addition .5 staff for Parks
<b>Non-Motorized Transportation</b>	Advocate for City Code to be updated to include sidewalks as well as parks & trails are identified as falling under PARCAC auspices
<b>Non-Motorized Transportation</b>	Advocate for City Code or processes to include an opportunity for PARCAC to review and comment on proposed subdivisions for recommended trail and or sidewalk facilities and associated easements prior to the preliminary plat being submitted to the KPBfor approval.

**\* Identified in SWOT Analysis**

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

## 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**