

**Mayor**

*David Allison*

**Council Members**

*Tom Bailer*

*Cathy Sherman*

*Kasey Kinsman*

*Melina Meyer*

*Anne Schaefer*

*Kristin Carpenter*

*Ken Jones*

**City Manager**

*Helen Howarth*

**City Clerk**

*Susan Bourgeois*

**Deputy Clerk**

*Tina Hammer*

**Student Council**

*summer vacation*

**City Council Work Session  
May 17, 2023 @ 12:00 pm  
Cordova Center Community Rooms  
Agenda**

**A. Call to order**

**B. Roll call**

Mayor David Allison, Council members Tom Bailer, Cathy Sherman, Kasey Kinsman, Melina Meyer, Anne Schaefer, Kristin Carpenter, and Ken Jones

**C. Work Session topics**

1. City of Cordova Housing Shortage/Difficulties options, strategies, incentives
  - a. City Planner Memo/Intro..... (page 1)
  - b. 2019 Comprehensive Plan..... (page 4)
  - c. 2015 Official Zoning Map..... (page 59)
  - d. Zoning Map Excerpts..... (page 60)
  - e. Walkshed Map..... (page 67)
  - f. City Attorney Housing Tax Incentives Memo..... (page 68)

**D. Adjournment**

If you have a disability that makes it difficult to attend city-sponsored functions, you may contact 424-6200 for assistance.

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**AGENDA ITEM 1**  
**City Council Work Session Date: 5/17/23**  
**CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION FORM**

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**FROM:** Kevin Johnson, City Planner

**DATE:** 5/17/23

**ITEM:** Housing and Development Incentives

**NEXT STEP:** Discuss and Direct Staff on How to Proceed

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  X   INFORMATION

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**I. REQUEST OR ISSUE:** City Council has asked staff to explore different options and strategies to determine what the City can do in its efforts to address the housing needs. While reviewing and exploring options, keep in mind what the goals, policies and strategies identified in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan (attached). The Comprehensive Plan is the cities guiding document and any changes we pursue or direction we take should be in line with the Plan.

**II. RECOMMENDED ACTION / NEXT STEP:** The City Council has tasked the staff with exploring different options and strategies to determine what the City can do to address the housing needs of our community. Staff has worked to come up with an initial list of possible changes to our zoning code, subdivision code, and potential financial incentives that could encourage the development of more affordable housing.

**III. FISCAL IMPACTS:** No fiscal impacts at this time. Future fiscal impacts will be determined based on what strategies staff pursues and their impacts will be presented at that time.

**IV. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** A lack of all forms of housing has been identified as an issue by the Comp Plan, City Council, and other community organizations. Staff has identified three main sources that contribute to this problem.

1. Lack of developable land. Most undeveloped land is encumbered by steep topography, wetlands, streams, or other physical / environmental challenges. The cost to grade roads and a building pad can be prohibitively expensive.
2. Cost of construction. In addition to the cost of land, the cost of getting supplies to Cordova adds additional financial constraints.
3. Lack of developers / contractors. Cordova has a limited number of contractors who have full workloads as it is. Also, getting larger out of town developers is difficult as there is limited upside for them in building only one or two houses at a time.

While staff does not believe that the city's development codes (zoning code, building code, subdivision code) are a major obstacle to development, they do believe there are many items that can be added, removed, or modified. These changes would be best targeted in areas where density already exists or is expected and where there are existing improvements such as roadways and utilities.

#### Zoning / Subdivision:

- Review and update Official Zoning Map  
The 2019 Comprehensive Plan identifies the need to update the Official Zoning Map to align with the Future Land Use Map (pg. 19-23 Comp Plan). To maximize the effects of any zoning code changes we should consider if the existing zoning designations and boundaries are appropriate. We should examine focusing infill development around the existing roadways and utilities like the “downtown core” and the areas immediately adjacent such as within a 5 to 10-minute walkshed.
- Add Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) codes.  
Permit ADUs without a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). Current code allows for up to a triplex in most zones but does not allow them in separate structures without a CUP.
- Modify minimum parking requirements.  
Current code requires two spaces per dwelling unit. When trying to develop multifamily homes, parking space can quickly add up and eat into the usable space of a lot. Consider reducing or eliminating requirement depending on proximity to downtown (5 to 10-minute walkshed). There is currently no parking requirement for Central Business District (First / Second Street area)
- Clarify height restrictions.  
Current code typically says something along the lines of “two- and one-half stories not to exceed 35 feet” or something similar depending on zoning district. Suggest removing the number of stories and allow for however many stories the building code would allow to fit within the height limit.
- Reduce minimum lot size in certain zones.  
Allowing for smaller lot sizes could allow for increased density which can be targeted to areas where appropriate. This could make sense in the areas around the downtown core as it is already denser than areas farther away from town.
- Create regulations for Planned Unit Developments (PUD) or Cottage Homes
  - Planned Unit Developments could look something like the Eccles Lagoon neighborhood. Create regulations that allow for communal parking area that then has ATV trail systems to get to people's properties. This could work well for these large chunks of undeveloped hillsides where putting in traditional roadways is cost prohibitive.
  - Cottage Home communities typically consist of small, detached homes that are clustered together around shared open spaces and common areas. These developments look to dwelling count while still providing outdoor open spaces

#### Financial Incentives / Assistance:

- Property tax exemptions and reductions.  
Under certain circumstances cities can implement programs that allow for either exempting a portion of or all property tax for a certain time period for new development and redevelopment. Typically, the amount of the exemption and length of the exemption is tied to the type of development (number of dwellings provided, ownership type, inclusion of “affordable” units, etc.). While the city may collect

less property taxes in the short term, the city would gain in the long term since once the exemption sunsets the value of the development will be much higher than the undeveloped or underdeveloped property was previously.

- **Reimbursement Programs**

The cost of the installation of utilities and roadways is often one of the largest hurdles in development here in Cordova. Programs can be established that allow for someone to install roads and utilities within public ROWs and easements and be reimbursed for a portion of those costs. The money for these repayments often comes from the creation of “special improvement districts”. These districts would be made up of the properties that would benefit from the installation of these improvements. These properties would be charged an additional cost on their property taxes that would be used to reimburse the person who installed the improvements. The installation of these improvements then has an added-on development incentive by making it easier and more likely that the other properties adjacent to these improvements would be developed.

- **Grants and Subsidies**

The city could establish a program to provide direct financial assistance to those wanting to building homes in our community. This assistance could be focused on supporting a specific aspect of the development like site preparation, utility installation, construction materials, surveys, inspections, etc. or could be used more broadly. Funding for a program like this could come from a source such as the short-term rental tax, as short-term rentals take away from the long-term housing stock. This could be seen as a way of balancing out the housing deficit that short-term rentals create on our long-term housing stock. The city could also place restrictions on projects that receive these funds to not allow for the dwellings to be used as a short-term rental for a set number of years.

**V. LEGAL ISSUES:** No legal impacts currently. Future legal issues will be determined based on what strategies staff pursues

**VI. SUMMARY AND ALTERNATIVES:** There are multiple options the city could pursue in trying to spur housing development in the community. These options range from zoning and subdivision code changes to providing financial incentives and assistance. Staff hopes that following this workshop the Council will be able to direct staff on which efforts to focus our resources on.

**VII. ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Comprehensive Plan
- B. Official Zoning Map
- C. Zoning Map Excerpts
- D. Zoning Table
- E. Walkshed Map
- F. Housing Memo from Legal





# Cordova Comprehensive Plan Update – FINAL

Adopted December 4, 2019



# Acknowledgements

Thank you to all Cordova residents, businesses, organizations and other local, regional, state, and federal partners who have contributed to the Cordova Comprehensive Plan Update process. Key individuals include:

## ***Comprehensive Plan Committee (alphabetical by first name)***

Bret Bradford	Nancy Bird
Brooke Johnson	Olivia Carroll
Cathy Renfeldt	Tom McGann
Dave Zastrow	Ken Jones (ex-officio)
Katrina Hoffman	Melina Meyer (ex-officio)
Kristin Carpenter	

## ***Mayor***

Clay Koplin

## ***City Council (by seat)***

A. Tom Bailer (James Burton, former)	E. Anne Schaefer
B. Ken Jones	F. David Allison
C. Jeff Guard	G. David Glasen (James Wiese, former)
D. Melina Meyer	

## ***Planning Commission***

Tom McGann, Chair	Nancy Bird
Scott Pegau, Vice Chair	Chris Bolin
John Baenen	Trae Lohse
Allen Roemhildt	

## ***City Staff***

Alan Lanning, City Manager  
Sam Greenwood, Public Works Director  
Leif Stavig, Planner

This plan was produced by Agnew::Beck Consulting with support from PDC Inc. Engineers, Northern Economics, and Kittelson and Associates. Plan photos courtesy of the Cordova Chamber of Commerce and Agnew::Beck Consulting.



# City of Cordova Resolution 12-19-52

## CITY OF CORDOVA, ALASKA RESOLUTION 12-19-52

### A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CORDOVA, ALASKA, ADOPTING THE CITY OF CORDOVA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE.

**WHEREAS**, the City of Cordova's existing Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2008;  
and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Cordova has developed a Cordova Comprehensive Plan Update consisting of three parts: an Executive Summary, the Full Plan document, and Appendices; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Cordova contracted with Agnew::Beck to facilitate the development of the Cordova Comprehensive Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Cordova, Agnew::Beck, and a Comprehensive Plan Committee comprised of community volunteers representing different perspectives and sectors, spent over a year engaged in an effort to gain widespread and varied public input for the comprehensive plan through in-depth interviews, presence at six large-scale events, a community survey and interactive map, a visitor survey, a project website, several informational postcards, newspaper and radio coverage, and a final extended public comment period; and


**WHEREAS**, the Cordova Comprehensive Plan Update will serve as a community resource and guide, offering recommendations that protect what residents value most about Cordova while benefiting and enhancing the quality of life for current and future residents; and

**WHEREAS**, the Cordova Comprehensive Plan Update is a community-driven tool that will provide direction to community leaders, residents, funders and other partners for years to come.


**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Council of the City of Cordova, Alaska does hereby adopt the City of Cordova Comprehensive Plan Update.

**PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 4<sup>th</sup> DAY OF DECEMBER 2019**



  
Clay R. Koplin, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Susan Bourgeois, CMC, City Clerk

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# 1. Introduction

## 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.*



"Cordova is the greatest town I've ever lived in. It's beautiful and quirky and amazing. I've lived in the Oregon countryside, San Diego, Chicago, Ketchikan and Sitka. Nothing beats Cordova!"

"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."



*The plan includes direct quotes from residents shared as part of the comprehensive planning process including project surveys, and comments shared at community events and meetings. For more detailed community feedback, see the appendix.*



# Purpose

## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The Cordova Comprehensive Plan Update will serve as a community resource and guide. The plan offers recommendations that protect what residents value most about Cordova while benefiting and enhancing the quality of life for current and future residents. The plan is a community-driven tool that will provide direction to community leaders, residents, funders and other partners. Cordova's Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2008.

"I think Cordova has been improving itself for the 45 years I've lived here, and it just gets better and more livable with all the quality of life improvements we have made, often thanks to volunteers and devoted city, state and federal workers who take pride in their jobs and the service they give to the community."

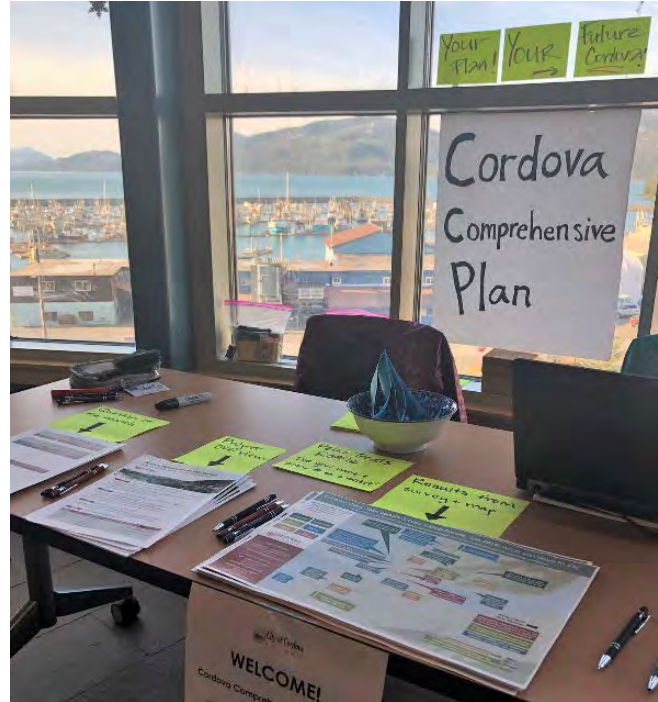
## Why is the plan relevant to Cordova residents?

- It is an opportunity to preserve and improve Cordova quality of life – the updated plan will guide decision-making on land use, housing, economic development, fiscal health, public facilities and services, transportation, parks and recreation, health and wellness and other topics that impact quality of life in Cordova.
- It starts with and centers on a shared vision and goals for prioritizing and evaluating all future actions – the plan will clearly identify the community's desired future direction (long-term) and policies and actions (shorter-term) that ensure progress toward that vision.
- It will position the community of Cordova for funding/partnering opportunities – the plan will send a clear message to regional, state and federal partners about Cordova's priorities, how the community is taking action and contributing to its own success.
- The process engages residents in shaping how they want the future of Cordova to look, providing many opportunities to share and discuss common ideas and concerns. It broadly answers:
  - How can we as a community protect the characteristics people value about living here, such as the small-town feel, 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 big priorities? How can we work together to achieve them?

"I live in Cordova because it is exactly the place I want to live, great work/life balance, out-the-door adventure, quality rural lifestyle with a splash of cosmopolitan perspective."

## Methodology: How was this plan developed?

The City of Cordova, led by planning staff, oversaw this effort with help from consulting team Agnew::Beck Consulting, with support from Northern Economics, PDC Engineers and Kittelson and Associates. The Comprehensive Plan Committee, a broadly representative group of Cordova residents, acted as a sounding board and group of creative problem solvers throughout the planning process.



The planning process included the following steps and outreach efforts:

### In-Person Activities

#### Plan Committee

Established the Cordova Comprehensive Plan Committee to help guide the planning process. The Committee was a broadly representative group that offered guidance and input on the process and plan contents and helped share information and gather community input. The Committee met four times. Plan Committee members also participated in project outreach efforts, including attending community meetings, sharing information about the plan at events such as the Cordova Health Fair and the Holiday Bazaar, and facilitating project presentations to local employers and organizations using a customized “Meeting in a Box” toolkit developed for the planning process.

#### Community Conversations

Hosted a public community conversation in October 2018 with over 70 attendees. Hosted a second conversation in January 2019 during Iceworm Festival, where the project team revealed and discussed the interactive map and survey results.

A summary of the conversations can be found in the appendix and on the project website.





## In-Person Activities, Continued

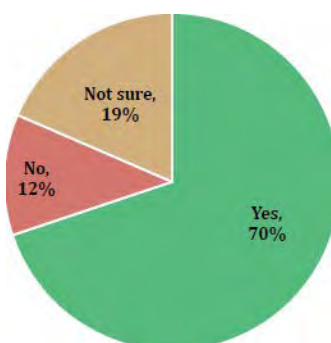
Information Tables	<p>Hosted informational booths at community events and engaged with hundreds of residents to talk about the plan, share draft products and collect input on how community members want Cordova to look in the future. City staff ordered and handed out customized Cordova Comp Plan pens with the project website URL, which were handed out at community events and used to further promote the process. Community events with a project presence included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native Village of Eyak Sobriety Celebration (November 2018)</li> <li>• Cordova Holiday Bazaar (December 2018)</li> <li>• Iceworm Festival (January 2019) – more information below</li> <li>• Community Dance Performance (April 2019)</li> <li>• Cordova Health Fair (April 2019)</li> <li>• Back-to-School Night (August 2019) to meet with middle and high school students and their families</li> </ul>
Iceworm Festival	<p>Engaged with residents throughout the 2019 Iceworm Festival, including the following community events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talked with seniors and other residents during the <b>Senior Lunch</b> at the Cordova Community Medical Center (CCMC).</li> <li>• Spent two full days sharing information and talking with Cordova residents and visitors in the upper atrium of the <b>Cordova Center</b> as they passed through to other Festival activities.</li> <li>• Collected feedback from residents through a fun interactive activity at the <b>Iceworm Variety Show</b>.</li> <li>• Talked with residents and collected survey responses at the <b>Iceworm Breakfast at St. Joseph's Catholic Church</b>.</li> </ul>
Interviews	<p>Conducted over 20 in-depth interviews with stakeholders, business owners and community leaders to learn about community challenges, priorities and collect suggestions for the plan.</p>



Surveys	More detailed summaries for each of these surveys are available in the appendix and on the website.
Community Survey	Received 327 responses to a community survey aimed at engaging residents and gathering feedback. The survey was open November and December 2018. The survey was distributed online, announced via project e-newsletters, linked on the postcard, available in hard copy at key locations around town, advertised in the Cordova Times and announced via social media.
Interactive Map	Collected 268 comments from residents via an interactive mapping tool aimed at soliciting location-based input on community priorities.
Question of the Month	<p>Launched a mini-survey series asking short, focused questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January 2019: "Do you see yourself living in Cordova in five years? What makes you want to stay in/leave Cordova?" (259 responses)</li> <li>March 2019: "Pick the best idea! What project or strategy would bring the most economic benefit to Cordova residents?" (49 responses)</li> </ul>
Visitor Survey	Collected 63 responses to a visitor survey, which was distributed in hard copy at hotels around Cordova, available online, promoted on the project website and advertised at community events.





Do you see yourself living in Cordova in 5 years?





Word clouds developed using Tagul; repeated words appear larger. For more details see the summary in the appendix or on the website

## OUTREACH AND MEDIA

Project Website	<p>Created an informative, simple project website. The website included background information about the project, downloads of past presentations and draft files, announcements of upcoming meetings, links to project surveys and a form to sign up for project e-newsletters. Most printed project materials included a QR code which residents could scan to access the website via a mobile device.</p> 
Email Distribution	<p>Throughout the project, developed and sent multiple email project updates to interested community and partner stakeholders. Relevant project announcements were also included in the City of Cordova E-News, which goes out weekly and has over 400 subscribers.</p>
Postcards	<p>Distributed two rounds of postcards to every post office box in Cordova in December 2018 and July 2019: over 1,500 postcards total each time. The December postcards introduced the project and included a link to the project website, survey and interactive commenting map. The July postcards announced the release of the draft plan and promoted the visitor survey.</p> 
Social Media	<p>Announced project updates on social media, including the community Facebook page.</p>
Radio	<p>Participated in a radio show to discuss the importance of the project and how residents can get involved over KCHU's Coffee Break program in December 2018 session and participated in an interview on KLAM.</p>



<p>Newspaper</p>	<p>Published an ad in the Cordova Times and invited newspaper staff to cover community events and conversations; the ad included the link to the website and the survey, with a QR code for mobile phone users to quickly locate the page.</p>  <p>Throughout the planning process the Cordova Times provided regular coverage of the key project milestones through articles, staff interviews and photos.</p>  <p><i>City Planner Leif Stavig has worked to develop the Cordova Comprehensive Plan since late 2018. Stavig, seen here on Thursday, July 25, 2019, believes that increased winter fishing is key to expanding Cordova's economy. Photo by Zachary Snowdon Smith/The Cordova Times</i></p>
<p>Extended Public Comment Period</p>	<p>Established an extended public comment period over the summer and early fall so visitors, seasonal residents and fisherman could provide input on the draft plan. The public comment period was open from June 14, 2019 through September 13, 2019.</p>



## RESEARCH TASKS

### Mapping

Developed land use, transportation and other relevant maps to use as decision-making tools and guide future development. This included a site visit to review existing land uses and land use policies, discuss development limitations and conduct an on-the-ground tour of land uses and issues.

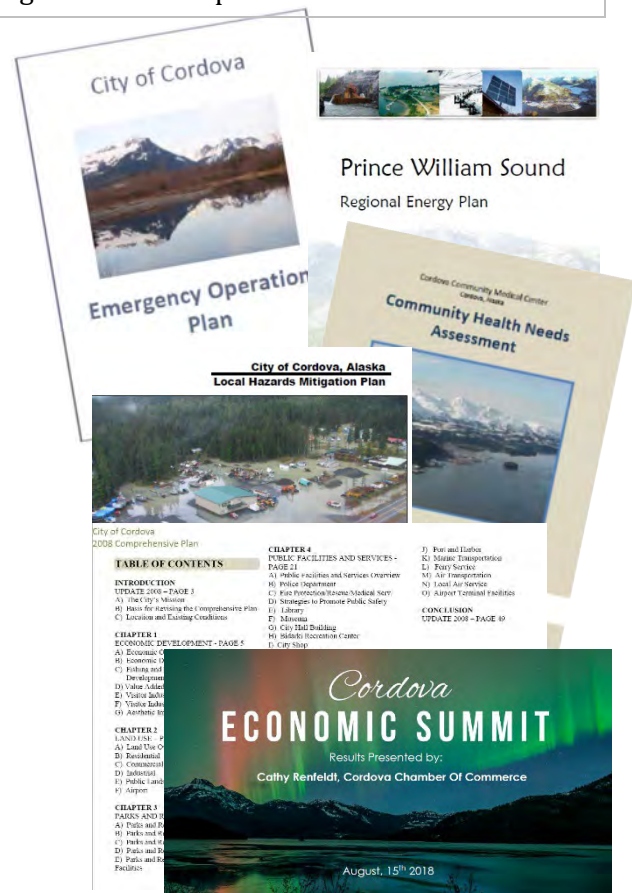
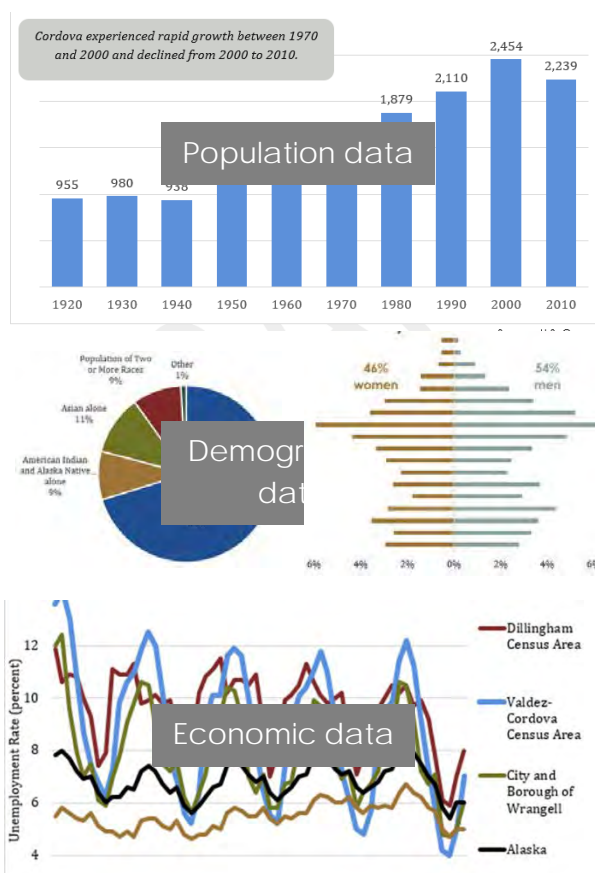


### Secondary Research

Collected information from local, state and federal sources to tell the story of Cordova: how it is changing and how the population, housing, economy and land use characteristics compare to other coastal communities. Most data used to develop key trends in the plan was collected in 2018. Before the plan was finalized in 2019, there were several significant changes that have or will impact the future of Cordova, including statewide budget cuts, suspended 2019-2020 winter ferry service to Cordova, and outcomes of the 2019 fishing season. Due to timing of the draft and final plan, these changes are not reflected in plan trends, but should be considered as city leadership and staff development and implement plan priorities.

### Review of Relevant Resources

Reviewed past and existing community, regional and other relevant plans and reports, including the 2008 Comprehensive Plan.



## Contents: What's in the plan?

There are three components to the Cordova Comprehensive Plan Update:



### Executive Summary

*Offers a condensed summary of the plan, including the community's vision and key policies (goals, strategies and sample actions) for achieving that vision, including a future land use map.*



### Comprehensive Plan (this document)

*Includes additional information on the process, area, and key issues informing plan policies.*



### Appendix

*Includes background information and context used to inform plan policies and plan implementation, such as land use, housing, economic data, summaries of public input, and best practices.*

## Plan Amendments and Updates

Outlined below are the steps for amending and/or updating the Cordova Comprehensive Plan:

- A minor change is a change that does not modify or add to the plan's basic intent, and that serves only to clarify the plan, make it consistent, facilitate its implementation, or make technical corrections. Such changes can be made administratively and do not require additional approval.
- An amendment permanently changes the plan by adding to or modifying the basic intent. Such changes can be recommended by the administration or public and approved by the Planning Commission and City Council.
- A more detailed update of the Cordova Comprehensive Plan should be conducted every five to ten years, starting with a thorough review by the City Council and key city staff to determine which goals and strategies have been accomplished and which may need to be revised, added or deleted. Residents and other key stakeholders should also be engaged during the update process.



# Accomplishments Since 2008 Comprehensive Plan Adoption

Cordova has successfully achieved an extensive list of accomplishments since the Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2008, including:

**LAND:** City land sales are promoting industrial, commercial and residential growth with a significant amount of new construction.

**HOUSING:** There have been new housing developments, including Coast Guard housing and new subdivisions (Cabin Ridge, Sunny Side, Alpine).

**HARBOR:** Cordova continues to upgrade and improve its maritime infrastructure, including:

- Addition of the new travel lift.
- Improved infrastructure at South Fill.
- North Fill boat ramp improved.

**CORDOVA CENTER:** The new facility provides functional, beautiful, energy efficient space for the community and allows Cordova to host more events and conferences.

**BUSINESS:** Cordova has many self-employed business owners and options for telecommuting are increasing as communication infrastructure improves. Businesses are expanding on the South and North Fill.

**FISHING:** The region's fisheries are well-managed and diversified. Young people are returning and attaining permits. Cordova's fish processing plants continue to make improvements, upgrades and expansions.

**BRANDING:** The Copper River brand has been marketed effectively and is increasingly recognized around the state and country.

**RESTAURANTS:** Harborside Pizza opened – the first newly built restaurant in Cordova in a long time; Baja Taco expanded; other restaurants have been renovated.

**SCIENCE CENTER:** The Prince William Sound Science Center is relocating and expanding its campus.



**EDUCATION:** The Cordova School District continues to be recognized as one of the best districts in Alaska.

**GROWTH:** Cordova is seeing an increase of young adults and children.

**THE OUTDOORS:** Cordova continues to be a world-class destination for outdoor recreation and has seen the following improvements:

- Forest Service trails and recreational sites (Sand Trail, Mile 18, One-Eyed Pond), ski hill improvements, Cabin Lake Road, Hartley Bay cleanup and picnic site (Eyak Corporation), Copper River watershed culverts, and an outhouse at Skater's Cabin.
- Completion of Breakwater Trail and the Veterans Memorial pocket park.
- Addition of Tot Lot Playground and Pump Track for bikes and skateboards.

**WELLNESS:** Gains in health care and preparedness efforts, including:

- Development of Native Village of Eyak's Ilanka Community Health Center.
- Expansion of medical capabilities at the hospital.
- Increase in emergency preparedness planning.

**SALMON JAM:** Cordova successfully established the Salmon Jam – Copper River Wild Salmon Festival and the Fungus Festival.

**FACILITIES:** Cordova has improved many community facilities, including:

- Elementary school remodel.
- Remodeled community facilities such as the high school gym and the renovation of Nirvana Park into a cemetery.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** Cordova continues to improve its infrastructure, including:

- Road improvements – drainage, sidewalks, paving, and more to local roads including Adams Avenue, Browning Avenue, Harbor Loop, Nicholoff Road and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.
- Upgrades to community drinking water infrastructure.
- Expansion of communication and technology, including fiber optic and cell service coverage.
- Expanded recycling service.





## 2. Land Use Issues and Policies

### Key Issues Guiding the Plan



#### **Limited land available for growth:**

Cordova is facing a challenge experienced by many of Alaska's coastal communities: the town is a small, isolated island of private property within a sea of public lands. Eyak Native Corporation does have relatively large land holdings but currently has no plans for large-scale land sales. In addition, much of the area has significant physical constraints, including steep slopes and wetlands. While the combination of these constraints has resulted in a concentrated, walkable town, they decrease options for growth and increase land and development costs.



#### **Lack of future land use map and outdated zoning:**

The city's current zoning code does not align well with existing and anticipated land uses. For example, the "low density residential" zone is applied on large tracts of vacant, city-owned land where physical constraints are extreme. This sets up unrealistic expectations about how these lands could or should be developed (e.g., easily providing options for affordable housing). The future code should also better respond to emerging community objectives, for example, helping to encourage opportunities for multifamily housing. The community also lacks a future land use map that sets out broad intentions for future growth and land use.

"The physical growth possibilities to accommodate a larger population are slim, so concentrating on improving the public standard of living is a more realistic goal. A well-maintained downtown has a positive effect on visitors as well as locals and improves the branding of the town as a destination. Maybe a low interest loan program to help downtown building owners with repairs/upgrades could be considered an investment in the community."

"The city is not in the real estate business, but if they want to have people invest in Cordova, and grow their property tax revenue long term, we should develop a road to open up more lots. I bet it would pay for itself."



**High development costs and redevelopment challenges:** Cordova's remote location, small population, challenging terrain and limited land supply all contribute to high construction costs. Cordova has been an established community for over 100 years, and some of the community's most valuable land is occupied by aging, underused and/or deteriorated buildings. Responding to these realities is difficult because the city currently does not have the tools and funding needed to help support redevelopment or take other actions to expand housing supply and reduce housing costs.



**Sustaining what people love about Cordova, while supporting change:** While most Cordova residents hold a core set of shared values, there is a divergence between those who prioritize sustaining Cordova's small-town traditions, and those more focused on development and growth. This mix of views can lead to creative solutions but also makes it harder to respond to important issues. The key land use issue is the need for community agreement on general directions for community growth, economic development and fiscal policy, which in turn sets the stage for the practical actions needed to address critical needs such as housing.

"We need zoning laws to permit less costly housing options. You need to be a millionaire to develop on a piece of suitable land in this community. Too many people come to Cordova for work but end up leaving because no affordable housing options exist."

"We should expand industrial development by airport. Cold storage, fish processing, storage facilities - things that take a larger footprint and don't need to be in town."

## Land Use Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C
Establish policies that better guide land use to promote affordable, quality housing and expand economic opportunities.	Protect and improve Cordova's character; its downtown, neighborhoods, waterfront and outdoor access.	Sustain the health of Cordova's natural systems.

## Land Use Strategies and Actions

**Strategy #1:** *Implement a future land use map that guides future decisions about land use and growth.*

### What is a future land use map?

The Cordova Future Land Use Map provides a tool for Cordova residents, landowners and elected officials to plan for growth and change. The map expresses objectives for the general location and character of different types of growth and land use.

The future land use map does not change city zoning districts or zoning code policy. The map provides broad guidance for future policy and development decisions, which will likely result in future revisions to the underlying zoning. The map is intended to be used as a generalized map and is not intended to follow specific property lines. Any zoning changes would require a separate, subsequent process with further public review.

The map can help guide plans for road and other infrastructure improvements, expansion of economic opportunities, protection of important conservation areas, and sustain the qualities residents value most about the community. The map covers lands in all ownerships, including public and private lands.

*See the Cordova Future  
Land Use Maps on the  
following pages.*

### Future Land Use Map Categories

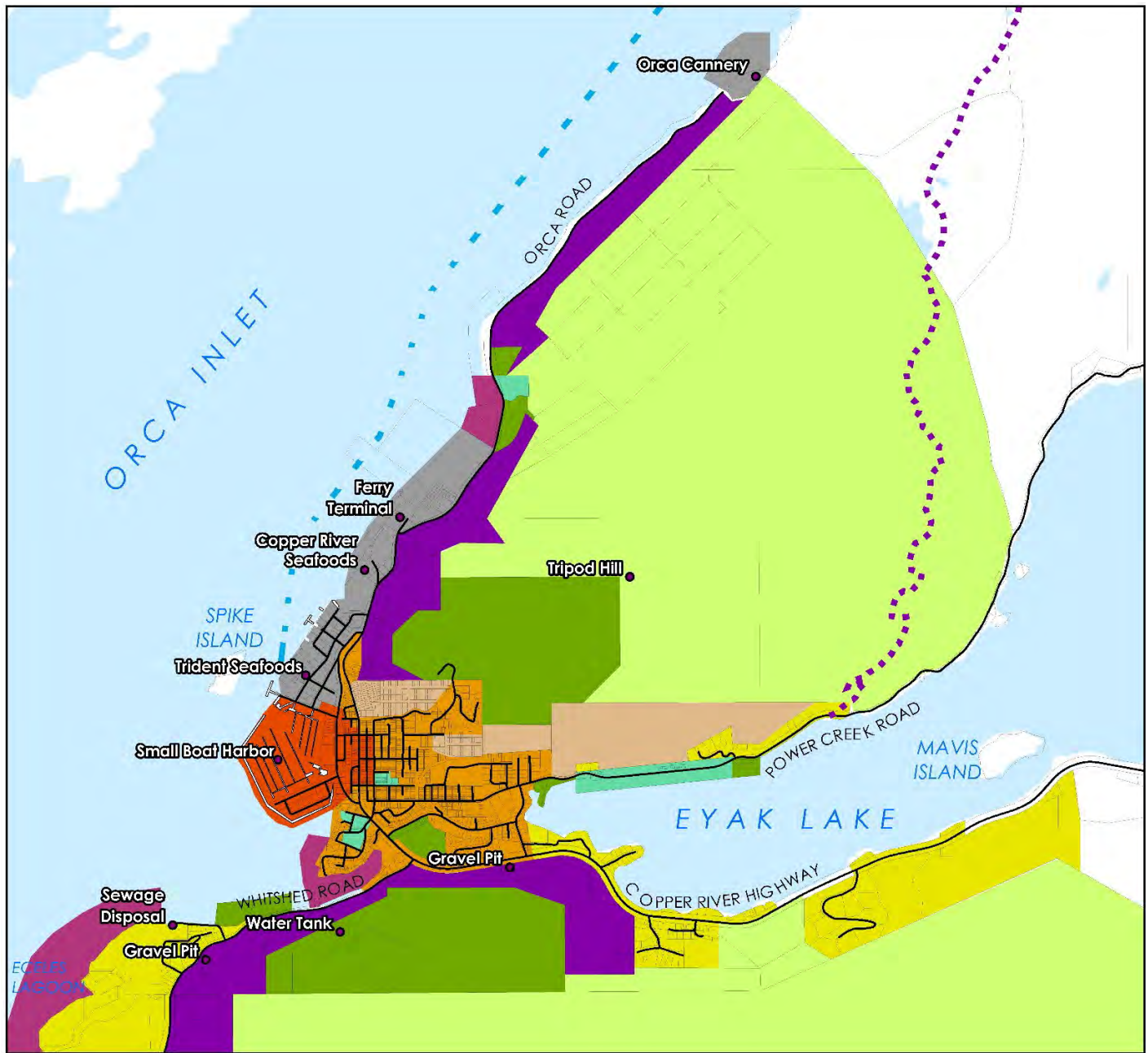
*The general land use categories defined on the map cover areas with different uses, but with similar underlying characteristics. For example, the "Community Core" includes a mix of commercial, industrial and residential uses, but these uses are concentrated in the walkable center of town.*

Land Use Category	Intended Land Uses	Application Area
<b>Community Core</b>	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
<b>In-Town Residential</b>	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
<b>Outlying Residential</b>	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
<b>Hillside Residential</b>	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
<b>Rural Mixed Use</b>	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
<b>In-Town Mixed Use</b>	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

<b>Industrial/ Commercial Waterfront</b>	Industrial and commercial uses that benefit from or require a waterfront location.	Existing and proposed developed waterfront areas
<b>Low Intensity/ Conservation Waterfront</b>	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
<b>Community Facilities</b>	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
<b>Parks &amp; Developed Open Space</b>	Large parcels used for developed, active recreation.	Ski hill, larger city parks
<b>Watershed, Dispersed Recreation, Open Space</b>	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 (Local View)



— Roads    ··· Trails    ▭ Parcels    — Marine Highway    ■ Water

### FUTURE LAND USE

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Community Core            | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span> In-Town Mixed Use                         | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:teal; border:1px solid black;"></span> Community Facilities                              |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> In-Town Residential       | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:grey; border:1px solid black;"></span> Industrial/Commercial Waterfront            | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:green; border:1px solid black;"></span> Parks & Developed Open Space                     |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightyellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Outlying Residential | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span> Low Intensity/Conservation Waterfront | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Watershed, Dispersed Recreation & Open Space |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:brown; border:1px solid black;"></span> Hillside Residential       |   |   |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkbrown; border:1px solid black;"></span> Rural Mixed Use        |   |   |

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

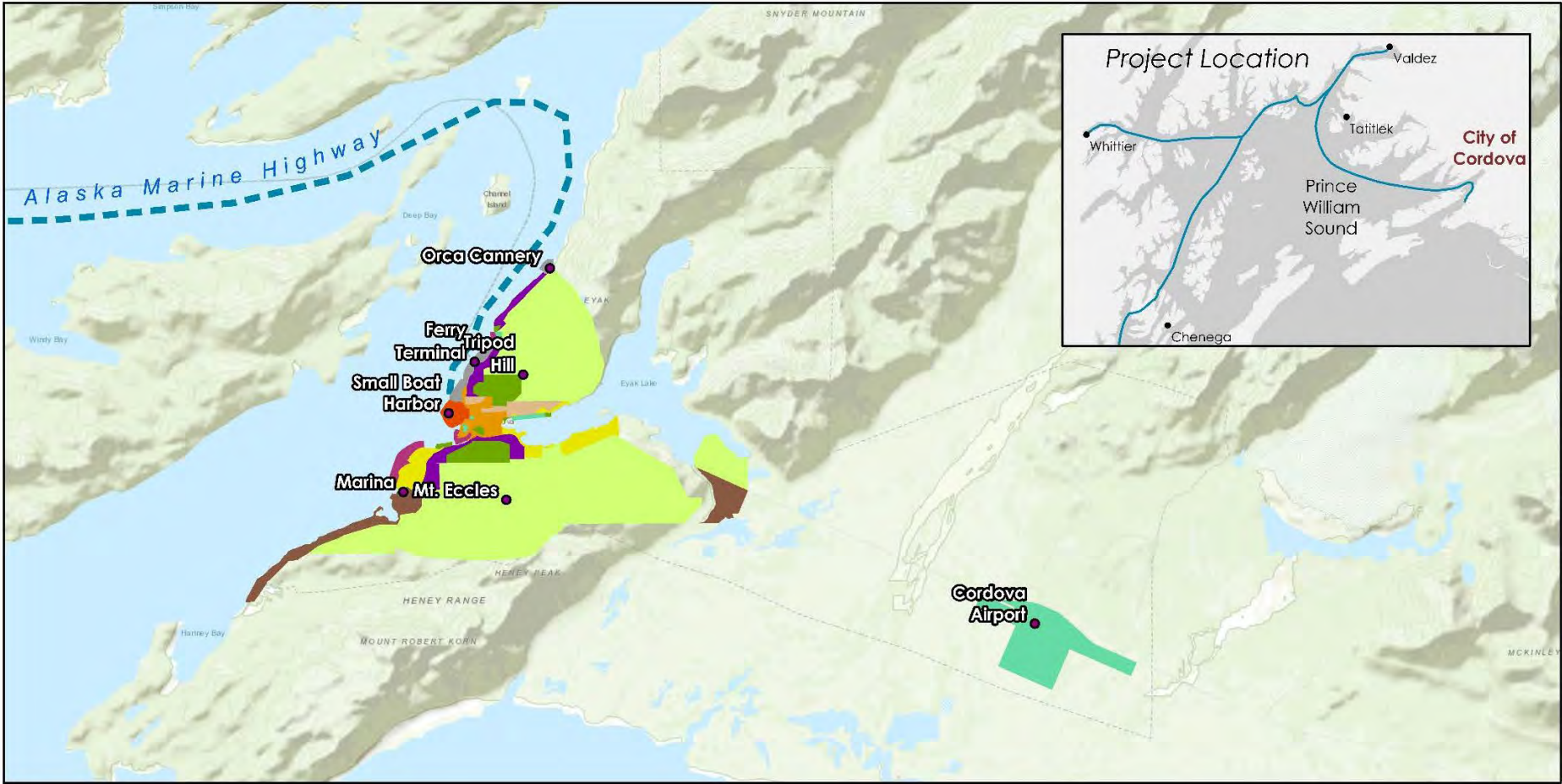
Data Sources: City of Cordova, State of Alaska, USFS



0 1,500 3,000 6,000 Feet

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

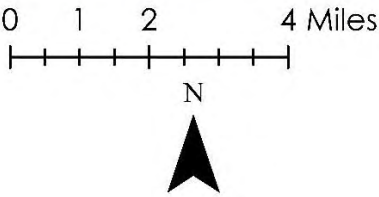
Future Land Use Map for Cordova (Full Extent of City of Cordova Boundaries)



--- City Boundary    - - - Marine Highway

**FUTURE LAND USE**

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



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

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

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



**Strategy #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.**

*NOTE: see the housing chapter for related strategies.*

- a. Revise the city's zoning code (Title 18) and subdivision code (Title 17) to remove conflicts and ambiguities with other city code.
- b. Revise the zoning code to accommodate new and/or revised land use objectives in the Future Land Use Map and other plan policies. Specific examples include:
  - In areas designated for residential densification, modify the code to better allow and encourage higher density residential development.
  - Add new zoning code sections to correspond with new land use categories, including the "Reserve Lands" and "Hillside Residential" designations.
- c. Make the changes described above through an active public process so residents understand the need for changes, the intention of the updates and the implications of the updates.
- d. Promote residential development in locations with the best potential to increase affordable housing. Three categories of locations, in order of most promising potential include:
  - **Infill and densification** – allow and encourage increased densities in established residential areas, including accessory dwelling units and multifamily housing.<sup>1</sup>
  - **Redevelopment** – create public-private partnerships and financial incentives for redevelopment of underused and/or deteriorated buildings in developed areas of town, focused on multifamily housing and/or mixed-use projects.<sup>2</sup>
  - **"Greenfield" development** – on larger tracts, require city-approved subdivisions with roads and other infrastructure, which will ensure developments appropriately respond to physical characteristics and result in quality developments.<sup>3</sup>
- e. Review city land use codes with developers, builders, and financial entities to determine what changes might better encourage redevelopment and expansion of quality residential, commercial, and mixed-use projects.

← zoning code recommendations

← zoning code recommendation

"The city has vacant unzoned land but most of it is on the side of the mountain. Any time we do make developable commercial or industrial land it goes fast."

"The challenge for developing new housing is not so much the lack of vacant land – there are actually quite a few vacant or underdeveloped lots in Cordova. The issue is the cost to build is greater than what the house is worth on the marketplace."

<sup>1</sup> "Infill" is the concept of developing vacant or under-used parcels within an existing developed area. Infill development is a useful tool in communities with limited available space for new development, since it creates more compact patterns of land use and results in more efficient use of limited land resources.

<sup>2</sup> Specific potential redevelopment sites recommended by the public during the planning process include the old school, the "gingerbread house," the Alaskan, the Salvation Army building and the Coho.

<sup>3</sup> "Greenfield" denotes lands that are currently undeveloped such as natural areas or agricultural lands.



- f. Modify the zoning code to better encourage and accommodate higher density residential development and other growth. Examples include:

← zoning code recommendation

- Allow for innovative forms of affordable housing, for example “cottage housing” which are single-family detached homes on a lot held in common by the owners.
- More clearly define and encourage development of accessory dwelling units and duplexes to add to the housing supply and so owners can generate revenue.
- Change the low-density residence district to allow residential uses greater than triplexes as conditional uses with appropriate standards regarding building form and scale.
- Develop guidelines for higher density housing in predominantly single-family neighborhoods. For example, create development standards that focus on building form and style, versus relying density standards.

**Strategy #3:** *Update local zoning maps to better align with the future land use map, using the established public review process.*

**Strategy #4:** *Work with private landowners to explore options to expand the supply of land available for residential development.*

*NOTE: see the housing chapter for related strategies.*

- a. Work with the Eyak Corporation and the Native Village of Eyak to identify options for partnerships to expand land available for housing.
- b. Investigate options with the Eyak Corporation and Native Village of Eyak, as well as funding through other sources, to share the costs of roads and other infrastructure needed to open lands to residential use.

**Strategy #5:** *Develop and apply land use policy tools to promote economic development priorities.*

*NOTE: see the economic development chapter for related strategies.*

- a. Identify locations for priority economic development activities and promote development through land use policies and incentives.
- b. Use zoning policies to direct use to maximize the value of limited waterfront land. For example, where possible, shift non-water dependent uses to locations away from the waterfront.
- c. Explore costs, benefits, funding strategies and environmental impacts to expand filled tideland areas in the following areas, listed in order of priority:
  - Shipyard expansion
  - South Fill expansion

← zoning code recommendation

“This is a great place, with great people. But decent, safe, and affordable housing is a huge concern. I’ve been trying to buy for three years now, with no luck. I’ll have to look for jobs elsewhere starting this year.”

“I want to see a revitalized downtown. Growth at South Fill happened at the expense of Main Street.”

- d. Develop active, practical land use and funding strategies to revitalize First Street and the rest of Cordova's downtown.<sup>4</sup>
- e. Use land use policy to improve the attractions of Cordova for visitors, aiming to increase the time and money spent by visitors in the community.
- f. Streamline project reviews, fees and approval processes to encourage redevelopment and new housing construction. For example, identify strategies to reduce costs of inspections and energy audits borne by home builders and required as a condition of Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) financing.

**Strategy #6: Maintain the quality of Cordova's natural environment.**

*NOTE: see the quality of life chapter for hazard mitigation and climate change-related strategies.*

- a. Review and update recommendations in the 2009 Cordova Stormwater Design Study Report and the 2012 Odiak Pond Stormwater Assessment, completed by the Copper River Watershed Project.
- b. Continue to update, reference and implement the Cordova Local Hazards Mitigation Plan and the Cordova Emergency Operations Plan, which address environmental hazards such as oil spills.
- c. Identify and incorporate environmental protection measures into municipal codes and policies, to potentially include stream setbacks, stormwater management requirements, invasive species mitigation and best practices for snow storage.

← zoning code recommendation

**Strategy #7: Establish incentives to encourage property owners to clean up lots and reduce junk yards.**

- a. Carry out a simple community education process that explains goals and benefits of cleaning up junk that accumulates around the community. Make clear that maintaining junk-free yards and well-maintained structures is an important way to sustain property values. Create incentives for further renovation of existing structures and new construction.
- b. Continue partnering on and improving the Cordova Clean Up event in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce.
- c. Provide city resources and leadership needed to actively enforce existing "Nuisance" requirements in the existing city code (Chapter 8.08.).

**Strategy #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.**

"We need positive reinforcement for good citizenship so people are encouraged to clean up trash, keep pets under control, and care for public spaces."

"Main street has many aging and abandoned buildings – how do we incentivize demolition or renovation?"

<sup>4</sup> Many on-line resources are available to assist communities with downtown revitalization. The national Main Street Program is one good resource. Their standardized approach is organized around four points: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization. For more information see: <https://www.mainstreet.org/mainstreetamerica/theapproach>

### 3. Housing Issues and Policies

#### Key Issues Guiding the Plan



**Limited stock of affordable housing:** Housing in Cordova is expensive relative to the rest of Alaska, and more costly than many other similarly-sized coastal communities.<sup>5</sup> Cordova's housing costs are likely higher due to elevated construction costs, higher median income values and scarcity due to limited developable land. This means younger families, residents working entry-level jobs and seniors on fixed incomes struggle to find affordable housing in Cordova.



**Fluctuating seasonal housing demands:** Cordova's population increases in summer months (May through September), as seasonal residents move into town to work in commercial fishing, seafood processing, tourism-related businesses and other activities. While some businesses, such as seafood processors, typically offer housing for their seasonal staff, others require employees to seek their own housing. There is a potential need for additional housing options to accommodate this seasonal influx of residents.

"Cordova has overpriced, expensive homes. It is difficult for young people to buy unless they get help from their families."

"We need more affordable housing. There is nothing in between for small families or seasonal folks."

<sup>5</sup> The median home value in Cordova is \$319,500, compared with \$261,900 overall for Alaska. Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2012-2017. See the appendix for more details on Cordova's housing market.



**New construction is expensive:** Cordova's remote location increases the cost of construction supplies. In addition, site preparation – installing water and wastewater systems, grading, driveways – can easily add more than \$50,000 to construction costs.<sup>6</sup> There are also certain housing-related occupations such as inspectors that are not filled locally, which increases the cost of construction because experts must be flown in to support the home construction and/or purchasing process. Cordova homes can also be more expensive to construct and maintain due to the strong, wet weather of coastal Alaska.



**Limited availability of land:** Cordova has limited vacant land available for the creation of new housing. The land that does exist close to town has characteristics such as steep slopes, poor or nonexistent road access, avalanche risk and other features that present challenges for potential builders and increase the cost of developing new properties.

"Development costs are high – properties that are available often require extensive, costly site development work."

"The cost of housing limits new job growth. Over the coming years we are losing approximately 30 housing units due to older buildings being demolished, which will make the problem worse."

<sup>6</sup> This information is based on interviews with local realtors and developers.



## Housing Goals

### Goal A

Increase the supply of affordable, quality housing that addresses the needs of all residents.

## Housing Strategies and Actions

### **Strategy #1: Pursue options for increasing the availability of affordable, quality housing.**

*NOTE: see the land use chapter for related land use strategies to address housing needs.*

- a. Conduct a Cordova housing needs assessment to identify community housing gaps and potential opportunities to increase the availability of affordable, quality housing. This assessment should be done with input from local builders, developers, real estate representatives and landowners. The assessment should identify barriers to expanding housing and review options for meeting the community's housing need, including exploring the feasibility of strategies presented in this chapter.
- b. Establish incentives for new, quality, affordable housing.
- c. Create and implement new housing policy tools such as a property tax abatement program for new or redevelopment projects.
- d. Explore methods for increasing seasonal housing to accommodate the increase in summer residents.
- e. Expand access to development capital through partnerships with lending institutions and locally-generated funds.
- f. 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; potential partners include the City of Cordova, Eyak Corporation, Native Village of Eyak, North Pacific Rim Housing Authority, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority and Neighborworks.
- g. Encourage the development of new short-term and long-term rentals. Periodically assess the amount of short-term vs. long-term rentals to ensure short-term rentals aren't reducing the availability of long-term rentals.

"There are no apartments and no affordable living solutions for young families needing a 2-to-3 bedroom home."

"I think the high cost of living (specifically renting/buying a house) prohibits people from moving here."

"The cost of housing is outrageous. If you come just for the summer there is no housing."

"Losing the fisherman's camp bunkhouse was a blow to affordable living for me here."

- h. Encourage and prioritize the development of permanent housing for seasonal workers, instead of temporary housing; i.e., a permanent bunkhouse built on a foundation versus temporary container vans.

**Strategy #2: Create additional senior housing options that allow aging residents to stay in Cordova.**

- a. Incentivize the creation of more American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant residential housing.

"Build a city-owned assisted living facility. This town is severely lacking housing for our senior citizens who need assistance in everyday living. There is literally nothing in town. Sunset view is unassisted living and the only other senior/disability home is the nursing home."

"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."

## 4. Economic Development Issues and Policies

### Key Issues Guiding the Plan



**Small population:** The population of Cordova has remained steady over the past ten years. However, population in the broader Valdez-Cordova Census Area is projected to decline over the coming decades as residents migrate to more urban areas.<sup>7</sup> Small communities may not have enough people to support certain types of businesses and services, and for businesses that do exist, costs are typically higher. Cordova also has relatively fewer working-age residents when compared with the rest of Alaska, indicating residents may leave the community during their working years to seek employment elsewhere. As a result, employers sometimes struggle to find qualified candidates and key occupations cannot always be filled locally, such as nurses, veterinarians, welders, retail workers and restaurant staff.



**Lack of economic diversification:** Cordova's location is convenient for fishermen participating in the Copper River fishery and harvesting in the productive waters of Prince William Sound. The community's economy is closely tied to the fishing industry, leaving Cordova vulnerable to fluctuations in fishing stocks and ex-vessel prices.

"Let us work towards attracting people to live in Cordova because they love Cordova. Let us support our industrial businesses (welders, net suppliers, contractors) and retail and restaurants (the Net Loft, Copper River Fleece, Harborside, PowderHouse, and The Reluctant) that DO stay open in the winter."

"If we want to say that fishing is what we do, we need to have infrastructure to support the industry, including supportive businesses so fishermen can take care of all their needs in Cordova."

<sup>7</sup> Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section. The Valdez-Cordova Census Area includes Valdez and Cordova along with 23 other smaller communities such as Glennallen, Copper Center, Kenny Lake, Tazlina and Whittier.



**Seasonal unemployment:** Cordova experiences increases in unemployment each winter due to reliance on summer industries such as fishing, seafood processing and tourism. For example, regional seafood processing employment in the Valdez-Cordova Census Area peaks in August with about 1,300 employees and declines to less than 100 in winter.<sup>8</sup> Many residents leave Cordova during the off-season, and some local businesses close in winter due to the decline in economic activity.



**High cost of living:** Cordova's high costs for groceries, travel, housing and freight impact the viability of local businesses and can make it difficult for employers to retain qualified workers. According to a recent community survey, the high cost of living is one of the primary reasons Cordova residents consider leaving the community. Contributing factors to the high cost of living include the small population discussed above, and Cordova's remote location off the road system.



**Limited space for growth:** Cordova has limited developable land for new commercial activities. New commercial growth will require redevelopment of existing underutilized spaces, which can be expensive. There is also a lack of consensus regarding priority land uses along the waterfront, such as whether it should be reserved as open space/public access or used for commercial activities. New maritime businesses that require waterfront access necessitate either the purchase and redevelopment of existing space or the creation of new waterfront space, which is resource intensive and must consider potential impacts to the environment.

"We have a huge loss of money that leaves town at the end of the summer since so many people involved with the fishing, tourism and other summer-based industries leave town at the end of the summer and take the money they earned with them."

"We are a retired couple on a fixed income. The cost of living and health care may force us to make a move."

<sup>8</sup> Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (AKDOLWD), 2018. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages by Census Area Annual Reports. The Valdez-Cordova Census Area includes Valdez and Cordova along with 23 other smaller communities such as Glennallen, Copper Center, Kenny Lake, Tazlina and Whittier.



## Economic Development Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C	Goal D
Support and sustain Cordova's seafood industry.	Diversify Cordova's economy, with a focus on businesses with year-round employment.	Support the growth of existing and new local businesses.	Pursue economic growth while preserving natural resources and characteristics that residents value.

## Economic Development Strategies and Actions

### **Strategy #1: Sustain and expand maritime services.**

*NOTE: see the fiscal health, public facilities and services chapter for related strategies.*

- Continue to update and implement the Harbor Master Plan with a phased approach and potential funding sources for long-term harbor upgrades, including eventual replacement of the New Harbor.
- Explore the feasibility of increasing community maritime amenities such as an indoor boat maintenance facility and community cold storage.
- Support maritime-related businesses and encourage entrepreneurs to establish new businesses such as vessel repair, boat rebuilding and fiberglass modification.
- Consider adding additional fill including at the shipyard to create space for new facilities and infrastructure.
- Explore feasibility of adding industrial uses near the airport, including additional cold storage and fish processing.
- Implement harbor enhancements to accommodate more small cruise vessels in Cordova.
- Explore opportunities for maritime support services such as an oil response facility and dock at Shepard Point.

"The harbor is the biggest issue now and will be in the future. It is the lifeline to Cordova."

"I cannot express how important it is to expand the fills and harbor and upgrade the shipyard."

"The city needs to work just as hard to fundraise for harbor improvements as they did for the Cordova Center."

## Strategy #2: Expand wintertime fisheries and value-added processing.

- a. Work with Alaska Department of Fish and Game to identify and open new wintertime fisheries close to Cordova; possible species include cod, shrimp, herring, crab and halibut.
- b. Maintain more regular communications between the city, chamber and local processors to identify concerns, needs and opportunities for growth.
- c. Advocate to keep Cordova's Fish and Game office open and fully-staffed.
- d. Encourage processors to expand value-added seafood processing efforts, to potentially include fish sticks, imitation crab or adding a smokehouse.
- e. Explore ways to mitigate the cost of fish processing waste in discharges from processing low-value wintertime fish species.<sup>9</sup>
- f. Advocate to the University of Alaska Fairbanks to continue funding Cordova's SeaGrant position.
- g. Encourage the Prince William Sound Science Center to expand industry-relevant research such as testing shellfish and exploring herring stock restoration.

"We have tremendous potential for value-added products. We have the floor space in our fish plants in the winter. Maybe some sort of pathway for value-added seafood entrepreneurs to have access to floor space in the fish processing plants over the winter when they are not being used."

"I would like to see wintertime fisheries such as the tanner crab fishery. That would help seasonal workers become year-round workers; it would help canneries amortize their facility costs over the entire year; and give fishers a more diverse income portfolio."

"Since moving to Cordova in August, it's been a real eye opener for me. The cost of living is high and there aren't many options for quality affordable housing that accepts pets. There isn't much to do during the darker months so having additional businesses that are open later would be a plus."

<sup>9</sup> When discharged into waterways, seafood processing waste can adversely impact the marine environment by altering habitat, changing water quality and attracting other animals, birds and fish. As a result, state and federal policies limit the amount of waste that can be discharged by seafood processing facilities; this means processors must take additional steps to manage their waste. When the cost of waste management is factored in, it is not always economical to process lower-value seafood species. To learn more, visit the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Water, Seafood Processing and Hatcher Section, "Permitting for Wastewater Discharges from Seafood Processing and Hatchery Facilities in Alaska:" <https://dec.alaska.gov/water/wastewater/seafood/>

**Strategy #3: Promote small-scale tourism and recreation, with a focus on improvements that benefit both visitors and residents.**

*NOTE: see the quality of life chapter for related strategies on enhancements to indoor and outdoor recreation in the area, which can also improve Cordova's appeal for visitors.*

*NOTE: see the transportation chapter for related strategies that address the high cost of traveling to/from Cordova, which may discourage travelers from visiting the community.*

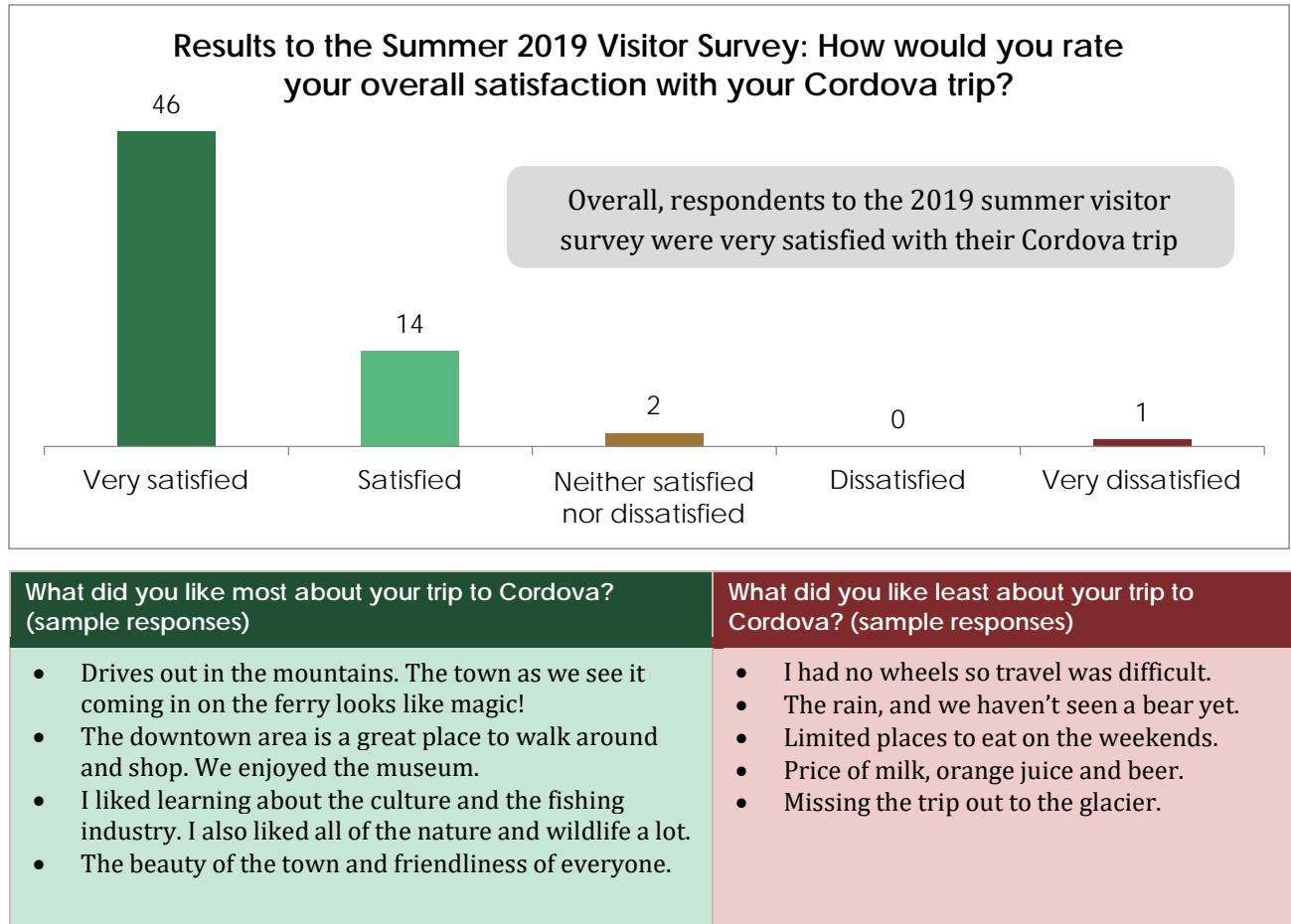
- a. Work with regional, state and federal partners to update and implement strategies in the existing Cordova Tourism Plan, focusing on actions that strengthen the year-round Cordova economy.
- b. Improve the overall marketing of Cordova, particularly as an outdoor recreation destination. Improve marketing plan and expand online promotion.
- c. Continue to promote and grow events such as Iceworm Festival, Shorebird Festival, Salmon Jam and Fungus Festival. Explore opportunities for the creation of additional events to attract visitors, with a focus on locally-run events that appeal to visitors and residents alike, instead of large-scale externally run or for-profit events.
- d. Conduct research to better understand Cordova's market and visitation trends and develop strategies for target market categories.
- e. Actively pursue meeting, event and conference markets for activities at the Cordova Center.
- f. Improve signage and wayfinding around the community.
- g. Continue to expand sportfishing education and enforcement to discourage illegal harvests.
- h. Encourage additional lodging options in Cordova to accommodate increased demand during peak seasons such as sportfishing, the Shorebird Festival and Salmon Jam.
- i. Promote shoulder season tourism (spring and fall) to increase the distribution of visitors throughout the year and increase visitation; target markets could include sport fishing, heli-skiing, arts and crafts, cross-country ice skating, birding and more.
- j. Expand opportunities for visitors to understand and learn about Cordova's unique cultural and natural history through partnerships with the Prince William Sound Science Center, the Native Village of Eyak, the Eyak Corporation, the Cordova Historical Museum and the Cordova Historic Preservation Commission.
- k. Increase the supply of both short- and long-term camping options, including recreational vehicle (RV) spaces.

"Increase tourism via access to the outdoors. Need parking, camping, and recreation facilities for visitors much later in the year. Encourage hunting and winter fishing."

"We talk energetically about expanding Cordova and diversifying the economy, but we must not lose sight of the values we currently have. I have watched many wonderful towns get swallowed up by tourism."

"We need a town-wide discussion/referendum about whether we want to be a cruise ship town. Lots of pros and cons: we shouldn't accidentally become a cruise ship town through port expansion without considering effect on the community."

- I. Actively advocate at state and federal levels for continued funding that supports improvements in outdoor recreation infrastructure. This includes funding that is directed to trail user groups, and funding needed by agencies to continue to provide outdoor recreation facilities, including trails and campgrounds.



#### **Strategy #4: Incentivize and support business development.**

- a. Identify tax incentives for small businesses and start-ups.
- b. Establish a co-work or incubation space for designers, developers, craftspeople, telecommuters and sole proprietors to share space and resources.
- c. Promote and recruit for needed businesses/occupations that address current gaps in the community, such as medical professionals, veterinarians, surveyors/appraisers and building inspectors.
- d. Promote and encourage entrepreneurs to explore new industries such as mariculture (oysters, kelp, sea cucumbers) and a local brewery.
- e. Promote the existing commercial kitchen space in the Cordova Center.
- f. Reevaluate the local business licensing program; consider adding a minimum revenue threshold so small businesses/entrepreneurs do not need a license until they reach a certain size.
- g. Encourage residents to shop locally.
- h. Establish a "Made in Cordova" branding program.

- i. Offer business counseling, development and training through the Cordova Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Alaska Small Business Development Center. This should include helping small business owners who want to retire by providing assistance with transitioning and selling their business instead of closing.
- j. Enlist the help of the Cordova Community Foundation to support local economic development, to potentially include the establishment of a revolving loan fund to support entrepreneurship, small business development and economic revitalization.
- k. Improve city code and city policies to encourage food truck businesses, such as establishing a seasonal food truck park as a convenient, accessible space for food trucks to congregate.
- l. Support telecommunication upgrades to improve connectivity and support business development and innovation.
- m. Improve city code and city policies to encourage home occupations (businesses within residences) that do not significantly alter the residential nature of the residence or negatively impact the surrounding properties.

**Strategy #5: Increase the number of year-round jobs.**

- a. Encourage local employers to promote vacant year-round positions during summer, before seasonal residents leave town. Some seasonal residents may opt to stay if they find year-round employment. Consider establishing a fall job fair targeted at seasonal workers.
- b. Encourage state and federal employers to hire locally instead of sending traveling temporary employees to fill positions in Cordova.
- c. Encourage large local employers to create more entry level roles and offer in-house training to create better economic mobility and career growth opportunities for residents. This includes the Forest Service, the city, non-profits, etc.
- d. Encourage large local employers to collaborate on solutions to community-wide challenges related to employment such as recruitment, retainment, benefits administration, etc.
- e. Promote telecommuting opportunities for web-based and independent professionals who may consider relocating to Cordova for its small town qualities and high quality of life.

"51% of Cordova businesses are sole proprietorships – so when owners are ready to retire, if they don't have the tools to transition and sell the business, it closes."

"We don't need to grow our summertime population, but we do need to keep more people here in the off season. Even an increase of 200 or 300 in the winter would make a big difference. I don't think we want our summertime population to grow any more -that would put a strain on our resources like parking and housing."

"There needs to be some sort of winter employment for people who live here. It's difficult to have a five month income base and hope you make enough in the summer to keep employees on the payroll all winter. "



**Strategy #6: Expand vocational and technical education opportunities.**

- a. Work with Prince William Sound College and other partners to expand the availability of training programs for needed trades such as welding, mechanics, electricians, plumbers, HVAC, carpenters and other marine-specific trades.
- b. Develop local courses for residents to get captains and master's licenses.
- c. Encourage young residents to pursue training in relevant occupations such as electrical, plumbing, mechanical and welding.

**Strategy #7: Develop a strong business district and revitalize First Street.<sup>10</sup>**

*NOTE: see the land use chapter for related strategies.*

- a. Establish city-sponsored incentives for demolition and/or redevelopment of aging properties in key areas such as First Street, for projects that can demonstrate public benefit. Incentives could include tax abatement or a revolving loan program for renovating older buildings.

"Main street has many aging and abandoned buildings – how do we incentivize demolition or renovation?"

"A well maintained downtown has a positive effect on visitors as well as locals and improves the branding of the town as a destination. Maybe a low interest loan program to help downtown building owners with repairs/upgrades could be considered an investment in the community."

"There are lots of properties for sale that need major renovations. This is a barrier to economic development for new entrepreneurs."

"It is clear we need some economic diversity. Any meaningful diversity will only come through some type of new industry/large business coming to town or through tourism. I think we should take a strategic approach to encouraging tourism on a limited scale. We have an extremely unique variation of ecosystems including marine, river delta, rain forest, glaciers, and the alpine. I think the community in concert with appropriate state and federal agencies could come up with some world class tourist activities here."

<sup>10</sup> First Street is referred to locally as Main Street.

# 5. Transportation Issues and Policies

## Key Issues Guiding the Plan



**Limited access to/from the community:** Cordova is only accessible by air or water; there is no road to Cordova. Commercial flight options to and from the community have been declining; the air carrier Ravn pulled out of Cordova altogether in 2017. These service changes have made it harder for passengers and cargo to travel in and out of the community. Although year-round barge service continues, there is uncertainty regarding the future of the Alaska Marine Highway System. Should public ferry service decline, the need for increased air service (passenger and cargo) to meet local needs and maintain economic health will become paramount.



**Lack of bicycle and pedestrian connectivity:** Convenient, accessible and well-maintained pedestrian and bicycle routes and amenities for residents and visitors from the downtown area to the harbor and other key destinations around the community are lacking. This creates barriers to travel and limits options for those who may not own or be able to drive a vehicle. Facilities need to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to be usable by people of all ages and abilities.

"The loss of Ravn service has had a huge impact on our organization. It has increased costs of bringing employees in and out of Anchorage on personal and professional business, including medical appointment referrals."

"We used to have fast ferry in winter and slow ferry in winter. Now we have no fast ferry and gaps in the services of the slow ferry. We went a month without service this winter."

"The main arterial roads in town should have sidewalks on both sides with curbs and adequate storm drainage. Curbs will help keep pedestrians safe when it's icy and make plowing easier for the operators."



**Aging road infrastructure:** Maintenance of existing roadways is challenging due to a mix of paved and gravel surfaces, aging maintenance equipment, deteriorating asphalt and storm infrastructure, and the steep grades of some roadways. In light of limited funding, maintenance has been the priority. New asphalt, drainage, curbs, gutters and sidewalks are necessary for many roadways to improve the life and functionality of the roads, reduce maintenance costs and improve safety for all modes.

“Enhance maintenance of roadways. There has been great improvement downtown! Now we just need a fast-moving plan to attack damaged roads in residential areas that have been neglected for maintenance and repair.”

## Transportation Goals

### Goal A

Secure reliable and affordable air and ferry service.

### Goal B

Maintain, preserve, and operate a safe and functional community transportation network that accommodates desired future change and growth.

### Goal C

Provide a network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities that are usable year-round by people of all abilities.

# Transportation Strategies and Actions

## **Strategy #1: Identify options for reliable and affordable air and ferry service.**

- a. Advocate for continued year around Alaska Marine Highway System ferry service with a reasonable fee structure.
- b. Actively participate in the Southeast Conference's Reform Initiative for the Alaska Marine Highway System.
- c. Explore the feasibility of water-based ferry alternatives for both passenger and freight service.
- d. Explore options and advocate for increases in affordable passenger and freight air service.
- e. Participate in the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities process to update the Cordova Airport Master Plan.

## **Strategy #2: Rehabilitate existing streets to meet current standards and reduce overall life-cycle costs through effective maintenance and preservation programs.**

- a. Develop a design criteria manual to identify standard details for road design, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, drainage, and lighting. Include typical cross sections for streets by functional classification including minimum right-of way widths.
- b. Develop a project ranking system to prioritize roads for short-term, mid-term and long-term rehabilitation needs.
- c. Prepare "shovel ready" designs for priority projects so they can be more easily funded using grant funds.
- d. Work with local tribal groups, businesses and landowners to identify, support and contribute to sidewalk projects.
- e. Develop an adopt-a-sidewalk program.
- f. Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure into reconstruction projects, as appropriate.
- g. Explore options for property owners to finance neighborhood street improvements, for example through local improvement districts (LIDs) or road service areas (RSAs).

"Affordable, regular transportation to and from Cordova by air and sea are critical to the resilience of our community. If access to that is curtailed or lost (which feels like it is constantly and currently threatened), our ability to attract and maintain businesses, keep a handle on cost of living, support manageable tourism levels, and ship our major community export--fish--to and from town, will go down the tubes."

"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."



**Strategy #3: Provide an efficient network of travel route options for pedestrians and bicycles.**

*NOTE: see the quality of life chapter for trail and outdoor recreation strategies.*

- a. Develop a non-motorized plan and prioritize bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The following are potential projects to include in the plan:
  - An outdoor staircase along the Cordova Center to connect First Street to the harbor.
  - Create pedestrian and/or bike paths on local roads where feasible, including along Whitshed Road and the road to the airport.
  - An improved route from the elementary school to Vina Young Subdivision.
  - Improved pedestrian connectivity between South Fill and the junior/senior high school.
  - Sidewalks on both sides of Railroad Avenue.
  - Sidewalks that create connections between the North Fill canneries, the breakwater lot and trail, city dock, harbor, South Fill and downtown.
  - A route from the ferry dock to the city center.
  - A route from the ferry dock to Fleming Point.
  - Other pedestrian routes through town that are not along roadways.
- b. Educate the public about bicycle and pedestrian facilities and issues, the health benefits of walking and biking and facilitate easy access to information.
- c. Install pedestrian and bicycle amenities such as benches, lights, bike racks and wayfinding signage along primary routes and at key destinations.

**Strategy #4: Facilitate future expansion and connectivity of the roadway system within city limits.**

- a. Update subdivision regulations for roadways to require compliance with the design criteria manual action recommended under transportation strategy #2.
- b. Require dedication of all rights-of-way and easements for roads, pathways and trails on subdivision plats.
- c. Encourage street system design in a rectangular grid pattern with smaller block sizes, frequent interconnections, and clear wayfinding; strongly discourage cul-de-sacs or dead-end streets. Encourage local street connections and walkways between existing neighborhoods and new developments.
- d. Adopt a complete streets policy, which requires that street planning, design and maintenance considers and meets the needs of all users, including green policy for managing drainage and reducing maintenance costs.

← zoning code  
recommendations

**Strategy #5: Establish additional transit options.**

- a. Encourage creation of additional shuttle and taxi services to meet the needs of residents and visitors, including large groups attending events at the Cordova Center.

"Create safe, easy interconnected pedestrian and bike paths and covered bike parking and sitting areas all over Cordova to increase walking and biking commuting."

"I would like to see covered bicycle parking near the harbors. If covered bicycle parking were available, more fishermen would be inclined to leave their trucks at home during openers."

"We need a running/ walking/ biking path alongside Whitshed Road. At present it is extremely dangerous to bike there, especially with the steep sides and sharp corners."

## 6. Quality of Life Issues and Policies

### Key Issues Guiding the Plan



**High cost of living:** The top concern in the community project survey was “high cost of living,” with 83 percent of respondents selecting that as one of their top five concerns. The high costs of housing and transportation and Cordova’s small population all contribute to the high cost of living in the community. Overall, Cordova has higher incomes and wages than other parts of Alaska, but not all households are able or willing to withstand Cordova’s high costs. For example, the University of Alaska’s cooperative extension service cost of groceries survey found that a week’s worth of groceries in Cordova cost \$324 in 2018, almost 50 percent more than Anchorage and nearly twice the statewide average.



**High cost and limited availability of health and long term care services:** Cordova is served by two health care providers, including a city-operated hospital and a clinic operated by the Native Village of Eyak. There are some redundancies between the two, and efforts are underway to improve collaboration. Like many small communities, Cordova experiences challenges with health care delivery, including attracting and retaining medical providers, limited access to specialty care, and higher costs for care. Residents have expressed a desire for expanded senior/in-home care, a child birthing facility, and additional mental health programs.

“Cordova has always been a wonderful place to live and raise a family. Of course, as with every community, there are always things that we as a whole can make better. I hope in the near future we can take a serious look at affordable housing, collaboration rather than competition between our healthcare facilities, and a realistic way to eradicate the drugs that have taken over our community.”

“Cordova is reputable as a high-performing school district. We are doing well DESPITE diminished resources.”



**Threats to education budgets and aging facilities:** Cordova is known for its high-quality schools, with strong academic programs and talented athletes. However, some of the school’s city-owned facilities are deteriorating, and the junior/senior high school will eventually need a major renovation or replacement, as well as the Bob Korn Swimming pool which serves as a classroom five days a week during the school year. In addition, the Cordova School District should prepare for expected declines in state funding for education due to Alaska’s fiscal instability.



**Geographic isolation, vulnerability to economic and environmental threats:** Cordova is in a seismically active area and parts of town are within a tsunami zone. The community is largely reliant on outside supplies for critical items like food and medicine, leaving Cordova vulnerable when its air and marine supply lines are threatened. In the longer term, Cordova may be vulnerable to impacts from climate change, including immediate and longer-term impacts to the marine environment that could threaten fish species important to the Cordova economy.

“I love this town and hate the thought of having to leave but it costs so much to live here ...now that I’m retired I have to leave.”

“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 to always provide the best care for my family.”



## Quality of Life Goals

Goal A	Goal B	Goal C	Goal D
Enhance and preserve Cordova's indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities.	Provide access to quality, affordable health care that meets the needs of all residents.	Sustain Cordova's excellent schools that prepare youth for a successful future.	Achieve resiliency through continued hazard mitigation and emergency preparedness planning.

## Quality of Life Strategies and Actions

### **Strategy #1: Expand and improve Cordova's indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities.**

*NOTE: these strategies also have the potential to help make Cordova a more desirable tourism destination and contribute to economic development. See the economic development chapter for more tourism-related strategies. For bicycle and pedestrian related strategies, see the transportation chapter.*

*For more details and specific recommendations, please refer to the Parks and Recreation Commission Master Plan. The Parks and Recreation Commission Master Plan is a living document reviewed on an annual basis by the Parks and Recreation Commission during open meetings; the public is welcome to provide input. Parks and Recreation Commission members are appointed by the mayor and are advocates for recreation in Cordova.*

- Maintain and expand Cordova's parks and trail system, including routes with trailheads accessible from downtown.
- Maintain and enhance Cordova's local parks and green spaces.
- Maintain and improve indoor recreation facilities such as the pool and Bidarki Center.
- Work with partners to explore options for developing a hut-to-hut/lodge-to lodge trail system with land-based or water-based trails.
- Support efforts by the U.S. Forest Service to construct additional public use cabins in the area.
- Advocate for restoring access to Child's Glacier and the Million Dollar Bridge.
- Make additional enhancements and expansion of the ski hill.

"Short interconnected trail loops would be ideal for seniors, parents with young children, those with physical limitations, people walking older dogs, and for those seeking a lunch time running workout."

"Develop a series of interconnected trails that loop through the land at the base of ski hill. This is the only area in town with year-round sunshine, land dedicated by the State to Cordova for recreational use, with road access and parking already in place."

- h. Add low-grade trails that are easy for seniors, strollers, children and those with disabilities.
- i. Maintain the Breakwater Fill Lot as a public space. Consider future business opportunities for the lot that preserve an element of public use.
- j. Create public parks/green spaces, support beautification and protect viewsheds along Cordova's waterfront.
- k. Maintain public access to the waterfront in the community core and at Fleming Spit.
- l. Increase the availability of covered outdoor seating spaces such as covered picnic tables.
- m. Establish a community dog park.

### **Strategy #2: Ensure quality and affordable health care.**

- a. Maintain the Cordova Community Medical Center designation as a Critical Access Hospital, with 24-hour emergency response, acute, primary and long-term care capabilities.
- b. Increase collaboration between Cordova Community Medical Center (CCMC) and Ilanka Clinic to maximize resident benefits while keeping costs under control.
- c. Support Cordova's aging residents and attract additional seniors by expanding the array of support services such as personal health aides, in home care and assisted living.

### **Strategy #3: Support local schools.**

*NOTE: see the fiscal health, public facilities and services chapter for related facility recommendations.*

- a. Fund the Cordova School District consistently from year-to-year at an amount that reflects the needs of the district and is affordable to the community.

### **Strategy #4: Implement public safety and hazard mitigation priorities.**

*NOTE: see the land use chapter for related environmental policy recommendations and the fiscal health, public facilities and services chapter for facility-specific recommendations.*

- a. Assign street addresses to homes along the Copper River Highway, Whitshed Road and other areas that lack addresses to improve access and emergency response.
- b. Better utilize the Cordova Hazard Mitigation Plan as a planning and decision-making tool for future development.
- c. Pursue funding, including grants, to implement priority strategies in the Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- d. Support neighborhood-level emergency preparedness and self-sufficiency training.

"Schools are the heart of the community. If we want to draw in and keep families, they need to be set as a top priority. Current leadership does not hold our schools in a place that I feel they should."

"People are looking into growing more produce. This would help Cordova and make money. I think we will be able to figure it out. With bad weather and bad ferry service it doesn't take long to run out of food. I think we need to do more of it ourselves."

"If I had to pick a reason to leave it would be access to a variety of medical services as I get older."

- e. Develop recovery plans that describe how Cordova will respond after an emergency, including staging and location of key community resources.
- f. Increase community education on emergency response and hazard mitigation plans.

**Strategy #5: Increase local food production.**

- a. Establish a community garden site.
- b. Encourage local groceries and restaurants to sell locally-grown produce.

**Strategy #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.**

*NOTE: see the land use chapter for related environmental quality strategies.*

- a. Work with partners such as the Prince William Sound Science Center, the U.S. Forest Service, Copper River Watershed Project and other state, federal and nonprofit agencies to focus on topics such as:
  - Changes in marine and terrestrial ecosystems and implications for commercial, sport and subsistence fishing.
  - Changes in precipitation and temperatures, and implications for local utilities and for outdoor recreation opportunities.

**Strategy #7: Encourage resident participation and engagement in local governance, decision-making and volunteerism.**

- a. Promote volunteer and education opportunities for youth to become involved in civic life and contribute to improving the community.
- b. Encourage community organizations and groups such as the Cordova Future Problem Solvers to recruit and encourage youth participation in volunteer activities.
- c. Add an “upcoming volunteer opportunities” category to the city e-newsletter, where local organizations can submit activities to be included.

**Strategy #8: Support Cordova’s thriving cultural and art organizations, activities and traditions.**

“Due to climate change and ocean acidification, our ocean-based economy is in great peril. The city needs to take a more active role in influencing state and federal level officials to take quick and substantial action to both prepare for and decrease the amount of change we are on track for.”

“Some volunteers wear so many hats they are falling over. How can we encourage, incentivize and spread out volunteering duties?”

## 7. Fiscal Health, Public Facilities and Services Issues and Policies

### Key Issues Guiding the Plan



**Reductions in State of Alaska support to communities:** The State of Alaska has historically provided most of the funds to develop and operate key local services, including the ferry, airport, roads and schools. This spending has allowed Alaskans to have high quality services while paying the lowest individual taxes of any U.S. state. Alaska is now facing fiscal challenges driven by continuing declines in oil revenues, reductions in federal spending, and uncertainty regarding the state's fiscal approach.<sup>11</sup> In response, the state is making reductions to services, community revenue sharing, schools, capital funds and other categories. This is a concern for Cordova, considering shared revenue equals 11 percent of the city's 2019 budget. Institutions like the Cordova School District are especially vulnerable since more than 60 percent of its funding comes from the state. It is likely Alaska communities will have to contribute a larger share for public services and facilities in the future.



**Small population and high service costs:** when adjusted for inflation, locally-generated revenues have been stable or slightly down in the last decade, even as state support has dropped. Meanwhile costs to provide and maintain community facilities and services continue to climb, even though population has remained steady. Addressing these fiscal challenges will require the community to make strategic decisions and better match revenues and expenditures.

"We need to focus on keeping this community alive. Fix what we already have."

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

<sup>11</sup> Alaska Economic Trends, February 2019. "Four Things to Know in 2019 - Understanding Alaska's Big Picture Three Years into the Recession." Available at <http://labor.alaska.gov/trends/feb19.pdf>





**Aging infrastructure:** Many of Cordova's public facilities were constructed when state and federal agencies provided most of the needed funding. However, today many of these facilities are aging and face a growing backlog of needed maintenance and eventual replacement. For example, port and harbor revenues cover regular operations and maintenance costs, but reserve funds are likely insufficient for longer term replacements and repairs. Other facilities that will require major upgrades, replacement or relocation include the junior/senior high school, the public safety building, the sewer treatment plant, the pool and the recreation center. Identifying a strategy for sustainably maintaining critical facilities, while also investing resources in other community priorities, will be a key component of community financial discussions.

"Between the old Library/Museum and old City Hall, we have visual examples of what happens when you don't invest in your buildings/infrastructure. Let's continually invest in and maintain city buildings so they last 100 years."

"Bidarki Recreation facility and the pool are incredible community resources. I would like to see more city funding going to maintain these facilities. The city is going to have to increase revenue. We cannot cut our spending to prosperity. Seasonal fisherman and workers need to pay their share for using the city infrastructure."

## Fiscal Health, Public Facilities and Services: Goals

### Goal A

Provide efficient, effective, fiscally responsible services, infrastructure and facilities.

### Goal B

Work towards increasingly self-supporting, sustainable government, with less reliance on state and federal funding.

## Fiscal Health, Public Facilities and Services: Strategies and Actions

**Strategy #1:** *Establish long-term plans and funding sources for maintenance and replacement of public facilities and infrastructure.*

*NOTE: see the economic development chapter for harbor and maritime specific facility strategies.*

- a. Develop a facilities plan that identifies and plans for short, medium and long-term facility needs, including the establishment of a repair and replacement plan for community facilities with dedicated funding sources. Consider:
  - Generating additional funding for the long-term fiscal health of port and harbor capital infrastructure.
  - Instituting an improved savings plan to fund eventual upgrades to the sewer treatment plant. Options to cover those large-scale upgrade costs include major grants or local bond measures.
- b. Invest in training and skill development so local contractors and city staff can better implement necessary utility and facility system repairs and maintenance.

"The Cordova Center is our biggest accomplishment. It brings people together. The library is great and gives summer residents a place to go. Some people grumble about the cost but I think it's great."

"The Cordova Center is a beautiful building but I don't think we can afford it... sometimes our ideas are bigger than our population can sustain."

**Strategy #2: Identify and upgrade known priority facilities, infrastructure and services.**

*NOTE: see the appendix for the City of Cordova's CIP list.*

- a. Plan for the construction of a new public safety building.
- b. Create an updated Cordova Water and Sewer Master Plan, with a focus on securing expanded and more reliable year-round water supply. Consider high priority needs such as:
  - Map and evaluate current water and sewer infrastructure.
  - Upgrade sewer treatment plant capacity.
  - Expand commercial fish processing capacity.
  - Create a more proactive monitoring program to identify and address infrastructure issues earlier on to mitigate the need for expensive repairs.
  - Conduct a network analysis to determine appropriate rates that better cover operating costs.
  - Explore options for expanding water, sewer and other utilities into areas that have greatest potential to support new housing and other needed new development.
- c. Create a stormwater master plan to guide stormwater management investments and improvements such as road drainage.
- d. Plan for future upgrades to renovate the aging junior/senior high school facility.
- e. Improve Eyak Lake recreation infrastructure, including improving or relocating the boat ramp, expanding parking, improving Skater's Cabin and expanding beach access.
- f. Plan for shipyard expansion and upgrades to shipyard equipment and facilities.

**Strategy #3: Reduce energy costs and reduce reliance on non-renewable energy resources.**

- a. Continue to investigate options for meeting electrical energy needs and reducing cost of electricity.
- b. Improve energy efficiency throughout facilities with upgrades and other improvements and encourage energy conservation.
- c. Prioritize investments in renewable energy and reduce the use of energy resources that contribute to climate change.

**Strategy #4: Improve waste management practices.**

- a. Improve recycling and trash management to further extend the life of the city landfill.
- b. Secure funding to obtain new refuse department equipment.
- c. Upgrade waste management equipment to reduce trash-related bear conflicts.
- d. Explore alternatives to the burn pile that have lesser environmental impacts.

"Due to climate, facility maintenance is high here; we need to be better about building those costs into planning and budgeting so our public facilities are sustainable."

"The city should concentrate on the core services: public works, public safety and schools."

**Strategy #5: *Develop greater revenue capacity to support anticipated needs.***

- a. Work with Cordova residents to continue to explore needed and creative options for new revenue sources, with a focus on revenues from high-impact seasonal residents as opposed to year-round residents.
- b. Advocate for continuation of state/community shared revenues and bond debt reimbursement.
- c. Continue to actively pursue funding opportunities and prioritize in-house and professional funding research and proposal development services for “shovel-ready” designs, cost-benefit analyses, etc.

**Strategy #6: *Develop budgeting practices that provide more consistency from year to year.***

- a. When reductions in revenue occur, evaluate ways to spread reductions throughout the entire budget, including contributions to the many entities the city supports.
- b. Budget for anticipated revenues conservatively and consistently.
- c. Evaluate the budgets and finances of the entities supported by the city to ensure consistent philosophies and budget practices.
- d. Develop a long-term strategic plan aimed at self-sufficiency and less dependence on state and federal funds.
- e. Continue to develop transparent budget/financial documents that educate the public about the city’s finances.



## 8. Implementation


The process for implementing this plan will include developing an annual work plan of “priority actions” that support the strategies identified in the plan. This annual work plan will consider existing and anticipated resources and will provide direction to city leadership, staff and their partners. Equally important, the annual work plan will give Cordova residents, businesses and partners a detailed picture of what progress is being made on the plan. The update will include a summary of actions taken, and progress made toward plan-identified goals and objectives. Additionally, the city will implement a process for gauging community satisfaction with plan progress. Cordova residents should be regularly encouraged to share comments, questions and concerns on plan contents and implementation, and more importantly, to get involved in plan implementation.

The following table outlines a potential format for the annual work plan, which could be completed as a part of plan implementation.

SAMPLE			
<b>Goal:</b> What broad or long-term change do we want to make?			
<b>Objective:</b> What measurable change do we hope to achieve over the next year?			
Priority Strategy	Actions <i>(specific step)</i>	Lead <i>(who)</i>	Timeline <i>(when)</i>
1.	a. b.		
2.	a. b.		
3.	a. b.		
<b>Indicators</b> <i>(what specific measures or data can help us track progress):</i>			





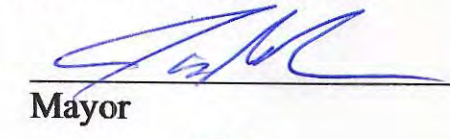


City of Cordova

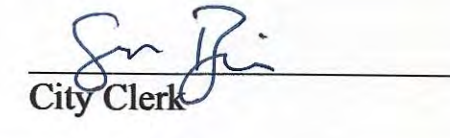
ALASKA

Official Zoning Map

This is to certify that this Official Zoning Map supersedes and replaces the Official Zoning Map adopted 6/16/99 as part of the Cordova City Code of the City of Cordova, Alaska.



Mayor



City Clerk


8/5/15


Date


8/5/15


Date


Zones


 Business District


 Central Business District


 Waterfront Commercial Park District


 Waterfront Industrial District


 Waterfront Historic District

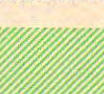
 Industrial District


 Low Density Residence District


 Medium Density Residence District


 Rural Residential District


 Planned Mobile Home District

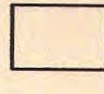
 Public Lands and Institutions District


 Parks and Open Space District


 Watershed Protection District


 Conservation District

 Unrestricted District

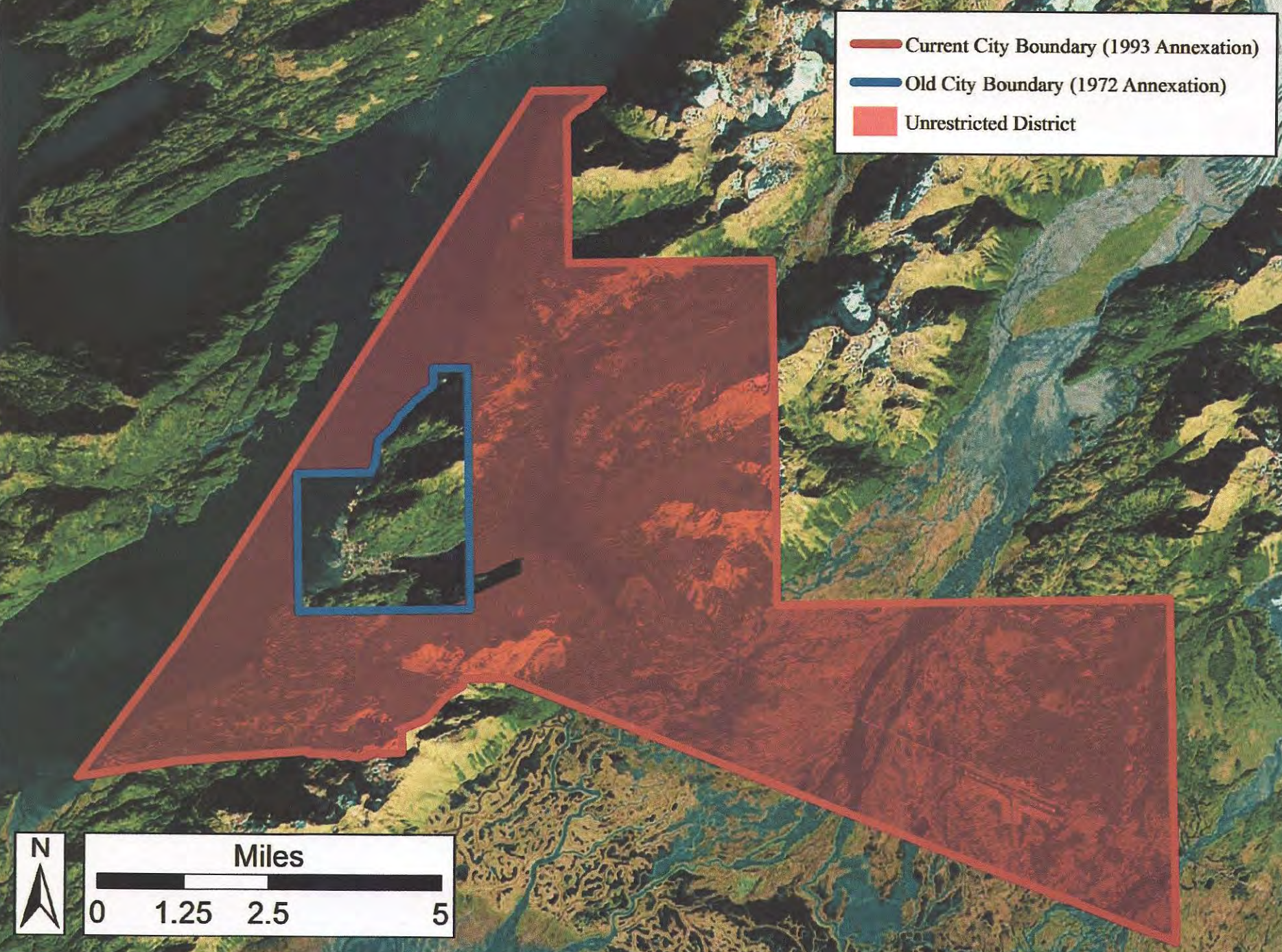
 Parcel Lines


 Current City Boundary (1993 Annexation)


 Old City Boundary (1972 Annexation)


 Eyak Lake Area Meriting Special Attention (AMSA)


Unrestricted District



 Current City Boundary (1993 Annexation)

 Old City Boundary (1972 Annexation)

 Unrestricted District

 Miles

0

1.25

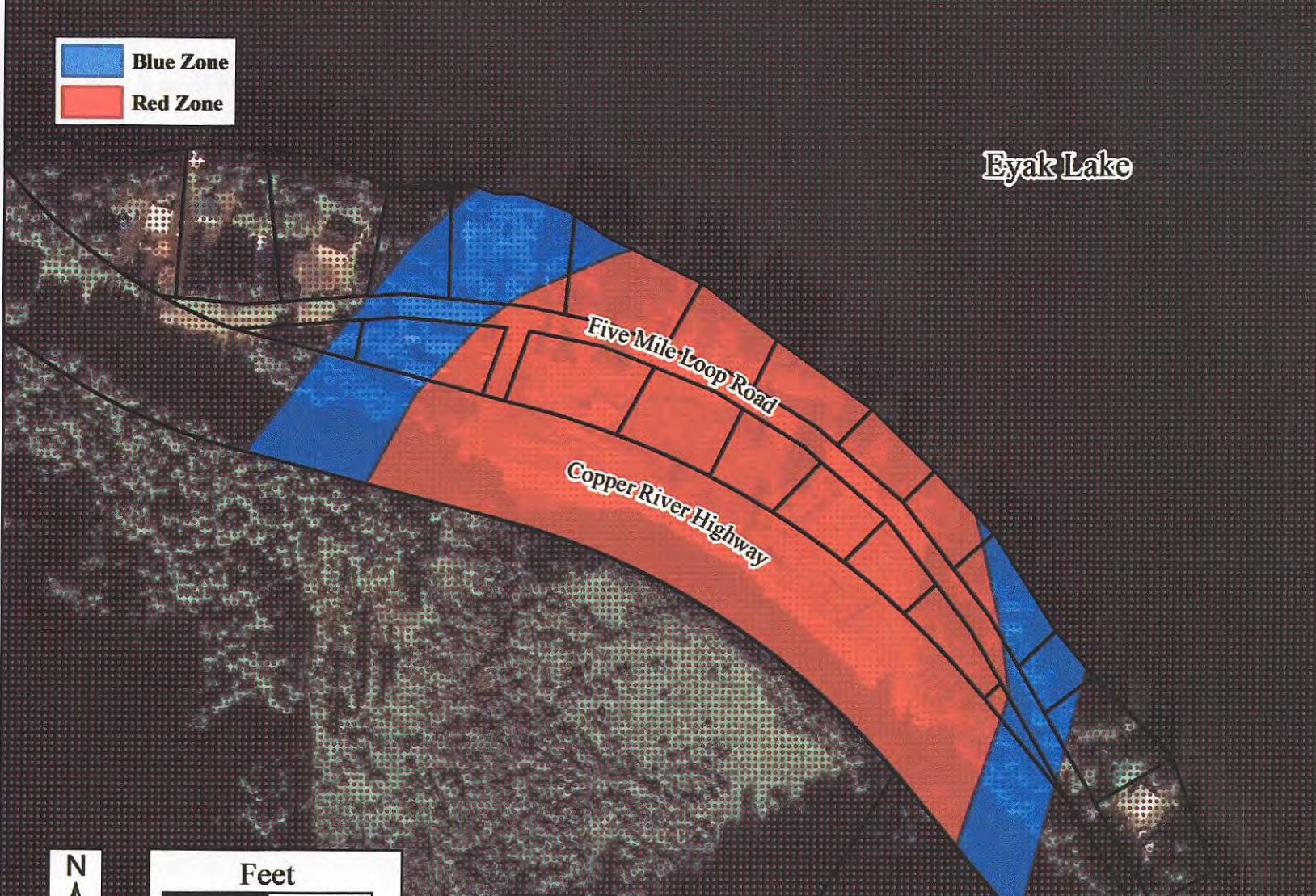
2.5


5


Notes:


1. All areas outside of the scope of the Zoning Map within the Current City Boundary are zoned in the Unrestricted District. See Unrestricted District map above.
2. Parcel lines are depicted on this map as solid black lines. These lines are approximate only and may include errors or omissions. They should not be used to determine actual property lines. There are several areas in which there are zone changes that do not follow parcel lines.
3. In addition to the zoning districts depicted on this map, there may be additional overlay zoning districts, designated hazard areas, or other land use regulations.
4. The City of Cordova does not guarantee that this zoning map is free from errors or omissions. This map is subject to and revision or interpretation as permitted by the Cordova Municipal Code. Prior to making any decision or taking any action based on the information contained on this map, please contact the Planning Department.
5. Title 18 of the Cordova Municipal Code contains the zoning ordinance for the City. The Code and this Zoning Map can be found on the City's webpage at [www.cityofcordova.net](http://www.cityofcordova.net).

Avalanche Overlay District



 Blue Zone


 Red Zone

 Feet

0

180

360

 Feet

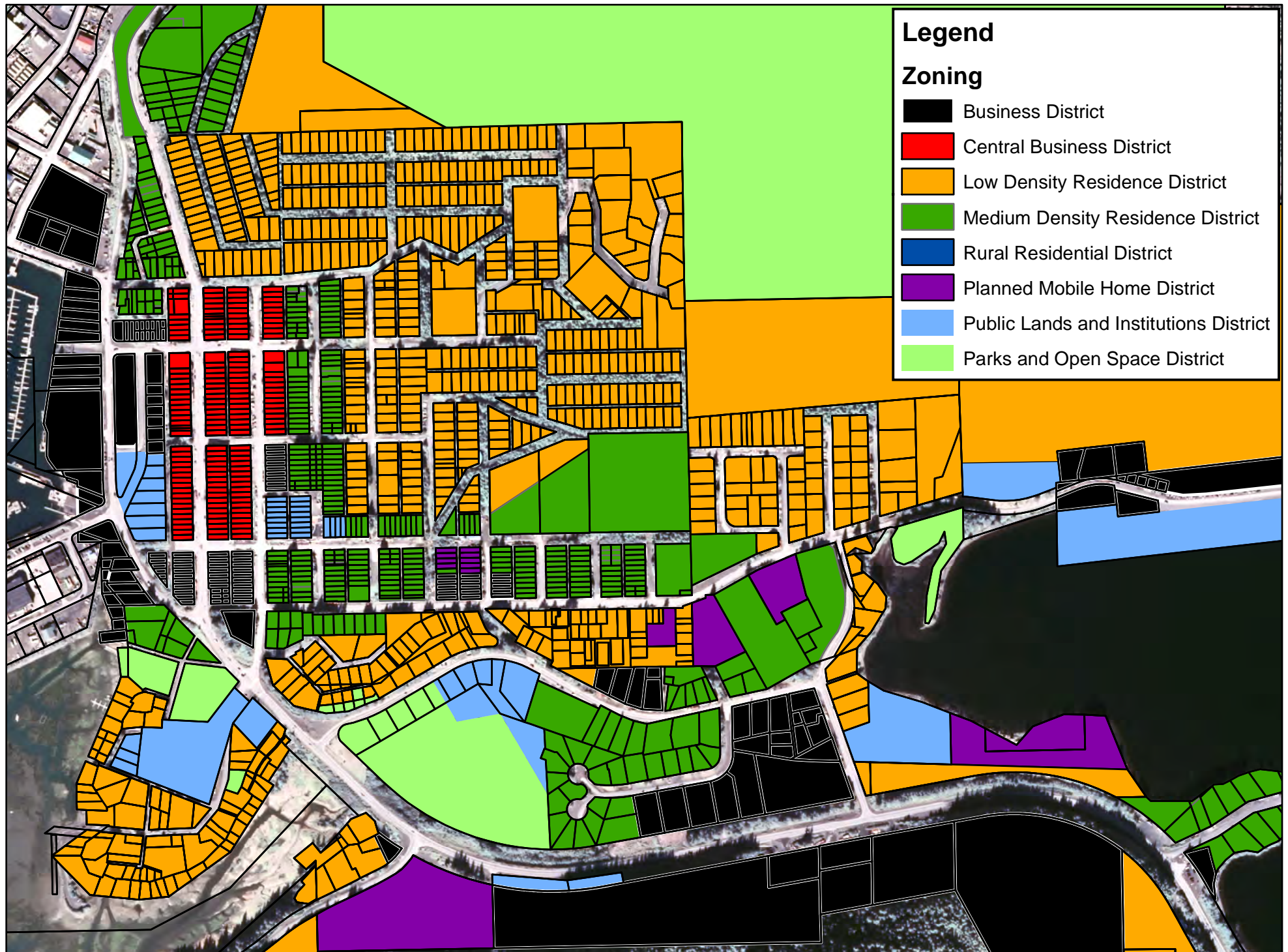
0

500

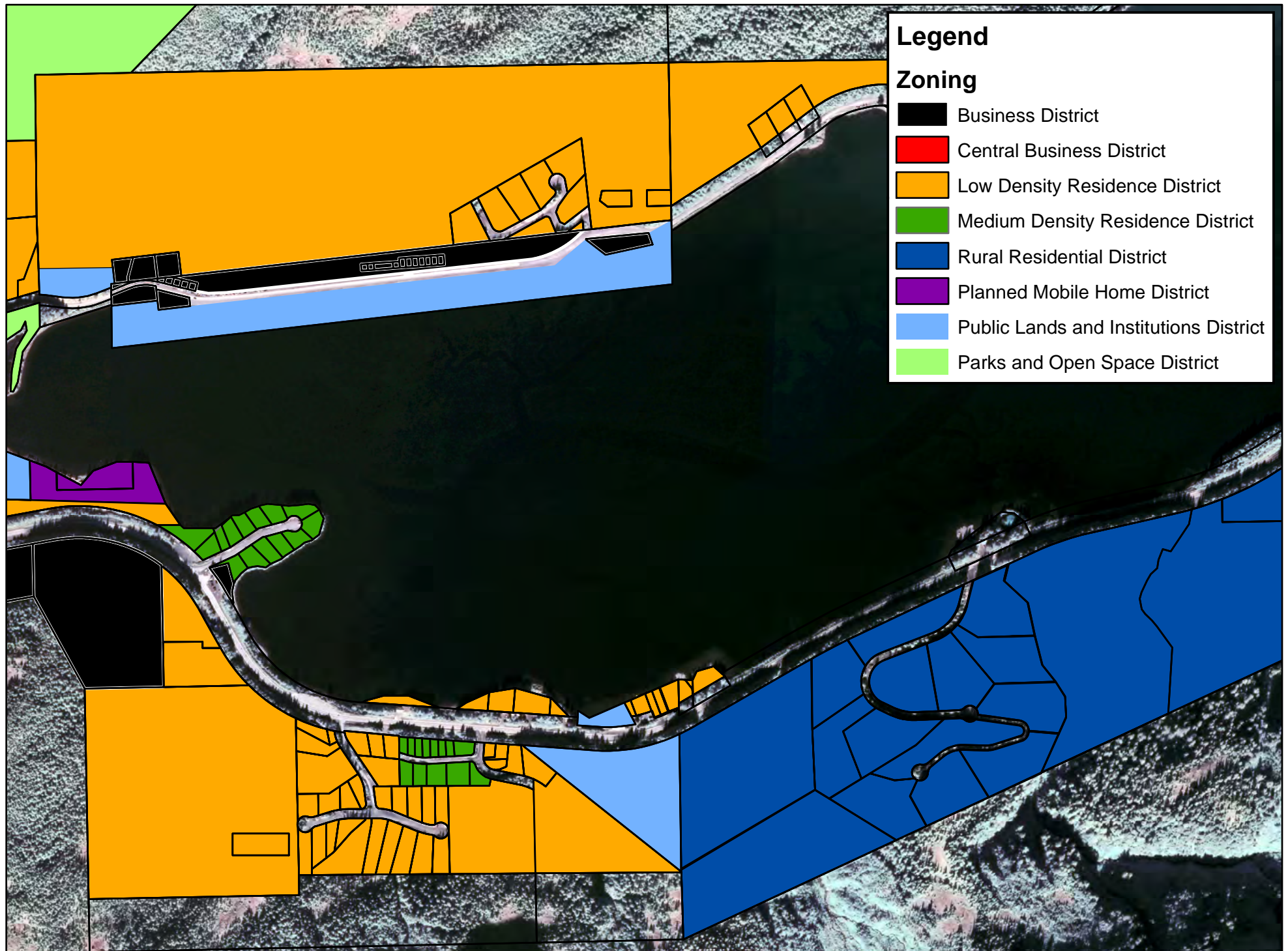
1,000

2,000







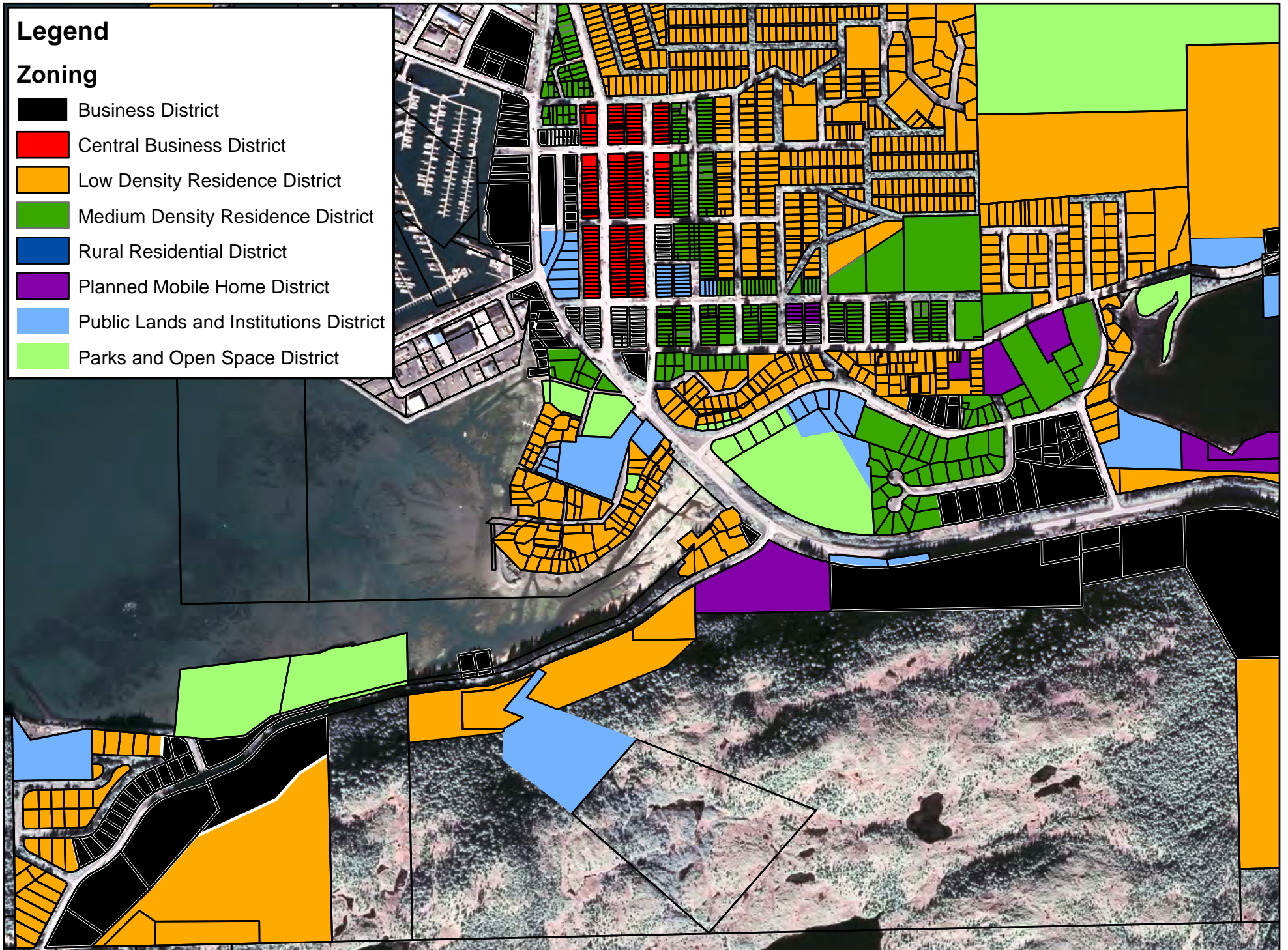




## Legend

### Zoning

- Business District
- Central Business District
- Low Density Residence District
- Medium Density Residence District
- Rural Residential District
- Planned Mobile Home District
- Public Lands and Institutions District
- Parks and Open Space District



DISTRICT	USES	SETBACKS	HEIGHT LIMIT	MIN. LOT SIZE
Low Density Residential – 18.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One – three Family Dwelling,</li> <li>Boardinghouses,</li> <li>Truck Gardening,</li> <li>Home Occupations</li> <li>Accessory Building (not for use as a dwelling),</li> <li>Off Street Parking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front: 10 ft.</li> <li>Side: <sup>1</sup>5 ft. (10 when on a street corner)</li> <li>Rear:15% depth of lot, not to exceed 15 ft.</li> </ul>	Two and one-half stories not to exceed 35 feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4,000 sq. ft. and 40 ft. wide.</li> <li>2,000 sq. ft. per dwelling for two and three family dwelling unit and 40 ft. wide.</li> </ul>
Medium Density Residential – 18.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One, two, &amp; <sup>2</sup>multifamily Dwelling,</li> <li>Boardinghouses,</li> <li>Accessory Building (not for use as a dwelling),</li> <li>Off Street Parking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front: 10 ft.</li> <li>Side: <sup>3</sup>5 ft. (10 when on a street corner)</li> <li>Rear:15% depth of lot, not to exceed 15 ft.</li> </ul>	Three and one-half stories not to exceed 45 feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4,000 sq. ft. and 40 ft. wide.</li> <li>2,000 sq. ft. per dwelling for two / three dwellings and 40 ft. wide.</li> <li>1,600 sq. ft. per dwelling for four – seven dwellings and 40 ft. wide.</li> <li>1,000 sq. ft. per dwelling for eight or more dwellings and 40 ft. wide.</li> </ul>
High Density Residential – 18.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One, two, &amp; multifamily Dwellings<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Public, Private &amp; Religious Elementary Schools</li> <li>Parks, Playgrounds/fields &amp; Municipal Buildings</li> <li>Rooming Houses</li> <li>Private Clubs &amp; Lodges<sup>5</sup></li> <li>Home Occupations</li> <li>Conditional &amp; Prohibited Uses, See Attached Supplemental Information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front: 10 ft.</li> <li>Side: 5 ft. &amp; increased one foot for each five feet in height exceeding 35 ft.</li> <li>Rear:10 ft.</li> <li>Multifamily shall provide 100 sq. ft. usable yard area per dwelling unit</li> </ul>	Unrestricted subject to Planning Commission approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4,000 sq. ft. and 40 ft. wide.</li> <li>6,000 sq. ft. for two family dwellings and 40 ft. wide.</li> <li>6,000 sq. ft. per dwelling for three – six dwellings and 50 ft. wide.</li> <li>8,500 sq. ft. per dwelling for seven dwellings plus an additional 750 sq. ft. for each dwelling from 8 – 10</li> <li>Max Lot Coverage of 50% of lot area</li> </ul>
RR3 Residential – 18.21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single Family Dwelling (no ADU allowed)</li> <li>Accessory Structures ((not for use as a dwelling))</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front: 10 ft.</li> <li>Side: 10 ft.</li> <li>Rear:25 ft.</li> </ul>	Two and one-half stories not to exceed 35 feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three Acres (130,680 sq. ft.)</li> <li>Max Lot Coverage of 25% of lot area</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> In case the building is so located on the lot that the rear thereof abuts one side yard and front abuts the other, the side yard along the rear of the building shall have a minimum width of twelve feet and the side yard along the front of the building shall have a minimum width of eighteen feet.

<sup>2</sup> Defined by code as any building containing three or more dwelling units

<sup>3</sup> (1. In case the building is so located on the lot that the rear thereof abuts one side yard and front abuts the other, the side yard along the rear of the building shall have a minimum width of twelve feet and the side yard along the front of the building shall have a minimum width of ten feet. (2. For multiple-family dwellings the minimum side yards required shall be increased one foot for each dwelling unit over four.

<sup>4</sup> More than one principal structure may be allowed on any lot or tract.

<sup>5</sup> Any use involving sale of dispensing or service of alcoholic beverages may be permitted by conditional use only.

Business – 18.28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All uses permitted in the R districts</li> <li><sup>6</sup>Retail / Service Shops</li> <li><sup>6</sup>Entertainment</li> <li><sup>6</sup>Accessory Buildings</li> <li>Others as approved by Planning Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><sup>7</sup>No Setbacks required unless residential located on ground floor.</li> </ul>	<sup>8</sup> Three stories not to exceed 50 feet	No Minimum Lot Size
Central Business – 18.29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All limited uses in the B district, except that off-street parking shall not be required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><sup>7</sup>No Setbacks required unless residential located on ground floor.</li> </ul>	<sup>8</sup> Three stories not to exceed 50 feet	No Minimum Lot Size
Planned Mobile Home District – 18.26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobile Home Park</li> <li>Mobile Home Subdivision</li> <li>Accessory Structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different Based on MH Park VS MH Subdivision, See Attached Supplemental Information</li> </ul>	Unclear, code implies standard mobile home height and 20 feet for accessory structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5,000 sq. ft.</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> (1 Retail stores and retail service shops of all kinds, banks, offices, hotels and restaurants (2 Theaters, bowling alleys, assembly halls, funeral parlors (3 Gasoline service stations, automobile repair garages, printing, laundry and dry-cleaning establishments employing not more than ten persons for operations, other than clerical and delivery

<sup>7</sup> Any structures designed or used as a residence shall provide setbacks in accordance with the R district requirements. Provided that when the ground floor is used for a commercial purpose, no setbacks required except for a side yard setback.

<sup>8</sup> a building or structure thereafter erected, added to or otherwise constructed may be increased in height, provided the gross cubical content of such building or structure does not exceed the sum total of the area of the lot upon which it is to be erected multiplied by fifty.



## **High Density Residential Zone Supplemental Information**

### **Conditional Uses:**

- Townhouses and row houses built to a common wall at side lot lines
- Nursing homes, convalescent homes and similar institutional uses
- Churches and synagogues, along with the customary accessory uses including parsonages, day nurseries, kindergartens and meeting rooms
- Utilities substations
- Off—street parking spaces or structures
- Museums, historical and cultural exhibits, aquariums, and the like
- Camper parks
- Convenience establishments
- Planned unit development
- Privately owned neighborhood community recreation centers in keeping with the character and requirements of the district, provided the center is oriented to a particular residential subdivision or housing project and that the uses are delineated as conditions to approval
- Quasi-institutional houses.

### **Prohibited Uses:**

- Any use or structure not of a character indicated under permitted uses and structures or permitted as a conditional use
- Storage or use of mobile homes except as provided in this section
- Portable or semi-permanent type structures
- Any use which causes or may reasonably be expected to cause excessive noise, vibration, odor, smoke, dust, or other particulate matter, toxic or noxious matter, humidity, heat or glare at or beyond any lot line of the lot on which it is located. "Excessive" is defined for these purposes as a degree exceeding that generated by uses permitted in the district in their customary manner of operation, or to a degree injurious to the public health, safety, welfare or convenience.

## **Mobile Home Park Zoning Supplemental Information**

### **Setbacks:**

- Mobile Home Parks:
  - Greenbelt. The park shall have a greenbelt ten feet in width at its rear and sides. The greenbelt shall be ten feet at the front of the mobile home park. The greenbelt shall be measured from the nearest edge of the road right-of-way to the line of the closest mobile home site
  - Recreation. The minimum of ten percent of the total park should be left in open space developed for recreation purposes. Such developed area shall not include roads, sidewalks, lands under water or having excessive grades and shall be so graded and developed as to have adequate drainage and usability by residents of the park
  - Site Dimensions. A mobile home shall have its own site which shall be at least fifty feet wide and a minimum of five thousand square feet in area

- Mobile homes shall be at least fifteen feet from the rear of the nearest mobile home and fifteen feet from the side of the nearest mobile home
  - Mobile homes shall be placed at least ten feet from the pavement of the access drive
- Mobile Home Subdivisions:
  - Lot width: fifty feet
  - Lot area: five thousand square feet
  - Minimum front yard: ten feet
  - Minimum side yard: ten feet
  - Minimum rear yard: fifteen feet



## 5-Minute and 10-Minute Walkshed





**MEMORANDUM**

**TO: HELEN HOWARTH  
CITY MANAGER**

**FROM: ZOE EISBERG  
HOLLY WELLS**

**RE: HOUSING TAX INCENTIVES SURVEY**

**CLIENT: CITY OF CORDOVA**

**FILE NO.: 401777.294**

**DATE: MAY 8, 2023**

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the City of Cordova ("City") with an introduction to tax and permitting programs that communities are using inside and outside Alaska to incentivize long-term rentals and encourage development of residential housing. This memorandum incorporates previous research regarding property tax exemptions, as well as direct subsidy and funding programs.

**I. PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS IN ALASKA COMMUNITIES**

**A. City and Borough of Juneau: Economic Development Incentives for Senior, Downtown, and High-Density Living**

Alaska Statute 29.45.050(m) authorizes municipalities to exempt or defer, by ordinance, properties qualifying as "economic development properties" from property taxation for up to five years, and may provide for renewal of the exemption or deferral under conditions established in the ordinance. The term "economic development property" means real or personal property that:

- (1) has not previously been taxed as real or personal property by the municipality;
- (2) is used in a trade or business in a way that
  - (A) creates employment in the municipality;
  - (B) generates sales outside of the municipality of goods or services produced in the municipality; or



(C) materially reduces the importation of goods or services from outside the municipality; and

(3) has not been used in the same trade or business in another municipality for at least six months before the application for deferral or exemption is filed; this paragraph does not apply if the property was used in the same trade or business in an area that has been annexed to the municipality within six months before the application for deferral or exemption is filed; this paragraph does not apply to inventories.<sup>1</sup>

The Juneau Municipal Code utilizes this statutory authority to encourage the development of residential housing by authorizing twelve-year<sup>2</sup> property tax exemptions on the following types of properties, provided that they also meet the definition of “economic development property” provided by AS 29.45.050(m):

1. Assisted living for senior citizens<sup>3</sup>: At least 15 new residential units on one lot of assisted living for senior citizens. The term “residential units” includes “the assisted living residential units for senior citizens and only those building spaces that are necessary and incidental to the assisted living of senior citizens... like common space, support space and shared facilities.”<sup>4</sup> This tax exemption runs with the land so long as all tax-exempt units remain under a single common ownership.<sup>5</sup>
2. Downtown multifamily<sup>6</sup>: At least 4 new residential units on one lot in the Downtown Juneau Residential Tax Abatement Map. Units must not be used as short-term rentals during the property tax abatement period.<sup>7</sup> This tax exemption runs with the land so long as all tax-exempt units remain under a single common ownership.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> AS 29.45.050(m).

<sup>2</sup> JMC 69.10.023(h) (“Tax exemptions approved under this section shall be for a period of 12 consecutive years beginning on January 1 of the first full calendar year after final approval of the application.”).

<sup>3</sup> JMC 69.10.023(a)(1).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> JMC 69.10.023(a)(2).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

No new downtown multifamily tax exemption applications may be accepted or granted after October 1, 2032.<sup>9</sup>

3. High-density residential<sup>10</sup>: At least 4 new residential units on one lot, where the residential development meets or exceeds 75 percent of the maximum density for one lot as provided by the Code. May not be used as short-term rentals during the property tax abatement period.<sup>11</sup> This tax exemption runs with the land so long as all tax-exempt units remain under a single common ownership.<sup>12</sup>

The magnitude of the exemption is determined on a spatial basis: “the square footage of the newly constructed residential units shall be divided by the square footage of all structures on the property, then multiplied by the assessed value of all improvements on the property and by the mill rate applicable to the property.”<sup>13</sup>

## **B. Fairbanks North Star Borough: New Construction Housing Tax Exemptions**

Similar to Juneau’s economic development housing incentive program, the Fairbanks North Star Borough provides a property tax exemption which “may be approved for the construction of new residential units when there is a demonstrated need for the construction in designated locations.”<sup>14</sup> The exemption is for a maximum of 10 years total if five or more residential units are constructed, and for a maximum of two years if fewer than five units are constructed.<sup>15</sup>

Prior to beginning construction on any project for which this exemption is sought, the developer must provide the tax assessor which includes, at a minimum:

- (1) proof that the entire property is within a designated area;
- (2) drawings of the residential units, including site plans and floor plans;
- (3) an acknowledgement that the units will be taxable when no longer eligible for tax exemption;
- (4) document describing how the project

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<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> JMC 69.10.023(a)(3).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> JMC 69.10.023(g).

<sup>14</sup> FNSBC 8.12.045.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

- (a) serves an area in which demand for housing exceeds available inventory;
- (b) serves a need with respect to cost and type of construction;
- (c) meets or exceeds a specified five-star energy rating; and
- (5) the details of any plan to transfer, convey, or assign ownership of the property to a third party after construction.<sup>16</sup>

An application may be approved by the Assembly by ordinance if the Assembly makes the following findings:

- (1) There is a demonstrated need for the location, cost, and type of construction that is proposed;
- (2) Construction is for entirely new residential units;
- (3) If construction is for five or more residential units, they are contained within a single multi-family structure;
- (4) The residential units will be constructed on the property within two years of approval;
- (5) Each unit is suitable for habitation by one or more persons, and include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation;
- (6) Each unit will be owner-occupied or leased for periods of at least one month; and
- (7) The proposed term of the exemption is proportionate to the benefit of the development.<sup>17</sup>

For developments of fewer than five units, the exemption becomes effective on the January 1st after construction of the foundation of the structure is complete and the exemption is approved by the assessor.<sup>18</sup> For developments of five units or more, the exemption becomes effective on the January 1st after the applicant has completed construction and the exemption is approved by the assessor.<sup>19</sup> Each year, the property owner must file a report with the Borough certifying, among other items, that the property remains eligible for the exemption.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> FNSBC 8.12.045(B).

<sup>17</sup> FNSBC 8.12.045(B).

<sup>18</sup> FNSBC 8.12.045(C)(1).

<sup>19</sup> FNSBC 8.12.045(C)(2).

<sup>20</sup> FNSBC 8.12.045(F).

### **C. Fairbanks North Star Borough: Deteriorated Property Tax Exemption**

In addition to its tax incentive program for newly-constructed residential properties, the Fairbanks North Star Borough Code also allows the Assembly to “grant a partial or total exemption and/or deferral for deteriorated property” if there is a clear and convincing demonstration that the exemption or deferral will provide a “direct economic benefit to the borough.”<sup>21</sup> The exemption or deferral must be necessary to:

- (1) The economic feasibility of completing improvements on the property; and
- (2) Promote or improve the economic development of the Borough.<sup>22</sup>

The exemption/deferral is available both to non-residential commercial properties, and multi-unit residential properties with at least eight residential units.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the property must either have been, within the last five years, ordered vacated, condemned, or demolished because of non-compliance with laws, ordinances, or regulations; or be located in an area that is determined by the Assembly after public hearing to be deteriorated or deteriorating, and the Assembly determines that the exemption or deferral will provide “measurable public benefits commensurate with the level of incentive granted.”<sup>24</sup>

Not all deteriorated properties will be eligible for this tax incentive: the improvements must be compatible with the Borough’s land use and development plans.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, as a prerequisite to eligibility, the property owner must be in compliance with all prior municipal and state tax obligations.<sup>26</sup>

### **D. City of Seward: Developer Incentive and Reimbursement Program**

The City of Seward took a novel approach to encouraging residential development. Chapter 5.22 of the Seward Municipal Code allows the City to “reimburse a developer for up to 50 percent of the costs of extending public utilities to the developer’s undeveloped property in order to incentive installation of public utilities and property development within city boundaries.”<sup>27</sup> Chapter 5.20 of the City Code allowed for the establishment by Council or by petition of “special improvement districts” based upon the public interest and

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<sup>21</sup> FNSBC 8.12.050.

<sup>22</sup> FBSBC 8.12.050(A).

<sup>23</sup> FNSBC 8.12.050(B).

<sup>24</sup> FNSBC 8.12.050(C).

<sup>25</sup> FNSBC 8.12.060(E).

<sup>26</sup> FNSBC 8.12.050(D).

<sup>27</sup> SMC 5.22.010.



necessity;<sup>28</sup> Chapter 5.22 of the Code clarifies that special improvement districts may be created and assessments levied against real property benefitted by the improvement “[w]hen the determination has been made that a city utility infrastructure will benefit the community through expansion of residential housing or will benefit the utility system.”<sup>29</sup>

Upon application to the City and approval by Council, a developer may extend electric, water, and wastewater utility services along public rights-of-way or easements, and may receive reimbursement of up to 50 percent of the costs to do so either via the special improvement district process or through reimbursement of private financing.<sup>30</sup> The reimbursement is funded by a partial assessment levied against the benefitting properties in the special assessment district.<sup>31</sup>

The Chapter provides a rigid procedure that developers must follow in order to obtain the benefit of the incentive and reimbursement program.<sup>32</sup> This includes, among other steps, the execution of an agreement between the developer and the City outlining division of costs for the utility extension;<sup>33</sup> requiring the provision of as-built drawings;<sup>34</sup> granting the City ownership of all utility lines and facilities within the easements or rights-of-way;<sup>35</sup> and allowing the City to witness the testing of any utility installation.<sup>36</sup> The City Council may adopt, change, or deny a request for reimbursement by resolution.<sup>37</sup>

## **II. BEYOND PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS: OTHER TAXATION OPTIONS**

Perhaps the most direct, impactful way to incentivize long term rentals within the City is to exempt these rentals from sales tax. A representative from the Alaska Fair Housing Corporation noted in a discussion regarding programs that may alleviate the City’s housing crisis that the simple removal of the 6% sales tax for long-term rentals

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<sup>28</sup> SMC 5.20.025.

<sup>29</sup> SMC 5.22.045.

<sup>30</sup> SMC 5.22.035.

<sup>31</sup> SMC 5.22.065.

<sup>32</sup> SMC 5.22.065.

<sup>33</sup> SMC 5.22.065(B)(1).

<sup>34</sup> SMC 5.22.065(B)(3).

<sup>35</sup> SMC 5.22.065(B)(4).

<sup>36</sup> SMC 5.22.065(B)(5).

<sup>37</sup> SMC 5.22.095.

would immediately increase the value of a long-term rental to all owners/landlords, regardless of the number of units offered.

Short of a full exemption from sales tax for long-term rentals (for example, rentals for more than 30 days), the City may also consider the use of improvement districts in which capital improvements to the properties in that district are either fully or partially funded by the City.

### **III. USING OVERLAY DISTRICTS TO INCENTIVIZE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

Many communities throughout the country are exploring the use of “Affordable Housing Overlay Zones” to incentivize the construction and development of housing options within their boundaries. Generally, “affordable housing” is housing that costs no more than 30% of the household income of the housed and does not include short-term rentals. An overlay district is often used to permit accessory buildings, remove density standards, reduce parking standards, and permit uses otherwise requiring a conditional use permit. In considering the use of overlay districts, the City may also want to consider implementing municipal grant programs that could be used to fund predevelopment, utilities, and other construction costs in the overlay district.

### **IV. GRANT PROGRAMS AND OTHER SUBSIDIES FOR HOUSING CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

In addition to tax exemptions and overlay districts, some municipalities are adopting grant programs to directly fund development of housing. There are many options regarding the nature, amount, and administrative process surrounding these grants. In Alaska, it is important that any grant program has a uniform application process and the award procedure is transparent. It is essential that all potential applicants have equal access and opportunity to participate and benefit from the grant program. While the grants may be monetary, it may also be a program through which the City absorbs the cost of improvements for utility or road installation or agrees to absorb specific planning costs like those associated with surveys. I have attached several examples of grant programs adopted by municipalities outside Alaska. These programs are also a way to structure funding requests to both the State of Alaska and federal agencies.

The City’s development of its own grant program may be further supported by participation in the Community Development Block Grant or Home Investment Partnership programs or participation in similar programs authorized by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 and administered, in large part, by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”). In the event the City decides to explore participation in these grants, a meeting with HUD and the City as well as discussions with other communities participating in HUD housing programs would be a worthwhile next step. Another important consideration is the opportunity to partner with the Native Village of Eyak and other tribal entities to address the housing crisis.

### **V. CONCLUSION**

While this is just an introduction to the housing incentive and subsidy options available to Cordova, the adoption of any new program should be accompanied with clear application, selection, and disbursement criteria and procedures for ensuring compliance and follow-through by recipients. The City should also review its Comprehensive Plan and any strategic plans to ensure that housing goals are prioritized and any exemption or funding program aligns with the stated priorities and goals in those plans.