

## ■ 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, and 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. 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-profit 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. 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 fire fighting, wildfire fighting, marine fire fighting, 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 3 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 8. 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.

The fire department manages one station in the City of Homer as well as eleven apparatus. The Department also works closely with Kachemak City and Kenai Peninsula Borough's Kachemak Emergency Services Area (KESA). Kachemak City is a Class 2 City with one fire station (at their Community Center) that houses Tanker 1. KESA is a Borough Service Area including the area outside of Homer and Kachemak City up to the Anchor Point Fire Service Area. KESA currently has a station located near McNeil Canyon, approximately Mile 11 East End Road, which houses two engines, a tanker, an ambulance, brush truck, and utility truck. Kachemak City contracts annually with Homer for Fire and EMS.

The majority of calls responded to by the department are for emergency medical services (80 percent). The 2007 adopted budget for the Homer Volunteer Fire Department was \$1,115,031, approximately 5 percent of the City's overall budget.

### **Near-term Priorities**

The fire department's top priority needs relate to facility improvements. Built in 1980 and upgraded approximately 10 years ago, the department's current facility is reaching the end of its functional life span and needs to be upgraded or replaced. Also, the department would like to have an unstaffed satellite facility above town on Skyline Drive in order to increase their capability to respond to fires in this high-danger area. 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. As Homer continues to grow and develop, the need for code enforcement capabilities is steadily increasing. Enforcement issues are already a concern. Given the recent trends in Homer with the increase in housing construction and residential development, hiring a plans examiner will increase the city's capacity to meet growing demand. Presently this service is deferred to the State.

### **Implementation Strategies**

1. Build a new station and training facility.
2. The Department and City shall develop a plan for a satellite facility on Skyline Drive.
3. Hire or provide for a Homer Fire Department Fire Marshal or Building Plans Examiner.
4. Increase capacity to deal with marine related fire events.
5. Continue to maintain and improve ISO ratings.

### **Long-term Needs**

There is a general need for greater capacity to respond to area demands. The timing and magnitude of this need will be driven by population growth and increases in the fire service area. 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 as well as increased numbers of tourist cruise ships. If the harbor is expanded, the fire department could use a boat in order to deal with an oil leak or ship fire related to an expanded harbor. 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**

1. Increase the volunteer core from 30 to a target of 50 people.
2. Obtain better equipment.
3. Improve the department's ability to deal with marine related fire and safety issues.
4. Continue to focus on training.
5. Continue to address and update emergency plans such as the All Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**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 and criminal investigations, managing the Homer Jail, and animal control.

The police department staffing includes twelve full-time police officers, seven full-time dispatchers, and six jail officers. To receive training, department employees attend the Police Academy in Sitka and are often sent out of state for additional training opportunities. The department emphasizes training and has sent an officer to advanced accident investigation training. Despite training opportunities, the police department has a recruitment and retention problem and has seen a large reduction in the number of people being attracted to law enforcement careers. Officers are in need of new automobiles. The current fleet is aged beyond any reasonable expectation of service.

The department's boundaries and responsibilities do not extend outside of the city limits. The Homer Police Department has a good working relationship with the State Troopers and the agencies support one another when necessary. The highest demand on officers is felt in the summertime due to the large volume of visitors to Homer.

The crime rate in Homer is relatively low, consisting mostly of traffic offenses and drug and alcohol activity. In terms of major offences, 80 percent of crime is related to vandalism and theft. Violent crime is very low. Computer-related crime has increased recently and has had an impact on department staffing because the investigation for this type of crime is very labor intensive. The department has had to shift more staff to investigation work. In addition to criminal investigation, crime solving, and general patrolling, staff also engages in enforcement of City Council ordinances. New ordinances have recently been imposed relating to protection of Homer's fragile beach ecosystem as well as noise disturbances. The police department responds to ordinance violations on a complaint call basis.

The 2007 adopted budget for the Homer Police Department was \$2,971,715, approximately 14 percent of the City's overall budget.

**Near-term Priorities**

**Implementation Strategies**

1. Increase both the patrol and dispatch staff to better respond to Homer's growth and change.
  - A. Increase staffing levels seasonally with consideration of adding a dedicated Homer Spit patrol officer for the summer months.
  - B. Develop and implement a plan that addresses the department's retention and recruitment issues.
2. Implement reasonable vehicle replacement plan.
3. Upgrade technology and information systems as they become available.

## Long-term Needs

There is a need for a larger physical structure to serve as police department operations headquarters. The building was constructed in the late 1970's and added onto in 1980. Another remodel of the building is currently taking place; however, the structure is nearing the end of its planned lifetime and has outgrown capacity. While the current structure is inadequate, the police department feels it can operate safely for the next couple of years. The existing site of the police department buildings is not large enough to accommodate a larger structure. The police department will need to build a new building in another location or adapt and reuse an existing structure in town. Another option may be for the police department to work with the fire department to develop a Public Safety/Emergency Services Facility. Since both departments are in need of new structures out of which to operate, a joint facility may be the most cost effective.

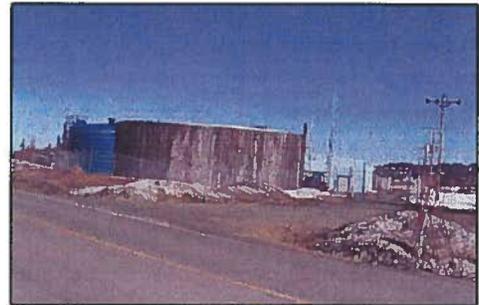
## Implementation Strategies

1. Build a new police department building.

**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 (DPW). 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 master plan, approximately 64 percent of the occupied homes in the city are served by the water system and approximately 54 percent are served by the sewer system.



## Water System

Homer operates a Class A public water system. Water is supplied from a dammed surface water source which forms the 35-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. A recent study on the Bridge Creek Reservoir indicates that this source has capacity limitations for supplying the community's water needs in the future, especially during dry years.

Seasonal summer population fluctuation and increased summer water needs cause summer demands to nearly double the wintertime water production. During times when demand outpaces production, water from the storage reservoirs must be used to meet peaks. Projections from the 2006 Water and Sewer Master Plan report average winter water production is currently at 0.5 mgd and will grow to approximately 1 mgd by 2025. Average summer demands are currently around 0.8 mgd and will

grow to approximately 1.9 mgd by 2025. Peak summer demands are currently around 1.3 mgd and may grow to nearly 3 mgd by 2025.

A new water treatment plant is now under construction. Treated water is distributed and stored in five water storage tanks which have approximately 1,160,200 gallons of operational capacity. These water storage tanks serve as treated water reservoirs for community water demands and fire emergencies.

The water distribution system consists of approximately 40 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 16 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 reservoir to town. The concentration of the system to the lower areas of town is not a function of engineering but rather of the current density of development. Approximately 1,430 customers are served. There are also 298 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 reservoir is also hauled to many residences outside of Homer city limits. Bulk water hauled to holding tanks accounts for approximately 20 million gallons/year of the water production at the water treatment plant.

### **Sewer System**

Homer operates a deep shaft wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The wastewater plant capacity is 880,000 gallons per day for peak flow. Homer has an intra-city agreement with Kachemak City to provide sewer service. Currently, the WWTP treats an average daily flow of approximately 390,000 gallons per day. However, summer population influxes and intense rain storms which contribute to inflow and infiltration can substantially increase flow to the plant to as much as 1.7 million gallons per day.

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., manhole lids, roof leaders, foundation drains, or connection to the stormwater system). Infiltration is defined as groundwater entering the system through cracks, faulty connections, or other openings. The study found inflow and infiltration to be a significant contributor to the overall wastewater collected. During a typical rain storm as much as 3 percent of the overall collection may be attributed to inflow and infiltration. During major storm events it is thought that over 1 million gallons of flow may be attributed by infiltration and inflow.

The wastewater collection system consists of approximately 37 miles of buried gravity sewer mains. Pipe materials consist of asbestos concrete, ductile iron, and polyvinyl chloride (PVC). About half of the system is constructed with asbestos concrete pipe, especially in the oldest sections built in approximately 1970. These older sections of pipe seem to be major contributors to inflow and infiltration. At one time, cast iron was used for sewer mains, but these lines are no longer active. 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 1,366 customers, 956 of which are residential. Parts of Kachemak City are also served by the system under an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Homer.

Homer maintains seven sewage pump stations. Two additional lift stations serve private septic systems on the Homer Spit. Lift stations are used to pump sewage from topographical low points to higher portions of the gravity system. There are approximately 8.3 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.

Many Homer residents and business owners not connected to the piped community system use on-site wastewater disposal systems. According to the Master Sewer and Water Plan, 47 percent of residents have on-site systems. Soil conditions and perched groundwater levels in Homer are not ideal for on-site systems and many are believed to function poorly.

### **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 also reduce demands on the City sewer system and individual septic systems.

### **Implementation Strategies**

1. Provide incentives for water conservation.
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.
3. Determine and plan for some limited near-term sewer system improvements that include sewer system main repair and rehabilitation for reduction of infiltration.
4. Enact an inflow reduction program.
5. 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. For instance, developing a source in a new location could induce growth into new areas served by the water line.
6. Enact a better cost-share plan for the extension of water and sewer services.

### **Long-term Needs**

The sewer system is judged to have adequate capacity to meet projected needs and does not require any major improvements.

**Objective D: PORT & HARBOR**—Continue to improve the infrastructure and services of the Port and Harbor 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. As of 2007, 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. Their 2007 budget was \$3,347,344.

### Near-term Priorities

### Implementation Strategies

Many of the projects outlined in Homer's Capital Improvement Program 2007-2012 relate to Port and Harbor activities. Five of the top fifteen CIP priorities are Port and Harbor Projects.

1. Expand the Deep Water Dock. A concept study was completed in 2004 and Phase 1, proposed in the CIP, would widen the existing dock to 88 feet and increase overall length to 744 feet. A driving factor for this dock improvement is to create a facility that can better receive cargo thereby reducing freight costs for goods coming to Homer. Currently most freight is trucked in from Anchorage.
2. Create an East Boat Harbor. This new facility would augment the existing harbor which is essentially full. 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.
3. Pave and improve Freight Dock Road. The improved road is intended to provide upgraded access to the Deep Water Dock and encourage development of a 30-acre marine industrial area on the Spit. In particular, the Port and Harbor would like to attract additional custom fish processing.

4. Address general harbor maintenance and erosion control.
5. Complete the Homer Spit Trail and harbor pathways. The Spit Trail currently stops at the lagoon and if extended along the harbor rim will be a great asset to help link Spit activities together.
6. Improve and provide additional restrooms along the Spit trail. All of these items are outlined in the CIP top 15 list.

### Long-term Needs

Many of the Port and Harbor's long-term needs would be best addressed in a Spit Master Plan, as described in the Land Use Chapter, Goal 4, Objective C.

### Implementation Strategies

Parking is one the major issues for the Spit. There is not enough parking for all current uses; in the longer term parking for the Spit and Port/Harbor will have to be addressed. Efforts have been made to pave lots and require payment. Additionally, the idea of a Spit shuttle has been discussed; however, little progress has occurred.

1. Upgrade or replace the harbormaster office. The harbormaster office has reached the end of its intended lifespan and is in need of an upgrade.
2. Monitor the changing characteristics of the Homer Spit. The Spit is critical to Port and Harbor operations and private land owners and is susceptible to land loss. Hazard and environmental concerns relating to the Spit are challenging to address. The Spit subsided a great deal during the 1964 earthquake; in the event of another major earthquake Spit subsidence remains a great concern.

### **Objective E: PARKS & RECREATION** – Improve and provide quality parks and recreation facilities to respond to current and anticipated demand.

Homer residents place high value on parks and recreational facilities and activities. Parks and Recreation programs enhance the quality of life for residents and benefit the local economy. City facilities that provide recreational opportunities include several parks, a trail system, playing fields, and campgrounds. The school district, community schools, and other parties offer a range of additional programs and facilities. As Homer continues to grow, both in size and as a tourist destination, demands for parks and recreation will grow. The City of Homer recognizes the value of these facilities and activities as an important asset to the community and supports their continued improvement. *See Parks, Recreation and Culture Chapter for specific recommendations.*

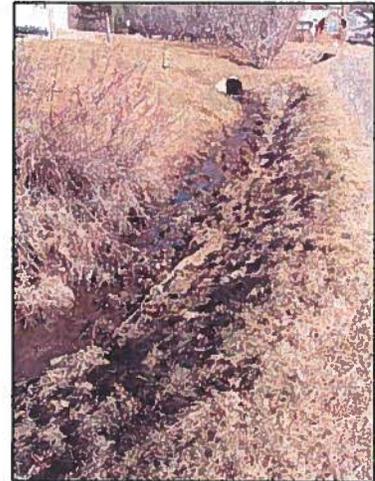
### **Objective F: STORM WATER CONTROL** – Provide for current and future needs and explore options for expanding the quality and extent of storm water control.

#### 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 stormwater 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.

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.



### 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

1. Develop stormwater design criteria for large parcel development.
2. Adopt area wide stormwater management standards.
3. Encourage the utilization of green infrastructure mapping as a means to identify and retain natural drainage channels and important wetlands, which serve drainage functions.
4. Enhance stream channels with the creation of ponds, wetlands, and different habitats that allow for trail systems, water bird habitat, overflow surface water and stormwater collection.
5. Encourage on-site stormwater infiltration management.

### 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

A new Homer Public Library opened on September 16, 2006. The building resulted from a collaborative, communitywide effort to raise needed funds. Since 2002, a citizens group spearheaded by the Library Advisory Board and Friends of the Homer Public Library lead a capital campaign which raised millions of dollars through private donations, grant funds, legislative appropriations, and city assistance. The outcome is a premier, environmentally friendly, certified Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) facility to better serve Homer’s needs.



The Homer Public Library is one of the four largest public libraries in the KPB and serves the greater Homer area. In 2008, the library hosted 133,186 visitors. The facility is approximately 17,000 square feet and houses about 35,000 volumes with a capacity for up to 47,000. The library is a wireless internet access site and offers 20 public computer terminals with Internet access. The library employs five full-time staff. Numerous volunteers support library operations and programs such as Story Hour.

Resources to support the library come from the City’s general fund, the majority of which is from sales and property tax revenue, and extensive local support from the Friends of the Library. The Friends of the Library is a nonprofit organization which provides resources for many library programs as well as funding support for capital improvements.

The 2007 library budget for the City of Homer was \$755,688, approximately 3.5% of the City’s overall budget.

### Near-term Priorities

Completion of the new Homer Public Library has lead to increased interest in programs and demand for services.

### Implementation Strategies

The new facility allows for this growth; however, additional staff would be helpful. Current staff levels are able to respond to customers at the front desk, but additional staff could assist with the behind the scenes backlog in processing of books and materials.

### Long-term Needs

The recent facility expansion is intended to provide capacity to serve projected demand for 20 years. Following this period, another expansion may be warranted. The current site has room for expansion if it becomes necessary. In addition, as technologies continue to change, the library will need to respond.

The library's location near highly used community facilities (bank, post office, grocery store) in the heart of Homer is ideal. Pedestrians can access the library and these facilities easily on an existing trail network.

### Implementation Strategies

1. The library should continue to be involved in the planning for the Homer town center to ensure that it will be linked to this important community project and that any future expansion needs are addressed.

**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 Schools, 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.

City sales tax, transfers from other funds, and real property taxes make up of the majority of City revenue. The 2007 City budget is based upon a 4.5 mill property tax rate. The City levies a sales tax of 4.5 percent.

### Future Needs

### Implementation Strategies

The present City Hall building on East Pioneer Avenue has served the City well for several decades. The building houses the City's administrative services, as well as the mayor's office, and the City Council chambers. A new City Hall is required to respond to increased staffing needs. The City Hall will be located in the proposed town center development area in order to help move that project forward and further improve the Homer central business district.

Present and anticipated population growth of the city will result in the need for an increase in municipal staff and resources to meet public service demands, particularly if the City expands its boundaries through annexation.

**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** – Continue to reduce waste and lessen the impact on the environment. Establish and maintain a City recycling program. See also Chapter 9.

The Homer Baling/Landfill Facility (HBF) is located at Mile 169.3 Sterling Highway, north of town. It is owned and operated by the Borough. The HBF receives municipal solid waste,

construction/demolition, land-clearing waste, wastewater treatment plant sludge from the City of Homer, and recyclables.

Currently the HBF municipal solid waste cell has 5 to 7 years remaining life. The construction and demolition cell has at least 15 years of space available. 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, plastic milk jugs, 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.

While current solid waste services are adequate to meet current and expected near-term demands, there has been community consensus around the need to reduce waste and increase recycling efforts.

### Implementation Strategies

1. Demonstrate City leadership by encouraging recycling within municipal departments.
2. Develop or partner with other organizations to create a public education program to encourage recycling within the community.
3. Work with the Borough to develop future strategies for waste disposal.

### **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 *Economic Vitality Chapter 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 this plan showed strong support for supporting arts and cultural opportunities in Homer. See *Parks, Recreation & Culture Chapter for specific recommendations*.

### **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 approximately \$30,000 annually 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 *Economic Vitality Chapter 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. See *Economic Vitality Chapter*.

### 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 prenatal programs. 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.



### Implementation Strategies

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.
2. Support the continuation of KBC’s course and degree programs in the allied health occupations, to provide a trained labor force for health care facilities. As Homer’s population ages, there will be increased demands on the health care system and a need for more trained health care professionals.
3. Continue to support the South Peninsula Hospital via the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the South Kenai Hospital Service Area.

### Future Needs

1. Support increased local educational opportunities in health care fields, including KBC, that create opportunities for residents to fill these medical industry jobs. See *Economic Vitality Chapter*.

**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.

## Implementation Strategies

1. Retain attractiveness as a community that appeals to all ages, from youth through retirement.
2. Effectively respond to the shifting age of the population and Homer's popularity as a retirement and visitor destination.
  - a. Require that all public facilities be accessible by senior citizens and individuals with disabilities.
  - b. Provide amenities and access for seniors in public facilities developed by the City.
  - c. Encourage and/or create incentives that encourage private businesses to make every effort to provide and/or improve accessibility for the senior population.
3. The city, through its land use decisions, will continue to improve the walkability of the downtown core to make the community more habitable and friendly for seniors and for those with disabilities. *See Land Use Chapter.*

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

## Implementation Strategies

1. Promote a healthy lifestyle by increasing activities available for youth. Providing a range of activities and programs in Homer improves the physical, mental, and social health of the community.
2. Support the efforts of Homer organizations that offer a variety of programs for youth. The City supports community-based efforts to increase and maintain opportunities for all citizens to build their physical, emotional, and intellectual strengths.
3. Encourage efforts to remove barriers to youth participation. *See Parks, Recreation and Culture Chapter for specific recommendations.*

**Objective G: EDUCATION** – Provide 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 Schools 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.

Kachemak Bay Campus provides postsecondary education, continuing education, professional development, and vocational training to Homer residents. The Homer campus is poised for growth. The University received \$2.5 million in the 2007 State Capital Budget to acquire and remodel the Homer City Hall. The purchase of Homer's City Hall and the consolidation of KBC in a centralized location will allow KBC to strengthen programs and offerings. Specifically, the college would like to expand and bolster art education, marine biology, allied health opportunities, and to offer technical

and career vocational training. There is a community consensus that KBC expansion would lead to widespread economic and cultural benefits for the area. Development of student housing will allow KBC to attract students to Homer, thereby promoting Homer as a “college town.” The Economic Vitality Chapter, (Goal 5, Objective B) identifies specific actions to support Homer’s post-secondary educational system.

Homer offers additional educational opportunities to both residents and visitors through various 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 both the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge and the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. The Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies also offers a broad menu of educational programs attracting participants from across the state.

### Implementation Strategies

1. Continue to partner and work to support efforts of the Kenai Peninsula School District.
2. Monitor state education funding if school enrollment continues to decline.
3. Continue active support of the expansion of the KBC.

### **Objective H:** Promote renewable and clean energy. *See also Chapter 9.*

1. Encourage energy utilities to seek renewable sources to meet Homer’s future energy needs.
2. Promote the decentralization of energy production by creating a legal framework for the development of on-grid private systems in collaboration with local energy providers.

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

#### Implementation Strategies

In many communities there is 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 at least 50 nonprofit entities operating within its borders. Supporting their successes and partnering when possible will only improve City operations.

1. Continue to work with residents and businesses to better understand community priorities, and to the extent possible, find resources to meet these needs.
2. Continue to work with citizen groups and nonprofit organizations which play a large role in providing desired services in Homer.

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

#### Implementation Strategies

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:

1. Increase the net revenues coming into the city, through managing costs and expanding the community’s tax base.
2. Improve the ability of the City to provide technical assistance for community organizations seeking to expand their services. The primary steps the City can take to help these organizations is to provide information regarding possible sources of funding for community service projects and to express support for specific fund raising efforts by writing letters when requested and through this comprehensive plan.
3. 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.
4. Support the efficient use of existing community facilities. Partner with organizations to keep city facilities operating beyond normal hours.
5. Create an environment in which Homer’s robust nonprofit community can thrive and respond to needs not met by the City.

**Public Services and Facilities Implementation Table**

Project	Timeframe			Primary Responsibility
	Near Term	Mid Term	Longer Term	
<i>Fire &amp; Emergency Services</i>				
▪ Construct new building and training facility.		x		City
▪ Develop satellite facility on Skyline Drive.	x			City
▪ Hire Fire Marshal/Code Examiner.	x			City
▪ Increase volunteer core to 50 people.		x		City, community volunteers
▪ Increase marine fire/emergency response capabilities.		x		City, Port & Harbor merchants & patrons
▪ Obtain better equipment.		x		City
▪ Increase training opportunities.		x		City
▪ Update Emergency Operations & Hazard Plans.			x	City
<i>Police Department</i>				
▪ Hire dedicated Homer Spit Officer for summer months.	x			City
▪ Address retention and recruitment issues, and retain a competitive compensation package.	x			City

▪ Implement a reasonable vehicle replacement plan.		x		City
▪ Construct new building.		x		City
<b>Water &amp; Sewer</b>				
▪ Institute a water conservation program and provide incentives.	x			City
▪ Implement the Water Sewer Master Plan	x	x	x	City
▪ Construct water and sewer lines to developed properties as demand warrants.			x	City
▪ Develop new water source.			x	City
▪ Sewer main repair and rehabilitation for reduction of infiltration.	x			City
▪ Enact a Sewer inflow reduction program.	x			City
▪ Identify an additional water source.		x		City
▪ Enact a better cost-share plan for the extension of water and sewer services.	x			City
<b>Port &amp; Harbor</b>				
▪ Develop a Homer Spit Master Plan.	x			City See land use
▪ Complete the Port and Harbor projects listed in Homer's current CIP.	x	x	x	City
▪ Create an East Boat Harbor (CIP)			x	
▪ Address general harbor maintenance and erosion control	x			
▪ Complete Homer Spit trail and harbor pathways(CIP)	x			
▪ Improve restrooms along the spit trail (CIP)			x	
▪ Build new Port & Harbormaster facility	x			
▪ Address parking/develop spit shuttle	x			City see land use
▪ Monitor erosion of Spit.	x			City, Spit merchants
<b>Solid Waste</b>				
▪ Improve recycling among City departments.	x			City
▪ Develop or partner with an organization to create a public education program to inspire recycling within the community.	x			City, community
▪ Work with the Borough on developing future strategies for waste disposal.	x			City, Borough
<b>Library</b>				
▪ Increase staff to respond to increased demand.		x		City
<b>Administration</b>				
▪ Build new City Hall and Plaza.		x		City
<b>Senior Services</b>				
▪ Improve accessibility for senior citizens. Require all Public facilities be accessible for seniors and	x			City

individuals with disabilities.				
▪ The City will provide amenities and access for seniors in public facilities developed by the city.		x		City
▪ Encourage or create incentives to encourage private businesses to provide or improve accessibility to the senior population.		x		City, business community
<i>Youth Services</i>				
▪ Provide a range of activities and programs to benefit youth.		x		City
▪ Support other organizations' efforts to offer youth programs.	x			City
▪ Encourage youth participation and remove barriers to participation.		x		City
<i>Education</i>				
▪ Continue to partner and work to support efforts of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.			x	City, KPB
▪ Monitor state education funding if school enrollment continues to decline.			x	City, Parents
▪ Continue active support of the expansion of the KBC.	x			City
<i>Storm Water</i>				
▪ Develop storm water design criteria for large parcel development.	x			City
▪ Adopt area-wide storm water management standards.		x		City
▪ 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
▪ Encourage on-site storm water infiltration management.	x			City
▪ 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
▪ See land use section for recommendations for drainage standards, (e.g., limit impervious areas).	x			City
<i>Community Capacity</i>				
▪ 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
▪ Continue to work with citizen groups and nonprofit organizations which play a large role in providing desired services in Homer.	x			City, Community

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the net revenues coming into the city, through managing costs and expanding the community's tax base.</li> </ul>	x			City, Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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.</li> </ul>		x		City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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.</li> </ul>		x		City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support the efficient use of existing community facilities. Partner with organizations to keep city facilities operating beyond normal hours.</li> </ul>	x			City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create an environment in which Homer's robust nonprofit community can thrive and respond to needs not met by the City.</li> </ul>			x	City