



# Valdez Voices & Visions



Project Narrative

Old Town Walking Tour  
Interpretive Signage Concepts



Artistic Banner Designs

Public Art Renderings

Paint by number  
community murals



*Valdez Voices & Visions* Project is a placemaking initiative designed to transform the cultural landscape of Valdez through an integrated system of art-infused public murals, banners and way-finding elements. At its core, the Project is about telling the story of Valdez’s past, present, and future through visually engaging, accessible, and meaningful works of art placed throughout the City’s pedestrian corridors and public spaces.

This Project aims to celebrate Valdez’s unique identity while enhancing the cultural experience for residents and visitors alike. Centered in our downtown and historic Old Town districts, the Project will include a series of interpretive markers, colorful “Wander Here” street pole banners, and professionally commissioned murals that visually narrate the story of Valdez’s past, present, and future.

The heart of the Project focuses on revitalizing the “Old Town Walking Tour” a self-guided outdoor museum that brings to life the original townsite of Valdez before its destruction in the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake and the subsequent relocation of the community. The Project’s way-finding elements will transform this quiet landscape into a more dynamic, accessible, and educational space. Newly designed signage will use archival images, QR codes, and interpretive content to walk visitors through time—connecting them to the people, cultures, and forces that shaped Valdez.

The “Wander Here” banner campaign will reinforce visual cohesion throughout the downtown core, encouraging exploration and reinforcing a sense of place. In addition, murals painted on outdoor canvas’ on select downtown buildings will feature local history, Indigenous culture, maritime life, and natural beauty—reflecting the stories and voices of our community and inviting deeper public engagement. These artworks will be developed through an open artist selection process, with strong community participation in design themes.

*Valdez Voices & Visions* represents an innovative approach to rural placemaking by blending heritage tourism, creative expression, and economic development in one unified effort. The Project is designed to be scalable and replicable by other small communities seeking to elevate underutilized public spaces into cultural assets. It aligns directly with the Valdez City Council's 2024 priorities to grow the local economy, support the arts, and enhance the community's sense of belonging.

The T-Mobile Hometown Grant will fund the creation and installation of banners and interpretive signage, artist stipends and mural materials, and community engagement events. Additional financial along with in-kind contributions from the City of Valdez and other local Alaskan partners will support the remaining implementation needs. With this support, Valdez Voices & Visions will launch a legacy of storytelling, pride, and economic vibrancy through the power of place.



# Old Town site with 19 interpretive signage placements (red dots)





# Original Valdez Town Site and beginning of the “Old Town Tour”





## Old Post Office site



## Corner of Alaska Ave & McKinley





# Remnants of the old dock





# John Thomas Kelsey Municipal Dock Public Art placement





# Old Town Valdez Wayfinding Panels design

## Old Town Valdez Walking Tour



## Tour Map

The aerial photo above shows the historical location for the stops on this tour. The light colored streets shown no longer exist. The map to the left shows where the interpretive panels are located for each of the stops.

- |                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1a. Brief History of Valdez          | 16. Klip Joint               |
| 1b. The Gold Rush Connection         | 17. Wells Commercial Company |
| 2. Valdez Gospel Chapel              | 18. Village Morgue Bar       |
| 3. Pioneers of Alaska Hall           | 19. Standard Oil Tank Farm   |
| 4. Post Office & Earthquake Memorial | 20. South Dike               |
| 5. Earthquake and Old Town           | 21. Union Oil Tank Farm      |
| 6. Hotel Valdez                      | 22. William A. Egan Home     |
| 7. 30th Motors                       | 23. The Pinson Bar           |
| 8. Valdez Dock Company               | 24. Gibson Mercantile        |
| 9. Post Office                       |                              |

## Welcome

Welcome to the original Valdez townsite and Old Town Walking Tour.

The 1.7 mile easy walk is composed of eighteen stops. At each, an interpretive panel describes the history of Old Town Valdez and the impact of the 1964 Great Alaskan Earthquake on its structures and inhabitants.

The map on the panel to your left includes an aerial view of Valdez prior to the earthquake. Stop numbers indicate where original structures stood in the past. The smaller graphic map located at the bottom left identifies where the tour stops are located relative to the two streets still remaining in evidence today: Alaska Avenue and McKinley Street.

For each location, the stop number is situated in the lower right corner and centered within the QR code. The code, when read via your phone or tablet, links you to the Valdez Museum's website, [www.valdezmuseum.org](http://www.valdezmuseum.org), and extended tour content.

You are at stop 1. Here, Alaska Avenue intersects with mile "0" of the Richardson Highway and signals the start of the tour.

Thank You!

The Valdez Museum gratefully acknowledges Robert and Linda Felland, Conoco Phillips, Pioneers of Alaska, Valdez Igloo #7 and #2, and the City of Valdez for their generous support of this project.



## OLD TOWN VALDEZ WALKING TOUR



SCAN ME  
FOR ONLINE ACCESS TO  
ALL PANELS



# Old Town Wayfinding Panels design

## Brief History of Valdez

### Land Acknowledgement

Valdez is located on the ancestral lands of the Alutiq/Sugpiaq Peoples. We honor and uphold all Alaska Native Peoples and their values and recognize the important role they played in the overland trade route that linked Interior Alaska to Prince William Sound.

### Earthquake History and Impact

Established in 1896 by gold seeking prospectors and incorporated in 1901, Valdez was home to citizens until 1967. Today, little evidence remains of this lively port after the impact of the 1964 Great Alaskan Earthquake, the second largest quake on record.

Old Town Valdez was not destroyed during the earthquake, but was condemned and deemed uninhabitable in the long term. A resilient community remained, while a new town emerged four miles west.

### Transportation Hub

Valdez is the northernmost ice-free port in North America, making it accessible year-round. The port weathered economic booms and busts and both thrived and survived because of its shipping and transportation industries. In the 1900s, the mail, supplies and people arrived from Seattle on steamships, then traveled via dog sled and sledge to northern Alaskan communities. Freight moved up the Richardson Highway from 1949-53 via the Alaska Freight Lines. The Richardson opened to year-round travel in 1949-50. This single event solidified Valdez' position as "Gateway to the Interior."



**OLD TOWN  
VALDEZ  
WALKING TOUR**

## Historic Valdez: Gold Rush Connection

### A Town Takes Root

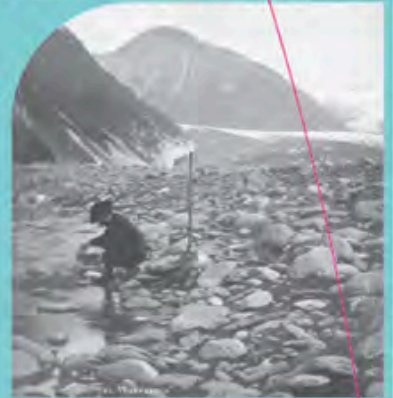
In 1896, an estimated 4000 ship-bound stampedes eager to take the All American route to the gold fields and make the arduous trek over the Valdez Glacier Trail flooded the Port of Valdez. According to prospectors, "They found neither wharf nor storehouse, nothing in fact but a snow bank." Their goods were cached on the sandy shore. A sea of canvas tents rose up at the mouth of Valdez Glacier Creek and the fledgling town, composed of "four log cabins, three frame houses, and many tents" was formed. "Three restaurants operated in full swing along with a number of stores and of course a saloon."

### Keystone Canyon Opens

In 1899, the U.S. Army cut a new trail through Keystone Canyon, twelve miles east of Valdez. The route bypassed Valdez Glacier and proved easier for sojourners. Valdez soon became the supply center for copper and gold miners operating nearby.

### Locals Struggle Against the Elements

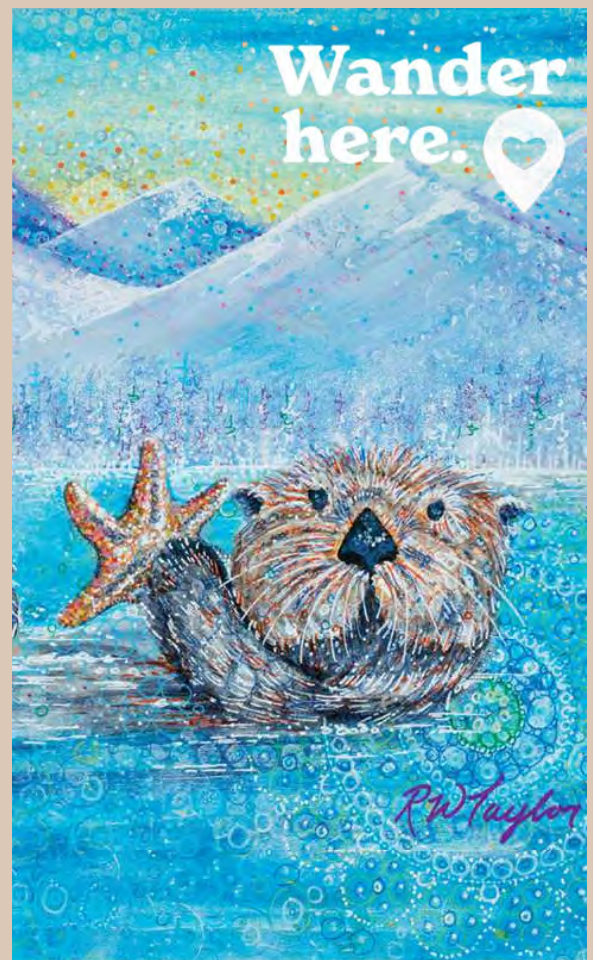
While convenient for supplying prospectors, the town's location on a sandy foundation situated at the base of the Valdez Glacier and a delta outwash plain proved a poor choice. Severe glacial winds, heavy snow falls, seasonal flooding, and unstable ground tormented the port and its inhabitants. In 1908 Valdez residents built a three-sided dike to divert glacier stream runoff and stem annual flooding.



**OLD TOWN  
VALDEZ  
WALKING TOUR**



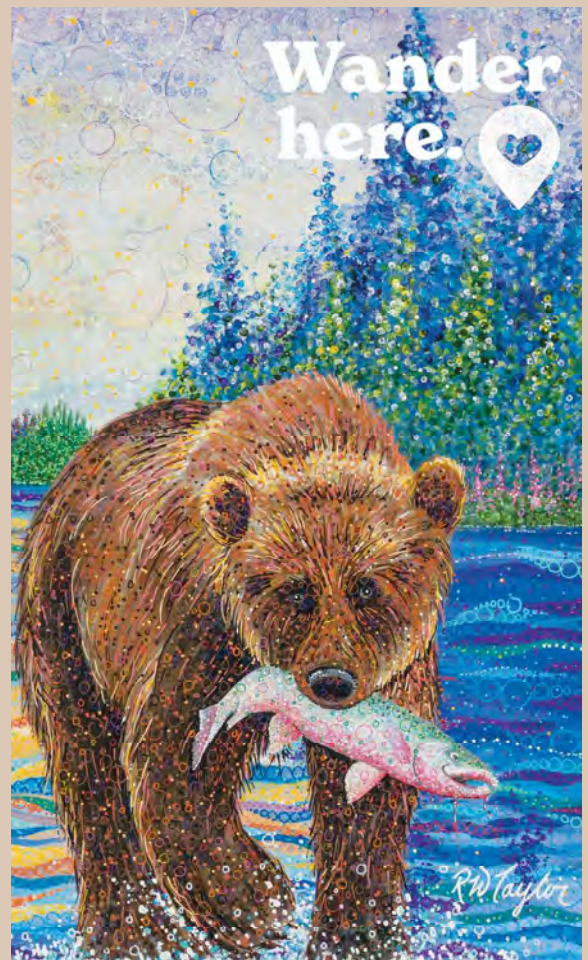
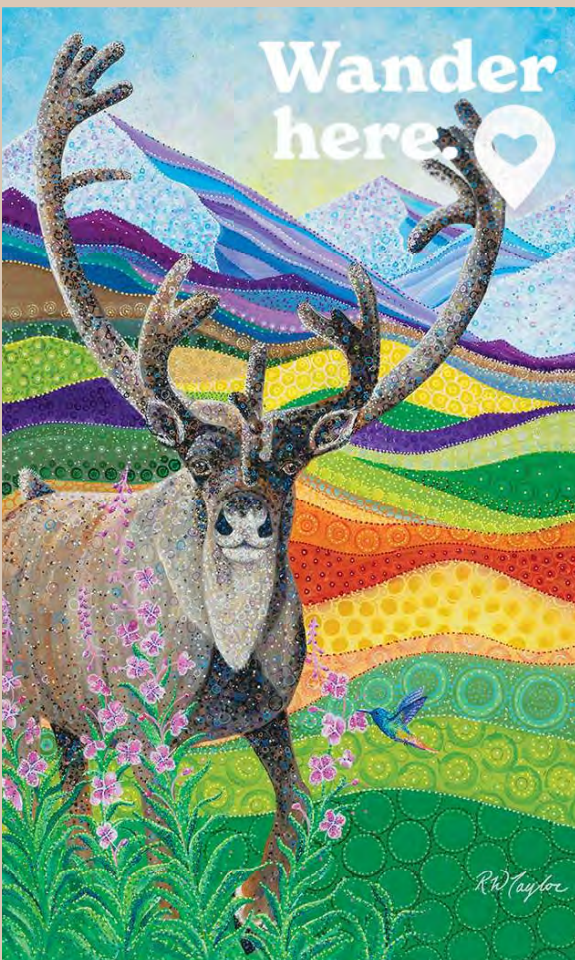
## Community branded banners

















# Public Art Designs





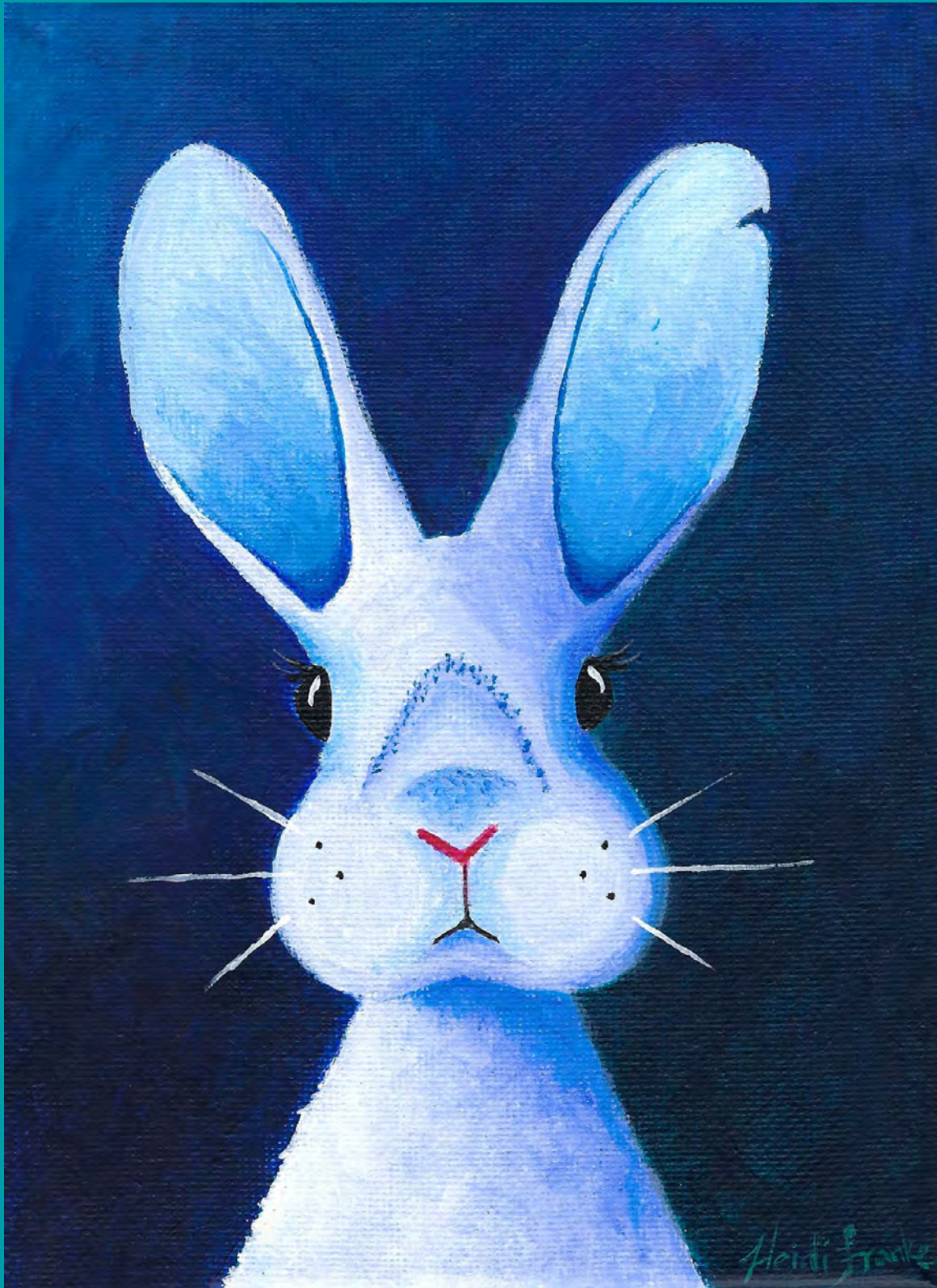








# Public Art













# Community paint by number mural

## Past, present, future

