



MAYOR
Verne E. Rupright

CITY PLANNER
Tina Crawford

WASILLA PLANNING COMMISSION

Dan King, Seat A
Daniel Kelly Jr., Seat B
Steven DeHart, Seat C
Doug Miller, Seat D
Glenda Ledford, Seat E
Clark Buswell, Seat F
Robert Webb, Seat G

**CITY OF WASILLA
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA
WASILLA CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Wasilla City Hall, 290 E. Herning Avenue, Wasilla, AK 99654 / 907-373-9020 phone

REGULAR MEETING

7 P.M.

JUNE 28, 2011

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ROLL CALL
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
- V. REPORTS
 - A. City Attorney
 - B. City Council
 - C. City Planner
 - D. City Public Works Director
- VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION *(five minutes per person, for items not scheduled for public hearing)*
- VII. CONSENT AGENDA
 - A. Minutes of June 14, 2011, meeting.
- VIII. NEW BUSINESS *(five minutes per person)*
 - A. Public Hearing
 1. **Resolution Serial No. 11-11:** Recommending that the Wasilla City Council amend WMC 16.28.110, Variance, to include sign variances; and add WMC 16.32.260, Variance Provisions, to allow

variances to the sign code and create sign variance criteria and process requirements.

- B. Committee of the Whole
 - 1. Draft Wasilla Area Plans.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

X. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Permit Information
- B. Enforcement Log

XI. AUDIENCE COMMENTS

XII. STAFF COMMENTS

XIII. COMMISSION COMMENTS

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Wasilla Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, June 14, 2011, in Council Chambers of City Hall, Wasilla, Alaska by A.C. Buswell, III, Chairman.

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioners present and establishing a quorum were:

Mr. Daniel Kelly, Jr., Seat B
Mr. Steven DeHart, Seat C
Mr. Doug Miller, Seat D
Ms. Glenda Ledford, Seat E
Mr. Clark Buswell, Seat F
Mr. Robert Webb, Seat G

Commissioners absent and excused were:

Mr. J. Dan King, Seat A

Staff in attendance were:

Mr. Archie Giddings, Public Works Director
Mr. Bert Cottle, Deputy Administrator
Ms. Tina Crawford, City Planner
Ms. Sandi Connolly, Public Works Clerk

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

A. Mr. Cottle led the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

GENERAL CONSENT: The agenda was approved as presented.

V. REPORTS

A. City Attorney
No report given.

B. City Council
Mr. Cottle stated it was a good meeting.

Mr. Giddings informed the Planning Commission the City Council passed the Ordinance to approve the Comprehensive Plan.

C. City Planner

Ms. Crawford stated that violation notices were given to business with electronic message center signs that are in violation of the sign code. She also stated that several businesses with nonconforming signs were unable to update their signs and that staff would be drafting an amendment to Title 16 to allow requests for a variance to the sign code. Additionally, she said that the Mayor intends to establish a committee to review and propose changes to the City's sign code. Members would consist of business owners, residents, and sign companies.

D. City Public Works Director

Mr. Giddings provided a summary of the work being done at the Airport and working with the Governor on the funding of Main Street Cuplet.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION *(five minutes per person, for items not scheduled for public hearing)*

Ms. Kelly Dow:

- Stated she is a resident of the City of Wasilla; and
- Stated her concern with a fence that was constructed by Alaska Live Steamers that cuts off access to a trail beginning in Lake Lucille Park, extending through the City's property and the area leased by the Live Steamers.

Mr. William Jarvis:

- Stated he is a resident of the City of Wasilla;
- Stated he is in support of the Wasilla Airport development;
- Opined that a train depot needs to be built at the City airport to help support tourism development; and
- Stated he is for trails/pathways that are for four wheelers and snow mobiles that are not going through the City and would like to see more trails developed for these uses, including footpath around Lake Lucille; and
- Stated he is in favor of airport development and additional flight, especially to the slope.

Mr. Thane Humphrey:

- Stated he is involved with the Business community and there is some confusion as to the City's stance with commercial development and would like to see better communication with the City and businesses within its boundaries; and
- Suggested the City put together a panel of diverse persons to encourage and support development of business and work on the revision of the sign code.

Mr. Bill Childress:

- Stated he is a resident of the City of Wasilla; and
- Stated that he did not believe that Alaska Toy Rental's sign was a distraction and that more distractions are caused by cell phones and flashing signs and that the City should concentrate more enforcement on those.

Mr. Thomas Hannam:

- Stated he is a business owner and stated his concerns with the sign code and would like to see changes to it about commercial signs;
- Stated that he felt enforcement on his sign was a personal vendetta; and
- Stated that he felt his sign could be used to advertise City activities instead of shutting it down.

Ms. Taffina Katkus:

- Stated she is here as a concerned citizen not as a council member; and
- Stated her opinion about signs within the City and believes the sign code needs to be updated but should be enforced as currently written until it is revised.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes of May 24, 2011, meeting.

GENERAL CONSENT: Minutes were approved as presented.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS (*five minutes per person*)

A. Public Hearings

There were no public hearings.

B. Committee of the Whole

MOTION: Commissioner Kelly moved to enter into the Committee of the Whole at 7:38 PM.

VOTE: The motion to enter into the Committee of the Whole passed unanimously.

1. Noise Ordinance recommend by the Mayor's Task Force on Industrial Uses;
2. Parks Master Plan recommended by Parks and Recreation; and
3. Draft Wasilla Area Plans.

MOTION: Commissioner DeHart moved to exit the Committee of the Whole at 8:59 PM.

VOTE: The motion to exit into the Committee of the Whole passed unanimously.

X. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

No statements made regarding the following items.

- A. Permit Information
- B. Enforcement Log

X. AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Ms. Crystal Williams:

- Stated she has lived in Wasilla for ten years; and
- Stated her concerns regarding signs and would like the sign code to be reviewed.

Mr. Mark Folkson stated he is in support of the sign that Mr. Hannam has at his business.

Mr. Ed McKendrie stated he is in support of the sign that Mr. Hannam has at his business and he was the one that sold the sign to Mr. Hannam.

Mr. John Katkus stated Mr. Hannam's sign is a distraction and that the City needs to keep a high standard in all our plans.

Ms. Taffina Katkus stated the purpose of the plan is to keep the integrity of the people and respect the opinion of the people. Keep the intent of the people in the original plan.

Ms. Kelly Dow stated we all live here and make sure this community is family-friendly not just a business community.

Mr. Mark Fokeson stated he is in favor of Mr. Hannam's sign and appreciates all the community support from Mr. Hannam.

XII. STAFF COMMENTS

No comments.

XII. COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Ledford stated Wasilla has growing pains and thanked the people who came and encouraged the audience to sign up for these committees.

Commissioner Webb stated when looking at the Wasilla Area Plans he was sure that they put as much work into them as was put into the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Miller:

- Stated he thinks we should have a Task force on this issue of the signs and that it probably needs to be updated; and
- Stated it is good to see so many people come to the meeting and come forward to help.

Commissioner Kelly thanked the audience for being here and for helping the Commission.

Commissioner DeHart stated perceptions are important and hopefully the conception that we would run over someone is not true, I would certainly not agree with that.

Chair Buswell stated his comment on the fluff was looking at editing it down, not that the work was not important.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The regular meeting adjourned at 9:40 PM.

ATTEST:

A.C. BUSWELL, III, Chairman

TAHIRIH KLEIN, Planning Clerk

Adopted by the Wasilla Planning Commission -, 2011.

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By: Planning
Public Hearing: 06/28/11
Adopted:

**WASILLA PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 11-11**

A RESOLUTION OF THE WASILLA PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDING THAT THE WASILLA CITY COUNCIL AMEND WMC 16.28.110, VARIANCE, TO INCLUDE SIGN VARIANCES; AND ADD WMC 16.32.260, VARIANCE PROVISIONS, TO ALLOW VARIANCES TO THE SIGN CODE AND CREATE SIGN VARIANCE CRITERIA AND PROCESS REQUIREMENTS.

WHEREAS, the Planning Staff requested to amend WMC 16.28.110, Variance, and add WMC 16.32.260, Variance Provisions; and

WHEREAS, the public hearing date and time was publicly advertised; and

WHEREAS, on June 28, 2011, the Wasilla Planning Commission held a public hearing on this request; and

WHEREAS, the Wasilla Planning Commission deliberated on this request taking into account the current provisions of the WMC; and

WHEREAS, after due consideration, the Wasilla Planning Commission determines that the proposed amendment is appropriate.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Wasilla Planning Commission hereby approves this resolution recommending that the City Council adopt the following revisions:

Amendment of section. WMC 16.28.110, Variance, is hereby amended as follows:

16.28.110 Variance.

A variance is the relaxation of the density, setback, [OR] height, or sign standards of this [CHAPTER] title beyond those provided for by this chapter. Prior to

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submission of a variance application, the developer is encouraged to attend a pre-application conference with the planner. The purpose of the pre-application conference is to permit the applicant to explain the situation that gives rise to the need for a variance and for city staff to explain the standards that must be met before a variance may be granted and to indicate the types of information that will be necessary to justify the variance. The variance pre-application conference may be combined with any permit pre-application conference.

Addition of section. WMC 16.32.260, Variance Provisions, is hereby added as follows:

16.32.260 Variance Provisions.

Variances to the setbacks, sign area, number of signs per parcel, and height of signs may be requested by a property owner, or authorized agent. The application process, notice requirements, and variance standards shall be the same as those for variances in Section 16.28.110. In granting a sign variance, the planning commission may prescribe conditions and safeguards to assure conformity with the purpose and intent of this chapter and is consistent with the city comprehensive plan and any other applicable adopted city plans.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Wasilla Planning Commission approves of these code amendments and enactment of the proposed new code and hereby forwards their support for adoption to the Wasilla City Council and to take effect upon adoption by the Wasilla City Council.

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APPROVED by the Wasilla Planning Commission on -, 2011.

APPROVED:

A.C. Buswell, III, Chairman

ATTEST:

Tina Crawford, City Planner

Bold and underline added. [CAPS AND BRACKETS, DELETED.]

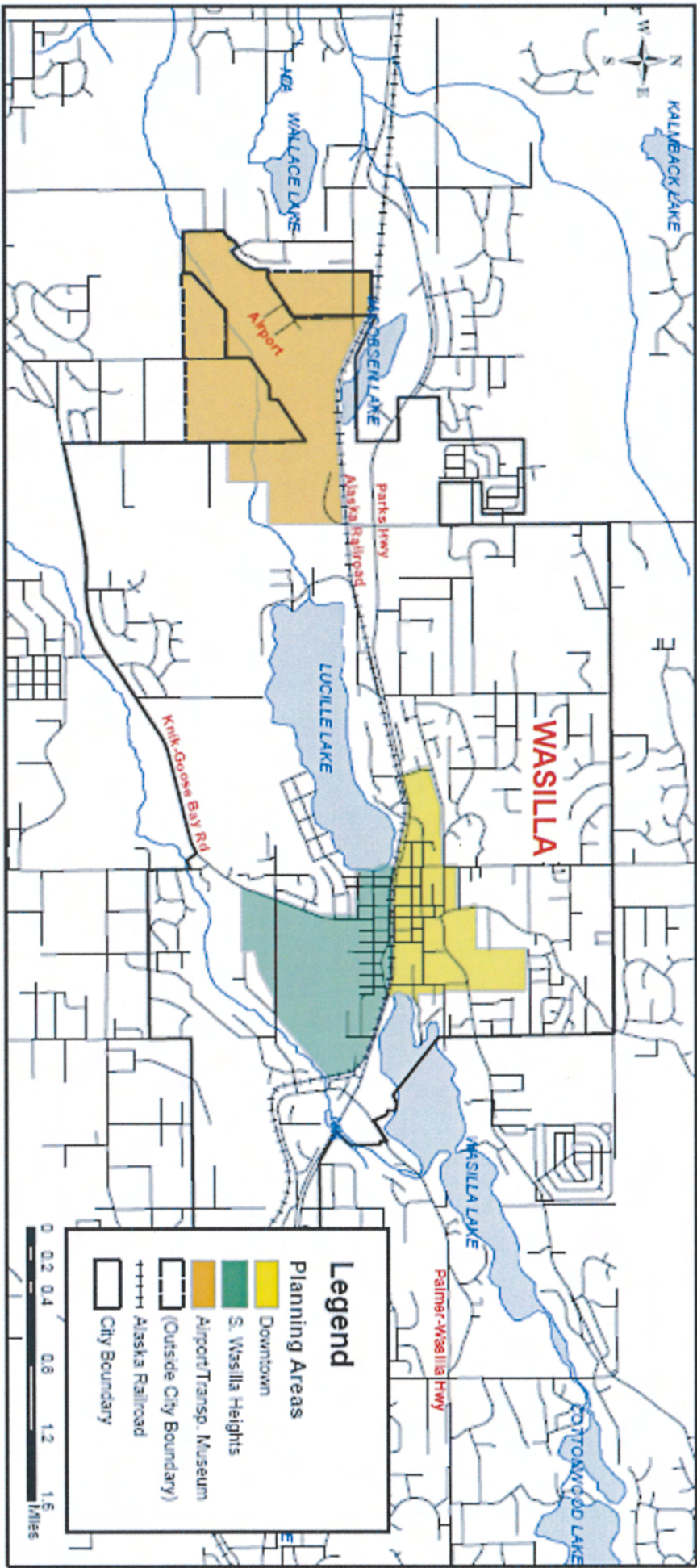
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WASILLA AREA PLAN BOUNDARIES



DOWNTOWN PLAN

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.

Downtown is a key gathering place for Wasilla residents and the business community. The area is zoned almost exclusively commercial but has a few pockets of residential areas.

Vacant lots are interspersed throughout Downtown, providing opportunities for infill development. Existing development includes parks, schools, artistic and historic venues, a performing arts facility, local specialty shops and restaurants within strip malls, and several City government offices. Residents cited the foremost challenges for this area to include: traffic congestion, a lack of overall connectivity to multiple destinations, inadequate parking for existing facilities, and a general lack of landscaping to provide aesthetic appeal.

VISION SUMMARY

In 1917, the first buildings in Wasilla were constructed in present-day Downtown. These buildings were the beginning of a city that residents continue to be proud of. Many of the original buildings still exist and are included on the National Register of Historic Places—notably, Teeland's Country Store and the Dorothy Page Museum. This is an historic area of Wasilla that set the stage for transforming the City to its present day Character.

Downtown is zoned almost exclusively commercial but has a few pockets of residential areas. The area has vacant lots interspersed with developed lots that are ideal locations for infill development. In Downtown you will find parks, schools, art and history, a performing arts facility, local specialty shops and restaurants within strip malls, and several City government offices.

This area is challenged with traffic congestion, a lack of overall connectivity to multiple destinations, and inadequate parking for the facilities located here. Residents feel that additional landscaping would improve aesthetic appeal.

The lack of a distinct identity for Downtown is also a great challenge. Residents have grappled with the question, "What makes a downtown?" They have identified characteristics such as a community meeting place, an area that fosters a sense of place and a sense of pride, and a place that represents the values and the history of the area. While the architecture and the infrastructure

are important in a downtown, the activities that occur in the area are vitally important as well.

OVERVIEW

In 1917, the first buildings in Wasilla were constructed in present-day Downtown. These buildings were the beginning of a city that residents continue to be proud of. Many of the original buildings still exist and are included on the National Register of Historic Places—notably, Teeland’s Country Store and the Dorothy Page Museum. This is an historic area of Wasilla that set the stage for transforming the City to its present day character.

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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.

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.

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.

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

ISSUES, GOALS, & OBJECTIVES

Assets (Strengths)

Historical Features:

Historic/cultural venues; Dorothy Page Museum; Teeland Building; potential historic district

Parks and Open Space: Wonderland Park (amphitheatre and skate park) appeals to a variety of interests; lake recreation

Location: Centrally located

Municipal Services & Infrastructure:

Post office; library; local government; water; sewer; power

Shopping & Services:

Variety of small business; access to large and small businesses and services; centralized shopping and services; destination

Economic & Development Potential:

High traffic count; available land to develop; historic features to draw tourism; tourism traffic nearby

Challenges (Weaknesses)

Traffic: Poor traffic flow; no traffic plan; post office location contributes to congestion

Parking: Limited availability; no parking with a Downtown atmosphere

Access: No ease of accessibility; lack of connectivity—too spread out, must use car to go everywhere; lack of sidewalks

Parks & Trails: Parks not connected; lack of trails

Identity & Appearance: Lack of identifiable Downtown area; no theme, no architectural appeal; not viewed as a destination; not well-planned; unattractive, uninviting, not a good representation of citizens and skills in the area

Existing Structures: Outgrowing what is there, i.e. library, post office, etc.

LAND USE

OVERVIEW

The future of land use in Downtown Wasilla will incorporate development centering on the individual and community needs to retain and attract residents and visitors. Residents feel that Downtown currently lacks a distinct identity and future land uses will work to bring an identity to this area.

New development should offer architectural appeal keeping with the rural character of Wasilla, complement existing development, and incorporate climate sensitive design. Realizing the community's vision for land use will result in a more livable community that residents will continue to be proud to call home.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Downtown is a community center with several anchors to build from. Downtown offers several parks, locally owned retail shops and restaurants, and civic services and offices. These land uses serve the community by providing a full spectrum of employment opportunities and services for Wasilla and surrounding areas.

A barrier to development is the small parcel sizes found throughout Downtown. Prominent land uses shaped goals for the area. Goals and objectives were developed taking the following specifics about each land use into consideration.

RESIDENTIAL

- o Residents expressed a desire for mixed use development in Downtown.
- o Traffic congestion and connectivity problems complicate getting around Downtown.

RETAIL

- o Retail locations in Downtown contribute to the small town charm because the shops are small and locally owned.
- o Downtown provides centrally located and diverse commercial services.
- o As Wasilla continues to grow, Downtown retail services should be diverse and unique to compete with other commercial areas in the City and region.

HOSPITALITY/CULTURAL ENTERTAINMENT

- o Residents value the history of Downtown, the museum, and the historic townsite buildings.
- o Downtown is lacking a strong entertainment component—there are no teen centers, clubs, or venues for large artistic or event performances.
- o As Downtown revitalization projects are developed, managers and business owners should consider development of visitor service infrastructure and establishments to attract tourism to the area.

OFFICE

- o Downtown houses most City offices.
- o Residents would like to have more public services centralized in Downtown.
- o More office space for government and private sectors would increase demand for other land uses.

EDUCATION

- o Three schools are located Downtown.
- o Residents suggested co-locating complementing land uses with education facilities (e.g., teen center and library).

RECREATION

- o Residents desire additional sidewalks in Downtown to make pedestrian movement easier.
- o The lack of sidewalks, particularly in the Main Street area, and the lack of discernable crosswalks hinders pedestrian movement in Downtown.
- o Location of parks, retail, and government services in proximity to each other could promote pedestrian friendly activities such as holiday decoration tours, landscaping contests or floral displays, and art displays.
- o Residents want multi-use trails to accommodate various modes of recreation.
- o Parks in Downtown should have connectivity to one another.

DOWNTOWN LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Downtown will be developed as a center of civic and education services supported by mixed use development. As a destination for residents and visitors, the area will incorporate more pedestrian-friendly design with new development. Mixed use development will provide commercial and public services for downtown residents, reducing traffic and the need for area parking. Connectivity throughout Downtown will be improved with multi-use trails, multi-modal connections, and centralized parking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the exception of platting authority, the City has the powers needed to achieve the vision identified for Downtown. Following are descriptions of tools that the City can use by making small adjustments to current approaches, as well as some innovative new mechanisms that can also be used.

Design Standards

Cohesive design and architecture firmly establish an area identity.

- o Design standards should be flexible, and not dictated by one group or government entity. Design standards can succeed if they are crafted as a collaborative effort by the primary stakeholders such as developers and business owners. A community survey that incorporates comparative photographs may be useful to determine what is aesthetically appealing to consumers. Design

standards should be divided to include mandatory and voluntary standards backed by incentives.

- o The first floor of mixed use buildings should command attention from passersby and be visually appealing and inviting. Examples to include in standards are transparent façades, benches, awnings, and decorative lighting.
- o Infill development should complement existing development. Standards should include guidance on building colors, types, heights, and signage that are complementary.
- o Climate sensitive design standards should be incorporated with new development Downtown. Climate sensitive design can increase the amount of natural light allowed in the building through the amount of window cover on the façade and/or skylights. Conifer trees planted along the sidewalk can provide a wind break for pedestrians while also contributing to the visual appeal of the street.
- o Incentives should be established to promote design standards. Ideas include variances from other requirements and expedited permit processing. For instance, if a developer commits to including a certain percentage of voluntary design standards, the City can expedite necessary permits or provide a variance to setbacks. Also, the City could consider relaxing number of spaces parking requirements for a mixed use structure and focus on parking location.

Infill

Promoting infill development in Downtown will provide more services that residents desire and is an efficient use of currently available infrastructure like water and wastewater lines. Consolidation of small lots can promote large mixed use and government development.

- o Use infill to encourage mixed use. Downtown has several small vacant lots that have been viewed as undevelopable due to size. These lots provide suitable sites for mixed use development, which places a greater emphasis on vertical development and a combination of uses within one building. Adjustments will need to be made to the current zoning code to remove barriers to this type of development.

Zoning

Changes to existing zoning code can help address the small lot sizes found in Downtown and help create a more solid economic base through increased development.

Zoning Revision

- o Changes to existing zoning code and district boundaries can help address development difficulties with the small lot sizes found in the northern sub area and reduce land use conflicts with existing zoning.

Form-Based Codes

- o Form-based codes emphasize building types, design, and parking location versus land uses and density. This type of zoning can bring cohesiveness to an area, while allowing the owner to determine the use of the building. The community aesthetics are more stable throughout the years, while the uses may be quite dynamic.
- o Districts define form-based codes, and there is an awareness of the relationship between multiple elements like roads, parking, neighborhoods, and retail corridors.

Overlay Zoning Districts

- o An Overlay Zoning District would create a distinct district that delineates specific regulations within the current zoning boundaries. This zoning district can be arranged to protect certain resources (e.g., the historic townsite), or promote a specific type of development in a particular area (e.g., community gathering places or tourist services).
- o Overlay zoning districts should be created in Downtown to promote government office development and mixed use.
- o Overlay zoning districts should include provisions requiring specific design, public art, or landscaping elements that contribute to the distinctiveness of the district.

Platting Authority

Platting configures parcels of land, either dividing or consolidating them.

- o The City should pursue negotiations with the Mat-Su Borough to establish an intergovernmental cooperation agreement that transfers some or all of the platting authority to the City.
- o Downtown has several small vacant parcels that are difficult to develop because of the lot size. If the City had platting authority, the re-platting process could be streamlined as an incentive to stimulate development.
- o This would reduce the burden on the Mat-Su Borough and provide Wasilla with increased autonomy and increased efficiency with re-platting and development.

Land Bank

A municipal land bank can be organized to work as a real estate arm of the City to consolidate land by purchasing and reselling key parcels that have been identified for targeted future land uses.

- o The City should establish a land bank that serves as a repository for land with the intent that the parcels will later be disposed.
- o The land bank can include and manage parcels of City land that are currently vacant.
- o The land bank can also strategically purchase parcels that are too small for development but would be adequate if re-platted into larger parcels.
- o Disposal or acquisition of land must be at fair market value and can occur by any method including outright sale or exchange.

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Land Ownership, Platting, and Zoning (LO)	1. Small lot sizes pose challenges to development.	A. Create larger, functional parcel sizes that accommodate development. i. Create an overlay Downtown zoning district. ii. Work with the Mar-Su Borough to develop and negotiate an intergovernmental cooperation agreement that transfers the platting powers to the City of Wasilla. iii. Streamline the replatting process with regard to consolidation of small lots. iv. Institute development incentives, such as replatting initiatives and business improvement districts. v. Create a program where the City purchases available parcels to hold for potential replatting.	Mid-term Mid-term Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000 <\$100,000 <\$100,000 \$100,000 - \$500,000 >\$500,000	Downtown City of Wasilla Planning Department City of Wasilla Planning Commission Downtown Landowners Mar-Su Homebuilders Association
<i>Text in Italic indicates an issue, goal, or objective is common throughout all three planning areas.</i>					
*Indicates an entity recommended to be established but not yet in existence					

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
<p>Community Character (CC)</p> <p>1. Downtown Wasilla lacks a distinct identity. The boundaries are unclear.</p> <p>2. The appearance of Downtown Wasilla needs to be improved, capitalizing on the historical elements.</p>	<p>A. Create an attractive identity for Downtown that complements Wasilla's natural setting and history.</p> <p>B. Promote downtown as a center of public and education services, supported by mixed commercial and residential use.</p>	<p>i. Institute design standards such as signage, lighting, and accommodate winter design factors.</p> <p>ii. Include pedestrian-oriented landscaping standards into a Downtown overlay zoning district such as using evergreen trees lining sidewalks to distinguish the area.</p> <p>iii. Consider establishing a "Gateway Program/Committee" (primary responsibility is to plan, design, and implement improvements for wayfinding stations and gateway entrances).</p> <p>iv. Consider establishing a Downtown Revitalization Committee and Public-Private Partnerships to develop the character of Downtown Wasilla, design projects to achieve the character, and implement improvements.</p> <p>v. Develop visual cues to identify gateways and sub-districts, such as entry kiosks, wayfinding stations, thematic landscape design, and signage.</p> <p>vi. Capitalize on existing facilities to develop plazas and community gathering places.</p> <p>vii. Encourage use of design themes through incentives such as variances from requirements, expedited permit processing, tax abatements, and loan programs.</p> <p>viii. Explore zoning areas by building type, rather than use to achieve aesthetic objectives but allow for flexibility in mixed use districts.</p> <p>ix. Promote community events that support the identity and theme of the area to attract visitors and tourists.</p> <p>x. Create an educational program through a public-private partnership to promote Downtown's identity and theme.</p>	<p>Short-term</p> <p>Mid-term</p> <p>Short-term</p> <p>Short-term</p> <p>Mid-term</p> <p>Long-term</p> <p>Long-term</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>Mid-term</p>	<p><\$100,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p> <p>\$100,000 - \$500,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p>	<p>Downtown</p> <p>City of Wasilla Planning Department City of Wasilla Planning Commission Wasilla City Council Gateway Committee* Downtown Revitalization Committee* Public-Private Partnerships* Mat-Su Convention and Visitor's Bureau Civic Groups (including art and history)</p>
<p><i>Text in italics indicates an issue, goal, or objective is common throughout all three planning areas.</i></p> <p>*Indicates an entity recommended to be established but not yet in existence</p>					

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW

The residents of Wasilla envision a vibrant Downtown that supports a variety of public services and small businesses that are mixed with multi-family residential units, art venues, and education facilities. Mixed use development and effective multi-modal transportation will be key factors in transitioning the Downtown into a social and economic center of the community.

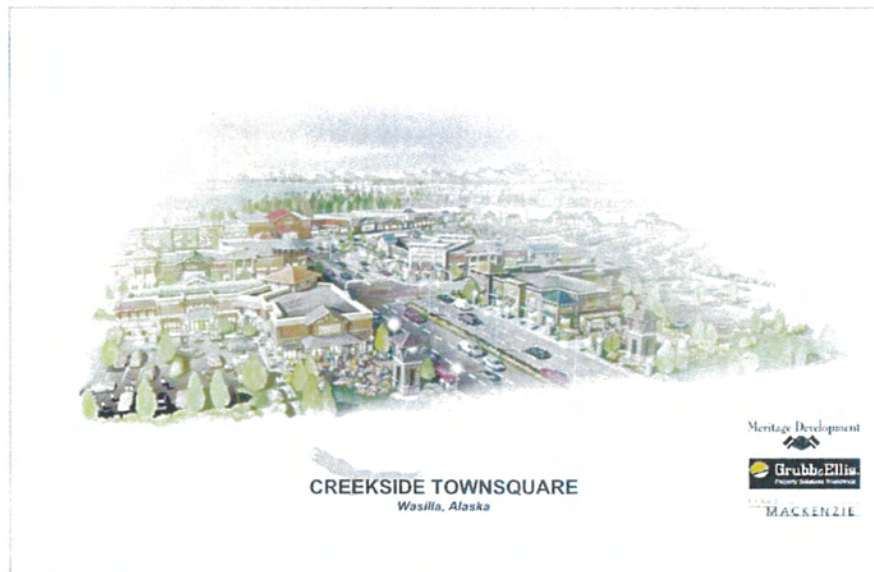
Offering a variety of commercial services in a core Downtown district where residents can live and work will contribute to additional business development in the area. The City, landowners, business community, and local citizens will need to work together to achieve the community vision for the Downtown. The City will work with others to establish incentives for infill and mixed use development, such as business improvement districts and partnerships.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Social and economic indicators remain strong in the City of Wasilla. Population has increased at an unprecedented rate, annual traffic volumes have steadily increased, and sales tax receipts continue to grow (City of Wasilla 2006b). Projected trends for the community indicate additional growth, spurring further economic development in the community.

There will be additional demands for residential units, retail development, and office space in the Downtown area. New development will occur as infill on vacant lands as well as via redevelopment of existing properties. Key planning considerations for economic stimulation in Downtown include residential, retail and hospitality, and office developments.

Development will be guided by City entities, such as the Downtown Revitalization Committee and Gateway Committee. A Downtown Revitalization Committee would likely be responsible for planning and guiding economic development proposals for the area. A Gateway Committee would focus on making each area readily identifiable in the gateway entrances, incorporating design themes for each area.



The Creekside Townsquare designed for Wasilla near Downtown.

Residential

Additional housing will be constructed in the Downtown area via PUDs, such as the Yenlo Square project. Multi-family units will be constructed, including low-cost or rent-subsidized units. Disadvantaged populations will be served, including low-income, elderly, and people with disabilities. Combining residential areas with retail and public services will make businesses more accessible and assist with reducing traffic in the core Downtown area.

Retail & Hospitality

Retail development will include new infill development, as well as redevelopment and expansion of existing businesses. The Downtown area will be distinguished by small businesses that support the government service, education, and tourism sectors. Hospitality services will include small cafes and restaurants. Beautification incentives will be offered to make the area more aesthetically appealing and to entice customers to spend time in the Downtown area.

Office

As a center for public services, government offices will be located in the Downtown area. City Hall will remain in the Downtown area, as the headquarters for City offices. The City will actively encourage office leases with state and federal agencies to establish Wasilla as a core location for public services.

Small office buildings will house private professional services that support government agencies and serve community needs.

DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Residents desire the Downtown to be an attractive, diverse city center. The City will work to attract and retain government services in the Downtown area. Incentives will be provided to enhance economic development, including mixed use of residential and commercial development. The area will be a destination for residents and visitors. A Downtown Improvement District will provide impetus and guidance for redevelopment efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To capitalize on the favorable economic outlook, and to achieve the Downtown vision, several economic development tools have been identified. The City is currently using some

of these tools; others are new to the community. Following are descriptions of economic development tools that the City can use by making small adjustments to current approaches, as well as some innovative new mechanisms that can also be used.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

Development incentives will assist property owners to implement the community vision for Downtown. For example, design themes will assist to develop the community identity and character. Reservations for public plazas, parks, and trails will enhance the aesthetic quality of the community. While these elements are in the public interest, they can add a financial burden to proposed development projects. There are several incentives the City may provide to private landowners to reduce costs or other requirements to attain the goals for the area.

- **Tax abatements** or deferrals can be offered for a fixed time, typically during development and/or at the initiation of services. Wasilla's tax base is predominantly supported by a sales tax, which does not support tax abatement or deferral. The City should work with the Mat-Su Borough to explore potential tax abatements or deferrals.
- Offer variances from requirements as trade-offs to achieve high priority goals. For example a greater density development may be permitted in exchange for reservation of public spaces.
- Expedite permit processing as a trade-off to achieve high priority goals.
- A Business Improvement District is a geographically defined area in which a majority of businesses or property owners agree to impose a specific tax or fee to provide certain public services. The concept may be used for a completely undeveloped area or for a revitalization project.
- A Tax Increment Finance District is a district that includes an area where redevelopment or public improvements are desired. The property values in the area are projected to increase due to project implementation. The funding mechanism is generated through the difference between existing tax abatements and projected increases in these taxes. This increment or difference between tax levies would be used to fund the proposed development. (Note: This tool assumes a property tax is levied.)
- Public-private partnerships engage the public and private sectors in specified roles through the planning, financing, designing, construction, operation, and/or maintenance of a project. For example, the government entity may contribute the initial investment for the project, with other tasks accomplished under contract by private parties.
- Develop partnerships with federal, state, and Mat-Su Borough governments. Take advantage of grant sources and matching funds. Identify and complete projects or plans that make the community eligible for new funding sources.
- Municipal funds may be identified for project implementation, such as development of a centralized parking facility. Municipal funds may also be leveraged as credit assurance or loans to facilitate private development of projects.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS OR PROGRAMS

- **A Gateway** Committee would have a primary responsibility for planning,

designing, and implementing improvements for wayfinding stations and gateway entrances. The committee would seek to make each area readily identifiable and work to incorporate design themes in the gateways.

- Implement marketing programs to promote the Downtown. Feature community events, special attractions, and local businesses. Target audiences include local residents, regional residents, and tourists. Develop partnerships with local businesses and business organizations for marketing efforts.
- Support Downtown revitalization efforts, such as façade improvements, beautification projects, pedestrian-oriented facilities, and parking improvements.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION & SUPPORT

By making documents and permit application reviews available online, the public process is more transparent and available to a greater audience.

- **Planning documents** and permit/application reviews should be readily available to the public on the City website.
- Improve communication efforts with the community to increase understanding and support for

economic development efforts.

- Highlight community plans and the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) program and make related documents more readily accessible to the public. For example, there have been requests to have electronic copies of all current community plans available on the City website.
- Utilize public service announcements, newspaper notices and advertisements, and mailings to draw attention to economic development efforts.

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)
<p>Economic Development and Recommended Land Uses (EC/LU)</p> <p>1. A good mix of services, shopping, and dining is limited in Downtown Wasilla.</p> <p>2. Wasilla is known as a "pass through" site; tourists pass by the community on their way to other destinations.</p>	<p>A. Develop an attractive, diverse city center.</p> <p>B. Develop Downtown Wasilla as a government and education center that is interrelated with mixed use (including residential and commercial development).</p> <p>C. Make Downtown a destination for residents and visitors.</p> <p>D. Establish a downtown redevelopment district.</p>	<p>i. Identify priorities for infill development, in terms of locations and uses.</p> <p>ii. Evaluate and prioritize needs for visitor service infrastructure in the area, such as public restrooms, parking, signage, pedestrian paths, and visitor information stations.</p> <p>iii. Prepare a public facilities plan that addresses city, borough, state, and federal facility needs in Wasilla.</p> <p>iv. Advocate the needs of Wasilla students to the Mat-Su School District for future long-term facility planning efforts, forging a relationship that benefits students.</p> <p>v. Incorporate public institutions and mixed use as priorities in re-zoning and ordinance revisions.</p> <p>vi. Adopt design standards to ensure infill development complements existing development.</p> <p>vii. Promote infill development through incentives such as a business improvement district.</p> <p>viii. Provide financing incentives for mixed use development, such as credit assurance, equity investment in the project, or soft second loans to developers.</p> <p>ix. Identify enterprise zones for specific uses such as employment core zones.</p> <p>x. Develop partnerships and marketing programs to promote Downtown.</p> <p>xi. Review and revise public relations and marketing materials, featuring changes and attractions in the Downtown and other areas of Wasilla.</p> <p>xii. Update zoning in Downtown to encourage a diversified city center.</p> <p>xiii. Inventory vacant properties and abandoned buildings and offer incentives for redevelopment.</p> <p>xiv. Explore alternate uses of strip mall developments, including incentives for redevelopment to mixed use.</p> <p>xv. Encourage development of establishments that would entice visitors to the area, such as small shops, cafes, and sites with historic themes.</p> <p>i. Attract Mat-Su Borough and state government offices to Downtown Wasilla.</p> <p>ii. Identify resources that promote entrepreneurship and business relocation/location to Wasilla, such as venture capital, marketing strategies, and private-public partnerships.</p>
<p>3. There are few locally based industries and limited professional employment opportunities for the influx of new residents.</p>	<p>A. Attract and retain professional service sectors to provide local employment and diverse economic base.</p>	<p>Text in italics indicates an item, goal, or objective is common throughout all three planning areas.</p>

Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Short-term	<\$100,000	Downtown
Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Economic Development Departments City of Wasilla Planning Commission Wasilla City Council Mat-Su Borough Mat-Su School District Public-Private Partnerships*
Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Downtown Revitalization Committee* Chamber of Commerce and Member Organizations
On-going	<\$100,000	Downtown Businesses and Trade Organizations Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
Mid-term	<\$100,000	
Mid-term	<\$100,000	
Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
Long-term	>\$500,000	
Short-term	<\$100,000	
On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
Short-term	<\$100,000	
On-going	<\$100,000	
Short-term	<\$100,000	
On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Economic Development Departments Wasilla Chamber of Commerce Alaska Small Business Development Center
Short-term	<\$100,000	

* Indicates an entity recommended to be established but not yet in existence

Transportation and Circulation

Overview

Downtown is widely viewed as the center of Wasilla as a community. The parks, shops, restaurants, offices, and civic services available in this district set a tone that residents would like to build on. However, traffic is often congested, and parking is limited and sometimes inconvenient to amenities. Passenger cars are the predominant mode of transportation in this area. Mat-Su Community Transit (MASCOT) operates a fixed route mini-bus system between Palmer and Wasilla and provides a minor portion of the core area transportation needs. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic offer a minor portion of the transportation needs as well. Residents expressed concern that the area is unsafe for pedestrians. Community members want a Downtown that is easy to get to, convenient to navigate, and inviting to spend time in.

Planning Considerations

The vision of Downtown as the center of education and civic services, supported by mixed use, brings to the forefront considerations of pedestrian access, public transportation, traffic flow, and sufficient, well-designed parking. Further, the kind of vibrant, pedestrian-friendly Downtown envisioned by residents suggests careful attention to aesthetic appeal.

Circulation

- Residents expressed a desire for traffic flow to be improved throughout Downtown, including new and redesigned corridors.
- Residents want accommodations for multi-modal transport, such as bike paths.
- The Parks Highway presents the biggest traffic problem in the core area. According to the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) Main Street Traffic Study, traffic volumes on the Parks Highway will increase from 33,000 (2005 average daily traffic [ADT]) to 50,000 ADT in the next 20 years. The proposed Wasilla By-Pass that will move the Parks Highway and the railroad south of the City will alleviate some of the traffic congestion in the core area. ADOT&PF is also in the beginning stages of a preliminary engineering study for the By-Pass project, although final design and construction are not expected to be completed for several years. Even with the By-Pass, the volumes through the core area are expected to be near current volume levels in 20 years due to increased population.
- The preferred alternative chosen by ADOT&PF for the Main Street/Knik-Goose Bay Road project is a one way couplet similar to 5th and 6th Avenues in Anchorage. Main Street and Knik-Goose Bay Road will become a one way southbound street, Talkeetna and Yenlo Streets will become a one way north bound street. Talkeetna Street will 'Y' off Knik-Goose Bay Road in the South Wasilla Heights area. Intersections at the Parks Highway will be at-grade. This option is currently under Environmental Re-Evaluation, with construction probably taking place between 2010 and 2015.

Connectivity & Accessibility

- Downtown should connect easily and rapidly to other areas of Wasilla.
- Downtown is seen as unsafe and inconvenient for pedestrians.
- Inadequate parking and lack of pedestrian measures make Downtown facilities less accessible to patrons.
- Residents would like to see a feasibility study on public transit.
- At the present time, 5-foot wide sidewalks along City streets are the primary pedestrian facilities in Downtown. Many existing sidewalks are in good condition, but additional pedestrian improvements are desired. Recently constructed paved pathways connect to the City streets from the Parks Highway to the east, Wasilla Fishhook Road to the north and Knik-Goose Bay Road to the south. A pedestrian tunnel was recently constructed under the Parks Highway at Crusey Street. This is the only north-south connection of pedestrian facilities across the Parks Highway and Alaska Railroad at this time.
- The connection of the Knik-Goose Bay Road pathway to the Wasilla-Fishhook Road pathway is across the Main Street/Parks Highway intersection. Pedestrian facilities along Main Street are in poor condition. Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant curb ramps are in bad shape at the Parks Highway, and nonexistent at other intersections. The ADOT&PF design for Main Street reconstruction was postponed in order to complete the Main Street Traffic Study, which was completed in 2006. The re-construction will likely include construction of sidewalks and/or pathways, which will complete connectivity along this corridor, with an at-grade pedestrian crossing at the Parks Highway.

Parking

- Downtown parking is inadequate and inconvenient.
- Parking solutions should be integrated with traffic circulation design and with pedestrian improvements.

DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION GOALS

The overall goal for transportation and circulation in the downtown area is improved traffic flow with well-planned transportation upgrades. Upgrades will include new and redesigned corridors, parking solutions, pedestrian measures, public transit, and accommodations for multi-modal transportation.

Recommendations

PLANNING

Adopted and current plans can ensure the vision of the community is developed.

- **Consider what** traffic measures will work best in Wasilla. A

combination of traffic calming measures, strategically located with linkages to multi-modal transportation, can channel traffic, improve access, and ease congestion. Options include: widening major thoroughfares; one-way streets; traffic lights at busy intersections; traffic circles at slower intersections; integrated bike paths; pedestrian malls.

- To ensure that major civic services and traffic draws are easily accessible; the City should identify which **specific facilities are the most heavily used**. This information should inform the design and redesign of major corridors and of parking, with heavily-used and high-volume facilities being close to major arteries into Downtown and to parking facilities.

CLIMATE SENSITIVE DESIGN

Climate sensitive design can account for the low winter temperatures, frequent high winds, extreme daylight variations, and snow removal and storage.

options such as skating corridors, outdoor fires, and dogsled ‘taxi’ are all possible.

- **Consideration should** be given to **climate** when designing multi-modal transportation linkages. For instance, bike routes can be designed to be seasonal; pedestrian malls and connections between sidewalks can be designed to be easily maintained in winter; creative winter

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

Increased pedestrian access can contribute to healthier, more vibrant communities—something that Wasilla residents expressed a desire for.

pedestrian access within the heart of Downtown will encourage less vehicle use within Downtown, and can be beneficial for businesses as well. Specific measures include: easily maintained sidewalks; clearly marked pedestrian crossings; overpasses and crosswalks with push-button stoplight controls in places where walking to a street corner would be inconveniently lengthy for pedestrians.

- **Pedestrian access** has proven to be a key consideration in other cities attempting to foster vibrant Downtown areas. While careful attention must be given to traffic flow to and from Downtown, as well as through and into it for users in vehicles, prioritizing

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Wasilla's relatively small population and diffuse neighborhoods may keep City-wide public transport from being viable at this time.

continuous shuttle running a Downtown circuit during busy times.

- **Periodically evaluate** expanding public transportation options. Feasibility studies should be coordinated with MASCOT.
- **Make small** increases in service between popular destinations such as hospitals, Downtown, the MUSC; or a

PARKING

A variety of parking options can improve circulation patterns throughout Downtown.

- **Consider a** public-private partnership to fund municipal parking lots and multi-level parking facilities.
- Consider including integrated parking garages into designs standards.

- Integrate public transportation and improved pedestrian access with parking space that serves the whole Downtown.
- Consider requiring bike racks at new developments to encourage alternate forms of transportation that can help improve circulation.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Consider the *aesthetic values* inherent in Wasilla's identity as an Alaskan town as well as the community's pride in its small-town charm.

- **Parking is** an aesthetic and quality-of-experience issue as well, given that poorly designed parking (whether in a garage or parking lot) can be both ugly and stressful to navigate. Large parking lots without trees and other vegetation become hot and uncomfortable in summer

and are visually unappealing year round. Shade ordinances can be employed to mandate trees and shade provisions as new parking lots are constructed, and large existing lots can be redesigned to incorporate shade landscaping.

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)
<p>Transportation and Connectivity (TC)</p> <p>1. Local residents feel that Downtown Wasilla is vehicle oriented and unsafe for pedestrians.</p> <p>2. Parking is limited for Downtown Wasilla services (e.g., the library and post office).</p> <p>3. Wasilla has congested roads and poor traffic flow.</p> <p>4. There is a lack of public transit service within the community.</p>	<p>A. Create a pedestrian-friendly Downtown.</p> <p>B. Increase inter-modal connectivity within the Downtown area and to other parts of Wasilla.</p> <p>A. Address the parking demand in Downtown.</p> <p>B. Provide parking solutions that encourage mixed use, meet public facility needs, and improve pedestrian access.</p> <p>A. Improve the movement of people and commodities throughout Wasilla and surrounding areas via various modes of safe, accessible transit.</p>	<p>i. Use in-fill development to encourage mixed use and reduce vehicle trips.</p> <p>ii. Encourage pedestrian amenities in capital project planning, zoning, and subdivision actions with the establishment of such things as walkways and overpasses.</p> <p>iii. Institute design standards that promote pedestrian access including winter design factors.</p> <p>iv. Develop and/or enforce City ordinances that enhance pedestrian safety, such as stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks.</p> <p>v. Coordinate pedestrian improvements with parking initiatives and solutions.</p> <p>vi. Investigate winter city solutions for pedestrian access.</p> <p>i. Assess existing capacity versus existing and projected demand.</p> <p>ii. Review and revise as necessary the parking requirements for new developments.</p> <p>iii. Evaluate the feasibility of centralized parking facilities, including construction via public-private partnerships, municipal funding, or tax increment financing.</p> <p>i. Update current transportation plans to reflect growing demands and patterns and to roadway assess condition and capacity, and traffic/accident problem areas.</p> <p>ii. Recognize projects already programmed in the capital improvements projects such as the Main Street/Yenlo One-Way Couplet and focus future redevelopment around them.</p> <p>iii. Ensure that transportation plan updates reflect growing demands and patterns, roadway condition and capacity, and traffic/accident problem areas.</p> <p>iv. Coordinate transportation improvements with the development of new public and commercial development that can generate changes in traffic volumes and patterns.</p> <p>v. Implement provisions from the Wasilla Official Streets and Highway Plan.</p> <p>vi. Initiate a feasibility study to determine public transportation needs, potential demand, and expansion options.</p> <p>vii. Work with MASCOT to investigate additional funding sources to expand public transit service.</p> <p>viii. Investigate funding sources to promote multi-modal transportation (such as bike paths) and secure transportation into transportation improvements.</p>
<p><i>Text in italics indicates an issue, goal, or objective is common throughout all three planning areas.</i></p>		

Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Long-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments Downtown
On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Public-Private Partnerships* Downtown Revitalization Committee* Downtown Businesses
Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	State Legislators City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments
Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission Wasilla City Council Public-Private Partnerships* Downtown Businesses
On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
Short-term	<\$100,000	
Short-term	<\$100,000	
On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments City of Wasilla Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission Wasilla City Council MASCOT Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Public-Private Partnerships* Downtown Businesses
On-going	<\$100,000	
On-going	<\$100,000	
Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
On-going	>\$500,000	
Short-term	<\$100,000	
Long-term	<\$100,000	
Short-term	<\$100,000	

*Indicates an entity recommended to be established but not yet in existence

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Transportation and Connectivity (TC)	5. Local residents feel that Wasilla railroad crossings are inconvenient and unsafe.	A. Improve railroad crossing efficiency and safety.	On-going	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments Alaska Railroad
			Mid-term	<\$100,000	
		i. Work with the Alaska Railroad to evaluate and assess crossing safety, eliminate at-grade crossings, and realign track facilities.	On-going	<\$100,000	
		ii. Improve signage, striping, and crossing markers.			
		iii. Work with the Alaska Railroad to provide public education outreach.			
		6. An integrated trail system is needed to connect areas of Wasilla and destinations outside Wasilla.			
		A. Provide a multi-use trail system that promotes connectivity within Wasilla and multi-modal circulation.			
		i. Inventory existing trails in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.	Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments
		ii. Explore options for land acquisition, easements, and partnerships.	Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission
		iii. Provide incentives for developers to include space and/or reserve easements for public plazas, parks, and trails.	On-going	<\$100,000	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
		iv. Investigate funding sources such as those through SAFETEA-LU/National Recreation Trails Program and other partnerships to implement methods and action items, which include acquisition of rights-of-way and funding trails.	Short-term	<\$100,000	Area Landowners, Residents, and Businesses
		v. Create multi-modal linkages, for example, car to parking to trails; centralized parking, bus, bike path.			Public-Private Partnerships*
			Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Nonprofit Community Interest Groups
*Indicates an entity recommended to be established but not yet in existence					

Public Facilities and Utilities

Overview

Downtown houses several public facilities, including City Hall, the Wasilla Public Library, Police Department, Post Office, and the Dorothy Page Museum, a private non-profit serving the general public. To realize the vision of a thriving, inviting Downtown that is truly the center of civic life in Wasilla, the public has expressed desire for a larger library, additional parks, trails, and a greenbelt to connect the lakes. In addition, some facilities are not currently compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). General issues related to Downtown public facilities include repair needs, limited space, a lack of elevator access, and insufficient parking.

Downtown offers public water and sewer service for nearly the entire area within the boundaries. There is no indication at this time that these utilities are in need of upgrades; however, connectivity and capacity to individual parcels may be an issue. Sewage is handled in a Septic Tank Effluent Pumping (STEP) system, further integrated into a wastewater treatment facility. Downtown water needs are met by the City's core water system, which draws from the Spruce Avenue well and Bumpus municipal wells. The East Susitna well will soon be added to the City's core water supply system.

Planning Considerations

Public Facilities

Accessibility

- Accessibility of public facilities includes, at minimum, ADA compliance. The Wasilla public library meets ADA standards, but inconveniently.

City Hall fails to meet ADA standards, most notably due to lack of elevator access. Both these facilities, as well as the Post Office, have accessibility constraints due to inadequate parking.

There are a couple of terms that bear definition here. The ADA sets clear legal accessibility standards that public facilities in the US are required to meet. *Barrier-free access* is a term used in other countries to describe legal requirements, and used here to describe any access consideration oriented to removing or preventing obstacles for patrons of any capability level. *Universal design* is the concept of designing products and environments (from the start) to be usable by all people. The principles of universal design are gaining in use, and deserve careful consideration:

Universal Design Definition:

The design of products and environments to be useable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

1: Principle One: Equitable Use

The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

2: Principle Two: Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

3: Principle Three: Simple and Intuitive

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

4. Principle Four: Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

5: Principle Five: Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

6: Principle Six: Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

7: Principle Seven: Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

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The Center for Universal Design has also developed 29 guidelines that further explain the above principles. While aesthetic appeal is not one of the principles of universal design, employing universal design principles can improve the aesthetics of public environments, because ADA compliance—and accessibility considerations above and beyond ADA—are built-in and become integral to the overall design. The universal design tenet of providing the same means of use for all users whenever possible means that rather than providing special accommodations for people with disabilities, every part of the built environment functions as inclusively as possible. This in turn leads to an overall cohesion in the look and feel of the facility.

Capacity

- Are the current facilities meeting the needs of the public? City Hall will not hold all the offices and functions that the City would ideally house there, and the building is in need of repairs. The library, too, is felt to be too small for current use, let alone increasing use in a growing community. The Post Office continues to be overcrowded, and contributes to Downtown traffic congestion.

Utilities

Connectivity

- Downtown utilities service the entire Downtown area.

Capacity

- Downtown utilities are currently adequate to meet needs. There are plans for expanding the sewage system, however, this would apply to areas not currently serviced; Downtown would remain on the STEP system. Concerns have been identified with the City's water supplies in relation to back-up and emergency provisions, rather than capacity (City of Wasilla 2001) These are discussed in Appendix A.

DOWNTOWN PUBLIC FACILITY & UTILITIES GOALS

As the center of Wasilla civic life, Downtown will have universally accessible public facilities, in good repair and adequate to the needs of an expanding population. Utilities will be in good repair, have ample provision for system repair, temporary shutdowns, and emergencies.

Recommendations

UNIVERSAL DESIGN/BARRIER-FREE ACCESS

Universal design promotes barrier-free access, which focuses on removing or preventing obstacles and designing user-friendly environments accessible for all users.

- **Conduct accessibility** audits of public facilities, and make self-audit materials available to business owners and developers.
- Prioritize actions to address accessibility issues at facilities.

UTILITIES INVENTORY/PLANNING

Inventorying existing utilities and their capacity helps to identify and plan for future needs and determine deficiencies.

Complete a utilities inventory and update current and future level of service needs for each.

plans such as the Sewer Master Plan, and the Water Systems Facilities Master Plan and update in prescribed regular intervals.

- Prioritize actions for meeting future level of service needs.
- Implement action items in utility

FACILITIES INVENTORY/PLANNING

Inventorying existing public facilities will help identify and plan for future needs.

- **Complete a** public facilities inventory and evaluate ADA compliance.
- Prioritize actions for addressing ADA

compliance deficiencies and upgrading facilities to meet the demands of the growing population.

- Implement action items in facility plans such as the Trails Plan and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (currently in progress) and update in prescribed regular intervals.

PARTNERSHIPS

Good partnerships are beneficial to all parties and can help achieve difficult goals.

- **Partnerships with** community and regional nonprofit organizations, governments, and private entities can help the City fund and acquire land for public facilities and upgrades to public facilities.

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Infrastructure (IN)	<p>1. Provide infrastructure and services that accommodate growth and development.</p> <p>2. Rapid growth and development is placing strains on existing infrastructure and public facilities, including roads and schools.</p>	<p>i. Update infrastructure and economic development plans, and coordinate priorities and timing of interdependent projects and facilities improvements.</p> <p>ii. Encourage infill development to address under utilized areas of Downtown.</p> <p>iii. Establish economic incentives such as Business Improvement Districts.</p> <p>iv. Evaluate school expansion capacity on school campuses.</p>	<p>Long-term</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>Mid-term</p> <p>Short-term</p>	<p>\$100,000 - \$500,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p> <p>\$100,000 - \$500,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p>	<p>Downtown</p> <p>City of Wasilla Planning, Economic Development and Public Works Departments</p> <p>City of Wasilla Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission</p> <p>Wasilla City Council</p> <p>Wasilla Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Public-Private Partnerships*</p> <p>Downtown Businesses</p> <p>Mar-Su School District</p>
<p><i>Text in italics indicates an issue, goal, or objective is common throughout all three planning areas.</i></p> <p>*Indicates an entity recommended to be established but not yet in existence</p>					

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Funding (FN) 1. There is limited funding for ongoing projects and City incentives.	A. Efficiently utilize existing funding B. Obtain new funding sources for projects and City incentives.	i. Establish the framework for tax increment finance districts to provide funding for future development incentives. ii. Identify grants, bonds, development districts, cost sharing options and public-private partnerships to fund projects. iii. Identify and complete projects or plans that make the community eligible for new funding sources. iv. Develop partnerships with the state and Mar-Su Borough governments to fund existing and proposed City projects. v. Initiate a public education program that promotes the availability of the City's capital improvement projects in locations such as City Hall and the City website through mediums like meetings, newspaper notices, and public service announcements. vi. Evaluate phasing and sequence of projects to ensure efficient use of funds.	Mid-term Short-term Mid-term On-going Short-term On-going	<\$100,000 <\$100,000 \$100,000 - \$500,000 <\$100,000 <\$100,000 <\$100,000	Downtown City of Wasilla City of Wasilla Planning Commission Wasilla City Council Public-Private Partnerships* Downtown Businesses Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and other state agencies
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