

HOMER SPIT

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

We Want Your Input on this Public Review Draft!

Help shape future goals and decisions about the Spit by providing input on this draft plan in several ways:

- ✓ Public Meeting - October 13, 2010 6:00 - 8:30 pm
Cowles Council Chamber, 491 E Pioneer Ave
- ✓ Written Public comments due November 10th
c/o project consultant: Sara Wilson Doyle
swdoyle@uskh.com • fax: 907.376.7819
USKH 351 W. Parks Hwy., Ste. 200, Wasilla, AK 99654
- ✓ Attend Future Planning Commission Meetings - testify at
a Planning Commission Hearing Decem)ber 1st.

If you have questions or for more information call:
Sara Wilson Doyle 1-888-706-USKH (8754)



City of Homer, Alaska
PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

September 28, 2010



Acknowledgements

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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

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City of Homer, Alaska

PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

September 28, 2010

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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





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

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 four 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 provided 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 featured a time for drop-in informal discussion (3:00 to 5:00 pm) and then a presentation and planning workshop (6:30 pm to 8:30 pm). These open house events included opportunities to comment on maps of the Spit, a presentation about the planning process, and comments/suggestions from participants. In addition,



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.

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.

From 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.
- Concern about future residential developments.

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

~ Workshop participant

- 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).

We Want Your Input on this Draft Plan PUBLIC MEETING

Wednesday, October 13, 2010

**6:00 - 8:30 pm City Hall, Cowles Council
Chamber, 491 E Pioneer Avenue**

In terms of the overall planning process, the Spit Comprehensive Plan process has followed a progression of research, community participation, study and brainstorming. Listed below are the major steps that lead to a final plan for 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
- Final Plan

Currently, the project is at the Draft Comprehensive Plan stage and is ready to be broadly circulated for community review, edits, and the fleshing out of more detail at a public meeting around a few key issues. The Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan will be the end product of this planning progression, and will strongly reflect input from citizens, the Spit business community, the Planning Commission, and city staff.



2. Background Data & Existing Conditions

The Homer Economy

The economy of Homer and 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 is a major land use. Camping 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 8-9. The table and pie chart at right show the approximate distribution of land uses on the Homer Spit by its major category. Note that many tidal lands that make up portions of parcels within the acreage are unusable.

Within the City of Homer's existing zoning code there are currently four designations that apply to the Homer Spit. These are Marine Commercial (MC), Marine Industrial (MI), Open Space-Recreational (OSR), and Conservation (CO). The code along with a current zoning map are included in Appendix A.

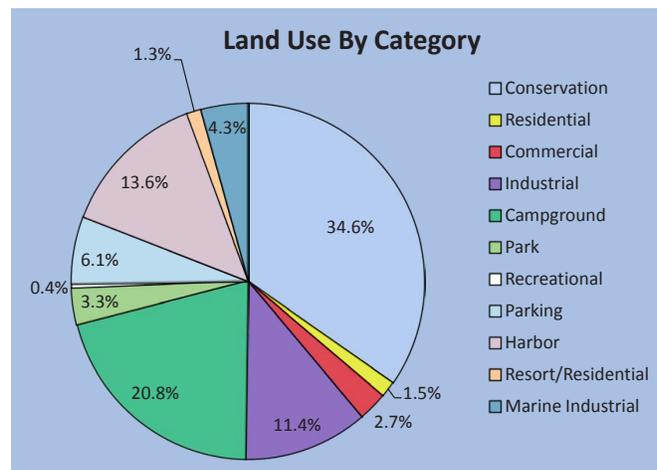
"We need to keep some of this [city land] as parking but we also need to get the property leased and get some new harbor businesses going."

~ Workshop participant



Seasonal worker's residence on the Spit.

Homer Spit Land Usage Summary, 2009			
#	Usage	Approximate Acreage	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%



Map 1: South Spit Landmarks



Symbol Legend

- Public Park
- Public Restroom



Map 2: North Spit Landmarks



Symbol Legend

- Public Park
- 🧑🧑 Public Restroom



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 significantly dropped. Some of that

displacement has rebounded since that time. Material from the subsequent excavation of the existing boat harbor and annual dredging have been used to fill the Spit and raised 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.

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 that 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 3540 vehicles for the month. Annual traffic data from 2007 indicates an annual ADT of 4125 vehicles. The 2007 monthly ADT data ranges from a low of 1636 vehicles in January to a high of 8959 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 are 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 DOT right-of-way (ROW). The City is currently negotiating an agreement with the DOT 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' which greatly improved visibility and safety for pedestrians and motorists moving through congested areas. A few spaces

"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

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

- 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.
- 1023 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. There were people obviously camping in parking areas as well.

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 which include:

- **Small Boat Harbor:** The Small Boat Harbor has 893 reserved stalls, 6000 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:** 245 foot face with 40 feet of depth.
- **Pioneer Dock:** 469 face with 40 feet of depth. The Pioneer Dock serves the Alaska Marine Highway Terminal located adjacent to the dock.

"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 located 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, and staff and maintenance resources and capacity.

Moreover, addition of new proposed park sites and improvements outside of existing parks are very difficult to implement on the Spit. As described in the Port and Harbor Section, a majority of the Spit's land and infrastructure are 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 on the current Harbormaster's site—both would be extremely 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 bikers 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 & 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 to the seafarers lost at sea 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 1976 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 money 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 & 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 of the Spit – 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 'plastic' i.e. looking like 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 relate to what uses are permitted, or are conditional use. Several common commercial uses are



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

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 required off-street parking. 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 designated by the current zoning map in Appendix A. 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



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 landbase.



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

place adjacent to other existing 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 to view areas and 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 to reduce 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 to preserve future opportunities.

A related issue that is sometimes found 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 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



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.

shops, restaurants, 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 of Homer. 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. Relocating this use to the eastern side of the harbor would work well for that use and free up space for a public plaza or other use.

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. 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 dropping-off passengers 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, 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.

An ideal location for the plaza would be in the current Harbormaster's site, which could be relocated to the east side of the harbor. The Harbormaster's building is in poor condition and the eastern side of the harbor provides better parking and visibility.

Another priority identified in the written comments was a viewing area to watch 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-seasonal 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 be more strategic.



A new park is proposed to include a kayak launch. The photo above shows the Alaska Kayak School preparing for a winter outing.



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

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

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 a.m. and 10 p.m.

The lagoon embayment itself requires ongoing maintenance including removal of a gravel bar at the entrance, lengthen and increase the height of the northern-most terminal groin

using rip-rap armor stone from the City’s small stockpile, rebuild the north berm using beach nourishment methods, dredge the lagoon approximately 3 feet to remove deposits from tidal action, and to plant 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 visitation are placing greater demand on Mariner Park, increasing the need for recreation and safety enhancements. Mariner Park needs to continue to identify and prioritize improvements, and analyze how the park fits into the community’s recreational activities. Several improvements have been identified in the Capital Improvement Plan.

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 must have a large dewatering area. This should be



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.

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 ACOE on a long term dredge spoils plan.

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 are initiated, 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.



Homer's 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.

2.5 Improve organization, wayfinding, and management of parking.

2.A Marine Transportation

Comprehensive Planning for the Spit must take care as it addresses 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. These will provide for improved transportation of goods and materials in and out of Homer, and also help move people both regionally and along the Alaska's Pacific Coast.

2.B Road and Trail Access

The City of Homer should continue to work with DOT 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 separation of parking, pedestrian areas, and traffic could improve safety and wayfinding.

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.

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 parking for 4 hours 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 to not necessarily 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. There needs to be a long term parking solution.

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 available for future economic development, but making the area smaller now will help identify exactly how much trailer parking is 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. To improve safety and efficiency, specific driveways should be created at key locations related to layout and traffic flows.

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 many 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.



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.

Goals for Economic Development on the Homer Spit

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.

A draft land use plan and map have been prepared to present recommendations (Maps 3-5, pages 43-45) 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 Army Corps of Engineers conducted an economic feasibility study of the project, funded by the State of Alaska, the Corps and the City of Homer. The results of this study do not look favorable for harbor expansion in the short term future.

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 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 for both locals and visitors. However, walking, running, beachcombing, and bird and mammal watching are all activities that can be enhanced for all season use.



4. Natural Environment

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



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.

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 recreation uses are meant to be areas 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. Conservation areas are important to manage because they 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



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

cleaning agents, garbage, recycling, 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' Heavy Hauler barge.

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

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

Goal 4.3 Manage storm water runoff.

Goal 4.4 Manage the Port as a working harbor, for recreational and working vessels, and remove the environmental hazard of "dead boats."



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 in a table format 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. Significant 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 1980's 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

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	<p>Identify appropriate residential uses on the Spit.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Consider a 25 ft building height limit, with a CUP process for buildings up to 35 feet.</p> <p>Encourage all developments to provide amenities such as bike racks, benches, picnic tables, trashcans and landscape features such as planters and art.</p> <p>Review Spit parking requirements and possible solutions.</p>	<p>Planning Department</p> <p>Planning Commission</p> <p>Port and Harbor Commission</p>
The City should plan for the future land use of city owned properties	<p>Reserve and cluster industrial land at specific nodes, including east and south of harbor.</p> <p>Better utilize the limited land available for industrial and economic development.</p> <p>Reserve sufficient land by the deep water dock for future industrial development.</p> <p>Designate “overslope” for commercial use-focus on south and west sides.</p>	<p>City Council</p> <p>Port and Harbor Commission</p>
Fix marine commercial and marine industrial zoning	<p>Submit draft ordinance to Planning Commission and City Council</p> <p>Consider zero lot line construction and the amount of right-of-way realistically needed to support specific uses at build-out.</p>	<p>Planning Department</p> <p>Planning Commission</p>
Review land lease policy and determine impact on leasing and character of leasing	<p>Continue reviewing lease policies periodically.</p> <p>City leases shall include land sufficient for businesses and minimal employee parking.</p>	<p>City Council</p>
Develop standards to apply to development	<p>Address screening of dumpsters/noxious facilities.</p> <p>Address standards for screening of industrial development.</p> <p>Explore industrial subdivision standards.</p>	<p>Planning Department,</p> <p>Commission</p>

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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	<p>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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>Provide kayak launching facilities.</p> <p>Set aside a new community park.</p> <p>Evaluate and develop a plan for non-boating access to fishing opportunities.</p> <p>Construct weather-protected picnic and outdoor meeting facilities.</p> <p>Open space recreation uses shall be encouraged on the west side of the Spit on public land.</p>	<p>Public Works Department/Parks and Recreation Division</p> <p>Chamber of Commerce</p>

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

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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 land owners 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.	Public Works Department, Parks & Recreation Planning Department Port and Harbor Commission

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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	<p>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).</p> <p>Enhance the connectivity and infrastructure needed to support Deep Water Cargo activities and Main Dock Areas.</p> <p>The City shall reserve right-of-way for access to the east side of the harbor.</p>	<p>Port and Harbor Dept</p> <p>Public works</p> <p>Administration</p> <p>City Council</p>
Balance cruise ship and other commercial activities. One should not happen at the expense of another	<p>Improve cruise ship passenger disembarkation area by the Deep Water Dock.</p> <p>Create way finding kiosks along the harbor.</p> <p>Create a covered harbor overlook area in near ramp 7 or the Deep Water Dock and the harbor entrance.</p> <p>Consider temporary solutions and how to prioritize improvements for cruise ship passengers, since the number of port calls varies year to year.</p>	<p>Port and Harbor Dept</p> <p>Public works</p> <p>Administration</p> <p>Existing commercial/retail business owners</p> <p>Excursion vendors</p> <p>Chamber of Commerce</p>

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)	<p>Limit number of access points to the Sterling Highway.</p> <p>Initiate a Reconnaissance Study to better define and control crossing points in the harbor commercial area.</p> <p>Evaluate traffic calming as element of Reconnaissance study.</p> <p>Enter Memorandum of Agreement with ADOT&PF to address parking, maintenance and management of the right-of-way.</p>	<p>Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities</p> <p>Administration</p>

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

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

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	<p>Participate in a public or private task force or organization.</p>	<p>City Council</p> <p>Economic Development Commission, Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Administration</p>
Encourage a shuttle bus system during peak summer months to transport visitors and employees to town, lodging and remote parking.	<p>Participate in a public or private task force or organization.</p> <p>Create business plan/model to determine funding/cash flow.</p>	

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

Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Better define parking locations	<p>Separate long-term parking from short-term/day use parking.</p> <p>Designate specific areas for RV parking.</p> <p>Provide loading zones for delivery trucks and motor coaches in the retail district.</p> <p>Implement a fee and permit system for long term parking.</p>	Port and Harbor Planning Department
Provide coherent wayfinding system for parking, and restrooms	<p>Establish a consistent theme for all parking graphics and signage.</p> <p>Develop color or other graphic/design feature to clearly indicate intended use.</p> <p>Clearly identify City of Homer as owner and requirements for use of lots.</p> <p>Clearly label all ramps so they are visible from the roads and parking lots.</p> <p>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.</p>	Port and Harbor Planning Department
Define loading and unloading areas	<p>Create a bus loading zone near the harbormasters office.</p> <p>Analyze options for a turn around/cul-de-sac/roundabout at End of the Road Park.</p>	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	<p>Create site-specific land use study for fish dock/processing/ice house area.</p> <p>Develop appropriate safety measures on Fish Dock Road.</p> <p>Construct an observation deck near the Fish Dock.</p>	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	<p>Review zoning for adequacy of provisions for industrial growth.</p> <p>Compress trailer parking to ensure there is no encroachment into needed industrial reserve lands.</p> <p>Expand the port facilities and freight capacity for improved transportation of goods and materials in and out of Homer.</p> <p>Expand and improve the deep water dock and other related port facilities.</p> <p>Improve Outer Dock Road</p>	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	<p>Encourage development related to the fishing, fish processing, and boating industries.</p> <p>Host economic development forum and determine opportunities for value added growth.</p>	Alaska Economic Development Corporation Planning Department Chamber of Commerce Processing plant managers/ operators
Determine incentives needed to promote Overslope development	<p>Analyze and develop market plan for development.</p> <p>Determine alternate incentives that would encourage growth.</p> <p>Identify sources of funding or implementation actions for identified incentives.</p>	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.	<p>Avoid development on city owned tidelands adjacent to Conservation areas, such as Louie’s Lagoon and Mud Bay.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Improvements to public lands should focus active recreation on the west side of the Spit, Mariner Park, and south of the Fishing Lagoon.</p>	Port and Harbor Dept Parks and Recreation

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Objective	Strategies	Responsibilities
Purchase or obtain conservation easements on private lands on the east side of 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 scarping, 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
Dead boat removal	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