

Cordova Comprehensive Plan Update Executive Summary, December 2019



Photos courtesy of the Cordova Chamber of Commerce and Agnew::Beck Consulting

Our Future Direction

The Cordova Comprehensive Plan...

...will serve as a community resource and guide.

...offers recommendations to protect what residents value about Cordova while enhancing the quality of life for current and future residents.

...is a community-driven tool that will provide direction to community leaders, residents, funders and other partners.

Why is the plan relevant to Cordova residents?

The updated plan will guide decision-making on land use, housing, economic development, fiscal health, public facilities and services, recreation, transportation, wellness and other topics.

The plan identifies the community's desired future direction (long-term goals) and policies (strategies and actions) that ensure progress toward a shared vision.

The plan will send a message to regional, state and federal partners about Cordova's priorities, and how the community is taking action.

The planning process engages residents in shaping Cordova's future, providing opportunities to discuss ideas and concerns. It broadly answers:

- ❖ How can we protect the characteristics we value, such as the schools, the harbor, and access to the outdoors?
- ❖ How can we address the challenges that make it hard to live here, such as the high cost of living and limited transportation access?
- ❖ What are our priorities? How can we work together to achieve them?

For more information and to view the full plan, visit

www.CordovaCompPlan.com

What We Value + Find Most Challenging About Life in Cordova

From the Cordova Comprehensive Plan Update Community Survey, Fall 2018 (327 responses)

What do you value most about Cordova?

(top 10)

#1	Sense of community, small-town feel	67%
#2	Access to outdoor recreation	65%
#3	Safe and family-friendly	61%
#4	Abundance of natural resources	54%
#5	Access to subsistence opportunities	52%
#6	Beautiful landscapes	49%
#7	Quality schools	35%
#8	Volunteers, commitment to community	24%
#9	Support for local businesses	21%
#10	History and culture	19%



What are Cordova's biggest challenges?

(top 10)

#1	High cost of living	83%
#2	Lack of affordable, quality housing	54%
#3	Limited ferry access	53%
#4	Lack of economic diversity, dependence on single industry	40%
#5	Aged harbor	38%
#6	Limited wintertime employment opportunities	32%
#7	Difficult to operate, maintain and replace public facilities	31%
#8	Limited land base and options for growth	31%
#9	Limited tourism infrastructure and activities	22%
#10	Small workforce, limited training and certification options	18%



OUR VISION

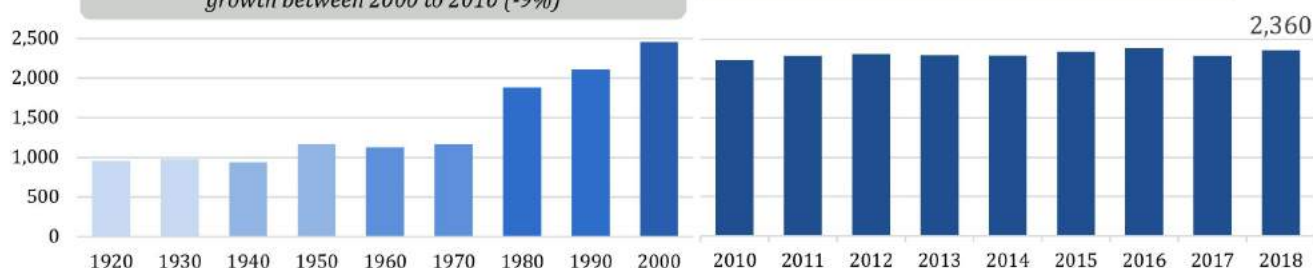
Cordova is a vibrant, livable fishing town known for its outdoor recreation, beautiful landscapes, close-knit community, diverse small businesses and cultural heritage.



OUR POPULATION

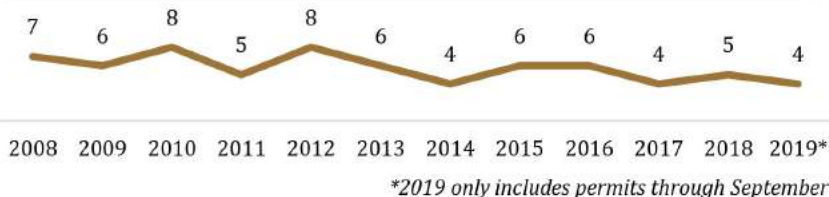
Rapid growth between 1970 and 2000 (110%); declining growth between 2000 to 2010 (-9%)

Some growth between 2010 and 2018 (5%)



OUR HOUSING

An average of 6 new residential construction permits annually since 2008



1,215 total housing units

1,034 are occupied

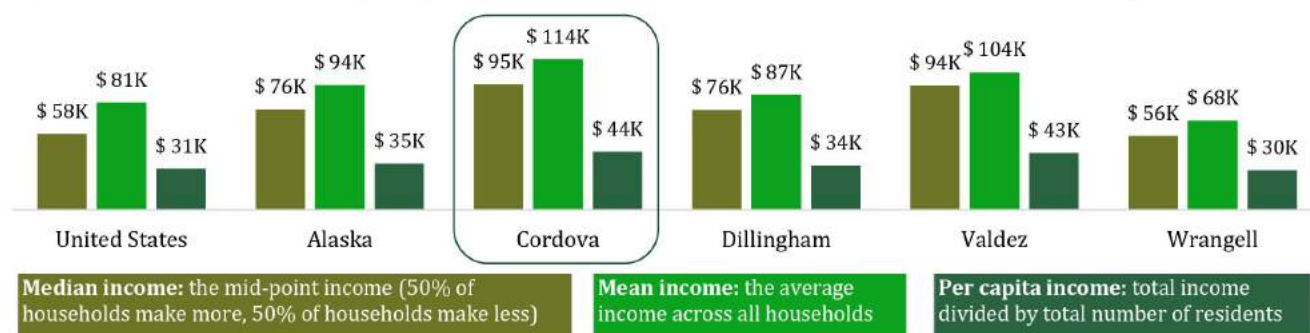
Homeowner vacancy rate is 0.1%;
rental vacancy rate is 12.4%

Homes are valued higher than
similar coastal Alaska communities

	Alaska	Cordova	Dillingham	Valdez	Wrangell
Median home value	\$261,900	\$319,500	\$254,900	\$201,600	\$194,000
Homeowners spending 30% or more of income on mortgage	27.7%	15.3%	23.5%	21.6%	29.5%
Renters spending more than 30% of income on rent	45.6%	13.9%	32.9%	55.7%	45.8%

OUR INCOME

Cordova's median, mean and per capita incomes are all higher than similar coastal Alaska communities





Key issues: ♦ limited land availability ♦ outdated zoning ♦ high development costs ♦ challenging terrain ♦
♦ balancing growth, change and community values ♦ no future land use map ♦

Goals	Strategies
<p>A. Establish policies that better guide land use to promote affordable, quality housing and expand economic opportunities.</p> <p>B. Protect and improve Cordova's character; its downtown, neighborhoods, waterfront and outdoor access.</p> <p>C. Sustain the health of Cordova's natural systems.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement a future land use map that guides future decisions about land use and growth. 2. Update and improve the city's Title 18 zoning and Title 17 subdivision codes to better respond to existing and future issues and opportunities. 3. Update local zoning maps to better align with the future land use map, using the established public review process. 4. Work with private landowners to explore options to expand the supply of land available for residential development. 5. Develop and apply land use policy tools to promote economic development priorities. 6. Maintain the quality of Cordova's natural environment. 7. Establish incentives to encourage property owners to clean up lots and reduce junk yards. 8. Encourage property owners to learn about the historic significance of lands and buildings and, as appropriate, work with the Cordova Historic Preservation Commission to recognize and preserve cultural resources.



Sample Actions to Support Implementation:

- Revise the city's zoning code and subdivision code to remove conflicts and address ambiguities with other city code.
- Review city land use codes with developers, builders, and financiers to determine how to better encourage redevelopment and expansion of quality residential, commercial and mixed-use projects.
- Explore costs, benefits and funding strategies to expand filled tideland areas, including the shipyard and South Fill.

How Will We Measure Success? *How the community will track progress on land use goals:*

↑ construction permits	↑ land use policies contribute to the success of housing, economic development and quality of life goals	↑ redeveloped properties in the core area	↑ comprehensive plan is used to guide all land use decisions
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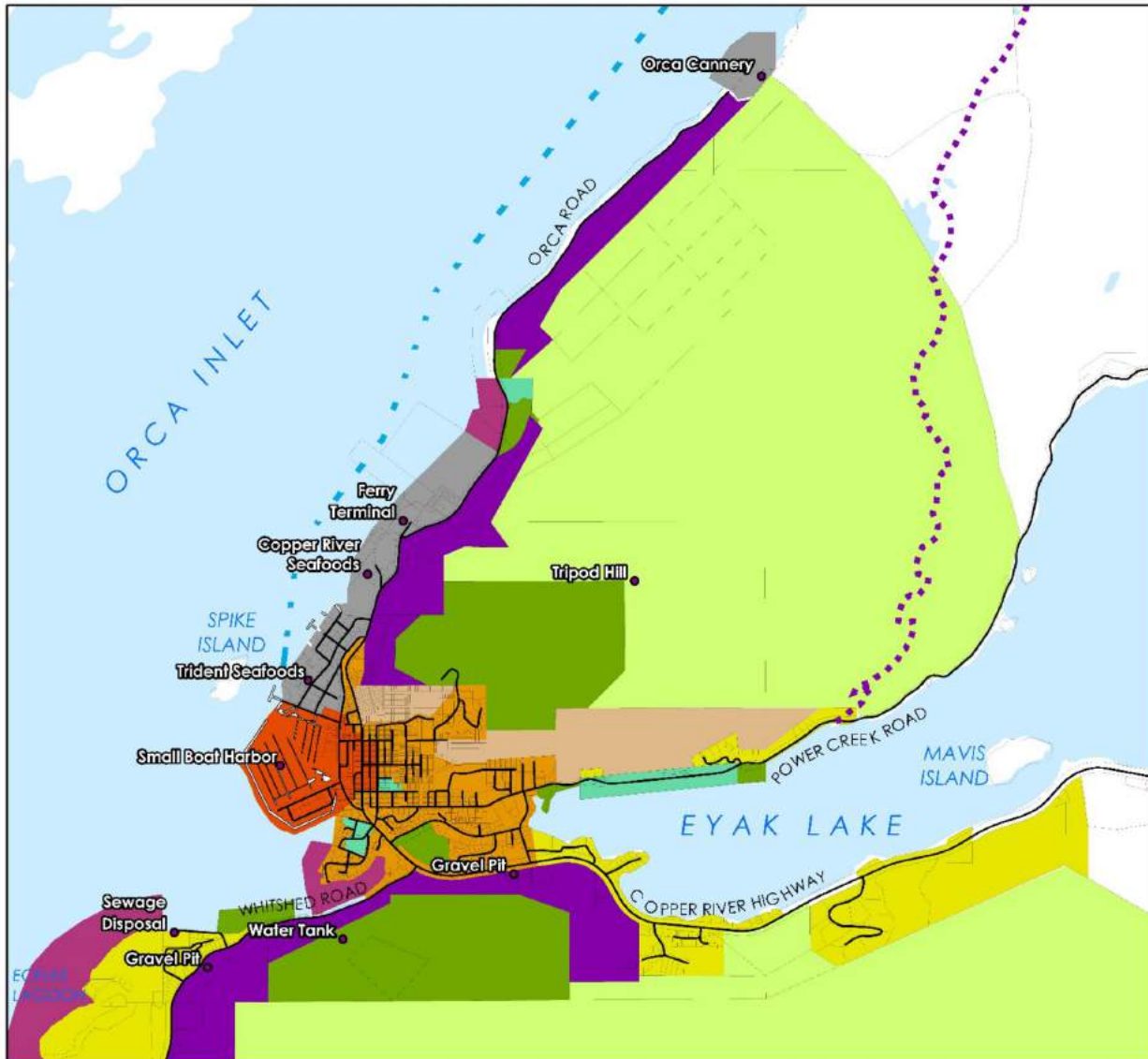
"I love the people, the slow pace of life, the physical closeness and ability to get by without a car if I needed."

Future Land Use Map Categories

Land Use Category	Intended Land Uses	Application Area
Community Core	Areas for continuing infill and densification, with a focus on mixed use development, walkability, redevelopment and policies for compatibility between differing uses. This is the primary business district for Cordova.	Historic downtown, harbor, South Fill and waterfront
In-Town Residential	Predominately residential with compatible public, commercial uses; an area for infill and densification, including neighborhoods that currently have public water, sewer, and other utilities.	Neighborhoods within reasonable walking distance (approximately ½ mile) from the Community Core
Outlying Residential	Predominately residential uses although other uses allowed; generally applied in areas with limited public water and sewer service and mixed sewer and septic.	Existing residential and other use properties in areas adjacent to the Community Core and In-Town Residential
Hillside Residential	Undeveloped, physically-constrained property intended for future residential use, in locations requiring rigorous subdivision, road and utility development to respond to the area's physical constraints.	Properties with significant physical development constraints on predominantly city-owned tracts, in areas adjacent to the Community Core and In-Town Residential
Rural Mixed Use	Variety of uses including residential, commercial, lodging and industrial with minimal rules on allowed uses.	Low density areas outside current/ anticipated utility service areas; generally, in areas on the outskirts of the city such as Whitshed Road, the airport, Six-Mile
In-Town Mixed Use	Areas that require further public engagement to determine best use, which could include residential, commercial or other developed uses.	City-owned and private land, typically in areas with strategic locations but significant physical development challenges
Industrial/ Commercial Waterfront	Industrial and commercial uses that benefit from or require a waterfront location.	Existing and proposed developed waterfront areas
Low Intensity/ Conservation Waterfront	Waterfront areas with identified conservation value, where development will be minimized.	Select locations that adjoin current or anticipated development areas including Shelter Cove, Odiak Slough
Community Facilities	Large parcels used for community and non-profit services and facilities.	Limited to larger tracts of land: community uses on smaller lots are not included
Parks & Developed Open Space	Large parcels used for developed, active recreation.	Ski hill, larger city parks
Watershed, Dispersed Recreation, Open Space	Public lands intended to remain in a largely natural state, providing protection for watersheds, scenic viewsheds and other valuable open space functions; also includes dispersed recreation such as trails and parks and some low-density residential development.	City, state and USFS upland properties

Future Land Use Map for Cordova

This future land use map identifies broad future intentions for the location and intensity of land use within the City of Cordova boundaries. The map aligns with existing or desired future use and is intended to support the community's vision. (NOTE: for a larger scale map showing the full extent of the City of Cordova, see the full plan).



— Roads - - - Trails ▭ Parcels — Marine Highway Water

FUTURE LAND USE

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Community Core | In-Town Mixed Use | Community Facilities |
| In-Town Residential | Industrial/Commercial Waterfront | Parks & Developed Open Space |
| Outlying Residential | Low Intensity/Conservation Waterfront | Watershed, Dispersed Recreation & Open Space |
| Hillside Residential | | |
| Rural Mixed Use | | |

Produced for the City of Cordova
by Agnew::Beck and PDC Engineers, 2019

Data Sources: City of Cordova, State of Alaska, USFS

Cordova Comprehensive Plan FINAL Executive Summary, Adopted December 2019



0 1,500 3,000 6,000 Feet

Projection: NAD 1983,
State Plane Alaska 3 FIPS 5003 Feet

Page 6



Key issues: ♦ lack of affordable housing ♦ high construction costs ♦ fluctuating seasonal housing demands ♦

Goals	Strategies
A. Increase the supply of affordable, quality housing that addresses the needs of all residents.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pursue options for increasing the availability of affordable, quality housing. 2. Create additional senior housing options that allow aging residents to stay in Cordova.



Sample Actions to Support Implementation:

- Conduct a Cordova housing needs assessment to identify community housing gaps and potential opportunities to increase the availability of affordable, quality housing.
- Create and implement new housing policy tools such as a property tax abatement program for new or redevelopment projects.
- Expand access to development capital through partnerships with lending institutions and locally-generated funds.
- Explore public-private partnerships with large landowners, regional agencies and statewide housing organizations to strategically plan for and develop affordable, quality residential subdivisions with utilities.

How Will We Measure Success? *How the community will track progress on housing goals:*

↑ housing needs are quantified and strategies developed/implemented to strategically meet those needs

↑ new residential construction permits

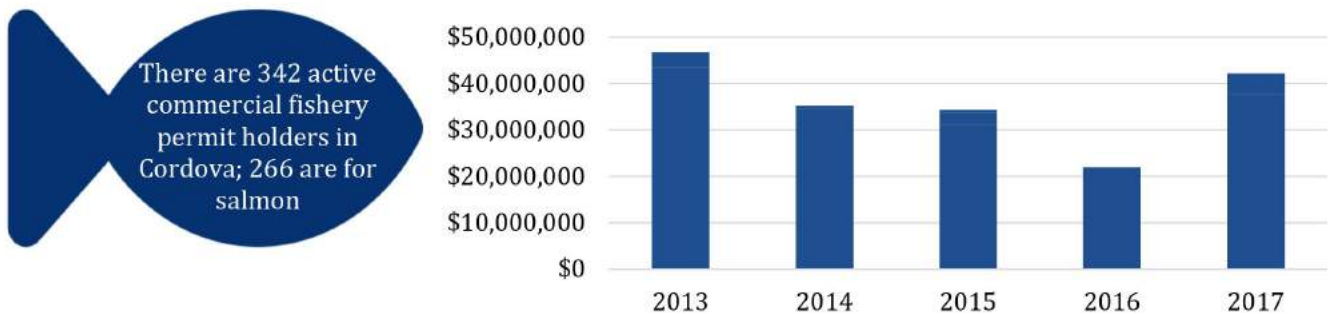
↑ number of ADA-compliant housing units

↑ public-private partnerships and completed projects

"The most disappointing thing I see happen in Cordova is when you have people who love the community, their jobs, their friends, but end up moving away due to lack of quality and affordable housing for their family or land to develop their own family home. Homes are important and Cordova doesn't have much to offer."

OUR ECONOMY

Earnings by Cordova's resident commercial fishermen were down in 2016 due to a weak year of salmon runs but increased to \$42 million in 2017. Most revenue comes from salmon.



Top Industries by Number of Employees

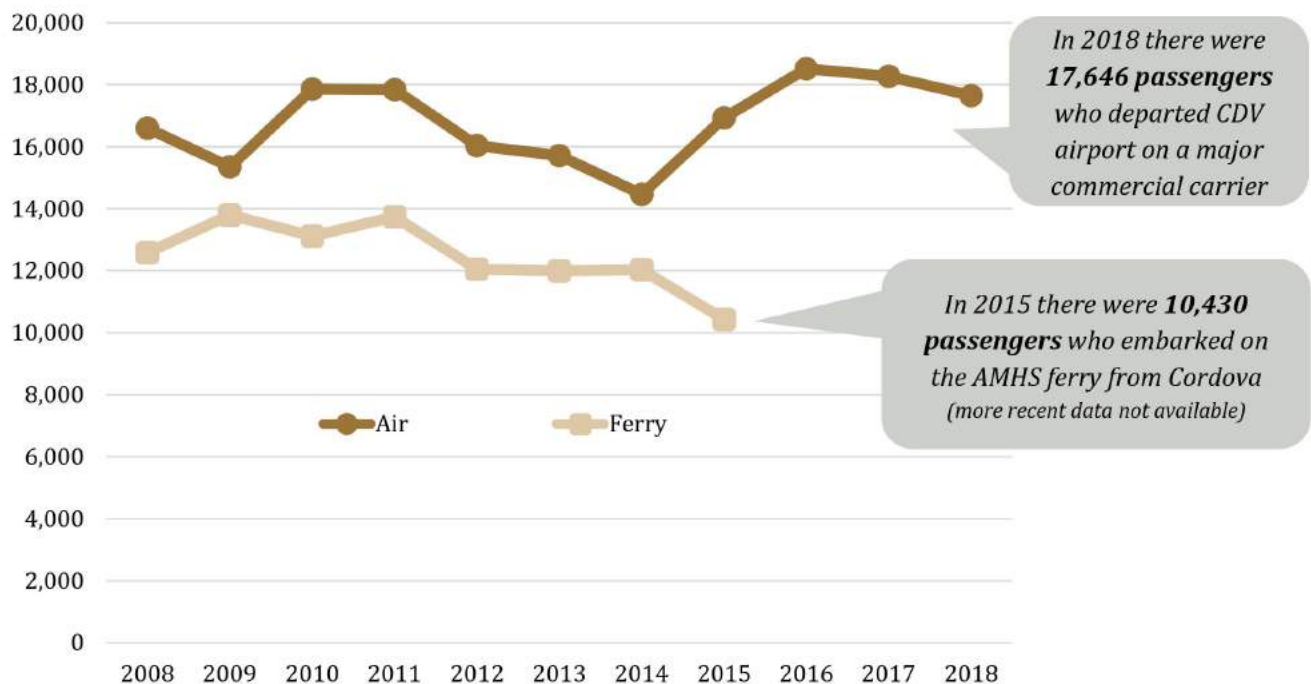
24% Local government (includes school, city, tribal staff)

20% Trade, transportation and utilities (includes retail)

16% Manufacturing (includes seafood processing)

Excludes federal workers, military and self-employed individuals, many of whom are fishermen.

VISITATION TO CORDOVA





Key issues: ♦ small population ♦ reliance on fishing industry ♦ high cost of living ♦ limited space for growth ♦

Goals	Strategies
<p>A. Support and sustain Cordova's seafood industry.</p> <p>B. Diversify Cordova's economy, with a focus on businesses with year-round employment.</p> <p>C. Support the growth of existing and new local businesses.</p> <p>D. Pursue economic growth while preserving natural resources and characteristics that residents value.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustain and expand maritime services. 2. Expand wintertime fisheries and value-added processing. 3. Promote small-scale tourism and recreation, with a focus on improvements that benefit both visitors and residents. 4. Incentivize and support business development. 5. Increase the number of year-round jobs. 6. Expand vocational and technical education opportunities. 7. Develop a strong business district and revitalize First Street.



Sample Actions to Support Implementation:

- Continue to update and implement the Harbor Master Plan with a phased approach and potential funding sources for long-term harbor upgrades.
- Work with Alaska Department of Fish and Game to identify and open new wintertime fisheries close to Cordova.
- Offer business counseling and training through the Cordova Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Alaska Small Business Development Center.
- Establish city-sponsored incentives for demolition and/or redevelopment of aging properties in key areas, such as tax abatement or a revolving loan program.

How Will We Measure Success? *How the community will track progress on economic development goals:*

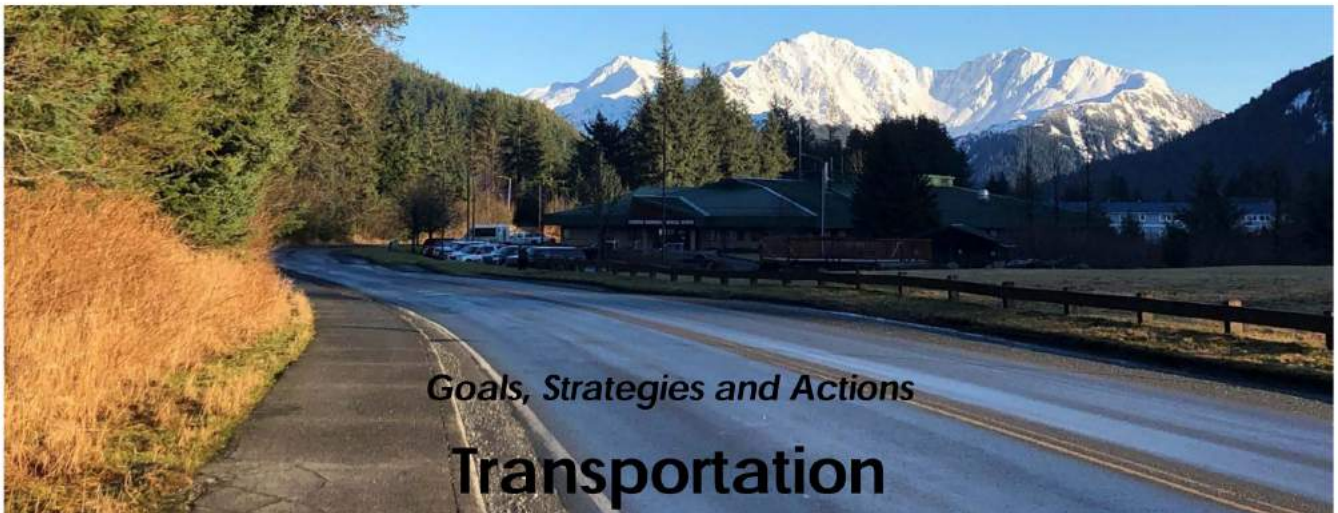
↑ Cordova business licenses

↑ sales tax receipts

↑ residents employed year-round

↑ commercial fishing earnings by Cordova permit holders

"Cordova is a wonderful community because it is small, because of the strong fishing economy, and because of the vibrant people who would not fit in anywhere else."



Key issues: ♦ limited access to/from the community ♦ lack of bicycle and pedestrian connectivity ♦
♦ aging road infrastructure ♦

Goals	Strategies
<p>A. Secure reliable and affordable air and ferry service.</p> <p>B. Maintain, preserve, and operate a safe and functional community transportation network that accommodates desired future change and growth.</p> <p>C. Provide a network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities that are usable year-round by people of all abilities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify options for reliable and affordable air and ferry service. 2. Rehabilitate existing streets to meet current standards and reduce overall life-cycle costs through effective maintenance and preservation programs. 3. Provide an efficient network of travel route options for pedestrians and bicycles. 4. Facilitate future expansion and connectivity of the roadway system within city limits. 5. Establish additional transit options.



Sample Actions to Support Implementation:

- Advocate for continued Alaska Marine Highway System ferry service with a reasonable fee structure.
- Explore options and advocate for increases in affordable passenger and freight air service.
- Develop a design criteria manual to identify standard details for road design, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, drainage, and lighting.
- Develop a non-motorized plan and prioritize bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

How Will We Measure Success? *How the community will track progress on transportation goals:*

↑ increase levels of ferry and air service

↑ miles of road improvements

↑ residents who bike or walk to work

↑ miles of new and/or improved sidewalks

"Cordova is difficult to get to which is one of the reasons why many people live here. It is off the beaten path, in a beautiful place...But with this comes additional challenges. When the ferry or airlines cannot support the needs of the community, people may begin to look for opportunities elsewhere."



Goals, Strategies and Actions

Quality of Life

Key issues: ♦ high cost of living ♦ high cost, limited availability of health and long-term care services ♦ threats to education budgets and aging facilities ♦ geographic isolation, vulnerability to economic and environmental disruptions ♦

Goals	Strategies
<p>A. Enhance and preserve Cordova's indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities.</p> <p>B. Provide access to quality, affordable health care that meets the needs of all residents.</p> <p>C. Sustain Cordova's excellent schools that prepare youth for a successful future.</p> <p>D. Achieve resiliency through continued hazard mitigation and emergency preparedness planning.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand and improve Cordova's indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities. 2. Ensure quality and affordable health care. 3. Support local schools. 4. Implement public safety and hazard mitigation priorities. 5. Increase local food production. 6. Conduct additional research on how climate change may impact Cordova and the surrounding environment and develop adaptation strategies that anticipate future changes and challenges. 7. Encourage resident participation and engagement in local governance, decision-making and volunteerism. 8. Support Cordova's thriving cultural and art organizations, activities and traditions.



Sample Actions to Support Implementation:

- Maintain and expand Cordova's trail system.
- Increase collaboration between Cordova Community Medical Center (CCMC) and Ilanka Clinic to maximize resident benefits while keeping costs under control.
- Better utilize the Cordova Hazard Mitigation Plan as a planning and decision-making tool for future development.
- Establish a community garden site.

How Will We Measure Success? *How the community will track progress on quality of life goals:*

↑ miles of new and connected trails

↑ increased access to care and CCMC financial sustainability

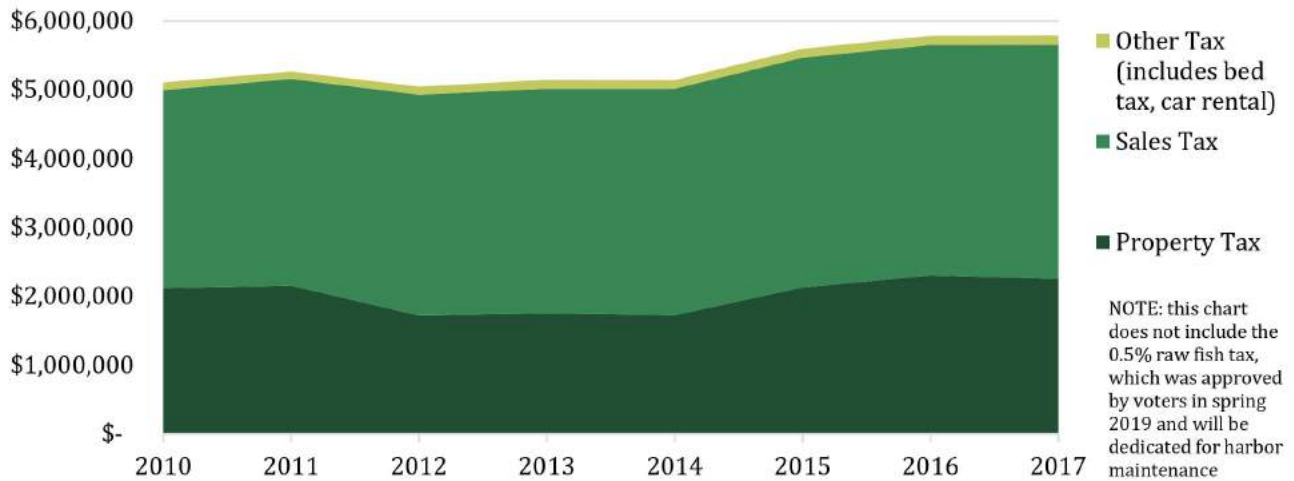
↑ funding for education

↑ neighborhoods participated in emergency preparedness training

"There are only so many possibilities and options available in such a small and isolated community. There are many benefits to Cordova being so small. But it can be a challenge to afford to live here and always provide the best care for my family."

LOCAL TAXES

More than half the city's tax revenues come from its 6% sales tax; property taxes (mill rate: 11.05 mills) are also a big contributor; smaller amounts come from the city's bed tax and car rental tax



Between 2010-2017, the average tax per capita in Cordova was \$2,350 per person



Cordova closely matches the average tax burden for Alaska municipalities



Executive Summary data sources: **POPULATION** 1920-2010 from the U.S. Census; 2011-2018 from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section. **HOUSING** new construction permits from the City of Cordova; home values, mortgage/rent spending, total units and vacancy rates from the American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2013-2017. **INCOME** median, mean and per capita incomes from the American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2013-2017. **ECONOMY** commercial fishing permit holders and earnings from the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission; top industries by number of employees from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section. **VISITATION** Air passenger counts from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics; ferry passenger counts from the Alaska Marine Highway System. **TAXATION** (this page) all data from the Alaska Taxable Database.



Goals, Strategies and Actions Fiscal Health, Public Facilities and Services

Key issues: ♦ declining state funding ♦ small population ♦ high service costs ♦ aging infrastructure ♦

Goals	Strategies
<p>A. Provide efficient, effective, fiscally responsible services, infrastructure and facilities.</p> <p>B. Work towards increasingly self-supporting, sustainable government, with less reliance on state and federal funding.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish long-term plans and funding sources for maintenance and replacement of public facilities and infrastructure. 2. Identify and upgrade known priority facilities, infrastructure and services. 3. Reduce energy costs and reduce reliance on non-renewable energy resources. 4. Improve waste management practices. 5. Develop greater revenue capacity to support anticipated needs. 6. Develop budgeting practices that provide more consistency from year to year.



Sample Actions to Support Implementation:

- Develop a facilities plan that identifies and plans for short, medium and long-term needs, including establishment of repair/replacement plans with dedicated funding sources.
- Plan for the construction of a new public safety building.
- Invest in training and skill development so local contractors and city staff can better implement necessary utility and facility system repairs and maintenance.
- Create an updated Cordova Water and Sewer Master Plan, with a focus on securing expanded and more reliable year-round water supply.

How Will We Measure Success? *How the community will track progress on fiscal health, public facilities, services goals:*

↑ repair and replacement plans for all critical facilities

↑ properties connected to city water, sewer and other utilities

↓ cost of energy

↓ annual trash-related bear conflicts

Cordova is a unique and beautiful place. I hope the city can successfully maintain the infrastructure without overburdening the local economy.."

City of Cordova FY2019 Budget Snapshot

Enterprise: Where the Money Comes From

Harbor revenues	\$1,492,907
Refuse revenues	\$1,143,064
Sewer revenues	\$828,114
Water revenues	\$762,643
Odiak Camper Park revenues	\$100,000

Note: Revenues come primarily from user fees, permits

Enterprise: Where the Money Goes

Harbor	\$1,454,163
Refuse	\$1,096,870
Sewer	\$828,114
Water	\$754,643
Odiak Camper Park	\$97,370

Operations
Other

Other
\$174,065

Capital and Grant Purchases

\$423,745

More than half of these purchases are with grant funds for fire and EMS equipment

Amount in City's Permanent Fund
\$7,761,018

General Fund: Where the Money Comes From

Sales tax, 6%	\$3,300,000
Property tax (Mill rate: 11.05 mills)	\$2,545,433
Shared revenue raw fish taxes	\$1,073,000
State reimbursement	\$1,039,543
National Forest Receipts	\$595,000
Department revenues	\$504,886
Transfers from enterprise funds	\$461,491
Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)	\$448,022
Leases & rents	\$294,200
Shared revenue utility co-op funds	\$230,000
Other	\$571,853

These are shared by the state, and are separate from the local 0.5% raw fish tax approved by voters in spring 2019

General Fund: Where the Money Goes

Transfers to other entities	\$2,630,287
Long term debt service (bonds)	\$1,988,758
Administration, finance, public works	\$1,206,213
Law enforcement	\$898,968
Street maintenance	\$873,624
Information services	\$816,355
Recreation	\$687,298
Equipment and facility maintenance	\$613,268
Fire & EMS	\$351,599
Jail operations	\$251,967
Non-departmental	\$264,013
Other	\$481,078

Includes Cordova School District, Cordova Medical Center, Cordova Chamber of Commerce, etc

Includes legal fees, insurance, audit, etc.



To view more detailed budget information, visit the City of Cordova's Document Library: <https://www.cityofcordova.net/document-central>

Source: City of Cordova

