



*Creating the Heart of Homer:
The Homer Town Center
Development Plan*

City of Homer
April 2006



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Envisioning the Heart of Homer

All of the people listed here have participated in some way in the Homer Town Square/Center Project since 1998, either as a focus group member, on one of the committees, attending one or more public meetings, by providing financial support, or by responding via the public survey that they wanted to volunteer or otherwise be involved. The names are listed in no particular order.

Homer Town Center Development Plan

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Funding Sources

City of Homer Resolution 05-95(A)

City of Homer Ordinance 06-08(A)

Introduction

A Vision for the Heart of Homer

Town Center will be a community focal point to provide for business development, instill a greater sense of pride in the downtown area, enhance mobility for all forms of transportation, and contribute to a higher quality of life.

Town Center will be based on a framework that establishes linkages within, to, and through the heart of the downtown area. This framework will create a vibrant community center where residents can live, work, and play, and visitors will be welcomed.

This Town Center Development Plan is the City of Homer's policy framework for the largely undeveloped area lying in the heart of the Central Business District, as shown on page 8. It represents the City's official vision for the type of environment ultimately desired in the Town Center, including its physical form and general appearance. It provides long-range land use, transportation, parking, and open space recommendations for the area.

The plan is not an ordinance or zoning. The plan itself does not change the zoning of property, and it is not a development proposal for a specific project. Rather, the plan will be used to guide future development policy and public infrastructure improvements, assist in the evaluation of future development proposals, and provide development guidance to landowners, citizens, and developers of Town Center.

To create a Town Center in Homer, it is crucial that the project be approached cooperatively by property owners, non-profit organizations, and local government. To succeed, it must be market driven and make economic sense.

The Town Center Development Plan refines the goals of the Homer Comprehensive Plan (1999 Update). The Comprehensive Plan establishes the vision and overall framework for the future of Homer. The Town Center Development Plan is consistent with the goals and requirements of the Comprehensive Plan, as identified at right.

The following goals and objectives from the **Homer Comprehensive Plan (1999 Update)** are particularly relevant to planning for development in Homer's Town Center:

- *Improve the attractiveness and usability of the business core to encourage use of the area.*
- *Encourage a balance of open space and attractive, retail-oriented development of vacant land in the business/core area.*
- *Actively pursue a theme for Pioneer Avenue. Support the establishment of a Town Square and connecting green spaces through town.*
- *Develop an integrated system of trails, sidewalks, and walkways to connect City parks, schools, recreational areas, and the downtown core area.*
- *Encourage and enhance the cultural and educational amenities of Homer.*
- *Guide growth and development in areas planned or zoned Central Business District (CBD) to provide a centrally located business/commercial area and focal point for the community.*
- *The City, in cooperation with private business owners, shall research and evaluate steps involved in creating and enabling a Pioneer Avenue theme and town square to become a reality.*
- *Work with the community to develop a centralized Town Square that includes a cultural center, interfacing with existing organizations and institutions to explore partnerships and shared parking.*
- *Investigate innovative funding mechanisms to provide funding for development of the Town Square with cultural and other facilities and public art programs.*

From "Verbatim responses to invitation to make additional comments to the City of Homer Citizen Survey," December 2002:

"I believe the Town Square project is very valid. Downtown should be lined by nature trails with public art. Crosswalks and the blue trails should be added as well to encourage folks to get out of their cars and shop and eat around town."

"I would like to see the city develop more trails and sidewalks so it is easier to walk around town. I would like to see trails connecting museum, library, new Fish and Wildlife building, city hall, and college."

"Build the town square and stop talking about it."

"Through inattention the city is allowing some of the most beautiful parts of town to become "Anytown USA." It doesn't have to be."

"I wonder if any city could do as much as Homer to be ugly. The city seems unwilling to assert its control over growth and development."

"Town square project is very important. I love our town and want to envision growth for many generations. Space is so important, not thoughtless ugly sprawl."

"I would definitely like the city to support the town square project. The city also should enact stricter zoning and architectural standards."

"Develop a city center park and be very careful to keep businesses in town. No strip malls. Curtail urban sprawl."

"Pioneer Street looks like a crappy jumble of a town according to tourists I've talked to. It's too bad."

"I would like for Homer as a city to match the marvelous natural surroundings. I'd like to see a town square, sidewalks, and bike trails. I'd like to see much improved planning and zoning. I'd like a pleasant town for walking with no parking setbacks in the central district."

"I'd like to see more trails built with more parks, and I'd vote to pay for them."

"It is critical to provide green space. Zoning, town square and year round jobs are the most important issues."

"City should be highly involved and supportive of green belt initiatives and town square."

"City is unattractive. Need new emphasis on beautification and green projects."

"Support a city and area connected by trails. Support focus on environmental integrity and acquiring and protecting land for green/open space. Focus on controlling urban sprawl. Try to encourage business to develop in core city area."

"Our city does not lend itself to walking around town."

"Develop businesses in town from the core out. No urban sprawl or strip malls."

"Homer, unfortunately, is a dumpy community architecturally amidst vast natural splendor."

"It would be nice to have more trails and sidewalks for easier shopping and getting around in town."

"Please develop town square identity a la Vancouver, BC – some mechanism to ensure that developers must set aside some % in town as green."

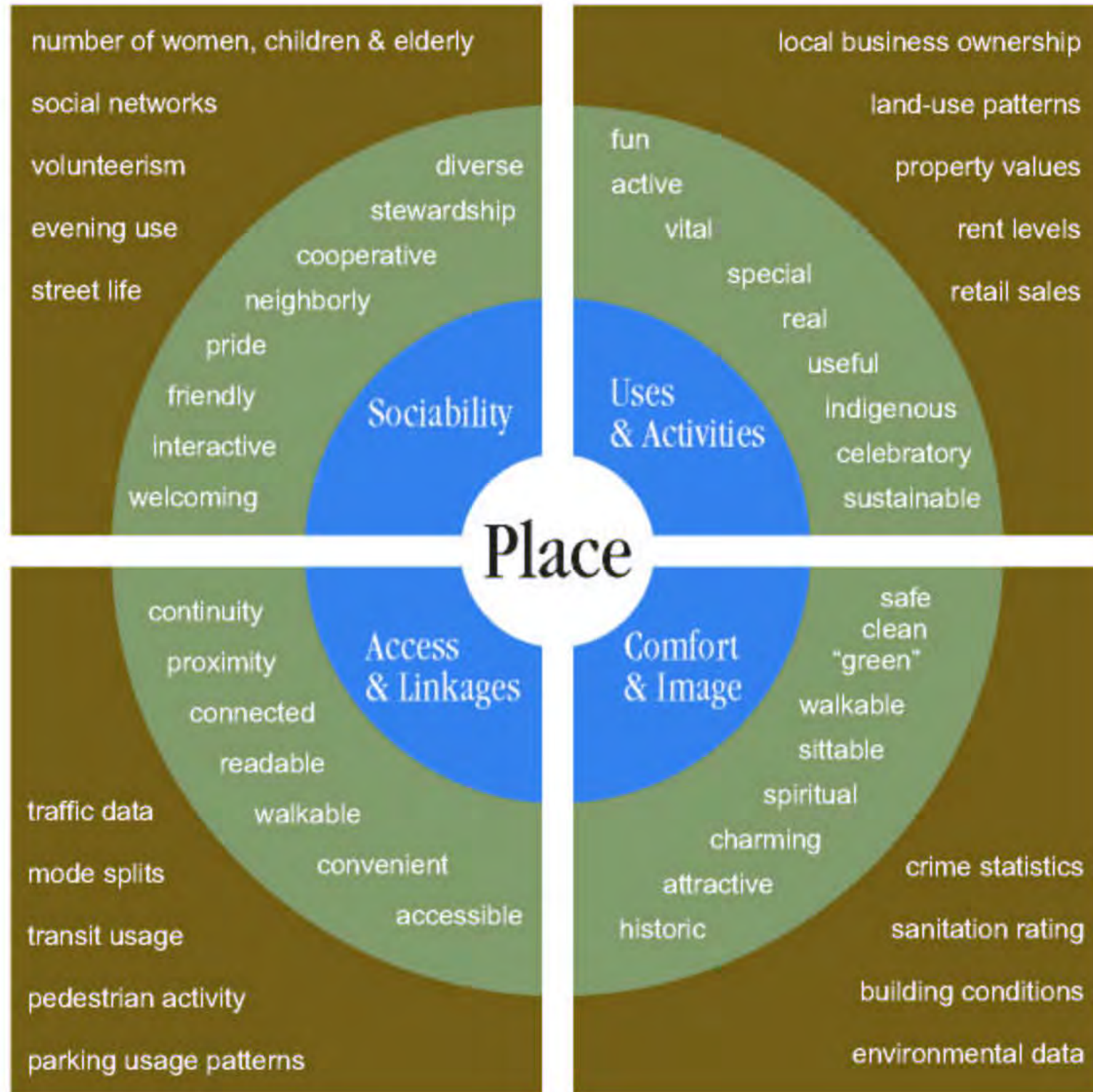
"We have one of the most stunning natural surroundings in the world. If we don't rein in our impulses to build the cheap and the tawdry, we will debase this setting and ourselves. It's not too late to prevent another Anchorage from happening here."

"We (the city, staff, council, citizens) should be making decisions today to shape Homer in 25 years from now, not for the next year."

"Our town looks like a dump! No pride of ownership. No sense of downtown."

"Homer needs bike, ski, and pedestrian trails. We need planning and zoning, a real downtown, and maintained roads."

What Makes a Great Place?



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“A great place is one where people want to go to observe the passing scene, socialize, or celebrate interaction with a wide range of people... It is where you arrange to meet friends, or bring visitors. Have you ever noticed how many people are enjoying a conversation at a farmers market or on a friendly Main Street?”

—from “Five Ways to a Great Place” by Kathy Madden, YES Magazine, Summer 2005

“Great places make great cities.”

—from The Project for Public Spaces, <http://www.pps.org>

Guiding principles

“Successful communities have a vision of where they want to go and of what things they value in their neighborhoods and downtowns. Their plans for development reflect these values and answer questions facing communities nationwide. How can a community capture the benefits of growth without overcrowding its schools? How can a community maintain its small-town charm and character while accommodating new residents and prospering economically? How can a community, city, or suburb benefit from growth but not suffer the post-growth disinvestment that so often follows?”

— from *Why Smart Growth: A Primer*
published by the International City/County Management
Association, 1998

Town Center planning began with a recognition that a viable and vibrant Town Center must allow for and encourage mixed uses; most importantly *civic, commercial, residential, and outdoor/open space*. The following principles further expand the core concept.

Economic Opportunity

- Town Center development will provide economic opportunities for property owners and other community members.
- Neighboring properties and businesses will benefit from Town Center development and will be encouraged to participate in the Town Center vision.
- Economics will drive a viable and diverse group of businesses.
- Public/private partnerships will be actively pursued.

Discussion: To be a successful destination and focal point, Town Center must provide an environment where a variety of businesses can thrive in combination with residential, governmental, and recreational activities.

The commercial anchor in Town Center will consist of a major private sector development which will draw people of different ages and incomes year-round. This could consist of a single store, a collection of stores, or a hotel with meeting facilities and retail components.

Common Space

- The Town Center will have connected green spaces to include features such as trees, flower beds, native plantings, playgrounds, buffers, landscape screenings, trails, and public art.
- Common spaces for public use will be reserved and developed.
- A central open-air plaza will serve as the focal point of Town Center.

- Common space in Town Center will incorporate artwork.

Discussion: Parks and open spaces help to create a sense of place in a community. They provide serenity, calm vistas, and exposure to nature, as well as places for social activity. Visible common spaces create a safe environment while enticing passersby to investigate and linger.

Town Center will include a formal outdoor plaza to serve as a focal point and fill the role as Homer’s “front porch.” The plaza will provide a forum for various community activities such as outdoor concerts, food vendors, arts and crafts shows, produce markets, and the start or finish of parades.

Town Center will also incorporate a central park to provide open green space in the heart of town, allowing for both passive and active recreation.

Connected pocket parks will join pedestrian ways with streets and parking areas to soften the hard-scape that is inevitable with development.

Transportation and Parking

- Multiple means of transportation, from automobiles to bicycles to wheelchairs, will be accommodated in Town Center.
- Town Center will have vehicular and pedestrian access from all directions. Road placement and design will create safe, modulated traffic flow.
- Town Center will be pedestrian friendly, providing walkways, trails, and other amenities to enhance connectivity.
- Town Center will accommodate future public transit.
- Parking will be designed to allow for compact development and to encourage “park and walk” activities.

Discussion: The Town Center will be designed and developed with the pedestrian in mind. Streets will be designed so vehicles travel at slower speeds,

The Benefits of Place

Builds & Supports the Local Economy

- Small-scale entrepreneurship
- More quality goods available
- Higher real estate values
- Local ownership, local value
- More desirable jobs
- Increased currency velocity
- Greater tax revenue
- Less need for municipal services

Nurtures & Defines Community Identity

- Greater community organization
- Sense of pride and volunteerism
- Perpetuation of integrity and values
- “Mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon”
- Less need for municipal control
- Self-managing

Fosters Frequent & Meaningful Contact

- Improves sociability
- More cultural exposure, interaction
- Exchanges and preserves information, wisdom, values
- Supports barter system
- Reduces race and class barriers
- Feeling of interconnection

Place

Creates Improved Accessibility

- More walkable
- Safe for pedestrians
- Compatible with public transit
- Reduces need for cars and parking
- More efficient use of time and money
- Greater connections between uses

Promotes Sense of Comfort

- Visually pleasing
- Generally stimulating
- Sense of belonging
- Greater security
- Better environmental quality
- Feeling of freedom

Draws a Diverse Population

- More women, elderly, and children
- Greater ethnic and cultural pluralism
- Encourages a range of activities and uses
- New service, retail, and customer niches
- Variation and character in built environment
- Encourages community creativity

“Arguably the nicest design feature about small towns is their compactness which allows for pedestrian travel.”

—from *The Small Town Planning Handbook*
published by the American Planning Association, 1995

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Guiding Principles, continued

“Some new city centers are dense and urban in character, while others emphasize a park-like setting. What they all share, however, is an underlying motivation to create a community focal point that emphasizes human scale.”

—from “Creating City Centers” by C. Duerksen and C. Gregory Dale, published by the American Planning Association in *The Commissioner*, Summer 1999

enhancing pedestrian safety and comfort. Safe street crossings will be provided. Sidewalks will line the streets and link parking areas and pocket parks. Separated pathways will join the development clusters within Town Center and will connect with pedestrian ways in other parts of town.

Access to and through Town Center will come from all four directions, allowing Town Center to unite commercial and residential areas of Homer. Pioneer Avenue to the north will be directly linked through Town Center to the business area developing around the Sterling Highway to the south. Access to the west will link to Main Street, and to the east will join with Poopdeck Street near Hazel Avenue, leading to the new library, the post office, and a variety of commercial enterprises. Access will be designed to encourage travelers to utilize the Town Center travel ways to reach other parts of town.

Parking will be positioned to allow for compact development, ensuring that buildings and other activities can easily be reached by parking and walking through Town Center. Parking will be a mixture of on-site parking, on-street parking, shared parking, and parking “parks.” Parking parks are small public parking areas joined together by pedestrian facilities, often adjacent to small green spaces containing trees, grass, and outdoor furnishings. On-site parking will be located to the rear or sides of buildings.

The Draft Homer Boulevards document will be utilized as a guide in the planning of streets and roads within Town Center, thus ensuring a cohesive design to the travel ways and facilitating many of the transportation goals of the Town Center Development Plan such as slower vehicular traffic with an emphasis on pedestrian navigation.

Civic Anchor

- A new City Hall will serve as the civic anchor for Town Center development.
- Town Center could also incorporate other civic institutions, such as a courthouse, civic center, or conference center.

Discussion: Large civic facilities serve an important function in a town center, providing some of the “critical mass” needed to bring the area alive while adding identity and promoting stability.

The preferred civic anchor for Town Center is a new City Hall, identified as a community priority in the City of Homer Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Residential Uses

- Town Center will include residential development.
- Multifamily residential and mixed residential/commercial development in Town Center will be encouraged.

Discussion: Residential development in Town Center will provide vitality and ensure that the area remains lively throughout the day. In addition to the existing single-family homes in the area, new development could include student housing for the local college, mixed-use retail buildings with affordable upstairs apartments, and upscale condominiums.

Design

- Architectural and design elements will contribute to a cohesive and attractive look and feel for Town Center. Properties adjacent to the Town Center development area will be encouraged to participate.
- Town Center will have a formal plaza as a defined focal point.
- Parking areas will be located to enhance the streetscape.
- Town Center design will incorporate clustered and compact mixed commercial/residential development adjacent to outdoor public spaces.
- Commercial buildings will generally be placed close to the street and sidewalk to create a friendly pedestrian atmosphere.
- Natural site factors and features will be

incorporated in Town Center design to highlight Homer’s unique topography and view-scape.

- Water runoff systems will be integrated into the design of Town Center.
- Buildings will be situated to take advantage of solar access.
- Architecturally integrated artwork will be encouraged.
- The Homer Community Design Manual will be used to guide development.

Discussion: Town Center is envisioned to be a cohesive development, with a harmony among construction types and styles. Properties adjacent to the primary development area will likely benefit by participating in this effort.

Compact development, with buildings clustered and placed close to the street, encourages walking and helps create a vibrant atmosphere. Mixed development that includes retail, service, and residential uses likewise encourages walking from activity to activity and creates a lively area that is used throughout the day. One common type of mixed use development in town centers is to locate second floor apartments above stores and offices.

As the focal point of Town Center, the town plaza will have buildings around it and will include extensive landscaping, park benches, etc. The plaza is where an outdoor concert might be held and where outdoor vendors will sell their products. Commercial activity could include a Farmers Market or “Saturday Market” on certain days.

Homer is known as an arts community. Incorporating artwork in Town Center will enhance this reputation by showcasing Homer’s artistic character.

Existing conditions

Described as “an unusual juxtaposition of culture and wilderness,” the town of Homer has also been characterized as “the outskirts of a town you never get to.”

—from early description of Town Square Project,
Kachemak Heritage Land Trust

For purposes of this plan, Town Center is defined as the largely undeveloped property outlined on Map C, totaling approximately 28 acres. This area is small enough to be easily walkable and large enough to create a true “Heart of Homer,” reflecting all the guiding principles adopted for Town Center development.

Land ownership

The Town Center area includes a mix of properties owned by public, private, and non-profit entities, as shown on Map C. In preliminary discussions, the City of Homer, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust, and Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI) have all indicated a willingness to consider trading land or adjusting lot lines to facilitate the development of Town Center.

Physical conditions

The Town Center site lies, as does the majority of Homer, on the footslopes between the upland Caribou Hills and Kachemak Bay. From Pioneer Avenue to the Sterling Highway, Town Center drops 80 feet in elevation, providing southern exposure and outstanding views of Kachemak Bay from several vantage points.

Soils are predominately slowly-draining. Designated wetlands make up nearly half of the Town Center site, acting as sponges to the large quantities of water runoff and below-ground seepage from the upland bluffs and hills.

Development is currently sited around the outer edge of the block where road frontage and utilities are constructed. Virtually no infrastructure exists on the vacant lands within Town Center.

Adjacent areas

Town Center lies in the heart of Homer’s Central Business District, as shown on Map A. Adjacent areas will influence and be influenced by Town Center development.

A residential neighborhood consisting primarily of small houses and businesses on small lots exists

directly to the east of Poopdeck Trail.

Pioneer Avenue, located directly to the north, is a mile-long commercial corridor with a number of popular shops, galleries, restaurants, and hotels. Sidewalks run the length of the street on both sides.

The Sterling Highway to the south has the highest traffic counts in the city, as it is the primary route to the Homer Spit. South of the highway near Town Center are several major attractions including the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, the Old Town art and commercial district, and Bishop’s Beach.

Main Street, to the west of Town Center, is a major north-south traffic corridor. Pedestrian traffic is light as there are currently no sidewalks. South of the Sterling Highway, Main Street provides access to Old Town.

The new Homer Public Library is anticipated to open in August 2006 at the east end of Hazel Avenue. The 5.5 acre site will include a greenway connection and trail running east to Town Center. Hazel Avenue was designed to accommodate on-street parking. A sidewalk runs the length of Hazel Avenue on the north side.

Homer population and economy

Within City limits, Homer’s estimated population in 2004 was 5,332, an increase of 9% over the previous year. Forecasts are for continued growth both within and outside City limits. Population of the larger Homer service area is estimated at approximately 12,000.

While commercial fishing continues to make a significant contribution to the local economy, Homer’s strongest job creation in recent years has been in industries that cater to tourism and/or provide services to the area population. Recent and anticipated construction projects in both the public and private sector attest to Homer’s growth in these areas.

Systems and Layers

system *n* an organized integrated whole made up of diverse but interrelated and interdependent parts.

This plan presents two viable design alternatives for Town Center. The design strategy used to create the two alternatives is based on a flexible framework of layered “systems.” The advantage of using this strategy is that instead of providing a fixed scenario or “freeze frame” of what Town Center should be, the systems approach recognizes that complete development may be up to 20 years away. Until then any number of development possibilities exist within the guidelines established by the Town Center Plan.

The six systems are designed as changeable and adaptable over time, though some systems are inherently more dynamic while others are more static. These systems operate independently and yet are complementary to one another. Such an approach accommodates economic, social, and political factors. New technologies and ecological considerations can be incorporated into the design of Town Center as needed, without having to totally rework building layouts, greenspace locations, trails, and roads. The flexibility of this design approach ensures that various needs are met as new needs arise throughout the public process.



Flows

This system includes all movement of water through the site. Water (including surface runoff, subsurface flows, rain or snowmelt) is carried through the site in a way that preserves or at least closely mimics natural function. Many drainages and wetlands exist on the site already. Preserving and utilizing natural drainage lowers utility costs, creates habitat, and is good for the environment.

Vegetated bioswales border impervious surfaces, such as parking lots and roadways. Bioswales move water on the surface, cleaning the water as it passes through vegetation. They are linked with walking paths.

Wetlands (constructed or natural) act as sponges in the floodplain, slowing down and soaking up flows. Not only do they provide a detention mechanism, they also add habitat and are integral to the green park spaces.



Terraces

The landform system organizes all surfaces and creates buildable areas. The terraces respect the natural landscape features of bluffs and plateaus that exist in the region as well as on the site. The terraces utilize the existing landform that resulted from previous development and thereby limit the amount of cut and fill needed to create buildable surfaces.

The large-scale terraces provide the framework for road, open space, and building development. The lowest impact development (parks and trails) is relegated to the steepest slopes.

Each individual building site has micro or small-scale terraces. These will guide building development.



Green + Open Spaces

This system includes open spaces, plazas, and park areas. They are described below in terms of the vegetative cover which primarily determines their use.

Forested areas with spruce trees create quiet places for relaxation and serve to buffer noise.

Open areas are covered with a variety of natural surfaces. They may or may not hold water, depending on the water table and time of year. Ideally some open spaces are designed to allow for foot traffic year round via boardwalks or bermed trails.

Pocket parks and hardscaped plazas have integrated vegetation and allow for year-round foot traffic. These are the most maintained and heavily traveled of the open spaces.

Systems and Layers, continued



Connections

This system is made up of all roads, bike and pedestrian paths, and future transit. These surfaces are distinguished by their materials and their function to move either car, bike, or foot traffic.

Primary and secondary roads are paved with asphalt or porous concrete. They generally move cars first and bikes second. Occasionally people on foot take over for parades and other events.

Sidewalks are generally adjacent to or within 20-feet of roads. They are made of concrete and primarily move people and other non-motorized slow-moving traffic.

Crosswalks and car-less streets carry people in a space typically created for vehicles. Vehicles pass through on occasion but special paving slows traffic and marks this surface as primarily pedestrian.

Urban trails are typically 10-foot wide, curving crushed stone or paved paths adjacent to thick vegetation and possibly moving water. They move foot and bike traffic traveling at a variety of paces.



Development Pads

This system consists of all areas developed with buildings and parking lots, including related vegetation for buffers, aesthetics, and stormwater drainage. Development guidelines will be consistent with the goals of this plan. The guide for development provided on page 12 suggests possible goals, indicators of achievement, and incentives.

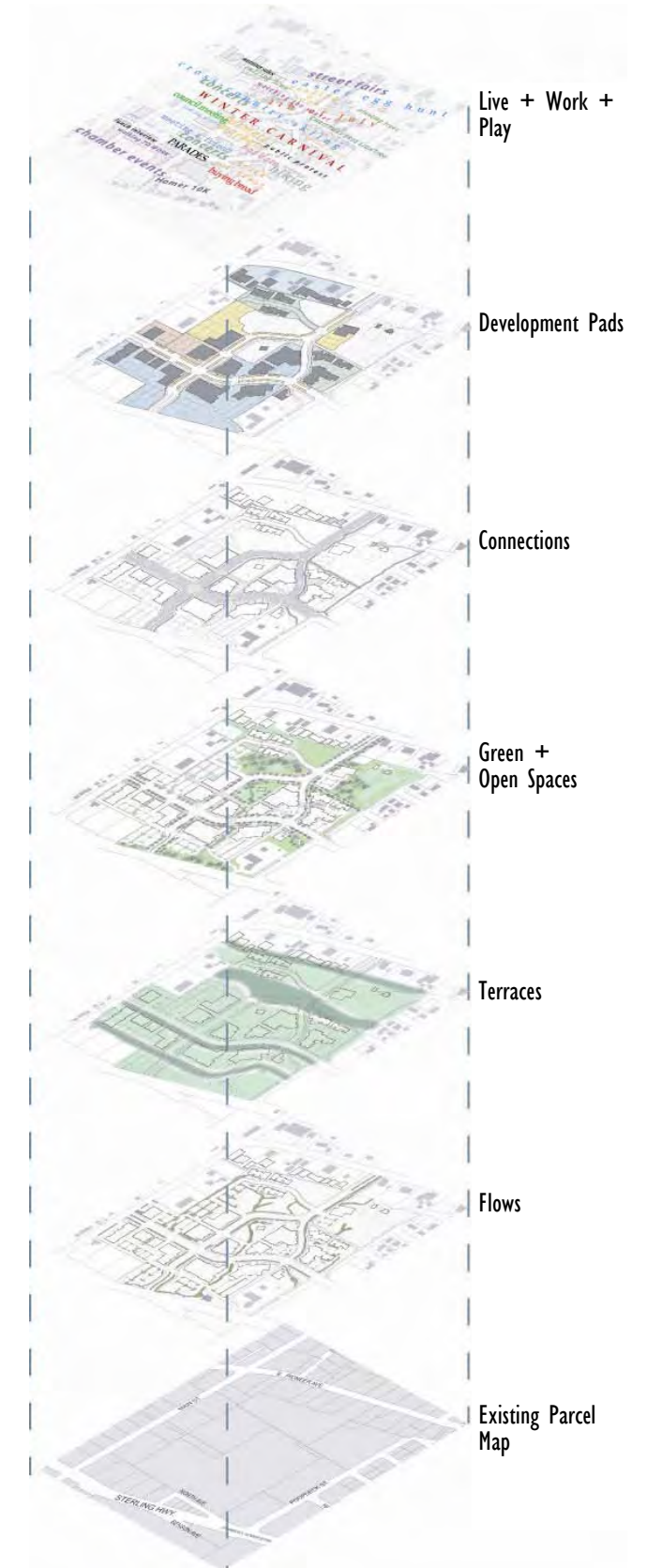
Bioswale (n) densely vegetated drainageway with gentle side slopes that collects and slowly conveys runoff flow downstream; allows suspended solids to settle, captures pollutants, and helps to prevent flooding.



Live + Work + Play

This system is the planned and spontaneous activities that occur at all times of the day and year in all of the different spaces. This system is made possible by all of the other systems.

Impervious surfaces (n) constructed surfaces—rooftops, sidewalks, roads, and parking lots—covered by impenetrable materials such as asphalt, concrete, brick, and stone which seal surfaces, repel water, and prevent precipitation and meltwater from infiltrating soils. Soils compacted by urban development are also highly impervious.



Town Center Development Guide



Above: Auto-scale development.

Right: Human scale development

Photos courtesy of Stacy Mitchell, Institute for Local Self Reliance



What is “human scale”?

In relation to architecture, buildings scaled to human physical capabilities have steps, doorways, railings, work surfaces, seating, shelves, fixtures, walking distances, and other features that fit well to the average person.

Human scale is sometimes violated to serve automotive scale. Commercial buildings that are designed to be legible from roadways assume a radically different shape. The human eye can distinguish about 3 objects or features per second. A pedestrian steadily walking 100 feet can perceive about 68 features; a driver passing the same frontage at 30 mph can perceive about six or seven features. Auto-scale buildings tend to be smooth and shallow, readable at a glance, simplified, and have signage with bigger letters and fewer words.

Development Goals	Indicators of Achievement	Possible Incentives
Sustainable landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate green and open space plan Provide green and open space Link to Trail Plan Use native plants Maintain landscape without pesticides and insecticides Utilize existing topography in landscaping Provide vegetated buffers between large expanses of parking Provide vegetated buffers between buildings and sidewalks/roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased floor-area ratio permitted Tax credits Increased building height
Human scale development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Siting responds to landscape features, preserving existing vegetation, drainage, grade, and views as much as possible Scale is oriented to adjacent primary and/or secondary streets Scale and massing are oriented to the human scale Attempts to reduce building scale and mass via smaller, clustered buildings; stacking uses; building into grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased floor-area ratio permitted Tax credits Increased building height
Lively streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buildings engage street with minimal or no setback Storefront windows along primary and secondary streets On-street parking provided in public right-of-way Human scale street and building lighting Streetscape furnishings and planting beds Only one row of angle-in parking permitted in front of buildings; most parking in rear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased floor-area ratio permitted Tax credits Increased building height
Decreased impervious surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint or shared parking Decreased amounts of contiguous parking Reduce impervious surface Multi-story parking Incorporate on-street and public parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased parking requirements City-matched contribution in-lieu parking funds
Natural stormwater drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing drainages and wetlands are maintained as much as possible; those lost to development are mitigated for on-site to provide same function (water quality and quantity) All surface runoff is cleaned on-site before exiting to drainage way Stormwater management interventions are integrated into site design and open spaces Interventions are integrated with adjacent property’s site design and open spaces, if possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased floor-area ratio permitted Tax credits Increased building height Decreased parking requirements
Good architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize green building/LEED standards Materials on building exterior consist of locally relevant material such as wood, stone, metal, or glass Exterior building elements reflect the local character—porches, shed roofs, perched platforms or decks Gracious human scale entry ways and public ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased floor-area ratio permitted Tax credits Increased building height Decreased parking requirements
Integrated development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed use development Provide secondary roads that link to primary roads Visually and experientially express concepts of water and earth in buildings and landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax credits Decreased parking requirements
Retail alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business owners participate in a local retail management alliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax credits Decreased parking requirements

Homer Town Center Design Details

Use of native plants



Homer's Town Center will achieve a cohesive look and feel with simple repeated planting patterns as illustrated in Designs A and B. These include:

1. planting street trees approximately every 30 feet along all rights-of-way
2. lining streets, walkways, and parking lots with vegetated bioswales
3. lining buildings with a buffer of shrubs and ground cover.

Native plants will guarantee a simple and readable planting pattern in Town Center. With native plants, maintenance costs will be lower, habitat for insects and birds will be created, and Town Center will be a visual, aesthetic, and environmental draw.

Flows follow function



Crushed stone walkway adjacent to a planted depression.



Planted bioswale near trail conveys stormwater.



Planted swale separates parking stalls and collects stormwater.



Constructed wetland in a park setting cleans water while serving as a water feature.



Sculptured expressions of water in an urban plaza.

Integrating stormwater detention into the Town Center is a bold move that saves on utility costs, creates habitat, and gives a unique identity to the center of Homer. The Town Center design challenges the idea that water must be banished to pipes and instead allows it to be preserved and integrated on the surface.

Images from Waterscapes by Dreiseitl, Grau, and Ludwig.

Design Details, continued

Building styles - Think local



Building architecture in Homer's Town Center should be simple, attractive, functional, and designed to human scale. Within the flexible framework for Town Center, the development pad system allows for broad interpretation but encourages building design to consider size, scale, siting, and materials. The plan for Town Center does not specify a building style or theme, but in addition to the Community Design Manual guidelines, encourages architecture to do the following:

1. Use green building design techniques, locally harvested materials, and energy-wise sustainable methods. The U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards offer good rules of thumb.
2. Have the major expression of the building façade consist of wood, stone, metal, and/or glass. These materials effectively correspond to the local surroundings and history—the forests, the glacial outwash, the water, and the fishing industry.
3. Feature exterior elements such as wrap-around porches, shed or sloped roofs, decks, and perched platforms and structures set on pylons. All of these are building forms that speak to the local character in a new and creative way.
4. Make every effort to orient structures to frame the outstanding views, utilize the existing slopes, and be scaled graciously to the average pedestrian. To that effect, skinny, multi-story buildings with entrances on multiple levels are favored over single-story broad structures.

Design Details, continued

Streetscapes



Thick Streets: two-lane primary streets with on-street parking, the urban trail surrounded on both sides by vegetated swales and buffers, and a sidewalk with street trees.

Park and Boulevard Streets: two-lane primary streets with central vegetated median, sidewalks lined with bioswales, street trees, and an inside shrub buffer.

Skinny Streets: narrow two-lane secondary streets with narrow sidewalks.

People Streets: narrow two-lane width tertiary streets paved with materials such as brick or cobblestone that may extend across intersections. Limited traffic flow is allowed but the entire surface is intended for pedestrians.

Within the Connections system, four street types guide the development of the public rights-of-way. Many variations are possible within each type.

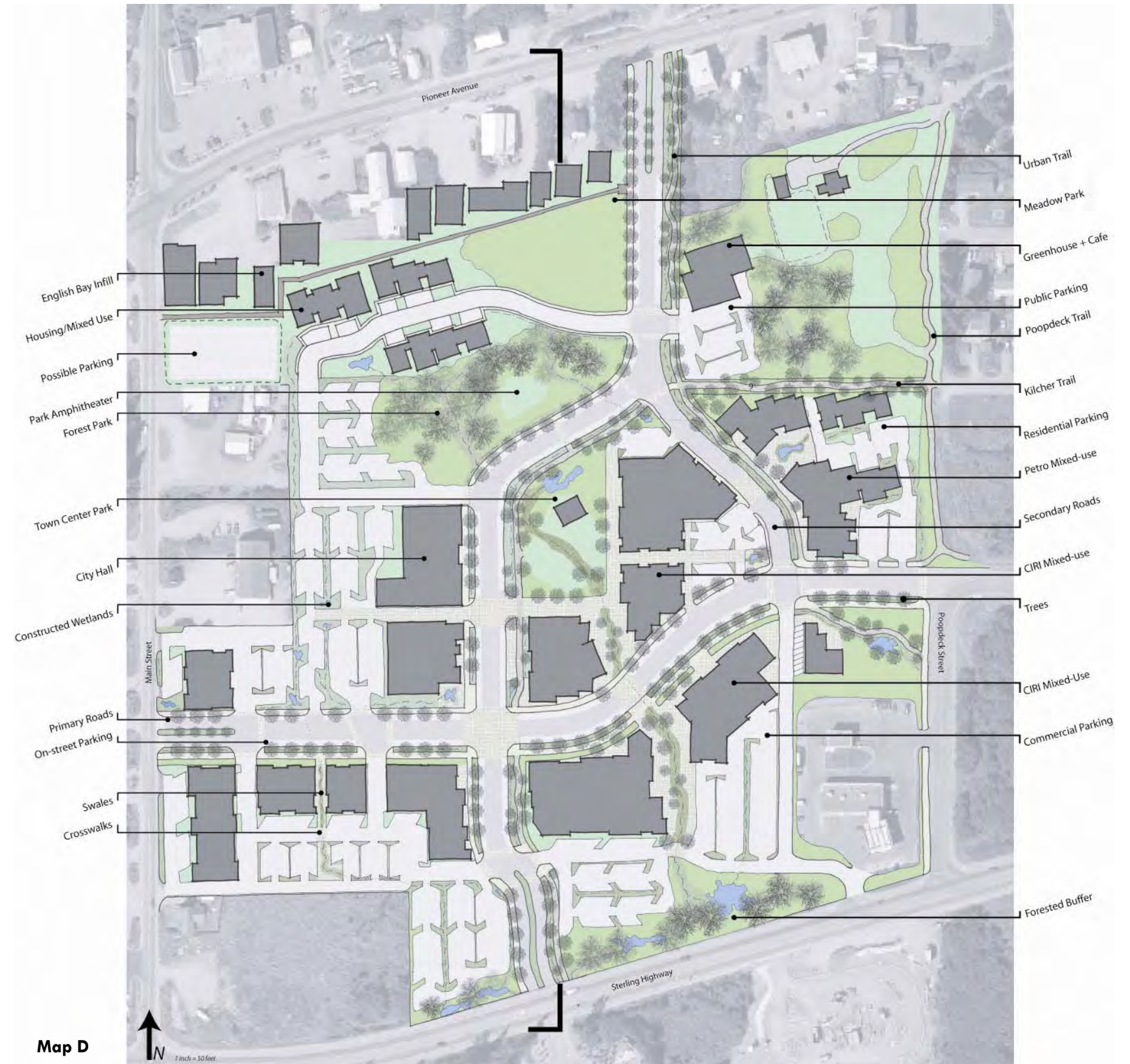
No matter the street type, each street should be considered a design surface for detailing with benches, planters, street trees, special paving, café areas, creative stormwater conveyers, and public art.

Homer Town Center Visioning – Design A

Design A shows how the Town Center may develop if the following major moves are made:

- The City builds a new City Hall (22K) within five years of start.
- A view corridor is established that preserves the best views from the public open space.
- Building footprints are small (25K or less), but multiple stories; buildings are clustered.
- The majority of buildings provide a mix of small businesses, housing, office, and retail.
- Roads are aligned to work with the major existing landforms.
- On-street parking is allowed seasonally wherever possible.
- The parking ordinance is amended for joint parking and urban residential parking, and takes into account on-street parking.
- Land swaps occur between the City, Petro Marine, CIRI, and possibly English Bay Corp. Land is swapped for road access, open space, and other reasons.
- Owners of adjacent properties, such as English Bay Corp. and Petro Marine, participate in Town Center development within 10 years of start.

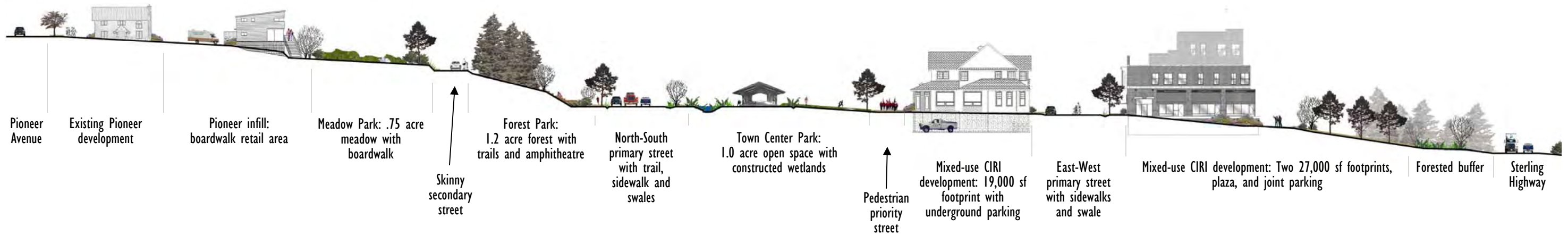
- Supplementing existing 1.5 acre park on KHLT parcel, roughly two acres of forest and peat meadow are preserved from development in perpetuity by becoming public parks; an additional one acre park is built.
- An urban trail runs along public rights-of-way, through park and future commercial areas, connecting Pioneer Avenue, the Poopdeck and Kilcher Trails, and Islands and Ocean Center.
- A City-run greenhouse is built on the Kachemak Heritage Land Trust parcel, adjacent to the community garden.
- Public/private partnerships and developer incentives allow for integration of natural drainage strategies that tie together stormwater drainage and open space for the entire site. Most developers participate while a few choose to handle their own stormwater on their individual parcels.
- A 20-foot forested buffer is required for development along the Sterling Highway.



Design A, continued

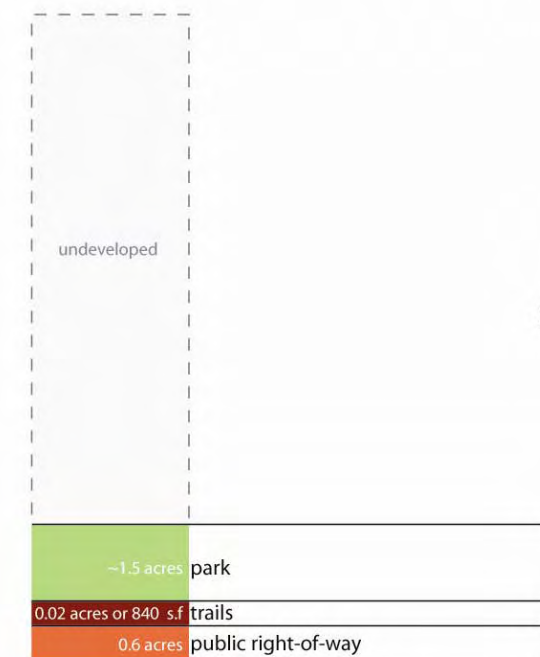
Section view

(north to south, through center of area shown on Map D)

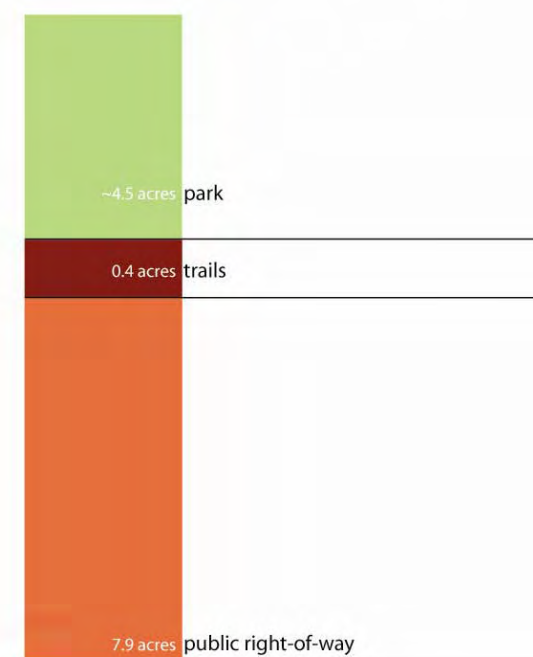


Public open space

pre-development uses



post-development uses

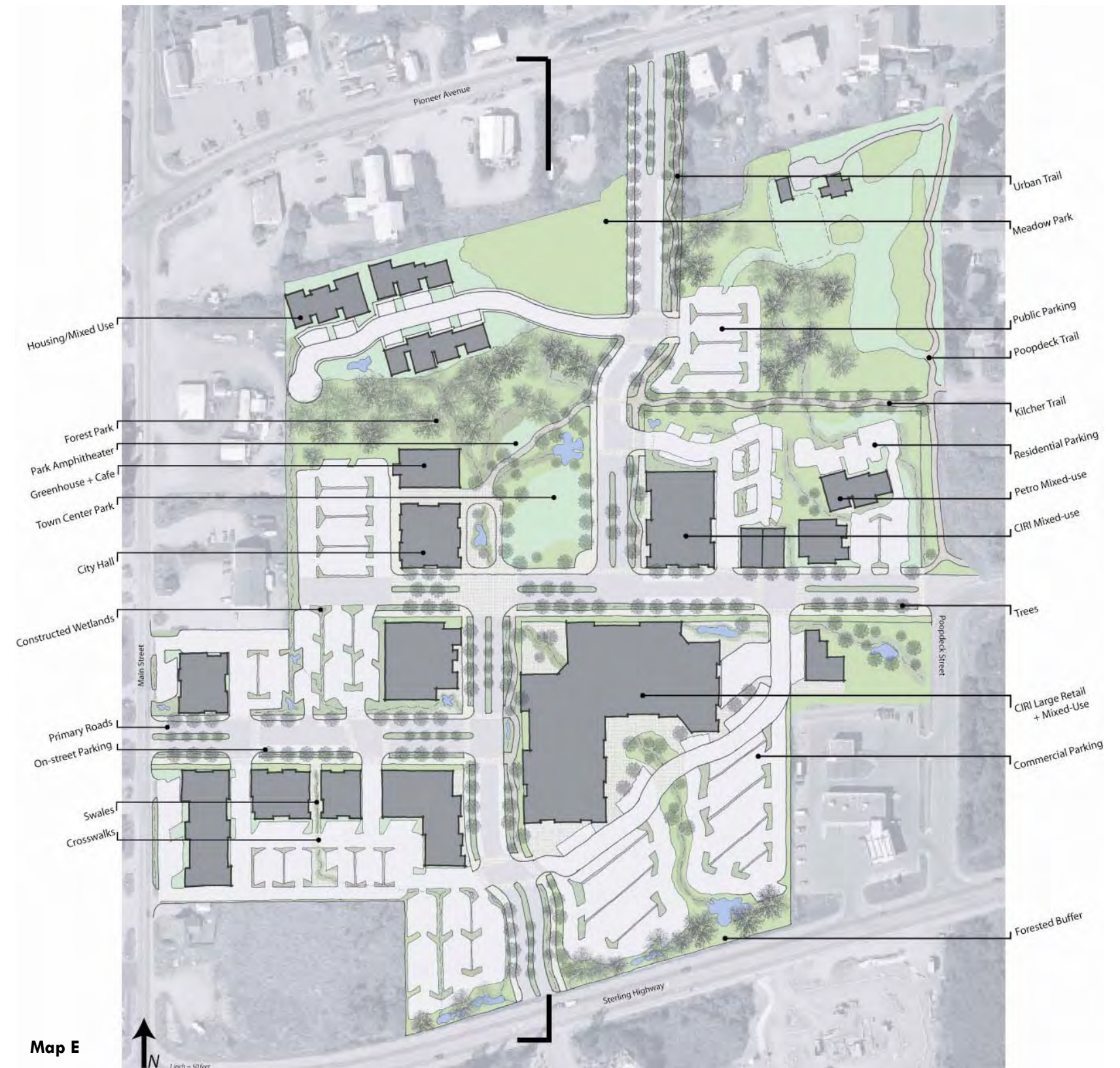


Homer Town Center Visioning - Design B

Design B shows how the Town Center may develop if the following major moves are made:

- The City builds a new City Hall (22K building, two stories) with adjacent greenhouse.
- Views are preserved by limiting lower elevation building heights.
- Building footprints are a range of small (25K or less) and large (66K).
- The majority of buildings provide a mix of retail, housing, and office space. A large major retailer occupies the 66K building.
- Roads are straighter and are less integrated into major existing landforms.
- Boulevard streets are constructed through Town Center on the primary streets.
- The parking ordinance is amended for joint parking.
- Land swaps occur only between CIRI and the City, who swap flat open space for developable land near Pioneer Avenue.
- Adjacent properties, such as English Bay Corp. and Petro Marine, do not participate in Town Center development or participate in a minimal way.

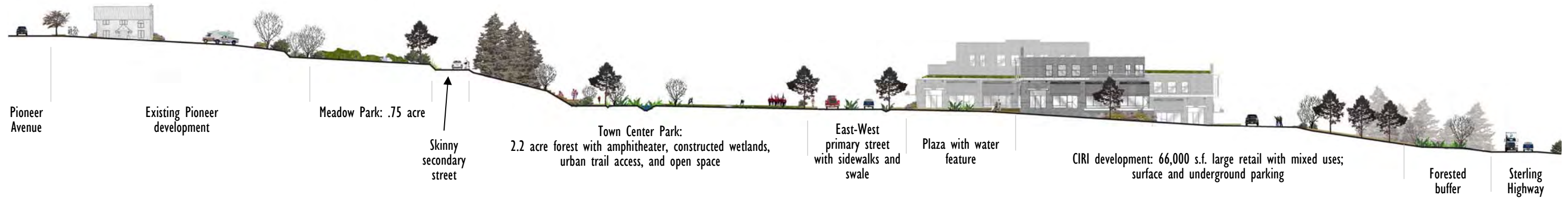
- Supplementing existing 1.5 acre park on KHLT parcel, roughly two acres of contiguous, open flexible space and forest are preserved from development by becoming public parks.
- Roughly one acre of peat meadow is preserved from development.
- An urban trail runs along public rights-of-way, through park and future commercial areas, connecting Pioneer Avenue, the Poopdeck and Kilcher Trails, and Islands and Ocean Center.
- Kachemak Heritage Land Trust allows development of a portion of their parcel for public park and community garden parking.
- Each major developer integrates a public water feature and/or uses natural drainage strategies for mitigating against some or all of a parcel's stormwater surface runoff.
- a 20-foot forested buffer is required for development along the Sterling Highway.



Design B, continued

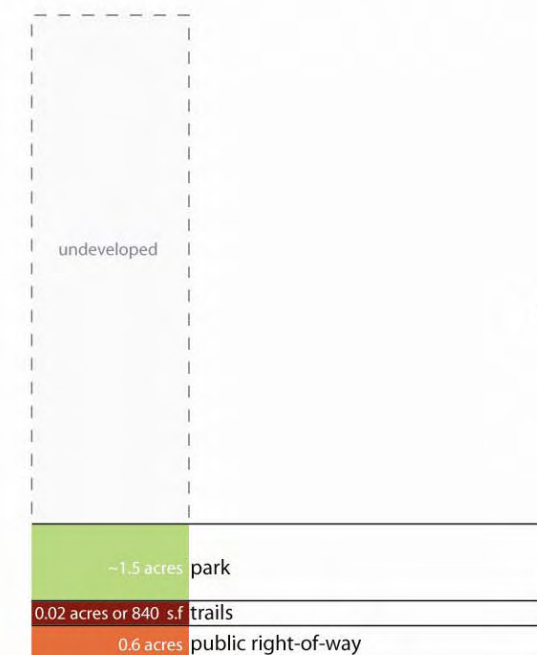
Section view

(north to south, through center of area shown on Map E)

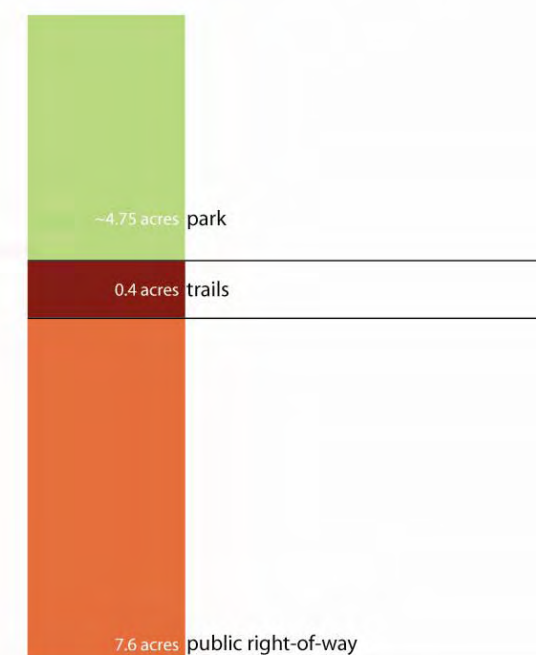


Public open space

pre-development uses



post-development uses



Homer Town Center - Sample Phasing Plan



0 - 5 years

- Build City Hall
- Establish routes for rights-of-way, trails, and sidewalks
- Build primary roadways with sidewalks, crosswalks, and utilities
- Build the urban trail
- Designate park spaces
- Establish view corridors (if desired)
- Initiate private development
- Preserve and enhance existing drainage areas



5 - 10 years

- Add street trees and street furnishings to primary roadways
- Enhance park spaces for events (amphitheater and pavilion)
- Enhance parks
- Add public parking
- Build secondary roads with sidewalks, crosswalks, and utilities
- Enhance open plaza spaces with signage, planting beds, and street furnishings
- Continue private development
- Establish forested buffer along Sterling Highway



10 - 15 years

- Finalize secondary trails with surfacing and signage
- Continue private development
- Continue to enhance parks
- Enhance forested buffer along the Sterling Highway
- Continue to preserve and enhance existing drainage areas



15 - 20 years

- Continue to enhance trails
- Continue private development
- Continue to enhance and maintain parks
- Continue to preserve and enhance existing drainage areas
- Complete greenhouse

Action Plan

Envisioning and planning Homer’s Town Center has been a long and complex process, and actually establishing Town Center as a successful development will undoubtedly be an even greater challenge—and even more rewarding. The Action Plan that follows is intended to help maintain momentum toward what could well be one of the most important opportunities Homer will have to promote economic development while enhancing the quality of life in our community.

As the project progresses, additions and revisions will be made to the action plan. Work on the tasks should begin by early 2006. Timeframe for completion will vary as shown in the right column. While City of Homer departments will take the lead in many of the action item tasks, involvement of non-profit organizations, landowners, and other interested community members will be important in moving Town Center development forward.

“Planning for change—for desirable change—must be aimed at promoting development that will meet local needs. At the same time, planning should discourage development that will reduce the community’s fiscal strength, physical appearance, or environmental quality.”

— from *The Small Town Planning Handbook*, published by the American Planning Association, 1995

Action/Task - 0-5 Years	Lead Department/ Agency	Time Frame
Designate location and formulate strategy for building new City Hall in Town Center	City Manager/City Council	0-1 year
Revise City parking requirements to accommodate on-street parking, parking pockets, shared parking, and off-site parking	Planning Department/ Planning Commission	0-1 year
Amend setback requirements to bring buildings closer to the street	Planning Department/ Planning Commission	0-1 year
Review and revise building height requirements to provide developers more latitude in building design. If heights exceed fire protection abilities, suitable fire suppression systems will be required	Planning Department/ Planning Commission	0-1 year
Continue development of the Homer Boulevards document	Public Works Department/ Road Standards Committee	0-1 year
Raise awareness and solicit support from Homer business community	City Council/Economic Development Commission	0-1 year
Develop incentives to encourage community art	City Manager/City Council	0-1 year
Facilitate property owners interested in waterscapes to conduct soil and hydrologic analysis to determine siting of natural springs and water systems	Public Works Department	0-1 year
Apply Community Design Manual guidelines to all development in the Town Center area, as consistent with Title 21	Planning Department/ Planning Commission	0-1 year
Develop first trail through Town Center, connecting Poopdeck Trail to Main Street through KHLT and City of Homer properties	KHLT/Parks & Recreation Commission	Ongoing
Facilitate land trades and purchases as requested by property owners	City Manager/City Council	Ongoing
Establish routes and acquire rights-of-way for roads, trails, and sidewalks, as budget allows	Planning Department and Commission/Public Works Department	1-5 years
Assist property owners in the preservation of existing drainages	Public Works Department	1-5 years

(continued)

Action Plan, continued

Conduct comprehensive housing and retail development analyses	Economic Development Commission	1-5 years
Research the feasibility of creating a cooperative retail alliance	Economic Development Commission/Landowners	1-5 years
Revise road standards to accommodate traffic calming	Public Works Department/ Transportation Advisory Committee	1-5 years
Build primary roadways with sidewalks, crosswalks, and utilities, as required by development	Public Works Department/ Landowners	1-5 years
Work with developers to build the north/south urban trail	Public Works Department/	1-5 years
Encourage property owners in protecting and enhancing drainage areas	Landowners/Public Works	Ongoing
Build City Hall	City Manager/City Council	1-5 years
Create and finance a Parks and Recreation Department, if development and funding allows	City Manager/City Council	1-5 years

“If a municipality wants a town center, it must come through with both the money and policy, often in infrastructure improvements and the development of parking and one or more cultural or civic facilities. This will attract substantially greater investment from the private sector.”

— from “Town Watch” by Thomas L. Lee, published in *Urban Land* magazine, May 2001

Action/Task - 5-10 Years	Lead Department/ Agency	Time Frame
Work with developers to establish buffer along Sterling Highway	Planning/Public Works	Ongoing
Develop market strategies to assist property owners in attracting businesses, as requested	Economic Development Commission	5-6 years
Encourage developers to add street trees and furnishings	Parks & Recreation	5-7 years
Build secondary roadways with sidewalks, crosswalks, and utilities, as required by development	Public Works Department/ Landowners	5-7 years
Build public parking. Consider the construction of public parking in conjunction with the construction of City facilities.	Public Works Department/ Landowners	5-10 years
Construct parks with outdoor furniture and restroom facilities	City Manager/City Council	5-8 years
Enhance trail system and parks, as financing allows	Public Works/Parks & Recreation	Ongoing

Action/Task - 10-15 Years	Lead Department/ Agency	Time Frame
Encourage the construction of an amphitheater and pavilion	Parks & Recreation/ Landowners	10-15 years

APPENDIX A: FUNDING SOURCES

“What gets financed is what gets built.”

—from *Getting To Smart Growth II: 100 More Policies for Implementation*, published by the International City/County Management Association, 2004

In addition to conventional bank financing for private development, a variety of innovative funding mechanisms could be useful in the development of Town Center. What follows is not meant to be an all-inclusive list of funding opportunities. The Alaska Community and Economic Resource Guide (<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/edrg/EDRGBuildBrowseList.cfm>) offers an extensive list of funding opportunities for small businesses, Native-owned businesses, non-profits, and government.

USDA Rural Development Loans

The USDA business and industry program can provide development credit in towns with populations of 50,000 or less, with priority going to places with populations of 25,000 or fewer. USDA may guarantee up to 70-80% of a loan and can provide long-term financing for real estate improvements. Funds may be used for purchase of land, buildings and equipment, working capital, and refinancing debts (in certain cases).

USDA Rural Utility Service - Zero Interest Loan

The RUS program is used to promote rural economic development projects, including but not limited to project feasibility studies, start-up costs, and incubator projects. RUS makes the loan or grant to the local RUS borrower, who in turn may re-lend money at 0% interest or transfer the grant to the third-party business. Zero interest loans and grants may be made to any RUS borrower, and then can be made directly to a business.

EDA Grants

The Economic Development Administration offers the following programs: Public Works, Economic Adjustment Assistance Program, Research and National Technical Assistance, Local Technical Assistance, Partnership Planning, University Center, and Trade Adjustment Assistance. The focus of EDA-funded programs is typically to create jobs in economically distressed communities.

Evergreen Community Development Association

The non-profit Evergreen Community Development Association administers the U.S. Small Business Administration's 504 Loan Program designed to provide long-term, low fixed-rate financing to small businesses to acquire owner-occupied real estate, machinery, or equipment for expansion or modernization. The program is designed to help small businesses expand and create full-time permanent jobs in their communities.

Business Improvement District (BID)

A BID is a group of property and/or business owners who pay an additional tax assessment in return for improvements such as parks and improved lighting in the district. The BID is a private sector organization; it is not regulated or managed by a government entity, although the tax collection mechanism is through the local tax process. An example of a BID can be found in Durango, Colorado. (See <http://downtowndurango.net/BID/index.html>)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Alaska is one of 46 states that allows the formation of a TIF district. TIF legislation allows local governments to set up TIF districts, issue bonds to finance development, and use any new taxes generated from the new development or increased values (tax increment) to pay off the bond. It is widely used in some areas of the country.

TIF captures additional tax revenue (without changing the tax rates) that may be generated by new development to finance the facilities needed to make new development possible.

Homer Accelerated Roads Program (HARP)

The Homer Accelerated Roads Program is a combined local funding source of dedicated sales tax revenues and assessments to upgrade City streets. As stated in the founding resolution for HARP, the intent of the program is to reconstruct local sub-standard city roads and/or upgrade existing city

roads, thereby reducing maintenance costs, improving access, increasing property values, and improving the quality of life.

Homer Accelerated Water & Sewer Program (HAWSP)

The Homer Accelerated Water & Sewer Program was established with the goal of improving the health and welfare of the citizens of Homer by connecting residences to City water and/or sewer, thereby increasing the number of users on the system, increasing property values, and improving the quality of life.

Local Improvement Districts (LIDs)

Local Improvement Districts are a financing mechanism by which the City can acquire, construct, and install needed public improvements on behalf of the property owners. All properties benefiting from the improvements share in the initial cost. LIDs are formed through a petition process and require approval of the City Council.

City Land Leasing/Sale

The City of Homer owns various parcels of land obtained through foreclosures, etc. As the Town Center comes to fruition it may be prudent for the City to lease or sell some of this property.

The City of Homer lease policy states that the City will lease land when it is in the City's best interest to do so. The City shall seek to maximize the value of its assets and lease property for the highest and best use. Proceeds from the sale or lease of City land in Town Center should be used to further development of Town Center.

Small Business Development Grants

Numerous small business development grant opportunities are available. The Alaska Community and Economic Development Resource Guide lists many of these resources.

APPENDIX B: CITY OF HOMER RESOLUTION 05-95(A)

**CITY OF HOMER
HOMER, ALASKA**

RESOLUTION 05-95(A)

Novak

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL ACKNOWLEDGING THE TOWN CENTER DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT - PLAN, AND DIRECTING THE INITIATION OF THE FIRST ACTION ITEMS IN THE TOWN CENTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

WHEREAS, Council adopted Resolution 03-90(S) on July 28, 2003, authorizing the formation of the Town Center Development Committee and supporting its mission; and

WHEREAS, Two or three proposals were to be recommended to the Planning Commission by January 2005; and

WHEREAS, The Committee was to develop concrete recommendations for Town Center thematic approaches and elements by January 2006; and

WHEREAS, The Committee was to continue to facilitate discussion among interested citizens and act in an advisory capacity at the direction of the Planning Commission until the Planning Commission made its final recommendation to the Homer City Council; and

WHEREAS, The area under consideration by the Town Center Development Committee is that area within the boundaries of Main Street and Heath Street, and Pioneer Avenue and the Sterling Highway; and

WHEREAS, Council confirmed the Mayor's appointments to the Committee via Memorandum 03-145 on August 25, 2003, with amendments approved via Memorandum 03-186; Memorandum 04-33(A) and Memorandum 05-20; and

WHEREAS, Council granted an extension of the deadline for proposals via Resolution 05-16(A) for an interim report available by March 31, 2005 and a final report available by the end of June 2005; and

WHEREAS, The Planning Commission, during their September 7, 2005 Regular Meeting, made no changes to the recommendations they received from the Town Center Development Committee; and

WHEREAS, Planning recommends that the Town Center Development Plan be adopted as an update to Homer's Comprehensive Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council hereby Acknowledges the Town Center Development Committee Report - Plan **with no preferred development alternative** and hereby directs initiation of the first action items in the plan **with no specific priority** as follows with specific regard to the Town Center and the development thereof:

1. City Manager and City Council formulate strategy for building new City Hall in the Town Center.

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Resolution 05-95(A)
City of Homer

2. Planning amend Community Design Manual guidelines to apply all development in the Town Center area.

3. Parks and Recreation develop first trail through Town Center, connecting Poopdeck Trail to Main Street.

4. City Council and Chamber of Commerce facilitate business development.

5. Public Works and Road Standards Committee finalize Boulevards document.

6. Planning revise parking requirements to accommodate on street parking, parking pockets, shared parking and offsite parking.

7. Planning amend set back requirements to bring buildings closer to the street.

8. Planning review and revise building height requirements.

9. Public Works conduct soils and hydro logic analysis to determine siting for natural springs and water systems such as ponds and streams.

10. Public Arts Committee develop incentives to encourage community art.

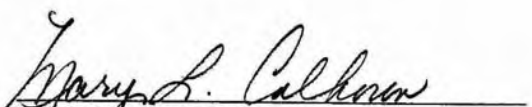
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an Ordinance be placed on the October 10, 2005 Council's Regular Meeting agenda for introduction of an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to add the Town Center Development Plan as an update thereof.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of Homer, Alaska this 26th day of September, 2005.

CITY OF HOMER

ATTEST:


JAMES C. HORNADAY, MAYOR


MARY L. CALHOUN, CMC, CITY CLERK

Fiscal Note: Staff, Advisory Body, Committee and volunteer time.

APPENDIX C: CITY OF HOMER ORDINANCE 06-08(A)

**CITY OF HOMER
HOMER, ALASKA**

City Council

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Ordinance 06-08(A)
City of Homer

ORDINANCE 06-08(A)

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA ADDING THE TOWN CENTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN TO THE 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, The City of Homer, as a First Class City inside a second class borough, has prepared a Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, The Kenai Peninsula Borough adopted the "1999 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update," by Ordinance 99-64; and

WHEREAS, Homer City Council adopted Resolution 05-95(A), Acknowledging the Town Center Development Committee Report - Plan and Directing the Initiation of First Action Items in the Town Center Development Plan, on Monday, September 26, 2005 during a Regular City Council Meeting; and

WHEREAS, Town Center Development Plan will guide the development of Homer's Town Center; and

WHEREAS, The Planning Commission has reviewed the Town Center Plan and conducted a public hearings; and

WHEREAS, The Homer City Council, based upon the recommendation(s) of the Homer Advisory Planning Commission and the Town Center Development Committee recommend that the Kenai Peninsula Borough adopt the Homer Town Center Development Plan as a part of the Homer Comprehensive Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the City of Homer:

Section 1. That recommendation is hereby made to the Kenai Peninsula Borough that the Homer Town Center Plan, as amended, be added to the Homer Comprehensive Plan.

Section 2. Town Center Development Plan, as amended, is attached as Exhibit A.

Section 3. This Ordinance is a non Code Ordinance and is of a permanent nature.

PASSED AND ENACTED by the Homer City Council this 28th day of March, 2006.

CITY OF HOMER

James C. Hornaday
JAMES C. HORNADAY, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Mary I. Calhoun
MARY I. CALHOUN, CMC, CITY CLERK

First Reading: Formerly Ordinance 05-53, Planning Commission Process Completed, Reintroduced February 13, 2006
Public Hearing: February 27, 2006 and March 28, 2006
Second Reading: March 28, 2006
Effective Date: March 29, 2006

Ayes: 6
Noes: 0
Abstain: 0
Absent: 0

Reviewed and approved as to form and content:

Walt E. Wrede
Walt E. Wrede, City Manager

Date: 4/4/06

Gordon J. Tans
Gordon Tans, City Attorney

Date: 10 April 2006

Fiscal Note: NA

/mlc