

2 VISION: WHAT IS A VISION?

IN A COMMUNITY PLAN, a vision is a positive outcome or an ultimate condition that a community desires to move toward. It is also both a process of stakeholder involvement and a product of the plan. It may build upon community strengths and address community weaknesses. The vision is a significant aspect of a community plan because it is an expression of local desires for quality of life and future development, which will guide residents, land owners, and City decision-makers.

HOW WILL A VISION HELP OUR COMMUNITY?

The vision should inspire and motivate the community to achieve their picture of the future and function as a filter for future development. When new development is proposed, decision-makers and residents will need to ask the questions, “Does this fit with our stated vision?” “Will this help us to achieve our vision?” “Are modifications needed?”

HOW WAS THE VISION DEVELOPED?

Shared values and ideas are the foundation for developing a community vision (Figure 4). A community’s values dictate what should be reinforced in a community and what should be fixed. Individuals had many different great ideas for what the City should work towards. For instance, if a community values arts and culture, they may work to establish a premier performing arts center or an annual summer festival showcasing and celebrating the arts.

In the process of defining the vision, citizens were asked to think about some of the following questions:

If you could make these areas the way you want them, what would they look like?

What community assets will the areas include?

On their days off, where will residents go and what will they do in these areas?

What amenities need to be located within the community to improve and enhance the quality of life?

How do I picture these areas in 15 years?

Although different opinions exist about what the future holds for the three planning areas, common ground can be found. Unequivocally, the public participation process and the school project revealed that residents are passionate about their community and want to enhance the assets that contribute to the extraordinary quality of life they enjoy.

The visions developed look 15 years to the future and represent the efforts of a cross section of residents and other stakeholders in Wasilla. The visions are based on common themes that flow throughout Wasilla as a whole and provide reference points for implementation.

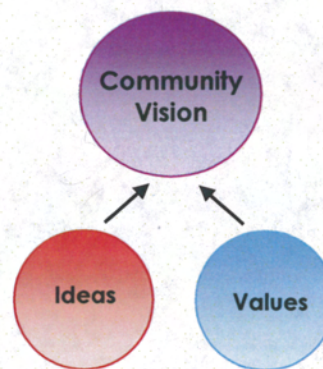


Figure 4 Community Vision

DOWNTOWN is the cornerstone of Wasilla's small town charm. It is a community crossroads where neighbors and friends stop to say hello and chat for a while at local businesses and parks. Residents congregate at the grocery store, the post office, parks, and plazas. Downtown is a center of public services, arts, and education. The community character that attracts people is maintained and enhanced. Residents value the quality of life and community bonds that flourish here.



*Above: Honor Garden and Circle of Honor
Left: Family at 4th of July Parade
Courtesy City of Wasilla*

❖ COMMUNITY CHARACTER ❖

Growth will be promoted that provides services to residents, encourages young families to establish roots in the community, and offers a comfortable environment for retirees. Downtown will be aesthetically appealing to residents and visitors, and will be a place where all come to shop, dine, work, and live. Pragmatic design standards that are pedestrian-oriented will complement the quality of life provided by the small town atmosphere and natural environment of Alaska.



*Above: Mat-Su Regional Outpatient Center
Left: Meta Rose Square
Courtesy City of Wasilla*

❖ RECOMMENDED LAND USES ❖

Developers will be encouraged to build here with mutually beneficial incentives. Small lots that now pose challenges to development will be combined with adjacent lots or zoning changes will be made that will make development more practical. New development will integrate open space in design. Downtown will be distinguished by pedestrian-oriented design and developed cross streets offering shopping and services as well as increased connectivity to parks, multi-use trails, and Wasilla and Lucille lakes. Additional parks, trails, greenbelts, and cultural and community facilities will be encouraged and supported. Mixed use that accommodates and benefits both young and old will be promoted to provide increased services for residents and contribute to aesthetics. Downtown Wasilla will continue to serve as the cultural center of the community, featuring a library and performing arts venues. The history of Wasilla's beginnings will be preserved to enrich the lives of residents and visitors.

❖ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ❖

Downtown will become a center for public and education services and be recognized as a prime location for successful businesses, government offices, and educational institutions. Nodes of mixed use development will contribute to business growth by offering a variety of commercial services in the same buildings where residents can live and work. These improvements to Downtown will attract more businesses providing additional professional employment opportunities and alternatives for residents, fostering greater economic sustainability.



Yenlo Square Phase I: Yenlo Arms

❖ GROWTH ❖

Downtown will be a proud centerpiece of the community that provides user-friendly full service amenities for residents and visitors such as shopping, dining, and cultural community centers. As the community continues to expand, Downtown will serve as an anchor. Growth will be directed towards infill opportunities in Downtown.

❖ TRANSPORTATION ❖

Downtown will have improved traffic flow with well-planned transportation upgrades, new transportation corridors, parking areas, pedestrian-oriented sidewalk connections, and convenient multi-modal and public transit options to ease traffic congestion.

CHARRETTE SNAPSHOT

During the mini-charrette, the public communicated many ideas and desires for the future of Wasilla, which are categorized in the following box.

- **Common Ideas** are dominant ideas repeated by several participants not only at the charrette, but also throughout the planning process. In the case of Downtown, these may include items that will take sustained effort by public and private parties to implement than the planning timeframe of this document due to a variety of reasons such as land ownership patterns and available funding.
- **Unique Ideas** are individual ideas that may be technically feasible, but they may take longer to implement within the planning timeframe of this document due to a variety of reasons such as land ownership patterns and available funding.
- **Other Highlights** are ideas that were shared by many participants at the charrette and could likely be implemented earlier within the planning timeframe of this document.

Common Ideas

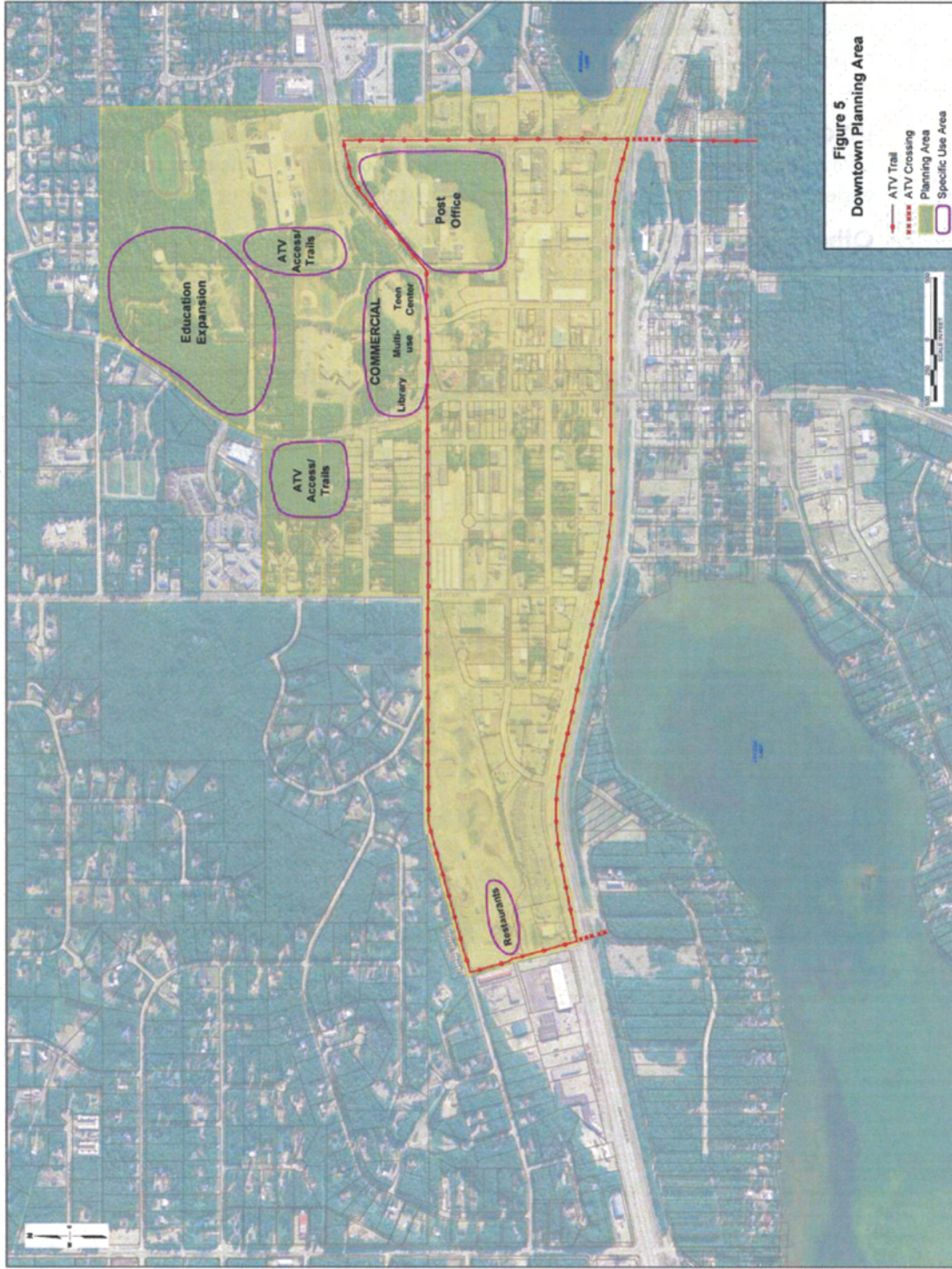
- Government offices
- Expanded library and post office

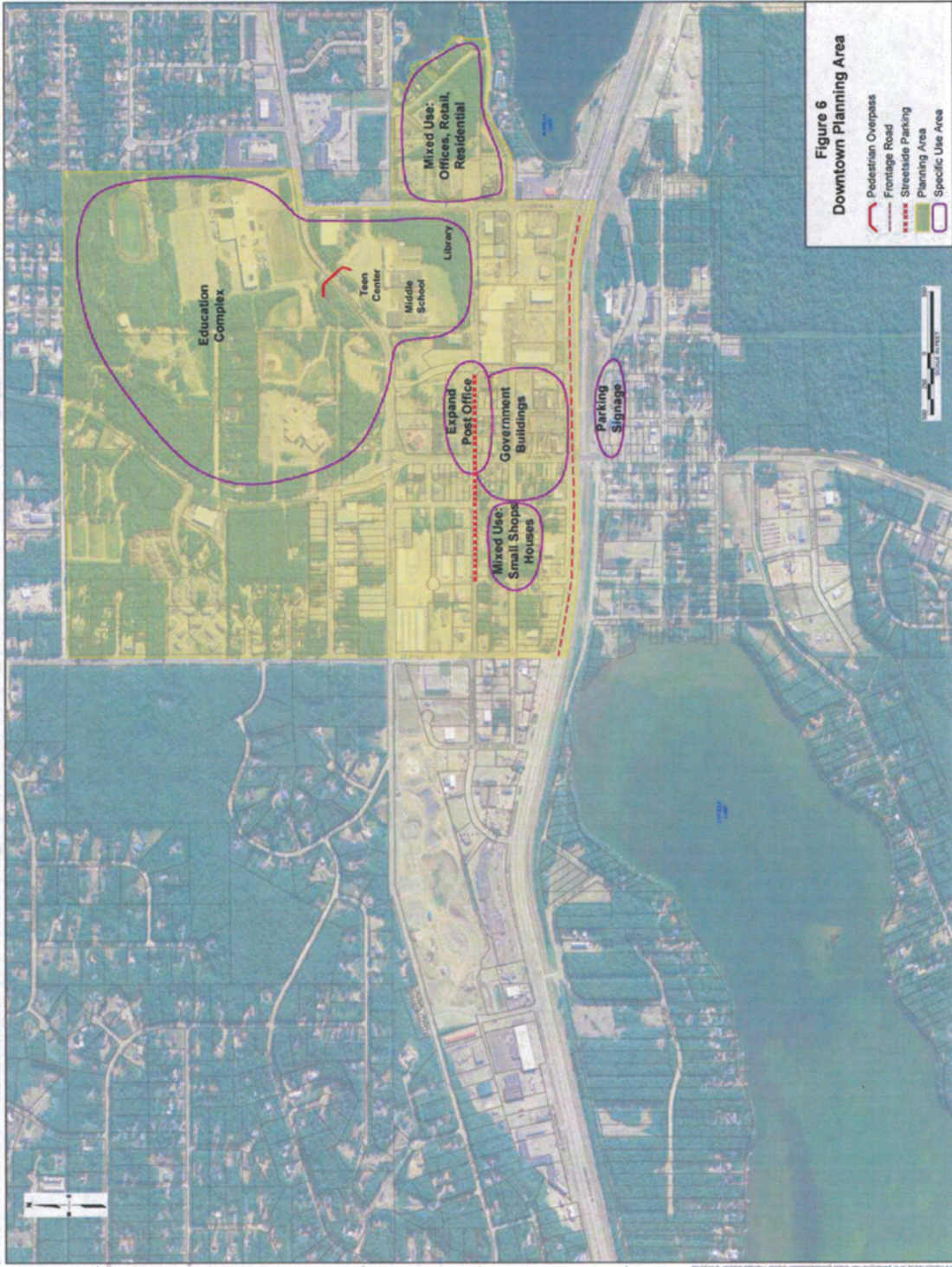
Unique Ideas

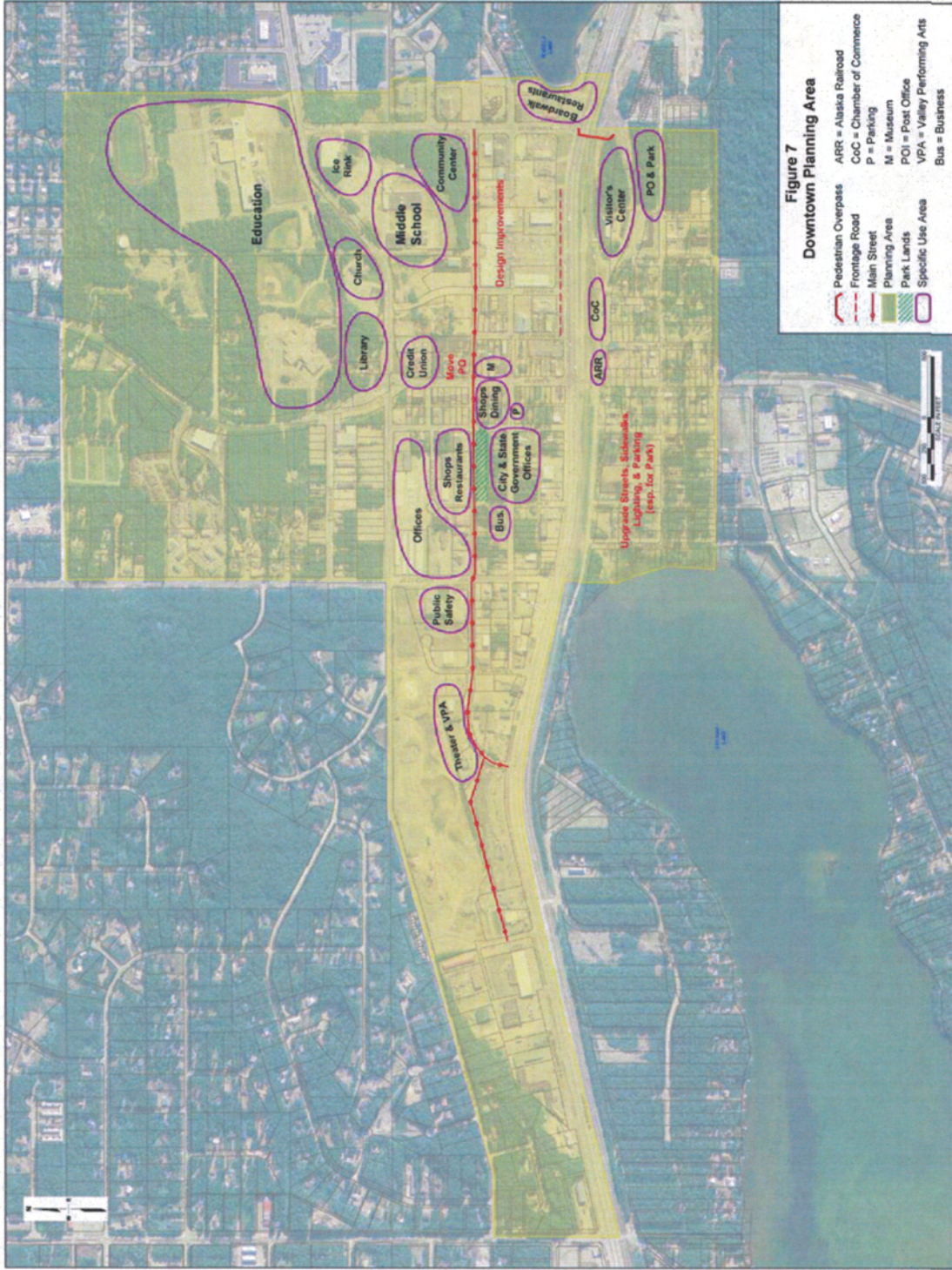
- College campus
- ATV trail around downtown
- Boardwalk and restaurants on west end of Wasilla Lake
- Frontage road

Other Highlights

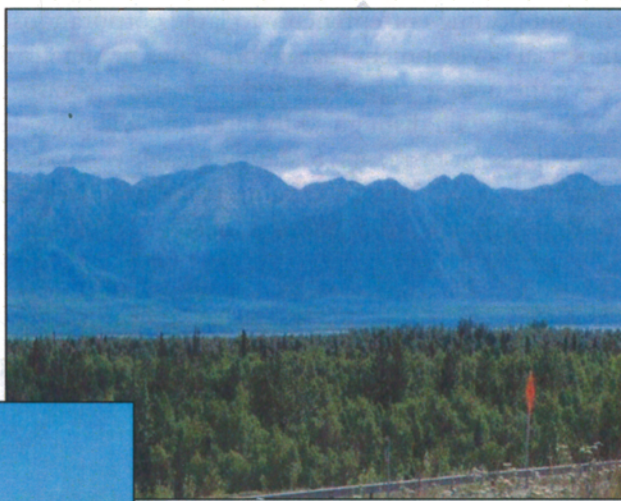
- Mixed use areas
- Expanded education complex with facilities and services located nearby
- Upgrade streets, sidewalks, lighting and parking
- Pedestrian overpasses on busy streets
- Community Center
- Teen Center







SOUTH WASILLA HEIGHTS is defined by its expansive views, undeveloped land, and burgeoning commercial growth. This area is delineated by three major thoroughfares—the Parks Highway, Palmer-Wasilla Highway, and Knik-Goose Bay Road. The Home Depot is a key landmark in the area. South Wasilla Heights is accessible and a prime location for a diversified business district with professional offices and a variety of commercial services to offer Wasilla and outlying areas. Residents value the area for the natural environment and the convenience of the commercial services currently provided.



Above: Chugach Mountains from South Wasilla Heights
Left: The Home Depot

❖ COMMUNITY CHARACTER ❖

South Wasilla Heights is a canvas for planned growth that will evolve into a destination for recreation and become a center of activity along the Parks Highway. This area will be known as a family-friendly, healthy, and vibrant district with multi-use parks, greenbelts, and trail connections to adjacent Downtown. Distinctive commercial development will have parks and greenbelts integrated into the design.

❖ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT \ GROWTH ❖

South Wasilla Heights will accommodate future growth and become a diversified business district supporting entrepreneurs to large corporations. The area will be marked by commercial development that incorporates pragmatic design standards that integrate and preserve the unique viewsheds and natural environment. Medical facilities and professional business parks will distinguish the area and will provide more professional employment opportunities for residents, fostering greater economic sustainability. A convention center will establish South Wasilla Heights as the premier gathering place in the Mat-Su Borough, supported by hotels, restaurants, a theater complex, and other complimentary services.

Potential Components of a Diversified Business District

- Private Firms
- Public Firms
- Government Offices
- Small Businesses
- Local Businesses
- Nationwide Retail
- Franchises
- Financial/Investment Offices
- Corporate Offices
- Hospitality Services
- Communication Services
- Shipping Services
- Medical Facilities