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Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Questionnaire Responses

1. What steps will you take to ensure that Anchorage remains competitive regionally and globally in terms of business attractiveness and investment opportunities?

The continuing loss of working age adults from our community. Since 2013 Anchorage has lost 1 out of 10 working age adults thru increasing retirements and net outmigration. While the number of working age adults leaving Anchorage remain stable, the number of working age adults moving to Anchorage has dropped significantly over the last 10 years.

Retirements are another big contributor to our declining available workforce. The 38 million remaining working age Baby Boomers in the U.S. will all reach age 65 in the next six years. We now have 2.5 times as many jobs as available workers in the Anchorage/Mat-Su region. All industry sectors will continue to struggle to fill jobs they have available, including the tourism sector.

We must become more aggressive about recruiting more workers to our city, while increasing our efforts to keep more existing workers here in Anchorage. We are competing with hundreds of cities across America who are actively recruiting workers from our city to fill their jobs. We need to be doing the same, while at the same time we must reinvest in our city, our schools and colleges, and our community quality of place to compete for workers we so desperately need.

Our greatest economic opportunities are already taking place with tens of billions of dollars being invested in Alaska over the next ten years by the Oil industry (\$12-\$15 billion by 2030), federal government infrastructure and broadband investments(\$10-\$20 billion by 2035), U.S. military expansion driven by the new Pentagon arctic strategy (\$\$ unknown), and growth of tourism to Alaska and growth of air cargo operations at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. These huge investments should lead to broad growth in the City of Anchorage economy over the next decade, if we can find the workers to staff these investments.



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2. How will you navigate the balance between promoting economic growth and preserving the natural environment and cultural heritage of Anchorage?

Anchorage is a community that loves its outdoor assets including our trails, parks, and Chugach State Park at our back door. I believe we will continue to value these assets in the future, which will require ongoing care and maintenance and very careful and public consideration of any future development that might negatively impact them.

Our cultural heritage has not always been given the recognition and support it deserves. It has only been in the last 15 years that we have seen a growing sense of importance of our Alaska native heritage and the need to preserve and promote our many cultural sites and assets in Anchorage to both our own community members and our burgeoning numbers of visitors to Anchorage. I believe our city must build an even stronger partnership with the Dena'ina Athabascan members of our community whose history in Cook Inlet stretches back in time for millennia to catalog, preserve, and celebrate key cultural sites, indigenous language, and other cultural assets from our past and present. A first important step would be to fully complete a wayfinding signage system throughout Anchorage that uses both English and Dena'ina names for landmarks, cultural sights, water bodies, and other locations that should be connected more fully to our community and its visitors.

3. How will you address infrastructure needs to support business growth, such as transportation networks, broadband access, and utilities?

We of course must complete the reconstruction of the Don Young Port of Alaska, the lynchpin to the Anchorage and Alaska economy. I will aggressively seek to tap all available funding opportunities at the state and federal levels to help offset to the greatest degree possible the need to bond for those improvements.

I will work to streamline any necessary permitting for new broadband infrastructure improvements in Anchorage to stretch federal investments in this key infrastructure of the future further through savings in time and effort to complete these projects. I will also advocate for full expansion of broadband infrastructure access within low-income neighborhoods and households through appropriately discounted fees for service by providers, as well as additional



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investments as needed in final and middle mile infrastructure to assure full access to high-speed internet services for all citizens of Anchorage.

Finally, I will seek new strategies we can implement to allow for investments in needed water and sewer system upgrades that reduce project costs for developers in support of new housing developments that are so desperately needed in Anchorage.

4. With the possibility of introducing a sales tax in Anchorage, how do you plan to mitigate any potential impact on local businesses, residents, and visitors, while still addressing the city's budgetary needs?

I am in favor of a combined 3% voter approved year-round sales tax that would provide both property tax relief to residential and commercial property taxpayers and that would provide a significant reinvestment in Anchorage's quality of life and place amenities. My support of this proposal is predicated on the premise that the earliest the tax would be presented to voters for final approval would be the year 2025 to allow for further research and community input.

Through the initial research of the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation in partnership with University of Alaska Center for Economic Development, the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, Visit Anchorage, Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Chugiak-Eagle River Chamber of Commerce, and the Girdwood business community, the 2% portion of the sales tax dedicated to property tax relief, estimated at \$120 million per year, would conservatively reduce the tax bill on \$450,000 home by 23%. It is also conservatively estimated that 16% of sales tax would be paid by people who don't live in Anchorage that include other Alaskans, visitors, and out of state workers.

The remaining 1% portion of the sales tax would be collected for the purpose of a reinvestment strategy focused on improving the quality of life in Anchorage through a list of voter approved projects, including 5 years of maintenance costs, to be built using the estimated \$360 million collected over a 6 year period before being sunsetted.

I would want to exempt certain purchases from the sales tax. Food bought in the grocery store and prepared at home, housing, childcare, health care, gasoline,



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and personal care products should be exempted to make the sales tax less regressive for lower income families and workers.

5. What is your plan to continue and improve essential municipal services to the community such as snow removal, public transportation and permitting, etc.

Staffing is the key challenge facing all municipal departments. I will hire only qualified professionals to fill department and agency leadership positions in our government who will focus on restoring the morale and function of all departments. My leadership team will seek to rebuild our government into a great place to work to attract and retain a skilled and professional workforce.

My administration will perform a full review of salary and benefits to guide our efforts to fill the vacancies in municipal departments. Our city government must be competitive in the wages and benefits it offers to compete in the tightest labor market Anchorage has seen in decades.

And I will partner with the assembly, organized labor, private sector, and the public in efforts to attract needed workers. We must market the great jobs our city offers to potential workers across Alaska and the Lower 48 if necessary. We must restore our government workforce and my administration will work with all partners to ensure our government is delivering superior public services our citizens expect.

6. How will you ensure transparency and accountability in city government?

I want a new direction for our city. I want to hear from people who disagree with me or have a different take. I want to hear their reasons for disagreeing with me. I don't have the market cornered on good ideas. I have a ton of ideas on how to make Anchorage a truly great city, but so do others. My job is to identify great ideas that most of us can agree on to set our community's priorities and make them happen. There is an adage I keep in the front of my thinking. 100% of nothing is nothing. In other words, compromise is not a dirty word. We all have ownership in the future of our city and that means our solutions must come from several points of view.



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This is a first step towards transparency, a community supported set of goals and outcomes for improving Anchorage. This will be the same path used to set budget proposals, establish needed policies and updates to policies, and

Anchorage must ensure all citizens are given every possible opportunity to participate and contribute to the decisions being made by our local government. Our city government must also be accountable for the outcomes it generates based on measurable performance goals that are reported frequently to the public. My Administration will stand ready to collaborate with the Assembly and the public in our efforts to make our city government both transparent and accountable to the public.

7. How will you address increasing business costs for security and property damage as a result of criminal activity?

First, I would work to fully staff the Anchorage Police Department, including dispatchers and support staff. I would also seek a review of currently approved police staffing levels and identify potential increases needed to address the high levels of property crimes and vandalism in our city.

Second, I would explore an idea previously proposed by former Mayor Dan Sullivan to re-establish the Municipal courts to address misdemeanor crimes in our city. This would increase the likelihood affected businesses and property owners will see some form of justice delivered in response to their losses to theft and vandalism.

It would also offer an opportunity to provide diversion programs for those who are homeless that are committing acts of vandalism or are resorting to theft to support themselves. Those convicted under these circumstances will be offered an opportunity to go into drug or alcohol treatment, workforce training, mental health services, and a path back to being permanently housed as opposed to serving time in jail if convicted. Restitution will also be a part of this process. This idea seems to have merit on first glance but would need to be fully vetted to identify if there is a record for success by other cities using this model, as well as the cost to stand up such a court system in our city and how we would pay for it.



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8. What strategies do you propose to incentivize local businesses to invest in education-related initiatives, such as funding scholarships, sponsoring mentorship programs, fostering continuing education for existing employees, or providing internships to students, thereby strengthening the educational ecosystem in Anchorage?

For our community's young people, the Anchorage School District is already providing a path for employers to invest in through the newly launched Academies of Anchorage initiative. (<https://www.asdk12.org/CCL>) Employers, by contributing their time, expertise, internships, externships, and investment will help build a stronger workforce for Anchorage through this innovative initiative that start in the fall semester of 2024 at all 8 Anchorage high schools.

The University of Alaska, Anchorage and a multitude of other training providers including several local trade union chapters already provide adult learning and training opportunities that provide multitude of certifications and degree opportunities that employers are already investing in because it's good business to do so.

The key initiative the mayor's office should undertake is to gather resources from private, nonprofit, and government sources to market and better connect both our youth and under-skilled adults to the opportunities that already exist in our city to learn new skills they want or need to improve their employability and earnings opportunities.

9. What strategies do you plan to enact to bolster and inspire business growth among young residents, women, and the BIPOC community?

We're mostly talking about entrepreneurship in this question. And there are already multiple organizations standing ready to assist entrepreneurs all ages and backgrounds to start a new business or grow an existing business. And the city should help to promote these organizations and services as widely as possible to all members of our community in partnership with the existing service providers.

In addition, as a significantly large purchaser of goods and services in the Anchorage economy, I believe the City of Anchorage should fully review its purchasing code and seek any new, innovative changes that will help give priority to Anchorage based



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businesses, including new entrepreneurial startups, a priority in purchasing decisions made by our city government, within the bounds of state and federal law. Shop local should apply to an even greater degree to our city government if the services and goods are of the same or better quality available from vendors serving our city from outside of our city limits.