



Aspen Suites Hotel – Juneau
8400 Airport Blvd.
Juneau, AK 99801
P: 907.550.7700 F: 907.500.7733
Juneau@AspenHotelsAK.com

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TO: Juneau Assembly Members
FR: Aspen Suites Hotel Juneau

Dear Visitor Industry Task Force:

There is a lot of dialogue in Juneau about the tourism industry: if it's too big, if it's good for residents, should we limit it and unfortunately, if it is it even right for Juneau.

The Juneau Aspen Suites Hotel probably doesn't seem like an obvious cruise/tourism business as most of our customers are independent travelers (visitors that don't book a cruise package and travel the state by making their own booking decisions), business travelers, or local Alaskans – but almost 1/3 of all cruise ship customers who have been on a cruise come back to Alaska on their own to experience the beauty, cultural diversity and wonder of Alaska. A healthy and vibrant cruise industry is very important to us as these are our guests.

We have had two hotels in Mendenhall Valley. We sold the first Aspen Hotel to Extended Stay of America. But we love Juneau and wanted to build again. We opened our 2nd Aspen Hotel 7 years ago. We employ about 20 year-round Juneau residents. That might not sound like a lot, but we also support school athletics, the arts, give countless complimentary rooms to non-profits so they can make their budgets, give free rooms to Alaskans needing cancer treatment year-round through the American Cancer Society. We make most of our revenue from May – September, the tourism season. If we have a healthy tourism industry, we can spend more in our community.

Recently, Norwegian Cruise Lines purchased land downtown. We were going to bid on the same piece of land to build a very high-end Aspen Hotel because like NCL, we see a lot of opportunity to enhance Juneau – not just for cruise guests, but for independent travelers and Alaskans.

Juneau has a unique opportunity to partner with NCL to develop this great property for what the community needs. Of course, they'll want to build a dock or pier but if the city and community collaborates with NCL, why can't we work together to build a nature center, a convention center, a science or rehabilitation center such as Seward has. How wonderful it is to have an investor that actually wants to partner with our community and have conversations to develop what we need and want?

As a community, we are already geographically challenged and especially during the summer months we are cost prohibitive so there is even more pressure on us to partner together to enhance our facilities and our attractions. We all have the same goal – developing a community we love and finding balance between a great lifestyle and a healthy tourism industry.

I urge the assembly, mayor, and community to work collaboratively with the tourism industry. Now is the time to plan for the future of our community – together.

Sincerely,

Carol Fraser
Regional Director of Sales and Community Marketing