

City & Borough of Juneau Community Funding Request

Basic Information

Name of Requesting Group or Organization	Friends of the Marie Drake Planetarium, 501(c)(3)
Summary of request (sentence or phrase)	Planetarium Upgrade with Auxiliary Portable
Amount of request	\$78,000
Assemblymember Sponsor	Paul Kelly
Is this a request for a one-time event, purchase or grant match?	Purchase
Does this request provide monetary support for the group's ongoing or operating expenses?	No
Primary contact individual for this group	Rosemary Walling
Primary contact's phone number	907-723-0692
Primary contact's email	rosemary@mariedrakeplanetarium.org

1. Funding Request (Project) Title (Suggested heading):

Planetarium Upgrade with Auxiliary Portable

2. Project description and benefit. Describe the project (in half a page or less), including specific aspects of the funding request and project. Explain how the project will benefit the community. What sector(s) of the community will this project benefit and/or serve?

In 2019, the Friends of the Marie Drake Planetarium secured the final amount needed to complete the purchase of a fully modern digital planetarium projection system for the 30' (9.1 meters) dome in the Marie Drake Planetarium. The cost was approximately \$100k. This contrasts with the cost for a start-from-scratch new planetarium with a 10-meter dome now being built at the University of Alaska's Museum of the North in Fairbanks. An anonymous donation of \$7.4 million made that possible. Since the start of 2024, we have given 80 public shows for an audience over 2300. We provided 50 classroom field trips for a total attendance of over 1100. Summing up, it gives 130 free shows and over 3400 attendees in under a year and a half. We count on community support and the use of the planetarium facility in the Marie Drake Building to do this.

Digitalis Education Solutions has upgraded their software and hardware versions, and so first, the computer hardware unit (computer) we now use has reached the end of its 5-year lifetime replacement cycle and needs replacement. Its replacement allows us to repurpose the original computer as a development platform for creating custom content. We would add to this an integrated LED lighting package, replacing the incandescent tubes of the '60s which are no longer available. Lastly, we add an auxiliary small portable system which would allow "field trips in the schools" for those schools now requiring travel time and transportation costs. Specifically, this consists of a 25-lb projection system running software compatible to that downtown and a 5-meter inflatable dome. Total request is for \$78,000, split by about 30% for downtown and 70% for the auxiliary system.

3. Plans and progress. Describe (in one or two paragraphs) what has been accomplished so far (if anything) toward this project's or funding's goal. This may include studies, designs, grant application status, fundraising activity, and total funds raised to date.

The project proposed here builds on preceding phases—the first phase being the 2019 purchase of the original projection system through a large fundraising effort. Next is our demonstrated commitment to providing affordable, in this case free, planetarium programming to the Juneau community and in supporting the science education of Juneau youth through our efforts working with the Juneau school system. For land and water locked Juneau, no one can drive to a planetarium in a nearby city. Since 2023, we have provided bus transportation for 20 classroom field trips. This cost year after year is not sustainable for us, but the most important limitation removed would be the number of students we reach. Virtually all the K-8 teachers would choose to have one or more planetarium experiences for their students each year.

The Marie Drake Planetarium is a 100% volunteer planetarium. At this time, we do not have the funds to contribute to the specific purchases included in this request. However, we offer our time at no cost.

4. Project support. Is the project supported in CBJ or other community plans (List where the project is mentioned or supports concepts in planning documents such as the Assembly Goals, Legislative Priorities, CIP Plan, etc.

Although the city does not own the planetarium equipment in the Marie Drake Planetarium, the planetarium enhances the community value of the city-owned physical facility. The retention of the planetarium space as a planetarium was ranked highest among the non-CBJ organizations requests for space in the Marie Drake Building last year by the PWFC.

Our project supports the high-level Assembly Goals of economic development and sustainable community. Both involve preparing students for future jobs in Juneau and aligning with our efforts to educate, inform, and inspire all age groups and education levels with free and inexpensive programming. Modern planetariums offer a vibrant and creative space for more than just astronomy and space science programs. Space and astronomy are often gateway topics for getting young people first interested in STEM related studies and careers. Regardless of the specific topic, students and adults may come to the planetarium for entertainment and yet leave knowing a bit more than when they arrived.

5. Goal of project. In one sentence or less, state the goal of the project. For example “economic development” or “improve non-motorized transportation routes.”

The goal is to provide science-related educational and entertainment opportunities to the Juneau community.

6. Total cost:

A. TOTAL COST (including funds already secured) = \$78,000

B. AMOUNT SECURED (include funding source) = \$0

7. Timeline: Indicate when you hope to complete the project.

All items will be ordered soon after funds are available in FY26. The lead times now vary from four to eight weeks, so most items could be working sometime in the fall. We expect 100% completion within the fiscal year.

8. Physical Location. Please provide the address or physical description of where the project is located.

Marie Drake Planetarium, 1415 Glacier Avenue, Juneau