



1057 W Fireweed Lane  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

November 12, 2024

Honorable Mayor Suzanne LaFrance

Assembly Member Meg Zaletel

Assembly Member Felix Rivera

Dear Mayor Suzanne LaFrance and Assembly Members Meg Zaletel and Felix Rivera,

Anchorage is a winter city in a winter state. For over twenty years (44 years for Art Geuss!) a dedicated group of volunteers have been working to improve Cuddy Family Midtown Park (CFMP). Mayor LaFrance, as a former Chair of the Anchorage Assembly, you may recall the annual presentation from the Anchorage Skates group to help pay for and support the ice maintenance at the skating oval.

With its location in the heart of Anchorage CFMP hosts events, celebrations, and festivals year-round. It features one of just six regulation-size speedskating ovals in the United States, the first inclusive playground in Anchorage, an amphitheater, and a picturesque walking path around ponds and the "Great Lawn." Around 93,000 vehicles drive around the park each day.

But the park is missing something. It needs a facility - a "chalet" - to be the hub or center for organized activities throughout the year. Although there are numerous businesses as well

as homes nearby the park is underused and undiscovered. Busy parks are safe and healthy parks. It is vital for the health, safety, and development of Midtown to have an active park.

We are asking that your administration include in its CIP request to the State of Alaska and in the 2025 legislative session funding for the construction of a chalet at CFMP. Almost \$600,000 has already been raised through parks bonds (secured in 2019 and 2023), individual donations and an Atwood Foundation grant. Over 100 people have made cash gifts including sixteen Olympians, among them gold medalists Kikkan Randall, Pat Pitney, Kris Thorsness, and Bonnie Blair.

In 2018, Kiewit Construction provided a detailed pro bono estimate of \$1.2 Million to build the facility; however, contractors state that given the inflation in costs of construction materials; and labor, the current price has likely significantly increased. The Midtown Park Chalet Committee is in the process of getting an up-to-date estimate from an independent cost consulting firm. Based on the due diligence of the Midtown Park Chalet Committee, **the Midtown Community Council estimates that approximately \$2.5 million is needed for the project; therefore, we are asking that \$2.5 million be added to the CIP in our behalf.**

We thank you for your consideration of this project for CIP funds. If you have any questions whatsoever, or would like a tour of the park, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Please help us continue to develop what we are calling "The Jewel of Midtown."

Sincerely,

*Kristine Steehner*

Midtown Community Council President

907-240-4324

And the

Midtown Park Chalet Committee

## NOTES

- A “chalet” has been in park plans since its inception. The Project for Public Spaces, a New York City-based public planning group, helped the municipality craft a design for the park in 2004, which included the chalet as a critical hub for activities. This design led to a “History of Cuddy Family Midtown Park and the Need for a Chalet” which includes a “Preliminary Report for Master Plan – Cuddy Family Midtown Park”.
- The Anchorage Skates group went through a planning exercise in 2015 in considering where to site the chalet. RIM Architects produced a pro bono (valued at \$14,000) preliminary design for the facility in 2016 based on that location. This design received enthusiastic approval from the Muni’s Parks and Recreation department, and the project received formal endorsement from the Midtown Community Council in 2020.
- In 2021 the Midtown Park Chalet donor-advised fund was established at the Alaska Community Foundation to accept gifts for the construction of the fund.
- All parties are on board with the proposed need, location, and design.
- This is a widely supported shovel-ready project, with partial funding already obtained, approvals in place, and it would make an impactful addition to the park and the life of Alaskans, the majority of whom traverse midtown Anchorage.
- With the remaining funding secured before the end of 2025 it is possible that construction could begin in 2026.