

Appendix F: About Homer – Community Background

2045 Homer Comprehensive Plan

Background Research and Data Analysis

Prepared by Northern Economics, Inc.

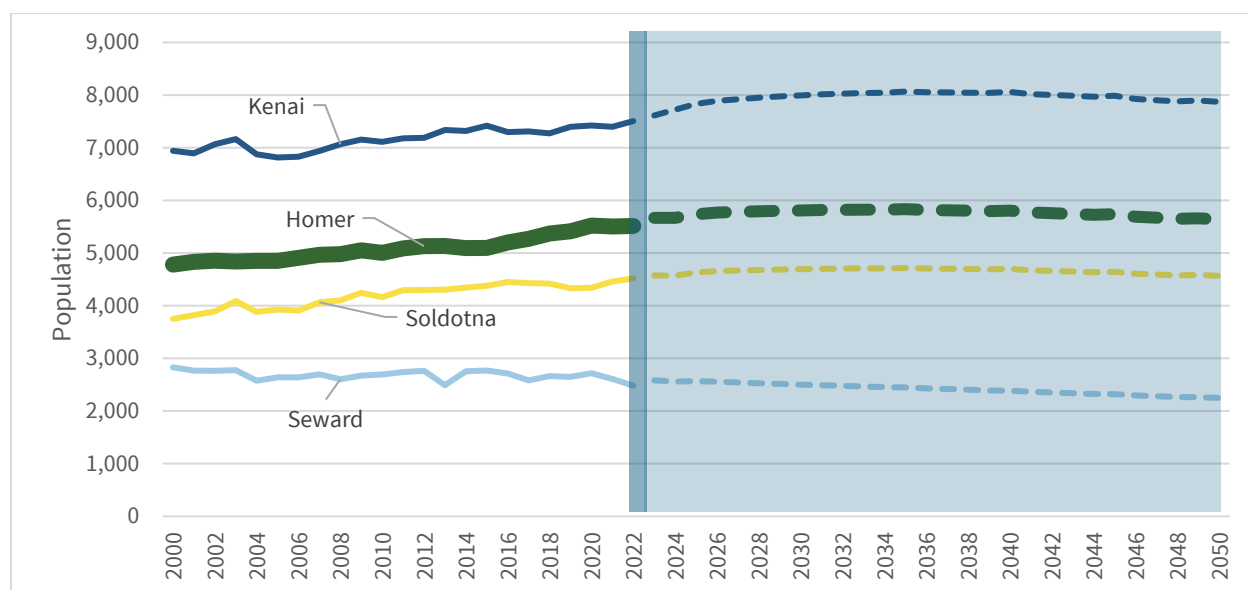
Updated July 2025

Our People

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

Homer's population in 2022 was 15.4% larger than it was in 2000 (growing 0.7% year-over-year on average). Using ADOLWD forecasts, Northern Economics predicts a population increase from 2023 to 2050, with the population of Homer forecast to be 2.3% larger in 2050 than it was in 2022.^{1,2,3,4} Population increases are also predicted for 2023–2050 in all comparison communities except for Seward, with year-over-year changes averaging 0.0% for Soldotna, and 0.1% for Kenai. The state as a whole is expected to experience 0.1% decline year-over-year on average from 2023–2050.

Figure 1: Historical and Forecasted Populations for Homer and Comparison Cities in the KPB



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development^{1,2,3,4} and Northern Economics analysis

There are several small communities that surround Homer and treat the City of Homer as their hub. These surrounding communities—Anchor Point, Diamond Ridge, Fox River, Fritz Creek, Kachemak, and Nikolaevsk—provide an important context to growth in Homer proper.

¹Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Historical Data: Places, “Population, 2000-2010”.

https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/estimates/data/TotalPopulationPlace_2000to2010.xls. Accessed March 18, 2024.

²Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Historical Data: Places, “Population, 2010-2020”.

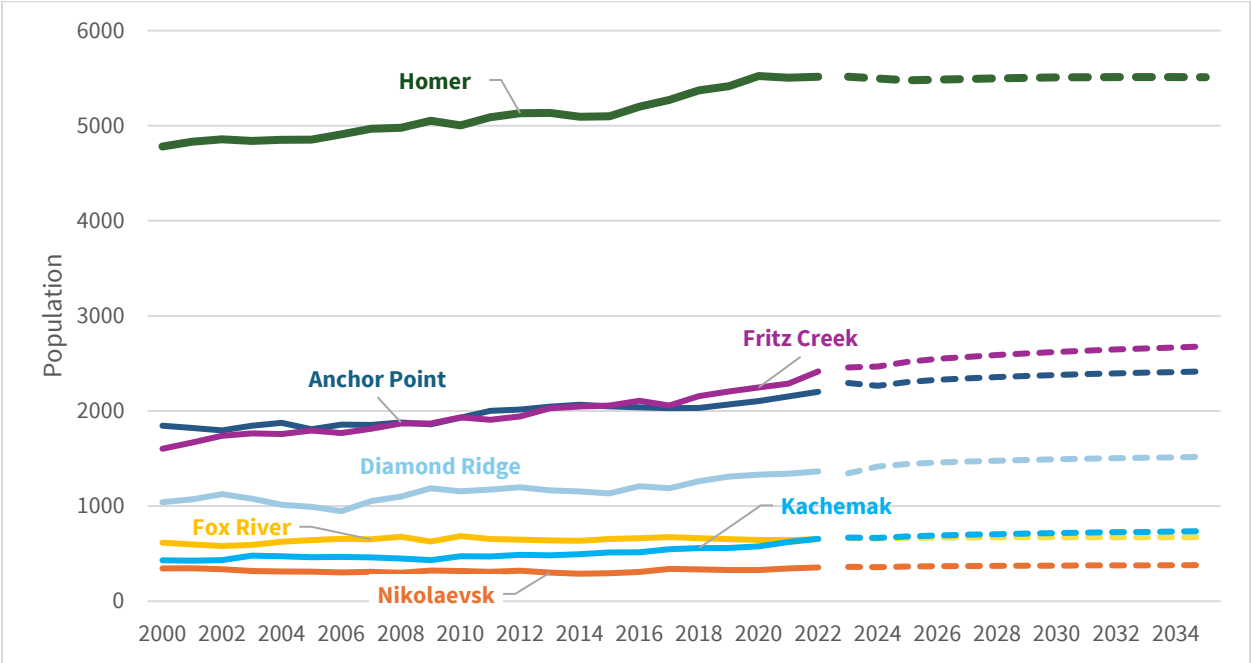
https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/estimates/data/TotalPopulationPlace_2010to2020.xls. Accessed March 18, 2024.

³Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Alaska Population Projections, “Alaska Population Projections 2023 to 2050”. <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/projections/pub/popproj.pdf>. Accessed October 9, 2024.

⁴Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Places and Other Areas, “Cities and Census Designated Places (CDPs), 2020 to 2023”. <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/estimates/data/TotalPopulationPlace.xlsx>. Accessed March 18, 2024.

As previously mentioned, Homer’s population in 2022 was 15.4% larger than it was in 2000. Considered together, the surrounding communities were 30.0% larger in 2022 than in 2000. Additionally, since 1994 the total population of the surrounding communities has exceeded the population in the City of Homer. When taken together, the population in Homer and its surrounding communities was 23.4% larger in 2022 than in 2000.

Figure 2. Historical and Forecasted Population in Homer and Surrounding Community Populations, 2000–2035



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development^{1,2,3,4} and Northern Economics analysis

Table 1. Kenai Peninsula Borough Components of Population Change, 2013–2023

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Population	56,852	57,366	57,631	57,995	58,058	58,232	58,328	58,849	59,049	60,000	60,898
% Growth	0.47%	0.90%	0.46%	0.63%	0.11%	0.30%	0.16%	0.89%	0.34%	1.61%	1.50%
Natural Increase	327	325	267	272	261	227	174	188	197	-2	80
Net Migration	-61	189	-2	92	-198	-53	-78	333	3	953	818

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development^{1,5}

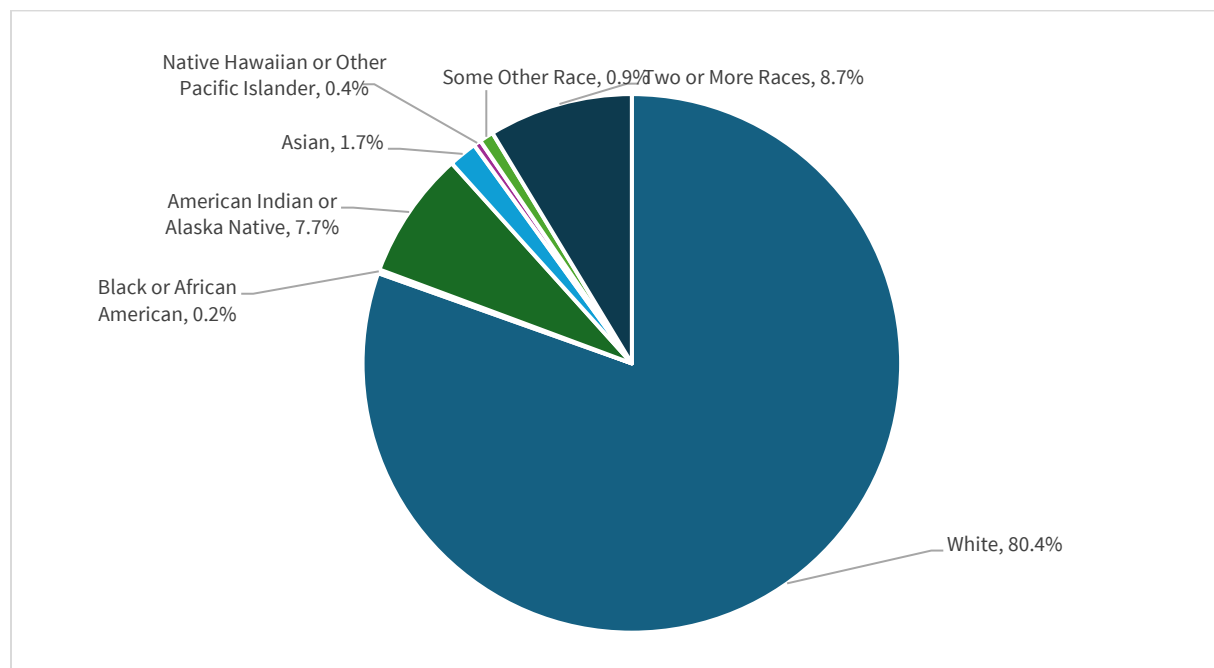
Table 1 summarizes the components of population change for 2013–2023 in the Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB)—the lowest level of detail at which this information is available.^{2,3}

⁵ Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Population Estimates, Economic Regions and Boroughs/Census Areas, Components of Change, 2020-2023. <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/data-pages/alaska-population-estimates>. Accessed April 8, 2024.

Over the period, migration into and out of the region fluctuated. For example, 2017 was a year with high out-migration, with a net migration of -198. On the other hand, recent years have had high rates of in-migration compared with the other years in the period, with 953 net migration from 2021 to 2022, and 818 net migration from 2022 to 2023.

The predominant racial group in Homer is white, and 80.4% of the population is white alone. The American Community Survey offers insights into race in Homer and other communities.⁶ In Homer, 91.3% of the population is one race, while 8.7% is two or more races. As shown in **Figure 3**, 80.4% of the population is white alone and 7.7% is American Indian and Alaska Native alone. In Homer and the comparison communities, the predominant racial group is white, accounting for 70% or more of the population in each community, followed by American Indian and Alaska Native. This holds true for the state of Alaska as well, but white alone accounts for a slightly lower overall percentage at 64.1% of the state's population.

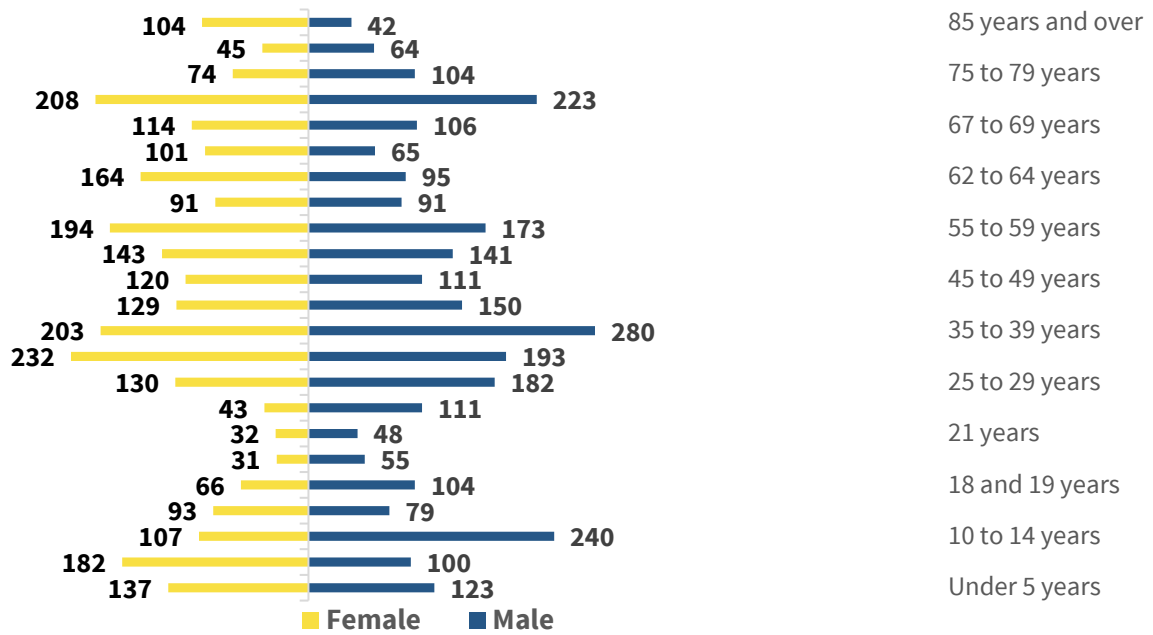
Figure 3. Race of Homer Population, 2022 (5-Year Average)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 data⁴

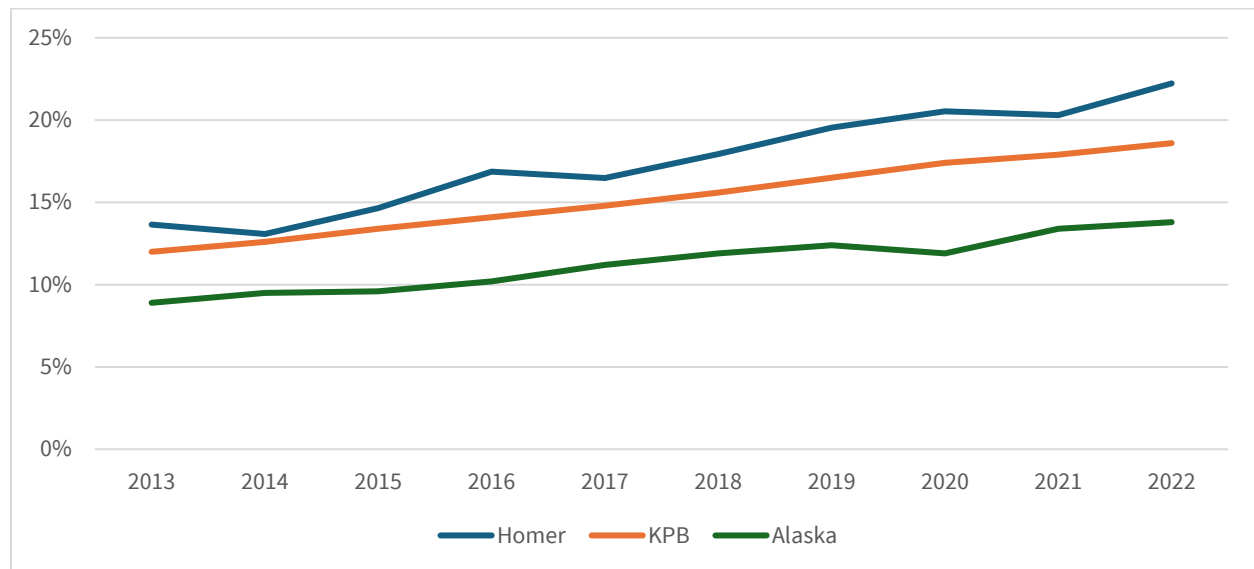
⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. "ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2022.DP05?g=160XX00US0233140>. Accessed on March 18, 2024.

Figure 4. Age of Homer Population, 2022 (5-Year Average)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 data⁷

Figure 5. Senior Population (65+) Change Over Time in Homer, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and Alaska



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 data⁴

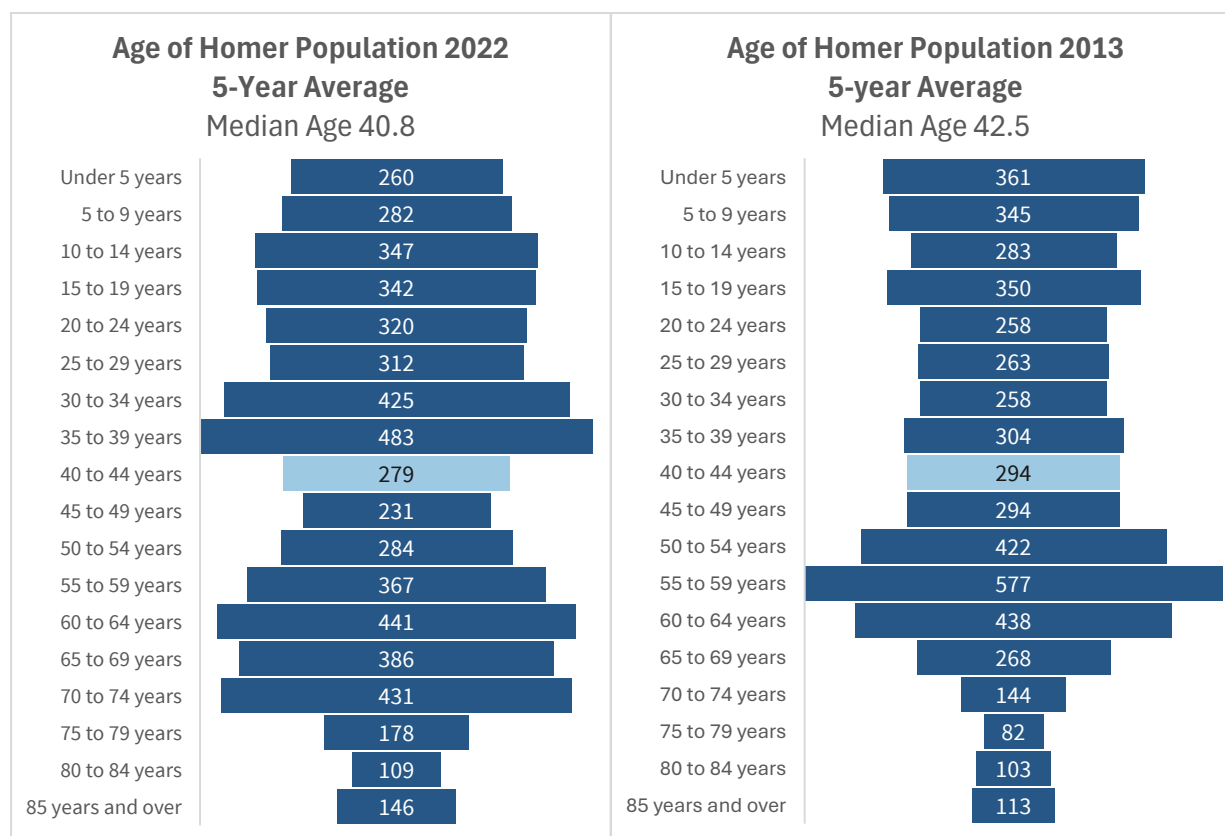
⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. "Age and Sex." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0101, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S0101?g=160XX00US0233140.0238420.0271640&moe=false>. Accessed on March 18, 2024.

Similar to the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the state of Alaska, Homer has a large and growing senior population. Over the last 10 years, we have seen the population across Alaska aging, with people over 65 representing an increasing proportion of individuals in many communities.⁴ **Figure 5** shows that the 65 and over population in both Homer and the KPB has made up a larger share of the population compared to Alaska as a whole. Seniors have different needs from other age groups for their housing and medical care. Additionally, seniors may need additional transportation options for those who are no longer able to drive so they can stay connected and engaged in the Homer community.

The median age in Alaska increased from 33.1 in 2013 to 35.9 in 2022. During this time, KPB's median age increased slightly from 40.7 to 41.2. However, Homer experienced an interesting trend: the median age in Homer now was slightly younger in 2022 than it was in 2013, going from 42.5 to 40.8, while at the same time the percentage of the population that is age 65 and over has increased from 14% to 22%.

Figure 6 illustrates how the age distribution of the Homer population has changed from 2013 to 2022.⁵ In 2013, the population shares at each age group were fairly uniform, except for a distinct increase in the population in the 50–64 age range. In 2022, that cohort had aged to where they are now contributing to the increase in the older population. It also looks like there has been notable growth in the 30–39 age group from 2013 to 2022, but that growth does not appear to be accounted for with the existing population in 2013 aging. This would suggest that new Homer residents that migrated to the area from 2013 to 2022 were likely in that age range or slightly younger when they moved there.

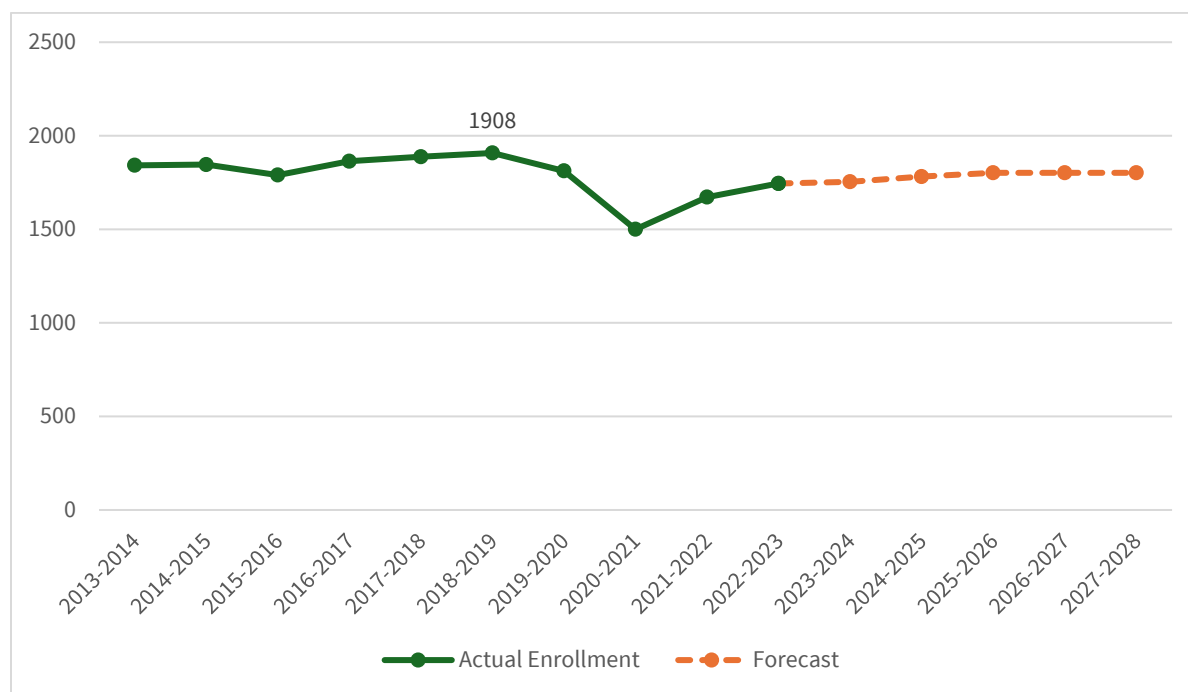
Figure 6. Comparison of Homer Population Age Distributions



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 data⁵

Enrollment in Homer area schools has fluctuated in recent years but has not rebounded fully from the dip during the pandemic. Homer is served by the Kenai Peninsula School District (KPBSD).⁶ **Figure 7** shows enrollment trends for what the KPBSD considers Homer area schools. Enrollment has fluctuated over the past 10 years, with a notable decline following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, since then enrollment has recovered partially. Enrollment peaked in the 2018–2019 school year, with 1,908 students enrolled across all grades. KPBSD is forecasting increasing enrollment at the Homer area schools, while forecasting decreasing enrollment for the overall district.

Figure 7. Homer School Enrollment, Pre-Kindergarten to 12th Grade



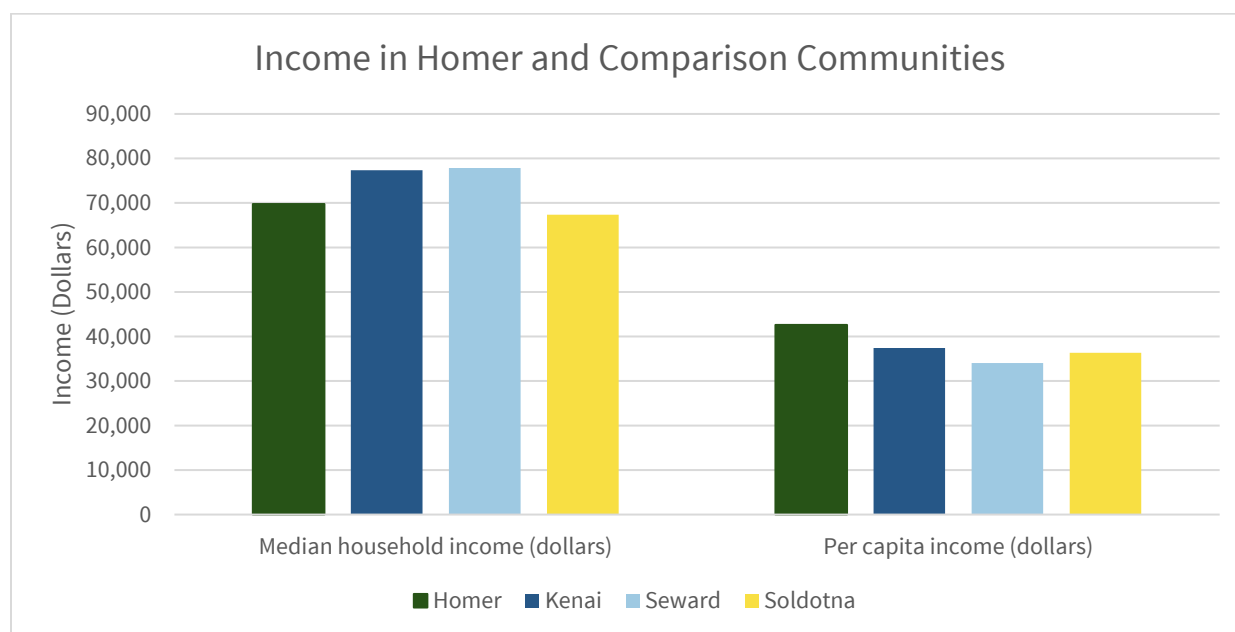
Source: Kenai Peninsula Borough School District⁸

⁸ Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. "Five-Year Enrollment Projection 2023-24 through 2027-28". November 4, 2022. <https://kpbsd.org/wp-content/uploads/departments/finance/budget-development/fy24/FY24-Projected-Enrollment-Document.pdf>. Accessed April 26, 2024

Our Economy

Homer residents have a higher per capita income than residents of comparison communities. **Figure 8** shows median household income and per capita income in Homer and comparison communities.⁹ Homer has the highest per capita income among comparison communities, though Kenai and Seward have higher median household incomes. From 2013 to 2022, Seward had the greatest increase (30%) in median household income, while Homer's increased by about 2% over the same period. Kenai and Soldotna both saw decreases in median household income on an inflation-adjusted basis. Homer has a lower percentage of residents below the poverty level (12.7%) than Kenai and Soldotna, though it is more than twice the level seen in Seward (6.1%).

Figure 8. Income in Homer and Comparison Communities



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 data⁷

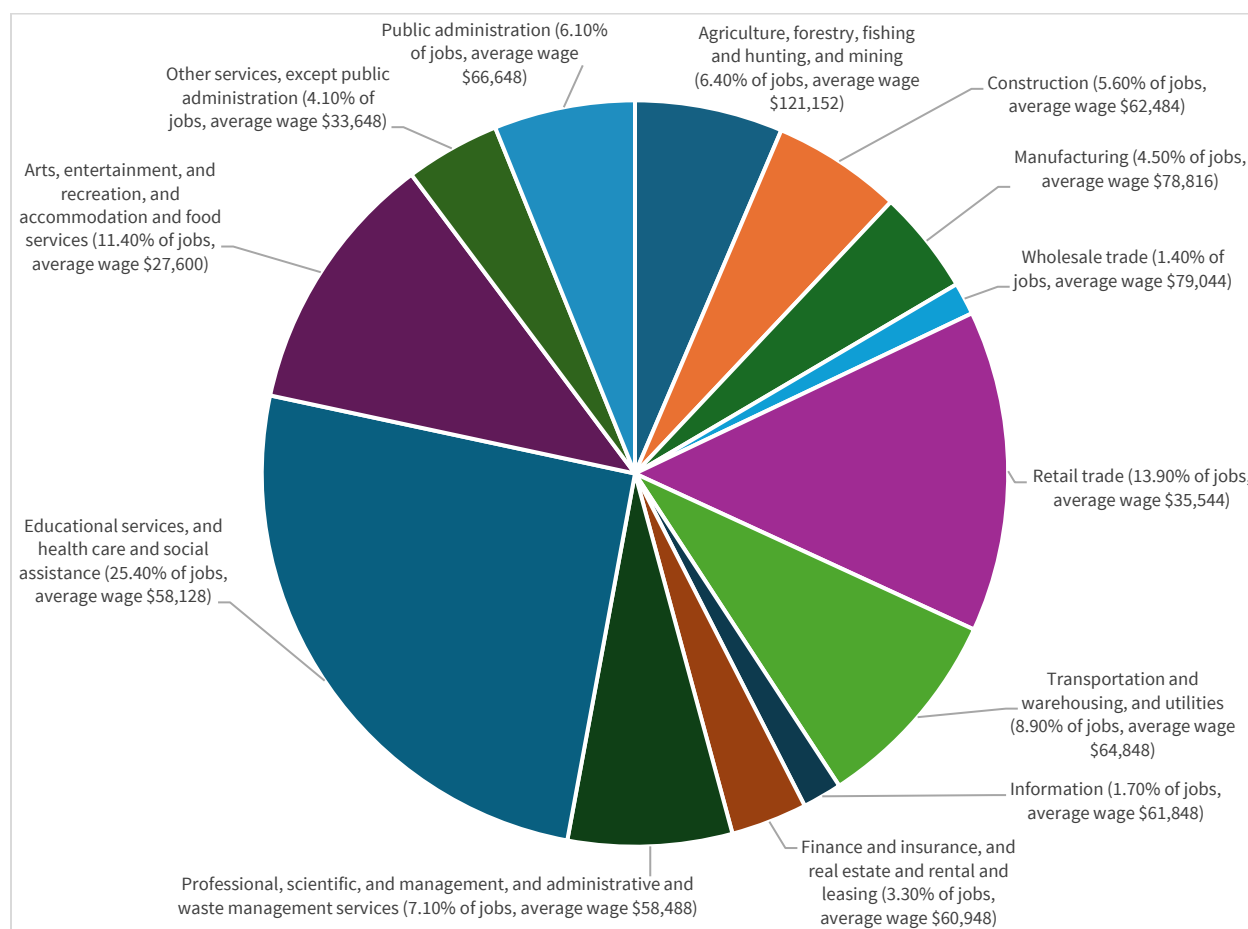
Homer has a diverse mix of industries. The three largest are 1) education, health care, and social assistance; 2) retail trade; and 3) arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services.¹⁰ **Figure 9** provides more detailed information on industries and wages in Homer. Based on monthly wage data for the Kenai Peninsula Borough, the average annual

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. "Selected Economic Characteristics." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP03, 2022 & 2013, [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2022.DP03?q=per capita income&g=160XX00US0233140_0238420_0268560_0271640](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2022.DP03?q=per%20capita%20income&g=160XX00US0233140_0238420_0268560_0271640). Accessed on March 18, 2024.

¹⁰ Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. "Current Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Annual January to December 2022." 2022. <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/article/current-quarterly-census-employment-and-wages-qcew>. Accessed April 26, 2024

wage for educational services, health care, and social assistance is \$58,128, assuming year-round work at a typical wage. Although there is not one specific NAICS industry that is designated as “tourism”, the industries that would be the most affected by tourism are 1) transportation and warehousing; 2) administrative and support and waste management and remediation services; 3) arts, entertainment, and recreation; and 4) accommodation and food services¹¹. Retail Trade would also likely be impacted as well. The industries in the Kenai Peninsula borough with the highest average monthly wages were mining (\$11,331), management of companies and enterprises (\$10,569), and utilities (\$9,470).

Figure 9. Percentage of Homer Workforce by Industry and Annual Wages by Industry for the KPB



Note: This method of wage calculation may overinflate real annual earnings for the Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, and mining industry since much of the work is seasonal and not the same monthly earnings year-round.

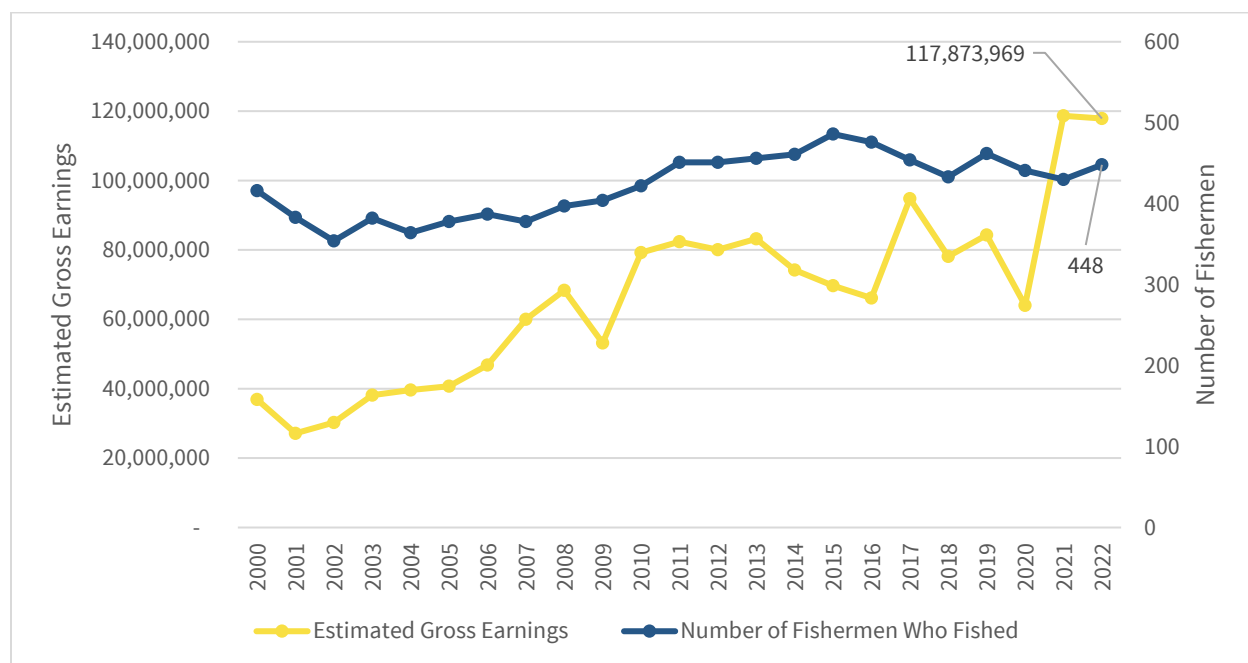
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 data⁷; ADOLWD Current Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages⁸, Northern Economics Analysis

¹¹ The University of Texas at San Antonio. “Tourism, Travel, and Hospitality” <https://libguides.utsa.edu/c.php?g=485669&p=3731491>. Accessed April 29, 2024

Homer is a community with strong ties to the commercial fishing industry. **Figure 10** shows the estimated gross earnings and the number of Homer residents who were commercial fishermen.¹² The number of commercial fishermen in Homer peaked in 2015 at 486. Estimated gross earnings have been trending upward, peaking in 2021 at just below \$120 million. The large spike in 2021 and 2022 was likely the result of higher than usual prices per pound of seafood, combined with a larger than usual catch.¹³ The industry saw the largest salmon run in the past 100 years in 2022.

Salmon was the largest fishery, accounting for \$79.5 million of the total gross earnings in 2022. However, much of those earnings came from salmon caught in Bristol Bay, not in the waters immediately adjacent to Homer. Kenai, Seward, and Soldotna had much smaller gross earnings in 2022 than Homer. In comparison to other Alaska fishing communities, estimated 2022 gross earnings in Homer were nearly double those of Petersburg, while Kodiak had slightly higher earnings at an estimated \$124.2 million.

Figure 10. Estimated Gross Earnings and Number of Fishermen



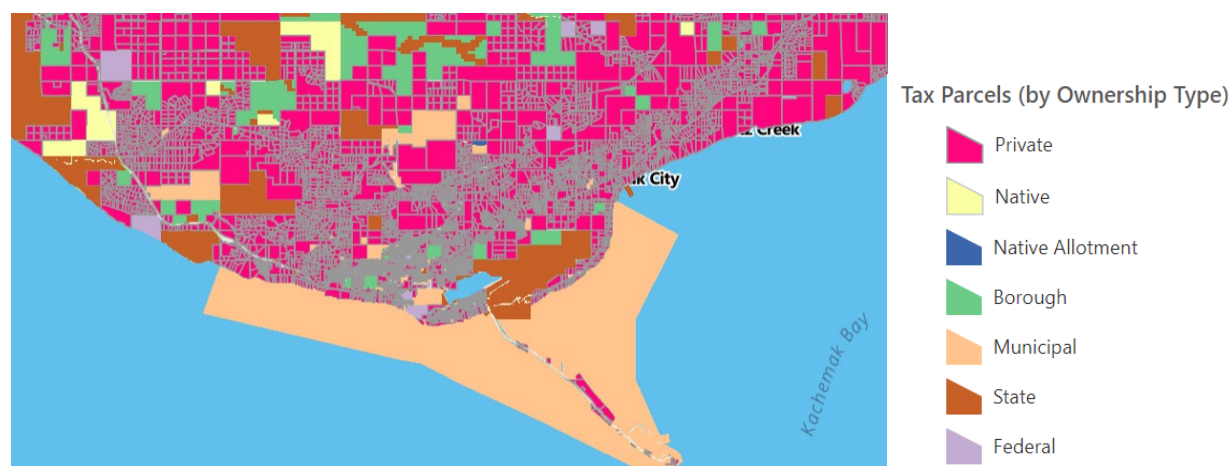
Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission⁹

¹² Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, Fishery Statistics – Participation & Earnings, Permit & Fishing Activity By Year, State, Census Area, or City. 2022. <https://www.cfec.state.ak.us/gpbycen/2022/122256.htm> Accessed March 18, 2024.

¹³ Working, Mark. "Wild Alaskan Salmon- An Industry in a Crunch". *ZacharyScott Insight*. September 2023. <https://zacharyscott.com/wild-alaskan-salmon-an-industry-in-a-crunch/>. Accessed April 26, 2024.

Land Ownership

Figure 11. Land Ownership in the Homer Area



Source: ViewKPB¹⁴

Figure 11 shows the land ownership in Homer, which highlights a few key trends. Much of the land in the city of Homer is privately owned. The Homer spit is a mix of municipal and private land. Aside from the spit, the waterfront in Homer is mostly privately owned, with a few areas of state or federal ownership.

The 2019 KPB Comprehensive Plan included additional information about land ownership in the borough.¹⁵ The KPB is largely publicly owned (87%), including federal (65%), state (21%), and local government land (1%). Of the remaining lands in the borough, 9% are owned by Native corporations and 3% are private owners. The Cook Inlet Regional Corporation is the largest private landowner in KPB, with over 330,000 acres of surface lands. However, when looking at established communities in the KPB, they have much higher rates of private ownership and different patterns from the rural land that influences broader KPB patterns.

Other comparison communities appear to follow similar land ownership patterns to Homer, in that they have more private ownership relative to the KPB. However, it appears that Homer has less Alaska Native owned lands immediately adjacent to it compared with other KPB communities. Homer also has less municipal owned land compared to the comparison communities.

¹⁴ ViewKPB, <https://geo.kpb.us/vertigisstudio/web/?app=ee8eef8b5c55417a8d2635a13658a76f>. Accessed April 26, 2024

¹⁵ Kenai Peninsula Borough. 2019 Kenai Peninsula Borough Comprehensive Plan. https://www.kpb.us/images/KPB/PLN/PlansReports/Comp_Plan/2019_KPB_Comprehensive_Plan.pdf. Accessed April 26, 2024

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