

Candidate name

George Martinez

1. Describe your previous experience with Alaska tourism. Do you have any prior employment in the industry?

In 2014, I founded the Anchorage Artist Coop and forged partnerships with local businesses, ADP, the MOA, and local artists to create placemaking opportunities that enhance destination tourism. We activated empty downtown storefronts, Town Square Park, Easy Park structures, and trash can art. Today the school district is involved with producing the art on the trash cans which has become a popular feature of downtown for visitors and our families alike. The more opportunities the people of Anchorage have to connect, enjoy and celebrate our city, the more our visitors will love it.

During my time in the Mayor's office, I continued this work and regularly convened stakeholders towards finding strategic opportunities to support the industry and our operators. I created an initiative aimed at keeping visitors here 5 hours longer and going 3 miles further from the downtown hotels, which will spread more money around to small businesses in multiple commercial corridors. As a result of this concept, the Welcoming Anchorage Downtown Art Walk was created. I also spearheaded the Downtown Design District's mayoral designation, which is the home of the SEED Lab.

In 2017, the Mayor and the UAA Chancellor signed a 5-year integration agreement which wrote me in the agreement as the MOA point of action. One of the focus areas is increasing UAA's downtown presence to enhance the tourist experience while connecting UAA sports and alumni with downtown bars and restaurants. I also facilitated the declaration of Anchorage as a Play Ball City by the US Conference of Mayor's which led to discussions of bringing MLB (minor league baseball) to Anchorage during the summer.

I was also appointed to the proto-board for Make Anchorage, which would add value to the destination experience of the city and help attract the independent tourist by amplifying the arts and culture sector. This would support enhancing the Alaskan Native cultural experience for visitors and grow our seasonal festivals like Rondy (Mushing District), Solstices, and more.

Before living in Alaska, I owned and operated a cultural tourism business in Central America for seven years.

2. Visit Anchorage ensures our community remains top-of-mind with visitors, meeting planners, and travel trade professionals. The work distinguishes our destination in a crowded, competitive landscape. Do you support Visit Anchorage's mission? Please explain your position.

Yes! Enhancing destination Anchorage to drive tourism is a priority to me and I will work to strengthen Visit Anchorage's ability to promote and draw people to Anchorage by listening, championing, cheerleading, and convening to ensure alignment with the mission of Visit Anchorage.

3. Anchorage's 12% room tax supports municipal services in three ways: one-third goes to the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) general fund; one-third goes to support operations and pay the bond debt for the Anchorage Convention Centers; and one-third goes to the MOA's destination marketing contract (currently held by Visit Anchorage). Do you support the current three-way allocation of Anchorage room tax revenues? Please explain your position.

Yes, however, excluding the impact of lost tax revenue from the 2020 season we were ahead of the bond debt repayment schedule for the convention center, which portends the opportunity to revisit the ⅓ currently dedicated to that.

4. In Anchorage, the visitor economy is already a significant contributor. Prior to COVID, the industry generated \$297 million in visitor-related spending and \$38 million in municipal hotel and rental car taxes. In addition to the taxes paid by visitors, tourism created one in nine jobs locally. Do you support additional taxes levied on the tourism industry and/or customers? If yes, please explain the type of taxes you believe would be most appropriate, and also how you believe those funds would be spent. If no, please explain your position.

I do not support any additional taxes levied against the industry and/ or customers at this point in time. However, I do have an innovative approach to increasing the level of visitors using public transportation - People Mover- which we can leverage into the annual federal funding formula.

I am open to working with the industry and community to explore future possibilities.

5. COVID has fundamentally affected leisure and convention travel, and a complete recovery may be several years away. How would you work to aid local businesses and individuals – particularly those reliant on tourism and travel – so that they can survive and flourish?

- Listen to the industry as partners. I am fully committed to destination Anchorage and working with the industry to direct federal aid and other resources to support local businesses and the most vulnerable individuals of the tourism and hospitality sector, with a specific focus on providing equipment and guidance to helping those businesses stay open and working.
- Help local businesses survive through digital adaptation and value-added growth opportunities.
- Reduce barriers and red-tape for necessary modifications to keep businesses open and in Anchorage.
- Additionally, I will focus on infrastructure development to create good-paying jobs immediately while enhancing destination tourism.
- I believe that we can begin bouncing back by the coming winter season and into the summer of 2022.
- Support year-round world-class arts, music, and cultural festivals and gatherings.

- Bring professional and other high-level sports/ activities to Anchorage during the off-seasons.

6. Do you have priorities that would make the municipality a more travel-friendly destination? If yes, please provide details.

Deploying strategies that will allow Anchorage visitors to stay longer and explore further.

- If we love Anchorage, they'll love it too.
- Expanding Alaskan Native place naming and placemaking.
- Strengthening tourism and hospitality sectors.
- A vibrant, safe, clean, colorful, and cultural downtown.
- Refocus on pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle safety.
- Enhance seasonal public transportation strategies to strengthen our federal funding formula.
- Foster culturally relevant placemaking and strengthen the arts and culture sectors to enhance the visitor experience while creating jobs for local artists.
- Expand public art mapping programs to leverage municipal art assets in new ways.
- Anchorage is a leader in inclusive playgrounds. It is essential to continue investing in parks and trails and prioritize public-private partnerships for maintenance and security.

7. What do you see as the mayor's role in Anchorage's visitor industry, destination marketing, and community development?

The Mayor can play a vital role in supporting the visitor industry. Enhancing destination Anchorage to drive tourism is a priority to me. I will work to strengthen our ability to promote and draw people to Anchorage by listening, championing, cheerleading, and convening to ensure alignment.

I will help our city put its best foot forward through strategic investments in infrastructure and culturally relevant placemaking.

8. What are your overall priorities for the municipality?

- 1) Toning down the toxic partisanship to bringing people together to move Anchorage forward.
- 2) Growing our economy through tourism, infrastructure, and innovation.
- 3) Opening Anchorage for business, critical infrastructure
- 4) Ending homelessness as we know it
- 5) SAFER: a safe anchorage for every resident
- 6) Improving destination anchorage - stay longer, go further
- 7) Early childhood and after school programs to help us reopen faster
- 8) Raising graduation rates and prepare the workforce we need

9) Raising Anchorage's global profile

9. What do you see as the greatest threat to Anchorage's future success? What about the greatest opportunity for the community?

Greatest threats: Natural disasters, toxic partisanship, and political leaders without the lived experience to bring people together to get things done.

The nature of the recovery we are facing gives our city a real opportunity to jump forward into new opportunities - with an inclusive vision of enhancing destination Anchorage that will help Anchorage, rebuild and rebound, stronger, better prepared and more prosperous.

16 month wish - The 1st MLB (Minor League) game in Alaska in summer of 2022 and getting Anchorage listed on the world map of creative cities.

10. Would you be interested in a follow-up meeting with Visit Anchorage?

Yes.