

NeighborWorks Alaska

Reconnecting Fairview Corridor Plan

Task 4.2 - Winter City Design Draft Memorandum

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Executive Summary



Figure 1. View facing east of 15th Avenue at Gambell Street (Image Credit: Arup)

Introduction

The Gambell and Ingra Street corridors in Anchorage were constructed in the 1960s to provide a regional vehicle and freight connection between the Seward and Glenn Highways. While the couplet remains important for regional travel, its auto-oriented design has created enduring challenges for the Fairview neighborhood, including physical barriers to local connectivity, unsafe travel conditions, and a built environment that discourages walkability and reinvestment. Over time, these conditions have contributed to social and economic inequities and lower levels of neighborhood-scale investment.

In 2023, NeighborWorks Alaska and the Fairview Community Council (FVCC) received funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Reconnecting Communities Program and engaged Arup to support the Reconnecting Fairview Corridor Plan. The Plan explores ways to improve multimodal connectivity, strengthen the local economy, and guide future investment along Gambell, Ingra, and Hyder Streets.

This Winter City Design memorandum builds on longstanding FVCC-led planning and policy initiatives, including the 2017 Fairview Visual Preference Survey, the 2019 Form-Based Code Overlay Zone proposal and Winter City Guidelines, the 2019 Fairview Color Palette, and the 2021 Fairview Innovation Area proposal, which together established a community-driven vision for winter-responsive urban form and reinvestment, primarily at the parcel and land use scale.

The memo extends that foundation by translating these principles to the corridor and public-realm scale and integrating findings from recent Reconnecting Fairview efforts, including the Transportation Gaps and Opportunities analysis (Task 3), Economic and Land Use Assessment (Task 4), and Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS) analysis (Task 5). Collectively, these efforts inform transportation conceptual design, phased implementation, and future regulatory considerations by treating winter performance as a core transportation outcome essential to safety, comfort, and year-round livability.

Purpose of This Document

This memorandum presents the findings from Task 4.2 of the Corridor Plan, which is to ensure that winter conditions are fully considered part of the overall planning process. Furthermore, findings are intended to help Fairview pilot and implement permanent practices that will bolster its identity as a community-led Case Study of how Winter City design principles are embraced in a North American subarctic community. Findings summarize how winter has been taken into consideration in the planning and design of Fairview's land use, street networks, public spaces and placemaking as well as winter maintenance operations. The contents of this document include:

- A summary of existing conditions and key winter challenges observed throughout Fairview
- Winter City goals for the Fairview neighborhood
- Practical recommendations to help Fairview function better during winter

Target Audience

The primary audience for this memorandum is actions that require municipal leadership and cross-agency coordination, with the Fairview Community Council (FVCC) serving as a key community partner and steward. The recommendations are intended to directly inform decision-making and implementation by the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), and MOA Maintenance and Operations (M&O), whose responsibilities for corridor design, capital delivery, and winter maintenance are central to advancing winter-responsive outcomes. The memo also outlines complementary strategies for engaging property owners, businesses, and developers, positioning Fairview as a pilot for approaches that can scaled to municipality-wide policies, standards, and investment practices

Seasonal Extremes and Design Context

Anchorage is the only major metropolitan area in North America, and one of a small number globally, located north of 60 degrees latitude, where extreme seasonal variation in daylight and solar angle fundamentally shapes daily life, mobility, and public space use. In winter, limited daylight, low sun angles, and prolonged snow and ice conditions constrain how and when people move and gather; in contrast, summer brings extended daylight that supports long periods of outdoor activity and social life. These predictable extremes create natural anchors around the solstices and equinoxes, which have long served as cultural and seasonal markers for community events, celebrations, and transitions between modes of living. This seasonal duality also drives distinct phases of maintenance, street usage, and travel behavior, requiring corridors and public spaces to perform differently across the year by accommodating snow storage, winter walking and transit access in colder months, while supporting higher volumes of walking, biking, and social activity during lighter seasons

Increasing climate variability is intensifying these seasonal extremes through heavier snowfall, ice conditions, freeze-thaw cycles, and more volatile shoulder seasons. Limitations in funding and public resources further strain winter maintenance, operations, and infrastructure performance. The corridor must function across distinct phases of use, maintenance, and travel behavior, reinforcing the need to treat winter not as a temporary exception, but as a defining condition that informs design, operations, and implementation decisions year-round.

What is a Winter City?

Urban form has a strong influence on when, why, and how long people choose to go outside. Winter is often seen as negative because of freezing temperatures and limited daylight. Streets, buildings, and public spaces can either make winter feel uncomfortable or help people feel safe, supported, and welcome, even during cold and dark months. The baseline conditions for a Winter City are as follows:

- We commonly experience temperatures below freezing;
- Precipitation in winter is mainly in the form of snow and remains as ice;
- Strong seasonal variation in daylight, with very limited hours of sunshine in winter and extended daylight during short summer seasons; and
- Winter conditions persist for several months in succession each year, contrasted by short, intense summer seasons.

An intentional Winter City takes a different approach and exceeds basic livability. It plans, designs, and builds the urban environment so people can move safely, stay connected, and enjoy their neighborhood all year long. A Winter City treats winter as a normal and valued part of daily life and encourages people to spend time outdoors in every season. This means beginning planning and design processes from the perspective of winter to create walkable streets, welcoming public spaces, and places that support comfort, safety, and social activity, even during the coldest months. It also requires a shift in mindset and shared responsibility, with local officials, developers, and the community all working together.

PRINCIPLES OF WINTER DESIGN

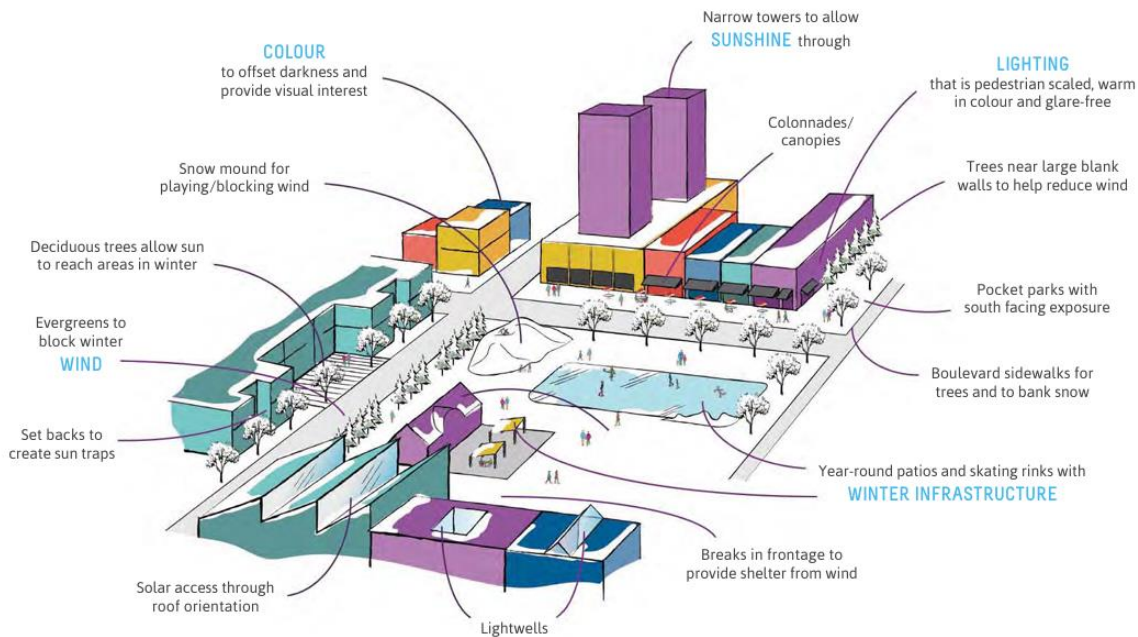


Figure 2. Example principles of Winter City design (© City of Edmonton)

Application to Reconnecting Fairview and Next Steps

Applying a Winter Performance Lens to Corridor Decision-Making

Pedestrian and multimodal stress along Gambell and Ingra is exacerbated by factors that are significantly amplified during winter, including constrained effective sidewalk width, limited buffer from traffic, long crossing distances, poor visibility, and snow storage conflicts. Centering winter performance reframes these issues as design-driven and predictable, rather than seasonal anomalies to be addressed solely through maintenance or operations.

- **Next Step – Apply Winter-Specific Criteria to Conceptual Design:** As conceptual designs advance, consider winter-specific performance criteria - such as pedestrian exposure, winter crossing comfort, snow storage feasibility, lighting adequacy, and maintenance access - alongside safety, and operational measures. This ensures winter performance directly informs design tradeoffs, the hierarchy of right-of-way uses, and priority locations for implementation, rather than being considered after conceptual decisions are made.

Prioritizing Implementation Through Phasing and Pilot Testing

Winter-related challenges and multimodal deficiencies are not evenly distributed across the corridor, and certain intersections and parcels along the corridor experience significantly higher pedestrian stress, safety concerns, and functional breakdowns during winter. Attempting to address all issues simultaneously risks diluting impact and delaying meaningful improvements. A phased approach allows Fairview to focus first on the highest-value opportunities, using winter conditions as a testing and learning environment.

- **Next Step – Define Implementation Phasing and Use of Winter-Focused Pilots:** Develop a phased implementation strategy that prioritizes near-term pilots in areas with documented multimodal stress and safety concerns. Fund early-phase, lower-cost interventions that can be evaluated during winter months to observe real-world performance related to snow behavior, pedestrian routing, visibility, and maintenance needs. Lessons from these pilots should directly inform refinement of permanent designs and the sequencing of capital investments.

Advancing Revitalization Through Placemaking and Public-Realm Activation

Revitalization within the corridor depends not only on land use allowances or market demand, but on whether the public realm functions as an enabling condition for investment, particularly during winter. Mixed-use activity, small business viability, and incremental redevelopment are most feasible where pedestrian visibility, comfort, and access can be sustained year-round. Poor winter pedestrian conditions such as limited comfort, snow storage conflicts, inconsistent maintenance, and low perceived safety directly undermine ground-floor activation and investment confidence, even where zoning and economic potential are otherwise supportive. Without winter-responsive street design, the parcel-scale intent of the Form-Based Code and Fairview Innovation Area framework cannot be reliably realized, limiting the effectiveness of land use policy alone.

- **Next Step – Align winter-responsive placemaking with activation and reinvestment priorities:** Coordinate corridor and public-realm investments to prioritize flexible activation, programming, and pedestrian-oriented street life, using winter functionality as a screening criterion for where and when to invest. Phase improvements to support near-term activation and small-scale business activity, while establishing predictable, winter-functional conditions that encourage sustained presence and reduce uncertainty for future reinvestment.

Transitioning from Guidance to Regulation Through Testing and Policy Scaling

FVCC's Form-Based Code Overlay Zone and Winter City Guidelines represent a substantial community achievement and articulate a clear, place-based vision for building form, frontage conditions, and the relationship between private development and the public realm in Fairview. While these documents provide a strong foundation for shaping future development outcomes, implementing a standalone, neighborhood-specific form-based code as binding zoning presents administrative and procedural challenges for the Municipality of Anchorage, which must maintain consistency, predictability, and enforceability across the citywide regulatory framework. If applied only in Fairview, a unique zoning regime could unintentionally introduce added complexity, such as interpretive uncertainty or unfamiliar requirements, that make development more cumbersome relative to other neighborhoods, potentially discouraging reinvestment rather than accelerating it.

Experience from other cold-weather cities indicates that form-based and winter-responsive approaches are most effective when introduced through a deliberate sequence: tested through coordinated planning and implementation, supported by incentives and clear expectations, and then scaled into municodified standards once approaches are proven. This progression allows place-specific goals to be advanced while minimizing the risk that a single neighborhood is perceived as higher-risk or more administratively burdensome. Comparable sequencing approaches can be observed in cities such as Pittsfield, Massachusetts; Iowa City, Iowa; Arlington, Virginia; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Denver, Colorado.

- **Next Step – Scope and pilot form-based and Winter City implementation for Municipal-wide adoption:** Identify opportunity areas and establish next steps for streamlined incentives, checklists, or administrative tools to improve the legibility and predictability of the existing zoning code. Pilot targeted materials or review processes that would allow FVCC leadership to advance Winter City principles during project entitlement. Engage property owners to refine opportunity areas and translate the adopted vision into parcel-specific land use changes. Based on this engagement and testing, parcel designations would be codified through the next Anchorage Land Use Plan update, followed by the development and adoption of municipal-wide design standards that incorporate proven Winter City and form-based principles across Anchorage.

Winter City Framework for the Gambell-Ingra Corridor

The experience of winter in Fairview is shaped by a combination of physical form, land use patterns, and operational practices. The Gambell–Ingra Corridor is characterized by wide rights of way, narrow and inconsistently maintained sidewalks, dispersed land uses, and fragmented winter maintenance responsibilities. This contrasts with Fairview’s distinct, compact street grid that if not disrupted by the Gambell-Ingra Corridor, would provide a seamless connection to Downtown Anchorage. Together, these factors create a winter environment that prioritizes vehicular movement over everyday neighborhood activity, pedestrian comfort, and accessibility, with limited opportunity to positively experience winter. During the winter months, sidewalks are frequently obstructed by snow and ice and are often used for snow storage rather than pedestrian movement. Wind exposure is high due to building setbacks and gaps in the built form, and lighting is primarily designed to support motorized traffic rather than pedestrian comfort, safety, or placemaking. These conditions reduce walkability, limit social interaction, and weaken Fairview’s vibrancy during much of the year.

Within this context, improving winter livability in Fairview cannot be achieved through neighborhood-led initiatives alone. While local efforts play a critical role in filling gaps, many of the factors that shape functionality and livability of the neighborhood, including snow disposal capacity, roadway design standards, and maintenance prioritization, are determined at the municipal and state level. Their impacts, however, are felt most strongly at the neighborhood scale.

At the same time, Fairview has a strong foundation of community leadership, local initiatives, and public spaces that can support a more ambitious approach to winter living. There is an opportunity for Fairview to act as a testing ground and show the way for Anchorage as a Winter City. This requires aligning community action with municipal operations and considering how individual property owners, developers, and local organizations can complement formal maintenance practices through design, programming, and stewardship.

To support this shift, the Winter City Framework brings together physical design, day-to-day operations, and community activation to create a more welcoming, functional, and vibrant winter environment. It reframes Fairview from a corridor to move into a destination. The framework consists of four themes, around which the remainder of this document is organized. Together, they establish a shared ambition for Fairview as a Winter City and provide a structure for coordinated action across scales and responsibilities. The themes are described as follows:



Figure 3. Winter City themes and ambitions for Fairview

- **Design:** Supporting people to spend more time outdoors year-round by rethinking how streets and public spaces function in winter. This includes rebalancing roadways to create safe and comfortable active travel routes, integrating winter-friendly features into buildings and streets, and using winter as an opportunity for high-quality placemaking rather than seeing it as a constraint.
- **Everyday Accessibility and Safety:** Putting safety and accessibility first for everyone during winter. This means finding practical ways to fill the gaps in the existing winter maintenance regime at the neighborhood level, based on how people move through Fairview in winter. It also includes small, targeted interventions to improve traffic safety.
- **Activation:** Encouraging people to embrace winter as a season to enjoy. This includes expanding access to outdoor activities and activating public spaces throughout the year. A lively winter environment can support local businesses, strengthen community life, and help attract reinvestment to Fairview.
- **Communication:** Treating winter as something to be actively promoted. Using communication tools and storytelling can help shape more positive attitudes toward winter, showcase Fairview's unique character, and highlight local stories, traditions, and experience. Making these visible can strengthen community pride, deepen the neighborhood's connection to winter as part of everyday life, and help new residents feel welcomed and belonging in Fairview.

Winter City Recommendations

The following recommendations are a set of actions and initiatives that the Fairview Community Council can lead on its own or deliver in partnership with local businesses, developers, and community groups. The themes have been broken down further into ambitions, shown in **Table 1**. These actions are not requirements; instead, they are practical recommendations that can be introduced gradually over time.

The recommendations are also meant to provide a starting point for the whole neighborhood. While the actions are focused on the Gambell-Ingra Corridor, they can be applied throughout Fairview. They allow the community to test ideas, learn from what works, adjust approaches, and build local knowledge. By trying new solutions, adapting them, and sharing lessons learned, the community can develop winter-responsive approaches that reflect Fairview's character and needs.

The focus is on practical, small-scale, and repeatable actions that improve winter livability while working within Anchorage's existing maintenance and operational constraints. The recommendations vary in scope and cost. Some are low-cost, quick wins that build on current programs and practices. Others are more ambitious and require greater upfront investment and ongoing resources. These costs should be viewed as long-term investments in making Fairview more livable in winter. Over time, they can also support Anchorage's broader goal of functioning better as a Winter City, with social, economic, and community benefits.

Delivering Winter City principles in Fairview will require collaboration beyond the community level. Responsibility for roads, maintenance, and public spaces is shared across multiple agencies and levels of government. This is especially challenging in a neighborhood shaped by major transportation corridors and fragmented land ownership. While most recommendations focus on actions that the community council and local partners can lead, some measures that require support from the Municipality of Anchorage are included to reflect the wider system of changes needed to support winter living.

Table 1. Winter city themes and ambitions for Fairview

Theme	Ambition
 Design: Planning, design and delivery in support of winter use	1 Make fundamental changes to enable winter use
	2 Introduce placemaking and urban design elements to make the public realm more active, engaging and beautiful
 Everyday safety and accessibility: Improved safety and accessibility for everyone	3 Make it easier to move around Fairview
	4 Improve the safety of the transportation network
 Activation: Organizing winter activities and experiences	5 Provide winter events, activities and amenities in Fairview
	6 Make it possible for everyone to participate in winter activities
 Communication: Sharing local stories, traditions and knowledge	7 Build a Shared Winter Culture for Fairview
	8 Lead the transformation towards a Winter City

Theme #1: Design Strategies

Seasonal changes bring added challenges to urban planning and design in Fairview. Cold temperatures, extreme variation between limited daylight and nearly nightless nights, heavy snowfall or freeze/thaw events, and long winters all affect how people experience streets, public spaces and buildings. In Fairview, many of these conditions are not well addressed through design. Though the residential areas are human scaled, the Gambell/Ingra Corridor lacks human-scale design, and winter-focused placemaking, such as warmth, color and lighting. As a result, the Gambell-Ingra corridor feels like a corridor to move through rather than a destination where people want to stop, gather, and spend time. The corridor is also not clearly perceived as a gateway to a residential neighborhood.

To address this, and to make Fairview and the Gambell-Ingra corridor a destination, major changes are required to the built environment. This includes changes to land use planning, building design, restructuring street layouts, and implementing placemaking initiatives. All design choices should account for snow accumulation, use snow strategically to create wind protection, and shape streets and spaces that feel comfortable in winter. As a subarctic neighborhood, Fairview must also respond to extreme changes in sunlight. Low sun angles, long periods of darkness, and deep shadows have a strong influence on comfort, visibility, and safety during the winter. These factors should be central to how streets and public spaces are designed.

Thoughtful winter design can have a major impact on how, when, and where people spend time outdoors. When streets and public spaces feel comfortable, safe, and welcoming, people are more likely to walk, gather, and take part in everyday life, even during winter.



Figure 3: Ingra Street is a high-speed corridor with narrow pavements



Figure 4: Hyder Street is wide with minimal placemaking features

Table 2. Winter city design considerations for Fairview

Scale	Considerations			
	Light	Wind	Water	Placemaking
Streets, paths, parking lots 	• Maximizing southern exposure to capture low-angle winter sun from the south. • In east-west direction, locate main sidewalks on the northern edge of the road to maximize sunlight in winter months. • Locating sidewalks/trails on the northern edge of an east-west street will melt the ice and snow faster in the spring • Placing crossing locations in spots that are not permanently shaded • Using a mix of deciduous trees on the southern side of public realm areas to provide shade in summer and let in light during winter. • Providing functional lighting for safety	• Orientation to reduce crosswinds in winter • Provision of windbreaks for sidewalks and trails (vegetation, berms, fences, buildings, snow walls) • Plant windbreaks so they remain approximately 50 percent porous to avoid creating wind tunnels	• Snow – Design of sidewalks and trails with maintenance fleet in mind (especially bottleneck locations – underpasses, junctions) – Wide sidewalks/trails (10ft+ can partially become snow storage in winter) – Sufficient allocation of ROW towards buffer zones, green buffers will drain the water in spring – Use of permeable surface materials (e.g. gravel, permeable surface blocks) to allow for natural drainage of surface water (incl. melting snow) – Heated sidewalks reduce the need for winter maintenance in areas with high pedestrian activity – Use of lighting for road markings – Selecting materials that are resilient to snow removal activities • Ice – Use of materials that are not slippery – Anti-slip (aggregates vs innovative solutions) – Crossfalls to reduce pooling of water and formation of ice – Locating gullies appropriately (and ensuring they remain open) – Choosing corrosion resistant materials • Fog – Stopping sight distance – High visibility road markings – Well-marked crossings and islands – Consistent lighting	• Using lighting for safety and to bring vibrance vibrancy • Street furniture (seating, shelters) to encourage people to stay at a location • Use of colored surface materials in surfaces to bring in vibrance in fall and spring • Gateways to welcome to the neighborhood – Considering snow accumulation in the shape – Lighting at night
Park/ square/other public spaces 	• Orienting public spaces to capture low-angle winter sun from the south, especially seating • Considering shadows from surrounding buildings and vegetation when locating winter activities • Using a mix of deciduous trees on the southern side of public realm areas to provide shade in summer and let in light during winter. • Providing functional lighting for safety	• Orientation to reduce crosswinds in winter • Provision of windbreaks for public spaces (vegetation, berms, topography, fences, buildings, shelters, snow walls) • Plant windbreaks so they remain approximately 50 percent porous to avoid creating wind tunnels • Use coniferous trees on the northern and northeastern sides of public realm to act as effective windbreaks and provide all-season color.	• Instead of asphalt, use permeable materials (e.g. Gravel, permeable surface blocks) • Crossfalls to reduce pooling of water and formation of ice (apart from locations where this is desired, such as ice-skating rinks)	• Introducing planting to provide color (+shade/wind block) • Provision of decorative lighting for vibrance • Provision of heat sources (e.g. firepits) to encourage staying at the location • Use of snow and ice for placemaking
Block 		• Building massing • Designing buildings with similar heights, with small variations, to limit wind tunnels • Building density to block wind and bring visual interest • Provision of windbreaks for sidewalks and trails (vegetation, berms, fences, snow walls)	• Use of planting to soak up surface water	• Use of coherent color palettes • Provision of decorative lighting for vibrance
Parcel 	• Use a mix of deciduous trees on the southern side of the parcel to provide shade in summer and let in light during winter.	• Openness • Building heights • Building density • Use coniferous trees on the northern and northeastern sides of public realm to act as effective windbreaks and provide all-season color.	• Make space for snow within the parcel • Natural drainage of surface water • Surface water (incl. Melting snow) – Ensure it gets treated naturally at the origin. Therefore, natural drainage should be the preferred option. • Shorter driveway means less shoveling • Planning snow storage in with southern exposure – Many smaller piles will melt faster than one large	• Provision of decorative lighting for vibrance • Locating buildings closer to ROW to make the streets human scale
Building 	• Maximizing daylight – Orienting windows and entrances towards south to maximize winter sunlight and passive heating – Size, shape and placement of windows to influence the amount of natural light • Using awnings and window treatments to reduce glare and overheating	• Considering prevailing wind direction in shape and orientation of the building will help with snowdrifts and shoveling • Simple shapes and rounded corners to reduce heat loss • Arctic entries to reduce heat loss • Using setbacks or tiered podiums for taller buildings to limit localized turbulence at street level • Use of rough façade materials to slow down wind	• Roof angles to naturally clear of snow • Covering entryways, steps and ramps; awnings, canopies, or colonnades over sidewalks • Designing roofs, rooflines and canopies to prevent icicles and snow falling onto sidewalks – Adding snow guards, canopies or arcades at entrances and along frontages to shelter pedestrians • Surface water (incl. Melting snow) gets treated naturally at the origin. Therefore, natural drainage should be the preferred option.	• Provision of decorative lighting color, signage, decorations for vibrance • Provision of heat sources (e.g. firepits) • For patios, apply the same principles as for parks

Principle #1: Make fundamental changes to enable winter use

Action 1.1: Rethink land use planning on Gambell-Ingra Corridor

Consider rezones or changes to the existing permitted uses to enable mixed uses, which in combination with other strategies may enable the densification of Hyder Street to create a local destination that encourage people to get out and travel by active modes of transportation. Higher density and mixed-use zoning to reduce the need to travel far and thus enabling a more walkable and livable neighborhood.

Action 1.2: Inclusion of local snow storage in the land use plan of Gambell and Ingra Corridor

Transporting snow is expensive and has environmental impacts. Planning snow storage at the zoning phase will save time, money, and resources as snow can be managed closer to where it falls, reducing hauling costs and vehicle trips. Planning snow storage into the land use plan of the corridor will make the streets and public spaces function better and feel more welcoming in winter as snow will not be blocking sidewalks. Local snow storage should include proper drainage and filtration to manage snowmelt safely.

Including local snow storage in zoning and arranging is the most effective way to ensure clarity to everyone and preventing quarrels as properties change owners over time. These spaces can serve multiple purposes throughout the year, acting as community gardens and pocket parks in summer and snow play or activity areas in winter (see more in Action 5.1, Action 5.5, Action 5.6)

Before land use plans have been updated, other methods may include making agreements with property owners and local businesses to use disused land parcels or underused parking lots as local snow disposal sites.

Case Study: Oulu, Finland



Figure 5. Hiukkavaara Center Master Plan rendering (Image Credit: City of Oulu)

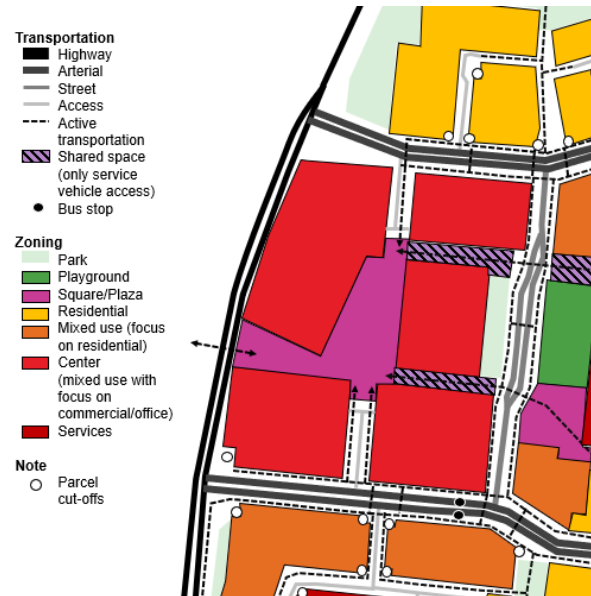


Figure 6. Hiukkavaara Center Master Plan facilitates all snow storage locally. Street cross sections have sufficient buffer zones, parcels have cut-offs at corners for additional snow piles and squares/plazas/parks can facilitate additional snow

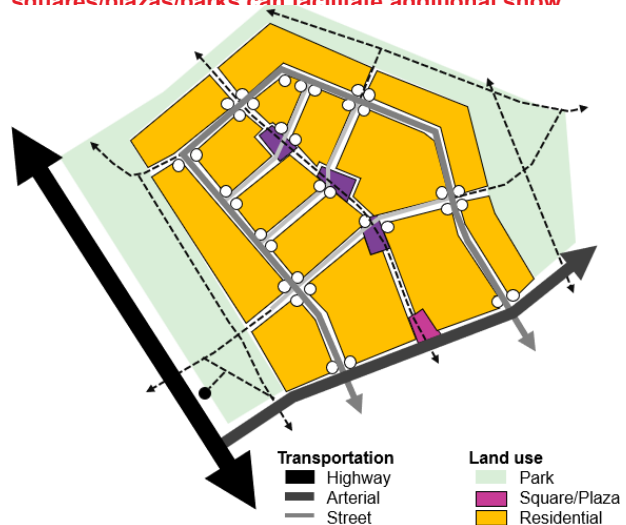


Figure 7. Diagram of Soittajankangas sub-section of Hiukkavaara Master Plan where the intersections of local access roads and active travel trails have been designated as shared spaces in zoning

Action 1.3: Reallocation of right of way to create more space for active travel and snow storage

Gambell and Ingra: On Gambell Street and Ingra Street, reallocate ROW to better support active transportation.

Hyder: On Hyder Street, reallocate space to better support local snow storage while enabling active transportation, and placemaking. If closure of Hyder Street for only active travel (and maintenance vehicles) for the full lengths/certain blocks is not possible, introduce local road narrowing to single lane sections to slow traffic down, reduce through movement, and create space for placemaking, snow storage and sustainable drainage features.

Introduce a wide buffer with planting between the roadway and a multi-use path to create an area of natural drainage for melting snow. The buffers need to be dimensioned appropriately on the basis of roadway widths and maintenance regimes. Multi-use paths should be wide enough to be maintained using the existing maintenance fleet. A path width of around 10 feet allows part of the space to be used for snow storage while still keeping routes open for walking and biking.

Full corridor: Active travel placement should respond to local winter conditions. On the streets, reduce exposure to cold winds during winter with planting and snow buffers on the northern and eastern sides. On the avenues, place sidewalks on the north side to capture low winter sunlight.

Action 1.4: Reduce the number of vehicles crossing Hyder Street to enable opportunities for placemaking and snow storage

Reducing the number of vehicle movements crossing Hyder Street in east-west direction will increase the available space for local snow storage and placemaking. Although the number of vehicles crossing east-west is already relatively low, formalizing this through changes in the layout and character of the avenues will better enable placemaking and activities on Hyder Street and make the environment safer and more comfortable for community use. Measures could include permanent restriction of traffic to everyone but local access, creating modal filters, considerably reducing the width of the avenues to discourage traffic flows in combination of shared spaces at the cross section of active travel routes and streets.

Case Study: Hiukkavaara, Finland



Figure 8. A zoning designated shared space in Soittajankangas built with a playground, space for socializing and snow storage (Image Credit: Google Maps)

Action 1.5: Establish a Seasonal Permitting Process for Convertible Curb and Lane Uses

Establish a clear, streamlined permitting process that allows on-street parking spaces or selected bike lanes to be seasonally converted for different uses over the course of the year. During summer months, these spaces could support temporary placemaking and economic activity such as parklets, outdoor seating, curbside vending, bike-share docks, or small-scale public art, while in winter the same spaces would revert to designated snow storage or winter maintenance functions. This strategy formalizes seasonal flexibility within the public right of way, allowing Fairview to balance business support, placemaking, and winter operations without permanent reconstruction.

Case Study: Edmonton, Canada

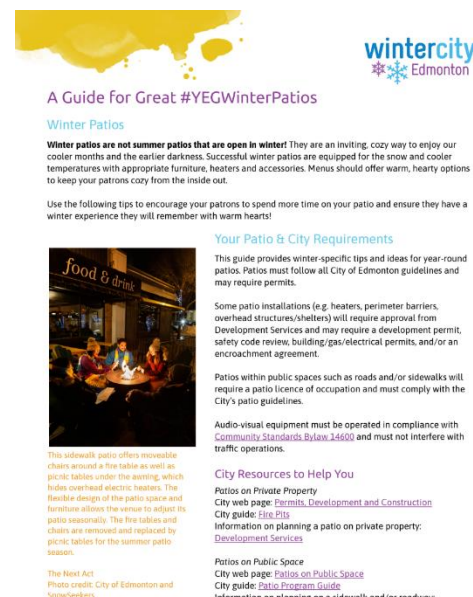


Figure 9. Winter Patios design guide for local business owners (Image Credit: City of Edmonton)

Action 1.6: Increase planting and green infrastructure along the corridor

Increasing planting along the corridor to improve comfort, manage meltwater, and create a more welcoming winter environment. Use sustainable drainage features (SuDS) to handle meltwater, and place planting to help block cold northerly and northeasterly winds. Create green verges that act as soakaways and use southern exposure to support snowmelt.

Case Study: Ann Arbor, Michigan

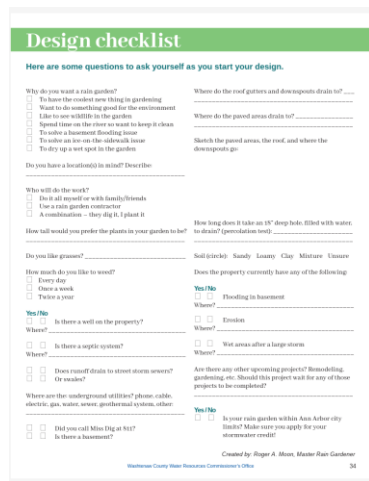
A design checklist for rain gardens. It includes questions about site location, plant selection, soil, and water management. The checklist is organized into sections with checkboxes for 'Yes/No' and 'When?'. It also includes a section for 'Who will do the work?' and a section for 'How long does it take to install?'. The checklist is titled 'Design checklist' and has a subtitle 'Here are some questions to ask yourself as you start your design.'.

Figure 10. Washtenaw County Rain Garden design checklist (Image Credit: Washtenaw County)

Action 1.7: Encourage the choice of materials that perform well in winter

Select public realm materials based on their full life cycle, not just upfront cost. Durable curb and edge materials that resist damage from snow clearing equipment can extend service life and reduce maintenance costs compared to standard concrete. This could include materials such as granite or stone curbs, high-performance or precast concrete, or other freeze- and thaw-resistant materials. Encourage the use of rough, non-slip, and colored materials in sidewalks and paved areas to improve safety in icy conditions. Where safe, use porous materials to enable the drainage of meltwater to ground water.

Action 1.8: Choose materials that increase winter comfort

Placemaking and urban design should consider that material choices also affect comfort. Natural materials like wood are more comfortable to sit on in winter than metal. Where metal is used, it provides insulating elements to improve comfort.

Action 1.9: Incentivize developers, businesses and property owners to locate new buildings closer to the right of way

Work with developers, businesses, and property owners to locate new buildings closer to the right of way along Gambell and Ingra. Bringing buildings closer to the street helps create a more human-scale environment, improves comfort for people walking by blocking winds, and makes streets feel more active and welcoming in winter. An example of this can be found in **Kodiak's Economic Development Corporation** who offers a \$7,500 incentive program for frontage and streetscape improvements.

Action 1.10: Encourage developers and property owners to apply best practice for climate-sensitive design

Encourage developers and property owners to apply climate-sensitive design that goes beyond basic building requirements. This includes design choices that improve winter comfort, such as orienting buildings to capture sunlight, using roof forms that reduce shadows and prevent snow from falling onto sidewalks, and shaping buildings to limit wind exposure and heat loss.

Many climate-sensitive design principles are already well understood in Anchorage. The priority in Fairview is to apply these principles consistently in new buildings, infill development, and redevelopment projects. The best opportunities arise when streets, utilities, or buildings are being renewed. New development can also support winter activity by adding density and small-scale commercial uses that create local destinations.

Case Study: Ortdivarten neighborhood in Kiruna, Sweden



Figure 11. Ortdivarten in Kiruna, Sweden (Image Credit: Johan Arvelius)

Principle #2: Introduce placemaking and urban design elements to make the public realm more comfortable, engaging and interesting

Action 2.1: Expand the “Push Back the Darkness” Initiative

Encourage residents to keep seasonal lights on throughout the winter to create a warm, welcoming, and visually appealing neighborhood. Brighter streets make walking more pleasant during the dark months. Expand the existing competition by inviting residents to use front yards creatively with snow features, decorations, furniture, or other elements in addition to lights. Encourage businesses to partake by lighting up frontages.

Case Study: Rochester, Michigan



Figure 12. Big Bright Light Show in Rochester, MI (Image Credit: Oakland County Moms)

Action 2.2: Incentivize developers and property owners to use the Fairview color palette on buildings

Encourage businesses and property owners to use the **Fairview color palette** to create a more cohesive and visually appealing neighborhood. A consistent palette strengthens the visual connection between buildings, and rich colors help create contrast during winter months, making streets feel brighter and more welcoming. An example of this can be found in **Skagway’s Historic District** color palette.

Case Study: Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway



Figure 13. Unified neighborhood color palette in Longyearbyen, Svalbard (Image Credit: Longyearbyen Lokalstyre)

Action 2.3: Incentivize developers and property owners to light up the building facades

In addition to using the Fairview color palette, encourage property owners and developers to light building facades. High-quality lighting that performs well in foggy, cold, and snowy conditions can brighten public spaces, improve safety, and help create a vibrant and consistent neighborhood feel during the dark winter months.

Case Study: Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway



Figure 14. Longyearbyen at night with lit-up facades (Image Credit: Nesvold, Jon Olav)

Action 2.4: Incentivize developers to incorporate design that activates the public realm

Encourage developers to include creative design features that bring life and activity to the public realm in all seasons. Encourage the architects to push the limits and include pocket parks, gathering spaces, or roofs that double as winter sledding areas. The goal is to create inviting, people-focused spaces that support activity and enjoyment year-round. The sky is the limit for what can be imagined.

Case Study: Piteå, Sweden



Figure 15. Parking garage with a roof used for sledding in winter and as an amphitheater in summer in Piteå, Sweden (Image Credit: White Arkitekter + Henning Larsen Architects)

Action 2.5: Introduce active travel-focused wayfinding signage across Fairview

Improve wayfinding across Fairview by adding signs that guide people walking and cycling to key destinations along routes that are maintained throughout the winter (focus on routes for Fairview Snow Fighters and Anchorage "Neighborhood Greenways"). Clear, visible wayfinding helps encourage walking and cycling, supports local activity, and makes the neighborhood easier and safer to navigate during dark and snowy months.



Figure 16. Top: Decorative surfacing and wayfinding on a market square in Joensuu Finland allocating spaces for play, travel and cafes in summer (Image Credit: Anssi Tuononen).

Action 2.6: Introduce more color to Fairview through placemaking

Use color to make Fairview's public spaces more vibrant and welcoming during the winter months. Introduce saturated colors through street furnishings, planting, and building materials. Add colorful elements to parks, trees, public art, and lighting to reduce the dominance of gray winter tones. Integrate bold, saturated colors into entry signs, playgrounds, shelters, and other placemaking features to strengthen neighborhood identity.

While surfaces get covered in snow and ice in winter, using colorful surfaces can contribute to a more interesting place not only in summer but also in late autumn and early spring. They can also be used to allocate the different uses of road space and squares. Painted surfaces will likely need touch-ups after one winter while using colored asphalt or blocks will last longer.



Figure 17. Visual Festival in Joensuu, Finland (Image Credit: VisualFestival)

Action 2.7: Organize a lighting or lantern trail

Organize a lighting or lantern program to brighten Hyder Street during the winter months. Decorative and colorful lanterns can improve safety, add visual warmth, and create a more inviting atmosphere. Use creative but context-appropriate lighting to make streets, parks, and public spaces feel more whimsical and welcoming in winter.

Partner with schools, community groups, and local businesses to design and create lanterns. Consider adding lighting to mid-block alleyways as well. Making these alleys more attractive and better lit can encourage walking and cycling, since they have less traffic and provide more shelter from winter weather.

Case Study: Reykjavik, Iceland



Figure 18. Light Valley in Christmas Valley in Laugardalur Reykjavik, Iceland (Image Credit: Visit Reykjavik)

Action 2.8: Make Community Gardens Winter-Proof

Consider wind direction and how vegetation, fencing, indoor structures, or stormwater capture can help with agriculture production. Have winter events at the community gardens by introducing lighting (candles are also good) to provide opportunities for socializing. As the community gardens have central locations, activating them will make people more aware of their existence and can get encouraged to join the activities in summer.



Figure 19. Montreal, Canada Winter Street Garden program

Action 2.9: Introduce safe firepits at places where people naturally gather

Introduce public fire pits at locations where other rest facilities are provided to help keep Fairview warm and welcoming during the winter months. Place them where people naturally gather, such as in the community garden or in public spaces along Hyder Street. Provide fire pits together with other elements (e.g. shelter, seating, bins, lighting) to create rest areas. Ensure appropriate safety measures and fire-risk considerations are included.

Action 2.10: Encourage businesses to decorate their windows in winter months and have a window trail

Encourage businesses to decorate and light their windows during the winter months to create a welcoming and visually interesting streetscape. A coordinated “window-shopping trail” can draw more people to the street and build anticipation even before larger improvements take place. Encourage businesses to use features such as illuminated displays, artwork, signage, or seasonal decorations to add warmth and visual appeal at the street level.

Case Study: Rochester, Michigan



Figure 20. Downtown winter lights display in Rochester, Michigan (Image Credit: WSJ)

Action 2.11.: Introduce temporary or permanent warming shelter infrastructure

Introduce warm-up shelters to give people a place to take a break, warm up, and stay active outdoors for longer during the winter months. These heated spaces can also provide an important, life-supporting resource for people experiencing homelessness or anyone needing temporary warmth. Partner with UAA students to design shelters that are safe, welcoming, and visually appealing. For bus stops, consider the usage of heaters or light-therapy lighting to improve comfort during dark winter periods. A shelter should protect people from wind and cold during the winter months and offer shade and rain protection in summer. Placement should consider prevailing wind direction.

Case Study: Winnipeg, Canada



Figure 21. Warming Hut in Winnipeg, Canada (Image Credit: Warming huts)

Theme #2: Accessibility and Safety

Life in Fairview, like the rest of Anchorage, is shaped by three types of activities: necessary, optional, and social. Necessary activities such as commuting, accessing services, and waiting for transit continue throughout the winter, regardless of weather conditions. However, these everyday activities are often difficult because sidewalks are narrow, blocked, or hard to use, especially in winter. As a result, people are frequently forced to walk in the street, creating serious safety risks for both people walking and drivers. Optional and social activities are even more affected by the conditions of the sidewalk network. When streets and public spaces feel unsafe or difficult to use, people are far less likely to spend time outdoors, meet others, or take part in community life.

Additionally, the Gambell and Ingra corridor, along with several other locations in the neighborhood, has a long history of traffic safety concerns. Collisions in these areas have led to serious injuries and, in some cases, the loss of life for people walking. Winter conditions such as snow, ice, darkness, and poor visibility make these risks even greater. Therefore, intersection improvements will be necessary to make crossing busy streets safer. This can combine making infrastructural changes as well as using various lighting systems to improve driver awareness and pedestrian visibility.



Figure 22. Starting point for making it easier to move around Fairview. Sidewalks are in poor condition, which often forces people to walk in the street. This is especially challenging for older adults and people with disabilities, for whom even small changes in sidewalk conditions can go a long way in improving accessibility and mobility. (Image Credit: Arup)

Principle #3: Make it easier to move around Fairview

Action 3.1: Expand the Fairview Snow Fighters initiative

Fairview Snow Fighters is an existing program that has already shown positive results. The next step is to expand the initiative, so it covers more key pedestrian routes across the neighborhood. This includes routes that connect to the primary school, recreation center, senior activity center, and the most important bus stops in Fairview. The program could partner with West Anchorage High School to recruit student volunteers, with snow clearing counting toward required community service hours. Funding options could include community donations or wider crowdfunding, municipal, state, or federal funding, partnerships with local businesses, and selling advertisement space.



Figure 23. Fairview Snowfighters pilot project (Image Credit: FVCC)

Action 3.2: Implement a Snowblower Loan Program

Work with the Municipality of Anchorage to provide snowblowers on a loan basis to help residents and volunteers clear sidewalks where snow removal gaps exist.

Case Study: Ann Arbor, Michigan

Action 3.3: Encourage businesses to share the cost and coordination burdens of snow removal

Encourage Businesses along the Gambell-Ingra Corridor to share the burden of snow removal. If businesses are next to each other, encourage them to come to an agreement to clear the neighbor's sidewalk if they get out to do their sidewalk first.

Action 3.4: Advocate for a change in the municipal snow clearing priorities

Focus on getting help with clearing the key routes faster after a heavy snowfall: access to the Primary School, 9th Avenue between downtown and Recreation Center, 13th and 15th Avenue.

Similar to Anchorage, the Fairbanks Downtown Association has a snow removal standard that prioritizes the downtown core to promote walkability and prevent neglect.

Case Study: Oulu, Finland



Figure 25. In Oulu, key cycle routes connecting places of work, services and residential areas get cleared before the roads (Image Credit: Euro News)

Action 3.5: Pilot community-procured snow clearance

Description: Work with the community to understand what residents are willing to contribute toward improved snow removal. Use donations to fund a locally managed snow clearance program, where small teams or individuals are paid to clear sidewalks on their own street or in the neighborhood. This approach supports local jobs, encourages small-scale entrepreneurship, and keeps investment within the community.

Case Study: SnowBuddy in Ann Arbor, MI



Figure 24. Snow Buddy is a community-led, donation funded snow clearance scheme in Ann Arbor, MI (Image Credit: Snow Buddy)

Action 3.6: Connect seniors and people with disabilities with volunteers to help out with snow clearance

Set up a platform for seniors and people with disabilities to reach out when they need help with snow clearance. The program could partner with West Anchorage High School to recruit student volunteers, with snow clearing counting toward required community service hours. Allow residents to nominate neighbors who go above and beyond in snow removal for rewards such as a lawn sign and prize draws.

Case Study: Aspinwall, PA



Figure 26. The Aspinwall Neighbors Snow Angel program connects volunteers with Aspinwall residents who need help in the winter months.

Action 3.7: Explore the implementation of heated sidewalks along Gambell and Ingrá

Explore the use of heated sidewalks along Gambell Street and Ingrá Street. Heated sidewalks prevent snow and ice buildup, improve safety and accessibility, and reduce the need for shoveling, plowing, or spreading gravel.

Systems can be electric or hydronic and are typically controlled by sensors that activate heating only when needed. Where available, low-carbon heat sources such as district heating return flows, waste heat, or ground and water-based thermal energy can be used to improve energy efficiency. Operating temperatures should be kept as low as possible to minimize energy use. Funding could come from the Municipality of Anchorage, developers, or business owners who would benefit from increased foot traffic and safer winter conditions.

Case Study Joensuu, Finland



Figure 27. Hydronic pedestrianized street in Joensuu, Finland

Action 3.8: Introduce covered bicycle parking

Description: Provide sheltered bike racks to protect bicycles from snow and spray from nearby roads. Covered parking makes biking more practical year-round and helps keep bikes in good condition during winter. They should be prioritized at high-visibility main destinations and main People Mover stops.

Case Study: Joensuu, Finland



Figure 28. Covered cycle parking next to bus stops with live timetables in Joensuu, Finland

Action 3.9: Plan community-wide snow clearance days

Organize community snow clearance days where neighbors come together to clear sidewalks and public spaces. These events can also include simple social activities, such as sharing hot chocolate, to build community spirit while improving winter accessibility.

Principle #4: Make it safer to move around Fairview

Action 4.1: Improve crossing points at key intersections

Improve pedestrian safety by upgrading key crossing points across the corridor. Measures include raised crossings to slow vehicle speeds and make people walking more visible, as well as curb extensions at crossings to shorten crossing distances and improve sightlines. To manage snow clearance costs and operations, install curb extensions only at the most important crossings and locations with poor visibility.

Action 4.2: Pilot a Warning Light System at a key pedestrian crossing

Description: Pilot warning lights at busy pedestrian crossings to alert drivers when people are crossing. These systems support safer, more gradual braking, especially in areas with poor visibility. At locations with high pedestrian and bike use, warning lights can be paired with infrared sensors that activate only when someone is approaching the crossing.

Case Study: Rauma, Finland



Figure 29. Warning lights with infrared sensors in Rauma, Finland (Image Credit: Rauma)

Action 4.3: Pilot sand/grit boxes at key locations

Work with MOA to add sand/grit boxes along sidewalks and at major pedestrian crossings. Community members can help distribute the aggregate as an extra safety measure to the city's existing service.

Action 4.4: Pilot projecting traffic signs

Test the use of projected traffic signs on snow or pavement to highlight shared spaces and alert drivers to the presence of people walking and biking. These projections remain visible when traditional signs and markings are covered by snow.

Case studies: Cities across Finland (e.g. Oulu, Joensuu, Jyväskylä, Vaasa, Tampere, Rovaniemi)



Figure 30. Traffic signs get projected onto road surface to indicate a shared space between cars and cyclists in Vaasa, Finland (Image Credit: Arup)

Action 4.5: Pilot projecting crosswalks

Test the use of a projected crosswalk to improve the visibility of pedestrian crossings during winter. This approach can complement physical upgrades such as raised crossings and curb extensions. Projected markings remain visible when snow and ice cover painted crosswalks, and colors can be adjusted to suit different weather conditions. **In February 2026, Alaska DOT&PF began a pilot to test this technology in Kodiak.**

Case Study: Ufa, Russia



Figure 31. A projected zebra crossing in Ufa, Russia (Image Credit: Instagram)

Theme #3: Activation

Winter-oriented events and activities help people spend more time outdoors and celebrate winter as a season of beauty and unique experiences. They support social inclusion, encourage creativity, and make use of the snow and ice already available in the neighborhood.

A balanced approach is important with regard to organizing events. Large one-time events bring excitement, while smaller, regularly scheduled activities create consistent opportunities for community participation throughout the winter. Community-led events also allow ideas to grow organically over time. To activate the public realm, Fairview can make greater use of snow and ice within the corridor. While shaping snow into statues, play areas, or simple installations requires additional time and effort, it uses local resources, is relatively easy to organize, and can bring color and life to winter streets.



Figure 32. View of Hyder Street during the winter (Image Credit: Arup)

Principle #5: Increase winter events, activities and amenities in Fairview

Action 5.1: Build a snow and ice playground on Hyder or on an underutilized parcel

Create a snow playground using piled snow to form simple winter features such as mazes, small slides, tunnels, or sculpted play areas; consult the children in Fairview to hear what they would like to see. The playground can be located on Hyder Street or on an underused parcel nearby. Ensure safety by clearly separating the play area from the roadway and using snowbanks, fencing, or other barriers to prevent children from wandering into traffic. A snow playground uses local resources, is low-cost, and can quickly bring activity and joy to the winter streetscape.

Case Study: Kiruna, Sweden



Figure 33. Snow playground in Kiruna, Sweden (Image Credit: Snö festivalen)

Action 5.2: Encourage businesses to build year-round patios

Share tips with local businesses on how to design patios that can be used comfortably throughout the year. Encourage cafés and restaurants to create winter-friendly patios with ground-up heaters, which warm people more effectively than overhead heaters. Partner with businesses to introduce small outdoor venues in winter, such as heated patios attached to storefronts or small sites with heated igloos or vendor huts.

Case Study: Joensuu, Finland



Figure 34. In winter, firepits, throws and natural-material seat covers bring warmth to the patio. The coffee hut is positioned to block the wind. (Image Credit: Kahvila Rento)



Figure 35. In spring, additional seating is provided against the wall of the coffee hut to provide opportunities to catch the sun. A canopy provides protection from rain. (Image Credit: Kahvila Rento)



Figure 36. In summer, additional activities like yoga and concerts are used to activate the riverside. (Image Credit: Kahvila Rento)



Figure 37. In fall, candles and firepits are used to provide both physical warmth and thermal comfort through light. Canopy protects people from rain. (Image Credit: Kahvila Rento)

Action 5.3: Offer Parallel Activities During Fur Rendezvous

Fur Rendezvous is Anchorage's flagship winter festival, with most activities centered downtown. Build on the existing outdoor film night that takes place during Fur Rendezvous by adding small-scale events in Fairview. Fairview can benefit by hosting parallel events that "piggyback" on the increased visitor activity. Examples include a small music event, outdoor DJ set, community disco, or other light-touch winter celebrations that draw people into the neighborhood during the festival period.

Action 5.4: Create programming alongside the Hyder Pedestrian Boulevard

Work with property owners along Hyder Street to activate the street during winter by offering warm drinks, snacks, and simple outdoor comforts along key walking routes. These small-scale events can draw people outside, support local businesses, and create a more welcoming winter atmosphere. Consider involving the PM&E winter maintenance team to give residents a chance to meet the people who keep Fairview moving in winter and learn more about snow and ice operations while being able to provide feedback to the team.

Case Study: Oulu, Finland



Figure 39. Winter maintenance team having an 'on site' event showcasing the equipment, getting feedback from the public and offering hot drinks (Image Credit: Oulun Konetyö Oy)

Action 5.5: Co-create ice and snow sculpture park/trails with the community

Create a community-led snow and ice sculpture park that gives residents the chance to build and enjoy sculptures together. Unlike traditional festivals or competitions, this park would invite people of all ages to participate directly, including schools, community groups, and local organizations. The designated site could also double as a local snow storage area, reducing the need for long-distance snow hauling and lowering overall maintenance effort.

Dedicated sculpture parks give residents the chance to try snow and ice sculpting themselves, either individually or through schools, community groups, and local organizations. While creating and maintaining sculptures requires time and resources, the designated area could also serve as a local snow storage site. This would reduce the need to transport snow elsewhere and lower the overall effort and cost of snow removal.

Case Study: Yonezawa, Japan



Figure 38. Snow lanterns can be built by the community (Image Credit: Tohokukanko)

Action 5.6: Activate unused pieces of land on a temporary or permanent basis

Work with property owners to activate unused or underused parcels of land, especially on the southwest side of blocks where sites are more sheltered from prevailing winds and receive more winter sun. These spaces can host small-scale winter uses, community activities, and seasonal installations. Encourage property owners involved in new developments to contribute to the public realm and create spaces that spill into the street.

Action 5.7: Implement year-round markets

Farmers' markets and secondhand markets do not need to be limited to the summer months or Christmas. Combined with seasonal activities, markets can become a place for the community to gather and for small businesses to thrive. Due to their temporary nature, they can take place at car parks, market squares, parking lots – anywhere with space.

Case Study: Kuopio, Finland



Figure 40. Kuopio has hosted the annual January farmers market since the 1800s. The market is combined with an annual baking competition. In 2026, it attracted approximately 60 stalls (Image Credit: City of Kuopio)

Principle #6: Make it possible for everyone to participate in winter activities

Action 6.1: Create a recreation gear loan program

Create a gear loan program at the recreation center so residents can borrow winter recreation equipment without needing to buy it. Items could include Nordic skis, skates, fat bikes, snowshoes, sleds, and other winter gear. This makes winter activities more accessible and encourages people of all ages to try new outdoor experiences.

Case Study: Rochester, Michigan



Figure 41. Rochester Hills, Michigan offers a “little sled” library (Image Credit: City of Rochester Hills)

Action 6.2: Design a Fairview Winter Trail/Scavenger Hunt

Encourage winter walking by creating a simple, passive program such as a QR-code scavenger hunt across Fairview. QR stations can share fun facts, local stories, or small challenges that motivate people to explore the neighborhood and stay active during the winter months. They can be done alone or as a group.

Action 6.3: Host a winter cycling safety program at schools

Work with local schools to host winter cycling training days. Traditionally, cones, spray paint or chalk, ropes, and boards are used to create the route. In winter, snow can also be used wherever it is available. Snow can mark the edges of the track, form soft obstacles to ride through, or even create a safe spot where riders can tip over gently into a snowbank. A winter skill course can also include icy or snowy patches where students can safely practice handling their bike in different winter conditions. For example, they can practice a quick but controlled stop on a slippery section. This helps build confidence and improves bike-handling skills in real winter weather.

Case Study: Finnish School Sport Federation



Figure 42. A winter cycling skills lesson at a school in Joensuu, Finland (Image Credit: Ari Haimakainen / Yle)

Action 6.4: Offer a winter walking group

Create a winter walking group to support physical, mental, and social wellbeing throughout the year. Walking groups offer a low-impact, accessible way to stay active, meet new people, and build motivation, especially when daylight is limited. Consider partnering with a physical therapist or similar professional who can occasionally lead the walks and teach safe winter walking techniques.

Theme #4: Communication

Developing a Winter City begins with a shift in mindset. Planning should start with winter needs first, with the understanding that if a place works well in winter, it will work even better in summer. Each year, residents must readjust to winter conditions, so communication plays an important role in shaping positive attitudes and helping people feel prepared and confident. Think of winter approaching as an ongoing public awareness campaign that uses clear, engaging communication to encourage people to embrace the season.

A mental shift is also needed within the municipality. Winter City design does not rely solely on developers, businesses, or residents choosing winter-friendly solutions. It requires planning and permitting processes that consistently consider winter use. When winter is embedded in municipal decision-making, it becomes the foundation for how streets, public spaces, and buildings are designed and approved.

Cities that communicate about winter in a positive, proactive way can shift local culture. For example, in Tromsø, Norway, research and practice show that residents experience less winter-related mood decline than expected for their latitude, partly because winter is talked about positively and embraced as part of daily life. Fairview can build a similar culture by normalizing winter-friendly habits, sharing helpful tips, celebrating winter events, and promoting a shared identity around being a winter-ready neighborhood.



Figure 43. From 2023 to 2024, the Anchorage Museum featured the works of artists and comic illustrators David Brame, Dimi Macheras, and Nathan Shafer, to celebrate Alaskan visual storytelling and empowers young audiences to create and share their own comics (Image Credit: Nathan Shafer via Anchorage Museum)

Principle #7: Build a Shared Winter Culture for Fairview

Action 7.1: Develop a marketing plan

Work with the community to define how Fairview wants to talk about winter. Create a social media strategy and marketing campaign that helps shift attitudes toward winter in a positive and authentic way. Partner with local radio stations, businesses, and community groups to share stories about what winter means to Fairview residents, including both long-time Anchorage locals and newcomers. Highlight opportunities, traditions, and experiences that make winter enjoyable, while staying honest about challenges but focusing on the positives.

Case Study: Edmonton, Canada



Figure 44. Edmonton's winter city campaign (Image Credit: City of Edmonton)

Action 7.2: Host a Cultural Story Telling event

Explore opportunities to integrate local community identity and history, Anchorage, Alaska Native, and Nordic winter cultural traditions, and stories into Fairview's broader winter identity. Host a storytelling event in partnership with Alaska Native cultural leaders and organizations to share knowledge, history, and perspectives on winter. These events can strengthen cultural understanding, celebrate local heritage, and enrich Fairview's collective winter story.



Figure 45. AKHF, Anchorage Park Foundation, and Visit Anchorage host an annual Day of Storytelling (Image Credit: Anchorage Park Foundation)

Action 7.3: Distribute mental health materials

Share and distribute mental health resources created by established organizations to help residents manage the physical and emotional challenges of winter. Provide clear, accessible information about coping strategies, available support services, and ways to stay connected and active during darker months. Materials can be circulated through community centers, libraries, local businesses, schools, and social media.

Case Study: Edmonton, Canada

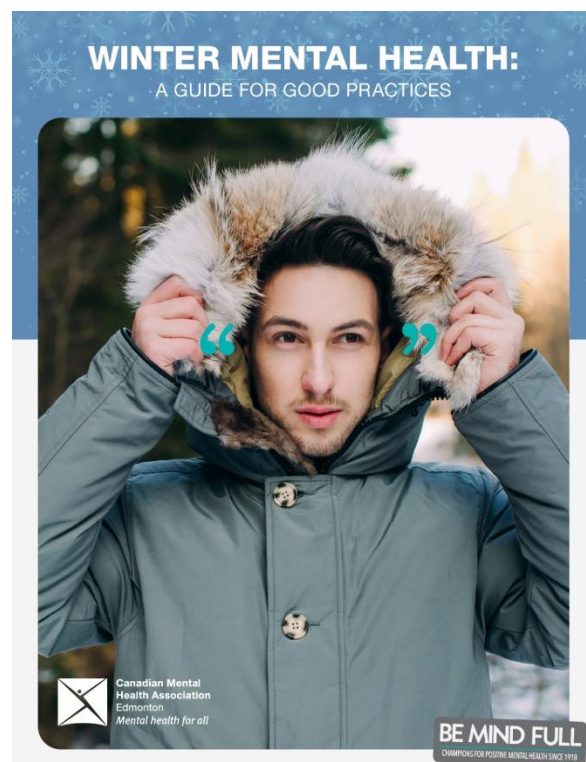


Figure 46. In partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, Edmonton offers a series of mental health resources for distribution as part of outreach campaigns (Image Credit: Canadian Mental Health Association)

Action 7.4: Encourage maintenance crews to walk and cycle

Encourage winter maintenance staff to regularly walk and cycle along the routes they maintain. Experiencing conditions firsthand helps crews better understand the importance of clear sidewalks, safe crossings, and reliable winter maintenance. This practice can support more responsive operations and improve attention to areas that are difficult or uncomfortable for people walking and biking.

Case Study: Oulu, Finland



Figure 47. Winter maintenance operators cycling on their route in Oulu, Finland. (Image Credit: Oulun Konetyö Oy)

Action 7.5: Organize a Snow and Tell

Organize a snow-education day at local schools to teach students about winter and show how fun and creative snow can be. Demonstrate how different types of snow support different kinds of play. For example, softer snow can form in sunny spots, deep snow can build behind windbreaks, and clear, slippery areas can be created when wind channels snow away. These techniques can also be used to create interesting snow shapes and small changes to the landscape.

Action 7.6: Pilot a winter friendship program

Connect seniors with newcomers to help introduce them to Fairview's winter, local activities, and available resources. These friendships can support confidence in winter travel, and a stronger sense of community belonging.

Action 7.7: Adopt a Winter Business Pledge

Invite local businesses to commit to small winter-friendly changes that brighten streets, improve comfort, and promote a positive winter culture. A Winter Business Pledge encourages independent businesses to adopt creative winter practices and celebrate the season collectively, helping shift neighborhood attitudes toward winter.

Action 7.8: Awareness campaign on snow clearance

Work with the Municipality to create a clear reminder of snow-clearing responsibilities in Anchorage. Provide practical information on shoveling best practices, sidewalk maintenance, and keeping curb inlets clear to prevent blockages during freeze-thaw cycles. Develop a simple tip sheet to help residents understand when to ask for assistance and how to use small, sunny snow storage areas that melt snow faster.

Case Study: Ann Arbor, Michigan



Figure 48. In addition to general reminders about snow clearance requirements, the City has outreach materials tailored to pairing residents with available resources such as the Snow Match Program (Image Credit: City of Ann Arbor)

Action 7.9: Share the knowledge on interventions to increase energy efficiency

Provide property owners with resources on how to improve energy efficiency in homes and businesses. Share links to grant programs, rebates, and financing options that help reduce costs. This makes winter living more affordable, comfortable, and environmentally responsible.

Action 7.10: Develop a Fairview Winter Welcome package

Create a winter welcome package for newcomers to people new to Anchorage. Include practical tips on staying warm, active, and healthy, information about snow clearance rules and parking bans, and guidance on navigating winter safely. Work with local schools to support families and help integrate winter into daily routines. The package can also serve as an annual reminder for long-time residents when winter begins.

Principle #8: Lead the transformation towards a Winter City

Action 8.1: Organize political champions

Description: Identify and support a political champion who can advocate for Fairview and Anchorage's Winter City vision. Strong leadership is essential to advance winter-focused design, secure funding, and build momentum for long-term change.

Case Study: Edmonton, Canada



Figure 49. The City of Edmonton has a WinterCity Strategy that requires an annual progress report (Image Credit: City of Edmonton)

Action 8.2: Advocate for codified winter-focused design and communication standards

Description: Support the MOA in incorporating winter-friendly design in buildings and public spaces as part of design criteria, including color, light, microclimates, and the indoor-outdoor relationship. Advocate for winter images to become a standard requirement in planning applications, public documents, and design submissions. Showing winter scenarios helps shift attitudes, set expectations, and ensure year-round usability.

Case Study: Ann Arbor, Michigan

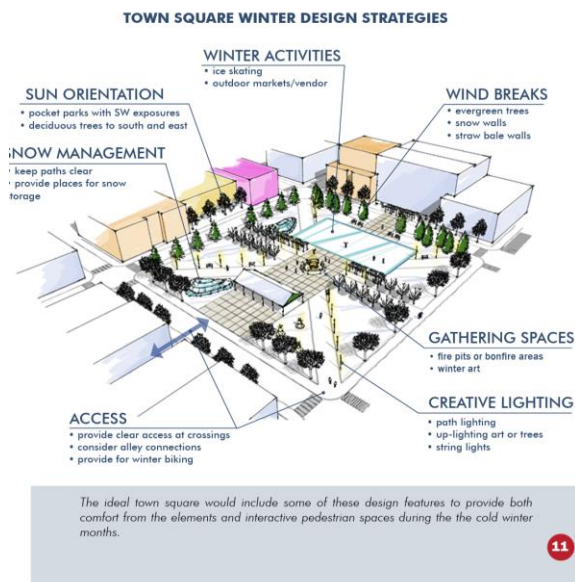


Figure 50. Ann Arbor, MI partnered with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to produce a Winter Strategies toolkit that was adopted by the City (Image Credit: Michigan EDC)

Action 8.3: Develop an archive of winter images

Develop a photo archive that captures Fairview in winter, including local activities, events, and everyday streetscapes. Start by building an internal image library for FVCC to use in communications, reports, and campaigns. Showing the beauty of Fairview in winter helps shift perceptions, strengthens community pride, and provides positive, realistic imagery for future Winter City materials.

Action 8.4: Promote the special story of Fairview

Share Fairview's success story widely to highlight the strong sense of care and community within the neighborhood. Communicate consistently about the positive impact of local winter initiatives, track progress, and show how projects evolve over time. Make this work visible so residents understand the difference being made and feel encouraged to join in. Honest and persistent storytelling builds pride, attracts volunteers, and helps others see Fairview as a model Winter City community.

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Existing Winter Conditions

Existing Winter Conditions

This chapter provides an overview of Anchorage’s climate and how the city, including the Fairview neighborhood, currently responds to winter conditions. Anchorage faces unique challenges due to its location, weather, and seasonal changes. Understanding these conditions helps explain why winter-focused planning and design are so important. This chapter is organized into the following sections: Climate, Land Use and Built Environment, Roadway Design, Winter Maintenance, and Placemaking and Activation. Together, these sections describe current conditions and set a baseline for identifying opportunities to improve how Fairview functions during winter.

Climate

Anchorage is the northernmost major metropolitan area in North America with approximately 290,000 residents. While Fairbanks is located farther north, it has a much smaller population of approximately 30,000 residents and has a different climate due to its inland location. Furthermore, Anchorage’s coastal setting creates its own set of winter challenges that are distinct from Fairbank’s Interior Alaska climate.

Winter in Anchorage is defined by cold temperatures, frequent snowfall, limited daylight, and strong seasonal variation. These conditions affect how people travel, use public spaces, and experience their neighborhood. This section looks at Anchorage’s climate through a winter lens, focusing on cold, snow, darkness, and seasonal changes.

Temperature

In Anchorage, temperatures usually fall below freezing around October and rise above freezing again in March. While winter conditions ease in spring, warmer temperatures take longer to arrive. The growing season (when temperatures are consistently above 50°F) typically does not begin until May and ends in September. Long-term climate data shows that Anchorage’s fall and winter seasons are becoming warmer. A comparison of 20-year and 60-year average temperatures, shown in Figure 51, indicates a gradual warming trend, particularly during the colder months. Compared to Fairbanks, Anchorage experiences fewer temperature extremes. Winters in Anchorage are generally milder, while summers are cooler. However, because of this milder climate, summer weather arrives later in Anchorage than in other Alaskan cities like Fairbanks.

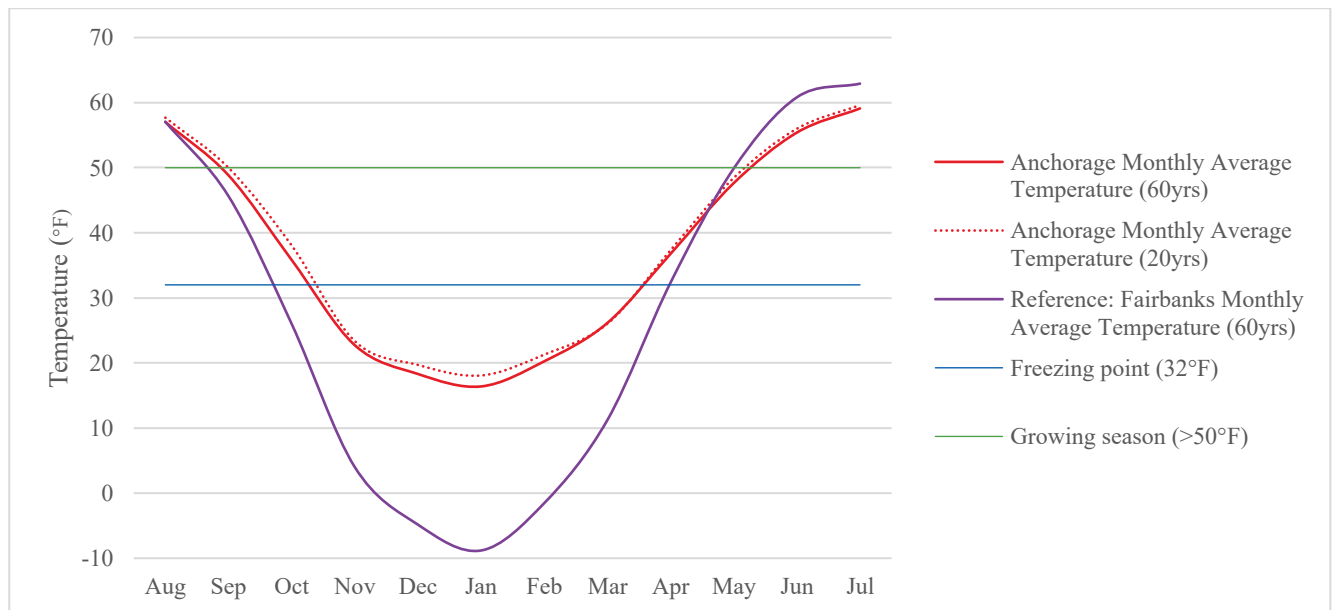


Figure 51. Monthly average temperature for a 60-year period (1966-2025) and a 20-year period (2006-2025) [1]

Wind

Wind can feel refreshing during the summer months, but in winter it often makes cold temperatures feel even harsher. Wind increases heat loss from the body and can make outdoor conditions feel much colder than the actual air temperature.

Unlike Fairbanks, where wind patterns are more consistent, wind direction in Anchorage changes throughout the year. As seen in Figure 52, winds most often come from the north during the winter while in summer, the prevailing wind direction shifts to the south. Anchorage also experiences stronger winds than Fairbanks. In December and January, only approximately 19% of winds in Anchorage are calm, compared to approximately 64% in Fairbanks. These wind conditions can significantly affect comfort and safety for people walking, waiting for transit, or using outdoor spaces in winter.

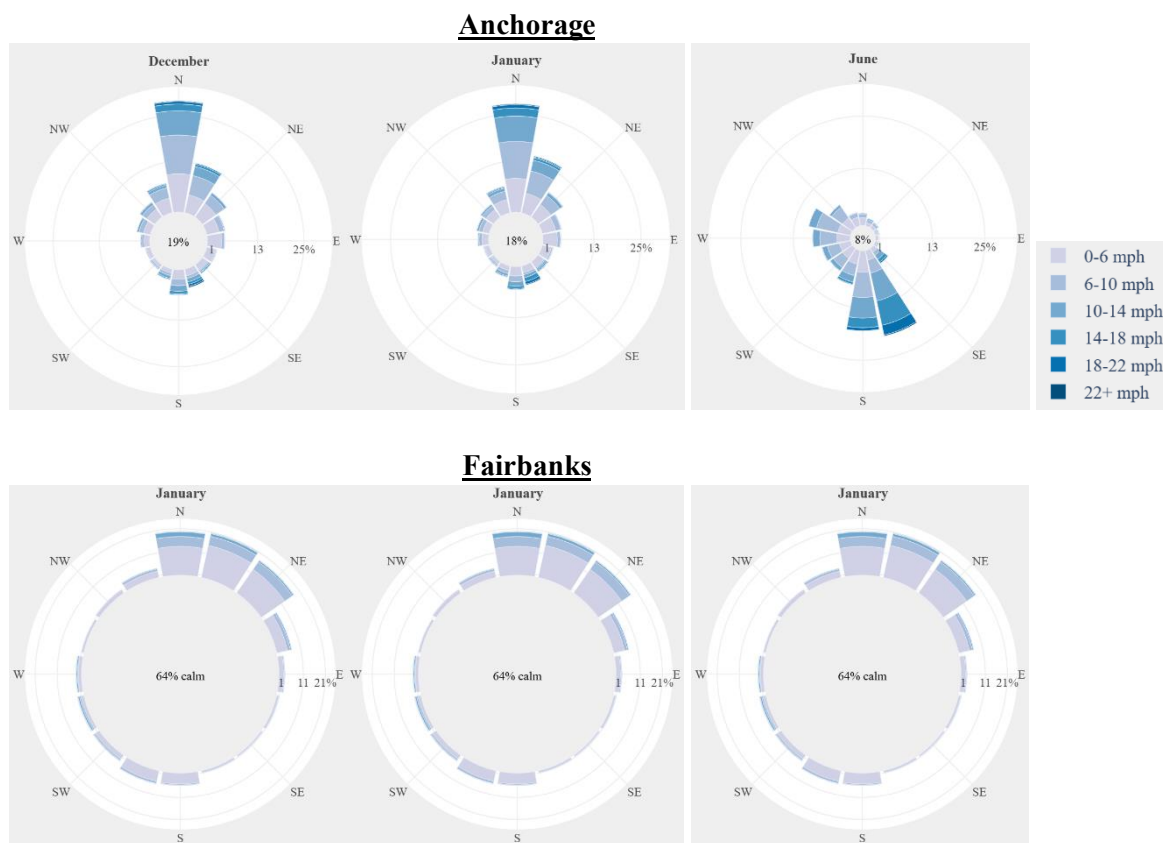


Figure 52. Monthly wind speed/direction distribution in Anchorage (top) and Fairbanks (bottom) (1980-present) [2]

Snow

Figure 53 shows Anchorage receives more snowfall than Fairbanks. The first snow usually falls around October, and the last snowfall often occurs in early May. Over the past 20 years, total snowfall in Anchorage has increased. However, snow is starting later in the season, but when it does fall, it often comes in larger amounts over a shorter period of time. This means more intense snowstorms, where large volumes of snow fall at once. These events place heavy pressure on snow clearing operations, especially when staff, equipment, and funding are limited. For residents, these snowstorms can mean getting snowed in more often as roads and sidewalks can take longer to clear, which makes it harder to get around. These conditions are especially challenging for people with limited mobility, including older adults and people with disabilities.

Although Anchorage receives more snowfall than Fairbanks, the average snow depth is lower. This is due to Anchorage's local climate. When ground temperatures are above freezing, snow melts more quickly and does not build up as much. Snow also compresses under its own weight over time. Recent trends show that average snow depth in Anchorage is increasing. When this is combined with more extreme weather events, it leads to more snowstorms where large amounts of wet, heavy snow fall all at once. Wet snow melts faster, which can limit how deep snow becomes, but it also creates new challenges.

Heavier snow is more difficult for residents to clear from driveways and sidewalks. It also places greater strain on buildings, especially roof structures, which must be able to handle higher snow loads. Changing temperatures also leads to more frequent freezing and thawing. This increases the ice buildup on sidewalks and walkways, which in turn leads to sidewalks being more slippery. These conditions raise safety concerns for people walking, using mobility aids, or accessing transit, particularly during the winter months.

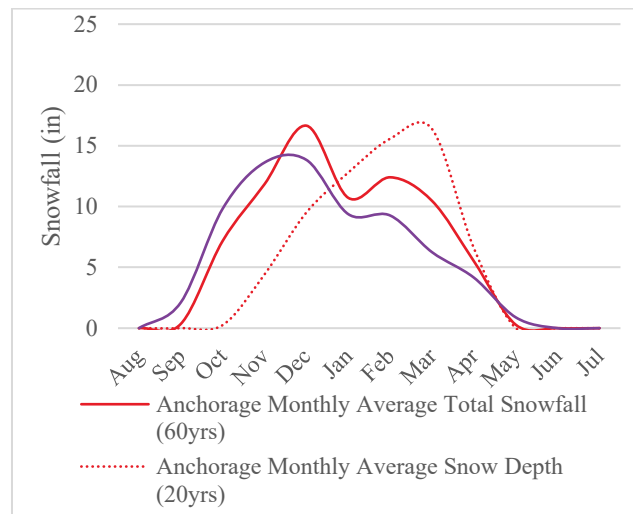


Figure 53. Monthly average snowfall (left) and monthly average snow depth (right) [1]

Darkness

Light plays an important role in both physical and mental health. Sunlight helps regulate our internal body clock, sleep patterns, and hormone production. It also affects mood, concentration, and vitamin D levels. An estimated 1 in 10 Alaskans experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), affirming the need for intentional lighting design choices through urban design. In daily life, good lighting helps people feel safer and more comfortable when moving around their neighborhood. Lighting, or the lack of it, can also influence how people experience the cold.

Compared to most cities in North America, Anchorage experiences long periods of darkness. Because of its northern location, the length of daylight changes greatly throughout the year. As shown in Figure 54, winter days are very short, while summer days are much longer.

Snow also creates opportunities in Anchorage because it reflects light and can help brighten winter environments. Even so, the short winter days mean that artificial lighting plays a major role in daily life. Street lighting, building lighting, and lighting in public spaces are especially important during the winter months to support safety, visibility, and overall wellbeing when natural light is limited.

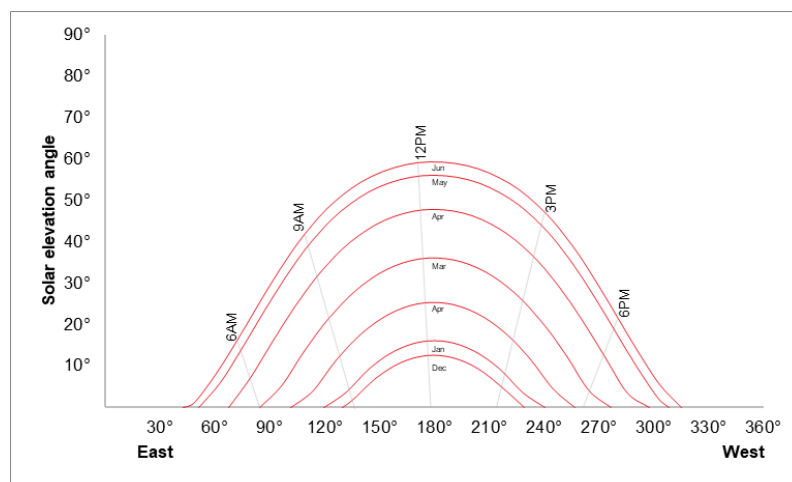


Figure 54. Sun path in Anchorage [3]

Seasonal Variations

As shown in the earlier sections, Anchorage experiences strong seasonal variation. However, seasons can be defined in different ways, which becomes especially important in northern cities like Anchorage.

Figure 55 shows that using ‘traditional’ astronomical seasons based on solstices does not accurately reflect how seasons are experienced in Anchorage. When seasons are defined only by temperature, winter appears shorter than it feels in daily life. When temperature, daylight, and snowfall are considered together, winter in Anchorage lasts for nearly six months of the year. Under this broader definition, winter can be divided into two distinct periods. The first is a darker winter, marked by the first snowfall and very limited daylight. The second is a brighter winter, when days gradually become longer and snow cover reflects more light, even though cold conditions continue. This way of understanding winter better reflects how residents experience the season and highlights the need for planning and design that responds to both darkness and snow over a long period of time.

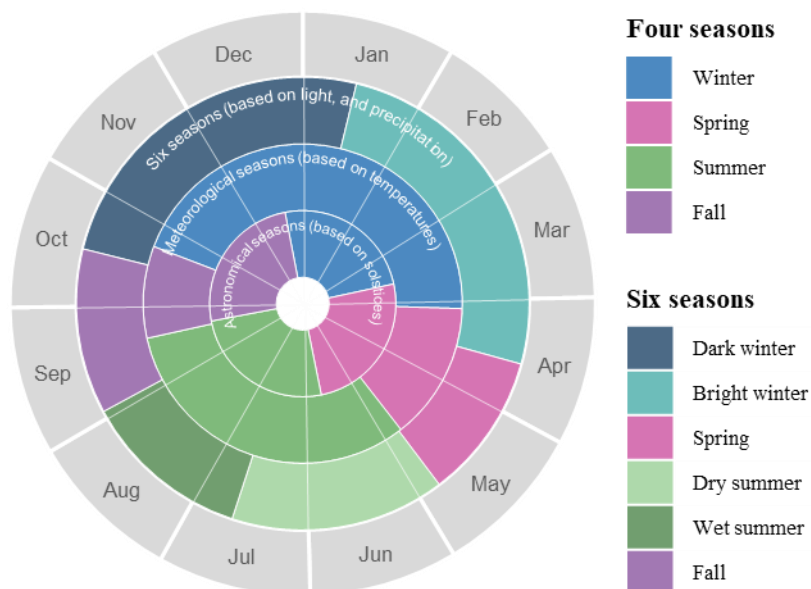


Figure 55. Seasonal patterns in Anchorage

Land Use and Built Environment

Land use, building design, and winter conditions all work together to shape how people move through and experience Fairview during the winter months. In cold climates like Anchorage, these relationships are especially important. Snow buildup, low winter sun angles, and exposure to wind can strongly affect comfort, safety, and access in public spaces.

Prior to snowfall, decisions about where snow can be stored are critical to maintaining the movement of people and goods throughout winter. Poor planning and design of snow storage can block sidewalks, narrow streets, and limit access for pedestrians, transit, and deliveries.

At the same time, the design of buildings and streets plays a major role in how winter feels at the street level. Building orientation, setbacks, and landscaping can help block cold winds, allow sunlight to reach sidewalks, reduce glare from snow and ice, and improve overall comfort. These design choices influence how usable streets and sidewalks are during the winter months.

This section looks at how snow storage is currently managed in Anchorage and how the built environment in Fairview affects winter conditions. Together, these factors shape daily experiences on streets and sidewalks and point to opportunities to improve comfort, safety, and accessibility during winter.

Land Use

Zoning along the corridor is relatively sparse and does not encourage mixed use. This results in longer walking distances between destinations and limited opportunities for active street life. The lack of land use intensity and mix reduces everyday foot traffic and makes walking less convenient and less attractive.

For more context information on land use in Fairview, refer to the [October 2025 Economic Assessment](#).

Buildings

Orientation and Height

In places with large seasonal changes in daylight, the orientation and height of buildings have a strong effect on how streets and public spaces feel. In winter, low sun angles can create long shadows and areas of intense glare. These conditions shape the character of the public realm and can discourage people from walking, especially when they are dependent on the use of mobility devices. Rapid changes between bright glare and low-light conditions can also reduce visibility for drivers, which may affect traffic safety.

Buildings and landscape features also influence how wind moves through an area. The placement of buildings, trees, and other structures can either block wind or funnel it. When used well, these elements can help reduce wind exposure and make outdoor spaces more comfortable during winter.

Within the Gambell-Ingra Corridor, building orientation varies due to land use patterns and parcel layouts. Parcels between 15th Avenue and 13th Avenue are mostly oriented east to west, while north of 13th Avenue, parcels are primarily oriented north to south. During the winter months, prevailing winds in Anchorage generally come from the north. Because buildings in the corridor are widely spaced and often aligned north to south, the existing built environment does little to block wind. Instead, these conditions allow wind to move more freely through the corridor, reducing comfort for people spending time outdoors.

There are currently 16 high-rise buildings in Anchorage that are at least 150 feet (or about 14 stories) tall. None of these buildings are located within the Gambell-Ingra Corridor. Most buildings in the corridor are one or two stories tall. Similar building heights with small variations can help reduce strong wind corridors, and the low building heights, combined with wide ROW, mean that shadows related to large buildings on streets are less common. However, the extreme seasonal changes in daylight mean that east-west oriented streets and alleyways often remain in shade during the winter months. At the same time, wide streets increase the risk of blinding glare for drivers, especially during sunrise and sunset. The direction and intensity of this glare change between winter and summer, as shown by the sun paths in Figure 54.

Active Frontages

In the study corridor, most sections of Gambell Street and Ingra Street function mainly as busy routes for vehicles. Sidewalks are narrow, and parking areas often sit within the parcels between buildings and the street. This layout makes the streets feel less welcoming for people walking or spending time outdoors.

Many buildings along the three corridors are oriented so that their frontage is away from the street instead of facing it. Even where businesses are present, they are usually set back behind parking areas. This limits street activity and reduces opportunities to create a lively and engaging streetscape. Additionally, large surface parking lots that are underutilized or vacant are a prominent feature, especially at the northern end of Hyder Street. These spaces are typically wide, exposed, and lack planting or built elements that could function as windbreaks or snow drift areas. As a result, they contribute to uncomfortable conditions and offer limited value to the public realm outside of vehicle storage.

Active frontages would help change the neighborhood character and user experience. This would place shops, services, or other uses on the ground floor, with entrances and windows directly facing the sidewalk. This creates streets that feel lively, welcoming, and comfortable for walking, browsing, and spending time. Active frontages also support local businesses by encouraging people to stop, explore, and spend money in the area.

For active frontages to work well, the sidewalks need to be wide, safe, and accessible for everyone. While cafés and restaurants often use outdoor seating to activate the street, any type of building can contribute by opening directly onto the sidewalk. Having more doors, windows, and activity along the street also helps improve safety, as more people are present throughout the day.

Color Palettes

Color can play an important role in improving winter environments as it adds visual interest and helps counteract long periods of darkness. When used on buildings, color can also make streets feel brighter and

more welcoming. Light-colored facades can also be used to reflect daylight onto nearby streets, sidewalks, and neighboring buildings. This approach is particularly helpful on south-facing walls to bring light to darker north-facing sidewalks and gardens. Fairview’s proposed neighborhood color palette calls for a cohesive visual identity that can help counteract long periods of darkness and snow cover. Results from the 2017 Visual Preference Survey conducted by the FVCC consistently showed stronger positive responses to environments with bold, saturated colors, clear contrast between buildings and the public realm, and visible architectural detail, particularly compared to muted or monochromatic streetscapes. Together, these findings support the use of higher-contrast color palettes on buildings, frontages, and public-realm elements to improve visual interest, legibility, and comfort during winter months.

In the study area, most buildings are relatively low in height and set back within their lots. Because of this, there is currently less need to rely on building color to bring light into the street. However, it is still relevant to use color to add visual interest and vibrancy to the streetscape. Currently, building colors on the corridor range from muted tones to bold colors. In some cases, color is used only as a small accent. In other cases, it defines the entire facade. Overall, the variety of colors across the neighborhood creates an inconsistent visual identity along the corridor. Despite this, there are strong examples within Fairview and across Anchorage where color has been used successfully to improve winter streetscapes. These examples show that a more coordinated approach to color could help strengthen the corridor’s identity and improve how the area feels during the winter months.



Figure 56. Colorful front doors (left) and buildings (right) in Fairview in February 2025

Roadway Design

The design of streets plays a major role in how people move through Fairview during winter. Road width, sidewalk space, lighting, parking, and snow storage all affect safety, comfort, and accessibility for people walking, rolling, biking, and driving.

Allocation of Road Space

Gambell Street and Ingra Street each have four traffic lanes while Hyder Street has one lane of traffic in each direction. Across the study area, streets are lined with narrow sidewalks that sit directly next to the roadway.

The sidewalks are too narrow for two wheelchair users, or even two people walking side by side, to comfortably pass each other. Accessibility is further reduced by utility poles and other equipment located in the middle of the sidewalk, as shown in Figure 57. During winter, these constraints become even more challenging once snow is cleared from street onto the sidewalk. Combined with the speed on Gambell Street and Ingra Street, the environment is uncomfortable for walking.

Lighting along the corridor is designed mainly for vehicles. There is little lighting focused on sidewalks, which makes walking feel less safe and less comfortable during dark months. It also reduces visibility and therefore impacts traffic safety. There are also few safe places to cross Gambell Street and Ingra Street, creating additional barriers for pedestrians.

The corridor has also very little planting or tree cover, which means there are few windbreaks, especially when considering the prevailing wind direction. This increases wind exposure and reduces comfort for people walking or waiting for the bus in winter.

Despite these challenges, there are clear opportunities to improve roadway design. Changes could include reallocation of road space to create wider sidewalks and clearer separation between different travel modes. Additionally, pedestrian-scale lighting would better support walking.



Figure 57. View of Gambell at the 13th Ave and a power line blocking a sidewalk in February 2025

On-Street Parking

Gambell Street and Ingra Street do not currently include on-street parking; both function as high-capacity arterial roadways, with curb space primarily used for travel lanes and, in winter, snow storage rather than parking. This makes winter maintenance easier because snowplows and other maintenance vehicles do not need to maneuver around parked cars.

Hyder Street is wide enough to allow parking during the summer while still leaving room for vehicles to pass. However, because of its width and straight layout, Hyder Street can encourage faster driving speeds. In winter, the street naturally becomes narrower as snow is cleared along the edges. This slows traffic and can improve safety, especially since people walking or using mobility devices are often forced into the roadway due to blocked sidewalks.

Introducing on-street parking along Gambell Street or Ingra Street presents challenges, including conflicts with snow storage and winter maintenance operations, reduced visibility at crossings, and safety concerns on

corridors that currently function as high-speed arterials. From a pedestrian and accessibility perspective, curbside parking can exacerbate winter conditions by increasing snow berms at corners, narrowing effective sidewalk space, and degrading sightlines for people walking, rolling, or crossing the street. Despite these challenges, when thoughtfully designed, on-street parking can also support economic development by increasing short-term access to adjacent businesses and providing flexible curb space that can be seasonally repurposed for placemaking, such as summer parklets and café spill-out areas, and winter snow storage or temporary installations.

Built-in Snow Storage in Roadway Design

There is currently limited space along streets and sidewalks for snow storage, such as planting areas or buffer zones. Snow hauling is expensive, road space is limited, and snow disposal sites can reach capacity during severe winters. These challenges are felt increasingly due to the changing winters. These challenges results often in ROW often not fully cleared right away. As a result, the Municipality of Anchorage frequently uses ROW as temporary snow storage.

In Anchorage, the ROW typically extends about 30 feet on either side of the road centerline. Using ROW for snow storage leads to sidewalks being blocked or narrowed. This creates major accessibility challenges, especially for people with disabilities, older adults, and people using strollers or mobility aids. Blocked sidewalks also create safety concerns. When there is not enough space to walk, people are forced into the roadway, increasing the risk of conflicts with vehicles. However, without snow, especially Hyder Street is underused. This results in streets that feel empty and lack visual interest. There is significant potential to redesign how space within the existing right of way is used so that snow can be stored without blocking sidewalks, bike routes, or other spaces for active travel. This issue is shown on Hyder Street in Figure 58 and Figure 59.



Figure 58. View of Hyder Street at 14th Ave in winter (Image Credit: Allen Kemplen)



Figure 59. View of Hyder Street at 14th Ave in autumn (Image Credit: Allen Kemplen)

There are opportunities to better manage space for snow within ROW. With careful planning and design, space can be reallocated for snow storage without reducing room for walking, biking, or other active forms of transportation. These changes could improve safety and accessibility during winter while still supporting efficient snow removal.

An example of this approach can be seen along Ship Creek Avenue, where a buffer separates the roadway from the multi-use trail. This allows snow removal to take place without blocking the trail, as shown in Figure 60. In addition, the Ship Creek trail is wide enough to be cleared using the existing machinery. A similar approach is used along 15th Avenue between Ingra Street and Orca Street, where buffers along the multi-use path add visual interest, as shown in Figure 61. However, the paths along 15th Avenue are narrower than the Ship Creek Trail and cannot accommodate the same maintenance vehicles.

Any future street redesign will need to carefully consider winter maintenance as crews are under significant pressure and must prioritize between roads, streets, trails and sidewalks across the city. Considerations for winter maintenance in the design of facilities include the type of equipment required and which agency or team is responsible for maintenance.



Figure 60. Ship Creek Trail in February 2025



Figure 61. Multi-use path with a green verge at 15th and Karluk in February 2025 (left) and in summer (right) [5]

Winter Maintenance

Winter maintenance includes a range of activities such as snow clearance, snow removal, and ice control. These activities are delivered through a joint effort involving several agencies and organizations across Anchorage.

At the neighborhood level, winter maintenance strongly influences how safe, welcoming, and usable public spaces feel. Poorly maintained streets and sidewalks discourage walking, gathering, and outdoor activity. In contrast, well-maintained routes and public spaces support year-round use and help maintain community presence during the winter months.

Roles and Responsibilities

Following snowfall, responsibility for winter maintenance in Fairview is shared among several organizations. Each organization has its own priorities and operational approaches to snow clearance. The main parties involved, along with their roles and responsibilities, are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Responsibilities of snow clearance and snow storage within Fairview [1]

Type of facility within study area	Responsibility	Snow storage
Private property, incl. driveways	Property Owners	Private property
Bus stops	MOA (PTD)	Snow disposal sites/ ROW
Sidewalks and trails	- AKDOT - MOA (M&O) – only along main roads - MOA (P&R) - Anchorage Downtown Partnership (ADP)	Snow disposal sites/ ROW
Streets	- AKDOT and - MOA (M&O)	Snow disposal sites/ ROW

Snow Disposal Sites

The Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) manages snow removal in Anchorage by dividing the city into several snow disposal service areas. Snow collected in each area is transported to a designated disposal site located elsewhere in the city. These sites are placed to serve nearby neighborhoods and reduce hauling distances. Figure 62 shows the snow disposal service areas across Anchorage.

Within the Gambell-Ingra corridor study area, snow removal operations are split at 9th Avenue. Snow collected north of this boundary is taken to the Commercial Drive Snow Disposal Site. Snow collected south of 9th Avenue is taken to the Sitka Street Snow Disposal Site. The travel distance to both sites is relatively similar, at approximately 1.5 to 2 miles. Even with these relatively short distances, however, the cost of hauling snow is a major part of the city's winter maintenance budget. Storing snow closer to where it falls would help reduce costs and improve efficiency. One option would be to create smaller, local snow storage sites within the neighborhood. This could include purchasing underused properties or using portions of parking lots during the winter months. Local snow storage sites could also provide added benefits beyond winter. In warmer months, these same spaces could be reused for public activities, community gatherings, or other forms of public space and placemaking.

In addition to municipal operations, some roads in the area are maintained by the Alaska Department of Transportation (AKDOT). The department's designated snow disposal site is located more than six miles away. While this distance reflects the department's responsibility for highway maintenance, it limits flexibility and increases costs when snow must be hauled long distances or when planning any deviation from established routes.

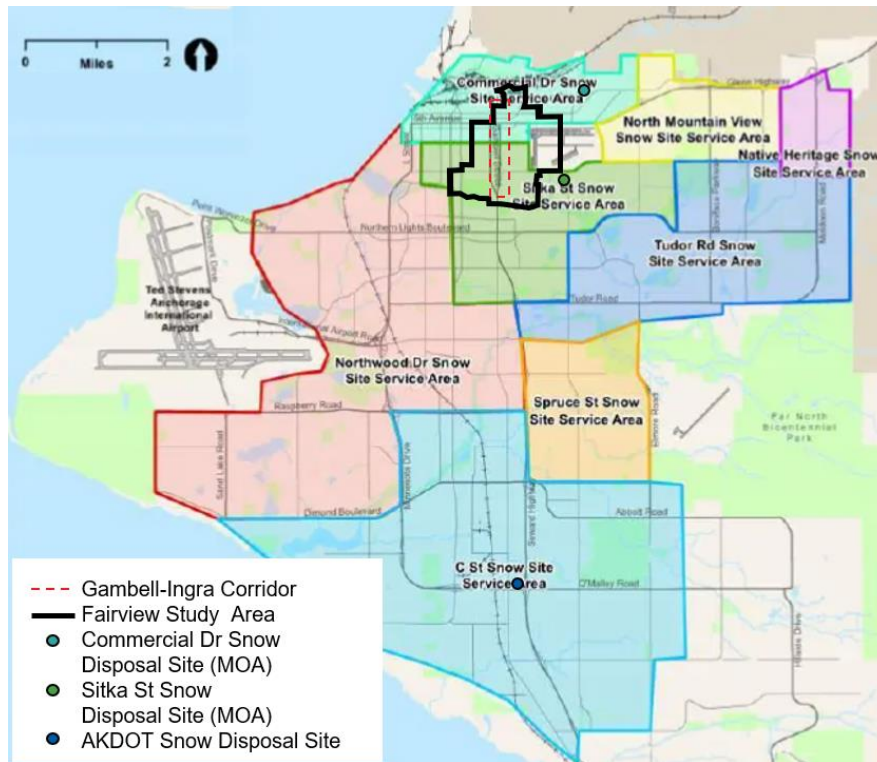


Figure 62. Anchorage snow disposal service areas (adapted from MOA [7])

Snow Removal

Street network

As shown in Figure 63, MOA's Maintenance and Operations Department (M&O) is responsible for winter maintenance on most streets within the study area. The main exceptions are the Seward and Glenn Highways, where maintenance responsibilities are shared between MOA and the Alaska Department of Transportation (AKDOT).

MOA is responsible for winter maintenance along Gambell Street and Ingra Street between 5th Avenue and 15th Avenue, as well as along 5th Avenue between Gambell Street and Karluk Street.

AKDOT is responsible for winter maintenance on the Seward and Glenn Highways and also carries out full maintenance of these corridors during the summer months.

Assigning winter maintenance of Gambell Street and Ingra Street to MOA provides operational benefits for the corridor. It supports more consistent service delivery and helps ensure continuity across connected local routes.

Sidewalks and trails

While the responsibilities for road winter maintenance are straightforward, the

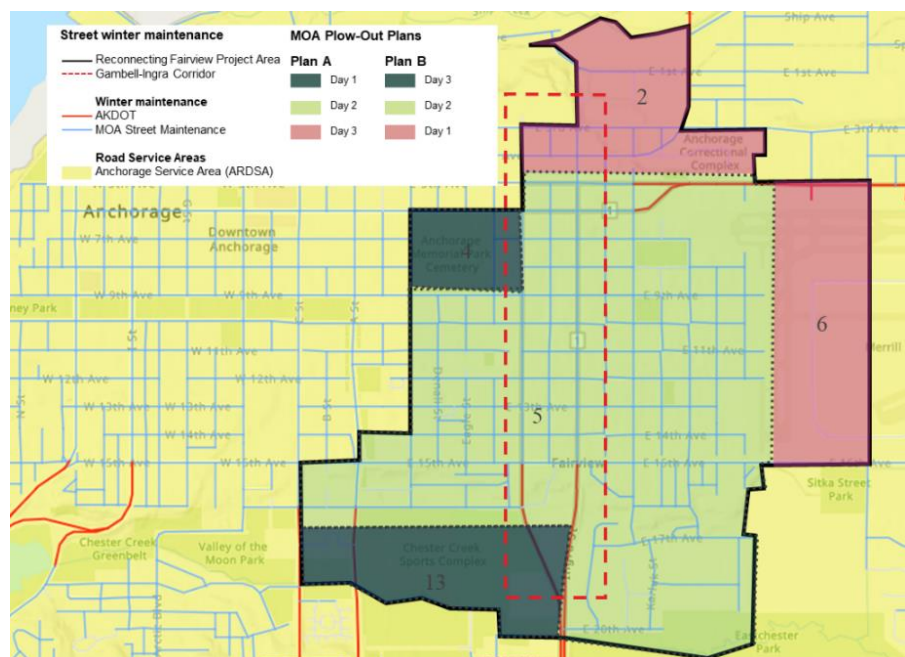


Figure 63. Roles and responsibilities of road maintenance in the study area [8] with Plow Plans for Fairview [9]

maintenance of sidewalks and trails is more complex. Sidewalk maintenance within the study area is divided among four entities: M&O, AKDOT, MOA's Parks Department, and the Anchorage Downtown Partnership, as shown in Figure 64.

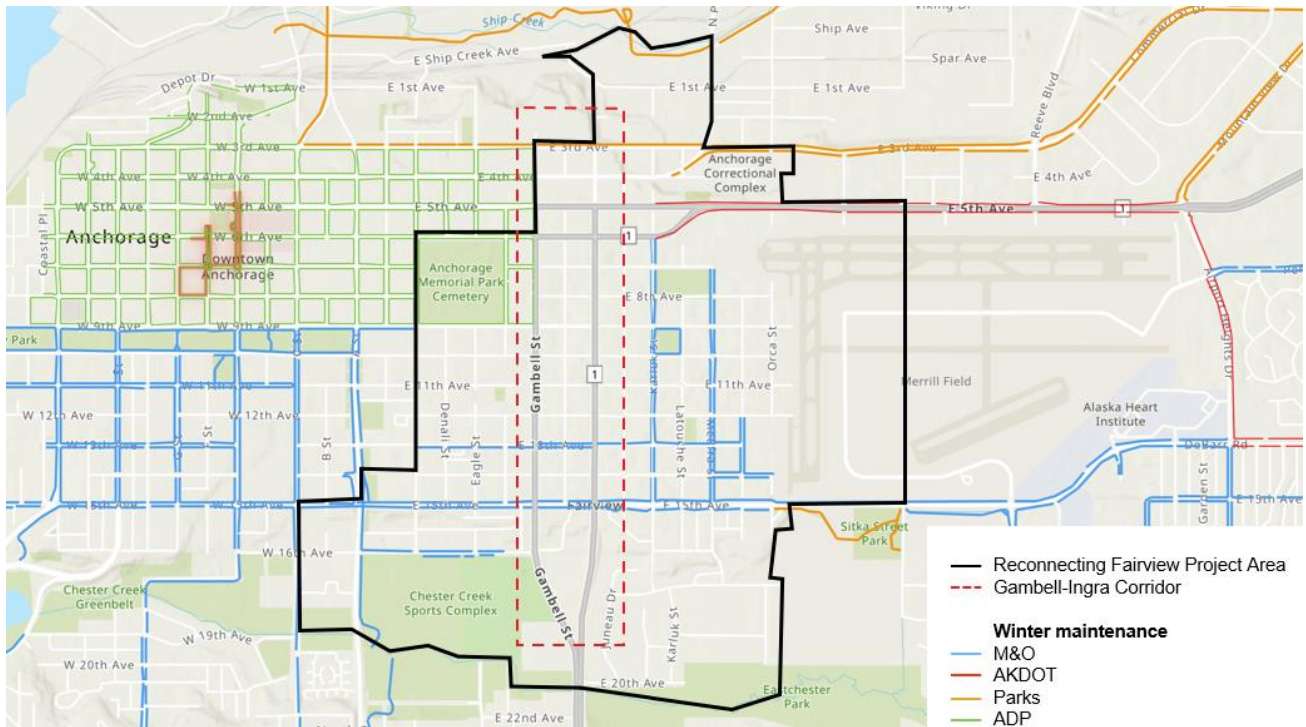


Figure 64. Winter sidewalk maintenance responsibility map [8] with Plow Plans [9]

M&O does not clear most neighborhood sidewalks. Sidewalks along the Gambell-Ingra corridor lack designated winter maintenance responsibility, resulting in limited or inconsistent upkeep. Only selected east–west streets, including 13th Avenue and 15th Avenue, receive winter sidewalk maintenance by MOA. Other sidewalks are not maintained during winter months, including 9th Avenue, which is one of the few continuous east–west routes in the city. The lack of sidewalk maintenance along the corridor reduces connectivity, particularly between northern Fairview and downtown Anchorage. This creates barriers for pedestrians during winter and limits safe, reliable access to key destinations such as schools (see Figure 65).



Figure 65. A mother and a child on their way to school in Fairview (Image Credit: Allen Kemplen)

Public transit infrastructure is also affected by limited resources at MOA. The Anchorage Downtown Partnership has a team of six staff responsible for clearing snow at all 682 bus stops across the city. Due to capacity and prioritization, only the 50 most heavily used bus stops are regularly cleared. None of these stops

are located within the study area. Limited snow clearance at local bus stops reduces accessibility and decreases the attractiveness of transit during snowy periods.

Handling Ice

Wet snow, sleet, and freezing rain can cause ice to build up on roads and sidewalks, making them slippery and unsafe. During these conditions, the Municipality of Anchorage uses aggregate, such as sand and small rocks, to improve traction. Aggregate is currently used at intersections, on steep or hilly streets, and near school bus stops. Its use is adjusted based on weather conditions to improve safety while avoiding unnecessary damage or waste.

The aggregate used is freshly crushed and has sharp edges. This helps the material grip the surface and stay in place. In some cases, the aggregate is also wetted with a liquid deicer to further reduce ice buildup on roads. While sharp-edged aggregate is effective for traction, it can create other issues. The rocks can damage bicycle tires and cause flat tires. When kicked up by passing vehicles, they can also pose a risk to people, vehicles, and nearby property.

Maintenance Prioritization

Within the study area, winter maintenance practices prioritize automobile over pedestrian infrastructure. Main and arterial streets maintained by M&O are plowed before residential streets. While roadways are consistently cleared, sidewalks are generally not maintained to the same standard. As a result, ROW functions primarily as a space for public snow storage during winter months. Sidewalks are frequently used for this purpose rather than supporting pedestrian movement. In addition, the study area spans multiple plow-out plans, which limits continuity for pedestrian trips across the corridor. This contributes to uneven winter accessibility and poor levels of safety, particularly along the Gambell and Ingra corridors.

Snow clearance is dependent on the amount of snowfall, as shown in Table 4. When less than four inches of snow fall, only main routes are cleared. For snowfall between four and fifteen inches, both main routes and neighborhood streets are cleared, with priority given to main routes. When snowfall exceeds fifteen inches, M&O adapts its approach based on available resources and conditions. In these cases, approximate clearance timelines are set, ranging from 84 hours for four to six inches of snow to more than 120 hours for snowfall exceeding fifteen inches. [1].

Table 4. M&O snow clearance priorities in winter 2024-2025 [6]

Snow Accumulation	M&O Priorities	Normal Deadline for neighborhood streets
Less than 4 inches	Main roads only	n/a
4-15 inches (plow-out)	- Main roads - Arterial and collector streets - Sidewalks - Neighborhood streets based on Plow Plan	4-6in: 84h 6-10in: 96h 10-15in: 108h
More than 15 Inches	Adapt to circumstances	120h or more

A plow-out is declared following a snowfall event of four inches or greater. During a plow-out, crews prioritize clearing main roads first, followed by arterial and collector streets, as well as municipal trails and sidewalks. Once these routes are cleared and snowfall has stopped, residential streets are addressed. The stated objective during a plow-out is to clear all residential streets at least once within 84 hours. If an additional snowfall of four inches or more occurs while a plow-out is underway, residential plowing is paused and crews return to clearing main and arterial routes. Residential plowing resumes once conditions allow.

While the municipality attempts to clear streets before sidewalks to avoid snow being thrown onto already cleared sidewalks, this approach prioritizes motorized traffic over pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. As a result, people are often forced to walk in the roadway because it is in a better condition than adjacent sidewalks. However, this contributes to reduced traffic safety. Reprioritizing active modes could be supported through street redesign where feasible. Providing a buffer zone between sidewalks or trails and the main roads would reduce conflicts between plowing operations and pedestrian infrastructure. This approach

is feasible on streets such as Hyder Street. While M&O does not clear residential sidewalks, they do aim to avoid plowing over sidewalks that have been cleared by the community. Post-plow snow hauling from sidewalks is sporadic and generally does not occur, as sidewalks are commonly used for snow storage.

Post-Plow Review and Clean-Up

After initial plowing operations are completed, M&O supervisors carry out post-plow reviews to assess road conditions and identify outstanding issues. Post-plow clean-up activities may include opening storm drains and catch basins, clearing fire hydrants, mailboxes, and driveways, pushing back snow berms, removing built-up snow and ice from road surfaces, and hauling snow where required.

Depending on available snow storage capacity, snow may be pushed further back into the right of way using wing blades or nose plows or blown back using snow blowers. In locations where there is insufficient space within the right of way, snow must be hauled to designated disposal sites.

Information on snow clearance activities is communicated through the municipal snow plowing map, which is updated when a formal plow-out has been declared. The map also includes a sidewalk maintenance tracker, showing when sidewalks were last cleared and where maintenance activities are currently underway, as shown in Figure 66.

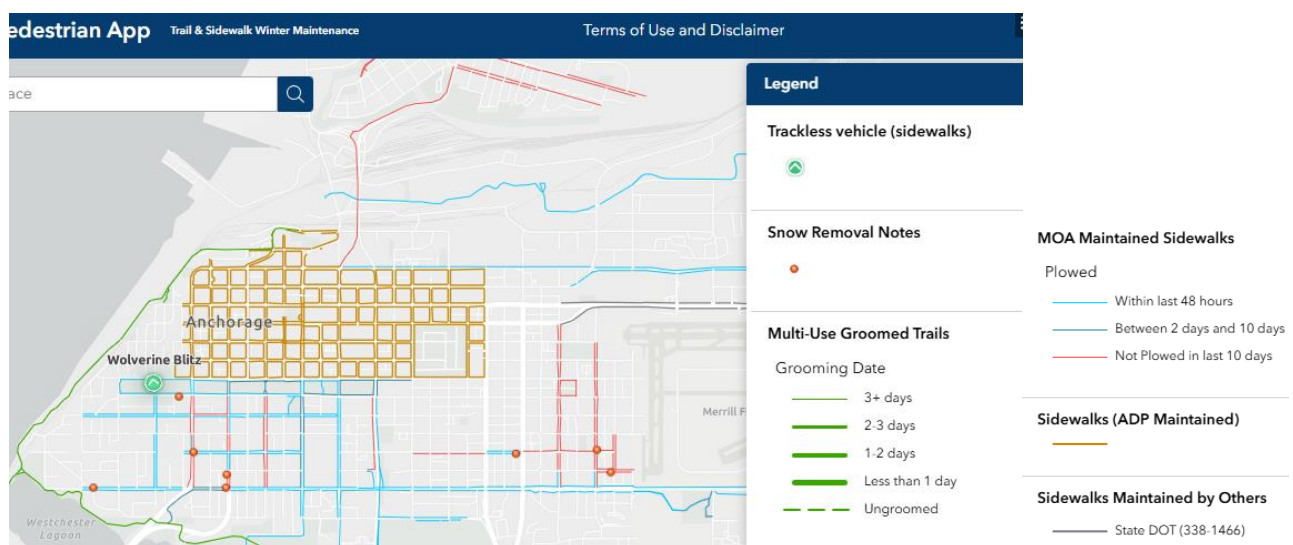


Figure 66. Winter Pedestrian App in March 2026 [10]

Maintenance Fleet

M&O's winter maintenance fleet currently consists of 30 graders, 14 loaders, 14 dump trucks, 8 sanders, 5 pick-up trucks, 9 snow blowers, and 14 trackless tractors. Trackless vehicles (see) are generally used for sidewalk clearance

While this fleet provides coverage across Anchorage, a significant proportion of the equipment is approaching or has exceeded its expected operational lifespan.

Long-term underinvestment and deferred procurement over several decades have resulted in ageing machinery that is increasingly expensive to maintain and more prone to mechanical failure. Frequent breakdowns and rising maintenance demands reduce the availability and reliability of equipment during snow events. As a result, winter maintenance operations are often delayed, and limited resources are prioritized toward keeping main roads and arterial routes passable.

Although M&O is now prioritizing pay and equipment investment to address years of underinvestment, operational capacity remains constrained. This limits the ability to progress efficiently to residential plow-out stages and contributes to extended periods of reduced accessibility on local streets and pedestrian infrastructure.

The procurement of replacement machinery is also constrained by long lead-in times, typically ranging from 12 to 18 months. This limits the municipality's ability to respond quickly to identified fleet gaps or unexpected equipment failures. While new equipment has been approved and is scheduled for delivery,

including 10 pick-up trucks, one vacuum truck, one sander truck with a belly blade and plow, and three graders, these additions are incremental and do not fully address the cumulative impacts of long-term underinvestment in the fleet.

Overall, limitations in fleet condition, equipment availability, and procurement timelines reinforce a winter maintenance approach that prioritizes vehicular mobility on the main road network. There is less capacity to address neighborhood-scale needs, including sidewalk clearance and residential plow-out operations. This places increased pressure on community members to clear sidewalks, including in locations where maintenance responsibility formally sits with M&O.

Due to limited resources, it is particularly important that new infrastructure is designed with the current and planned maintenance fleet in mind, so that active travel facilities can be cleared quickly and efficiently.

Local Efforts

Fairview Snowfighters

Because snow clearance of sidewalks and footpaths is not a consistent priority, large parts of the public realm are difficult or impossible for residents to use during winter. In response, FVCC ran a pilot program called Fairview Snowfighters during the winter of 2024 to 2025. As part of the pilot, local volunteers maintained selected sections of footpath along 15th Avenue. Volunteers focused on clearing the sidewalks and improving access to bus stops, with the aim of supporting mobility, safety, and everyday accessibility for residents during winter conditions. The pilot demonstrated the role that community-led initiatives can play in addressing gaps in formal winter maintenance.



Figure 67. Anchorage resident clearing snow off the driveway with a snow blower (Image Credit: Bill Roth / ADN) [11]

Snowblower Loan Program Equipment

Alongside the Fairview Snowfighters initiative, FVCC petitioned the Municipality of Anchorage to establish a snow blower loan system in 2025. The intent of this initiative was to provide residents and volunteers with access to appropriate equipment to support sidewalk and path clearance, particularly in areas not regularly maintained by municipal services

Snow Melting Cistern

To reduce reliance on hauling away snow, FVCC worked with engineering students from the University of Alaska Anchorage to design a snow melt cistern for the parking area of the Fairview Recreation Center in 2014 [2]. The was aimed to manage snow more efficiently on site. Although construction funding was

secured in 2012, the estimated cost of the final design exceeded the available budget. As a result, the snow melting system has not yet been implemented.

Placemaking and Activation

Placemaking and activating public spaces play an important role in how Fairview is experienced during the winter months. While street design and winter maintenance affect whether people can move safely through the neighborhood, placemaking and various events influence whether people choose to spend time outdoors, meet others, and take part in everyday social life. These factors also affect how long people are willing to stay outside in winter.

Therefore, the quality of public spaces becomes especially important in a Winter City. Well-designed public areas, sheltered and well-lit spaces, and clear visual and cultural cues help people feel comfortable, find their way, and feel a sense of belonging during the colder and especially darker months.

Within the Gambell and Ingra corridor, placemaking is limited by the role of Gambell Street and Ingra Street as busy, high-capacity vehicle routes. Hyder Street functions more as a residential and local commercial street, but it also lacks strong placemaking and activation features. As a result, most winter activities and events take place elsewhere in Anchorage, particularly downtown or the recreation center in Fairview. This leads to the corridor being experienced as a place to pass through rather than a destination where people stop, gather, and spend time.



Figure 68. Fairview Wishing Well placemaking intervention placed throughout Fairview in Winter 2024 (Image Credit: Anchorage Museum)

Public Realm Infrastructure

The public spaces within corridor currently lack many of the elements that support comfort, clarity, and social use, not only in winter but throughout the year. Wayfinding is limited, with few signs or visual cues to help people navigate the neighborhood or understand connections to nearby parks, trails, and community facilities. This becomes more challenging in winter, when snow covers ground markings and daylight hours are short.

Street furniture is limited throughout the corridor. There are no places to sit, rest, or gather, and sidewalks are often too narrow to add benches or other street furniture without limiting the accessibility for people with reduced mobility. The lack of resting places affects disproportionately older people, people with mobility challenges, and those waiting for transit.

Lighting along Gambell Street, Ingra Street, and Hyder Street is provided through major lighting columns meant for the illumination of the roadway. Pedestrian-scale lighting is largely missing throughout the study area, and lighting is rarely used to highlight walking routes, gathering spaces, or crossings. This reduces the sense of safety and comfort during long winter evenings and reinforces the corridor's vehicle-focused character. There is also little use of color or warm-toned lighting that could help counter darkness and improve comfort in cold conditions.

Bus stops in the study area generally offer little protection from wind and snow. The lack of covered or partially sheltered waiting areas increases exposure to harsh winter weather and can discourage transit use, especially during very cold or windy periods. Additionally, the winter maintenance of bus stops is lacking which further reduces the options for travel across Fairview.



Figure 69. Sidewalk and bus stop under snow (Image Credit: Allen Kemplen)

Planting within ROW and nearby public spaces is limited and often confined to narrow strips. Trees are usually planted in straight lines rather than in groups, which reduces their ability to block wind or capture drifting snow. Limited planting also makes it harder to visually define walking routes in winter, when snow covers sidewalk edges.

While downtown Anchorage has a variety of statues and murals, public art and cultural features are largely absent along the Gambell and Ingra corridor. The lack of murals, artwork, or seasonal installations limits opportunities to add color, identity, and interest to the winter streetscape in the neighborhood

Community Gathering Spaces

Most formal and informal gathering spaces in Fairview are located indoors. Community life tends to center on places such as the recreation center, churches, and other institutional buildings. While these facilities play an important role, their indoor focus means there are very few outdoor spaces that support casual encounters or visible community activity during winter. As a result, there is a clear need for more outdoor places where people can pause, gather, and warm up.

Activities and Initiatives

Currently FVCC has a number of initiatives to encourage activity in the community throughout the year, and making the neighborhood more vibrant.

Fairview Community Gardens Project

Fairview Community Council (FVCC) has secured two properties within the corridor to develop community gardens. Both sites are located along Ingra Street, with one at the corner of East 14th Avenue and the other in a mid-block location further along Ingra Street.

FVCC is also developing a Serenity Garden at the corner of Karluk Street and 13th Avenue. Together, these gardens will provide opportunities for residents to come together to design, build, and maintain shared spaces, helping to strengthen community connections and local pride.

At present, gardens mainly support activity during three seasons of the year. As they are still in development, there is an opportunity for the community to design them in a way that also encourages winter use. This could include features that help people stay warm or provide shelter. Overall, it is important to consider snow storage within the sites. While four-season greenhouses require electrical connections and heating, even

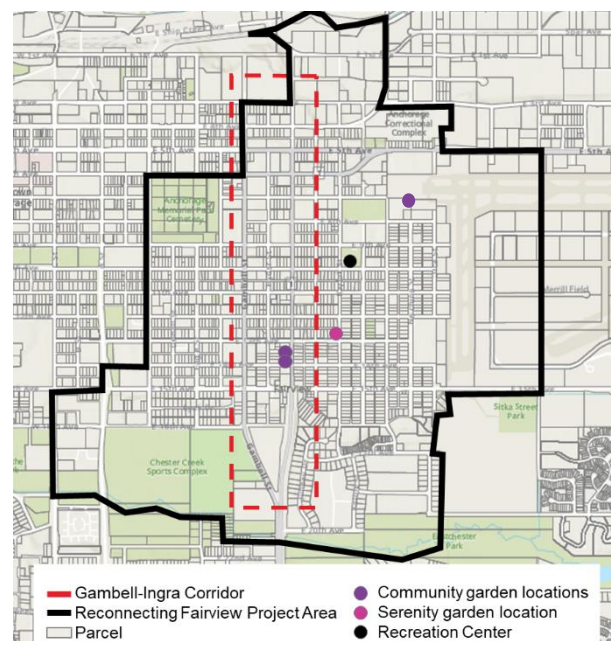


Figure 70. Community garden locations in relation to the study area and the recreation center

unheated or lightly heated greenhouses can extend the growing season well into the fall and early winter and kick starting the season earlier in spring making use of days getting longer fast, increasing year-round community presence.

Outdoor Film Screening

FVCC have partnered up with the Anchorage Museum, Anchorage Design Week, Anchorage Parks & Recreation, NeighborWorks Alaska, and Alaska BookMobile to host outdoor films screening at the recreation center during Anchorage's Fur Rendezvous Festival and Anchorage Design Week. The screenings are free to attend and provide an opportunity for residents and visitors get together and gather outdoors. The film nights also help raise awareness of Fairview among people attending the annual festival, supporting greater visibility and positive recognition of the neighborhood.



Figure 71. Outdoor film night in Fairview. (Image Credit: Fairview Community Council [15])

"Push Back the Darkness" Contest

FVCC has partnered with the Fairview Business Association to host a lighting contest, "Push Back the Darkness", where residents and business owners were asked to help setting up seasonal lighting along the Gambell and Ingraham corridors. The purpose was to showcase that the corridor a gateway to a residential community. FVCC offers to provide LED lights and extension cords but asked for the residents and businesses to power the lights and monitor them.

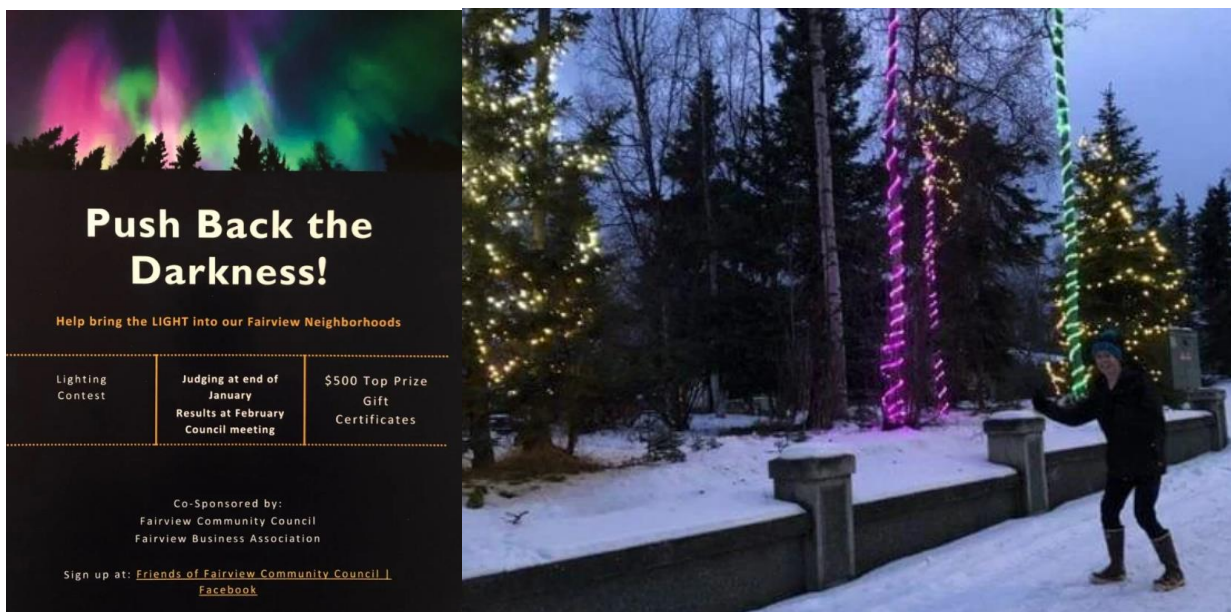


Figure 72. Push Back the Darkness advert (left) and results across the neighborhood (right) (Image Credit: Image Credit: Fairview Community Council) [16]

Summary of Current Challenges

Supporting winter use in Fairview presents several interrelated challenges related to urban form, roadway design, winter maintenance, and public space activation.

Built Form and Street Edges

- Many buildings are set back from the street, providing little shelter from wind or winter weather.
- Most buildings lack active ground-floor frontages, resulting in streets that feel quiet and uninviting for people on foot.
- The use of color and materials along building façades is inconsistent, with no coordinated palette to create visual cohesion or seasonal identity.
- Limited investment in the public realm reinforces the perception of the corridor as a place to pass through rather than a place to stop, gather, or spend time.

Sidewalk Design and Right-of-Way Constraints

- Sidewalks are often narrow and quickly overtaken by snow, forcing pedestrians into the roadway.
- Sidewalk widths are inconsistent, complicating winter maintenance and snow clearance.
- In many locations, sidewalks are placed directly adjacent to traffic lanes, causing plowed snow to be pushed onto walking areas.
- Utilities are sometimes located within sidewalks, creating physical obstructions that further reduce usable space in winter.

Snow Storage and Snow Disposal

- Snow disposal sites can reach capacity midway through severe winters, resulting in snow being stored within the right-of-way, including on sidewalks.
- Snow storage within the ROW frequently takes precedence over pedestrian movement, significantly reducing accessibility for people walking, wheeling, or biking.
- Snow management needs constrain how streets, sidewalks, and public spaces function throughout the winter season.

Winter Maintenance Priorities and Coordination

- Winter maintenance resources are limited, with a strong emphasis on keeping arterial roads passable.
- Sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure are not maintained to the same standard as roadways, reducing winter walkability.
- Responsibilities for sidewalk and trail maintenance are fragmented across multiple agencies, leading to gaps and inconsistent service.
- Large portions of the Gambell–Ingra corridor lack clearly assigned responsibility for winter sidewalk maintenance.
- The study area spans multiple plow-out plans, limiting continuity for pedestrian trips across the corridor.
- During plow-out events, long clearance timelines can leave residential streets and sidewalks inaccessible for extended periods.
- Winter maintenance prioritization generally favors motorized traffic over people walking, biking, or using transit.

Transit Access and Connectivity

- Limited snow clearance at local bus stops reduces accessibility and makes public transit less attractive during winter months.
- Key east–west connections, including 9th Avenue, are not maintained in winter, reducing connectivity between Fairview and downtown Anchorage.

Maintenance Equipment and Capacity

- The winter maintenance fleet is aging, increasingly unreliable, and costly to maintain due to long-term underinvestment.
- Equipment breakdowns and limited fleet availability delay snow clearance and constrain neighborhood-scale maintenance.
- Long procurement lead times limit the Municipality of Anchorage’s ability to quickly address equipment gaps.
- Community-led snow clearing initiatives help address local needs but place additional responsibility on residents and volunteers.

Public Spaces, Community Spaces, and Winter Activation

- Most community gathering spaces shift indoors during winter, limiting outdoor visibility and informal social interaction.
- There are few outdoor places where people can pause, gather, or warm up during colder months.
- Public spaces are not consistently designed to support winter comfort, lingering, or everyday use.
- Community gardens and outdoor spaces are largely three-season facilities, with limited features to support winter activity.
- A lack of shelter, wind protection, and warming elements reduces the usability of outdoor spaces in winter.
- Landscaping along streets is minimal, providing little visual interest or seasonal definition.
- Paths and green verges lack clear visual cues, making edges harder to identify, particularly in winter conditions.
- Wide paved areas, such as Hyder Street, do not encourage walking, gathering, or placemaking outside of peak seasons.
- Existing activation efforts are often temporary or event-based, with limited everyday winter presence.

Winter City Case Studies

Case Study Locations

Although priority was given to cities situated within arctic and sub-arctic zones, a few other urban areas exhibiting climatic characteristics similar to Anchorage have been selected as case studies.

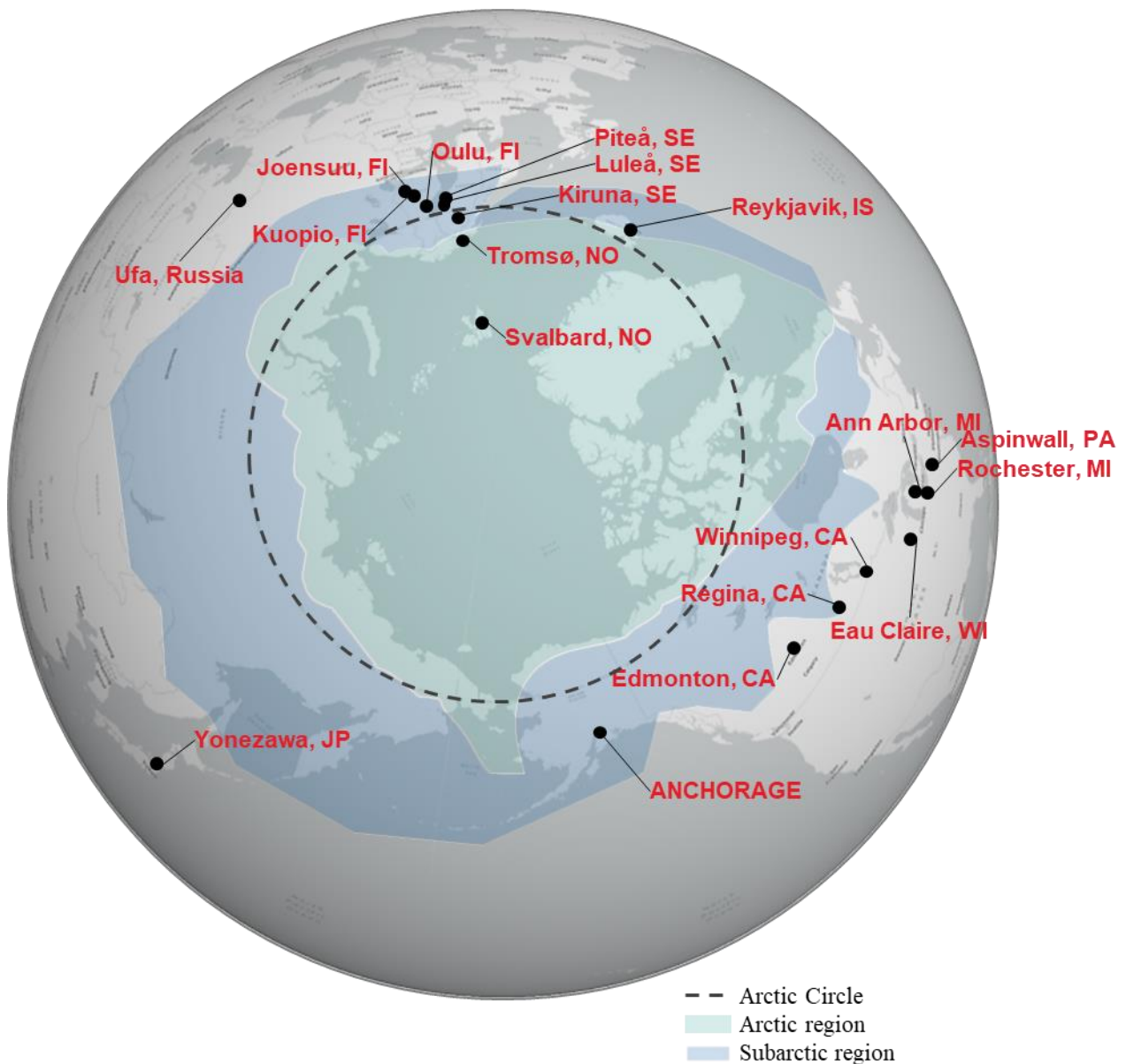


Figure B-1: Overview of Case Study locations in relation to Anchorage and the arctic and sub-arctic regions