

**JUNEAU**  
DOWNTOWN BUSINESS  
ASSOCIATION



# DOWNTOWN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION FISCAL YEAR 2024 STATUS REPORT FOR THE CBJ



Downtown Business Association

612 West Willoughby Avenue, Suite A, Juneau, AK 99801

*September 2024*



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## INTRODUCTION

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This report summarizes activities for the Downtown Business Association (DBA) in the period of July 2023 to June 2024, fiscal year 2024, in alignment with the organization’s mission and stated goals. DBA membership is made up of business owners and property owners with specific commercial interests in our downtown. Downtown Juneau is the center of civic life in Juneau. Our members recognize our role as the front door of Juneau in our service to our fellow residents, Alaska as the Capital City, and as we welcome visitors from around the world. Our engaged members help prioritize the voice of business owners specific to the unique nature of doing business downtown and we work within the context of the nationally recognized Main Street America accreditation which Juneau holds (the only location in the State of Alaska with this accreditation).

### **Mission**

The mission of the Downtown Business Association is to promote and advocate, on behalf of our membership, for a vibrant and sustainable downtown.

### **Goals**

1. Foster an attractive, safe, and clean environment that attracts people downtown.
2. Improve access to, from, and within downtown.
3. Make downtown a family-friendly destination year-round.
4. Strengthen and add capacity to the DBA membership.

### **Funding**

The CBJ approved the DBA for the following FY2024 funding support:

- CBJ Community Grant – Operations Support (\$40,000)
  - Promote downtown as a family-friendly destination.
  - Support CBJ’s efforts to implement Blueprint Downtown.
  - Maintain national Main Street America accreditation for Downtown Juneau.
  - Create opportunities to support current businesses and new start-ups.
- CBJ Marine Passenger Fees – Downtown Ambassadors (\$90,000)
  - Enhance the cruise passenger experience through the Downtown Ambassador Program.



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## 1. FOSTER AN ATTRACTIVE, SAFE, & CLEAN ENVIRONMENT THAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE DOWNTOWN

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Our work in this area includes initiatives to maintain Downtown Juneau's nationally recognized Main Street America accreditation and the visitor-centric DBA Downtown Ambassador program.

### **MAIN STREET AMERICA**

DBA's efforts to invigorate Juneau's downtown are strengthened by the Main Street America program, a national program that has existed for more than 35 years. Juneau is officially designated as an accredited downtown as part of this program with the following stated values: "We believe Main Streets are for everyone. At the core of our approach to revitalization is a commitment to creating places of shared prosperity, equal access to opportunity, and inclusive engagement. Main Street America models and champions this vision through our actions and programs." Examples of activities sponsored by the DBA to support this initiative across the year included holiday-oriented events and activities where all are welcome, engagement with membership and key partners, and entrepreneurship gatherings. In March 2024, DBA concluded its assessment review with MSA leadership and was successfully reaccredited for time frame under review. Recommendations from MSA included: visible DBA Board presence at CBJ Assembly meetings, the implementation of a volunteer management program, evidence of completed work plans by members, and working committees assigned to MSA programming.

### **DBA AMBASSADOR PROGRAM**

This program funds the employment of Juneau residents during the summer season to assist cruise ship visitors in all dock areas and downtown streets. It is an excellent tool to support cruise passengers and help facilitate an enjoyable Downtown Juneau experience. Additionally, these seasonal employees remain alert to adverse situations, provide information as requested to our downtown guests, and report observations to the DBA Support Team when additional support is needed.

The DBA Downtown Ambassador Program is funded exclusively by dedicated marine passenger fees and is designed to provide visitors to Downtown Juneau with easily accessible hospitality services. These services are offered whenever cruise ships are docked. In addition to Marine Park, all CBJ docks with arriving vessels are regularly serviced by our Downtown Ambassadors for immediate guest engagement. This service is also provided on foot along the sidewalks of Marine Way, Franklin Street, Ferry Way, Shattuck Way, Seward Street, Main Street, Front Street, Second Street, and Third Street, as well as the areas bounded by the Goldbelt Tram, Rainbow Foods, the Juneau City Museum, and Merchant's Wharf.

As a program focusing primarily on hospitality, Downtown Ambassadors frequently provide visitors with directions, recommendations, and general assistance. Secondly, these local staff provide observations on public nuisance and safety issues with direct contact with CBJ Dispatch, as needed. While there were no reports to the CBJ police during FY24, there were almost daily instances of observed homelessness at Marine Park, the intersection by the Triangle, and in alcoves of vacant commercial spaces on Front Street.

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## 2. IMPROVE ACCESS TO, FROM, AND WITHIN DOWNTOWN

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### DOWNTOWN MAP

DBA used revenue generated from advertisement sales to publish the Downtown Walking Map 2024 to aid visitors' access to, from, and within Downtown Juneau. **No CBJ Marine Passenger fees were used to facilitate this project.** The 2024 Downtown Map was created to facilitate access to downtown destinations while on foot. This is particularly useful for day visitors arriving on cruise ships and seeking to maximize their brief time in town. This map features notable landmarks, frequently visited sites, ATMs, restrooms, and location information for DBA member businesses in the downtown corridor to include the Aak'w Village District. Improvements to the 2023 map included adding the whale statue, adding mention of the handful of members without a storefront or located elsewhere, expanding the inset map to include businesses located closer to the capital, and organizing businesses into relevant categories to create a directory to aid visitors (e.g., Dining, Grocery and Convenience, Excursions, Financial Services, Lodging). Many compliments were received from users of the map with below:

- "The DBA map is the *single most effective* marketing tool for my business. If I only had one option for advertising, this would be it." ~DBA Member
- "This is the *best* destination map we have ever seen... and we travel a *lot!*" ~Cruise Visitor

### BLUEPRINT DOWNTOWN

DBA provided the following invited input on April 19, 2023 (Ch. 3 and 5) of Blueprint Downtown:

#### *A Destination with a Sense of Place*

To date and with the support of our members and CBJ, the DBA has successfully secured and maintained Main Street America accreditation (p. 12). This reflects our commitment and ability to uphold the standards required for this nationally recognized designation (p. 187). Main Street America's focus on heritage overlaps with DBA activities and the historical significance of the area (pp.13, 185, 186).

#### *A Downtown for Everyone*

If prioritized, a downtown playground space would align with DBA's adoption of a family-friendly approach (p. 189). Our regular outreach to members and other businesses located downtown fosters communication among residents, businesses, and organizations (p. 191). The work of DBA directly facilitates placemaking (p. 191) and dynamic social connection (p.78). This includes the Downtown Ambassador program, as well as activities executed by the DBA (e.g., Gallery Walk, Pumpkin Patch, Candidate Forums). The lack of sufficient parking for employees and customers, along with inadequate loading zones, remains a significant issue for our members and their employees.

#### *Safe and Welcoming*

Our members creatively collaborate on downtown beautification projects (p. 192); this includes Light Up Juneau (p. 15, 73), proposed mural activities on Ferry Way, partnerships with other organizations (e.g., Litter Free), and promoting partners' activities (e.g., the purchase of hanging flower baskets). The goals and objectives of the Downtown Ambassador program align with many aspects of Blueprint Downtown, as well as those of TBMP (p. 188).





### *Diverse and Well-Managed Tourism*

Our Downtown Ambassadors engage with cruise ship passengers at multiple docks and downtown streets. DBA is a member of TBMP and frequently collaborates by promoting downtown volunteer activities, passing along observations, and sharing information (p. 190).

### *Strong and Stable Economy*

DBA is responsive to businesses and strongly advocates for all efforts to support a year-round and authentic experience (pp. 12, 78, 183). The DBA promotes the Free Ride Zone via member newsletters (p. 185) and through Downtown Ambassadors. The lack of easy access to aggregated statistical data specific to downtown masks the contributions of downtown businesses on fiscal impact (e.g., sales taxes), diversity (e.g., BIPOC business owners), and revitalization efforts (p. 187).

### *Recommendations*

- A funded full-time resource with local knowledge of key partners, downtown activities, small business, entrepreneurship, and economic development would help fulfill Blueprint Downtown.
- Keeping City Hall in the downtown corridor is paramount to the year-round success for businesses in the area and facilitates the economic vitality required by Main Street America standards.
- Going forward, it is vital to maintain the Downtown Ambassador program with marine passenger fee funds. This nationwide best practice reflects our successful decade-long partnership with CBJ.
- The DBA strongly endorses activities to beautify and increase the vibrancy of downtown in coordination with CBJ and other business groups. Likewise, rather than designating Marine Park as “the heart of downtown,” a point more centrally located would be ideal (e.g., clock, SHI).
- The DBA would not recommend creating a new Local Improvement District (LID) or Business Improvement District (BID) if it places an additional financial burden on downtown businesses already paying a relatively high amount of sales and property tax to CBJ.
- All decision makers are encouraged to consider the far-reaching impacts of the downtown experience. With visitors to Juneau during the Legislative session and summer season, and our year-round residents, collaboration and support will help facilitate our common goals.

### **VISITOR CIRCULATOR STUDY**

The DBA submitted a letter of support to Ms. Alix Pierce on October 30, 2023, for a downtown circulator given the many benefits it would afford for cruise ship passengers and locals. Prior studies have reported that the average Alaska cruise passenger has a walking radius of ¼ mile. This walking distance is further limited by travelers with health or mobility conditions. Overcoming this transportation barrier with a convenient downtown circulator would provide options for local spending at eateries, drinking establishments, and shops, benefiting business and CBJ through the payment of sales tax revenues.

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### 3. MAKE DOWNTOWN A FAMILY-FRIENDLY DESTINATION YEAR-ROUND

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Consistent with MSA programming, the DBA Board reaffirmed its commitment to transforming Downtown Juneau into a family/kid-friendly destination on March 20, 2023.

#### **SCAVENGER HUNT PUMPKIN PATCH AND DOWNTOWN TRICK-OR-TREAT**

DBA organized a “Halloween Scavenger Hunt and Downtown Trick & Treat” increasing exposure for downtown businesses and encourage the community to enjoy their downtown. A record number of businesses were involved with fifty-eight (58) participating, and hundreds of locals were entered in the drawing for \$500+ in fabulous prizes donated by DBA Members.

#### **GALLERY WALK**

Gallery Walk, Downtown Juneau’s signature holiday celebration of the arts, is a co-planned event by the Downtown Business Association (DBA) and Juneau Arts and Humanities Council (JAHC). The annual event draws residents from across the borough to the downtown area for seasonal shopping and local entertainment. Pop-up artists were featured in locations along Seward St., Main St., Franklin St., and Front St. with the latter being closed between Franklin/Seward for activities (e.g., fire pit station, hot chocolate station, volunteer station, performances). Also, a Santa Selfie station hosted by Heritage Coffee generated more than \$500 in donations to benefit Polaris House. Other event elements included a DJ at the corner of Heritage Way and Front Street, Front Street Performances, The DBA/JAHC partnership consisted of weekly meetings and frequent communication between team members and shared outreach/planning efforts. A recap of the event was also published in an article by the [Juneau Empire](#), along with a [Photo Gallery & Recap](#). Additional highlights are provided below:

- The DBA Support Team focused on permitting, donations, vendors, volunteers, trolley, signage, fire pit, hot chocolate, Santa Station, non-profit fundraiser, and the overall experience of the event. The DBA Membership was also engaged via newsletter updates and a pre-event info session via Zoom.
- JAHC Staff coordinated promotional activities and coordinated performances, entertainment acts, and some volunteers.
- JAHC/DBA Support Team were on live radio 11/30 plus a live on-air interview took place at the event featuring Nimmy Phillips, Hollis Kitchens, and Sydney Mitchell from the DBA.
- Participating vendors included Treasures of Eastern Europe High School Tour Group, Monarch Jewels, Juneau Animal Rescue, Shoreline Wild Salmon, Sweets of Aloha, Mudchild Ceramics, Corvus Design, and JDIA 12U Hockey. Due to CBJ Code of Ordinances ([Title 42.20.210](#)), commercial activity or panhandling cannot take place on Front Street. As an alternate solution, these artisan businesses and fundraisers were provided with access to Sealaska’s Plaza, including complimentary electricity.
- Juneau Tours was again a generous sponsor of the event by providing a complimentary trolley for use by the public. Additionally, an extra stop was added at the Alaska Capitol/Juneau City Museum bringing the total number of trolley stops to four.
- A blizzard derailed plans to install the large DBA Christmas Tree on the JAHC parking lot.



**MEMBER DONATIONS**

This year saw many new partners joining us to make the event a tremendous success! These included donations of hot chai tea (Spice Juneau Indian Cafe), space for Santa and hot water for hot chocolate (Heritage Coffee), hot chocolate mix and marshmallows (Gary’s Fine Jewelry), space for vendor booths and electricity (Sealaska), and a firepit with propane (JEDC). Many volunteers assisted throughout.

**BUSINESS PARTICIPATION**

Approximately 80% (41 out of 53) of the following participating businesses are DBA Members:

Alaska Knifeworks	Shoefly Alaska
Alaskan Brewing - The Depot Store	Spice Cafe & Art Gallery
Annie Kaill's	Spice Juneau Indian Cuisine
Barnaby Brewing Company	Taku Fisheries
Bustin Out Boutique	The Coppa Cafe Gallery
Caribou Crossings	The Pottery Jungle
Chilkat River Trading	The Rookery Cafe
Devil’s Club Brewing	Treetop Tees
Downtown McGivney’s Sports Bar & Grill	Triangle Club Bar
Gary’s Fine Jewelry	Willow + Luna
Harbor Tea & Spice	Trove
Hearthside Books	Drip Drop Shop Wonder Shop
Heritage Coffee Company	Alaska State Museum
Indigenous Art Doug Chilton Designs	Friends of the State Library, Archives and Museum
Juneau Artists Gallery	Frost + Fur
Juneau Arts & Humanities Council	Juneau Dance Theatre
Juneau's Imagination Station	Juneau-Douglas City Museum
Lily Hope, LLC	Legislative Affairs Agency
Mt. Juneau Trading Post	Lodestone Library
NorthWind Architects, LLC	Marie Drake Planetarium
Rainbow Foods	Perseverance Theatre
Real Juneau Home Group	Southeast Alaska Land Trust
Red Dog Saloon	Susan and Natalie Watson's Studio and Gallery
Sealaska Heritage Institute	Sweets of Aloha

**HOLI DAY CELEBRATION**

Hosted by Spice Juneau Indian Cafe and endorsed by the DBA, Nimmy Philips – DBA President – provided a fun and entertaining event for all ages. This activity showcased the wonderful diversity we have in Downtown Juneau with a dancing flash mob and a kaleidoscope of colors.



### **CROSS-PROMOTIONS**

DBA maintains a regular presence on social media and actively shares downtown events, CBJ announcements, TBMP concepts, and DBA Member promotions. This provides a steady flow of communication and traffic across platforms, business profiles, and groups in the area.

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## **4. STRENGTHEN & ADD CAPACITY TO THE DBA MEMBERSHIP**

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### **MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT & COMMUNICATION**

One of the four pillars of the MSA framework is Organization. In this context, the desired state is a sustainable revitalization effort that provides the DBA with adequate resources and leadership while developing strong ties to businesses and community partners. Channels of communication included monthly newsletters, alerts about upcoming events and resources, opportunities to weigh in on issues, and in-person conversations with business owners and managers, as well as supportive events such as:

- Alaska Start-up Week Entrepreneurs on Tap held at Amalga Distillery
  - Annual DBA Membership Meeting held at Spice Cafe & Gallery
  - Candidate Forum for CBJ Assembly Candidates held at Spice Cafe & Gallery
  - CBJ Assembly Meetings
  - Downtown Litter Clean-Up
  - EV Round-up
  - Friends of Downtown Membership Drive (\$3,000 prizes)
  - Juneau Maritime Festival Vendor Booth
  - Innovation Summit In-Kind Sponsorship
  - Legislative Welcome Reception Sponsor
  - Main Street America/American Express Grants (Spice Juneau Indian Cafe, Bustin' Out Boutique)
  - Map Design and Advertising Sales
  - Membership Services
  - Monthly DBA Virtual Office Hours
  - Radio Promotions and On-Air Spots
  - Year-over-Year Sales Pulse Survey
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## **CONCLUSION**

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The DBA supports downtown businesses and acts as a liaison between CBJ and our membership as we work together on our shared priorities. We recognize collaboration is key to success, and we will continue to expand our membership, build upon our current relationships to create lasting positive impacts for downtown, and work to improve communication with our valued community partners. DBA values the partnership with and support of the CBJ to meet our shared goals for a vibrant downtown Juneau.