

SOUTH WASILLA HEIGHTS

South Wasilla Heights offers an extraordinary perch for views of Pioneer Peak and other nearby mountains. The primary commercial development in the area is The Home Depot, which is surrounded by large vacant lots. As a relatively undeveloped area, South Wasilla Heights is a great community asset that offers a canvas for planned growth able to benefit the lives of residents and cater to visitors. This area is zoned primarily commercial, with only six parcels carrying the rural residential designation. The primary challenges facing further development in this area are infrastructure installation and construction of an internal network of roads.

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.

VISION SUMMARY

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.

OVERVIEW

South Wasilla Heights offers extraordinary views of Pioneer Peak. The primary commercial development in the area is The Home Depot. As a relatively undeveloped area, South Wasilla Heights is a great community asset that offers a canvas for planned growth able to benefit the lives of residents and cater to visitors.

This area is also zoned primarily commercial, with only six parcels carrying the rural residential designation. The core South Wasilla Heights area is bounded by Knik-Goose Bay Road, the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, and a steep slope to the north. There is a South Wasilla Heights subarea between the railroad right-of-way and Susitna Avenue, and between Roberts Street and Lake Street. This subarea includes the old Alaska Railroad Depot (now the Chamber of Commerce), and several residences and commercial businesses. Although the

sub-area has infrastructure in place, the rest of South Wasilla Heights lacks infrastructure and an internal network of roads.

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

LAND OWNERSHIP, PLATTING, AND ZONING – RECOMMENDED LAND USES/INFRASTRUCTURE

Formal sewer, water, utility and transportation plans for the area will help shape land use patterns and the landscape. Natural features and viewpoints will be maintained as South Wasilla Heights develops. Multi-use trails, parks, and

community meeting places will be developed. 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. Zoning changes will also promote a diversified business district that will help shape the area by providing a contrast of services from Downtown—large nationwide retail stores, business parks for corporate offices, private firms, and services, and a variety of hospitality services to meet the needs of Wasilla and the surrounding area. Infrastructure connections will continue to expand, and the City will work with developers to determine mutually beneficial solutions to infrastructure expansion.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation facilities will provide safe connections across busy thoroughfares, and thoughtful and safe street design will be implemented. New and enhanced transportation corridors will contribute to business and commercial development.

CHARRETTE IDEAS

Common Ideas

- High-end professional offices
- Trails, parks, greenbelts
- Theater Complex
- Hotels
- Convention/Civic Center

Unique Ideas

- Restaurant with a view of Denali and surrounding mountains

Other Highlights

- Pedestrian facilities
- Traffic lights

Assets (Strengths)

Aesthetics:

Viewsheds in this planning area set it apart

Infrastructure:

Main line utility lines are already in place

Services/Attractions:

The Senior Center; Iditarod Headquarters; Lake Lucille Campground; and the Knik Museum are near the planning area

Access:

Good access off the Parks Highway

Development Potential:

Almost a clean slate; mostly large lots/room for development; opportunity exists NOW to make fewer mistakes and do things right the first time; road system easily promotes growth; commercially zoned

Challenges (Weaknesses)

Aesthetics:

Large areas of clear cutting have occurred with no following development, which has made the area an eyesore to local residents

Geology:

The area has tight soils and a high surface water table

Transportation:

An internal network of roads is needed; traffic problems exist and a bypass is already needed

Land Ownership:

Almost all of the land in this area is owned by private individuals, and these landowners will dictate development

Infrastructure:

Developers must bear the cost of tying into the utility main lines that surround undeveloped parcels

LAND USE

OVERVIEW

The future of land use in South Wasilla Heights will incorporate design that centers on the individual property owners, natural environment, and the current needs of the community. With this in mind, this area of the City will retain and attract residents and visitors. South Wasilla Heights will transition into an attractive diversified business district with future land uses that will bring identity to this area without diminishing the visual appeal of the area.

New development can be profitable to developers while offering architectural appeal in keeping with the rural character of Wasilla, complementing existing development, and incorporating climate sensitive design. Realizing the community's vision for land use will result in improvements to a community that residents will continue to be proud to call home.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

South Wasilla Heights offers several commercially zoned large vacant lots, which are in private ownership. An older sub area of South Wasilla Heights is north of Park Avenue with occupied commercial and residential land uses on small lots. Vacant lots in this sub area are small and pose challenges similar to some Downtown parcels. This plan offers many ideas and suggestions from the public who expressed a desire to see this area become a diversified business district that provides large retail stores, nice restaurants, hospitality services, medical facilities, and business parks filled with professional offices to add diversity to employment options in Wasilla.

As development proceeds in this area, it is important to residents to retain the character and aesthetic appeal, with development contributing to the identity of the area. Four prominent land uses shaped goals for South Wasilla Heights. Goals and objectives were developed taking the following specifics about each land use into consideration. The following points were taken into consideration while developing goals.

Residential

- Single and multi-family housing is found in the sub area of South Wasilla Heights, yet zoning is commercial.

Retail

- The community clearly expressed that they want to see a variety of retail land uses in South Wasilla Heights.
- Small lot sizes in the South Wasilla Heights sub area challenge development.

Hospitality / Entertainment

- The community clearly expressed a desire to see a variety of entertainment/hospitality land uses in this planning area, particularly a theater complex.

Office

- South Wasilla Heights is a prime area for the City to encourage business development.

Recreation

- Residents fear that current zoning regulations do not encourage protection of natural amenities that set South Wasilla Heights apart from other areas of town.
- There are currently no designated recreation land uses in South Wasilla Heights.

SOUTH WASILLA HEIGHTS LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Planning will guide South Wasilla Heights development as a diversified business center that provides urban amenities like nationwide retail outlets, restaurants, hotels, and medical and professional offices. South Wasilla Heights will retain its aesthetic qualities as development shapes a distinct identity for the area incorporating multi-use trails, parks, and public facilities serving broad community needs and year round uses. Zoning adjustments will accommodate existing uses and development of small vacant lots will be promoted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the exception of platting authority, the City has the powers needed to achieve the vision identified for South Wasilla Heights. Following are descriptions of land use 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.

- Design standards should not be 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.
- Building placement and design should take advantage of the natural setting, employing appropriate color and style themes.

- 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.
- Climate sensitive design standards should be incorporated with new development in South Wasilla Heights. 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 sidewalks and bikepaths can provide a wind break for pedestrians while also contributing to the visual appeal of the street.
- 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. Also, the City could consider waiving or altering parking requirements for a mixed use structure, or to encourage creative use of open space.

ZONING

Zoning guides the type and intensity of land uses in an area, reduces land use conflicts, and ensures that the area remains intact for the enjoyment of all users.

Zoning Revision

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

Form-Based Codes

- 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.
- 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

- An Overlay Zoning District creates 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 viewshed or mature forests), or promote a specific type of development in a particular area (e.g., professional business park).
- Overlay zoning districts should be created in South Wasilla Heights to promote professional business parks or mixed use in the sub area.
- Overlay zoning districts should include provisions requiring specific design or landscaping elements that contribute to the distinctiveness of the district.

Planned Unit Development

- A PUD is a tool that can unify large-scale development with a variety of land uses and densities on a single tract of land.

- A PUD is mutually beneficial to developers and the community. Developers have greater flexibility with design and densities in exchange for including parks, trails, or preservation of specific resources.

PLATTING AUTHORITY

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

- The sub area of South Wasilla Heights has 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.
- This would reduce the burden on the Mat-Su Borough and provide Wasilla with increased autonomy and increased efficiency with re-platting and development.

- 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.

LAND BANK

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

- Disposal or acquisition of land must be at fair market value and can occur by any method including outright sale or exchange.

- The City should establish a land bank that serves as a repository for land with the intent that the parcels will later be disposed.
- The land bank can include and manage parcels of City land that are currently vacant.
- The land bank can also strategically purchase parcels that are too small for development but would be adequate if re-platted into larger parcels.

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 and easements for recreation land uses.

PLANNING

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

- Existing plans should be reviewed and updated as the community changes and grows.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

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.

- Utilize public service announcements, newspaper notices and advertisements, and mailings to draw attention to economic development efforts.

PROGRAMS / COMMITTEES

Establishment of a focused committee is a way to involve citizens in planning ideas they helped formulate.

- A South Wasilla Heights Policy Advisory Committee should be formed as a sub committee to the Planning Commission to develop specific design criteria for consideration in design standards and form-based codes for the South Wasilla Heights.

DRAFT

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
1. The public feels that there are no formal plans for the area.	A. Provide adequate planning for area development and growth.	i. Implement and strengthen existing City of Wasilla plans.	On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning Department City of Wasilla Planning Commission South Wasilla Heights Policy Advisory Committee*
		ii. Prepare formal plans to address issues that arise in the future.	Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
2. Parks, trails, and public facilities are not currently designated in South Wasilla Heights.	A. Establish accessible multi-use trails, parks, and public facilities that serve broad community needs, year round uses, and transportation objectives.	iii. Make existing plans more readily available to residents. For example, provide online access to plans through the City's website.	Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments City of Wasilla Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Public-Private Partnerships* South Wasilla Heights Landowners and Businesses Nonprofit Community Interest Groups Community Recreation Clubs/Groups (e.g., running club)
		iv. Form a South Wasilla Heights Policy Advisory Committee to Formulate specific design considerations for the area.	Short-term	<\$100,000	
		i. Complete a facility inventory to determine level of service needs.	Short-term	<\$100,000	
		ii. Update Parks and Recreation Master Plan (currently underway).	Short-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
		iii. Implement action items from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.	Long-term	>\$500,000	
		iv. Explore options for land acquisition, easements, and partnerships.	Short-term	<\$100,000	
		v. Provide incentives for developers to include space for public plazas, parks, and trails.	On-going	>\$500,000	
<i>Text in italics indicates an issue, goal, or objective is common throughout all three planning areas.</i>					
*Indicates an entry recommended to be established but not yet in existence					

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
<p>Land Ownership, Platting, and Zoning (LO)</p> <p>1. Zoning of the small lots south of the Parks Highway pose challenges to development. 2. Current platting and zoning regulations do not adequately encourage protection of natural amenities such as viewpoints and greenbelts.</p>	<p>A. Zoning accommodates existing uses and provides clear guidance for development that meets community objectives for development of South Wasilla Heights. B. Provide development incentives for encouraging protection of natural amenities such as viewpoints and greenbelts.</p>	<p>i. Review and update zoning to accommodate nodes of mixed use, residential multi-family development, and other land use districts. ii. Evaluate use of Planned Unit Development and other land use tools to provide incentives to developers that incorporate views and other natural amenities into development plans. iii. Evaluate use of common parking between developments to reduce loss of natural areas. iv. Develop subdivision code replatting standards that the City of Wasilla must first approve before recommending approval to the Mat-Su Borough. v. Work with the Mat-Su Borough to develop and negotiate an intergovernmental cooperation agreement that transfers the platting powers to the City of Wasilla. vi. Create a program where the City purchases available parcels to hold for potential replatting.</p>	<p>Long-term Short-term Short-term Mid-term Long-term Long-term</p>	<p>\$100,000 - \$500,000 <\$100,000 <\$100,000 \$100,000 - \$500,000 \$100,000 - \$500,000 >\$500,000</p>	<p>South Wasilla Heights City of Wasilla Planning and Economic Development Departments City of Wasilla Planning Commission South Wasilla Heights Landowners</p>
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ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
<p>Community Character (CC)</p> <p>1. Residents wish to improve the aesthetic character of development in South Wasilla Heights.</p> <p>2. Residents desire development in South Wasilla Heights to be distinctive, contributing to the identity of the area.</p>	<p>A. Promote a development theme that emphasizes large scale commercial and entertainment activities and related services.</p> <p>B. Cultivate attractive development in South Wasilla Heights.</p> <p>C. Protect the area's scenic qualities by incorporating them into development plans.</p> <p>D. Area development shapes a distinct identity for South Wasilla Heights through incorporation of design themes.</p>	<p>i. Institute design standards such as signage, lighting, and accommodate winter design factors.</p> <p>ii. Establish a South Wasilla Heights overlay zoning district that includes landscaping standards aimed at maintaining the aesthetic qualities of the area such as retaining a certain amount of mature vegetation.</p> <p>iii. Consider establishing a "Gateway Program/Committee" (primary responsibility is to plan, design, and implement improvements).</p> <p>iv. Develop visual cues to identify gateways and sub-districts, such as entry kiosks, wayfinding stations, thematic landscape design, and signage.</p> <p>v. Identify and acquire or reserve lands for community parks and open space.</p> <p>vi. Consider establishing design elements that visually link adjacent properties and create public spaces.</p> <p>vii. Encourage use of design themes through incentives such as variances from requirements, expedited permit processing, tax abatements, and potential loan programs.</p> <p>viii. Identify viewpoints and access points important to the public, and establish design criteria, scenic easements, and rights-of-way to maintain these important community attributes.</p>	<p>Short-term</p> <p>Mid-term</p> <p>Short-term</p> <p>Long-term</p> <p>Short-term</p> <p>Long-term</p> <p>Short-term</p>	<p><\$100,000</p> <p>\$100,000 - \$500,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p> <p>>\$500,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p> <p>>\$500,000</p> <p><\$100,000</p>	<p>City of Wasilla Planning Department City of Wasilla Planning Commission Wasilla City Council Public-Private Partnerships* South Wasilla Heights Property Owners and Businesses South Wasilla Heights Policy Advisory Committee*</p>
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW

South Wasilla Heights is largely undeveloped at this time. This presents the community with an opportunity to literally develop their vision for the area from the ground up. Residents desire a diversified business district to be developed in the area, including professional, retail, medical, and other services.

The City, landowners, business community, and local citizens will need to work together to achieve the community vision for the South Wasilla Heights area. The City will work with others to establish incentives for development, such as business improvement districts, enterprise zones, and partnerships.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Most of the area is held in large lots and is zoned commercial. With indicators for continued economic growth, demand is likely for retail development and office space in the South Wasilla Heights area. Key planning considerations for economic development in South Wasilla Heights include residential, retail, entertainment and hospitality, and office developments.

Residential

Residential development exists in the northern portion of the planning area, although most of the land is zoned as commercial. Residential development will likely hem the edges of the planning area.

Retail

New retail development will shape the business landscape in South Wasilla Heights. The area will be distinguished as a diversified business district that features a combination of national retail establishments and small businesses.

Office

Targeted growth in South Wasilla Heights will include the professional sector. Class A office facilities will serve public corporations and private firms. Medical facilities could be located in this area.

Federal, state, and local government offices could also be located in the area, expanding from the Downtown core.

Hospitality / Entertainment

Residents desire development of entertainment facilities such as a theater complex. The visioning sessions included suggestions for development of small hotels to serve the business community, as well as a variety of restaurants.

SOUTH WASILLA HEIGHTS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Residents desire South Wasilla Heights to be a diversified business center with entertainment and hospitality amenities to serve the community. The City will work to attract and retain business development in South Wasilla Heights. Incentives will be provided to guide and facilitate development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To capitalize on the favorable economic outlook, and to achieve the vision for South Wasilla Heights, 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 South Wasilla Heights. For example, reserving space for public plazas, parks, and trails will enhance the aesthetic quality of the area and connectivity to other portions 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. The City should work with the Mat-Su Borough to explore potential tax abatements or deferrals.
- Formalize a strategy for an overlay zone 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 geographically defined 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.)

- Enterprise Zone includes a geographically defined area that is targeted for economic development or growth. The area may be identified as an employment core zone, with particular emphasis on creating new job opportunities for the community. Businesses that operate in the zone would be offered tax credits, which then would be used by those companies to create new job opportunities.
- 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 provide 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.

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.
- Planning – Implement and strengthen existing plans that relate to economic development. Develop new plans as conditions change.

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 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)	Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Economic Development (EC)	1. Small lot sizes south of the Parks Highway pose challenges to development.	A. Foster development in the Kennedy and Nelson subdivisions.	Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Economic Development Departments City of Wasilla Planning Commission South Wasilla Heights Landowners
		i. Institute development incentives, such as replanting initiatives and business improvement districts. Please refer to Land Ownership, Platting, and Zoning Objectives that also contribute to achieving economic development goals.			
2. There is a need for greater business development in South Wasilla Heights.	A. Attract a diversity of sectors to establish in the area, including professional, medical, hospitality, and retail services.	i. Work with property owners to identify priorities for area development.	Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Economic Development Departments
		ii. Incorporate development priorities in re-zonings and ordinance revisions.	Mid-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission Wasilla City Council
		iii. Identify enterprise zones for specific uses such as employment core zones.	Short-term	<\$100,000	Public-Private Partnerships* South Wasilla Heights Development Committee*
		iv. Adopt design standards to ensure development contributes positively to area identity.	Short-term	<\$100,000	Chamber of Commerce and Member Organizations South Wasilla Heights Businesses and Trade Organizations*
		v. Update zoning for South Wasilla Heights to encourage diversified area development.	Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
3. There are few locally based industries and limited professional employment opportunities for the influx of new residents.	A. Attract and retain professional service sectors to provide local employment and decrease economic leakage.	i. Work with property owners to develop incentives to attract medical and visitor services to South Wasilla Height.	On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Economic Development Departments Wasilla Chamber of Commerce
		ii. Identify resources that promote entrepreneurship and business relocation/location to Wasilla, such as venture capital, marketing strategies, and private-public partnerships.	Short-term	<\$100,000	Alaska Small Business Development Center
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Transportation and Circulation

Overview

Community members envision South Wasilla Heights as a largely commercial district, incorporating hotels, restaurants, medical and professional offices. Residents noted the views and woodlands in the area, and want South Wasilla Heights development to integrate with the natural aesthetic appeal, and to include multi-use trails and parks.

Planning Considerations

South Wasilla Heights is largely undeveloped with no internal road network. The area is bounded on the south and east by the recently constructed Palmer-Wasilla Highway extension. Design capacity (year 2020) ADT for the road is 14,150 vehicles per day. The 2005 ADT count was about 10,000 vehicles per day. The north side is bounded by low volume residential streets in fair condition. The area is bounded on the west by Knik-Goose Bay Road, which will be upgraded as part of the Wasilla Main Street project. The one-way northbound Talkeetna Street and one-way southbound Knik-Goose Bay Road will 'Y' in the northwest corner of this area. The remainder of Knik-Goose Bay Road between Glennwood Avenue and the 'Y' will also be reconstructed.

South Wasilla Heights currently has a residential area, and commercial areas of both small and large lot size. The region is largely undeveloped, giving planners the opportunity to design nearly from the ground up. The vision for South Wasilla Heights voiced by the community implies the following considerations regarding transportation and circulation:

Circulation

- Community members would like traffic flow within South Wasilla Heights to facilitate navigating the area quickly and efficiently.
- The extension of Crusey Street across the Parks Highway and railroad could provide a second north-south access corridor between this area and the Downtown core area. However, obtaining approval from the Alaska Railroad for an at-grade crossing would likely be difficult and a separated grade crossing over the tracks and highway would be costly.
- The City continues to propose railroad relocation to the south of town to facilitate circulation within the community.
- Safety for pedestrians is a concern, but pedestrian flow is to be emphasized within groups of buildings and businesses, rather than area-wide.

Connectivity & Accessibility

- South Wasilla Heights currently has limited connectivity with the Parks Highway and the Alaska Railroad. Community members would like the area to be easy to get to.
- Safe connections across busy roads are a concern to community members.
- The community would like to see multi-use trails and parks within the area.

- Where public transit is deemed feasible, residents would like to see it be linked with both parking and facilities, and to increase the area’s connectivity to other parts of Wasilla.

Parking

- Residents would like to see adequate, well-planned parking that avoids the downfalls of current Downtown parking.

SOUTH WASILLA HEIGHTS TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION GOALS

Residents would like to see transportation and circulation in South Wasilla Heights support connectivity to other areas of Wasilla by multi-modal transportation that facilitates easy flow of pedestrians, vehicles, bicycles and public transit systems within the area.

Recommendations

PLANNING

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

- Planning for this area should identify intersections at locations along Knik-Goose Bay Road and the Palmer-Wasilla Highway opposite existing roads to consider four-way intersections with traffic signals.

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

Multimodal linkages connect air, road, rail, and trails to increase transport efficiency of goods and people.

- Parks could be connected by trails as well as by road. Groups of buildings/businesses could be connected by multi-use trails as well.
- Aside from the pedestrian tunnel under the Parks Highway at Crusey Street there is not a **direct**

connection for pedestrians between the South Wasilla Heights area and Downtown. Additional pedestrian crossings over or under the Parks Highway and railroad might be considered in future planning.

- The City might consider encouraging bicycle racks near buildings and in complexes.

CLIMATE SENSITIVE DESIGN

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

- Climate sensitive design can be used to make sure that public transit routes have adequate shelter, integrating stand-alone shelters and loading zones for facilities with spacious entries. New facilities of a certain size can be required to accommodate public transit by design.

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)
Transportation and Connectivity (TC)		
1. The area has limited connectivity with the Parks Highway and the Alaska Railroad.	A. Develop an efficient transportation system and associated infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Review and update the Streets and Highways Plan to reflect the growing demands and changing patterns. ii. Evaluate placement and capacity of access to the area off the Palmer-Wasilla Highway and Knik-Goose Bay Road.
2. Wasilla has congested roads and poor traffic flow. 3. There is a lack of public transit service within the community.	A. Improve the movement of people and commodities throughout Wasilla and surrounding areas via various modes of safe, accessible transit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ensure that transportation plan updates reflect growing demands and patterns and to roadway assess condition and capacity, and traffic/ accident problem areas. ii. Coordinate transportation improvements with the development of new public and commercial development that can generate changes in traffic volumes and patterns. iii. Implement priorities from the Wasilla Official Streets and Highway Plan. iv. Initiate a feasibility study to determine public transportation needs, potential demand, and expansion options. v. Work with MASCOT to investigate additional funding sources to expand public transit service. vi. Investigate funding sources to promote multi-modal transportation (such as bike paths) and ensure incorporation into transportation improvements.
4. Local residents feel that Wasilla railroad crossings are inconvenient and unsafe.	A. Improve railroad crossing efficiency and safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Work with the Alaska Railroad to evaluate and assess crossing safety, eliminate at-grade crossings, and realign track facilities. ii. Improve signage, striping, and crossing markers. iii. Work with the Alaska Railroad to provide public education outreach.
5. 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Inventory existing trails in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. ii. Explore options for land acquisition, easements, and partnerships. iii. Provide incentives for developers to include space and/or reserve easements for public plazas, parks, and trails. 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. v. Create multi-modal linkages, for example, car to parking to trails; centralized parking, bus, bike path.
<i>Text in italics indicates an issue, goal, or objective is common throughout all three planning areas.</i>		

Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
South Wasilla Heights		
Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments City of Wasilla Planning Commission Wasilla City Council
Short-term	<\$100,000	MASCOT Alaska Railroad Corporation and Shipping/Transportation Businesses Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Public-Private Partnerships*
On-going	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments City of Wasilla Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission Wasilla City Council
Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	MASCOT Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Public-Private Partnerships*
On-going	>\$500,000	Wasilla Businesses
Short-term	<\$100,000	
Long-term	<\$100,000	
Mid-term	<\$100,000	
On-going	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments Alaska Railroad Corporation
Mid-term	<\$100,000	
On-going	<\$100,000	
Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments
Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission
On-going	<\$100,000	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Public-Private Partnerships*
Short-term	<\$100,000	Area Landowners, Residents, and Businesses Nonprofit Community Interest Groups
Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
*Indicates an entity recommended to be established but not yet in existence		

Public Facilities and Utilities

Overview

There are no public facilities currently located in South Wasilla Heights. Currently the area is supplied with water by city water mains on the north, along Knik-Goose Bay Road on the west, along the Palmer Wasilla Highway on the south, and along the east side adjacent to the new Home Depot. A 16” sewer main bisects the area, coming south from the City core area, and heads east to the sewage treatment plant. It is currently the responsibility of developers to connect with these utilities.

Planning Considerations

Public Facilities

Accessibility

development Downtown, the City has an opportunity to decide whether ADA compliance is a sufficient accessibility standard for Wasilla, or whether it wishes to set its own.

- As the area is developed, the public would like to see a multi-use trail and park areas incorporated into overall development. As with new

Capacity

- At present this topic is not applicable, since there are not public facilities in the area.

Utilities

Connectivity

Heights, and whether it is practical to construct the new system in sections or modules as various areas are developed, or whether there is a primary grid/network that ought to be laid all at once.

- The single sewer main connects to the core area system. Consideration should be given to how the system would be expanded in South Wasilla

Capacity

Capacity is a consideration as utilities are extended into the area. Ideally, the water and sewer systems would be constructed in a manner that minimizes initial costs, but is adaptable to being connected into over time to the highest projected capacity or need.

- Capacity is a consideration as utilities are extended into the area. Ideally, the water and sewer systems would be constructed in a

SOUTH WASILLA HEIGHTS PUBLIC FACILITY& UTILITIES GOALS

Public facilities in South Wasilla Heights will include a multiple-use trail, and both indoor and outdoor spaces will be fully accessible to people of all abilities. Utilities will be provided in a manner that allows and encourages development of the area, while balancing public vs. developer costs.

Recommendations

UTILITIES INVENTORY/PLANNING

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

- Plan a utility grid in the area to minimize developers' connection costs to encourage development that meets City priorities.
- Complete a utilities inventory and update current and future level of service needs for each.
- Prioritize actions for meeting future level of service needs.
- Implement action items in utility plans such as the Sewer Master Plan, and the Water Systems Facilities Master Plan and update in prescribed regular intervals.

FACILITY INVENTORY/PLANNING

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

- Coordinate with a local land trust to evaluate options for land acquisition for parks and/or green belts that are identified in the Trails Plan and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (currently in progress).
- A municipal land bank (described in more detail in the Land Use Plan Elements and in Section 5) can be a valuable tool for purchasing key parcels identified by the community for parkland.
- Conduct a feasibility study to determine the economic viability of a convention center in the South Wasilla Heights area.

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 and easements for parkland, community centers, and a potential convention center.

ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	Schedule	Cost	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
1. South Wasilla Heights has limited infrastructure.	A. Expand infrastructure connections in the area.	i. Review and update utility and facility plans.	Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments South Wasilla Heights Landowners Alaska Division of Community Advocacy
		ii. Establish priorities for infrastructure expansion.	Short-term	<\$100,000	
		iii. Explore funding mechanisms for additional facility capacity to accommodate infrastructure expansion.	Short-term	<\$100,000	
		iv. Evaluate connectivity and adequate capacity for infrastructure during the plating process.	On-going	<\$100,000	
2. The community is experiencing rapid growth and it is projected to continue. 3. Rapid growth and development is placing strains on existing infrastructure and public facilities, including roads and schools.	A. Provide infrastructure and services that accommodate growth and development.	i. Update infrastructure and economic development plans; and coordinate priorities and timing of interdependent projects and facilities improvements.	Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning, Economic Development and Public Works Departments City of Wasilla Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission Wasilla City Council Wasilla Chamber of Commerce Public-Private Partnerships* South Wasilla Heights Businesses
		ii. Encourage infill development to address under utilized areas of South Wasilla Heights.	On-going	>\$500,000	
		iii. Establish economic incentives such as Business Improvement Districts.	Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
*Indicates an entry recommended to be established but not yet in existence					



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 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, and 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 Mat-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 mailings, newspaper notices, and public service announcements.	Mid-term Short-term Mid-term On-going Short-term	<\$100,000 <\$100,000 \$100,000 - \$500,000 <\$100,000 <\$100,000	South Wasilla Heights City of Wasilla City of Wasilla Planning Commission Wasilla City Council Public-Private Partnerships* South Wasilla Heights Businesses
<i>Text in italics 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					