

To: Joan O’Keefe, United Human Services of Southeast Alaska, Inc.
From: McKinley Research Group
Date: November 10, 2021
Re: Teal Street Center Project Benefits, Select Topics

The Teal Street Center in Juneau, Alaska, is envisioned as a welcoming and accessible one-stop social services hub for Southeast Alaska agencies and the people they serve. The campus will house nine currently disparate tenant agencies and will provide itinerant space for an additional five agencies, as well as flexible shared space.¹

This memo addresses anticipated benefits of the Center, with a focus on client demographics (notably income status and race), COVID-19 mitigation, and regional reach. The memo also shares tenant agency expectations for how the Teal Street Center will benefit their clients and improve their agencies’ effectiveness and efficiency.

Table 1. Teal Street Center Agencies

Tenant Agencies	Itinerant Agencies
Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL)	Bartlett Regional Hospital Behavioral Health
Alaska Legal Services Corp.	Four As: Alaskan Aids Assistance Association
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Juneau	SEARHC Front St. Clinic
Disability Law Center of Alaska	SERRC: Alaska’s Educational Service Agency
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, AK Dept. of Labor
Cancer Connection	
Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska	
United Human Services of Southeast Alaska	
United Way of Southeast Alaska	

Income Status of Clients

Tenant agencies provide an essential safety net for many low-income individuals and families in Juneau and Southeast Alaska. One agency (Alaska Legal Services Corp.) uses income as an

¹ This memo is updated from an October 2021 version to reflect the addition of Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA), which has since signed on as a tenant agency of Teal Street Center with a three-year commitment. CCTHITA data and comments have not been incorporated into this analysis.



eligibility criterion, and three others track income status of their clients. Three agencies report that more than 70% of their clients are low-income, while another deems about 30% low-income.

The number of Southeast Alaska clients who received direct services from these agencies in 2019 and 2020, along with the percentage deemed low-income, is shown in Table 2. While numbers served varied significantly between 2019 and 2020, clients' low-income status did not, and is reported as an aggregate for simplicity. Note that different agencies use different indicators for income status.

Table 2. Income Status of Teal Street Center Clientele, Southeast Alaska 2019 & 2020

Agency	Total # Served 2019	Total # Served 2020	% Low-income 2019-2020	Indicator Used	Notes
Southeast Alaska Independent Living	2,916	3,294	80%	\$30,000 annual income or less	Income is self-reported
Front St. Clinic/SEARHC	219 patients, 1,113 visits	494 patients, 2,792 visits	70%	≤200% poverty (\$32,180 for individual)	
Alaska Legal Services Corp.	171	295	100%	≤200% or lower (\$32,180 for individual)	75% of clients are below 125% poverty
Big Brothers Big Sisters	103	75	31%	Income assistance or subsidized lunch	# served = youth matched with a "Big"

Note: The 2021 federal poverty guideline for Alaska is \$16,090 for an individual and \$33,130 for a family of four.

Other Teal Street tenants describe significant financial vulnerability and need among clientele:

- **Disability Law Center** administers the Benefits Advocacy Program in Juneau to help individuals apply for Social Security disability benefits. Providers observed that many individuals who were likely eligible did not receive benefits because their applications were incomplete or unsupported. In their experience, "vulnerable residents with disabilities who lack a regular income are more likely to struggle with the laborious and complicated application process." Lack of benefits can make it more difficult for clients to stabilize their lives. The program helped 63 clients in 2019 and 71 clients in 2020.
- **NAMI Juneau**, which also houses the Juneau Suicide Prevention Council, focuses on meeting needs of people in crisis or with acute mental health needs, and does not charge clients or require paperwork. Due to the impact of mental illness, a significant number of those served are presumed to be low-income. Many lack stable housing and employment but lack financial benefits due to struggles with application processes.
- **Cancer Connection** provides education and support, including financial support, for Southeast Alaska residents who have a cancer diagnosis. National studies show almost

half of cancer patients drain their life savings within two years of diagnosis, and cancer patients are 2.65 times as likely as the average American to declare bankruptcy.

Many providers noted that low-income individuals and families have fewer resources for transportation. With multiple agencies in one readily accessible location, **Teal Street Center will make services easier to reach for low-income Alaskans** who receive or could benefit from services. In addition, reduced overhead costs and improved cross-agency collaboration will **help agencies do more with their limited time and dollars** to address the needs of low-income and financially vulnerable residents in Juneau and Southeast Alaska.

Client Race and Ethnicity

Teal Street Center agencies reach underserved or traditionally marginalized populations, particularly Alaska Native/American Indian residents. Table 3 shows the race/ethnicity, to the extent known, of Teal Street Center clientele, and corresponding demographics for each group in the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ).

Table 3. Racial/Ethnic Demographics of Teal Street Center Clientele (%), 2019-2020

Agency	AK Native/ American Indian	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	White	Two or more races	Unknown
SAIL	35%	3%	1%	2%	52%	6%	1%
BBBS	55%	0	3%	0	34%	8%	0
ALSC	39%	4%	1%	4%	44%	4%	4%
DLC	42%	2%	6%	3%	43%	2%	1%
CBJ	12%	8%	3%	7%	64%	10%	0

COVID Impacts and Project Responsiveness

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted human services agencies and their clients. In addition to the virus itself, individuals and families who were already struggling have faced compounding problems such as job losses, loss of child care and in-person supports, and social isolation. Agencies had to reimagine operations almost instantly to accommodate social distancing and safety while meeting increased community need. This section describes how the COVID pandemic has impacted Teal Street Center agencies, and how plans for the Center address and mitigate risks associated with COVID and other airborne viruses.

COVID IMPACTS

Teal Street tenant agencies report significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on both operations and client and community needs. As the table below shows, several agencies, including those that serve large numbers of clients, reported significantly increased need. Other agencies were not able to serve as many people as a result of the pandemic.

- Front Street Clinic, which serves primarily unhoused individuals on a walk-in basis, saw a sharp rise in the number of patients and total number of visits, both more than doubling from 2019 to 2020.
- Alaska Legal Services saw an increase of 65% in the number of Juneau clients, and a 73% increase in the number of clients across Southeast Alaska over that period.
- Southeast Alaska Independent Living saw 13% growth, or an increase of 378 additional individuals served, and the Disability Law Center reported an 11% increase in cases.
- Cancer Connection served close to the same number of individuals in 2020 as 2019, but reached fewer people through its education programs.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters supported 27% fewer “matches” in 2020 than 2019 due to the pandemic’s impacts on social interaction.

Table 4. Change in Numbers Served, 2019 to 2020

Agency	Total # Served 2019	Total # Served 2020	% Low-income 2019-2020
Front St. Clinic/SEARHC	219 patients 1,113 visits	494 patients 2,792 visits	+126% patients +151% visits
Alaska Legal Services Corp.	171	295	+73%
Southeast Alaska Independent Living	2,916	3,294	+13%
Disability Law Center	72	80	+11%
Cancer Connection	98 direct service Approx. 650 education	96 direct service Approx. 450 education	-2% direct service -30% education
Big Brothers Big Sisters	103	75	-27%

Interviews with agency staff provided further insight into the pandemic’s impacts. Staff described changes to program delivery and operations, and increases in client need.

- **NAMI Juneau’s** support groups and educational programs were shifted online. “The upside was that people elsewhere in Southeast Alaska were able to attend. The downside is that many of the people who would normally attend groups and presentations were ‘zoomed out’ and less willing to engage.”
- **Big Brothers Big Sisters** shifted all its programs to virtual format. Staff observed that families in the program needed extra support and referrals due to the stressors of the pandemic.
- **Cancer Connection** reported that fewer clients attended support groups and yoga classes due to discomfort with an online format. Fewer clients came to the office for in-person support.

- **Alaska Legal Services** reported that overall caseloads grew by 73% in 2020 compared to 2019. A doubling of housing cases during that period helped drive that increase. ASLC also saw an increase in the number of cases relating to public benefits, debt, consumer finance, and bankruptcy.
- **SAIL** reported increased need for services, difficulty meeting client needs, and worsening provider shortages. Non-living wages, the state's fiscal problems, and a challenging work environment have put providers in short supply, staff said. "COVID exacerbated that and added health risk. The provider shortage is now at crisis level."
- **Disability Law Center** staff reported that case management, intake, and all other services shifted to phone and mail, which can impact application submittal timelines. DLC also stopped in-person monitoring of facilities due to the pandemic and implemented a virtual monitoring protocol on several reviews. "While better than nothing, it does not measure up to the adequacy of an in-person review," staff noted.

PROJECT RESPONSIVENESS TO COVID

Most buildings were not designed with the threat of an airborne virus in mind. Regardless of how long COVID-19 persists as a threat, there is new awareness of airborne pathogens as a critical element to consider in building design. Teal Street Center offers the opportunity to create from scratch a building designed to mitigate COVID-19 transmission risk, as well as transmission of similar pathogens.

Designed by local architects Sherri von Wolfe and Travis Miller of atelier corbeau, the building is conceived with the health and wellbeing of its occupants and visitors at its core. "This building will be fully accessible, and will be a place of dignity," von Wolfe explained. COVID-responsive design is compatible and consistent with creating a space that is light, airy, accessible, and safe.

The design follows indoor air quality practices recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which states: "CDC recommends a layered approach to reduce exposures to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. This approach includes using multiple mitigation strategies, including improvements to building ventilation, to reduce the spread of disease and lower the risk of exposure."

Key Teal Street Center facility COVID-19 mitigation strategies are described below.

- **Central core design** calls for offices and meeting rooms around the perimeter and a large open staircase in the middle.
 - Design avoids narrow hallways where close contact can occur.
 - All offices and meeting rooms have direct access to fresh air and light.
- **Air circulation and filtration** systems are designed to mitigate risk.

- Discrete units supply outside air to each space rather than recirculating air through an HVAC system.
- High-density filter traps particulates such as virus particles – plans anticipate a MERV 13 system in accordance with EPA and CDC recommendations.
- Plans include a small **park or garden** area to the south of the building.
 - In addition to supporting the mental and physical wellbeing of occupants, welcoming outdoor spaces offer Covid-safe opportunities, weather permitting, for small groups to gather for conversation, collaboration, lunch breaks, etc.

Tenant Agency Anticipated Benefits

Tenant agency contacts interviewed for this report described how they anticipate Teal Street Center will benefit their clients and improve their effectiveness. The following quotes, lightly edited for clarity, reflect a range of expected benefits, chief among them increased **operational efficiency**, more seamless **referral coordination**, a **safer and more welcoming and accessible facility**, and **financial savings**.

“The **conference room will give us a ‘home base’** instead of constantly begging for space in other buildings for our weekly classes, weekly support groups, monthly coalition meetings, etc. Once these meetings are in our building it **will allow attendees to access our other resources** (such as books, flyers, brochures) that we do not carry from borrowed space to borrowed space. Additionally, sharing a building with other non-profits will facilitate referrals between the entities, as well as the Glory Hall next door.” -NAMI Juneau

“The space will be more welcoming than our current space – it’s a safe physical space, and there’s free parking. The Teal Street Center offers an inviting entrance to the building and the set-up will greatly **improve customer service and provide staff safety**. We’ll have better opportunities to collaborate, refer for resources, and recruit volunteers and participants.” -Big Brothers Big Sisters

“Cancer Connection is a small grass roots agency and has moved the office multiple times over the years due to the need for low rent. Teal Street will give us a permanent home, with **low rent, adequate client parking, and meeting and storage space. We’ll be more accessible and user friendly** to current and future clients by being co-located with several human service agencies in the Teal Street Center.” -Cancer Connection

“Alaska Legal Services partners closely with other agencies, including Disability Law, JAMHI, Front Street Clinic (SEARHC), SAIL, and others. Having all these facilities in one shared space will **shorten referral time and allow for enhanced, wrap-around services** for clients in need.” -Alaska Legal Services Corporation

“For many we serve, whether due to a disability of a moment of personal crisis or other issue, scheduling an appointment in the future simply isn’t effective when they are present, in your office, and ready to work on the task they asking for help with. ... Teal Street will provide a **seamless connection with other providers**. For example, if someone needs help with disability benefits, they can do directly to Alaska Legal Services in the same facility.” -Southeast Alaska Independent Living

“It is very challenging for many of our clients to navigate transportation, particularly in inclement weather. A centralized service center will mitigate that barrier and improve referral coordination between agencies, which in essence is **closing the gaps in the social service safety net**. And the use of **shared resources will allow us to redirect overhead dollars to outreach and service dollars**.” -Disability Law Center

Regional Context and Significance of Teal Street Center

Juneau serves as a social services hub for the Southeast Alaska region, and Teal Street Center tenant agencies likewise have regional reach. In addition to serving clients who travel to Juneau for services, some Teal Street Center agencies visit other communities or have staff located outside Juneau to better serve people in outlying communities.

Juneau, the largest community in Southeast Alaska and the state capital, serves as a hub for the 35 towns and villages in the region. With an estimated population of 31,974, Juneau is home to about 44% of the region’s 71,946 inhabitants (2019 estimates). Southeast Alaska is the traditional homelands of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples. Approximately 20% of current Southeast residents are Alaska Native, and the region is home to 20 federally recognized tribes, 13 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act village corporations, and one regional corporation, headquartered in Juneau.

The region is about 500 miles long and occupies an area of 35,138 square miles, roughly the size of Indiana. Sparsely populated and



Figure 2. Map of Alaska



Figure 1. Map of Southeast Alaska

geographically isolated, Southeast Alaska is comprised largely of islands, and the mainland portion is separated from Canada by the steep glaciated mountains of the Coast Range.

With the exception of Haines and Skagway at the northern end of the Southeast panhandle, the region’s communities are not accessible by road to other communities, though are linked to each other by a network of state-run ferries and air services. Juneau is the transportation hub for the region, with the most direct flights out of the region, and the most ferry and barge sailings.

Juneau is significantly bigger than the next-largest communities: Ketchikan (population 8,228 in 2019), Sitka (population 8,640 in 2019), and Petersburg (population 3,221 in 2019). Only nine communities in the region have a population of 1,000 or greater. Juneau is home to the region’s largest hospital and largest university campus, and amenities such as a downhill ski area and skating arena. People throughout the region come to Juneau to shop at big-box stores like Costco and Home Depot, to receive health care unavailable in outlying communities, for education and training opportunities, and to participate in social and recreational activities, such as basketball tournaments and cultural festivals.

Due to the small number of people spread over a large geographic area, most communities simply cannot provide the breadth of services available in Juneau. Teal Street Center tenant agencies support and serve the region’s needs; as such, the benefits of the Teal Street Center will extend throughout Southeast Alaska. Table 5 shows, for agencies that collect this data, the number and percentage of clients who do not reside in Juneau who were served in 2019 and 2020.

Table 5. Regional Reach, Teal Street Center Agencies, 2019-2020

Agency	# Served Juneau	# Served Southeast, Non-Juneau	% Served Outside Juneau
Southeast Alaska Independent Living	2,377	3,833	62%
Alaska Legal Services Corp.	236	230	49%
Big Brothers Big Sisters	114	64	36%
Disability Law Center – legal clients only	6	12	67%
Disability Law Center – Juneau benefits pilot	140	0	0