

## **Two Page Summary**

The mission of Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Ltd. is Clean, Safe and Vital. We work to increase these three ideas throughout downtown, for residents, businesses, employees and visitors. Our organization continually works to find the most innovative and effective ways to improve the image and vitality of downtown. In 2017, we designed and managed a new program to bring positive energy and visitors into the park at the heart of the downtown community, Town Square Park. Our program, 144 Activities in Town Square Park, focused on partnerships with local businesses and organizations, to host daily activities/events in the park, all free of charge and open to the public. Through grassroots and online marketing, inspiration from space activation strategies throughout the U.S., and investment to increase security and staff the park on almost a daily basis, we managed to bring 116 unique events into the park between mid-May and late August, all under a budget of around \$12,600.

## **Innovation**

Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Ltd. is slowly changing the culture of downtown, and in addition, Anchorage as a whole. Anchorage has long struggled with high crime rates, homelessness and in recent years, increasing drug use. Town Square Park was becoming a center for these activities. As an organization, we work to make downtown “clean, safe and vital”, however these three objectives cannot be accomplished by putting band aids on our problems. We need to transform the culture of downtown to bring about the long-term positive changes our community needs. In March 2017, the inspiration for 144 Activities in Town Square Park appeared as a way to use positive energy and momentum to displace the negative activities that had been occupying the park. If a park is filled with music, theater, outdoor activity, the issues that plague downtown cannot coexist. By examining the problem in a new light, we discovered that we can simultaneously bring recreation opportunities for residents, businesses and visitors, while tackling crime, homelessness and drug use in the park. Space activation programs operate on this principle of activating space as an asset. What is unique about 144 Activities is the dual purpose the program serves, while fostering a growing sense of community downtown.

## **Replication**

Many communities around the U.S. face similar issues to Anchorage. The affordability, low staff needs, and grassroots structure of the program reveal how it can be replicated anywhere. The total budget for 144 Activities was approximately \$12,600, including development and planning, marketing and branding, the space activation trailer and games, and staffing. The low investment cost for the high return impact the program created cannot be matched. Likewise, the program does provide sustainability through the partnerships created by using local businesses and organizations as hosts for activities. Each host paid \$99 to use the park for a day, with the exceptions of some nonprofits, which helped pay for the program.

One part-time staff member led the program throughout development and execution. While many team members contributed in their respective fields, the program did not require a large staff contingency full-time. We used our employees from our downtown ambassador program to help hosts with set-up and take-down, as well as keep an eye on security throughout many events. These employees were already patrolling downtown on their ambassador shifts, so it did not add any additional cost.

Finally, the grassroots marketing strategy with door-to-door recruitment for hosts, and most of the marketing occurring through social media outlets, allowed the total cost to remain low while still effectively getting the word out.

## **Representation**

One of the most unique aspects of the program was the partnerships created between Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Ltd., Anchorage Parks and Recreation, and all of the organizations, businesses,

musicians and artists who hosted events. These relationships built social capital that helped our organization to become an even stronger leader in downtown, as well as bring in a number of new stakeholders to the community. Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Ltd. worked directly with Anchorage Parks and Recreation through weekly check-ins to make sure each of our goals for activating the space were accomplished. Hosts worked directly with Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Ltd. in planning their event, marketing and following up after the event to pull new organizations/businesses into the community long-term. Creating a stronger community through regular daily programming was a key goal for the program.

### **Sustainability**

144 Activities has the potential to become self-sustaining financially through host fees. We wanted to make sure that required fees did not deter possible hosts from participating in the program, especially in its first year. Thus, we waived the \$99 fee for the majority of hosts. However, with the overall budget around \$12,600, there is a strong potential of corporate sponsorship to pay for the entire program upfront, or fundraising possibilities from around the downtown community. We are running the program for summer 2018 and foresee no issues with sustaining the program as long as it is contributing to the community.

### **Execution**

The idea for 144 Activities came from Executive Director, Jamie Boring, who pitched the idea to create a program that brings positive energy into Town Square to drive out negative activities. Boring hired Rosie Frankowski as the key staffer for the development of the program with help from the entire team at Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Ltd. Throughout March and April 2017, we worked to plan out the organizational structure of using hosts to provide a variety of programming, and shoulder some of the workload, while building a stronger community through new partnerships. We used grassroots methods of finding hosts, collecting local contacts from our entire team and reaching out to business owners, organization heads and key downtown leaders through word of mouth, email, and phone. The program launched May 15 and ran until August 19, with activities almost every day. Once the program launched, each week key logistical details would be sent out to the ambassador program director to schedule staffing for the hosts, the food trucks that also operated in the park, our Parks and Recreation partners, and of course, marketing online and appearances on radio and television once the media discovered the program. Post-144 Activities, hosts were contacted for opinions on ways to improve and assess the program.

### **Outcome**

All in all, 144 Activities included 116 unique events, reaching over 15,000 people. The webpage for 144 Activities received 1,850 unique views, demonstrating its strong presence as a first-year program. The Facebook page for the program had 180 likes and 194 followers (as of August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017).

The social capital created by the program cannot be measured, but has paid off into our organization's 2018 operations. As well, many members of the downtown community reached out to Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Ltd. with high notes of praise for the program.