



# HOMER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2018



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# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The following groups participated in developing the Homer Comprehensive Plan 2018:

## **The City of Homer**

Honorable Ken Castner, Mayor  
Katie Koester, City Manager

## **Homer City Council**

Tom Stroozas  
Shelly Erickson  
Rachel Lord  
Caroline Venuti  
Donna Aderhold  
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## **Homer Advisory Planning Commission**

Tom Bos	Roberta Highland
Syverine Bentz	Dale Banks
Franco Venuti	Mandy Bernard
Don Stead	Shelly Erickson
Savannah Bradley	Tom Stroozas

## **City of Homer Commissions & Boards:**

### **Economic Development Advisory Commission**

### **Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission**

### **Library Advisory Board**

### **Port and Harbor Advisory Commission**

This plan is a 10-year update of the original 2008 plan, which included input from the following: Agnew::Beck Consulting, LLC, HDR Alaska, Inc., Koonce Pfeffer Bettis, Inc., Steve Colt, Ph.D., DnA Design, Homer Soil & Water Conservation District, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust (KHLT)

Photos in this document were provided by Planning Staff, Agnew::Beck, and HDR Alaska, Inc.

Cover photo by Emma Luck / Rainbow Tours

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# CODE ORDINANCE ADOPTING PLAN

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**CITY OF HOMER  
HOMER, ALASKA**

City Manager

**ORDINANCE 18-47**

AN ORDINANCE OF THE HOMER CITY COUNCIL ADOPTING THE  
2018 HOMER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND RECOMMENDING  
ADOPTION BY THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH.

WHEREAS, The Kenai Peninsula Borough as a Second Class Borough shall provide for planning on an areawide basis in accordance with AS 29.40; and

WHEREAS, As provided in Kenai Peninsula Borough Code 21.01.025, cities in the Borough requesting extensive comprehensive plan amendments may recommend to the Kenai Peninsula Borough Planning Commission a change to the city comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, The City of Homer has prepared a extensive comprehensive plan amendments in the form of the 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, A comprehensive plan is a public declaration of policy statements, goals, standards and maps for guiding the physical, social and economic development, both private and public, of the City; and

WHEREAS, The 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan will guide the development of the City of Homer; and

WHEREAS, The Homer Advisory Planning Commission and other City commissions and bodies have reviewed said plan and/or conducted public hearings; and

WHEREAS, The Homer City Council, based upon the recommendation of the Homer Advisory Planning Commission, recommends that the Kenai Peninsula Borough Planning Commission and Assembly adopt the 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY OF HOMER ORDAINS:

Section 1. The 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan is hereby adopted as the City of Homer Comprehensive Plan, superseding the 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

Section 2. The previously adopted Homer Master Roads and Streets Plan (1986), Homer Non-Motorized Transportation and Trail Plan (2004), Homer Area Transportation Plan (2005) and the Homer Town Center Development Plan (2006), Homer Spit Plan (2010) remain part of the Homer Comprehensive Plan.

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Section 3. Subsection (b) of Homer City Code 21.02.010, Comprehensive Plan—Adoption, is amended to read as follows:

b. The following documents, as initially approved and subsequently amended, are adopted by reference as comprising the Homer Comprehensive Plan.

1. Homer Comprehensive Plan (2018)
2. Homer Master Roads and Streets Plan (1986)
3. Homer Non-Motorized Transportation and Trail Plan (2004)
4. Homer Area Transportation Plan (2005)
5. Homer Town Center Development Plan (2006)
6. Homer Spit Plan (2010)

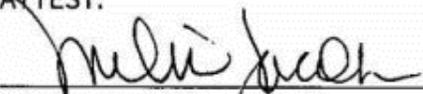
Section 4. The City hereby recommends that the Kenai Peninsula Borough Planning Commission and Assembly adopt the 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan as extensive comprehensive plan amendments under Kenai Peninsula Borough Code 21.01.025, and as an element of the Official Borough Comprehensive Plan within the City of Homer planning area of the Borough.

Section 5. Sections 1 through 3 of this ordinance shall take effect upon the adoption of the 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan by the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly. The remainder of this ordinance shall take effect upon its adoption by the Homer City Council.

Section 6. Section 3 of this ordinance is of a permanent and general character and shall be included in the city code. The remainder of this ordinance is not of a permanent nature and is a non-code ordinance.

ENACTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA, this 26 day of Nov, 2018.

CITY OF HOMER  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
KEN CASTNER, MAYOR

ATTEST:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK



85 YES: 6  
86 NO: 0  
87 ABSTAIN: 0  
88 ABSENT: 0

89  
90 First Reading: 10-22-18  
91 Public Hearing: 11-26-18  
92 Second Reading: 11-26-18  
93 Effective Date: 11-27-18

94  
95 Reviewed and approved as to form:

96  
97 Katie Koester  
98

99 Katie Koester, City Manager

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101 Date: 12-4-18

\_\_\_\_\_  
Holly Wells, City Attorney

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# ■ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## **INTRODUCTION (Chapter 1)**

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan together with City of Homer's Master Roads and Streets Plan (1986), Non-Motorized Transportation and Trail Plan (2004), Area Transportation Plan (2005), Town Center Development Plan (2006), and Spit Plan (2010) comprise the Homer Comprehensive Plan.

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan update was adopted as a 20-year long-range plan and included extensive public involvement as well as professional consulting services. The 2018 Comprehensive Plan serves as a 10-year revision of the Plan and includes contributions from City Commissions, City staff, and input from the public. The next 20-year update, due in 2028, will likely include a more extensive process, similar to that of the 2008 plan.

Continued development influences Homer's character and presents many demographic, social, and economic challenges. Comprehensive planning aims to promote the type of natural and built environment that the community desires. The Comprehensive Plan identifies a broad, long-term vision for Homer's future, and establishes goals, standards, and policies for land use and development.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION (Chapter 2)**

Homer's population is changing. Homer continues to grow at a steady pace. The age of the population is shifting and a new level of wealth is visible. Notably a trend has developed toward an increased population of retirees and more second homes leading to higher-priced land and housing. The general change in Homer's demographic is coupled with seasonal population variations. This change presents Homer with opportunities and challenges. Some are listed below:

- Growth will need to be guided to meet Homer's concerns about protecting community character and the quality of the environment.
- Seasonal population fluctuations create challenges for providing city services and facilities. Seasonal peak infrastructure demands force increases in capacity without necessarily providing a commensurate increase in funding.
- The outward expansion of the city affects demand for and costs of roads, water and sewer, schools and other public services, and also presents challenges for protecting open space.
- An aging population and growth in the retiree population creates demands for expanded access to health services and for increased recreational opportunities.
- New arrivals, while contributing to increases in the prices of land and housing, also create a range of jobs and local economic opportunities.
- Retirees can be a resource with the ability to volunteer their time and talents to community organizations, nonprofit agencies, and their service on boards and commissions.

These changes present challenges to the character of Homer and opportunities to emerge as a new kind of community – one that keeps the best of its character *and* embraces the need to grow and change. The purpose of this plan is to establish a framework to reach this ambitious goal.

## **COMMUNITY VALUES (Chapter 3)**

This chapter briefly lists Homer’s community values as defined through community input in the Comprehensive Plan process. The overarching theme throughout is to “Keep Homer a lively, vital community that effectively responds to change and growth while retaining what is best about Homer’s character.”

## **LAND USE (Chapter 4)**

The Land Use chapter of this Comprehensive Plan seeks to respect the past, to recognize the current realities of building and living in Homer, Alaska, and to create a new paradigm for the future. Befitting the aspirations of a unique and vibrant city, Homer seeks to further develop as a city which respects the environment, is wonderful to live in, and inspiring to visit. Specific goals of the chapter are listed below; the remainder of this section gives an overview of some of the most important policies in this chapter.

**GOAL 1:** 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.

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

**GOAL 3:** Encourage high-quality buildings and site development that complement Homer’s beautiful natural setting.

**GOAL 4:** Support the development of a variety of well-defined commercial/business districts for a range of commercial purposes.

The chapter outlines strategies for building a compact, walkable community core, partly in response to concerns regarding energy use and climate change. Ideas for maintaining the functional benefits of the natural environment are presented in this chapter’s green infrastructure discussion. Other, more traditional motivations support compact development, including reduced infrastructure costs. Close neighbors sharing resources and looking out for their neighborhoods may hark back to an earlier time, but this also offers an attractive and practical model for the future.

Throughout this chapter, you will find prescriptions for encouraging more compact residential development and better walkability. The intent is to remove regulatory barriers to compact development in a way that enables the private sector to develop denser housing, particularly infill housing that is attractive, well-built, and fits well with existing homes.

The plan’s proposed land use recommendations map clarifies intended types of uses. These recommendations include more diverse housing areas and higher density mixed use residential office and commercial areas. The proposed designations would encourage a mix of development types while reducing conflicts by setting out standards for allowable densities and the character of development. This creates a spectrum of housing and commercial options to accommodate income and lifestyle diversity in Homer. Through zoning code amendments, the community will further develop these zoning concepts with clear regulations and guidelines for balancing development and open space.

The plan proposes development of an integrated system of green spaces that benefits the community aesthetically and functionally, by protecting corridors for trails, storm water management, wildlife habitat, and viewsheds. Changing land use designations recognizes the environmental constraints to development that were not apparent when some areas were initially zoned. Suggested changes correspond to the realities of the character of the land and provide ways to create guidelines and incentives to create balanced development and protect environmentally important areas.

Overall, an effort has been made to consider rural cold climate challenges, environmental understanding and economic opportunities as we work to ensure Homer remains Alaska's "cosmic hamlet by the sea."

## **TRANSPORTATION (Chapter 5)**

As Homer continues to grow and change, the community needs to consider transportation alongside all other aspects of community growth and development. Challenges related to circulation will likely grow, including parking, highway congestion, maintenance, and bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Plan goals and associated policies, summarized below, will improve the range and quality of Homer transportation options, to better serve current needs and respond to projected growth.

**GOAL 1:** The street system should be configured to include arterial, collector, and local streets. Through-street connections should be encouraged, while maintaining the integrity of existing neighborhoods.

**GOAL 2:** The transportation system, including streets, trails, docks, and airports, should support future community economic and population growth.

**GOAL 3:** Homer's transportation system and services should be developed in a manner that supports community land use, design, and social goals.

Homer will benefit from creating a more complete circulation system in Homer. Policies described under Goal 1 propose the early identification of collector and arterial roads as well as methods to pay for right of way acquisition and road building and to ensure that connectivity occurs in a way that protects neighborhood character.

Homer's transportation system needs to keep pace with growth and economic development. Strategies include working collaboratively with the State, Borough, and other landowners to develop a more complete street network and corridor preservation program as well as to provide alternatives to the automobile.

Homer's transportation system can work to support broad community goals. Policies include implementing the Homer Non-Motorized Transportation and Trails Plan, improving downtown parking, developing street, sidewalk, trail design and landscaping standards that are bicycle and pedestrian friendly and that include provisions for the elderly, citizens with disabilities, and safe walking routes for children.

## **PUBLIC SERVICES & FACILITIES (Chapter 6)**

The City of Homer provides a range of quality public services and facilities. In addition to those provided directly by the City as an independent entity, services and facilities are provided by the Kenai Peninsula Borough, the State of Alaska, and in collaboration with a variety of nonprofit organizations and community groups. Chapter 6 outlines three goals for maintaining and improving these services and 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.

**GOAL 2:** Seek collaboration and coordination with service providers and community partners to ensure important community services are improved upon and made available.

**GOAL 3:** Encourage the broader community to provide community services and facilities by supporting other organizations and entities that want to develop community services.

As Homer continues to grow and change, work will be needed to maintain and upgrade existing fire, emergency services, law enforcement, water, sewer, and harbor services. The plan looks at the current status, as well as near and long-term priorities for each area of service delivery. Other services and facilities the plan addresses include parks and recreation development, storm water control, maintaining the library and adequate City administrative offices.

The City is an integral partner in supporting and encouraging Homer's arts and cultural activities, visitor services, health care services, senior and youth activities and services, educational opportunities, visitor attractions and services<sup>5</sup>. Although not necessarily the primary party responsible for these areas or activities, the City should provide assistance and leadership in these efforts.

Developing strong partnerships between the City and community partners will expand the ability of citizens to be self-sufficient and provide services and facilities beyond what the City can achieve on its own. Strategies to improve services include opportunities for increasing net revenues, providing technical assistance to community organizations, and creating incentives for organizations to take a lead in developing and providing services.

Efficiency and sustainability are key elements to the successful implementation and operation of any infrastructure, public facilities or services, whether provided by the City or by its many partners throughout the community.

## **ECONOMIC VITALITY (Chapter 7)**

Economic vitality in a community is essential to provide the means for citizens to meet their basic needs and enjoy leisure time activities, and to provide resources for community needs. Many aspects of community and government operations affect the economy. The goals established in the Economic Vitality chapter follow.

**GOAL 1:** Define and encourage economic development that meets the desires and interests of Homer residents and supports the unique character of the community.

**GOAL 2:** Encourage the retention and creation of more year-round and higher wage employment.

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

**GOAL 4:** Support renewable and non-renewable energy services.

**GOAL 5:** Strengthen Homer as a tourism destination.

**GOAL 6:** Support community efforts to establish affordable housing.

Many of the factors that create “quality of life” for Homer residents also serve as economic assets. These include Homer’s spectacular natural setting, outdoor recreational opportunities, arts and culture, and small town character. Dimensions of this character include the variety of locally owned businesses, friendly people, human-scale architecture, and a lack of urban problems that often plague larger towns (e.g., blight, traffic congestion and crime). While growth is inevitable in Homer and could change Homer’s distinctive character, many cities have found ways to grow and maintain their character, through careful attention to development, including economic development.

Specific components of economic development where local government has a large role include creating a more vibrant downtown district; adopting land use policies that contribute to compact, sustainable, and attractive development; and ensuring development of a balanced transportation network including non-motorized transportation and public transportation, which will become more critical as Homer grows and as global energy challenges become more pressing.

Tourism, education, and the arts contribute significantly to Homer’s economy now and hold potential for future growth. Because of its potential to be disruptive, tourism should be guided to help sustain the qualities of the community that attract both residents and visitors. Collaboration between local government and other organizations will help ensure positive development in tourism and the arts.

Homer must maintain existing core industries such as fishing, marine trades, tourism, health care and construction, and seek new ways to promote more higher-wage jobs and to maintain a diverse economy, which reduces the risk of drastic economic downturn. Homer is fortunate to possess a relatively diverse economy currently and should seek to enhance this diversity. Another objective is to encourage year-round economic activity, which can be enhanced by promoting entrepreneurial small business ventures and “footloose” professional activity, along with expanded college programs.

Finally, Homer should look ahead to the challenges facing all communities in a “carbon-constrained world” and seek to enhance local self-reliance in agriculture, sustainable energy production, and other aspects of community life. Indeed, if Homer can develop expertise in these areas, that knowledge itself could be exported, further enhancing the local economy.

## **ENERGY PLAN (Chapter 8)**

Homer understands the necessity of conserving finite energy resources. Reducing the use of fossil fuels and solid waste leads to the reduction of greenhouse gasses. The conservation of resources is not only a benefit to Homer taxpayers, but also contributes to the creation of a sustainable society. The creation of an energy plan situates Homer to be a leader in responsible stewardship. The energy plan positions the community to take advantage of new opportunities to strengthen the local economy, improve public health and improve community livability. The goals listed provide the framework for this stewardship.

**GOAL 1:** The City of Homer will be a community leader in implementing policies that promote energy efficiencies.

**GOAL 2:** The City of Homer will be a responsible steward of consumable resources.

**GOAL 3:** The City of Homer will play an active role in influencing regional policies that promote the research, development, and use of sustainable energy alternatives.

Lately, the need to contribute to a sustainable society is even more evident. The increased use of renewable energy sources represents an opportunity to benefit the environment, community and the economy, locally, regional and globally. Homer wishes to position the community to take advantage of funding opportunities to participate in the forefront of new technologies.

This energy plan dovetails upon several other city documents. Homer has adopted a Climate Action Plan and an employee sustainability handbook, addressing many of the goals presented here.

# CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

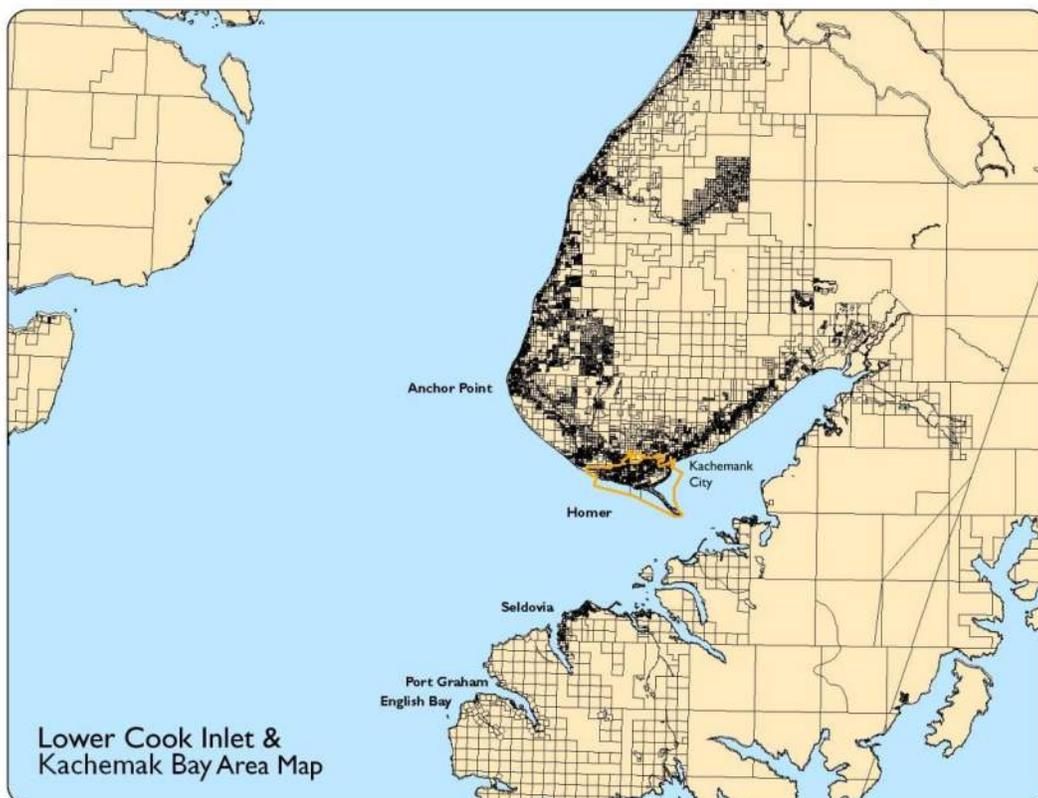
## Overview

The Comprehensive Plan is an all-inclusive long-range plan for the future of Homer. It functions as a guide for policymakers as they make decisions that influence the physical, social, and economic development of the community. The plan translates community values into broad goals and identifies specific objectives and strategies to further those goals.



## Overview of Community Boundaries and Setting

Homer lies on the north shore of Kachemak Bay on the southwest edge of the Kenai Peninsula. *See Kachemak Bay area map below.* It is the southernmost point of the road system connecting the Kenai Peninsula with Anchorage, which lies 227 road miles north of Homer. Homer is approximately 59.6° north latitude and 151.6° west longitude. Homer's city boundaries encompass a total area of approximately 25 square miles (15 square miles of land and 10 square miles of water). *See the City of Homer Zoning Map in Appendix C-2* According to the



Alaska Department of Community, Commerce, and Economic Development (DCCED), in 2017 Homer’s population was estimated at approximately 5,313 people.

Homer has a close relationship with many nearby communities, both along the road system and the marine highway system. Kachemak City (incorporated in 1961) shares Homer’s eastern boundary. It has a 2017 population of approximately 505 people and many of its residents are employed in Homer. Anchor Point is located 14 miles northwest of Homer along the road system and has a population of approximately 1800 residents. Like Kachemak City, many of Anchor Point residents are employed in Homer. Homer also helps to service the needs of communities across Kachemak Bay, notably Seldovia, Port Graham and Nanwalek (formerly English Bay). The Alaska Marine Highway ferry service connects Homer to Seldovia.

## **Purpose of the Plan**

The purpose of comprehensive planning is to promote the type of environment – both built and natural – that a community desires. The City of Homer has a robust planning history, especially when compared to many Alaskan communities. Early efforts to create a comprehensive plan date to 1954 with area residents documenting existing conditions and making recommendations for growth and development. The 2008 City of Homer Comprehensive Plan previously guided the City’s growth and development; this 2018 update relies heavily on that work. The plan takes a long-term view, establishing broad goals and policies intended to guide growth over the next 10 years.

The Comprehensive Plan is an all-inclusive long-range plan for the future of Homer. It functions as a guide for policymakers as they make decisions that influence the physical, social, and economic development of the community. The plan translates community values into broad goals and identifies specific objectives and strategies to further those goals.

The plan is organized into chapters that include goals, objectives, and implementation strategies. Some of the chapters are followed by an implementation table that breaks down implementation strategies into specific projects. Each project in the table has a code indicating which goal and objective it pertains to. For example, “1-A-1” pertains to goal 1, objective A, and is implementation project 1, while “2-B-5” pertains to goal 2, objective B, and is implementation project 5.

In Alaska, comprehensive plans are mandated of all organized first and second class boroughs by Title 29 of the Alaska State Statutes. The key elements of the statute (Sec. 29.40.030) are summarized below:

The comprehensive plan is a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social, and economic development, both private and public, of the municipality, and may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Statements of policies, goals, and standards;
- Land use plan;
- Community facilities plan;
- Transportation plan; and,
- Recommendations for implementing a comprehensive plan.

A comprehensive plan provides a method to analyze past development, current issues and community views, and to use this information to establish policies guiding future development. Key components of this plan include a broad, long-term vision for Homer’s future; policies to guide land use, growth, and development; priorities to improve public facilities and services; and policies to promote economic development, retain community character and protect the natural environment.

This updated City of Homer Comprehensive Plan is built from the 1989, 1999, and 2008 City of Homer Comprehensive Plans and other plans adopted by the City of Homer, including the Town Center Development Plan (2007), Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan (2011), Capital Improvement Plan (2016), Water and Sewer Master Plan (2006), City of Homer Non-Motorized Transportation and Trails Plan (2004), and the Homer Area Transportation Plan (2005). The 2008 comprehensive plan update was a major revamp of the previous version and is considered a 20-year plan. The 2018 update serves as a 10-year revision of the existing plan and includes contributions from City Commissions and City staff.



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## CHAPTER 2 BACKGROUND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

### Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of Homer's history, current conditions and trends, and sets the stage for the policies presented in the remainder of the plan.

### History

The area surrounding Homer has been home to Alaska Natives for over 8,000 years. The Pratt Museum and the Homer library are excellent sources of information about the rich Alaska Native history of Kachemak Bay. While archaeological evidence indicates that major Native settlements were located across Kachemak Bay from Homer, there is also evidence of early Native campsites on the Homer Spit. Today persons with Alaska Native and American Indian heritage make up approximately 6.9% percent of Homer's total population. (American Community Survey (ACS) 2014)



Homer's non-Native history began in 1895, when the US Geological Survey came to the area to study coal and gold resources. The following year, Homer Pennock, the man of character after whom the town is named, arrived with a crew of 50 gold miners and developed a small settlement on the Spit. While gold mining never became a profitable endeavor, coal mining did and was the predominant economic activity from the late 1800s through World War I. In the early 1900s, fishing developed into an important industry. The majority of canneries and fishing-related activity was centered across the bay in Seldovia. However, when the 1964 Good Friday earthquake struck, Seldovia's waterfront was devastated. The Homer Spit also subsided several feet due to the earthquake but it was able to assume Seldovia's fishing support activities. Like the Good Friday earthquake, the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound marked another very significant event for Homer. While Homer is somewhat distant from the point of grounding, outside Valdez, the reach of the spill was vast; Homer's shoreline was included in the 1,300 miles of coast impacted by the Exxon Valdez disaster.

### Natural Environment

Homer is a breathtakingly beautiful community. Surrounded by snowcapped mountains and glaciers, this community is a gateway to mountain and maritime adventures. Homer is also well-known for the "Homer Spit," a landform of deposited gravel extending 4.5 miles into Kachemak Bay. This strong relationship to the natural environment, combined with Homer's stunning natural setting and its vibrant arts and cultural scene, has made it a popular destination for tourists.

Homer's year-round ice-free port and protected harbor provide easy access to Kachemak Bay. The Bay is traveled by Homer residents, residents of nearby communities, and visitors for recreation, wildlife viewing, fishing, and transportation. Life in Homer relates to the ocean in many ways – the climate, economy, environment, infrastructure, and way of life are all shaped by Homer's proximity to the water.



Kachemak Bay and the Homer Spit

The ocean-influenced maritime climate lends to a fairly temperate place by Alaska standards. Average daily temperatures range from 45 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer and 14 to 27 in the winter. Yearly snowfall during the winter averages 55 inches; total annual precipitation is 24 inches.

The topography of the region adds to its beauty. The City of Homer is situated in a geographical area referred to as the Homer Bench. The Homer Bench is characterized by high bluffs to the north and gently sloping shorelines in the south. Homer is bounded by Kachemak Bay to the south, and Diamond Ridge to the north, which rises from about 400 to 1,100 feet above

sea level. The area is composed of layered sand, silt, clay, conglomerate, coal seams, and volcanic ash. Common rock types include shale, sandstone, coal, and claystone. The steep slopes and the loose nature of the soil and bedrock make the area susceptible to landslides when saturated with water. Homer experiences both bluff and shoreline erosion problems. Across the bay in Kachemak Bay State Park, the dramatic, heavily glaciated mountains of the Kenai Range provide stunning scenic views for the city.

## Social Environment

Homer faces several significant trends that will affect the community for at least the next 10 years. Growth in the number of residents who are over 65, and also between the ages of 20 and 34 shape the work force, job opportunities, and tax base. Significant changes in the State of Alaska budget due to the rapid decline in oil revenues is having a negative impact on school budgets, road maintenance, road constriction, and capital projects of any kind.

These trends pose important issues for the borough and its communities. Notably, an aging population creates needs for specific types of public facilities and services, tax revenue collection, and special housing. Lower school enrollment numbers often mean that State support becomes more limited and school budgets are stretched. An aging population is often indicative of the lack of local economic opportunity sufficient to attract and hold families. A more vibrant economy would attract and retain workers and families, and a more diverse tax base. Decreasing incomes may increase demands on social services while simultaneously lowering support for and ability to pay taxes or fees for services.

## Economy

Education, health care, commercial fishing, and tourism form the backbone of Homer's economy. Large employers include the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, University of Alaska Kachemak Bay Campus, and South Peninsula Hospital. Additionally, there are numerous other health and wellness providers, tourism and commercial fishing enterprises and related services such as hotels, restaurants, and retail shops. Educational services, health care, and social assistance are responsible for more than 26% of jobs in Homer (ACS 2014). Additionally, arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services provide another 13% of local jobs.

## **Increasing Visitors**

Homer continues to be a popular tourist destination. *Alaska Economic Trends* reports that “Homer’s visitor industry is thriving and contributes to the support of local cottage industries including bed and breakfasts and arts and crafts.”<sup>1</sup> This statement from 2004 still rings true in 2018. It is likely that Homer will continue to draw in visitors as the gateway to Kachemak Bay State Park, “halibut capital of the world,” and for the general access to natural habitat and wildlife areas it provides. Homer also attracts visitors who enjoy the many cultural events and festivals hosted by the community, as well as specialty stores, most notably the local art galleries. Recent trends in tourism include changes to the size of halibut a charter customer may keep, as well as the reduction in the number of days that are open to fishing. In spite of a slackening halibut fishing sector, Homer will need to market the numerous other existing tourism and ecotourism related activities in order to sustain and grow the visitor industry.

## **Housing Characteristics**

Residential use remains the predominant function of developed land in Homer. Sixty-eight percent of Homer residents live in single family detached homes. Long term, there is little incentive for building more densely, maximizing the public investment made in water and sewers, and generating revenue (through service fees) sufficient to pay for the ongoing costs of a very spread out utility system.

The number of new residential permits has been steady since housing market stabilized after the recession. Although interest rates are slowly beginning to rise, the City expects an average of 30-40 new homes to be constructed per year for the foreseeable future. There has been an increase in redevelopment; tearing down old cabins and mobile homes, and replacing them with new energy efficient residences.

Housing prices remain high relative to income, despite a recent market trend of leveling home prices. In 2014, over 26% of mortgaged households spent 35% or more of their income on housing costs. Of households that rent, over 40% spend more than 35% of gross household income on housing. The median sale price for a single family house was \$235,000 in 2015. Housing prices and rental costs play a large role in determining who can live and thrive in Homer. *Goal 6 of Chapter 7, Economic Vitality*, discusses affordable housing in more detail.

## **Homer Population Trends and Demographics**

Homer’s population growth tends to fluctuate, but in recent decades reflects slow to moderate growth once the effects of annexation in 2002 are discounted. Homer’s seasonal population fluctuations complicate the effort to define the community’s demographic character. In the summertime, the population of Homer swells dramatically with tourists, seasonal workers employed in commercial fishing and tourist support industries, part-time summer residents, and second-homeowners. General population growth trends, numbers, and graphs do not capture the complexity and variation of Homer’s population.

<sup>1</sup> *Alaska Economic Trends, November 2004, Department of Labor and Workforce Development.*

Table 1. Homer Population Statistics 1960-2015

Year	Population	Average Annual Growth
1960	1,247	
1970*	1,083	-1.40%
1980	2,209	7.39%
1990	3,660	5.18%
2000	3,946	0.76%
2010**	5,003	2.40%
2015	5,153	0.30%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2016

\* Homer's growth rate declined due to the 1964 incorporation of the city.

\*\* Annexation was completed in 2002, enlarging Homer and the City's population

## Shifting Age of the Population

Homer has seen a population increase of persons aged 65-and-older from 7 percent in 1990 to 13 percent of the total population in 2014. (See Table 2). This may be explained by two main factors: the aging of Homers' existing population and the in-migration of retirees. Alaskans and those from other states moving to Homer to retire are part of a larger trend prevalent throughout the borough.

Similarly across the Kenia Peninsula Borough, the retirement age group has grown significantly, while other age groups have not. In 1990, 4.9 percent of the population was aged 65 years and older. In 2000 this had increased to 7.3 percent and by 2010 had risen to 11.3 percent. By 2032, this is projected to increase to nearly 24%. This phenomenon is referred to locally as the 'Silver Tsunami', representing the scale of demographic transformation that is occurring.

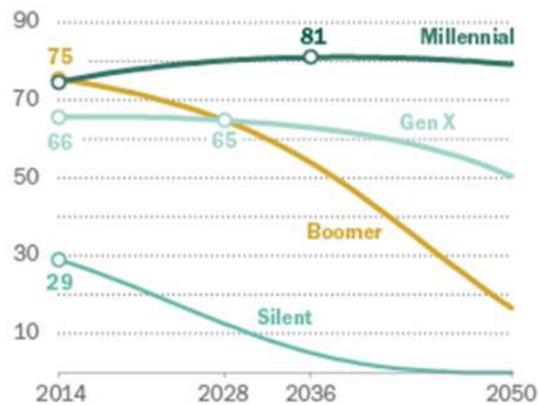
Table 2. Age Statistics for City of Homer, 2000-2014

Age	2000 Population		2014 Population	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Total	3,946		5,229	
9 and Under	551	14%	708	14%
10 to 19	646	16%	675	13%
20 to 34	478	12%	973	19%
35 to 44	659	17%	538	10%
45 to 54	748	19%	686	13%
55 to 64	366	9%	965	18%
65 and Over	398	10%	684	13%

Source: US Census Bureau and 2014 American Community Survey Note: US Census Bureau's 2000 population is slightly different from State of Alaska numbers. The census captures the April 1 population while the State estimates the July 1 population.

## Projected Population by Generation

In millions



Note: Millennials refers to the population ages 18 to 34 as of 2015.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of U.S. Census Bureau population projections released December 2014

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 1: Projected Population by Generation

population ages, there are relatively fewer Generation X residents to assume skilled jobs, start new businesses, and volunteer their time and expertise in the community. Time will tell if Homer can harness the people power of the Millennials to assume the rolls left unfilled by aging Baby Boomers.

## Fiscal Challenges

Alaska remains particularly vulnerable to economic shocks, such as the current dip in oil prices. The State economy has somewhat matured and diversified, with growth in tourism, air cargo and mining, but oil revenue is critical to fund state government and provides numerous high paying jobs. Homer needs to plan for growth, and there are good reasons to expect this growth will continue. At the same time, the community needs to be aware that growth rates could quickly slow or reverse.

Table 4 shows the median household, family and non-family (individual) income for Homer for 2000, 2010, and 2014. Homer has seen a decline in median income when levels are adjusted to 2015 dollars. This affects resident's ability to pay increased taxes and fees for services. At the same time, Table 5 shows the slow increase in city tax revenues. As the State cuts support to local governments, cities will need to find a way to either increase revenues to pay for services, or reduce services.

Table 4. Median Income in Homer

Income	2000	2010	2014
Median household Income	59,639	57,205	55,443
Median Family Income	74,611	75,225	75,717
Median non-family income	36,744	31,311	30,132

Source: US Census Bureau, ACS and Consumer Price Index (used to adjust to year 2015 level).

Table 3. Generation Groups

Generation	Birth Years
Millennials	1982 - 2004
Generation X	1965 - 1981
Baby Boomers	1946 - 1964

Another interesting trend shown in Table 2 is the shrinking portion of the population between the ages of 35-55, and the increase of 20-34 year olds. The younger group is commonly a demographic that is under represented in Homer, as young adults move away for schooling or jobs and don't return. Perhaps this trend is shifting, although the Great Recession and lack of job opportunities in the lower 48 may have influenced more young residents to stay or return to Homer. This age group is known as the Millennials (see table 3).

They are as significant a cohort as the Baby Boom generation in terms of sheer number of people in that age group. It is reasonable to expect a continued increase in younger people, and relatively fewer residents in the age group between the Millennials and the Baby Boomers, broadly considered Generation X. In the near term, as Homer's

City sales tax and real property taxes make up the majority of City tax revenues. The 2018 City budget is based upon a 4.5 percent sales tax and a 4.5 mill property tax rate. Tax revenues continue on an upward trend. Table 5 shows the City tax revenues from property and sales taxes from 2012 through 2015. Property tax revenues have increased an average of 1.3 percent each year between 2012 and 2015. This increase reflects the slow growth of new construction and the recovery of the housing industry. Sales tax revenue has also increased. While expecting continued incremental increases in the tax base and municipal tax revenues, reduction in state spending may increase the City's costs. New expenditures by the City will need to be weighed with the likelihood that revenues will increase enough to cover the expenses.

Table 5. City of Homer Tax Revenues, 2012 through 2015

Year	Property Tax	% Change	Sales Tax	% Change
2012	\$3,009,577		\$4,752,288	
2013	\$3,220,859	7.0%	\$4,944,776	4.1%
2014	\$3,085,931	-4.2%	\$5,024,526	1.6%
2015	\$3,118,636	1.1%	\$5,126,605	2.0%

Source: COH budget 2014, 2015

## Long Term Growth Forecast

The boom and bust of Alaskan economic life requires City governments to be both optimistic and realistic, and to be able to respond to change. In previous plans, population forecasts were greatly overestimated. Actual population growth has been leisurely over time. With the potential for a slow growing population forecasted in Table 6, the region can expect continued slow economic expansion. While there is the potential for mega projects such as the Natural Gas pipeline that would terminate in Nikiski, it is reasonable for the community to expect modest and steady change. This outlook applies to new jobs, new residents, growth of the tax base and increases in government revenues to pay for services.

Table 6. Population Projections 2012-2042

AK Dept. Labor and Workforce Development Population Projections 2012-2042								
Year	2012	2017	2022	2027	2032	2037	2042	
Alaska	732,298	770,417	806,479	839,191	868,902	897,034	925,042	
KPB	56,756	59,225	61,391	63,116	64,321	65,098	65,647	
City of Homer Population Projections								
Year	2012	2017	2022	2027	2032	2037	2042	
Using KPB growth rates	5,153	5,376	5,572	5,727	5,837	5,907	5,957	* low projection
1% annual growth rate	5,153	5,416	5,692	5,982	6,288	6,608	6,945	* mid projection
Southern Kenai Peninsula Population Projections								
Year	2012	2017	2022	2027	2032	2037	2042	
Using KPB growth rates	10,783	11,232	11,643	11,966	12,195	12,343	12,448	* low projection
1% annual growth rate	10,783	11,333	11,911	12,519	13,157	13,828	14,534	* mid projection

## Growth Trends

Homer's future growth will be driven by a combination of what happens to the Alaska economy and also specific factors that are more or less independent of what is happening in the Alaska economy. These include things like the prices for the mix of fish species that Homer fishers tend to catch, the growth of specific visitor attractions similar to the Islands and Ocean Center, and the location decisions of businesses. Perhaps most important of all, and most difficult to forecast, is the growth of Homer as a quality-of-life community that is attracting wealthy people who want to live here. This growth will depend partly on the actions that citizens take to maintain the current attractive qualities, and it will probably also depend on more mysterious attributes that economists call "reputation effects." If Homer remains a "hot" residential destination, then it can grow, at least in some dimensions, more or less independently of changes in the conventional "economic base."

## Summary

Taken together, the set of facts presented in this chapter support the conclusions listed below.

- The natural environment is important to Homer's economy and way of life. The community clearly desires to maintain the natural environment. New strategies will be needed to protect this environment as the community grows – particularly regarding drainage, erosion, open space, climate change and ocean acidification.
- Homer has a diverse, vibrant economy that builds on the community's strengths and character. The community will need to work to enhance and preserve economic opportunity.
- Tourism has grown significantly in Homer, contributing to growth in the overall service sector. Tourism marketing will need to diversify as charter fishing may become a less significant attraction over time.
- Homer needs room to grow, in a way that respects the community's character, addressing concerns about sprawl and climate change. The plan should designate locations and patterns for new growth, considering related needs like expanded water and sewer service.
- Homer's demographics are changing. Many out-of-town and out-of-state retirees are coming to Homer, affecting land prices and expectations about public services and facilities.
- Housing prices have been driven up by new demands and an influx of more wealthy residents. Maintaining a stock of quality housing for middle- and low-income households will be important for Homer's future, particularly for housing younger families within the City.
- The coming of age of Millennials will shape Homer's future as a place for young families with children.
- Existing housing stock is aging, and may not be attractive to retirees due to size and updates needed, which in addition to price also deter young families.
- Need to expand tax base and service fees to compensate with increases in operational costs for city programs and facilities.
- Trends of the last 30 years are likely to continue, and Homer will face new challenges and opportunities tied to growth

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## CHAPTER 3 COMMUNITY VALUES

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The previous chapter describes the growth and change occurring in Homer and surrounding areas along with the resulting opportunities and challenges facing the community. Chapters 4-8 present goals and strategies to respond to the impact of this growth and change. This chapter presents a general summary of the broad values of the Homer community. This material comes from the 1999 Comprehensive Plan Update, feedback received from the community in the preparation of the 2008 plan, and new ideas captured in this update.

Listed below are qualities of Homer that are strongly valued by residents. The items listed were repeatedly articulated during the comprehensive plan update process and over the years.

Keep Homer a lively, vital community that effectively responds to change and growth while retaining what is best about Homer's character.

- A strong interest in political matters; a desire to guide the future growth and development of Homer.
- Appreciation of Homer's spectacular natural setting, its great views, interesting topography, as well as a tradition of concern about the quality of natural resources and the environment.
- Support for a diverse economy, including many small, independent home-based businesses.
- Desire for ready access to open space, parks, and recreation.
- Pride and support for local arts.
- Strong commitment to encouraging a wide range of high quality medical and health-promoting services and facilities, both conventional and nontraditional.
- Support for the robust network of nonprofit and volunteer organizations giving to the community in many ways.
- Interest in lifelong learning and opportunities for access to education.
- A strong tradition of commercial fishing and a strong community bond to the marine environment and resources.
- Desire for a mix of rural and main-street character – with many residents living on larger parcels with space between neighbors – coupled with a desire to create a new “heart of Homer” – a lively town center offering the pleasures and conveniences of a thriving downtown, while not forgetting the importance of a healthy Pioneer Avenue economy.
- Maintain existing city services. Adjust the level of service when revenues fluctuate.





## ■ CHAPTER 4 LAND USE

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*Vision Statement: Guide the amount and location of Homer's growth to increase the supply and diversity of housing, protect important environmental resources and community character, reduce sprawl by encouraging infill, make efficient use of infrastructure, support a healthy local economy, and help reduce global impacts including limiting greenhouse gas emissions.*

### **Overview**

This chapter presents background information and policies to guide development in Homer. The first goal presents the overall goal of the land use policies. The other goals are more specific to various aspects of land use issues.

### **Summary of Goals**

- GOAL 1:** 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.
- GOAL 2:** Maintain the quality of Homer's natural environment and scenic beauty.
- GOAL 3:** Encourage high-quality buildings and site development that complement Homer's beautiful natural setting.
- GOAL 4:** Support the development of a variety of well-defined commercial/business districts for a range of commercial purposes.



## Context: Land Use in Homer & Surrounding Areas

### Land Use in Homer

Land use in Homer today closely corresponds to the area's unique geographical features, history of homesteading, the road system, access to Kachemak Bay, and other water resources. Two very distinct areas with very different land use characteristics developed in the last century, one on the mainland and the other on the Homer Spit. The portion of the City on the "mainland" has a ring-like land use pattern. It has a relatively concentrated, mixed use core or central business district. Transitional land uses surround the core consisting of institutional and public facilities, commercial uses, residential office, and denser, more urban residential. Farther from the central business district, larger lot/low density rural residential land uses prevail. Variations from this general pattern occur, for instance, along the Sterling Highway where roadside commercial activities are prevalent and in some instances compete with concentrated downtown activities. Additionally, the area surrounding the airport, southeast of downtown, holds most of the town's mixed industrial activities.

The Homer Spit contains its own assortment of industrial, commercial, and recreational uses. The Spit's functions and land uses fluctuate with the season; during the summer months commercial activities increase in response to the arrival of summer visitors and tourism. Activities on the Spit are sufficiently distinct and complex to warrant a separate plan, the *Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan (2011)*.

Homer's land use pattern is generally supported by the City's current zoning designations, but an eclectic mix of land uses is still found in various zoning districts (*see Appendix C-2, 2016 Zoning Map*). This mixing of uses is part of the unique character of Homer and not without benefits. The current land use zones largely fulfill their



intended functions, but in some cases do not mesh with the realities of existing or desired future use patterns. Growth in Homer will require a new set of standards to guide the form and location of future land use and development. For instance, the land downtown and extending west along the Sterling Highway is zoned central business district and gateway business district respectively. New policies are needed in the central business district to better allow for higher density and greater mixing of retail shopping, professional services, entertainment facilities, restaurants, and residential uses. The policies controlling development in the gateway business district will likely need ongoing refinement to promote business with an emphasis on the visitor industry and at the same time ensure an attractive and notable entry point to Homer and Kachemak Bay.

Homer's public water and sewer infrastructure plays a large role in shaping land use patterns in the city (*see Appendix C-4, Existing Water and Sewer Infrastructure Map*). To make the investment in public water and sewer infrastructure efficient and fair, decisions on infrastructure need to be coordinated with land use policy. For example, there are some areas within the rural residential zoning that have gained water and sewer service, providing landowners the opportunity to subdivide their lots and develop at a higher density than the existing land use classification promotes. This situation calls for a solution and is addressed in this plan.

Homer’s pattern of development is also greatly influenced by environmental constraints. Steep slopes, bluff and shoreline erosion, and wetland areas make development of many parcels costly, difficult, or even unfeasible. While such areas may be unfeasible for individual development, they can have great value for the community as a whole. Drainage ways, beach areas, or steep or erodible slopes can form an integrated open space network (“green infrastructure”) which supports the areas that may be developed more intensively. Environmental constraints and opportunities have an important role in guiding the character and location of new growth.

### **Land Use and Growth in Homer and the Surrounding Area**

The city of Homer is growing and it is likely to continue to grow (*see Chapter 2, Background Demographic Information*). As stated previously in this plan, future growth will be driven by factors including changes in the overall economy of Alaska, the future of the fishing industry, the pace of growth in the visitor industry and – probably the most difficult to forecast – the growth of Homer as a quality-of-life community for retirees, baby boomers, and other “footloose” prospective residents. If Homer remains a desirable residential destination, then it can grow, in some ways, more or less independently of changes in the conventional economic base.



Top of  
Main Street  
looking  
South to  
Bishop’s  
Beach

While increasing visitation has had a great impact on the economic growth of Homer, the most significant change in Homer’s real estate landscape has been the recent, rapidly growing demand for middle- to high-end residential development. This has led to substantial increases in land prices and the construction of many new homes, particularly in the area just outside of the city’s perimeter, extending out East End Road and on the bench above town. This growth is an important consideration in the development of Homer’s Comprehensive Plan. Residents of these developments use many of the same public and commercial services as Homer residents including police, fire, water supply, shops, restaurants, visitor and medical facilities, and public institutions like the library. Planning for services requires consideration of this growing residential demand.

## Goals & Objectives for Land Use

**GOAL I:** 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.

**Objective A:** Promote a pattern of growth characterized by a concentrated mixed-use center, and a surrounding ring of moderate-to-high density residential and mixed-use areas with lower densities in outlying areas.

Many of the community’s most important goals are tied to the amount and location of growth. These goals include encouraging affordable housing, protecting environmental quality, creating a walkable community, and efficiently providing public services and facilities. The broad strategy behind this objective is to encourage concentrated residential and business growth in the central area of the city, with densities decreasing in outlying areas. The existing pattern of development in the city and current zoning generally follow this pattern. The alternative to this pattern – to allow this same quantity of growth to spread over a much wider area – works against all these goals.

While concentrating land uses brings many benefits, residents clearly want to maintain a sense of open space and privacy that is often associated with lower density development, particularly in residential areas. As a result, this objective of concentrated growth must be accompanied by a set of standards that ensure housing and commercial areas are well designed. The remainder of this section presents more details on the location of new development. The following sections address the character of new development.

The key element of this section is the generalized Land Use Recommendations Map (*see Appendix A-10, Comprehensive Plan Land Use Recommendations Map*). This is not a zoning map, but a general map of proposed future land uses in Homer. Before these recommendations have the force of law, a separate, subsequent process must occur to amend the City’s current zoning code.

### Implementation Strategies

- Review Land Use Recommendations Map

**Objective B:** Develop clear and well-defined land use regulations and update the zoning map in support of the desired pattern of growth.

The Comprehensive Plan Land Use Recommendations Map establishes the location and intent of proposed land use districts, but does not address the standards needed to guide development.

### Implementation Strategies

- Revise zoning map
- Encourage preservation of natural system infrastructures
- Review density objectives
- Review appropriate design standards

**Objective C: Maintain high quality residential neighborhoods; promote housing choice by supporting a variety of dwelling options.**

Diverse, high-quality residential neighborhoods are crucial to the stability and economic health of Homer. Growth puts pressure on housing prices as land prices increase. Neighborhoods established decades ago with large lots face pressure as some landowners create subdivisions with smaller lots, while others would like to preserve the established neighborhood character. Housing choice is crucial to accommodate future growth as the dominant single family large lot developments clearly won't be able to meet future demand in quantity or price.



**Implementation Strategies**

- Review code for opportunities for appropriate infill
- Support options for affordable housing

**Objective D: Consider the regional and global impacts of development in Homer.**

Homer is a community that understands and appreciates its place in the context of the larger, global environment. As shown by its robust environmental nonprofit community and the work of the City's Global Warming Task Force, Homer residents look beyond their boundaries and have expressed the importance of acting locally as a way of addressing global issues.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Review opportunities that support energy efficiency for structures
- Consider land use policies that promote density and discourage sprawl

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

Homer's natural setting provides many benefits but also creates significant constraints. The characteristics of the physical setting need to be respected in guiding the location, amount, and density of development. Growth will need to be guided to meet Homer's concerns about protecting community character and the quality of the environment.

This plan takes two general approaches to guide development in relation to environmental conditions. One is to "overlay" information regarding environmental constraints and opportunities onto the Land Use Recommendations Map. This means, for example, that some portions of an area identified for development would be limited by the site-specific presence of steep slopes, wetland areas, drainage channels, etc. The second broad strategy is to recommend that appropriate standards be adopted so that where development does occur it is designed to respect environmental functions and characteristics. Examples in this category include site development polices for drainage, vegetation, and grading.

A need exists for the community to take seriously the issue of shoreline stabilization and the implications of allowing ongoing shoreline development. A process should be launched to examine the issue and put proposed solutions before the citizens.

**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.

Protecting the environment can be a way to achieve goals like reducing infrastructure costs and providing “environmental services” like drainage ways, parks, and trails. For example, protecting the integrity of a stream channel can help provide cost-effective drainage solutions and also provide a trail corridor. The challenge in carrying out these types of actions is that most land in Homer is already split into many individual private parcels. This objective provides the first step in solving this challenge by creating a complete base of knowledge regarding environmental features on land regardless of ownership. Specific steps to establish a system of green infrastructure are found in Appendix C-7.

Maps of important environmental features, processes, and key open space areas are valuable to the extent this information shapes decisions about development. In particular, this information is critical to protect features that cross boundaries of multiple parcels; e.g., streams and trails. This action not only protects open space values, but increases the value of neighboring properties for developers.

### **Green Infrastructure Defined**

*Green infrastructure is defined as an interconnected network of natural areas and other open spaces that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions, sustains clean air and water, and provides a wide array of benefits to people and wildlife. In contrast to traditional approaches to open space conservation, green infrastructure is integrated with and linked to development. Green infrastructure is a way of conserving natural areas that function as city infrastructure. Definition and other information based on Green Infrastructure: Linking Landscapes & Communities.*

*Mark A. Benedict, Ph.D., Edward T. McMahon, J.D.  
Island Press, 2006*

### **Implementation Strategies**

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

**Objective B:** Continue to review and refine development standards and require development practices that protect environmental functions.

Once a project has been identified for development, green infrastructure concepts can be used to consider what special conditions, if any, need to be incorporated into the project’s layout and development. Guidelines for development such as setbacks from waterbodies or limits on development of steep slopes are covered through the City’s zoning code. Homer’s existing codes include many good environmental standards. Periodic review of the successes and failures of the existing standards will help identify opportunity for revisions.

Appendix C-7 includes examples of how decisions about site clearing, grading, and impervious surfaces can create very different types of development. Homer is encouraged to continue practices that bring about Objective B.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- Review the lessons learned from the implementation of site development standards
- Consider revision of development standards in light of new information in relation to environmental functions and best practices

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

Ideally, adopting more effective development standards will result in the preservation and protection of lands with high environmental value. However, there may be some areas identified that cannot easily be protected through standard means and are so important they should be preserved forever. References such as wetland, steep slope, and green infrastructure maps can help identify and prioritize these lands. Organizations, such as the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service of Alaska may be consulted in identifying specific local strategies. Examples of environmentally important areas might include a particular beach access corridor or a particular section of a lake or stream.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Support acquisition of environmentally sensitive land for preservation

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

Homer’s environment is affected by actions outside of its borders. Wildlife corridors and drainage systems do not conform to borough and municipal boundaries. In this regard, Homer should work with surrounding jurisdictions, notably the Kenai Peninsula Borough along with other local, state, and federal land managers to promote environmentally suitable policy.

**Implementation Strategies**

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

**GOAL 3: Encourage high quality buildings and site design that complements Homer’s beautiful natural setting.**



New growth and development in Homer is inevitable. The community has made clear its intent to guide the character of the built environment so this growth improves the quality of the life. The Town Center Development Plan established standards for the development of the city core and sets a good standard for policies that can be followed to achieve higher design quality. An integrated but balanced regulatory and enforcement process is needed for the entire city, to raise the bar for future development standards. While enhanced development standards help guide the character of the built environment, enforcement of nuisance properties and the undue collection of open air junk will compliment development standards to improve the quality of life.

**Objective A:** Create a clear, coordinated regulatory framework that guides development.

Clear, predictable, consistent rules and regulations are key to achieving standard, quality design. These rules and regulations have to fit the context of the marketplace and be accepted by the development community. Overregulation is a disincentive, while under-regulation will achieve less than desired results. Specific policies addressing this topic include:

**Implementation Strategies**

- Review City adopted plans for consistency
- Review rules and regulation options with consideration of operational constraints and community acceptance

**Objective B:** Encourage high quality site design and buildings.

Good site design, appealing architecture, and quality construction practices contribute to the creation of high quality buildings. Attractive, well-constructed buildings are a long-term asset to the community. Design can be thought of in two categories: form, meaning what the building looks like; and function, meaning the construction methods and layout of the building.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Consider appropriate design standards for buildings
- Review site impacts of developments

**GOAL 4:** Support development of a variety of well-defined commercial/business districts for a range of commercial purposes.

**Objective A:** Encourage a concentrated, pedestrian oriented, attractive business/commerce district in the Central Business District (CBD) following the guidelines found in the Town Center Development Plan.

Creating a vital, successful central business district – the clear commercial and civic center of Homer – won’t happen by accident. A number of strategies are required to reach this objective, as outlined below. These actions are all designed to carry forward in the spirit of the previously approved Homer Town Center Development Plan and Community Design Manual. Those documents provide additional details that need to be considered to gain a full understanding of CBD objectives.



**Implementation Strategies**

- Consider infrastructure appropriate to support and sustain investment in the Central Business District

**Objective B:** Discourage strip development along the Sterling Highway and major collectors/thoroughfares.

Strip development occurs along busy major roads with easy access to businesses. Strip development is an unplanned consequence of building transportation infrastructure, and it tends to include practically any land use in an eclectic – often cluttered and unsightly – array of buildings, parking lots, utilities, and support structures.

Strip development along highways introduces competition for the central business district and weakens its role. Strip development can create unattractive community entries (e.g., the Glenn Highway coming into downtown Anchorage) and unsafe edges along thoroughfares. Communities with no restraints on the location of commercial use often find their downtowns wither, as businesses shift to outlying, lower cost properties. On the other hand, communities need to allow for a measure of outlying commercial growth, to be fair to property owners, to meet the need for the types of commercial uses that don't fit well into a central commercial core, and to respond to ongoing demand for expansion of commercial activity.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Support infill of existing commercial districts prior to expansion of a district
- Consider attractive commercial design practices

**Land Use Implementation table**

Table 7. Chapter 4, Land Use Implementation Table

Project	Timeframe				Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	Ongoing	
<b>Goal 1 – Guide Homer’s Growth</b>					
<i>I-A-1</i> Update the zoning map in support of the desired pattern of growth.				x	HAPC
<i>I-B-1</i> Consider additional methods for preserving natural areas and areas where ongoing natural processes may present hazards to existing or proposed development.	x				HAPC
<i>I-B-2</i> Promote standards and policies that promote mixed use and high quality, attractive medium to high-density development.				x	HAPC
<i>I-B-3</i> Develop standards and policies for new mixed-use districts, including the Gateway Business district. Consider “form-based” zoning strategies, encouraging a modest scale of development while allowing for a wide range of uses.				x	HAPC
<i>I-B-4</i> Consider zoning regulations that accommodate more mixed use and medium to high-density housing in the residential office and central business districts.				x	HAPC

Project	Timeframe				Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	Ongoing	
<i>I-B-5</i> Develop consistent design standards for new development to complement the character of the land use. Include architectural and site development standards and standards for associated infrastructure (particularly roads and trails).				x	HAPC
<i>I-B-6</i> 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.		x			EDC
<i>I-B-7</i> Consider neighborhood planning around the hospital for the centralized expansion of medical services.				x	HAPC
<i>I-C-1</i> Promote infill development in all housing districts.				x	HAPC
<i>I-C-2</i> Encourage inclusion of affordable housing in larger developments and affordable housing in general.				x	HAPC
<i>I-C-3</i> Improve the rural residential zoning code to withstand pressure for platting large lots into smaller ones in that district.				x	HAPC
<i>I-D-1</i> Pursue environmentally sound development practices and measure success for every public facility project in Homer either by locally established benchmarks, LEED certification, or other contemporary concepts.				x	Public Works, Administration
<i>I-D-2</i> Encourage a concentrated development pattern to reduce the need for vehicle trips and encourage non-motorized transportation (see <i>Chapter 5, Transportation</i> ).				x	HAPC
<i>I-D-3</i> Support planning and zoning regulations that promote land use strategies that include compact, mixed-use development, higher density development, and infill.	x			x	HAPC
<i>I-D-4</i> Adopt building codes and incentives to increase energy efficiency in all new residential and commercial development.		x			HAPC, City Council
<b>Goal 2 – Maintain Homer’s Natural Environment and Scenic Beauty</b>					
<i>2-A-1</i> Consider adopting incentives to encourage use of the Green Infrastructure Map developed by the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District.		x			HAPC
<i>2-A-2</i> Require developers to include details about environmental features and processes, along with plans for open space, when submitting subdivisions or other developments for approval.		x			HAPC

Project	Timeframe				Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	Ongoing	
2-A-3 Require developers to demonstrate how features that cross multiple parcels will be protected in individual projects. Use this process to create links between open space areas and integrate new development into the network of open space.		x			HAPC
2-A-4 When a Green Infrastructure Map is adopted, use it in the review process.		x			Planning, HAPC
2-A-5 Audit the codes and ordinances to identify the revisions that support the implementation of green infrastructure and prioritize code amendments for adoption.	x				HAPC
2-B-1 Continue to review and refine standards and guidelines to reduce bluff erosion and shoreline erosion, such as managing surface water runoff on coastal bluffs and implementing any other applicable best management practices.		x		x	HAPC
2-B-2 Continue to review and refine standards for coastal bluff stabilization projects and building setbacks from coastal bluffs.	x			x	HAPC
2-B-3 Continue to review and refine standards for setbacks on streams and wetlands.		x		x	HAPC
2-B-4 Continue to review and refine standards for development on steep slopes, in wetland areas, 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.		x		x	HAPC
2-B-5 Continue to review and refine review processes for hillsides, areas subject to landslides and other sensitive settings (e.g., allowance for development on steeper slopes subject to submission of more extensive site analysis and engineering reports).		x		x	HAPC
2-B-6 Consider regulation of on-site septic systems		x			HAPC
2-C-1 Work with land trusts and/or public agencies to acquire land for protection and recreational use. Build on example set by Kachemak Heritage Land Trust.				x	Administration
2-C-2 Consider land trades or variations on the transfer of development rights.		x			HAPC
2-C-3 Recommend that the City purchase property vital for the protection of the Bridge Creek Watershed.	x			x	HAPC

Project	Timeframe				Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	Ongoing	
2-D-1 Identify environmentally sensitive sites and natural systems of regional importance and work towards collaborative management of these areas. Options include implementing Special Use Districts to develop and pay for needed infrastructure and addressing drainage and trail issues on a regional or watershed approach.		x		x	HAPC, Planning
2-D-2 Encourage establishment of environmentally responsible development practices by the KPB and other land managers on land surrounding Homer.				x	HAPC, Administration
<b>Goal 3 – Encourage High Quality Development</b>					
3-A-1 Synthesize existing rules and regulations for both public and private development in a comprehensive design manual. 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 to balance functionality and aesthetics.				x	HAPC, Planning, Public Works
3-A-2 Provide a clear and predictable approval process for every development including organizing project review and permitting and providing appropriate staff review.				x	HAPC
3-A-3 Review code enforcement requirements and other actions in relation to meeting community expectations.				x	HAPC
3-B-1 Adopt building codes and create an inspection program.		x			HAPC, Administration, Public Works
3-B-2 Set standards that regulate the form of development to encourage attractive, diverse housing styles.	x				Planning, HAPC
3-B-3 Develop specific policies regarding site development including standards for landscaping, grading, lighting, view protection, etc., in coordination with current national efforts that promote better site development (LEED certification standards, Sustainable Sites Initiative, Low Impact Development, etc.).			x		HAPC
3-B-4 Ensure that all utility service to new developments shall be underground.				x	Planning, Public Works
3-B-5 Ensure that any redevelopment which moves overhead utilities requires moving those utilities underground.				x	Public Works

Project	Timeframe				Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	Ongoing	
<b>Goal 4 – Support Development of Well-defined Business Districts</b>					
4-A-1 Provide incentives for private investment in the CBD. Incentives can include public investments in improved infrastructure (e.g., roads, trails, parking) and in public facilities. Particular priorities include improved public parking and construction of a new east-west road through the center of the CBD roughly parallel to the Sterling Highway and Pioneer Avenue.		x			HAPC, Public Works, Administration
4-A-2 Create an overlay zone for the “Old Town” section of the CBD, establishing general standards for building design and construction. Aim for future buildings to continue in the style of the older buildings in the area as well as the several more recently constructed buildings that follow these traditions.		x			HAPC
4-A-3 Use public/private partnerships to improve streetscapes, including better sidewalks, landscaping, and building facades. Develop an attractive, business friendly commercial streetscape for Pioneer and Old Town businesses.				x	Administration
4-A-4 Improve trail connections to and within the CBD. Provide a system of trails and sidewalks linking residential areas, commercial and civic uses.				x	Public Works
4-A-5 Concentrate commercial uses in the downtown.				x	Planning Commission
4-A-6 Support Pioneer Avenue beautification/revitalization efforts.	x			x	HAPC, Public Works, Administration
4-B-1 Use the zoning process to guide the majority of future commercial development into the central business district. Locate development as presented on the Land Use Recommendations Map. Implementation will require an ongoing balancing act.				x	HAPC
4-B-2 Use strategies to ensure the character of strip commercial development will make a positive contribution to the overall character of the community. Strategies include: controls on the size and appearance of signs, requirements for landscaping of parking areas, and basic guidelines regarding building appearance.				x	HAPC



## CHAPTER 5 TRANSPORTATION

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*Vision Statement: Address future transportation needs while considering land use, economics, aesthetics and increasing community connectivity for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists.*

### Overview

This chapter is supplemented by the 2005 *Homer Area Transportation Plan* (Transportation Plan), the 2004 *Homer Non-Motorized Transportation and Trail Plan*, and the 2011 *Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan*. It augments these other documents and includes content not covered by these plans.

Transportation in Homer is an integral issue that is important to the future of the community. A small, low-density community typically has few serious transportation problems. However, summer visitation compounds traffic problems along certain routes. Problems related to circulation, parking, congestion, and bicycle and pedestrian safety will grow unless future transportation is considered in conjunction with land use, economic development, and aesthetics.

Transportation is also a key component in Homer's infrastructure, supporting businesses and economic activities. The 1989 Comprehensive Plan noted "Homer is a point where people and goods often change transportation modes to arrive at the final destination." Homer is a hub for land, sea, and air transportation. Maintaining and enhancing Homer's role as this transportation hub will support future community economic and population growth.



### Summary of Goals

A number of goals were identified during the preparation of the Transportation Plan. These goals were used as the basis for the following comprehensive plan transportation goals and objectives.

- GOAL 1:** The street system should be configured to include arterial, collector, and local streets. Through-street connections should be encouraged, while maintaining the integrity of existing neighborhoods.
- GOAL 2:** The transportation system, including streets, trails, docks, and airports, should support future community economic and population growth.
- GOAL 3:** Homer's transportation system and services should be developed in a manner that supports community land use, design, and social goals.

## **Context: Transportation in Homer**

Much of Homer's commercial development is spread along Pioneer Avenue, East End Road, and Ocean Drive. Homes and businesses are relatively spread out, with room provided for parking along the side or in front of most buildings. While this pattern makes it easy to get around Homer by car, it creates challenges for those who would like to have a more compact, walkable community.

Community concern, as evidenced by committee and public participation in the meetings held for the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, focused on how the community is to evolve and what it will be like to live in Homer in the future. The role of transportation is to support the development of the type of community that resident's desire. Homer residents have consistently spoken in favor of a community that has a more compact and walkable center with attractive streets that support pedestrians, bicycles, as well as cars. These objectives can be achieved. Conscious and consistent efforts to use road and property development standards that support community goals are necessary to achieve these objectives.

Awareness of the key role of transportation in community development has lead to a significant amount of local transportation planning in Homer. Relevant work includes the following plans:

- The Homer Intersections Planning Study, October 2005
- Homer Non-Motorized Transportation and Trail Plan, June 2004
- The Homer Area Transportation Plan – 2001, updated and adopted 2005
- Homer Master Roads and Streets Plan, July 1985

## **Goals and Objectives for Transportation**

**GOAL I:** The street system should be configured to include arterial, collector, and local streets. Through street connections should be encouraged, while considering the impact on the integrity of existing neighborhoods.

**Objective A:** Ensure that collector-level streets are planned, designed, and constructed in addition to arterials and local streets.

The primary job of arterial streets is to move traffic from one place to another, rather than to provide access to adjoining property. Arterials are generally the responsibility of the State.

Collector streets move traffic from one neighborhood to another, from local streets to arterials, or from one neighborhood to other areas of the community. Predominant travel distances are shorter than on arterial routes and consequently, more moderate speeds are typical. Collectors may provide access to adjacent properties but mobility is typically a more important function. Collectors are typically constructed, owned, and maintained by the local government. Because Alaska communities have been slow to adopt road powers and actively contribute to the development of their street systems, the importance of collector street development has often come too late to inexpensively locate and construct these streets. Homer adopted the 1986 Master Roads and Streets Plan to address the development of Homer's road network.

Local streets and roads are usually built as part of residential development, then transferred to local government ownership. Their primary purpose is to provide access to adjacent land. Local streets provide the lowest level of traffic mobility and serve relatively short distances. They provide access from individual residences to the community street network by connecting to collector-level roads. Through-traffic movement is discouraged.

Identifying future collector street locations is important for a number of reasons. Early location of collector and arterial roads reduces the chance that too much traffic will use residential streets. If subdivisions are developed with minimal land-use controls, what could be called “creeping collectors” may result. For example, an early subdivision is located close to the main road. The streets built for the subdivision are all local streets with driveways opening directly onto the streets, appropriate for serving a single subdivision. Later, a second subdivision is built behind the first. The streets built for the second subdivision are connected to the first subdivision’s streets. As houses are built in the second subdivision, traffic slowly increases on the first subdivision’s streets, and in particular on the streets providing the most direct link to the main road. If the process is allowed to continue with no thought to the location and construction of collector streets, congestion, the fair distribution of road maintenance costs, safety, and other issues arise. It is also much more expensive to establish collector-level streets in a developed area with higher land costs and limited location choices.

Early location of collector and arterial roads minimizes the cost of right-of-way. Establishing future collector routes to serve rural development would allow Homer to plan for, reserve, and over time acquire the right-of-way for the street, so that by the time it is needed, it can be designed and built cost-effectively. It is appropriate for the developers of larger subdivisions to build portions of collectors that border and serve the subdivision.

Early road location minimizes hard feelings. Without locating and designating future collector roads, subdivisions are built and lots occupied before residents know where future main roads will be located. It is far preferable for those who buy land in a development to know, for example, that the western boundary of the development will, at some time in the future, have a collector route built along it, rather than for the property buyers to expect (unrealistically) that the natural area “behind the house” will stay the way it is indefinitely.

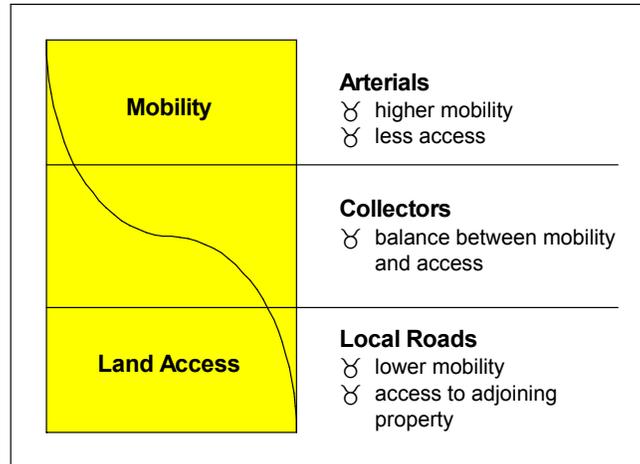
Homer has had some success in building collector routes and critical connections through the Special Assessment District (SAD) process in which residents of an area come together and cost share with the City for necessary improvements. This is one way the City can work with residents to improve Homer’s road system.

### Implementation Strategies

- Update transportation planning documents.



Figure 2: Collector Streets and Local Streets Constructed at the Same Time



Source: Safety Effectiveness of Highway Design Features, Vol. 1 FHWA, 1992

Figure 3: The Mobility-Land Access Relationship

**Objective B:** Roadway development in Homer should focus on establishing key street connections.

The Homer Intersections Planning Study and other plans have noted that there are a very limited number of streets and roads that provide connectivity from one part of Homer to another. For example, Homer only has two routes for getting up the hill: East Hill Road and West Hill Road. Existing roadways and intersections are generally functioning acceptably, but several are expected to be at capacity by 2020. Adding road connections will help avoid the need for additional lanes on existing streets. The Intersections Planning Study and the Town Center Plan have recommended a group of new roadway connections and roadway improvements. The street connections should be reviewed, approved and added to the City’s capital projects priority list.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Address recommendations in transportation plan

**Objective C:** Homer’s street system should operate at acceptable levels of service, delay, and congestion.

Similar to the residents of many small communities, Homer drivers typically experience good levels of service on the community road system. The primary exceptions to this are on Pioneer Avenue and the Sterling Highway. Both can be very busy, with slow average speeds and steady traffic that makes executing left turns onto these roads difficult.

Since it is unlikely that the community will want to expand either the Sterling Highway or Pioneer Avenue to four lanes, serving the growing community adequately will require the simultaneous development considerations. As local streets develop, the collector street network also needs to expand to avoid concentrating all through traffic on the existing arterials.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Support a complete street network

**GOAL 2:** The transportation system, including streets, trails, docks, and airport, should support future community economic and population growth.

**Objective A:** Work in concert with the State of Alaska, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and private landowners to appropriately develop the Homer street system as the community grows.

One of the biggest challenges in recent years, related to State transportation, is the fall in oil revenues and resulting budget cuts. Reduced revenue results in less prompt snow removal, less street sweeping, fewer road repairs, and delayed maintenance and construction projects. The City needs to pay particular attention to funding opportunities and lobbying efforts to ensure Homer road projects progress in a timely manner to serve the transportation needs of the community.

#### Implementation Strategies

- Review and support programs that contribute to serve Homer into the future

**Objective B:** Establish a corridor preservation program.

It is important that Homer ensure that its prospective street system includes collector connections as well as arterials and residential streets. Without the designation of general route locations it will be expensive-to-impossible to build the streets after an area is developed.

A corridor preservation program should identify the location of future roads, so that when a collector-level road is needed to connect subdivisions with highways or other arterials, the right-of-way is in hand or readily available. Without such a program, the cost of acquiring right-of-way can be high for the City. The impact to the residents whose homes and businesses must be relocated or impinged upon is also significant. Locating future collectors and establishing a corridor preservation program should be an important objective of the City's transportation program. It is important to ensure that the corridor management program has a solid foundation. The Transportation Plan designated road connections that will be needed as parcels of private property develop. In the near future, the City will have to take a number of steps to identify and preserve corridors. These steps include the following:

1. Create a variety of options, such as:
  - a. fee simple purchase of land for right-of-way
  - b. require building setbacks from road rights-of-way
  - c. obtain voluntary dedications or donations of right-of-way on a case-by-case basis during the land development process
  - d. other available tools include securing options to purchase, making interim use agreements, land banking, purchase of access rights, and density credits
2. Identify existing roadway easements.
3. Finalize future corridor needs as identified in the Transportation Plan.
4. Field verify recommended corridors to make sure the routes are constructible at a reasonable cost.
5. Select alternative alignments in cases in where recommended or existing (section line) rights-of-way are not feasible.
6. Although not important (or possible, in most cases) to have a precise alignment identified before the road is designed, the designated corridors should indicate corridor needs and identify that the road location will be determined by specific engineering design studies.

7. Working with the Borough and State, reserve as much land in the corridors as possible. Consider the following measures as a basket of tools to be developed, and in some cases, codified as City Ordinances:
  - a. Require subdivision developers to contribute funds toward upgrades on roads that will be more heavily used as a result of their subdivisions.
  - b. Deny requests for waivers by subdivision developers who prefer not to improve roads to City or Borough standards.
  - c. Utilize criteria for right-of-way exactions and a process for determining the amount of right-of-way dedication that is roughly proportionate to the impact of the proposed development.
  - d. Provide a reduction or reprieve from property taxes on property subject to corridor preservation restrictions; e.g., by removing property from the tax roll, reducing the tax rate for preserved land, or providing a tax credit.
  - e. Offer an option for clustering developments by reducing setbacks or other site design requirements to avoid encroachment into the right-of-way.
  - f. Utilize procedures for intergovernmental coordination between the City, the Borough, and Alaska DOT&PF.

#### **Implementation Strategies**

- Identify and support corridor preservation program

**Objective C:** Enhance and protect the Spit’s critical role in regional marine transportation, and improve traffic flow and safety on Homer Spit Road.

The Homer Spit Plan further describes goals and objects for transportation on the Spit.

#### **Implementation Strategies**

- Support efficient provision of transportation routes on the Homer Spit

**Objective D:** Work in concert with the State of Alaska to maintain and improve the Homer Airport.

The Homer Airport is owned and operated by the State Department of Transportation, but the City of Homer owns and operates the terminal building. The airport provides a 6,700-foot long by 150-foot wide asphalt runway and a 3,000 by 600-foot seaplane “runway” and an adjacent seaplane base on Beluga Lake. The airport is equipped with IFR (instrument flight) capability. The city is served by several scheduled and chartered aircraft services.

The Homer Airport Master Plan provides long-range goals for airport improvements. Current priorities include constructing parallel taxiways and expanding the south apron, replacing the rescue and firefighting building, constructing a chemical storage building, and procuring a de-icing truck. Improvements are also being planned for floatplanes on Beluga Lake, such as the recently completed haul out road.

It is in the interest of the City of Homer to support a well maintained and improved airport facility. The airport and related support facilities amount to a vital economic engine that contributes to the local economy. Development decisions near the airport should take into account the externalities that exist with current and future operations.

### Implementation Strategies

- Keep conflicts with airport to a minimum

**GOAL 3:** Homer’s transportation system and services should be developed in a manner that supports community land use, design and social goals.

Homer has expressed a consistent opinion as to how the city should grow and the “look and feel” that residents want for the community. Key desires include a more focused and walkable downtown, a more walkable and bike-able community, and the development of an attractive community that mirrors the natural beauty of Homer’s setting. The community roadway system is an important component of Homer’s development and plays an important role in whether the community’s goals will be realized.

In general, all of the pedestrian improvements noted in other adopted plans and included in this plan will benefit children, the elderly, and citizens with disabilities. Homer remains a desirable location for retirement living. As the population over 65 years of age continues to grow, consideration of the transportation needs of the aging population continues to be important. Without linked sidewalks, trails, crosswalks, and pedestrian ways, it is often difficult for seniors to navigate on foot and often impossible for those with disabilities that require a wheel chair. Additionally, there is a need for community transit type services to serve less mobile populations, such as seniors and residents with disabilities.



**Objective A:** The trail and sidewalk network should provide an alternative to driving, enhanced recreational opportunities, and support auto-free transportation throughout the community.

The 2004 *Homer Non-Motorized Transportation and Trail Plan* provides a comprehensive examination of walkability and bike-ability in Homer. The plan reveals a limited number of comfortable pedestrian routes and public concern over the lack of safe places to walk. A combination of increasing traffic on through-routes, limited sidewalks, and unconnected, low-traffic-volume streets has contributed to the shortage of comfortable pedestrian routes. In a small community, it is reasonable to expect substantial non-motorized travel if the trails and sidewalks are in place to support walkers and bikers. The plan suggests a number of improvements to make Homer more walkable and bike friendly.

### Implementation Strategies

- Encourage alternate transportation

**Objective B:** City street design standards and cross sections should be bicycle and pedestrian friendly, and include provisions for the elderly, citizens with disabilities, and safe walking routes for children.

Street design should follow elements of complete streets. enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists of all ages and abilities. The development of a comprehensive sidewalk and trail system will require that the appropriate facilities be included with the construction of each new street. Important elements include standard designs for sidewalks, trails, street side planting, paving requirements, and the inclusion of traffic calming elements in residential streets.

The Homer Non-Motorized Transportation and Trail Plan (2004) provides sample street cross-section designs with locations for both pedestrian and bicycle facilities. These or similar cross-sections should be adopted as standards for the community core. A second set of cross-sections should be developed for more outlying areas. The primary differences between the two would include the presence of curb and gutter and facilities on both sides of the street in the community core, with facilities on one side of the street and no curb and gutter in the outlying areas. A key element of the maintenance of roadside trails in Alaska pertains to how snow is handled. Sidewalks next to the street only work if snow is plowed to the center of the street. For outlying areas with a trail along the side of the road, a key design element is sufficient trail setback to allow plowing and stockpiling of snow between the road surface and the trail.

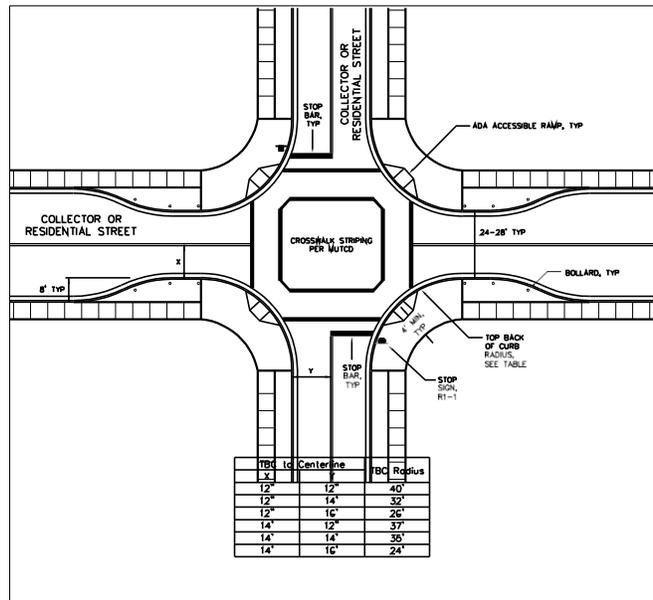


Figure 4: Neckdown or bulb-out (Municipality of Anchorage Traffic Calming Protocol Manual) the

Landscaping improves the attractiveness of streetscape, making both motorized and non-motorized travel more pleasant. Plantings can be combined with specialty sidewalk or street pavements to highlight crosswalks, bulb-outs, and other features. Alaska designs also need to incorporate temporary snow storage and snow removal.

Traffic calming has been successfully used on residential streets to reduce the speed of traffic while not limiting auto access. A feature often used in town centers is the sidewalk bulb-out or neckdown at intersections. Bulb-outs have the combined benefits of slowing traffic somewhat and shortening the distance pedestrians must cover to cross the street. They also provide additional sidewalk space for trees or other plantings.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Support complete street provisions

**Objective C:** Support community transit service to enhance mobility, support compact development, and help achieve social goals including provisions for the elderly, citizens with disabilities, and safe walking routes for children.

There are two aspects of transit in Homer that are worthy of consideration and development. The first is service for community residents who, due to disabilities or other reasons, are not able to provide their own transportation. The second aspect is service for visitors to enhance the connection between central Homer and the Spit.

For community residents with limited mobility, similar operations in other Alaskan communities use



Figure 5: CARTS First Wheelchair Passenger

a combination of vehicles owned by the private-nonprofit agencies and the transit system. On the Kenai Peninsula, Central Area Rural Transit System Inc. (CARTS) provides a ride sharing service, for a fee, to people with reduced mobility or special needs. The advantages of this type of transit organization are that the combining of user groups can result in the vehicle fleet being more efficiently utilized and operations are more productive. Operating costs are low, and these systems have typically been established as demand-responsive small bus or van service rather than the fixed-route bus systems typically found in larger communities.

As of 2016, Homer businesses and nonprofits offer transit to both community residents and visitors.

For summer visitors, a private company offers a popular trolley service between the Spit and downtown. For special populations, the Homer area has two purchase-of-service voucher programs using contracted cab companies. One is for general public rides using public transportation funds through CARTS, the other provides subsidized rides for the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Additionally, the Ninilchik Village Tribe will receive federal funding to initiate public transportation services for community and tribal members in Ninilchik and Kenai Peninsula, in the amount of \$300,000 in FY 2016.

### Implementation Strategies

- Support opportunities for public transportation

## Transportation Implementation Table

Table 8. Chapter 5, Transportation Implementation Table

Project	Timeframe				Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	Ongoing	
<b>Goal 1 – Encourage Street Connections and Maintain Neighborhoods</b>					
<i>1-A-1</i> Update the 1986 Master Roads and Streets Plan.	x				City
<i>1-A-2</i> Update the 2005 Transportation Plan as needed.		x			City
<i>1-B-1</i> Improve Heath Street and Pioneer Avenue Intersection.		x			City AKDOT
<i>1-B-2</i> Construct connections between West Hill Road and Fairview Avenue.			x		City Private
<i>1-B-3</i> Link the disconnected portions of Fairview Ave through central Homer.		x			City
<i>1-B-4</i> Continue to acquire land for the planned east west connection from Bartlett to Lake Street.				x	City
<i>1-C-1</i> Develop a more complete street network including collector connections, rather than two main roads with local streets that feed them, in order to avoid the need for wide, high-volume arterials.				x	City
<b>Goal 2 – Transportation System Should Support Community Growth</b>					
<i>2-A-1</i> Continue to ensure adequate streets are built by private and public sponsors that keep pace with current and support future community development.				x	City
<i>2-A-2</i> Utilize the State of Alaska STIP process and capital budget requests to continue to build, maintain and upgrade State roads within and near the City.				x	City
<i>2-A-3</i> Update the 2005 Transportation Plan to reflect policies that will result in the desired road network.	x				City
<i>2-B</i> Establish a corridor preservation program (see <i>Goal 2, Objective B for steps</i> ).	x				City
<i>2-C-1</i> Enhance the connectivity and infrastructure needed to support deep water dock cargo activities and Main Dock Areas.				x	City
<i>2-C-2</i> Limit number of access points to Homer Spit Road.				x	City AKDOT
<i>2-D-1</i> Consider issues such as noise impacts and safety hazards in the permitting of new housing and development near the airport.				x	City

Project	Timeframe				Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	Ongoing	
2-D-2 During the zoning map amendment process discussed in the Land Use Section, consider the relationship of the airport and surrounding development. Evaluate and amend the map accordingly.	x				City
2-D-3 The City of Homer will participate in planning activities and comment on plans involving the maintenance and improvement of the airport.				x	City
<b>Goal 3 – Develop Transportation System to Further Land Use, Design, and Social Goals</b>					
3-A-1 Build pedestrian/bicycle friendly street networks.				x	City
3-A-2 Implement the Non-Motorized Transportation and Trail Plan. Pages 15-19, 26-31, and 33-36 list specific improvements.				x	City
3-B-1 Develop bicycle and pedestrian-friendly standard street designs and cross-sections.	x				City
3-B-2 Create standards for traffic calming, streetscape design, and landscaping.	x				City
3-B-3 Adopt cross-sections for bike and pedestrian facilities in the downtown core.	x				City
3-B-4 Amend the Site Design and Connections sections of the 1986 Design Criteria Manual for Streets and Drainage to ensure compliance with the site accessibility requirements set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act.	x				City
3-B-5 Consider snow removal and maintenance concerns in design standards.	x			x	City
3-B-6 Include sidewalks and trails as appropriate in the construction of new streets.				x	City
3-B-7 Develop non-motorized transportation routes in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.	x			x	City
3-B-8 Work with parents and school groups to create safe walking routes to schools and after school locations frequented by Homer’s school aged children.	x			x	City
3-C-1 Continue to support enhanced mobility via community transit through private-nonprofit client services.				x	City
3-C-2 Support nonprofit and private sector efforts to continue shuttle bus service from the Spit and providing a loop around downtown Homer.				x	City
3-C-3 Support the establishment of a community transit service.				x	City



## ■ CHAPTER 6 PUBLIC SERVICES & FACILITIES

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*Vision Statement: The City should strive to provide public services and facilities that meet current needs while planning for the future. The City wishes to develop strategies to work with community partners that provide beneficial community services outside of the scope of City government.*

### Overview

Providing adequate, accessible community facilities, services, and infrastructure is a principal function of the City of Homer. Often, government effectiveness is somewhat measured by its ability to plan for and finance these facilities. The City of Homer has been successful in this role with a variety of high quality, well-managed community facilities and services. This chapter outlines actions needed to maintain and improve facilities and services as the city changes.

The City provides public water and sewer services, police, fire protection, and emergency services. It also operates and maintains the port and harbor, public library, parks, animal shelter, airport terminal, and recreation facilities. The Kenai Peninsula Borough and City cooperate to provide education, health care, certain land use planning functions, solid waste disposal, and other human services such as assistance to senior citizens. Homer residents pay city and borough property and sales taxes to help cover the costs of these services and facilities. In addition, Homer has a wide array of community services that are provided and supported by a robust network of nonprofit organizations and community groups.

The first goal in this chapter focuses on actions to provide and improve the services and facilities for which the City is directly responsible. The second goal addresses activities that the City supports. The third goal identifies strategies for the City to work with partners to provide additional community services. Under each goal are objectives which further describe near-term priorities and long-term needs for the described public services and facilities.

This document identifies general goals for future improvements. Final decisions regarding if and when such improvements are made will be determined by the City Council, considering available funding, competing needs, and other factors. The responsibility to achieve the goals in this chapter, particularly the second and third goals, does not solely lie with the City of Homer. As with any community, it is the active participation, support, and motivation of individuals, businesses, non-profits, and other organizations that creates a home for many generations to enjoy.

### Summary of Goals

**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.

**GOAL 2:** Seek collaboration and coordination with other service providers and community partners to ensure important community services are improved upon and made available.

**GOAL 3:** Encourage the broader community to provide community services and facilities by supporting other organizations and entities that want to develop community services.

## Goals and Objectives for Public Services and 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 A: FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES** – Maintain and improve the high level of fire protection and emergency services in Homer to respond to current and anticipated future needs.

### *Current Status*

The Homer Volunteer Fire Department provides fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to the City of Homer and, when necessary, to areas outside of city limits through mutual aid agreements with neighboring fire service areas. The department also reviews new building development to ensure it meets certain emergency access criteria. The Department employs six staff. A volunteer core of approximately 30 individuals supports the department's staff. Staff and volunteers are trained in emergency medical services, structural firefighting, wildland firefighting, marine firefighting, and some specialty rescue services. Fire hydrant coverage extends throughout the majority of city limits. The city has achieved a fire insurance rating (ISO) of 4 in areas within 1,000 feet of the City's fire hydrants, resulting in significant savings in the cost of home insurance. Structures located more than 1,000 feet distant of a fire hydrant have an ISO rating of 4Y. Areas located more than five miles from a fire station are rated at an ISO of 10. The goal is to maintain the current ISO ratings as well as the 35-foot structure height limit until the adoption of regulation for allowance of taller structures that do not negatively affect ISO ratings.

The fire department manages two stations (one is unmanned) in the City of Homer as well as twelve apparatus. Kachemak City contracts annually with Homer for Fire and EMS services.

The majority of calls responded to by the department are for emergency medical services (85 percent). The 2017 adopted budget for the Homer Volunteer Fire Department was \$1,045,426, approximately 5 percent of the City's overall budget.

### *Near-term Priorities*

The fire department's top priority needs relate to facility improvements and adequate staffing. The fire station was built in 1980 and upgraded in 1995 and again in 2017. The 2017 renovation is expected to extend the life of the facility for 10 years. With the existing level of marine activity, there is a need for increased marine fire and rescue capacity. Notably, Homer often provides refuge/safe harbor to ships not normally scheduled to stop in port due to the nature of its location, orientation, and protected waters. Homer's economy is highly seasonal with larger call volume occurring in the summer months. The City funded two seasonal positions in the Department to aid in responding to emergency calls. In 2017, the department hired an Assistant Fire Chief, a long vacant position. As Homer continues to grow and develop, the need for code enforcement capabilities is steadily increasing. Enforcement issues have been a concern for several years. Hiring a plans examiner and Fire Inspector will increase the city's capacity to meet demand. Presently this service is deferred to the State Fire Marshal's Office in Anchorage for commercial structures.

### Implementation Strategies

- Improve facilities
- Evaluate expanding services and capabilities

### *Long-term Needs*

There is a general need for greater capacity to respond to City demands. The timing and magnitude of this need will be driven by population increases within the City. In regard to marine activities, the Homer port is engaged in determining the feasibility of expanding the deep water port which, if implemented, would attract more marine cargo traffic. Firefighting capabilities should be evaluated in correlation with proposed harbor expansion. The fire department, with the assistance of other City agencies, should continue to address and update their emergency plans, such as the Local All-Hazard Mitigation Plan, as new technology and information become available.

### Implementation Strategies

- Evaluate marine firefighting capabilities
- Establish reserves and correlate with equipment replacement schedule
- Increase volunteer base and training opportunities

**Objective B: LAW ENFORCEMENT – Provide ample law enforcement services to meet existing demand and anticipated future demands.**

### *Current Status*

Homer has a full service municipal police department and is responsible for emergency and police dispatch, patrol, criminal investigations, operating the Homer Jail, and animal control.

Police Department staffing includes twelve full time police officers, seven full time dispatchers, and six jail officers. Police officers attend a certified police academy and receive on-going training throughout their careers. Jail officers receive initial training through the state municipal corrections officer program. All officers are state certified. Dispatchers are primarily trained through an intensive in-house training program and then receive advanced training in emergency medical dispatch and other areas. The department has been faced with recruitment problems which follow the national trend of less people being attracted to law enforcement jobs. Retention has improved in recent years. Retention is heavily impacted by wage parity with other agencies. The current vehicle fleet has many vehicles aged beyond any reasonable expectation of service.

The department's boundaries and responsibilities do not extend beyond the city limits. Homer Police officers do have enforcement authority throughout the state. The department has a very good working relationship with the State Troopers and the agencies support each other when necessary. The highest demand on the department is experienced during the summertime due to the large influx of visitors to the Homer area.

The crime rate in Homer is relatively moderate, consisting mostly of traffic offenses, property crimes, and drug and alcohol related activity. In terms of major offenses, 80 percent of crime is related to vandalism and theft. Violent crime is very low. Homer Police officers face a very high caseload per officer. The caseload per officer is currently approximately 30 percent higher than any other agency on the Kenai Peninsula. In addition to criminal investigation, crime solving and general patrol work, officers also enforce city ordinances on a complaint call basis. Ordinance enforcement related to protecting Homer's fragile beach ecosystem has been a matter of significant public concern.

The 2017 budget for the Homer Police Department is \$3,265,539, approximately 14 percent of the City's overall budget.

### *Near-term Priorities*

The public safety radio system is nearing the end of its useful life. Key components of it will no longer be supported by the manufacturer after 2018. It is imperative to begin replacing and updating the system as soon as possible.

There is a strong need to replace the building and grounds utilized by the Homer Police Department. The existing structure was built in the late 1970's. Department operations have outgrown the current building and it has serious personnel safety and health concerns. The existing site is too small to accommodate expansion or reuse. The city formed a Public Safety Building Review Committee in 2016 and made a proposal for a new fire and police combined facility. After voters failed to approve a bond measure for a combined police and fire facility, the council has been working on a fire station renovation and a scaled down version of the original police facility proposal.

### Implementation Strategies

- Maintain authorized positions
- Plan for equipment upgrade/replacement
- Review staffing levels
- Plan for new facility

### *Long-term Needs*

To maintain the delivery of efficient, professional long term public safety services to Homer, the Homer Police Department needs a stable work force supplied with essential tools. These tools include a well-maintained and adequate vehicle fleet, on-going training and professional development, up-to-date radio, computer, investigations and office equipment, and professional management and leadership. Maintaining wage parity with other law enforcement agencies combined with proper equipment and leadership are key factors for retaining workers and providing career stability. Computer and radio equipment age rapidly and quickly become outdated. Obsolete equipment often does not interface properly resulting in increased workloads and sometimes a complete failure in necessary interagency data transfer.

### Implementation Strategies

- Determine action necessary to ensure a stable workforce

**OBJECTIVE C: WATER/SEWER SERVICES** – Continue to provide high-quality water and sewer services, anticipate future demand, and effectively guide Homer's growth with the extension of water and sewer into areas identified in the land use plan.

### *Current Status*

Public water and sewer service for the city of Homer is provided by the City of Homer Department of Public Works. In July 2006, a Water and Sewer Master Plan was completed for the City to provide guidance on future improvements and expansions for each of the utilities. According to the 2006 master plan, approximately 64 percent of the occupied homes in the city were served by the public water system and approximately 54 percent were served by the public sewer system.

Current estimates, based on Kenai Peninsula Borough GIS information, indicate that 74% of occupied homes are served with public piped water and 61% are served with public piped sewer.

### **Water System**

Homer operates a Class A public water system. Water is supplied from a dammed surface water source which forms the 37-acre Bridge Creek Reservoir. This is the City's sole water source; no other groundwater wells or other surface

sources are operated by the City. It is important to note that groundwater in Homer is generally unsuitable for residential and commercial water wells due to low yields, shallow groundwater, lack of a significant freshwater aquifer, and saltwater in wells. The City established the Bridge Creek Watershed Protection District in an effort to preserve and protect the city's drinking water source. Based on current population growth projections and current water usage, the Reservoir has adequate capacity for the foreseeable future.

Seasonal summer population fluctuations and increased summer water needs cause summer demand to nearly double the wintertime water production. Average winter water production (2016) is currently 350,000 gallons per day (0.35 mgd). Peak winter demand is 500,000 gallons per day (.5 mgd). Average summer demand is currently 800,000 gallons per day (0.8 mgd). Summer peak demand (2017) is currently 1,000,000 gallons per day (1.0 mgd). The water treatment plant, built in 2009, has the capacity to produce 2,000,000 gallons per day (2.0 mgd). The plant uses "ultra" filtration to produce high quality drinking water that meets or exceeds EPA drinking water standards. Based on historical population growth rates of 2-3% per year, no new treatment plant capacity will be needed for many years.

Treated water is distributed and stored in three water storage tanks, which have approximately 1,750,000 gallons of operational capacity. An additional tank has been designed and will be built when funding has been identified. These water storage tanks serve as treated water reservoirs for community water demands and fire emergencies.

The water distribution system consists of approximately 53.5 miles of buried pipe. Pipe materials consist of cast iron, ductile iron, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), and high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe. Sizes of pipe range from 4 to 18 inches in diameter. The piping is generally confined to the lower areas of Homer except for two corridors which carry the water down from the treatment plant through low density residential development to the more densely developed areas. Approximately 1,850 customers are served. There are also 413 fire hydrants connected to the city water distribution system.

Homer residents and businesses not on the public water system typically maintain their own wells or pay to have private contractors haul potable city water to a holding tank. Because groundwater sources are often difficult to find with sufficient production and water quality, many property owners not connected to the City's system choose to purchase hauled water. Water from Homer's distribution system is also hauled to many residences outside of Homer city limits. In 2016, bulk water accounted for approximately 13% of the water billed.



**Water Treatment Plant built in 2006**

## Sewer System

Homer operates a deep shaft wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The WWTP is designed to treat 880,000 gallons per day on average (.88mgd), but has the capability for treating 1,400,000 gallons per day (1.4 mgd) peak flow. Homer has an intra-city agreement with Kachemak City to provide sewer service. Currently, the WWTP treats an average winter daily flow of 390,000 gallons per day (610,000 gallons per day average summer flow). However, intense rain storms which contribute to inflow and infiltration can substantially increase flow to the plant. A record of 1.7 million gallons per day has been recorded, but it is rare to see a flow of over 1.2 million gallons per day.



Sewer Treatment Plant (1990)

The wastewater collection system consists of approximately 55.2 miles of buried gravity sewer mains. Pipe materials consist of asbestos concrete, ductile iron, high density polyethylene (HDPE), and polyvinyl chloride (PVC). About half of the system is constructed with asbestos concrete pipe, especially the oldest sections built in the 1970's. Sizes of pipe range from 6 to 24 inches in diameter, with the majority being 8-inch size mains. The sewer system serves a total of 1,450 customers. Additionally, parts of Kachemak City are served by the sewer system.

Homer maintains seven sewage pump stations. Lift stations are used to pump sewage from topographical low points to higher portions of the gravity system. There are approximately 11.6 miles of force main pipe from the lift stations. Force main pipes are constructed from ductile iron or high density polyethylene pipe (HDPE) and range from 3 to 6 inches in diameter.

Those Homer residences and businesses not connected to the public sewer system use on-site wastewater disposal systems. Poor perking soil conditions and a perched groundwater table in Homer are not ideal for on-site systems and many are believed to function poorly.

A study was conducted to better understand the inflow and infiltration contribution to Homer's wastewater plant. Inflow is defined as surface water entering the system from various sources (i.e., building sump pumps, roof leaders, foundation drains, or system manhole lids). Infiltration is defined as groundwater entering the system through manhole/pipe cracks, faulty connections, or other openings. The study found inflow/infiltration to be a significant contributor to the overall wastewater collected. 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.

Because the soils in Homer are silty and relatively impermeable, infiltration is not considered a significant contributor to inflow and infiltration (pipes and manholes are generally buried in impermeable soils). Inflow is considered to be a much more significant factor, the result of perched groundwater table and generally poor drainage conditions. The lack of inspections of new home construction, poor drainage around homes and businesses, lack of enforcement, and the lack of pipe storm drain systems have led to illegal storm drain connections to the sanitary sewer system.

### *Near-term Priorities*

Demand for water will continue to rise as the community grows and as the outlying areas grow, since Homer's water is hauled to residences outside city boundaries. Water conservation measures can help reduce demands on the City's finite supplies and can also reduce demands on the City sewer system and individual septic systems. Extending the water and sewer system to meet future demands will require a careful examination of the costs and benefits and should include consideration of programs that provide for cost sharing. Encouraging infill in areas already served and keeping a reasonable schedule for maintaining current systems will provide increased revenue and long term system-wide cost savings.

### Implementation Strategies

- Support measures that conserve water use
- Reduce inflow
- Consider actions to meet future demands

### *Long-term Priorities*

The sewer system is judged to have adequate capacity to meet projected needs and does not require any major improvements. Continued maintenance of the 30-year-old sewer treatment plant is an ongoing priority.

**Objective D: PORT & HARBOR – Continue to develop the infrastructure and services of the Port and Harbor in order to improve its position as an important regional port and harbor facility.**

### **Current Status**

The City of Homer owns and operates much of the land and associated facilities on the Spit. The Port and Harbor Department manages and maintains the Homer Small Boat Harbor with approximately 1,000 boat stalls, the Pioneer Dock where the US Coast Guard and Alaska State Ferry moor, the commercial Fish Dock which processes over 20 million pounds of commercial fish annually, the Ice Production Plant which produces several thousand tons of ice, the Fish Grinding Facility, and the Deep Water Dock. The department operates as an Enterprise Fund financially supported by user fees.

The Port and Harbor facilities are a critical component to Homer's economy. The Small Boat Harbor is the largest single basin facility in Alaska. Commercial fishing is a large, but often unseen enterprise. Many of the boats that operate out of the Homer port are million dollar businesses; however, their fish is either landed elsewhere or quickly moved out of town. Only a small percentage is processed locally. Sport fishing is also a large economic generator in Homer, playing a key role in tourism activities. A multitude of charter companies are based out of the Small Boat Harbor. The Port and Harbor is engaged in a delicate balancing act of trying to accommodate the needs of many user groups. Land must be maintained for marine related industrial activities which support the fishing industry and freight and shipping activities, while providing space for recreational and tourist activities.

The Port and Harbor employs 18 staff members, both full and part-time, with an annual budget in 2017 of \$4,782,246.

### *Near-term Priorities*

Many of the projects outlined in Homer's Capital Improvement Program 2018-2023 relate to Port and Harbor activities. Two of the top five projects found in the FY 2019 State Legislative Priorities list are Port and Harbor Projects. These two projects are summarized below.

The proposed Homer Port & Harbor: New Large Vessel Moorage Facility would augment the existing harbor which is used beyond capacity and currently has a wait list with over 203 names on it. Boats can be accommodated only by "rafting," tying boats to other boats. In some instances crabbing boats are tied up three deep to the dock. Operating in this manner increases liability for the department and reduces the life of the docks.

The proposed Homer Barge Mooring & Large Vessel Haul Out Repair Facility would provide safe moorage and an associated uplands haul out repair facility for large shallow draft vessels.

### *Long-term Needs*

Many of the Port and Harbor's long-term needs are addressed in the Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan which was adopted in 2011 as a component of the Homer Comprehensive Plan.

### Implementation Strategies

- See the Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan

**Objective E: PARKS & RECREATION** - 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.

### *Current Status*

The City of Homer provides municipal parks and recreation services through two separate departments: the Parks Maintenance Division under Public Works and the Community Recreation under Administration. The Parks division maintains and is responsible for daily operations associated with the City's summer campgrounds, parks, playgrounds, restrooms, and cemetery facilities. The Community Recreation Division is responsible for providing community-based educational and recreational programming for all ages. Through a partnership with the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, Community Recreation is able to utilize the Borough owned fields and facilities located at both the Homer Middle and High Schools. Currently 4.73 FTE's are budgeted for Parks (facilities), and 1 FTE for community recreation (programming). There is also a desire to better coordinate all efforts through a combined Parks and Recreation Department.

Long term, both parks facilities and programming need secure funding. One idea for facilities is to create an endowment fund, where city funds could be leveraged to allow private citizens to donate for the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the City's park system, thereby relieving some pressure from the City for parks. Alternately, the funds could be used as grants to support other organizations in their efforts to provide facilities. The community needs to weigh in on using public funds for private facilities. On the one hand endowment funding will help keep existing partner facilities open, and possibly allow for new facilities, but at the same time public parks need adequate funding as well.

The City's Public Art Program and public beaches fall under the purview of the Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission (*Arts activities are addressed in Chapter 7, Economic Vitality*). The City

has an adopted Beach Policy, which has historically been updated about every seven years, generally in response to new or unresolved ongoing problems. As new challenges and opportunities arise, this document will need to be updated and the city will need to fund any plan implementation strategies.

### *Near-term*

#### Implementation Strategies

- Seek out strategies that enhance facilities and programs

### *Mid-term*

A particular challenge is ensuring residents from all sectors of the community have access to programs and facilities. In addition to providing programs and facilities for which the City is directly responsible (e.g., campground, trails), Homer has a hardworking sector of volunteers, nonprofit recreation organizations, and private businesses that provide recreational activities. The City will need to continue to partner with organizations and businesses for Homer to continue to enjoy the wealth of facilities and programs currently available.

#### Implementation Strategies

- Pursue partners to maintain and expand recreational opportunities

### *Long-term*

In 2015, the City completed the Park, Art Recreation and Culture (PARC) Needs Assessment. The goal of the needs assessment was to determine the resources and prioritize the needs of the community concerning parks, arts, recreation and culture facilities and programs. One desired improvement identified by many Homer residents is a multi-use, year round community facility. The PARC Needs Assessment identifies a range of activities that need indoor recreation and performing arts space, although no one facility would likely accommodate all the desires. The City's role in a community recreation facility includes providing political support for the establishment of the facility and assisting to secure space in an existing building or a site for the proposed facility. It is possible that a public/private partnership is more advantageous to the community, such as a combination hotel and convention center. In the absence of a private or non-profit sector partner, the community will need to identify the priority uses, and thus building design, as one of the first steps. A working example of a successful partnership is the development of the South Peninsula Athletic and Recreation Center (SPARC). This facility relied on many donors (including the city of Homer), a \$1 a year land lease from the borough, and many volunteers hours to get the facility up and running. In the near term, the City can continue to rely on existing facilities and a collaborative approach to host performing arts events, cultural activities, community meetings, conferences, and conventions (*also, see Chapter 7, Economic Vitality*).



Lastly, the City of Homer has adopted a beach policy. As new challenges and opportunities arise, this document will need to be updated and the city will need to fund any plan implementation strategies.

#### Implementation Strategies

- Consider the ability of the city to support a Community Recreation Center
- Implement and review beach policies

**Objective F: STORM WATER CONTROL – Provide for current and future needs and explore options for expanding the quality and extent of storm water control.**

***Current Status***

The majority of Homer’s storm water is channeled and drained through an open ditch system. Only the downtown and Old Town area have storm drain lines, specifically along Pioneer Avenue and Main Street. In total, the City maintains approximately 3 miles of storm sewer and associated catch basins. There is one oil/water separator facility, at the intersection of Bartlett and Pioneer Avenue. The State Department of Transportation maintains drainage along state roadways. Homer’s storm water outflow is located just north of Bishop’s Beach. This outflow has not yet reached the threshold which would require monitoring the quality of discharge under NPDES rules.



A ditch along Kachemak Way near Pioneer Ave.

Currently, drainage needs for large parcel development are dealt with individually, by the developer. Homer’s Design Criteria Manual for subdivisions does not address on-site storm water management. However, in the city’s denser commercial districts, the zoning code does have provisions requiring developers to prepare storm water management plans. In some recent subdivision developments, property has been dedicated for retention ponds and related facilities due to wetland permit requirements from the Army Corp of Engineers. Better storm water management can help reduce the amount of inflow into the sewer treatment plant and reduce peak flows.

***Near-term Priorities***

The City should develop a long-range plan for stormwater drainage to foster appropriate development and meet increasing federal and state water quality standards. The plan should set a strategy for most efficiently meeting city stormwater needs, incorporating on-site infiltration when possible.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Plan and implement additional strategies for addressing stormwater

***Long-term Needs***

Currently significant areas of the city are not served by storm drains. As the amount and intensity of development increases, the percentage of community covered by impervious surfaces will grow and the City will need to develop new, more active stormwater management strategies. Homer’s topography lends itself to drainage issues with highly erodible bluffs and slopes. An effective strategy is to use on-site stormwater infiltration management techniques coupled with limiting development on steep slopes. Under this approach, future subdivisions and other large development projects will retain open space within their boundaries for stormwater collection and infiltration. In addition, development will need to limit impervious areas such as paved driveways and paths to reduce the quantity of runoff and provide more areas for infiltration. Increased reliance on on-site management of stormwater is consistent with the general intent of federal water quality standards, focused on reducing non-point source pollution. Open space areas for stormwater infiltration should become part of Homer’s green infrastructure network and could double as space for recreation, community gardens, and similar amenities.

**Objective G: LIBRARY**– Maintain Homer’s first-class library facility and continuously build on the high-quality library services to meet current and projected needs.

*Current Status*

In the ten years since the new Homer Public Library opened in 2006, use of the facility and library services has increased dramatically. Between 2008 and 2015, circulation of library materials grew by 43%, rising to 142,178 items. The number of people using the library’s study rooms rose 19%, while use of the meeting room increased 35%. Attendance at children’s story times grew by 63%. Fortunately, the library enjoys wide community support, as reflected in the fact that volunteer hours rose as well, by 48%. Since the closure of Homer’s Boys and Girls Club in 2013, the library has seen a significant increase in the number of children using the library after school. Tourists and transient workers use the library heavily during the summer months. Winter, traditionally a slower time at the library, has also seen increased activity in recent years, on par with the summer months.



The library building is approximately 17,000 square feet and houses about 45,800 titles with a capacity for up to 47,000. The library offers 26 public computers with internet access, wireless internet, and cabled connections in study rooms and carrels. The library employs six full-time and three part-time staff. The Friends of Homer Library and numerous other volunteers support library operations.

Resources to support the library come from the City’s general fund, the majority of which is from sales and property tax revenue, a small annual grant from the State of Alaska, and extensive local support from the Friends of Homer Library. The Friends of Homer Library is a nonprofit organization which provides resources for many library programs as well as occasional one-time equipment purchases not provided for in the city budget.

When economies tighten, library use increases because individuals are less able to afford to purchase internet connections, computers, books, and DVDs. More people use library computers to seek employment, higher education, and training. Especially during difficult economic times, the public library plays a crucial role in equalizing access to information, government, jobs, and educational resources.

The facility currently accommodates the existing level of usage with moderate conflicting demands for space or services; however, if current trends continue, the ability to provide the access to information, materials, programming, and workspace requested by the community will be challenged.

The 2018 library budget for the City of Homer is \$891,814, approximately 7.1%, of the City’s overall budget.

*Short-term Priorities*

Technology: The use of computers and other digital devices to access information and reading material continues to expand. The library’s public computers and wireless network are used extensively (49,406 sessions in 2015). The current public-use computers, as well as the video conference equipment, are near the end of their useful life span. A depreciation/replacement reserve fund is crucial to replace this essential equipment as it ages.

Staff: On-going training is essential to keep current on new technologies as they arise in order to implement best practices regarding technology, as well as to assist the public of all ages.

### Implementation Strategies

- Keep current with the demands of new technology

### *Mid and Long-term Priorities*

The library building was intended to provide capacity to serve projected demand for 20 years. With significant increases in library use and demand for services at the ten-year mark, meeting the demand at 20 years may be challenging. Should the demand at the library continue to increase beyond projection, it will be necessary to evaluate options for providing services into the future.

### Implementation Strategies

- Consider the strategies to address the demand for library services

**Objective H: ADMINISTRATION – Provide adequate administrative services and associated facilities to meet current and anticipated future administration demands on the City of Homer.**

### *Current Status*

The City Manager’s office is responsible for overall administration including property, personnel, budget and finance, planning and enforcement of ordinances, as well as implementation of policy directed by the City Council. The offices of the City Manager, City Clerk, Planning, Library, Community Recreation, Information Technology and Personnel comprise the City’s administrative services. The Finance Department is a stand-alone department. The Public Works Department is located separately from the City’s administrative offices; however, it also provides essential administrative functions.

**GOAL 2: Seek collaboration and coordination with other service providers and community partners to ensure important community services are improved upon and made available.**

**Objective A: SOLID WASTE – Reduce waste and lessen the impact on the environment. Establish and maintain a workplace recycling program (*also, see Chapter 8, Energy Plan*).**

The Homer Transfer Facility (HTF) is located at Mile 169.3 Sterling Highway, north of town. It is owned the Borough and operates under private contract. The HTF receives municipal solid waste, construction/demolition, land-clearing waste, wastewater treatment plant sludge from the City of Homer, and recyclables.

The HTF was constructed in 2013 and replaced the Homer Baling Facility (HBF). Refuse collection is taken care of by private business and individual residents who haul their own waste to the landfill. Recycling of a variety of consumables is available in Homer; specifically, newspaper, corrugated cardboard/brown grocery bags, glass, aluminum cans, mixed paper, tin cans, number 1 and 2 plastic, used oil, and batteries. Several local private stores offer recycling drop-off. In addition, some individual facilities such as the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center offer recycling receptacles alongside rubbish bins.

### Implementation Strategies

- Support policies that reduce the amount of trash transferred from Homer

**Objective B: ARTS & CULTURE – Sustain and support Homer’s robust arts and cultural traditions.**

Homer has a tradition of fostering arts and cultural activities. These greatly contribute to quality of life and provide economic benefits to the community (see *Chapter 7, Economic Vitality for specific recommendations*). While the City is not the primary party responsible for continuing and expanding cultural activities, it can be a helpful partner.

Community comments expressed during the process of preparing the 2008 City of Homer Comprehensive Plan showed strong support for supporting arts and cultural opportunities in Homer (see *the PARC Needs Assessment for more current information*).

**Objective C: VISITOR SERVICES – Provide and sustain public services and facilities to serve visitors.**

Out-of-town visitors are a major local economic generator. Many of the facilities and amenities described in this plan reveal reasons for Homer’s rich tourist activity. Visitor attractions such as the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, activities, and events abound in Homer. The Homer Chamber of Commerce offers a Visitor Information Center at 201 Sterling Highway. The City supports the Chamber’s visitor activities with a 2017 contribution of \$51,000 for tourism marketing. On a broad level, the City works to maintain and improve the attractiveness of the community as a visitor destination through land use, infrastructure, and circulation policies; for example by improving the character of downtown and the Spit. These policies are described elsewhere in this plan (see *Chapter 7, Economic Vitality for specific recommendations relating to visitor services*).

**Objective D: HEALTH CARE – Support and encourage health care to provide exceptional cradle to grave services and keep pace with the changing needs of Homer’s community (also, see Chapter 7, Economic Vitality).**

**Current Status**

Homer offers a range of health care service options. Homer has a major hospital facility, South Peninsula Hospital, which is Borough-owned, operated by a nonprofit management board, and part of a borough service area. Homer also has a state funded Public Health Center. This nurse-run facility offers immunizations, health education programs, and infectious disease control, among other services. Seldovia Village Tribe also operates a health care facility. South Peninsula Behavioral Health Services, Inc. is Homer’s primary outpatient and emergency services provider of mental and behavioral health service and support. Homer has seen an increase in medical services that has expanded the opportunity for care and recovery from an increasing range of medical procedures. The Homer City Council has participated in discussions about substance abuse and has recognized the opportunity to address strategies that might assist those addicted or at risk of addiction.



**Implementation Strategies**

- Respond to local demands for service

**Objective E: SENIOR SERVICES** – Keep Homer an attractive place to live for people at all stages of life by providing and supporting public services and facilities to serve the senior population.

*Current Status*

Many features make Homer attractive to this growing segment of the city’s population, including a relatively concentrated downtown with some walkable areas, senior center, library, university, hospital, doctors, and other health care providers. The community has an effective, active nonprofit agency which provides services to Homer’s seniors including assisted living and long-term care.

Implementation Strategies

- Support senior services

**Objective F: YOUTH SERVICES** – Enhance year-round opportunities for youth to be stimulated and engaged in safe, fun, healthy activities.

*Current Status*

*See the PARC Needs Assessment for more information.*

Implementation Strategies

- Support a variety of activities geared toward youth

**Objective G: EDUCATION** – Support high-quality education in Homer and enhance and sustain lifelong learning opportunities.

*Current Status*

The City of Homer partners with the Borough to use school facilities for the Community Recreation programs in which school buildings are used to provide recreational, educational, social, and cultural activities to the entire community after school hours and in the summer. School enrollment for Homer and the entire borough has been declining in recent years, with attendant loss of programs.

The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) provides postsecondary education, continuing education, professional development, and vocational training to Homer residents. The University also provides K-12 and public education programs, workshops and trainings through the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. There is a community consensus that UAA expansion would lead to widespread economic and cultural benefits for the area. Development of student housing will allow the Kenai Peninsula College (KPC) to attract students to Homer, thereby promoting Homer as a “college town.” The Economic Vitality Chapter identifies specific actions to support Homer’s post-secondary educational system.

Homer offers additional educational opportunities to both residents and visitors through various business and nonprofit agencies and has become a popular destination for seminars and learning programs. For instance, many marine related educational programs are offered through the Alaska Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, which is the headquarters for the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies also offers a broad menu of educational programs attracting participants from across the state.

Implementation Strategies

- Support educational opportunities in Homer

**GOAL 3:** Encourage the broader community to provide community services and facilities by supporting other organizations and entities to develop community services.

In many communities there is a disconnect between the services and facilities area residents would like the City to provide and the capacity for providing those programs with current City resources. Homer has the benefit of over 100 nonprofit entities operating within its borders. Supporting their successes and partnering when possible will further improve community services.

**Objective A:** Increase the City’s capacity to provide and expand community services. Improve the synergy between the City and other community partners.

Residents and businesses will continue to have high expectations for the public services and facilities available in the community. To meet the needs and desires of Homer residents, a strong partnership between the City and community partners will help to bring services and projects to the community beyond what the City can achieve on its own. The following actions will strengthen this partnership and expand the capacity to provide services:

**Implementation Strategies**

- Encourage and support shared goals with community groups
- Support existing community organizations and facilities by providing technical assistance and creating incentives

**Public Services and Facilities Implementation Table**

Table 9. Chapter 6, Public Services and Facilities Implementation Table

Project	Timeframe			Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	
<b>Fire &amp; Emergency Services</b>				
<i>I-A-1</i> Construct new building and training facility.		x		City
<i>I-A-2</i> Maintain personnel funding.	x			City
<i>I-A-3</i> Hire Fire Marshal/Code Examiner.	x			City
<i>I-A-4</i> Increase marine fire/emergency response capabilities.		x		City, Port & Harbor merchants & patrons
<i>I-A-5</i> Increase volunteer core to 50 people.		x		City, community volunteers
<i>I-A-6</i> Establish an adequate on-going annual budget for replacing or refurbishing essential equipment.		x		City
<i>I-A-7</i> Evaluate capacity to respond to emergencies associated with possible expansion of harbor or neighboring waters.		x		City
<i>I-A-8</i> Increase training opportunities.	x			Fire Department

Project	Timeframe			Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	
I-A-9 Update Emergency Operations & Hazard Plans.		x		City
<b>Police Department</b>				
I-B-1 Retain and recruit to maintain full staffing levels	x			City
I-B-2 Address retention and recruitment issues, and retain a competitive compensation package.	x			City
I-B-3 Implement a reasonable vehicle replacement plan.	x			City
I-B-4 Hire dedicated Homer Spit Officer for summer months.	x			City
I-B-5 Pursue grants and city funding to upgrade and replace radio system.	x			City
I-B-6 Construct new building.	x			City
I-B-7 Ensure adequate on-going funding.			x	City
I-B-8 Maintain aggressive training program in all divisions.			x	Police Department
I-B-9 Communicate department needs with community leaders.			x	Police Department/Admin.
<b>Water and Sewer</b>				
I-C-1 Institute a community water conservation program and provide incentives.	x			City
I-C-2 Support the installation of low flow plumbing fixtures as well as the encouragement of landscaping using natural vegetation that does not require extensive irrigation.	x			City
I-C-3 Determine and plan for some limited near-term sewer system improvements that include sewer system main repair and rehabilitation for reduction of infiltration.	x			Public Works
I-C-4 Enact an inflow reduction program.	x			Public Works
I-C-5 Replace/rehabilitate failing pipes.	x			Public Works
I-C-6 Identify an additional water source for use in the next 10 to 20 years. An important consideration is that the location of any new source could have implications for land use development in Homer.			x	City
I-C-7 Enact a better cost-share plan for the extension of water and sewer services.		x		City
I-C-8 Construct water and sewer lines to developed properties as demand warrants.			x	City
<b>Port and Harbor (Also, see the Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan)</b>				
I-D-1 Develop large vessel moorage facility.		x		City
I-D-2 Develop barge mooring & large vessel haul out facility.	x			City

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	
<b>Storm Water</b>				
<i>I-F-1</i> Review storm water design criteria.	x			City
<i>I-F-2</i> Develop storm water master plan.	x			City
<i>I-F-2</i> Adopt area wide storm water management standards.	x			City
<i>I-F-3</i> Encourage the utilization of green infrastructure mapping as a means to identify and retain natural drainage channels and important wetlands, which serve drainage functions.	x			City
<i>I-F-4</i> Enhance stream channels with the creation of ponds, wetlands, and different habitats that allow for trail systems, water bird habitat, overflow surface water and storm water collection.	x			City
<i>I-F-5</i> Encourage on-site storm water infiltration management.			x	City
<i>I-F-6</i> Maintain existing systems.	x			Public Works
<i>I-F-7</i> Create public announcements concerning storm water control.	x			City
<b>Library</b>				
<i>I-G-1</i> Create technology fund.	x			City Council, Administration
<i>I-G-2</i> Maintain training schedule.	x			Library administration
<i>I-G-3</i> Continue to report usage and demand for services to the City Council.	x			Library administration/LAB
<i>I-G-4</i> Track demand for space and share information with others providing community meeting spaces.	x			Library administration/LAB
<i>I-G-5</i> Identify and explore funding opportunities for operations.		x		LAB/Friends of the Library
<i>I-G-6</i> Evaluate appropriate levels of service in relation to probable budget scenarios.		x		Library administration/ City Council
<i>I-G-7</i> Keep abreast of and comment on neighborhood developments.			x	Library administration/LAB
<b>Solid Waste</b>				
<i>2-A-1</i> Demonstrate City leadership by encouraging recycling within municipal departments.	x			City
<i>2-A-2</i> Develop or partner with other organizations to create a public education program to encourage recycling within the community.	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

Project	Timeframe			Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	
2-F-3 Encourage efforts to remove barriers to youth participation.	x			City
<b>Education</b>				
2-G-1 Continue to partner and work to support efforts of the Kenai Peninsula School District.	x			City
2-G-2 Monitor state education funding if school enrollment continues to decline.	x			City
2-G-3 Continue active support of the KPC.	x			City
<b>Chapter 3 - Community Capacity</b>				
3-A-1 Continue to work with residents and businesses to better understand community priorities, and to the extent possible, find resources to meet these needs.	x			City
3-A-2 Continue to work with citizen groups and nonprofit organizations that play a large role in providing desired services in Homer.	x			City, Community
3-A-3 Increase the net revenues coming into the city, through managing costs and expanding the community's tax base.	x			City
3-A-4 Improve the ability of the City to provide technical assistance for community organizations seeking to expand their services. Provide information regarding possible sources of funding for community service projects. Express support for specific fund raising efforts by writing letters when requested and through this comprehensive plan.		x		City
3-A-5 Continue to create incentives for other organizations to take a lead in community services by providing small matching grants, limited technical assistance, and the option to use City land or facilities at reduced rates.		x		City
3-A-6 Support the efficient use of existing community facilities. Partner with organizations to keep city facilities operating beyond normal hours.	x			City
3-A-7 Create an environment in which Homer's robust nonprofit community can thrive and respond to needs not met by the City.			x	City
3-A-8 Support the health improvement coalition "Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships" (MAPP).	x			

# CHAPTER 7 ECONOMIC VITALITY

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*Vision Statement: Homer’s economic industries remain strong and show continued growth.*

## Overview

This chapter presents goals and objectives related to economic development. While the private and non-profit sectors, along with state and federal spending, ultimately drives much of the economic activity, local government plays an important role in stimulating and guiding growth through its land use and infrastructure policies and projects.

The 1989 comprehensive plan stated:

*Though it is generally recognized that fishing has been the backbone of the Homer economy for the past forty years, diversification of the Homer economy has taken place, especially in the last few years. Tourism, commercial and government services, retail trade, and a retirement population have been added in [the 1980s]...*

These trends have continued and perhaps accelerated in the years since the 1989 plan. Additionally, as state and federal funding has changed, local and regional governments are bearing increased costs in providing services. Private sector economic health and growth are required to build the tax base if residents want to maintain existing government services and facilities.

Most of the economic development actions presented here are tied to topics addressed in other chapters. For example, recommendations regarding commercial development are included in Chapter 4 – Land Use. As a result, much of the value of this chapter is for those readers who are focused on economic issues and want to see a compilation of plan policies regarding economic development together in a single chapter. In 2011, the city adopted the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS document is a broad document covering many sectors of Homer’s economy.

Homer’s quality of life is a principal economic asset. Maintaining and improving the quality of life in Homer is crucial to keeping existing business and attracting new business and professional activity. Quality of life is challenging to define because it involves many dimensions of a community to which people place varying degrees of importance. The elements of quality of life that are particularly valuable to economic development are those that make the community especially attractive to residents, visitors, and small businesses. While there is room for further improvement, Homer currently possesses many such elements.

### **Homer’s Quality of Life Elements**

- A strikingly beautiful natural setting
- A diverse, engaged, involved community, and rich civic life
- Diverse culture and leisure activities, including ready access to parks and a wide range of year-round outdoor recreation
- Eclectic neighborhoods such as Old Town and Pioneer Ave.
- Access to education and lifelong learning
- A feeling of safety and freedom from crime
- A clean, healthy, natural environment
- An active arts community, tradition of skill and interest in performing and visual arts
- Multiple transportation and access options, a developing trail system, and road access to Anchorage
- Access to commercial and recreational activities in and around Kachemak Bay
- High quality, comprehensive healthcare service

## Summary of Goals

**GOAL 1:** Define and encourage economic development that meets the desires and interests of Homer residents and supports the unique character of the community.

**GOAL 2:** Encourage the retention and creation of more year-round and higher wage employment.

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

**GOAL 4:** Support renewable and non-renewable energy services.

**GOAL 5:** Strengthen Homer as a tourism destination.

**GOAL 6:** Support community efforts to establish affordable housing.

## Goals and Objectives for Economic Vitality

**GOAL 1:** Define and encourage economic development that meets the desires and interests of Homer residents and supports the unique character of the community.

Homer residents would like to foster economic development in its many existing sectors. Education, sustainable tourism, health care, construction, commercial fishing and marine industries, arts, and culture are the industries that Homer has been built upon. These industries are viable and stable today and offer good prospects for growth. The remainder of this chapter looks in more detail at steps to strengthen Homer's economy, and to do so in a manner that provides economic opportunity while sustaining Homer's unique character and high quality of life.

### Implementation Strategies

- Support local businesses with internal and external policies.
- Partner with organizations that have interests in the success of local merchants and products.
- Review and update city economic plans.



**GOAL 2: Encourage the retention and creation of more year-round, higher wage jobs.**

Homer residents desire more year round, living wage jobs. This in turn will help support small businesses, and the tax base.

**Objective A:** Increase year-round employment that will enable local people to work, live, and raise their families in Homer.

While almost all city actions will ultimately affect the course of economic change and job growth, city actions to promote year-round jobs include those listed below:

**Implementation Strategies**

- Consider zoning regulations that support new business opportunities while minimizing negative impacts.
- Evaluate opportunities to create and support public and private infrastructure.
- Encourage science, information infrastructure, and technology-based business development.
- Evaluate regional or other successes for opportunity within Homer.

**Objective B:** Encourage retention of existing and the relocation of new Federal and State Government jobs and training programs to Homer.

Government jobs are an important part of the local and regional economy. Government employment, whether research, visitor or education related, comprises 17.5% of local jobs. (American Community Survey 2014). Some government employment is found in every community, such as local, borough and state jobs related to day-to-day activities (airports, roads, schools, etc.). In addition, Homer has many residents who are employed through state agencies such as state parks, the court system, public health, the university, including the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve, and federal agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, which are headquartered in Homer. The Coast Guard also has a presence in the community. The City of Homer is also known as an important base for marine research and education activities.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Work to retain existing state and federal jobs.
- Promote Homer as a place to expand and attract government operations



Homer: Not just the Halibut Capital of the World

**Objective C: Support efforts to increase the scale and scope of the education industry to support a skilled workforce.**

Education is important to Homer's economic vitality for two reasons. First, it provides residents with the ability to acquire the skills and knowledge ("human capital") needed to succeed in the global economy, and find a local job. To the extent people can acquire these skills and knowledge without leaving home, they can earn higher incomes, create new businesses and jobs for others, keep their education expenditures circulating in the local economy, and provide the skilled workers needed for existing local jobs. Education is also an exportable product if people come to Homer to learn.

University of Alaska provides essential post-secondary and vocational education to Homer residents. The economic impact is broad and significant. Additional educational programs are provided by several nonprofit organizations operating in Homer and across Kachemak Bay. The marine environment and spectacular setting of Homer and Kachemak Bay are significant assets that could lead to growth of the education industry. The implementation strategies below apply not only to Kenai Peninsula College (KPC), but also to any other interested educational institution.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Support development of programs that prepare individuals through workforce development
- Support opportunities for partnerships and collaborative educational programs

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

**Objective A: Recognize emerging industries.**

Homer is a place of big ideas and entrepreneurial spirit. Examples include the fervor with which local agriculture has developed, particularly high tunnel cultivation and commercial peony growing. These are growing local and regional business opportunities. Over time, there will be new economic opportunities that arise; the city should be open to these new ideas and support those that show reasonable opportunities for growth.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Interact with those involved in introducing new industries and services to Homer

**Objective B: Promote the marine trades including mariculture and shipping industries.**

Homer's harbor and associated marine trade and services activities are an important component of the local and regional economy. Marine related activities could be expanded to increase the number of living wage, skilled jobs in the community. Local seafood processing, boat building, and fabrication services offer a chance for a local product to reach the local, state and national markets. Homer's public and private port facilities also serve as a staging area for freight destined to more remote parts of the coast.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Work to identify and support infrastructure for marine related industries

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

Recreation and the arts are key components of the Homer economy and support the tourism industry and Homer's quality of life. Actions to promote the arts include those listed below. Some of these objectives are best carried out by the City, while others are best undertaken by local arts groups and tourism marketing organizations with City cooperation and encouragement.

#### Implementation Strategies

- Consider and review zoning for opportunities that support the arts industry
- Support sustainable recreational facilities and opportunities (*see Objective E of Chapter 6, Public Services and Facilities*)

**Objective D:** Support the health care and wellness industries.

Health care and wellness are a growing sector of Homer's economy. This is partially driven by an aging population, but also by resident's desire for improved health. Over the past decade, South Peninsula Hospital has completed a major expansion, several new dental clinics have been constructed, and the Seldovia Village Tribe constructed both a medical clinic and a wellness center. Specialized medical services such as surgeries, sleep studies, oncology and VA care are also available. As the health care industry continues to change, Homer can expect to see growth in the types of medical services available, and more jobs in this field.

#### Implementation Strategies

- Support allied programs and businesses that strengthen Homer's local health care opportunities

**GOAL 4:** Support regional renewable and non-renewable energy exploration and production.

Homer citizens support researching and pursuing renewable energy projects. Outside of the city, oil and gas exploration continues. Supporting the exploration, extraction, and renewable energy industries does not necessarily have to compromise Homer's scenery or quality of life. There are many opportunities to benefit from the construction, research, and extraction activities, whether through direct employment, or by providing services such as worker housing, catering, fuel, payroll, and transportation to local and non-local contractors who work on site (*also, see Chapter 8, Energy Plan*).

#### Implementation Strategies

- Consider Homer's ability to provide support services

**GOAL 5:** Strengthen Homer as a tourism, business travel, education and recreation event destination.

Homer is already one of Alaska's premier tourist destinations and appears to be enjoying continuing growth in visitation and expenditures. A trend is also emerging to hold professional conferences and educational events in the community in addition to the many athletic, cultural and recreation opportunities. City actions can have a significant impact on the economic importance of the visitor economy by promoting longer stays, increased expenditures per person, and more repeat visitation.

Equally important, City government plays a crucial role in guiding the growth of tourism to maximize its benefits and to minimize the costs imposed on the people of Homer.

**Objective A:** Invest in local infrastructure, parks, and civic improvements that will serve locals well as visitors by promoting longer stays, increased expenditures per person, and more repeat visitation as a form of economic development.

One economic development strategy is to find ways to encourage visitors to stay in the community longer during their visit, or to visit again in the future. The Farmer’s Market in downtown Anchorage is an example; visitors to the market also visit other downtown businesses. Even staying an hour or two longer in the community may result in visitors eating more meals in local restaurants or spending more money shopping. The City benefits through increased sales tax revenue. To keep Homer an attractive destination requires that the City and private business work in partnership to provide the basic services that visitors and locals expect. These improvements and public expenditures should also benefit local taxpayers.

Effort should be made in the future to have more tourists visit downtown Homer to support year round businesses. Seasonally, the Spit will continue to be a huge draw, but investment in tourist amenities should be equally focused on downtown Homer.

#### Implementation Strategies

- Maintain a welcoming environment that serves the needs of visitors

**Objective B:** Support efforts to improve community attractions, including land and water trails, and access to marine activities and the marine environment. Improve links between attractions.

Homer can be considered to have three main tourism destination areas: The downtown and Old Town area, the Spit, and the area across Kachemak Bay. While each of these areas currently attracts numerous visitors, it is likely that more tourists could be accommodated and more spending could be encouraged if the unique attributes of each area were further developed and if better connections were made among the three areas. Ideally, the enhancements that attract more tourists equally benefit local residents as well, resulting in an increase to business activity, tax receipts, and quality of life.

#### Implementation Strategies

- Improve the ability and convenience of travelers to travel throughout Homer

**Objective C:** Increase the net benefits that tourism brings to Homer.

Homer’s distinctive character and attractions create substantial economic benefits to the community in terms of jobs, business opportunities, and tax revenues. Tourism also helps the community host a greater number and diversity of businesses and services than what local spending alone can support. While tourism creates a wide array of benefits, it can also be disruptive to local life. For example, tourism may exacerbate traffic congestion, transform commercial areas from local to visitor-serving, cause crowding at recreation destinations enjoyed by residents, and potentially adversely affect fish, wildlife, and other elements of the natural environment. Community members have expressed a desire to encourage tourism activities that do not require extensive changes to the existing environment, but rather help to conserve Homer’s natural setting and improve the area.

As a result of this mix of positive and potential negative impacts, Homer should pursue a guided tourism growth policy. The community will promote tourism growth, but do so in a manner that helps sustain the qualities of the community that attract residents and visitors.

#### **Implementation Strategies**

- Promote tourist amenities that provide benefits beyond the tourist season
- Review the cost to maintain tourist amenities and minimize the amount of local subsidy
- Promote tourist activities that have the least negative impact to locals
- Promote Homer as a tourist destination

#### **GOAL 6: Support community efforts to establish affordable housing.**

Many residents expressed the view that economic development depends, at least in part, on a balance between income and the cost of living. Strategies to promote a diverse range of housing options are discussed in *Chapter 4, Land Use*. This goal is included as a component of economic vitality to explicitly reflect the connection between housing opportunities and the economic well-being of Homer.

City government has few tools to address the issue of affordable housing. The direct role of the City of Homer is limited by the fact the City is not a housing authority, and city taxation and development fees are relatively low. In recent years, the Economic Development Commission (EDC) has studied Homer's tax policies. The EDC found that the tax credits for housing that the city could institute do not significantly affect the cost of housing. The market demand is for homes that are more expensive, and the high cost of real estate and land development results in very few new 'affordable' housing units. However, the city can support the efforts of other groups in building new affordable housing units, which will free up units on the private rental market.

#### **Implementation Strategies**

- Consider support mechanisms for special population

## Economic Vitality Implementation Table

Table 10. Chapter 7, Economic Vitality Implementation Table

Project	Timeframe			Ongoing	Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term		
<b>Goal 1 - Encourage Economic Development</b>					
1-1 Support Chamber's Buy Local campaign and source city purchases locally when price competitive.				x	Administration
1-2 Continue the local bidders preference in city procurement policies.				x	City Council
1-3 Review and make zoning recommendations that promote local agriculture and other locally sourced products.	x			x	HAPC
1-4 Plan for economic development by partnering with organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce. Retain an active board role with the chamber, and involvement with Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District, Inc. (KPEDD), Homer Marine Trades, non-profits and other similar organizations.				x	Administration
1-5 Review the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Plan.		x			EDC
1-6 Create an action plan from the CEDS plan.	x				Administration, EDC
1-7 Stay abreast of the requirements of information technology infrastructure.				x	HAPC, EDC
<b>Goal 2 - Encourage Year-round Jobs</b>					
2-A-1 Review zoning regulations to ensure new businesses and development are not unduly restricted.				x	HAPC
2-A-2 Continue to invest in community infrastructure and transportation systems (see <i>Chapter 5, Transportation</i> ).				x	City Council, Administration
2-A-3 Identify business needs through business retention program participation.				x	EDC
2-A-4 Stay abreast of the needs of technology-based business and review the ability of the city to support.				x	EDC
2-A-5 Partner with KPEDD to identify options for incentives to encourage local business growth.	x			x	EDC, Administration
2-A-6 Work with KPEDD to identify regional successes.	x			x	EDC, Administration
2-B-1 When local state or federal jobs are being considered for elimination or relocation, lobby to retain them.				x	City Council, Administration

Project	Timeframe			Ongoing	Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term		
2-B-2 Actively work with the Coast Guard to support the retention and expansion of facilities in Homer.	x			x	City Council, Administration
2-B-3 Work with state and federal authorities to promote the expansion of their activities in Homer.				x	City Council, Administration
2-C-1 Keep abreast of KPC program offerings and consider resolutions of support.				x	City Council
2-C-2 Review zoning requirements in regard to student housing opportunities.		x			HAPC
2-C-3 Support collaborative educational programs.				x	City Council
2-C-4 Connect sources of information that contribute to identifying local job training needs.				x	EDC, Administration
<b>Goal 3 – Promote Growing Industries</b>					
3-A-1 Periodically review land use regulation effects upon new business opportunities.				x	HAPC, Planning
3-B-1 Make ice available year round for fish processing, when demand dictates.		x			Port
3-B-2 Continue to evaluate demands and plan to address ways to support the fishing industry.				x	Port and Harbor Commission
3-B-3 Continue efforts to expand the Deep Water Dock and other Harbor infrastructure.	x			x	Administration, Port, City Council
3-B-4 Continue East Boat Harbor expansion studies.				x	Administration, Port, City Council
3-C-1 Review zoning for opportunities that accommodates art studio, art education activities, and residential living ( <i>also, see chapter 4, Land Use</i> ).	x				Planning, HAPC
3-C-2 Investigate options for creating a new, multi-purpose cultural, performing arts and community center in Homer’s town center ( <i>see the Town Center Plan and Park Art Recreation and Culture Needs Assessment</i> ).			x		Administration
3-D-1 Lobby for support of Kenai Peninsula College (KPC) programs supporting the local healthcare industries.				x	City Council
3-D-2 Consider shared marketing opportunities to also include Homer as a healthcare destination.				x	Administration, Chamber of Commerce

Project	Timeframe			Ongoing	Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term		
<b>Goal 4 – Support Energy Exploration and Production</b>					
4-1 Maintain and/or expand industrial zones.				x	Planning Commission
4-2 Support community efforts to remediate brownfield locations via letters and resolutions of support and technical assistance for grant applications.				x	Administration, City Council, other departments as appropriate
4-3 Continue to review zoning options for provisions of renewable energy systems in the City.				x	Planning Commission
4-4 Promote renewable energy development regionally with resolutions of support.				x	City Council
4-5 Review how land use policies may be used to support energy, mining, oil, and gas support services.				x	Planning Commission
<b>Goal 5 – Strengthen Homer as a Destination</b>					
5-A-1 Support and fund beautification efforts on Pioneer Avenue through budget appropriations, CIP, cost sharing and grant applications.				x	City Council, Administration
5-A-2 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, park maintenance, etc.).				x	City Council, Administration, Public Works
5-B-1 Review opportunities to improve shuttle stops (also, see 5-B-3).				x	Public Works, City Council
5-B-2 Design and build a wayfinding system that includes the Spit, Pioneer Ave., and Old Town, consider a local partnership.		x			City of Homer, Chamber of Commerce, community partner
5-B-3 Consider constructing ADA accessible sidewalk improvements and installing benches and trashcans at central shuttle stops, such as the corner of Bunnell and Main.	x				Public Works, City Council
5-C-1 Adequately fund maintenance of public facilities.				x	City Council, Administration, Public Works
5-C-2 When planning new amenities, evaluate projects benefits for both residents and visitors (e.g., trails).				x	City Council, Administration, Public Works
5-C-3 Support eco-tourism concepts and passive or quiet low-impact recreation activities in marketing information.				x	City partnership with Chamber of Commerce

Project	Timeframe			Ongoing	Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term		
5-C-4 When opportunities arise, work with private sector partners to support private sector establishment of conference and convention capabilities.				x	Administration
5-C-5 Review infrastructure capacity for the ability to meet current and future demands.				x	Public works
5-C-6 Recommend and support taxation policies and fee structures that result in revenues from tourism that cover the city's costs in providing services to tourists.	x			x	City Council and City Departments
5-C-7 Support shoulder season activities that are not seasonally dependent as a way to expand the local economy.				x	Public Works, Administration, City Council
5-C-8 Identify, promote and expand, and target visitor markets, including Alaska residents, out-of-state independent travelers, and small group package tour travelers.				x	Chamber of Commerce, KPTMC
5-C-9 Accommodate and encourage events such as the Shorebird Festival and Kachemak Bay Writers' Conference, professional and educational conferences, and sporting tournaments.				x	Administration, City Council, and community partners
<b>Goal 6 – Support Efforts to Establish Affordable Housing</b>					
6-1 Support the efforts of other organizations to provide housing for target populations such as seniors, low income and special needs residents. Write letters or pass resolutions of support.				x	City Council, Administration
6-2 Support senior housing that allows seniors to age within the community, such as assisted living and long term care. Write letters or pass resolutions in of support for grant applications to expand housing.				x	City Council, Administration
6-3 Maintain land use regulations that support cradle to grave housing options for special populations.				x	HAPC



## CHAPTER 8 ENERGY PLAN

*Vision Statement: The City of Homer will be a model for energy conservation, wise use of environmental resources, and supporting renewable energy development.*

### Overview

The City of Homer continues to develop policies that further advance the goal of contributing to a more sustainable environment, seeking to be on the forefront of sustainable thought and action. This energy chapter builds on the Climate Action Plan, adopted in 2007. The goal of the Climate Action Plan is to reduce the threat of global climate change through government and community efforts. Additionally, the City has produced an employee sustainability handbook. “*Money, Energy and Sustainability*” sets operational policies for City staff and is a resource for other organizations pursuing energy conservation. Both documents suggest actions that citizens and government can take to reduce carbon emissions and conserve energy.

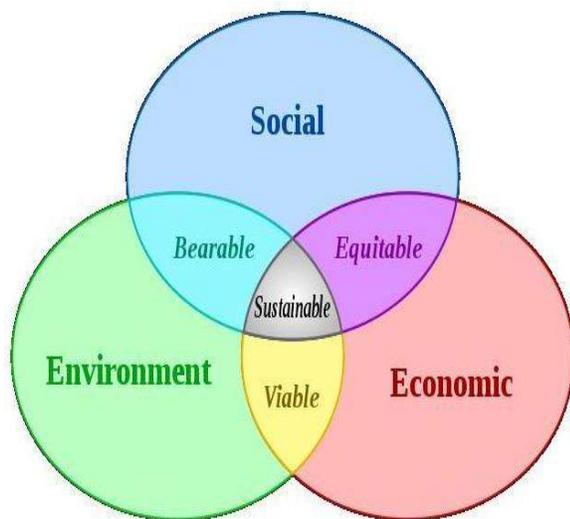


Figure 6. Three Pillars of Sustainability  
Author: Johann Dréo

Access to an affordable, secure supply of energy is necessary for almost every activity of government, business and private life. Energy policies can play a crucial role in the development of a local and regional energy system that can help ensure the long-term economic viability and livability of Homer. Currently, national energy policies are beginning to reflect the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and establish a fair degree of independence from uncertain international energy markets. Locally, policies can facilitate responsible contributions from our community to the global human and natural environment. Progressive energy policies should strive for an energy system that is sustainable, locally and globally. On the local level, some direct benefits of these policies can include job creation and retention of money in the community, as the need to buy energy from sellers outside the region is reduced. In addition, addressing energy use in the transportation sector can improve quality of life by reducing traffic congestion and associated impacts.

The City of Homer has a role in the broader discussion of energy resources and conservation. One major role is to ensure municipal buildings and projects are energy efficient and as sustainable as possible, in a cost efficient manner. A second role includes working with public and private parties to support the use of local renewable resources for power generation. Taking advantage of local renewable energy production is likely to lead to the creation of new jobs. The City can accomplish these and other desired goals by creating and implementing a long-range energy plan.

Several sections of the 2008 Homer Comprehensive Plan discuss energy related policies. The following chapters and goals also relate to this chapter and can be considered as part of the City’s energy policies:

*Chapter 4, Land Use, Goal 1 Objective D, and Goal 3 Objective B*

- Consider the regional and global impacts of development in Homer. Encourage high quality site design and buildings. Implementation actions in this chapter include items such as developing policies for LEED, Sustainable Sites and Low Impact Development (*see Chapter 4, Land Use*).

*Chapter 5, Transportation, Goal 3*

- Homer’s transportation system and services should be developed in a manner that supports community land use, design, environmental, and social goals. The trail and sidewalk network should provide an alternative to driving, enhanced recreational opportunities, and auto-free connectivity throughout the community (*see Chapter 5, Transportation*).

*Chapter 6, Public Service and 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 demand. (*see Chapter 6, Public Services and Facilities*).

*Chapter 7, Economic Vitality, Goal 7*

- Support regional renewable and non-renewable energy exploration and production. Implementation items include encouraging renewable energy development locally and regionally and supporting efforts to supply local energy needs with natural gas. (*see Chapter 7, Economic Vitality*).

## **Summary of Goals**

**GOAL 1:** The City of Homer will be a community leader in implementing policies that promote energy efficiencies.

**GOAL 2:** The City of Homer will be a responsible steward of consumable resources.

**GOAL 3:** The City of Homer will play an active role in influencing regional policies that promote the research, development, and use of sustainable energy alternatives.

## Goals and Objectives for Energy Planning

**GOAL I:** The City of Homer will be a community leader in implementing policies that promote energy efficiencies.

**Objective A:** City of Homer operations will save taxpayer money and set an example by adopting cost effective energy saving technologies and operating procedures.

### Implementation Strategies

- Continue to monitor energy and water use
- Support the Climate Action Plan

**Objective B:** Encourage energy efficiency in building construction and for the life of the building.

Buildings use a lot of energy over their lifecycle, and construction is a very energy and material intense activity. Building and construction design can minimize construction waste and maximize energy efficiency (*also, see Chapter 4, Land Use as referenced above*).

### Implementation Strategies

- Consider the use of energy over the life of facilities

**Objective C:** Consider the full costs, direct and indirect, of energy use when performing economic analyses.

The real environmental and social costs of fossil fuels are not reflected in consumer prices. Consumers pay the cost of energy production and transportation, but not directly for air pollution, health problems, or other environmental or social effects of burning fossil fuels. “True or full cost accounting” is a term used to describe how a dollar value can be attributed to these indirect costs. Wise energy production and use requires these external costs to be internalized in energy prices. Paying the true cost will increase energy prices, but also will encourage energy conservation and energy production from renewable sources. Presumably when the full cost of fossil fuels are reflected in consumer prices, renewable energy will be cost competitive.

### Implementation Strategies

- Be mindful of the impact of indirect costs reflected in city projects and facilities

**GOAL 2: The City of Homer will be a responsible steward of consumable resources.**

Minimizing solid waste is in the long-term interest of the community. The former local landfill is now the Homer Transfer Facility, and solid waste is trucked to the Central Peninsula Landfill south of Soldotna. Reducing garbage in the land fill will stretch the life of existing facilities and postpone the expensive process of constructing new disposal sites. The three R's - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle - are the pillars of solid waste reduction. There reuse of materials and using less material (reducing) are especially important. Effective solid waste reduction requires coordination between the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The City should work with the Kenai Peninsula Borough and private entities to take advantage of recycling and waste reduction opportunities.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Support and implement plans that reduce, reuse, and recycle consumables
- Develop a solid waste and recycling plan for municipal facilities and operations
- Develop procurement policies to reduce resource and energy consumption “upstream” (*see the City of Homer employee policy guide “Money, Energy and Sustainability”*)
- Support efforts to increase community recycling and waste reduction

**GOAL 3: The City of Homer will play an active role in influencing regional policies that promote the research, development, and use of sustainable energy alternatives.**

**Objective A:** Express support for energy planning with emphasis on long term sustainability and affordability.

**Energy Planning**

The energy industry is changing rapidly as renewable energy sources are found and new technologies emerge. Federal and State funding sources may become available for renewable energy projects and/or energy efficiency planning and implementation. Homer should examine these funding opportunities and emerging technologies for potential use in the community. Recent examples include investigating tidal energy opportunities in Kachemak Bay and capturing energy in the gradients of Homer’s water system.

A sound energy policy has several basic principles. There must be an understanding of the energy source, the financial and environmental implications of utilizing that source, and where and how the energy is used. Homer should analyze the energy systems supplying the community, potential renewable energy resources, and emerging technologies. The end goal is long term, affordable, and sustainable energy supplies.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Monitor local and region energy policies
- Support sustainable energy projects

**Objective B: Support renewable-energy research and development.**

Homer’s proximity to hydroelectric generation and potential ocean energy resources presents an opportunity to guide future energy consumption toward renewable energy sources and away from the negative economic and environmental impacts associated with fossil fuel consumption. Least-cost planning, where energy conservation investment is weighed against energy purchase investment, with life-cycle costs factored in, can provide a framework for cost-effective, responsible energy planning and conservation.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Encourage and support opportunities for research and development of renewable-energy

**Objective C: Encourage industrial and commercial users to be energy efficient.**

Industries with large amounts of fuel or energy by-products (e.g. wood waste or steam), may be able to generate electricity to add to the utility grid. The design and operation of industrial developments can be managed to reduce or transfer this otherwise wasted energy and also to maximize use of renewable energy. This can increase overall community energy efficiency.

**Implementation Strategies**

- Maximize the use of renewable and minimize energy waste

**Energy Plan Implementation Table**

Table 11. Chapter 8, Energy Plan Implementation Table

Project	Timeframe				Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	Ongoing	
<b>Goal 1 – Promote Community Energy Efficiencies</b>					
<i>I-A-1</i> Implement the Climate Action Plan and strategies to grow and maintain the Revolving Energy Fund.	x			x	City
<i>I-A-2</i> Continue to maintain and utilize Revolving Energy Fund.	x			x	City
<i>I-A-3</i> Continue to monitor, evaluate, and report energy use in city facilities.	x			x	Public Works
<i>I-A-4</i> Conduct a performance audit of water and wastewater facilities.		x			Public Works
<i>I-A-5</i> Continue to review energy audit items for implementation.	x			x	City
<i>I-A-6</i> Evaluate renewable energy opportunity for all major capital projects.	x			x	City
<i>I-A-7</i> Monitor water use trends in city facilities that might indicate overuse or leaks.	x			x	City

Project	Timeframe				Primary Duty
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	Ongoing	
<i>1-B-1</i> Require the calculation of full life cycle costs in economic and energy analysis of city projects.	x			x	City
<i>1-B-2</i> Analyze LEED or similar principles in design of public structures of facilities at bid.				x	
<i>1-C-1</i> Consider direct and indirect costs when performing economic analysis of city projects.				x	
<i>1-C-2</i> Quantify external and indirect costs for energy when conducting lifecycle costs.				x	
<b>Goal 2 – Stewardship of Consumable Resources</b>					
<i>2-1</i> Assign city staff to create a solid waste and recycling plan for City operations.	x				City
<i>2-2</i> Continue to support environmentally friendly procurement policies through the Sustainability Guidebook.	x			x	City
<i>2-3</i> Encourage and advertise recycling activities through newsletters and billings.	x			x	City
<b>Goal 3 – Influence Regional Policies that Promote Sustainable Energy Alternatives</b>					
<i>3-A-1</i> Form relationship with regional stakeholders in energy policies.		x			City
<i>3-A-2</i> Assign staff to work with regional entities regarding energy resource development.	x			x	City
<i>3-A-3</i> Report to City Council with information regarding local and regional long range energy plans.				x	City
<i>3-B-1</i> Draft resolutions of support that encourage renewable, by-product, and co-generated energy projects.	x				City
<i>3-B-2</i> Investigate in-kind or funding partnerships to encourage renewable energy projects.				x	City
<i>3-B-3</i> Consider periodic review of code for accommodation of existing and emerging renewable energy technology.		x		x	City
<i>3-C-1 2</i> Review zoning code for accommodation of renewables.				x	City

# ■ Appendix A – Land Use Recommendations

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## **Appendix A**

### **Land Use Designation Categories**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Homer's existing set of land uses and built environment offers much to be commended and retained. Two qualities in particular stand out as strengths:

##### **Mix of uses**

Homer has a freewheeling, organic character. In many parts of town, land uses – residential, office, retail, storage, industrial, and open space – are freely mixed. This style breaks common rules of traditional planning, but in most instances the result is attractive and functional. This eclectic mix of uses fits together with little or no conflicts, and helps create Homer's unique, well-liked character.

##### **1. Building appearance**

Homer has an organic building aesthetic where the majority of buildings “fit.” Many are actually quite attractive, while relatively few stand out as offensive or out-of-place.

##### **2. Development aesthetic**

Homer has a widespread site development aesthetic that is also quite attractive. Many commercial lots in Homer feature hand-crafted informal signage, natural landscaping, and a comfortable, natural fit with the land. This contrasts with the buildings and parking areas in many Alaskan communities (e.g., Wasilla) where development is rarely pleasing to the eye.

In many instances these qualities exist in spite of, or possibly out of, compliance with the City's zoning rules. In light of these realities, the function of an updated zoning code for the City of Homer should be to strengthen and institutionalize the styles and patterns most builders and developers are already following. Care needs to be taken that simplistic zoning rules don't damage the more, unique home-grown qualities that give Homer its special character. At the same time, odds are good that future developers may not know the “unwritten rules” that have made past development generally attractive.

For these reasons and to implement comprehensive plan policies, Homer needs to upgrade and revise its existing zoning code. As part of this comprehensive plan, a “land use designation map” has been prepared identifying intended land uses, working from the existing zoning map. This product is not as detailed or specific as a zoning map, but does express the general land use strategies of the comprehensive plan. This map is a starting point in the process of amending the zoning code to refine and implement these general policies. A particular focus of this land use designation map is to use mixed use zoning practices that focus more on offsite impacts and building forms and less on controls on the specific type of use. This approach provides necessary guidance while still preserving the unique and functional character of the community.

Between the adoption of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and the 2018 plan, several parts of the community were rezoned, zoning district text was amended, and the East End Mixed Use district created. The following descriptions of land uses are split into two parts: proposed new zoning districts, and existing zoning districts. The Land Use Recommendations Map depicts the areas of the community where the proposed new districts could be implemented. A map of the existing zoning districts, as of the draft of this plan, can be found in Appendix C, Background Land Use Information.

## NEW LAND USE CATEGORIES

### RT (RESIDENTIAL TRANSITIONAL)

- **Intent** The R-2 district is intended to provide a transitional residential zone between higher and lower density residential or residential office developments with a focus on residential land uses. Densities in this area will be in between the lower density rural residential zone (R-3) and the more urban, higher density uses in the R-1 district.
- **Primary Use** Medium-density residential including single-family and duplex; provide for a scale, density, and character of residential development appropriate for locations between urban and rural residential areas.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
  - Areas generally served by water and sewer or likely to be served in the future; full city services.
  - Moderate lot size minimums (for example, 10,000 square foot lots for single family homes).
  - Allows second units and duplexes by right (both subject to standards).
  - Allows bed-and-breakfasts by right; other small scale accommodations<sup>1</sup> allowed with administrative review. (For purposes of this plan a B&B defined as lodging where owner proprietor resides on site – see footnote for details.)
  - Allows home-based businesses by right (subject to standards); allows some larger non-retail business activities subject to administrative review.
- **Development standards**
  - Encourage retention of quasi-rural character.
  - Encourage attractive diverse housing types (vs. “cookie-cutter” subdivisions).
  - Encourage open space subdivisions as alternative to more typical lot layouts.

### DT (DOWNTOWN MIXED USE)

- **Intent** The intent of the DT district is to provide a mixed use business district in the core area of Homer, with safe, pleasant, and attractive circulation for pedestrians and vehicles.
- **Primary Use** Provide a concentrated, centrally located district in the center of Homer for a mixture of urban uses, including general retail shopping, personal and professional services, educational institutions, entertainment establishments, restaurants and related businesses, civic uses, recreation and residential uses. Create high quality public spaces (sidewalks, trails, gathering areas) and encourage pedestrian movement throughout the area; allow for a mixture of residential and commercial uses with conflicts resolved in favor of commercial uses.
- **Other Uses, Allowances and Specifications**
  - Areas served by public water and sewer, full range of other urban services
  - Allow and encourage densities typical of small town, “main street” settings (sufficient concentration of uses to encourage circulation by foot).
  - Residential densities – multi-family dwellings; for example, up to 6 units per acre allowed by right; up to 14 units per acre with administrative review.

- Minimal building setbacks to create a friendly, pedestrian-oriented streetscape.
- Encourage parking off-site (e.g., allowing payment of a fee in lieu of meeting on-site parking standards, through shared parking arrangements, through reducing on-site requirements by providing public parking and protected pedestrian ways).
- **Development standards include:**
  - Create an attractive, pedestrian-oriented environment (e.g., windows and doors that are close to the street, landscaped parking, standards to humanize buildings such as clearly articulated entries).
  - Advisory guidelines re design character, so buildings and other structures within the district are compatible with one another and with the surrounding area.
  - Consider establishing an overlay zone for Old Town so buildings in that portion of the district feature an “Old Homer” historical character.
  - Consider establishing a University district.

## MEDICAL DISTRICT

- **Intent** Acknowledge demand for medical services will increase with a larger, aging population. Enact zoning regulations that allow medical services to expand with the growing need for life long medical care, in a localized area near the hospital.
  - Work with area residents and business owners to identify desirable neighborhood character and appropriate performance standards such as building bulk and scale, density, signage, lighting and parking lot development.
  - Other issues may be identified and addressed through the zoning process.

## EXISTING LAND USE CATEGORIES

### RESIDENTIAL

#### UR (URBAN RESIDENTIAL)

- **Intent** The R-1 district is intended to provide more intense residential development in the city core, in a manner that matches Homer’s small town character and encourages increased densities near pedestrian-oriented commercial areas.
- **Primary Use** Medium and medium-high density residential including single-family, duplex, and multiple-family; allow for a variety in housing types and housing price levels.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
  - Areas generally served by water and sewer; central locations with excellent access to a range of urban services and facilities.
  - Residential is primary use; but allows for other uses where these uses maintain residential character.
  - Moderate lot size minimums (for example, 6000 square foot lots for single family homes).
  - Allows bed and breakfasts by right, allows second units and duplexes by right (both subject to standards). (For purposes of this plan, a B&B is defined as lodging where owner proprietor resides on site.)

- Allows home-based businesses by right (subject to standards).
- **Development standards**
  - Encourage attractive, diverse housing types (vs. “cookie-cutter” subdivisions).
  - Ensure newer housing is compatible with character of older neighborhoods (for example, by requiring transitional densities, buffer uses).

## RR (RURAL RESIDENTIAL)

- **Intent** The R-3 district is intended to provide areas for low density residential development and limited agricultural pursuits.
- **Primary Use** Low-density residential development in outlying locations, generally with less services and/or lower level of service than in urban areas.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
  - Areas generally not served by water and sewer, nor likely to be served in the near future.
  - Larger lot sizes or cluster subdivisions to preserve sense of open space.
  - Allows accessory housing units by right (subject to standards).
  - Allows bed and breakfasts by right, subject to standards (for purposes of this plan B&B defined as lodging where owner proprietor resides on site)
  - Allows home-based businesses by right, subject to standards; allows some larger non-retail business activities subject to administrative review.
- **Development standards**
  - Option for higher densities and cluster development. Encourage open space subdivisions as alternative to more typical lot layouts.
  - Ensure newer housing is compatible with character of older neighborhoods.

## COMMERCIAL AND MIXED USE

### CBD (CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT)

- **Intent** The intent of the CBD commercial district is to provide a mixed use business district in the core area of Homer, with greater allowance for vehicular use than in the Downtown district, but still with a character that encourages pedestrian use.
- **Primary Use** Provide a centrally located area within the City for a mixture of urban uses and activities, including general retail shopping, personal and professional services, educational institutions, entertainment establishments, restaurants and related businesses, civic uses, recreation, and residential uses. Allow a mixture of residential and commercial uses but conflicts resolved in favor of business.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
  - Areas served by public water and sewer, full range of other urban services
  - Allow and encourage relatively high densities (sufficient concentration of uses to encourage circulation by foot).
  - On-site parking required (option for shared parking with an approved parking plan).

- Residential densities – for example, multi-family up to 6 units per acre - allowed by right
- **Development standards include:**
  - Create an attractive, pedestrian-oriented environment (e.g., landscaped parking, standards to humanize buildings such as clearly articulated entries).
  - Advisory guidelines regarding design character, so buildings and other structures within the district are compatible with one another and with the surrounding area.
  - Control signage to maintain visual quality (for example, avoid large, highly illuminated signs).

#### RO (RESIDENTIAL OFFICE)

- **Intent** The intent of the RO district is to allow for a range of residential and residential compatible uses. While allowing office, certain commercial and other business uses, buildings and sites must have a scale and character similar to single family detached or small multi-family homes. This district serves as a transition zone between commercial and residential neighborhoods.
- **Primary Use** Provide a mix of low-density to medium-density residential uses with certain specified businesses and offices which may include professional services, administrative services and/or personal services, but does not include direct retail or wholesale transactions except for sales which are incidental to the provision of services.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
  - Areas served by public water and sewer, full range of other urban services, close to other urban services.
  - Moderate lot size minimums (for example, 7500 square feet); allows for attached housing.
  - Guide use to create/maintain an attractive highway environment
- **Design and development standard**
  - Required (not advisory) standards to maintain residential character/residential scale of buildings (e.g., height, setbacks, parking location, signage).
  - Advisory design guidelines regarding building style (e.g., use of materials, architectural style).
  - Allow for limited commercial signage, consistent with overall goal of retaining a largely residential character.

#### G-MU (Gateway Mixed Use)

- **Intent** The intent of the G-MU district is to provide land uses that primarily cater to the tourism and visitor industry of Homer and to promote year round activity. The gateway district serves as the primary roadway entry into Homer. It will provide an attractive built environment and promote those uses that will not compete with the DT, CBD and GC districts.
- **Primary Use** Promote mixed-use development, with emphasis on the visitor industry. Serve needs and interests of the visitor industry, as well as year-round residents and Homer's role as the Gateway to Kachemak Bay (not to conflict w/CBD). Minimize future

- traffic congestion along the Sterling Highway corridor and preserve the experience residents and visitors have when entering Homer by way of the Sterling Highway.
- Commercial uses are primary objective; focus on “Gateway” appropriate businesses such as visitor amenities, hotels – no gas stations, fast-food, strip development.
  - **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
    - Areas served by public water and sewer, full range of other urban services.
    - Allow and encourage relatively high densities (sufficient concentration of uses to encourage circulation by foot).
    - Residential densities – for example, multi-family up to 6 units per acre - allowed by right; higher densities with administrative review or use dimensional standards like CBD above.
  - **Development standards**
    - Advisory guidelines re “Gateway” design character.
    - Encourage parking behind buildings (through appropriate set-back rules).
    - Design standards that create an entry point the community can be proud of - attractive, pedestrian-oriented to a degree (e.g., landscaped parking).
    - Control signage to maintain visual quality (for example, avoid large, highly illuminated signs).

#### E-MU (EAST END MIXED USE)

- **Intent** The intent of the E-MU district is to allow a wide variety of commercial, industrial, and heavy industrial uses in a district with access to the boatyard, marine services, and the airport; and to ensure such uses, which are important to Homer’s economy, continue to have a viable location.
- **Primary Use** Mixed-use development with fewer constraints on uses than existing GC-1 and GC-2. Designed to accommodate the wide range of uses found in the area today, as well as other future uses; examples include industrial, marine-oriented, construction services (including batch plants), storage, and artist workshops. Residential and retail are allowable, but residential/retail and commercial conflicts will be resolved in favor of commercial/industrial uses.
- **Other Uses, Allowances and Specifications**
  - Allows for mixed use, live/work, provides larger lots than would be available in CBD.
  - On-site parking required.
  - Guide use to create/maintain an attractive highway environment.
- **Development standards**
  - Minimal – basic guidelines for parking, setbacks.
  - Encourage basic landscaping.
  - Properties adjacent to the Conservation zone should use best management practices when developing near the southern edge of the property. Strategies may include, but are not limited to, 100 foot buffer zones along the southern property lines adjacent to the conservation areas, tree retention (bird habitat, moose cover), habitat and vegetation retention, and storm water and pollution management techniques. Developers are encouraged to use a combination of techniques to minimize impacts

within 100 feet of the south property line and to provide for storm water filtration. Development is encouraged to concentrate on the northern portions of these lots.

#### GC-1 (GENERAL COMMERCIAL 1)

- **Intent** The intent of the GC-1 district is to provide for auto-oriented business.
- **Primary Use** Provide for a diverse array of commercial, retail, and civic uses; commercial uses are primary objective. Applied in locations where the auto is primary means of access.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
  - Areas served by public water and sewer, full range of other urban services.
  - Residential densities – for example, residential uses up to 6 units per acre allowed by right; higher densities with administrative review or use dimensional standards like CBD above.
  - On-site parking required (option for shared parking with an approved parking plan).
  - Guide use to create/maintain an attractive highway environment.
- **Development standards include:**
  - Control signage to maintain visual quality (for example, avoid large, highly illuminated signs).
  - Provide for safe pedestrian circulation.

#### GC-2 (GENERAL COMMERCIAL-2)

- **Intent** The intent of the GC-2 district is to locate commercial and industrial uses where access to transportation infrastructure is a primary consideration. This district will also serve as a reserve to allow for future commercial and industrial expansion.
- **Primary Use** Promote a sound heavy commercial area within the community with good access to main roads, and reserve land for future industrial expansion. Designed to permit manufacturing, processing, assembly, packaging, or treatment of products within enclosed utilities and facilities required to serve these uses. Residential uses permitted, recognizing the primacy of light industrial and commercial activities. Residential uses limited; certain retail enterprises limited. Performance standards for heavy commercial uses, especially where the district abuts other zoning districts. Allows for heavier commercial uses – manufacturing, processing, packaging, and support of airport activities / needs.
- **Other Uses, Allowances, and Specifications**
  - Accessible by vehicle/direct access.
  - Allows for mixed use, live/work, provides larger lots than would be available in CBD
  - On-site parking required.
- **Development standards include:**
  - Minimal – basic guidelines for parking, minimal setbacks
  - Encourage basic landscaping, screening

#### MC (MARINE COMMERCIAL) (See also 2011 Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan)

Provide adequate space for the commercial needs which service and support water-dependent industries and facilities; encourage adequate separation between allied but potentially incompatible commercial and industrial uses while providing proximate locations for the mutual benefit of such

water-oriented commercial and water dependent industrial uses. Commercial enterprise permitted to the extent that it services and supports the water-dependent industries which are important to Homer's economic base (e.g., fishing, marine transportation, off-shore energy development, recreation, and tourism) and to the extent that location elsewhere creates unnecessary hardship for the users of such commercial services. Performance standards are required to minimize the impact of commercial development on the natural features on which it depends.

MI (MARINE INDUSTRIAL) (See also 2011 Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan)

Provide adequate space for those industrial uses that require direct marine access for their operation and to encourage the most efficient utilization of land. Promote marine-dependent industries important to Homer's economic base (e.g., fishing, fish processing, marine transportation, off-shore oil development, and tourism); give priority to those uses, and minimize conflicts among industrial, commercial and recreational uses.

OSR (OPEN SPACE—RECREATIONAL)

Promote public recreational opportunities while protecting natural and scenic resources. Give priority to pedestrian uses over motor vehicles uses and preserve public access to the tidelands. All development proposals in the district will be evaluated in terms of their compatibility with natural hazard and erosion potential and their effect on scenic vistas and public access.

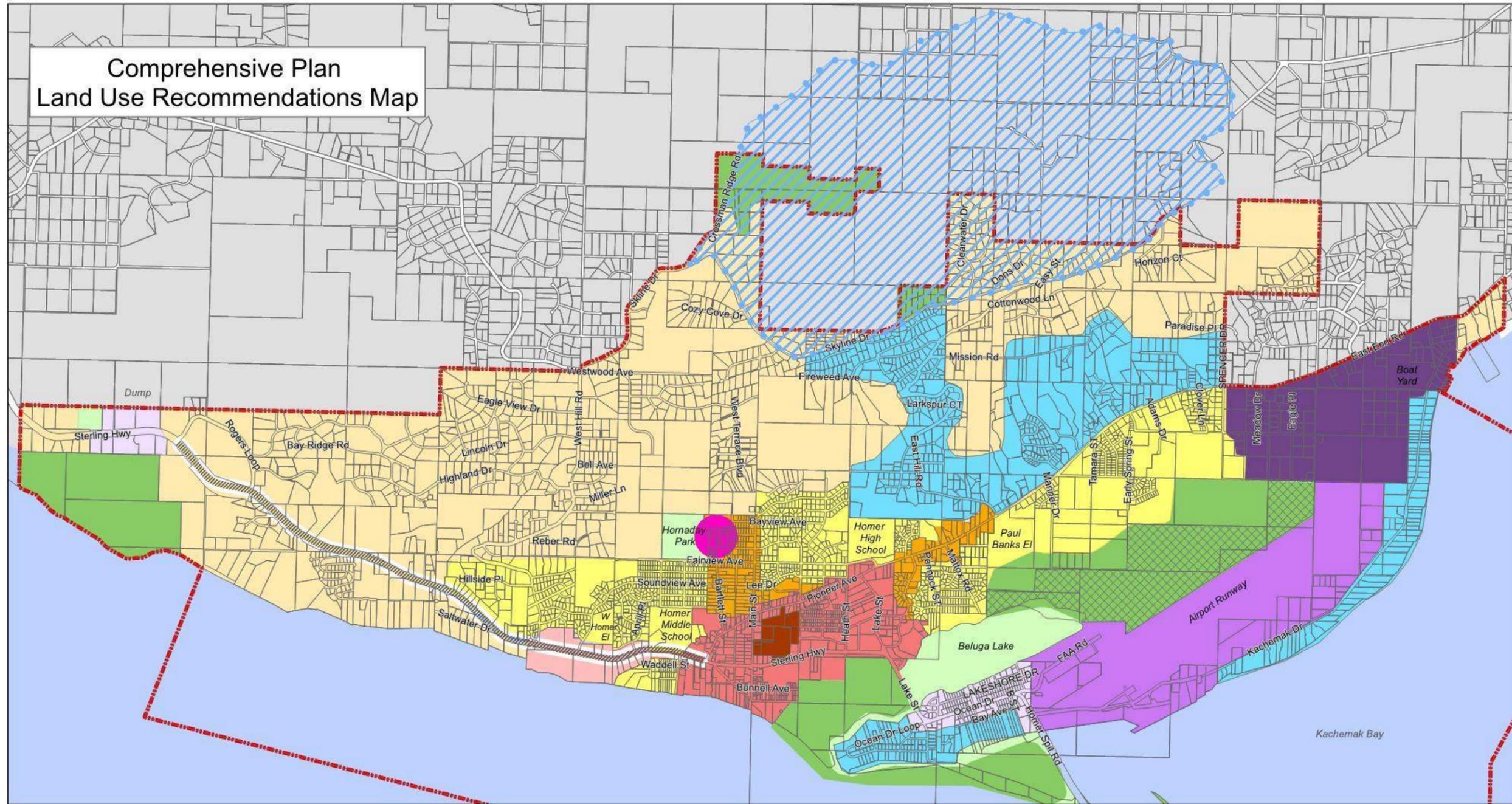
CO (CONSERVATION)

- **Intent** The conservation district is applied to sensitive public and in some instances private lands that are critical to the maintenance of fish and wildlife resources, serves important watershed protection areas, or serves other key environmental functions. These lands are to be maintained in an undisturbed and natural state, except for enhancement projects. Private landowners may agree to have this designation on their property. The Green Infrastructure map discussed is an important reference in identifying conservation areas.
- **Primary Use** Acceptable uses in this district include undeveloped open space, parks with passive recreation activities and facilities (e.g., wildlife viewing, nature walks, educational and interpretive uses) and other uses that do not change the character of the land or disrupt fish and wildlife. Passive recreation activities are secondary to habitat protection and enhancement. Private landowners may agree to have this designation on their property.
- **Development standards include:**
  - Where applied to private lands, specific development strategies and standards are needed to balance the interests of private land owners with the need for protection of functionally valuable, sensitive natural areas.
  - Consider requiring a 100 foot habitat buffer on all lands bordering the airport area conservation zone, as discussed under the East End Mixed Use zone.

BCWP (BRIDGE CREEK WATERSHED PROTECTION DISTRICT)

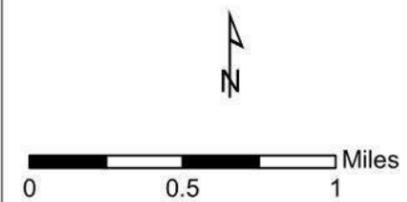
Prevent degradation of water quality and protect the Bridge Creek Watershed to ensure its continuing suitability as a water supply source for the City's public water utility. Restrict land use activities that would impair the water quality or increase the cost for treatment.

# Comprehensive Plan Land Use Recommendations Map



## Legend

Land Use Recommendations	
	Town Center
	Medical District
	Rural Residential
	Bridge Creek Watershed
	General Commercial 1
	Residential Office
	Open Space Rec
	Gateway Business District
	General Commercial 2
	Urban Residential
	Conservation
	Downtown Mixed Use
	East End Mixed Use
	Residential Transition
	Scenic Gateway Corridor Overlay
	City Limits
	Airport Critical Habitat Area



City of Homer



# ■ Appendix B – Annexation Process

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## Summary

**Develop a clear and open public process for future changes to City of Homer boundaries. Explore a planned, phased possible expansion; and initiate and establish regional planning processes with the Kenai Peninsula Borough.**

Existing land use and future growth around the periphery of Homer has significant impacts on the quality of life, the environment, and the economy of those who live and work within city limits. As a consequence, the City needs to be open to the possibility of annexing lands beyond city boundaries. Some of the specific benefits for those in the annexed areas include:

- Access to water for domestic use
- Improved fire protection services
- Improved street maintenance and snow removal services
- Improved law enforcement services provided by the City police department (as continued growth in outlying areas requires more services than the Alaska State Troopers can provide)
- Local control over planning and zoning (when done in a manner that reflects local values, city planning and zoning authority can help avoid the intrusion of incompatible uses into neighborhoods and help maintain and increase property values)
- Right to vote for elected representatives in Homer, and serve on City Boards and Commissions (currently sales tax provides the majority of the city's revenue. People outside city boundaries pay sales tax but don't vote for the people who make the decisions about how sales tax money is spent)

**Step 1:** Develop a clear and orderly process to assess the need and apply for the expansion of the boundaries of the City of Homer, which is likely to be necessary over the coming decades as surrounding areas grow and develop.

**Step 2:** Develop a fair, planned process for involving affected members of the public when considering annexation.

**Step 3:** Develop land use and infrastructure policies to address issues such as access and water use for areas that may be annexed in the future.

**Step 1:** Develop a clear and orderly process to assess the need and apply for the expansion of the boundaries of the City of Homer, which is likely to be necessary over the coming decades as surrounding areas grow and develop.

For the long-term benefit of both the city and surrounding areas, Homer will adopt a proactive planning strategy in the greater Homer area. Overall intentions regarding possible boundary changes are outlined below:

### **Implementation Strategies**

1. Regularly assess the need for phased annexations to guide growth and provide for effective delivery of municipal services which benefit landowners, residents, and businesses.
2. Identify specific criteria for prioritizing prospective annexation areas. Focus near term attention where the uses have the greatest impact on City of Homer interests, including the area of the Bridge Creek water reservoir and associated watershed, areas where City water is delivered to residents outside city limits, areas directly adjacent to Homer city boundaries, and areas where recreational and open space resources (trails, greenbelts, water and drainage ways) are already in existence or may be easily developed.
3. Establish a clear and open public process for proposing annexations, including obtaining input from interested persons regarding land use and City services.
4. Work actively with the KPB to develop shared plans for current uses and future growth in the areas outside current city boundaries; including services, land use, and development standards.
5. In addition to considering the impacts of proposed annexation on residents and land owners, evaluate the costs and benefits of specific possible annexations to the City of Homer; looking, for example, at the relative balance of expected revenues versus costs to provide needed services.

**Step 2:** Develop a fair, planned process for involving affected members of the public when considering annexation.

Past annexation procedures in Homer have been painful, slow, and costly. Some of this cannot be avoided: annexation is a complex issue and not everyone will be satisfied with the outcomes. Nonetheless, there is room for improvement in the procedures associated with annexation. Specific policies include:

### **Implementation Strategies**

1. In the near term, carry out an initial “annexation issues scoping process” for areas outside the city. Get early input from landowners, residents, and businesses in possible annexation areas regarding annexation issues. This will help Homer in planning for future growth, and enable landowners and businesses outside Homer to be part of the process and to understand how annexation may affect them.
2. Prior to proceeding with any annexation petition, the City, working with the Borough, will undertake a planning study of the specific area proposed for annexation. This will include providing public notice and public meetings to help define recommended future land uses and to indicate how and when municipal services (including public safety, utilities, streets and trails) will be extended to the area, together with estimated associated costs. The recommendations

of the study will be incorporated into any annexation proposal submitted to the Alaska Local Boundary Commission.

3. Extra effort will be made to give the public a meaningful role in the consideration of annexation costs and benefits.
4. Explore options for different levels of services where clear distinctions can be made in the level of service required. For example, the level of fire protection service may vary greatly as a function of road infrastructure, vegetation, and response time. In outlying areas for example, the focus may be prevention of loss of human life and containment versus protection of life and property in locations closer to town.
5. It is not possible or appropriate for the City of Homer to prepare land use policy for potential annexation areas. At the same time, the City needs to convey general intentions for the future use of annexed lands. These intentions are established through the general policies of this Comprehensive Plan and other policies for land inside City limits, but also give a helpful sense of what policies might apply in future annexation areas. Examples of general policies that apply citywide and would likely be extended to annexed areas include creating and maintaining quality residential neighborhoods, using setbacks and buffers to ensure compatibility between different types of uses, providing open space and trails, and ensuring roads are built to City standards. The annexation planning studies called for above will build from the general framework in the Comprehensive Plan and take into account the opportunities and constraints of specific locations, as well as the perspectives of affected property owners and residents.

**Step 3: Develop land use and infrastructure policies to address issues such as access and water use for areas that may be annexed in the future.**

Regardless of any future annexations, which may be decades away, the City needs to address several specific land use and infrastructure issues that cross city boundaries into greater Homer. Specific issues and recommended policies are presented below:

**Implementation Strategies**

1. Working through a cooperative planning process with the Borough, establish mechanisms to deal with issues outside City of Homer boundaries with greatest impact on the City. Examples include agreement to use common road standards and for cooperative work on trail and open space issues.
2. Re-examine the City’s current policy for the provision of water from the public water system to users outside city limits and determine the impact of this practice. Currently approximately 26% of occupied homes within Homer city limits do not enjoy the benefit of piped water delivery. The ability to receive water from city sources outside city boundaries has a major impact on the prospects for development in outlying areas where options for wells are limited. Water delivery in outlying areas contributes to the outward spread of residential uses, which in turn increases driving, energy use and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. Determine if areas receiving water should be high priority areas for annexation. Investigate options for “reciprocity” by either developing plans for annexation or by establishing KPB-enforced land use practices that align with similar practices in the City of Homer (*See Chapter 6, Public Services and Facilities, Goal 1, Objective C, for more on water use*).



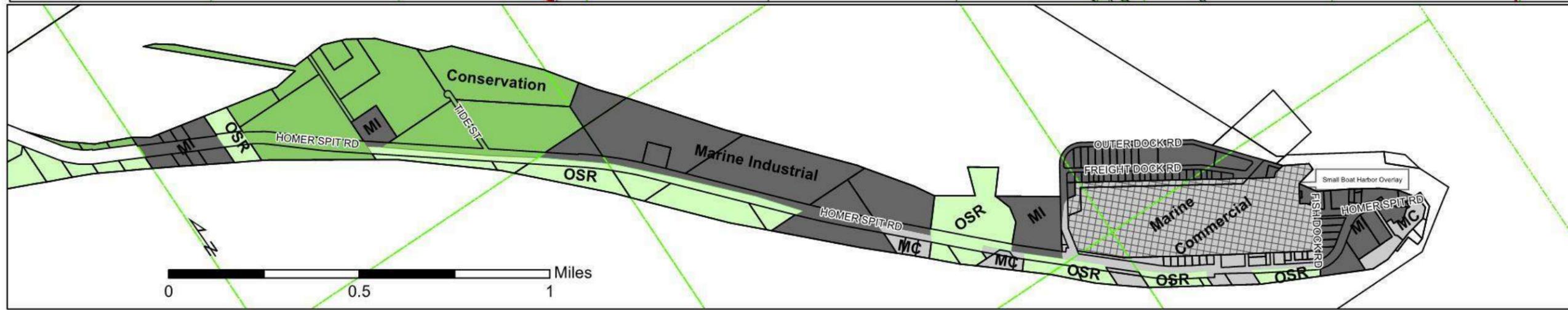
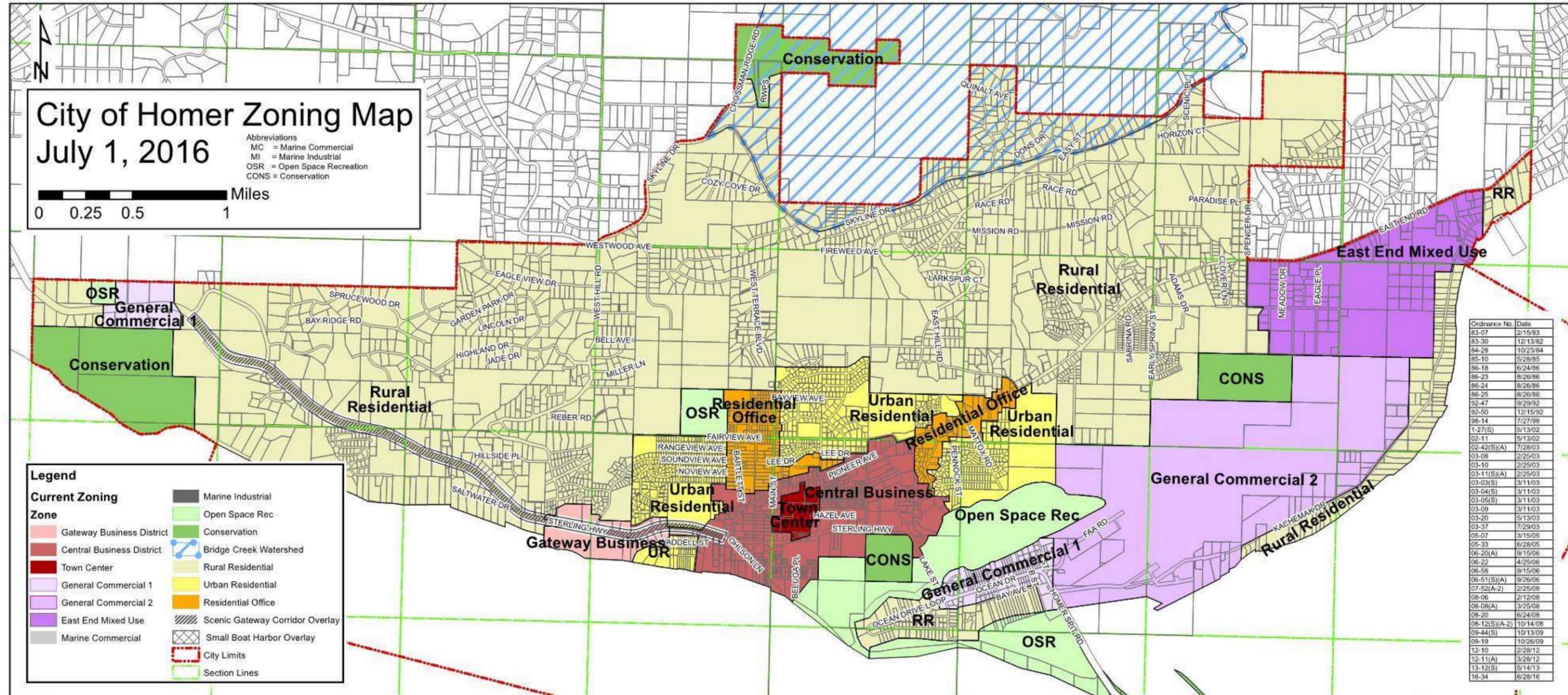
# ■ Appendix C – Background Land Use Information

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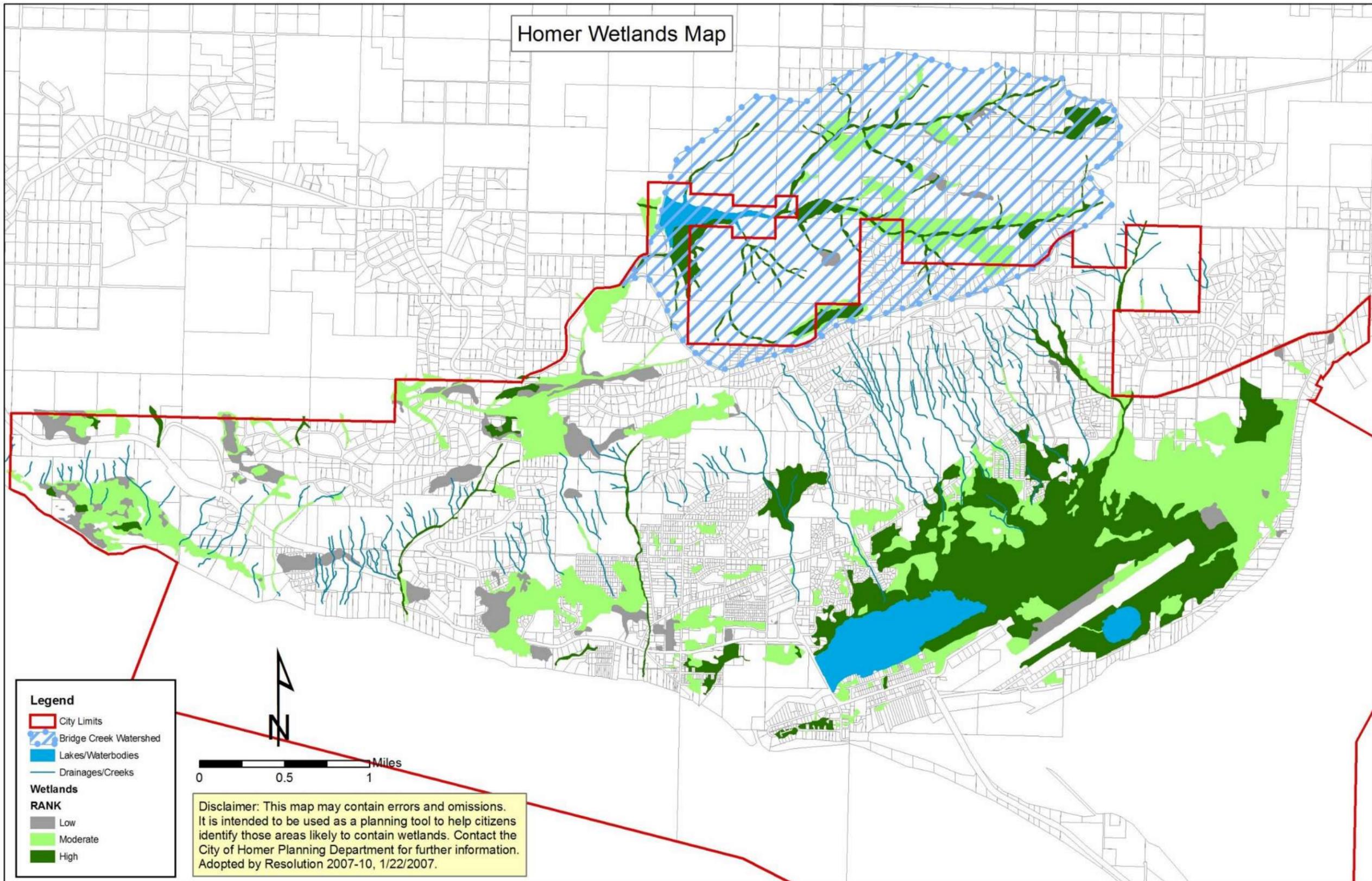
## Index

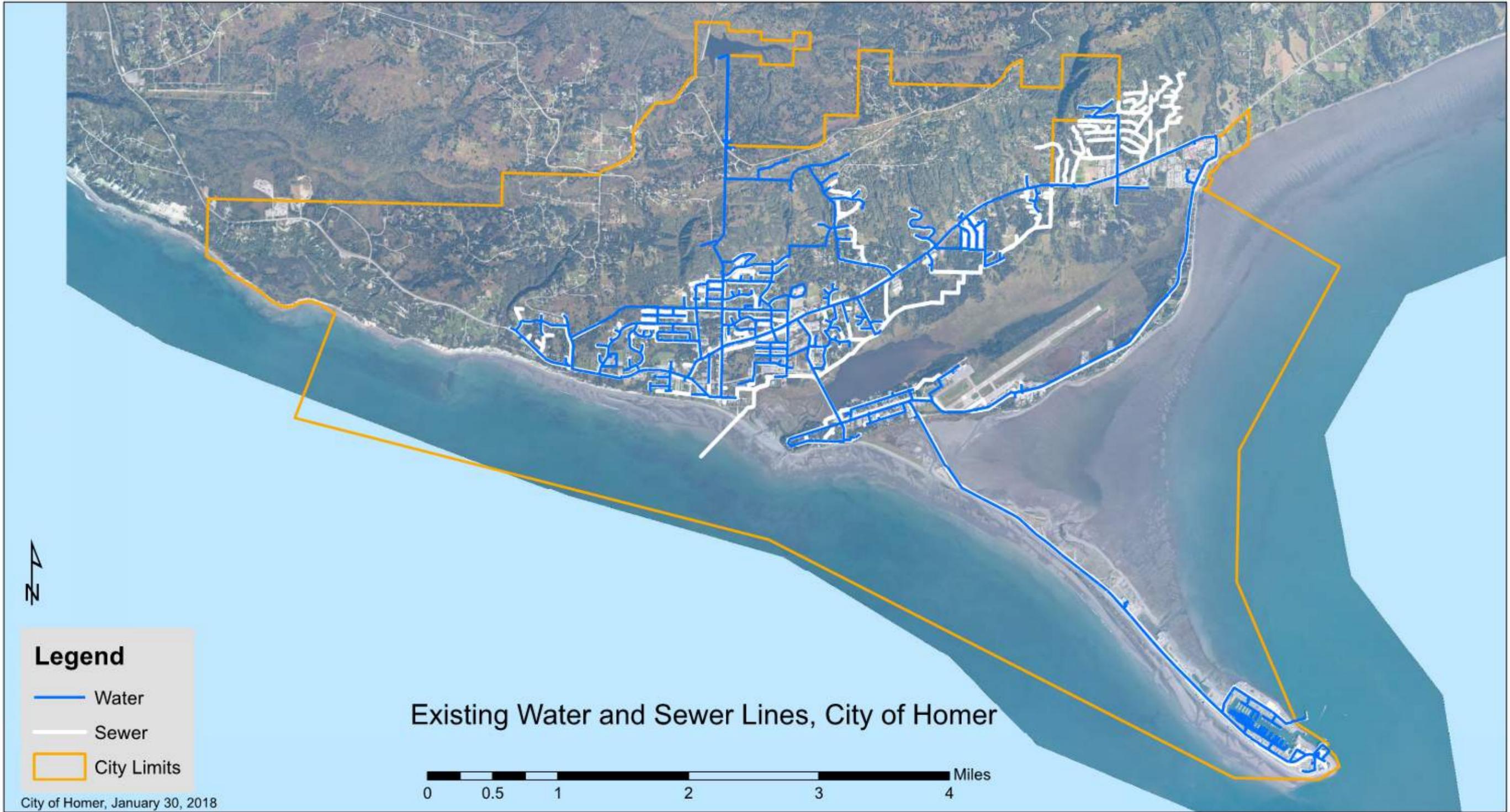
2016 Zoning Map	C-2
2005 Wetlands Map	C-3
Existing Water and Sewer Infrastructure Map	C-4
Flood Plain Map	C-5
Coastal Erosion Map	C-6
Green Infrastructure Mapping	C-7 – C-10
Land Suitability Mapping	C-11
Woodard Creek Plan Excerpt	C-13



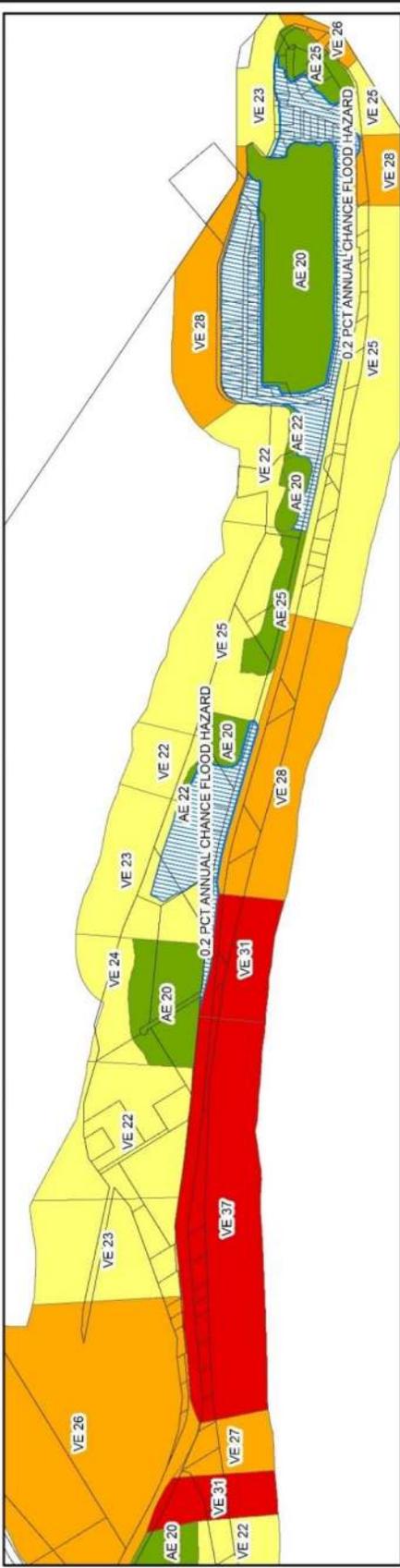
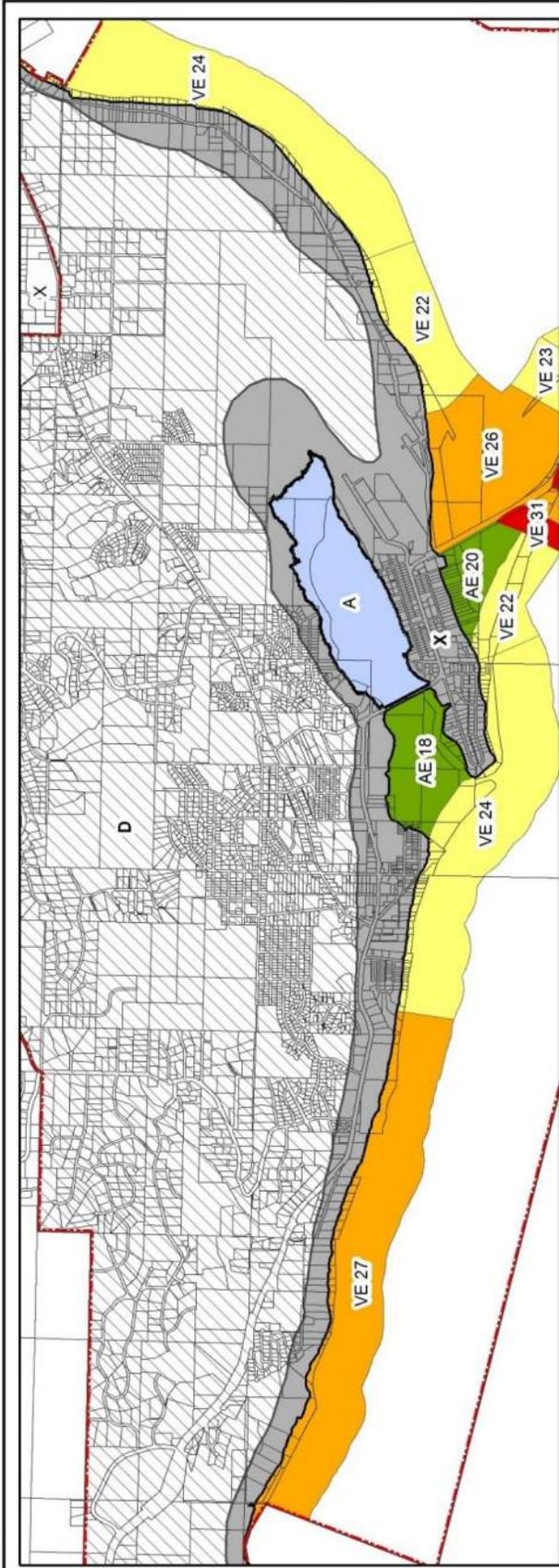


# Homer Wetlands Map









11/14/2017

**Legend**

**Homer Flood Areas 2016**

- AE, 20
- AE, 22
- AE, 25
- VE, 22
- VE, 23
- VE, 24
- VE, 25
- VE, 26
- VE, 27
- VE, 28
- VE, 29
- VE, 30
- VE, 31
- VE, 32
- VE, 33
- VE, 34
- VE, 35
- VE, 36
- VE, 37

**Flood Zone, BFE**

- A, Unnumbered
- AE, 18

**Homer Floodplains**

- 0.2 PCT ANNUAL CHANCE FLOOD HAZARD, -9999
- X, Outside 0.2% annual chance flood
- D, Flood Hazards undetermined

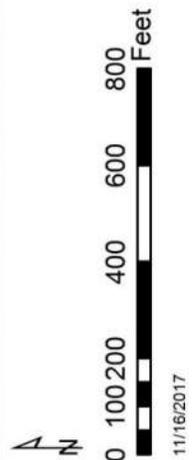


# Coastal Erosion: Homer's Changing Coastline 1951-2013



City of Homer  
Planning and Zoning Department

The red lines show the top of the bluff, derived from aerial photos. The end of Main Street, on Bishop's Beach, is one of the more active areas of coastal erosion.



## **Green Infrastructure Mapping**

Following is a draft Green Infrastructure Map developed by DnA Design of Homer as part of an independent project with the local Soil & Water Conservation District. The map was developed as a way to define lands viable for future development while considering the need to protect drainage, open space, and other environmental features that would complement development. The project defines incentives for developers to consider landscape systems in their projects while maintaining or enhancing their bottom line. The green infrastructure elements are determined by overlaying scientific, ecological, and economic values to provide not only an ecological benefit, but also quantifiable economic and quality of life benefits. Since Green Infrastructure (GI) looks at larger scale landscape systems, the map extends beyond the boundaries of the city to include entire watersheds and other key features that cross the political boundary of the city limit. The map legend categories are defined more precisely as follows:

### ***Highly Developable/Developed (white)***

Areas that are well suited for development or are already developed.

### ***Some Green Infrastructure Elements (yellow)***

Areas that are well suited for development with consideration of larger landscape systems, such as storm water management, upland-wetland complexes, poor soils, unstable slopes, trails, habitat, etc. These areas will likely have associated incentives to maintain environmental systems while enhancing land values.

### ***Important Green Infrastructure Elements (light green)***

Development in these areas should consider the specific Green Infrastructure characteristics present. These are not critical natural areas. However, if development in these areas is not careful, it will negatively impact larger landscape systems. Construction costs in these areas will probably be higher if the natural characteristics are not considered. These are areas where the public and property owners should be made aware that there is some important characteristic that they should consider protecting (such as steep slope, valuable wildlife habitat, adjacent creeks, trails or wetlands). Carefully planned development that preserves or enhances Green Infrastructure elements can add value to real estate, for example, by retaining natural features and wildlife. These are areas that would benefit from clear development guidelines to preserve landscape systems, and would be eligible for special development or restoration incentives.

### ***Critical Green Infrastructure (dark green)***

These areas have sensitive or critical landscape systems, processes, or connections and are most appropriate for conservation. They are predominantly areas with steep slopes, critical wetlands, poor soils, or other sensitive landscape features. These areas would likely be very difficult and expensive to develop, and are limited by existing federal regulation. Development in these areas will cause significant impacts on natural systems, neighboring properties and possibly view sheds, and will increase the risk and associated costs due to natural hazards. These areas should be considered amenities for the city and its residents because of their value for storm water management, habitat protection, view shed protection, open space, and trails. Options for preserving these lands should be explored, for example, through conservation easements, land or development trades, or other creative incentives, particularly for areas held in private ownership.

## Mapping Background

*This Green Infrastructure Map is generated from spatially explicit GIS base maps which include the following characteristics:*

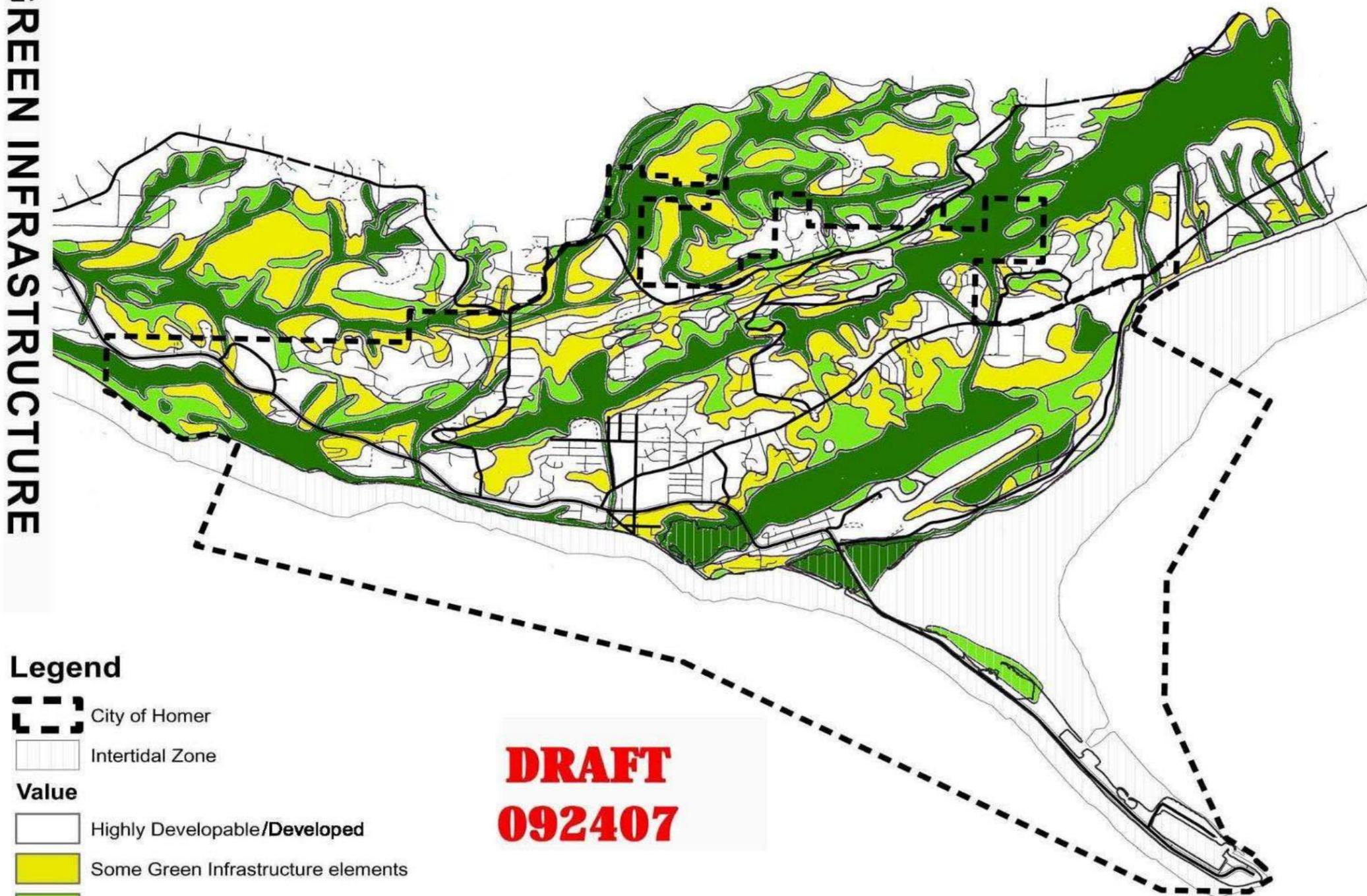
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Soils   | • Storm water management   |
| • Creeks and drainages  | • Wetlands   |
| • Slopes  | • Vegetation habitat   |
| • Bluff erosion   | • Wildlife habitat   |
| • Construction costs (essentially development costs due to slope, road access, soils, wetlands, open water and drainages) | • Accessible lands—lands already served by road and water and sewer (basically a weighted buffer by infrastructure construction costs) |
| • Trails and public amenities   | • Views and view sheds   |

*Specific steps to establish a system of green infrastructure include those outlined below; the Green Infrastructure Map provides a simplified illustration of this approach:*

1. Identify and map individual environmental features and processes – erosion areas, wetlands, steep slopes, aquifer recharge areas, shoreline access points, critical view sheds, etc.
2. Identify open space and recreation areas – trails, parks and recreation use areas, view sheds and other features that are best protected by allowing the land to remain largely undeveloped.
3. Overlay mapped environmental features with open space and recreation areas to create an integrated “green infrastructure” network map. This should identify features such as stream corridors and trails that cross multiple properties. Also identify areas that may be able to support development, but will require special standards to maintain environmental quality (e.g., steep slope areas).
4. Limit areas included in the green infrastructure map to those of highest value or greatest constraint. For example, the map should identify the most important trails, the most important wetlands and streams, and the steepest slopes.
5. Formally adopt the map, recognizing that site-specific developments may lead to changes in the features that need protection for particular development projects.
6. Establish a formal process that balances the long-term communitywide benefits of the green infrastructure concept with short-term impacts on individual private landowners.

HOMER SUITABILITY MAPPING

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



Legend

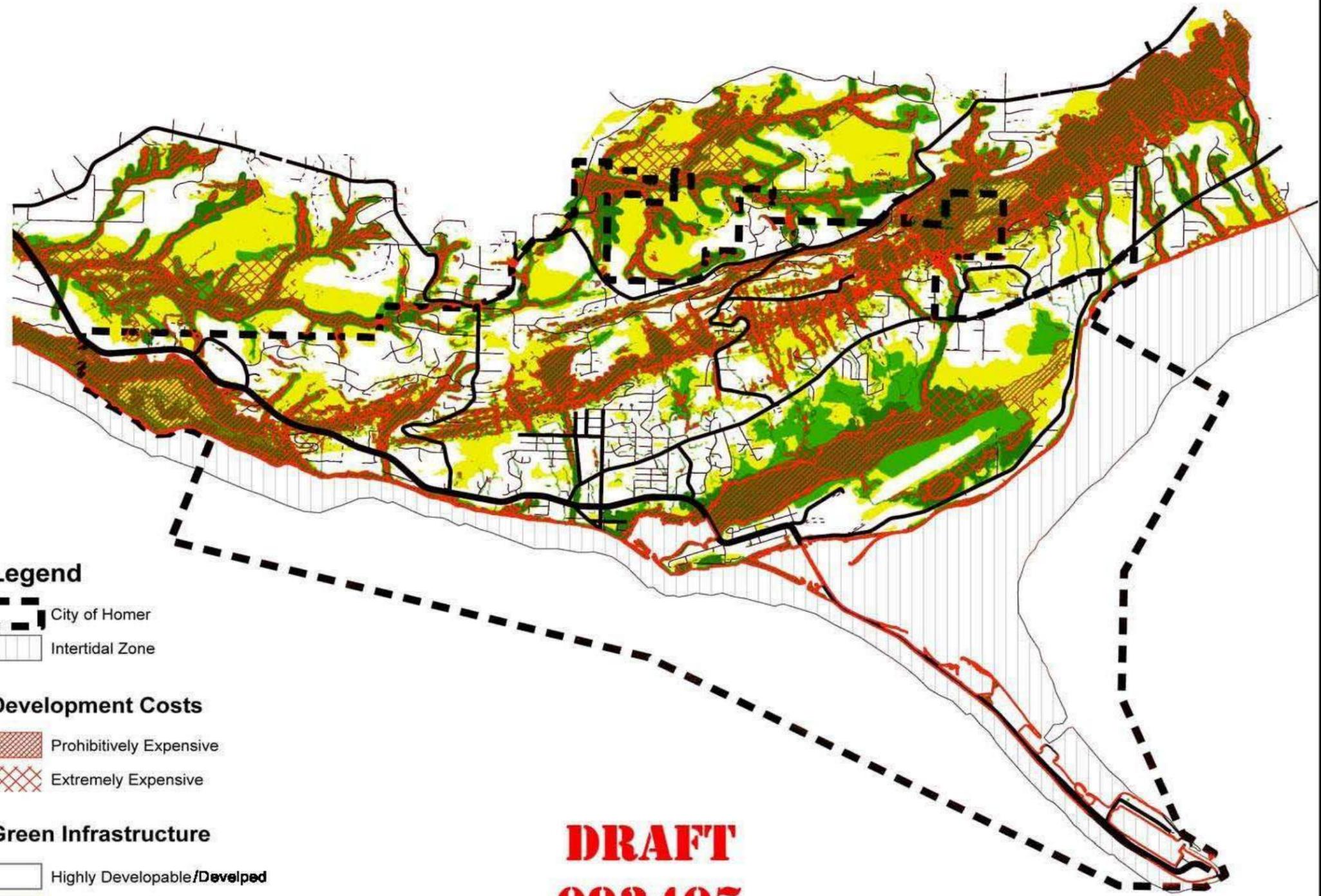
- City of Homer
- Intertidal Zone
- Value**
- Highly Developable/Developed
- Some Green Infrastructure elements
- Important Green Infrastructure elements
- Critical Green Infrastructure



Note: The map shown on this page is provided only as an illustration. It was developed by the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District 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.

**HOMER SUITABILITY MAPPING**

**G.I. and DEVELOPABLE LANDS**



**Legend**

-  City of Homer
-  Intertidal Zone

**Development Costs**

-  Prohibitively Expensive
-  Extremely Expensive

**Green Infrastructure**

-  Highly Developable/**Developed**
-  Some Green Infrastructure Elements
-  Important Green Infrastructure Elements
-  Critical Green Infrastructure Elements

**DRAFT  
092407**



# HOMER SUITABILITY MAPPING

## G.I. and DEVELOPABLE LANDS 2

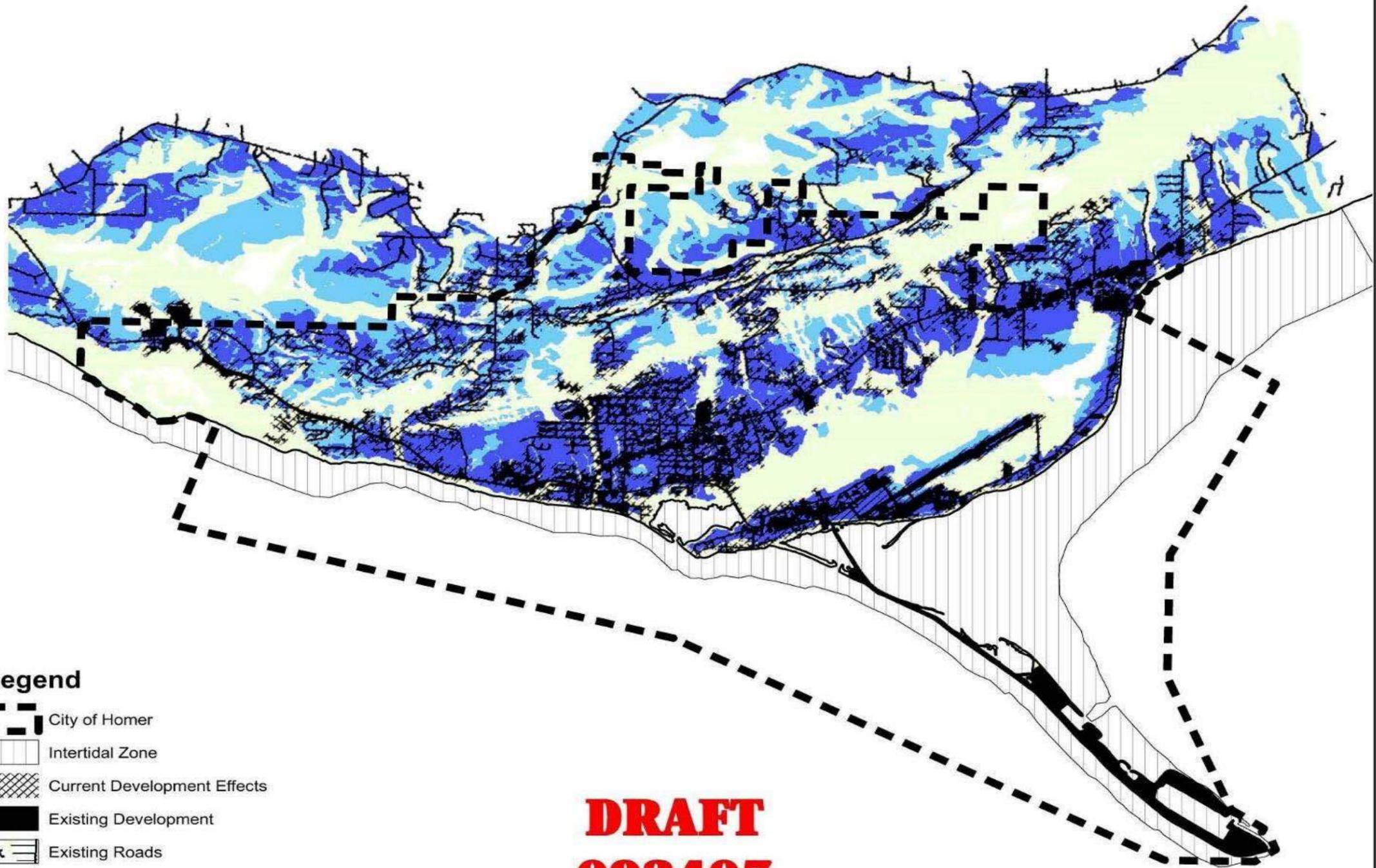


### Legend

- City of Homer
- Intertidal Zone
- Current Development Effects
- Existing Development
- Existing Roads

### High-Value Development Lands

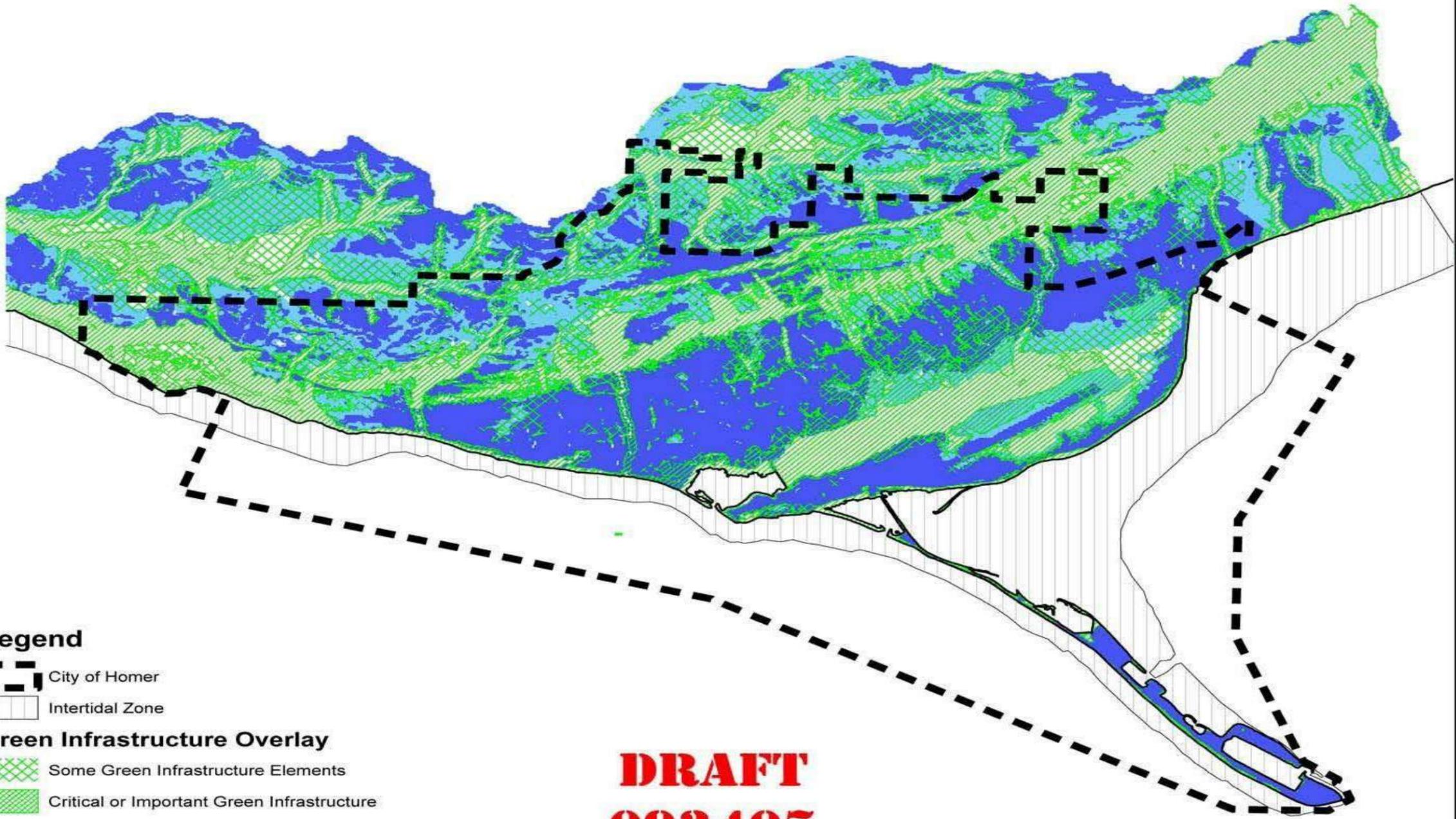
- Moderate Value
- High Value



**DRAFT**  
**092407**

HOMER SUITABILITY MAPPING

G.I. and DEVELOPABLE LANDS 3



Legend

City of Homer

Intertidal Zone

Green Infrastructure Overlay

Some Green Infrastructure Elements

Critical or Important Green Infrastructure

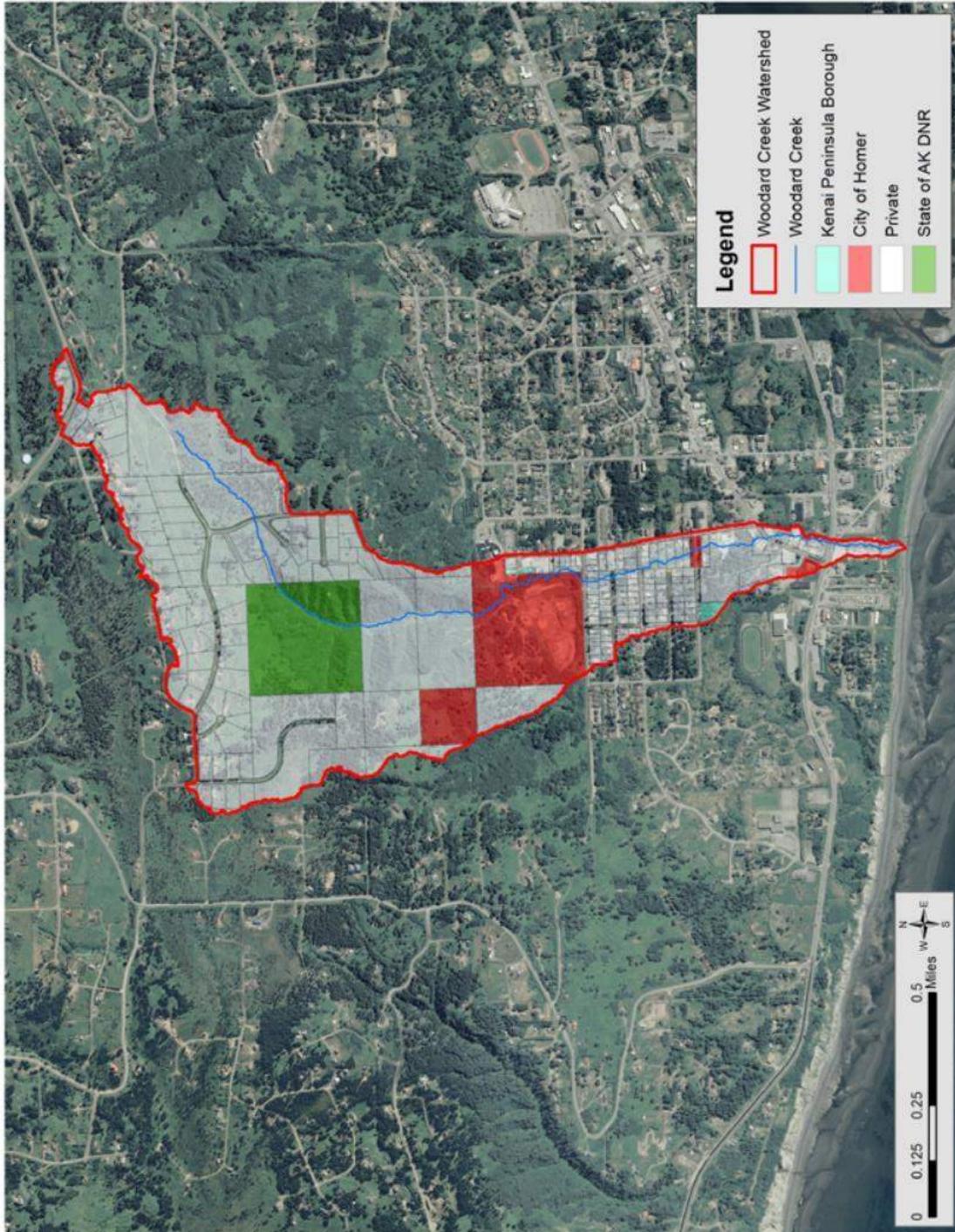
High-Value Development Lands

Moderate Value

High Value



**DRAFT**  
**092407**



Land ownership within the Woodard Creek Watershed (Watershed boundary: Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, 2017; Basemap: Kenai Peninsula Borough imagery, 2012; Ownership parcels: Kenai Peninsula Borough GIS Division, 2017).

<b>Projects for Future Consideration</b>		<b>Objectives Met</b>
<b>Task</b>	<b>Description</b>	
<b>1. Identify areas prone to overflow (culverts, low banks) and work with Homer Public Works Department to mitigate flooding.</b>		
1	Map areas with low banks	• Identify, study, and address high risk areas in the Woodard Creek Watershed
2	Inventory debris in culverts	• Identify, study, and address high risk areas in the Woodard Creek Watershed
3	Remove debris from culverts as necessary	• Identify, study, and address high risk areas in the Woodard Creek Watershed • Protect natural systems
<b>2. Daylight Woodard Creek throughout the watershed.</b>		
1	Work with the City of Homer to daylight Woodard Creek at Fairview Avenue	• Address stream channelization and culverting in the lower watershed • Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities
2	Work with the City of Homer to daylight Woodard Creek at Homer Bypass	• Address stream channelization and culverting in the lower watershed • Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities
3	Work with the City of Homer to daylight Woodard Creek at Pioneer Avenue	• Address stream channelization and culverting in the lower watershed • Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities
4	Work with the City of Homer to daylight Woodard Creek at the area below Homer Bypass	• Address stream channelization and culverting in the lower watershed • Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities
5	Work with the Pratt Museum to daylight Woodard Creek on Pratt Museum land	• Address stream channelization and culverting in the lower watershed • Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities
<b>3. Add buffer strips along Woodard Creek</b>		
1	Identify priority areas for buffer strips	• Protect natural systems
2	Install buffer strips in key areas	• Protect natural systems
<b>4. Install features to reduce flow in key areas</b>		
1	Identify priority areas for waterfalls	• Protect natural systems
2	Install waterfalls in the stream in key areas	• Protect natural systems
<b>5. Paint the roads to show where Woodard Creek flows</b>		
1	Coordinate annual road painting at Pioneer Avenue	• Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities
<b>6. Develop program to engage the community in keeping Woodard Creek clean</b>		
1	Host annual Woodard Creek clean-up	• Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities • Protect natural systems
2	Encourage participation in adopt-a-stream program	• Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities • Protect natural systems
<b>7. Develop program to educate the community about Woodard Creek</b>		
1	Create an outdoor classroom for the community to learn about Woodard Creek	• Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities • Protect natural systems
2	Deliver presentations at schools, council meetings, and local interest groups	• Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities

<b>Projects for Future Consideration</b>	
<b>Task</b>	<b>Objectives Met</b>
8. Develop observation points for community members to view Woodard Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and enhance public access points</li> </ul>
9. Continue to work with partners to acquire properties for public access along Woodard Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and enhance public access points</li> </ul>
10. Increase pedestrian access to Woodard Creek at the beach near Crittenden Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and enhance public access points</li> </ul>
11. Discourage culverts in new road development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Woodard Creek into local planning efforts</li> </ul>
12. Connect Woodard Creek trails to existing trail systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Woodard Creek into local planning efforts</li> <li>• Create and enhance public access points</li> </ul>
13. Include Woodard Creek plans in the Homer Comprehensive Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Woodard Creek into local planning efforts</li> </ul>
14. Restrict vehicular access on Gordon Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Woodard Creek into local planning efforts</li> <li>• Protect natural systems</li> </ul>
15. Develop partnerships with other groups with mutual interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Woodard Creek into local planning efforts</li> <li>• Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities</li> <li>• Protect natural systems</li> </ul>
16. Develop watershed best management practices for property owners and land managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities</li> <li>• Protect natural systems</li> <li>• Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities</li> <li>• Protect natural systems</li> </ul>
17. Create incentive system to encourage property owners and land managers to implement best management practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase outreach, education, and stewardship opportunities</li> <li>• Protect natural systems</li> </ul>
18. Map impervious cover in the Woodard Creek Watershed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, study, and address high risk areas in the Woodard Creek Watershed</li> </ul>

