

Anchorage Parks are Economic Engines – Now You Can Give Them a Boost

By Beth Nordlund, Development Director for the Anchorage Park Foundation

In recent history, funding for Parks & Recreation programs has been inadequate to meet community needs. Community members who participated in the 2004 park planning process suggested creating the Anchorage Park Foundation to accept private contributions to accomplish important parks and recreation community goals. The Mayor, the Director of Parks & Recreation, Parks Commissioners and the Alaska Community Foundation made it happen.

The Anchorage Park Foundation is a newly-created fund of the Alaska Community Foundation, a 501c(3) public charity established to promote stewardship and create simple ways for people and businesses to impact change in their communities. The Anchorage Park Foundation's mission is to *advance parks, recreation opportunities, trails, and conservation efforts that enhance the quality of life for all resident and visitors to Anchorage*. We are listening to the community and focusing on the enhancing services people value.

Research has proven that parks are economic engines: they attract businesses, increase property values, attract visitors and entice them to extend their stay, help retain a well trained and highly educated workforce critical to local businesses success in the global market, and add to the overall health and quality of life in Anchorage. The number two reason for firms to relocate is quality of life issues – second only to good local schools. For the second year in a row, Anchorage has earned the highest five-star rating in Expansion Management Magazine's "Quality of Life Quotient." Our parks are a part of our success, and they should be viewed as economic engines if we are planning for growth in a way that ensures a high quality of life.

Anchorage has over 14,000 acres of municipal parkland, 200 parks, and over 400 kilometers of trails and greenbelts that link neighborhoods with surrounding natural open space and wildlife habitat. These are considerable assets for the citizens of Anchorage to enjoy and maintain.

Working together to accomplish Anchorage's parks and recreation priorities, we can raise the money needed to improve services for our residents and visitors, and bridge the gap between growing needs and limited financial resources that rely too heavily on property taxes. Our work will only serve to boost Anchorage's economy.

Already Rasmuson Foundation and Wells Fargo, as well as a number of private individuals, have seen the value of using the Park Foundation to improve the quality of life in Anchorage. Plans are in the works to showcase our initial efforts this year and inspire community members to give their time and money to see results for years to come!

Do you have a vision for parks, trails, open spaces and recreation opportunities in Anchorage? Play a role in Anchorage's growth and success by boosting the Anchorage Park Foundation with a contribution or a public-private partnership opportunity today.

For more information or to contribute today, contact Beth Nordlund at the Anchorage Park Foundation at nordlundbl@muni.org or (907) 343-4492.

<http://www.muni.org/parks/foundation.cfm>