

THOMPSON CENTER TRACKS



Tracking the Progress of the **Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center**

Congressman Young Secures \$2.5 Million; Project on Track for 2006 Groundbreaking

Federal funding secured by Congressman Don Young will help address one of the problems facing Fairbanks' current log cabin visitor center – lack of dedicated parking.

Young indicated that he wanted to do what he could to support the project, a legacy to his friend Morris Thompson. At his request, the recently-approved federal transportation bill included \$2.5 million to design and construct the parking lots and utilities systems for the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center. Plans call for approximately 100 parking spaces, including dedicated spaces for RVs, school busses and motor coaches.

The new facilities will make a more welcoming first impression. With convenient parking and easy access to the future Center, visitors will have more time to spend learning about all that Interior Alaska has to offer. All this will help further one of the Center's key goals – to encourage visitors to spend more time in Fairbanks and Interior Alaska and to give them ideas for return trips.

With more than \$19 million in federal, state, and private dollars now secured toward the \$26 million project goal, planners hope to break ground in spring 2006.

“The recent federal support will allow us to stay on schedule,” says Cindy Schumaker, Project Director, “But our work is certainly not over. We still need \$7 million in State and private funds to complete the project.”

Center Acquires Land, Historic Cabin

Project partners are making significant progress on securing land along the Chena River at the preferred building site, a major task that needs to be completed prior to groundbreaking.

The most recent acquisition is a historic log cabin built in 1910 and located on the corner of Dunkel and Clay Streets. While most of the buildings on the site will be demolished to make way for the new structure, the Center plans to rehabilitate the old cabin and use it as an outdoor exhibit to celebrate life in turn-of-the-century Fairbanks. The Center also plans to nominate the cabin for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

With the purchase of the cabin, the Center has secured more than 75% of the land on the preferred site, with the lands being held by the City of Fairbanks, a key partner in the project. The Fairbanks City Council recently unanimously approved a land swap that helps clear the way for acquiring another parcel, and negotiations on the remaining land on the site continue.

Alaska Airlines Helps Private Donations Soar Past \$1 Million at Gathering of Anchorage Friends

On the evening of October 5, more than 70 friends of Morris Thompson's gathered to raise funds for the new facility that will bear his name, pushing the total for private donations to the Center to \$1.3 million.

Bill MacKay, Alaska Airlines Senior Vice President and a close friend of Morris Thompson's, announced a \$300,000 pledge from Alaska Airlines – the single largest gift the company has ever made. First National Bank Alaska also joined the growing list of Center supporters with a \$10,000 gift. Individual donations ranging from \$100 to \$1,000 brought the evening's total to \$330,000.

The reception was held at the Anchorage home of Al and Diane Adams and co-hosted by Al Adams, Sam Kito, Byron Mallott and Carl Marrs, all members of the Center's Leadership Team.

“The Morris Thompson Center is good for Alaska and for Fairbanks. It demonstrates how great things can happen when we all work together,” said event host Al Adams. “My wife and I wanted to do something to get people talking about this project around the state. It was a great night, and we need to keep the momentum and continue raising funds to meet our goal.”

TCC Seeks Cultural Program Planner

As plans for the building and exhibits take shape, project partner Tanana Chiefs Conference is looking for someone to develop the cultural programs for the

future Center. This new staff position will focus on ensuring that the Center serves as a bridge between communities and a gathering place where people come together to understand, to appreciate and to respect other cultures.

“We want to have a program that includes Alaska Native singing and dancing, classes on traditional ways of smoking salmon, and an avenue for elders to share their stories and wisdom,” said TCC communication director Charlene Ostbloom. “We need someone who can make that happen, from developing programs to staffing them and ensuring we can pay for them in the long run.”

The cultural programs planner will seek input from Doyon, Fairbanks Native Association, the Alaska Native Heritage Center, village councils and other organizations. TCC is looking for someone with in-depth knowledge and appreciation for Alaska Native cultures, languages and history and demonstrated ability in strategic planning. For a complete job description, call the TCC Human Resources office at 452-8251 x3259 or send an email to michelle.andon@tananachiefs.org.



Leadership team members and representatives from Alaska Airlines celebrate the company's \$300,000 gift to the center. Pictured (left to right): Byron Mallott, Alaska Airlines Public Affairs Director Susan Bramstedt, Al Adams and Alaska Airlines Senior VP Bill MacKay.



Left: This historic 1910 cabin on the preferred site will be preserved as part of the Center's outdoor exhibits. Right: At the October 5 reception, First National Bank Alaska's Betsy Lawer and event hostess Diane Adams reminisced about dinner parties they attended with Morris and Thelma Thompson.



Did you know...

...that the Center's partners have selected a Board of Directors for the newly-incorporated 501(c)3 non-profit organization? The nine-member board includes three Fairbanks Convention & Visitors Bureau appointees, three Tanana Chiefs Conference appointees, two National Park Service appointees and one appointee representing the family of Morris Thompson.

President: Deb Hickok
FCVB President & CEO

Vice President: Charlene Ostbloom
TCC Communications Director

Treasurer: Robin Renfroe
TCC Chief Administrative Officer

Secretary: Don Pendergrast
Alaska Public Lands Information Center Director

Matt Atkinson
Northern Alaska Tour Company Marketing Coordinator

Nicole Jordan
Morris Thompson's Daughter

David Mills
National Park Service Superintendent

Debbie Tilsworth
Alaska Riverways Executive Vice President



Morris Thompson Center Board Members (left to right): Debbie Tilsworth, Nicole Jordan, Deb Hickok, Charlene Ostbloom, Don Pendergrast and Robin Renfroe. Not pictured: Matt Atkinson and David Mills.

Thompson Center Tracks is a publication to update friends and supporters on the progress of the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. For more information, contact Cindy Schumaker at 907.459.3880 or thompson.center@tananachiefs.org.



M O R R I S T H O M P S O N
CULTURAL AND VISITORS CENTER

Tanana Chiefs Conference
122 First Avenue, Suite 600
Fairbanks, AK 99701

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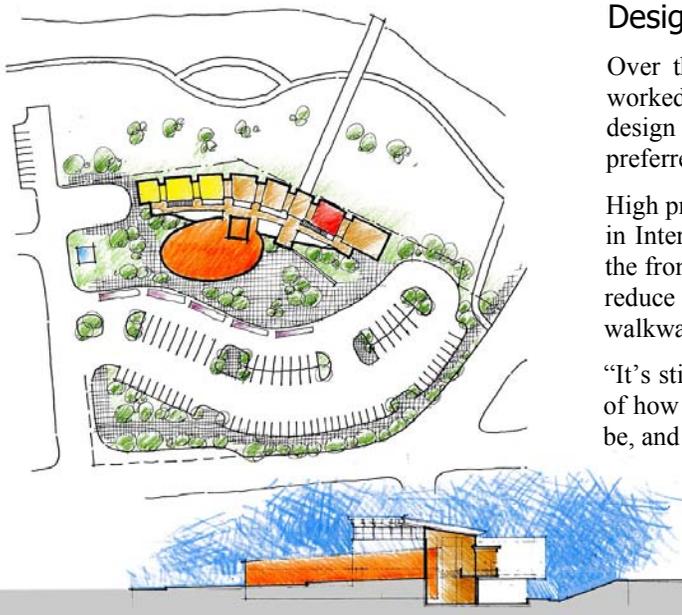
Design Concept Selected

Over the past two months, project planners and community advisors have worked with architect Charles Bettisworth and Company, Inc. to develop the design of the new Center. On September 29, participants selected their preferred design concept (shown at left.)

High priority was placed on creating a warm, friendly building that reflects life in Interior Alaska, using natural materials such as wood and stone to capture the frontier spirit and strategically placed windows to bring in natural light and reduce electricity costs. Outside, planners envision a park-like setting with walkways and landscaping that complement the riverside location.

"It's still a work in progress," said Bettisworth, "but this gives us a good idea of how the building should relate to the park and river, where the parking will be, and how the spaces within the building will flow together."

Charles Bettisworth and Company will continue refining the design and present a 3-D study model to the board in the coming month.



Images courtesy Charles Bettisworth and Company, Inc.