



City of Homer

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Planning

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Memorandum

Agenda Changes/Supplemental Packet

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION
FROM: ZACH PETTIT, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I
DATE: MAY 15, 2024
SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL

12. INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

12. D. Homer Comprehensive Plan Rewrite Community Snapshot

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1. Introduction

Project Purpose

The City of Homer is updating the [2018 Comprehensive Plan](#) to recognize and celebrate what we have **accomplished**, to address new **challenges and opportunities** for our community, and to coordinate efforts to **achieve our shared vision for a future Homer**. The Comprehensive Plan will serve as a **community resource** and **guide** for community leaders, residents, and other partners to protect what residents value most about Homer while enhancing the quality of life for current and future residents.

*This comprehensive plan rewrite is **Phase 1** of a two-phased project. In **Phase 2**, the project team will work closely with the City of Homer to update the City's zoning code, Title 21, to support the land use recommendations in the updated plan.*

What is a comprehensive plan?

A combination of **long-term goals** and **short-term strategies** that will **guide decisions** about land use, housing, public services and infrastructure, transportation, economic development, health and wellness, sustainability, resilience and climate change, quality of life, and more. The plan provides a road map for implementation with clear priorities and action items. The **Future Land Use Map** in the comprehensive plan will provide a blueprint that sets **intent** for how the area will accommodate change and meet resident needs.

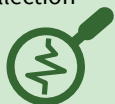
What is a zoning code?

Zoning code and the zoning map are local laws governing **how land is used or developed**, where and how buildings are sited, and other rules related to how a property functions. Zoning is the tool used for achieving the intent set by the comprehensive plan and goals set in the Future Land Use map.

Project Schedule

FEBRUARY 2024

- Project kick-off
- Steering Committee kick-off and initial meetings to map out public participation plan
- Background research and data collection



MARCH & APRIL 2024

- Resident, community leader, and partner interviews; small group discussions
- Community survey launch
- **COMMUNITY VISIT #1:** Introduce process, gather initial input on community vision, open house



MAY 2024

- **COMMUNITY VISIT #2:** Share and get input on emerging findings via this "Community Snapshot" that includes an initial summary of community input
- Interactive comment map launch



SUMMER-FALL 2024

- Survey and comment map close
- Ongoing outreach
- Develop growth scenarios to explore different options and identify preferred scenario for Homer's future
- Public Review Draft Plan release (by early October)
- **COMMUNITY VISITS #3 & #4:** Share and get feedback on draft plan; select preferred growth scenario



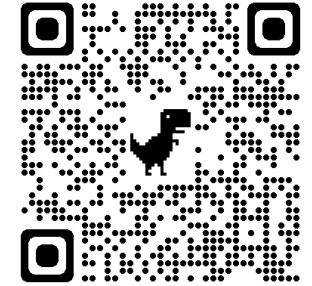
WINTER 2024

- **COMMUNITY VISIT #5:** Provide information during public hearings on plan adoption
- Revision and adoption process
- Bring the plan to life! (City and partners)



What information has informed this snapshot?

- Emerging survey results (260 responses as of May 13, 2024)
- Community Visit #1 results
- Planning Commission and City Council member interviews
- Existing community and regional plans
- Population and economic data



Take the survey!

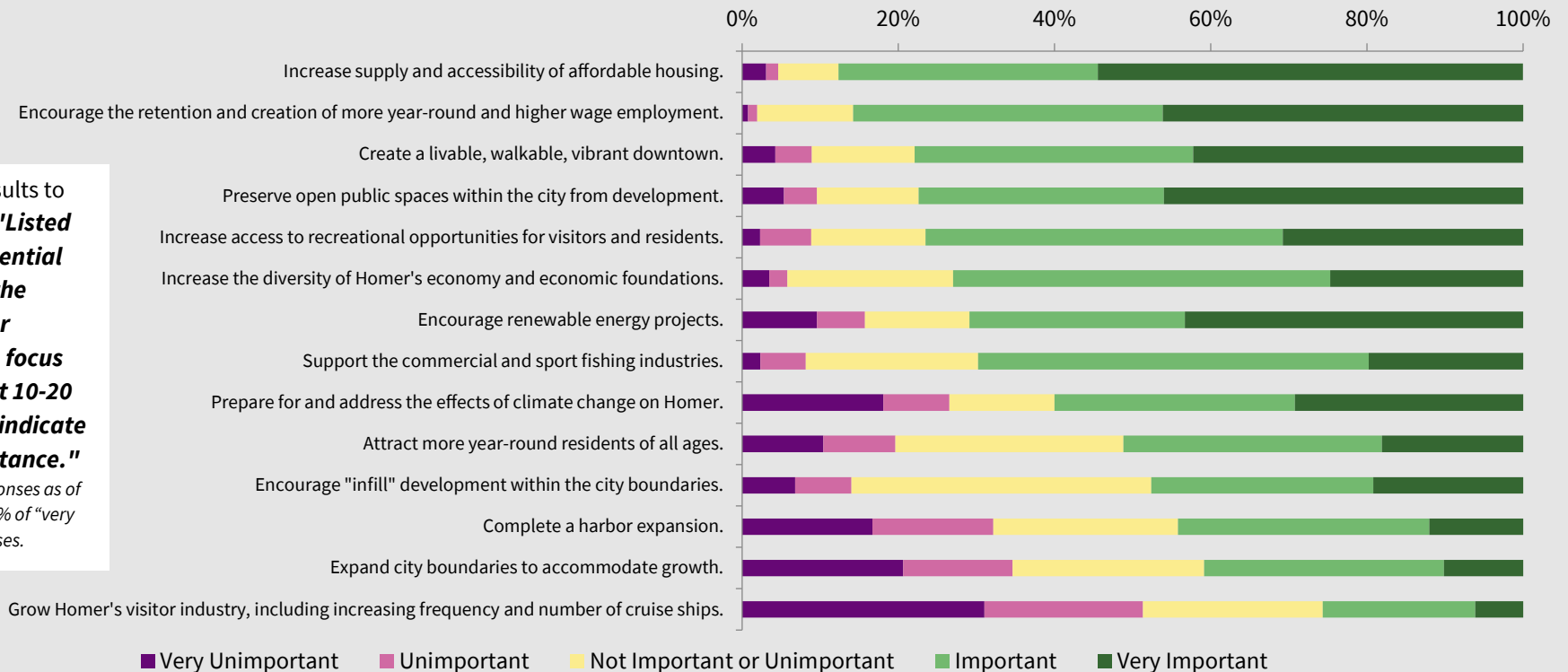
How to get involved

- The project team will be in Homer May 13-16, 2024 with drop-in hours for residents during the week (details on project website).
- Visit the project website: www.homercompplanupdate.com.
- Take the [Community Survey](#) available on the website or in hard copy at City Hall. The survey closes on June 21st!
- **Coming Soon!** Check the project website for the **Homer Interactive Comment Map** to provide your location-specific suggestions.
- Follow the City of Homer on Facebook: www.facebook.com/cityofhomerak/.
- Contact the project team:

Ryan Foster, City of Homer Planner, rfoster@ci.homer.ak.us, 907-299-8529 | **Shelly Wade**, Project Consultant, shelly@agnewbeck.com, 907-242-5326

Emerging community survey results. It's not too late to share your feedback! Respond by June 21st.

Preliminary results to the question: **"Listed below are potential priorities for the greater Homer community to focus on for the next 10-20 years. Please indicate level of importance."**
Featuring 262 responses as of 5/13/24. Sorted by % of "very important" responses.



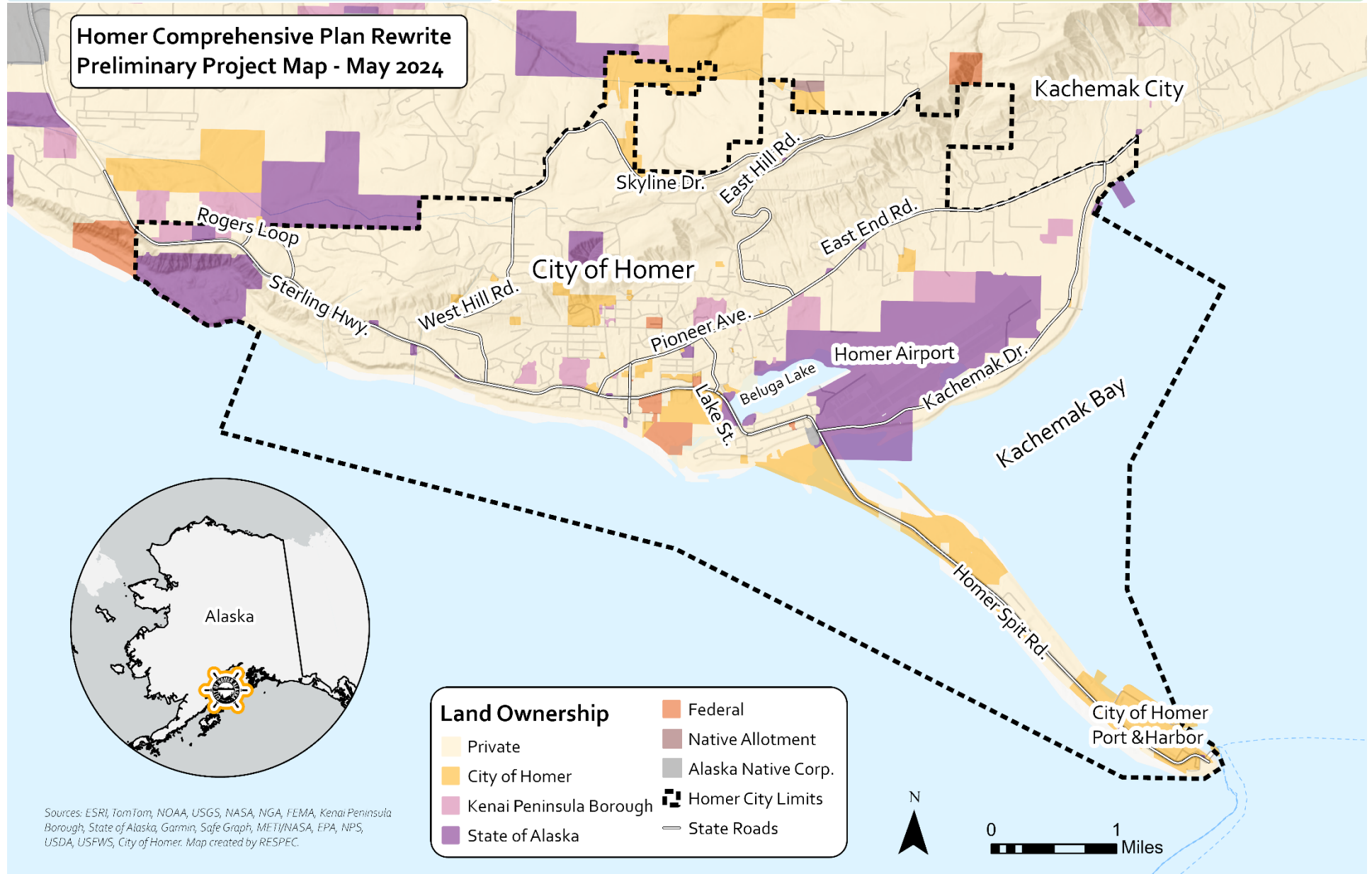
2. Project Area Quick Facts and Map

Tuggett (Homer) is located on Dena'ina and Sugpiak land.

Incorporated as a first-class city in 1964.

87% of land in City is privately-owned.

The city is 25.5 sq. miles.



3. About Homer: Who are we? How have we changed over the past 10 years? *Arrows depict trends from 2013-2022*

OUR PEOPLE

Total population: 5,515 ↑ 7%

Predicted population growth: ↓ 3% by 2050

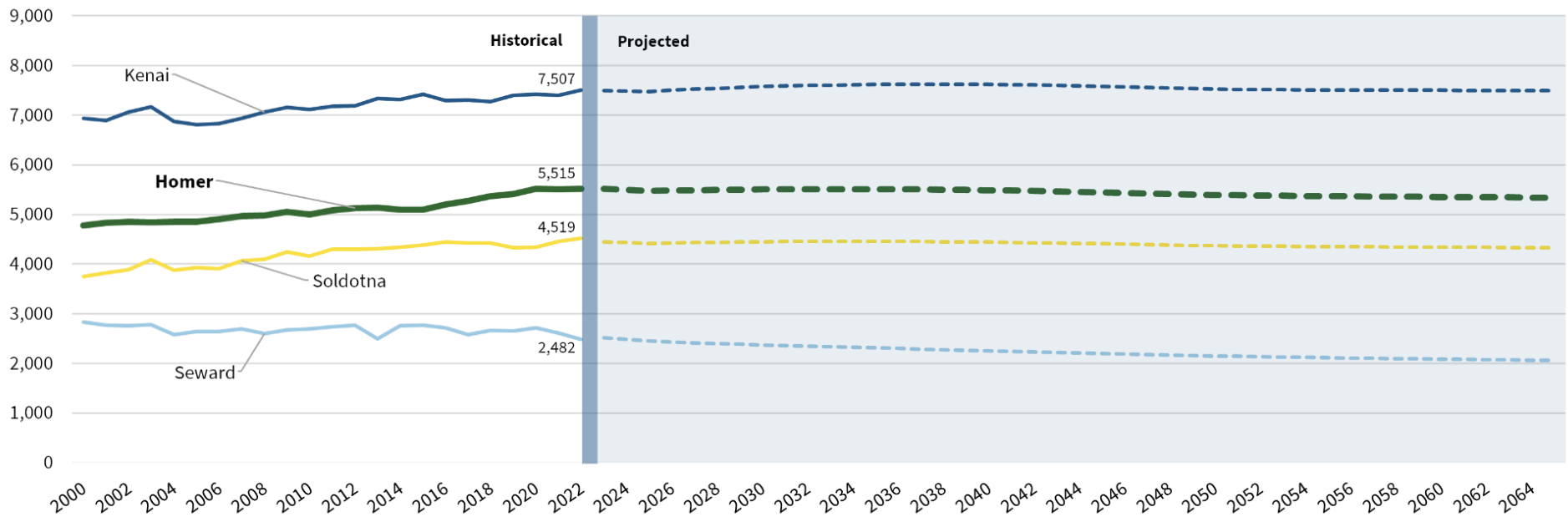
Median age: 40.8 ↓ 4%

Ages 65+: 22% of population ↑ 8%

School enrollment: 1,745 ↓ 5%



Historical and Forecasted Populations for Homer and Comparison Cities in the Kenai Peninsula Borough



At-A-Glance Homer History *(adapted from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan)*

- Home to Indigenous people for over 8,000 years; archeological evidence of campsites on the Spit.
- 1896 – Homer Pennock arrived with a crew of 50 gold miners and developed a small settlement on the Spit.
- Early 1900s to today – fishing developed into an important industry.
- 1964 – Year of city’s incorporation and the Good Friday earthquake, which devastated Seldovia’s waterfront; the Spit also subsided several feet.
- 1989 – Exxon Valdez oil spill impacted Homer’s coastline
- 2002 – Annexation of 4.6 sq. miles.

OUR ECONOMY

Median annual household income (inflation-adjusted): \$69,757 ↑ 30%

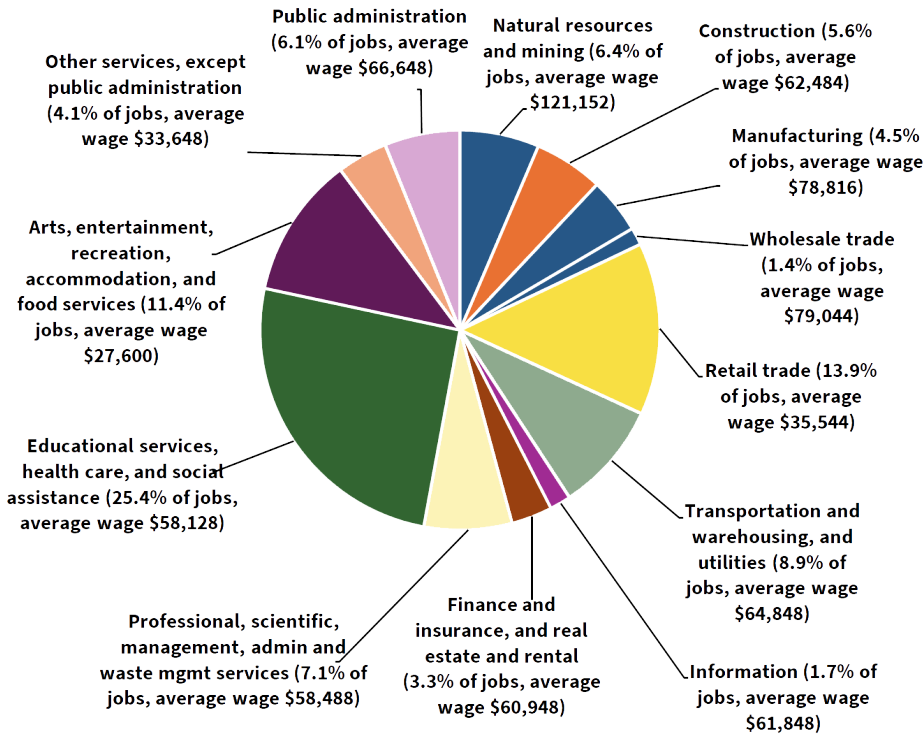
Estimated gross earnings for commercial fisherman: \$117,873,969 ↑ 42%

Annual unemployment rate: 5.4% ↑ 43%

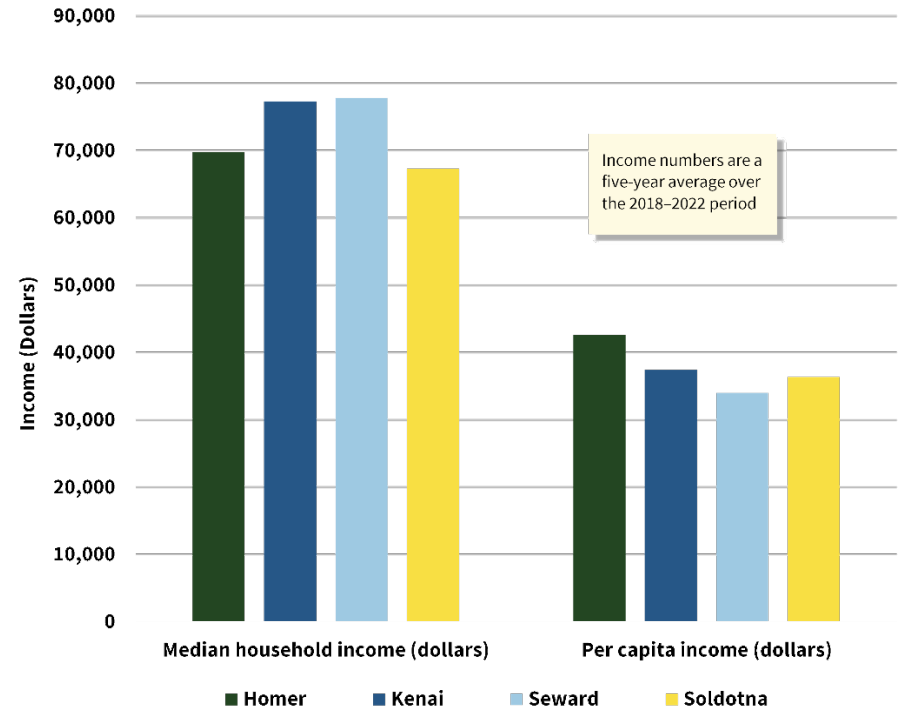
Top industry: Education, health care & social assistance



Percentage of Homer Workforce by Industry



Income in Homer and Comparison Communities



Sources for pages 5 and 6: Homer Comprehensive Plan (History), 2018; Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2022; US Census Bureau American Community Survey: 2022, 2013 (ACS 5-Year Estimates), Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, 2022, and Northern Economic Analysis, 2024; ADOLWD Current Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages; Northern Economics Analysis, 2024

4. What We've Learned So Far

Preliminary Responses from Homer Community Survey, May 13, 2024

What We Value Most About Homer (Our Values & Strengths)

<p>The natural beauty and wild areas.</p>	<p>Access to the outdoors.</p>	<p>Friendly and supportive atmosphere, with a variety of volunteer groups and community programs.</p>	<p>The tight-knit community and small-town feeling.</p>	<p>The arts, culture, and non-profit activities.</p>
				
<p><i>I value . . .</i> “My dog being able to run free on the beach and my neighborhood.” “Having a public radio station and coffee shops.” ” ‘Small-town’ feel, meaning we are not a severely urbanized location.”</p>				

What Can Make Life Challenging in Homer (Our Challenges & Opportunities for Change)

<p>Lack of attainable and available housing.</p>	<p>High cost of living.</p>	<p>Lack of pedestrian options/access and limited public transportation.</p>	<p>Threats to green space from over-development.</p>	<p>Visitor industry growth and potential for overcrowding.</p>
				
<p><i>It's challenging when . . .</i> “I want accountability when people are building complexes and have green spaces for people to walk around in.” “The more you push for tourism the more we will raise cost of living and burden locals and the traditions like commercial fishing.” “No recreation/community center for gatherings.” “We avoid the Spit in the summer. It's crowded and there's no parking. Bathrooms are closed to residents in the off season.”</p>				

5. Potential Goals and Priorities/Projects by Focus



Land Use & Environment



Potential Goal: Land use policies promote quality of life, environmental health, and a resilient community.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Incorporate resilient practices, such as low-impact development, in land use policy.
- Continue to evaluate the vulnerability of critical infrastructure to natural disasters and processes such as tsunamis and erosion. Use this information to develop adaptation measures that ensure critical community facilities remain operational even during emergencies.
- Identify tools to guide growth within Homer and understand the community-wide impacts of actions on individual lots. Investigate incentives to encourage greater density, infill, and mixed-use development in already developed areas.
- Update wetlands dataset to better inform developability of and the need to protect various areas throughout the City of Homer.
- Ensure land use and transportation planning are aligned to encourage development in desired areas, support non-motorized transportation, and mitigate traffic and user conflicts.



Housing



Potential Goal: Increase opportunities for affordable housing that addresses the needs of all residents.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Complete a Housing Needs Assessment that identifies the number and types of housing units needed in the community to serve the projected population growth.
- Provide incentives for development and making more long-term rental units available including possible property tax incentives, public-private partnerships with acquiring land for development, and starting a local housing fund through the city.
- Encourage housing development and availability on suitable land through zoning provisions.
- Build public-private partnerships with organizations that influence housing development, such as contractors, nonprofits, and lending agencies.
- Maintain consistent data collection to monitor housing needs and progress.



Public Services & Infrastructure



Potential Goal: Services and infrastructure are right-sized for community needs, regularly maintained, and not place an undue cost burden on individual property owners.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- City-managed properties should be accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- Infrastructure should support an aging population.
- Evaluate the possibility of creating a designated fund for park staff and grounds maintenance.
- Update the Sewer and Water Master Plan.
 - Revisit system capacity and expansion.
 - Develop a plan to address inflow & infiltration issues.
- Reevaluate funding sources for road maintenance to allow for sustainable, long-term maintenance.



Transportation



Potential Goal: Expand and maintain safe transportation options for all ages, abilities, and modes.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Implement the recommendations in transportation plan.
- Develop low stress walking and biking networks in key areas.
- Improve year-round maintenance for all modes of transportation (walking, biking, ADA accessibility, vehicles).
- Expand connected network of roads, trails, and sidewalks.
- Support transit options.
- Incorporate recommendations from the Homer Wayfinding Plan.



Economic Development



Potential Goal: Maintain a diversified economy where wages and jobs can support the high cost of living in Homer.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Create policies that define a “town center” to drive commerce, business, and resident and visitor services.
- Develop a “downtown plan” to infill land, support new and existing business, and create a walkable town center.
- Grow emerging industries including the retail arts, marine trades, construction, and other trades.
- Grow public transportation to aid in economic development for both residents and visitors.
- Prioritize accessibility in new and existing facilities for both residents and visitors.



Health & Wellness



Potential Goal: Residents are healthy and thriving, with access to needed services.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

Implement the top priorities of the 2023 Homer Community Health Needs Assessment, including:

- Increase access to mental/emotional/substance abuse health services.
- Create opportunities for affordability housing options.
- Provide more opportunities for Childcare services.
- Ensure more mental health resources for our youth.



Sustainability, Resilience, & Climate Change



Potential Goal: Sustainability and resilience are considered in all long-term planning and policies to benefit current and future generations of Homer residents.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Review mitigation and adaptation measures in the Climate Action Plan and Progress Report that have not yet been implemented. In particular:
 - Update Title 21 to allow for greater density, infill, and mixed-use development in key areas to promote healthy community growth.
 - Pursue LEED for Cities/Communities (Lfc) certification or incorporate Lfc standards into policy and planning decisions.
 - Explore alternative energy production opportunities.
- Implement projects identified in the 2024 Transportation Plan, 2007 Climate Action Plan, and 2004 Non-Motorized Transportation and Trail Plan to improve mass transit and non-motorized transportation infrastructure.
- Integrate “green infrastructure” policies throughout land use, transportation, and public services focus areas.



Quality of Life



Potential Goal: Support walkability, affordability, and accessibility for all ages.

Emerging priorities, potential project ideas:

- Expand activities and opportunities for our youth.
- Ensure services and infrastructure support our aging population.
- Maintain access to outdoor recreation and develop new recreation places, such as an indoor gym.
- Develop policies that promote increased access to childcare.

Preliminary Survey Results:

What is your preference for community or economic growth in Homer?
Community Survey, Preliminary Results, May 13, 2024

