

2013



DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN

EXHIBIT A
Ordinance Serial No. 13-20



CITY OF
WASILLA
• ALASKA •

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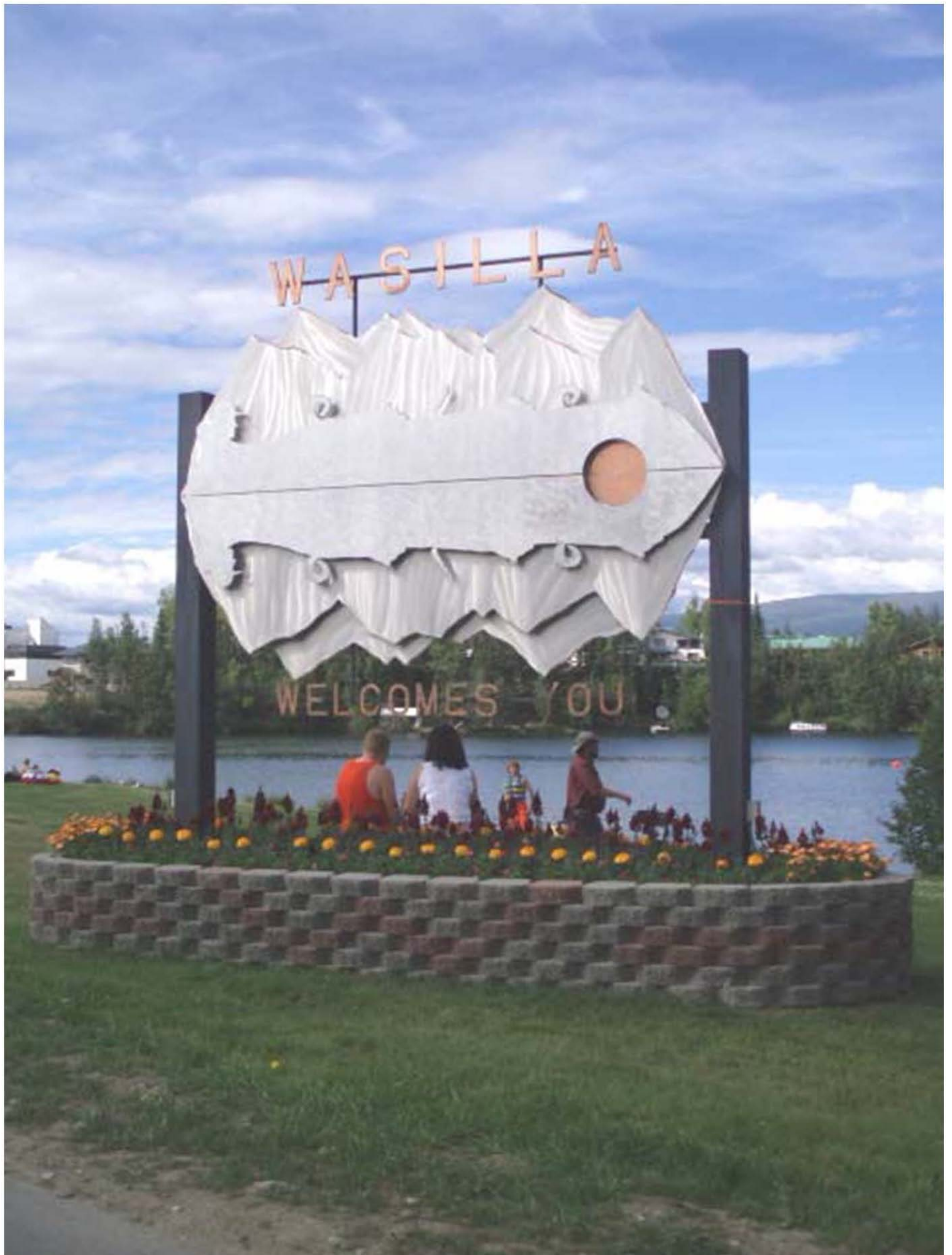
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADCA	Alaska Department of Community Advocacy
ADOT&PF	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
ADT	average daily traffic
AIDEA	Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority
CIP	Capital Improvement Project
DCCED	Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
GPD	gallons per day
MASCOT	Mat-Su Community Transit
MATI	Museum of Alaska Transportation Industry
Mat-Su Borough	Matanuska Susitna Borough
MUSC	Multi-Use Sports Complex
PUD	planned unit development
STEP	septic tank effluent pumping
STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program



WASILLA

WELCOMES YOU

INTRODUCTION

THE WASILLA DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN will assist to shape the future of the Downtown Area. It provides a vision of the future that is a reflection of those who live and/or work in Wasilla daily. Community values, preferences, and concerns are documented, as well as opportunities to improve the quality of life.

City Departments, the Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Airport Advisory Commission, and the City Council will refer to these documents so they can:

- make informed decisions concerning future growth and development
- plan for projects more efficiently
- assign appropriate resources to community needs
- identify needs for new or revised zoning and / or development authorities
- identify infrastructure priorities



The plans will also guide individuals and private companies when making investment and development decisions, or whenever questions affecting development within the community arise. While the plans will assist to guide community changes, the plans will be updated over time to reflect the changing needs of the community as new developments and trends occur. Section 1: Introduction provides more information on the purpose, preparation, and content of the plan, and answers the questions of what plans do, how the Wasilla Downtown Area Plan relates to existing plans, and how the community will be involved.

Planning Area Overview

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 through 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.

Area Vision Summary

In a community plan, a vision is a positive outcome or an ultimate condition that a community desires to move toward. It may build upon community strengths and address community weaknesses. The vision is a significant aspect of a community plan because it is an expression of local desires for quality of life and future development, which will guide residents, land owners, and City decision-makers. The vision should inspire and motivate the community to achieve their picture of the future. It should be used as a filter for future development proposals. When new development is considered, decision-makers and residents will need to ask the questions, *“Does this fit with our stated vision?”* *“Will this help us to achieve our vision?”* *“Are modifications needed?”*



The following vision was developed for the downtown planning area of Wasilla. The vision is elaborated upon further in Section 2: Vision.

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

Overview of Issue, Goals, and Objectives

Community members helped identify assets and challenges for the downtown planning area throughout the planning process by taking part in various exercises in public workshops and meetings, focus group sessions, and written comments. These exercises assisted the planning team to identify issues for the areas, goals for future conditions, and objectives to achieve the goals. This area plan provides summary tables for the area, organized by category. Issue categories included:

- community character
- land ownership, platting, and zoning
- economic development
- recommended land uses
- infrastructure
- transportation and connectivity
- funding



The tables, found in Section 3: Issues, Goals, Objectives, also identify potential leads and/or participating partners for initiating actions or strategies to accomplish objectives and achieve associated goals.

Overview of Plan Elements

Section 4: Plan Elements expand upon the goals and objectives identified for each area. Plan elements include land use, economic development, transportation and circulation, and public facilities and utilities. Each plan section addresses planning considerations, goals, and recommendations for implementing the Wasilla Area Plans.

LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS include:

- design standards to establish an identity
- promoting infill development
- making changes to the zoning code to facilitate development
- establishing a land bank to manage parcels for future targeted land uses
- developing partnerships to achieve challenging goals
- developing and revising plans to address changing needs of the community
- evaluate City annexation options to reduce future land use conflicts
- improving public communication
- establishing committees and programs to involve citizens in implementation

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS include:

- establish economic development incentives, such as tax abatements or deferrals, variances, business improvement districts, partnerships, and others
- establish economic development projects and programs
- improve public communication and support
- evaluate City annexation options to retain future economic development options

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION RECOMMENDATIONS include:

- continue traffic planning for the community
- climate-sensitive design
- design for pedestrian access and multi-modal transportation
- evaluate the feasibility of public transportation options
- improve parking options and aesthetics
- utilize zoning to cluster heavy transport and freight facilities in the City
- preserve rural character of the community and enhance aesthetics in transportation projects



PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS include:

- improve barrier free access to public facilities; incorporate universal design standards
- conduct facilities inventory
- implement action items from existing plans
- identify utility expansion priorities to facilitate development

Overview of Implementation

Follow-through with implementation action items determines the success of a plan. To achieve the goals and objectives articulated for the downtown area, there must be a comprehensive understanding of the implementation tools and mechanisms. In addition, the community must identify:

1. Actions and projects to accomplish
2. Lead and supporting partner and individuals
3. Timeframe for completion of actions and projects
4. Annual review process

Implementation tools and mechanisms are outlined in the plan, as well as actions and responsibilities (Section 5: Implementation Tools and Mechanisms).

Overview of Funding Sources

To achieve the visions outlined in the Downtown Area Plan, the City may have to explore new avenues of funding to implement priority projects. A summary table of potential federal, state, and private funding sources was assembled to assist the city with the task of identifying potential options (Section 6: Funding Recommendations and Potential Funding Sources.) The state also produces an Economic Development Resource Guide which lists funding options for municipalities. In addition, the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) – Division of Investments and the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority provide loans and assistance to small businesses.

1 INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE OF WASILLA DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN

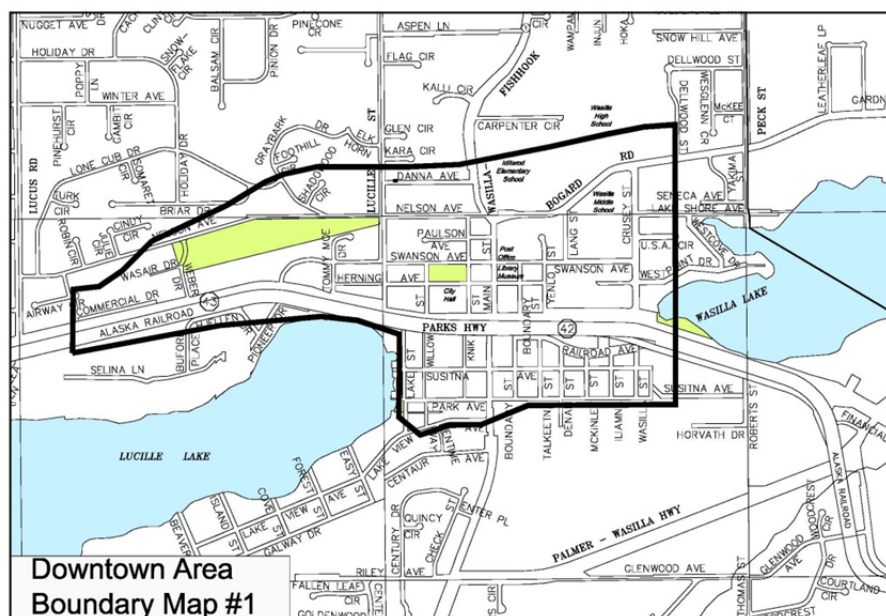
THE WASILLA DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN is a tool for growth in the next 15 years in Downtown Area. The plan provides a vision for the future that is a reflection of those who live and / or work in Wasilla daily. It communicates their community values, preferences, and concerns, and identifies opportunities where the City can capitalize on its assets and improve the quality of life.

This plan provides guidance to City Departments, the Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, and the City Council so they can:

- make informed decisions concerning future growth and development
- plan for projects more efficiently
- assign appropriate resources to community needs
- identify needs for new or revised zoning and / or development authorities
- identify infrastructure priorities

The plan is also an important guide to individuals and private companies when making investment and development decisions, or whenever questions affecting development within the community arise.

Wasilla is a dynamic city and municipal decision-makers are forced to respond quickly to growth. The City views planning as a continual process in which the community implements and builds on prior plans, updating the plans as conditions change. This planning document is a living document based on information available at a particular time. The needs of the community will change as new developments occur, and the area plans will be updated accordingly.



Where is the Planning Area?

This planning document examines the downtown area in Wasilla, which is distinguished by unique assets and challenges.

Downtown

In 1917, the first buildings in Wasilla were constructed in present-day Downtown. These buildings were the beginning of a city the 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.

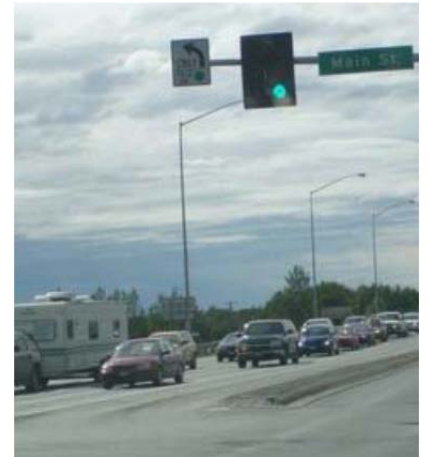
Downtown is zoned almost exclusively commercial but has a few pockets of residential areas. The area has vacant lots interspersed with developed lots that are ideal locations for infill development. In Downtown you will find parks, schools, art and history, a performing arts facility, local specialty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



Historic Teeland’s serves as a community gathering place.



Traffic in Downtown



Meta Rose Square has aesthetic appeal and additional landscaping would add to that.

PROCESS: PREPARATION AND CONTENT OF THE PLAN



Members of the Visioning Committee discuss ideas for the Airport and Transportation Museum Area.

The Wasilla Downtown Area Plan is an agenda for action that will serve as a reference and guide for decision-making. Public participation was critical for development as well as implementation of this plan. It provides the “real-world” perspective of those who have the most at stake – the residents, property owners, and business owners. Successful public participation reaches out to those who have grown up and raised their families in the community for decades, and to those who are now choosing to raise their families here because of the quality of life Wasilla has to offer.

The public identified community issues, goals, objectives, and priorities for implementation. The document puts forth the groundwork for initial steps the City and all stakeholders to take to achieve their visions and bring them closer to their stated goals.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

A common misconception is that Wasilla does no planning and zoning is nonexistent. To the contrary, Wasilla has completed or regularly updated more plans than most communities in Alaska, and zoning has long been in place through the City’s Land Development code. The first step in this planning effort was to review existing plans, reports, ordinances, and community surveys. This step provided the planning team with:

- an inventory of previously identified issues and assets
- a determination of the relevance of issues
- a log of background information

Each plan was reviewed and issue statements were developed to provide a base of issues to compare against issues identified in public meetings. The goal of this step was to capture all unresolved issues, regardless of origin.

REVIEWED DOCUMENTS AND MAPS	
<i>Comprehensive Plan</i>	<i>Water Systems Facilities Master Plan</i>
<i>Trails Plan</i>	<i>Airport Master Plan</i>
<i>Sewer Master Plan</i>	<i>Official Streets and Highways Plan</i>
<i>Hazard Mitigation Plan</i>	<i>Main Street Traffic Study</i>
<i>Community Survey Report</i>	<i>Wasilla Municipal Code</i>
<i>Zoning Map</i>	<i>Five-Year Fiscal Forecast Model</i>
<i>Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy</i>	

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



Community members had the opportunity to share their ideas and values throughout the planning process.

Community involvement kicked off in August 2006 when the planning team presented an overview of the planning process at a Wasilla Planning Commission meeting. Shortly following, a newsletter was mailed to Wasilla residents and business owners introducing them to the goals of the planning process, the planning areas, and opportunities for participation. The newsletter also included a form for recipients to submit comments and questions to the planning team.

Throughout the planning process, the public was asked to share their most important issues, needs, and vision for the downtown area. Community input shaped the entire plan. Planning boundaries were amended, based on public comments. The area vision is centered on information gathered in the public sessions. Planning issues and the related goals and objectives all stem from public input.

The City hosted the first Visioning Committee workshop in November 2006. This committee (a subcommittee of the Planning Commission) was developed by the Mayor, City Planning Department, and Planning Commission and convened stakeholders and leaders of Wasilla. Next, three focus group sessions were hosted. The focus groups represented a full spectrum of interests, spanning arts and cultural to business and transportation industry interests.

Participants of the Visioning Committee workshop engaged in a SWOT Analysis – an exercise where participants are asked to identify the community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The focus group sessions posed targeted questions about community values and the strengths and weaknesses of each planning area.

The Visioning Committee workshop and three focus group sessions included the most formal process of identifying the visions. During these participation opportunities, attendees were asked to finish the sentence, “In 15 years, I see Wasilla as”

Participants in these sessions were guided through exercises to focus on the future of the downtown planning area.

Presentations were given to the Wasilla Rotary Club and the Wasilla Chamber of Commerce to provide an overview of the goals of the planning process and to present a synopsis of the results from the Visioning Committee workshop and focus group sessions.



City planning staff was available to the community to hear their thoughts on how Wasilla should grow.

A day-long mini-charrette (a specialized type of planning hands-on workshop to gather public input) was then held to offer the public an opportunity to collaborate with one another and illustrate their ideas and visions. Large maps of each planning area were provided for groups and individuals to record their ideas for preferred land uses and development emphases.

Shortly following the mini-charrette, a public meeting was organized to review the products of the planning process to date, answer questions, and solicit additional comments to incorporate in the planning document.

Another facet of the public participation program was the school project. Youth involvement provides an opportunity for students to offer a unique perspective to the planning team and fosters community pride and commitment. We designed a curriculum that meets the Alaska State Education Content Standards and Grade Level Expectations that outlined exercises and materials for teachers to integrate in specific classes. The curriculum was provided to teachers in December. In May, students were asked to participate in a small scale design workshop where they brainstormed ideas for potential land uses in Downtown, then sketched on maps the locations for suggested lands uses and boundaries for the Downtown planning area. Figure 2 illustrates the public participation timeline.

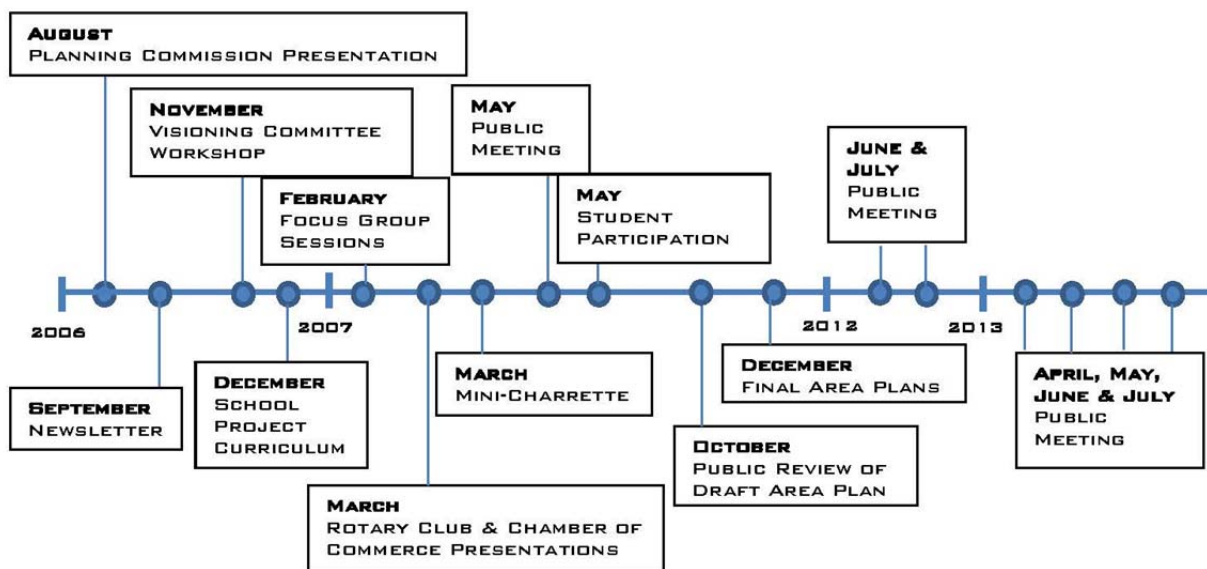


Figure 2. Public Participation Timeline

WHAT IS IN THIS PLAN?

The Wasilla Downtown Area Plan is organized into the following sections:

- Section 1: Introduction: furnishes an overview of the planning process and planning contents.
- Section 2: Vision: describes the values that the community wants to see retained and new ideas for future life in Wasilla.
- Section 3: Issues: Goals and Objectives: provides a synopsis of each planning area's assets and challenges, as well as goals and objectives that address community identified issues and can help strengthen each area.
- Section 4: Plan Elements: discusses the vision, planning considerations, goals, and recommendations associated with land use, economic development, transportation and circulation, and public facilities and utilities for each planning area.
- Section 5: Implementation: examines new and existing tools and mechanisms that can be used or modified to achieve foals identified for each planning area. This section also identifies a responsible entity for each implementation action and a reasonable schedule for completion of the action.
- Section 6: Funding Recommendations and Potential Funding Sources: provides an inventory of funding recommendations and potential funding sources for the actions identified.
- Area Profile – Appendix A: provides background information and inventories existing conditions in Wasilla.
- Public Involvement Summary – Appendix B: provides notes from community involvement meetings and workshops and newsletter(s).
- School Project – Appendix C: provides the developed curriculum, summary notes from the sessions with students, and map outputs.

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PLANS

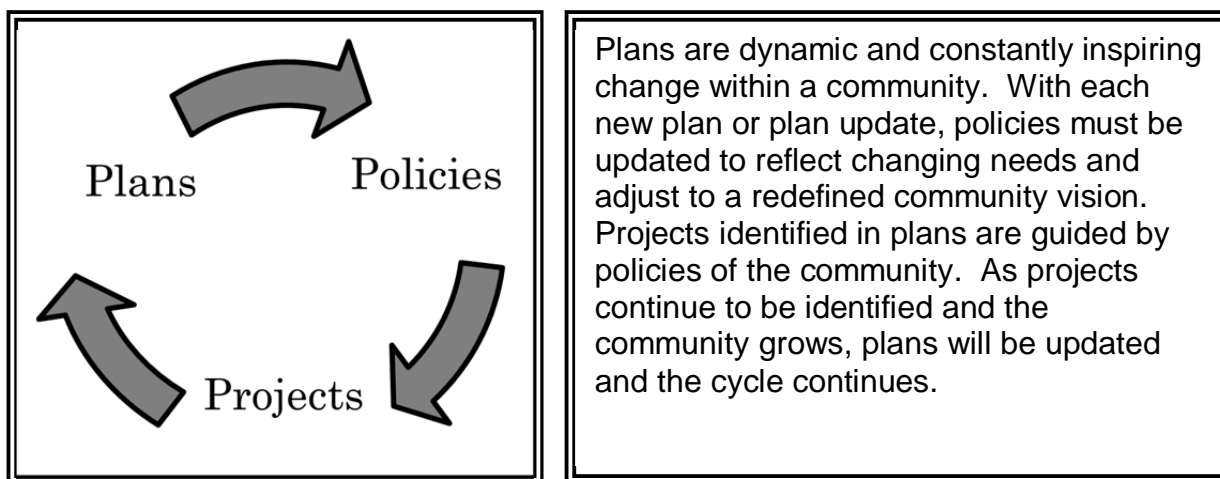
WHAT DO PLANS DO?

Plans, in general, focus on characteristics within the community that can be strengthened. They also focus the community vision to guide policies for specific elements such as land use, economic development, transportation and circulation, and public facilities and utilities.

Policies connect the vision to what actually happens. They are developed by the Wasilla City Council, commissions, and City departments in the form of land development regulations (e.g., landscaping standards and sign ordinances, and zoning designations) and building codes. Policies guide the development of future projects in Wasilla.

Projects are derived from the plans and other sources, which are prioritized and included on the City’s capital improvement projects list. These projects are implemented in accordance with specific policies defined by the City. Projects may be funded by the public, private entities, or public-private partnerships.

The Wasilla City Council, commissions, and various departments are responsible for enforcing policies that guide development and projects using tools such as permits, approvals, and other administrative procedures.



HOW DOES THE WASILLA DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN RELATE TO EXISTING PLANS?

Title 16, the Land Development Code of Wasilla, encourages areas to develop neighborhood plans for inclusion as an amendment to the City Comprehensive Plan. Wasilla has several plans that relate to this area plan. The Wasilla Downtown Area Plan is compatible with and complements existing community and regional plans that guide growth. Figure 3 inventories the plans in Wasilla and illustrates the relationship of plans beginning with the comprehensive plan, which provides broad direction for the entire city. Element focused plans complement the broad plans, providing specific guidance for things like wastewater treatment systems and trails. Area focused plans further round out policy planning documents by furnishing details for a distinct area within the City. All of these documents include implementation actions, which are later carried out through a variety of mechanisms and entities.

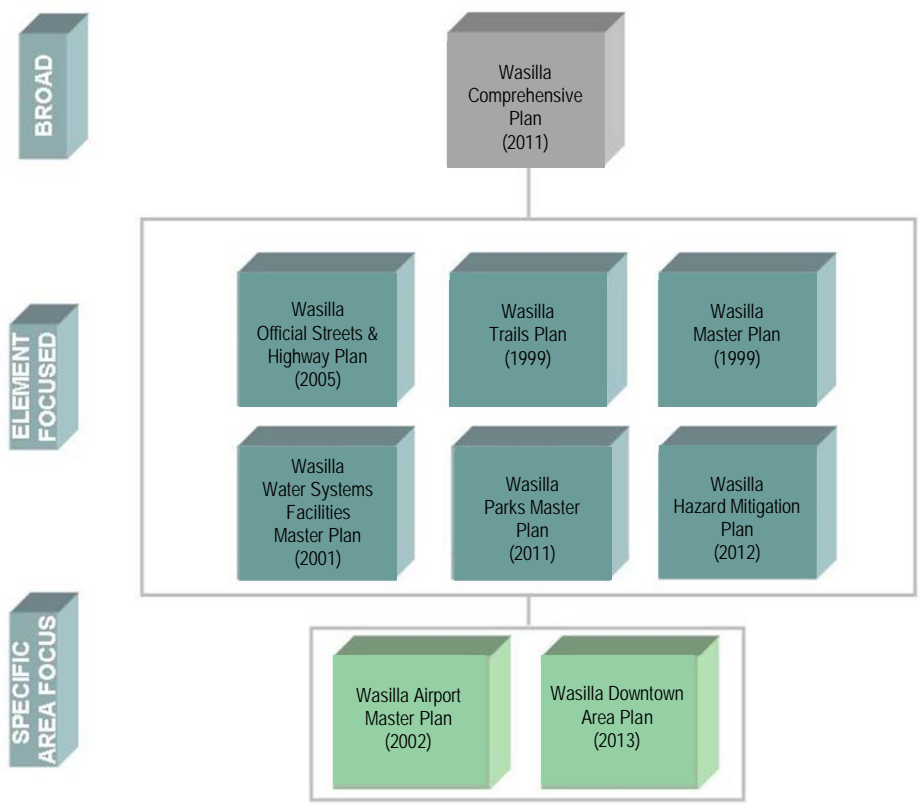


Figure 3. Wasilla Planning Documents

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

HOW WILL THE COMMUNITY BE INVOLVED?

Plans often fail because responsibility for implementing actions is unidentified in the plan. This document identifies potential responsible parties while still giving the City flexibility for changes if necessary. Continued public support and enthusiasm along with suitable and realistic implementation mechanisms are crucial to the success of this area plan. Everyone must work together for this plan to come to fruition.

In Section 3: Issues, Goals, Objectives, and Responsible Parties are identified to lead and assist in the implementation of objectives to reach the goal. These entities are not all- inclusive and can change as dynamically as the City is changing. Most importantly, this area plan represents the vision of people who are invested in Wasilla. As such, it will take not only City Council, the Planning Commission, and City staff to help implement these ideas, but those who helped develop and identify these ideas as well as current and future residents. This plan will achieve the greatest success if everyone who resides and works in Wasilla is committed to taking part in implementing the visions laid out in the plan.

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2 VISION: WHAT IS A VISION?

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

HOW WILL A VISION HELP OUR COMMUNITY?

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

HOW WAS THE VISION DEVELOPED?

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

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

- ❖ *If you could make these areas the way you want them, what would they look like?*
- ❖ *What community assets will the areas include?*
- ❖ *On their days off, where will residents go and what will they do in these areas?*
- ❖ *What amenities need to be located within the community to improve and enhance the quality of life?*
- ❖ *How do I picture these areas in 15 years?*

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

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

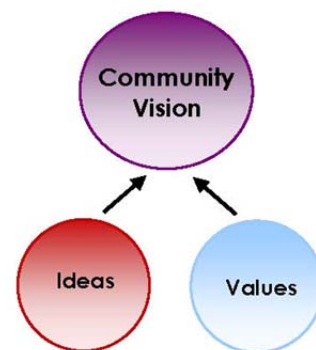


Figure 4 Community Vision

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



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

❖ COMMUNITY CHARACTER ❖

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



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



❖ RECOMMENDED LAND USES ❖

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

❖ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ❖

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



Yenlo Square Phase I: Yenlo Arms

❖ GROWTH ❖

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

❖ TRANSPORTATION ❖

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

CHARRETTE SNAPSHOT

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

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

<p style="text-align: center;">Common Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government offices• Expanded library and post office <p style="text-align: center;">Unique Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• College campus• ATV trail around downtown• Boardwalk and restaurants on west end of Wasilla Lake• Frontage road <p style="text-align: center;">Other Highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mixed use areas

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3 ISSUES, GOALS, & OBJECTIVES

Area Snapshots: Downtown

Community members helped identify assets and challenges for the downtown planning area throughout the planning process by taking part in various exercises in public workshops and meetings, focus group sessions, and written comments. The assets and challenges were used to develop issue statements, goals, and objectives for the downtown planning area.

Assets (Strengths)

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

Parks and Open Space: Wonderland Park (amphitheater 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

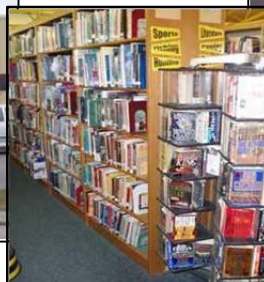
Parks & Trails: Parks not connected; lack of trails

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.



Wasilla Post Office



Wasilla Library



Retail, restaurant, and office spaces in Downtown Wasilla

Issues, Goals, & Objectives

This section identifies the issues, goals, and objectives and provides a summary framework for action items, or strategies, to implement the plan.

WHAT DO THESE TERMS MEAN?

Issues are problems that impede progress or perceptions that the existing conditions are inadequate.

Goals are general, broad statements of what you want to accomplish, or the community's aspirations. They are positively stated desired future situations to address an issue.

Objectives are statements of planned results that are measurable or trackable.

The following summary tables are categorized by issue statements. Priority issues were derived from evaluating the results from the Visioning Committee workshop, focus group sessions, charrette, public workshop, and individual public comments. Some issues identified during this planning process are lingering issues previously identified in existing planning documents.

From each identified issue, the planning team developed goals and objectives. The tables also identify potential leads and/or participating partners for initiating actions or strategies to accomplish objectives and achieve associated goals.

Schedules for Completion

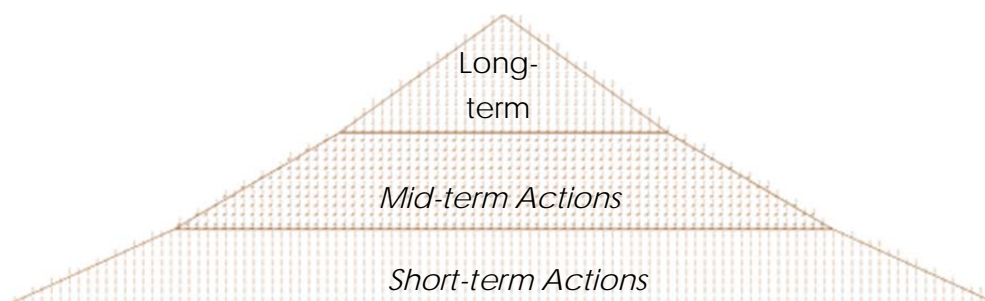
Each implementation item is tied to a timeframe defined as on-going, or short-, mid-, or long-term. The planning timeframe for this plan is 15 years.

On-going actions require relationship building and maintenance of relationships, structures, plans, zones, etc. On-going actions results are often difficult to measure.

Short-term actions can be accomplished within 1 to 2 years. These actions often provide immediate reward and success, which can be motivating for accomplishing more intensive actions. Many short-term actions lay the groundwork for accomplishing mid-term actions.

Mid-term actions are accomplished within 3 to 5 years. These actions take a larger coordinated effort to complete, and more than one entity may be involved with implementing the action.

Long-term actions will take 5 to 10 years to complete and typically will involve a number of different coordinating entities to accomplish the action.



ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	SCHEDULE	COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Community Character (CC)					
<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>	i. Institute design standards such as signage, lighting, and accommodate winter design factors.	Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning Department
		ii. Include pedestrian-oriented landscaping standards into a Downtown overlay zoning district such as using evergreen trees lining sidewalks to distinguish the area.	Mid-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission Wasilla City Council
		iii. Consider establishing a "Gateway Program/Committee" (primary responsibility is to plan, design, and implement improvements for wayfinding stations and gateway entrances).	Short-term	<\$100,000	Gateway Committee* Downtown Revitalization Committee*
		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.	Short-term	<\$100,000	Public-Private Partnerships*
		v. Develop visual cues to identify gateways and sub-districts, such as entry kiosks, wayfinding stations, thematic landscape design, and signage.	Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Matanuska-Susitna Convention and Visitor's Bureau Civic Groups (including art and history)
		vi. Capitalize on existing facilities to develop plazas and community gathering places.	Long-term	<\$100,000	
		vii. Encourage use of design themes through incentives such as variances from requirements, expedited permit processing, tax abatements, and loan programs.	Long-term	<\$100,000	
		viii. Explore zoning areas by building type, rather than use to achieve aesthetic objectives but allow for flexibility in mixed use districts.	Long-term	<\$100,000	
		ix. Promote community events that support the identity and theme of the area to attract visitors and tourists.	On-going	<\$100,000	
		x. Create an educational program through a public-private partnership to promote Downtown's identity and theme.	Mid-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
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.	Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning Department
		ii. Work with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to streamline the replatting process with regard to consolidation of small lots within the City of Wasilla.	Long-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission Downtown Landowners
		iii. Institute development incentives, such as replatting initiatives and business improvement districts.	Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Matanuska-Susitna Homebuilders Association
		iv. Create a program where the City purchases available parcels to hold for potential replatting.	Long-term	>\$500,000	
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ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	SCHEDULE	COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Economic Development and Recommended Land Uses (EC/LU)					
1. A good mix of services, shopping, and dining is limited in Downtown Wasilla. 2. Wasilla is known as a "pass through" site; tourists pass by the community on their way to other destinations.	A. Develop an attractive, diverse city center.	i. Identify priorities for infill development, in terms of locations and uses.	Long-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Economic Development Departments
		ii. Evaluate and prioritize needs for visitor service infrastructure in the area, such as public restrooms, parking, signage, pedestrian paths, and visitor information stations.	On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission
	B. Develop Downtown Wasilla as a government and education center that is interspersed with mixed use (including residential and commercial development).	iii. Prepare a public facilities plan that addresses city, borough, state, and federal facility needs in Wasilla.	Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Wasilla City Council
		iv. Advocate the needs of Wasilla students to the Matanuska-Susitna School District for future long-term facility planning efforts, forging a relationship that benefits students.	Short-term	<\$100,000	Matanuska-Susitna Borough
	C. Make Downtown a destination for residents and visitors.	v. Incorporate public institutions and mixed use as priorities in rezonings and ordinance revisions.	On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Matanuska-Susitna School District Public-Private Partnerships* Downtown
		vi. Adopt design standards to ensure infill development complements existing development.	Short-term	<\$100,000	Revitalization Committee* Chamber of Commerce and Member Organizations
	D. Establish a downtown redevelopment district.	vii. Promote infill development through incentives such as a business improvement district.	Short-term	<\$100,000	Downtown Businesses and Trade Organizations
		viii. Provide financing incentives for mixed-use development, such as credit assurance, equity investment in the project, or soft second loans to developers.	On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
		ix. Identify enterprise zones for specific uses such as employment core zones.	Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
		x. Develop partnerships and marketing programs to promote Downtown.	Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Economic Development Departments
		xi. Review and revise public relations and marketing materials, featuring changes and attractions in the Downtown and other areas of Wasilla.	On-going	<\$100,000	Wasilla Chamber of Commerce
		xii. Update zoning in Downtown to encourage a diversified city center.	On-going	<\$100,000	Alaska Small Business Development Center
		xiii. Inventory vacant properties and abandoned buildings and offer incentives for redevelopment.	Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	
		xiv. Explore alternate uses of strip mall developments, including incentives for redevelopment to mixed use.	On-going	>\$500,000	
		xv. Encourage development of establishments that would entice visitors to the area, such as small shops, cafés, and sites with historic themes.	Short-term	<\$100,000	
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. Attract Matanuska-Susitna Borough and state government offices to Downtown Wasilla.	Long-term	<\$100,000	
		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	
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ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	SCHEDULE	COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Infrastructure (IN)					
1. The community is experiencing rapid growth and it is projected to continue. 2. 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
		ii. Encourage infill development to address underutilized areas of Downtown.	On-going	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission
		iii. Establish economic incentives such as Business Improvement Districts.	Short-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Wasilla City Council
		iv. Evaluate school expansion capacity on school campuses.	Long-term	<\$100,000	Wasilla Chamber of Commerce Public-Private Partnerships *Downtown Businesses Matanuska-Susitna School District
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ISSUE	GOAL	OBJECTIVE(S)/POLICY(IES)	SCHEDULE	COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Transportation and Connectivity (TC)					
1. Local residents feel that Downtown Wasilla is vehicle-oriented and unsafe for pedestrians.	A. Create a pedestrian-friendly Downtown. B. Increase inter-modal connectivity within the Downtown area and to other parts of Wasilla.	i. Use infill development to encourage mixed use and reduce vehicle trips.	Long-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments
		ii. Encourage pedestrian amenities in capital project planning, zoning, and subdivision actions with the establishment of such things as walkways and overpasses.	On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
		iii. Institute design standards that promote pedestrian access including winter design factors.	Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Public-Private Partnerships*
		iv. Develop and/or enforce City ordinances that enhance pedestrian safety, such as stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks.	Short-term	<\$100,000	Downtown Revitalization Committee*
		v. Coordinate pedestrian improvements with parking initiatives and solutions.	On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Downtown Businesses State Legislators
		vi. Investigate winter city solutions for pedestrian access.	Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments
2. Parking is limited for Downtown Wasilla services (e.g. library, post office).	A. Address the parking demand in Downtown. B. Provide parking solutions that encourage mixed use, meet public facility needs, and improve pedestrian access.	i. Assess existing capacity versus existing and projected demand.	Short-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments
		ii. Review and revise as necessary the parking requirements for new developments.	On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning Commission Wasilla City Council
		iii. Evaluate the feasibility of centralized parking facilities, including construction via public-private partnerships, municipal funding, or tax increment financing.	Mid-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments City of Wasilla Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission
3. Wasilla has congested roads and poor traffic flow. 4. There is a lack of public transit service within community.	A. Improve the movement of people and commodities throughout Wasilla and surrounding areas via various modes of safe, accessible transit.	i. Update current transportation plans to reflect growing demands and patterns and to roadway assess condition and capacity, and traffic/accident problem areas.	Long-term	<\$100,000	Wasilla City Council MASCOT
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.		On-going	<\$100,000	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Public-Private Partnerships*	
iii. Ensure that transportation plan updates reflect growing demands and patterns, roadway condition and capacity, and traffic/accident problem areas.		On-going	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Downtown Businesses	
iv. Coordinate transportation improvements with the development of new public and commercial development that can generate changes in traffic volumes and patterns.		Long-term	>\$500,000		
v. Implement priorities from the Wasilla Official Streets and Highway Plan.		On-going	<\$100,000		
vi. Initiate a feasibility study to determine public transportation needs, potential demand, and expansion options.		Short-term	<\$100,000		
vii. Work with MASCOT to investigate additional funding sources to expand public transit service.		Long-term	<\$100,000		
viii. Investigate funding sources to promote multi-modal transportation (such as bike paths) and ensure incorporation into transportation improvements.		Short-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000		
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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.	i. Work with the Alaska Railroad to evaluate and assess crossing safety, eliminate at-grade crossings, and realign track facilities.	On-going	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla Planning and Public Works Departments
		ii. Improve signage, striping, and crossing markers.	Mid-term	<\$100,000	Alaska Railroad
		iii. Work with the Alaska Railroad to provide public education outreach.	On-going	<\$100,000	
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 Public-Private Partnerships*
		v. Create multi-modal linkages, for example, car to parking to trails; centralized parking, bus, bike path.	Long-term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Nonprofit Community Interest Groups
			*Indicates an entity 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.	i. Establish the framework for tax increment finance districts to provide funding for future development incentives.	Mid-term	<\$100,000	City of Wasilla City of Wasilla Planning Commission
		ii. Identify grants, bonds, development districts, cost sharing options and public-private partnerships to fund projects.	Short-term	<\$100,000	Wasilla City Council Public-Private Partnerships*
	B. Obtain new funding sources for projects and City incentives.	iii. Identify and complete projects or plans that make the community eligible for new funding sources.	Mid-Term	\$100,000 - \$500,000	Downtown Businesses
		iv. Develop partnerships with the state and Matanuska-Susitna Borough governments to fund existing and proposed City projects.	On-going	<\$100,000	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and other state agencies
		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.	Short-term	<\$100,000	
		vi. Evaluate phasing and sequence of projects to ensure efficient use of funds.	On-going	<\$100,000	
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4 PLAN ELEMENTS

The Plan Elements chapter addresses planning considerations, goals, and recommendations for implementing the Wasilla Downtown Area Plan. The plan elements expand upon the goals and objectives identified for the downtown area. Plan elements include Land Use, Economic Development, Transportation and Circulation, and Public Facilities and Utilities.

An overview is that is intended to capture key aspects of the area vision and portray the future condition of the downtown planning area. The planning considerations incorporate aspects of the area's current issues, strengths, and weaknesses. They are grouped by topic area, such as residential, retail, recreation, circulation, connectivity and accessibility, and parking. The goals outline broad aspirations for accomplishments over the life of the plan.

Recommendations are included that describe potential tools for the City and its partners to use to achieve the community's vision for the planning area. Recommendations include tools such as planning, inventories, design standards, zoning changes, and incentives.



Yenlo Square Rendering: looking east on Swanson Avenue in Downtown.

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 ○ Residents expressed a desire for mixed use development in Downtown.

- Traffic congestion and connectivity problems complicate getting around Downtown.

Retail ○ Retail locations in Downtown contribute to the small town charm because the shops are small and locally owned.

- Downtown provides centrally located and diverse commercial services.
- 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 ○ Residents value the history of Downtown, the museum, and the historic town site buildings.

- Downtown is lacking a strong entertainment component—there are no teen centers, clubs, or venues for large artistic or event performances.
- 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

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

Education

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

Recreation

- Residents desire additional sidewalks in Downtown to make pedestrian movement easier.
- The lack of sidewalks, particularly in the Main Street area, and the lack of discernable crosswalks hinders pedestrian movement in Downtown.
- 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.
- Residents want multi-use trails to accommodate various modes of recreation.
- 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.

- 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.

- 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.
- Infill development should complement existing development. Standards should include guidance on building colors, types, heights, and signage that are complementary.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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

- 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

- 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 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 town site), or promote a specific type of development in a particular area (e.g., community gathering places or tourist services).
- Overlay zoning districts should be created in Downtown to promote government office development and mixed use.
- Overlay zoning districts should include provisions requiring specific design, public art, or landscaping elements that contribute to the distinctiveness of the district.

PLATTING AUTHORITY

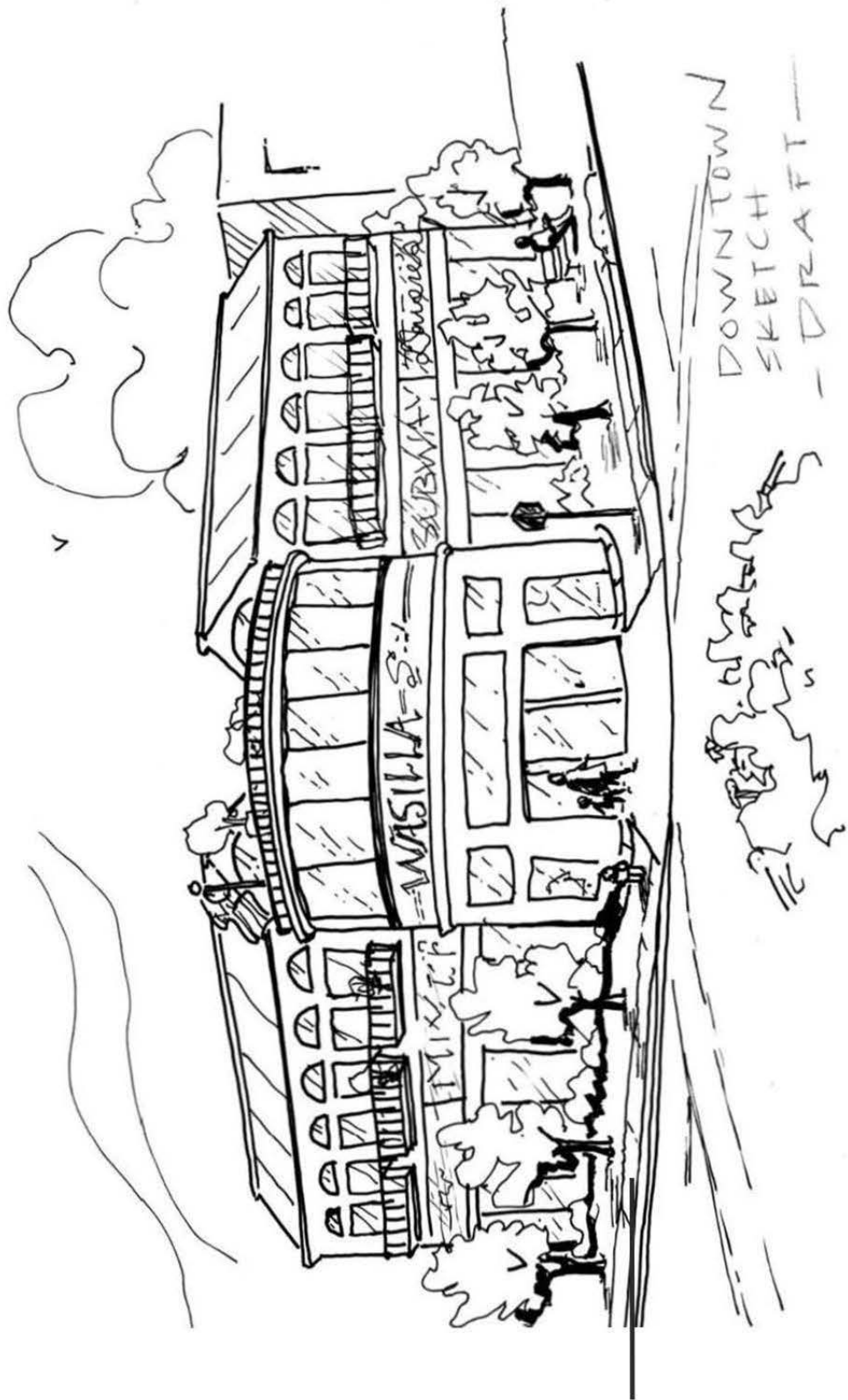
Platting configures parcels of land, either dividing or consolidating them.

- Downtown has several small vacant parcels that are difficult to develop because of the lot size. The City should coordinate with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to identify ways to streamline the platting process for combination of these lots as an incentive to stimulate development.
- This would reduce the burden on the Matanuska-Susitna 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.

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



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.

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 Matanuska-Susitna 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 Matanuska-Susitna 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

- Gateway Committee would have a primary responsibility for planning, designing, and implementing improvements for way finding 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.

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. ADOT&PF is also in the beginning stages of a study for the Parks Highway Alternative project, although final design and construction are not expected to be completed for several years. Even with the Parks Highway Alternative, 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 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 northbound street. Talkeetna Street will 'Y' off Knik-Goose Bay Road in the just north of the intersection with the Palmer-Wasilla Highway Extension. Intersections at the Parks Highway will be at-grade. This option is currently completing the Environmental Assessment phase, with construction probably taking place between 2014 and 2016.

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, five-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 the Main Street reconstruction 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.

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

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

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

vehicles, prioritizing 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

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

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

- 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 continuous shuttle running a Downtown circuit during busy times.

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.

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, Bumpus municipal, and East Susitna wells.

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.

Copyright © 1997 NC State University, The Center for Universal Design.

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.

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

Inventorizing 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.
- 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.

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.

5 IMPLEMENTATION

FOLLOW-THROUGH WITH IMPLEMENTATION action items determines the success of a plan. To achieve the goals and objectives articulated in Section 3, there must be a comprehensive understanding of the implementation tools and mechanisms. In addition, the City and its partners must identify:

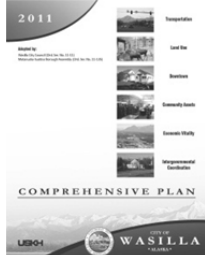

1. Actions and projects to accomplish
2. Lead and supporting partners and individuals
3. Timeframe for completion of actions and projects
4. Annual review process to assess progress in implementing the plan

The Wasilla Downtown Area Plan represents a snapshot in time developed as a combination of perspectives from the participating community. Public and private entities, citizen groups, and individuals share responsibility with the City of Wasilla to put the elements of this plan into action. With a cohesive effort, we can achieve our goals and build a stronger community with a vibrant economy.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS AND MECHANISMS

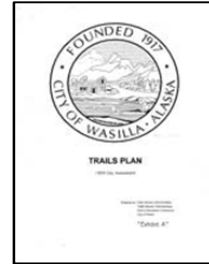
Implementing the Wasilla Downtown Area Plan can be accomplished through changes to existing regulations and practices, and through development of new management tools and procedures. The recommendations listed below are initial suggestions that will require more detailed consideration by the City and its implementation partners.

Existing Tools and Mechanisms – City of Wasilla

<p>City of Wasilla Comprehensive Plan</p>	<p>The first step in implementing the Wasilla Area Plans is to adopt this document as an amendment to the 2011 Comprehensive Plan. Adoption will allow the Wasilla Planning Commission, Wasilla City Council, and City staff to use and cite the document as a basis for making decisions, such as identifying capital project priorities and considering applications for rezoning.</p>	
<p>City of Wasilla Official Streets & Highways Plan</p>	<p>The Official Streets and Highways Plan serves as a planning guide for the Planning Commission, City Council, and other agencies to use as the basis for decisions on street development and improvement in Wasilla. The Wasilla Area Plans document should be consulted when updating the Official Streets and Highways Plan and setting transportation capital project priorities. The City should update the Streets and Highways Plan to reflect the tremendous changes in the area since its adoption in 2005.</p>	

Wasilla Parks & Recreation Commission

Wasilla has a Trails Plan, and adopted a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2011. City staff and the Parks and Recreation



Commission should consult the Wasilla Downtown Area Plan during future updates to ensure that the plans are complementary and adequate direction is incorporated in parks and recreation decision-making.

Economic Development

The City of Wasilla does not have an economic development department that actively markets Wasilla as a business location and works to grow locally-owned businesses. However,

administrative staff can use this document to promote economic development and help implement the Wasilla Area Plans.

City of Wasilla Land Development Code

Application of the Wasilla Downtown Area Plan to the existing City Land Development Code and processes include the following:

Overlay Districts – The City could consider creating overlay districts within the downtown area. A special purpose overlay district can be applied to a specific geographic area in order to provide additional specific guidance or requirements to the underlying zoning district. In creating an overlay district, it will be important to define the purpose of the overlay district and specific rules of the district. As an example, an overlay district in Green Bay, Wisconsin allows structures to share parking areas and receive credits for available parking stalls within a certain distance of the structure.

Rezoning – Actions related to rezoning include both municipal review of requests for rezoning, and rezoning that could be initiated by the City of Wasilla. City staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council should refer to this document when considering approval of requests for rezoning. If the proposed rezoning does not appear to be compatible with the direction set forth in this planning document, the request could be modified or denied for approval.

For property that is currently owned by the City, or property that may be required to encourage consolidation of small lots and infill development, the City could institute a request for rezoning to encourage specific uses compatible with the direction of this planning document. The size of potential rezoning and compatibility with surrounding uses should be considered to avoid conflicts and the appearance of “spot zoning”.

Changes to Approved and Conditional Uses – Approved and conditional uses are currently defined in City Code for each zoning district; the City has some leeway in approving conditional uses. City staff and the Planning Commission should refer to this document when considering approval of requests for conditional uses. Approval of a conditional use may promote the goals and objectives of this planning document. If the proposed request does not appear to be compatible with the direction set forth in this planning document, the request could be modified or denied for approval.

When revising the City Land Development Code, the City could institute changes in approved and conditional uses to encourage specific uses compatible with the direction of this planning document. This could also be addressed if designing overlay districts.

Variations – A variance is a relaxation of density, setback, height, or other standards set forth in the Wasilla Land Development Code, and requires both a pre-application conference with City staff and a hearing before the Planning Commission. City staff and the Planning Commission should refer to this document when considering approval of requests for variations. If the proposed request does not appear to be compatible with the direction set forth in this planning document, the request could be modified or denied for approval.

Planned Unit Developments – PUDs are intended to allow flexibility in regulation, design, and placement of buildings and uses of open space, and allow modification of specific zoning district requirements. It typically can accommodate a higher population density, or increased intensity or mix of uses than is permitted in a specific zoning district. City staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council should refer to this document when considering approval of requests for PUDs. Approval of a PUD may promote the goals and objectives of this planning document. If the proposed request does not appear to be compatible with the direction set forth in this planning document, the request could be modified or denied.

Landscaping Standards - The purpose of the City of Wasilla Landscaping Standards Ordinance includes “enhancing the community environment and visual character, providing attractive and functional separation and screening between uses, and to attract visitors and tourists to the City for the economic benefit of everyone in the community. City staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council should refer to this Wasilla Area Plans document when implementing the Landscaping Standards Ordinance.

Taxes, Fees, & Other Economic Incentives

The City of Wasilla currently offers quick permit processing times and reduced permit fees as potential incentives for economic development. Without a tax abatement, the ability to offer tax relief is limited.

However, the City could look at reductions in other fees, such as utility hookups, on a case by case basis, to encourage the types of development recommended by the plan.

Existing Tools and Mechanisms – Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Platting Actions

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is responsible for subdivision of land within the City of Wasilla. Subdivision dimensional requirements and other aspects of approval are influenced by existing plans and ordinances such as the Wasilla Land Development Code. The Mat-Su Borough should refer to this document when considering approval of requests for subdivision of land within the downtown area. If the proposed request does not appear to be compatible with the direction set forth in this planning document, the request could be modified or denied.

Matanuska-Susitna School District

The School District is responsible for locating, planning, and constructing new school facilities, and for programming improvements to existing facilities. There are a number of recommendations in Section 3 of this plan that should be considered by the School District.

Taxes, Fees, & Other Economic Incentives

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough can provide a number of economic development incentives, including tax deferrals and abatements, issuing revenue bonds and providing fast track permitting.

The City of Wasilla and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough should discuss potential uses of these tools to promote plan implementation.

Existing Tools and Mechanisms – State of Alaska

Transportation Capital Project Programming

State funding for major transportation projects is programmed through the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and is usually

guided by recommendations from the City on their transportation priorities. The City should work with state transportation planners to incorporate plan recommendations into transportation priorities.

Property & Facility Investments & Decision

The State of Alaska makes decisions on the location and leasing of state office buildings, disposition and use of state properties. The City should work with

state facility planners to incorporate plan recommendations into facility decision-making.

New Tools and Mechanisms – City of Wasilla

Downtown Business Improvement District/Redevelopment Authority

Establishment of a Downtown business improvement district and/or Redevelopment Authority can provide a means of encouraging infill development and sharing the cost of infrastructure improvements. It can also help the City promote

catalytic development projects such as public office buildings and mixed use development complexes, and organize special events that bring people Downtown.

A Business Development District can be run as a voluntary association of a formal organization with bylaws. Typically, a formal business improvement district is funded by a special tax assessment, with revenues dedicated to supporting activities within the district. There are a number of models and guidelines that can be investigated should this be of interest to the City and Downtown property and business owners.

Municipal Land Bank & Revenue Bonds

Municipal Land Bank programs are used to acquire lands for a variety of public purposes, including lot acquisition and consolidation for public facilities or resale to private parties for development. Resale

could be used to encourage mixed use and higher density residential development. Options

for initial funding of land acquisition include an investment of general revenue funds, use of revenue bonds similar to those used by utilities, and state and federal grants. Ultimately, sale of lands under the program would cover the majority of program costs.

Gateway Committee

Some communities form citizen committees to help develop community branding and tools for “way finding” – directing residents and visitors to community events, attractions, and facilities. This could be accomplished as a subcommittee to the Wasilla Chamber of Commerce, or as a special committee of the Parks and Recreation Commission or Planning Commission.

Actions and Responsibilities

Actions

Actions are projects undertaken to achieve the objectives. They can be monitored and evaluated for success. Specific implementation actions that have been recommended to address issues, goals, and objectives are presented in Section 3 of this document, and are listed as ongoing actions or short-term, mid-term, and long-term priorities.

Responsibilities

Responsibility for implementing actions is what makes a planning effort successful, and cannot fall to the City alone. Implementation will require a partnership between government (City, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and state), businesses, community organizations, and landowners to attain the goals and objectives of this plan. Specific recommendations for implementation responsibility to address issues, goals, and objectives are presented in Section 3 of this document. It will take leadership among the recommended partners to convene a group to address the recommended policy actions.

Annual Review

Monitoring progress of the Wasilla Downtown Area Plan is an important element of implementation. Each year, the plans need to be reviewed to recognize our progress on meeting our goals and objectives. The Planning Department will coordinate this annual review with all City departments, and as appropriate, with other entities that have been identified as a partner to accomplish the goals and objectives.

Annual Review Goals

- Identify successes
- Identify problems and obstacles
- Review the level of activity and the availability of resources
- Reassess relative priorities
- Maintain and verify departmental accountability
- Generate recommendations to improve the quality and effectiveness of the area plans

The annual review will consist of a questionnaire or work session with input from each department director or organization head. Topics will include the goal, objective, and actions related to the department or organization. The progress report should include the following.

Progress Report

- Current status of the project
- Any changes made to the project
- Major milestones accomplished
- Schedule for future action
- Problems encountered and strategies to overcome them
- Recommendations for changes to the plan
- Whether or not the project has helped achieve the goals/objectives in the plan

6 FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS AND POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

To achieve the visions outlined in the Downtown Area Plan, the City may have to explore new avenues of funding to implement priority projects. A Summary table of potential federal, state, and private funding sources was assembled to assist the City with the task of identifying potential options. The state also produces an Economic Development Resource Guide which lists funding options for municipalities. In addition, the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) – Division of Investments and the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) provide loans and assistance to small businesses.

These tables offer a starting point for organizing efforts to pursue potential funding sources. These tables should be updated regularly. There may be additional funding sources available that are not included in these tables, but may be added in the future.

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PROGRAM	AGENCY	ACTION	RESTRICTIONS	CONTACT	AMOUNT	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY
FEDERAL							
Emergency Watershed Protection Program	U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service	Assists in relieving imminent hazards to life and property from floods and products of erosion due to natural disasters (technical and financial assistance).	There must be an unusual event, cannot be an ongoing problem. Funds may be used for erosion control but not relocation; intended only as a temporary solution. Assistance must be requested within 60 days of natural disaster.	Anchorage NRCS Field Office (907) 271-2424	75% cost share to restore watershed functions. Technical assistance can also be applied for.	N/A	City of Wasilla
Economic Development Technical Assistance	U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration	Project grants to support local technical assistance programs. This is a very flexible resource targeted at local economic development efforts.	Applicants may be municipalities, public entities, non-profits and Alaska Native village entities. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.	Berny Richert and staff U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration 550 W. 7th Ave., Suite 1780 Anchorage, AK 99501 (907) 271-2272 (907) 271-2274 (fax) brichert@eda.doc.gov	Grants are typically in the \$15,000 to \$40,000 range.	N/A	City of Wasilla
Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG)	USDA Rural Development	Grants may be used for: 1) acquisition and development of land; 2) construction, conversion, enlargement and repairs of buildings, equipment, streets, and pollution control and abatement facilities; 3) start-up operating cost and working capital; 4) technical assistance for proposed grantee projects; 5) reasonable professional fees and charges; and 6) to establish a revolving fund which can be used to provide financial assistance to third party recipients.	Public entities, such as cities, boroughs, federally recognized Alaska Native Village entities and private nonprofit corporations. The project must be located in a rural area or city of less than 50,000 people. Application must show how small business development or expansion is likely to occur as a result of the grant, and cannot be passed through to private business.	Dean Stewart USDA Rural Development 800 W. Evergreen, Suite 201 Palmer, AK 99645 (907) 761-7722 (907) 761-7793 (fax) dean.stewart@ak.usda.gov http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbeg.htm	No maximum amount, but priority is given to smaller projects. During fiscal year (FY) 2007, approximately \$40.8 million is available for the RBEG program.	N/A	City of Wasilla
Business & Industrial Loans	USDA Rural Development	Assist in obtaining quality loans for economic development. Funds must be used for business enterprise.	Project must be in a rural area or city of less than 50,000 population, borrower must obtain a loan commitment before borrower and lender jointly apply for a loan guarantee; one-time 2% loan guarantee fee.	Frank Muncy or Dean Stewart (907) 745-2176 http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/b8ki_gar.htm	The total amount of Agency loans to one borrower must not exceed \$10 million. Exceptions for loans of up to \$40 million under certain circumstances can be made.	N/A	Business owners, federally recognized tribal groups, a public body, or an individual.

PROGRAM	AGENCY	ACTION	RESTRICTIONS	CONTACT	AMOUNT	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY
Rural Business Opportunity Grants	USDA Rural Development	Grants may be used for these purposes: 1) to identify and analyze business opportunities that use local resources, 2) to establish business support centers or otherwise support creation of new businesses, 3) for economic development planning, 4) to pay reasonable fees and charges for professional services necessary to conduct the technical assistance, training or planning functions, and 5) to identify, train and provide technical assistance to existing or prospective entrepreneurs.	Grants are available to rural areas other than a city or town with a population of greater than 50,000. Eligible organizations include rural public bodies; rural non-profit corporations; rural Indian tribes on federal reservations and other federally recognized tribal groups; and cooperatives with members that are primarily rural residents.	Dean Stewart USDA Rural Development 800 W. Evergreen, Suite 201 Palmer, AK 99645 (907) 761-7722 (907) 761-7793 (fax) dean.stewart@ak.usda.gov http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/fbog.htm	The maximum grant for a project serving a single state is \$50,000.	N/A	Business owners, non-profit corporations, Indian tribes, and rural cooperatives.
Community Facility Loans and Grants	USDA Rural Development	Loans for public entities in rural areas to construct, repair, improve or expand community facilities for health care, public safety and public services.	Applicants must be unable to obtain needed funds from other sources at reasonable rates and terms; have legal capacity to borrow and repay loans; be financially sound and able to manage the facility effectively. Available for communities with populations less than 10,000. Interest rates on loans vary. Grants are available to public entities such as municipalities, counties, and special-purpose districts, as well as non-profit corporations and tribal governments.	Frank Muncy or Dean Stewart (907) 745-2176 http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrpl/s70A7010B2navid=BUSINESS_DEVELOPMENT&parentmax=RURAL_DEVELOPMENT&navtype=RT	Alaska's FY97 allotment was \$750,000 for direct loans and \$750,000 in loan guarantees. Grants up to 75% of development cost. Loans repayable over 40 years.	N/A	City of Wasilla
Water and Waste Disposal Loans and Grants	USDA Rural Development	Loan and grant funds to construct, repair, improve or expand water or sewer systems, storm sewer facilities, sanitary landfills, incinerators, and necessary equipment.	Public entities such as cities, boroughs, federally recognized Alaska Native Village entities and non-profit corporations are eligible. Applicants must be unable to obtain funds from other sources at reasonable rates and terms. The maximum term for all loans is 40 years; however, no repayment period will exceed state statutes or the useful life of the facility.	Dean Stewart USDA Rural Development 800 W. Evergreen, Suite 201 Palmer, AK 99645 (907) 761-7722 (907) 761-7793 (fax) dean.stewart@ak.usda.gov http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/pubs/pal1806.pdf	Grants are made, in some instances, for up to 75% of eligible project costs.	N/A	City of Wasilla

PROGRAM	AGENCY	ACTION	RESTRICTIONS	CONTACT	AMOUNT	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY
Airport Improvement Program	Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	Provides funding to improve the safety, capacity, security and environmental concerns of public use airports. Grants are provided to public agencies and certain private owners.	Eligibility is based on type of sponsor and type of activity that needs funding. Does not include improvements to hangers, terminals or non-aviation development. Eligible airports must be included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems.	James Lomen Airports Program Specialist U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) FAA 222 W. 8th Ave, Room #36A Anchorage, AK 99513 (907) 271-5816 http://www.faa.gov/airports-airtraffic/airports/regional_guidance/alaskan/aip/	For large and medium primary hub airports, the grant covers 75% of eligible costs (or 80% for noise program implementation). For small primary, reliever, and general aviation airports, the grant covers 95% of eligible costs.	City of Wasilla
Major Capital Investments Program (New Starts and Small Starts)	Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	Provides capital assistance for three primary activities: new and replacement buses and facilities, modernization of existing rail systems, and new fixed guide way systems (New Starts).	Eligible recipients for capital investment funds are public bodies and agencies (transit authorities and other state and local public bodies and agencies thereof) including states, municipalities, other political subdivisions of states; public agencies and instrumentalities of one or more states; and certain public corporations, boards, and commissions established under	Office of Program Management (202) 366-4020 http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_3590.html	Funding match is 80% federal, 20% local.	City of Wasilla MASCOI
Rural and Small Urban Areas	FTA	Provides formula funding to states for supporting public transportation in areas of less than 50,000 population.	Eligible recipients are state and local governments, non-profit organizations (including Indian tribes and groups), and public transit operators.	Office of Program Management (202) 366-4020 http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_355.html	Federal share maximum is 80% (90% in some cases) The maximum federal share for operating assistance is 50% of the net operating costs. The local share is 50%, which shall come from an undistributed cash surplus, a replacement or depreciation cash fund or reserve, or new capital.	City of Wasilla

PROGRAM	AGENCY	ACTION	RESTRICTIONS	CONTACT	AMOUNT	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY
Rural Transit Assistance Program	FTA	Provides a source of funding to assist in the design and implementation of training and technical assistance projects and other support services tailored to meet the needs of transit operators in non-urbanized areas.	Funds are apportioned to state, but eligible recipients are states and local governments, and local transit operators.	Office of Program Management (202) 366-4020 http://www.fta.dot.gov/fundings/grants/grants_financing_3610.html	\$65,000 plus an amount based on un-urbanized population to state of Alaska. There is no federal requirement for a local match.	Contact Bruce Wells ADOT for local application information (907) 465-6991	City of Wasilla
Job Access and Reverse Commute Program	FTA	Grant program to develop transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low income individuals to and from jobs and to develop transportation services for residents of urban centers and rural and suburban areas to suburban employment opportunities. Emphasis is placed on projects that use mass transportation services.	Eligible recipients are local governmental authorities and agencies and non-profit entities.	Office of Program Management (202) 366-4020 http://www.fta.dot.gov/fundings/grants/grants_financing_3624.html	Match not to exceed 50% in USDOT funding. Other 50% may be derived from other federal programs where eligible, states, and localities.	Email Debbi Howard, ADOT Transit Coordinator for application information debbi_howard@dot.state.ak.us	City of Wasilla
New Freedom Program	FTA	Grants for new transportation services and public transportation alternatives beyond the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) to assist individuals with disabilities with transportation needs.	Recipient will be required to certify that projects selected were derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan and that the plan was developed through a process that involved individuals of the public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers.	Office of Program Management (202) 366-4020 http://www.fta.dot.gov/fundings/grants/grants_financing_3549.html	Funds are apportioned among the states based on the number of individuals with disabilities. The federal share for the net project capital cost of a project may be up to 80%, and not more than 50% of the net operating cost of a project.	Email Debbi Howard, ADOT Transit Coordinator for application information debbi_howard@dot.state.ak.us	City of Wasilla

PROGRAM	AGENCY	ACTION	RESTRICTIONS	CONTACT	AMOUNT	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY
STATE							
Mini-Grants Assistance Program	Department of Commerce, Community, & Economic Development) DCCEd; USDA Forest Service; Denali Commission	Competitive grants to fund economic development projects that support business or community development activities. Mini-grant program funding is a combination of the USDA Forest Service Community Assistance program and Denali Commission funds, appropriated for the program.	Eligible applicants include municipalities, tribal governments, and non-profit organizations applying on behalf of a community that has a population of 10,000 or less. Community consensus for proposed projects is a key element in funding consideration.	Jill Davis, Grants Administrator, DCED, Community Advocacy 211 Cushman St. Fairbanks, AK 99701-4639 (907) 451-2717 (907) 451-2742 (fax) Jill_Davis@commerce.state.ak.us http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/grt/minigrant.htm	Maximum \$30,000 per community per fiscal year	Funding for current year is uncertain. Website will be updated when/if funding is allocated.	City of Wasilla
Municipal Water, Sewerage and Solid Waste Matching Grant Program	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Division of Facility Construction and	Provides grants for water, wastewater, and solid waste processing facilities. Funding amount available is limited to 100% of eligible costs. Funding does not cover operation, maintenance, repair, or construction of storm sewer systems.	Alaska municipalities are eligible. Application is made through an online questionnaire.	Mike Lewis (907) 269-7616 mlewis@envirocon.state.ak.us http://www.dec.state.ak.us/water/minigrant/index.htm	Contact Mike Lewis for more information.	Contact Mike Lewis for more information.	City of Wasilla
Rural Energy Programs	DCED, Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), Alaska Energy Authority	Two types of grants: 1) to continue activities, procurement of materials, and equipment that would be used to prevent power plant related emergencies and disasters statewide; 2) provides follow-on funding for correction of hazards that are existing or pose a possible threat to life, health and safety in rural communities. Wherever possible, funds will be used to leverage local matching funds.	Inquire with AIDEA	Kris Noonan Program Manager (907) 269-4697 knoonan@aidea.org	Contact Kris Noonan for more information.	Contact Kris Noonan for more information.	City of Wasilla
Small Business Economic Development Loan Program	AIDEA	To provide private sector employment by financing the start-up and expansion of businesses that will create significant long-term employment.	Companies must be a small business as defined by the Small Business Administration (SBA). Applicants are required to match loan funds with cash or other private, non-public financing.	Division of Investments (907) 465-2510	Maximum loan amount is \$300,000.	N/A	Small businesses

PROGRAM	AGENCY	ACTION	RESTRICTIONS	CONTACT	AMOUNT	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY
Community Development Block Grant	Department of Community and Regional Affairs, Municipal and Regional Assistance Division	Provides financial resources to Alaskan communities for public facilities and planning activities which address issues detrimental to the health and safety of local residents and to reduce the costs of essential community services. The program may also fund Special Economic Development activities which result in the creation of jobs for low and moderate income persons.	Any Alaskan municipal government is eligible to apply.	Jo E. Grove, Block Grants Program Manager, DCED, Division of Community Advocacy 211 Cushman Street Fairbanks, AK 99701-4639 (907) 451-2716 (907) 451-2742 (fax) Jo_Grove@commerce.state.ak.us http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dea/grr/blockgrants.htm	Maximum of \$850,000 per community	December or January	City of Wasilla
Beneficiary and Special Needs Housing Program	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC)	Grants to non-profit service providers and housing developers for construction of housing for the Alaskan special needs populations, primarily the beneficiaries of the Alaska Mental Health Trust.	Applicants restricted to local governments, non-profit organizations, and tax-exempt organizations.	Bob Pickett, Planner P.O. Box 101020 Anchorage, Alaska 99510-1020 (907) 330-8273 (907) 338-2585 (fax) bpickett@ahfc.state.ak.us http://www.ahfc.state.ak.us/grants/beneficiary_snhg.cfm	\$100,000	4:30 p.m., Friday, September 21, 2007	City of Wasilla
HOME Investment Partnership Act	AHFC	Funding is available to develop new affordable rental housing through new construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition and rehabilitation. HOME funds are typically grant funds but may also be loaned to project sponsors.	Applicants are restricted to for-profit organizations, non-profit organizations, and regional housing authorities.	Corrine O'Neill P.O. Box 101020 Anchorage, AK 99510-1020 (907) 330-8275 (907) 338-2585 (fax) connell@ahfc.state.ak.us http://www.ahfc.state.ak.us/grants/home.cfm	\$50,000	4:30 p.m., Friday, September 21, 2007	For-profit organizations, non-profit organizations, and regional housing authorities.
Senior Citizens Housing Development Fund	AHFC	Provides housing for persons who are 60 years of age and older and whose incomes are in the low to moderate ranges. Acquisition, rehabilitation, accessibility modification and new construction of senior housing as well as pre-development activities are all eligible for grant awards.	Applicants are restricted to for-profit organizations, non-profit organizations, and regional housing authorities.	Elaine Mello P.O. Box 101020 Anchorage, AK 99510-1020 (907) 330-8236 (907) 338-2585 (fax) emello@ahfc.state.ak.us http://www.ahfc.state.ak.us/grants/schdf.cfm	\$100,000	4:30 p.m., Friday, September 21, 2007	For-profit organizations, non-profit organizations, and regional housing authorities.

PROGRAM	AGENCY	ACTION	RESTRICTIONS	CONTACT	AMOUNT	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY
Homeless Assistance Program	AHFC	Funds are awarded competitively to homeless service providers for emergency or transitional housing or to prevent homelessness through payment of arrearages.	Applicants are restricted to municipalities, regional housing authorities, non-profit organizations or any partnerships thereof.	Kris Duncan, Planner AHFC P.O. Box 101020 Anchorage, AK 99510 (907) 330-8276 (800) 478-2432 (907) 338-2585 (fax) kduncan@ahfc.state.ak.us http://www.ahfc.state.ak.us/grants/homeless_assistance.cfm	Yet to be determined	November 6, 2007	City of Wasilla
Child Care Grant Program	Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Division of Early Development	Funding for facility staff salaries, substitute care, health and safety related items, and education and training of staff related to child development.	Applicants must have a current Alaska Child Care License and Business License, participate in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), and willing to accept children funded through the CCAP.	Program Manager, DEED, Division of Public Assistance, Department of Health and Social Services 619 E. Ship Creek Ave., Suite 230 Anchorage, AK 99501 (907) 269-4500 (907) 269-4536 (fax) ccpo@health.state.ak.us http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/ccare/ccare_grant.html	Amount is determined geographically and by attendance	N/A	Child care providers
Recreational Trails Grant Program	Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR);	Grants are available for the development and maintenance of trails and related facilities. Funding is also available for some safety and education projects.	Municipalities, public agencies, Native organizations and non-profits are eligible. http://www.alaskatrails.org	Grants Administrator (907) 269-8709 http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/grants/trails.htm	Maximum \$50,000 Program offers 80/20 federal matching funds	October 1	City of Wasilla
Snowmobile Trails Grant Program	DNR, DPOR	Reimbursable, matching grant funds are available for trail easement acquisition, development and maintenance of trails and trail-related facilities for snowmobile use. Funds are also available for snowmobile safety and educational programs. Development, maintenance, and acquisition projects require a 75/25 match. Safety and education programs do not require matching funds.	Applicant may not apply for additional funding for a project receiving funding from the DPOR. Businesses and individuals are ineligible.	Alaska DPOR Grants administrator 550 W. 7th Ave., Ste. 1380 Anchorage, AK 99501-3561 (907) 269-8699 http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/grants/snowmtr.htm	Safety and education grants provide between \$1,000 and \$15,000 Development and maintenance grants provide a minimum of \$2,500, with no maximum Grantee must provide a 25%	August 1	City of Wasilla non-profit organizations and public agencies

PROGRAM	AGENCY	ACTION	RESTRICTIONS	CONTACT	AMOUNT	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY
Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants	DNR, DPOR, National Park Service (NPS)	Provides partial funding for the acquisition of outdoor recreation lands and/or development of outdoor recreation facilities. 50% local match is required. DNR provides notification of program availability.	<p>For acquisition and development money, the state, cities and federally recognized Tribes are eligible. Qualifying criteria include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Project type must be identified as a community priority in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. 2) Applicant must have authority to provide outdoor recreation services on public lands. 3) If development project, land must be owned by sponsor. 4) All past compliance problems must be solved. 5) Applicant must have current Section 504 Self-Evaluation and Transit Plan, or be willing to prepare one prior to receiving grant. 6) Project development must be accessible to persons with disabilities. 7) Federal share requested must be between \$100,000 and \$500,000. 	<p>Kristy Gray Alaska State Parks 550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1380 Anchorage AK 99501-3561 (907) 269-8692 (907) 269-8907 (fax) Kristy_Gray@dnr.state.ak.us http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/pa/rs/grants/lwcf.htm</p>	<p>For the FY'06 funding cycle, applications of no less than \$100,000 and no more than \$500,000 federal share were accepted.</p>	<p>Federal FY'08 grant program will be tentatively available in March 2008. It is expected that a grant round will be in the spring. When funding becomes available, all governmental entities listed in the Municipal Officials Directory will be notified via letter.</p>	City of Wasilla
PRIVATE							
Rasmuson Foundation	Rasmuson Foundation	Two award levels are available: Tier 1 awards are for capital projects and Tier 2 awards are for capital projects and the expansion or start-up of innovative projects that address issues of broad community or statewide significance. Capital projects are defined as furnishings, buildings, audio and video equipment, books, medical equipment, computers, art supplies, sports equipment, musical instruments, vehicles, etc.	Alaskan organizations that have received 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service and are classified as "not a private foundation" under section 509(a) of the U.S. Code are eligible.	<p>Rasmuson Foundation 301 W. Northern Lights Blvd. Suite 400 Anchorage, AK 99503 (907) 297-2700 (877) 366-2700 (907) 297-2770 (fax) rasmusonfdn@rasmuson.org http://www.rasmuson.org/ind-ex.html</p>	<p>Tier 1 awards: less than \$25,000 Tier 2 awards: exceeding \$25,000</p>	<p>N/A</p>	City of Wasilla other organizations

Economic Development Resource Guide lists funding options in Alaska www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/edrg/EDRG.htm

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

The following identifies some public and private sources that are organized to provide technical and financial assistance to both new and established businesses.

<p>DCED Division of Investments 550 W. 7th Ave., Suite 1650 Anchorage, AK 99501-3568 (907) 269-8150 (907) 269-8147 (fax) http://www.dced.state.ak.us/investments/index.cfm</p> <p>The Division of Investments offers loans for commercial fishing, fisheries enhancement, and small business economic development, as well as assumptions on existing loans under a number of loan programs.</p>	<p>AIDEA 813 W. Northern Lights Blvd Anchorage, AK 99503 (907) 269-3000 (888) 300-8534 (toll-free AK only) (907) 269-3044 (fax) www.aidea.org</p> <p>AIDEA is a public corporation of the state that provides capital to finance economic growth in Alaska through a variety of financing assistance programs. Projects financed by AIDEA range from working capital loan guarantees for small businesses to multi-</p>
<p>Small Business Administration (SBA) Anchorage District Office 510 L St., Suite 310 Anchorage, AK 99501-1952 (907) 271-4022 (907) 271-4545 (fax) www.sba.gov/ak/</p> <p>SBA helps entrepreneurs form successful small businesses. SBA's program offices in every state offer financing, training, and advocacy for small firms. The SBA works with thousands of lending, educational, and training institutions nationwide.</p>	<p>Women's Finances YWCA of Anchorage 245 W. 5th Ave. P.O. Box 102059 Anchorage, AK 99510-2059 (907) 274-1524 (907) 272-3146 (fax) ywcaak@alaska.net</p> <p>Alaska's only SBA designated Women's Business Center, is a full-service small business and micro-enterprise development organization assisting women (and men) as they start and grow</p>
<p>Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) – Branch of Credit and Finance P.O. Box 25520 Juneau, AK 99802-5520 (907) 586-7103 (800) 645-8397 (907) 586-7037 (fax)</p> <p>The BIA's Loan Guarantee Program offers either 80% or 90% guarantees on loans made by a commercial bank to an Alaska Native, American Indian, tribe, or Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Corporation. The ceiling limit for an individual is \$500,000 and for tribes and ANCSA Corporations, the limit is \$5.5 million.</p>	<p>USDA Rural Development 800 West Evergreen, Suite 201 Palmer, AK 99645 (907) 761-7705 (907) 761-7783 (fax) http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ak/ / dean.stewart@ak.usda.gov</p> <p>USDA Rural Development's mission includes three separate agencies: Rural Business – Cooperative Service; Rural Utilities Service; and Rural Housing Service. The agency has a variety of programs available to support economic development in rural areas, including guarantees, direct loans, and grants. These programs include Business and Industry Loan Guarantees, Business and Industry Direct Loan Program, and Rural Business Enterprise Grants.</p>

<p>Alaska Business Development Center, Inc. 3335 Arctic Blvd., Suite 203 Anchorage, AK 99503 (907) 562-0335 (800) 478-3474 (907) 562-6988 (fax) www.abdc.org</p> <p>The Alaska business Development Center, Inc. currently received funding from the Alaska Division of Investments to provide one-on-one technical assistance statewide to commercial harvesters and small business participants or potential participants in the Alaska fishing industry. This service offers assistance for those who desire expanded opportunity and employment in the industry,</p>	<p>Alaska Small Business Development Center (SBDC) 430 W. 7th Ave, Suite 110 Anchorage, AK 99501-3550 (907) 274-7232 (800) 478-7232 (907) 274-9524 (fax) www.aksbdc.org</p> <p>The SBDC was designed to provide small businesses with the practical assistance they need to survive, grow, and prosper. The SBDC works with both established businesses and individuals that are planning to go into business, and is committed to strengthening the Alaskan economy through growth and stability in small</p>
<p>CED Division of Community Advocacy 550 W. 7th Ave., Suite 1770 Anchorage, AK 99501-2341 (907) 269-4580 (907) 269-4539 (fax) www.dced.state.ak.us/dca/</p> <p>DCED offers business assistance and support through various programs (including the Division of Community Advocacy referenced above).</p> <p>DCED publishes the Economic Development Resource Guide. This guide contains over 100 programs that provide funding assistance or</p>	

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Historical and Regional Context

About 12 miles north of the Knik Arm of Cook Inlet, Wasilla lies in a lake-rich plain between the Matanuska River, and the Susitna River. The Dena'ina (Tanaina) Athabascan Indians called the area Benteh, meaning ‘among the lakes’ (Cook and Norris 1998). Areas of frequent use along these rivers and in the Talkeetna Mountains were historically connected by Native trails and winter routes (Fall 1981).

The original townsite of Wasilla was named after Chief Wasilla, a local Dena'ina chief and shaman (City of Wasilla 2007a). There are various opinions regarding the meaning of Wasilla and the origin of the naming of the community by some historians' accounts. In the Dena'ina dialect the word “Wasilla” means “breath of air,” a perfect name for the town nestled between two beautiful lakes. However, some assert the name descended as a variation of the Russian name “Vasili.” Likely after Vasili Melakoff, who explored the area in the 1830s (Potter 1978).

The productive lakes and streams that characterized Chief Wasilla's home made the area a popular wintering ground and the site of small, semi-permanent Native villages. Local regions such as the Susitna Valley, Talkeetna Mountains, and Matanuska River were historically connected by Native transportation and trade trails. By the late 1830's, smallpox had been introduced in Alaska by the Russian American fur trade. The disease struck many villages in the Wasilla area, killing roughly half of the Dena'ina residents. Measles, tuberculosis, and influenza also took a devastating toll (Cook and Norris 1998).

Knik, the first boom town in the Mat-Su Valley, boasted a population of 500 by 1915 (Potter 1978). The town served the fur trappers and miners working the gold fields at Cache Creek and Willow Creek. The town of Wasilla was established in 1917, at the intersection of the new Alaska Railroad with the Carle Wagon Road (today's Wasilla-Fishhook Road), which linked the Willow Creek mining district with the town of Knik. Wasilla's proximity to the gold fields and railroad service lured Knik residents to relocate, and in a few short years, Knik became a ghost town. Willow Creek was a very active mining area between 1909 and 1950. Incomplete records indicate that at least 623,874 ounces of gold, worth nearly 18 million dollars, were produced at a time when gold was valued between 20 and 35 dollars an ounce. Wasilla was a supply base for gold mining, and for coal mining, through World War II (City of Wasilla 2007a).

Wasilla is home to the headquarters of the Iditarod Trail Committee. The Iditarod sled dog race commemorates the heroic transport of life-saving serum to combat a diphtheria epidemic that broke out in Nome, on the Bering Sea Coast, deep in the winter of 1925, when planes were



Dorothy Page was the “Mother of the Iditarod.” Along with Joe Redington, Sr., she was responsible for bringing the Iditarod to Wasilla.

grounded due to cold. The original serum run began with rail transport from Anchorage to Nenana, north of Fairbanks, where the rail line ended. From there, teams of dogs and mushers relayed the serum to Nome. The annual race, hugely popular in Alaska and with a following nationwide, covers the entire distance by dog team.

As road construction and upgrades have improved access to Anchorage, vacation homes and commuting between Anchorage and Wasilla have become more common. In particular, the Parks Highway segment into Wasilla, finished in the 1970s, allowed hundreds of workers to begin the 45-minute drive to Anchorage and back each day. Hundreds of new residents were drawn to the area, creating a great demand for new services. Wasilla incorporated in 1974 as a First Class City (Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development 2007).

Major growth occurred in Wasilla during the Alaska oil boom and pipeline development of the 1970s and 1980s. By 1984, Wasilla had again become the commercial heart of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and for a time was the fastest growing city of its size in the United States. Many people are attracted to the Valley and to Wasilla for the rural setting, affordable housing and a family-oriented community. While the commercial and residential development patterns have obscured much of the frontier town setting, Wasilla residents still identify strongly with the town's roots in the first days of non-Native settlement of Alaska, when the era's pioneers established a hub of commerce and initiative in the young territory.

Location and Setting

Wasilla provides residents an ideal location that offers access to a multi-use year round playground with some of Alaska's most sought after vacation spots just a short scenic drive from home including the Matanuska and Knik glaciers, Hatcher Pass, several state game refuges and recreation areas, world-class fishing rivers, and Denali National Park and Preserve. Within the City, residents can enjoy Lucille and Wasilla lakes, Cottonwood and Lucille creeks, and several smaller streams (ADCCED 2007 and City of Wasilla 1996). Figure A1 illustrates Wasilla's location and setting within Alaska.

Wasilla covers approximately 13 square miles of land and about 1 square mile of water in the southern reaches of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The City is anchored between the Talkeetna Mountains and the Knik Arm and flanked by the Matanuska and Susitna valleys in southcentral Alaska. The main line of the Alaska Railroad runs through town, and local roads, the George Parks Highway, and the Glenn Highway provide direct links to Anchorage, as well as other destinations throughout Alaska and Canada. Anchorage is a manageable commute approximately 45 miles south of the City, while Fairbanks is about 315 miles north (ADCCED 2007; City of Wasilla 1996; and City of Wasilla 2005).

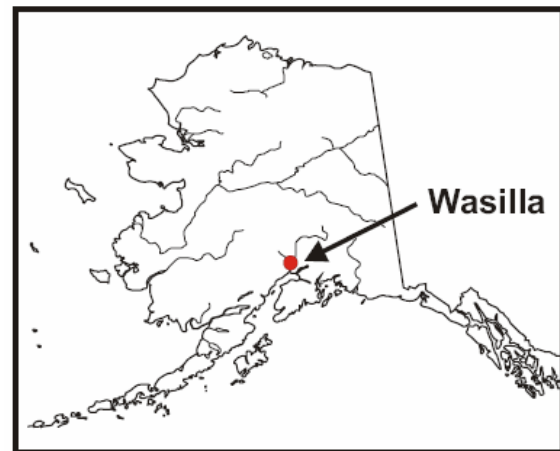


Figure A1. Location and Setting

Vegetation and Wetlands

Existing Conditions

Vegetation is diverse in the Wasilla area and characteristic of boreal forest vegetation as depicted in Figure A2. Treed areas consist mostly of three types of forest cover; needleleaf, broadleaf, and a mixture of the two. Needleleaf forests have a canopy of mainly white spruce in dry areas and black spruce in wetland areas. The understory consists of species such as alder, willow, devil's club, shrub birch, blueberry, cranberry, and mosses. The canopy of the broadleaf forests are made up of paper birch, aspen, and cottonwood, and the understory may consist of Labrador tea, blueberry, rusty Menziesia, prickly rose, species of horsetails, and fireweed. Mixed broadleaf and needleleaf forests can have a canopy of white and black spruce, paper birch, aspen, or cottonwood. In addition to most of the understory species found in either broadleaf or needleleaf forests, mixed forest understory may also consist of dwarf dogwood and lady fern (City of Wasilla 1996 and Lakehead University 2007).

Other types of plant cover in the Wasilla area include tall and low shrubs (alder, devil's club, lady fern, and horestail), dwarf shrubs (dwarf birch and heath species), dry and moist herbs (grasses, sedges, mosses, and lichens), wet and aquatic herbs (sedges, mare's tail, buckbean, pond lilies), agricultural areas (grazing and grain fields), and developed areas (mostly weedy species).

Wetlands in Wasilla and the surrounding areas include Lake Lucille, Wasilla Lake, Cottonwood Creek, and Lucille Creek. These water bodies provide important habitat for freshwater and anadromous fish species as described in the *Fish and Wildlife* section. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has mapped two systems of wetlands in accordance with the Cowardin wetlands classification system in the Wasilla area including the palustrine and lacustrine systems (USFWS 2007).

The terms *bog*, *swamp*, and *marsh* are all common terms for the palustrine system of wetlands. These wetlands are a freshwater system "dominated by trees, shrubs, emergents, and mosses or lichens" (Cowardin et al. 1979). In Wasilla this system is characterized by emergent, forested, and scrub-shrub vegetation types (USFWS 2007). Emergent persistent wetlands are dominated by erect, rooted, perennial plants adapted to growing in water (Cowardin et al. 1979).

Vegetation in the palustrine forested wetlands is typically dominated by white spruce-black spruce hybrids (Viereck et al. 1992). The understory shrub layer consists of both low and tall shrubs such as willow, Labrador tea, lowbush cranberry, and bog blueberry. Common ground cover includes peat mosses, herbaceous species like field horsetail, a few flowered sedges, and a variety of forbs (Viereck et al. 1992 and Reed 1996).

Scrub-shrub wetlands typically are found within and around bogs or fens. Vegetation in palustrine scrub-shrub wetlands is typically dominated by shrubs including those found in forested wetlands, as



Figure A2. Major Vegetation Types of Alaska.

Source: Ager, T.A. and Carrara, P.E. 2006.

well as sweet gale, leatherleaf, and dwarf birch. The ground cover is similar to that of forested wetlands, with bluejoint reedgrass also being typical (Viereck et al. 1992; Reed 1996).

Implications for Development

Development of land in the Wasilla area may have a variety of effects on wooded and wetland areas. Certain detrimental effects on wildlife are tied to alteration of wetland and forested areas. Some of these, discussed in *Fish and Wildlife* section, may include exclusion of animals from areas normally used, habitat loss, and disturbance. Additionally, fish can be affected by changes in water quality associated with erosion and run-off, and they can be cut off from migration routes to spawning grounds or rearing areas by diverting or blocking streams or draining wetlands. The vegetation itself is susceptible to disturbance from development due to filling wetlands and deforestation.

Geology and Soils

Geology

The Matanuska Valley is characterized as a glacial-drift and loess mantled topographic and structural trough surrounded by the Chugach Mountains to the south and the Talkeetna Mountains to the north. The mountains consist of igneous and metamorphic rocks of Mesozoic age topped with Tertiary sedimentary rocks. Glacial and stream deposits reflect the highly varied geological characteristics of the area (Muhs et al 2004).

The Matanuska Valley was glaciated most recently by the Naptown glacial event. The youngest terminal moraine created by this glaciation, the Elmendorf moraine, lies between 15 to 40 kilometers beyond the Matanuska Valley and is estimated to have been deposited between 13,700 and 11,700 years ago (Muhs et al 2004).

The Wasilla area is generally free of permafrost (NRCS 2002). However, some isolated masses are present locally (Selkregg 1974). The Matanuska Valley is on the southernmost portion of Alaska's zone of discontinuous permafrost (Muhs et al 2004). Permafrost becomes more prevalent to the north and east of Wasilla.

Another noteworthy geologic feature of the Matanuska Valley, and especially to the City of Wasilla, is the Castle Mountain Fault. This fault runs east-west from Sutton to beyond Houston and is a right lateral, strike-slip fault approximately 200 kilometers long (Bunds 2001). The fault occurs within 10 miles northwest of Wasilla and travels through the center of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Documented magnitude 6 and 7 earthquakes have ruptured the Castle Mountain Fault about every 700 years over the last 2,800 years (FTA and ARRC 2005).

Soils

The Wasilla area consists of four main soil types or 'series'. The *Kashwitna* and the *Knik* are most suitable for development. The *Kashwitna* series is found north of the Parks Highway and west of Lake Lucille and occurs within glacial outwash plains and hills (NRCS 1998). The *Knik* series is found mostly north and south of Lake Lucille and Wasilla Lake as well as in downtown Wasilla. *Knik* soils consist of shallow, well-drained soils formed in silty loess over gravelly glacial drift and extremely gravelly coarse sand. *Kashwitna* soils are also well-drained soils formed in silty loess over gravelly glacial drift and extremely gravelly coarse sand and occur at greater depths than the *Knik* series (NRCS 1998). *Knik* series soils are the most suitable and most commonly used for land development, excluding areas along wetlands. However, areas of compacted silt and surficial

depressions associated with these series can contribute to problems with drainage and frost heaving events.

Associated with the *Kashwitna* soil series, are the *Kichatna* and *Deception* soil series. Similar to the *Kashwitna* series, these two soil types occur at greater depths than the shallow *Knik* series. The substratum of the *Kichatna* and *Kashwitna* series is extremely gravelly coarse sand, while the *Deception* series' substratum consists of a very gravelly loam or very gravelly sandy loam (NRCS 1998).

Implications for Development

Frost heaving, slope, and a high water table have implications for local development potential. Drainage and frost heaving occur in localized pockets of the *Knik* and *Kashwitna* series; however, these series are typically suitable for development, particularly the *Knik* series.

Valuable mineral deposits are not currently known to exist within the City of Wasilla; however, large amounts of gravel and sand provide a local and ready source of material for road construction and concrete applications. Several trainloads of gravel are exported to Anchorage daily, during heavy construction seasons. Marl, a lime-rich deposit, is used on a small-scale for agricultural uses (NRCS 1998).

The Wasilla area lies within the Matanuska Valley coal field and contains known deposits of coal (Selkregg 1974). Additionally, coal bed methane (CBM) projects are in place within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The Pioneer exploration unit, established in 1998, includes much of Downtown Wasilla (ADNR 2004). Methane is the primary energy component of natural gas. Because coal has such a large internal surface area, it can store six or seven times as much gas as a conventional natural gas reservoir of equal volume. In relation to a natural gas reservoir, the coal beds are much shallower and less expensive, thus methane is a valuable resource for energy demands (USGS 2000).

Topography and Drainage

Existing Conditions

Topographic elevations within the city limits of Wasilla vary from about 300 to 500 feet above sea level. Downtown and the Airport and Transportation Museum Area are nearly level, while South Wasilla Heights is significantly higher in elevation. A sudden rise of over 100 feet on the eastern and southern edges of South Wasilla Heights adds to the area's prominence in the landscape and its desirable views. The area slopes away more gradually toward the west.

Downtown is directly north of South Wasilla Heights and in between Wasilla and Lucille lakes. This area is relatively flat, ranging from 300 to 350 feet above sea level. The Airport and Transportation Museum Area has a shallow rise in elevation near its center just south of Jacobsen Lake, which slightly exceeds 350 feet above sea level. This area also has some low-lying wetland areas, including a stretch of Lucille Creek along its southern border, where the elevation is approximately 300 feet above sea level (USGS 1992).

Area drainage includes two major streams, Lucille and Cottonwood creeks, and two major lakes, Wasilla and Lucille lakes. Wasilla Lake is part of the Cottonwood Creek drainage system.

Lake Lucille is similar in area to Wasilla Lake, but is very shallow. No permanently flowing streams feed Lake Lucille. Two storm drains on the north shore of the lake collect storm water runoff from the Parks Highway. However, the volume and quality of these waters is unknown. This lake does not experience as much inflow as Wasilla Lake and has consequently become eutrophic, i.e., mineral and organic rich leading to seasonal oxygen deficiency. In 1998 the lake was listed on the Alaska

Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) Section 303(d) list of impaired waters for failure to meet ADEC 18 Alaska Administrative Code 70 water quality standards for dissolved oxygen (Oasis 2005).

Historically, there may have been a hydrologic connection between the two lakes, but the construction of the Alaska Railroad line and the Parks Highway separated the two watersheds. Lake Lucille is drained by Lucille Creek into Meadow Creek and then into Big Lake 11.3 miles to the west (ADEC 2002).

Cottonwood Creek's mean flow is estimated at 16 cubic feet per second, depending on seasonal precipitation and snowmelt. Annual mean flow at the Lucille Creek gage is approximately 1.25 cubic feet per second (ADEC 2002).

These waterways are important for supplying water, recreation, subsistence, habitat and intrinsic value. The *Vegetation and Wetlands* and the *Fish and Wildlife* sections further discuss the values of these waterways.

Implications for Development

New development in the three planning areas will have to account for topography and drainage considerations.

Wetlands in low-lying areas may be susceptible to negative effects from development as described in the *Vegetation and Wetlands* section. Also, flooding may occur in low areas such as along the banks of Cottonwood Creek. Development in more hilly areas like South Wasilla Heights should take into account drainage and run-off patterns of disturbed soils. Slope stability issues may arise, impacting local areas, and further alter runoff and drainage patterns in the area.

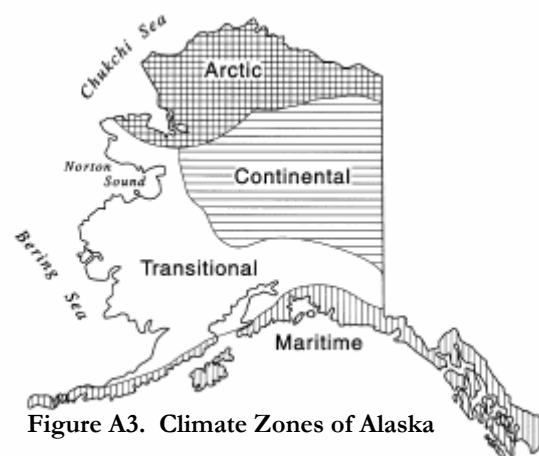
These areas may also have important viewsheds, and their maintenance would likely be desirable primarily through the use of regulatory mechanisms such as zoning and landscaping standards.

Climate

Existing Conditions

Situated in southcentral Alaska at approximately 61° north latitude and -149° west longitude, Wasilla has a transitional climate and thus experiences a combination of the mild and wet conditions of the maritime climate as well as the extremes of the continental climate. Being in the transitional climate zone, Wasilla has experienced both the extreme temperatures of the continental climate as well as the heavy precipitation and snowfall characteristic of the maritime climate. Over 29 inches of snow has fallen in Wasilla in a 24 hour period, and strong cold winter winds coupled with excessively cold temperatures have created dangerous wind chills in excess of -45°F (City of Wasilla 2004).

Wasilla is largely protected from the frigid continental climatic extremes by its location in relation to the Alaska Range and the Chugach and Talkeetna mountains as illustrated in Figure A3. Average temperatures range from approximately -33 and 33 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) in January and between 42 and 83°F in July. Annual precipitation totals roughly 17 inches, with 50 inches of average annual



snowfall (ADCCED 2007 and Ager 2003). The bitterly cold high winds synonymous with the Matanuska, Susitna, and Knik valleys that gust off the Knik and Matanuska glaciers do affect the community. Annually, high winds are recorded in Wasilla and property damage has occurred (City of Wasilla 2004).

Wasilla is located in an area generally free of permafrost (NRCS 2002). By late March and early April, winter begins to release its grip and the ground starts to thaw. On average there are 115 days without frost, and the first frost of the season typically arrives by the beginning of September. Although daylight is limited to about 5 hours on the winter solstice, the summer solstice brings a 19 hour day (City of Wasilla 1996). Local gardeners reap the benefits of the long days as plants, fruit, and vegetable crops grow quickly in these conditions.

Implications for Development

Future development in Wasilla should consider climate-responsive, northern design principles that account for the low winter temperatures, frequent high winds, extreme daylight variations, and snow removal and storage. The City might consider strengthening and adopting building codes that require additional structural and insulation reinforcements to withstand high winds, heavy snow loads, and low temperatures.

Extreme daylight variations can be incorporated into subdivision and building design by deliberate solar orientation so that sunlight at solar noon is unobstructed and maximized during winter months. This can be accomplished through building orientation on the lot and adjacent lots as well as promoting the use of deciduous trees that will allow more sunlight to penetrate to buildings during the winter months. This could be particularly attractive to residents as energy costs continue to rise. Solar orientation can potentially reduce energy costs and provide more comfortable homes (USDOE 1993).

Snow removal and storage is an ongoing concern for development in a northern city. An implication of this is that new development needs to consider adequate room for storage on streets, sidewalks, parking spaces, and other forms of new development. This requires additional space. New infrastructure needs to be designed to accommodate snow storage, decreased daylight, high winds, and extreme temperatures. Suggestions include a greater number of decorative lighting fixtures, strategically placed windbreaks to prevent snowdrift on pedestrian and transportation corridors, and different roadbed designs and materials to withstand sustained periods of freezing temperatures. Greater density Downtown might also be an option to consider as it would minimize the distance between services, thus reducing the time exposed to inclement weather.

Fish and Wildlife

Existing Conditions

Common animals in the Wasilla area include large and small mammals, a diversity of birds, and several species of fish. Many of these are year-round residents, such as moose, fox, rabbit, and beaver. Several species call this area home on only a seasonal basis, or as a rest-stop along migration routes. These may include loons, Canada geese, and arctic terns, among many others. There are no current threatened or endangered species in the Wasilla area, but the American peregrine falcon and the arctic peregrine falcon were downgraded from the Alaska Endangered Species list (ADF&G 2007).

Moose are abundant throughout Alaska, including the Wasilla area. They spend summer months in the mountains north of Wasilla, where they breed and calve. In the winter months, moose migrate to

low-lying areas including river and stream drainages. At this time, moose forage mainly on bare twigs of willow, birch, and aspen. In spring the moose forage on a wide variety of plants including sedges, equisetum (horsetail), aquatic plants, and grasses. Summer forage options expand to other forbs and vascular plants, including leaves of birch, willow and aspen (City of Wasilla 1996).

Moose are preyed upon by bears and wolves, but many also are killed by humans. Sport and subsistence hunting for moose is an important part of many Alaskans' lives. Approximately 6,000 to 8,000 moose are harvested each year; yielding about 3.5 million pounds of meat (ADF&G 2006). Additionally, as moose inhabit low-lying developed areas during winter months, many are killed each year in collisions with cars and trains.

Black and brown bears inhabit the Wasilla area. Brown bears are not common in this area, but can be found in the surrounding areas, usually at higher elevations. Black bears can be found from sea level to alpine areas and are most commonly found in forested areas (City of Wasilla 1996). As black bears emerge from their dens in the spring, they forage on almost anything they can find, including new green vegetation and carcasses of animals killed over the winter. The bears feed heavily on spawning salmon as they travel upstream in the summer, and berries become important to their diet in the late summer and early autumn (ADF&G 2006).

Habituation of black bears to humans and the urban environment is an issue of some concern. Black bears show great ability to adapt to developed areas and often forage in garbage cans and dumps. With the prevalence of black bears in urban settings, risk of injury to humans or bears increases through interactions. However, bears are also valued wildlife in this area and important for both subsistence and sport hunting.

Other small game and furbearing animals are present in the Wasilla area, including fox, rabbit, coyote, mink, weasel, muskrat, and beaver (City of Wasilla 1996). While these species were frequently trapped for their fur and were a source of income for many residents, they have more recently become important on an intrinsic level and contribute greatly to the wildlife viewing possibilities in the Wasilla area.

Birds are also central figures in Wasilla area wildlife. During the summer this area is home to many nesting and migratory species including the bald eagle, Canada goose, common loon, grebes, and arctic tern. Common birds that use the Wasilla area primarily in winter include black-capped chickadee, great grey owl, Bohemian waxwing, pine grosbeak, and downy woodpecker (ADF&G 2006). Three Species of Special Concern exist in southcentral Alaska, and potentially in the Wasilla area. These include the American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), arctic peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus tundrius*), and olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) (ADF&G 2007). Recreational bird viewing can be a popular activity during the summer and people generally enjoy having birds around throughout the year.

Local waters such as Cottonwood Creek, Cottonwood Lake, and Lucille Creek are home to a variety of important fish species including all five species of Pacific salmon. Additionally, Dolly Varden, steelhead, and cutthroat also use these waters. Cottonwood and Lucille Creeks provide necessary migration corridors for these species, while pools within the creeks and Cottonwood Lake provide habitat for juvenile salmon (City of Wasilla 1996). These species are an important resource for sport and subsistence anglers in the Wasilla area.

Implications for Development

The presence of wildlife populations can have implications for development. Regulations regarding protection of certain species or habitats can slow or stop development in some cases. For example,

bald eagle nests are protected from disturbance under the Bald Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S. Code 668-668d, 54 Statute 250), and buffer zones are required around the nest sites. Bald eagles are known to nest within the City of Wasilla. Other protected and future-protected wildlife habitat, including wetlands, must be addressed in development projects and permits may be required. Due to the presence of bald eagles, other wildlife and their habitats, it is important for developers to conduct bird surveys and obtain necessary permits prior to construction.

Population and Demographics

Population

Wasilla is growing at a much faster rate than is the state as a whole. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Wasilla had a population of 4,028 in 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau 1990). The Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development’s (DCCED) estimates Wasilla’s 2006 population at 6,775, a 68.2 percent increase from 1990 (Alaska DCCED 2006). The U.S. Census Bureau recorded a total population of 550,043 in Alaska in 1990 and estimates the state’s 2006 population at 670,053, which is an increase of only 21.8 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2007). By 2030, the state population is expected to grow by 25 percent and have an estimated total population of 840,000 (Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development [ADLWD] 2007). Neither the U.S. Census Bureau nor the ADLWD provides Wasilla-specific population projections because of the city’s relatively small population. If extrapolated from ADLWD projections for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the city would experience a growth rate of 9.3 percent from 2006 to 2010, 26.8 percent from 2006 to 2015, and 78.4 percent from 2006 to 2030. Figures A4 and A5, respectively, present graphic representation of Wasilla’s population from 1920 to 2006 and Wasilla’s estimated future population growth based on ADLWD growth projections for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

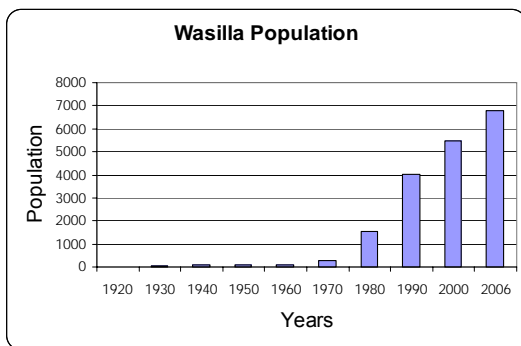


Figure A4. Population 1920-2006

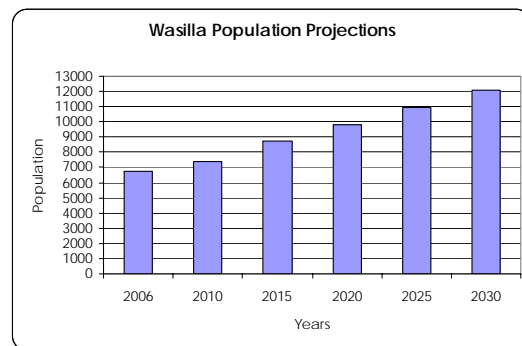


Figure A5. Population Projections

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2000; AK DCCED 2006

Gender and Age Composition

According to 2000 U.S. Census Bureau demographic information, the gender and age composition of Wasilla is similar to the state of Alaska; however, females slightly outnumber males in Wasilla, the city’s median age is slightly younger than that of the state population, and a greater percentage of Wasilla residents are 65 years or older. Table A1 presents city and state gender and age information and Figure A6 presents a breakdown of the Wasilla population by age category.

Table A1. Gender and Age

	Wasilla	Alaska
Percent Males	49.9	51.7
Percent Females	50.1	48.3
Median Age	29.7	32.4
Percent 5 years and under	8.8	7.6
Percent under 18 years	33.6	30.4
Percent 18 years and over	66.4	69.6
Percent 20 to 24 years old	7.1	6.4
Percent 25 to 44 years old	30.8	32.5
Percent 45 to 64 years old	19.1	22.3
Percent 65 years and over	6.7	5.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

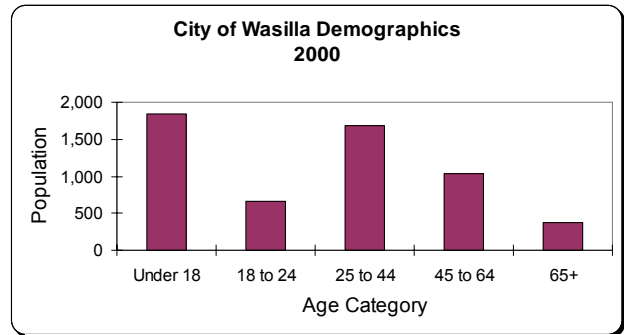


Figure A6. Wasilla Demographics 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

Racial Composition

Compared to state census data, Wasilla has low minority populations. The 2000 U.S. Census racial composition data for Wasilla and Alaska are presented in Table A2.

Table A2. Wasilla Racial Composition

Race	Number of Wasilla Residents	Percent of Wasilla Population	Percent of Alaska Population
One Race	5,144	94.1	94.6
White	4,674	85.5	69.3
Black or African American	32	0.6	3.5
American Indian and Alaska Native	287	5.2	15.6
Asian	72	1.3	4.0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	7	0.1	0.5
Some other race	72	1.3	1.6
Two or More Races	325	5.9	5.4
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	201	3.7	4.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

Educational Attainment

Of the 3,091 Wasilla residents 25 years of age or older in 2000, an estimated 89 percent had graduated from high school and approximately 13 percent had a bachelor's degree or a higher level of education. When compared to census statistics for the entire state of Alaska, a greater percentage of Wasilla residents had graduated from high school and earned associate degrees. A smaller percentage, however, had earned bachelor's or graduate degrees. Table A3 presents a more detailed look at this age group's educational attainment.

Table A3. Education Attainment

Education Level	Number of Wasilla Residents	Percent of Wasilla Population	Percent of Alaska Population
Less than 9 th grade	121	3.9	4.1
9 th to 12 th grade, no diploma	225	7.3	7.5
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1,003	32.4	27.9
Some college, no degree	1,023	33.1	28.6
Associate degree	326	10.5	7.2
Bachelor's degree	224	7.2	16.1
Graduate or professional degree	169	5.5	8.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

Economic Statistics

As shown in Table A4, the 2000 census economic statistics for Wasilla are similar to those for the state of Alaska. Wasilla, however, had a lower unemployment rate, a smaller percentage of families below the poverty level, and a greater percentage of residents in the labor force.

Table A4. 2000 Census Economic Statistics

	Median Household Income (1999 dollars)	Per Capita Income (1999 dollars)	Families Below Poverty Level	Individuals Below Poverty Level	In Labor Force (≥16 years old)	Employed	Unemployed
Wasilla	\$48,226	\$21,127	5.7%	9.6%	70.8%	62.8%	7.9%
State of Alaska	\$51,571	\$22,660	6.7%	9.4%	71.3%	61.5%	6.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

Housing

Existing Inventory and Condition

Wasilla had an estimated 2,119 housing units in 2000 (City of Wasilla 2007a), and there have been additions in recent years. The majority of housing in Wasilla can be characterized as single-family homes situated on large lots in a semi-rural area. Wasilla also has a proportion of small multi-family units (four, six and eight unit residential buildings), which are often interspersed within single-family neighborhoods. Wasilla housing units have an occupancy rate of 93.4 percent, and owner occupied housing accounts for 55.8 percent of all units (Table A5). Generally, the major residential areas are located north of the Parks Highway and near Lake Lucille. The majority of subdivided land is platted into lot sizes of 40,000 square feet or larger.

Table A5. Housing characteristics for Wasilla compared to the Mat-Su Borough, Anchorage, and the State.

Type of Housing	Wasilla	Mat-Su Borough	Anchorage	Alaska
Total No. of Housing Units	2,119	27,329	100,368	260,978
No. of Occupied Units	1,979	20,556	94,822	221,600
No. of Vacant Units	140	6,773	5,546	39,378
Seasonal, Recreational, Occasional	34	5,244	1,107	21,474
Percent of Occupied Housing	93.4%	75.2%	94.5%	84.9%
No. of Owner-Occupied Units	1,104	16,218	56,953	138,509
No. of Renter-Occupied Units	875	4,338	37,869	83,091
Percent of Owner-Occupied Units	55.8%	78.9%	60.1%	62.5%

Notes: No. = Number

Source: City of Wasilla website, Community Profile: Housing (http://www.cityofwasilla.com/profile/profile_06.asp)

Most residential structures (71 percent) were constructed between 1970 and 1989, and 69.8 percent have between 3 and 6 rooms. Over half (53.4 percent) are 1-unit detached homes, and 20.1 percent are 3 or 4-unit structures. All but 1.3 percent have complete plumbing facilities and only 1.0 percent do not have complete kitchen facilities. Table A6 presents more housing details.

Table A6. Residential Structure Detail

	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
UNITS IN STRUCTURE			HEATING TYPE		
1-unit, detached	1,130	53.4	Utility gas	1,754	88.8
1-unit, attached	72	3.4	Bottled, tank, or LP gas	35	1.8
2 units	178	8.4	Electricity	122	6.2
3 or 4 units	425	20.1	Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.	59	3.0
5 to 9 units	128	6.0	Wood	5	0.3
10 to 19 units	62	2.9			
20 or more units	53	2.5			
Mobile home	57	2.7			
Boat, RV, van, etc.	13	0.6			
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT			SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS		
1999 to March 2000	41	1.9	Lacking complete plumbing facilities	26	1.3
1995 to 1998	289	13.6	Lacking complete kitchen facilities	20	1.0
1990 to 1994	162	7.6	No telephone service	15	0.8
1980 to 1989	1,014	47.9	Specified owner-occupied units	834	100.0
1970 to 1979	489	23.1			
1960 to 1969	92	4.3			
1940 to 1959	31	1.5			
1939 or earlier	0	0.0			

Table A6. Residential Structure Detail (Continued)

	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
ROOMS			VALUE		
1 room	69	3.3	Less than \$50,000	45	5.4
2 rooms	125	5.9	\$50,000 to \$99,999	108	12.9
3 rooms	296	14.0	\$100,000 to \$149,999	367	44.0
4 rooms	501	23.7	\$150,000 to \$199,999	216	25.9
5 rooms	351	16.6	\$200,000 to \$299,999	85	10.2
6 rooms	329	15.5	\$300,000 to \$499,999	13	1.6
7 rooms	190	9.0	\$500,000 to \$999,999	0	0.0
8 rooms	131	6.2	\$1,000,000 or more	0	0.0
9 or more rooms	126	5.9	Median (dollars)	137,700	(X)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

Planned Improvements/Development

Wasilla is a young community, with most housing units (71 percent) less than 40 years old. Currently, there are no known large-scale (e.g., subdivision-wide) planned improvements for housing in the City. However, there are residential developments occurring throughout the City. Yenlo Square, a planned unit development is currently in Phase III, and scheduled for completion in 2010. This is a mixed-use development that will include approximately 150 residential units, some for single families and others for seniors and people with special needs (Architects Alaska 2004). Table A7 provides a summary of development permits issued by the City of Wasilla between 2002 and 2006 for residential housing.

Table A7. Development Permits Issued by the City of Wasilla

Year	Single Family	Duplex	Multi Family	Total Dwelling Units
2002	42	24	110	176
2003	43	28	35	106
2004	48	34	60	142
2005	75	22	11	108
2006	41	34	34	109

Source: City of Wasilla 2007b

Public Facilities and Schools

Existing Facilities and Condition

Airport

Wasilla Municipal Airport was constructed by the State of Alaska to replace the old airport that was located in Downtown Wasilla. The new airport was constructed in 1992 on 370 acres of City-owned land and opened in 1993 (City of Wasilla 1996 and 2002). It is approximately 15 minutes from Downtown in the Airport and Transportation Museum Area and has year-round operations. The 3,700-foot paved runway is approved for general aviation aircraft and was paved in 1999 (City of Wasilla 2002). The airport's amenities and services include a radio-controlled runway, taxiway and security lighting, onsite engine and airframe repair, onsite fuel service, and air-taxi services. Lease lots, spaces, and tie-downs are available.

The City is responsible for year round operation and maintenance of the Wasilla Municipal Airport. A five-member Airport Advisory Commission advises and provides recommendations to the City for airport operations and maintenance, site locations and development plans for airport lease lots,

and for specific proposals for development at the airport (WMC 2.68.010). The Wasilla Airport Master Plan includes a capital improvement plan and describes the anticipated projects to be completed through 2022.

Aurora Cemetery

The Wasilla Aurora Cemetery is located at mile 1.1 Wasilla-Fishhook Road outside of the planning area boundaries. The City has maintained the cemetery since 1980. There are approximately 500 plots and no plans to expand the cemetery through land acquisition (City of Wasilla 1996). The City assumes the powers of the cemetery and sells the remaining lots and will maintain the cemetery in perpetuity. The Department of Parks and Recreation maintains the cemetery, and the City Clerk administers the records. Funds acquired from the sale of cemetery lots are held in a nonexpendable trust fund. The interest from the trust fund is used for maintenance, operation of and capital improvements construction in the cemetery. General operations of the cemetery are paid for through the City's general fund.

City Hall

City Hall, built in 1934 and located Downtown, is one of the oldest buildings in Wasilla located on the corner of Knik Street and Herning Avenue. The structure was originally built to function as a school. The state owned the building when the Mat-Su Borough bought it in 1973; the City did not have title to the property until 1981 (City of Wasilla 1996). The following functions operate at City Hall:

- Mayor and Administrative Offices
- City Council Chambers
- City Clerk
- Finance
- Public Works
- Planning
- Economic Development

Some city departments are not located there due to lack of space. City Council, Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Airport Advisory Commission and meetings are hosted here as well.

Currently, the building is not compliant with the American Disabilities Act, nor is the parking for the building. There are a sufficient number of parking spaces available for the 25 staff. However, there limited ADA-compliant parking spaces available for the public building. Coupled with an aging electrical system and capacity issues, City Hall is in need of upgrades and expansion. However, at this time there are no existing plans for modifications to the building.

Dorothy Page Museum and Historic Town Site

The Dorothy Page Museum, established in 1967, is Wasilla's first museum. It is located Downtown, near the Wasilla Public Library and museum and library patrons vie for approximately 20 available parking spaces in the shared lot. The main museum building, a National Historic Landmark, was originally constructed as the Wasilla Community Hall in 1931 and served as a forum for social gatherings and sporting events such as basketball games. Although the exhibits are on display mostly in the main building, the museum is comprised of 10 structures, including Wasilla's first school,

which is also a National Historic Landmark. Home to an extensive collection of Wasilla artifacts, the museum also offers rotating exhibits each summer. These exhibits are on loan from the state museum and differ from year to year. Every April, a Borough archaeologist presents one to two lectures at the facility in celebration of Archaeology Month. On Fridays, museum entry fees are waived for all Mat-Su residents. In fiscal year 2007, a total of 6,162 people visited the museum - a dramatic increase from the previous year's visitor total of 4,528. The City of Wasilla operates the museum. Currently there are no plans for expansion; however, the Visitor's Center will be fitted with a Halon-type fire suppression system this winter (Neel 2007).

Fire and Emergency Medical Services

Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are provided to the City of Wasilla by the Mat-Su Borough. Wasilla is served by the Central Mat-Su Fire Department, which has seven stations. Station 61 is located in Downtown Wasilla at 101 West Swanson Avenue in the Central Public Safety Building. This station is the first to respond to an emergency in the City. Other stations have the capacity to assist with response efforts if needed. The facility is 5 years old and is the first station to have built-in living quarters, which includes 17 beds, a dayroom, kitchen, and a workout room. Fire and EMS positions are on-call and respond via pager. The following positions are staffed at this station:

- 4 full-time fire fighters (includes 2 chiefs)
- 2 secretaries
- 6 paramedics (staffing 2 ambulances; staffed around the clock at this station)
- 1 paramedic supervisor (staffed around the clock at this station)
- 2 fire code officials
- 1 public educator/fire trainer
- 2 fire service area helpers

Station 61 houses the following equipment for response:

- 2 engines
- 1 pumper tanker to carry extra water
- 1 ladder truck with a 100 foot aerial ladder
- 1 heavy rescue truck
- 1 hazardous materials decontamination trailer
- 4 ambulances
- 2 command vehicles (for 2 chiefs)

This facility also has two training rooms available for use that include a TV, VCR, DVD, and multi-media projector. The rooms have an adjoining collapsible wall and together can accommodate up to 300 people. These rooms are available to both government and non-government users.

Library

Wasilla Public Library, located in the Downtown Planning area, is the fourth busiest library in the state. It receives funding from the City of Wasilla and the Mat-Su Borough. The library is open daily, Monday through Saturday. Parking is limited at the facility with merely 11 available spaces; however, there is supplemental parking available at the corner of Boundary Street and Swanson Avenue. Library cards are free to Mat-Su residents or landowners in the Mat-Su Borough, and are available for a charge to others. Beginning January 1, 2008, non-City residents will be charged either \$10 for a 3-month library card or \$35 for a full-year library card. Cards are valid at all Mat-Su Library Network branches.

The Wasilla Public Library offers multiple services. The library participates in the state interlibrary loan system. It has six computers connected to the Internet. One computer station has Microsoft® Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, and Adobe® Reader. The library offers free Internet access and other computer resources, such as printing and disk purchase for downloading. The staff includes 12 part-time and full-time employees. There are approximately 55,000 items in the library's collection, including circulating and reference books, audio books, periodicals, and videos. The library catalog can be searched online.

The facility is a key destination in downtown Wasilla, and one that faces some challenges. Parking is extremely limited, and while the building does have handicap access, this is minimal and inconvenient for patrons with disabilities.

Friends of Wasilla Public Library, a non-profit organization, is currently trying to raise funds and support for a new library facility. According to the organization, the current library is too small and requires too much maintenance because of its age; a new facility will provide much needed additional space, more parking, and easier access for people with disabilities. The City has hired an architect to prepare initial design documents, but funding for final design work has not been secured.

Multi-Use Sports Complex (MUSC)

The Wasilla Multi-Use Sports Complex, located at 1001 South Mack Drive, opened in March 2004. This facility is located in the Airport and Transportation Museum Area. This indoor sports complex has four primary activity areas: an ice arena, an indoor artificial turf court, a running/walking track, and three community meeting rooms. Ice skating, skate rentals and lessons, and ice rentals are offered to the public for a fee at the Curtis C. Menard II Memorial Ice Arena. The turf court is available for rental for birthday parties, sports team practices and games, or other events, and a for-fee "Turf for Tots" program is offered midday three days a week during the summer. Patrons can use the running/walking track by paying as they go, purchasing punch cards, or 3-month passes. Each of the approximately 650-square-foot meeting rooms will accommodate about 30 people. They can be rented by the hour or by the day. Audio/visual equipment and other presentation items are available at additional costs. Some events held at the complex in 2007 include the Iron Dog Snow Machine Display and Vendor Show, the Alaska Youth Hockey State Tournament, the Valley Home Builder's Show, and several high school graduation ceremonies. There are currently no formal plans for expansion of this facility, however, there are plans to construct a new kitchen in the building.

Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry

The Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry (MATI) is a private, non-profit corporation (501(c)(3)) with a volunteer board of directors and is located in the Airport and Transportation Museum Area. While it is not a publicly owned facility, it serves the public of the City of Wasilla and

visitors, and is important to include in the overview of facilities. Its stated mission is "...the collection, conservation, restoration, exhibition, and interpretation of artifacts relating to Alaska's transportation and industrial history." The museum receives no government funding, relying solely on admissions, gift shop sales, and donations to cover costs.

The museum is open from May 1 through September 30. Operating hours are 10:00 am to 5:00 pm Tuesday through Sunday. The entry fee is \$8.00 for adults and \$5.00 for senior citizens. Parking is free, sufficient to support the number of daily visitors, and spots for recreational vehicles are provided.

The museum was originally established in Anchorage in 1967 as the Air Progress Museum. It operated at this location until 1973, when a fire closed down the facility. In 1976, the remaining museum pieces were moved to 3 acres on the Alaska State Fair grounds. The museum, renamed "The Transportation Museum of Alaska" and later the "Alaska Historical and Transportation Museum," remained at this location for 15 years before being moved to its present location in 1992.

The museum sits on over 20 acres of land and includes a gallery, a train yard, an exhibit hall, and numerous outdoor artifacts. The artifacts on display include items donated by individuals and on-loan items from the military and other organizations. This summer, the museum relocated a 1935 barn to the museum grounds; they plan to restore the building for display. According to museum staff, approximately 8,000 people visited the museum in 2006. There are no formal plans to relocate the museum or to upgrade current facilities.

Police Department

The Wasilla Police Department (WPD) headquarters is located at 1800 East Parks Highway. The Mayor appoints the police chief who manages the department. Established in 1993 with only 8 commissioned officers, the WPD has grown to include 23 commissioned officers as of 2005. The WPD serves the entire population of Wasilla. The department also provides services as needed to surrounding area residents and many seasonal visitors that stop in or pass through the City to shop or recreate. The Wasilla Youth Court is also located in the Police Department building. It is unknown if there are formal plans to upgrade or renovate the current facility.

Post Office

The Wasilla Post Office is located in Downtown at 401 North Main Street on the corner of Swanson Avenue and Main Street. This is the only post office servicing Wasilla residents located wholly within the City boundaries. The 1996 comprehensive plan spoke about a replacement facility because of the inadequacies of the existing facility. The post office continues to be overcrowded and a contributing factor to traffic congestion.

Schools

Table A8 lists schools within the Downtown Planning Area, as well as other schools that are commonly used by Wasilla residents. No schools are located in the Airport & Transportation Museum Planning Area or the South Wasilla Heights Planning Area.

Table A8. Select Schools Serving Wasilla Residents

School	Grades	Enrollment	Portables	Space adequate
Within Downtown planning area boundaries				
Wasilla High School	7-12	1,284	6	No, very crowded
Wasilla Middle School	6-8	756	6	Yes, with portables
Iditarod Elementary	K-5	469	4	Yes, with portables
Correspondence Study School**	K-12	1,031	—	not applicable
Twindly Bridge Charter School	K-12	157	—	Yes
Outside of the planning areas but within Wasilla or are commonly used by residents				
Burchell High School	9-12	238	1	Yes
Colony High School	9-12	1145	0	No
Palmer High School	9-12	912	0	Yes
Mat-Su Career and Technical High School	9-12	Opens Fall 2007	0	Yes
Teeland Middle School	6-8	629	0	Yes
Cottonwood Creek Elementary	K-5	490	2	Yes, with portables
Tanaina Elementary	K-5	492	0	Yes
Midnight Sun Family Learning Center	K-10	168	—	Yes

Sources: Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District 2007; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development 2007; City of Wasilla 2007a

The Correspondence Study School is commonly referred to as the “home-schoolers school.” The school was established to help parents with curriculum and is a support network. This school offers teachers to advise parents, a small library (primarily stocked with materials passed down), and a training room for special events. The school district leases the current space.

There are no formal plans for expansion of any of the listed schools. Wasilla High School is in the process of renovating sections of the school, and Wasilla Middle School is in the process of renovating the cafeteria. However, neither of the renovations will add square footage.

Utilities

Sewer Service System

Wastewater Collection System

The City wastewater treatment system was constructed in the mid 1980s with a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency that covered 93 percent of the cost of construction. The system