

# 2022-2026 Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

## Recreation & Entertainment Summary – **DRAFT**

**Includes:** Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats | Targets | Goals | Strategies & Actions | Relevant Plans

### Strengths *Internal attributes that contribute to success*

- Access to outdoor recreation (trails, parks, fishing)
- Availability of quality public libraries
- Beautiful landscapes and wildlife
- Downtown Fairbanks is historic, walkable, and features many retail and restaurant options, with great waterfront access
- Increasing number of local restaurants and breweries
- Many community events, festivals throughout the year
- Quality and diverse museums that attract visitors and preserve the region's history and heritage
- Shopping hub for the surrounding region, with flagship stores such as Costco
- Traditional arts and crafts of Alaska Native artists

### Weaknesses *Internal barriers to success*

- Conflicts between logging and recreation/trail users, and between different recreation user groups on forestry trails
- Limited access to opportunities for seniors and those with mobility challenges
- Limited chain restaurants and shopping outlets
- Outlying areas of the FNSB have fewer opportunities and dedicated space for bicycles and pedestrians
- Sales tax in North Pole (4%) can be a disincentive for shopping locally for some residents
- The area within a 20-minute drive radius of EAFB, including the nearby City of North Pole, has limited retail, dining and indoor recreation options; in a telephone-based retail needs survey of the North Pole area in 2017, respondents gave poor scores for local shopping and retail

### Opportunities *External forces that contribute to success*

- Alaska Long Trail
- Funding for quality-of-life improvements based on a Fort Wainwright Behavioral Health Epidemiological Consultation (BH EPICON) study that was conducted in response to a high number of suicides and fatalities
- Increasing year-round visitation to better support the leisure and hospitality industry year-round

### Threats *External forces that could be barriers to success*

- Land use conflicts at recreation and aurora sites
- Ongoing supply chain disruptions due to the pandemic and workforce shortages

Where We Are	What measurements can we use to track progress? Where do we want to be in 5 years?	2026 Targets (5% growth from 2019)
<b>260</b> (2020)	<b>Retail Trade Businesses</b> – Number of retail trade businesses in FNSB; largest subcategories include motor vehicle and parts dealers (40), Sporting Goods, Books, Music, etc. (29), Gasoline Stations (29), Building Material and Garden (22) <i>Increase of 3% since 2016 (252 businesses)</i>	<b>273</b>
<b>81</b> (2020)	<b>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation Businesses</b> – Number of businesses in FNSB; this category includes performing arts (18), and amusements, gambling, and recreation (55) <i>Increase of 4% since 2016 (78 businesses)</i>	<b>85</b>
<b>\$143 Million</b>	<b>Wages</b> – Annual wages to FNSB residents employed in leisure & hospitality <i>Leisure &amp; hospitality employs 10% of the population but only covers 4% of FNSB's total wages, indicating these jobs pay less than other industries</i>	<b>\$150 Million</b>

Other Potential Indicators (need baselines and targets): Quality of Life indicators/satisfaction

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Recreation & Entertainment Summary Draft for Interior Alaska Economic Summit Review, February 2022**

**Recreation & Entertainment Goals** – long term improvements and changes we want to see in five years or more



1. The FNSB’s portfolio of year-round recreation and entertainment options continues to grow, contributing to a high quality of life and encouraging FNSB residents to live joyful, healthy lifestyles.
2. Alaskans, military families, and transplants increasingly choose to relocate to and stay in FNSB due to the high quality of life and abundance of activities.

Strategies & Actions – the activities we will implement over the next 5 years to accomplish goals & targets and who will lead them	Lead
<p><b>1. Support Gathering Spaces</b> – Ensure Fairbanks has the facilities needed to host year-round gatherings and large community events. <i>(Goals 1, 2)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Construct a new Fairbanks Convention and Arts Center in downtown Fairbanks.</li> <li>b. Secure funding for and implement phases 2 of the Pioneer Park Master Plan, including opening the park to the riverfront, adding a multi-purpose center.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>2. Enhance Outdoor Recreation Opportunities</b> – Expand outdoor recreation opportunities that appeal to residents and visitors alike. <i>(Goals 1, 2)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Complete and implement the FNSB Recreational Trails Plan.</li> <li>b. Support establishment of the Alaska Long Trail.</li> <li>c. Maintain and modernize existing FNSB outdoor facilities, including athletic fields, Pioneer Park, and improvements to Chena Lake Recreation Area.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>3. Expand Indoor Recreation Opportunities</b> – Expand indoor recreation opportunities that appeal to residents and visitors alike. <i>(Goals 1, 2)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Conduct a conceptual design study for renovation of the Carlson Center, including expanding indoor recreation, fitness, and multipurpose space.</li> <li>b. Remodel the Noel Wien Public Library.</li> <li>c. Maintain and modernize existing indoor recreation facilities, including pools &amp; recreation centers.</li> <li>d. Construct the North Star Athletics Complex.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>4. Enhance Retail</b> – Implement the following quality of life strategies, as identified in the Eielson Regional Growth Plan Quality of Life chapter. <i>(Goals 1, 2)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Continue progress on commercial re-district rezoning efforts in the City of North Pole.</li> <li>b. Consider policies that will attract businesses to the City of North Pole, including developing a database of commercial real estate opportunities.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>5. Connect with Military</b> – Implement the following quality of life strategies, as identified in the Eielson Regional Growth Plan Quality of Life chapter. <i>(Goals 1, 2)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Increase the dissemination of information to EAFB families to increase awareness of and participation in local activities and events.</li> <li>b. Increase distribution of Explore Fairbanks' list of businesses who offer military discounts.</li> <li>c. Create a list of volunteer opportunities in the FNSB for military spouses and civilian residents.</li> <li>d. Improve outreach about the availability of existing facilities and recreation options.</li> <li>e. Consider providing bus transportation options from EAFB to North Pole and Fairbanks during large events and festivals to increase military engagement in community activities.</li> <li>f. Develop guided programs to introduce newcomers to Alaska’s outdoor recreation opportunities.</li> <li>g. Investigate options for developing a community center in the Greater North Pole area.</li> <li>h. Establish a military community liaison to coordinate information-sharing with EAFB personnel.</li> </ol>	

**Other Relevant Resources**

- **Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan.** Fairbanks North Star Borough. Est. completion spring 2022. [View here.](#)
- **Pioneer Park Master Plan.** Fairbanks North Star Borough. November 2021. [View here.](#)
- **Feasibility Study & Market Analysis for the Carlson Center Study.** Fairbanks North Star Borough. 2020. [View here.](#)
- **Eielson Regional Growth Plan.** Fairbanks North Star Borough. 2018. [View here.](#)



# Interior Alaska Economic Summit, February 22-23, 2022

## Recreation & Entertainment Breakout: Discussion Summary (02-23-22)

To view results from the other sessions, visit <https://fnsbceds.com/> (results will be posted by March 11<sup>th</sup>)

This document compiles feedback and notes from the breakout session. The other tools that were used to guide the discussion include:

- An economic cluster/influencer one-pager that identified a preliminary SWOT analysis, goals, strategies, actions, and measures of success
- A worksheet identifying a proposed economic vision statement and guiding questions for each of the activities. The guiding questions have been copied into this document for reference. The feedback on the economic vision statement was compiled separately and will be released by March 11<sup>th</sup>.

### Participants *(alphabetical by first name, based on sign in sheet)*

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*RSVPs: 23 participants*

## Feedback on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

### Guiding Questions:

1. What did we get right?
2. What's missing?
3. What would you change?
4. What's the most important item in each quadrant?

### Discussion Notes:

Color Key: Blue = proposed revision | red = proposed deletion | green = proposed addition

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise: expand outdoor recreation opportunities listed to include snow, mountains, hunting, backdoor wilderness, winter sports</li> <li>• Revise: modify Costco bullet to not call out the retailer by name, but acknowledge Fairbanks as a shopping and supply hub for residents, industry, village stores</li> <li>• Revise: expand to capture how extensive the trails are, including winter trails</li> <li>• Revise: expand restaurants and breweries to include cafes (or broaden to “local food and drink”)</li> <li>• Delete: less emphasis on downtown Fairbanks</li> <li>• Add: proximity to national parks, state parks – protected public lands</li> <li>• Add: garage sales increasingly popular in summer</li> <li>• Add: Pioneer Park as a cultural and recreation hub</li> <li>• Add: extreme seasons create different types of opportunities throughout the year</li> <li>• Add: in addition to having access to activities, the community also has a culture of being active year-round</li> <li>• Add: the community has talented guides and knowledgeable residents about accessing and recreating in the area</li> <li>• Add: Morris Thompson</li> <li>• Add: pristine streams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise: Consider trimming some of the detail, e.g., around North Pole bullets</li> <li>• Add: lack of collaboration around facilities, such as plans for two new facilities, the North Star Athletic Center and the Fairbanks Native Association Community Center</li> <li>• Add: Chena River pollution and lack of public access (privatized waterfront)</li> <li>• Add: lack of information for safety and outdoor recreation</li> <li>• Add: poor lighting along trails and downtown</li> <li>• Add: dilapidated, vacant buildings downtown</li> <li>• Add: access to Alaska Native arts and crafts – lack of connections for visitors</li> <li>• Add: limited services for individuals experiencing homelessness and the visibility of folks with nowhere to go who hang out downtown</li> <li>• Add: lacking “middle” recreation options for those who are not doing extreme/high intensity activities, but want more than a paved trail</li> <li>• Add: litter, cleanliness</li> <li>• Add: limited transit options</li> <li>• Add: poor bike and pedestrian facilities, especially in winter</li> <li>• Add: lack of concert/convention center</li> <li>• Add: challenging winter conditions for recreating</li> <li>• Add: lots of cement in downtown spaces</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add: resource extraction that creates/improves access to new spaces</li> <li>• Add: improved collaboration between different land agencies</li> <li>• Add: AirBnB’s experience tool as a new way to promote activities and support entrepreneurs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add: lack of investors with the ability or interest to fund recreation improvements</li> <li>• Add: regulations of recreation, entertainment, and retail businesses, including food trucks, licensing</li> <li>• Add: proposed Manh Choh trucking activity would bring trucks by Pioneer Park an average of once every 7 minutes</li> <li>• Add: conflicts with resource extraction that negatively impact open space/viewsheds and access</li> <li>• Add: climate change, such as permafrost melting trails and resulting in damages to board walks, increased erosion</li> </ul>

## Goals, Strategies, Actions Discussion Questions

### Guiding Questions:

1. What did we get right?
2. What would you change?
3. What's missing?
4. Who will lead each of the strategies? What do you see as you/your organization's role?
5. Which of the strategies is most important for us to focus on over the next year?

### Discussion Notes:

- Goals
  - Like: references to joyful and healthy lifestyles
  - Revise: "transplants" to "newcomers"
  - Revise: "stay" to "live"
  - Revise: consider adding students to the target groups under Goal 2
  - Add: possible additional goal: "Expand events to more weekends to bring continuous attraction that's open to all demographics"
- Strategy 1: Support Gathering Spaces
  - Revise: Goal name to be "Support Gathering Spaces & Events"
  - Add: Better promote and connect residents with Tribal events; improved integration between Tribal planning and other community planning
  - Add: Complete the rec center
  - Add: Offer transit to key populations (UAF, military) during key community events, festivals, sporting activities
  - Add: Increase the number of community gatherings (especially in winter) that are accessible and open to everyone, and increase headliner events such as music festivals
- Strategy 2: Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
  - Revise: Consider how to better promote existing events such as Equinox, RACCO, World Eskimo Indian-Olympics, Yukon Quest)
  - Add: Develop a safety guide for new residents that helps orient them to potential outdoor hazards they might encounter when recreating (such as how to handle a wildlife encounter)
  - Add: Identify ways to better support the missing middle recreationist – improved facilities, signage, information, guides, gear rentals; reduced or subsidized fees
  - Add: Create an outdoor skating rink downtown, or a skating loop on the river
  - Add: Complete the connector trail across Fairbanks
  - Add: Work with state and federal agencies to create more centralized access to information, including shared trail maps and promotion tools (instead of each agency having its own tools and maps)



- Add: Remove cement and install green space in parks, such as downtown
- Add: Improve signage and wayfinding throughout the community, including both online and onsite tools
- Add: Revitalize the bike share program in downtown Fairbanks
- Strategy 3: Indoor Recreation
  - Revise: Consider rewording strategy to include “indoor recreation **and wellness** opportunities”
  - Revise: under Noel Wien Public Library, edit to recommend expanded library hours to the evenings and Sundays
  - Revise: Consider adding “wellness” back into the title for the North Star facility
  - Add: Create a checklist of landmarks around the community (indoor and outdoor) for visitors to “check off,” with QR codes and photo opportunities
  - Add: Consider adding bouldering/climbing wall to the North Star Complex
  - Add: Create a cultural tourism plan to better integrate and connect visitors and residents with cultural learning and retail opportunities in the community
- Strategy 4: Enhance Retail
  - Add: Create and expand designated spaces for food trucks and local vendors in summer; this could potentially be done in partnership with First Friday
  - Add: Recruit an electronics store such as Best Buy
  - Add: Establish a shared small business market space where small businesses can launch in a subsidized space with less overhead, and with a test kitchen
- Strategy 5: Connect with Military
  - Add: Utilize schools as community gateways for many military families and increase outreach/connections via the schools
  - Add: Have local representatives visit and give talks on base in partnership with Moral, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs
- Other (could go in other chapters)
  - Add: Offer trainings to entrepreneurs on how to use AirBnB and other online tools to promote activities and tours
  - Add: Create safe spaces for transient residents to spend time during the day
  - Add: Increase transit connections at key locations such as the train station, airport, parks

## Measures of Success Discussion Questions

### Guiding Questions:

1. What did we get right?
2. What's missing?
3. What would you change?
4. Which of these indicators will be the most effective at measuring our success?

### Discussion Notes:

- Add: Miles of trail (FNSB has some of this)
- Add: Suicide rates, # of poor mental health days – want to see reductions (available via the Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and the Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey)
- Add: UAF student enrollment, or percentage of graduates who opt to stay
- Add: Social media analytics/metrics, such as the number of mentions for key terms or hashtags like “#ExploreFairbanks,” or the number of location tags for Fairbanks
- Add: Age and population data and/or migration data: are young families choosing to stay here?