



## **Activating Underutilized Parking Spaces for Public Use**

### **Downtown Parking Garage Rooftop Becomes a Community Asset**

During 2016, Anchorage, Alaska was entering into a recession; consequently, parking use was showing signs of decline. ACDA began the hard look at its parking resources and best use for public spaces.

Under an aggressive strategic plan established by the ACDA Board of Directors, leadership was tasked to re-think usage of existing parking assets.

“ACDA has gotten creative with parking and transit resources, treating them less like infrastructure, and more like real-estate.” Alaska Public Media, June 27, 2017

ACDA reinvented the usage of its parking resource in downtown Anchorage by activating underutilized parking spaces on the rooftop of EasyPark’s 5th & B parking garage and created a new community asset for everyone to enjoy.

The Rooftop featured a half-court basketball, two concrete ping pong tables, a concrete chess table and lots of benches to sit on to enjoy a lunch break or take in the beautiful mountain scenery.

The Rooftop was made available for public use Monday-Sunday 6am-10pm. Additional video equipment had been installed which was monitored by the EasyPark Dispatch team to provide a safe and secure environment.

At the end of 2016, ACDA partnered up for the first time with the Anchorage Museum and held its first outdoor film in downtown Anchorage titled “*Films Worth Freezing For*” during the Anchorage International Film Festival.

During 2017, ACDA added an all year round skating rink (made of plastic sheet) to the park with music and lights due to the popularity of the public space. The plastic skating material has proved to be a positive asset as Anchorage experiences rain during the winter and outdoor skating rinks can be problematic. ACDA also added picnic tables on The Rooftop due to high usage of downtown workers during their lunch breaks.

During 2016 and 2017, farmer market vendors were able to set up on the Rooftop for free and sell their local produce to downtown workers. Another added benefit as downtown Anchorage does not have a downtown grocery store.



## **Goals:**

The Rooftop was created with the idea to re-activate property of the Anchorage Community Development Authority that was underutilized, increase parking usage at the 5<sup>th</sup> & B parking garage, and to provide an amenity to attract and keep people downtown.

**Strategies:** ACDA made the decision to do a “soft” rollout during 2016 as they were not sure on how safety/security would be affected in the parking garage. Video cameras and additional rule signage would need to be added to the space. ACDA would utilize video advertising to showcase the space.

**Planning/Implementation:** Videos of the Rooftop were utilized via social media and advertising via KTUU (local television channel). All presentations in front of community groups would include updates about the Rooftop. Event planners would be contacted about the available space as well as local farmer market groups. The ACDA and EasyPark website would be updated to include information about the Rooftop. ACDA would add Rooftop banners on the façade of the 5<sup>th</sup> & B parking garage to bring attention to the new space.

**Challenges:** Due to ACDA’s strategic decision of doing a “soft” rollout, the usage was low during 2016 and the beginning of 2017 and/or the public just was not aware of the public space due to its location.

**Problems Solved:** ACDA added additional signage within the parking garage about the Rooftop at a prime location that 55,000+ monthly customers visit due to a pay-on-foot (garage device to make a parking payment) and the skybridge that adjoins the 5<sup>th</sup> & B parking garage with the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Mall.

**Research:** ACDA had EasyPark review their parking numbers at the 5<sup>th</sup> & B parking garage before implementing the idea of utilizing the Rooftop for public space. After reviewing the data, it was confirmed that the Rooftop was rarely used unless a peak shopping and/or event day occurred (Black Friday or Iditarod).

**Outcome:** EasyPark increased their daily transient parking numbers by 1,000+ per month at the 5<sup>th</sup> & B parking garage. The basketball court has been especially popular and is even used during the winter. With the popularity of the Rooftop, ACDA will be adding another Rooftop to another parking garage in downtown Anchorage.