



Agenda

Port & Harbor Advisory Commission

Worksession

Tuesday, May 14, 2024 at 5:30 PM

City Hall Conference Room Upstairs In-Person & Via Zoom Webinar

Homer City Hall

491 E. Pioneer Avenue
Homer, Alaska 99603
www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

Zoom Webinar ID: 925 6798 0403 Password: 278396

<https://cityofhomer.zoom.us>
Dial: 346-248-7799 or 669-900-6833;
(Toll Free) 888-788-0099 or 877-853-5247

CALL TO ORDER, 5:30 P.M.

AGENDA APPROVAL

DISCUSSION TOPIC(S)

- A. Spit Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Plan Rewrite
- B. Other Agenda Items

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE (3 minute time limit)

ADJOURNMENT

Next Regular Meeting is **Wednesday, May 22, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.** All meetings scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar.

10/19/2022

Port and Harbor Advisory Commission Work Session General Notes:

Process for Edits per Planning

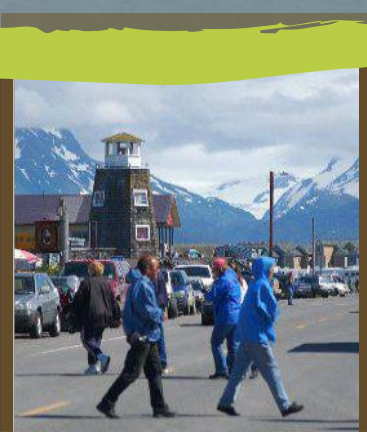
- 1) Submit any requested changes/edits in a draft document to Planning to use during a public forum or meeting phase
- 2) Planning will run with it as needed for the public phase as a separate document or as part of the larger current project to revamp the City Comprehensive Plan, utilizing a consultant contractor as necessary (minimum 6 months, likely longer for this phase approx 1 to 1.5 years. Important to get all user groups feedback)
- 3) Final Draft will be submitted to the Planning Commission and passed on to City Council for review and adoption
- 4) Council adopted version will be submitted to KPB's planning department for their review, final approval and adoption.

Goals

- 1) Update overall
- 2) Add language and projects in such a way as to create a document that can be utilized as justification or reinforcement for grant/funding assistance opportunities
- 3) Use as a tool to solicit or pool the public/community feedback on current and future City projects

HOMER SPIT

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN





City of Homer, Alaska

Adopted November 1, 2011

USKH

Acknowledgements

A special thank you to everyone at the City of Homer for their support and assistance with this planning effort:

Mayor
James Hornaday

City Manager
Walt Wrede

City Council
Kevin Hogan
Barbara Howard
David Lewis
Francie Roberts
Beth Wythe
Bryan Zak

Planning Commission
Sharon Minsch, Chair
Tom Bos
Gretchen Druhot
Roberta Highland
Kent Haina
Ray Kranich
Jeff Sinn
Franco Venuti

City Planner
Rick Abboud

Public Works Director
Carey S. Meyer

Port Director/Harbormaster
Bryan Hawkins

Planning Technician-GIS
Julie Engebretsen

**Planning Technician-
Code Compliance**
Dotti Harness

Administrative Assistant
Shelly Rosencrans

We also would like to acknowledge all of the many interested community members who attended public meetings and provided email input to the planning project.



"Where the land ends
and the sea begins"

HOMER SPIT

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



City of Homer, Alaska

Adopted November 1, 2011

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction / page 1

Chapter 2. Background Data & Existing Conditions / page 5

Chapter 3. Vision 2030 / page 20

Chapter 4. Implementation / page 33

Maps

Map 1. South Spit Landmarks / page 7

Map 2. North Spit Landmarks / page 8

Map 3. Current Land Ownership / page 43

Map 4. Future Land Use Concept / page 44

Map 5. Future Land Use Concept, Inset / page 45

Map 6. Future Parking Concept / page 46

Homer Spit

Comprehensive Plan Goal:

Wise land management of the Spit and its resources to accommodate natural processes, while allowing **supporting** (Bob) fishing, tourism, other marine related development, and open space/recreational uses.





1. Introduction

The Homer Spit is an intriguing natural phenomenon. It is one of the longest occupied natural sand spits in the world, extending southeast from the City of Homer, approximately 4.5 miles into Kachemak Bay. The Spit is a natural, dynamic system, which is constantly being shaped by deposition and erosion of sediments. The Spit is sensitive to changes in the natural environment and to human activities, both on the Spit itself and in the uplands of the mainland.

The Homer Spit is a lot of things to a lot of different and diverse groups of people. The Spit is unusual in that so much of it is owned by the City of Homer. The Spit was the site of the town's first settlement and survived the 1964 Good Friday earthquake. In more recent times, it has emerged as the centerpiece for Homer's tourism industry. It is a working port and harbor, a wildlife refuge, a place for outdoor recreation, and a place for employment and business. An economic engine for the region, it is the center of Homer's thriving

**"The beauty of the whole scene:
boats, birds, a place to go walking.
Access to boating and the ferry.
This is our greatest treasure; let's
not mess it up."**

~ Workshop participant

fishing industry and has become one of Alaska's most popular tourism destinations.

As one enters the City from the north and experiences the view of Kachemak Bay, the surrounding mountains and glaciers, the focus of attention is naturally drawn to the Spit as a place to investigate. This update of the City of Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan is similar to that view, focusing attention on current issues, defining a vision, and setting a course of action for the future.

The Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan was excluded from the overall city comprehensive plan update, which began in 2006. It was determined the Spit was such an important community feature it deserved and required



The Spit in the winter features some open businesses and an active harbor, but many shops are closed and boarded up.

its own planning effort. Some of the issues identified by the City to address in the plan include:

- Increasing traffic congestion
- Parking
- New demands for public services
- Future land use, zoning, and development
- Encouraging economic development without compromising the unique character of the Spit
- [Extension of harbor services and port expansion](#) ^(Crisi)

Future comprehensive planning efforts should integrate the Spit with the rest of the community, rather than separating these geographic areas into different planning documents.

Purpose of the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan describes existing conditions and defines a preferred future development plan. The Plan recommends public improvements for this unique and special place and addresses future land use and zoning, parking, pedestrian issues and conservation. The Plan will serve to guide the Planning Commission, the City Council, and other community leaders and businesses as they make decisions related to the Spit over the next 20 years.

The Planning Process

The planning process began in April 2009 with a contract for professional services. The planning process has included ongoing public involvement

opportunities, including to date five public planning workshops, as well as ongoing input, work sessions, and discussion with the Planning Commission.

A project website was established from the project outset to provide information to interested persons. The website, www.homerspitfutureplan.com, provided meeting notices, summaries of community meetings, and draft documents. It also provided an email feedback function that a number of people used to provide comments.

In August 2009 public involvement workshops were held to introduce the project and identify community concerns, issues, and opportunities.

In September a second round of workshops were held, which were well attended by interested citizens, property owners, and business owners. Back-to-back workshops on September 10, 2009, included opportunities to comment on maps, a presentation about the planning process, and comments/suggestions from participants.

In October 2010, a final open house took place following the release of a public review draft plan. Participants discussed the draft plan, its recommendations, and provided comments.

Expansive tidal flats attract numerous shorebirds.



“Recognize the unique bird habitat of the Spit.”

~ Workshop participant



Citizens cover a wall with notes expressing their opinions and concerns at a public planning workshop.

In addition to public meeting input, a number of people submitted comments through the project website. These comments and ideas were used as a basis for planning recommendations, and representative quotations are included throughout this report.

After the initial phase of public input, a number of major themes and issues emerged from the public comments:

- A desire to make the Spit a better, year-round destination for locals and visitors alike.
- The Spit has great potential for economic/ industrial development and the creation of year-round, family sustaining jobs. Tourism development should not compromise this potential and land should be designated for industrial-type development. A balanced mix of tourism and maritime industry is needed.
- The need for improved transportation alternatives, including bicycles, pedestrians and shuttle buses.
- The recognition of the unique coastal bird habitat and sea mammal environment.
- Improve access, condition, and amenities of existing parks and open places and consider adding more parks, open space, a kayak launch, fishing dock, and a community central gathering place.
- Parking is a major issue.

“The Spit is really Alaska's jewel and should be a place for everyone.”

~ Workshop participant

- Concern about future residential developments.
- Reduce pedestrian/vehicle conflicts.
- There is a desire for more overslope development (boardwalk of shops, restaurants, and services, etc.).
- Great opportunities for public art.
- Consider zoning that is unique to the Spit.

Over the fall, additional discussions, input, and research were completed and a “framework document” was released in January 2010 as a focal point for community discussion and to solicit additional direction from City Planning staff, the Planning Commission, and the Port and Harbor Advisory Commission. Additional public comments were received including:

- Recognize the importance of shorebird habitat for birds and the economic value for Homer.
- Adopt design standards for new construction, and to screen industrial activities.



Residents marked up maps highlighting site-specific concerns, ideas, and needs associated with the project.



The lighthouse tower of the Salty Dawg is a famous Spit landmark.

“There is an "old" attitude of industrial vs. tourism vs. commercial fishing on the Spit, and in reality all three are important. They each bring value and demonstrate we are an active, viable port—not just the end of the road.”

~ Workshop participant

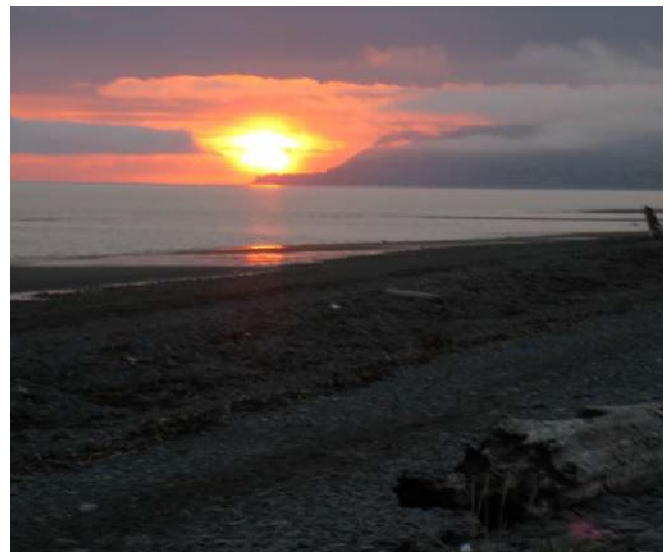
- Create a viewing platform to observe the fish dock.
- Recognize the value of beach rye grass and encourage retention along the edge of the harbor and along parking areas and roads to help control dust and storm water erosion (rather than planting more formal landscaped areas).
- Continue to implement clean harbor operations to reduce harbor pollution.
- Keep the open space character and viewsheds of the Spit.
- Reduce the need for a conditional use permit for customary activities along Fish Dock Road. Allow maintenance, security, and crew quarters area-wide on the Spit.
- Make improvements to the Deep Water Dock area using cruise ship tax revenue to serve tourists (restrooms, guard shack, covered

waiting area, etc.).

In terms of the overall planning process, the Spit Comprehensive Plan has followed a progression of research, community participation, study, and brainstorming. Listed below are the major steps that led to its formal adoption as an element of the Homer Comprehensive Plan:

- Gather Information
- Research and Analysis
- Community Involvement
- Parking Study
- Future Development Concepts
- Framework Plan
- Community Review / City of Homer Planning Staff and Planning Commission Revisions
- Draft Comprehensive Plan
- Community Involvement and Revisions
- Planning Commission Review and Approval
- City Council Review and Approval
- Borough Assembly Adoption (Ordinance 2011-38, Amending KPB 2.56.030)

Adopted on November 1, 2011, the Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan is the end product of this planning progression. The result strongly reflects input from citizens, the Spit business community, the Planning Commission, and City staff.



Residents value the Spit's open space character and viewsheds.



2. Background Data & Existing Conditions

The Homer Economy

The economy of Homer and the surrounding region is based upon commercial fishing, government, services, and tourism. The area has grown and prospered in recent years due to growth of these sectors. The Homer Spit is a major contributor to the regional economy as a hub for the commercial fishing industry and as one of Alaska's premier tourism destinations.

The recently adopted 2008 Homer Comprehensive Plan addressed the community's economy, as summarized below:

- Homer needs room to grow, in a way that respects the community's character as well as addresses concerns such as sprawl and climate change. The plan should designate locations and patterns for new growth, with consideration of needs like expanded water and sewer service.
- Tourism is likely to stay strong and grow.

"Wouldn't it be great to upgrade our Coney Island image? We would definitely have the ability to have higher lease rates."

~ Workshop participant

- The natural environment is important to Homer's economy and way of life. The community clearly desires to maintain the natural environment. New strategies will be needed to protect this environment as the community grows – particularly regarding drainage, erosion, and open space.
- Homer has a diverse, vibrant economy that builds from the community's strengths and character. The community will need to work to enhance and preserve economic opportunity.
- Lastly, it is likely these trends will continue, and Homer will face new forms of challenges and opportunities tied to growth.

Land Use

A variety of land uses have evolved over time on the Homer Spit and created a unique sense of place. Uses include marine-related industrial and commercial, including fishing and fish processing, the harbor and harbor related business, the marine highway terminal, port facilities, fuel storage, retail, lodging, camping, parking, and recreational, conservation, and public land uses.

RV and tent camping (Bryan) is a major land use. Opportunities include tent camping on the beach with several public and private campgrounds. In the last decade, new residential condominium units have been developed near the end of the Spit. Combined with a hotel resort, and seasonal worker's makeshift lodgings squeezed into the commercial district, residential is a small but very visible land use on the Spit.

A map showing major Spit landmarks is provided on pages 7-8. The table and pie chart at right show the approximate distribution of land uses on the Homer Spit by major category. Note that while many tidal lands making up portions of parcels within the acreage may be unusable for development, such lands are valuable for many conservation and economic purposes including tourism, fishing, clamming and recreational activities. A *generalized land ownership map for the Spit* is provided on page 43.

The City of Homer's existing zoning code currently has four designations that apply to the Homer Spit. These are Marine Commercial (MC), Marine Industrial (MI), Open Space-Recreational (OSR), and Conservation (CO). Current codes and a zoning map are available on the City's website.

"We need to keep some of this [city land] as parking but we also need to get the property leased and get some new harbor businesses going."

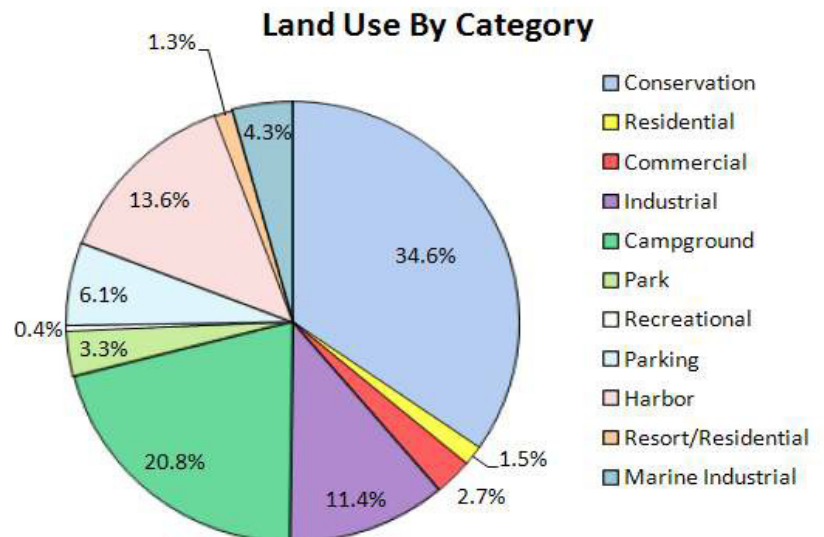
~ Workshop participant



Seasonal worker's residence on the Spit.

Homer Spit Land Usage Summary, 2009			
#	Usage	Approximate Acreage ¹	Percentage
0	Conservation	≈ 189.7	34.6%
1	Residential	≈ 8.19	1.5%
2	Commercial	≈ 14.67	2.7%
3	Industrial	≈ 62.64	11.4%
4	Campground	≈ 114.14	20.8%
5	Park	≈ 18.26	3.3%
6	Recreational	≈ 2.18	0.4%
7	Parking	≈ 33.34	6.1%
8	Harbor	≈ 74.31	13.6%
9	Resort/Residential	≈ 7.25	1.3%
10	Marine Industrial	≈ 23.35	4.3%
TOTAL:		≈ 548.03	100%

¹ Acreage includes tidal lands



Map 1: South Spit Landmarks



Barge Basin

Kevin Bell
Ice Arena

Symbol Legend

- Public Park
- Public Restroom

Pier 1 Theater

Nick Dudiak
Fishing Lagoon

Dredge Piles

Boat Launch Ramp

Coal Point
Commercial District
Harbormaster's

Salty Dawg Saloon

Coal Point Park

Seafarer's Memorial

Dredge De-Watering
Site (seasonal)

End of the Road Park

RAMP 5
RAMP 6
Boat Harbor
RAMP 4 RAMP 7
RAMP 8
RAMP 3
RAMP 2

Fuel
Docks

Fish Dock,
Ice Plant &
Processing

Fuel
Tanks

Land's
End

Deepwater Dock:
Freight Shipping
Cruise Ship Arrival

Pioneer Dock:
Alaska Marine Highway
U.S. Coastguard

Map 2: North Spit Landmarks

Mariner Lagoon

Starvin Marvin's
Pizza & Lighthouse

Mud Bay

Symbol Legend

- Public Park
- Public Restroom

Mariner
Park

Wildlife Viewing
& Parking Spot

Louie's
Lagoon

Wildlife Viewing
& Parking Spot

Marine Industrial
Staging & Storage





An interpretive sign guides birdwatchers along the Spit bike and walking path.

Natural Environment

The coastal area of the Spit is a marine and tidal environment, attracting numerous shorebirds and marine animals. The Spit is a nationally recognized birding area, and has international recognition due to the number of birds that pass through the area during annual migrations.

The Mud Bay and Mariner Lagoon areas are part of the Western Shorebird Reserve Network (WSRN). With a tidal range greater than 28 feet, Kachemak Bay has expansive tidal flats and provides a rich shore environment for wildlife. Kachemak Bay is also a State of Alaska designated Critical Habitat Area, which was supported by Alaskans statewide.

Much of the Spit's upland environment has been altered over time. The Spit was severely impacted by the 1964 earthquake as the elevation dropped significantly, although some

of that displacement has rebounded over time. Material from the subsequent excavation of the existing boat harbor and annual dredging was used to fill the Spit and raise the elevation of some of the land to the present level.

Tsunami Hazard

Kachemak Bay is situated in an active seismic area of Alaska. A tsunami analysis entitled *"Tsunami Hazard Maps of The Homer and Seldovia Areas, Alaska"* was published by the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys, in 2005. This report considered two earthquake scenarios and estimated tsunami inundation for Homer and Seldovia. It did not model the inundation by waves that might be generated by local submarine or underwater landslides, or the inundation from a debris avalanche generated by eruption of nearby Augustine Volcano.



Signs designate the Tsunami Evacuation Route.

The summary of the study concludes *“neither of the modeled scenarios results in inundation of the entire Homer Spit. However, it is important to note that the Border Ranges fault scenario results in flooding of a portion of the Spit and the road for a distance of approximately 0.3 mi (0.5 km) near the head of the Spit. Because this flooding may occur repeatedly during a tsunami, it is possible that the road may be washed out, cutting off the evacuation route from the Spit. Even though our numerical modeling does not show inundation of the entire spit for the scenarios we used, we recommend that evacuation of the Spit be a mandatory part of any tsunami evacuation plan.”*

The report ends with the statement *“because of the uncertainties inherent in this type of modeling, these results are not intended for land-use regulation.”* Thus, common sense must prevail in developing plans for the Homer Spit. Tsunami warning sirens and evacuation signs are currently in place and consideration should be given to provide additional warning siren locations and evacuation plans. Signage may also be added at public locations to educate the public about tsunamis and what the sirens mean.

Flood Hazard

In 2003, the City of Homer joined the National Flood Prevention Program and adopted regulations for development in flood zones. In general, the Federal Insurance Rate Maps identify the Spit as a Coastal High Hazard

Area. The Spit’s shoreline is in the “Velocity Zone,” which is characterized by coastal wave action with tidal surges and high energy, wind-generated wave action. The Spit is subject to constant coastal erosion. Much of Homer Spit Road is protected by large rock rip rap to absorb erosive wave energy.

The Flood Standards aim to minimize exposure to flood damage while protecting the functions of the coastal zone. Meeting these development standards is costly. Buildings and boardwalks must be designed and certified by an engineer or surveyor that the pilings will withstand a 100-year flood event and that the structures are elevated properly. In order to provide this assurance, expensive engineering may be required, further increasing development costs. Additionally, engineers and surveyors have disputed the elevations on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps. FEMA intends to resolve the inconsistencies with a new comprehensive coastal restudy of the Homer Spit starting in 2010, which may result in new flood plain mapping.

Climate Change

Alaska is experiencing the impacts of global climate change. It is predicted that general warming of the oceans and potential melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets will impact coastal areas around the world, by raising water levels by the end of this century and beyond. Experts predict more frequent



The Deep Water Dock is where cruise passengers arrive in Homer. Although workable, the site lacks amenities and is distant from visitor destinations, requiring shuttling.



The mixing of pedestrian and automobile traffic during the busy season poses potential safety issues.

and severe storms, accelerating erosion of the shoreline. This forecasted effect of climate change may greatly impact the low lying Homer Spit and should be considered in planning efforts. The City of Homer's Climate Action Plan is an excellent resource.

Transportation

The Spit is served by the 2-lane Sterling Highway (Homer Spit Road). The highway is under the jurisdiction of the Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT). A June 2009 traffic count indicates an average daily traffic (ADT) total of 3,540 vehicles for the month. Annual traffic data from 2007 indicates an annual ADT of 4,125 vehicles. The 2007 monthly ADT data ranges from a low of 1,636 vehicles in January to a high of 8,959 vehicles in July. The highest daily traffic counts occurred on several consecutive days in May of 2007 and were in excess of 10,500 vehicles. The next highest daily counts occurred in July and were in excess of 10,000 vehicles.

The State Highway Marine Terminal is adjacent to the Pioneer Dock near the tip of the Spit. Ferry service provides access to Seldovia, Prince William Sound, Kodiak Island, and the Aleutian Chain. Also based at Pioneer Dock is a U.S. Coast Guard Cutter with on-shore storage and facilities. Security and parking for staff are important practical issues associated with these sites.

Homer's Deep Water Dock is located on the eastern edge of the Homer Harbor. Its separation from the main activity center of the Spit works well when industrial vessels use the dock; however, recent cruise ship arrivals (nine vessels in 2010) have found the lack of amenities and distance from the commercial core of the Spit a challenge. Time and effort shuttling large volumes of passengers reduces visitors on-the-ground time for shopping, excursions, and sight-seeing.

Although proximity can be an issue, especially for elderly visitors, in general the Spit is very walkable, including along the beach (especially at low tide), on the commercial district boardwalks,



Commercial development on the Spit with specialty shops and restaurants connected by a boardwalk.

and along harbor docks. The busiest areas of the Spit can experience heavy foot traffic mixing tourists, boat owners, and a variety of carts and vehicles for staging and shuttling. Visitors watching the busy scene sometimes are in the way, causing a safety hazard especially in the vicinity of Fish Dock Road where forklifts, trucks, and utility vehicles are often in use. Additional safety concerns for pedestrians include crossing the busy Homer Spit Road, and parking areas where pedestrian access is not defined.

A separated bike and walking path parallels the highway from the mainland to just west of Freight Dock Road. The City is currently planning the continuation of the bike and pedestrian path from its current terminus to the end of the Spit.

Existing Parking Facilities and Policies

With vehicular parking a primary issue on the Spit, a parking study was conducted as part of the planning process. The goal of the parking analysis is to address these parking issues:

- Pedestrian safety
- Short and long-term recommendations
- Signage
- Parking lot design
- Parking policies, such as free vs. charge, time limitations, etc.

Parking is also a primary community concern as expressed by public comments at planning workshops and email feedback from the project website. The Port and Harbor Department is responsible for management of parking on the Homer Spit. A map showing existing parking facilities is included on page 14. Public parking facilities consist primarily of gravel open areas. Most parking is located around the harbor area and at the fishing lagoon. In recent years, several parking areas located near the marina ramps have been paved and designated as fee parking.

Portions of public and private parking areas are located within the ADOT right-of-way (ROW). The City is currently negotiating an agreement with the ADOT for management of the parking areas located in the ROW.

Organizing the gravel open areas for an efficient parking pattern and traffic flow is a challenge.

“The Spit Trail has been an excellent addition funded through Fed Hwy \$\$ It has increased family use, bicycle, and walking our new "track." The extension will be welcome and tie the beginning into the end.”

~ Workshop participants



Pedestrians and bicyclists use the Spit pathway extensively.



Unmarked gravel lots create some unique parking patterns. As currently configured they also tend to drain poorly and become riddled with puddles when it is rainy.

Temporary pylons and rope are often used as an attempt to guide and organize parking. There is no signage identifying parking areas, except for the paved fee parking sites.

There are no existing parking areas for the large number of RVs and other large vehicles that visit the Spit, resulting in sometimes chaotic parking patterns.

Other than the few paved areas designated for fee parking, all other areas are designated as free parking for up to seven days. Thus, areas considered prime parking for day users and retail customers are used extensively by long-term parkers. There are few areas designated for short-term parking and delivery/service vehicles for commercial areas.

In 2010 the Port began more rigorous parking enforcement for vehicles and trailers, installed more signage, and created a 15-foot wide and 230-foot long loading zone in front of a busy boardwalk. This not only allowed delivery trucks to get off the street and unload, but also created greater visibility for the businesses along the boardwalk strip. In key areas, especially along the highway, parking spaces were limited to vehicles under 20-feet, which greatly improved visibility and safety for pedestrians and motorists moving through congested areas.

“I can see the increasing congestion on the Spit, particularly around the shops. For visitors just going out to the Spit to shop, sightsee, or catch a water taxi, public transit will eliminate the need to find that elusive parking spot on the Spit.”

“Give consideration to the many elderly and disabled persons who enjoy visiting the Spit on a regular basis and who will not be comfortable or inclined to use a shuttle. Not everyone is able to walk around and carry their belongings and remain exposed to the elements outside the protection of their own vehicles.”

“Need more parking.”

“Consider a parking garage.”

~Public comments



Congestion is a seasonal issue both on land and in the harbor, which has a long wait list for boat slips.



Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan

Parking Facilities



DAILY PARKING “SNAP-SHOT” - Estimated parking lot capacity and count of all parked vehicles in all public parking areas on an hourly basis, Friday, July 10, 2009

Lot Number	Lot Capacity	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	# & % vehicles parked all day
LOT 1	32	7	7	7	9	3	*	7	8	8	7	
% Occupied		21.88%	21.88%	21.88%	28.13%	9.38%	*	21.88%	25.00%	25.00%	21.88%	*
LOT 4	220	*	141	139	158	160	*	151	152	140	147	
% Occupied		*	64.09%	63.18%	71.82%	72.73%	*	68.64%	69.09%	63.64%	66.82%	*
LOT 6a	66	50	53	57	61	61	*	56	55	49	47	
% Occupied		75.76%	80.30%	86.36%	92.42%	92.42%	*	84.85%	83.33%	74.24%	71.21%	23 - 35%
LOT 6b	108	78	86	87	98	98	*	90	87	79	79	
% Occupied		72.22%	79.63%	80.56%	90.74%	90.74%	*	83.33%	80.56%	73.15%	73.15%	42 - 39%
LOT 6c	72	18	19	19	19	19	*	19	19	19	19	
% Occupied		25.00%	26.39%	26.39%	26.39%	26.39%	*	26.39%	26.39%	26.39%	26.39%	18 - 25%
LOT 7a	161	82	93	97	100	97	*	100	100	97	94	
% Occupied		50.93%	57.76%	60.25%	62.11%	60.25%	*	62.11%	62.11%	60.25%	58.39%	40 - 25%
LOT 7b	237	155	168	177	193	200	*	202	204	204	195	
% Occupied		65.40%	70.89%	74.68%	81.43%	84.39%	*	85.23%	86.08%	86.08%	82.28%	61 - 26%
LOT 8	72	24	25	31	38	50	*	47	49	50	49	
% Occupied		33.33%	34.72%	43.06%	52.78%	69.44%	*	65.28%	68.06%	69.44%	68.06%	12 - 17%
LOT 9	28	13	18	18	21	22	*	24	23	15	19	
% Occupied		46.43%	64.29%	64.29%	75.00%	78.57%	*	85.71%	82.14%	53.57%	67.86%	5 - 18%
LOT 10	77	58	63	70	70	71	*	73	74	73	74	
% Occupied		75.32%	81.82%	90.91%	90.91%	92.21%	*	94.81%	96.10%	94.81%	96.10%	34 - 44%
LOT 11	22	15	16	15	15	15	*	21	19	20	20	
% Occupied		68.18%	72.73%	68.18%	68.18%	68.18%	*	95.45%	86.36%	90.91%	90.91%	11 - 50%
LOT 12	32	5	5	6	9	18	*	23	27	24	21	
% Occupied		15.63%	15.63%	18.75%	28.13%	56.25%	*	71.88%	84.38%	75.00%	65.63%	*
LOT 13	35	28	30	30	30	31	*	30	33	33	31	
% Occupied		80.00%	85.71%	85.71%	85.71%	88.57%	*	85.71%	94.29%	94.29%	88.57%	26 - 74%
LOT 14a	86	76	76	77	84	*	*	85	84	82	82	
% Occupied		88.37%	88.37%	89.53%	97.67%	*	*	98.84%	97.67%	95.35%	95.35%	21 - 24%
LOT 14b	74	49	49	55	65	68	*	71	72	69	70	
% Occupied		66.22%	66.22%	74.32%	87.84%	91.89%	*	95.95%	97.30%	93.24%	94.59%	35 - 47%
LOT 15	21	4	5	6	10	13	*	20	17	17	19	
% Occupied		19.05%	23.81%	28.57%	47.62%	61.90%	*	95.24%	80.95%	80.95%	90.48%	2 - 10%

* No data



Boaters are important users of parking facilities on the Spit.

“Boat and trailer parking: A lot of land being used for low revenue. Make it more compact!”

“Major issue: we need to come up with a practical “central parking plan” both on/off Spit. Need real commitment to shuttle type transportation.”

~ Workshop participants

A few spaces were also dedicated to handicap parking and for loading/unloading with a 15 minute maximum time limit.

Parking Users

Parking facilities on the Homer Spit serve a number of different groups and needs. Listed below are the users identified:

- Vessel owners, crewmen, and clients
- State Park employees
- Water taxi customers and employees
- Shop owners and employees
- Tourists and residents
- Fish dock employees and commercial truck traffic for the fish industry
- Commercial delivery trucks
- Ferry dock customers/crewmen and commercial trucks
- [Marine tradespeople](#) (Mark Z.)

- Residents from across the bay such as Seldovia, Nanwalek, Port Graham, Halibut Cove, and Peterson Bay
- Load and launch customers, trailers and vehicles
- Marine Highway staging for freight, vehicles, and foot passengers, along with employee parking
- Coast Guard vessel staff parking
- Vessels parked on the uplands
- Fishing lagoon fishermen
- Campers and RVs
- Federal, State and City employees
- People selling boats and vehicles

Parking Analysis

An important part of the parking study was creating a one day “snapshot” of parking utilization. This included estimating parking lot capacity and counting all parked vehicles in all public parking areas on an hourly basis. Following is an overview summary of the one day parking count study and analysis:

- The parked vehicle count was made on Friday, July 10, 2009, between 7 am and 4 pm.
- Considered a busy, typical summer day.
- About 1,343+/- parking spaces were inventoried and counted every hour all day.
- 1,023 vehicles or 76% of the parking was occupied at the peak hour (2 pm).
- Up to 92% of all parking was occupied in retail and ramp areas at the peak hour.
- 330 parking spaces, or 24.5% of all parking, was occupied by the same vehicle all day in various locations.

Parking behavior observations were made during the count. The gravel parking surface creates inefficiencies as parkers have difficulty lining up. In addition, RVs require a larger parking space and can partially block driving lanes. People were also obviously camping in parking areas.

Port of Homer

Homer is a year round, ice free port supporting a range of diverse activities that are critical to the local economy, including shipping, commercial fishing, transportation, tourism, and recreational uses.

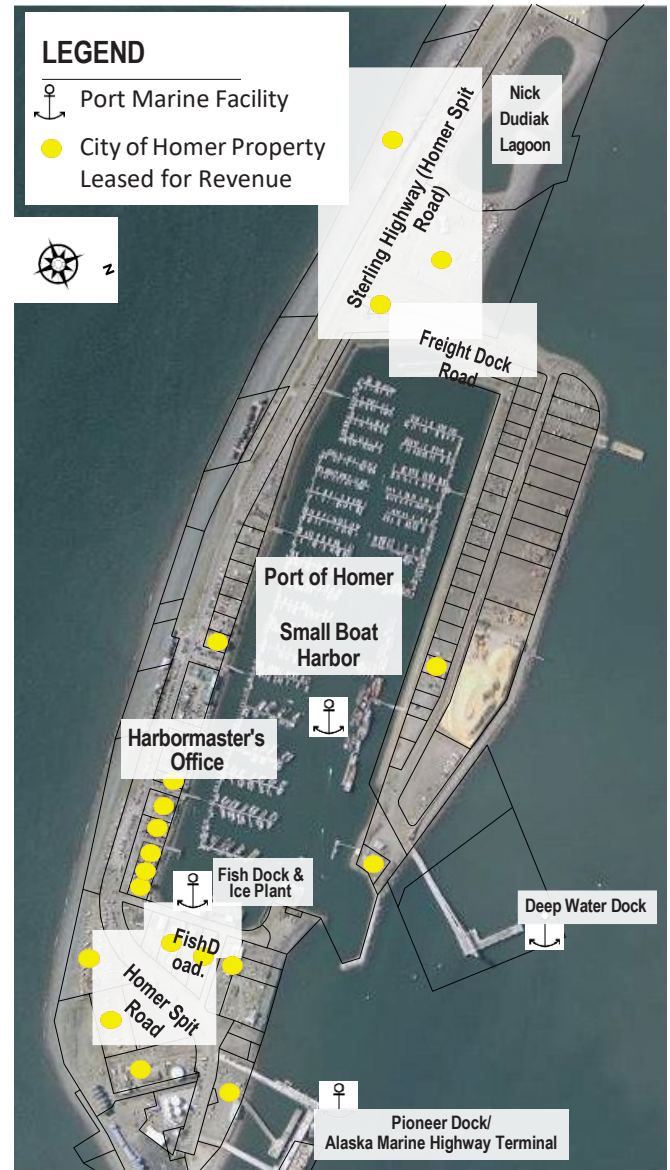
The City of Homer owns most of the Spit's major port and harbor infrastructure and a majority of the land on the Spit. Most public assets on the Spit are managed through a "Port and Harbor Enterprise Fund," which operates and is financed in a manner similar to private business enterprises where the cost of providing goods and/or services to the general public are financed or recovered primarily through user fees.

City ownership of the land and major assets retains long-term control over critical activity zones on the Spit and also allows coordinated infrastructure and services as and where needed, supported by lease and user fee income. The map at right shows Spit lands and areas that are leased by the City for income, as well as the major port-owned facilities that include:

- **Small Boat Harbor:** The harbor has 893 reserved stalls, 6,000 feet of transient mooring, a five-lane boat launch and fish cleaning stations.
- **Fish Dock and Ice Plant:** The Fish Dock operates for a nine-month season. The dock has eight cranes. The ice plant has 200 tons of ice storage.
- **Deep Water Dock:** A 345-foot face with 40 feet of depth.
- **Pioneer Dock:** A 469-foot face with 40 feet of depth. The Pioneer Dock serves the Alaska Marine Highway Terminal located adjacent to the dock.
- **Large Vessel Haul Out Facility** (Ian)

"We need to keep some of this as parking but we also need to get the property leased and get some new harbor businesses going."

~ Workshop participant



The fish dock is an important piece of infrastructure for economic development and processing.

Parks and Recreation

Homer's Public Works Department operates parks and recreation facilities on the Spit including campgrounds, public restrooms, and an RV dump station. Currently there are five dedicated public parks on the Spit, which are highlighted at right, and are shown on Maps 1-2 (pages 7-8).

Although there are many recreational needs and opportunities on the Spit serving both local residents and visitors, these must be balanced within the overall context of the existing City of Homer Comprehensive Plan Parks and Recreation priorities, currently planned Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), and staff and maintenance resources and capacity.

Moreover, addition of proposed new park sites and improvements outside of existing parks is very difficult to implement on the Spit. As described in the Port and Harbor Section, a majority of the Spit's land and infrastructure is controlled by an Enterprise Fund. Port users—not local taxpayers—would be asked to fund these endeavors making them challenging to implement, despite their merits and public support.

Thus, two ideas that generated some excitement during the public process—a park and gathering place concept focused around the Pier One Theater, and a landmark plaza and drop-off zone. Both would be challenging to fund and implement.

Another park issue is safe pedestrian access and connectivity. Specifically, access to End of the Road Park is challenged by the lack of pedestrian facilities. Currently cyclists and pedestrians use the road shoulder for access adjacent to a busy stretch of road. This park is the logical end point for future extensions of the Spit Trail.

Coal Point Park also has challenging pedestrian access, primarily because of its isolation amidst industrial land uses. Relocation or safer pedestrian connections were raised as options for addressing these concerns.

Mariner Park: Located on the north end of the Spit, this park is a popular camping spot and attracts local residents with children who enjoy wading and water play.



“Improve access and condition of existing parks and open places.”

“Add more amenities (tables, shelters, grills, benches, bathrooms, etc.)”

“No one even knows it (Coal Point Park) is there!”

~ Public meeting and email input comments

Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon: The “Fishin’ Hole” attracts significant local and visitor recreational uses, and is stocked and managed for recreation.





Seafarer's Memorial:
One of the more photographed icons on the Spit, this lovely memorial is an important public space that also provides a scenic lookout, benches for sitting, and maintained flowerbeds.



Coal Point Park: This small park is poorly located in terms of attracting users. It is surrounded by industrial activities and pedestrian access is a challenge. However the site does provide a nice location for viewing the harbor and has elements commemorating Alaska's 1967 Centennial.



End of the Road Park:
This very popular area is generally unimproved and provides parking, beach access, and recreational on-shore fishing. The site also provides boaters with a good view of wave conditions outside the protected harbor.



Homer Spit

Comprehensive Plan Goal:

Wise land management of the Spit and its resources to accommodate natural processes, while allowing fishing, tourism, other marine related development, and open space/ recreational uses.





3. Vision 2030 ?

It is **clear** that the Homer Spit is a defining physical and social element of the larger Homer community and of Southcentral Alaska. Visitors and residents treasure this “jewel” of Alaska and its unique mix of art, culture, sport, recreation, retail business, and environmental assets.

The community wishes to protect and continue this mix, but at the same time wishes to promote commercial and maritime industrial vitality. Also, the community wishes to provide better connections for pedestrians and non-motorized users to improve access and safety.

This following section provides a vision for the Spit, but also recognizes some very important realities. One is that the Spit is unusual in that so much of it is owned by the City of Homer. In addition to standard municipal responsibilities such as parks and public facilities, the City also leases land to private companies. There are two types of goals that arise from this arrangement of land ownership:

“The Spit's unique landform and outstanding vistas give it character and attraction. Protecting the open space character, key viewing points, unblocked vistas, and open public access should guide any development considerations.”

~ Public Input on Framework Plan

- 1) There are universal concepts and goals that apply to all lands regardless of ownership such as zoning; and
- 2) There are policies the City as a land owner should examine.

Another reality is that the City itself further manages its lands based on the way the land was purchased. The Port and Harbor is operated as an Enterprise Fund, meaning that general revenues such as City wide property and sales taxes are not used to support operations. Port revenue is used to purchase port land and to benefit port operations, not the city as a whole.

This is a consideration when deciding upon future park areas, viewing platforms, and activities that do not generate money for the port, but are paid for solely by port users.

Taking these underlying land use and fiscal concerns into account, a vision is provided in the following section that respects the public's desires by framing realistic options and opportunities. Specifically, the vision is outlined in terms of four overarching categories with subcategories:

1. **Land Use and Community Design**
2. **Transportation**
3. **Economic Vitality**
4. **Natural Environment**

The vision consists of goals within each of these categories that can help guide decision making and provide a framework for final plan recommendations.



1. Land Use and Community Design

Goals for Land Use and Community Design:

- 1.1 Maintain the variety of land uses that establish the unique "Spit" character and mix of land uses.
- 1.2 Improve the permanence and character of new commercial development.
- 1.3 Provide public facilities that attract residents and visitors to the Spit for recreational purposes.

- 1.4 All development should recognize, value, and complement the unique natural resources on the Homer Spit.
- 1.5 Respond to seasonal land use demand fluctuations.
- 1.6 Protect public access to and enjoyment of the Spit's unique natural resources.

This plan does not suggest major changes to Spit land use. The community appreciates the eclectic mixture of land uses and activities. The goal is to keep the character of the Spit and make minor changes to improve the experience and functionality. The Spit should be a clean, safe, and fun place to fish, walk, bike, sightsee, and shop with a highly functional, efficient working harbor.

Traditionally, business owners have used creative solutions to solve problems; there is a desire to keep this independent spirit and sense of individuality. The Spit should avoid a "plastic" look that is "Anywhere USA." There is very limited developable area; compact development will be key to future economic growth. Reduced building setbacks and parking requirements are possible solutions.

The minimum lot sizes are 6,000 square feet in the Marine Industrial (MI) District and 20,000 square feet in the Marine Commercial (MC) District respectively. These minimums are for new platted lots. The uniform size and grid pattern that this promotes does not make sense for all development on the Spit given the underlying curvilinear land form and the premium value of land.

Greater flexibility in lot size and building setbacks are possible solutions. The minimum lot size of MC could be reduced. Buildings should also be designed to maintain the human scale and preserve views of the surrounding bay and mountains. A combination of lower building height regulations and conditional use allowances for buildings up to 35 feet should be considered.

Another set of zoning issues on the Spit relates to what uses are permitted, or are conditional use. Several common commercial



Zoning should be adjusted to support Spit business owner's sense of individuality and unique character.

uses are conditional uses in the MI zones, such as restaurants. Although these existing measures help limit the potential overexpansion of commercial and residential development, more carefully tailored tools are desired that better address the demand for these uses, while preserving the waterfront and other fishing, marine transportation, and economic uses.

Another issue relates to existing parking requirements. A clear policy is needed regarding off-street parking requirements. Separate, private, off-street parking facilities can create more traffic and detract from the pedestrian environment. An alternative is to waive parking requirements in lieu of a onetime parking system contribution or assessment, or requiring annual permit purchases.

A final zoning consideration relates to the current required setbacks. Setbacks may be needed on the Spit in some locations to provide egress, fire access, and buffer between different land uses. In other cases due to the uniqueness of the Spit, with its very limited amount of developable land and very wide right-of-ways, reduced setbacks may be one way to accommodate future growth and create a denser pattern of development that also improves pedestrian access. This is especially pertinent when a landowner with multiple lots is interested in developing the sites in an integrated approach, such as the successful commercial district around the privately owned boardwalks near Coal Point Seafoods.

Beyond zoning, each future land use has a number of issues and opportunities that need to be considered within the final comprehensive plan. These are addressed separately, followed by broad overarching goals for Land Use and Community Design.

1.A Industrial Development

The Spit has great potential for future industrial development related to the fishing, marine, and shipping industries. Key issues include the need to:

- Better utilize the limited land available for industrial and economic development.
- Reserve sufficient land by the Deep Water Dock for future industrial development.
- Encourage development related to the fishing, fish processing, and boating industries.

Future industrial development should be clustered in specific locations as highlighted in the Future Land Use Concept Maps (pages 44-45). However, industrial activities can have deleterious impacts to scenic resources that are valued by the public. Selective screening of industrial land use should be considered where industrial activity takes place adjacent to other existing



Compact development, reduced setbacks, and integrated development approaches that cross lot lines—such as this private connected boardwalk—all help take better advantage of the Spit's limited land base.



Better definition of traffic circulation and safety are needed to ensure safe functioning of the existing fish dock, ice plant and processing plants.

development and transportation routes. However, care must be exercised to ensure that screening does not then restrict views to scenic resources or limit the public's ability to view areas and enjoy activities that add to the interest of the Spit, such as storage of crab pots.

The existing fish dock, ice plant, and processing plants are key economic generators on the Spit but they are potentially threatened by incompatible land uses. Furthermore, the mix of land uses in the area and the undefined circulation sometimes creates hazards to pedestrians and others that pass through. The public needs to be aware there are hazards in the area; signage can be used to discourage foot traffic. This area requires attention to provide for separation of uses and reservation of land for future industrial development.

The area east of the harbor basin by the Deep Water Dock is a bright spot in industrial activity on the Spit and receives high use. However, competing uses and traffic patterns may encroach into the activity in this area and create safety hazards in the future.

Finally, creep of commercial land uses into an industrial area should be avoided because it reduces future options for marine industrial uses and harbor facilities. Marine industrial and transportation are strategically important long term-uses, and commercial activity should be located so that future opportunities are preserved.

A related issue that is sometimes difficult to address is the issue of how to regulate commercial versus industrial development. More definition is needed with respect to commercial use to address the character of commercial development as it has occurred on the Spit.

1.B Commercial Development

Some commercial development on the Spit has contributed to a haphazard and "temporary" character, and blocked the view shed. Buildings should be no more than one or two stories to maintain a human scale and to preserve views of the surrounding bay and mountains. Sign size needs to be compatible and in scale with multiple buildings on one parcel. Developments should be encouraged to provide amenities such as benches, trash cans, planters, etc.

As more commercial opportunities are desired, the overslope area at the harbor basin offers excellent opportunities for commercial growth and maintaining a controlled and established character to the Spit. These opportunities are available in particular on the west and east sides of the harbor basin, which could accommodate 40,000 square feet of new overslope development. This level of leasable square footage devoted to small shops, restaurants,



Overslope commercial development could expand alongside the harbor basin; preservation of views and limiting overexpansion are key issues.



A major seasonal land use is RV/tent camping. While there may be community concern about additional Spit lodging, camping and residential uses, these uses are already there.

service businesses, or other uses should be sufficient to meet demands well into the future.

While this opportunity could provide tremendous economic benefits, the impact to existing commercial areas and the character of overslope development must be carefully considered. The City of Homer should look into developing appropriate standards and design guidelines for new development to maintain the character of the Homer Spit, including how to maintain public views into the harbor.

1.C Resort/Residential Development

In recent years, new residential condominium development was constructed on the Spit as a planned unit development. Strong community concerns over additional residential development were expressed at planning workshops. Concerns included the height of buildings blocking views and safety related to tsunami and flooding. Although some of these concerns and objections may be overcome through design, the concern over tsunami and severe flood/weather events is real.

Both formal permitted lodging facilities and campgrounds, and informal, unpermitted lodging and camping are present on the Spit. While there may be community concern about additional lodging, camping and residential uses, the uses

are already there. A residential option may be considered as part of the planning process. A clear policy is needed and appropriate regulations created and enforced to meet public health and safety concerns. Lodging and nightly rental facilities that may be permitted in the future can be located above existing and future commercial developments. By permitting these activities, the City can better regulate them and ensure facilities meet building, health, and safety codes.

1.E Parks and Recreation

The public clearly expressed the high value placed on tidal habitat, beaches, and views available on the Homer Spit. These areas are not just important as habitat for a myriad of shorebirds, waterfowl, fish, mammals, and plant life, but are important to the identity of the community. Protection of these areas is a central consideration to any development or use that is allowed on the Homer Spit.

This planning effort recognizes the value of the natural environment of the Homer Spit by recommending continued preservation of this unique marine tidal habitat as conservation areas. In addition, public access to important use and viewing areas should be preserved, and where required, improved.



By permitting lodging and nightly rental facilities above existing and future commercial developments, the City can better ensure facilities meet building, health, and safety codes.



The Harbormaster's office is in poor condition, is expensive to heat, and has limited parking.

A new community park and gathering area was a priority identified during the planning workshops. A possible site identified in the public process is a portion of the city campground between the fishing lagoon and Freight Dock Road, near Pier One Theater. It may be feasible to purchase the property from the Port and Harbor Enterprise Fund. The area was envisioned as a place for picnics, kayak load and launch, and other day use activities.

Another new park concept discussed is incorporating a central plaza into the busiest part of the Spit. The plaza includes a pullout for passenger drop-off that can accommodate buses and vans, an attractive shelter, benches, bike racks, wayfinding and interpretive elements, and a restroom. The site could serve many first time visitors and charter and tour bus passengers by providing a logical site for meeting with excursion vendors. The site also could support a shuttle service for long-term parking or provide other transportation system links.

Another priority identified in the written comments was a viewing area to observe the commercial fishing activities on the Fish Dock. People like to watch what is going on, but need to do so in a safe place, away from forklifts and truck traffic. Potential locations include Coal Point Park or the southwest corner of the harbor and the steel grid.

Other improvements for existing parks include:

End of the Road Park: Provide a storm watch pavilion, restrooms, a fishing dock, better definition of the parking area, and an improved turn-around for vehicles.

Seafarer's Memorial Park: It is suggested this park be expanded slightly to give it more prominence. This is another excellent location for a multi-season storm watch pavilion and public restrooms.

Coal Point Park: The existing small park located adjacent to the Fish Dock has difficult pedestrian access given the lack of pedestrian connectivity to the harbor boardwalk and the safety hazards of walking along Fish Dock Road. The park has a parking area that is too big and a small, but wonderful green space with excellent views of the harbor and Fish Dock. A community discussion may be warranted about whether this park should be improved by expanding its greenspace and upgrading its amenities, or whether relocation would provide more strategic benefit.

The now underutilized park is proximate to several key industrial sites and the space could be used to provide needed restrooms to serve the fish dock, the wood grid, and the fuel dock. An unused area south of the park could be used to provide parking for boat owners and/or Spit employees, which would remove them from the key activity zones.



A new park is proposed to include a kayak launch. This photo shows Alaska Kayak School preparations for a winter outing.



Coal Point Park has a historical plaque dating to Alaska's Centennial in 1967.

If the park is relocated, potentially some of its historic elements that are salvageable could be incorporated into a better location. One option would be to create a central landmark plaza as described earlier, which could also serve as a drop-off and meeting site for visitors. Another option would be to move the park to the vicinity of the cruise ship arrival zone and include a rain shelter and Spit viewing platform looking across the harbor.

Fishing Lagoon Improvements: The Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon (also known as the “Fishing Hole”) is a man-made marine embayment approximately 5 acres in size, stocked to provide sport fishing harvest opportunity. It is extremely popular with locals and visitors alike. During the summer when salmon are returning, approximately 100 bank anglers may be present at any one time between 7 am and 10 pm.

The lagoon embayment itself requires ongoing maintenance including removal of a gravel bar at the entrance, lengthening and increasing the height of the northern-most terminal groin using rip-rap armor stone from the City's small stockpile, rebuilding the north berm using beach nourishment methods, dredging the lagoon approximately 3 feet to remove deposits from tidal action, and planting wild rye grass sprigs to stabilize the inner basin slope.

Mariner Park Improvements: As one of Homer's most popular recreation areas, Mariner Park attracts campers, beach walkers, kite-flyers, trail users, birders, people with dogs, and others who come to enjoy the views and open-air recreation opportunities. Homer's growing population and tourist volume is placing greater demand on Mariner Park, increasing the need for recreation and safety enhancements. The City needs to continue to identify and prioritize improvements, and analyze how the park fits into the community's recreational activities. Several projects have been identified in the CIP. Strong public sentiment was voiced against any further expansion of the park by placing fill material in Mariner Lagoon.

1 F. Future Site Use Considerations

A final issue, important to the Land Use and Community Design discussion, are whether City leased lands are being used for their highest and best purposes, and whether some less visually attractive uses can be re-located. A couple of key issues include:

Dredge Spoils: Currently, a lot of material is dredged from the harbor entrance and it requires a large dewatering area. This should be considered when planning what to do with City owned properties, as planning and permitting for dredge spoils is a lengthy and complicated process. The City is working with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on a long-term dredge spoils plan.



Large areas must be maintained on the Spit for seasonal de-watering of dredge spoils. When de-watering is complete, the vacant site above is used for staging and parking.

Lease Renewals: As leases are renewed, particularly long-term leases, the City should consider how well the current use fits its specific parcel, and whether other activities might be better suited to the site. However, before displacing uses, impacts to the economic mix of enterprises on the entire Spit should be considered. As changes in use or lease re-negotiations occur, the following should be carefully analyzed:

- How the displacement of an existing use will impact the overall commercial/land use mix;
- Whether a historic continuity of use on a site provides an important attraction for returning and future visitors; and
- Whether the economics of the proposed activity are proven and markedly more valuable to the community than the existing use.



2. Transportation

Goals for Transportation on the Homer Spit:

- 2.1 Enhance and protect the Spit's critical role in regional marine transportation.
- 2.2 Improve traffic flow and safety on the Sterling Highway.
- 2.3 Provide adequate and safe facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- 2.4 Provide improved multi-modal transportation on and to the Spit.
- 2.5 Improve organization, wayfinding, and management of parking.



The Deep Water Dock provides a strategic port for large vessels. Although today it is primarily used for freight and cruise ship dockings, in the future it could get more use as the Northern Sea Route opens up.

2.A Marine Transportation

Comprehensive Planning for the Spit must carefully address land issues to remember that the Spit is a critical regional marine transportation link. Maintaining infrastructure, and enhancing and expanding the port facilities, freight capacity, and multi-modal access links are critical.

Multi-modal refers to the ability to move people and cargo by more than one method of transportation, such as barge, truck, air, and rail. This provides for improved transportation of goods and materials in and out of Homer, and also helps move people both regionally and along Alaska's Pacific Coast.

2.B Road and Trail Access

The City of Homer should continue to work with ADOT on use and management of the Sterling Highway right-of-way through the Spit commercial area. The proposed bike path extension was originally conceptualized to be located along the harbor basin. However, this concept creates conflicts with proposed overslope development, and safety issues with mixing bicycles, pedestrians, shoppers, and marina users.

An alternative concept would locate the bike path along the highway, with sufficient separation for the comfort and safety of pedestrians and careful placement of driveways. The bike path, situated in a median of saw grass or a rain-garden vegetated catchment system, would add natural green space and create the opportunity to define specific driveway locations for the large parking area.



The separation of parking, pedestrian areas, and traffic could improve safety and wayfinding.

2.C Parking Management

This plan recommends a number of actions to organize and manage parking on the Spit. These ideas focus on parking management, separating as much as possible different long- and short-term parking uses, redefining parking areas, and charging a fee for long-term parking. Experimenting with what works on the ground is an important element of discovering how to balance and meet the needs of the users and landowners.

Free Parking: Free 4-hour parking should be provided in key locations to support retail and commercial business on the Spit. The free parking areas should be patrolled during peak periods to enforce compliance and parking tickets issued for violations.

Permit Parking for Slip Rentals and Employees: Employees and annual slip customers should be issued permits for designated areas. The idea is not necessarily to charge a fee for this parking but rather to manage where this parking occurs. Parking for slip rentals is proposed adjacent to several of the marina ramps.

Permits for Long-Term Parking: Fee permits for those who need to leave a vehicle on the Spit for a longer term should be required. Under the current situation, people can leave a vehicle parked in some of the busiest commercial zones for up to 7 days, and it is difficult to enforce this term. There is no incentive not to leave a car on the Spit for extended periods of time. A long-term parking solution is needed.

Compress the Existing Boat Trailer Parking

Area: Currently, an area larger than required is being used for boat trailer parking. Average daily use is approximately 80 to 100 trailers parked during peak summer season, falling to a peak of 45 during fall and spring months. However, up to 165 trailer parking spaces may be required during the winter king salmon derby.

The boat trailer parking area should be compressed for better utilization, enforcement of policies, and maintenance. The area should be large enough to accommodate peak use. The land not being used for boat trailer parking can be made available for future economic development, but making the area smaller now will help identify exactly how much trailer parking is really necessary.

Parking Signage: Parking users need guidance and information to know where and how to park. Currently, parking areas are not clearly identified and policies are not well communicated. Clear identification of parking areas, occupancy rules, and fees through an attractive, informative, and consistent signage system will help resolve many of the parking problems. Information could also be provided at the launch ramp kiosk.

Create Specific Parking Lot Entrances: The large parking area that borders the west side of the harbor is wide open and vehicles can enter the parking area anywhere. This creates unsafe turning movements and confusion in the parking lot. RVs are prone to hang up on the elevation change present alongside the Spit

Road. Specific driveways should be created at key locations to control traffic flow, increase safety, and reduce confusion.

Parking Management: Parking facilities and land are valuable assets, especially on the Homer Spit, where land resources are limited. Public parking must be managed to balance the needs of the various different parking user groups. Consider creating a parking subcommittee to develop parking policies and improvement projects. Consider creating a mechanism to provide leases to private businesses to meet parking requirements.

Loading Zones and Handicap Parking: The commercial and retail businesses located on the Spit require numerous deliveries. Specific loading zones should be identified and designated. Handicap parking spaces are needed near marina ramps and retail areas. Specifically, handicap spaces are needed for the ramps on the east side of the harbor.



3. Economic Vitality

The 2008 Homer Comprehensive Plan contains a chapter exclusively on economic vitality. The goals and strategies of Chapter 8, Economic Vitality, may be applied to both the Spit and mainland area of Homer. The paragraphs following provide additional information gathered from the public meetings and comments.

Goals for Economic Development:

- 3.1 Improve the local economy and create year-round jobs by providing opportunities for new business and industrial development appropriate for the Homer Spit.



The Auction Block's Spit storefront provides a fresh catch menu, and processed items in the store front. Its web-based auction is very popular with both fishermen and fresh fish buyers.

A land use plan and map have been prepared to present recommendations (Maps 4-6, pages 44-46) supporting the goals outlined in this chapter. The plan does not make sweeping changes to the existing development pattern or use of the Spit. It does address future use of underutilized property, designates specific areas for economic development, and provides for reorganization of land use to create a community park and gathering place.

3.A Port and Harbor

The City of Homer has been attempting to secure funding for two major harbor projects including a Deep Water Dock expansion and Harbor expansion. Unfortunately, despite a long waiting list for smaller and mid-sized vessels, the Harbor expansion initiative has experienced a recent setback. The USACE



The Time Bandit, Homer's now famous contribution to the "Deadliest Catch" has generated public interest in the North Pacific fishing industry, and is a visitor attraction.

conducted an economic feasibility study of the project, which was funded jointly by the State of Alaska, USACE, and the City of Homer. The results of this study do not look favorable for harbor expansion in the short-term.

The Port is a major economic asset to the community and continued efforts should be made to maintain the port and incrementally improve it. A long range plan for the port and harbor facilities is warranted; the last plan was completed in 1984. Significant improvements have been made since then, and it is time to look forward to the next 25 years of port operations, regardless of the success of the expansion project.

3)B Multi-Seasonal Use

The Homer Spit and Harbor provide a jumping off point for many community and regional events. Events such as the Winter King Salmon Derby, Shorebird Festival, and many others, draw locals and visitors to the Spit. As a winter city, Homer should create more opportunities to make the Spit a year round destination. However, walking, running, beachcombing, and bird and mammal watching are all activities that can be enhanced for all season use.



4. Natural Environment

Goals for the Natural Environment:

- 4.1 Manage conservation areas and the natural resources of the Spit to ensure continued habitat and biological diversity.
- 4.2 Support environmentally responsible harbor operations by all user groups. Activities such as power washing and scraping, sanding



The Spit is a critical habitat area for 100,000 shorebirds in addition to other marine life. Local non-profits are playing an important role in helping to acquire and protect habitat zones.

and painting may not be allowed in the harbor in the future due to environmental regulations.

- 4.3 Manage storm water runoff.
- 4.4 Manage the Port as a working harbor, for recreational and working vessels, and remove the environmental hazard of “dead boats.”

The Homer Spit and Kachemak Bay offer rich coastal waters for marine habitat. The Spit is a premier destination for birding; waterfowl and seabirds alike populate the sparkling waters. Public comment during this plan emphasized the importance of the habitat to birds and marine mammals, and the economic benefits to the community. Preserving habitat is important to the environment and the local economy. The Shorebird Festival is an important shoulder season tourism event that draws many visitors. Many years have been spent acquiring and protecting habitat on the Spit. Most recently, the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council worked with the City to acquire land in the Louie’s Lagoon area and create conservation easements. The Kachemak Heritage Land Trust has been instrumental in partnering with the City on this project and others.

This plan makes a distinction between places for people and places for wildlife. Open space and recreational uses are meant to be areas



An important aspect of protecting the Spit's natural environment is removal of derelict boats.

for “active” recreation by people – fishing, beachcombing with the dog, etc. Goals for open space and recreation can be found under section 1, Land Use and Community Design.

Conservation areas are meant for “passive” human use, such as bird watching and photography. Conservation areas are defined through zoning, conservation easements, the Beach Policy, and the legal boundaries of the Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area. Management of conservation areas is important

because these are spaces intended to be protected for wildlife habitat. Habitat in Kachemak Bay is irreplaceable and there are few alternatives in the region. Where else will 100,000 shorebirds land in May and feed on specific beach life to fuel up for the continuation of their journey?

Harbor operations and boat owner habits also play an important role in protecting Kachemak Bay resources. The City of Homer supports the Alaska Clean Harbor Pledge, which is a list of best management practices to address topics such as cleaning agents, garbage, recycling, and storm water and sewage management. Implementation of these practices will need to come from the Port. Boat owners also have a role in greener boating practices, and are encouraged to refer to the publication “Clean Boating for Alaskans.”

Moreover, managing derelict/nuisance boats is a key concern both because of the environmental and sinking hazards of these vessels and because they occupy valuable moorage space. In 2010 a number of wrecking and disposal projects were completed including removal of the 450-foot Heavy Hauler barge.



There are many strategies for storm water management on the Spit including as rain gardens using native plants and driftwood, drainage ponds and ditches, retention of native vegetation, green roofs, and limiting of impervious surfaces.



4. Implementation

This final section provides specific objectives and strategies for meeting the vision and goals outlined in Chapter 3. The table is intended as an implementation tool over the next 20 years and/or the life of the plan. Key partners who are needed to help with implementation are listed, including the City of Homer, landowners and developers, state and federal agencies, non-profits, and local economic enterprises including the Chamber of Commerce. Cooperation and a “win-win” approach to implementation will be vital to the successful outcome of this planning effort.

“An important issue is actually implementing a plan. I remember being at Land’s End in the 1980s at a community brainstorming. There were ideas galore, wall posters full, and actually some consensus to “plan” and do. Unfortunately all these folks, including myself all went back to jobs and lives and without planning, “Coney Island” emerged.”

~ Workshop participants



1. Land Use and Community Design

Goal 1.1 Maintain the variety of land uses that establish the unique “Spit” character and mix of land uses.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Revise zoning to protect character and enhance commercial, industrial, and public facilities development	Identify appropriate residential uses on the Spit. Similar land uses (such as charter offices, boat and gear sales, tourism activities) shall be encouraged to cluster to achieve a mix of related activities and minimize adverse impacts on other activities. Consider a 25-foot building height limit, with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process for buildings up to 35 feet. Encourage all developments to provide amenities such as bike racks, benches, picnic tables, trashcans, and landscape features such as planters and art. Review Spit parking requirements and possible solutions.	Planning Department Planning Commission Port and Harbor Commission
The City should plan for the future land use of City-owned properties	Reserve and cluster industrial land at specific nodes, including east and south of harbor. Better utilize the limited land available for industrial and economic development. Reserve sufficient land by the deep water dock for future industrial development. Designate “overslope” for commercial use focus on south and west sides.	City Council Port and Harbor Commission
Address marine commercial and marine industrial zoning	Submit draft ordinance to Planning Commission and City Council. Consider zero lot line construction and the amount of right-of-way realistically needed to support specific uses at build-out.	Planning Department Planning Commission
Review land lease policy and determine impact on leasing and character of leasing	Continue reviewing lease policies periodically. City leases shall include land sufficient for businesses and minimal employee parking.	City Council
Develop standards to apply to development	Address screening of dumpsters/noxious facilities. Address standards for screening of industrial development with view protection. Explore industrial subdivision standards.	Planning Department, Commission

Goal 1.2 Improve the permanence and character of new commercial development.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Develop standards for public property development	Revisit design guidelines for overslope development to provide more specificity for development at harbor overslope, considering issues such as lot size, legal access, and parking policies.	City Council

Goal 1.3 Provide public facilities that attract residents and visitors to the Spit.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Provide amenities that aid residents and visitors	Identify locations and needs for restrooms/showers.	Port and Harbor Department, harbor users, leaseholders
Provide enhanced park and recreation facilities	Identify and prioritize public recreation needs on the spit, and include projects on the CIP. Refer to the Master Parks and Recreation Plan, chapter 7, in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. Prepare a master plan for development of a new community gathering space at the site of the existing City campground north of Freight Dock Road (pier 1 area). Provide kayak launching facilities. Set aside a new community park. Evaluate and develop a plan for non-boating access to fishing opportunities. Construct weather-protected picnic and outdoor meeting facilities. Open space recreation uses shall be encouraged on the west side of the Spit on public land.	Public Works Department/ Parks and Recreation Division Chamber of Commerce

Goal 1.4 All development should recognize, value, and complement the unique natural resources on the Homer Spit.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Preserve and protect important wildlife and bird sanctuary areas.	Require site-specific handling requirements for all runoff from parking areas. Provide information on preventing the growth of noxious weeds. Encourage the use of native plant materials for all landscaped areas. Encourage the presence of interpretive programs to identify plant and animal resources. Clearly sign beach areas designated off-limits for motorized travel.	Planning Department Parks and Recreation Division State of Alaska, DNR Parks Non-profit Organizations US Fish & Wildlife Services

Goal 1.4 All development should recognize, value, and complement the unique natural resources on the Homer Spit.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Identify private lands to become conservation areas	Buy private property from willing landowners for conservation purposes. Encourage containment and cleanup of junk. The City should pursue ownership or preservation of the west side of the Spit for open space recreation, camping, and view shed protection.	City Council
Allow the natural transport of sediments along the west side of the Spit to continue uninterrupted.	Proponents of bulkheads, groins, breakwaters, or other devices shall demonstrate that their project will not adversely disrupt this sediment transportation.	Public Works Department

Goal 1.5 Respond to seasonal land use demand fluctuations.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Ensure that high demand seasonal uses are given priority	Allow interim/temporary uses of vacant City land when they are supportive of seasonal demands (fishing, tourism, etc.). Rationalize parking areas to make sure demand is met but at the same time, reduce the overall footprint and visual impact.	Port and Harbor Commission Administration Port & Harbor Department

Goal 1.6 Protect public access to and enjoyment of the Spit's unique natural resources.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Maintain and protect traditional public use of the beaches along the Spit such as gathering coal, shellfish, fishing and other recreational activities.	Inventory and identify key traditional use areas and access routes. Obtain public ownership of land on the Spit especially focused around key sites. Conservation of the Mud Bay area of the Spit. Maintain and increase public access to the harbor and beaches to improve opportunities for fishing, and other recreational activities. Minimize conflicts between motorized and non motorized users on the Spit. Install signage to educate ATV users about responsible ATV use.	Public Works Department Parks and Recreation Planning Department Port and Harbor Commission
Protect the scenic, natural and aesthetic resources.	Encourage the build-up of driftwood on Spit Beaches. Use native landscape elements in public design projects (beach grass, driftwood).	Public Works Department Parks and Recreation Planning Department Port and Harbor Commission



2. Transportation

Goal 2.1 Enhance and protect the Spit's critical role in regional marine transportation.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Prioritize transportation and land use decisions to support waterfront dependent activities	Priority for use of the Small Boat Harbor and distal end of the Homer Spit shall be marine commercial, marine industrial (fishing), industrial transportation, waterfront tourism, and recreation (both day use and outings across the bay). Enhance the connectivity and infrastructure needed to support Deep Water Cargo activities and Main Dock Areas. The City shall reserve right-of-way for access to the east side of the harbor.	Port and Harbor Public Works Administration City Council
Balance cruise ship and other commercial activities. One should not happen at the expense of another	Improve cruise ship passenger disembarkation area by the Deep Water Dock. Create way finding kiosks along the harbor. Create a covered harbor overlook area in near ramp 7 or the Deep Water Dock and the harbor entrance. Consider temporary solutions and how to prioritize improvements for cruise ship passengers, since the number of port calls varies year to year.	Port and Harbor Public Works Administration Existing commercial/retail business owners Excursion vendors Chamber of Commerce

Goal 2.2 Improve traffic flow and safety on the Sterling Highway (Homer Spit Road).

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Maintain the capacity of the Sterling Highway (Homer Spit Road)	Limit number of access points to the Sterling Highway. Initiate a Reconnaissance Study to better define and control crossing points in the harbor commercial area. Evaluate traffic calming as an element of the Reconnaissance Study. Enter Memorandum of Agreement with ADOT&PF to address parking, maintenance, and management of the right-of-way.	ADOT Administration

Goal 2.3 Provide adequate and safe facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Provide safe walkways and trails	Develop pedestrian plan for Spit. Work with DOT on solutions such as crosswalks. Consider options for location of the bike path to best address safety and all users. Plan and design the proposed bike path extension to meet the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians. Plat easements for walkways in commercial areas and along overslope area. Require provision of connectivity between adjacent commercial properties in permit process/zoning language. Connect harbor to Seafarers Memorial with trail. The City shall reserve 15' pedestrian/safety rights-of-way and access for overslope development around the periphery of the small boat harbor. Construct pedestrian pathway around northerly harbor rim.	Public Works Department Planning Department Port & Harbor Dept

Goal 2.4 Provide improved multi-modal transportation on and to the Spit.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Support year round car ferry service to the outlying communities of Kachemak Bay	Participate in a public or private task force or organization.	City Council Economic Development Commission, Chamber of Commerce Administration
Encourage a shuttle bus system during peak summer months to transport visitors and employees to town, lodging and remote parking.	Participate in a public or private task force or organization. Create business plan/model to determine funding/cash flow.	

Goal 2.5 Improve organization, wayfinding, and location of parking and harbor facilities

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Better define parking locations	Separate long-term parking from short-term/day use parking. Designate specific areas for RV parking. Provide loading zones for delivery trucks and motor coaches in the retail district. Implement a fee and permit system for long term parking.	Port and Harbor Planning Department
Provide coherent wayfinding system for parking, and restrooms	Establish a consistent theme for all parking graphics and signage. Develop color or other graphic/design feature to clearly indicate intended use. Clearly identify City of Homer as owner and requirements for use of lots. Clearly label all ramps so they are visible from the roads and parking lots. Create a kiosk or signage at each ramp and restroom showing the layout of the harbor, and parking in the immediate area of the user.	Port and Harbor Planning Department
Define loading and unloading areas	Create a bus loading zone near the harbormasters office. Analyze options for a turn around/cul-de-sac/roundabout at End of the Road Park.	Port and Harbor ADOT City Council



3. Economic Vitality

Goal 3.1 Improve the local economy and create year-round jobs by providing opportunities for new business and industrial development appropriate for the Homer Spit.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Enhance the circulation and safety in the fish dock area	Create site-specific land use study for fish dock/processing/ice house area. Develop appropriate safety measures on Fish Dock Road. Construct an observation deck near the Fish Dock.	Port and Harbor Dept Parks and Recreation

Goal 3.1 Improve the local economy and create year-round jobs by providing opportunities for new business and industrial development appropriate for the Homer Spit.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Enhance east harbor area for industrial use	Review zoning for adequacy of provisions for industrial growth. Compress trailer parking to ensure there is no encroachment into needed industrial reserve lands. Expand the port facilities and freight capacity for improved transportation of goods and materials in and out of Homer. Expand and improve the deep water dock and other related port facilities. Improve Outer Dock Road.	Public Works Planning Department Port and Harbor
Determine economic development opportunities for “value added” growth such as processing, small scale local retail, and restaurants serving local products	Encourage development related to the fishing, fish processing, and boating industries. Host economic development forum and determine opportunities for value added growth.	Alaska Economic Development Corporation Planning Department Chamber of Commerce Processing plant managers/operators
Determine incentives needed to promote Overslope development	Analyze and develop market plan for development. Determine alternate incentives that would encourage growth. Identify sources of funding or implementation actions for identified incentives.	Public Works Department Port and Harbor Commission Alaska State DEC Finance Department



4. Natural Environment

Goal 4.1 Manage conservation areas and the natural resources of the Spit to ensure continued habitat and biological diversity.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Minimize human impact on conservation areas.	Avoid development on city owned tidelands adjacent to Conservation areas, such as Louie’s Lagoon and Mud Bay. Minimize all development that is not marine related within the Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area, defined as below the 17.4 ft mean high tide. Improvements to public lands should focus active recreation on the west side of the Spit, Mariner Park, and south of the Fishing Lagoon.	Port and Harbor Dept Parks and Recreation

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Purchase or obtain conservation easements on private lands on the Spit, such as between north of the hockey rink, and the base of the Spit.	Work with willing land owners to conserve land through methods such as conservation easements, or public or nonprofit ownership. Consider purchasing first right of refusal options, right of occupancy for remainder of lifetime or other less traditional methods that will ensure conservation of the properties at some point in the future.	Public Works Planning Department Port and Harbor

Goal 4.2 Support environmentally responsible harbor operations by all user groups. Activities such as power washing and scraping, sanding and painting may not be allowed in the harbor in the future due to environmental regulations.

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Support and implement the Alaska Clean Harbor Pledge	Implement relevant portions of Chapter 9 Energy, from the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, such as energy efficient public buildings, recycling and solid waste management. Implement a bilge water management program. Pursue public education on boat cleaning agents, to reduce the use of harsh chemicals such as bleach.	Public Works Planning Department Port and Harbor
Support the concepts presented in “Clean Boating for Alaskans”	Continue to support environmentally responsible boating habits. Partner with harbor user groups on public education and providing appropriate facilities.	Port and Harbor Harbor user groups

Goal 4.3 Manage Storm Water Runoff

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Address stormwater issues, puddling, and erosion	Explore better parking lot maintenance and storm water management approaches such as rain gardens, settling ponds and shallow ditches. Use to also help define parking areas, particularly where winter maintenance is not needed. Parking revenues could be used to help pay for these projects. Create a spit drainage and grading plan. Drainage needs to be planned and implemented block by block rather than haphazardly for all properties.	Public Works Port and Harbor

Goal 4.4 Manage the Port as a working harbor, for both recreational and working vessels

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Remove derelict vessels	Continue to get rid of boats not paying moorage; the harbor is not a storage facility or museum. Harbor expansion is expensive; the harbor should be fully utilized by active users. Dead boats can also be an environmental hazard if no one is responsible for making sure they don't sink or leak.	Public Works Port and Harbor

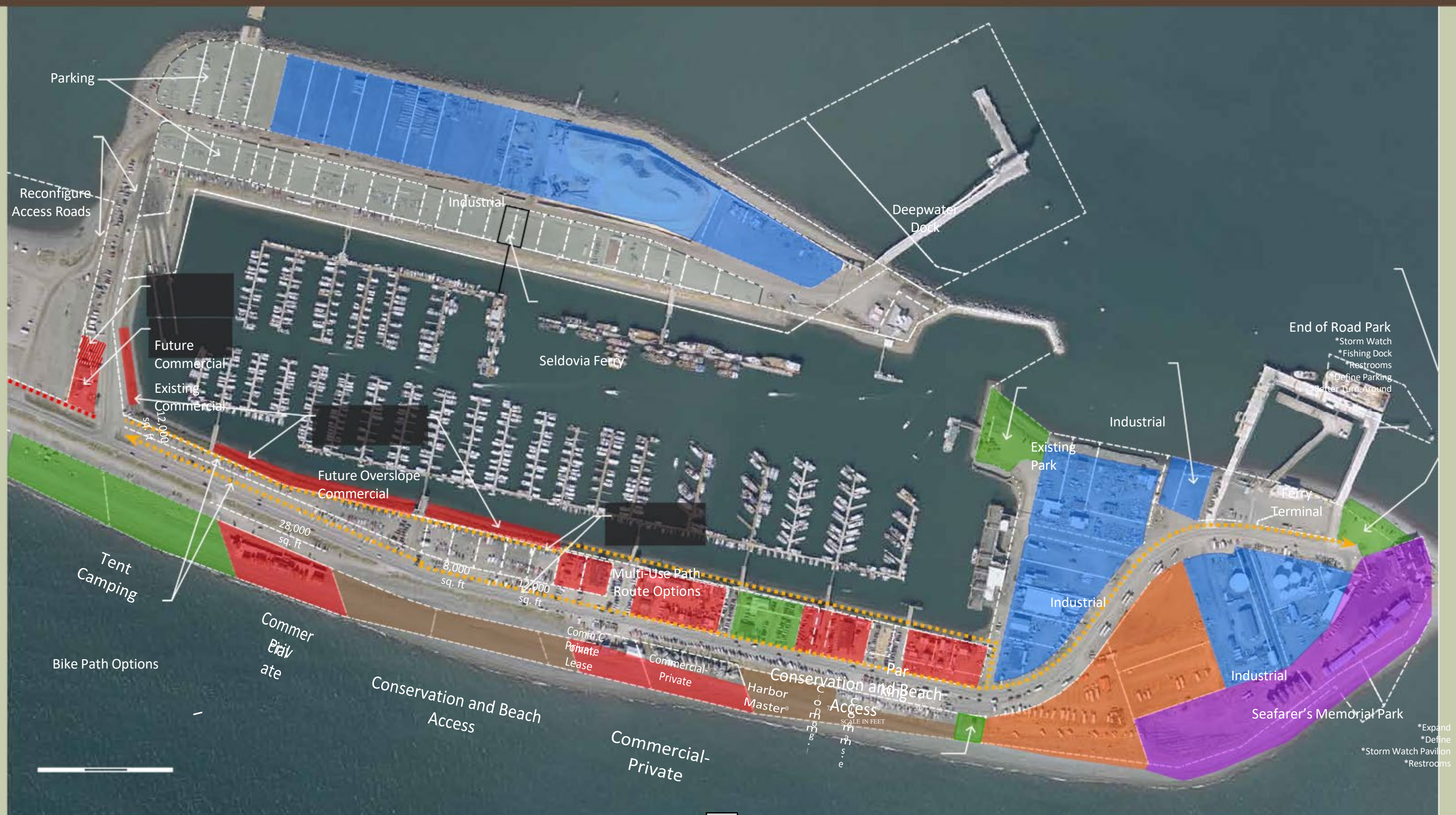
Map 3: CURRENT LAND OWNERSHIP



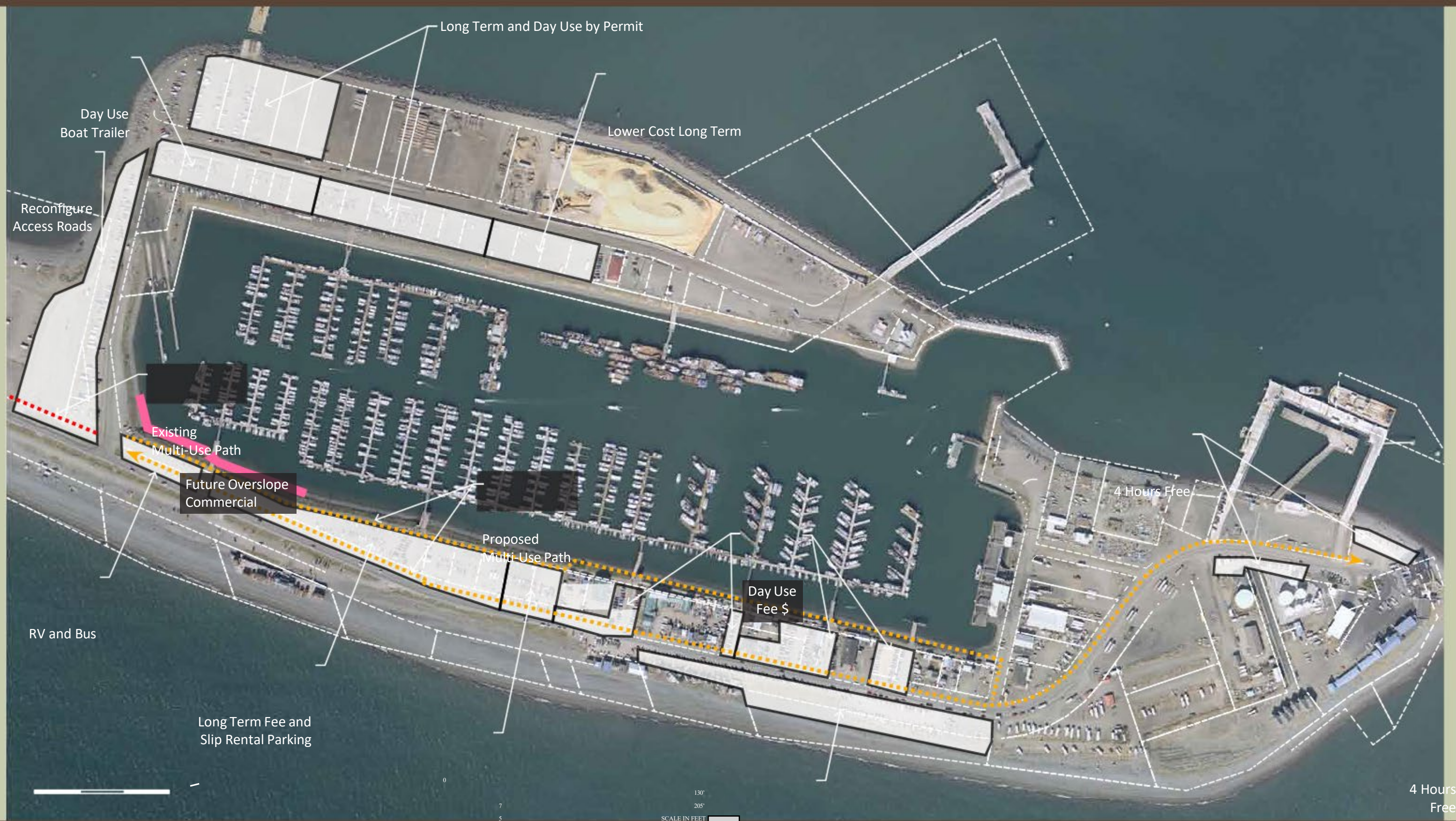
Map 4: FUTURE LAND USE



Map 5: FUTURE LAND USE CONCEPT ENLARGEMENT



Map 6: FUTURE PARKING CONCEPT





City of Homer

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

Office of the City Clerk

491 East Pioneer Avenue

Homer, Alaska 99603

clerk@cityofhomer-ak.gov

(p) 907-235-3130

(f) 907-235-3143

Memorandum

Agenda Changes/Supplemental Packet

TO: PORT & HARBOR ADVISORY COMMISSION
FROM: ZACH PETTIT, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I
DATE: MAY 14, 2024
SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL

DISCUSSION TOPIC(S)

- C. Attachement and Linked Blog Post from Commissioner Shavelson regarding Homer's Future **Page 3**
- D. Homer Comprehensive Plan Rewrite Community Snapshot **Page 9**

From: [Bob Shavelson](#)
To: [Zach Pettit](#)
Subject: Fwd: Weigh in on Homer's Future
Date: Monday, May 13, 2024 8:11:54 AM
Attachments: [image.png](#)
[image.png](#)
[image.png](#)
[2024-4 Harbor Expansion Opinion .pdf](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Hi Zach -

Would you please print the attachment and the linked blog post for everyone at the comp plan work session? If that does not work for you, please forward this email.

Thank you -

Bob

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Kachemak Bay Conservation Society <kbayconservation@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, May 13, 2024 at 8:00 AM
Subject: Weigh in on Homer's Future
To:

Weigh in on Homer's Future



This is someone's vision of the future of Homer back in the 80s--a little reminder of the need to participate in our City of Homer Comprehensive Plan Update, and the follow-up code-writing process (next year).

Take 15-20 minutes to complete [the community survey](#).

Open Hours with the Comprehensive Plan Project Team at the Homer Library Conference Room.

Tuesday, May 14: 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 15: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 16: 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

<https://homercompplanupdate.com/>

Here is some food for thought on some of the issues facing Homer:



Protect our Invaluable Green Infrastructure

As you have surely noticed, some Florida developer clear-cut about 5 acres just north of the Calvin and Coyle Trails before their development plans had even been approved. The issues of clear cutting, road and culvert design, impacts to wetlands and moose habitat of this development are problems all over greater Homer:

- We need at least 100' buffers around our important creeks and wetlands. This is about habitat, erosion, and flooding, and the quality of the water that runs into other people's property, and eventually into Kachemak Bay. Riparian ecosystems are priority habitats because their composition, structure, and functions dramatically affect a multitude of fish, amphibian, bird, mammal, and invertebrate species. Although they are a small portion of the landscape, approximately 85% of wildlife species use them. Buffers are also essential in preventing flooding and erosion. [Learn more about buffers here.](#)
- Developers should have to have a plat approved before they go ahead and clear-cut the land, ditch it, fill and grade it.
- People should not be allowed to cut, fill and ditch land in such a way as to harm (eg. flood, erode or damage water quality) of downstream and property owners. This could be achieved through a city fill and grade permit, which we don't have right now.
- Housing developments like the one going in above the Calvin and Coyle Trail system should have to maintain some natural habitat/water management no matter where they are. Homer needs codes concerning conservation of living trees in city subdivisions. A code required number of trees/acre left standing should be created.

More wetlands and forested areas in town should be zoned as "conservation" so that they can do all the good work of green infrastructure--prevent erosion, flooding, water quality issues and maintain habitat.

- We need more than the current 40 ft setback from the steep slopes, and it should include protections for trees that are holding the bluff together.
- Green Infrastructure/Nature-Based Solutions are endorsed by FEMA, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the EPA as the preferred path to effective and affordable stormwater management. Homer can do better!
- The best way to really protect land is to buy and conserve it. [Here is a nifty and effective mechanism to make that happen](#)-- also works for conserving farm land!!
- We need to reduce the use of Conditional Use Permits (CUPs), which are basically a back door for big developers to get around our codes--in boring meetings where nobody attends, CUPs allow us cumulatively lose what makes Homer special.



Large-scale harbor expansion? NO.

- This half-baked, astronomically expensive, "build it and they will come" plan stands to bankrupt the city, help wipe out whatever fish remain in the bay, over-run an already over-run spit, and do nothing to tackle the biggest problem for folks in the trades - *cost of housing*. Did someone say [boondoggle](#)?
- A large-scale expansion of the harbor—with significantly more industrial activity—could have wide-ranging implications for the fabric of our town, from cruise ships, to drawing down our limited drinking water supplies, to increased development.
- For a deeper dive into the range of issues with the proposed expansion [please see our blog post here](#).

Walk the Walk on Climate Change

- Require that all city project bids--think putting a new roof on a school, etc.-- should be based on a [life-cycle assessment](#), which bakes in the cost of heating and maintaining the structure.
- The City should invest in renewable energy--rooftop solar and small solar farms. There are lots of good grant opportunities out there and the city is letting them pass by.
- Incentivize renewable energy for local businesses.
- Plan for increased drought in the summer and flooding in the winter--back to green Infrastructure

Sustainable Tourism

- Sustainable Tourism is defined by the UN World Tourism Organization as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts,

addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”

- NO CRUISE SHIPS is a good start.

Non-Resident Owners

- Non-resident owners are an important driver of the recent rapid development--and spike in property prices--in this town.
- If you talk to contractors, there has not been a building boom quite like this one since the 1960s. Folks in the planning department say that we are building 40-60 homes a year.
- According to the Economic Development office, approximately half of these homes are for people who live here. Another 25% are summer or second homes, and the last 25% might be rental units or air bnb.
- We should be [taxing non-resident owners](#), like they do in Hawaii and North Carolina.
- We should not allow Air BnB's with absentee owners to operate in residential neighborhoods--[just like a normal BnB or other "Home Business"](#).

This is a small town and we won't all agree about everything, but it is worth trying to discuss differences. If there are ideas in here that you think need to be reevaluated and would like to discuss further, please reach out.

In love and respect for our shared home,

Penelope Haas

--

Kachemak Bay Conservation Society
Homer, Alaska

kbayconservation@gmail.com

<http://www.kbayconservation.org>

alaskansknowclimatechange.com

--

Bob Shavelson
bobshavelson@gmail.com
907.299.3277

This week, the City of Homer is sending representatives to the State Legislature to ask for additional funding for the US Army Corps of Engineers Homer Harbor expansion feasibility study project, and we are preparing to send lobbyists to Washington DC. The study we started last year ran out of funding and we need more to continue. The Kachemak Bay Conservation Society (KBCS) believes that the City's pursuit of a large-scale expansion deserves careful scrutiny on a number of levels.

Number one, there isn't evidence of any significant future increase in demand for large vessel moorage. The City is advocating for moorage for 160-200 vessels of up to 250', but they have precious little evidence to support any demand at that scale. Yes, large vessels pass through Homer on their way to Western AK, but where is the evidence of increased traffic in the future? Where is the list of hundreds of large vessels waiting to tie up in Homer? In 2019, the Corps of Engineers published a survey of about a thousand large vessel owners who were asked if they would bring their boats to Homer, and 2 –yes, 2– said they would. Most big boats in the Homer Harbor now work in Alaska fisheries, and the City is not considering the implications of fishery declines across Alaska. It is tragic that climate change gives Alaska fisheries a poor outlook, but we must nonetheless account for negative implications of this trend for large vessel demand going forward. A warming ocean is bringing many of our fisheries to their knees, with shut-downs in crab, cod, and salmon in recent years. Our own Kachemak Bay is facing reduced numbers of halibut, rockfish and King Salmon. At last year's ComFish meeting, Senator Murkowski said Alaska fisheries are in a crisis. This past December, Trident announced that it would be closing its Alaskan assets in Kodiak, Ketchikan, Petersburg, and False Pass, as well as the South Naknek Diamond NN cannery facility and its support facilities in Chignik. Outlook is not good for the Alaska fisheries, and horrible as it is, we have to reckon with it.

Second, neither Homer nor the State of Alaska can afford the proposed large-scale expansion. Consider that Nome's bill for a deepwater port expansion stands at \$600 million today, and that number doesn't include all the "accessories" like floats or power, or the maintenance costs, all of which are up to the local sponsor. We need honest, concrete assessments of the full cost to the City and State of development and maintenance, including power, water, road, additional parking, dredging, the possible haul out facility people keep talking about as a job-maker. The sooner we get a handle on all these costs the better, as they they will likely be unaffordable. Homer is far from being able to afford repairs to our *existing* harbor – estimated at over \$73 million – and folks are already grumbling about increased parking and slip fees. Homer residents don't want to be strapped with the bills associated with a large-scale expansion for which there is no clear demand. The Legislature is struggling to find funding for our schools and roads, and it is very likely that we can't afford this extravagant pipe dream. The city council should direct HDR, the contractors we paid \$400,000 to help with the investigation, to get a handle on likely costs to the City and State, as well as marking out clearly limitations that would be cost-prohibitive to alter (like road width, parking, and water supply) associated with the City's proposed harbor expansion now.

Third, the implicit intent of the City of Homer to compete with ports in Anchorage, Whittier, Seward, and Nome for freight and with Kodiak and Seward for large-vessel haul-out work is misguided. Operators of the large vessel haul out facilities in both Seward and Kodiak have said in no uncertain terms that there *is not* excess demand for large-vessel work, and that they themselves do not have waiting lists. When a Homer City Council Member was asked how we could justify constructing another port for freight when we already have cities on the rail system, Anchorage, Whittier, and Seward, they responded that we need to be prepared in the event of an earthquake. KBCS sees this as a pretty flimsy answer that gravely underestimates the cost of construction and maintenance, but we have yet to hear a better one. Homer is just as susceptible to earthquakes as any of these locations and is much farther from the center of commerce.

Lastly, a large number of Homer residents do not want a significant expansion of our harbor. Adding 160-200 large vessels and 250 smaller vessels that could go where the big boats are now is unpopular—cost aside—because many believe it would have undesirable impacts on housing, roads, parking, tourism, environment, available water, and quality of life. Unfortunately, we have spent about a million City dollars exploring the possibility of a large-scale harbor expansion without *first asking the public* if this is what we want to spend our money on or if this is the direction we want to go. There should have been a poll or a general vote before spending extravagant sums of money to pursue expansion. Now would be a good time to get a poll like that out there. And make sure to ask people: A) Do you want this? B) Do you want to *pay for it*? C) How do you rank the importance of this issue vs. other issues? We need this information, because the city's ongoing prioritization of the harbor expansion is taking precious resources (think dollars, grant-writing, staff time, travel, and lobbyist dollars) away from other priorities like affordable housing, recreation facilities and trails, schools, clean water habitat protection, roads, our climate action plan, and so much more.

Penelope Haas,
Vice-President Kachemak Bay Conservation Society

The Kachemak Bay Conservation Society's mission is to protect the environment of the Kachemak Bay region and greater Alaska by encouraging sustainable use and stewardship of natural resources through advocacy, education, information, and collaboration.



1. Introduction

Project Purpose

The City of Homer is updating the [2018 Comprehensive Plan](#) to recognize and celebrate what we have **accomplished**, to address new **challenges and opportunities** for our community, and to coordinate efforts to **achieve our shared vision for a future Homer**. The Comprehensive Plan will serve as a **community resource** and **guide** for community leaders, residents, and other partners to protect what residents value most about Homer while enhancing the quality of life for current and future residents.

*This comprehensive plan rewrite is **Phase 1** of a two-phased project. In **Phase 2**, the project team will work closely with the City of Homer to update the City's zoning code, Title 21, to support the land use recommendations in the updated plan.*

What is a comprehensive plan?

A combination of **long-term goals** and **short-term strategies** that will **guide decisions** about land use, housing, public services and infrastructure, transportation, economic development, health and wellness, sustainability, resilience and climate change, quality of life, and more. The plan provides a road map for implementation with clear priorities and action items. The **Future Land Use Map** in the comprehensive plan will provide a blueprint that sets **intent** for how the area will accommodate change and meet resident needs.

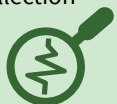
What is a zoning code?

Zoning code and the zoning map are local laws governing **how land is used or developed**, where and how buildings are sited, and other rules related to how a property functions. Zoning is the tool used for achieving the intent set by the comprehensive plan and goals set in the Future Land Use map.

Project Schedule

FEBRUARY 2024

- Project kick-off
- Steering Committee kick-off and initial meetings to map out public participation plan
- Background research and data collection



MARCH & APRIL 2024

- Resident, community leader, and partner interviews; small group discussions
- Community survey launch
- **COMMUNITY VISIT #1:** Introduce process, gather initial input on community vision, open house



MAY 2024

- **COMMUNITY VISIT #2:** Share and get input on emerging findings via this "Community Snapshot" that includes an initial summary of community input
- Interactive comment map launch



SUMMER-FALL 2024

- Survey and comment map close
- Ongoing outreach
- Develop growth scenarios to explore different options and identify preferred scenario for Homer's future
- Public Review Draft Plan release (by early October)
- **COMMUNITY VISITS #3 & #4:** Share and get feedback on draft plan; select preferred growth scenario



WINTER 2024

- **COMMUNITY VISIT #5:** Provide information during public hearings on plan adoption
- Revision and adoption process
- Bring the plan to life! (City and partners)



What information has informed this snapshot?

- Emerging survey results (260 responses as of May 13, 2024)
- Community Visit #1 results
- Planning Commission and City Council member interviews
- Existing community and regional plans
- Population and economic data

How to get involved

- The project team will be in Homer May 13-16, 2024 with drop-in hours for residents during the week (details on project website).
- Visit the project website: www.homercompplanupdate.com.
- Take the [Community Survey](#) available on the website or in hard copy at City Hall. The survey closes on June 21st!
- **Coming Soon!** Check the project website for the **Homer Interactive Comment Map** to provide your location-specific suggestions.
- Follow the City of Homer on Facebook: www.facebook.com/cityofhomerak/.
- Contact the project team:

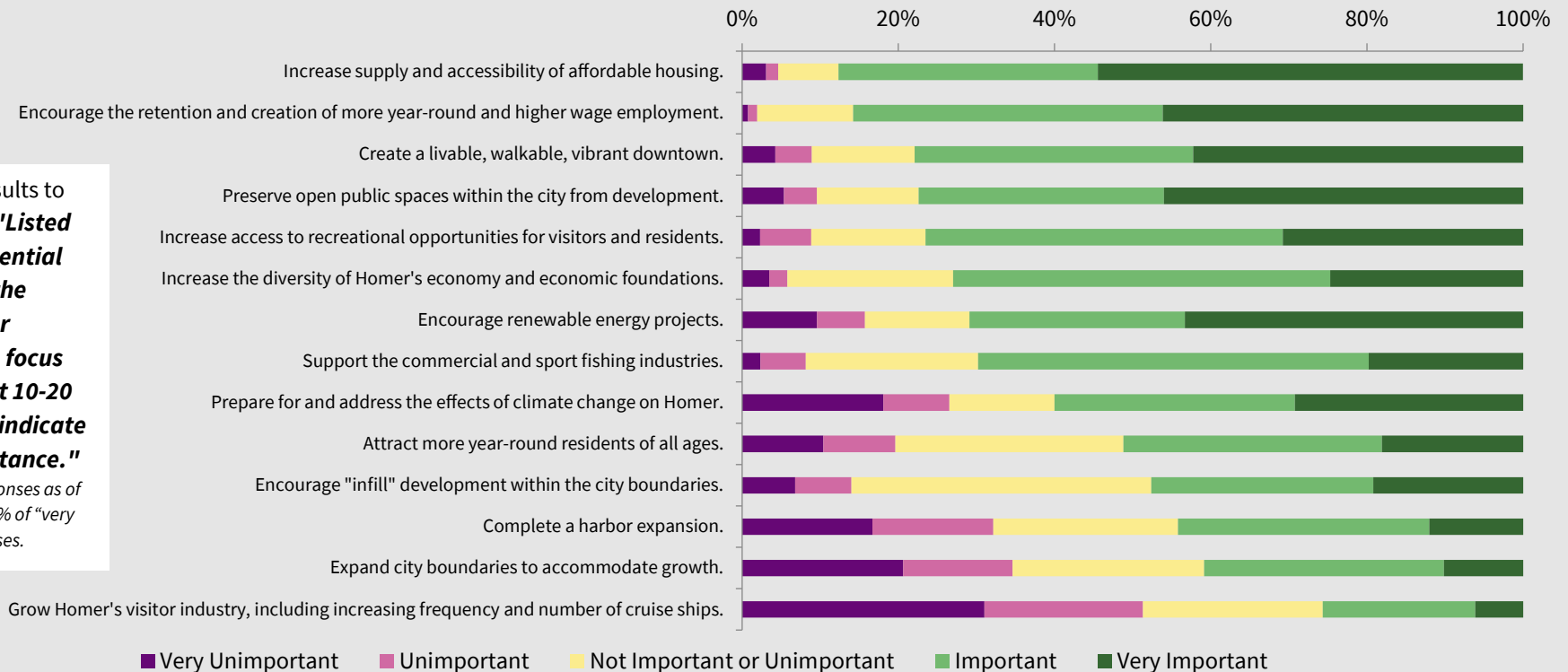
Ryan Foster, City of Homer Planner, rfoster@ci.homer.ak.us, 907-299-8529 | **Shelly Wade**, Project Consultant, shelly@agnewbeck.com, 907-242-5326



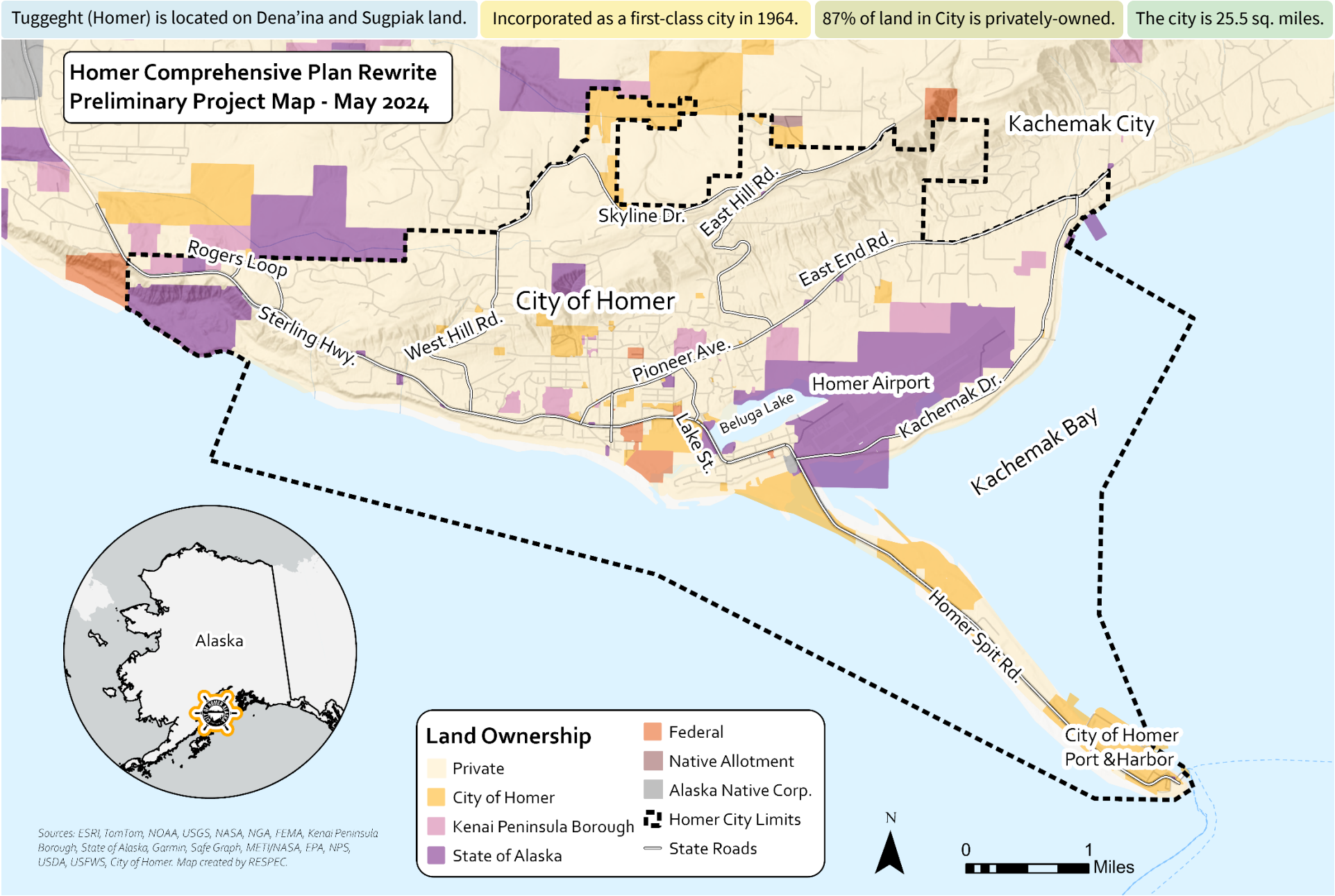
Take the survey!

Emerging community survey results. It's not too late to share your feedback! Respond by June 21st.

Preliminary results to the question: **"Listed below are potential priorities for the greater Homer community to focus on for the next 10-20 years. Please indicate level of importance."**
Featuring 262 responses as of 5/13/24. Sorted by % of "very important" responses.



2. Project Area Quick Facts and Map

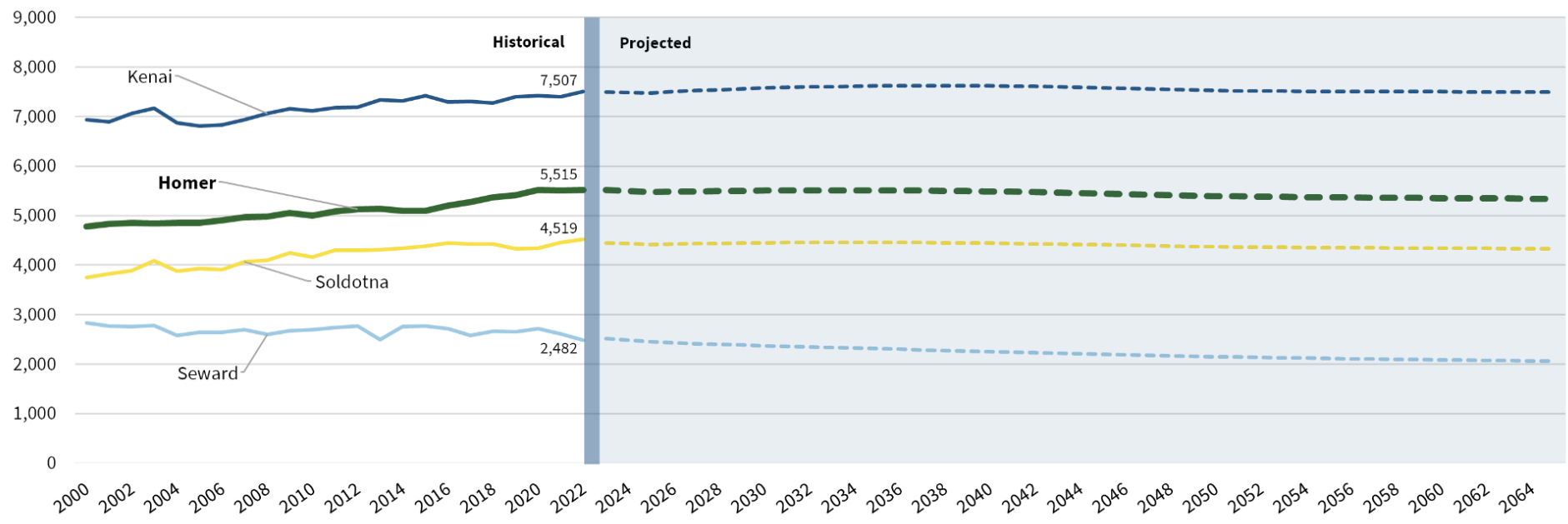


3. About Homer: Who are we? How have we changed over the past 10 years? Arrows depict trends from 2013-2022

OUR PEOPLE

Total population: 5,515  7%
Predicted population growth:  3% by 2050
Median age: 40.8  4%
Ages 65+: 22% of population  8%
School enrollment: 1,745  5%

Historical and Forecasted Populations for Homer and Comparison Cities in the Kenai Peninsula Borough



At-A-Glance Homer History (adapted from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan)

- Home to Indigenous people for over 8,000 years; archeological evidence of campsites on the Spit.
- 1896 – Homer Pennock arrived with a crew of 50 gold miners and developed a small settlement on the Spit.
- Early 1900s to today – fishing developed into an important industry.
- 1964 – Year of city’s incorporation and the Good Friday earthquake, which devastated Seldovia’s waterfront; the Spit also subsided several feet.
- 1989 – Exxon Valdez oil spill impacted Homer’s coastline
- 2002 – Annexation of 4.6 sq. miles.

OUR ECONOMY

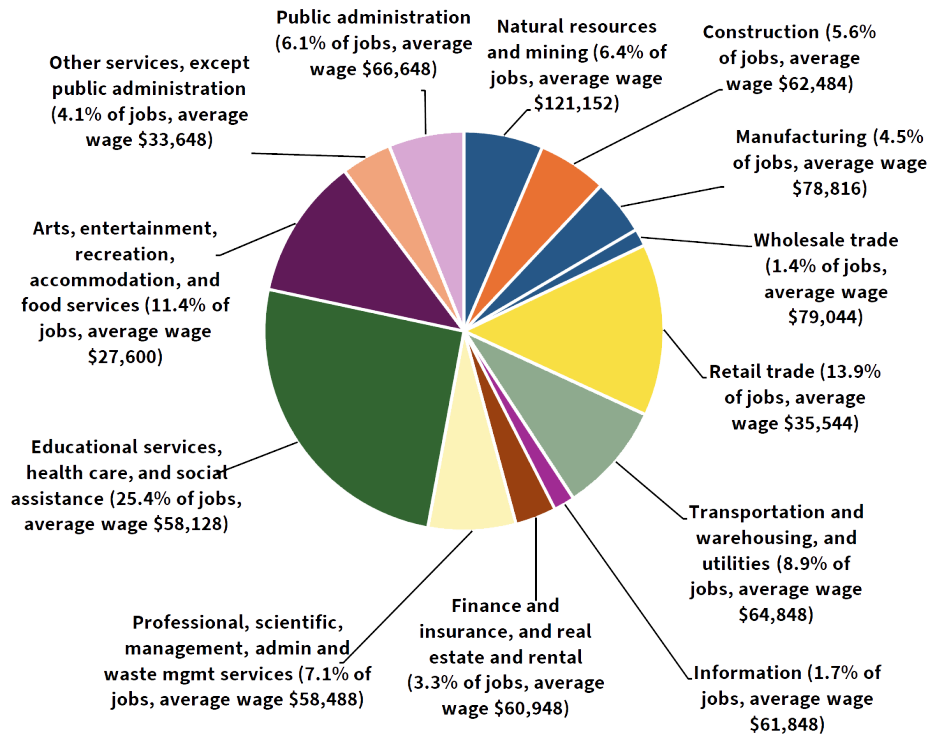
Median annual household income (inflation-adjusted): \$69,757  30%

Estimated gross earnings for commercial fisherman: \$117,873,969  42%

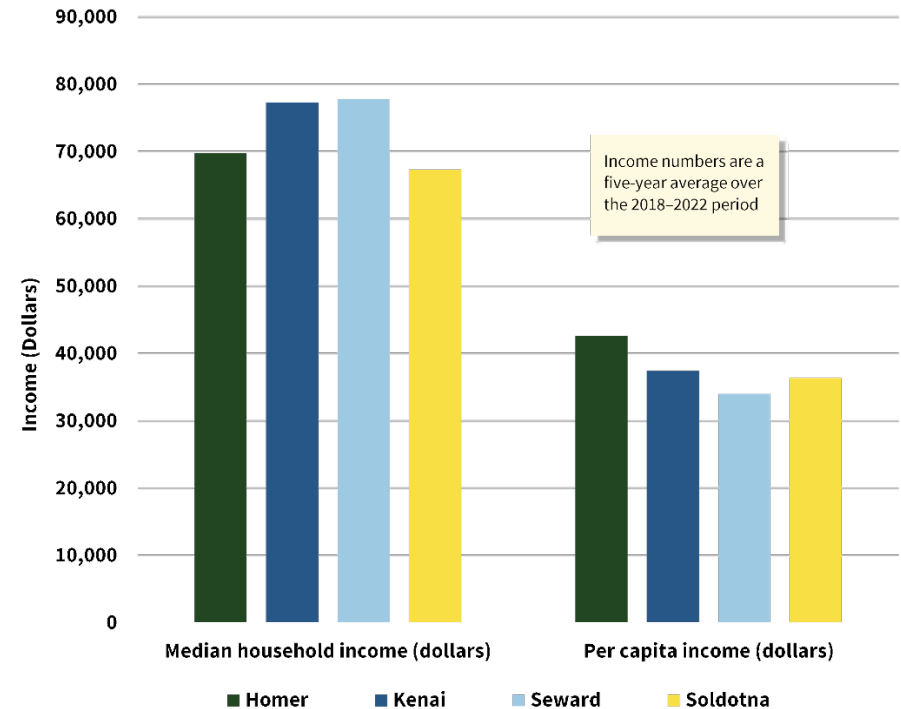
Annual unemployment rate: 5.4%  43%

Top industry: Education, health care & social assistance

Percentage of Homer Workforce by Industry



Income in Homer and Comparison Communities



Sources for pages 5 and 6: Homer Comprehensive Plan (History), 2018; Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2022; US Census Bureau American Community Survey: 2022, 2013 (ACS 5-Year Estimates), Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, 2022, and Northern Economic Analysis, 2024; ADOLWD Current Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages; Northern Economics Analysis, 2024

4. What We've Learned So Far

Preliminary Responses from Homer Community Survey, May 13, 2024

What We Value Most About Homer (Our Values & Strengths)

The natural beauty and wild areas.	Access to the outdoors.	Friendly and supportive atmosphere, with a variety of volunteer groups and community programs.	The tight-knit community and small-town feeling.	The arts, culture, and non-profit activities.
				
<i>I value . . .</i> “My dog being able to run free on the beach and my neighborhood.” “Having a public radio station and coffee shops.” <i>” ‘Small-town’ feel, meaning we are not a severely urbanized location.”</i>				

What Can Make Life Challenging in Homer (Our Challenges & Opportunities for Change)

Lack of attainable and available housing.	High cost of living.	Lack of pedestrian options/access and limited public transportation.	Threats to green space from over-development.	Visitor industry growth and potential for overcrowding.
				
<i>It's challenging when . . .</i> “I want accountability when people are building complexes and have green spaces for people to walk around in.” “The more you push for tourism the more we will raise cost of living and burden locals and the traditions like commercial fishing.” “No recreation/community center for gatherings.” <i>“We avoid the Spit in the summer. It's crowded and there's no parking. Bathrooms are closed to residents in the off season.”</i>				

5. Potential Goals and Priorities/Projects by Focus



Land Use & Environment



Potential Goal: Land use policies promote quality of life, environmental health, and a resilient community.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Incorporate resilient practices, such as low-impact development, in land use policy.
- Continue to evaluate the vulnerability of critical infrastructure to natural disasters and processes such as tsunamis and erosion. Use this information to develop adaptation measures that ensure critical community facilities remain operational even during emergencies.
- Identify tools to guide growth within Homer and understand the community-wide impacts of actions on individual lots. Investigate incentives to encourage greater density, infill, and mixed-use development in already developed areas.
- Update wetlands dataset to better inform developability of and the need to protect various areas throughout the City of Homer.
- Ensure land use and transportation planning are aligned to encourage development in desired areas, support non-motorized transportation, and mitigate traffic and user conflicts.



Housing



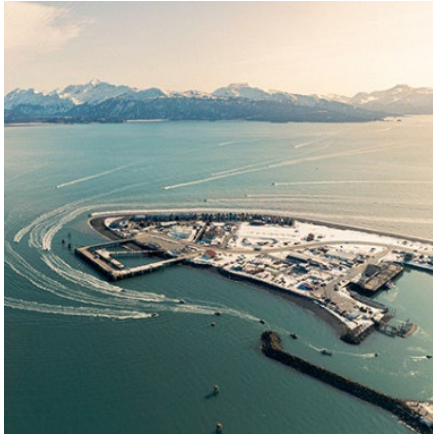
Potential Goal: Increase opportunities for affordable housing that addresses the needs of all residents.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Complete a Housing Needs Assessment that identifies the number and types of housing units needed in the community to serve the projected population growth.
- Provide incentives for development and making more long-term rental units available including possible property tax incentives, public-private partnerships with acquiring land for development, and starting a local housing fund through the city.
- Encourage housing development and availability on suitable land through zoning provisions.
- Build public-private partnerships with organizations that influence housing development, such as contractors, nonprofits, and lending agencies.
- Maintain consistent data collection to monitor housing needs and progress.



Public Services & Infrastructure



Potential Goal: Services and infrastructure are right-sized for community needs, regularly maintained, and not place an undue cost burden on individual property owners.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- City-managed properties should be accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- Infrastructure should support an aging population.
- Evaluate the possibility of creating a designated fund for park staff and grounds maintenance.
- Update the Sewer and Water Master Plan.
 - Revisit system capacity and expansion.
 - Develop a plan to address inflow & infiltration issues.
- Reevaluate funding sources for road maintenance to allow for sustainable, long-term maintenance.



Transportation



Potential Goal: Expand and maintain safe transportation options for all ages, abilities, and modes.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Implement the recommendations in transportation plan.
- Develop low stress walking and biking networks in key areas.
- Improve year-round maintenance for all modes of transportation (walking, biking, ADA accessibility, vehicles).
- Expand connected network of roads, trails, and sidewalks.
- Support transit options.
- Incorporate recommendations from the Homer Wayfinding Plan.



Economic Development



Potential Goal: Maintain a diversified economy where wages and jobs can support the high cost of living in Homer.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Create policies that define a “town center” to drive commerce, business, and resident and visitor services.
- Develop a “downtown plan” to infill land, support new and existing business, and create a walkable town center.
- Grow emerging industries including the retail arts, marine trades, construction, and other trades.
- Grow public transportation to aid in economic development for both residents and visitors.
- Prioritize accessibility in new and existing facilities for both residents and visitors.



Health & Wellness



Potential Goal: Residents are healthy and thriving, with access to needed services.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

Implement the top priorities of the 2023 Homer Community Health Needs Assessment, including:

- Increase access to mental/emotional/substance abuse health services.
- Create opportunities for affordability housing options.
- Provide more opportunities for Childcare services.
- Ensure more mental health resources for our youth.



Sustainability, Resilience, & Climate Change



Potential Goal: Sustainability and resilience are considered in all long-term planning and policies to benefit current and future generations of Homer residents.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Review mitigation and adaptation measures in the Climate Action Plan and Progress Report that have not yet been implemented. In particular:
 - Update Title 21 to allow for greater density, infill, and mixed-use development in key areas to promote healthy community growth.
 - Pursue LEED for Cities/Communities (LfC) certification or incorporate LfC standards into policy and planning decisions.
 - Explore alternative energy production opportunities.
- Implement projects identified in the 2024 Transportation Plan, 2007 Climate Action Plan, and 2004 Non-Motorized Transportation and Trail Plan to improve mass transit and non-motorized transportation infrastructure.
- Integrate “green infrastructure” policies throughout land use, transportation, and public services focus areas.



Quality of Life



Potential Goal: Support walkability, affordability, and accessibility for all ages.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Expand activities and opportunities for our youth.
- Ensure services and infrastructure support our aging population.
- Maintain access to outdoor recreation and develop new recreation places, such as an indoor gym.
- Develop policies that promote increased access to childcare.

Preliminary Survey Results:

What is your preference for community or economic growth in Homer?

Community Survey, Preliminary Results, May 13, 2024

