



April 26, 2024

City & Borough of Juneau
Assembly Member Wade Bryson
155 Heritage Way
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: DBA FY25 Request for CBJ Funding – Family Friendly Capital City

Dear Assembly Member Bryson,

On behalf of the Downtown Business Association (DBA), thank you for sponsoring our request to CBJ for FY25 funding. We understand members of the Assembly Finance Committee at their April 17 meeting had follow-up questions for JEDC on our proposal. Please find our responses to those questions:

- *“What is the CBJ’s historical support for DBA and what is in the budget?” (Assembly Member Smith)*

DBA is grateful for a long history of CBJ approval for the use of marine passenger fees to support the Downtown Ambassador program and general funds to invest in the success of Downtown Juneau. Related history is broken down below by fund source and timing; see attached for file from Angie Flick.

Marine Passenger Fees - Since FY13, CBJ has funded the DBA’s Downtown Ambassador program with marine passenger fees. Starting with an initial award of \$56k, support has nominally grown over the years while arriving passenger counts have sharply increased. The remaining monies of last year’s \$90k award are currently being used to execute the program deliverables through the end of June. We remain hopeful that CBJ will continue to support this initiative which aligns with Blueprint Downtown’s vision for a hospitable and welcoming downtown experience for everyone that visits. Additionally, these employees abide by TBMP standards reflecting common goals.

General Funds – CBJ began supporting DBA in FY18 with the goal of enhancing Juneau’s reputation as a Mainstreet America accredited community. Funding sources for these recurring initiatives have included hotel bed taxes (FY18-20 and FY23) and general funds (FY21-22 and FY24). Over these years, CBJ funding amounts have ranged from \$75k (FY19-23) to \$40k (FY24). The reduced funding did impact our ability to fully execute some workplans, so we do seek approval for previous levels to maintain our focus on economic vitality and hospitality.

- *“This does not feel that we are discussing plans. We do not see plans or progress in that paragraph. It reads like a project-based grant process request as well as a recurring funding request” (Mayor Weldon and Assembly Member Gidaag).*

While some of the requested funds are project based (e.g., finish installation of the Light Up Downtown project), recurring support will continue to facilitate DBA’s ongoing and year-round activities intentionally designed to promote a welcoming and hospitable downtown; see below for a progress update:

DBA FY25 Initiatives: Family Friendly Capital City *Request for CBJ Funding*

- ✓ DBA members count is currently 125 downtown businesses, property owners, and members of our community that share an interest in a thriving year-round downtown.
- ✓ Approximately \$13M in annual sales tax revenue was collected by CBJ from downtown businesses in 2024; this excludes hotel bed taxes, as well as sales taxes generated by the ships while in port.
- ✓ Via the DBA, Downtown Juneau was reaccredited by Mainstreet America in March 2024.
- ✓ To date, FY24 fundraising includes dues (\$35K) advertising sales (\$23k), and promotion income.
- ✓ Our events result in hundreds of volunteer hours and community sponsorships/support. With these funds, we plan to implement enhanced tracking measures to better capture these metrics.
- ✓ To date in this fiscal year, six newsletters have been published, three virtual office hours have been held, and there have been regularly scheduled monthly board meetings with guest speakers and liaisons (e.g., CBJ Parks & Recreation Director, George Schaaf; CBJ Historic Resources Advisory Committee Member, Dorene Lorenz; JAHC, Rachele Bonnet; CBJ Assembly, Greg Smith). With this funding, we will continue to work with these collaborative and supportive partners.
- ✓ In terms of promotions, the DBA has planned, promoted, and executed multiple events during FY2024 including flagship family-friendly activities such as Gallery Walk (attracted 10,000 unique visits to the downtown corridor), as well as the Pumpkin Patch and Scavenger Hunt at Halloween (record historical participation by downtown businesses attracting many families and children, as well as partnerships, sponsorships, and prize offerings).
- ✓ We have promoted various events and activities with our partners and individual members (e.g., First Friday, Holi Festival Day with Spice Indian Cafe & Gallery; Summer Kick Off at Sandy Beach w/Kindred Post; Legislative Reception with the Juneau Chamber of Commerce; Lily Hope).
- ✓ Regarding economic vitality, the DBA has hosted collaborative events in FY24 to promote a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem (e.g., Alaska Start Up Week), public service via forums with our members and candidates (e.g., CBJ Assembly Elections), and input on CBJ initiatives to encourage downtown livelihood and development (e.g., Circulator Study; Blueprint Downtown).
- ✓ Light Up Juneau is in its final stages of implementation with Carver Construction. This involves the installation of remaining lights and replacing bulbs. The DBA is also following up with business owners who elected to install their own lights. This project enhances downtown's atmosphere and attracts families, friends, and individuals to the downtown core during the winter. Once the project installation is complete, maintenance will be an item that needs ongoing funding from CBJ into the future. This past winter, some members experienced problems accessing CBJ electricity.

The DBA seeks to actively prepare for the projected decline in school-aged children, the pending homeporting of a USCG icebreaker with accompanying crew and families, and the potential relocation of City Hall outside the downtown core. Corresponding changes are expected to downtown's daily foot traffic and point-of-sale transactions, in addition to the ongoing challenges of operating a profitable year-round downtown business. We hope you will agree that the DBA is uniquely qualified and geographically situated to assist these efforts to benefit all that visit, live, or work downtown.

Sincerely,

Veneita Bingham

Veneita Bingham
Downtown Business Association, President
V's Cellar Door, Owner

Nimmy Philips

Nimmy Philips
Downtown Business Association, Vice President
Spice Indian Cuisine, Owner