



City of Homer

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Memorandum

Agenda Changes/Supplemental Packet

TO: PORT & HARBOR ADVISORY COMMISSION
FROM: ZACH PETTIT, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I
DATE: MAY 14, 2024
SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL

DISCUSSION TOPIC(S)

- C. Attachment and Linked Blog Post from Commissioner Shavelson regarding Homer's Future **Page 3**
- D. Homer Comprehensive Plan Rewrite Community Snapshot **Page 9**

From: [Bob Shavelson](#)
To: [Zach Pettit](#)
Subject: Fwd: Weigh in on Homer's Future
Date: Monday, May 13, 2024 8:11:54 AM
Attachments: [image.png](#)
[image.png](#)
[image.png](#)
[2024-4 Harbor Expansion Opinion .pdf](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Hi Zach -

Would you please print the attachment and the linked blog post for everyone at the comp plan work session? If that does not work for you, please forward this email.

Thank you -

Bob

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Kachemak Bay Conservation Society <kbayconservation@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, May 13, 2024 at 8:00 AM
Subject: Weigh in on Homer's Future
To:

Weigh in on Homer's Future



This is someone's vision of the future of Homer back in the 80s--a little reminder of the need to participate in our City of Homer Comprehensive Plan Update, and the follow-up code-writing process (next year).

Take 15-20 minutes to complete [the community survey](#).

Open Hours with the Comprehensive Plan Project Team at the Homer Library Conference Room.

Tuesday, May 14: 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Wednesday, May 15: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Thursday, May 16: 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

<https://homercompplanupdate.com/>

Here is some food for thought on some of the issues facing Homer:



Protect our Invaluable Green Infrastructure

As you have surely noticed, some Florida developer clear-cut about 5 acres just north of the Calvin and Coyle Trails before their development plans had even been approved. The issues of clear cutting, road and culvert design, impacts to wetlands and moose habitat of this development are problems all over greater Homer:

- We need at least 100' buffers around our important creeks and wetlands. This is about habitat, erosion, and flooding, and the quality of the water that runs into other people's property, and eventually into Kachemak Bay. Riparian ecosystems are priority habitats because their composition, structure, and functions dramatically affect a multitude of fish, amphibian, bird, mammal, and invertebrate species. Although they are a small portion of the landscape, approximately 85% of wildlife species use them. Buffers are also essential in preventing flooding and erosion. [Learn more about buffers here.](#)
- Developers should have to have a plat approved before they go ahead and clear-cut the land, ditch it, fill and grade it.
- People should not be allowed to cut, fill and ditch land in such a way as to harm (eg. flood, erode or damage water quality) of downstream and property owners. This could be achieved through a city fill and grade permit, which we don't have right now.
- Housing developments like the one going in above the Calvin and Coyle Trail system should have to maintain some natural habitat/water management no matter where they are. Homer needs codes concerning conservation of living trees in city subdivisions. A code required number of trees/acre left standing should be created.

More wetlands and forested areas in town should be zoned as "conservation" so that they can do all the good work of green infrastructure--prevent erosion, flooding, water quality issues and maintain habitat.

- We need more than the current 40 ft setback from the steep slopes, and it should include protections for trees that are holding the bluff together.
- Green Infrastructure/Nature-Based Solutions are endorsed by FEMA, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the EPA as the preferred path to effective and affordable stormwater management. Homer can do better!
- The best way to really protect land is to buy and conserve it. [Here is a nifty and effective mechanism to make that happen](#)-- also works for conserving farm land!!
- We need to reduce the use of Conditional Use Permits (CUPs), which are basically a back door for big developers to get around our codes--in boring meetings where nobody attends, CUPs allow us cumulatively lose what makes Homer special.



Large-scale harbor expansion? NO.

- This half-baked, astronomically expensive, "build it and they will come" plan stands to bankrupt the city, help wipe out whatever fish remain in the bay, over-run an already over-run spit, and do nothing to tackle the biggest problem for folks in the trades - *cost of housing*. Did someone say [boondoggle](#)?
- A large-scale expansion of the harbor—with significantly more industrial activity—could have wide-ranging implications for the fabric of our town, from cruise ships, to drawing down our limited drinking water supplies, to increased development.
- For a deeper dive into the range of issues with the proposed expansion [please see our blog post here](#).

Walk the Walk on Climate Change

- Require that all city project bids--think putting a new roof on a school, etc.-- should be based on a [life-cycle assessment](#), which bakes in the cost of heating and maintaining the structure.
- The City should invest in renewable energy--rooftop solar and small solar farms. There are lots of good grant opportunities out there and the city is letting them pass by.
- Incentivize renewable energy for local businesses.
- Plan for increased drought in the summer and flooding in the winter--back to green Infrastructure

Sustainable Tourism

- Sustainable Tourism is defined by the UN World Tourism Organization as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts,

addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”

- NO CRUISE SHIPS is a good start.

Non-Resident Owners

- Non-resident owners are an important driver of the recent rapid development--and spike in property prices--in this town.
- If you talk to contractors, there has not been a building boom quite like this one since the 1960s. Folks in the planning department say that we are building 40-60 homes a year.
- According to the Economic Development office, approximately half of these homes are for people who live here. Another 25% are summer or second homes, and the last 25% might be rental units or air bnb.
- We should be [taxing non-resident owners](#), like they do in Hawaii and North Carolina.
- We should not allow Air BnB's with absentee owners to operate in residential neighborhoods--[just like a normal BnB or other "Home Business"](#).

This is a small town and we won't all agree about everything, but it is worth trying to discuss differences. If there are ideas in here that you think need to be reevaluated and would like to discuss further, please reach out.

In love and respect for our shared home,

Penelope Haas

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Kachemak Bay Conservation Society
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<http://www.kbayconservation.org>

alaskansknowclimatechange.com

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Bob Shavelson
bobshavelson@gmail.com
907.299.3277

This week, the City of Homer is sending representatives to the State Legislature to ask for additional funding for the US Army Corps of Engineers Homer Harbor expansion feasibility study project, and we are preparing to send lobbyists to Washington DC. The study we started last year ran out of funding and we need more to continue. The Kachemak Bay Conservation Society (KBCS) believes that the City's pursuit of a large-scale expansion deserves careful scrutiny on a number of levels.

Number one, there isn't evidence of any significant future increase in demand for large vessel moorage. The City is advocating for moorage for 160-200 vessels of up to 250', but they have precious little evidence to support any demand at that scale. Yes, large vessels pass through Homer on their way to Western AK, but where is the evidence of increased traffic in the future? Where is the list of hundreds of large vessels waiting to tie up in Homer? In 2019, the Corps of Engineers published a survey of about a thousand large vessel owners who were asked if they would bring their boats to Homer, and 2 –yes, 2– said they would. Most big boats in the Homer Harbor now work in Alaska fisheries, and the City is not considering the implications of fishery declines across Alaska. It is tragic that climate change gives Alaska fisheries a poor outlook, but we must nonetheless account for negative implications of this trend for large vessel demand going forward. A warming ocean is bringing many of our fisheries to their knees, with shut-downs in crab, cod, and salmon in recent years. Our own Kachemak Bay is facing reduced numbers of halibut, rockfish and King Salmon. At last year's ComFish meeting, Senator Murkowski said Alaska fisheries are in a crisis. This past December, Trident announced that it would be closing its Alaskan assets in Kodiak, Ketchikan, Petersburg, and False Pass, as well as the South Naknek Diamond NN cannery facility and its support facilities in Chignik. Outlook is not good for the Alaska fisheries, and horrible as it is, we have to reckon with it.

Second, neither Homer nor the State of Alaska can afford the proposed large-scale expansion. Consider that Nome's bill for a deepwater port expansion stands at \$600 million today, and that number doesn't include all the "accessories" like floats or power, or the maintenance costs, all of which are up to the local sponsor. We need honest, concrete assessments of the full cost to the City and State of development and maintenance, including power, water, road, additional parking, dredging, the possible haul out facility people keep talking about as a job-maker. The sooner we get a handle on all these costs the better, as they they will likely be unaffordable. Homer is far from being able to afford repairs to our *existing* harbor – estimated at over \$73 million – and folks are already grumbling about increased parking and slip fees. Homer residents don't want to be strapped with the bills associated with a large-scale expansion for which there is no clear demand. The Legislature is struggling to find funding for our schools and roads, and it is very likely that we can't afford this extravagant pipe dream. The city council should direct HDR, the contractors we paid \$400,000 to help with the investigation, to get a handle on likely costs to the City and State, as well as marking out clearly limitations that would be cost-prohibitive to alter (like road width, parking, and water supply) associated with the City's proposed harbor expansion now.

Third, the implicit intent of the City of Homer to compete with ports in Anchorage, Whittier, Seward, and Nome for freight and with Kodiak and Seward for large-vessel haul-out work is misguided. Operators of the large vessel haul out facilities in both Seward and Kodiak have said in no uncertain terms that there *is not* excess demand for large-vessel work, and that they themselves do not have waiting lists. When a Homer City Council Member was asked how we could justify constructing another port for freight when we already have cities on the rail system, Anchorage, Whittier, and Seward, they responded that we need to be prepared in the event of an earthquake. KBCS sees this as a pretty flimsy answer that gravely underestimates the cost of construction and maintenance, but we have yet to hear a better one. Homer is just as susceptible to earthquakes as any of these locations and is much farther from the center of commerce.

Lastly, a large number of Homer residents do not want a significant expansion of our harbor. Adding 160-200 large vessels and 250 smaller vessels that could go where the big boats are now is unpopular—cost aside—because many believe it would have undesirable impacts on housing, roads, parking, tourism, environment, available water, and quality of life. Unfortunately, we have spent about a million City dollars exploring the possibility of a large-scale harbor expansion without *first asking the public* if this is what we want to spend our money on or if this is the direction we want to go. There should have been a poll or a general vote before spending extravagant sums of money to pursue expansion. Now would be a good time to get a poll like that out there. And make sure to ask people: A) Do you want this? B) Do you want to *pay for it*? C) How do you rank the importance of this issue vs. other issues? We need this information, because the city's ongoing prioritization of the harbor expansion is taking precious resources (think dollars, grant-writing, staff time, travel, and lobbyist dollars) away from other priorities like affordable housing, recreation facilities and trails, schools, clean water habitat protection, roads, our climate action plan, and so much more.

Penelope Haas,
Vice-President Kachemak Bay Conservation Society

The Kachemak Bay Conservation Society's mission is to protect the environment of the Kachemak Bay region and greater Alaska by encouraging sustainable use and stewardship of natural resources through advocacy, education, information, and collaboration.



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



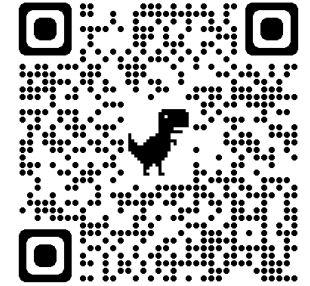
WINTER 2024

- **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!

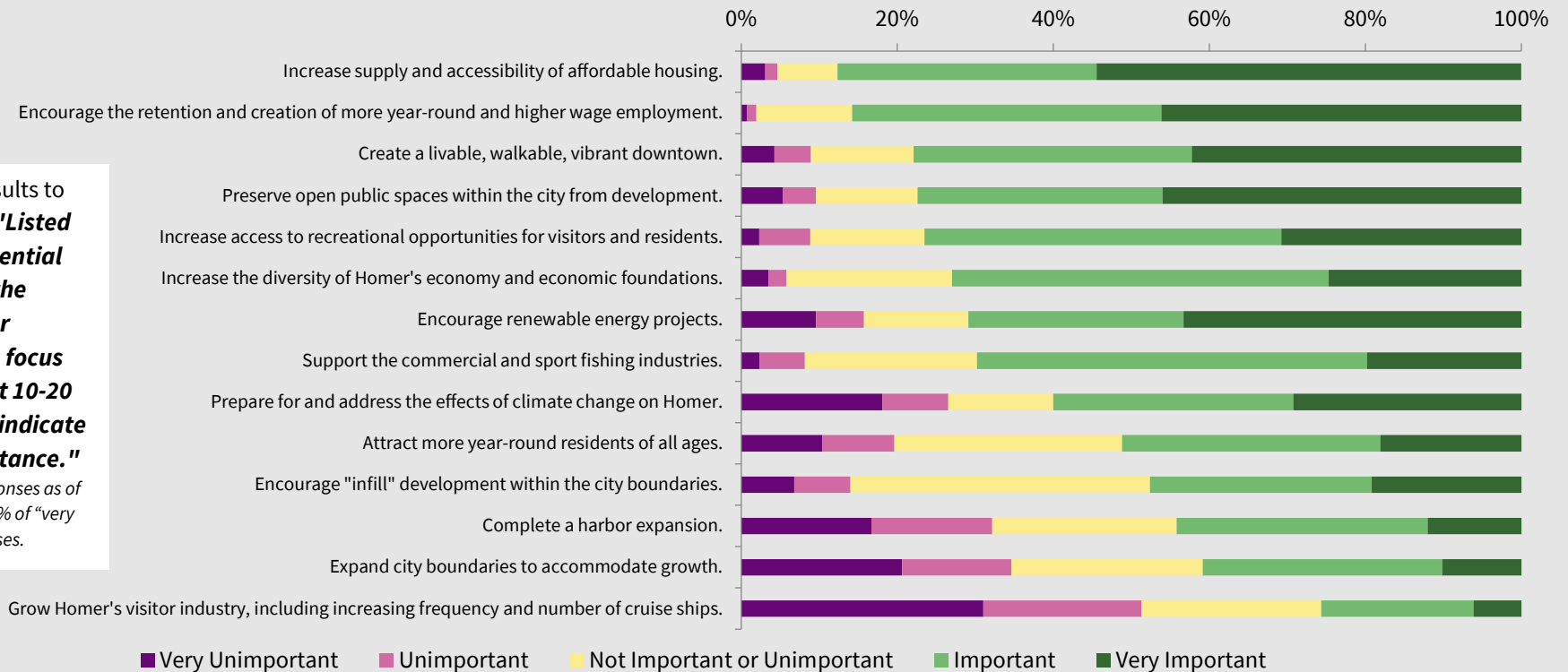
How to get involved

- 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.



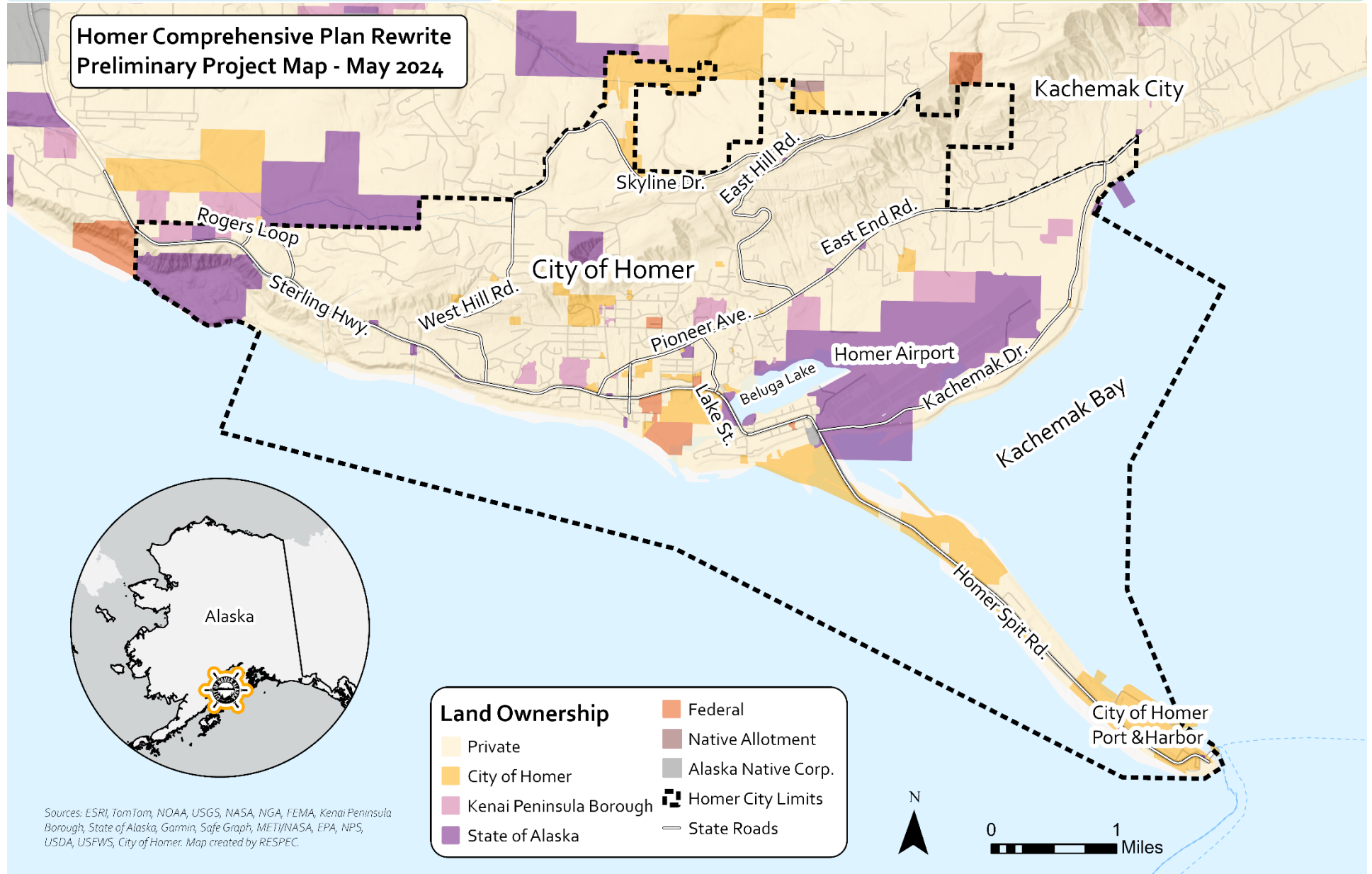
2. Project Area Quick Facts and Map

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

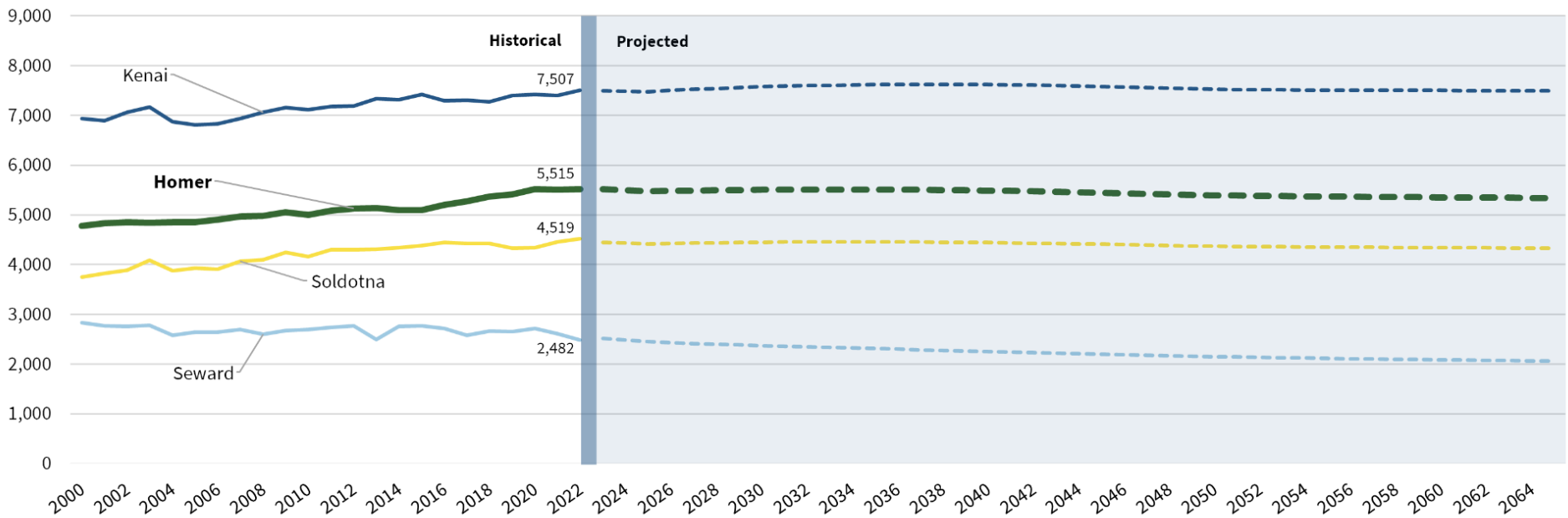
Median age: 40.8 ↓ 4%

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%

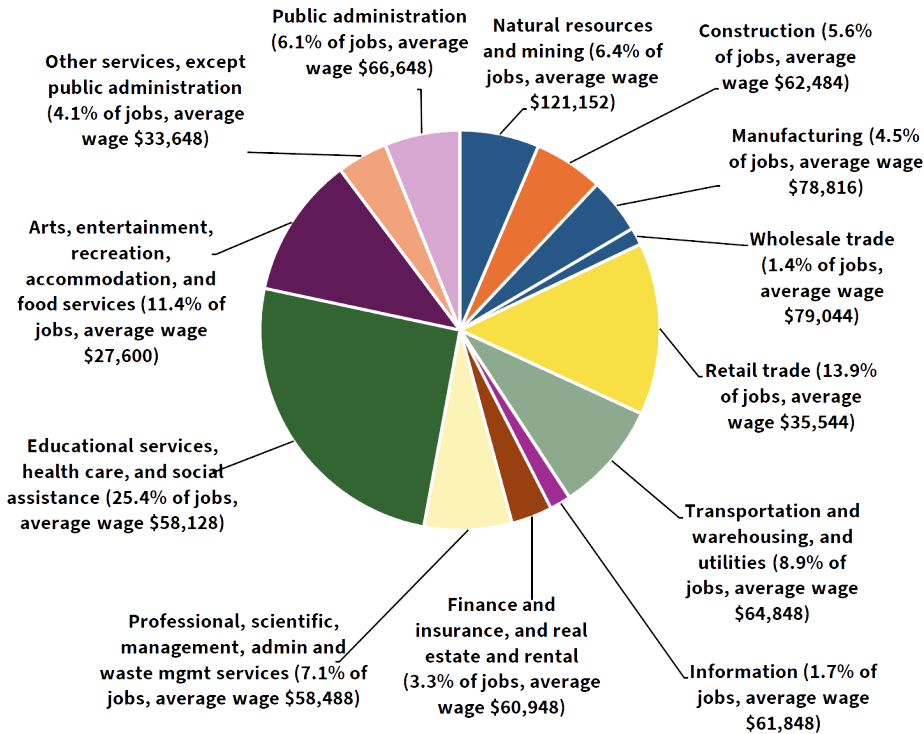
Estimated gross earnings for commercial fisherman: \$117,873,969 ↑ 42%

Annual unemployment rate: 5.4% ↑ 43%

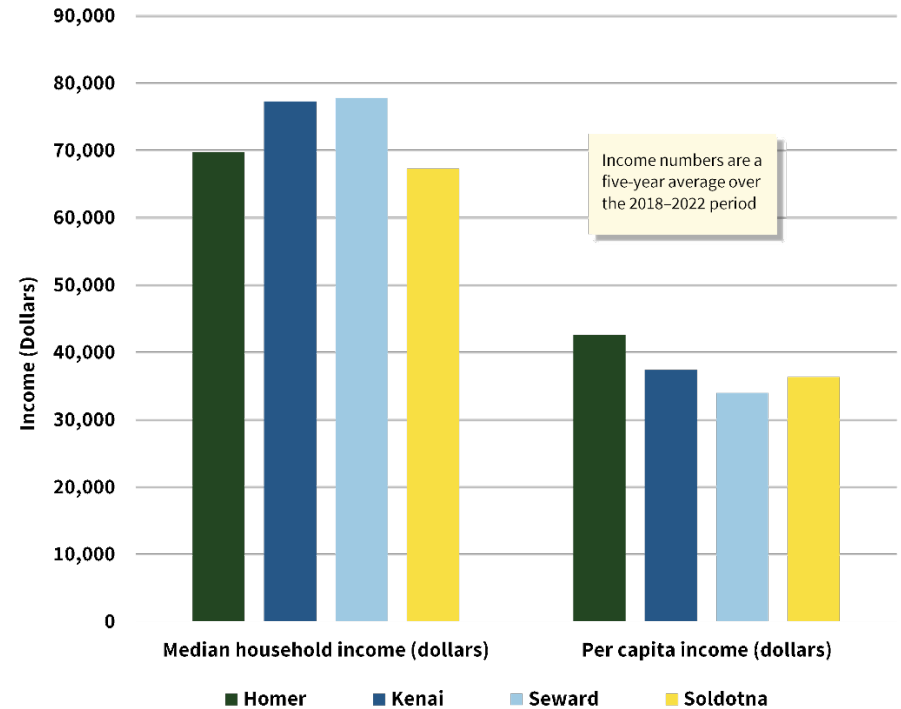
Top industry: Education, health care & social assistance



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

