

# WILD REVIEW

A VISITOR INDUSTRY UPDATE PUBLISHED BY  
VISIT ANCHORAGE

October 2020

## SEYMOUR AWARD NOMINEES

While the 2020 Seymour Awards were postponed as a public health precaution, the nominees still shine: Visit Anchorage is proud to recognize the local entrepreneurs and organizations nominated for this year's awards.

Nominees are people and businesses making a difference in our community, the visitor industry, or Visit Anchorage programs. They provide excellent products and services, enhancing Anchorage's image as a premier destination, and we look forward to honoring and celebrating their achievements in person when the time comes.

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



No one knows what the path ahead will actually look like. But we are working hard to identify and follow the star that best guides us.

I hope that we've managed to strike a delicate balance this year and for 2021. On the one side, we've taken a clear-eyed and conservative approach to budgeting. That will keep our plans and programs in line with current expectations coalesced from board members and staff. On the other side, we've sought to maximize the power and reach of our programs to ensure the best possible outcomes for our community and our industry. Perhaps it isn't all that different from what we do in any year, but at a time like this, it is vital, and requires painful choices.

We already have a pretty clear picture of what 2020 has meant in real terms. We have bed tax actuals through Q2 as I write and are working on the assumption of 30-35% of what we saw in 2019 for the final two quarters of the year.

Apart from bed tax returns and projections, an infusion of municipal CARES Act funding will put Visit Anchorage in a stronger position for 2021. It has set in motion projects that will put us on the best footing going forward. It allows us to field new research, reinforce photo and video assets, and work to improve Anchorage.net with better functionality. These will adapt us for new traveler demands, remarketing our city to the most likely traveler post-COVID, supporting visitor businesses devastated by COVID. It will also provide the resources necessary for an updated Visitor Guide, Meeting Planner Guide, and maps. Each folds in new imagery that better matches the current consumer mindset, and emphasizes new protocols and mitigation measures. All that as 2020 concludes.

The board has approved the budget for 2021. Next year's budget assumes 30% of 2019 bed tax in the first quarter of 2021, and 40% of 2019 returns for the remaining three quarters of 2021. We plan to put \$3.3 million into promotion for Anchorage in the year ahead. That's about 60% of what was put into the market pre-pandemic. While not at all where we would like to be, that's better than you might expect given all that has happened. We preserved promotions by severely reducing costs, saying goodbye to some amazing people, with creativity, flexibility and persistence from our remaining staff, and by eliminating all but the most cost-effective means of marketing (this last category was often a decision made for us, for example, as tradeshow were cancelled or postponed).

The evolving and uncertain realities of the world have dictated a new approach in the near-term. We will continue to focus on areas likely to show the first signs of recovery, including engaging and inspiring independent travel. That means investing in new digital tools to help sell, and emphasizing online and social engagement.

We continue to connect with travel advisors and meeting planners, laying the groundwork for a future return of group sales, meetings, and conventions. Virtual sales events so far have included Anchorage-specific events for meeting planners statewide and in Chicago area, as well as virtual trade events for ASTA, Go West, and GTM. These meeting events provided over 125 travel trade appointments and virtual presentations to the entire conference group. Future business in these areas relies on strong relationships with clients and vendors, and demands we get creative in reaching customers.

Predicting the future is anybody's guess, but planning for the one we want puts us on the best course forward.

Sincerely,

Julie Saupé  
President & CEO



## REMEMBERING BILL ELANDER

*A Tribute from Julie Saupe*

Many of you have reached out since hearing the sad news that Bill Elander, former President & CEO of the Anchorage Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB, now Visit Anchorage) passed away on Friday, Aug. 28. We'd like to extend our deepest condolences to his wife Lynn and their entire family.

Bill served as ACVB's CEO from 1988-2000, and I credit him as the architect of Visit Anchorage as we now know it. Bill envisioned Anchorage as a conventions and meetings destination and he turned that vision into a reality, working to ensure the success of the newly opened Egan Center and convention hotels by creating the sales and marketing capacity to fill them.

Bill was an institution unto himself during his tenure at ACVB. He was forceful, assertive, and direct; he was also caring and truly dedicated to the cause of improving and serving our community via a vibrant visitor economy. Those who worked directly with him use words like "tough" and "compassionate" in the same sentence. I'll use the word resilient.

He had a proud military career and served our country honorably as a military pilot and also as a POW during the last year of the Vietnam War. In his own words, as reported in the Nevada Appeal last August:

"On my 65th mission, I was shot down and captured and released in 1973," Elander said. "I spent some time at the Hanoi Hilton and another camp."

The French-built prison known as Hoa Lo was ironically nicknamed the Hanoi Hilton, a slam on its inhospitable conditions. Both Elander and the late U.S. Sen. John McCain of Arizona, a former Navy pilot, were held at the prison at the same time, but they didn't have any significant contact.

After four months of flying out of Thailand, Elander's luck ran out on July 5, 1972. An air-to-air missile struck his Phantom, and the young officer bailed out in a mountainous area about 35 miles northeast of Hanoi. After six-and-half days of intense interrogations and constant threats, his captors moved him from isolation to a larger cell with 19 other POWs. Elander, who attended the pilot survival course at the former Stead Air Force Base northwest of Reno in 1958, stood strong during his captivity until late January 1973 when the North Vietnam and U.S. governments signed the Paris Peace Accord to end the war. On March 29, North Vietnam released Elander and the other POWs during Operation Homecoming. Elander spent 267 days in captivity, devoid of any news from family or friends, an experience he still calls frustrating and difficult."

As we all work our way through this troubling time, I encourage you to think about Bill's life, whether you knew him or not. His ability to find success in both military and destination marketing careers, to persevere in daunting circumstances, and to leave behind multiple legacies is a lesson for us all.

As an industry, we will manage our way through this pandemic. Like Bill, I hope we all find a way to do so with a balance of toughness, compassion, and resilience.

## THE VISITOR GUIDE

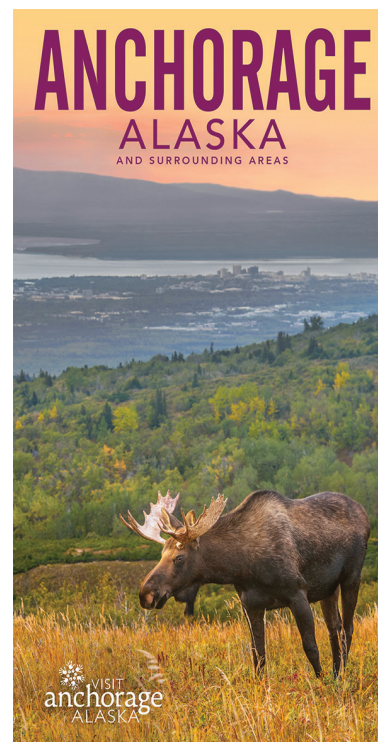
In late August, the Municipality of Anchorage awarded a portion of local CARES Act funding to Visit Anchorage, and we are grateful for the funding to better support Anchorage's visitor businesses, positioning our community for success when travel begins to return again

To kick things off, we're producing an updated visitor guide offering imagery and messaging better suited to current traveler interests and concerns. The process starts now. Because this project is moving forward on a tight deadline, we thank you in advance for your prompt responses to our emails and requests.

Your business will not be charged for any existing display ads, extra listings, or additional narrative text — so if you paid for any of these in the 2020 visitor guide, you'll receive the same space in the new visitor guide for free. Everyone who placed a display ad in 2020 can re-run the same ad, or submit a new ad of the same type and size. Ad contracts have been sent and are due back to Visit Anchorage by Oct. 1, 2020. If making creative changes, updated ad artwork and ad submission forms will be due on Oct. 8, 2020. If we do not hear back by then we will assume you would like to keep the same ad you ran in 2020.

Members are also now able to verify listings for the new visitors guide. Please [follow the link](#) and [refer to these instructions](#) to verify and/or update your listings in the Member Account Center by Oct. 7, 2020. If no changes are made by then, your 2020 listing will be carried over to the new visitors guide.

*Please don't delay:* Your timely action makes this exciting project possible. We look forward to working with you, and continuing to serve the local tourism and hospitality industry.



## JULY MML SETS STAGE FOR FUTURE IN-PERSON EVENTS



In mid-July, as convention centers slowly reopened and the Municipality of Anchorage temporarily eased restrictions on in-person events, Visit Anchorage staff and members gathered for the first in-person Monthly Membership Luncheon since the spring.

Featuring an array of new event protocols and procedures as well as guest speaker Neal Fried, an experienced economist with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the luncheon was a success in more ways than one: Fried gave attendees a valuable and context-rich look of the current state of Anchorage’s economy, and the rest of the event offered a firsthand look at how businesses and meeting venues can host safe, COVID-conscious gatherings going forward.

**Layout:** Private tables spaced widely gave luncheon attendees plenty of room to enjoy lunch and follow the presentation while keeping a safe physical distance from other guests.

**Lunch:** Individual table service preserved food safety and sanitation measures, ensuring guests could dine with comfort and security.

**Flow:** From first approach to final goodbyes, check-in to member announcements, convention center and Visit Anchorage staff reworked the luncheon flow to meet all the latest public health and guest safety requirements.

Review Fried’s presentation – as well as recent member webinars – at [Anchorage.net/members](https://www.visitanchorage.net/members).

*Photo: Attendees gather at the Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center for the July Monthly Membership Luncheon, featuring a presentation by economist Neal Fried. Lilly Kelly / Visit Anchorage*

## STAYING SAFE AND HEALTHY

When it comes to keeping Anchorage healthy and open for business, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services has an important reminder: Wash your hands, every single day, thoroughly and often. Use soap and warm water, and wash for at least 20 seconds any time you touch items others might have. This includes:

- When entering buildings
- After using elevators or stairwells
- After using the restroom
- Before eating

Cough, sneeze, or blow your nose? Scrub and wash your hands. And remember: Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

The DHSS also recommends practicing physical distancing, which means keeping at least 6 feet away from non-household members whenever possible. Need a reference for what 6 feet looks like? Think about the length of a 200-pound halibut, or a fully grown grizzly bear.

Finally, remember to wear a mask in public places — health authorities say it’s one of the most effective ways to keep everyone safe and well.





## MEETINGS UPDATE

With large gatherings temporarily on hold, Visit Anchorage’s Convention and Meetings sales team is staying busy preparing for the day when in-person events can fully resume.

Ongoing conversations, a series of webinars, and panel discussions deliver valuable updates to partners in key areas – from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle to Denver, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Indianapolis, Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, Nashville, Lexington, Raleigh/Durham, Philadelphia, and beyond.

Earlier this fall, Visit Anchorage meeting staff attended Cvent Connect, an educational virtual event with more than 30,000 attendees. At Connect Marketplace – a gathering of approximately 5,000 suppliers and planners scheduled to take place in Las Vegas in October – staff will have individual appointments with approximately 120 meeting and event planners from the Association and Specialty (incentive) markets.

By ensuring meeting planners have all the latest public health information, community safety facts, and venue operating details, the Visit Anchorage meetings team is cultivating the guest confidence necessary to catalyze gatherings in Anchorage as soon as it’s possible to do so again.

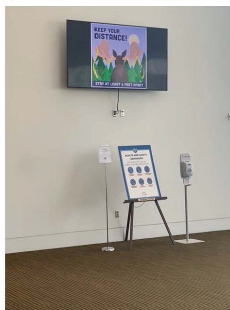
In the meantime, our convention centers are also preparing for the future. ASM Global, the convention centers’ management company, has created VenueShield, a program that provides the highest levels of cleanliness and safety, with protocols that deliver advance hygienic safeguards for clients and visitors.



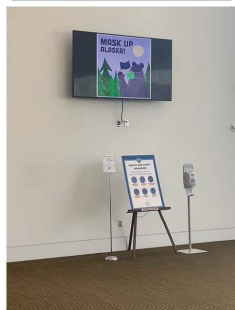
Foam Boards on each Level



2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Landing Monitor



2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Landing Monitor



2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Landing Monitor

## TRAVEL TRADE UPDATE

The Visit Anchorage sales team remains busy preparing to meet trade virtually for a run of (now virtual) trade shows scheduled to take place throughout the balance of the year.

Our ongoing work with Anchorage visitors and Visit Anchorage members has uniquely prepared us to answer travel trade questions about Alaska offerings in 2020 and looking forward to 2021.

At this year’s recent American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) virtual gathering, demand for appointments with travel trade has quadrupled and requests for destination training across the country create optimism for the coming seasons. “Alaska land travel will be in high demand,” our travel trade contacts tell us repeatedly.

If your business has created “COVID-resilient” products that you will be offering in the weeks and months to come, please share the details and any images with the Visit Anchorage sales department to share with our domestic buyers.

The sales department’s third and fourth quarter schedules include travel trade events and meeting planner programs to re-market Anchorage as a destination of choice for future visitors and delegates: AMC, ASAE, MPI, PCMA, Smart Meetings, ASTA, Go West, NTA, USTOA, Connect, SpinCon, Site, AFN, GTM and GTM West, and more.

National travel sentiment surveys show that domestic travelers are looking for natural destinations, national parks, fly/drive itineraries, and family-friendly communities that have safety protocols in place. Anchorage offers all those amenities in spades, and we’re ready to keep sharing the good news.





## SEYMOUR AWARD NOMINEES

### All-Alaskan Award

This award recognizes a member — individual or business — with longevity, a sense of community and stewardship, and a legacy of self-sufficiency.

- Chris von Imhof
- Jose Martignon / Pangea Restaurant
- Kirk Hoessle / Alaska Wildland Adventures
- Midnight Sun Brewery
- Premier Alaska Tours

### Contribution to the Community

Previously known as the Community Organization Award, this award recognizes a member or non-member business or individual who is a supporter of the visitor industry and/or elevates its public profile.

- Alaska Public Lands Information Center
- Anchorage Fur Rendezvous
- Chef Patrick Hoogerhyde / The Bridge Restaurant
- Jacob Lyon
- Shawn Idom / Hair Science

### Member Contribution to Visit Anchorage

This award recognizes a member business or person for in-kind or financial sponsorship, volunteer spirit and/or staff support, and participation in Visit Anchorage projects and events

- Alpine Air Alaska
- Premier Alaska Tours

### Member of the Year

This award recognizes a member business with an outstanding recent contribution and/or body of work and contributions over a period of time

- Holland America Princess / Premier Alaska Tours / Alaska Railroad (nominated as a team)
- Matt Worden / Go Hike Alaska
- Salmon Berry Travel & Tours

### Sustainable Action Award

This award recognizes a member business or individual undertaking significant and measurable work to reduce the scale and impacts of climate change in Alaska — through policy changes, innovative technologies, or encouraging behavior changes in guests and staff.

- Di Whitney
- Tom Tougas / Major Marine Tours & Harbor 360 Hotel

### Visitor Industry Advancement Award

This award recognizes a member business or person for innovation, new business and/or investment, industry advocacy of relevant issues, development of new products/markets, and involvement in developing educational opportunities, scholarships, and relevant issues to attract potential new businesses to the industry.

- Alaska Native Heritage Center
- Go Hike Alaska
- Hyatt Place Anchorage

## STAY AND PLAY SUMMER WRAP-UP

When the spreading coronavirus pandemic cancelled cruises and upended Alaska's busy summer tourism season, Visit Anchorage pivoted local marketing efforts to focus on a different audience: Alaskan travelers planning last-minute staycations and alternative adventures in their own backyard.

With a renewed emphasis on community health, traveler wellbeing, and the great outdoors, the summer Stay and Play campaign reached thousands of Alaskans with special offers, itinerary inspiration, and insider tips designed to help in-state travelers make the most of an unprecedented summer.

From June – August, a targeted email campaign reached nearly 1,000 Alaskans with member deals and community events, generating an above-average open rate of nearly 34 percent. Ads running on social media platforms, the Anchorage Daily News, and other digital platforms reached tens of thousands of additional Alaskans.

By the time summer drew to a close, we generated millions of ad impressions through the ad campaign – over 3.2 million.



## WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

Get to know these new members; they could be your next business partners!

- [Alamo Car Rental](#)
- [Alaska Destinations and Adventures, LLC](#)
- [Emerald Air Service](#)
- [National Car Rental](#)
- [Royal Caribbean Group](#)
- [TOTE Alaska](#)
- [Vortex VR](#)

## FROM OUR BLOG

Need some inspiration for new things to do this fall or thinking about sights to see on a road trip? Check out Visit Anchorage's blog that highlights a variety of topics from the best blueberry spots to road trip ideas. Head on over to [Anchorage.net/blog/](https://Anchorage.net/blog/) to fuel your next Anchorage adventure.

## BERRY PICKING IN ANCHORAGE

Wild berries abound in Anchorage. Look for tart crimson cranberries, plump bright blueberries, juicy raspberries, cloudberries, currants, salmonberries, and more — they flourish on Chugach mountainsides, in overgrown city parks, and along winding trails at the edges of the city.

A subsistence staple and popular part of traditional Alaska cuisine, most berry varieties are ready for harvest in the late summer and early fall. Consult a qualified guide for help identifying edible types: The [University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service](#) offers several guides and educational publications.



## Find Anchorage's Best Berry Patches

## ANCHORAGE AMONG TOP 10 SMALL CITIES NATIONWIDE: REPORT

Anchorage is on the rise — now listed as number six in a nationwide ranking of America's Best Small Cities.

The annual report, compiled by Resonance Consultancy, ranks small cities (those with populations between 100,000-500,000 people) based on half a dozen factors ranging from sense of place to economy, infrastructure, and institutions. In 2019, Anchorage landed in the number 16 spot. This year, the city's natural splendor, wide-open spaces, and connectivity catapulted it squarely into the top 10.

It's in good company: Topped only by Asheville, NC, Savannah, GA, Santa Fe, NM, Naples, FL, and Reno, NV, Anchorage beats destinations like Boulder, CO, Santa Cruz, CA, and Myrtle Beach, SC.

"The most remote entry on our list is hardly off the beaten path," Resonance reports. "Anchorage is ... a destination for nature-lovers, art buffs, beer enthusiasts and folk who like their urban experience with a dash of the rustic, capped off on a clear day by views of North America's tallest peaks."

[Click here to read the full report.](#)







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