



April 25, 2023

Dear Juneau Assembly Members and Mayor Weldon:

We write to request support for Juneau Climbing and Recreation (JCR). Juneau Climbing and Recreation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that operates the Rock Dump, an indoor rock climbing gym, recreational, and community facility located off Thane Road in Juneau. Similar to other private and public recreational facilities in Juneau (e.g., Juneau Gymnastics Academy, Juneau Youth Wrestling Club, Juneau Karate Academy, the hockey rink, the Field House, Juneau pools, and Eaglecrest), the Rock Dump facility plays a central role in Juneau's physical and recreation community, particularly in the fall and winter months when it is dark, icy, and challenging to recreate outside.

The Rock Dump currently provides climbing classes for youth, school groups, and adults seeking to improve their climbing skills, strength, and wellness. We have over 200 members and 15,000 visits per year from both members and non-members. The gym offers a number of programs for the community, including Kids Climbing Club and Women's Night. Our user-base includes people of all ages, from those who are just learning to walk to residents over 65, with the biggest segment representing residents between 14 and 30. Our employees are typically between 18 and 30. Offering jobs and recreational opportunities for this demographic is so important right now for keeping our young adults in Juneau.

Further, climbing with partners, developing coordinated body movement, and building strength can teach valuable lessons about teamwork and instill self-confidence in youth and adults alike. At the community level, climbing is one of the more rapidly growing sports in the United States, with an estimated 8 million climbers in 2023. In many cities, climbing gyms serve as community hubs in addition to providing recreational opportunities for all ages. We believe that these community benefits would be a natural outcome of developing a new gym in Juneau. Moreover, Juneau has a cultural tradition of outdoor-oriented recreation, which makes a gym a perfect fit for our community.

JCR is evaluating the ways we may better serve our community and play a larger role to support both indoor and outdoor recreation in Juneau. We feel that the current Rock Dump facility does not meet the needs of the community and restricts growth. The principal shortcomings of the current facility are that it is a non-permanent rental property, the building is in need of significant investment for repairs and thermal upgrades, it is located off Thane, which limits accessibility, and it is quite small.

We have had meetings with realtors, architects, and climbing wall manufacturers to assess all options, including renovating our current space, buying a new space, or co-locating with another facility. To better serve our community, ensure a widely accessible facility, and address the physical shortcomings

of the current facility, JCR determined that purchasing or leasing land and constructing a new facility is the best option.

Based on our initial investigation, we have found that to purchase land and construct a 10,000 square-foot facility would cost in the range of \$5-7 million (\$500-750K for land, \$3-5 million to construct the facility, and \$1 million for the wall system). Our first step would be to work with landowners and realtors to identify the land, then develop conceptual options and cost estimates for building construction. With these options in hand, we will host community and member meetings for public input and feedback. Then, we will develop the preferred option, finalize a business plan, and continue to identify donors and grant opportunities.

To get this development project started, JCR seeks the Assembly's support in the amount of \$500,000 for the planning and design of the project (\$100,000), and then we would use the remaining funding to leverage grant opportunities.

By developing a new gym and offering enhanced programming in a more accessible location, we aim to solidify our ability to provide a year-round recreational facility that serves citizens of CBJ by increasing mental and physical fitness, developing interpersonal skills through trust, and encouraging indoor/outdoor recreational growth in and around our community. The Rock Dump currently serves a sizable portion of the Juneau Community and, with more space and a more central location, could expand its reach, provide more robust programs for all segments of the community, and continue its valuable mission of allowing CBJ residents to promote their mental and physical development in a healthy and supportive environment.

Sincerely,

Demian Schane

Demian Schane, *Board President, Juneau Climbing and Recreation*

(submitted with the support of Jessie Palomino, *Rock Dump Manager*; and Eran Hood, Jess Brown, Emily Nauman, Bob Lafavour, Diana Baetscher, Laughlin Barker, Alisha Falberg, and Kelly Karl, *Juneau Climbing and Recreation Board of Directors*)