



# 2045 Homer Comprehensive Plan Update

Executive Summary: Public Hearing Draft, July 2025



[HomerCompPlanUpdate.com](http://HomerCompPlanUpdate.com)

## Plan Purpose

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

The 2045 Homer Comprehensive Plan serves as a community resource and guide for community leaders, residents, and other partners to protect what residents value most about Homer while enhancing the quality of life for current and future residents.

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

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



Land Use &  
Environment



Public Facilities &  
Services



Housing



Economic  
Development



Transportation



Governance



Sustainability &  
Resilience

### What is a comprehensive plan?

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

### What is a zoning code?

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



## Community Voices: Highlights from the Community Survey

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

Community, small town feel, family and friends

Natural beauty and scenery

Access to outdoor activities and ocean



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

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

Overall cost of living

Infrastructure and transportation challenges

Lack of affordable housing



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

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

Homer has retained its small-town character

Affordable housing and reasonable cost of living

Walkable, vibrant downtown



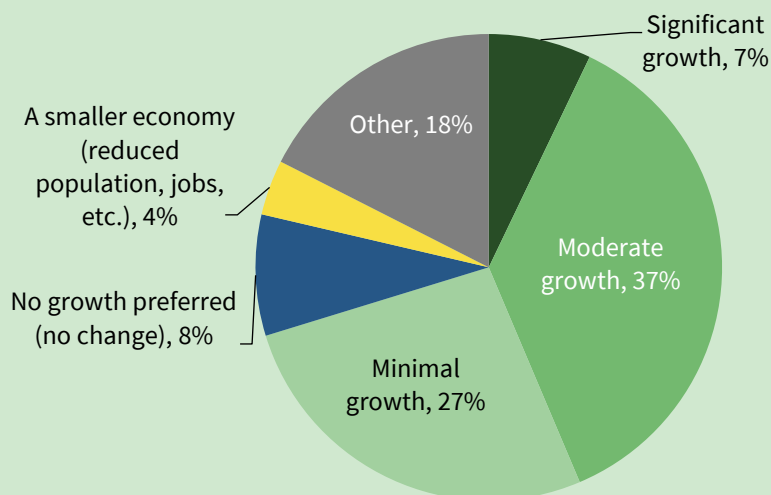
*"I came here to work a seasonal job... I stayed because Homer gave me the space and support to be who I am. I love this place deeply; I love the fun and quirky community that I've found."*

## Who responded to the 2024 Community Survey?

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

- 70% have lived in Homer more than a decade.
- 91% live in Homer year-round.
- 39% reside within the City of Homer limits.<sup>1</sup>

### Desired Growth



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

### Housing Highlights

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

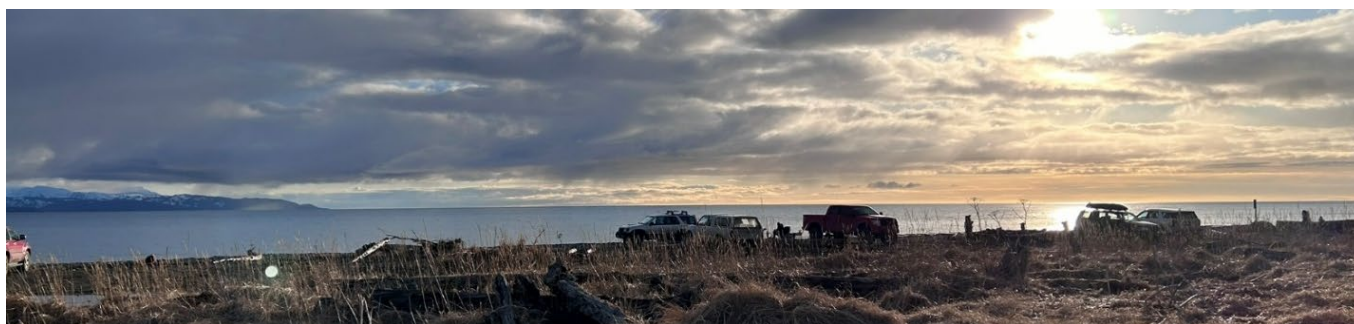
### Quality of Life

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

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

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

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



<sup>1</sup> The project team conducted a deeper review of many of the community survey results to check for variations by age, income, and location. There was minimal variance across these categories. [Click here](#) to view the comparison results.

## Homer by the Numbers

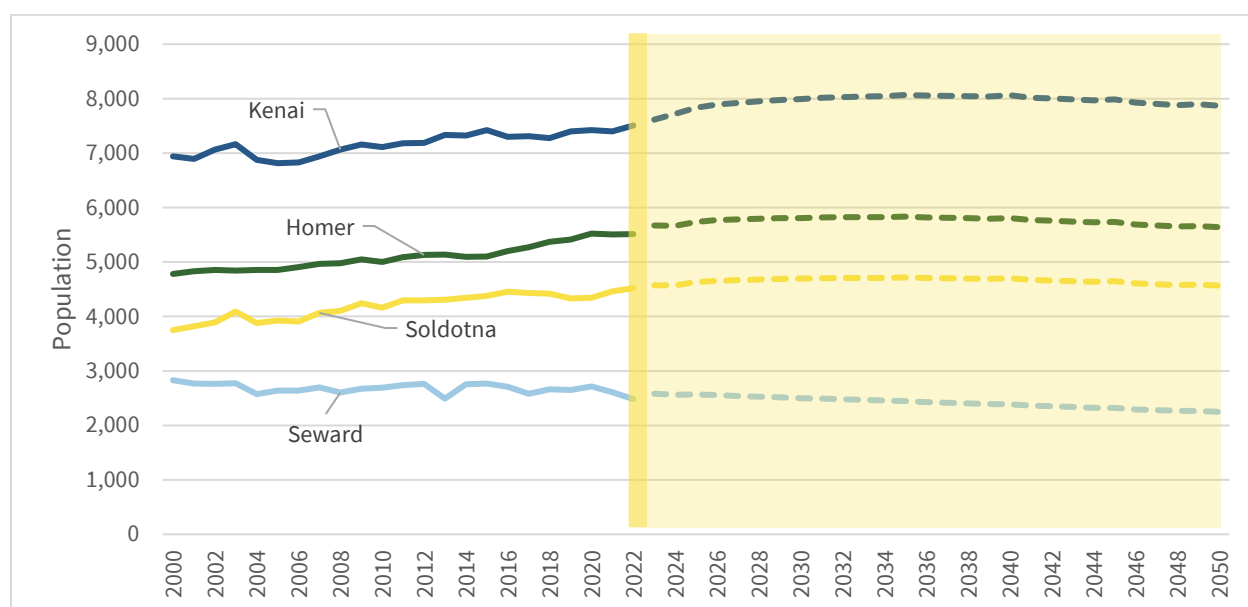
Where have we been? Where are we today? Where are we headed?

### Our People\*

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

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

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



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

\*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.

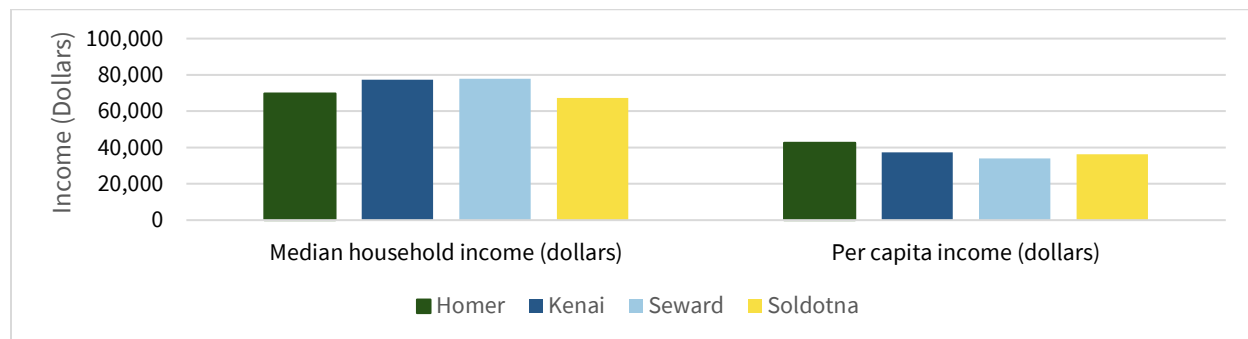
### At-A-Glance Homer History *(adapted from the 2018 Comprehensive Plan)*

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

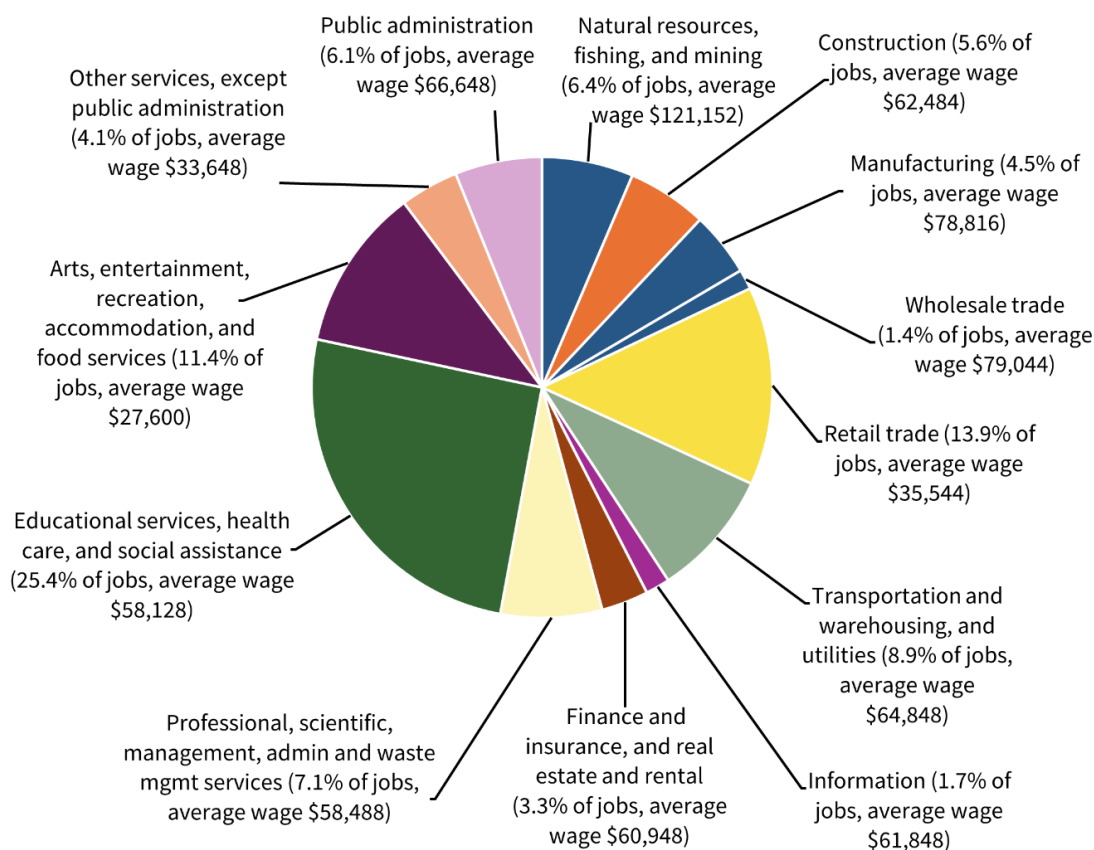
## Our Economy\*

Median annual household income (inflation-adjusted): \$69,757 <span style="color: green;">▲</span> 30%	Estimated gross earnings for commercial fishermen: \$117,873,969 <span style="color: green;">▲</span> 42%	Annual unemployment rate: 5.4% <span style="color: green;">▲</span> 43%	Top industry: Education, health care and social assistance
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### Income in Homer and Comparison Communities



### Percentage of Homer Workforce by Industry



Sources for pages 5 and 6: 2018 Homer Comprehensive Plan (History); Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2022; US Census Bureau American Community Survey: 2022, 2013 (ACS 5-Year Estimates), Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, 2022, and Northern Economic Analysis, 2024; ADOLWD Current Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages; Northern Economics Analysis, 2024. \*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. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.





Photo: Derek Mueller



## Land Use and Environment

### Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Moderate Growth Desired
- Modernized Zoning Is Essential for Attainable Housing, Safety, and Future Growth
- Equitable Access to Recreation and Open Space Enhances Community Well-Being
- Place-Based Planning Strengthens Homer's Distinct District and Regional Role

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

1. Implement a Future Land Use Map that guides future decisions about land use and growth.
2. Implement zoning reforms to support sustainable growth and attainable housing development.
3. Strategically align development regulations with natural hazard risks and land suitability to support safe, resilient, and responsible growth.
4. Protect and enhance green space in Homer to support habitat connectivity, recreational access, and community well-being.
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.

### 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 Land Use Map Categories

Future Land Use Map Primary Categories				
Category	Intended Land Uses	Application Areas	Use Examples	2018 Designation
<b>Downtown Mixed Use</b>	The urban core of Homer, allowing for a <b>mix of commercial, community, and high to medium density residential uses</b> (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
<b>Urban Residential</b>	<b>Medium density</b> 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
<b>Neighborhood Flex</b>	A mix of residential and compatible uses that emphasize <b>adaptability</b> —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
<b>Rural Residential</b>	<b>Low density</b> 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
<b>Commercial Mixed Use</b>	<b>Commercial and community uses</b> supported by residential uses within a walkable, human-scaled environment. <b>Flexibility for businesses is prioritized.</b>	Same as current zone areas for Gateway Business District	Mixed-use buildings, culture venues, retail, restaurants	Gateway Business District
<b>Medical Mixed Use</b>	The Medical District of Homer, allowing for <b>medical facilities and other mixed uses supportive of the district</b> , 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
<b>Airport</b>	<b>State-owned lands with multiple uses</b> associated with the Homer Airport where preferences might	Properties associated with the Homer Airport	Manufacturing and processing, worker housing,	Commercial 2 and Conservation

Future Land Use Map Primary Categories				
Category	Intended Land Uses	Application Areas	Use Examples	2018 Designation
	supersede City land use intent. Includes critical habitat and adjacent airport-related uses.	as designated by the 2001 Kenai Area Plan	airports, cold storage facilities	
<b>Light Industrial Mixed Use</b>	Predominately <b>commercial and industrial uses</b> that generally require direct motor vehicle access and potentially larger land areas. <b>Residential uses are accessory.</b>	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
<b>Marine Commercial</b>	<b>Water-dependent or related commercial uses</b> 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>
<b>Marine Industrial</b>	<b>Water-dependent industrial uses</b> that require direct marine access for their operation, direct motor vehicle access, and potentially larger land areas. <b>Commercial uses are accessory.</b>	Same as current zone areas for Marine Industrial	Fish processing, marine transportation, cold storage	<i>Not included</i>
<b>Open Space Recreation</b>	<b>Public lands</b> with <b>uses that promote public recreation and access opportunities</b> 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
<b>Conservation</b>	<b>Public and private lands</b> that <b>serve key environmental functions</b> , 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

### Future Land Use Map Overlays

Future Land Use Map Overlay Categories		
Category	Description	Application Areas
<b>Area Plan</b>	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
<b>Environmental Constraints</b>	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



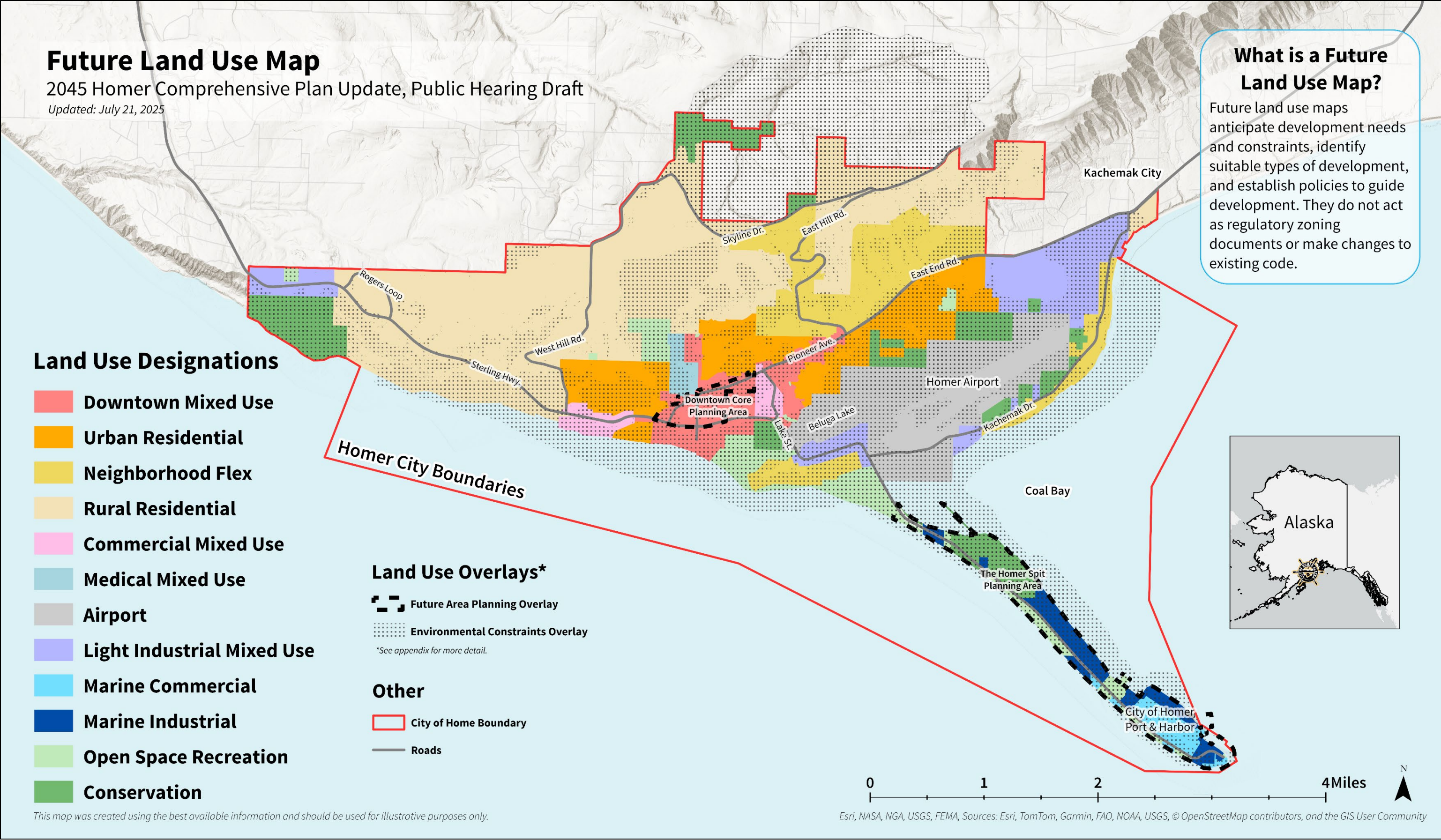






Photo: Derek Mueller



# Public Facilities and Services

## Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Reliable and Affordable Services
- Accessible, Maintained Community Facilities
- Rising Service Demands and Infrastructure Costs

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

1. Provide safe, year-round public facilities for residents of all ages and abilities.
2. Continue to provide high-quality water and sewer services within the City to meet current and anticipated demands.
3. Maintain and improve Port and Harbor infrastructure.
4. Develop new facilities to support access and safety on the Homer Spit.
5. Continue to meet the community’s public safety needs to ensure the safety of residents, visitors, and first responders.
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.

## 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.



## Housing

### Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Housing Supply Does Not Meet the Community Needs
- Rising Costs and Land Availability Limit Housing Development Opportunities
- Unattainable Housing and the High Cost of Living are Barriers to Economic Growth and Quality of Life

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.
<b>City-Led Strategies</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement zoning reforms to encourage attainable housing development for young people, families, seniors, and seasonal workers.</li> <li>2. Assess Homer's housing needs and maintain data collection.</li> </ol> <b>Potential Partner-Led Strategies</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Develop incentives and public-private partnerships for affordable and long-term housing development.</li> </ol>			



Photo: Art Koeninger



## Economic Development

### Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Population Expected to See Slight Growth
- Residents Value the Quality of Life but Struggle with Cost of Living, Housing
- Fishing and Tourism Industries Remain Strong Economic Drivers

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.

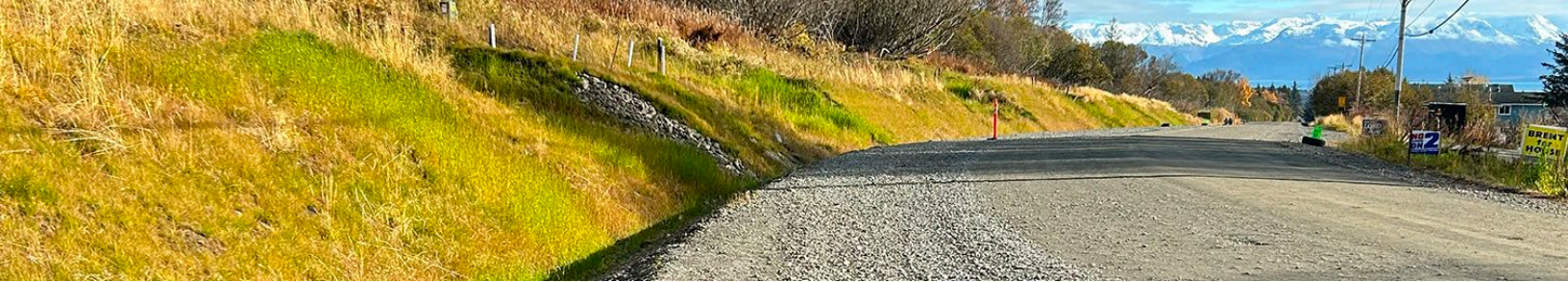
### City-Led Strategies

1. Invest in infrastructure that supports economic growth in key sectors.
2. Celebrate Homer's status as a vibrant hub for arts, culture, and community engagement.
3. Sustain Homer's role as an agricultural hub.

### 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.





## Transportation

### Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- A Transportation Hub for the Region
- Road and Sidewalk Maintenance is a Community Priority
- Residents Walk and Bike Year-Round
- Traffic Flow and Safety Concerns
- Continued Interest in Transit Opportunities

#### Goal A

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

#### Goal B

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

#### City-Led Strategies

1. Build or improve safe roadway and pathway access and connections to key locations.
2. Maintain a year-round transportation network.

#### 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.



## Governance

### Overarching Themes Guiding the Plan

- The City of Homer Faces Fiscal Uncertainty

### Other Themes Guiding the Plan

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

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

### City-Led Strategies

1. Develop a long-term fiscal plan that is proactive, sustainable, and responsive to short-term challenges and opportunities.
2. Diversify revenue streams to reduce dependence on sales and property taxes.
3. Conduct operational efficiency audits to identify cost savings and streamline municipal services.
4. Increase public participation in budget planning, improve access to financial data, and foster community discussions to ensure policies reflect the needs and priorities of residents both inside and outside City limits.

### 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.



Photo: Kyra Wagner



## Sustainability and Resilience

### Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Natural and Climate-Driven Hazards Increase Risks to People and Infrastructure
- Sustainability and Resilience Are Core to City Planning and Investments
- Open Space and Natural Lands Support Long-Term Community Well-Being

#### Goal A

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

#### Goal B

Encourage Homer residents to be proud stewards of their community and the spectacular natural setting around them.

### City-Led Strategies

1. Modernize City operations for long-term efficiency and resilience.
2. Reduce risk from natural hazards through proactive siting and planning.
3. Enhance natural drainage systems.

### Potential Partner-Led Strategies

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