



# Agenda

## Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Regular Meeting

Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 8:30 – 10:00 AM

City Hall Cowles Council Chambers In-Person & Via Zoom Webinar

**Homer City Hall**  
491 E. Pioneer Avenue  
Homer, Alaska 99603  
[www.cityofhomer-ak.gov](http://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov)

**Zoom Webinar ID: 971 1030 8124 Password: 151329**  
<https://cityofhomer.zoom.us>  
Dial: 346-248-7799 or 669-900-6833;  
(Toll Free) 888-788-0099 or 877-853-5247

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### CALL TO ORDER, 8:30 A.M.

### AGENDA APPROVAL

### PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA (3-minute time limit)

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Steering Committee Meeting Minutes of December 2, 2024

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### VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

### REPORTS

### PENDING BUSINESS

- A. **Plan Development & Launch** – Discuss Steering Committee Member Key Comments and Questions from Draft Plan/Chapter Review and Next Steps to Prepare for January 31<sup>st</sup> Launch (Committee Members, Project Team)

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#### 1. SC Chapter Assignments

- a. Land Use & Environment – Charlie
- b. Sustainability, Resilience, & Climate Change – Charlie
- c. Public Facilities & Services – Shelly E.
- d. Transportation – Shelly E.
- e. Housing – Kathy
- f. Quality of Life – Kathy
- g. Economic Development – Nicole
- h. Governance – Jason

#### 2. Photo Contest

- a. Discuss purpose, process, and timeline for gathering photos for the comprehensive plan from community members.

### 3. Launch Process

- a. Discuss process and outreach ideas for January 31<sup>st</sup> Public Review Draft Launch – social media, e-blast to project contacts, radio (tentative: February 12<sup>th</sup> Radio Coffee Show), newspaper, flyer that directs folks to commenting tools, Steering Committee network outreach, Community Visit (see below).
- B. **February 2025 Community Visit** – Share and Discuss Preliminary Framework for Week of February 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Visit (Project Team)
  1. CONFIRMED – February 4<sup>th</sup> Open House – purpose, process, structure
  2. TENTATIVE – Joint Work Session (note: final gathering with SC) – purpose, process, structure
  3. OTHER – TBD

### **NEW BUSINESS**

### **INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

- A. Relevant Materials from the Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission

Memorandum from Community Recreation Manager as backup

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**COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE** (Members of the audience may address the Committee on any subject, 3-minute limit)

### **COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF**

### **COMMENTS OF MAYOR/COUNCILMEMBER** (If Present)

### **COMMENTS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Session 24-13 a Regular Meeting of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was called to order by Chair Kathy Carssow at 8:08 a.m. on December 2, 2024 at the Cowles Council Chambers in City Hall, located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar.

PRESENT: COMMITTEE MEMBERS AREVALO, BARNWELL, CARSSOW & ERICKSON

ABSENT: COMMITTEE MEMBER DAVIS

STAFF: CITY PLANNER FOSTER, ACTING CITY MANAGER ENGBRETSSEN & DEPUTY CITY CLERK PETTIT

CONSULTANTS: SHELLY WADE, AGNEW::BECK  
MEG FRIEDENAUER, AGNEW::BECK

## **AGENDA APPROVAL**

Chair Carssow requested a motion and second to approve the agenda.

ERICKSON/AREVALO MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA**

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. Steering Committee Meeting Minutes of October 23, 2024

ERICKSON/AREVALO MOVED TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 23, 2024 MEETING MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

## **VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS**

### **REPORTS**

- A. Agnew::Beck Contract Amendment – Update on Project Timeline as set out in Contract as Amended (Project Team)
- B. Growth Scenarios – Share and Discuss In-Person and Online Growth Scenarios Engagement Results and Characteristics of “Preferred Alternative” (Project Team)
- C. Plan Development – Share Update on Timing for Public Review Draft Rollout (Project Team)

## **PENDING BUSINESS**

- A. Community Engagement – Share and Discuss Direct Outreach to Fishermen and Processors (Steering Committee Members Erickson & Arevalo)
- B. Steering Committee Deliverables – Committee Discussion and Decision Regarding Fulfilling Assignment to “Submit Written Comments on the Draft Comprehensive Plan” per Resolution 23-129(A) (Steering Committee Members)

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Plan Development – Share, Discuss, and Confirm the Proposed Structure and Topics for the Revised Comprehensive Plan and Identify Steering Committee Members Assignments for Early January Review of Public Review Draft Chapters (Project Team)

The Committee Members assigned chapters to be reviewed from the Public Review Draft among themselves as described:

- Committee Member Barnwell: Land Use & Environment and Sustainability, Resilience and Climate Change
  - Committee Member Arevalo: Economic Development, Health & Wellness, and Quality of Life
  - Committee Member Carssow: Housing, Health & Wellness, and Quality of Life
  - Committee Member Erickson: Public Facilities & Services and Transportation
  - Committee Member Davis: Governance
- B. Title 21 Code Revision – Introduce Additional Project Team Members and Conduct Brief Overview of Code Revision Process and Timeline (Project Team)
  - C. Steering Committee Schedule

The Committee scheduled its next regular meeting for Thursday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 8:30 a.m.

## **INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

### **COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

### **COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF**

### **COMMENTS OF THE MAYOR**

### **COMMENTS OF THE TASK FORCE**

Committee Member Barnwell noted that it was a good meeting and thanked the Committee Members and City Staff.

Committee Member Arevalo stated that she would try to get some feedback from farmers, in addition to speaking with her processor friend in order to get that feedback to the Commission.

Chair Carssow noted that she would share the information regarding the contract amendments to Deputy City Clerk Pettit to ensure that it's shared with the rest of the Committee Members.

## **ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Task Force Chair Carssow adjourned the meeting at 9:35 a.m. The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 8:30 a.m.** All



meetings scheduled to be held via Zoom Webinar and in person in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zach Pettit, Deputy City Clerk I

Approved:\_\_\_\_\_



# 2025 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update

Draft Core Plan for Steering Committee Review: January 9, 2025

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all Homer residents, businesses, organizations, and other local, regional, state, and federal partners who have contributed to the 2035 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update development process, including City of Homer staff and past and present Homer City Council and Planning Commission members.

A detailed list of key individuals and contributors is listed in the Appendices (forthcoming).

Photos courtesy of Agnew::Beck unless otherwise noted.

This plan was produced by Agnew::Beck Consulting in partnership with RESPEC, Kinney Engineering, Northern Economics, Corvus Design, and Stantec to ensure the planning process, and ultimately the final plan meets community needs.



## **Homer City Council Ordinance No.**

*To come in final document when adopted.*

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# Introduction

## Our Vision

*Homer is a vibrant regional community hub on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, known for its:*



Connected and engaged residents



Healthy lands and waters



Thriving and diverse economy



Sustainable growth and development



Attainable housing and walkable neighborhoods



Abundant recreational opportunities



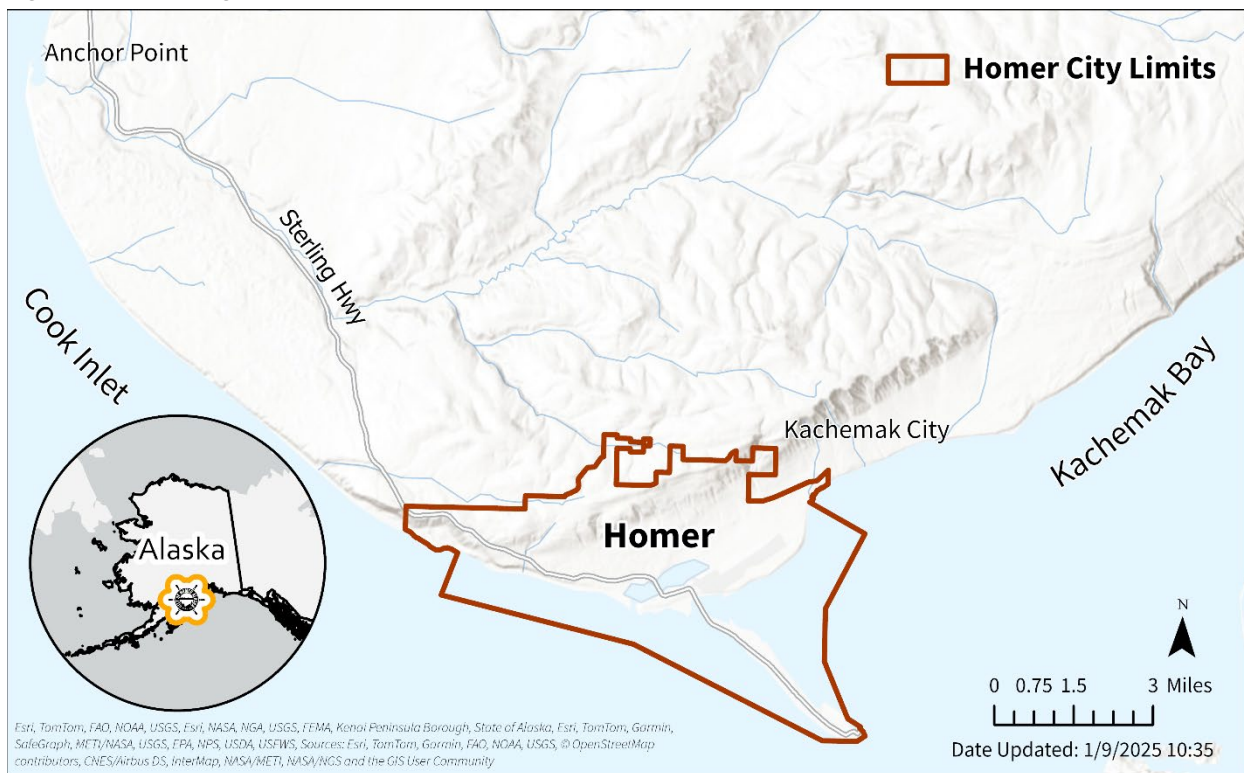
Artistic expression and cultural heritage



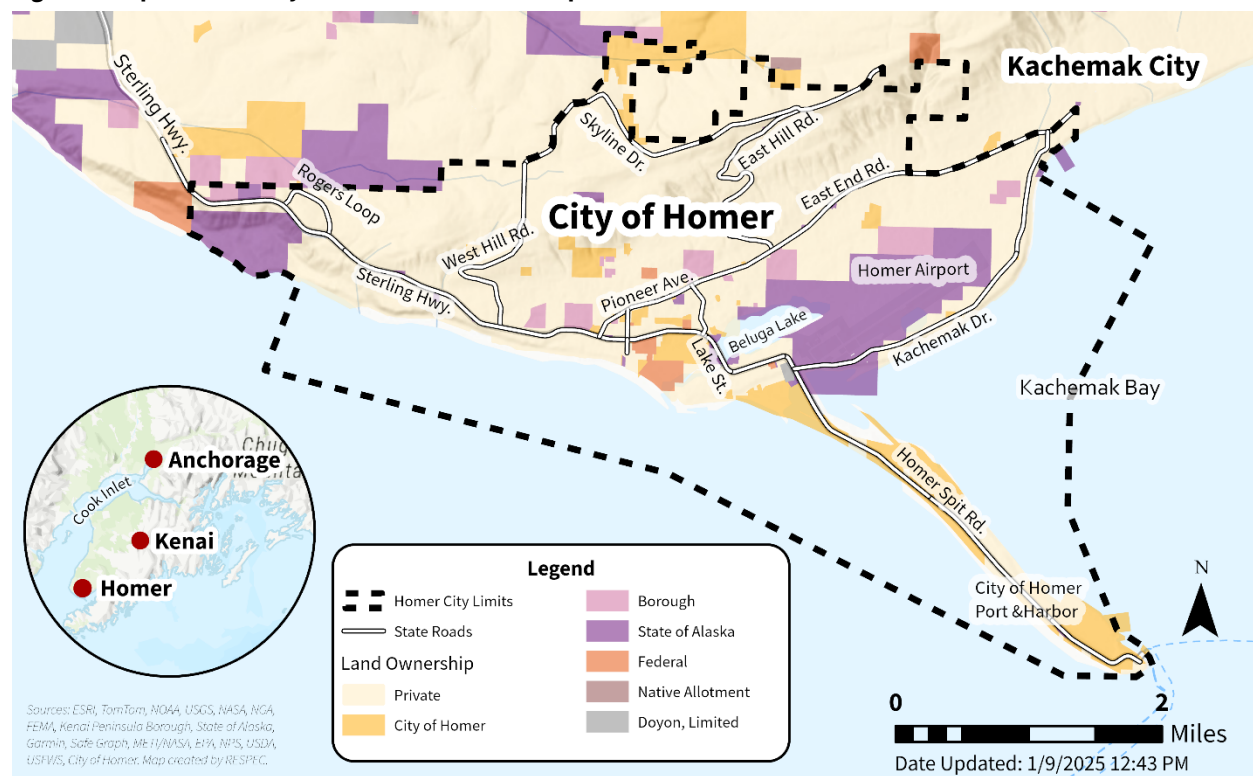
Connection and service to surrounding communities

## Project Area

**Figure 1. Map of the greater Homer area**



**Figure 2. Map of Homer city limits and land ownership**



## 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.

The updated Homer Comprehensive Plan will be a combination of long-term vision, goals, and practical strategies that will: guide decisions about land use and environment, housing, public services and infrastructure, transportation, economic development, health and wellness, sustainability, resilience and climate change, and quality of life, and more. It will provide a roadmap for implementation, with clear priorities and actions.

## How does this 2035 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update Relate to the 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan?

The 2035 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update and accompanying Future Land Use Map provide broad direction and guidance for the Homer community. This update process recognized changes to community characteristics and needs of residents in the last five years, especially with consideration for Phase 2 of this project, the Homer Title 21 Code Rewrite. For example, this plan includes a chapter on housing to reflect the concerns in Homer and much of the state about the availability of quality, affordable, and attainable housing, where the 2018 plan did not have a dedicated chapter on housing. This revised plan does not include updates to all chapters in the 2012 plan but focuses on core topics as relevant to changing conditions. It aims to have practical strategies and goals



that are widely accepted by the community and implementable by the City of Homer, and their community and other partners.

A Future Land Use Map DOES:	A Future Land Use Map DOES NOT:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipate development needs, opportunities, constraints.</li> <li>• Identify suitable/unsuitable types of development.</li> <li>• Propose recommendations for how an area should develop.</li> <li>• Establish policies and standards to guide development.</li> <li>• Recommend improvements to zoning codes.</li> <li>• Guide decisions about rezones and future area planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act as a regulatory or zoning document.</li> <li>• Make changes to existing zoning codes.</li> <li>• Apply retroactively.</li> </ul>

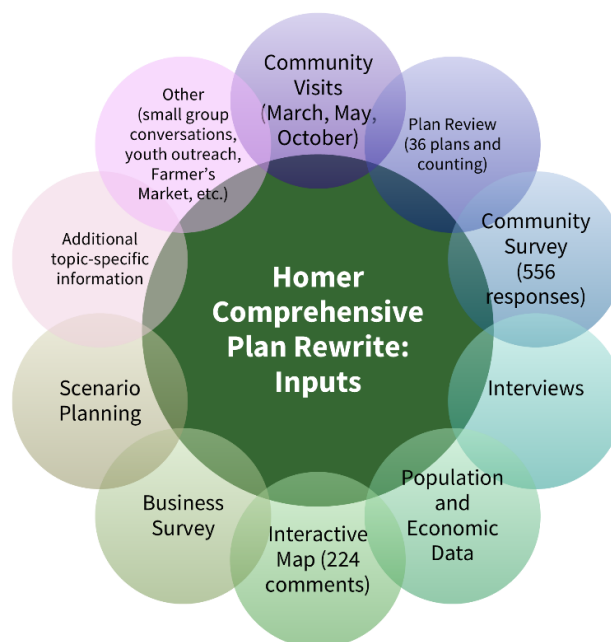
## How Does the Future Land Use Map Relate to Zoning?

Zoning is a regulatory framework or policy that describes how land can be used in the present; it provides some overarching restrictions to ensure land uses within a designated area do not conflict. A future land use map identifies broad future land use intentions for an area. Zoning codes are law and a way to implement and enforce land use goals within a specified area, while a future land use map aligns with existing and desired future land use in the project area. The plan and the associated Future Land Use Map will not immediately result in zoning changes. Rather, the proposed land use categories and recommended zoning improvements in this plan provide categories and tools to guide land use decisions in the City in a way that guides the vision for the area, promotes planning best practices, and considers local context. If there are proposed rezones in the project area, the Future Land Use Map will guide the zoning actions. Boundary lines in the Future Land Use Map are approximate and may out of necessity be changed. It is not the intent to divide lots or specific uses by these boundary lines.



## Methodology

### How Was this Plan Developed?

This plan was developed with extensive input from residents, city leadership and staff, commissions, committees, and other community leaders, and regional, state, and federal partners. and included the activities on the following pages. *A summary of all outreach events can be found in the Appendices (to come) and on the project website.*

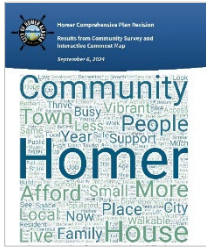


## In-Person Activities

<b>Steering Committee</b>	<p>The Steering Committee met 15 times (through December 2024) during the duration of the project and assisted in the development of the comprehensive plan. The committee plans to meet twice more during the drafting phase in January and February 2025. The five-member committee is comprised of two city council members, one city planning commissioner, one economic development commissioner, and a city resident representative nominated by the mayor and approved by the City Council. The roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee are outlined in City of Homer Resolution 23-129(A) and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist in the refinement and execution of the public outreach process, outreach program, and schedule.</li> <li>• Participate in public outreach activities and events including work with each of the member's represented organizations to keep them informed on the project and encourage their participation, solicit participation from a wide range of people and organizations in the community, participate in event exercises and provide feedback.</li> <li>• Provide feedback and recommendations on Comprehensive Plan draft documents.</li> </ul> <p>The Steering Committee meetings are noticed and open to the public.</p>
<b>City Meetings</b>	<p>The project team routinely provided updates at the <b>Homer City Council meetings and Planning Commission meetings</b>. The project team facilitated a <b>Joint City Council and Planning Commission Work Session</b> in March 2024 to kick off the project, review the overall purpose and legal basis for comprehensive plans and prepare the planning commissioners, Council members, and staff for the comprehensive plan revision process. The project team also attended and engaged many of the city boards and commissions including the <b>Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Parks, Art, Recreation &amp; Culture Advisory Commission, Library Advisory Board, Economic Development Advisory Commission, and Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory Board</b>. Project team members also met with City department staff, including the library staff, public works staff, port and harbor staff, community development staff, and others.</p>
<b>Community Group Meetings</b>	<p>The project team attended and provided updates at the meetings of several active community groups including, the Homer Chamber of Commerce board of directors, Homer Guiding Growth, Homer Stormwater Working Group, Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) Steering Committee, MAPP Housing Working Group, Homer Marine Trades Association, and others.</p>
<b>Community Conversations and Open Houses</b>	<p>The project team hosted the following public community conversations and open houses where the project team discussed current economic conditions, emerging vision, values, priorities, and policies for the Homer Comprehensive Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Open House</b> March 28, 2024 at Alaska Islands &amp; Oceans Visitor Center.</li> <li>• <b>Community Work Session on Growth Scenarios</b> October 22, 2024 at Alaska Islands &amp; Oceans Visitor Center.</li> <li>• <b>Community Open House to launch Public Review Draft</b> Planned for February 4, 2025 at Alaska Islands &amp; Oceans Visitor Center.</li> </ul> 
<b>Events and Information Tables</b>	<p>The project team and Steering Committee attended the following community events or locations to engage with the community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 11, 2024: Met with high school government class at Homer High School.</li> <li>• May 14-16, 2024: Held open hours at the Homer Public Library to receive feedback and provide information on the plan.</li> <li>• March 15, 2024: Hosted an information table at the Spenard Builders Supply's Contractors day to engage with local contractors, builders, and other.</li> <li>• May 15, 2024: Hosted an Under 40 Focus Group to collect feedback and input from Homer residents under 40 years old.</li> <li>• September 14 and 21, 2024: to engage with residents and visitors.</li> </ul> 
<b>Interviews</b>	<p>The project team conducted more than two dozen interviews with business owners, community leaders, community organizations, and committees to learn about community challenges, priorities and collect suggestions for the plan.</p>

## Surveys

### Community Survey



The community survey was aimed at engaging residents and gathering feedback. The survey was open April 22, 2024, through July 1, 2024 and received 556 responses. The survey was distributed online, announced via project e-newsletters and website, announced via social media, in public meetings, and through outreach by Steering Committee members. The survey was also available in hard copy at the Homer Public Library and City Hall.

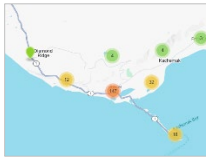
### Business Survey

The business survey was aimed at engaging business owners. It was open from July 12, 2024, through August 25, 2024 and received 66 responses. The survey was designed and promoted with assistance from the City's Economic Development Commission and the Homer Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center.

### Visitor Survey

The Visitor's Survey received five responses. The Project Team decided to not analyze these results due to the low response rate.

### Interactive Map



The Interactive Comment Map was aimed at soliciting location-based input on community priorities. It was open in conjunction with the Community Survey, for the same time period and distributed through the same methods, and received 224 responses.

## Outreach and Media

### Project Website

The project website provided a place for residents to easily find background information about the project, downloads of past presentations and draft files, announcements of upcoming meetings, links to project surveys, and a form to sign up for project e-newsletters. <https://homercompplanupdate.com/>

### Email Distribution

Throughout the project, the project team developed and sent multiple email project updates to nearly 250 interested community and partner subscribers.

### Social Media

The project team announced project updates on social media, through the City of Homer's Facebook page that has 814 followers. The Homer Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center also shared some announcements, reaching its 5,600 followers.

### Newspaper and Radio

Ads announcing public events were published throughout the project in the Homer News and newspaper staff covered some community events and conversations. Public Service Announcements announcing events aired on radio stations KBBI, K-Wave FM 105, KPEN FM 102, K-BAY 93.3, and KGTL AM 620/FM 100.

## Research Tasks

### Mapping

The project team developed land use, transportation, and other relevant maps to use as decision-making tools and guide future development.

### Secondary Research

The project team collected information from local, state and federal sources to tell the story of Homer: how it is changing and how the population, housing, economy and land use characteristics compare to other Kenai Peninsula communities.

### Plan Review

The project team reviewed past and existing community, regional and other relevant plans and reports, including the 2018 Comprehensive Plan.

## Timeline

Winter 2023-2024	Spring-Summer 2024	Fall-Winter 2024	To Come: Early 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signed contract</li> <li>Kickoff project</li> <li>Develop Public Participation Plan (PPP)</li> <li>Steering Committee (SC) member appointment</li> <li>Refine PPP, prep for community kickoff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Visit #1 (March)</li> <li>Review existing plans</li> <li>Develop Community Snapshot</li> <li>Community Visit #2 (May)</li> <li>Survey launches/closes</li> <li>Survey analysis released to public</li> <li>Develop Growth Scenarios methodology and approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue developing growth scenarios</li> <li>Met with commissions and committees</li> <li>Business survey results released</li> <li>Visit #3 (October)</li> <li>Community Work Session to release Growth Scenarios</li> <li>Growth Scenarios public review and feedback</li> <li>Plan drafting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase 2: Title 21 Update kick off</li> <li>Steering Committee reviews public review draft and provides feedback</li> <li><b>* We are here *</b></li> <li>Public Review Draft released (January 31)</li> <li>Community open house to celebrate plan review launch (February 3)</li> <li>Comment period; work sessions with Steering Committee, Planning Commission, and City Council</li> <li>Comment Deadline (tentatively March 7)</li> <li>Revisions and plan finalization based on feedback</li> <li>Adoption process and put plan to action</li> </ul>

## Contents, What's in the Plan

Executive Summary (coming soon)	Core Plan (this document)	Appendices (coming soon)
Offers a graphic, condensed summary of the plan, including the City's vision, goals, and strategies for each topic; also includes the Future Land Use Map.	Includes additional information on the process, area, and key issues that were used to inform the goals and strategies.	Includes extensive background information, context and discussion used to inform the Future Land Use Map and related plan goals and strategies.

## Chapters in the Core Plan



## How to Use this Plan

This plan serves as a basis and rationale for other community policies and actions, including: site-specific and neighborhood plans; specialized plans addressing housing and other topics; ordinances and other policies carrying out the goals of the Comprehensive Plan; projects carried out by city staff; and a tool for communicating priorities and funding requests to state and federal government or other funders, such as the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) list, neighborhood-initiated rezones or special legislative appropriations.

The goals of this plan give the City and community a broad vision and direction to work toward in the coming years. A key element of this plan is the Future Land Use Map, which offers broad guidance on preferred future land use and will inform future changes to zoning, land uses, housing, transportation, and recreation-related policy decisions.

Most importantly, this plan should serve as a key tool for community leaders and residents in their short-term and long-term planning and decision-making. In conjunction with more detailed plans and current information, the plan should be the backdrop and foundational reference for all City Planning Commission and Council meetings and rulings regarding the project area, and for City departments in their daily operations. See below for a specific breakdown of how different stakeholders might use the plan.

### How to Use this Plan if you are a...

<b>Resident</b> Use as an tool to protect or improve the things you love about the area; for example, to propose a trail connection, or to learn about where the community agreed future development might occur and preservation take place.	<b>City Planner</b> Guide decision-making on land use changes such as zoning, and permitting; identifies needed policy changes and enforcement priorities.	<b>Regional Representative</b> Official guiding document for Planning Commission and Council members when making decisions, rulings, and creating policy in the project area.
<b>Housing Developer</b> Identify areas where different types of growth are encouraged/discouraged and summarizes housing, transportation and commercial needs.	<b>Business Owner</b> Use to understand where your type of business may be best located or what community priorities could inform a business idea and plan.	<b>Grantwriter</b> Use to demonstrate communitywide support for key priorities in the project area when applying for funding from state, federal and other sources.

## Plan Amendments and Updates

Outlined below are the steps for amending and/or updating the Homer Comprehensive Plan:

- A minor change is a change that does not modify or add to the plan's basic intent, and that serves only to clarify the plan, make it consistent, facilitate its implementation, or make technical corrections. Such changes can be made administratively and do not require additional approval.
- An amendment permanently changes the plan by adding to or modifying the basic intent. Such changes can be recommended by the administration or public and approved by the Planning Commission and City Council.
- A more detailed update of the Comprehensive Plan should be conducted every five to ten years, starting with a thorough review by the Planning Commission and key city staff to determine which goals and strategies have been accomplished and which may need to be revised, added, or deleted. Residents and other key stakeholders should also be engaged during the update process.

## Implementation

The process for implementing this plan will include developing an annual work plan of “priority actions” that support the strategies identified in the plan. This annual work plan will consider existing and anticipated resources and will provide direction to city leadership, staff, and their partners. Equally important, the annual work plan will give Homer residents, businesses and partners a detailed picture of what progress is being made on the plan. The update will include a summary of actions taken, and progress made toward plan-identified goals and objectives, including a baseline of where the community is today and where they want to be 5-10 years from today. Additionally, the City will implement a process for gauging community satisfaction with plan progress. Homer residents should be regularly encouraged to share comments, questions and concerns on plan contents and implementation, and more importantly, to get involved in plan implementation.

The following tables outline a potential format for the annual work plan, including a sample “dashboard” of objectives for economic development. These tables could be completed as a part of plan implementation.

**Figure 3. Sample action plan**

<b>SAMPLE</b> <b>Goal: What broad or long-term change do we want to make?</b> <b>Objective: What measurable change do we hope to achieve over the 5-10 years?</b>			
<b>Priority Strategy</b>	<b>Actions</b> <i>(specific step)</i>	<b>Lead</b> <i>(who)</i>	<b>Timeline</b> <i>(when)</i>
<b>1.</b>	a. b.		
<b>2.</b>	a. b.		
<b>3</b>	a. b.		

**Figure 4. Sample objectives dashboard**

<b>Where We Are</b> <i>(2023 data)</i>	<b>Objectives Dashboard: Economic Development (example)</b> What measurements can we use to track progress? Where do we want to be in 5-10 years?	<b>2028-2034</b> <b>Targets</b>
<b>\$61.2 million</b>	<b>Workforce Earnings</b> – Amount of earnings and wages paid to Haines employees. Combination of Alaska Department of Labor Employment and Wage data; US Census Nonemployer (self-employment) Statistics; and US Bureau of Labor Statistics.	<b>XXX</b>
<b>68 percent</b>	<b>Business Climate Confidence</b> – Percentage of Haines business owners and top managers who reporting viewing the overall business climate in Haines as “Positive” (of 26 Haines business leaders surveyed representing 12 economic sectors.) From Southeast Conference’s Annual Business Climate Survey.	<b>XXX</b>
<b>68,116 cruise ship passengers</b>	<b>Visitors</b> – Annual number of visitors to Haines by cruise ship and visitors/passengers via other modes (Alaska Marine Highway System, Haines-Skagway Fast Ferry, motorists, and air.) Note: Not all non-cruise ship visitors are “independent travelers.” For example, 87 percent of Fast Ferry passengers in 2023 were guests on a tour purchased in Skagway and 13 percent identified as “independent” travelers. From Haines Borough Tourism Department Season Report.	<b>XXX</b>
<b>106,117 visitors by other modes</b>		<b>XXX</b>



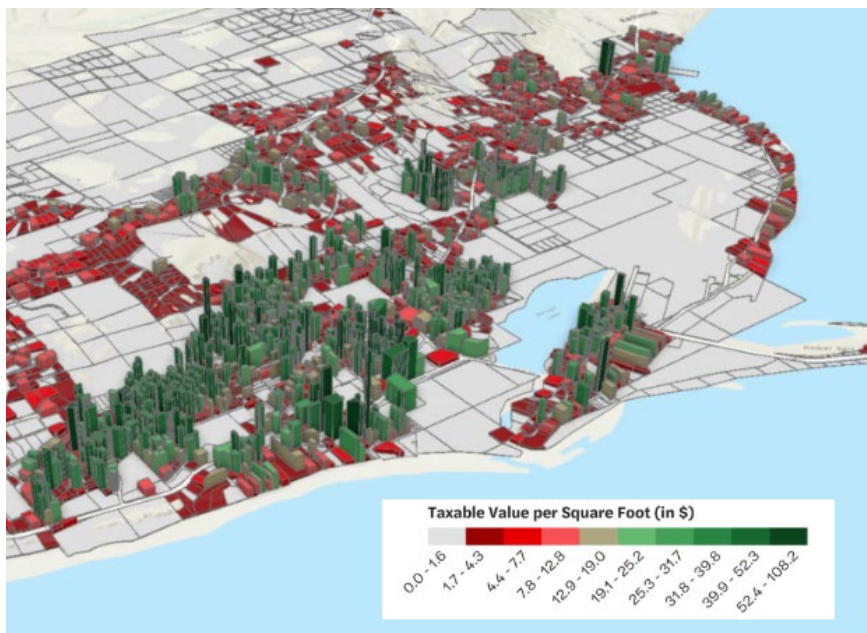


## Land Use & Environment

### Key Themes Guiding the Plan

#### Growth.

Homer's population is projected to grow at a slower rate over the next 20 years and most residents want to see growth occur moderately and sustainably within city boundaries<sup>1</sup>. Nearly 65 percent of the 548 respondents in the Community Survey prefer minimal to moderate community and economic growth and 75 percent of the 91 respondents in the Growth Scenarios Report Card chose scenarios that reflect a more dense, central, and connected development pattern. According to multiple comments received from interviews, community events, and surveys, Homer also places a high value on preserving its small-town character through growth that prioritizes equitable access to resources, respects ecological limits, and enhances local resilience, aligning with principles of sustainable and community-focused development.



A heat map of downtown Homer, showing how certain properties (green) contribute significantly to the city's taxable income, which influences the revenue a city can allocate to essential infrastructure, such as water, sewer systems, and roads.

Source: <https://agnewbeck.box.com/s/zngimby9tbhe8dm62n9txvyknkhd3w3c>

#### Housing

Affordability and attainability of housing in Homer is hindered by zoning code, central and developable land availability, and the proliferation of short-term rentals that remove options from the housing stock<sup>2,3</sup>. 87 percent

<sup>1</sup> Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Alaska Population Projections, "Alaska Population Projections 2023 to 2050". <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/projections/pub/popproj.pdf>. Accessed October 9, 2024

<sup>2</sup> Kenai Peninsula Borough, "Homer Housing Review." March 24, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> City of Homer, "Short Term Rental Basics Memorandum." September 27, 2022.

of survey respondents believe that increasing the supply and accessibility of affordable housing is important, yet many zones within the central areas of Homer place limits on where and how housing can be developed. 66 percent of survey respondents agree that more attainable starter homes are needed for young families or residents that wish to downsize, but non-traditional and affordable housing options (tiny homes, cottage homers, manufactured homes, townhomes) in Homer Code Title 21 are limited or non-existent in central areas.



Examples of non-traditional affordable housing types in Alaska.

Source:  
<https://agnewbeck.box.com/s/zn62n9txvyknkhd3w3c>

Without more opportunities for housing variety, redevelopment strategies like infill, and some restrictions to short-term rentals, young families will continue to look for housing outside of city limits where it is more affordable but is less connected to resources and services.

## Environmental Constraints

Homer's land base area contains approximately 35 percent of slopes, wetlands, critical habitat, and land with other biophysical characteristics that make development challenging<sup>4,5</sup>. While these areas significantly reduce the amount of suitable land for development, they also provide immense benefit through their resultant protection of suitable/developed land and their ecological functions<sup>6</sup>. 77 percent of the 551 Community Survey respondents said that preserving open public spaces within the city from development was important and 34 percent of residents listed sustainable and resilient development as the single most important priority during the Growth Scenarios event. Specifically, residents want development and growth to be more integrated and compatible with the local environment. Solutions called out by residents in surveys and meetings include green infrastructure incorporation, open space preservation, and greater attention to development standards for both private development and public infrastructure.



Moose use Homer as a corridor to migrate seasonally from Skyline (NE) to the Beluga Wetlands Complex (SW). This photo, taken during a community visit, shows a moose calf grazing on Homer private property.

Source:  
<https://agnewbeck.box.com/s/i3qzbx029fa08e5dmx2a55vzssfsfplt>

<sup>4</sup> City of Homer, "Local Hazard Mitigation Plan." 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Note: Calculation performed from Environmental Constraints Overlay area measurement, which does not include all wetland areas (See *Future Land Use Map*).

<sup>6</sup> Homer Soil and Water Conservation, "City of Homer Beluga Planning Area, Volumes 1 & 2." June 2013.



## Open Space

Residents cherish Homer's varied opportunities for recreation and subsisting, but they want more connections and protections to those opportunities<sup>7</sup>. Homer has a broad inventory of open space relative to other communities through a wide variety of property owners including (but not limited to) the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, the Alaska State Aviation Division, the Kachemak Heritage Land Trust. However, there are gaps or missing connections to neighborhoods and the town center, and some areas used as open space for active and passive recreational activities are mostly within other zones and are not formally dedicated.<sup>8</sup>



Bird migration at Beluga Lake. Photo taken during a community visit.  
Source: <https://agnewbeck.box.com/s/i3qzhx029fa08e5dmx2a55vzssfsfplt>

## Zoning

Residents of the City of Homer recognize that Homer City Code and Zoning have not implemented recommendations of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan. Further, the 2018 Comprehensive Plan does not adequately address redevelopment strategies for Homer's most pressing needs, such as affordable and attainable housing and broader considerations for resilient, sustainable development. Aligning City Code with strategies provided in the Comprehensive Plan ensures that government policies are united with community feedback and will improve the likelihood that challenges will be addressed in the short and long-term future.



Homer residents gathered for the October 21st, 2024 Growth Scenarios Work Session.

Source:  
<https://agnewbeck.box.com/s/og9elpe7yo4geesvpu2oazc1roj8usgn>

## Area Planning

Multiple areas within or near Homer have unique landscapes, community characteristics, and serve community in different ways. These areas include the Homer Spit, the Town Center, the Medical District, the Scenic Gateway Corridor, and three habitat areas (Woodard Creek, Bridge Creek, and Airport Critical Habitat). Additionally, many

<sup>7</sup> See *Appendices for Homer Community Survey and Growth Scenario Report Card Summary*.

<sup>8</sup> See *Parks Proximity Analysis Map*.

communities, like Anchor Point, Seldovia, and Kachemak City, are connected to Homer as their service hub. The level of work for the areas ranges from needing significant planning work, through to areas with a clear vision being set, but with varying levels of work completed to incorporate them into City policies.



Photos of Airport Critical Habitat (top), the Homer Spit (bottom), and Main Street. *Photo Credit: Homer Chamber of Commerce.*

Source:

<https://agnewbeck.box.com/s/zngimby9tbhe8dm62n9txvyknkhd3w3c>

## Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C
Promote sustainable, moderate growth that preserves Homer's small-town character.	Unite environmental impacts, community connections, and infrastructure capacity with responsible development.	Use the Comprehensive Plan as the foundation for zoning reform and area planning.

## Strategies and Potential Actions

### Icon Key:

- ✖ Capital: For any project that includes a potential capital project
- \* Code: A strategy that recommends a specific code revision
- 📅 2018: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan
- ⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation (these will be carried forward into an action plan)

### 1. Implement a future land use map that guides future decisions about land use and growth.

⚡ \* 📅

**Figure 5. Future Land Use Map Primary Categories**

<b>Future Land Use Map Primary Categories</b> The land use categories defined on the map cover areas with different uses, but with similar underlying characteristics. For example, the “Urban Residential” designation includes medium residential uses and compatible commercial uses.				
<b>Category</b>	<b>Intended Land Uses</b>	<b>Application Areas</b>	<b>Use Examples</b>	<b>2018 Land Use Designation</b>
<b>Downtown Mixed Use</b>	The urban core of Homer, allowing for a <b>mix of commercial, community, and high to medium density residential uses</b> with adaptability to changing market needs. A focus on close proximities and a walkable, human-scale environment, enabling all-day and all-season use by all.	Combination of the 2018 Future Land Use Designations for Downtown Mixed Use, Medical District, and Town Center	Hospitals, live-work spaces, mixed use buildings, retail, eateries, community facilities, multi-unit housing, apartment buildings, parks	Downtown Mixed Use, Medical District, and Town Center
<b>Urban Residential</b>	<b>Medium density</b> residential uses with compatible public and light commercial uses that generate low traffic volumes; areas for infill and densification, including neighborhoods that currently have access to public utilities, <b>with lots typically less than 10,000 square feet.</b>	Combination of the 2018 Future Land Use Designations for Urban Residential and Residential Office	Emphasis on multi-unit housing (single buildings, accessory dwellings, cottage clusters), pocket parks, commercial villages.	Urban Residential and Residential Office
<b>Transition Residential</b>	<b>Medium to low density</b> residential uses with compatible public and commercial uses; areas for infill and densification, including neighborhoods that currently have access to public utilities. <b>Flexible lot sizes designed to respect topography and environmental constraints.</b> An area transitioning from low to higher densities, and infrastructure supporting a walkable environment.	Same as 2018 Future Land Use Designation for Residential Transition	Varied housing types, community garden, neighborhood café, schools, churches	Residential Transition
<b>Rural Residential</b>	<b>Low density</b> residential uses and limited agricultural pursuits, <b>with lots typically 10,000 square feet or more that may not have access to public utilities.</b>	Same as 2018 Future Land Use Designation for Rural Residential	Single family units with ADUs, lodges, farms, conservation areas	Rural Residential
<b>Commercial Mixed Use</b>	Promotes commercial and community uses supported by residential within a walkable, human-scaled environment. <b>Flexibility for businesses is prioritized.</b>	Same as current zone areas for Gateway Business District	Mixed-use buildings, culture venues, retail, restaurants	Gateway Business District
<b>Light Industrial Mixed Use</b>	Predominately <b>commercial and industrial uses</b> that generally require direct motor vehicle access and potentially larger land areas. <b>Residential uses are accessory.</b>	Combination of current zone areas for East End Mixed Use and General Commercial 1.	Warehousing and distribution hubs, building supply stores, supportive infrastructure	East and Mixed Use and Commercial 1

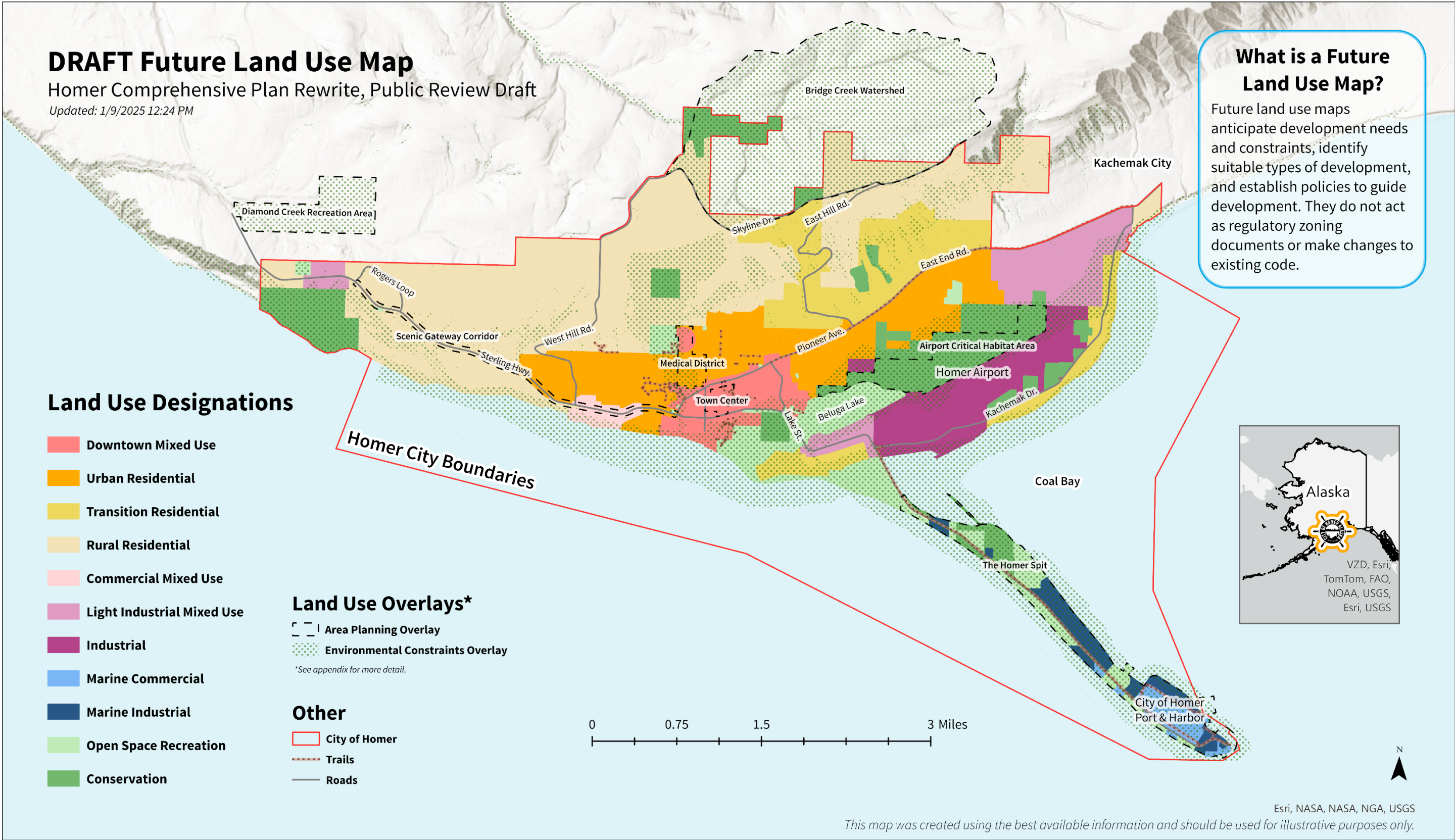
<b>Industrial</b>	Predominantly heavy industrial uses where <b>commercial retail and service uses are accessory.</b>	Same as current zone areas for General Commercial 2	Manufacturing and processing, worker housing, airports, cold storage facilities	Commercial 2 and Conservation
<b>Marine Commercial</b>	<b>Water-dependent or related commercial uses</b> requiring direct motor vehicle access, potentially larger land areas, and benefit from proximity or convenient connection to the waterfront.	Same as current zone areas for Marine Commercial along the Homer Spit	Retail, restaurants, cold storage, docks, marine charters, accessory lodging	<i>Not included</i>
<b>Marine Industrial</b>	<b>Water-dependent industrial uses</b> requiring direct marine access for their operation, direct motor vehicle access, and potentially larger land areas. <b>Commercial uses are accessory.</b>	Same as current zone areas for Marine Industrial	Fish processing, marine transportation, cold storage	<i>Not included</i>
<b>Open Space Recreation</b>	<b>Public lands with uses that promote public recreation and access opportunities</b> while preserving the natural and scenic resources of the areas.	Same as current zone areas for Open Space Recreation	Community parks, playgrounds, recreation facilities, trails	Open Space Recreation
<b>Conservation</b>	<b>Public and private lands that serve key environmental functions</b> , such as critical habitat or watershed areas, to be maintained in an undisturbed and natural state.	Same as current zone areas for Conservation and areas dedicated as conservation by statute or plat.	Habitat protection facilities with education facilities or non-motorized trails as conditional	Conservation, and Open Space Recreation

**Figure 6. Future Land Use Map Overlays**

<b>Future Land Use Map Overlay Categories</b>		
The overlays defined on the map cover areas with base land use designations but identify special provisions in addition to the base designation.		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Application Areas</b>
<b>Area Plan</b>	Areas where further planning efforts are needed and/or where additional development regulations may apply.	Town Center, Medical District, the Homer Spit (encompassing the Small Boat Harbor Overlay), Airport Critical Habitat Area, Bridge Creek Watershed Protection District, Scenic Gateway Corridor, and the Diamond Creek Recreation Area.
<b>Environmental Constraints</b>	Known areas of environmental constraints, such as critical habitat and steep slopes, to help identify places where more detailed site analysis may be warranted if areas are to be developed or improved.	Airport Critical Habitat, Bridge Creek Watershed Protection District, the Diamond Creek Recreation Area, the Woodard Creek Watershed, AE flood areas, coastal bluff stability areas, anadromous streams, and slopes 30 percent or greater.



Figure 7. DRAFT Future Land Use Map



## 2. Update the city code to better respond to existing and future opportunities for moderate, sustainable growth.<sup>9</sup> ⚡ \* 📄

- a) Rezone areas currently designated for low-density uses (like single-family homes) to allow for higher-density development (e.g., multi-family housing, compatible mixed-use developments).
- b) Implement zoning codes that allow for greater flexibility and adaptability, such as form-based codes that focus on building form and relationships rather than strict use classifications.
- c) Develop consistent design standards for new development to complement the character of areas. Include architectural and site development standards and standards for associated infrastructure (particularly roads and trails). 📄 \*
- d) Provide a clear and predictable approval process for every development including organizing project review and permitting and providing appropriate staff review. 📄
- e) Encourage development within areas well-served with existing community services or institutions (schools, libraries, health care clinics, post offices, utility companies, other governmental institutions, or services that people need access to).
- f) Synthesize existing rules and regulations for both public and private development in a comprehensive design manual to balance functionality and aesthetics. For instance, it is important that the Master Roads and Streets Plan is supplemented by the Community Design Manual, Transportation Plan, and a Streetscape Design Manual. 📄
- g) Adopt building codes and incentive programs to increase energy efficiency and promote renewable energy in existing and new residential and commercial developments.<sup>10</sup> \* 📄

## 3. Create affordable housing development incentives and initiatives and modify code to increase attainable housing opportunities that cater to the needs of young people, families, seniors, and seasonal workers.<sup>11</sup> ⚡ \* 📄

- a) Update zoning regulations to support higher density and mixed-use developments where appropriate, facilitating the creation of multi-family housing and affordable units. \*
- b) Remove regulatory barriers to compact and infill development, enabling denser housing projects that integrate well into existing neighborhoods. \*
- c) Expand allowable housing types, including ADUs, tiny homes, townhomes, courtyard homes, and manufactured and modular homes. \*
- d) Create development incentives, affordable housing initiatives, and public-private partnerships for affordable and long-term housing development.
- e) Offer developers incentives, like increased density bonuses or reduced parking requirements, for including affordable housing units or public amenities in their projects.

## 4. Strategically align development code with natural hazard considerations and habitat values.<sup>12</sup> ⚡ \* ✖ 📄

- a) Stormwater retention policies **TBC**
- b) Work with the Kenai Peninsula Borough and other partners to create an accurate assessment of wetlands within the Greater Homer Area. \*

<sup>9</sup> Cross reference with Housing Chapter, Sustainability, Resilience & Climate Change Chapter, Public Facilities & Services Chapter, and Transportation Chapter.

<sup>10</sup> Cross reference with Sustainability, Resilience & Climate Change Chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Cross reference with Housing Chapter.

<sup>12</sup> Cross reference with Sustainability, Resilience & Climate Change Chapter.

- c) Refine standards and guidelines to reduce bluff and shoreline erosion, such as managing surface water runoff on coastal bluffs and implementing any other applicable best management practices as part of development review processes. ✖ 📄 See Appendix for more information
- d) Revise code to address development on steep slopes in areas subject to landslides, and on other sensitive sites, including standards for grading and drainage, vegetation clearing, building setbacks, and building footprints. Include flexibility in road dimensions to avoid excessive grading. Development on steep slopes or outfalls may be subject to more extensive site analysis or geotechnical reports. 📄 See Appendix for more information.
- e) Work with partners to identify environmentally sensitive sites and natural systems of regional importance and ensure collaborative management of these areas. Options may include implementing Special Use Districts to develop and pay for needed infrastructure and addressing drainage and trail issues by region or watershed. 📄 See Appendix for more information
- f) Re-evaluate height standards in commercial and mixed-use districts to determine whether buildings over three stories should be permitted. Height standards must meet fire safety and insurance standards. 📄
- g) Revise standards for setbacks on streams and sensitive watersheds in accordance with Alaska Department of Fish and Game recommendations.
- h) Pursue protection of lands that are of marginal development value through purchase, land trades/consolidation, easements, or other tools.

**5. Maximize opportunities with public and private partners to preserve existing open spaces and create new green space connections that increase recreation activities and habitat value areas.**<sup>13</sup> ✖ 📄 ⚡

- a) Complete the ongoing Parks and Recreation Master Plan to identify shortages in park areas, distinguish between active and passive recreation areas, and build out the parks system as recommended.
- b) Develop a land protection strategy that prioritizes protection of high-value lands (open space, conservation, or recreational use), is opportunity-based to protect additional lands that are marginal for development due to their biophysical characteristics and is systems-based to identify additional protection/acquisition for habitat/corridor/trail integrity and connections. Implement the strategy through direct purchases, land trades/consolidation, easements, or other tools including collaboration with land trusts and/or public agencies. 📄
- c) Incorporate green spaces, parks, and stormwater management systems into the development code to create more livable and resilient urban environments.

**6. Develop area plans or master planning tools through robust community engagement and education. Master plans for specific community areas preserve character and address challenges unique to those areas.**<sup>14</sup> See also: Strategy 7, Downtown Plan ✖

- a) Update the 2011 Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan.
- b) Incorporate the 2023 South Peninsula Hospital Master Plan into development code, land management policy, and capital improvements.
- c) Collaborate with Homer Soil & Water Conservation, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources to adapt existing land use plans in development codes.

<sup>13</sup> Cross reference with Quality of Life Chapter, Sustainability, Resilience & Climate Change Chapter, and Transportation Chapter.

<sup>14</sup> Cross reference with Economic Development Chapter.

**7. Update Homer's 2006 Downtown Plan to focus on a walkable town center to support infill development, new and existing businesses, and community activities.<sup>15</sup> [ ] ✖**

- a) Build a coalition of public/private partnerships to support improvements to the commercial streetscape of Pioneer and Old Town. Improvements include sidewalk grid completion, green infrastructure and landscaping, and building façade design. [ ]
- b) Use regulations to control building height, parking standards, setbacks, landscaping, and façade design to create a more compact and cohesive streetscape.
- c) Encourage concentrated development patterns that reduce vehicle trips and advance non-motorized transportation.<sup>16</sup> [ ]
- d) Support Pioneer Avenue beautification and revitalization efforts. [ ] ✖

Quotes to be added for next draft.

<sup>15</sup> Cross reference with Economic Development chapter, Transportation chapter, and Governance chapter.

<sup>16</sup> Cross reference with Transportation chapter.





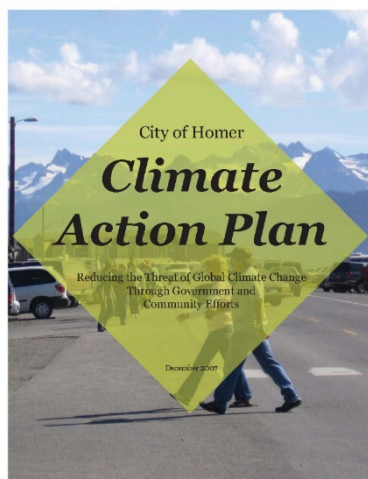
## Sustainability, Resilience & Climate Change

### Definitions<sup>17</sup>

**Sustainability:** The process of using our finite resources as a community to balance the goals of economic vitality, environmental stewardship, and social equity to ensure that we can meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Resilience:** The ability of a community to anticipate, plan, and prepare for threats, persevere through stressful or disruptive events, and recover and adapt to new conditions.

### Key Themes Guiding the Plan



Cover page of the 2007 City of Homer Climate Action Plan (City of Homer, 2007).

### Integrated Sustainability & Resilience Planning

It is critical to integrate sustainability and resilience into all Homer plans and policies. The City of Homer started this process in 2007 when it became the first community in Alaska to develop a Climate Action Plan, which asserted that action was necessary to prepare Homer for the impacts of climate change. Throughout the 2024 comprehensive plan update, the community has reiterated its desire to make Homer more sustainable and resilient. For example, 74% of community survey respondents said it is very important to encourage renewable energy projects over the next 20 years. Additionally, guidance from the American Planning Association states that it is a best practice for communities to fully integrate sustainability into their comprehensive plans.<sup>18 19</sup>

### Preservation of Ecosystems

Homer residents place a high value on preserving and protecting existing green spaces and ecosystems. Under the current zoning code, approximately 606 acres of land are reserved for 'Conservation' and 546 acres are zoned for 'Open Space and Recreation' uses, with the remaining 8,331 acres available for development.<sup>20</sup> Seventy-seven percent of respondents to the community survey identified preserving open public spaces within the city from development as a top priority. Protection of undeveloped green spaces, conservation of sensitive ecosystems, and a desire to increase consideration for the natural environment were common themes across

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from the Fairbanks North Star Borough Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, 2024

<sup>18</sup> Godshalk, D. R., & Anderson, W. R. (2012). *Sustaining Places: The Role of the Comprehensive Plan*. Chicago, IL: American Planning Association.

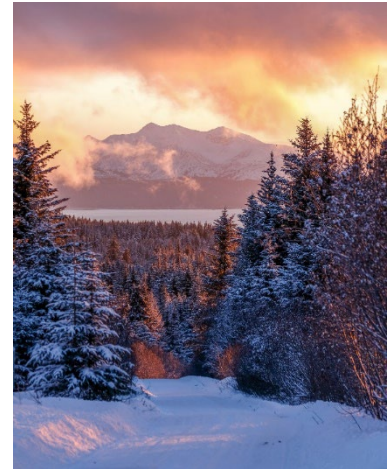
<sup>19</sup> Godshalk, D. R., & Rouse, D. C. (2015). *Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans*. Chicago, IL: American Planning Association.

<sup>20</sup> Calculated from "City of Homer Zoning" GIS data, provided by the Kenai Peninsula Borough GeoHub website.

the survey and growth scenarios report cards. Open response and interview comments suggested concentrating development in already developed areas (infill), avoiding development in unsafe or environmentally sensitive areas, protecting wildlife corridors, and prioritizing maintaining natural green spaces over creating new manmade parks.

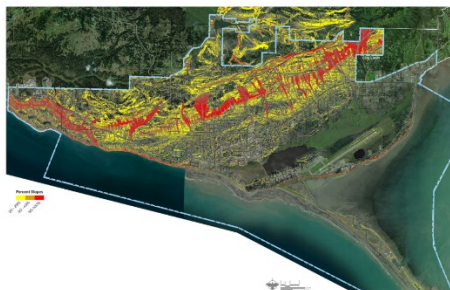
## Resilient Development

Homer residents want development that is resilient to climate change and works within known environmental constraints. Many comments indicated the need for the comprehensive plan and future land use map to consider environmental instabilities such as steep slopes and climate change impacts such as more intense and frequent storms, changes to fisheries, and energy system transitions. Known or predicted natural hazards impacting development in and around the City of Homer include vulnerability to tsunamis and flooding<sup>21</sup>, landslides and earthquakes<sup>22</sup>, and slope erosion<sup>23</sup>.

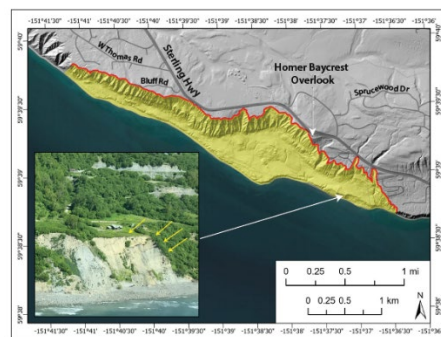


A winter trail in Homer(photo from Kachemak Communication)

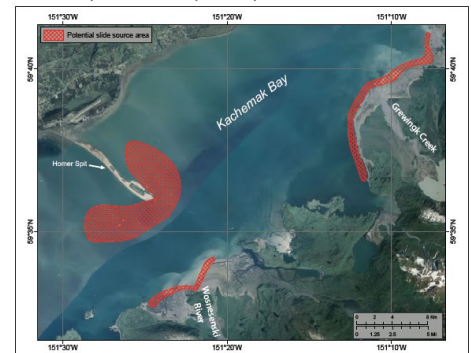
Steep slopes are just one example of an environmental constraint that can impact where and how development occurs. (Homer Growth Scenarios Report, 2024).



There is a significant landslide hazard in the Bluff Slope area (Salisbury, 2024).



There are several potential source locations (shown in red) of underwater slides near Homer (Suleimani, 2019).



<sup>21</sup> Suleimani, E. N., Nicolsky, D. J., & Salisbury, J. B. (2019). *Updated Tsunami Inundation Maps for Homer and Seldovia, Alaska*. Fairbanks, AK: Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys.

<sup>22</sup> Salisbury, J. B. (2024). *Landslide Hazard Susceptibility Mapping in Homer, Alaska*. Fairbanks, AK: Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys.

<sup>23</sup> Buzard, R.M. & Overbeck, J.R. (2022). *Coastal Bluff Stability Assessment for Homer, Alaska*. Fairbanks, AK: Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys.

## Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C
Update the City of Homer's future land use map, zoning code, and relevant plans to support sustainable and resilient development characterized by environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic vitality.	Implement the future land use map that supports density and mixed-use infill in already developed areas to preserve existing natural green spaces and ecosystems.	Protect both existing and new infrastructure from the impacts of climate change and develop and implement policies to address known environmental constraints.

## Strategies and Potential Actions

### Icon Key:

✂ Capital: For any project that includes a potential capital project

\* Code: A strategy that recommends a specific code revision

■ 2018: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan

🚀 Priority: Emerging priority for implementation (these will be carried forward into an action plan)

### 1. Comprehensive Climate Action and Engagement

- Reengage the community about climate change mitigation and adaptation and the status of the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP) and pursue public-private partnerships and collaborations with local climate change-motivated entities.<sup>24</sup> 🚀
- Build sustainability and resilience into all policies, practices, and projects as a baseline assumption, rather than an optional add-on.
  - Consider climate change in all long-range planning efforts (e.g., transportation, land use, Homer Spit, emergency management, economic development) and governance.<sup>25</sup>
- Maintain annual membership with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and continue to use the ICLEI protocol for organizing and calculating City of Homer energy use.

### 2. Buildings and Development

- Enact guidelines, regulations, or incentives to limit development in environmentally sensitive areas, including erosion-prone slopes and bluffs, and support the protection of habitat and green infrastructure on public and private lands. 🚀 \*
- Update City Code to promote more sustainable and resilient land use and transportation strategies, including denser mixed-use and more compact development, urban infill and redevelopment, and non-motorized transportation infrastructure.<sup>26</sup> \*
- Develop Homer's "Town Center" in line with the guiding principles in the Homer Town Center Development Plan and use this as a model for future development as Homer grows.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Cross reference: Governance (Partnerships/Collaboration)

<sup>25</sup> Cross reference: All Chapters

<sup>26</sup> Cross reference: Land Use & Environment and Transportation

<sup>27</sup> Cross reference: Land Use & Environment and Economic Development

- d) Require the use of permeable pavements, bioswales, and rain gardens with new commercial development to manage stormwater.<sup>28</sup> ✖
- e) Relocate City of Homer buildings out of tsunami inundation zones and consider regulations to limit future commercial and residential development in environmentally unsuitable and hazard-prone areas.<sup>29</sup>

## Energy

- 1. Encourage energy efficiency and cost savings in City building construction and for the life of the building by considering the use and full cost (direct and indirect) of energy over the lifespan of all facilities.**<sup>30</sup> ✖

  - a) Investigate whether additional facility energy savings are feasible by conducting up-to-date energy audits of City buildings and facilities.<sup>31</sup>
  - b) Continue to produce annual basic inventory reports for all energy consuming and GhG-producing City sectors, including summaries of energy consumption, GhG, energy outputs, and costs; report should include both sector and individual facility totals for detailed year to year comparison. Develop an inventory tracking the disposal of landfill waste.<sup>32</sup>

- 2. Explore the adoption of building codes and incentive programs to increase energy efficiency and promote renewable energy adoption in existing and new residential and commercial developments.**<sup>33</sup> ✖
- 3. Eliminate remaining heating fuel use in City facilities by continuing the transition to natural gas and pursuing unaccomplished renewable energy recommendations from the 2009 Climate Action Plan Implementation Report, such as wind, solar, and hydro energy opportunities.**<sup>34</sup> ✖

## Motorized Transportation

- 1. Make improvements to the City's vehicle fleet and operations including replacing older and less fuel-efficient vehicles with hybrids and EVs, reducing vehicle idling, minimizing unnecessary travel and maintaining more detailed records for vehicle age, mileage/hours, and maintenance history.** ✖
- 2. Explore the development of a widespread EV charging network to support the transition to electric vehicles for the city fleet, residents, and visitors, and reduce transportation-related GhG emissions.**<sup>35</sup> ✖

Quotes to be added for next draft.

<sup>28</sup> See the Low-Impact Development (LID) Planning Summary Report (2020) for more details.

<sup>29</sup> Cross reference: Public Facilities & Services chapter

<sup>30</sup> Cross reference: Public Facilities & Services chapter

<sup>31</sup> Cross reference: Public Facilities & Services chapter

<sup>32</sup> Cross reference: Public Facilities & Services chapter

<sup>33</sup> Cross reference: Land Use & Environment chapter

<sup>34</sup> Cross reference: Public Facilities & Services chapter

<sup>35</sup> Cross reference: Transportation chapter





## Public Facilities & Services

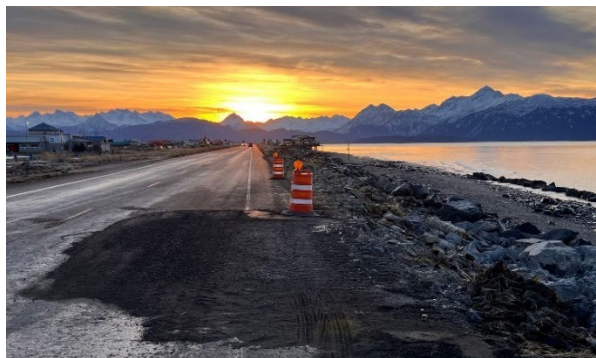
### Key Themes Guiding the Plan

#### Vulnerability to Natural Hazards

Homer's location makes it vulnerable to natural hazards including tsunamis, landslides, and flooding, as well as the longer term impacts of climate change. There are numerous plans and reports that provide recommendations for improving the resilience<sup>36</sup> of Homer's infrastructure.<sup>37</sup> The Port, Harbor, and Spit, which are all important components of Homer's economy, are especially vulnerable to severe storms and climate change. Similarly, the Public Works Campus is vital to the City's operations but is in a tsunami inundation zone. The water and sewer services within the City are adequate, but inflow and infiltration from stormwater is impacting the capacity of the wastewater treatment plant.



Development of a new Public Works facility is planned to occur across three phases, with construction beginning in 2026 (from the City of Homer 2024-2029 Capital Improvement Plan).



A November storm caused damage to the Homer Spit Road (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Facebook, 2024).

<sup>36</sup> Cross reference: Sustainability, Resilience, and Climate Change

<sup>37</sup> For example:

Suleimani, E. N., Nicolsky, D. J., & Salisbury, J. B. (2019). Updated Tsunami Inundation Maps for Homer and Seldovia, Alaska. Fairbanks, AK: Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys.

Kinney Engineering (2020). Low-Impact Development (LID) Planning for the City of Homer.

Salisbury, J. B. (2024). Landslide Hazard Susceptibility Mapping in Homer, Alaska. Fairbanks, AK: Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys.

## Accessible and Comprehensive Facilities

City-owned facilities include the Homer Education and Recreation Center (HERC), the Homer Public Library, and the Homer Airport Terminal. These, and all City of Homer facilities, should be managed to improve the quality of life of Homer residents and support economic development. Feedback from the Community Survey indicates that the residents are interested in safe, accessible, well-lit facilities, especially for young families and retirees.



The skate park at HERC-1 (from the HERC Task Force Final Recommendation Report, 2018).

*“Support our infrastructure. Our water and sewer facilities are at capacity, and we keep building new things with little thought to how we will maintain them.”*

~ Homer Comprehensive Plan Revision Community Survey

## Reliable and Affordable Services

The City of Homer provides water, sewer, fire protection, law enforcement, and emergency services. The City also works with partners such as the Kenai Peninsula Borough to support other public services such as education, healthcare, and solid waste management. Although responses to the community survey showed general satisfaction with the fire, law enforcement, and emergency services, several comments expressed concerns about inadequate funding and staffing levels. All services provided by the City need to support quality of life, economic development, and safety while balancing the needs of young families and retirees alike.



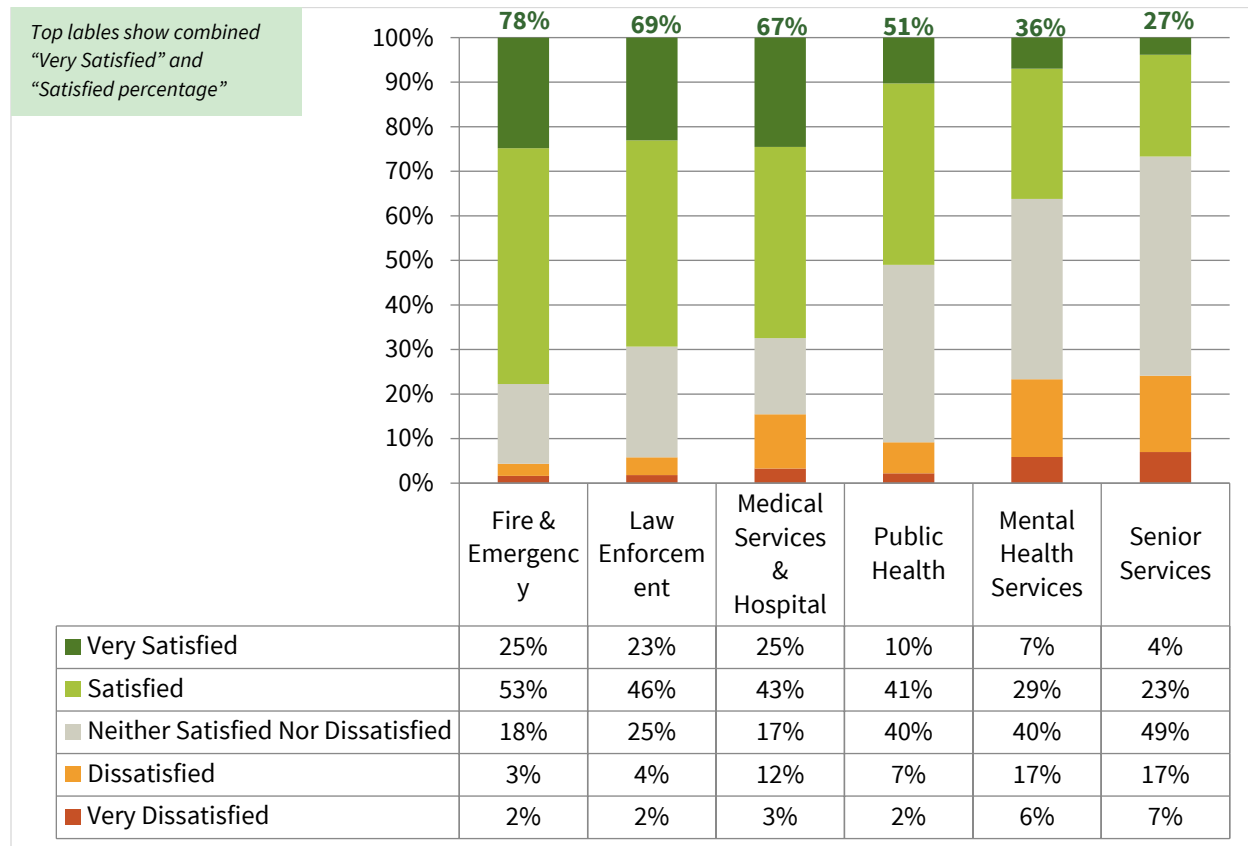
A new restroom facility at Ramp 8 is scheduled to be constructed in 2027 (from the City of Homer 2024-2029 Capital Improvement Plan).

## Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C
Mitigate risks to City-owned infrastructure from climate change and natural hazards..	Provide and improve city-operated facilities to meet the needs of the community, accommodate desired growth, and support sustainability and conservation goals.	Seek collaboration and coordination with other service providers, such as the Kenai Peninsula Borough, private entities, and the broader community, to ensure important community services are available, affordable, and adequate.

**Figure 8. Results from question #8 of the community survey, September 2024**

**Q7: How satisfied are you with the availability of the following Health & Safety programs or services in Homer?**



Answered: 55

## Strategies and Potential Actions

### Icon Key:

- ✂ Capital: For any project that includes a potential capital project
- \* Code: A strategy that recommends a specific code revision
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- ⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation (these will be carried forward into an action plan)

## Facilities

### 3. Continue to implement the recommendations of the Final Report and Recommendations on Tsunami Risk to the Public Works Campus. ⚡

- a) Evaluate whether additional critical infrastructure needs to be relocated away from tsunami inundation zones, areas at risk of erosion, or other natural hazards.
- b) Locate new city facilities away from tsunami inundation zones, steep slopes, and other natural hazards and choose locations that minimize impacts to sensitive ecosystems and wildlife corridors.

4. **Redevelop the Homer Education and Recreation Center (HERC) property to provide safe, year-round public recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities.** <sup>38</sup> ⚡
5. **Work with residents, visitors, the FAA and DOT&PF to identify and address the deficiencies of the Homer Airport terminal.**
  - a) Collaborate with air carriers to provide more reliable year-round service to and from Homer Airport.
  - b) Collaborate with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities in the development of a new airport master plan for Homer Airport.

## Utilities and Services

1. **Continue to provide high-quality water and sewer services within the City to meet current and anticipated demands.** 📄
  - a) Develop a long-range stormwater drainage and management plan that builds on the Low-Impact Development Plan (also referred to as the Green Infrastructure – Stormwater Master Plan) that considers water quality, wastewater treatment plant capacity, inflow and infiltration, climate change, and erosion, and provides recommendations for proactive stormwater management. ⚡
2. **Conduct a needs assessment and strategic plan for fire, emergency, and law enforcement services to identify gaps in funding and staffing and develop recommendations for maintaining and improving these services.**
  - a) Ensure that fire, emergency, and law enforcement services are increased appropriately to support new public facilities as they are constructed, such as new recreational facilities or the Harbor expansion.
3. **Continue to coordinate with the Kenai Peninsula Borough to ensure solid waste management services are affordable, meet current community needs, and anticipate future needs to support growth.**
4. **Collaborate with Homer Electric Association, Inc. to ensure affordable, reliable provision of energy to the Greater Homer Area.**
5. **Develop a plan and identify funding sources to provide free public Wi-Fi in key areas, such as parks and recreational facilities, public transportation hubs, and the public library.**
6. **Increase the City's capacity to provide and expand community services and improve the synergy between the City and other community partners.** 📄
  - b) Provide technical assistance to community organizations seeking to expand their services.
  - c) Partner with community organizations to supplement or expand City services and the operating hours of City facilities.

*"I love the idea of ramped up recreation for all ages but feel like the focus does not include the ripple effect of increased Public Safety calls nor the fact that Public Safety continues to receive less and less representative and financial support from City Council."*

~ Homer Growth Scenarios Report Card

<sup>38</sup> Cross reference: Quality of Life



## Port and Harbor

1. **Develop a long-range Port and Harbor management plan that considers the environmental and economic significance of the Homer Spit, the impacts of climate change, and natural hazards like tsunamis and erosion. ⚡**
2. **Construct a new parking structure on the Homer Spit that can also serve as a shelter-in-place location during tsunamis.**
3. **Develop new non-motorized infrastructure providing access to the harbor and improve the accessibility of existing infrastructure, including ADA improvements at the Fishing Hole.**

*“Make sure infrastructure keeps up with growth.”*

*“Humbly expand the harbor”*

*“Concerned about further harbor expansion, but it could be improved instead!”*

*“Create a centralized community space that serves all the community.”*

~ Homer Comprehensive Plan Revision Community Survey



# Housing

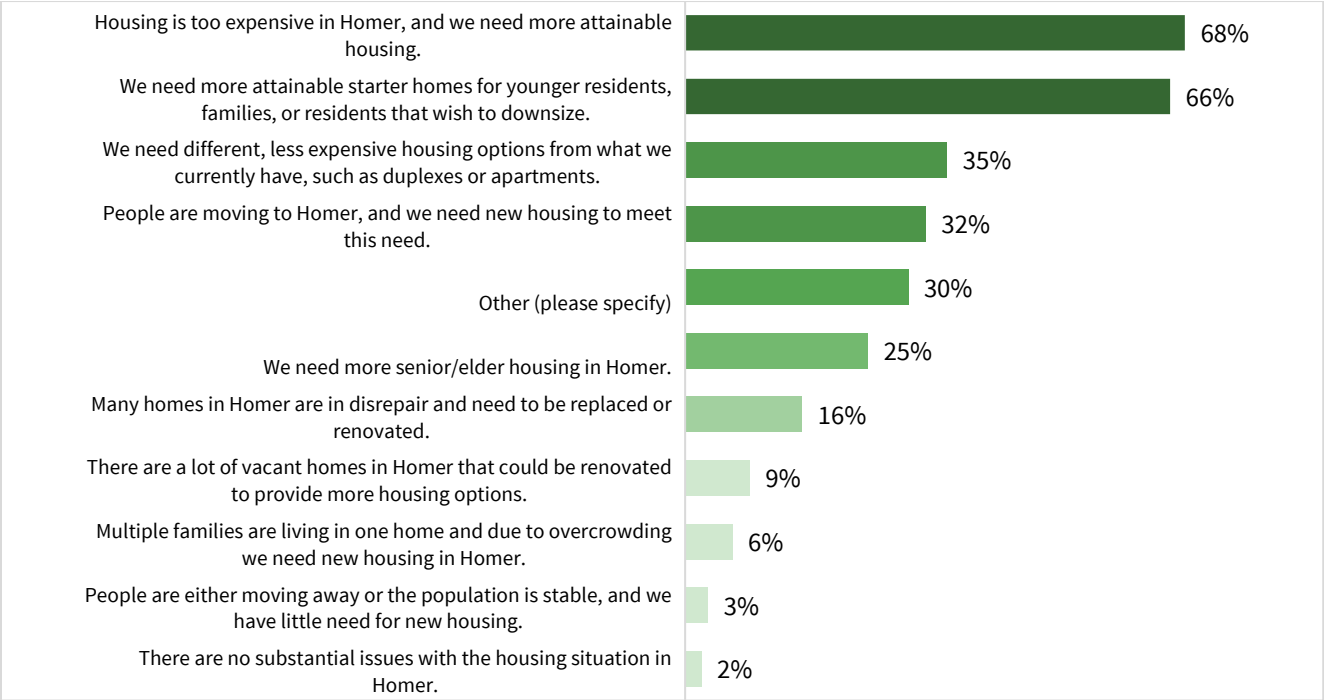
## Key Themes Guiding the Plan

### Inventory

Homer’s population has been experiencing steady, modest growth over the past 22 years but a slight decrease in that growth is now expected until 2025. At the same time, the number of new housing units have remained relatively stagnant in Homer over the past 10 years, with 2023 having the fewest new units (34) coming onto the market since 2012. Homer also sees variable population throughout the year with more people seeking housing in the summer months during the fishing and tourism seasons. The growth and seasonal nature of Homer’s population has likely contributed to the community’s perception that attaining housing in the community is challenging, but overall, the supply and demand in the rental market is about average, with 2,851 existing housing units in the city limits and a vacancy rate of 16 percent (a vacancy rate of 5-10 percent is considered “healthy” by national standards.) However, vacancy rates in tourism-driven economies can be misleading without more detailed data collection. While the data suggests a balance between housing supply and demand in Homer, the community’s perception of housing challenges may stem largely from high costs. This perception highlights the need to account for factors like vacancy rates, which can be influenced by the tourism industry and the prevalence of short-term rentals.

Figure 9. Results from question #7 of the community survey, September 2024

**Q7: Please choose up to three statements from the options below that best summarize the housing situation in Homer.**



Answered: 551; respondents could select up to three from the list above.

## Rising Costs and Limited Access

Housing in Homer has become increasingly expensive, making it less accessible for many residents, including young professionals and families. According to census data, 50 percent of renter households in Homer (358 out of 702) are cost-burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing expenses. This statistic does not capture additional challenges, such as issues with accessibility, the condition of rental units, or their size. Feedback from renters also highlighted difficulties in finding pet-friendly housing, a concern especially significant for younger, single renters and seasonal employees. As of November 2024, the median home listing price in Homer was approximately \$550,000 – a 97 percent increase since 2018 and significantly higher than the statewide median of \$396,000. High building costs, largely driven by shipping expenses to Alaska, further constrain the new construction market. While more localized data is needed to fully understand these costs, the Mortenson Construction Cost Index indicates that national construction costs have risen by 40 percent since 2018, compounding the housing affordability challenges in Homer. Available land does not seem to be a barrier; the Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) Land Management Department Homer Housing Review in March 2023 identified 1,163 vacant tax parcels within the City limits of Homer with an average lot size of 1.3 acres. This presents substantial infill and higher density development opportunities with access to existing public utilities for housing development and would result in additional contributions to the borough tax base and City public utility revenues.

## Impacts of Housing Challenges on Economic Development

The lack of affordable housing affects various groups differently, such as seniors wishing to age in place and seasonal workers who struggle to find suitable accommodations. Essential workers, like healthcare professionals, say they face difficulties relocating to Homer due to housing shortages. In the Homer Comprehensive Plan Revision Business Survey, 13 percent of participants identified "lack of available housing for seasonal employees" as a key challenge to hiring and retaining workers, second only to the challenge of "lack of qualified applicants." "High cost of housing" was also cited in interviews as a reason why more fishermen do not live in Homer year-round. Housing outside the city limits is often more affordable and accessible, but residents in these areas feel unrepresented because they cannot vote for Homer elected officials and may lack access to certain City services.

*"I wish the housing market was better/more affordable for young folks/families wanting to invest."*

*"Airbnb's are taking all the mid to small houses from local people. Rentals are very hard to find at reasonable prices and home prices are so high that they are out of reach for the average young family."*

*"We don't need MORE housing. We need to find ways to make the current housing affordable!"*

*"We need to incentivize people willing to build affordable, year-round housing."*

*"There is a huge lack of senior care and senior housing in this community. The assisted livings are already full, and we are expecting a silver wave in this community."*

*"A big concern is that the actual city limits are so small compared to the actual areas that many local residents live in and thus many of us who own businesses and earn sales tax for the city, do not actually live within the city limit and therefore are not able to vote on city decisions. Nor do we qualify for city services, such as the Police and Animal Shelter, etc. Something needs to change around all of that. Perhaps we don't need the city water and sewer where we live but would sure like to have more of a voice."*

~ Homer Comprehensive Plan Revision Community Survey and Comment Map

**Figure 10. Top five community areas for improvement, historical perspective**

Which THREE aspects of our community most need to be improved?			
Top 5 Community Areas for Improvement, Historical Perspective			
	2015 Perceptions Survey (590 responses)	2019/2020 Perceptions Survey (469 responses)	2023 Perceptions Survey (1,020 responses)
1	Jobs and economic opportunities (48%)	Jobs and economic opportunities (13%)	Housing (58%)
2	Public transport (38%)	Substance abuse treatment (13%)	Public transportation (24%)
3	Substance abuse treatment (36%)	Housing (12%)	Jobs and economic opportunities (20%)
4	Housing (26%)	Public transportation (12%)	Substance abuse treatment (17%)
5	Access to job training and higher education (17%)	Respect for varied viewpoints (10%)	Behavioral health services (17%)

Source: Perception of Community Health Survey

Image from the MAPP 2023 Community Health Needs Assessment Executive Summary.

## Influence of Tourism and the Rise of Short-Term Rentals



In the Homer Comprehensive Plan Revision Community Survey, about 18 percent of respondents identified vacation rentals as a barrier to housing, reflecting concerns about the impact of tourism on housing availability. While tourism is a vital economic driver for Homer, many residents believe it contributes to housing market pressures. In 2024 (through September), Homer recorded 480,063 "visitor days." Although these numbers have declined in recent years, the Homer Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center plans to promote longer visitor stays and attract more tourists during the shoulder seasons in 2025.

Data about the number of short-term rentals in Homer varies; the city identified approximately 326 short-term rental units in 2022 using now-discontinued city software. This represents 14.8 percent of the total housing stock, a notably high percentage compared to other communities in Alaska (see Figure 11). Kenai

Peninsula Borough Land Management Department estimated 475+/- Airbnb, and 260 +/- VRBO offerings in the "greater Homer area" in its March 2023 Homer Housing Review. Growing support exists within the community for regulating short-term rentals to preserve residential neighborhoods and ensure housing availability for long-term residents and workers. However, some measures to address these concerns, such as a resolution supporting a borough-wide bed tax proposed in June 2024, were not supported by Homer's elected officials.

*"You can't have affordable housing without higher density units."*

~ Homer Comprehensive Plan Growth Scenario



**Figure 11. Short-Term Rentals as a Percent of Total Housing Units**

Table from the Girdwood Economic + Housing Analysis, April 2024

Community	Short-Term Rentals	Total Housing Units	Percent of Total Units
Girdwood	310	1,839	16.9 percent
Homer	326	2,201	14.8 percent
Kenai Peninsula	2,149	31,330	6.9 percent
Sitka	151	4,229	3.6 percent
Juneau	379	13,792	2.7 percent
Kodiak Island	140	5,450	2.6 percent
Chugach	72	3,287	2.2 percent
Matanuska-Susitna	903	42,018	2.1 percent
Ketchikan Gateway	127	6,427	2.0 percent
Anchorage, Municipality	2,323	118,293	2.0 percent
Fairbanks North Star	717	44,270	1.6 percent
Wrangell-Petersburg	37	3,251	1.1 percent

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021); City of Homer October 2022 City Council Work Session; Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Alaska Economic Trends, September 2022; AirDNA Quarterly Reports for Girdwood 2023 Q3.

## Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C	Goal D
Preserve and produce a high-quality housing inventory that accommodates for projected population growth and is affordable, attainable and safe for all Homer residents.	Homer's housing inventory is compatible with the beloved existing community character while allowing for essential growth and density.	Housing development is in balance with preservation and sustainability goals of the City and new housing development minimizes environmental impacts.	Homer builds strong community and regional partnerships around housing that increase housing attainability and affordability.



## Strategies and Potential Actions

### Icon Key:

- ✂ Capital: For any project that includes a potential capital project
- \* Code: A strategy that recommends a specific code revision
- 2018: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan
- ⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation (these will be carried forward into an action plan)

### 1. Implement zoning reforms to encourage attainable housing development, prioritizing housing solutions that cater to the needs of young people, families, seniors, and seasonal workers. \* ⚡

(Also similar, but not exact to ■ goal in land use that reads, “Guiding Homer’s growth with a focus on increasing the supply and diversity of housing, protect community character, encouraging infill, and helping minimize global impacts of public facilities including limiting greenhouse gas emissions” and Goal 6 under Economic Vitality, “Support community efforts to establish affordable housing.”)

- a) Update zoning regulations to support higher density and mixed-use developments where appropriate, facilitating the creation of multi-family housing and affordable units. \*
- b) Remove regulatory barriers to compact and infill development, enabling denser housing projects that integrate well into existing neighborhoods. \*
- c) Expand allowable housing types, including manufactured and modular homes. \*

### 2. Develop incentives and public-private partnerships for affordable and long-term housing development.

- a) Explore the creation of a local housing fund and implement targeted incentives to encourage affordable housing development over luxury and short-term rental projects.
- b) Address the scarcity of affordable land by exploring Community Land Trust models (example: Sitka, AK) and other strategies to lower land acquisition costs.
- c) Incentivize private property owners to place existing vacancy parcels into residential use.
- d) Build public-private partnerships with organizations that influence housing development, such as contractors, nonprofits, Tribal housing authorities, and lending agencies.
- e) Explore possibilities for City land acquisition with the intent to develop attainable housing through an RFP process.

*“Homer needs to grow and offer homes for younger people and families starting out or there will be no one to work in the service industries.”*

~ Homer Comprehensive Plan  
Revision Business Survey

*“The cost of housing is not reflective of our local economy and is rapidly outpacing the middle class wage earner.”*

~ Homer Comprehensive Plan  
Revision Community Survey  
and Comment Map

### 3. Consider sustainable development and creative solutions.

- Integrate climate sustainability plans into housing strategies to ensure resilience and environmental protection. ⚡
- Explore how to maximize the use of any local or regional materials that would decrease the cost of building. This could include (but is not limited to) traditional materials like gravel or timber as well as creative sources like 3-D printing and repurposed or customized shipping containers. This could also be addressed with building code revision that allow for non-traditional materials and innovative designs, or an “innovative and sustainable housing overlay zone” (this overlay zone strategy has been successful in Taos, New Mexico.) Note: these ideas require additional research but are based on methods currently being explored or used in other parts of the state. ✳
- Explore partnerships and solutions that could reduce the cost of shipping for building materials and manufactured homes to Homer.



### 4. Assess Homer’s housing needs, maintain data collection, and foster community involvement.

- Conduct a detailed Housing Needs Assessment to identify current and future housing needs, including types and numbers of units required to serve projected population growth and affordability ranges as well as support economic growth and industries. ⚡
- Complete a housing stock report and buildable lands inventory. Conduct targeted borough land disposition for housing with specific objectives in mind: manufactured housing, smaller lots for more affordable ownership and rental products, duplexes, and triplexes. Note: The strategic approach to land disposition could occur through targeted negotiations/partnerships with local organizations, such as Tribes and Kenai Peninsula Housing Initiatives, Inc. In addition, the request for proposals (RFP) process could be used to select developers/contractors and associated homebuyers for selected borough owned lots with specific housing objectives.
- Build City capacity internally or through contractor support to pursue strategic land dispositions.
- Update housing indicators (see Figure 12 below) annually to track housing issues, constraints, needs, and opportunities.
- Encourage shared planning and decision-making to ensure housing policies reflect community priorities and needs.

*“Affordable housing developers would benefit from a simplified process with the city.”*

~ Homer Comprehensive Plan Growth Scenario Results

**Figure 12. Housing indicators**

Indicator	Description	What it tells us	Sources
<b>New Housing Units</b>	Quarterly report of new single family, multi-family, and mobile home units	Tracking the number of new housing units added to the market can help track how well the market is responding to demand and track progress towards new housing goals.	AHFC Alaska Housing Market Indicators Report (available at <a href="https://www.ahfc.us/efficiency/education-and-events/research-information-center/alaska-housing-market-indicators">https://www.ahfc.us/efficiency/education-and-events/research-information-center/alaska-housing-market-indicators</a> or <a href="https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/housing/new.html">https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/housing/new.html</a> )
<b>Housing Occupancy and Vacancy Rates</b>	Total occupied/vacant housing units, homeowner vacancy rate, rental vacancy rate	Vacancy rates below 5 percent are an indication of a tight housing market that could limit housing mobility and is often a sign of pent-up demand. A growing	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED

Indicator	Description	What it tells us	Sources
		number of vacant units can also be an indication that the housing supply is not meeting the needs of residents and the existing housing stock is not being used to its full potential.	HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at <a href="https://data.census.gov/">https://data.census.gov/</a> )
<b>Housing Tenure</b>	Owner-occupied housing units, renter-occupied housing units, and average household size for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units	The relative demand or need for ownership <i>versus</i> rental housing in your community. Household size can indicate the size of housing unit that renters and owners are looking for, respectively.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at <a href="https://data.census.gov/">https://data.census.gov/</a> )
<b>Overcrowding</b>	Occupants per room	Often an indication of pent-up demand within a community. Overcrowding is defined as more than 1.0 person per room. Severe overcrowding is defined as 1.5 or more people per room.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at <a href="https://data.census.gov/">https://data.census.gov/</a> )
<b>Affordability</b>	Selected monthly ownership costs as a percentage of household income (SMOCAPI) and gross rent as a percentage of household income (GRAPI)	Households that spend more than 30 percent of their total income on housing costs are considered to be cost burdened. Spending a larger portion of household income on housing limits the amount of income available for other non-discretionary spending, such as food, clothing, and transportation.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at <a href="https://data.census.gov/">https://data.census.gov/</a> )
<b>Median Family Income</b>	Median family income and HUD income limits broken down by persons in family and income limit category	The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sets income limits that determine eligibility for assisted housing programs including the Public Housing, Section 8 project-based, Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, Section 202 housing for the elderly, and Section 811 housing for persons with disabilities programs.	The Department of Housing and Urban Development, FY 2023 Income Limits Summary (available at <a href="https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html#query_2023">https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html#query_2023</a> )
<b>Local Building Permit Activity</b>	Data collected by local assessors on the number and or type of building activity occurring in the community	Data that describe current building activity in the community can help track how well the market is responding to demand and progress towards new housing goals.	Local Accessors/Municipal Planning Departments
<b>Housing Wage</b>	Housing wage is an estimate of the hourly wage a full-time worker must earn to afford a modest rental home at HUD's fair market rent (FMR) without spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs	Illustrates the gap between renters' wages and the cost of rental housing.	National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach Dashboards (available at <a href="https://nlihc.org/oor/state/ak">https://nlihc.org/oor/state/ak</a> )
<b>Population Estimates/ Components of Change</b>	Components of change include births, deaths, and net migration.	Helpful information around how a community is changing/growing and what role housing could play in population dynamics moving forward.	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce, Alaska Population Estimates (available at <a href="https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/data-pages/alaska-population-estimates">https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/data-pages/alaska-population-estimates</a> )





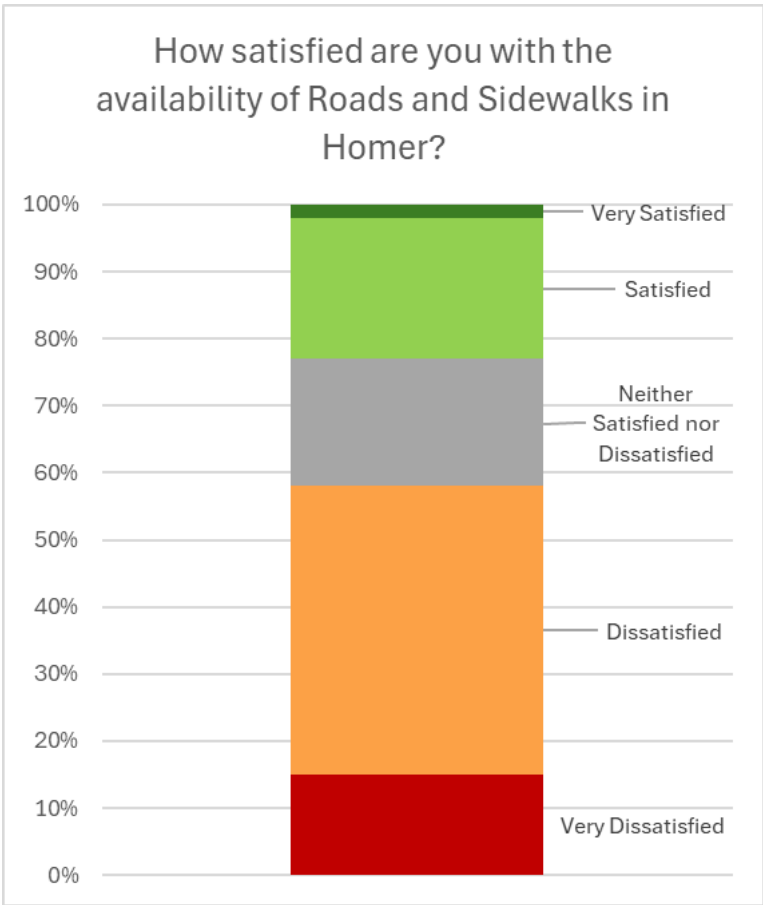
# Transportation

## Key Themes Guiding the Plan

### Non-Motorized Transportation

City of Homer residents desire more opportunities to walk and bike year-round. Residents identified a need for increased pedestrian connectivity and an increase in bike infrastructure on the Community Survey Map and over 50% of respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied over the availability of roads and sidewalks. Currently, the City has roughly 129,065 feet of sidewalk and bike/walking pathways and 67,778 feet of maintained trails. However, many connections are missing, leaving pedestrians to walk along the roadway or find a less desirable route to their destination.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 13. Community Survey Results show that almost 60% of residents want more roads and sidewalks in Homer. The comments associated with this survey question indicated that residents want more walking and biking facilities.**



<sup>39</sup> The City has been working to improve safe travel for persons of all ages and abilities. The Homer All-Ages and Abilities Pedestrian Pathway (HAP) will connect the Senior Center, main medical district, library, post office, police station, grocery store, and pharmacy, as well as existing trails. (from the Transportation Plan)

## Maintenance

Maintenance of roadways, sidewalks, and trails is a priority for City of Homer residents. In the Community Survey, residents identified maintenance as one of the most challenging things about living in Homer, citing the need for improvements to state-maintained roads more than any other.. The City of Homer's Public Works department is responsible for maintenance on 29 miles of rural roads and 21 miles of urban roads.<sup>40</sup>

## Traffic Flow and Safety

Key issues identified in the Community Survey regarding traffic flow and safety were truck routes, parking, pedestrian safety, and summertime congestion. These issues affect the entire transportation network, both motorized and non-motorized. Although most residents use a car daily, many would like to reduce those trips and use walking and biking more frequently, especially for commuting and to access recreation.<sup>41</sup>



Calhoun Trail: The Calhoun Trail is an example of one of the 25 city-maintained trails, together spanning almost 11 miles. It's maintenance and upkeep provides a pedestrian connection from Fairview Avenue to Bayview Avenue.



Traffic Calming: Speed hump for slowing traffic on Beluga Place

## Goals

The 2024 Transportation Plan identified four key goals for transportation in the City of Homer. The Comprehensive Plan goals complement and support the goals outlined in the Transportation Plan.

Goal A	Goal B
Provide a robust non-motorized transportation network focused on connectivity, safety, and access to the "City Center", to schools, and to trails for users of all ages and abilities.	Maintain safe and useable non-motorized and motorized transportation network year-round to move people and goods to, from, and within the Greater Homer Area.

<sup>40</sup> DOT&PF and the City of Homer have two agreements, known as TORA's, that allow the City to take over maintenance of state facilities: one for the Homer Spit and one for Pioneer Avenue. These allow the City to maintain these state roads to the standards desired by community members. (from the Transportation Plan)

<sup>41</sup> 83% of survey respondents from the Homer Transportation Plan Survey said they use a car daily but would prefer to walk and bike more.

## Strategies for Goal A

### Icon Key:

- ✖ Capital: For any project that includes a potential capital project
- \* Code: A strategy that recommends a specific code revision
- 2018: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan
- 🚩 Priority: Emerging priority for implementation (these will be carried forward into an action plan)

1. **Establish truck routes for the City of Homer to reduce interactions between truck traffic and non-motorized users. \***
2. **Develop public transportation options, particularly in the Spit area, to alleviate traffic congestion and improve accessibility for seasonal workers, residents, and visitors.<sup>42</sup>**
3. **Develop a Complete Streets policy for the City of Homer. \*? ■** (policy would include goals/objectives from 2018)
4. **Expand the Homer All Ages and Abilities Pedestrian Pathway (HAP) Loop, including extensions along Pioneer Avenue and into Old Town; consider locations for public parking in the city center to allow visitors to park once and walk.<sup>43</sup> ✖**
5. **Improve non-motorized connections to schools and address school site congestion. ✖ ■**
6. **Explore development of a widespread EV charging infrastructure network to support the transition to electric vehicles and reduce transportation-related GhG emissions.<sup>44</sup> ✖**
7. **Conduct a reconnaissance engineering study to identify concerns, needs, and obstacles for improving Kachemak Drive for non-motorized travel and to develop potential solutions.**

## Strategies for Goal B

1. **Work with DOT&PF to improve maintenance on state-owned sidewalks, paths, and bike lanes through participating in the state planning process and considering Transfer of Responsibility Agreements (TORAs) or transfer of ownership. ■**
2. **Define maintenance standards for roads, sidewalks, paths, and trails. \*?**
3. **Update design standards for walking and biking infrastructure in Title11 to ensure they are connected and maintainable. \*?**
4. **Update Public Works maintenance plans and policies to define maintenance standards for sidewalks, paths, and trails in addition to the existing road policy. ✖**

Quotes to be added for next draft.

<sup>42</sup> Cross reference with Economic Development chapter

<sup>43</sup> Cross reference with Quality of Life chapter

<sup>44</sup> Cross reference with Sustainability, Resilience, and Climate Change chapter



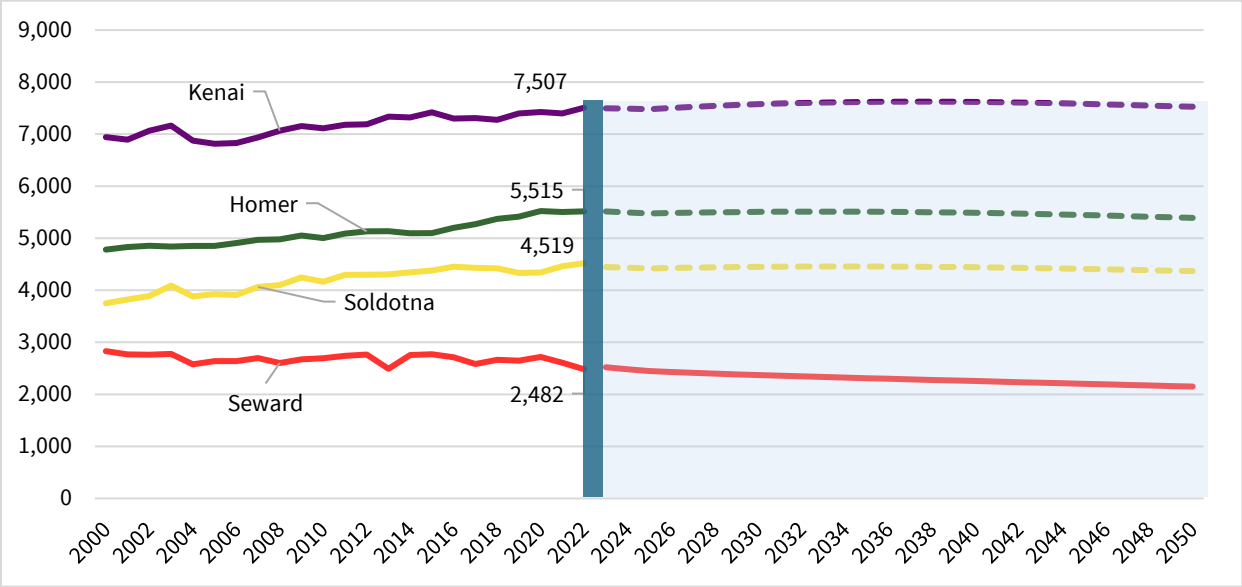
# Economic Development

## Key Themes Guiding the Plan

### Population

Homer's population has been steadily increasing, with a 15.4 percent growth from 2000 to 2022, and is projected to continue growing modestly until 2050. The city has a growing senior population (increasing from 14 percent in 2013 to 22 percent in 2022), which presents unique economic challenges and opportunities, particularly in housing and healthcare services. Homer boasts a higher per capita income compared to nearby communities, although its median household income has seen a modest increase over the past decade. However, residents are still concerned about the high cost of living and doing business in Homer and cite those costs as one of the biggest challenges of living in Homer.

Figure 14. Historical and forecasted populations for Homer and comparison cities in the KPB



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Northern Economics analysis.

*"Growth reflects community values and benefits the local economy – not growth for growth's sake. Keep local input central."*

*"Slow, moderate growth that focuses on year-round residents, recreation, 'working' people (i.e., fisherman, marine trades), and avoids catering to large corporations, second homeowners, and cruise ship-tourism."*

~ Homer Comprehensive Plan Revision Community Survey and Comment Map

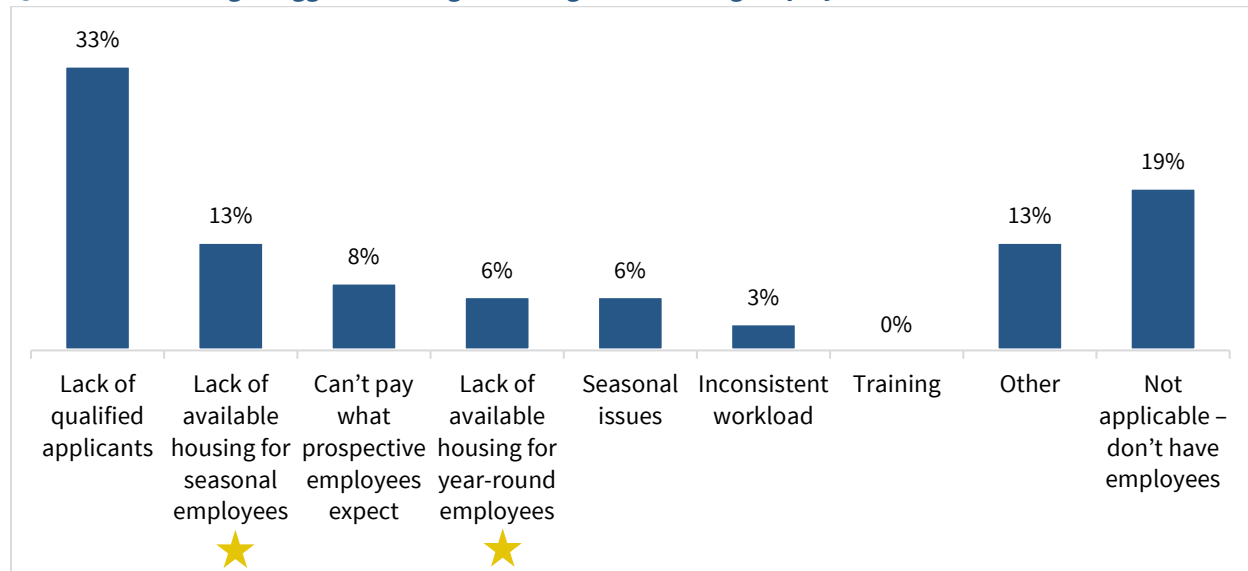


## Housing

As the population grows, so does the demand for housing. The need for affordable and attainable housing is a priority by the community, as indicated by the community and business surveys and the discussions community groups having are having about housing policy. Developing housing solutions with a focus on seniors and young people can address demographic needs and stimulate the local economy by increasing demand for goods and services.

**Figure 15. Results from question #8 of the business survey, September 2024**

**Q8: What is the single biggest challenge to hiring and retaining employees?**



Answered: 64. Multiple choice question. Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding to the nearest whole number.

### Other responses (themes with two or more responses)

- Agree that multiple challenges impact hiring and retaining employees (3)
- Do not have issues hiring and retaining employees (2)

## Infrastructure

An increasing population necessitates the expansion and improvement of public services and infrastructure, such as transportation and recreational facilities. Enhancing public transportation options to connect key areas can improve accessibility and support economic growth. Improvements in Homer's infrastructure, including roads, internet service, and public utilities are necessary to support growth and attract businesses and is supported by the community as shown through the community survey and public comments. Ensuring that infrastructure is not only compliant with regulations but that is also genuinely accessible can enhance community inclusivity and economic participation.

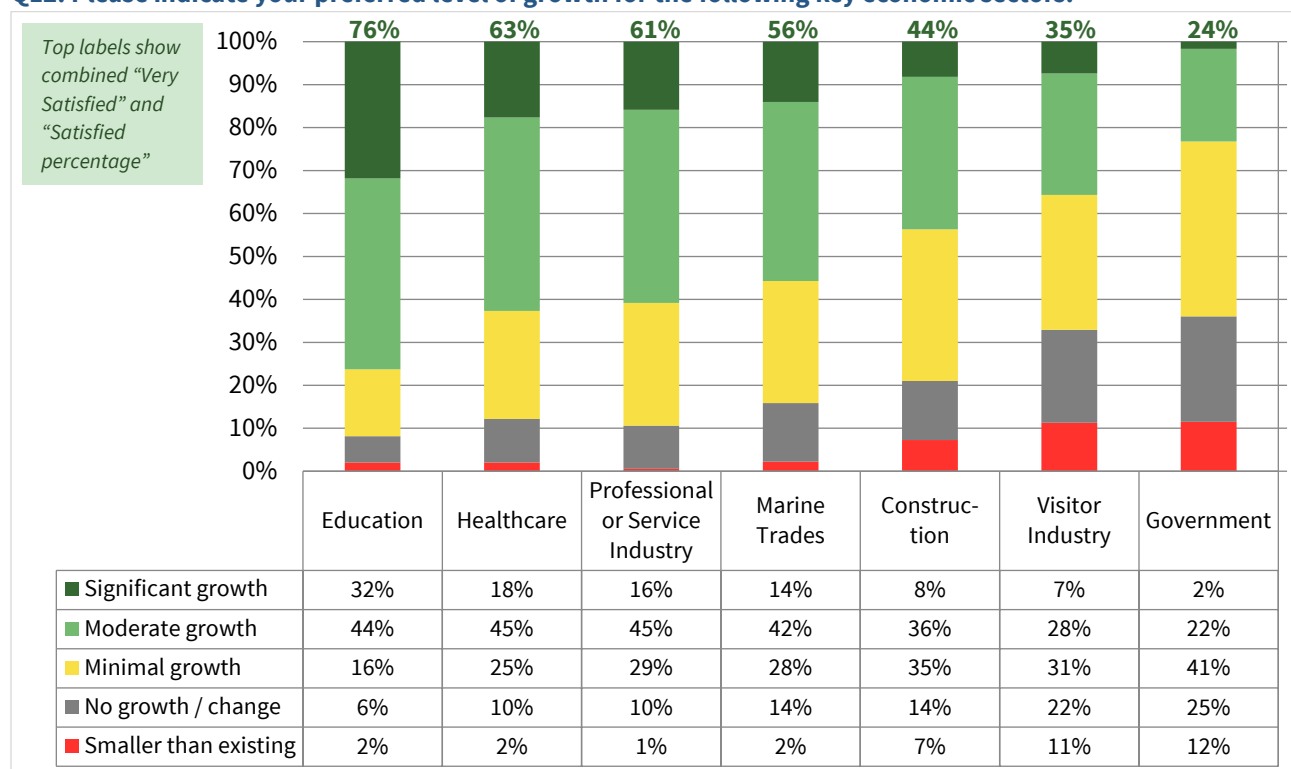


## Industries

The largest industry sectors in Homer include education, healthcare, retail trade, and arts and entertainment. The commercial fishing industry remains a vital part of Homer's economy, with significant earnings from fisheries. Tourism and marine trades are not specifically identified in state industry data, but both are identified as key industries in the community. Tourism is a critical component of Homer's economy, but there is concern about relying too heavily on this industry or growing this industry at the expense of other priorities important to residents. The community survey showed support for growing the potential of the marine trades industry to provide new economic opportunities and support existing community strengths.

**Figure 16. Results from question #12 of the community survey, September 2024**

**Q12: Please indicate your preferred level of growth for the following key economic sectors.**



## Jobs

Homer business owners cite barriers to attracting and training employments as their primary obstacle to doing business in Homer, according to the business survey. Expanding educational training in trades can build a skilled workforce, which is essential for supporting local industries and attracting new businesses. Supporting small business incubation can foster entrepreneurship and innovation, leading to job creation and economic diversification.



**Figure 17. Percentage of Homer workforce by industry and annual wages by industry for the KPB**

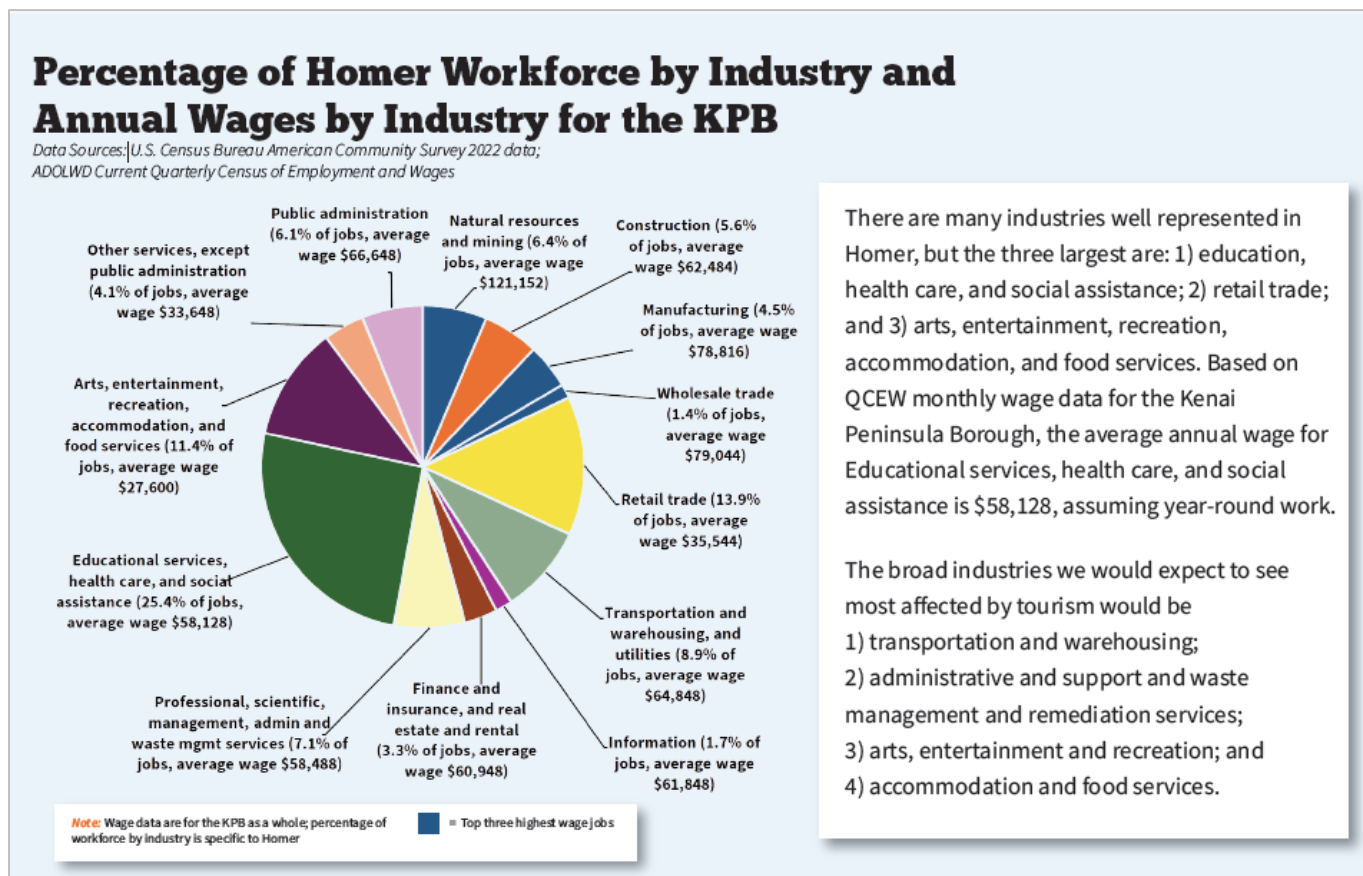


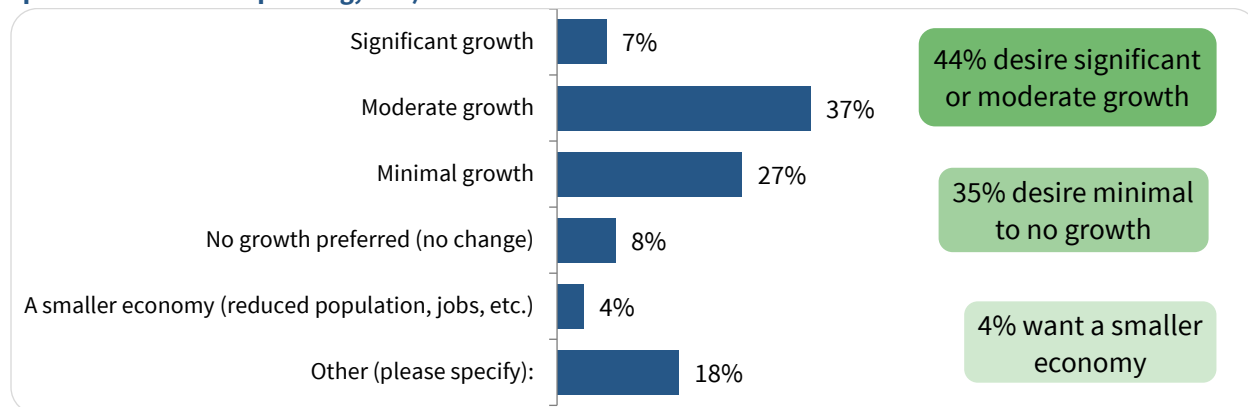
Image from the Homer People & Economy Poster

## Growth

An important point made by the Homer community throughout the Comprehensive Plan process is a desire to manage growth to ensure it is sustainable and does not compromise the quality of life, character, or the environment in the community. Engaging community members through effective communication strategies can ensure that economic development plans reflect the community's priorities and gain broader support.

**Figure 18. Results from question #11 of the community survey, September 2024**

**Q12: What is your preference for community/economic growth in Homer (increased population, jobs, specific industries expanding, etc.)?**



Answered: 548

## Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C	Goal D
Enhance Homer's defined "town center" through incremental policy implementation to drive commerce, business, and resident and visitors' services, that is walkable, utilizes "infill" strategies, and supports new and existing businesses.	Support Homer's diversified economy by honoring traditional industries like fishing and tourism, while supporting the expansion of marine trades, arts and entertainment, healthcare, and small business development that maintain the character of Homer.	Expand work force development, especially in fisheries, marine trades, healthcare, and small business support that provides strong foundations for businesses and residents and increases year round, high wage employment opportunities.	Develop and maintain sustainable, accessible infrastructure that aids in economic development for both residents and visitors, while prioritizing accessibility.

## Strategies and Potential Actions

### Icon Key:

✖ Capital: For any project that includes a potential capital project

\* Code: A strategy that recommends a specific code revision

■ 2018: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan

⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation (these will be carried forward into an action plan)

- 1. Address barriers to workforce recruitment and retention by improving access to affordable, attainable housing and childcare.** <sup>45</sup> ⚡
- 2. Expand vocational training resources, particularly in trades, marine trades (including mariculture and shipping industries), and healthcare industries, to retain young residents and provide year-round employment.** ⚡
  - Enhance health care opportunities and adjacent industries to strengthen local services and employment. ■
  - Create co-working spaces and incubator hubs for small-scale manufacturers and entrepreneurs. (The Commons in Ketchikan is a good example and model.)
  - Encourage retention of existing and the relocation of new Federal and State Government jobs and training programs to Homer. Promote Homer as a place to expand and attract government operations. ■
  - Pursue moderate, sustainable growth in tourism, focusing on activities that benefit small businesses and minimize negative impacts on community character. ■ Develop regenerative tourism strategies to balance visitor growth with environmental and community preservation.
  - Promote recreation, the arts, and non-governmental organizations as a complement to tourism and as an export industry. ■

<sup>45</sup> Cross reference with Housing chapter

- f) Continue and increase support for the Alaska Small Business Development Center business advisor located in Homer to foster local business growth.

### **3. Encourage economic growth and infrastructure development while preserving the natural resources and community characteristics valued by current residents and attracting new residents.**

- a) Develop a comprehensive "downtown plan" to create a walkable town center that supports infill development, new and existing businesses, and community activities.<sup>46</sup> ✖
- b) Develop public transportation options, particularly in the Spit area, to alleviate traffic congestion and improve accessibility for seasonal workers, residents, and visitors.<sup>47</sup>
- c) Invest in infrastructure, parks, public restrooms, and recreational facilities to improve the quality of life for residents and enhance tourism experiences.<sup>48</sup> ■
- d) Regularly review and update city economic plans to reflect current needs and opportunities. ■
- e) Enhance local schools and K-12 teacher support to attract families and foster long-term community stability.<sup>49</sup>

### **4. Pursue moderate, sustainable growth in tourism, focusing on activities that benefit small businesses and minimize negative impacts on community character.** ■

- a) Develop regenerative tourism strategies to balance visitor growth with environmental and community preservation.
- b) Promote recreation, the arts, and non-governmental organizations as a complement to tourism and as an export industry. ■

### **5. Promote commercial fishing as a viable career option in Homer and demonstrate long-term support for and commitment to the industry.**

- a) Increase investment in harbor infrastructure and advocate for state and federal funding to support the fishing sector.<sup>50</sup>
- b) Develop programs to attract seafood buyers and retailers to Homer, increasing competition and driving better prices for local fishermen.
- c) Expand hands-on training and apprenticeships to promote fishing as a viable career option.
- d) Offer grant programs, financial assistance, and legal services to support new entrants to the fishing industry.
- e) Promoting sustainable, science-based fisheries management.

*"Make Homer a good place to live and it will be a good place to do business."*

*"Tourism needs to be scaled to what maintains local ownership."*

*"A diverse economy is a healthier economy."*

~ Homer Comprehensive Plan Revision Business Survey

<sup>46</sup> Cross reference with Land Use chapter

<sup>47</sup> Cross reference with Transportation chapter

<sup>48</sup> Cross reference with Land Use, Public Services & Infrastructure, and Quality of Life chapters

<sup>49</sup> Cross reference with Quality of Life chapter

<sup>50</sup> Cross reference with Public Services & Infrastructure chapter



Placeholder photo

# Quality of Life

## Key Themes Guiding the Plan

### Strong Network of Care Options for a Community of its Size

Homer has a major hospital facility, the Borough-owned South Peninsula Hospital. The hospital is designated a “critical access” hospital and the largest employer in the community. There is also a state-funded Public Health Center and a health care facility operated by Seldovia Village Tribe. An assortment of other organizations provide behavioral, mental, and alternative health services. A 2023 Community Health Needs Assessment identified nine top health needs for the community (see figure below), which partners are working to address.

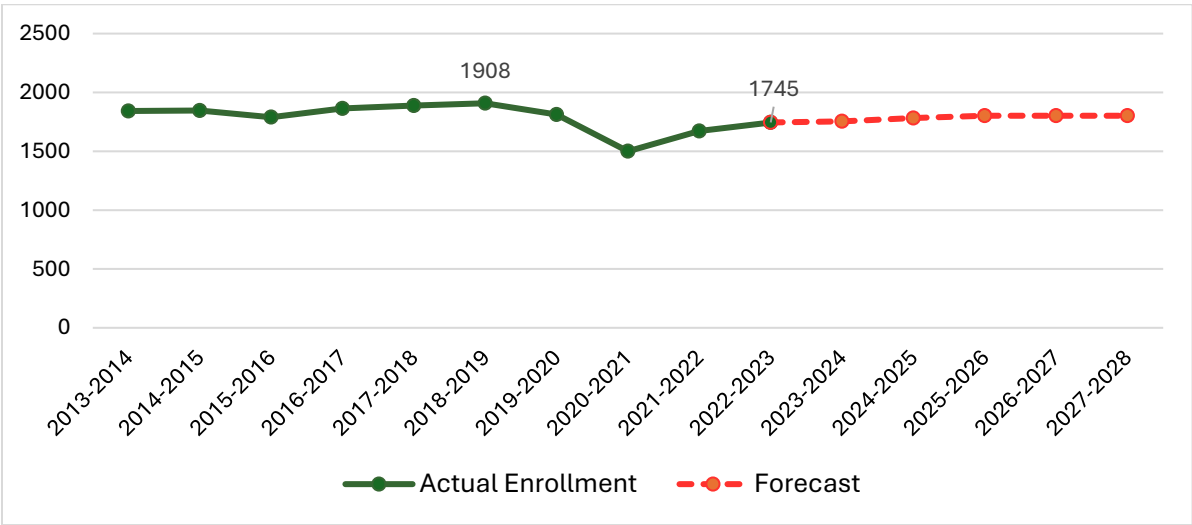
Figure 19. Top Health Needs Priorities, from 2023 Community Health Needs Assessment (alphabetical order)

Aging Population	Housing	Social Isolation
Barriers to Care	Mental Health	Staff Workforce Shortages
Childcare	Physical Health	Substance Use

### Great Community for Families, but Some Challenges

Homer is served by the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD), and is celebrated for its quality schools.<sup>6</sup> Enrollment in Homer area schools has fluctuated in recent years, with a peak of 1,908 students during the 2018-2019 year and a dip during the pandemic (see figure below). KPBSD is forecasting increasing enrollment at the Homer area schools, while forecasting decreasing enrollment for the overall district. An ongoing concern for KPBSD is the challenge of funding Alaska’s public schools. Given stagnant state funding over many years, Alaska’s public schools, including schools operated in Homer, have been forced to make substantial cuts and/or actively seek and secure funds to meet needs. While parents celebrate Homer’s strong schools, safe feel, and high quality of life, they also cite housing costs, childcare availability, and limited year-round employment as barriers to choosing Homer as a place to raise a family.

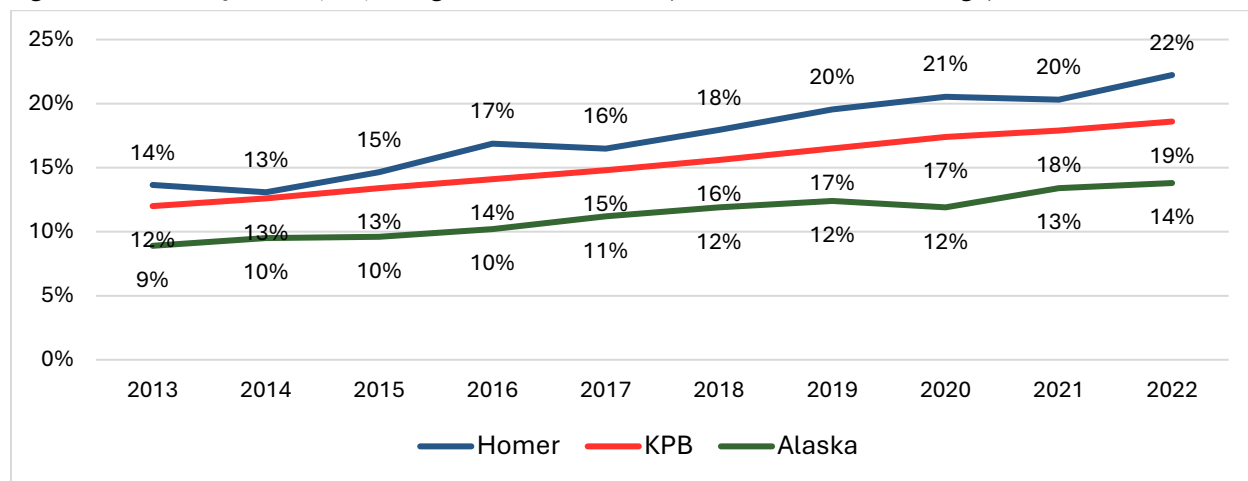
Figure 20. Homer School Enrollment, Pre-Kindergarten to 12th Grade



## Popular with Retirees

Homer's population has been experiencing steady, modest growth over the past 22 years (an increase of 15.4 percent since 2000), although forecasts predict this growth leveling off through 2050.<sup>51</sup> State data suggests much of this growth is due to a large and growing senior population, which reflects trends in the Kenai Peninsula Borough and Alaska overall. In Homer, residents aged 65 and older represent a larger share of the population (22 percent) compared to Alaska as whole (14 percent) (see figure below). Seniors have different needs from other age groups for housing, medical care, and transportation.

**Figure 21. Senior Population (65+) Change Over Time in Homer, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and Alaska**

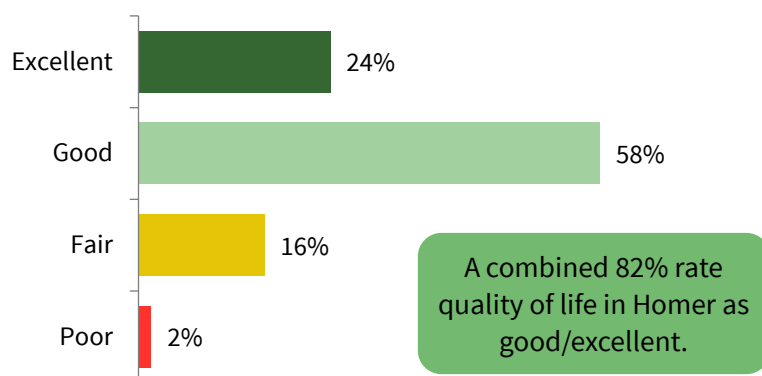


Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 data<sup>4</sup>

## A Desirable Place to Live

A combined 82 percent of community survey respondents rate the quality of life in Homer as good or excellent (see figure on right). Residents especially value the small-town feel, friendliness, the views, and the proximity to clean air, water, and open space. These top themes are similar to the community's greatest strengths identified in the "Perception of Community Health Survey" conducted as part of the 2023 Community Health Needs Assessment. In the business survey, respondents

**Figure 22. Community Survey Responses to the Question, "How would you rate quality of life in Homer?"**



<sup>51</sup> <sup>51</sup>Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Historical Data: Places, "Population, 2000-2010". [https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/estimates/data/TotalPopulationPlace\\_2000to2010.xls](https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/estimates/data/TotalPopulationPlace_2000to2010.xls). Accessed March 18, 2024.

<sup>51</sup> Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Historical Data: Places, "Population, 2010-2020". [https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/estimates/data/TotalPopulationPlace\\_2010to2020.xls](https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/estimates/data/TotalPopulationPlace_2010to2020.xls). Accessed March 18, 2024.

<sup>51</sup> Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Alaska Population Projections, "Alaska Population Projections 2021 to 2050". <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/article/projections/pub/popproj.pdf>. Accessed March 18, 2024.

<sup>51</sup> Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Places and Other Areas, "Cities and Census Designated Places (CDPs), 2020 to 2023". <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/estimates/data/TotalPopulationPlace.xlsx>. Accessed March 18, 2024.

say, “access to recreational opportunities” and “quality of life in Homer” are top benefits to doing business in the Greater Homer area.

## High Cost of Living

Like many of Alaska’s communities, Homer residents face a high cost of living, especially when it comes to housing affordability and availability. Some of the same characteristics that residents value, such as the small town feel and the beautiful environment, also attract a large number of visitors each summer that bring challenges including congestion and pressures on the housing market. A growth scenarios activity was used during the comprehensive plan process to encourage participants to reflect on their desired future for Homer, with results suggesting residents desire limited growth that preserves the quality of life in Homer, with an increase in year-round services. Prioritizing policy changes that protect what residents value while addressing community concerns (e.g., around new housing and infill) will help the community work toward this desired future.

## An Active Community





Residents participate in an evolving set of recreation activities throughout the seasons. Homer is also vibrant with small businesses, many nonprofit organizations, and active civic engagement. The City of Homer owns and manages 17 parks totaling over 520 acres of land, along more than five miles of maintained trails. These amenities range from small pocket parks and multi-use trails to forested natural areas, larger established parks with play areas, campgrounds, and sports fields. Current trails in and around the community experience heavy use and residents express a desire for more year-round trails and opportunities for recreation. Homer has also identified a multi-purpose indoor recreation facility as a longtime community priority.

## Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C	Goal D
Homer is welcoming, affordable, safe, and accessible for residents of all ages.	Homer is an active, vibrant community with year-round opportunities to enjoy art, events, and recreation.	Residents are healthy and thriving, with access to basic needs and quality services.	Homer residents are proud stewards of their community and the spectacular natural setting around them.

## Strategies and Potential Actions

### Icon Key:

-  Capital: For any project that includes a potential capital project
-  Code: A strategy that recommends a specific code revision
-  2018: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan
-  Priority: Emerging priority for implementation (these will be carried forward into an action plan)



## 1. Health Care: Ensure access to quality, affordable care.

- a) Implement the goals and strategies identified in the 2023 Homer Community Health Needs Assessment and forthcoming Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), including strategies that address the following priority needs. ⚡
  - Aging Population
  - Barriers to Care
  - Childcare
  - Housing
  - Mental Health
  - Physical Health
  - Social Isolation
  - Staff Workforce Shortages
  - Substance Use
- b) Continue to support the South Peninsula Hospital via the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the South Kenai Peninsula Hospital Service Area Board, including implementing priorities identified in the SPH Facilities Master Plan. ⚡ Top three priorities include:
  - Utilize existing open-shelled space to establish nuclear medicine program, expansion of oncology and infusion, and an upgraded pharmacy. ✖
  - Consolidate services into a medical office building. ✖
  - Address deferred maintenance of existing facilities. ✖
- c) Bolster local educational opportunities to train residents for available health care jobs. 📖
- d) Support efforts by the SPH to construct new employee housing, freeing up other housing units for the community. (See also: *Housing chapter*.)



## 2. Indoor Recreation: Enhance indoor recreation options in Homer, especially in winter months.

- a) Plan for and construct a new, multi-purpose community center in Homer's town center to serve the social, recreation, cultural, and educational needs of the Homer community. Preferred features include a general-purpose gymnasium, multi-purpose space for instructional programs, safe walking/running, dedicated space for youth, and possible emergency shelter. ⚡ ✖ 📖
- b) Clean up the Homer Education and Recreation Complex (HERC) and conduct revitalization planning to determine how to proceed with the building once hazardous materials have been removed. 📖
- c) Continue to collaborate with the Borough to use school facilities for recreational, educational, social, and cultural activities to the entire community after school hours and in the summer. 📖
- d) Implement operations-focused recommendations in the Parks, Art, Recreation, & Cultural Advisory Commission (PARCAC) 2025-2025 Strategic Plan.
  - Ongoing areas of focus include open communications, more commission engagement in budgeted, support for public art, increased collaboration with organizations, and preservation of open and green spaces
- e) Reconfigure the City's organizational structure to provide park facilities and recreation services by establishing a dedicated Parks and Recreation Department and ensuring staff capacity is appropriate. 📖
- f) Ensure that City facilities are sufficient to support events that draw visitors such as festivals and activities (e.g., clean restrooms on the Spit, RV dump stations, adequate trash collection, etc.). 📖

### 3. Outdoor Recreation: Care for and expand Homer's network of outdoor trails and parks.

- a) Complete priority upgrades to existing City parks, including Karen Hornaday Park, Bayview Park, and Jack Gist Park. ⚡ ✖
- b) Build new sidewalks, trails, and accessible crossings that better connect community hubs and existing networks (e.g., Diamond Creek Recreation Area connector trails). ⚡ ✖
- c) Develop, update, and implement Master Park and Recreation plans to proactively identify the maintenance and capital needs of City parks. ⚡ 📋
- d) Establish depreciation reserves for ongoing care and maintenance of recreation facilities. ✖
- e) Implement recommendations in the Homer Wayfinding & Streetscape Plan. ✖ 📋
- f) Refine City Code so sidewalks are included under PARCAC oversight. ✖
- g) Implement the Homer Beach Policy and Management Plan, including enforcement of existing regulations, establishment of future regulations, and public education to ensure Homer's beaches are maintained, preserved, protected, and enjoyed. 📋
- h) Develop additional community and neighborhood park facilities to complement or expand recreation opportunities; aim for at least one park within ½ mile of all homes within the Urban Residential and Mixed- Use land use area. ✖
- i) Expand and promote the "adopt-a-park" program in which local businesses, service organizations, or youth groups care for a particular park, and a structure for public/private partnerships for operations. 📋
- j) Establish a park endowment fund through the City or in partnership with the Homer Foundation. 📋
- k) When opportunities arise, enhance or improve public access to the beach at public access points. ✖ 📋



*NOTE: these strategies and actions also have the potential to help make Homer a more desirable visitor destination and contribute to economic development. See the economic development chapter for more tourism-related strategies.*

### 4. Elder and Senior Services: Support Homer's aging residents and allow current residents to age in place by meeting the unique needs of seniors.

- a) Ensure the sustainability and viability of the Homer Senior Center, including updating policies, procedures, and accounting practices.
- b) Establish a Memory Care wing at the Homer assisted living facility. ✖

### 5. Accessibility: People of all ages and abilities can live, work, and play in the community.

- a) Implement the 2023 City of Homer Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Transition Plan for Parks, Play Areas & Campgrounds and the Transition Plan for City Facilities to correct deficiencies and implement policies that increase accessibility of Homer's public facilities and recreation spaces. ✖ ⚡
  - Priority sites for upgrades include City Hall, Karen Hornaday park, the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon Accessible Ramp & Fishing Platform, and removing parking and pavement barriers at City facilities.
- b) Improve existing and develop new trails that meet the needs of younger families, seniors, and residents/ visitors with limited abilities.
- c) Develop parking areas with facilities at key trails/parks access points. ✖
- d) Integrate rest locations and bathroom facilities at key locations near, in, and throughout community parks and trails. ✖

- e) Update non-motorized facility design standards to improve accessibility, and ensure accessible crossings are included in all future road projects. ✖ \*
- f) Community hubs (schools, university campus, stores, services, parks) are accessible and connected for all ages and abilities. ✖ \*
- g) Establish parking standards that increase access to community hubs (e.g., Downtown and on the Homer Spit) and generates revenue for the city.
- h) Encourage private businesses to make every effort to provide ADA compliant facilities and/or improve accessibility for the senior population. ✖

*See also: Transportation and Land Use and Environment chapter for accessibility recommendations.*

## **6. Youth and Early Childhood: Homer's youngest residents and their families have what they need to grow and thrive.**

- a) Ensure quality childcare is accessible and affordable, with parents and caregivers easily able to connect with available childcare resources and programs. ⚡
- b) Bolster the efforts of the MAPP Homer Early Childhood Coalition in supporting families with young children to learn about community events, connections, resources, and information, including distribution of the Family Resource Booklet.
- c) Support efforts by the South Peninsula Hospital to establish a childcare facility for hospital employees, increasing overall childcare capacity in the community. ✖
- d) Promote a healthy lifestyle by increasing activities available for youth.
- e) Promote volunteer and education opportunities for youth to become involved in civic life and contribute to improving the community.

## **7. Education: Offer high-quality K-12 education in Homer and sustain lifelong learning opportunities for all residents.**

- a) Advocate for state level increases to the Base Student Allocation formula. ⚡
- b) Continue to partner and work to support efforts of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.
- c) Continue active support of the University of Alaska Anchorage's Kenai Peninsula College (KPC).

*See also: Economic Development chapter for specific post-secondary school and workforce training recommendations.*

## **8. Library: Maintain the library as a thriving community space for learning and connecting.**

- a) Continue to maintain the depreciation schedule for library equipment and sustain ongoing training schedules and regular usage reporting.
- b) Grow the library's endowment fund and support overall fundraising for library upgrades.
- c) Evolve the library's equipment and delivery formats to meet evolving community demands for more digital content.
- d) Assess the library's anticipated need for growth and improvements over the next decade and create an engineering study of upgrades, to potentially include a larger meeting room, an increased number of study rooms, a dedicated teen room, more storage space, facility repairs, and an outdoor covered space. ✖

## **9. Public Safety: Continue to meet the community's public safety needs to ensure the safety of residents, visitors, first responders, and the environment.**

- a) Complete planning for and construct a new fire station. ✖
- b) Upgrade the City's fire department fleet of vehicles to maximize firefighting capabilities and meet Insurance Services Office (ISO) requirements; immediate needs include a quint/ladder truck and a quick attack/brush truck. ✖

- c) Support the mission and capacity needs of the Homer Police Department.

*See also: Public Facilities and Services for public safety recommendation and Land Use and Environment chapter for hazard mitigation recommendations.*

#### **10. Arts and Culture: Celebrate Homer's status as a vibrant hub for arts, culture, and community engagement.**

- a) Update the Parks, Art, Recreation, and Culture Needs Assessment, and continue to expand city partnerships with other organizations to implement recommendations.
- b) Partner with Ninilchik Traditional Council and Seldovia Village Tribe to increase the presence of Alaska Native art, signage, and history around Homer.
- c) Support arts and culture installations and spaces in the community, including Homer's museums and galleries (see also: PARCAC Strategic Plan). ✖
- d) Collaborate with citizen groups and nonprofit organizations to address community needs by providing small matching grants, limited technical assistance, and the option to use City land or facilities at reduced rates. 📄
- e) Support the efficient use of existing community facilities. Partner with organizations to keep city facilities operating beyond normal hours. 📄

Quotes to be added for next draft.



## Governance

To come in next draft.

## Appendices

To come in next draft.





# MEMORANDUM

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## Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

**Item Type:** Informational

**Prepared For:** City Planner Ryan Foster, Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, Agnew::Beck, Mayor Lord and Homer City Council

**Thru:** Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager

**Date:** December 20, 2024

**From:** Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission thru Recreation Manager Mike Illg

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## Background

At the November 21, 2024 Regular Meeting, the Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission requested a Special Meeting on December 19, 2024 to review and make formal recommendations to the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and contractor Agnew::Beck to include and consider for future planning and action. The commission unanimously approved the attached recommendations and additional information related to the recommendations.



## City of Homer

[www.cityofhomer-ak.gov](http://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov)

## Office of the City Clerk

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Homer, Alaska 99603

[clerk@cityofhomer-ak.gov](mailto:clerk@cityofhomer-ak.gov)

(p) 907-235-3130

(f) 907-235-3143

# Memorandum Supplemental Packet

TO: PARKS, ART, RECREATION & CULTURE ADVISORY COMMISSION  
FROM: ASHLEY APPEL, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I  
DATE: DECEMBER 19, 2024  
SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL

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### DISCUSSION TOPIC

- A. Comprehensive Plan
  - 1. 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan
  - 2. City of Homer Topos
  - 3. Public Comment

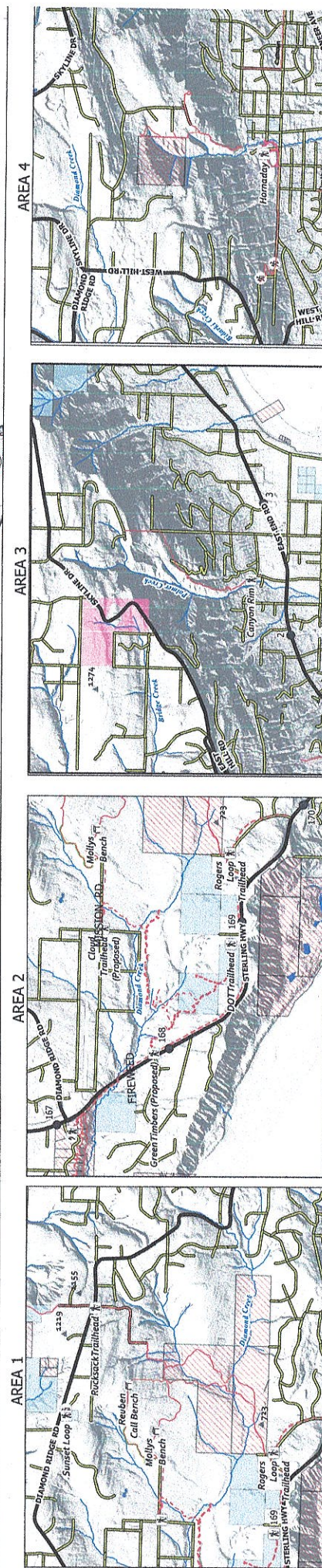
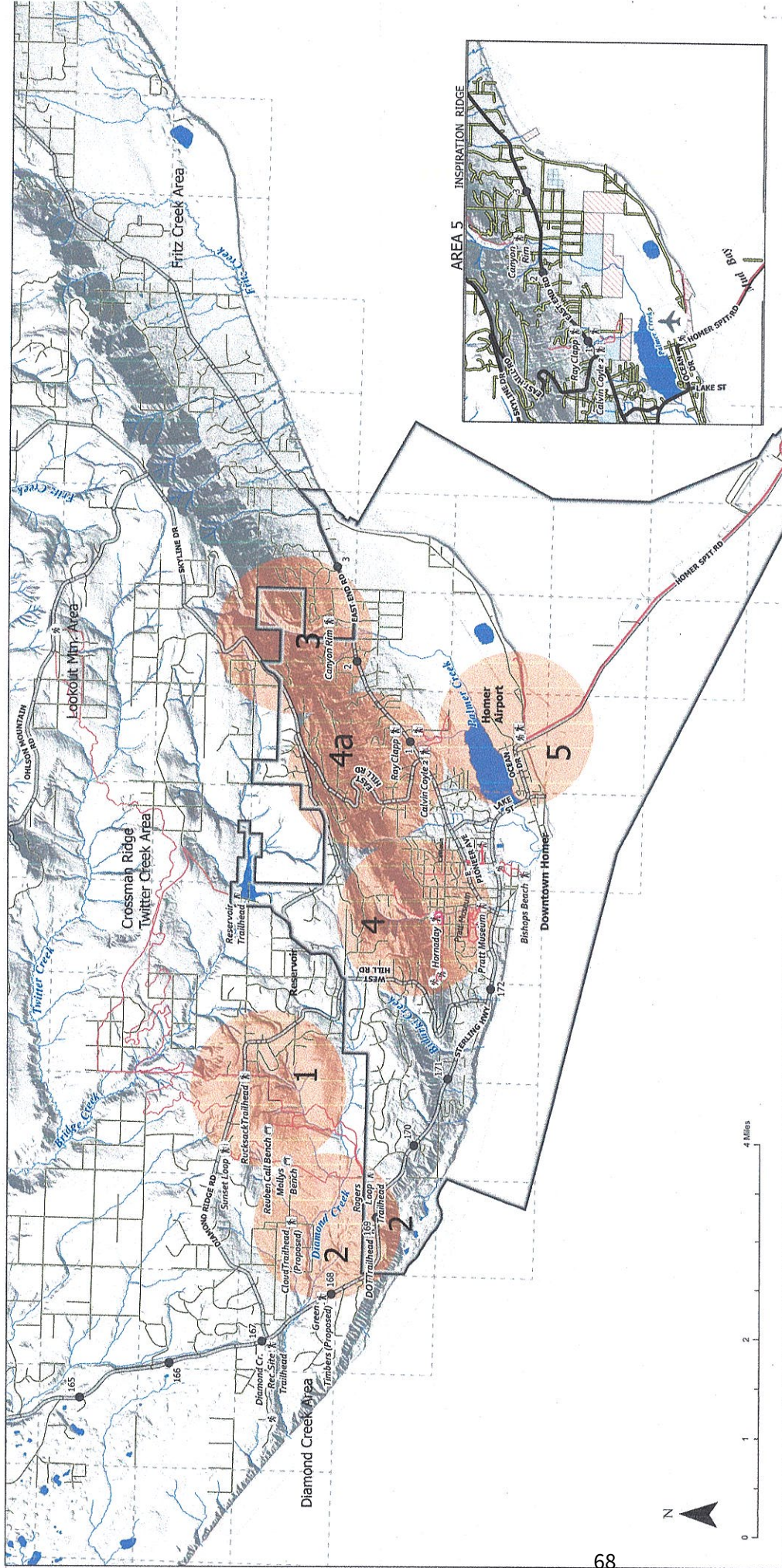
Project	Timeframe			Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	
<b>Parks and Recreation</b>				
<i>I-E-1</i> Research the year-round and seasonal staff needs to maintain and operate city park facilities and programs. Increase staffing and volunteer involvement as needed to provide basic City services.	x			City
<i>I-E-2</i> Expand and promote the “adopt-a-park” program in which local businesses, service organizations, or youth groups care for a particular park.	x			City
<i>I-E-3</i> Establish a park endowment fund through the City or in partnership with the Homer Foundation.	x			City
<i>I-E-4</i> Conduct a cost benefit analysis on creating a unified Parks and Recreation Department that combines the Community Recreation and Parks Maintenance Division.	x			City
<i>I-E-5</i> Maintain a balance between natural and manicured park development.	x			City
<i>I-E-6</i> Create structure for public/private partnership grants for operations.	x			City
<i>I-E-7</i> Partner with other organizations to continue providing programs and facilities.	x			City
<i>I-E-8</i> Continue to work with the school district and borough to maintain and expand the partnership for community use of their infrastructure for recreational purposes.	x			City
<i>I-E-9</i> Every 5-10 years, assess whether available park and recreation facilities and programs are meeting demands, from inside and outside city limits.		x		PARC Commission
<i>I-E-10</i> Pursue financial strategies that leverage City tax dollars to build public recreation facilities.			x	City
<i>I-E-11</i> Use the Capital Improvement Plan, city budget, bond measures and partnerships with other organizations (such as Little League) to lobby, fundraise and build public recreation facilities.			x	City
<i>I-E-12</i> Establish Community Recreation Center; define what is needed as part of this facility, what gap it will fill, what purpose it will serve, and how operations and maintenance will be funded.		x		City
<i>I-E-13</i> Support the policies and recommendations of the Beach Policy document.	x			City
<i>I-E-14</i> As the need arises, update the beach policy and implement the recommendations.		x		City
<i>I-E-15</i> Discourage right-of-way and public access easement vacations to the beach.	x			City
<i>I-E-16</i> When opportunities arise, enhance or improve public access to the beach at public access points.		x		City

Project	Timeframe			Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	
2-A-3 Work with the Borough to develop future strategies for waste disposal.	x			City
2-A-4 Partner with others to reduce city waste stream.	x			City
<b>Health Care</b>				
2-D-1 Support activities that increase the ability to respond to intensive behavioral health needs of the community, including residential needs for behavioral health consumers of all ages, by looking at the possibility of developing a residential behavioral health facility, particularly for children and youth, located in Homer.	x			City
2-D-2 Support the continuation of KPC's course and degree programs in the allied health occupations, to provide a trained labor force for health care facilities.	x			City
2-D-3 Support local and regional strategies that address the substance abuse and prevention.	x			City
2-D-4 Continue to support the South Peninsula Hospital via the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the South Kenai Peninsula Hospital Service Area Board.	x			City
2-D-5 Support increased local educational opportunities in health care fields, including KPC, that create opportunities for residents to fill these medical industry jobs.		x		City
<b>Senior Services</b>				
2-E-1 Retain attractiveness as a community that appeals to all ages, from youth through retirement.	x			City
2-E-2 Require that all public facilities be accessible by senior citizens and individuals with disabilities in accordance with ADA requirements.	x			City
2-E-3 Provide amenities and access for seniors in public facilities developed by the City.	x			City
2-E-4 Encourage and/or create incentives that encourage private businesses to make every effort to provide ADA compliant facilities and/or improve accessibility for the senior population.	x			City
2-E-4 The city, through its land use decisions, will continue improving the walkability of the downtown core to make the community more habitable and friendly for seniors and for those with disabilities.		x		HAPC
<b>Youth Services</b>				
2-F-1 Promote a healthy lifestyle by increasing activities available for youth.	x			City
2-F-2 Support the efforts of Homer organizations that offer a variety of programs for youth.	x			City









**HOMER TRAIL ALLIANCE**

**PRIORITY AREAS & STEWARD POSSIBILITIES**

**2023-2024**

**Priority Areas:**

1. Homestead Trail System
2. Baycrest Recreation Area
3. Bear Canyon-Wynne NC
4. Reber-Hornaday Park-Woodward Canyon

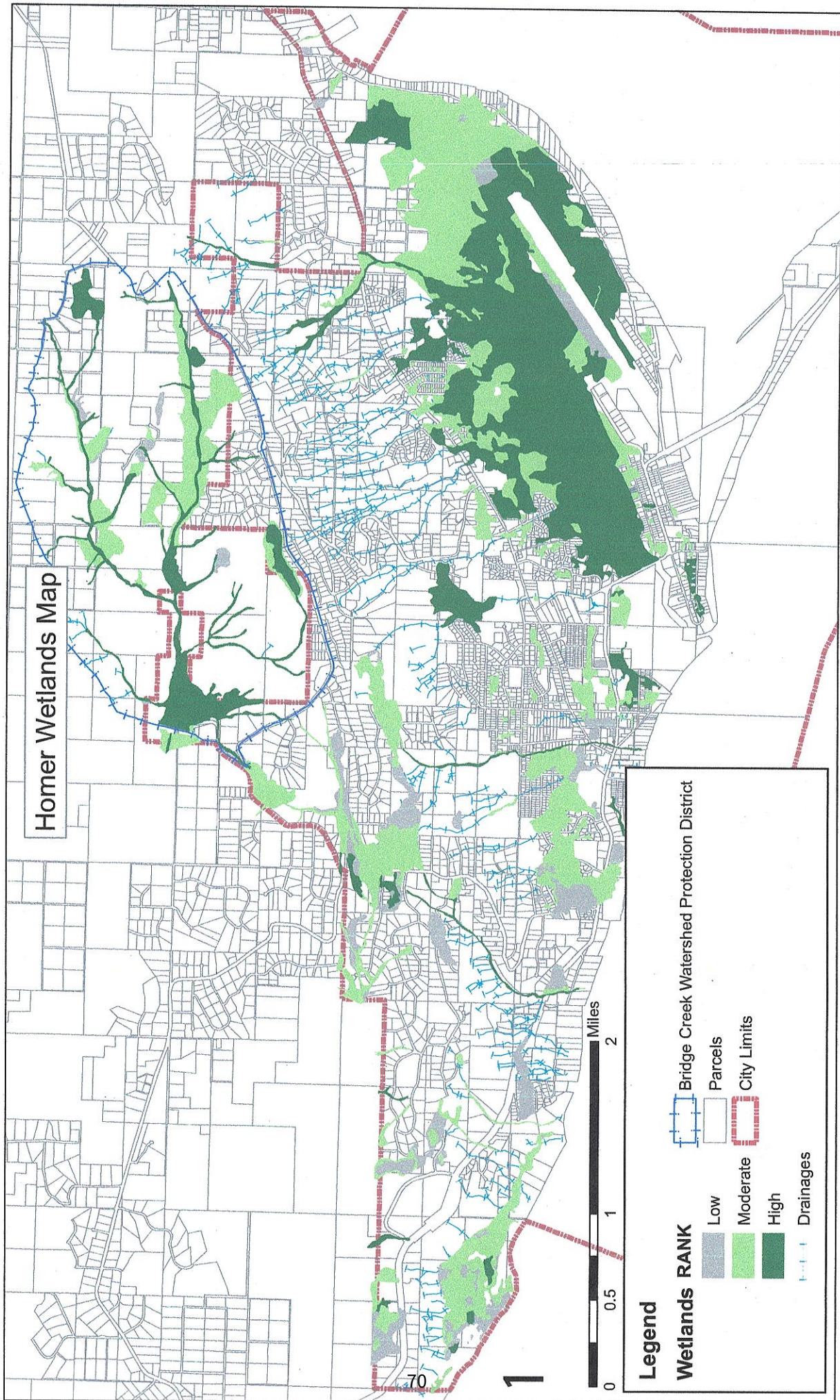
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 Projection: NAD83, Zone 14, NAD83  
 Topo Contour Intervals: 100 ft., 25 ft.  
 Map Date: 09/02/21  
 Map Author: C. Benwell







# Homer Wetlands Map



**Legend**

**Wetlands RANK**

- Low
- Moderate
- High

**Bridge Creek Watershed Protection District**

- Parcels
- City Limits
- Drainages

## Comments for the City of Homer Parks and Recreation Culture and Arts Commission Regarding the Homer Comprehensive Plan Re-Write

December 19, 2024

From: Charles Barnwell  
City of Homer resident  
410 Crestwood Circle  
Homer, AK. 99603

General Comment: The City of Homer recreation facilities are in need of better funding and a stronger program, i.e. more staff and resources. A funding source(s) for this should be investigated, this may be a mix of private funding, governmental funding, and perhaps a special tax or taxes.

### Other Comments:

- A. Homer is a growing community, and land available for open space and parks is shrinking. To mitigate this I recommend the City of Homer (COH) include goals and objectives in the Comp Plan Re-Write to address this issue. Some suggestions for goals and policies are as follows:
  - 1. **Establish a quality open space network.** Potential open space land should be identified and mapped in GIS, and prioritized by staff, PARCAC, Planning Commission, and the Council. Recognize the potential of incorporating green infrastructure within public open space and recommendations for conservation.
  - 2. **Support organizations that are working on open space acquisition, and planning** for open space and parks. Examples of these include: Homer Trails Alliance, Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust.
  - 3. **Create a City program** to work with federal and state governmental agencies on the acquisition of open space through grant opportunities.
  - 4. **Upgrade existing, and develop new public open spaces**
  - 5. **Create a strong alliance with the community, state and Local Governments, education, and the private sector** to achieve shared use and common goals and ensure that parks are accessible to people of all abilities in the community.
  
- B. Key areas of Homer are known for their value as watersheds and recreational areas. These areas should be protected and conserved while we still can. Goals, policies, should be included in the Comp Plan that address key watershed areas in the City of Homer area. Area plans, also known as community or neighborhood plans, serve to guide decisions about the physical development of a specific neighborhood or district, would provide a tool for addressing these key areas. Suggested goals and objectives for the Comp Plan Rewrite are as follows:
  - 1. **Development of an Area Plan that addresses the Diamond Creek** western area –also known as the Diamond Creek Recreation Area. This area is largely composed of a city owned parcel. An Area Plan will help the City allocate funding for facilities and

maintenance in this area that may likely be built in the near future. A previous plan—the Diamond Creek Recreation Area Plan—was developed in 2013, but has not been updated since then, nor has been part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

2. **Development of an Area Plan that addresses the Woodard Creek watershed.** This watershed is located just above the downtown Homer area, and includes the South Peninsula Hospital. This will help the City allocate funding for potential Hornaday Park expansion, and protect a watershed that has been known to flood and landslide in past years, and includes valuable habitat, and informal trails. Some planning has taken place (2015) for example the Woodard Creek Watershed Plan, but has not officially been made part of the City’s planning process.



Comments from Devony Lehner re parks and trails in Comp Plan.

I have the pleasure of currently working on recreational activities in Homer from two perspectives: (1) how to promote sustainable management of open space and trails, while also enhancing wildlife habitats and (2) how best to facilitate recreational activities—particularly outdoors—for folks with disabilities. Also, as a local subdivision developer (Stream Hill Park) who kept open space and trails (and green infrastructure) as core elements of our subdivision design, I’m familiar with how meaningful access to outdoor recreation is to many individuals who are active in the real estate market as buyers and sellers.

Based on this background—along with recognizing the tremendous potential economic value of having “destination-quality” recreational opportunities locally (for both locals and visitors), I urge that the importance of open space and recreation be appropriately highlighted in the Homer Comprehensive Plan.

In addition, it is well established that maintaining open spaces that can act as green infrastructure—e.g., helping store water, reduce flooding, reduce erosion, stabilize slopes, etc.—is fundamental to a community’s resilience (and public works cost efficiency) as climate conditions change. This is another reason that Homer’s Comp Plan must emphasize the critical significance of maintaining natural open spaces in the Homer area, along with the countless kinds of opportunities those lands and waters provide and protect.

Devony Lehner



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Thursday, December 19

To: Homer Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission  
[clerk@ci.homer.ak.us](mailto:clerk@ci.homer.ak.us)

RE: Homer Comp. Plan Special Meeting

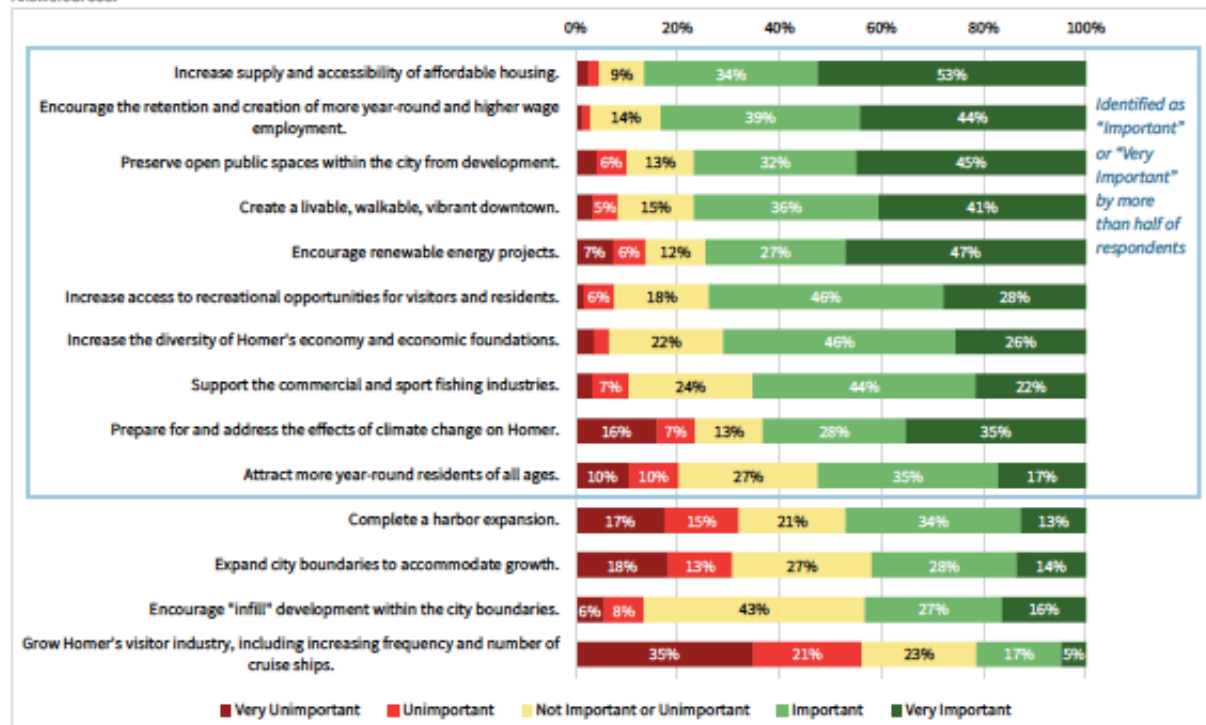
Dear members of PARCAC:

Thank you for taking the time so close to the holidays to consider how best to meet the priorities of our community. As you deliberate on your recommendations, we urge you to revisit the survey put out by the Comp Plan team to assess Community Values, which indicate that top priorities for our community include (in order of prioritization):

- 1) Preserve open public spaces within the city from development
- 2) Create a livable, walkable, vibrant downtown
- 3) Increase access to recreational opportunities for visitors and residents
- 4) Prepare for and address the effects of climate change on Homer

**Q13: Listed below are potential priorities for the greater Homer community to focus on for the next 10-20 years. For each potential priority, please indicate level of importance.**

Answered: 551.





Here are a few ideas for how you might be able to meet these community goals.

- 1) Adopt GIS mapping layers of priority green spaces into our Comprehensive Plan and indicate the intention to adopt policy and code that would (a) protect some lands from development (b) increase recreational access and (c) prepare for and mitigate against climate change.**

**Kachemak Greenway**

**The Kachemak Greenway**  
An open space and trail network in and around Homer

Overview of Benefits of the Kachemak Greenway:

- International trail system
- Open space and a BLM corridor
- Unbroken natural corridor
- Increased network of greenways, paths, and recreation
- Increased accessibility to historic archaeological resources, parks, and recreation
- Located for new developments to create open space and build the corridor for the planning
- Corridor higher quality of life for Homer residents
- Create alternative transportation system

NOTE: Each color depicts the different uses where trail access is thick or has very limited access.

**Legend**

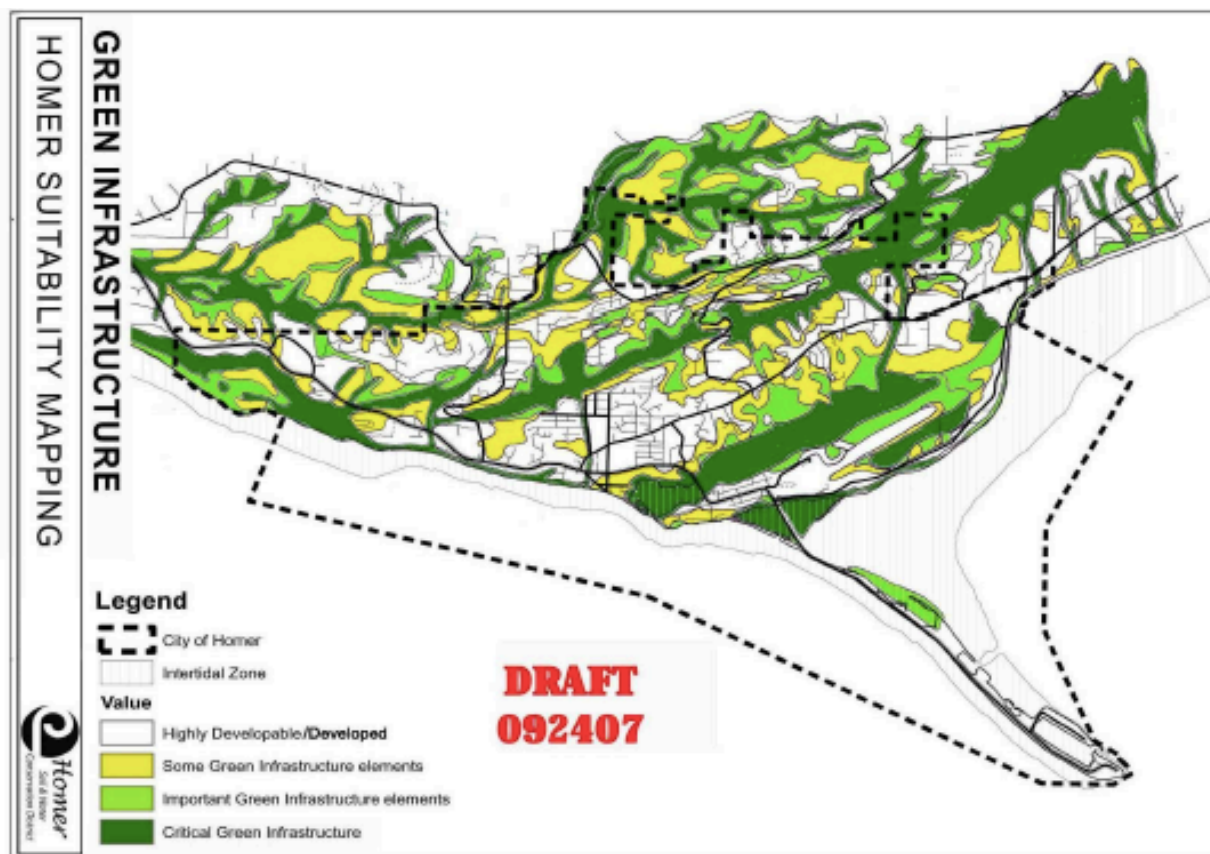
- Green: National Greenway
- Pink: Municipal Trail System
- Blue: Major Trails
- Yellow: Trailheads and Section
- Red: Open
- Green: Existing
- Red: Proposed



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Maps in the appendix of the 2018 Comp Plan are another good starting place. The GIS for these maps should be located and the imagery should be integrated into the comp plan as layers with language that indicates the intention to adopt policy that would (a) protect some lands from development (b) increase recreational access and (c) prepare for and mitigate against climate change.

An example of the mapping from the 2018 plan include this map of Green Infrastructure:



NOTE: The map shown on this page is provided only as an illustration. It was developed by the Homer Job and Visitor Conservation License and is included in this document for descriptive purposes only. While illustrating the general objectives for green infrastructure that are endorsed by this plan, this draft map will not be adopted as part of this comprehensive plan.

2) In order to conserve land, it is necessary to buy it, and to buy it money is needed. A Stormwater Utility Program represents the industry-standard for an equitable, stable, source of funding to protect high value lands. Here is a run-down of how these work.

**Definitions:**





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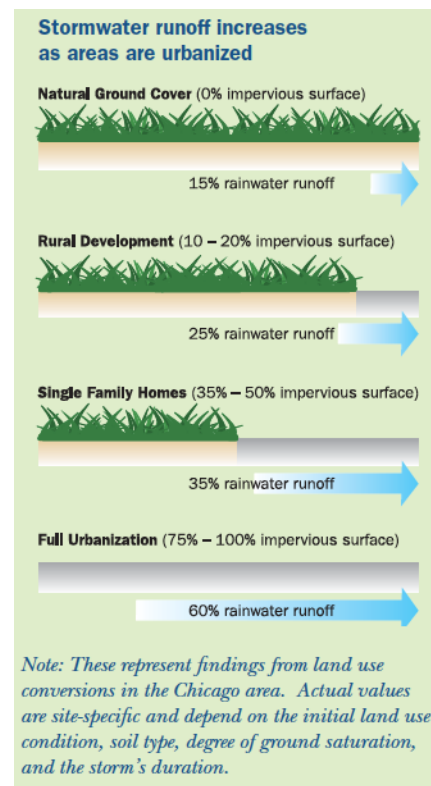
- A stormwater utility institutes a fee for the management of stormwater. Funds are used to manage stormwater.<sup>1</sup>
- Funds from a Stormwater Utility can be used to purchase land. Known variously as Green Infrastructure, Nature-Based Engineering, Nature-Based Flood Solutions, the utilization of nature to help manage stormwater is endorsed by FEMA, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the EPA as the preferred path to effective stormwater management: it makes sense to purchase lands to manage stormwater and then allow people to recreate on those lands.
- One of the most commonly litigated issues associated with a Stormwater Utility is whether an assessed utility fee is considered a **fee or a tax**.<sup>2</sup>

### Pros of this Approach:

1. There is consensus among public works officials that the utility approach is the best way to finance stormwater management systems<sup>3</sup>:

“The main reasons for their preference are obvious: utilities are a stable, equitable, secure source of funds. Also, funding through user charges based on their contribution to the problem is often thought to be fairer than funding through the use of property taxes.”<sup>4</sup>

2. Conservation of lands in Homer is an old value that is well-grounded in community values.:The 2018 Comp Plan says, “Identify environmentally sensitive sites and natural systems of regional importance and work towards collaborative management of these areas. Options include



“Reducing Damage from Localized Flooding: A Guide for Communities”  
EPA 2004.

<sup>1</sup> *Financing Stormwater Utilities, 2nd Edition* by John F. Damico and Lamont W. Curtis, Revised and Updated by the American Public Works Association Water Resources Management Committee, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Because many jurisdictions require voter approval to assess a tax, this distinction can be critical. In the event of a legal challenge, courts commonly look to several elements to distinguish between a tax and a fee, including: the relationship between the assessed fee and the service provided by the local government, the purpose of the fee, the uniformity of application of the fee, and whether the fee benefits those who pay (“Green Infrastructure Toolkit: Local Funding,” Georgetown Climate Center. Online at: <https://www.georgetownclimate.org/adaptation/toolkits/green-infrastructure-toolkit/local-funding.html>).

<sup>3</sup> *Financing Stormwater Utilities, 2nd Edition* by John F. Damico and Lamont W. Curtis, Revised and Updated by the American Public Works Association Water Resources Management Committee, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> *Financing Stormwater Utilities, 2nd Edition* by John F. Damico and Lamont W. Curtis, Revised and Updated by the American Public Works Association Water Resources Management Committee, 2020.





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implementing Special Use Districts to develop and pay for needed infrastructure and addressing drainage and trail issues on a regional or watershed approach.”

3. Lands purchased with these funds in some instances could double as recreational sites and/or allow for some agricultural uses through leases, like low-impact farming, birch syrup, etc, see examples in California and Colorado and across the country.
4. The utilization of nature to help manage stormwater is endorsed by FEMA, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the EPA as the preferred path to effective stormwater management.
5. Despite challenges, stormwater utilities maintain sound legal standing. Court systems across the country have determined that the legal standard for stormwater program charges and rates “must be fair and reasonable and bear a substantial relationship to the cost of services and facilities.”<sup>5</sup>
6. Fees could be instituted without the popular vote needed to institute a tax.
7. COH Public Works has roughly calculated the cost of installing drain works to accommodate increased flows over the next 10 years at **\$47 million dollars**.<sup>6</sup> Loss of permeable green space and poor drainage management comes at a cost to the City: during intense rain storms, as much as 50 percent of the overall flows received at the sewer treatment plant may be attributed to inflow and infiltration. During major storms, over 1,000,000 gallons per day of flow may be attributed to infiltration and inflow.<sup>7</sup>
8. Funds could be used to support the creation of a necessary Stormwater Management staff position.

### **Cons of this Approach:**

1. Most people are generally unaware of the stormwater infrastructure that exists in their community. Thus, many will find it strange to be asked to pay user fees to a utility for the stormwater that runs off their property. Besides being a funding mechanism, the utility approach involves redefining the way in which people think about runoff and stormwater management.

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<sup>5</sup> *Financing Stormwater Utilities, 2nd Edition* by John F. Damico and Lamont W. Curtis, Revised and Updated by the American Public Works Association Water Resources Management Committee, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> “Green Infrastructure Planning for the City of Homer,” <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=2f427e99603a4c61979f5b4e64462096>.

<sup>7</sup> “Homer Comprehensive Plan, 2018”



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2. Care must be taken in the formation of utilities, particularly their rate structures, because utilities can be subject to controversy and may be legally challenged.<sup>8</sup>
3. Will require a City official to manage and/or a partnership with another organization to help manage.
4. Lands purchased with funds would need to be managed by the City.

### **Fiscal Implications:**

The policy is intended to be a net positive, allowing the City to purchase lands critical for green infrastructure, such as land above and steep slopes, critical wetlands and drainage-ways. Funds should also be used to pay a staff person focused on management of stormwater and green infrastructure.

### **Relevant Data and Examples:**

- There are an estimated 2,000+ stormwater utility programs in existence.<sup>9</sup>
- The 2019 Western Kentucky Stormwater Utility Survey summarizes data from 1,716 stormwater utility programs across the country. Nationwide, the average monthly single-family residential fee was \$5.85, the standard deviation was \$4.50, and the median fee was \$4.75. Fees range from zero up to \$45 per month for a typical single-family home.
- Most stormwater utilities in the United States are based on a fixed, flat rate for a dwelling unit or residential home, while non-residential properties are charged in proportion to a typical home. This model is popular because it is straight forward and easy to administer.
- Another way of setting rates is by tying fees to the area of impermeable surface on a property. Tying the service fee to the area of impervious surface is the fairest system, which means that it reduces legal risk. Downsides of the model based on the area impervious surface include the front-end work of determining and tracking the area impervious surface for every parcel (the City of Homer Stormwater Management Plan, Code 21.74.010 and 21.75.0020, require information on acreage filled); administrative load and public confusion can result from the fact that each person will have a different fee, that fee may change over time, and property owners need a new bill each year. Cities can face legal exposure if they do not maintain good records of impervious area.

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<sup>8</sup> According to the Western Kentucky Stormwater Utility Survey 2013, 72 legal challenges to stormwater utilities were identified, of which 44 were decided in favor of the utility while 16 of the cases resulted in an unfavorable decision and/or the utility was struck down. 12 of the cases were still pending according to the publication.

<sup>9</sup> *Financing Stormwater Utilities, 2nd Edition* by John F. Damico and Lamont W. Curtis, Revised and Updated by the American Public Works Association Water Resources Management Committee, 2020.



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- Stakeholder involvement and outreach programs are necessary for implementation of a stormwater utility program. Elected officials as champions, key stakeholder input, and public involvement will ensure a successful and meaningful program implementation. Agencies that have tried implementation with minimal or no public information programs have been met with resistance from the community and, in many cases, have been unsuccessful in implementation attempts or have had the program rescinded after implementation.<sup>10</sup>
- The EPA has a comprehensive list of Public Stormwater Campaigns, complete with resources like radio spots, pamphlets, logos, etc.

Thank you again for your consideration and Happy Holidays!

Penelope Haas  
Vice-President,  
Kachemak Bay Conservation Society

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<sup>10</sup> *Financing Stormwater Utilities, 2nd Edition* by John F. Damico and Lamont W. Curtis, Revised and Updated by the American Public Works Association Water Resources Management Committee, 2020.

**To: PARCAC**  
**From: Janette Keiser, PE**  
**Date: November 5, 2024**  
**Re: Food for Thought about Comp Plan and Parks/Recreation**

**CONTENTS:** This Memorandum contains excerpts from Homer's existing Comprehensive Plan related to parks, recreation and culture aspects. There is some language in Chapter 4 – Land Use as well as Chapter 6 – Public Services & Facilities. I have listed key phrases that describe community values pertaining to parks, recreation and culture aspects, as identified in the 2018 Comp Plan. Most, if not all, the community values identified in 2018, are the same community values we are seeing in the 2024 surveys and public forums.

This Memorandum also contains the specific Objectives and Implementation Strategies, which were established in 2018. Some of the Implementation Strategies have been accomplished; most have not.

It also contains Recommendations for the new comprehensive plan and code, intended to take the 2018 Implementation Strategies a step further in supporting the community's values.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose is to stimulate discussion and brainstorming by identifying what our current reality looks like and seed the ground with ideas for future action.

### **CHAPTER 3 – COMMUNITY VALUES**

***Here are some particularly relevant excerpts from the list of community values:***

- *Appreciation of Homer's spectacular natural setting...*
- *Desire for ready access to open space, parks and recreation*
- *Pride and support for local arts*
- *Interest in lifelong learning and opportunities for access to education*
- *Support for a diverse economy*
- *Retain the best of Homer's community character*

### **CHAPTER 4 – LAND USE**

**GOAL 1:** *Guide Homer's growth with a focus on increasing the supply and diversity of housing, **protect community character**, encouraging infill, and helping minimize global impacts including limiting greenhouse gas emissions.*

**Objectives and Implementation Strategies** do not address parks, trails or open space

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW COMP PLAN & CODE

Incorporate space for parks, trails and open space into the City's development standards and codes.

1. Develop design standards that encourage use of green infrastructure and open space.
2. Develop a Parks Master Plan that identifies spaces that would be good candidates for parks and open space.
3. Update Homer's Non-motorized Transportation Plan to identify routes that would make good candidates for trails and paths.
4. Strengthen city code regarding when and how new developments are required to include trails, paths and sidewalks.
5. Develop new city code that specifies when and how open space needs to be incorporated into new developments.

**GOAL 2:** *Maintain the quality of Homer's natural environment and scenic beauty.*

### **Key phrases:**

- *Homer's natural setting provides many benefits but also creates significant constraints.*
- *Growth will need to be guided to meet Homer's concerns about protecting...the quality of the environment.*

**Objective A:** *Complete and maintain a detailed "green infrastructure" map for the City of Homer and environs that presents an integrated functional system of environmental features on lands in both public and private ownership and use green infrastructure concepts in the review and approval of development projects.*

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- *Review how developments affect on- and off-site environmental functions.*
- *Support the preservation of green infrastructure*

### **Implementation Strategies:**

- *Review lessons learned from the implementation of site development standards.*
- *Incorporate development standards that address environmental constraints, functions and best practices.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW COMP PLAN & CODE

1. Do what we said we would do in 2018:
  - a. Create a "green infrastructure" map.
  - b. Support the development of green infrastructure.
  - c. Review lessons learned from implementation of site development standards and enforcement practices.



- d. Incorporate environmental concerns & best practices into development standards, code and enforcement practices.
2. Revise code to incorporate review of green infrastructure in permitting and land use decision making.
3. Incorporate Green Infrastructure Projects into City's capital plans and budgets.

**Objective C:** *Provide extra protection for areas with highest environmental value or development constraints.*

**Implementation Strategy:**

- *Support acquisition of environmentally sensitive land for preservation.*

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW COMP PLAN & CODE**

1. Do what we said we would do in 2018; that is, support acquisition of environmentally sensitive land for preservation as open space
2. Provide property tax relief for undevelopable land preserved for public benefit.
3. Use Conservation and Open Space designations more liberally to include undevelopable or environmentally sensitive land.

**Objective D:** *Collaborate with jurisdictions outside the City of Homer, as well as state and federal agencies, to ensure that environmental quality is maintained.*

**Implementation Strategy:**

- *Support practices that preserve and maintain environmental quality outside the City of Homer.*

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW COMP PLAN & CODE**

1. Do what we said we would do in 2018; that is, support practices that preserve and maintain environmental quality outside the City of Homer.
2. Work with governmental and non-governmental organizations to designate and protect sensitive areas.

**CHAPTER 6 – PUBLIC SERVICES & FACILITIES**

**GOAL # 1** *Provide and improve city-operated facilities and services to meet the current needs of the community, anticipate growth, conserve energy and keep pace with future demands.*

**Objective E:** *Identify resources needed to operate parks, recreation facilities and programs, enhance City and community-sponsored year-round recreational facilities and programs to serve people of all ages, and support citizen efforts to maintain environmental quality and public use of beaches through the Beach Policy.*

**Key Phrases:**

- *Need secure funding*

- *Endowment fund*
- *Better coordinate all efforts through combined Parks and Recreation Department*
- *4.73 FTEs budgeted for Parks*
- *1 FTE budgeted for Community Recreation (programming)*
- *Hardworking sector of volunteers*
- *Multi-use Community Recreation Facility*

### ***Implementation Strategies:***

- *Seek out strategies that enhance facilities and programs*
- *Pursue partners to maintain and expand recreational opportunities*
- *Consider the ability of the City to support a Community Recreation Center*
- *Implement and review beach policies*

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW COMP PLAN & CODE**

- Have a separate chapter for Parks
- Have a separate chapter for Community Recreation
- Update and separate the tasks set forth in the 2018 Comp Plan's Parks and Recreation Project List into a Parks list and a Community Recreation list and incorporate into their respective chapters.
- Incorporate action items from PARCAC's Strategic Plan
- Expand the Parks Chapter by:
  - Incorporating appropriate language from the Land Use Chapter about open space and non-motorized transportation
  - Incorporating appropriate language from the Transportation Chapter about non-motorized transportation
  - Incorporating appropriate language from the Economic Vitality Chapter about the potential for parks to contribute to Homer's economy.
  - Expand the Community Recreation Chapter by Incorporating appropriate language from the Economic Vitality Chapter about the potential for parks to contribute to Homer's economy.
- Build an organizational connection between Community Development Department and Parks so there is better coordination and communication regarding issues involving both land use, open spaces and non-motorized transportation
- Integrate PARCAC into discussions with the City Council's Recreation Champions

## **CHAPTER 7 – ECONOMIC VITALITY**

***Goal 3: Identify and promote industries that show a capacity for growth.***

**Objective C:** *Promote recreation, the arts, and non-government organizations as a complement to tourism and as an export industry.*

**Implementation Strategies:**

- *Consider and review zoning for opportunities that support the arts industry.*
- *Support sustainable recreational facilities and opportunities.*

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW COMP PLAN & CODE**

- Strengthen the language about how Parks and Community Recreation can contribute to Homer's economic development.
- Build collaboration between the Economic Development Commission and PARCAC
- Build an organizational connection between Community Development Department, Parks Division and Community Recreation so there is better coordination and communication regarding issues related to economic development, parks and community recreation.

# **PARKS, ART, RECREATION, & CULTURAL ADVISORY COMMISSION (PARCAC) 2025-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **1. On-going goals.**

- a. **On-going Goal #1. Open Communications.** Provide timely, relevant comment to the City Council and as appropriate, other Commissions and Boards, on Parks, Art, Recreation & Cultural issues.
  - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to help inform the City Council and other Commissions and Boards, about matters within PARCAC's purview.
  - ii. **Actions:**
    1. PARCAC members will use staff reports and meeting minutes to stay informed about activities within the City that fall within PARCAC purview, discuss the activities, , at PARCAC meetings and forward appropriate comments to the City Council.
    2. At each PARCAC meeting, a PARCAC member will volunteer to make a report about the PARCAC meeting at the next available City Council meeting.
- b. **On-going Goal #2. Parks & Recreation Budget.** Gain a better understanding of the process, have more communication on budget/projects between City Staff and review budget at least annually.
  - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to serve as an advocate for the fiscal needs of items/programs that fall within PARCAC purview.
  - ii. **Actions:**
    1. PARCAC will conduct an annual review of the budget information and determine items to for endorsement.
    2. PARCAC will review the budget information and provide comments and recommendations to the City Manager and the City Council during the development of the new budgets.
    3. PARCAC supports the concept of a sustainable source of funding for Parks and Recreation and will advocate for this.
- c. **On-going Goal #3. Public Art.** Support inclusion of Public Art in City Facilities when planning upgrades, renovations and new projects.
  - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to ensure public art is included in City buildings on a consistent basis.
  - ii. **Actions:**
    1. PARCAC recognized the City has a standing operating procedure for accepting and decommissioning public art.
- d. **On-going Goal #4: Parks/Recreation/Arts/Culture Community.** Maintain working relationships with various cultural entities.
  - i. **Objective:** PARCAC will maintain relationships with Homer's arts and cultural community.

- ii. **Actions:**
      - 1. PARCAC will invite community organizations involved with arts, culture, parks, trails and other matters within PARCAC's purview PARCAC meetings.
  - e. **On-going Goal #5: Open & Green Spaces.** Preservation of areas of natural beauty and open green spaces throughout the City.
    - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objectives are to (a) protect space designated within the City as open or green space and (b) increase the City's ownership of such spaces consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan.
    - ii. **Actions:**
      - 1. PARCAC will review land allocation plan and make recommendations.
      - 2. PARCAC welcomes recommendations from the public or staff regarding lands that would best serve the community as open or green space.
2. **Short Term Goals:** These are intended to be goals that can be accomplished within 1-2 years.
- a. **Short Term Goal #1: Organizational Issues.** Continue working with the City Council and the City Manager with the goal of the development of a Parks & Recreation Department.
    - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to support an organizational structure for providing parks facilities and recreation services in a cost effective and efficient manner.
    - ii. **Actions:**
      - 1. PARCAC will review and comment on options for an organizational structure for providing parks facilities and recreational services.
  - b. **Short Term Goal #2. Community Recreation Center.** Support and advocate for a new Community Recreation Center including a capital campaign.
    - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to develop a short- term and long-term plan for developing and operating a Community Recreation Center.
    - ii. **Actions:**
      - 1. PARCAC will keep informed of decisions and recommendations emanating from the Council's Recreation Champions by maintaining communication with them.
      - 2. PARCAC will review and comment on the draft Community Recreation Center Development Plan when it's developed.
      - 3. PARCAC will review and comment on the draft Community Recreational Center Operational Plan when it's developed.
  - c. **Short Term Goal #3: Operational Policies.** Support the development of policies for Parks and Community Recreation Programs.
    - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to ensure the City's Parks and Community Recreation Programs are operating in accordance with reasonable municipal practices.
    - ii. **Actions:**



1. PARCAC will review and comment on any Operational Policies for the Use of Parks and Operational Policies for Community Recreation that are developed.
- d. **Short Term Goal #4: Park Planning.** Support the update and development of Master Park Plans.
    - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to promote the maintenance and capital needs of the City's parks are being provided for in a proactive matter.
    - ii. **Actions:**
      1. PARCAC will review and comment on the Park Development Plan for each park that will include a list of capital and maintenance activities for each park once developed.
      2. PARCAC acknowledges that a budget for accomplishing such maintenance and capital needs will need to be developed and will review and comment on this once a draft is developed.
  - e. **Short Term Goal #5: Sustainable budgeting.** Research and advocate for the development or creation of depreciation reserves to maintain parks and recreation facilities.
    - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to support the City in creating a sustainable funding source for developing and maintaining parks and recreation facilities.
    - ii. **Actions:**
      1. PARCAC will review and comment on any funding plan for parks and recreation facilities that may be developed.
3. **Long Term Goals.** The long term goals, with are intended to be goals that can be accomplished within a 3-5 year timeframe.
    - a. **Long Term Goal #1: Staffing.** Support staffing requests made by Staff or advocate for staffing as identified.
      - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to see that the staff developing and maintaining parks facilities and providing community recreation services is cost effective and provides the determined desired level of service
      - ii. **Actions:**
        1. PARCAC will review and discuss staffing levels with staff and advocate for additional staff as needed.
    - b. **Long Term Goal #2: Non-motorized Transportation.** Advocate for City Code to be updated to include sidewalks as well as parks & trails are identified as falling under PARCAC auspices.
      - i. **Objectives:** PARCAC's objective is to advocate for non-motorized transportation options in accordance with the City's Transportation Plan.
      - ii. **Actions:**
        1. PARCAC will advocate for the finalization and adoption of the Transportation Plan, and its eventual incorporation into the new Comprehensive Plan.

- c. **Long Term Goal #3: Non-motorized Transportation.** Advocate for City Code or processes to include an opportunity for PARCAC to review and comment on proposed subdivisions for recommended trail and or sidewalk facilities and associated easements prior to the preliminary plat being submitted to the Kenai Peninsula Borough for approval.
  - i. **Objective:** PARCAC's objective is to be more proactive about identifying opportunities for non-motorized transportation.
  - ii. **Actions:**
    - 1. PARCAC will advocate that the Homer City Code be updated to accomplish the goals/objectives set forth in the new planning documents.