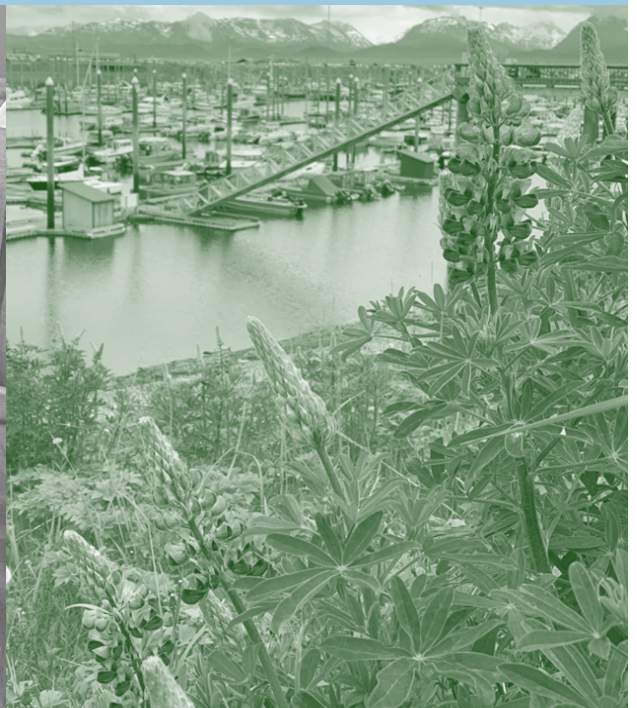




2045 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update

Core Plan: Public Hearing Draft, July 2025

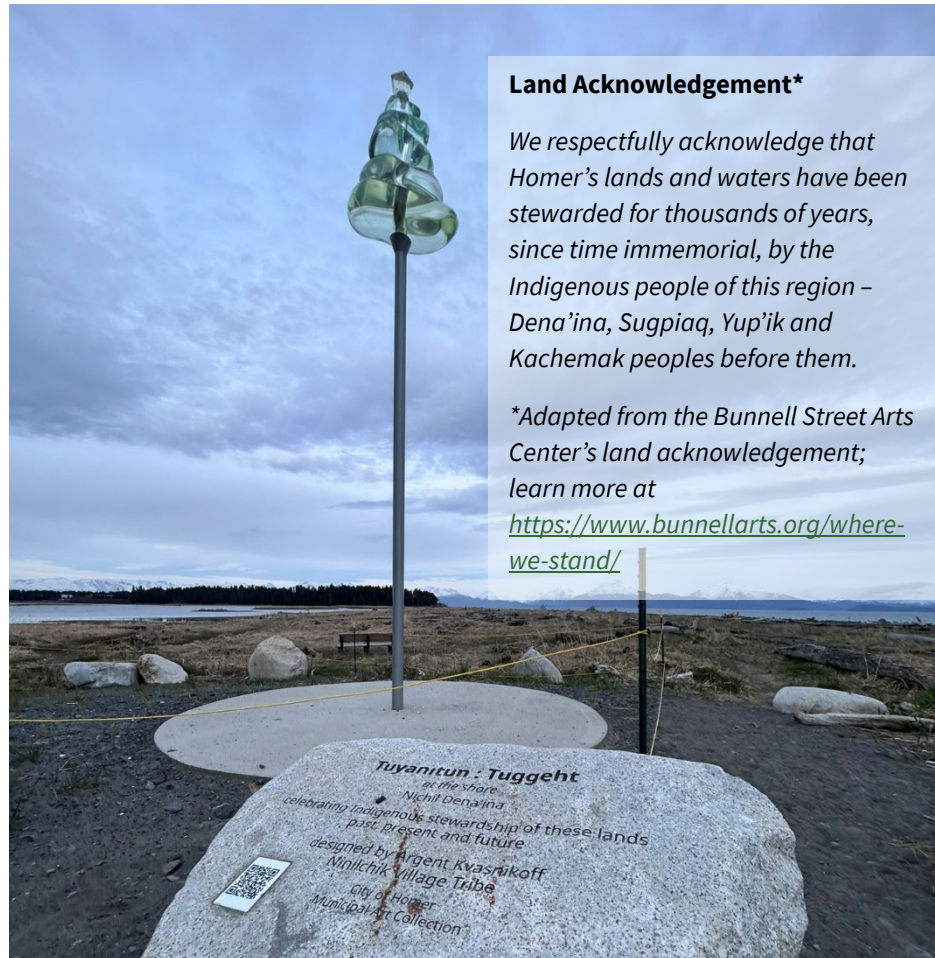


HomerCompPlanUpdate.com

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all Homer residents, businesses, organizations, and other local, regional, state, and federal partners who have contributed to the 2045 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update development process, including City of Homer staff, the Homer Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and past and present City of Homer boards, commissions, and councils.

“Tuyanitun: Tuggeht,” a sculpture on Bishop’s Beach, created by local artist Argent Kvasnikoff, a member of the Ninilchik Tribe of Alaska, to celebrate Indigenous stewardship of Homer area lands past, present, and future.



This plan was produced by Agnew::Beck Consulting in partnership with RESPEC, Kinney Engineering, Northern Economics, Corvus Design, and Stantec to ensure the planning process, and ultimately the final plan meets community needs.

Many photos in this plan were submitted by residents during a project photo contest; these photos are listed with photo credits. Uncredited photos were taken by members of the project team.



Homer City Council Ordinance No.

To come in final document when adopted.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Homer City Council Ordinance No.....	3
Introduction	7
Our Vision	7
Purpose	8
Methodology	9
Context	10
How to Use This Plan	12
Land Use and Environment	15
Key Themes Guiding the Plan.....	15
Goals.....	16
City-Led Strategies and Actions	17
Potential Partner-Led Strategies	23
Policies Supporting Land Use and Environment in Other Chapters	24
Public Facilities and Services	25
Key Themes Guiding the Plan.....	25
Goals.....	27
City-Led Strategies and Actions	27
Potential Partner-Led Strategies	30
Policies Supporting Public Facilities and Services in Other Chapters.....	31
Housing	32
Key Themes Guiding the Plan.....	32
Goals.....	34
City-Led Strategies and Actions	34
Potential Partner-Led Strategies	34
Policies Supporting Housing in Other Chapters	35
Economic Development	37
Key Themes Guiding the Plan.....	37
Goals.....	40
City-Led Strategies and Actions	41
Potential Partner-Led Strategies	42
Policies Supporting Economic Development in Other Chapters.....	43
Transportation	44
Key Themes Guiding the Plan.....	44

Goals.....	46
City-Led Strategies and Actions	47
Potential Partner-Led Strategies	48
Policies Supporting Transportation in Other Chapters.....	48
Governance	49
Overarching Theme and Context.....	49
Goals.....	55
City-Led Strategies and Actions	55
Potential Partner-Led Strategies	56
Policies Supporting Governance in Other Chapters	56
Sustainability and Resilience	59
Key Themes Guiding the Plan.....	59
Goals.....	60
City-Led Strategies and Actions	61
Potential Partner-Led Strategies	62
Policies Supporting Sustainability and Resilience in Other Chapters	63

List of Appendices

- Appendix A: Acronyms
- Appendix B: Glossary of Key Terms
- Appendix C: Methodology
- Appendix D: Plan Review
- Appendix E: Public Participation Overview
- Appendix F: About Homer – Community Background
- Appendix G: City of Homer Fiscal Trends Report
- Appendix H: Land Use and Environment: Supplemental Maps
- Appendix I: Partner-Led Strategies and Actions
- Appendix J: Implementation Plan



Credit: Derek Mueller

List of Figures

Figure 1. City of Homer Vision.....	7
Figure 2. Homer Comprehensive Plan Update: Inputs	9
Figure 3. Map of the Greater Homer Area	10
Figure 4: Community Accomplishments Since 2008.....	11
Figure 5. Historical and Forecasted Population in Homer and Surrounding Community Populations, 2000–2035	12
Figure 6. Results From the 2024 Community Survey	15
Figure 7. Future Land Use Map Primary Categories.....	17
Figure 8. Future Land Use Map Overlays	18
Figure 9. Future Land Use Map	20
Figure 10. Responses to the 2024 Homer Community Survey Question, “How satisfied are you with the availability of the following Health and Safety programs or services in Homer?”	25
Figure 11. Top Five Community Areas for Improvement, Historical Perspective.....	33
Figure 12. Housing Indicators	35
Figure 13. Historical and Forecasted Populations for Homer and Comparison Cities in the Kenai Peninsula Borough.....	37
Figure 14. Responses to the Homer Business Survey Question, “Please rate the following factors as benefits or barriers to doing business in the Greater Homer Area.”	38
Figure 15. Percentage of Homer Workforce by Industry and Annual Wages by Industry for the Kenai Peninsula Borough.....	39
Figure 16. Responses to the 2024 Homer Community Survey: Preferred Level of Growth by Economic Sector	40
Figure 17. Responses to the 2024 Homer Community Survey Question, “How satisfied are you with the availability of Roads and Sidewalks in Homer?”	44
Figure 18. Existing and Potential Future Sidewalk Connections	45
Figure 19. Revenues and Expenses for the City of Homer, 2012–2022 (Millions of 2022 Dollars)	49
Figure 20. Inflation-Adjusted City of Homer Revenues, 2012, 2016, 2020, and 2022 (Millions of 2022 Dollars)	51
Figure 21. Per Capita Revenue by Category 2012 – 2022, Excluding Grants and Contributions (2022 Dollars).....	51
Figure 22. Inflation-Adjusted City of Homer Expenses, 2012, 2016, 2020, 2022 (Millions of 2022 Dollars).....	51
Figure 23. Homer Sales Tax Revenues 2012–2022 (Millions of 2022 Dollars)	52
Figure 24. City of Homer Property Tax Revenues, 2012–2022 (Millions of 2022 Dollars)	52
Figure 25. Responses to the 2024 Homer Community Survey: Qualitative Feedback Dissatisfaction with Fire and Emergency Services	53
Figure 26: Core Functions of the State of Alaska, Borough, and City	58

Introduction

The 2045 Homer Comprehensive Plan serves as a resource for community leaders, residents, and other partners to protect what residents value most about Homer and guide decision-making while enhancing the quality of life for current and future residents. The plan establishes a long-term community vision for Homer's future, captured in Figure 1 below. It proceeds to translate that vision into broad goals as well as practical strategies and actions in the subsequent chapters.

Figure 1. City of Homer Vision



Purpose

Why do we need an updated comprehensive plan?

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

- The first Homer Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1954. The plan has gone through periodic updates every five to ten years. The 2018 update was a technical update and did not include significant changes from the previous major plan, which was completed in 2008.
- The conditions around the Greater Homer Area have evolved since 2018, and the community has made progress and completed strategies from the 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan.
- The 2018 plan update was conducted internally by City staff with input from the City Council and City commissions/advisory boards. The 2018 plan did not include a major public participation component.
- The City is updating the zoning and planning sections of the City Code (Title 21) to make the code clearer and easier to use. This update aims to support better development decisions, particularly on key issues like housing, natural hazard mitigation, and urban sprawl. To ensure the code reflects Homer's current needs, the City wants to align the code updates alongside the up-to-date plan, with ample opportunities for residents to shape the future direction of the community.

Alaska Statute, Title 29

Title 29 of Alaska Statute requires that cities and boroughs must engage in some form of land use regulation:

AS 29.40.030(b). Comprehensive Plan.

*(a) The **comprehensive plan** is a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social, and economic development, both private and public and may include, but is not limited to, the following:*

- (1) statements of policies, goals, and standards;*
- (2) a land use plan;*
- (3) a community facilities plan;*
- (4) a transportation plan; and*
- (5) recommendations for implementation*

Some of the recommendations in the 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan are still relevant today.

This plan includes strategies and actions that have been adapted from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan.

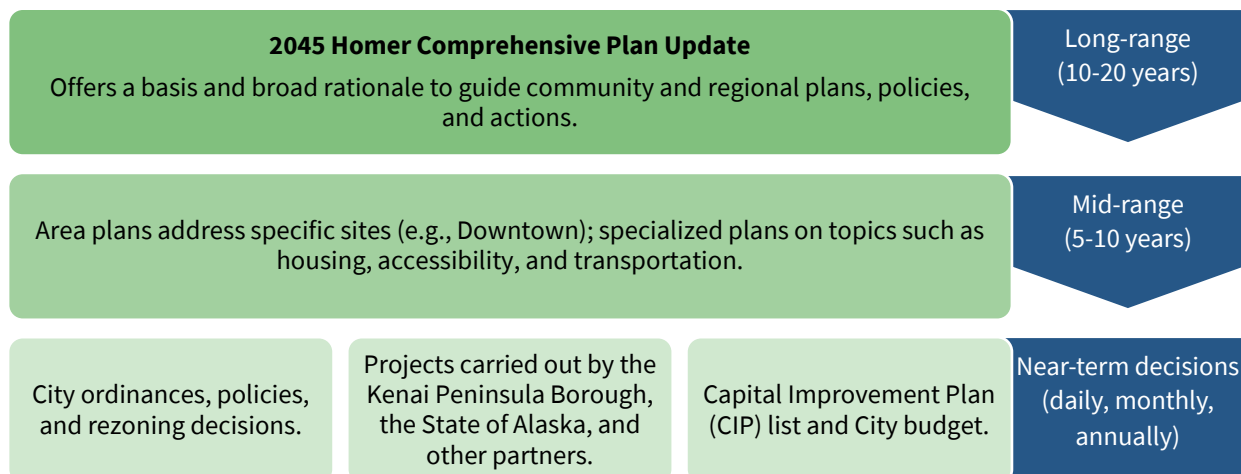
These strategies and actions are identified in the focus area chapters using a green diamond symbol:



How does this 2045 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update relate to the 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan?

The 2045 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update and accompanying Future Land Use Map provide broad direction and guidance for the Homer community. This update process recognized changes to community characteristics and resident needs in the last five years, especially with consideration for Phase 2 of this project, the Homer Title 21 Code Update. For example, this plan includes a chapter on housing to reflect the concerns in Homer and much of the state about the availability of quality, affordable housing, where the 2018 plan did not have a dedicated chapter on housing. This updated plan aims to have practical strategies and goals that are widely accepted by the community and implementable by the City of Homer, the community, and other partners.

How does this plan relate to other community plans?

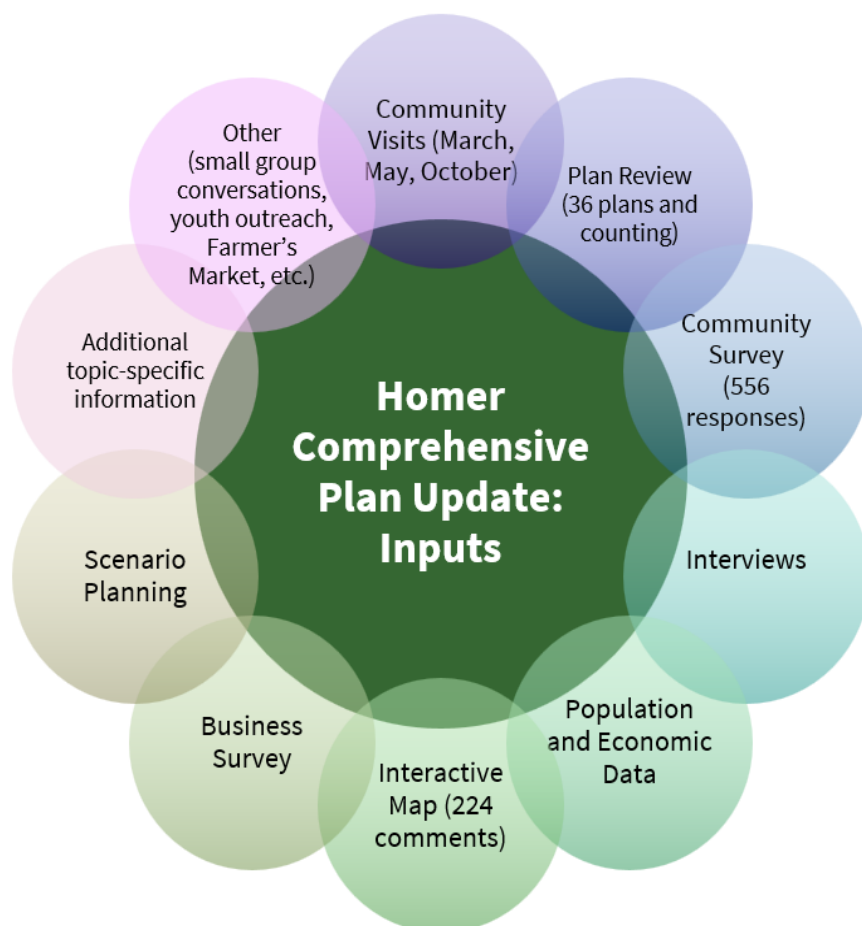


Methodology

How was this plan developed?

This plan was developed with extensive input from residents, City leadership and staff, commissions, committees, and other community leaders, as well as regional, state, and federal partners. See the list of inputs in Figure 2. The planning process kicked off in December 2023, with adoption in fall 2025. For a detailed summary of the project activities and inputs that contributed to the plan, see Appendix C: Methodology. Detailed summaries of project outreach activities can be found on the project website: homercompplanupdate.com.

Figure 2. Homer 2045 Comprehensive Plan Update: Inputs

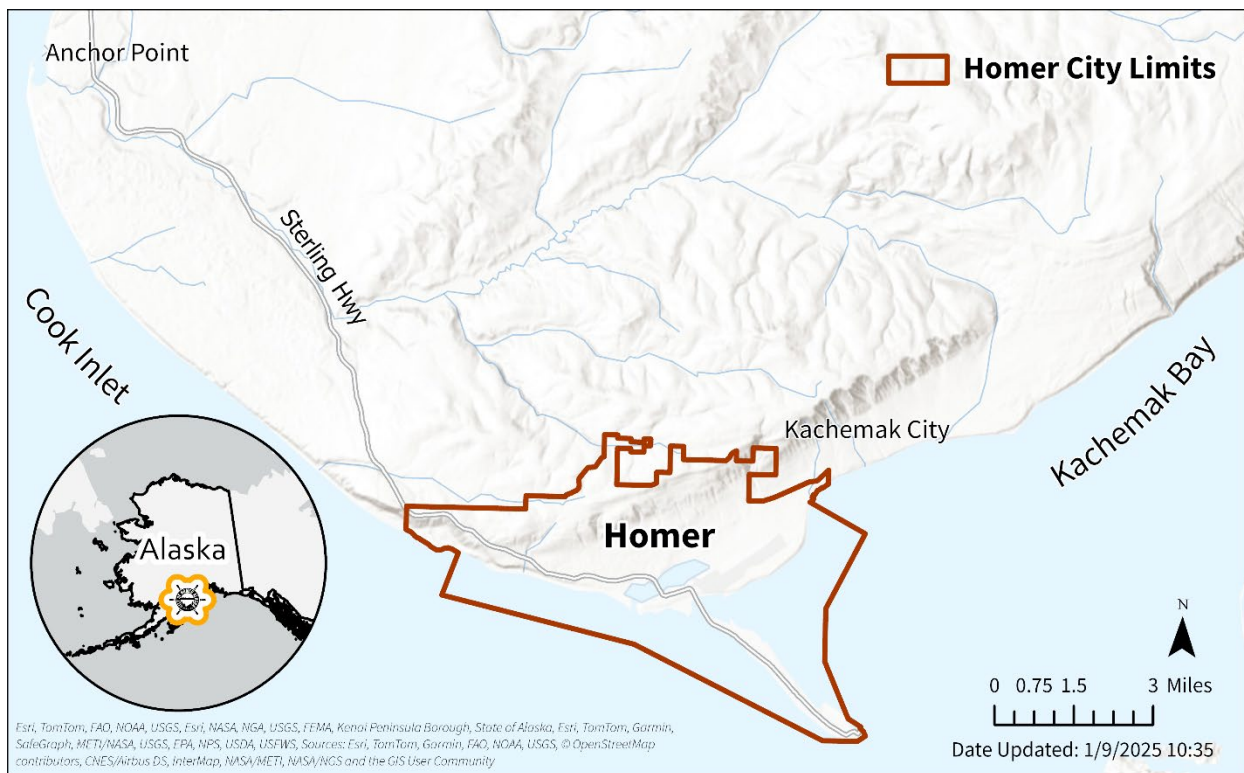


Context

Project Area

The "Greater Homer Area" encompasses the City of Homer and its neighboring communities, including Diamond Ridge, Kachemak City, and Fritz Creek. Located on the southwestern edge of Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, this region contains a broad mix of services, employment, housing, and recreational opportunities. The area is defined by its distinctive geography—coastal lowlands and tidal flats along Kachemak Bay, the narrow 4.5-mile Homer Spit with its seasonal marine commerce, and upland ridges that support residential and agricultural uses with sweeping views of the bay and mountains. The Sterling Highway and Alaska Marine Highway connect these communities to Homer, supporting daily flows of people and goods and reinforcing Homer's role as a regional hub. While the policies in this plan focus on the City of Homer and services within its jurisdiction, they are written with consideration for the City's connections to the greater area it serves.

Figure 3. Map of the Greater Homer Area



Why update the Plan Now?

The City of Homer has made progress since the 2008 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Community Accomplishments Since 2008

✓ Built a new police station and completed repairs to fire department	✓ Completed an ADA transition plan for City facilities	✓ Revised the Community Design Manual
✓ Added public restrooms in downtown Homer and Homer Spit	✓ Completed the Climate Action Plan Progress Report	✓ Reduced parking requirements for homes and businesses
✓ Renovated and expanded City Hall	✓ Constructed port and harbor office	✓ Updated the Homer Transportation Plan
✓ Improved trail systems and built new sidewalks; completed trail between harbor and Seafarers Memorial	✓ Developed updated beach policy and revised Coastal Bluff construction setback regulations	✓ Rezoned areas according to the Future Land Use Map such as creating the Town Center, East End Mixed Use and Medical Zoning Districts
✓ Completed upgrades to End of the Road, Bishop's Beach, Jack Gist, and Karen Hornaday Parks	✓ Increased police and emergency response coverage	✓ Expanded Community Recreation Services and public-private partnerships
✓ Modified City budget and taxation based on major reductions of state funding to municipalities	✓ Completed long-range planning for future facilities such as public works and indoor recreation	✓ Continued purchasing lands in the Bridge Creek Watershed Protection District to protect public drinking water
✓ Completed cruise ship disembarkment improvements and harbor overlook at Deep Water Dock	✓ Completed a Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan and began making improvements	✓ Updated the Homer Spit Plan and followed up with zoning revisions and parking management

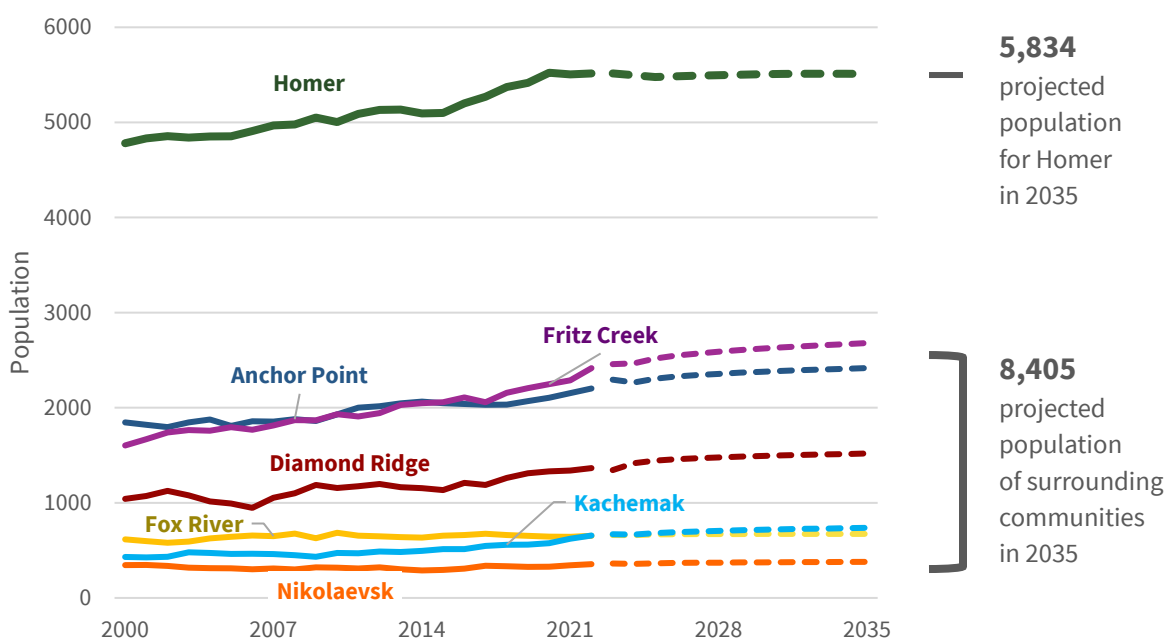
At the same time, the City of Homer and surrounding area have changed significantly since the technical update in 2018. The following are a list of other impactful changes that have occurred:

- Homer is experiencing a **growing senior population**; the percentage of the population that is 65 or older increased from 14 percent to 22 percent between 2013 to 2022.¹
- The **COVID-19 pandemic** left lasting impacts, from changes in worker habits to higher inflation.
- Impacts from **climate change** are a growing concern.
- The City is planning for **port, harbor, and Homer Spit ("the Spit") improvements** to meet economic needs and increase resilience to natural hazards and climate change.
- **Housing** is increasingly cited as a concern for hiring and retaining workers and for the overall quality of life.
- The City is facing **fiscal uncertainty**, necessitating careful planning and prioritization of resources (see Governance chapter for more details).

¹ U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 data

- The area's **population has continued to grow**. Figure 5 shows historic and forecasted population trends in Homer and the surrounding communities.
 - Homer's population in 2022 was 15.4 percent larger than it was in 2000 (**green line on chart**).
 - Considered together, the surrounding communities around Homer were 30.0 percent larger in 2022 than in 2000, outpacing growth within City limits.
 - Since 1994, the total population of the surrounding communities has exceeded the population in the City of Homer.
 - Many residents in these surrounding communities work in the City and/or rely on City services, facilities, and businesses. Many of these residents also have shared they would like to live in Homer but cannot afford to live within City boundaries; housing cost and housing affordability are often cited as a barrier.

Figure 5. Historical and Forecasted Population in Homer and Surrounding Community Populations, 2000–2035



Note: Population and economic data in this plan are current as of 2022; updated data are released annually by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Northern Economics analysis (see Appendix F: About Homer for details). Population projections are updated regularly; for most current estimates, visit

<https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/article/alaska-population-projections>

How to Use This Plan

This plan serves as a basis and rationale for other community policies and actions, including: site-specific and neighborhood plans; specialized plans addressing housing and other topics; ordinances and other policies carrying out comprehensive plan goals; projects carried out by City staff; and a tool for communicating priorities and funding requests to state and federal government or other funders, such as the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) list, neighborhood-initiated rezones, or special legislative appropriations.

The goals of this plan give the City and community a broad vision and direction to work toward in the coming years. A key element of this plan is the Future Land Use Map, which offers broad guidance on preferred future land use and will inform future changes to zoning, land uses, housing, transportation, and recreation-related policy decisions.

Most importantly, this plan should serve as a key tool for community leaders and residents in their short-term and long-term planning and decision-making. In conjunction with more detailed plans and current information, the plan should be the backdrop and foundational reference for all City Planning Commission and Council meetings and rulings regarding the project area, and for City departments in their daily operations. See below for a specific breakdown of how different stakeholders might use the plan.

How to use this plan if you are a...

Resident Use as a tool to protect or improve the things you love about the area; for example, to propose a trail connection, or to learn about where the community agreed future development might occur and take place.	City Staff Guide decision-making on land use changes such as zoning, and permitting; identifies needed policy changes and enforcement priorities.	City or Regional Representative Use when City Commissions, Boards, and Council members make decisions, rulings, and create policy in the project area.
Property Owner or Developer Identify areas where different types of growth are encouraged or discouraged while summarizing housing, transportation, and commercial needs.	Business Owner Use to understand where your type of business may be best located or what community priorities could inform a business idea and plan.	Grant Writer Use to demonstrate communitywide support for key priorities in the project area when applying for funding from state, federal, and other sources.

What's in This Plan

Executive Summary	Core Plan <i>(this document)</i>	Appendices
Offers a graphic, condensed summary of the plan, including the City's vision, goals, and strategies for each topic; also includes the Future Land Use Map.	Includes additional information on the process, area, and key issues that were used to inform the goals and strategies.	Includes extensive background information, context, and discussion used to inform the Future Land Use Map and related plan goals and strategies.

There are ten appendices that accompany the plan, including a list of acronyms and a glossary of frequently used terms. See the Table of Contents for the full list of appendices.

Chapters in the Core Plan and Chapter Organization

The following chapters are included in the plan:



Land Use and Environment



Public Facilities and Services



Housing



Economic Development



Transportation



Governance



Sustainability and Resilience

Chapters are organized into the following components:

Key Themes

Each chapter in this plan begins by identifying key themes that describe current conditions, community perspectives, and relevant trends for that focus area.

Goals

Themes are followed by a broad set of goals. The goals identify long term, aspirational improvements.

City-Led Strategies and Actions

Each chapter includes a set of policies (strategies and actions) that guide residents, the City, and partners in achieving the vision and goals of the plan. A subset of strategies are identified as proposed priority strategies. These strategies were selected based on the community survey and related inputs such as the growth scenarios activity, feedback received during the public review draft, and input from City boards and commissions. Priority strategies include a more detailed action table that identifies who should lead and support implementation, estimated resources (staff capacity, policies, funding) that may be needed, and whether the action is short, medium, or long-term. Appendix J brings the action plans from all chapters into one place, as well as proposed next steps for implementation and a list of potential funding resources.

After plan adoption, City staff and commissions use the action plans to collaboratively prepare annual work plans to help guide implementation, with each commission selecting three actions from the plan to advance during the year. These annual work plans will reflect available resources and guide leadership and staff, while also providing Homer residents, businesses, and partners a picture of progress tied to budget and capital improvement priorities.

Partner-Led Strategies

Partners play a key role in achieving the community's vision and goals and supporting implementation of the plan. Following the City-led strategies, each chapter features a set of potential partner-led strategies. Appendix I includes additional detail on these strategies, including a list of potential actions for many of the partner-led strategies.

Policies in Other Chapters

In some cases, a policy may support goals in other chapters. For example, harbor-related policies are relevant in the Public Facilities and Services chapter, the Transportation chapter, and the Economic Development chapter. To reduce redundancy, each policy is only listed once; the end of each chapter features a table with cross-references to other chapters.

Plan Amendments and Updates

The Kenai Peninsula Borough holds planning and platting authority; therefore, all plan amendments and updates require approval by the Borough. This is intended to be a 20-year plan, although if conditions change significantly in the community within the 20-year period (such as major population growth or population loss), it may be necessary to update sooner.

Key to Icons in the Plan

✂: **PRIORITY.** This strategy has been identified as an emerging priority for implementation

✂: **CAPITAL.** This action features a potential capital project (including those in planning and feasibility stages).

*: **CODE.** This action recommends a specific code revision.

◆: **2018.** This action is adapted/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan.



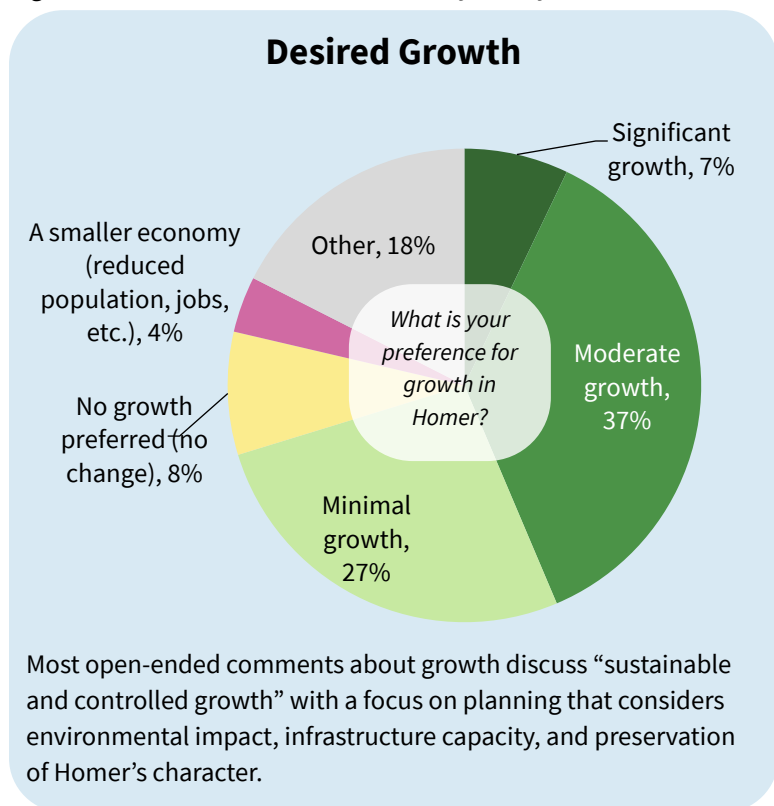
Land Use and Environment

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

Moderate Growth Desired

Homer's population is projected to grow at a slower rate over the next 20 years and most residents want to see growth occur moderately and sustainably within City boundaries.² As shown in Figure 6, nearly 65 percent of the 548 respondents in the community survey prefer minimal to moderate community and economic growth and 75 percent of the 91 respondents in the Growth Scenarios Report Card chose scenarios that reflect a more dense, central, and connected development pattern. According to multiple comments received from interviews, community events, and surveys, Homer places a high value on preserving its small-town character through growth that prioritizes equitable access to resources, respects ecological benefits and limits, and enhances local resilience.

Figure 6. Results From the 2024 Community Survey



Modernized Zoning is

Essential for Attainable Housing, Safety, and Future Growth

Homer's current land use regulations no longer reflect the community's development needs or values. Residents have called for more attainable housing options, greater consideration of natural hazards, and updates to zoning standards that align with infrastructure availability and environmental constraints. Most survey respondents (87 percent) said increasing affordable housing was important, yet many central areas are zoned in ways that limit higher-density options, infill, or non-traditional housing types such as townhomes, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), or modular homes. 66 percent of respondents agreed that starter homes are especially needed. Meanwhile, approximately 35 percent of Homer's land base includes wetlands, steep slopes, or critical habitat that limits development feasibility and increases hazard exposure³. Residents want code updates that allow for more flexibility in building types, incentivize infill and redevelopment in appropriate areas, and ensure that private and public development considers runoff, slope stability, and infrastructure capacity. Aligning Homer's

² Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. (2023). *Alaska population projections 2023 to 2050*. <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/projections/pub/popproj.pdf>

³ From spatial analysis performed on environmental constraints overlay of the Future Land Use Map.

zoning code with these goals is essential to support equitable housing, reduce long-term hazard risks, and ensure that future growth respects the City’s landscape and resources.

Equitable Access to Recreation and Open Space Enhances Community Well-Being

Residents value the many ways they engage with Homer’s outdoors—from informal shoreline access to year-round trail use and recreation in neighborhood parks. In the community survey, 77 percent of respondents identified preservation of public open space as important. Though Homer has a broad inventory of public and quasi-public land, not all areas are easily accessible, and some active-use spaces are not formally protected for open space or recreation in current land use designations. Community members expressed strong interest in improving park facilities, expanding all-season trail networks where feasible, and ensuring beach access remains safe and publicly available. As Homer continues to grow, access to existing open space will be a key factor in maintaining health, social connection, and quality of life for all residents.

Place-Based Planning Strengthens Homer’s Distinct District and Regional Role

From the economic and cultural activity on the Homer Spit (“the Spit”) to the services concentrated in the downtown core, different areas of Homer serve different functions in the daily life of the community. Residents and stakeholders have called for more detailed planning in these unique places to ensure development supports their intended purposes. Coordinated land use planning, infrastructure investment, and zoning updates in key areas will help maintain Homer’s role as a connected regional center.



Homer residents gathered for the October 21st, 2024 Growth Scenarios Work Session.

Goals

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.	Modernize zoning and land use regulations to reflect the community’s vision.

City-Led Strategies and Actions

1. Implement a Future Land Use Map that guides future decisions about land use and growth.

Note: Actions associated with this strategy are encompassed in Land Use and Environment Strategy 2.

Figure 7. Future Land Use Map Primary Categories

Future Land Use Map Primary Categories				
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, and areas for infill and densification.	2018 Future Land Use Designations for Urban Residential	Emphasis on varied housing (single unit, accessory dwellings, cottage clusters)	Urban Residential
Neighborhood Flex	A mix of residential and compatible uses that emphasize adaptability —to topography, mix of housing types, and variety of community uses. Supports a mix of housing types and small-scale community uses within walkable areas that respond to environmental constraints. Designed to balance access to services with preservation of landscape character.	Same as 2018 Future Land Use Designation for Residential Transition	Varied housing types, community garden, neighborhood café, corner store, schools, churches	Residential Transition
Rural Residential	Low density residential uses 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, 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
Medical Mixed Use	The Medical District of Homer, allowing for medical facilities and other mixed uses supportive of the district , with an emphasis on accessible design and amenities that meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.	Same as current zone areas for Medical District	Medical facilities, professional offices, assisted living facilities, varied housing types, parks	Medical District

Future Land Use Map Primary Categories				
Category	Intended Land Uses	Application Areas	Use Examples	2018 Designation
Airport	State-owned lands with multiple uses associated with the Homer Airport where preferences might supersede City land use intent. Includes critical habitat and adjacent airport-related uses.	Properties associated with the Homer Airport as designated by the 2001 Kenai Area Plan	Manufacturing and processing, worker housing, airports, cold storage facilities	Commercial 2 and Conservation
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
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 Spit	Retail, restaurants, cold storage, docks, marine charters, accessory lodging	<i>Not included</i>
Marine Industrial	Water-dependent industrial uses that require 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	Conservation, and Open Space Recreation

Figure 8. Future Land Use Map Overlays

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 (encompassing the Small Boat Harbor Overlay) 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.	Flood zones, coastal bluff instability, scarps, hydric soils, key watersheds, and slopes 30 percent or greater

A key element of this plan is the **Future Land Use Map**, which offers broad guidance on preferred future land use and growth and will inform future changes to zoning, subdivisions and other land uses, housing, transportation, and recreation-related policy decisions.

The Future Land Use Map is a vital tool for guiding development and resource management. Key considerations include:

- *Zoning Designations*: Clear classification of areas for residential, commercial, industrial, and conservation uses.
- *Compatibility with Existing Uses*: Ensuring new land uses align with current neighborhood characteristics and infrastructure.
- *Environmental Considerations*: Incorporating natural features and constraints into land use planning to protect ecosystems.
- *Community Input*: Engaging residents in the planning process to reflect their needs and priorities in the land use designations.



Beluga Lake

Zoning is a regulatory framework or policy that describes how land can be used in the present; it provides some overarching restrictions to ensure land uses within a designated area do not conflict. A future land use map identifies broad future land use intentions for an area. Zoning codes are law and a way to implement and enforce land use goals within a specified area, while a future land use map aligns with existing and desired future land use in the project area. The plan and the associated Future Land Use Map will not immediately result in zoning changes. Rather, the proposed land use categories and recommended zoning improvements in this plan provide categories and tools to guide land use decisions in the City in a way that guides the vision for the area, promotes planning best practices, and considers local context. If there are proposed rezones in the project area, the Future Land Use Map will guide the zoning actions.



A Future Land Use Map DOES:

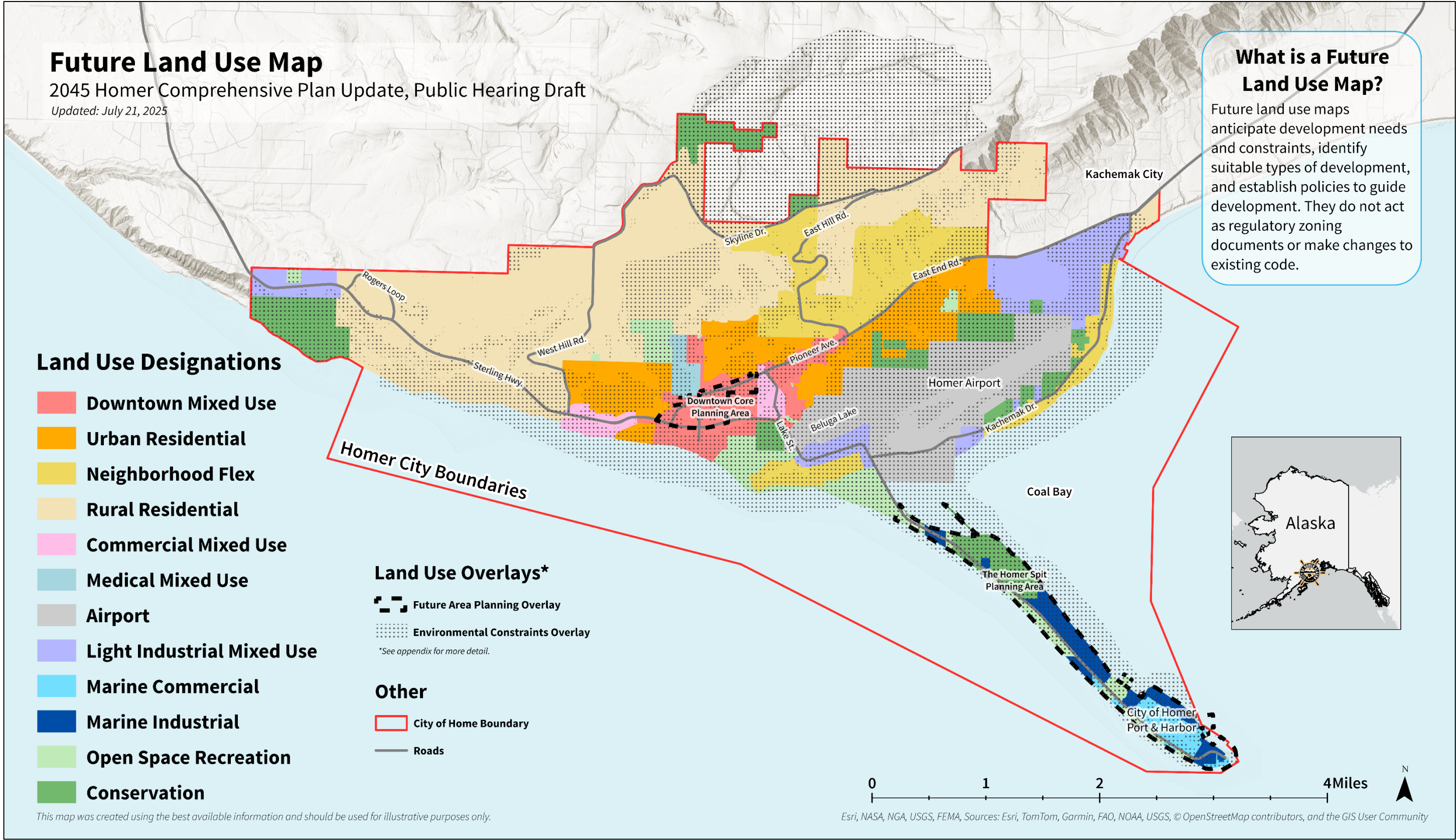
- Anticipate development needs, opportunities, constraints.
- Identify suitable/unsuitable types of development.
- Propose recommendations for how an area should develop.
- Establish policies and standards to guide development.
- Recommend improvements to zoning codes.
- Guide decisions about rezones and future area planning.



A Future Land Use Map does NOT:

- Act as a zoning document.
- Make changes to existing zoning codes.
- Apply retroactively.

Figure 9. Future Land Use Map



Icon Key:

⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation

✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project

* Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision

◆ 2018: An action adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan

2. Implement zoning reforms to support sustainable growth and attainable housing development. ⚡

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Prioritize zoning reforms that expand housing choice, including support for higher-density and mixed-use development, infill, and housing types such as ADUs, townhomes, and modular homes. *	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
b. Create zoning tools like form-based codes and flexible use standards that accommodate evolving land uses and building types. *	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
c. Create consistent design and infrastructure standards that reflect neighborhood character and support multi-modal access. * ◆	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
d. Align development regulations with community service availability, promoting growth in areas already served by schools, utilities, and other key services. *	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
e. Simplify and clarify the development approval process and related staff procedures. * ◆	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
f. Improve enforcement and reporting procedures to address development-related health and safety issues, within scope of zoning and permitting authority. *	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
g. Gauge community and stakeholder support for zoning and policy tools that expand housing options, such as density bonuses, parking requirement adjustments, and other potential incentives for affordable and long-term housing development.	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
h. Modify zoning and permitting tools to support small business growth and economic resilience, including consideration for locally owned and emerging industries.	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)

3. Strategically align development regulations with natural hazard risks and land suitability to support safe, resilient, and responsible growth. ⚡

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Use the City of Homer Hazard Mitigation Plan to inform updates to zoning and development codes, ensuring land use decisions reflect the latest risk assessments. *	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
b. Clarify zoning procedures and criteria for rezoning reviews to ensure consistency with the comprehensive plan and hazard mitigation goals. *	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
c. Update development standards for steep slopes, drainageways, and erosion-prone areas to manage grading, erosion, runoff, and vegetation clearing. Encourage the use of green infrastructure and site-responsive design solutions to improve drainage and reduce hazard exposure. * ♦	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
d. Strengthen stormwater and erosion control provisions in City code, incorporating green infrastructure techniques—such as vegetated buffers and infiltration features—to reduce coastal bluff erosion and other site-based hazards. * ♦	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
e. Improve coordination between subdivision design standards and site-level review to ensure hazard mitigation measures carry through from platting to construction. *	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
f. Consider expanding the range of conditions that may be applied to Conditional Use Permits to address riparian protection, soil stability, wetland preservation, and related site concerns. *	City Administration, Community Development Department, Planning Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)

4. Protect and enhance green space in Homer to support habitat connectivity, recreational access, and community well-being. ⚡

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Complete priority upgrades to existing City parks, including Karen Hornaday Park, Bayview Park, and Jack Gist Park. ✖	Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission, Public Works Department, City Council	Karen Hornaday: \$1.1M Jack Gist: \$840k Bayview: \$190k (all from FY26 CIP)	Medium (3-5 years)
b. Continue to improve existing trails and public access points to meet the needs of families, seniors, and residents and visitors with limited mobility. ✖	Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Ongoing
c. Enhance or improve safe public access to beaches at designated public access points as feasible. ✖	Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Ongoing

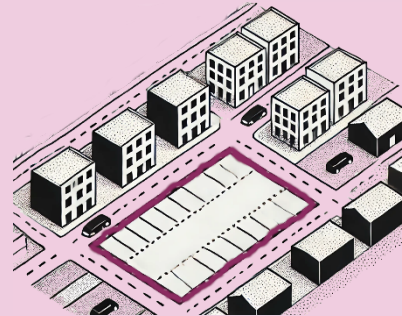
Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
d. Develop and implement a Master Park and Recreation Plan to proactively guide park maintenance, upgrades, and future facility needs. ✖ ♦	City Administration, Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)

5. Advance place-based planning and development that supports Homer's unique community character, encourages targeted infill, and strengthens Homer's role as a regional hub.

Action
a. Lead area planning efforts for the Spit and downtown core. These efforts should address land use, infrastructure needs, environmental hazards, economic development, and recreational access. Area plans should inform updates to zoning maps, capital improvements, and long-term planning priorities. ♦
b. Support compact, walkable downtown development that encourages mixed-use buildings, incremental infill, and redevelopment of underutilized parcels. Update development standards—such as building form, setbacks, and lot coverage—to ensure projects contribute to a financially productive, pedestrian-friendly streetscape. ♦
c. Develop a Homer Spit Master Plan to guide long-term land use, infrastructure investment, harbor operations, and climate adaptation. The plan should address erosion and sea level rise, coordinate City-owned leases, balance economic and recreational uses, and protect environmental resources. It should inform updates to zoning, capital improvements, and emergency management policies. ✖
d. Prioritize infrastructure investments—such as street improvements, multimodal access, water and sewer upgrades, and broadband—in areas identified for infill and redevelopment through area planning efforts. Compile development standards into a unified design manual that integrates transportation, streetscape, and infrastructure guidance. ♦ ✖
e. Coordinate with relevant agencies to improve land use planning around key public assets, including the Homer Airport. Work to align local zoning and infrastructure improvements with future airport operations, economic development goals, and state transportation plans.

What is 'infill'?

*Infill is the **strategic use of underutilized or vacant land** within already developed areas to create new housing, businesses, or public spaces. Using this redevelopment strategy maximizes existing infrastructure, helps create connected, walkable neighborhoods, and revitalizes communities without expanding into undeveloped land.*



Potential Partner-Led Strategies

6. **Collaborate with public and private partners to enhance community spaces and recreational infrastructure.** ♦
7. **Coordinate with regional and state agencies to align land use policies with environmental stewardship and shared planning goals.**

“Future growth should consider how development may impact environmental resources both inside and outside the city boundary.”

~ Community Meeting

“Keeping Homer Homer is valid, but there are different interpretations of that. To me, it means keeping it unique, allowing people to have a choice, and providing affordable housing.”

~ Stakeholder Interview

Policies Supporting Land Use and Environment in Other Chapters

The table below summarizes the location of related policies in other parts of the plan that support and contribute to Homer’s land use and environment goals. They are shown in order by chapter.

Topic	Chapter and Strategy Number of Related Policies					
	Public Facilities & Services	Housing	Economic Development	Transportation	Governance	Sustainability & Resilience
Open space and parks connectivity	1					3
Area planning	4		1, 5	5		
Airport area	7			4		
Hazard mitigation and climate-responsive land use	5				4	2
Zoning reform for housing		1				
Preserving community character			9			
Infill and dense development			5	1, 2	3	
Wayfinding				2		
Education about infill, density					4	
Partnerships, open space management					5	
Mapping tools to guide development						4

“Unless Homer embraces change and alters the status quo, we will experience more of the sprawl model of development that we are already witnessing.”

~ Growth Scenarios Report Card Results

“Emphasize infill development, however, do it in a thoughtful way that facilitates moose travel from the hillside, through town, to the water’s edge.”

~ Community Survey Results



Credit: Derek Mueller

Public Facilities and Services

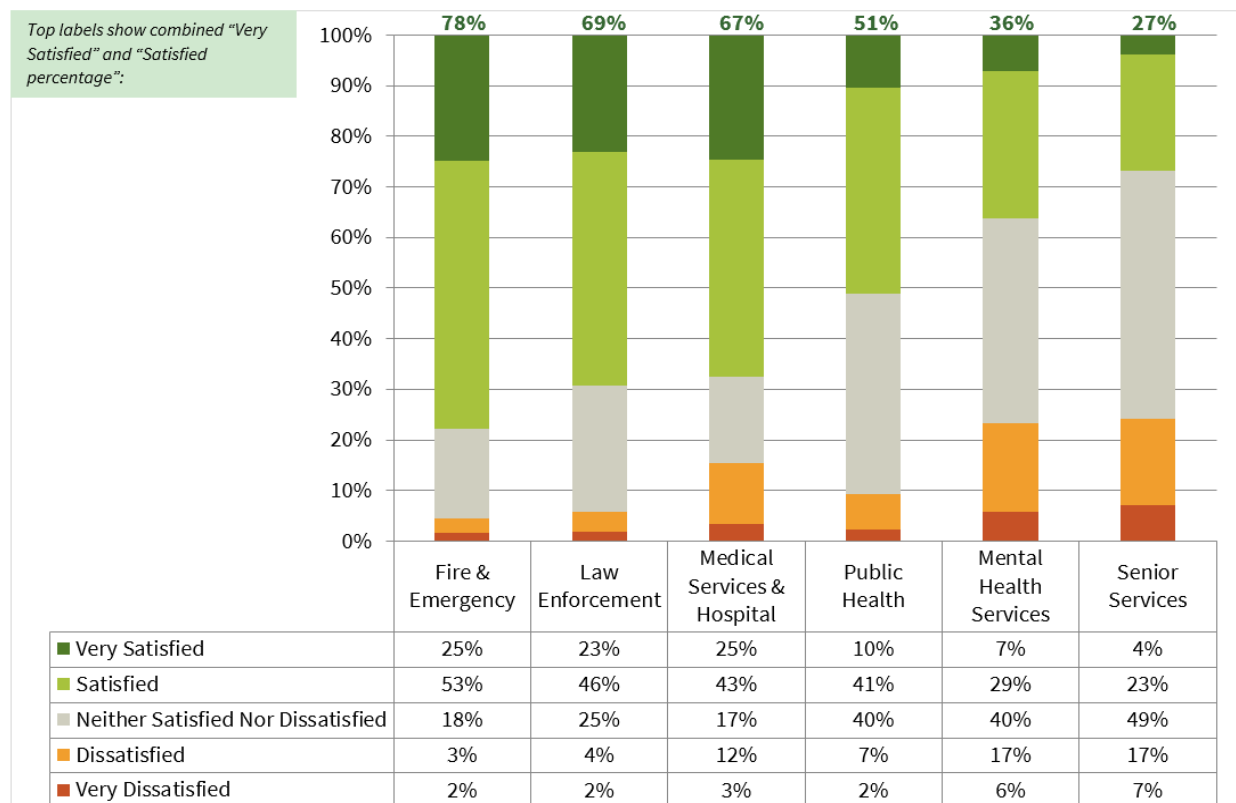
Key Themes Guiding the Plan

Reliable and Affordable Services

The City of Homer provides a range of services, including water, sewer, planning, road maintenance, community development, recreation, parks, port and harbor management, fire protection, law enforcement, planning, and emergency services. The City relies on other public and private entities, such as the Kenai Peninsula Borough⁴, for other services such as education, healthcare, and solid waste management; the State of Alaska manages many of the important transportation facilities, including the airport and major roadways. Although responses to the community survey show general satisfaction with fire, law enforcement, and emergency services (Figure 10), there are some concerns about inadequate funding and staffing levels.

Figure 10. Responses to the 2024 Homer Community Survey Question, “How satisfied are you with the availability of the following Health and Safety programs or services in Homer?”

Answered: 552



⁴ Agnew::Beck Consulting. (2019), *2019 Kenai Peninsula Borough Comprehensive Plan*. Prepared for the Kenai Peninsula Borough with support from Alaska Map Company, ASRC Energy Services, Alaska Survey Research, Casey Planning and Design, Northern Economics, and PDC Inc. Engineers.

https://www.kpb.us/images/KPB/PLN/PlansReports/Comp_Plan/2019_KPB_Comprehensive_Plan.pdf

Accessible, Maintained Community Facilities

The City of Homer owns and manages a variety of facilities in the community, ranging from the Public Library to the Airport Terminal. An increasing population necessitates the strategic improvement of public services and infrastructure, including public safety, utilities, and recreational facilities. For example, Homer has identified a multi-use community recreation center as a longtime community priority. Improvements to Homer's infrastructure are necessary to support growth and attract businesses; these are supported by the community as shown through the community survey and public comments. At the same time, existing facilities in the community have significant ongoing maintenance needs that sometimes stretch the capacity of City staff and its aging equipment. The City maintains a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that identifies priorities for major capital expenditures, including both new and existing facilities. The CIP is a six-year plan, updated annually.



Credit: HERC Task Force Final Recommendation Report, 2018

Accessibility and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements are also essential to ensuring that all members of the community—regardless of age, ability, or mobility—can safely and comfortably access and enjoy public facilities. Inclusive design not only upholds civil rights and legal standards but also strengthens community equity and cohesion by expanding participation in public life and supporting the dignity of every resident.⁵ Many of the projects on Homer's CIP feature needed ADA improvements, including to key facilities such as City Hall.

“Create a centralized community space that serves all the community.”

~ Community Survey Results

Rising Service Demands and Infrastructure Costs

As a regional hub, Homer provides many services that also benefit residents outside of City limits, such as its recreation facilities and the library. At the same time, maintaining and upgrading infrastructure—especially water and sewer systems—is a financial challenge due to a limited customer base. In 2000, the City of Homer successfully petitioned to annex just over 25 square miles of land to the West, North, and East of City limits. While this annexation helped grow the City's tax base to support the provision of services, some of the homes within the annexed areas are still not served by City services. The water and sewer services within the City are adequate, but stormwater runoff impacts the capacity of the wastewater treatment plant.

“Make sure infrastructure keeps up with growth.”

~ Community Survey Results

“Focus on responsibility to replace aged buildings, such as fire station that benefit all residents and visitors.”

~ Growth Scenarios Report Card Results

⁵ “Does improving accessibility boost local economies? ADA compliance can be costly for community – but the financial benefits may be bigger,” Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Dec. 1, 2022, <https://cmap.illinois.gov/news-updates/does-improving-accessibility-boost-local-economies/>

Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C
Ensure City services are available, affordable, and adequate.	Provide and improve City-operated facilities to meet the needs of the community, accommodate desired growth, and support sustainability and conservation goals.	Mitigate risks to City-owned infrastructure from climate change and natural hazards.

City-Led Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- ✈ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- * Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2018: An action adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan

1. Provide safe, year-round public facilities for residents of all ages and abilities. ✈

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Maintain the library as a thriving community space for learning and connecting, including assessing the library's anticipated need for growth and improvements over the next decade and planning for upgrades. ✂	Library Advisory Board, Library Department, Information Technology Department	Remodel engineering study: \$75k (FY26 CIP)	Ongoing
b. Implement the 2023 City of Homer ADA Transition Plan for Parks, Play Areas and Campgrounds and the Transition Plan for City Facilities to correct deficiencies and implement policies that increase accessibility of Homer's public facilities and recreation spaces. Priority sites for upgrades include City Hall, Karen Hornaday Park, the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon Accessible Ramp and Fishing Platform, and removing parking and pavement barriers at City facilities. ✂	ADA Advisory Board, Administration Department, Public Works Department, Port and Harbor Department	City Hall: \$1.1M Fishing Lagoon Ramp & Platform: \$770k Parking Barrier Removal: \$386k (all from FY26 CIP)	Medium (3-5 years)
c. Plan for and construct a new, multi-purpose community center in Homer's downtown to serve the social, recreation, cultural, and educational needs of the Homer community. Preferred features include a general-purpose gymnasium, multi-purpose space for instructional programs, safe walking/running, dedicated space for youth, and possible emergency shelter. ✂	Administration Department, Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission, City Council	~\$16.05M (FY26 CIP)	Medium (3-5 years)
d. Demolish the Homer Education and Recreation Complex (HERC) and identify opportunities for remediation of the site. ✂	Administration Department, City Council	Undetermined	Long (more than 5 years)

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
e. Consider and evaluate changing the City's organizational structure to provide park facilities and recreation services by establishing a dedicated Parks and Recreation Department.	Administration Department, Finance Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
f. Ensure that City facilities are sufficient to support events that draw visitors such as festivals and activities (e.g., clean restrooms on the Homer Spit ("the Spit"), RV dump stations, adequate trash collection, etc.). ✖	Administration Department, Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Ongoing
g. Update the Homer Airport Terminal to address deferred maintenance and improve accessibility. ✖	Public Works Department, Administration Department, City Council	\$1.3 M for initial repairs and renovations (FY26 CIP)	Medium (3-5 years)

2. Continue to provide high-quality water and sewer services within the City to meet current and anticipated demands. ⚡

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Update the 2006 Water and Sewer Master Plan.	Administration Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
b. Continue to build, upgrade, and replace water and wastewater infrastructure to meet industry standards, changing regulatory requirements, and replace aging systems. ♦✖	Public Works Department	\$707k for wastewater treatment plant improvements \$10.4 M for water storage and distribution improvements (FY26 CIP)	Ongoing
c. Maintain the water and sewer Capital Asset Repair and Maintenance Allowance (CARMA) funds for repair and replacement of facilities that serve existing customers.	Finance Department, Public Works Department, City Council	Undetermined	Ongoing
d. Use the Homer Accelerated Water and Sewer Program (HAWSP) to fund the design and construction of facilities that support new and existing customers.	Finance Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Ongoing
e. Continue to limit and manage development in the Bridge Creek Watershed Protection District to maintain its suitability as a drinking water source.	Community Development Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Ongoing

3. Maintain and improve Port and Harbor infrastructure. ⚡

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. 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.	Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department	Erosion Mitigation: \$4M (FY26 CIP)	Medium (3-5 years)
b. Maintain infrastructure to maximize longevity and ensure safety of users. ✖	Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department	Undetermined	Ongoing
c. Maintain and promote Homer's status as a "working waterfront" by being a partner for the Alaska Marine Highway System, the U.S. Coast Guard, commercial operations, and other state and federal partners.	Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department	Undetermined	Ongoing
d. Plan for and construct a large vessel haul out facility. ✖	Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department	\$5.3 M (from FY26 CIP)	Long (more than 5 years)
e. Consider opportunities to integrate complementary marine industrial and tourism uses, for example by constructing walking paths and viewing platforms that would allow visitors to observe aspects of the marine trades that they may not be able to see elsewhere. ✖	Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department	Undetermined	Ongoing

4. Develop new facilities to support access and safety on the Homer Spit. ⚡

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Support the harbor expansion and related infrastructure, including environmental review, geotechnical studies, and funding strategies to align with public safety, traffic, and parking objectives on the Spit.	Port and Harbor Department, Community Development Department, Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, City Administration, City Council	\$278 mil (FY26 CIP)	Long (5+ years)
b. Develop new non-motorized infrastructure providing safe access to the harbor and improve the accessibility of existing infrastructure, including ADA improvements at the Fishing Hole. ✖	ADA Advisory Board, Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department	Undetermined	Ongoing
c. Further develop parking at the base of the Spit, designate formal parking areas to minimize parking in unsuitable areas, and consider free seasonal shuttles and pay-to-park options in congested areas to reduce traffic. ✖	Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department, City Council	Undetermined	Long (5+ years)
d. Evaluate the need for a new parking structure on the Spit that could also serve as a shelter-in-place location during tsunamis. ✖	Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department	Undetermined	Long (5+ years)

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
e. Improve viewpoints for wildlife observation. ✖	Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department, Public Works Department, Planning Commission, Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
f. Evaluate the uses of City-owned property on the Spit and ensure uses align with the needs and aesthetics of the area.	Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)

5. Continue to meet the community's public safety needs to ensure the safety of residents, visitors, and first responders.

Action
a. Conduct a needs assessment and strategic plan for fire, emergency, and law enforcement services to identify gaps in funding and staffing and develop recommendations for maintaining and improving these services.
b. Complete planning for and construct a new fire station. ✖
c. Support the mission and capacity needs of the Homer Police Department.
d. Upgrade the City's fire department fleet of vehicles to maximize firefighting capabilities and meet Insurance Services Office (ISO) requirements. ✖
e. Collaborate with the Kenai Peninsula Borough to implement recommendations in the Safe Streets and Roads for All Comprehensive Safety Action Plan.

6. Increase the City's capacity to provide and expand community services and improve the synergy between the City and other community partners to maximize resource and investments.

Action
a. Provide technical assistance to community organizations seeking to expand their services. ♦
b. Partner with community organizations to supplement or expand City services and the operating hours of City facilities. ♦

Potential Partner-Led Strategies

7. Identify and address the deficiencies of the Homer Airport (updated master plan, more reliable year-round service, etc.).
8. Ensure people of all ages and abilities can live, work, and play in the community, including encouraging businesses and organizations to create accessible, ADA-compliant facilities.
9. Collaborate with Borough, state, and federal partners to ensure year-round access to community facilities for recreational, educational, social, and cultural activities.

Policies Supporting Public Facilities and Services in Other Chapters

The table below summarizes the location of related policies in other parts of the plan that support and contribute to Homer's public facilities and services goals. They are shown in order by chapter.

Topic	Chapter and Strategy Number of Related Policies					
	Land Use & Environment	Housing	Economic Development	Transportation	Governance	Sustainability & Resilience
Parks and trails	4					
Marine trades			1			
Homer Spit development			1			
Community use of facilities			2			
Roads, sidewalks, and bike lanes				1, 2		
Wayfinding				1, 9		
Parking				1		
Airport and ferry				4		
Financing of facility and service improvements					1	
Infill of water-sewer					2	
Engaging residents in service and facility planning and spending					2, 3	
Energy efficiency of municipal facilities						1
Hazard mitigation and placement of municipal facilities						1
Stormwater and green infrastructure						3



Aerial view of the Homer Spit at dawn. Credit: Tim Hatfield



Public Works facility: plans for a new facility are underway.



Housing

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

Housing Supply Does Not Meet the Community Needs

Although Homer has a relatively high overall housing vacancy rate, many residents continue to face difficulty finding homes that are affordable, available year-round, and suited to their household needs. In the past decade, the City has added a modest number of new housing units each year—averaging 36 units annually between 2013 and 2023.^{6,7} However, the types of homes being built have not kept pace with the needs of working families, older adults, and younger residents entering the housing market. According to the community survey, 68 percent of respondents said housing is too expensive, and 66 percent said more attainable homes are needed for people just starting out or seeking to downsize. With long-term population growth projected at just 2.3 percent through 2050, the core challenge is not growth pressure but the mismatch between existing housing stock and what year-round residents can access. Zoning reforms that support a greater variety of housing types—especially in areas served by infrastructure and close to services—can help the City respond to these persistent gaps.

Rising Costs and Land Availability Limit Housing Development Opportunities

Housing in Homer has become significantly more expensive, limiting options for residents across income levels, particularly young professionals, families, and older adults seeking to downsize. As of November 2024, the median home listing price in Homer was approximately \$550,000—a 97 percent increase since 2018 and well above the statewide median of \$396,000.⁸ According to census data, half of all renter households in Homer (358 out of 702) are cost-burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing.⁹ These figures do not reflect additional barriers such as limited availability of pet-friendly units, or housing that is in good condition and available year-round. High construction costs—driven by inflation, labor shortages, shipping expenses, and rising material prices—also constrain new development. Nationally, construction costs have increased by 40 percent since 2018, according to the



⁶ Alaska Division of Research and Analysis Section. (2024). *Alaska New Housing Units Multiple Years*. Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/housing/new.html>

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B25070: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income*.

⁸ Specific number based on <https://www.realtor.com> data; other sources were compared and numbers were comparable.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S2501: Occupancy Characteristics*.

Mortenson Construction Cost Index.¹⁰ While the 2023 Homer Housing Review identified 1,163 vacant tax parcels within City limits with an average lot size of 1.3 acres, many of these properties face significant development barriers, including wetlands, steep slopes, and lack of access to utilities.¹¹ These conditions increase the cost and complexity of construction and limit the feasibility of building new homes. Addressing these constraints through targeted infrastructure investment and infill-oriented zoning strategies will be essential to expanding the range of housing options available to the community.

Unattainable Housing and the High Cost of Living are Barriers to Economic Growth and Quality of Life

Limited access to affordable, attainable housing continues to challenge Homer’s ability to retain essential workers, support local businesses, and meet the needs of a changing population. Homer business survey results show that 13 percent of respondents identified a lack of housing for seasonal employees as a key hiring barrier, second only to the shortage of qualified applicants. In interviews, the high cost of housing was also cited as a reason why more fishermen do not live in Homer year-round. Seniors seeking to age in place and younger residents starting families or attending college locally often face limited choices that are affordable, accessible, and available year-round. While some workers find more attainable housing outside City limits, they may lack access to City services and representation, weakening civic connection and economic participation. More broadly, Homer’s high cost of living—including housing, transportation, and construction—adds on residents and local employers alike. Expanding housing options for year-round workers, seniors, and young people is essential to sustaining the local economy and ensuring Homer remains a livable community for all generations.

“Affordable housing developers would benefit from a simplified process with the city.”

~ Growth Scenario Report Card

Figure 11. Top Five Community Areas for Improvement, Historical Perspective

<i>Top 5 Community Areas for Improvement, Historical Perspective</i>			
	2015 Perceptions Survey (590 responses)	2019/2020 Perceptions Survey (469 responses)	2023 Perceptions Survey (1,020 responses)
1	Jobs and economic opportunities (48%)	Jobs and economic opportunities (13%)	Housing (58%)
2	Public transport (38%)	Substance abuse treatment (13%)	Public transportation (24%)
3	Substance abuse treatment (36%)	Housing (12%)	Jobs and economic opportunities (20%)
4	Housing (26%)	Public transportation (12%)	Substance abuse treatment (17%)
5	Access to job training and higher education (17%)	Respect for varied viewpoints (10%)	Behavioral health services (17%)

Source: Perception of Community Health Survey

Image from the 2023 Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) Community Health Needs Assessment

¹⁰ Mortenson. (2024). *Construction Cost Index Report*. <https://www.mortenson.com/cost-index>

¹¹ City of Homer. (2023). *Homer Housing Review*. <https://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/communitydevelopment/housing>

Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C	Goal D
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.	Develop Homer's housing inventory to be compatible with the beloved existing community character while allowing for essential growth and density.	Ensure housing development aligns with the City's preservation and sustainability goals, minimizing the environmental impact of new construction.	Build strong community and regional partnerships around housing to improve housing attainability and affordability.

City-Led Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- ✂ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- * Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2018: An action adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan

1. Implement zoning reforms to encourage attainable housing development for young people, families, seniors, and seasonal workers. ✂ *

Note: Actions associated with this strategy are encompassed in Land Use and Environment Strategy 2.

2. Assess Homer's housing needs and maintain data collection. ✂

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Conduct a Housing Needs Assessment to identify current and future housing needs, including types and numbers of units required to serve projected population growth and affordability ranges as well as support economic growth and industries.	Administration Department, Community Development Department, City Council	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
b. Complete a housing stock report and buildable lands inventory.	Administration Department, Community Development Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
c. Evaluate the City's land portfolio to identify any feasible opportunities for strategic dispositions.	Administration Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
d. Update housing indicators (see Figure 12 below) annually to track housing issues, constraints, needs, and opportunities; share updates online.	Community Development Department, Administration Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
e. Monitor short-term rentals and their impact on the housing market.	Administration Department, Community Development Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)

Potential Partner-Led Strategies

3. Develop incentives and public-private partnerships for affordable and long-term housing development.

Policies Supporting Housing in Other Chapters

The table below summarizes the location of related policies in other parts of the plan that support and contribute to Homer's housing goals. They are shown in order by chapter.

Topic	Chapter and Strategy Number of Related Policies					
	Land Use & Environment	Public Facilities & Services	Economic Development	Transportation	Governance	Sustainability & Resilience
Zoning reforms for housing	1, 2					
Infrastructure support and future needs		2			3	
Aging in place			4, 10			
Fiscal tools to support attainable housing					2	
Education and partnerships for housing accessibility			8		4	4
Land suitability						2

Figure 12. Housing Indicators

Indicator	Description	What it tells us	Sources
New Housing Units	Quarterly report of new single family, multi-family, and mobile home units.	Tracking the number of new housing units added to the market can help track how well the market is responding to demand and track progress toward new housing goals.	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) Alaska Housing Market Indicators Report (available at https://www.ahfc.us/efficiency/education-and-events/research-information-center/alaska-housing-market-indicators or https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/housing/new.html)
Housing Occupancy and Vacancy Rates	Total occupied/vacant housing units, homeowner vacancy rate, rental vacancy rate.	Vacancy rates below five percent are an indication of a tight housing market that could limit housing mobility and is often a sign of pent-up demand. A growing number of vacant units can be an indication that the housing supply is not meeting the needs of residents and the existing housing stock is not being used to its full potential.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at https://data.census.gov/)
Housing Tenure	Owner-occupied housing units, renter-occupied housing units, and average household size for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units.	The relative demand/need for ownership <i>versus</i> rental housing in a community. Household size can indicate the housing unit size that renters and owners are looking for, respectively.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at https://data.census.gov/)

Indicator	Description	What it tells us	Sources
Overcrowding	Occupants per room.	Often an indication of pent-up demand within a community, overcrowding is defined as more than 1.0 person per room. Severe overcrowding is defined as 1.5 or more people per room.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at https://data.census.gov/)
Affordability	Selected monthly ownership costs as a percentage of household income (SMOCAPI) and gross rent as a percentage of household income (GRAPI).	Households that spend more than 30 percent of their total income on housing costs are considered to be cost burdened. Spending a larger portion of household income on housing limits the amount of income available for other non-discretionary spending, such as food, clothing, and transportation.	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at https://data.census.gov/)
Median Family Income	Median family income and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) income limits broken down by persons in family and income limit category.	HUD sets income limits that determine eligibility for assisted housing programs including the Public Housing, Section 8 project-based, Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, Section 202 housing for the elderly, and Section 811 housing for persons with disabilities programs.	The Department of Housing and Urban Development, FY 2023 Income Limits Summary (available at https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html#query_2023)
Local Building Permit Activity	Data collected by local assessors on the number and or type of building activity occurring in the community.	Data that describe current building activity in the community can help track how well the market is responding to demand and any progress toward new housing goals.	Local Assessors/Municipal Planning Departments
Housing Wage	Housing wage is an estimate of the hourly wage a full-time worker must earn to afford a modest rental home at HUD's fair market rent (FMR) without spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs.	Illustrates the gap between renters' wages and the cost of rental housing.	National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach Dashboards (available at https://nlihc.org/oor/state/ak)
Population Estimates/Components of Change	Components of change including births, deaths, and net migration.	Helpful information around how a community is changing/ growing and what role housing could play in population dynamics moving forward.	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce, Alaska Population Estimates (available at https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/data-pages/alaska-population-estimates)



Credit: Art Koeninger

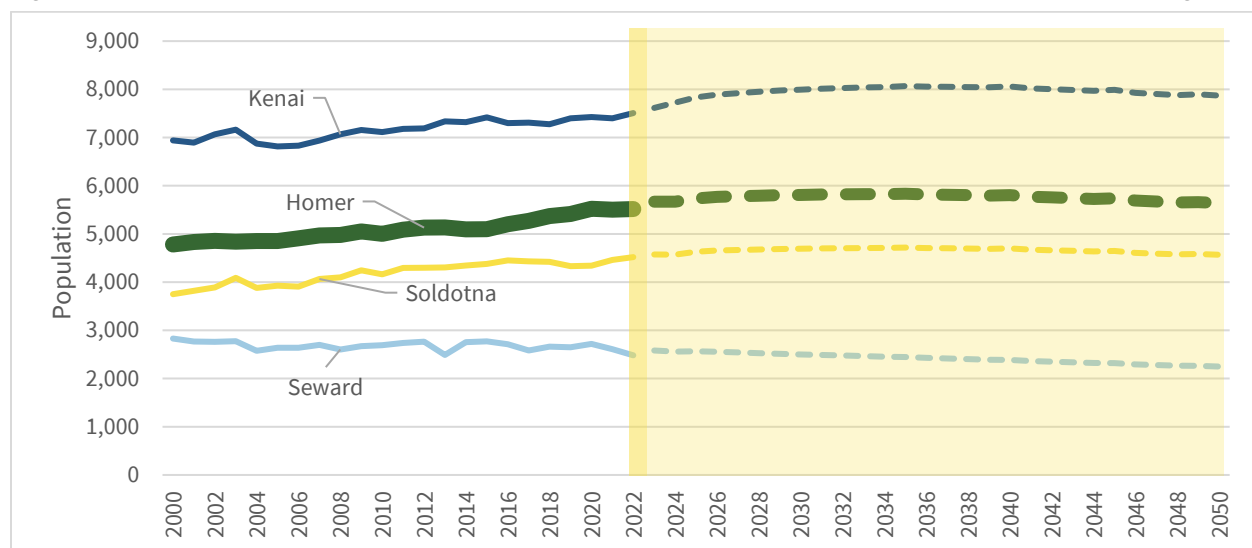
Economic Development

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

Population Expected to See Slight Growth

Homer's population has been steadily increasing, with a 15.4 percent growth from 2000 to 2022, and is projected to continue growing slightly until 2050 (Figure 13). The City has a growing senior population (increasing from 14 percent in 2013 to 22 percent in 2022). This growth presents unique economic challenges and opportunities, particularly in housing and healthcare services. Homer has a higher per capita income compared to nearby communities, and its median household income has seen a modest increase over the past decade. However, residents are still concerned about the high cost of living and doing business in Homer and cite those costs as one of the biggest challenges of living in Homer.

Figure 13. Historical and Forecasted Populations for Homer and Comparison Cities in the Kenai Peninsula Borough



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development data (accessed 2024), and Northern Economics analysis; see Appendix F: About Homer – Community Background for more detailed analysis. Note: Population and economic data in this plan are current as of 2022; updated data are released annually by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

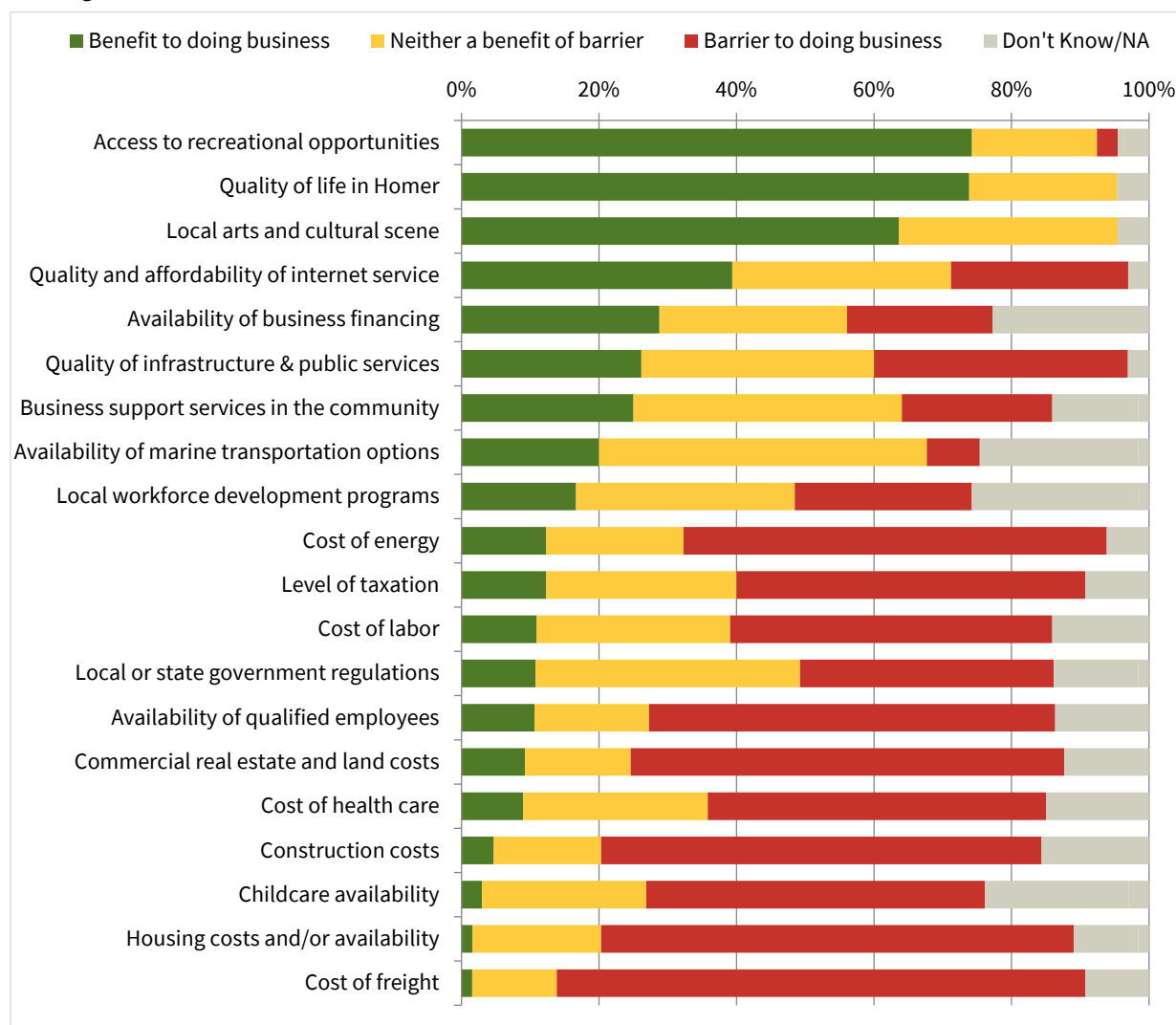
During the planning process for this update, the comprehensive planning team worked with the community to explore different levels and types of growth. Community survey respondents were asked about preferred levels of growth; three scenarios were later developed to explore what a desired future Homer could look like, and residents had the opportunity to review and grade the different options. In both the community survey and the growth scenarios activity, most participants indicate support for minimal to moderate growth. The Homer community also expresses an ongoing desire to manage growth to ensure it is sustainable and does not compromise the quality of life, character, or the environment in the community.

Residents Value the Quality of Life but Struggle with Cost of Living, Housing

Homer is vibrant with small businesses, many nonprofit organizations, and active civic engagement. However, like many of Alaska's communities, Homer residents and businesses face a high cost of living, especially when it comes to housing affordability and availability (see Housing chapter). Some of the same characteristics that residents and businesses value, such as the small town feel and the beautiful environment, also attract many visitors each summer, bringing challenges such as congestion and pressures on the housing market. Families value Homer's schools, safe feel, and high quality of life; however, they similarly cite housing costs, limited childcare availability, and limited year-round employment as barriers to choosing Homer as a place to raise a family. The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) also hosts the Kachemak Bay Campus in the community, a satellite branch of the UAA's Kenai Peninsula College.

Based on a 2024 survey of Homer businesses (Figure 14), business owners cite barriers to attracting and training employees as their primary obstacle to doing business in Homer. Expanding educational training could help build a skilled workforce, which is essential for supporting local industries and attracting new businesses. Homer businesses are also impacted by the global trend of increases in online purchases, sometimes at the expense of local stores that provide jobs and support the local tax base.

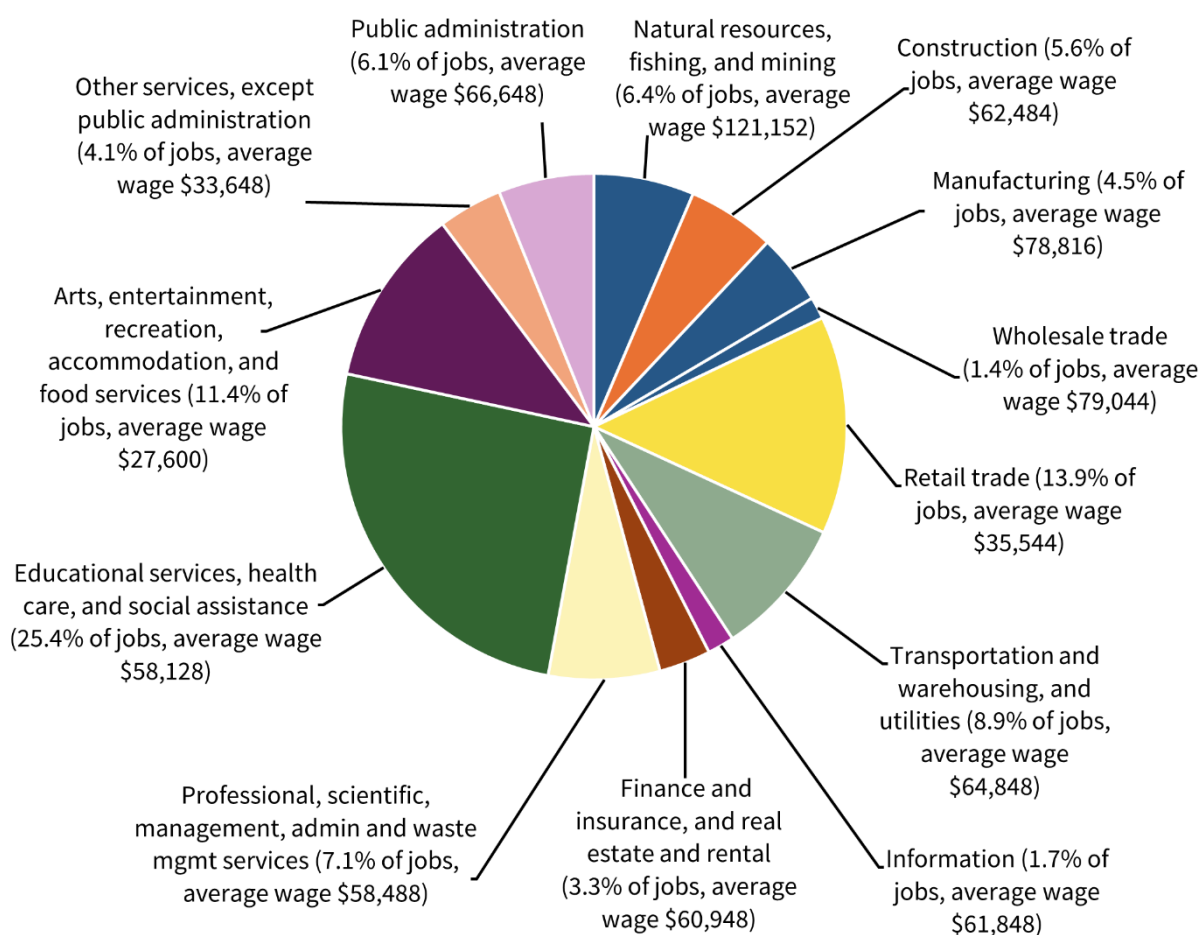
Figure 14. Responses to the Homer Business Survey Question, "Please rate the following factors as benefits or barriers to doing business in the Greater Homer Area."



Fishing and Tourism Industries Remain Strong Economic Drivers

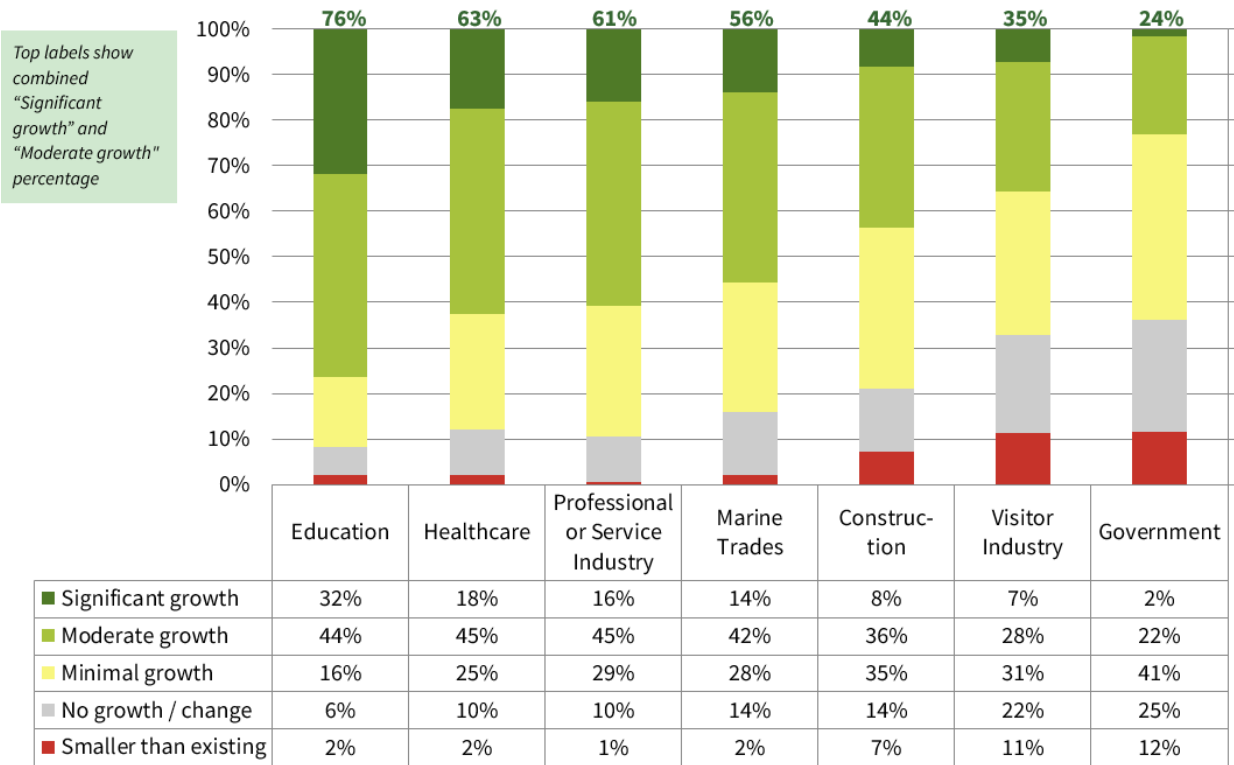
The largest industry sectors in Homer by share of workforce include education, healthcare, retail trade, and arts and entertainment (Figure 15). The fishing industry, although employing a smaller portion of the workforce, continues to play an important role in Homer's economy through high per-worker earnings and its broader contributions of commercial, charter, and subsistence fishing, which support local businesses, cultural identity, and food security. Tourism and marine trades are not specifically identified in state industry data, but both are identified as key industries in the community. Tourism is a critical component of Homer's economy, but there is concern about relying too heavily on this industry or growing this industry at the expense of other priorities important to residents. The community survey showed support for growing the potential of the marine trades industry to provide new economic opportunities and support existing community strengths (Figure 16). Homer also has a thriving agriculture sector and is nicknamed the "City of Peonies."

Figure 15. Percentage of Homer Workforce by Industry and Annual Wages by Industry for the Kenai Peninsula Borough



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development based on Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages and Northern Economics Analysis, 2024. Excludes self-employed individuals and those serving in the armed forces. Categories based on the North American Industry Classification System: <https://www.bls.gov/cew/classifications/industry/home.htm>. Categories may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 16. Responses to the 2024 Homer Community Survey: Preferred Level of Growth by Economic Sector



"We need growth that reflects community values and benefits the local economy – not growth for growth's sake. Keep local input central."

~ Community Survey Results

"A diverse economy is a healthier economy."

~ Business Survey Results

Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C	Goal D	Goal E
Enhance Homer’s defined downtown to drive commerce, business, and resident and visitors’ services.	Support Homer’s economy by honoring traditional industries, while supporting expansion of select industries that maintain the character of Homer.	Expand workforce development in key sectors to increase year-round, high wage employment opportunities.	Develop and maintain sustainable, accessible infrastructure that supports a thriving local economy.	Sustain Homer as an active, vibrant, healthy community with year-round opportunities to enjoy art, events, and recreation.

City-Led Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- ⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- * Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2018: An action adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan

1. Invest in infrastructure that supports economic growth in key sectors. ⚡

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Incentivize growth of the marine trades in Homer to expand services offered locally, create jobs, support fishing, increase the City's taxbase, and reduce the need to travel to other areas of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. ✂ *	Community Development Department, Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission, Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department	Undetermined	Ongoing
b. Continue to develop the Homer Spit ("the Spit") in a fiscally and environmentally responsible manner to provide opportunities for marine trades and tourism. ✂	Community Development Department, Planning Commission, Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission, Economic Development Commission, Port and Harbor Advisory Commission, Port and Harbor Department	Undetermined	Ongoing

2. Celebrate Homer's status as a vibrant hub for arts, culture, and community engagement. ⚡

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Update the Parks, Art, Recreation, and Culture Needs Assessment, and continue to expand City partnerships with other organizations and entities to implement recommendations.	Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission Administration Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
b. Support arts and culture installations and spaces in the community, including Homer's museums and galleries and on the Spit. ✂	Economic Development Commission, Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission,	Undetermined	Ongoing
c. Collaborate with citizen groups and nonprofit organizations to address community needs by providing limited technical assistance and the option to use City land or facilities at reduced rates. ◆	City Administration, City Council	Undetermined	Ongoing
d. Increase the presence of Alaska Native art, signage, and history around Homer.	Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Ongoing

3. Sustain Homer's role as an agricultural hub.

Action

- a. Support limited small scale farming and backyard gardens to strengthen the local food economy.
- b. Maintain Homer's role as an agricultural hub for the surrounding area by supporting efforts that facilitate the processing, storage, distribution, and marketing of local agricultural products (e.g., farmer's markets).

Potential Partner-Led Strategies

4. Support Homer's youngest residents and their families by making sure they have what they need to grow and thrive, including access to child care. ⚡
5. 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. ⚡
6. Support access to quality, affordable health care. ⚡
7. Promote fishing and maritime services as viable career options in Homer and demonstrate long-term support for and commitment to the industry.
8. Promote food security.
9. Address barriers to workforce recruitment and retention (e.g., housing, child care).
10. Pursue moderate, sustainable growth in tourism, focusing on activities that benefit small businesses and minimize negative impacts on community character. ♦
11. Support Homer's seniors, including the ability to remain in the community as they age.
12. Support high-quality K-12 and higher education in Homer, support teachers, and sustain lifelong learning opportunities for all residents.



South Peninsula Hospital

"The cost of housing is not reflective of our local economy and is rapidly outpacing the middle class wage earner."

~ Community Survey Results

Policies Supporting Economic Development in Other Chapters

The table below summarizes the location of related policies in other parts of the plan that support and contribute to Homer's economic development goals. They are shown in order by chapter.

Topic	Chapter and Strategy Number of Related Policies					
	Land Use & Environment	Public Facilities & Services	Housing	Transportation	Governance	Sustainability & Resilience
Improve zoning code to promote growth in desired areas and simplify permitting and procedures	2					
Thriving downtown	5					
Guide planning at the Homer Spit	5	4				
City facilities equipped to host large events		1				
Maintenance of existing parks and restrooms that enhance visitor experiences		1				
Port and harbor infrastructure		3				
Homer airport						
Accessible, ADA compliant facilities, including businesses		7				
Affordable, attainable housing			1, 2, 3			
City center parking and walkability				1		
Public transportation options to improve accessibility for seasonal workers, residents, and visitors				5		



Vendors in front of Homer business on Contractor's Day



Transportation

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

A Transportation Hub for the Region

Homer is connected to other parts of the Kenai Peninsula by road, air, and water. Homer's port is a key connection point for distributing goods and moving people around the Kenai Peninsula and beyond. Homer is one of the only communities on the Kenai Peninsula serviced by the Alaska Marine Highway System. For details on the airport, port, and harbor, see the Public Facilities and Services chapter.

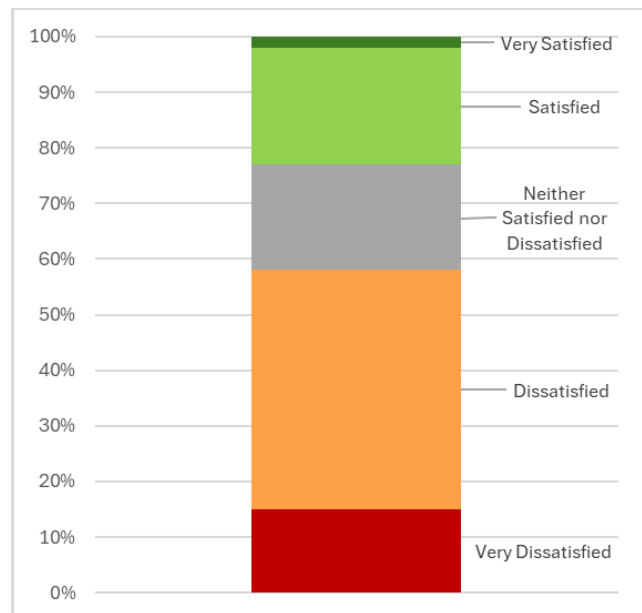


Road and Sidewalk Maintenance is a Community Priority

Year-round maintenance of the transportation network is critical for improving access, safety, equity, and quality of life for Homer residents. Indeed, maintenance of roadways, sidewalks, and trails is identified in the 2024 Homer Transportation Plan¹² and was also identified as a priority through community outreach. In the community survey results, residents identified maintenance as one of the most challenging things about living in Homer, citing the need for improvements to state-maintained roads. The City of Homer's Public Works Department is responsible for maintenance on 29 miles of rural roads and 21 miles of urban roads.¹³ As additional roads and sidewalks are constructed, maintenance burdens must be considered. As an example, where sidewalks are constructed, crews can no longer push snow to the side of the road and leave it there. Instead, snow must be trucked away to the City snow dump to clear the sidewalks.

Figure 17. Responses to the 2024 Homer Community Survey Question, "How satisfied are you with the availability of Roads and Sidewalks in Homer?"

Results show almost 60 percent of residents want more roads and sidewalks; write-in comments indicate residents specifically want more walking and biking facilities.



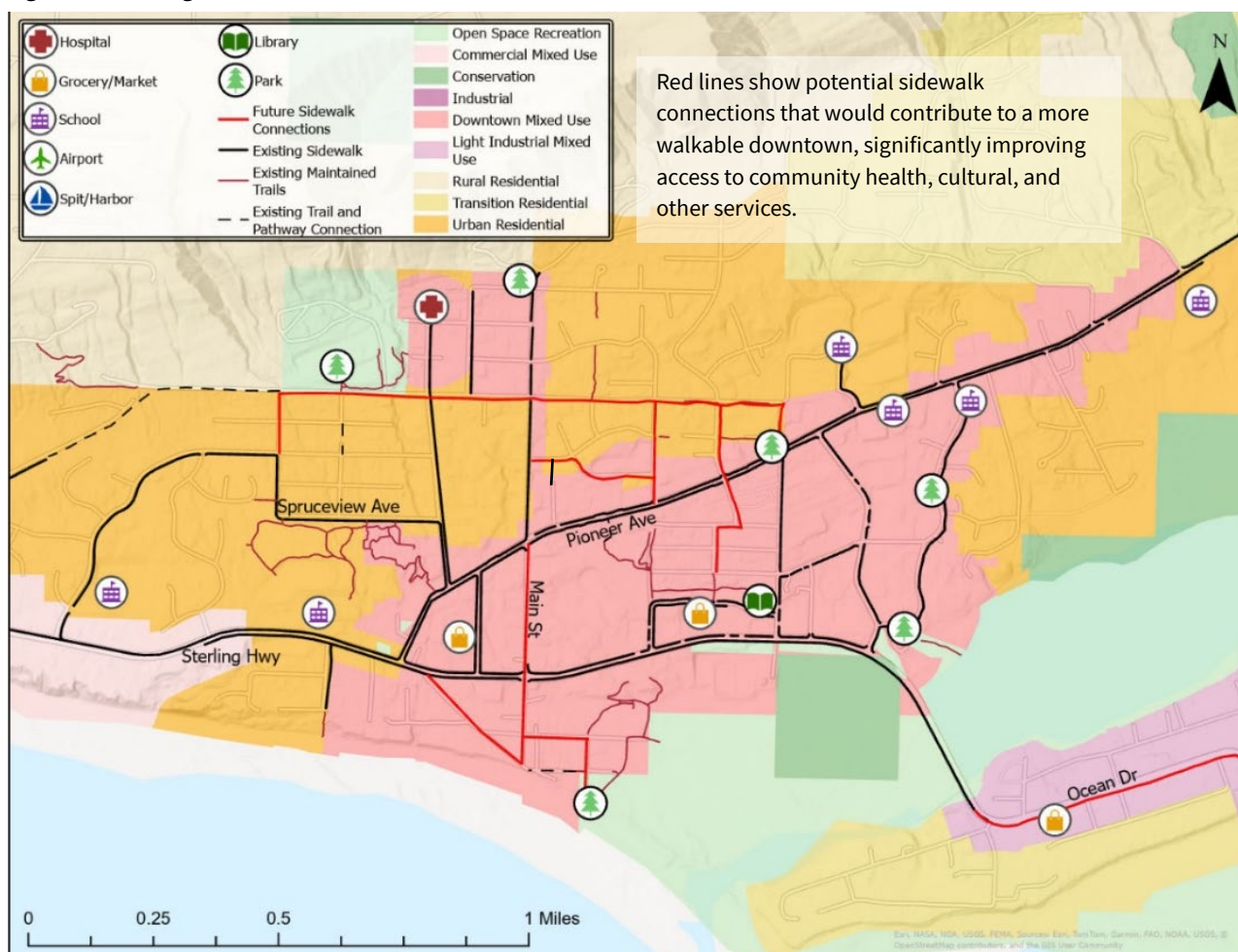
¹² Homer Transportation Plan (2024). https://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/planning/page/78524/transportation_plan_07102024.pdf

¹³ The City has been working to improve safe travel for persons of all ages and abilities. The Homer All-Ages and Abilities Pedestrian Pathway (HAPP) will connect the Senior Center, main medical district, library, post office, police station, grocery store, and pharmacy, as well as existing trails (from the Transportation Plan).

Residents Walk and Bike Year-Round

Walkable neighborhoods directly contribute to the small-town feel that Homer residents value. Connecting schools, shopping, the library, parks, and medical facilities can reduce vehicle trips, support affordable housing by reducing transportation costs per resident, and improve safety. Throughout the planning process, residents expressed a desire for improved infrastructure to walk and bike year-round. In the community survey results, residents identified a need for increased pedestrian connectivity and in bike infrastructure. Over 50 percent of respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied over the availability of roads and sidewalks.¹⁴ Currently, the City has over 24 miles of sidewalk and bike/walking pathways and almost 13 miles of maintained trails (Figure 18). However, many connections between paths are missing, leaving pedestrians to walk along the roadway or find a less desirable route to their destination.¹⁵ For longer trips, bicycles could be accommodated by widening shoulders or installing separated pathways on key routes, such as along the Sterling Highway and on East and West Hill Roads. The recently completed 2024 Homer Transportation Plan identifies many of these challenges and offers recommendations for improvements to the non-motorized network.

Figure 18. Existing and Potential Future Sidewalk Connections

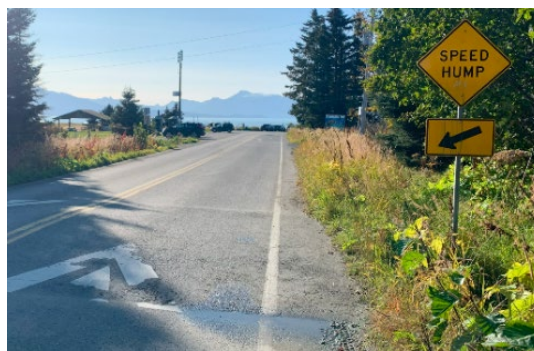


¹⁴ 83 percent of survey respondents from the Homer Transportation Plan Survey said they use a car daily but would prefer to walk and bike more.

¹⁵ The City is working to improve safe travel for persons of all ages and abilities. The Homer All-Ages and Abilities Pedestrian Pathway (HAPP) will connect the Senior Center, main medical district, library, post office, police station, grocery store, and pharmacy, as well as existing trails. (from the Transportation Plan)

Traffic Flow and Safety Concerns

Homer's existing roadway network can support the future traffic growth that could come with increased population. Although most residents use a car daily, many would like to reduce those trips and use walking and biking more frequently, especially for commuting and to access recreation.¹⁶ Three key areas to enhance longevity and access within the network include expanding sidewalks and trails, connecting new neighborhoods to collector roads as they are built, and providing continuing maintenance. Other issues identified in the community survey results were truck routing, parking, pedestrian safety, and summertime congestion. These issues affect the entire transportation network, both motorized and non-motorized.



Speed hump for slowing traffic to Bishop's Beach.

The natural environment makes some network connections challenging. For example, East Hill and West Hill Roads connect neighborhoods above the bluff to the downtown area but don't have adequate walking and biking facilities and are a circuitous and sometimes dangerous route for pedestrians and bicyclists. Some residents requested trail connections through the bluff area (similar to Reber Trail) to make more direct non-motorized connections; however, the topography will make it difficult for these connections to be maintained and to be used by persons of all ages and abilities.

Continued Interest in Transit Opportunities

Providing public transportation could support households without access to a car and could also serve areas like the Homer Spit ("the Spit") where vehicle traffic overwhelms the network during the tourist season. Currently, local taxi companies transport most residents and visitors who don't have access to their own vehicle. Some private and nonprofit entities provide van service as part of their programs. In the past, some private companies have tried providing transit services more broadly, but these efforts have not been financially sustainable.



The Calhoun Trail is an example of one of the 25 city-maintained trails, together spanning almost 11 miles. Its maintenance and upkeep provides a pedestrian connection from Fairview Avenue to Bayview Avenue.

Goals

The 2024 Transportation Plan identified four key goals for transportation in the City of Homer:

- *Goal 1:* Increase Safety of Interactions Between Different Modes of Travel
- *Goal 2:* Provide A Connected Network of Local and Collector Roads and Trails That Balances Modes Based on Land Use Contexts
- *Goal 3:* Maintain Transportation Network to Be Usable Year-Round
- *Goal 4:* Provide Expanded Transportation Options for Residents and Visitors

¹⁶ 83 percent of survey respondents from the Homer Transportation Plan Survey say they use a car daily but would prefer to walk and bike more. Learn more at www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/planning/page/78524/transportation_plan_2024_01302024_red_size_002.pdf

The 2024 Transportation Plan includes specific recommendations. The policies in this chapter supplement those already identified in the Transportation Plan and focus on topics that received less coverage in the Transportation Plan.

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

City-Led Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- ✂ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- * Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2018: An action adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan

1. Build or improve safe roadway and pathway access and connections to key locations. ✂

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Improve non-motorized connections to schools. ✂	Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, Community Development Department, Public Works Department, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District	Undetermined	Varies
b. Implement recommendations in the Homer Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan. ✂ ◆	Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, Community Development Department, Public Works Department	\$278k (FY26 CIP)	Long (5+ years)

Note: See the 2024 Homer Transportation Plan for related policies on the following topics: e-bike legislation, complete streets/all ages and abilities policy, traffic calming, bicycle safety campaign, parking study, neighborhood connectivity to schools, extension of the Homer All Ages and Abilities Pedestrian Pathway (HAPP) Loop, walking and biking infrastructure priorities, complete East-West connections.

2. Maintain a year-round transportation network.

Action
a. Update design standards and road design for walking and biking infrastructure in Title 11 to ensure they are connected, safe, and maintainable. *
b. Ask voters whether to renew the Homer Accelerated Roads and Trails fund beyond 2027.
c. Identify additional funding sources and strategies to support new construction, renovation, maintenance, and equipment for roads and trails.

Note: See the 2024 Homer Transportation Plan for related policies on the following topics: bicycle parking, transfer of responsibilities for state road maintenance, improved winter maintenance on state roads, winter maintenance standards, updating City non-motorized facility design standards, Kachemak Drive reconnaissance engineering study.

Case Study: Public-Private Partnership Providing Public Transportation

In the City of Sitka, public transportation is provided under the oversight of the nonprofit Center for Community with two partner organizations: Sitka Tribe of Alaska (who operates the fixed-route scheduled bus service) and Southeast Senior Services (who operates the door-to-door paratransit service). Sitka Tribe of Alaska receives federal transit funding directly to the Tribe; the City of Sitka supports the services with yearly contributions and by maintaining the paratransit vehicles; other grants also help to meet the operating and capital funding needs. (<https://ridesitka.com/>)

Potential Partner-Led Strategies

- 3. Ensure continued operation of safe airport and ferry operations to support the movement of people and goods to and from the community and maintain Homer's status as a regional hub.**
- 4. Explore public transit options, particularly in the Homer Spit area, to alleviate traffic congestion and improve accessibility for seasonal workers, residents, and visitors.**
- 5. Install benches, trash cans, bike racks and create drop-off and pick-up locations for buses, taxis and visitors, in alignment with the Homer Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan.**

Note: See the 2024 Homer Transportation Plan for related policies on the following topics: truck network/truck routes, transit options, school pick up and drop off congestion, updating existing trail maps.

"State roads make up the backbone of the City of Homer transportation system, providing key connections between local city roads for walking, biking, driving, and the movement of freight... both state- and city-owned roads are needed to provide safe transportation options for residents, visitors, and the movement of freight."

~ Transportation Plan 2024

Policies Supporting Transportation in Other Chapters

The table below summarizes the location of related policies in other parts of the plan that support and contribute to Homer's transportation goals. They are shown in order by chapter.

Topic	Chapter and Strategy Number of Related Policies					
	Land Use & Environment	Public Facilities & Services	Housing	Economic Development	Governance	Sustainability & Resilience
Infill and walkability	1, 5					
Trails	4					
Downtown development	5					
Homer Spit planning and development	5	4				
Homer airport land use	5					
Accessibility improvements		1, 7				
Port and harbor improvements		3				
Kenai Peninsula Borough Safe Streets and Roads for all		5				
Airport improvements		6				
Tsunami evacuation routes						2
Roads and bluff stability						2

Governance

Overarching Theme and Context

The City of Homer Faces Fiscal Uncertainty

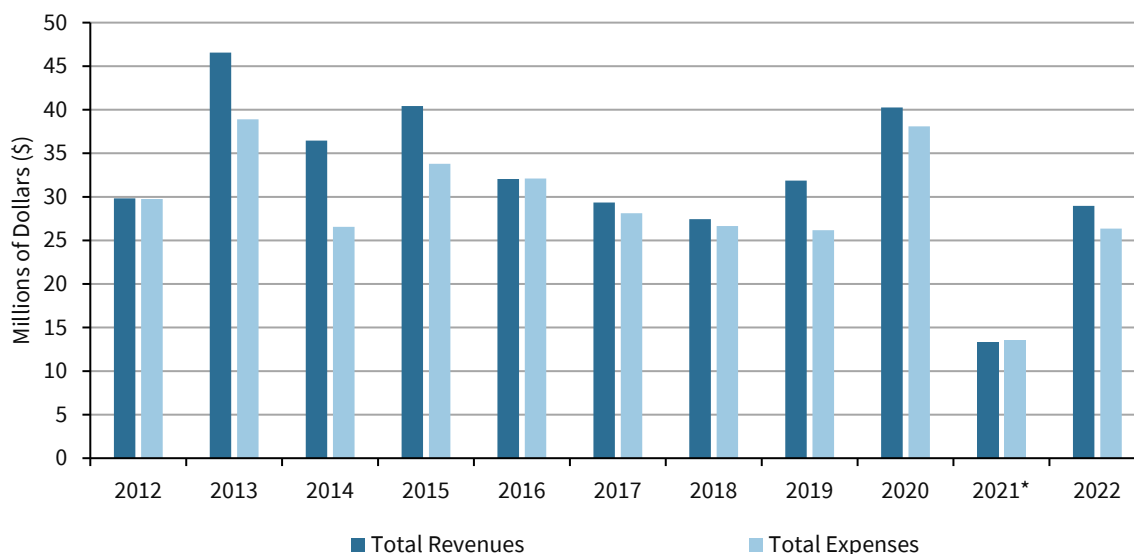
Understanding the City’s fiscal position—its revenues, expenditures, and economic capacity—is essential for informed and effective comprehensive planning. Municipal budgets are the foundation of local government operations. Like many small municipalities, Homer faces ongoing fiscal uncertainty that requires careful planning and prioritization of resources. This chapter begins with an overview of Homer’s revenues and expenses as well as some of the challenges contributing to an uncertain fiscal environment. For more background, see Appendix G: City of Homer Fiscal Trends.

“Anything that requires significant funding needs to start with stating who is willing to pay for it.”

~Growth Scenarios Report Card Results

Over the years, the City of Homer’s annual revenues and expenses have fluctuated. As seen in Figure 19, total revenues exceeded total expenses in nine out of 11 years – in six of those years, by a considerable margin. The two years where expenses exceeded revenues were 2016 and 2021, resulting in \$57,641 and \$169,125 deficits, respectively, for those years. Compared to the financial gains made in other years, these amounts were both small deficits.

Figure 19. Revenues and Expenses for the City of Homer, 2012–2022 (Millions of 2022 Dollars)



Note: Includes all funds. The City changed from a calendar year to a fiscal year, resulting in 2021 only covering six months. As a result, revenues and expenses shown for 2021 reflect six months of activity. A full fiscal year is shown for 2022 (July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022). Source: City of Homer audits (2012–2022), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for inflation adjustments (2023), and Northern Economics analysis. See Appendix G: City of Homer Fiscal Trends for details.

About the Data in this Chapter

The primary sources used to inform key themes and draft policies in this chapter include City of Homer financial statements, budget documents, department reports and additional information and data from City sources; Kenai Peninsula Borough Assessing Department data; and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Census Bureau data. These sources informed a detailed “City of Homer Fiscal Trends Report”, prepared as part of the 2045 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update process (see Appendix G). Community input, including the community survey, interviews with elected City officials, commissions, boards, and committees, and other community conversations, as well as research on comparable communities also informed key themes and policies.

The information in this chapter is based on available datasets at the time of plan development and may not reflect current trends. For current information about the City's budget and taxation trends, visit:

- City of Homer: Latest Operating and Capital Budgets: <https://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/finance/budgets>
- Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development's Taxable Database: <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/OfficeoftheStateAssessor/alaskaTaxable-New.aspx>
- Kenai Peninsula Borough Property Tax Webpage: <https://www.kpb.us/departments/property-tax/property-tax-overview>

The State of Alaska's fiscal situation has and continues to remain uncertain. As a result, the City cannot rely on some of the same state funding sources as it has in the past for certain programs. The pandemic caused further uncertainty in future revenue and expenditure activities for the City. An additional source of financial vulnerability is the City's water and sewer utility fund. The City owns expensive and expansive treatment, collection, and distribution infrastructure with few customers paying for maintenance and operations of those systems. Capital grants have played a crucial role in Homer's finances, but they fluctuate significantly year to year. This variability creates challenges in long-term planning, making the City reliant on uncertain external funding sources.



Homer faces challenges meeting increasing demands for services while dealing with high inflation following the pandemic. The City has experienced revenue growth, largely fueled by increased tourism. However, inflationary pressures on labor, supplies, and equipment have offset these gains, reducing overall purchasing power. While inflation is expected to stabilize, the City must carefully manage expenditures to maintain a balanced budget.

The following three sections— “Revenue Snapshot”, “Expenses Snapshot”, and “Taxation Snapshot” —provide additional context on the need to address the City of Homer's fiscal uncertainties.

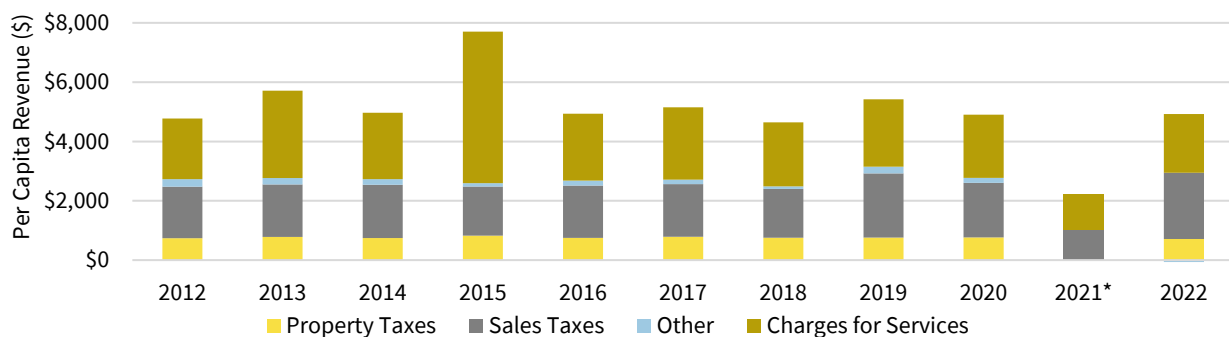
Revenue Snapshot

Total revenues for the City of Homer fluctuated between 2012 and 2022 with periods of growth and periods of shrinkage. One driving factor in revenue fluctuations is operating and capital grants, which are received periodically. Figure 20 identifies the largest single line-item revenue sources across all different funds and sources of revenues. As shown in the table, the largest revenue sources for Homer in 2022 were (1) sales tax (\$12.34 million), (2) port and harbor services (\$5.19 million), and (3) property tax (\$3.91 million). As detailed in Figure 21, revenues per capita are generally stable at around \$5,000 (excluding capital and operating grants and contributions). If all factors remain constant, for example, and if the City does not realize any additional revenue streams, the City could anticipate generating around \$5,000 in revenue per capita in future years.

Figure 20. Inflation-Adjusted City of Homer Revenues, 2012, 2016, 2020, and 2022 (Millions of 2022 Dollars)

	2012	2016	2020	2022
Charges for services, port and harbor	\$ 4.96	\$ 5.26	\$ 5.70	\$ 5.19
Charges for services, water	\$ 2.18	\$ 2.38	\$ 2.39	\$ 1.95
Charges for services, sewer	\$ 1.97	\$ 2.09	\$ 1.87	\$ 1.81
Operating grants and contributions	\$ 2.06	\$ 1.33	\$ 12.44	\$ 1.35
Capital grants and contributions	\$ 3.27	\$ 5.06	\$ 0.75	\$ 1.20
Property tax	\$ 3.80	\$ 3.89	\$ 4.24	\$ 3.91
Sales tax	\$ 8.90	\$ 9.20	\$ 10.15	\$ 12.34
Other revenues	\$ 2.69	\$ 2.85	\$ 2.72	\$ 1.22

Source: City of Homer (2015, 2016, 2020, 2022), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for inflation adjustments (2023), and Northern Economics analysis.

Figure 21. Per Capita Revenue by Category 2012 – 2022, Excluding Grants and Contributions (2022 Dollars)

Note: The amount shown for 2021 represents six months, due to the change from a calendar year to a fiscal year. Source: City of Homer (2012–2022), ADOLWD (2024a, 2024b, 2024c), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for inflation adjustments (2023), and Northern Economics analysis

Expenses/Cost of Services Snapshot

On average, port and harbor, public safety, and water and sewer make up the largest share of service-related expenses for the City of Homer (see Figure 22). The port and harbor services alone account for 23 percent of expenses, although port and harbor services generate an even greater share of revenues at 42.1 percent. Other significant expenditures include public safety (18.8 percent of expenses), and water and sewer (17.17 percent).

Many programs generate enough self-supporting revenue which they generate through their service charges, leaving a relatively small deficit to make up through operating and capital grants and other tax-based revenues. Some programs are designed as “business-type activities”, meaning they should recover all or most of their costs through user fees and charges. These include water and sewer, and port and harbor.

Figure 22. Inflation-Adjusted City of Homer Expenses, 2012, 2016, 2020, 2022 (Millions of 2022 Dollars)

	2012	2016	2020	2022
Port and Harbor	\$ 5.89	\$ 8.75	\$ 6.68	\$ 5.83
Public Safety	\$ 6.02	\$ 6.23	\$ 5.75	\$ 5.81
Public Works	\$ 3.39	\$ 3.76	\$ 4.62	\$ 4.39
Water and Sewer	\$ 5.82	\$ 5.40	\$ 4.99	\$ 4.38
General Government	\$ 4.92	\$ 4.12	\$ 5.58	\$ 4.20
Other Expenses	\$ 3.71	\$ 3.85	\$ 10.46	\$ 1.76

Source: City of Homer (2012–2022), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for inflation adjustments (2023), and Northern Economics analysis

Taxation Snapshot

Figure 23 shows an upward trend in sales tax revenue for the City of Homer from 2012 to 2022. The City of Homer collects a year-round 7.85% sales tax (4.85% of which is for the City and 3% for the Borough) with a \$500 cap. Homer has the second highest sales tax rate in the Borough behind Seldovia, which charges 9.5 percent seasonally (April through September). On a per-capita basis, sales tax revenue in 2012 was \$1,734.81 and in 2022 it was \$2,237.71 per person,

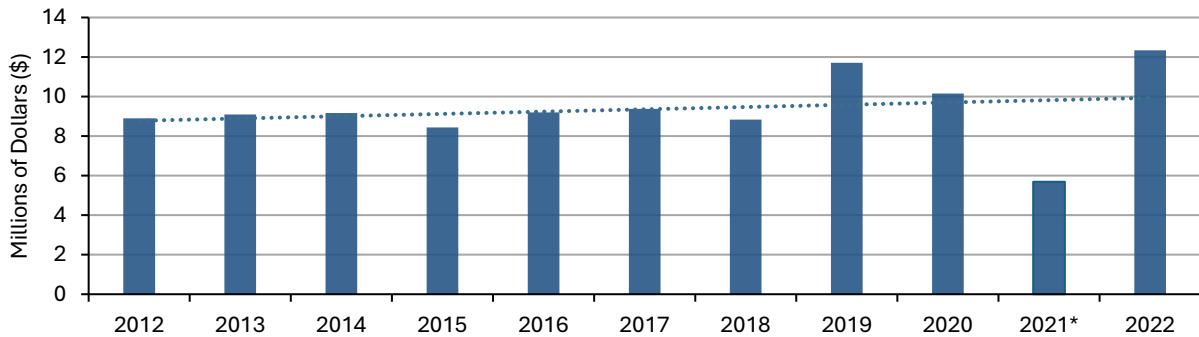
demonstrating real growth relative to the population and inflation. It is likely that the increase in tax revenue per capita came from both an increase in spending as well as an increase in the tax rate in 2019. Some of this sales tax is applied toward a bond payment for Homer's police station.

"A big concern is that the actual city limits are so small compared to the actual areas that many residents live in and thus many of us who own businesses and earn sales tax for the city, do not actually live within the city limits and therefore are not able to vote on citizen decisions. Nor do we qualify for city services, such as the police and animal shelter. Something needs to change around all of that. Perhaps we don't need the city water and sewer where we live but would sure like to have more of a voice."

~Community Survey Participant

Total property tax revenues have generally been steady from 2012 to 2022, increasing by about half a percent each year (Figure 24). One trend that could impact future property tax revenues received by the City is an aging population, since there are property tax exemptions for senior citizens. For residents who are 65 or older or are disabled veterans, the Borough exempts the first \$150,000 of property valuation.

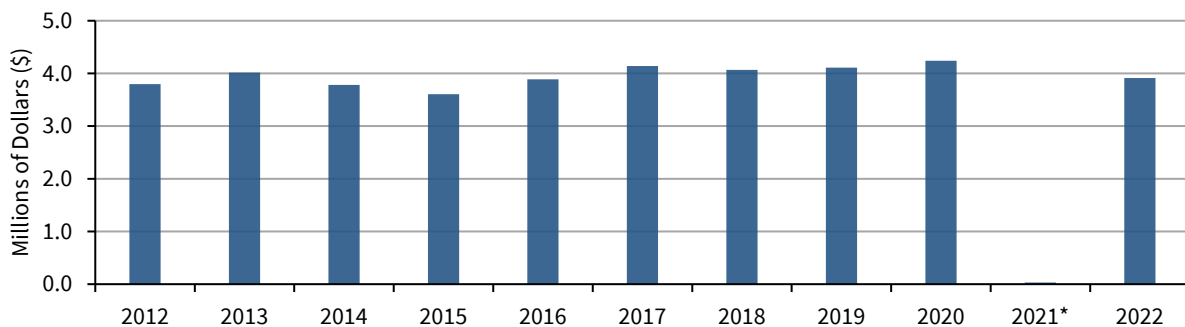
Figure 23. Homer Sales Tax Revenues 2012–2022 (Millions of 2022 Dollars)



Note: The amount shown for 2021 represents six months, due to the change from a calendar year to a fiscal year.

Source: City of Homer (2012–2022), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for inflation adjustments (2023), and Northern Economics analysis

Figure 24. City of Homer Property Tax Revenues, 2012–2022 (Millions of 2022 Dollars)



Note: *2021 is not shown, due to changes in tracking from a calendar year to a fiscal year. Source: City of Homer (2012–2022), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for inflation adjustments (2023), and Northern Economics analysis

Other Themes and Related Fiscal Challenges

Revenue Growth Driven by Tourism, but Inflation Limits Gains

The City of Homer has experienced revenue growth, largely fueled by increased tourism. However, inflationary pressures on labor, supplies, and equipment have offset these gains, reducing overall purchasing power. While inflation is expected to stabilize, the City must carefully manage expenditures to maintain a balanced budget.

Dependence on Sales Tax as a Primary Revenue Source

Sales tax remains the most significant revenue source for Homer, contributing 43 percent of total revenues in 2022. Sales tax revenue has grown at an average annual rate of 3.32 percent. This reliance makes the City vulnerable to economic downturns and shifts in consumer spending.

Aging Population and Increased Property Tax Exemptions

Property tax revenue has remained stable but faces future risks due to the increasing number of senior citizens eligible for property tax exemptions. In Homer, residents aged 65 and older represent a larger share of the population (22 percent) compared to Alaska as whole (14 percent). According to tax data from the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, the share of tax-exempt property in the Kenai Peninsula Borough has grown: there were 3,700 approved property tax exemption applications in the Borough in 2012, compared to 6,704 approved applicants in 2022. These exemptions could potentially impact the City's ability to generate stable revenue from property taxes. See Appendix G for additional details.

Staff Capacity Challenges Impacting Service Delivery

The City of Homer faces staffing shortages that impact its ability to provide essential services efficiently. Limited personnel and funding constraints have led to delays in project implementation, code enforcement, and service expansion. Addressing workforce needs and limitations across City departments will be crucial for ensuring the City's long-term operational sustainability. If the City expands its infrastructure and services, that will likely require robust recruitment, training, and retaining of additional staff to operate and maintain any new facilities or programs.

Current staff capacity was a recurring theme throughout the 2045 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update engagement process. As shown in Figure 25, for “Fire and Emergency Services”, when asked to share more detail about those community health and safety programs they are least satisfied with, many residents shared concerns with staff capacity. Similar concerns were raised regarding the implementation of existing and potential policies or new code that are created through the updated plan and Title 21 code revision process.

Figure 25. Responses to the 2024 Homer Community Survey: Qualitative Feedback Dissatisfaction with Fire and Emergency Services

Fire and Emergency Services: More staffing and resources needed; challenges posed by relying on volunteers for critical emergency services	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>There is not enough law enforcement to cover the city of Homer and outlying areas</i>• <i>It would be great to have all services with designated staff instead of volunteers. Takes a long time for responses by time the volunteers get to the station, then out on the call</i>• <i>Our fire and emergency services are grossly understaffed. Please fix it. We finally increased the staff from one to two on call at night but that is still insufficient</i>• <i>Public safety should be first and foremost on the minds of a local government, the rest is details</i>• <i>Our fire and emergency response teams need more funding so they can hire more staff. They have a very large area to cover and with limited staff their ability to do their job is negatively impacted.</i>
---	----	--

Public Engagement and Fiscal Transparency are Important

There is a strong demand for greater public involvement and education about the City's fiscal situation. Many residents outside City limits contribute to the economy but lack voting rights, leading to concerns about representation and service access. A key step in achieving a shared community understanding and ownership of City actions is consistent resident participation in City boards, commissions, committees, elected positions, and related City processes. Ongoing education for participants and residents on public involvement, information sharing, and civic engagement is key to reducing divisiveness and supporting inclusive policy and project implementation in Homer.



As evident in the robust community participation in comprehensive planning activities, residents across the Greater Homer Area are interested and invested in Homer's future. Based on responses to the community survey, residents highly value and look to the "City Council" and "City Government" for guidance on Homer's future (ranked 2nd in number of mentions after "non-profit and environmental organizations"). At the same time, as shown in Figure 16 in the Economic Development chapter, residents selected "Government" as the sector they desire the least amount of growth (most saying a combined "no growth/change" or "smaller than existing", even while noting lack of funding and/or staff capacity for fire and emergency services and road maintenance).



"Growth outside of the city depends on city services, but the city lacks funding to support growth outside the city."

~Growth Scenarios Report Card Results

"Some of this happens outside of city limits. How to develop without sacrificing the rural elements of Homer. Most people who live outside of limits don't want to be included because of fees. Homer is a hub, which can be a deficit for the city."

~Planning Commissioner comment

The Value of Collaboration and Partnerships in Fiscal Sustainability

Public-private partnerships (PPPs), or partnerships between the public sector and the private sector for the purpose of delivering a project or a service traditionally provided by the public sector, is one tool the City of Homer can use to complete priority community projects. By leveraging private investment and expertise, the City can support key projects without overburdening taxpayers. Successful PPPs in Alaska's coastal communities have demonstrated the ability to enhance economic development, improve public services, and expand infrastructure while reducing municipal costs. An example of an effective PPP in Homer today is in the community's Medical District with the South Peninsula Hospital (SPH)—a partnership between the City of Homer (landowner), Kenai Peninsula Borough (facility owner), SPH, Inc. Board of Directors (governance), and South Kenai Peninsula Hospital Service Area (public advisory board). Homer can benefit from similar partnerships in areas such as harbor improvements, renewable energy projects, and housing development. Similarly, the City can also partner with Tribal organizations or nonprofit partners that have access to different funding streams and resources to achieve shared priorities.

“The comprehensive plan is spearheaded by the city, but other partners help implement the strategies and actions.”

~Planning Commissioner comment

Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C
Ensure long-term financial stability.	Enhance fiscal transparency and community engagement.	Strengthen collaboration and partnerships.

Icon Key:

- ✂ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- * Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2018: An action adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan

City-Led Strategies and Actions

1. Develop a long-term fiscal plan that is proactive, sustainable, and responsive to short-term challenges and opportunities. ✂

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Establish a six-year budget framework to improve financial foresight and stability.	Administration Department, Finance Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
b. Ensure the Capital Improvement Plan is tied to the six-year budget.	Administration Department, Finance Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)

2. Diversify revenue streams to reduce dependence on sales and property taxes. ✂

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
a. Increase financial reserves to mitigate risks from economic downturns or unexpected expenditures.	Administration Department, City Council, Finance Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
b. Leverage City-owned land for development that aligns with economic and housing goals.	City Council, Community Development Department, Planning Commission	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
c. Explore the feasibility of taxation options.	Administration Department, City Council, Finance Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
d. Use tools such as bonds, tax increment financing (TIF), Business Improvement District (BID) assessments, and other mechanisms to finance infrastructure improvements and public amenities in designated redevelopment areas.	Administration Department, City Council, Community Development Department, Finance Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Timeframe
e. Offer property tax abatements (City-wide or targeted) to developers to incentivize investment in higher-density projects.	City Council, Community Development Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
f. Expand fees for City services, such as permitting and recreational activities, to align costs with service use.	Administration Department, City Council, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
g. Support small business growth through targeted incentives to expand the local tax base.	City Council, Administration Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)

3. Conduct operational efficiency audits to identify cost savings and streamline municipal services.

Action
a. Encourage infill development and connect customers to water and sewer systems where the infrastructure already exists to avoid additional build-out capital costs.
b. Solicit regular input from residents about desired services and facilities, and how to improve service delivery.
c. Engage City commissions and boards in their respective budget areas to inform prioritization and planning.
d. Evaluate staffing levels across departments and identify workforce gaps and inefficiencies based on current needs.

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 inside and outside City limits.

Action
a. Educate residents about service levels, benefits, and costs for different parts of the City and those areas adjacent to City boundaries.
b. Educate residents on City powers, roles, responsibilities, and the benefits of different planning processes and tools.
c. Inform residents and visitors of the value of green infrastructure in reducing infrastructure costs, as well as educate the community on which types of green infrastructure works best in Homer.
d. Continue to create opportunities for youth involvement in City decision-making.
e. Educate the public about the benefits of higher density development, such as reduced traffic congestion and increased walkability.
f. Encourage shared planning and decision-making to ensure policies reflect community priorities and needs.

Potential Partner-Led Strategies

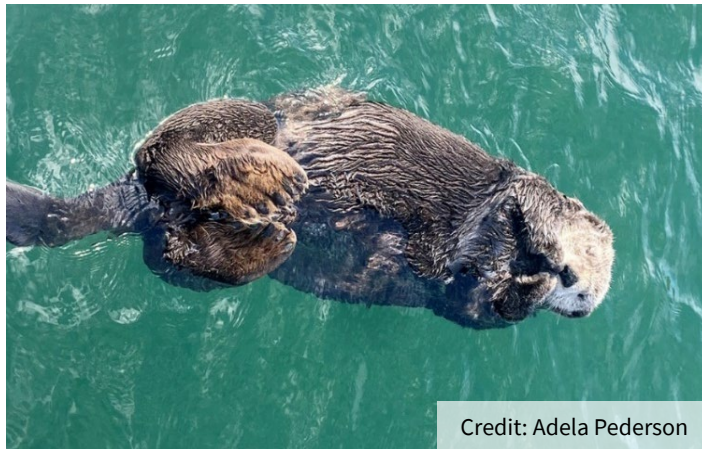
5. Identify opportunities to coordinate with organizations including Tribal organizations, Alaska Native Corporations, and local and regional non-profits to leverage resources and provide services more cost-effectively.

6. Work with the Kenai Peninsula Borough to advocate for and implement policies that fiscally benefit borough communities.

Policies Supporting Governance in Other Chapters

The table below summarizes the location of related policies in other parts of the plan that support and contribute to Homer's governance goals. They are shown in order by chapter.

Topic	Chapter and Strategy Number of Related Policies					
	Land Use & Environment	Public Facilities & Services	Housing	Economic Development	Transportation	Sustainability & Resilience
Higher density, sustainable growth	2					
Community and stakeholder input on zoning and policy tools	2					
Improved processes and efficiencies in zoning, design, and review	3					
Evaluation of creating a municipal Parks and Recreation Department		1				
High quality, sustainable municipal facilities and services		All				
Land dispositions			2			
Encourage expansion of select industries				1		X
Access to City facilities				2		
Sustainability and resilience in City planning						
Energy efficiency of municipal facilities						



What are the core functions of the State of Alaska, Borough, and City?

Figure 26 illustrates the breakdown of responsibilities between the State of Alaska, the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the City of Homer, presented in alphabetical order.

Figure 26: Core Functions of the State of Alaska, Borough, and City

State of Alaska	Kenai Peninsula Borough second class borough*	City of Homer first class city*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska Marine Highway Ferry Terminal Alaska State Troopers (outside of City limits) Homer Airport Road Maintenance of major roadways (including Sterling Highway, Pioneer Avenue, Homer Spit Road, Kachemak Drive, West Hill Road, and East Hill Road) State Parks (e.g., Kachemak Bay State Park) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospital (via service areas) Planning and platting Regional emergency medical services (via service areas) Road maintenance (via service areas) Schools, via Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Solid waste services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airport terminal Animal control City code enforcement Elections Parks and recreation Planning and zoning (within City limits) Police Port and harbor Public library Right of way management Road maintenance and snow removal (shared with State) Volunteer Fire Department Water and wastewater

Alaska has two primary classifications of municipalities: General Law and Home Rule. Within the General Law classification there are first class cities/boroughs and second class cities/boroughs. The Kenai Peninsula Borough is a second class borough and the City of Homer is a first class city. For both, powers are defined by state law and by local ordinances; while these powers can be broad, there are some limitations on certain activities like taxation. Home Rule municipalities generally have broader powers and may exercise all legislative powers not prohibited by law or charter. To learn more about the powers of municipalities, visit the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development Division of Community and Regional Affairs, Local Government Resource Desk:

www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/LocalGovernmentResourceDesk/MunicipalGovernment/MunicipalGovernmentStructureinAlaska.aspx.



Credit: Kyra Wagner

Sustainability and Resilience

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

Natural and Climate-Driven Hazards Increase Risks to People and Infrastructure

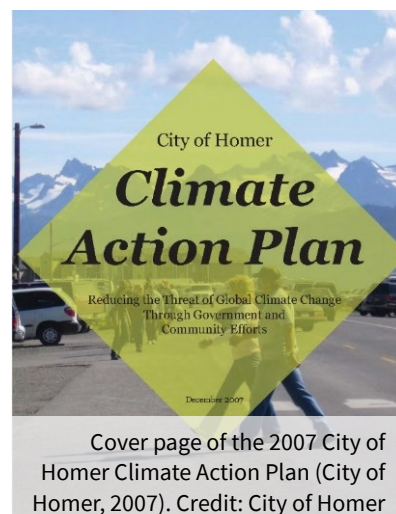
Homer's natural setting makes it vulnerable to multiple hazards, including earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, wildfires, and flooding. These risks are expected to intensify as the region experiences the effects of a warming climate. The number of extreme wildfire danger days around Homer is projected to increase significantly by 2050, with higher temperatures, drought, and beetle-killed forests contributing to fire risk. Severe and extreme drought conditions are projected to occur around 20 percent of the time.¹⁷ At the same time, inland flooding is expected to worsen, particularly around Beluga Lake, as 1-in-100-year rainfall events become more intense.¹⁸ Although isostatic rebound may offer short-term relief from storm surge, flood depths on the Homer Spit ("the Spit") are expected to increase again by 2080, with parts of the Spit experiencing over two meters of inundation in a major event.¹⁹ Several City facilities are also at risk including the Public Works campus, which lies in a tsunami inundation zone.²⁰ These evolving hazards highlight the need for forward-looking planning, facility siting, evacuation coordination, and land management tools to strengthen Homer's resilience over time.



A November storm caused damage to the Homer Spit Road, resulting in a State Declaration of Disaster Emergency. Credit: Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Facebook, 2024

Sustainability and Resilience Are Core to City Planning and Investments

The City of Homer has a long history of leadership on sustainability, having adopted Alaska's first Climate Action Plan in 2007. Today, the community continues to express strong support for renewable energy, hazard mitigation, and environmental stewardship. In the 2023 community survey, 74 percent of respondents said it was "very important" to encourage renewable energy projects over the next 20 years. Community members also emphasized the importance of resilience-focused infrastructure, sustainable development practices, and forward-looking



Cover page of the 2007 City of Homer Climate Action Plan (City of Homer, 2007). Credit: City of Homer

¹⁷ Woodwell Climate Research Center. (2022). *Climate Risk Assessment: Homer and Seldovia, Alaska*. Retrieved from <https://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/publicworks/climate-risk-assessment>

¹⁸ Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy (ACCAP). (2023). *Alaska's Changing Climate: Localized Projections for Southcentral Alaska*.

¹⁹ Suleimani, E.N. (2019). *Tsunami Hazard Assessment for the Kachemak Bay Area*. Alaska Earthquake Center.

²⁰ City of Homer. (2023). *Tsunami Risk Final Report and Recommendations for Public Works Campus*.

land use decisions. These values are reflected in the City’s ongoing efforts to transition municipal facilities to more efficient energy sources, conduct energy audits, incorporate green infrastructure, and modernize capital projects to have long-term resilience.²¹ As hazards and environmental stressors increase, integrating sustainability as a baseline assumption in all City policies and capital investments will help reduce future costs, improve operational efficiency, and protect the well-being of Homer’s residents.

Open Space and Natural Lands Support Long-Term Community Well-Being

Homer’s ecosystems, wetlands, and green spaces provide natural protection against flooding, erosion, and other hazards—while also contributing to the community’s quality of life. Residents strongly support preserving these natural assets: 77 percent of community survey respondents identified the preservation of public open space as a top priority. In open responses and interviews, residents expressed support for concentrating new development in existing disturbed areas, avoiding steep slopes and flood-prone zones, and protecting wildlife corridors and critical habitat. Preserving wetlands, riparian buffers, and upland vegetation also enhances Homer’s capacity to manage stormwater through low-impact development and natural drainage systems. Continued investment in data tools—such as Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) mapping, green infrastructure inventories, and watershed-based planning—will help the City and its partners prioritize land for conservation and align development with long-term environmental resilience.



Credit: Kachemak Communications

“We need to make considerations about how we are going to get our energy in 10-20 years and adjust for climate change. Invest in ways to minimize our energy demand and alternative methods of harnessing our energy.”

~ Community Survey Results

Goals

Goal A	Goal B
Protect both existing and new infrastructure from the impacts of climate change, environmental constraints, and hazards.	Encourage Homer residents to be proud stewards of their community and the spectacular natural setting around them.

²¹ City of Homer. (2023). *Energy Audit Reports and Capital Improvement Plan Updates*. Kinney Engineering. (2020). *Low Impact Development Planning for the City of Homer*. City of Homer Public Works Department. Retrieved from https://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/public_works/page/49271/low_impact_development_planning_study_6-30-20_final.pdf

City-Led Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- ✈ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- * Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2018: An action adapted from/carried over from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan

1. Modernize City operations for long-term efficiency and resilience. ✈

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Completion
a. Incorporate sustainability (long-term resource stewardship) and resilience (ability to adapt and recover from disruptions) into the design and evaluation of all City plans, policies, and capital projects. *	All City boards, commissions, departments	Undetermined	Ongoing
b. Conduct energy audits of City facilities and operations on a 10-year basis to identify cost-saving opportunities and inform capital upgrades. ✂	Administration Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
c. Transition City facilities and assets to more efficient and lower-emission energy sources where feasible. ✂	Administration Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
d. Continue to seek grant funding and technical assistance for projects that restore ecological functions, reduce flood risk, or enhance long-term resilience.	Administration Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Ongoing
e. Explore the use of local or alternative building materials to reduce building costs and improve resilience.	Administration Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)

2. Reduce risk from natural hazards through proactive siting and planning. ✈

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Completion
a. Relocate municipal buildings out of tsunami inundation zones where feasible and continue to consider hazard-prone or unsuitable areas in future development projects. ✂	Administration Department, Community Development Department, Public Works Department	\$11.4 M for Public Works facility (FY26 CIP)	Ongoing
b. Provide information and signage to educate residents and visitors about tsunami evacuation routes. ✂	Administration Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Ongoing
c. Incorporate landslide risk analysis into City planning using tools such as LiDAR mapping and geotechnical field assessments, with an emphasis on bluff areas most vulnerable to development and climate impacts. ✂	Community Development Department, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Completion
d. Continue to implement the Homer Beach Policy and Management Plan, including enforcement of existing regulations, establishment of future regulations, and public education to ensure Homer's beaches are maintained, preserved, protected, and enjoyed. ♦	Community Development Department, Planning Commission, Public Works Department, Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Committee, Police Department, City Administration	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
e. Evaluate current bluff stability best practices in City infrastructure design standards, including guidance for street extensions, trails, utilities, and Right of Way (ROW) projects near coastal or inland bluffs. Incorporate if needed.	Public Works Department	Undetermined	Long (5+ years)

3. Enhance natural drainage systems. ⚡

Action	Who	Estimated Costs	Target Completion
a. Update and adopt the City's Low-Impact Development Plan (also referred to as the Green Infrastructure – Stormwater Master Plan) to incorporate current data on erosion, water quality, and flooding. The updated plan should identify strategic opportunities for wetland preservation and enhancement as a form of natural stormwater management.	Community Development Department, Planning Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
b. Continue to incorporate green infrastructure approaches (e.g., rain gardens, vegetated buffers, permeable surfaces) into City-led projects.	Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)
c. Continue to integrate wetlands, riparian areas, and other natural drainage features into the City's capital planning, permitting review, and long-term infrastructure decisions.	Community Development Department, Planning Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Short (1-2 years)
d. Explore incentives, recognition programs, or voluntary guidelines that encourage sustainable development practices on private land.	Community Development Department, Planning Commission, Public Works Department	Undetermined	Medium (3-5 years)

Potential Partner-Led Strategies

4. Leverage partnerships to advance community-wide sustainability and resilience. ⚡

Policies Supporting Sustainability and Resilience in Other Chapters

The table below summarizes the location of related policies in other parts of the plan that support and contribute to Homer's sustainability and resilience goals. They are shown in order by chapter.

Topic	Chapter and Strategy Number of Related Policies					
	Land Use & Environment	Public Facilities & Services	Housing	Economic Development	Transportation	Governance
Title 21 and responsible growth	1, 2					
Title 21 and hazard mitigation	3					
Open space preservation	4					
Infill and sprawl reduction	5					
Green infrastructure / wetlands integration		3				
Hazard-based siting and resilience		5				
Long-range stormwater management plan		3				
Water and sewer management plan		6				
Food security				3		
Moderate, sustainable growth in tourism				9		
Transportation network sustainability					1, 3, 4	
Public-private partnerships						4
Engaging community about sustainability, stewardship						5