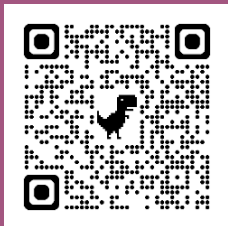




2035 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update

Draft Executive Summary for Public Review: February 2025



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Share your feedback by March 14, 2025.

Visit [HomerCompPlanUpdate.com](https://www.homer.ak.us/HomerCompPlanUpdate) to learn about the public comment process.



Connect with the Project Team

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Plan Purpose

The City of Homer is updating the 2018 Comprehensive Plan to recognize and celebrate what we have **accomplished**, to address new **challenges and opportunities** for our community, and to coordinate efforts to **achieve our shared vision for a future Homer**.

The Comprehensive Plan will serve as a community resource and guide for community leaders, residents, and other partners to protect what residents value most about Homer while enhancing the quality of life for current and future residents.

The updated Homer Comprehensive Plan will be a combination of long-term vision, goals, and practical strategies that will: guide decisions about land use and environment, housing, public services and infrastructure, transportation, economic development, health and wellness, sustainability, resilience and climate change, and quality of life, and more. It will provide a roadmap for implementation, with clear priorities and actions.

This comprehensive plan update is **Phase 1** of a two-phased project. In **Phase 2**, the project team will work closely with the City of Homer to update the City's zoning code, Title 21, to support the land use recommendations in the updated plan.



Land Use & Environment



Sustainability, Resilience & Climate Change



Public Facilities & Services



Housing



Transportation



Economic Development



Quality of Life



Governance

What is a comprehensive plan?

A combination of **long-term goals** and **short-term strategies** that will **guide decisions** about land use, housing, public services and infrastructure, transportation, economic development, health and wellness, sustainability, resilience and climate change, quality of life, and more. The plan provides a road map for implementation with clear priorities and action items. The **Future Land Use Map** in the comprehensive plan will provide a blueprint that sets **intent** for how the area will accommodate change and meet resident needs.

What is a zoning code?

Zoning code and the zoning map are local laws governing **how land is used or developed**, where and how buildings are sited, and other rules related to how a property functions. Zoning is the tool used for achieving the intent set by the comprehensive plan and goals set in the Future Land Use map.

Community Voices: Highlights from the Community Survey

TOP 3 THEMES: What three things do you **value most** about living in Homer?

Community, small town feel, family and friends

Natural beauty and scenery

Access to outdoor activities and ocean



“Thank you for gathering this input! Homer has been an amazingly connected and healthy place for me, and I want it to remain so for my kids and any who are drawn to our engaged, connected community.”

TOP 3 THEMES: What 3 things do you find **most challenging** about living in Homer?

Overall cost of living

Infrastructure and transportation challenges

Lack of affordable housing



“The lack of affordable homes/rentals for locals year-round. I have a year-round dwelling, but I am seeing many service workers being priced out of living here.”

TOP 3 THEMES: 20 years from now, what does your **ideal Homer** look like?

Homer has retained its small-town character

Affordable housing and reasonable cost of living

Walkable, vibrant downtown



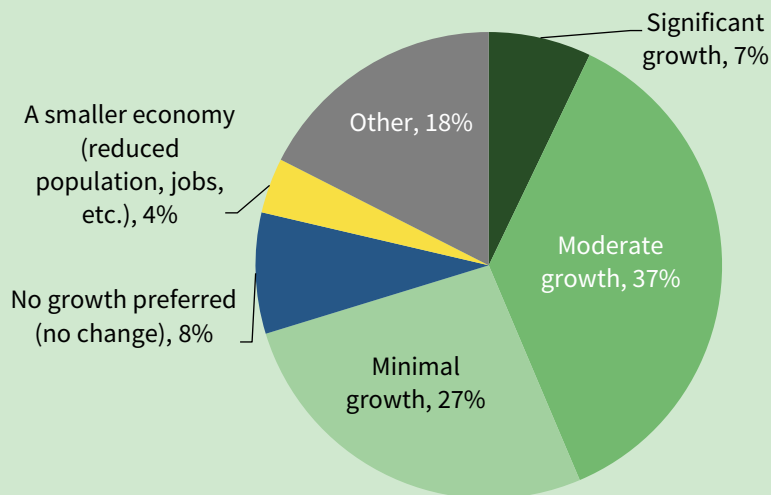
“I came here to work a seasonal job... I stayed because Homer gave me the space and support to be who I am. I love this place deeply; I love the fun and quirky community that I've found.”

Who responded to the 2024 Community Survey?

556 people participated in the survey, exceeding our goal of 500 participants. 224 comments were received on the interactive map. Of the 556 survey participants:

- 70% have lived in Homer more than a decade.
- 91% live in Homer year-round.
- 39% reside within the City of Homer limits.

Desired Growth



Most open-ended comments about growth discuss “sustainable and controlled growth” with a focus on planning that considers environmental impact, infrastructure capacity, and preservation of Homer’s character.

Housing Highlights

- 76% of survey participants are satisfied/very satisfied with their current housing situation.
- 68% say housing is too expensive in Homer.
- 66% say more attainable starter homes are needed for younger residents, families, or residents that wish to downsize.

Quality of Life

- A combined 82% rate the quality of life in Homer as good/excellent.
- A combined 88% rate Homer as a good/excellent place to raise a family.

Top Priorities and Projects for Homer to Focus on for the Next 10-20 Years

- Increase supply and accessibility of affordable housing
- Encourage the retention and creation of more year-round, higher wage jobs
- Preserve open public spaces within the city from development
- Create a livable, walkable, vibrant downtown
- Encourage renewable energy projects

Identified as “important/very important” by 74% or more of survey participants.



Homer by the Numbers

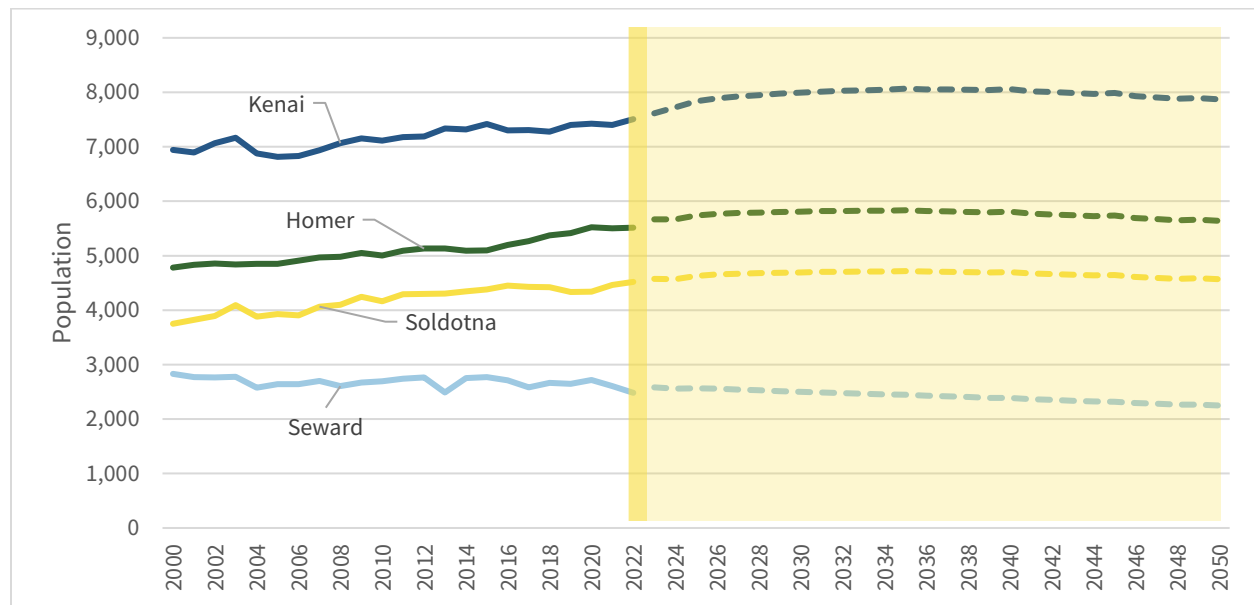
Where have we been? Where are we today? Where are we headed?

Our People

Total population: 5,515 ↑ 7%	Ages 65+: 22% of population ↑ 8%
Predicted population growth: ↑ 2.3% by 2050	School enrollment: 1,745 ↓ 5%
Median age: 40.8 ↓ 4%	

Historical and Forecasted Populations for Homer and Comparison Cities in the Kenai Peninsula Borough

Homer’s population has been experiencing steady, modest growth over the past 22 years.



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Northern Economics analysis

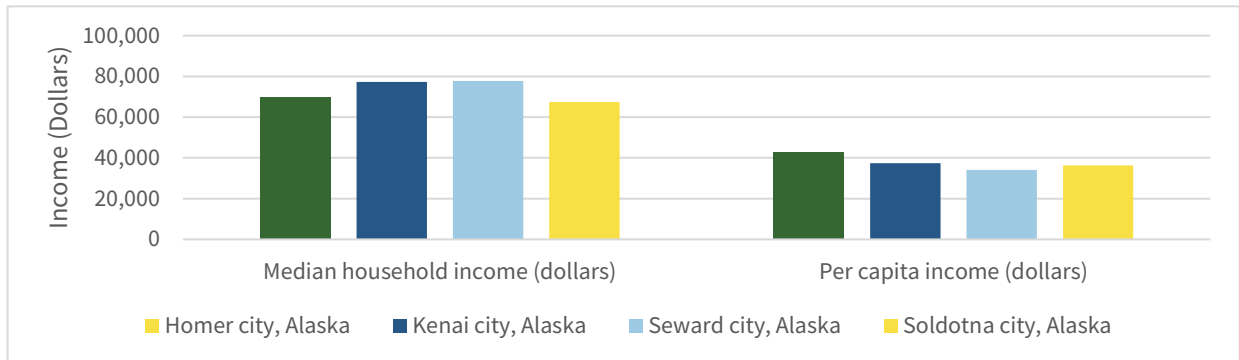
At-A-Glance Homer History *(adapted from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan)*

- Home to Indigenous people for over 8,000 years; archeological evidence of campsites on the Homer Spit.
- 1896 – Homer Pennock arrived with a crew of 50 gold miners and developed a small settlement on the Spit.
- Early 1900s to today – fishing developed into an important industry.
- 1964 – Year of city’s incorporation and the Good Friday earthquake, which devastated Seldovia’s waterfront; the Spit also subsided several feet.
- 1989 – Exxon Valdez oil spill impacted Homer’s coastline
- 2002 – Annexation of 4.6 sq. miles.

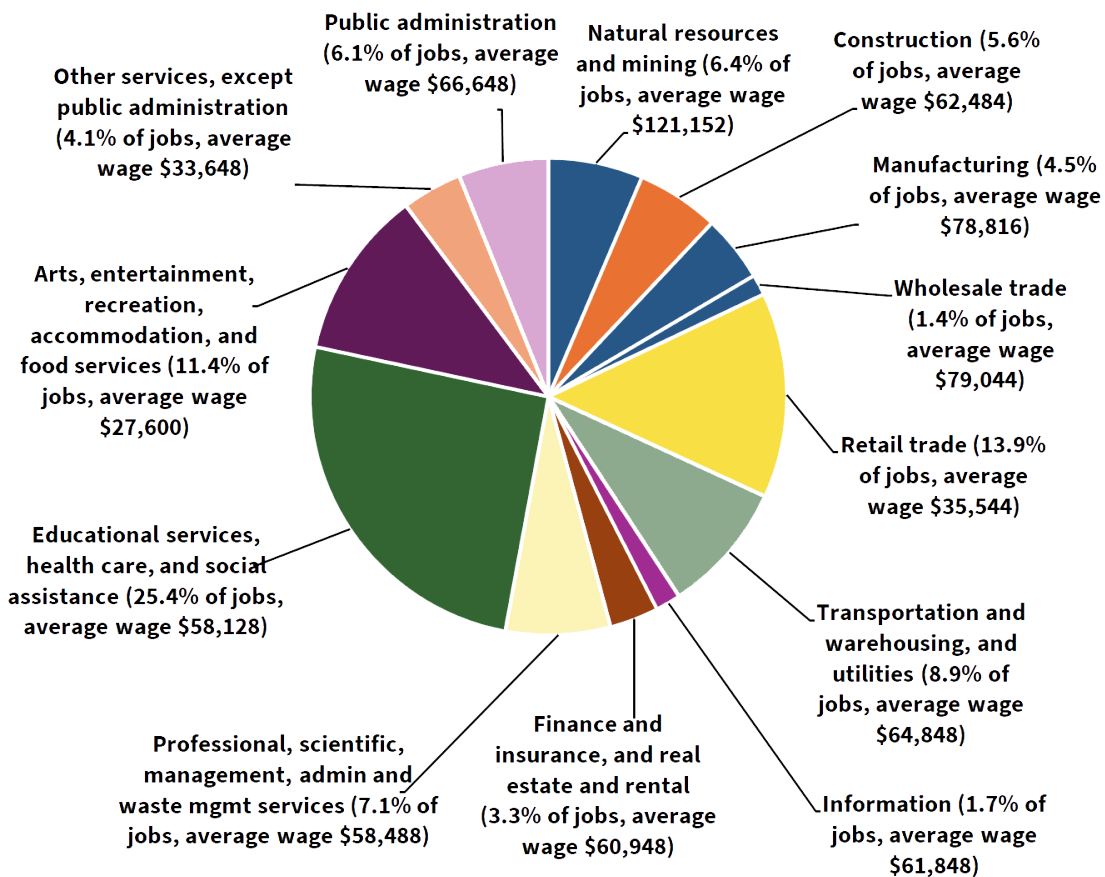
Our Economy

Median annual household income (inflation-adjusted): \$69,757 ↑ 30%	Estimated gross earnings for commercial fisherman: \$117,873,969 ↑ 42%	Annual unemployment rate: 5.4% ↑ 43%	Top industry: Education, health care & social assistance
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Income in Homer and Comparison Communities



Percentage of Homer Workforce by Industry



Sources for pages 6 and 7: Homer Comprehensive Plan (History), 2018; Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2022; US Census Bureau American Community Survey: 2022, 2013 (ACS 5-Year Estimates), Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, 2022, and Northern Economic Analysis, 2024; ADOLWD Current Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages; Northern Economics Analysis, 2024



People walk along the beach in Homer as the sun sets. Photo: Derek Mueller



Land Use & Environment

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Moderate, Sustainable Growth Desired
- Housing Attainability Through Land Use Reform
- Development that Fits Natural Conditions
- Addressing Gaps in Outdoor Access
- Aligning Code with Community Vision
- Targeted Planning for Unique Places

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C
Promote sustainable and moderate growth that preserves Homer’s small-town character.	Plan for responsible development that balances environmental impacts, community connections, and infrastructure capacity.	Use the 2035 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update as the foundation for zoning reform and area planning.

Strategies

1. Implement a future land use map that guides future decisions about land use and growth.
2. Update Homer City Code to better respond to existing and future opportunities for moderate, sustainable growth.
3. Create affordable housing development incentives and initiatives and modify code to increase attainable housing opportunities that cater to the needs of young people, families, seniors, and seasonal workers.
4. Strategically align development code with natural hazard considerations and habitat values.
5. Conserve open green space in Homer to protect environmental values, provide recreational opportunities, and enhance biophysical connectivity.
6. Create a downtown area that supports walkable connections, infill development, increased density, and community activities compatible with new and existing businesses to support Homer as a regional center for commerce.
7. Develop policies for specific community areas to help preserve character and address challenges unique to those areas.

Future Land Use Map Categories

Future Land Use Map Primary Categories

The land use categories defined on the map cover areas with different uses, but with similar underlying characteristics. For example, the “Urban Residential” designation includes medium residential uses and compatible commercial uses.

Category	Intended Land Uses	Application Areas	Use Examples	2018 Designation
Downtown Mixed Use	The urban core of Homer, allowing for a mix of commercial, community, and high to medium density residential uses (low lot size minimums, high lot coverage, reduced setback limitations and parking maximums) with adaptability to changing market needs. A focus on close proximities and a walkable, human-scale environment, enabling all-day and all-season use by all.	Combination of the 2018 Future Land Use Designations for Downtown Mixed Use, Medical District, Office Residential and Town Center.	Hospitals, live-work spaces, mixed use buildings, retail, eateries, community facilities, multi-unit housing, apartment buildings, parks	Downtown Mixed Use, Medical District, Residential Office and Town Center
Urban Residential	Medium density residential uses with compatible public and light commercial uses that generate low traffic volumes; areas for infill and densification.	Combination of the 2018 Future Land Use Designations for Urban Residential.	Emphasis on varied housing (single unit, accessory dwellings, cottage clusters)	Urban Residential
Transition Residential	Medium to low density residential uses with compatible public and commercial uses with flexible lot sizes designed to respect topography and environmental constraints. An area transitioning from low to higher densities, and infrastructure supporting a walkable environment.	Same as 2018 Future Land Use Designation for Residential Transition.	Varied housing types, community garden, neighborhood café, schools, churches	Residential Transition
Rural Residential	Low density residential uses and limited agricultural pursuits that may not have access to public utilities.	Same as 2018 Future Land Use Designation for Rural Residential.	Single family units with accessory dwellings, lodges, farms, conservation areas	Rural Residential
Commercial Mixed Use	Commercial and community uses supported by residential uses within a walkable, human-scaled environment. Flexibility for businesses is prioritized.	Same as current zone areas for Gateway Business District.	Mixed-use buildings, culture venues, retail, restaurants	Gateway Business District

Category	Intended Land Uses	Application Areas	Use Examples	2018 Designation
Medical Mixed Use	The Medical District of Homer, allowing for medical facilities and other mixed uses supportive of the district , with focus on Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant design and amenities.	Same as current zone areas for Medical District.	Medical facilities and accessory uses, professional offices, various housing types, parks	Medical District
Light Industrial Mixed Use	Predominately commercial and industrial uses that generally require direct motor vehicle access and potentially larger land areas. Residential uses are accessory.	Combination of current zone areas for East End Mixed Use and General Commercial 1.	Warehousing and distribution hubs, building supply stores, supportive infrastructure	East and Mixed Use and Commercial 1
Industrial	Heavy industrial uses where commercial retail and service uses are accessory.	Same as current zone areas for General Commercial 2.	Manufacturing and processing, worker housing, airports, cold storage facilities	Commercial 2 and Conservation
Marine Commercial	Water-dependent or related commercial uses requiring direct motor vehicle access, potentially larger land areas, and benefit from proximity or convenient connection to the waterfront.	Same as current zone areas for Marine Commercial along the Homer Spit.	Retail, restaurants, cold storage, docks, marine charters, accessory lodging	<i>Not included</i>
Marine Industrial	Water-dependent industrial uses requiring direct marine access for their operation, direct motor vehicle access, and potentially larger land areas. Commercial uses are accessory.	Same as current zone areas for Marine Industrial.	Fish processing, marine transportation, cold storage	<i>Not included</i>
Open Space Recreation	Public lands with uses that promote public recreation and access opportunities while preserving the natural and scenic resources of the areas.	Same as current zone areas for Open Space Recreation.	Community parks, playgrounds, recreation facilities, trails	Open Space Recreation
Conservation	Public and private lands that serve key environmental functions , such as critical habitat or watershed areas, to be maintained in an undisturbed and natural state.	Same as current zone areas for Conservation and areas dedicated as conservation.	Habitat protection facilities with education facilities or non-motorized trails as conditional	Conservation, and Open Space Recreation

Future Land Use Map Overlay Categories

The overlays defined on the map cover areas with base land use designations but identify special provisions in addition to the base designation.

Category	Description	Application Areas
Area Plan	Areas where further planning efforts may be needed and/or where additional development regulations may apply.	The Homer Spit and the Downtown Area.
Environmental Constraints	Known areas of environmental constraints, such as critical habitat and steep slopes, to help identify places where more detailed site analysis may be warranted if areas are to be developed or improved.	Airport Critical Habitat, Bridge Creek Watershed Protection District, the Diamond Creek Recreation Area, the Woodard Creek Watershed, Federal Emergency Management Agency flood zones, coastal bluff stability areas, anadromous streams, and slopes 30 percent or greater.

DRAFT Future Land Use Map

2035 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update, Public Review Draft

Updated: February 4, 2025

What is a Future Land Use Map?
 Future land use maps anticipate development needs and constraints, identify suitable types of development, and establish policies to guide development. They do not act as regulatory zoning documents or make changes to existing code.

Land Use Designations

- Downtown Mixed Use
- Urban Residential
- Transition Residential
- Rural Residential
- Commercial Mixed Use
- Medical Mixed Use
- Light Industrial Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Marine Commercial
- Marine Industrial
- Open Space Recreation
- Conservation

Land Use Overlays*

- Environmental Constraints Overlay
- Future Area Planning Overlay

*See appendix for more detail.

Other

- City of Homer
- Roads

Homer City Boundaries

Downtown Core Planning Area

The Homer Spit Planning Area

City of Homer Port & Harbor

Kachemak City

Coal Bay

Homer Airport

Pioneer Ave.

Beluga Lake

Kachemak Dr.

East End Rd.

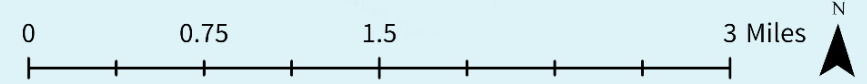
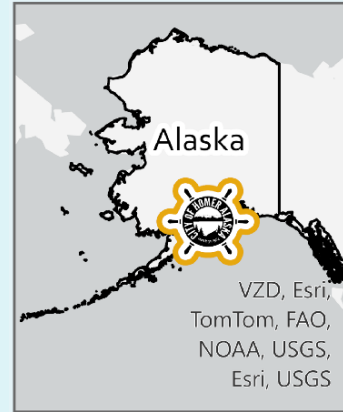
East Hill Rd.

Skyline Dr.

West Hill Rd.

Sterling Hwy.

Rogers Loop



VZD, Esri, TomTom, FAO, NOAA, USGS, Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, USGS

This map was created using the best available information and should be used for illustrative purposes only.



Beluga Lake swans in the fall. Photo: Kyra Wagner



Sustainability, Resilience & Climate Change

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Integrated Climate, Sustainability, and Resilience Planning
- Preservation of Ecosystems and Open Space
- Sustainable and Resilient Development

Goal A

Update the City of Homer’s future land use map, zoning code, and relevant plans to support sustainable and resilient development characterized by environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic vitality.

Goal B

Implement the future land use map that supports density and mixed-use infill in already developed areas to preserve existing natural green spaces and ecosystems.

Goal C

Protect both existing and new infrastructure from the impacts of climate change, environmental constraints, and hazards.

Strategies

1. Support comprehensive climate action and engagement.
2. Reduce the greenhouse gas emissions produced by City operations and encourage the reduction of emissions throughout the Greater Homer Area.
3. Continue to develop code, regulations, and incentives to guide sustainable and resilient development.
4. Develop and maintain mechanisms for expanding the quality and extent of stormwater management by the City.
5. Protect and enhance wetlands and waterbodies to support stormwater management, water quality, recreation, and responsible development.
6. Protect and enhance open spaces for recreational and environmental benefits.



Public Facilities & Services

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Vulnerability to Natural Hazards
- Reliable and Affordable Services
- Accessible Community and Recreation Facilities

Goal A

Ensure important community services are available, affordable, and adequate.

Goal B

Provide and improve city-operated facilities to meet the needs of the community, accommodate desired growth, and support sustainability and conservation goals.

Goal C

Mitigate risks to City-owned infrastructure from climate change and natural hazards.

Strategies

Facilities

1. Continue to implement the recommendations of the Final Report and Recommendations on Tsunami Risk to the Public Works Campus.
2. Provide safe, year-round public facilities for residents of all ages and abilities.
3. Maintain all roads within the City limits to a consistent and acceptable standard.
4. Work with residents, visitors, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and DOT&PF to identify and address the deficiencies of the Homer Airport Terminal.

Utilities and Services

5. Develop a long-range stormwater drainage and management plan to mitigate negative downstream impacts such as property damage, bluff erosion, and pollution.
6. Continue to provide high-quality water and sewer services within the City to meet current and anticipated demands.
7. Ensure that fire, emergency, and law enforcement services and facilities can support current and future needs.
8. Increase the City's capacity to provide and expand community services and improve the synergy between the City and other community partners.

Port and Harbor

9. Maintain and improve Port and Harbor infrastructure.
10. Develop a long-range Port and Harbor Management Plan that considers the environmental and economic significance of the Spit, the impacts of climate change, and natural hazards like earthquakes, tsunamis, and erosion.
11. Develop new facilities to support access and safety throughout the Spit and Harbor.




Housing

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Community Perceptions of Homer’s Housing Inventory vs Data
- Rising Costs of Living is Driving Housing Challenges
- Housing Challenges’ Impact on Economic Development
- Tourism’s Influence on the Rise of Short-Term Rentals in Homer

Goal A

Preserve and produce a high-quality, healthy, safe, and energy efficient housing inventory that accommodates for projected population growth and is affordable, attainable and safe for all Homer residents.

Goal B

Develop Homer’s housing inventory to be compatible with the beloved existing community character while allowing for essential growth and density.

Goal C

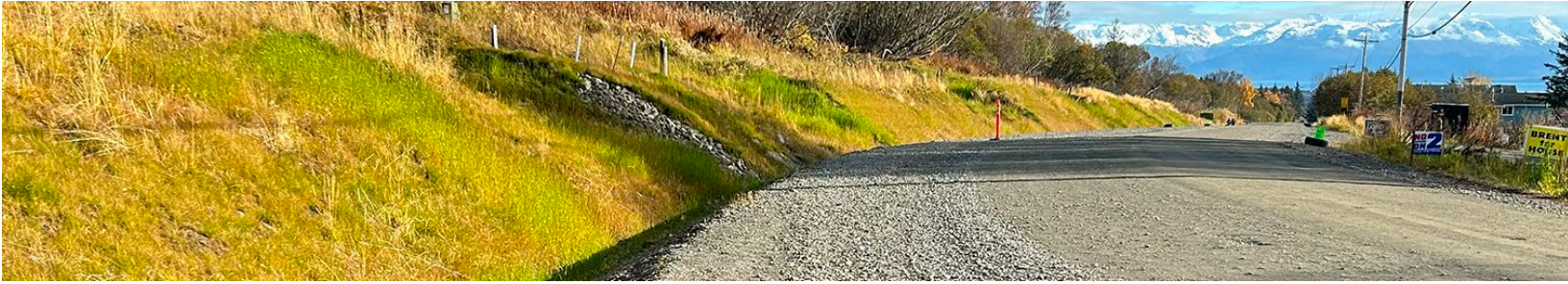
Ensure housing development aligns with the City’s preservation and sustainability goals, minimizing the environmental impact of new construction.

Goal C

Build strong community and regional partnerships around housing to improve housing attainability and affordability.

Strategies

1. Implement zoning reforms to encourage attainable housing development, prioritizing housing solutions that cater to the needs of young people, families, seniors, and seasonal workers.
2. Develop incentives and public-private partnerships for affordable and long-term housing development.
3. Consider sustainable development and creative solutions.
4. Assess Homer’s housing needs, maintain data collection, and foster community involvement.



Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Road and Sidewalk Maintenance is a Community Priority
- Residents Walk and Bike Year-Rounds
- Few Remaining Traffic Flow and Safety Concerns
- Continued Interest in Transit Opportunities
- Ongoing Need for Natural Disaster Planning

Goal A

Provide a resilient non-motorized transportation network focused on connectivity, safety, and access to the downtown, to schools, and to trails for users of all ages and abilities.

Goal B

Maintain a sustainable, safe, and useable non-motorized and motorized transportation network year-round to move people and goods to, from, and within the Greater Homer Area.

Strategies

1. Focus on developing a walkable downtown that can support infill development, new and existing businesses, and community activities.
2. Maintain year-round transportation network.
3. Build or improve roadway and pathway access and connections to key locations.
4. Support public-private partnerships that enhance network sustainability via alternative transportation options.



Veggies at the Homer Farmers Market. Photo: Art Koeninger



Economic Development

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Population Expected to Continue Growing
- Housing Challenges are Affecting Economic Development
- Infrastructure Needs are Increasing
- Fishing and Tourism Industries Remain Strong Economic Drivers
- Job Growth Hindered by Training and Housing
- Sustainable Growth Preferred Among Community

Goal A

Enhance Homer’s defined downtown with policy implementation to drive commerce, business, and resident and visitors’ services.

Goal B

Support Homer’s diversified economy by honoring traditional industries, while supporting the expansion of marine trades, arts and entertainment, healthcare, and small business development that maintains the character of Homer.

Goal C

Expand work force development, especially in fisheries, marine trades, healthcare, and small business support that increases year-round, high wage employment opportunities.

Goal D

Develop and maintain sustainable, accessible infrastructure that aids in economic development for both residents and visitors, while prioritizing accessibility.

Strategies

1. Address barriers to workforce recruitment and retention by improving access to affordable, attainable housing and childcare.
2. Expand vocational training resources, particularly in trades, marine trades (including mariculture and shipping industries), and healthcare industries, to retain young residents and provide year-round employment.
3. Encourage economic growth and infrastructure development while preserving the natural resources and community characteristics valued by current residents and attracting new residents.
4. Pursue moderate, sustainable growth in tourism, focusing on activities that benefit small businesses and minimize negative impacts on community character.
5. Promote commercial fishing as a viable career option in Homer and demonstrate long-term support for and commitment to the industry.



People walk along the beach in Homer as the sun sets. Photo: Derek Mueller



Quality of Life

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- A Desirable Place to Live
- Strong Schools, but Some Challenges Remain for Families
- Popular with Retirees
- High Cost of Living and Balancing Growth
- Strong Network of Care Options for a Community of its Size
- An Active Community

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C	Goal D
Create a welcoming, affordable, safe, and accessible community for residents of all ages.	Sustain Homer as an active, vibrant community with year-round opportunities to enjoy art, events, and recreation.	Ensure residents are healthy and thriving, with access to basic needs and quality services.	Encourage Homer residents to be proud stewards of their community and the spectacular natural setting around them.

Strategies

Health Care

1. Ensure access to quality, affordable care.

Indoor Recreation

2. Enhance indoor recreation options in Homer, especially in winter months.

Outdoor Recreation

3. Care for and expand Homer’s network of outdoor trails and parks.

Elder and Senior Services

4. Support Homer’s aging residents and allow current residents to age in place by meeting the unique needs of seniors.

Accessibility

5. Ensure People of all ages and abilities can live, work, and play in the community.

Youth and Early Childhood

6. Support Homer’s youngest residents and their families by making sure they have what they need to grow and thrive.

Education

7. Offer high-quality K-12 education in Homer and sustain lifelong learning opportunities for all residents.

Library

8. Maintain the library as a thriving community space for learning and connecting.

Public Safety

9. Continue to meet the community’s public safety needs to ensure the safety of residents, visitors, first responders, and the environment.

Arts and Culture

10. Celebrate Homer’s status as a vibrant hub for arts, culture, and community engagement.



Governance

Overarching Theme: The City of Homer Faces Fiscal Uncertainty

Other Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Revenue Growth Driven by Tourism, but Inflation Limits Gains
- Dependence on Sales Tax as a Primary Revenue Source
- Aging Population and Increased Property Tax Exemptions
- Rising Service Demands and Infrastructure Costs
- Staff Capacity Challenges Impacting Service Delivery
- Public Engagement and Fiscal Transparency are Increasingly Important
- The Value of Collaboration and Partnerships in Fiscal Sustainability

Goal A

Ensure long-term financial stability and resilience.

Goal B

Enhance fiscal transparency and community engagement.

Goal C

Strengthen collaboration and partnerships.

Strategies

1. Develop a long-term fiscal plan that is proactive, sustainable, and responsive to short-term challenges and opportunities.
2. Diversify revenue streams to reduce dependence on sales and property taxes.
3. Conduct operational efficiency audits to identify cost savings and streamline municipal services.
4. Increase public participation in budget planning, improve access to financial data, and foster community discussions to ensure policies reflect the needs and priorities of residents both within and outside city limits.
5. Identify opportunities to coordinate with organizations including Tribal organizations, Alaska Native Corporations, and local and regional non-profits to leverage resources and provide services more cost-effectively.