City of Cordova
ALASKA

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:

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B. Ken Jones
C. Jeff Guard
D. Melina Meyer
E. Anne Schaefer
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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 4th DAY OF DECEMBER 2019

CITY OF CORDOVA CORPORATE SEAL JULY 8, 1909 ALASKA

Clay R. Koplin, Mayor

ATTEST:

Susan Bourgeois, CMC, City Clerk

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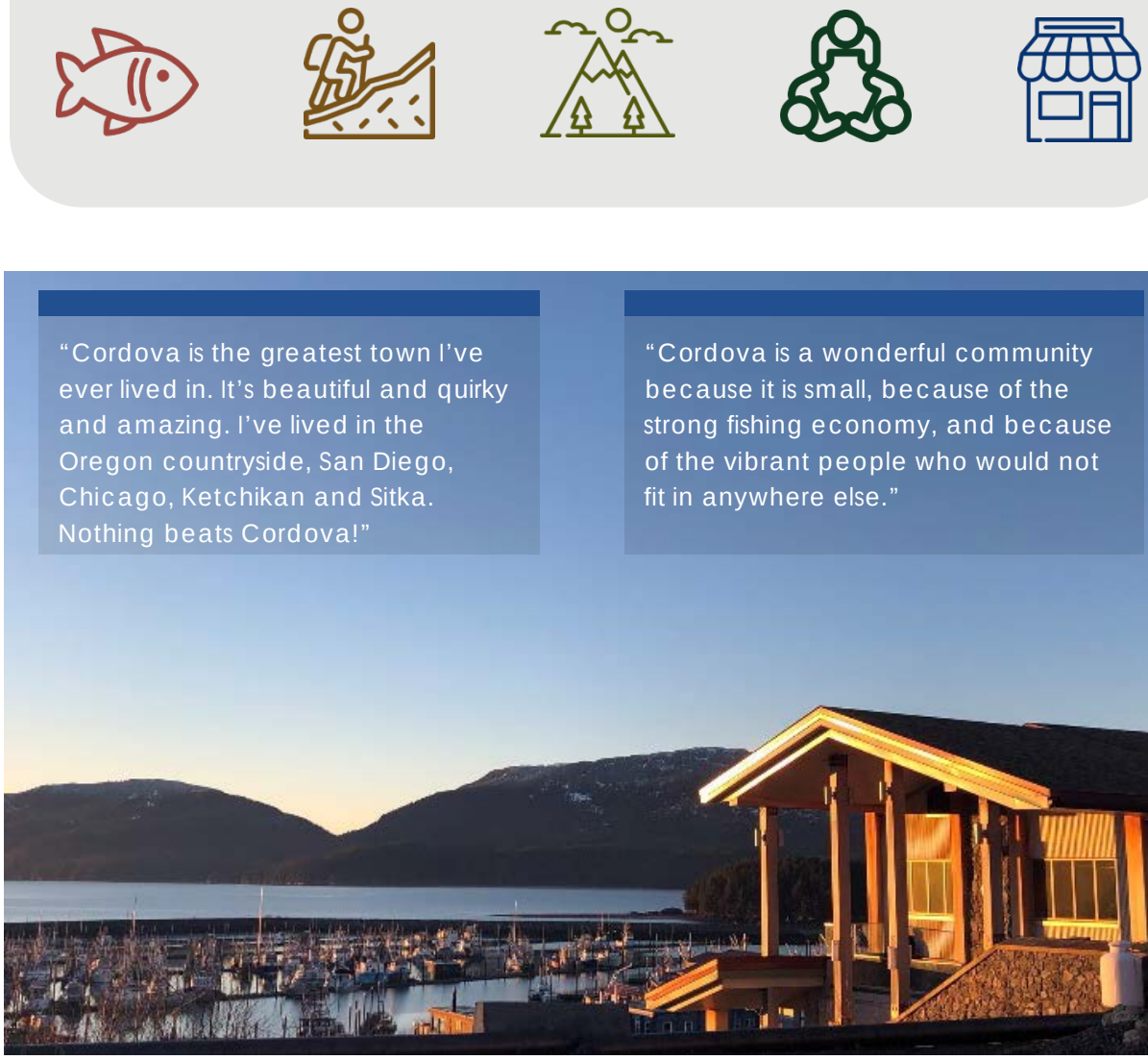
1. Introduction

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.



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."

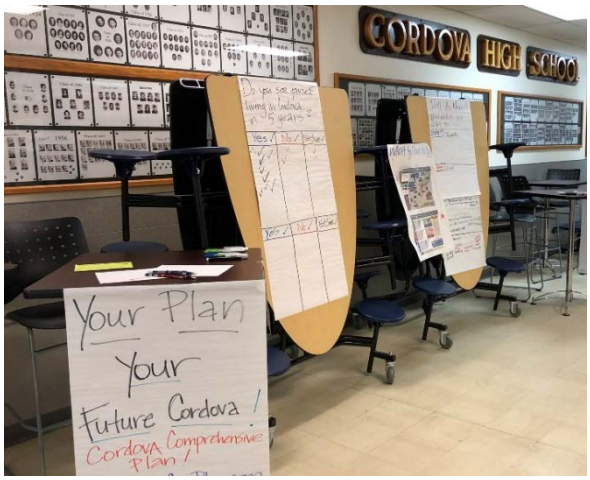
Methodology: How was this plan developed?

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.

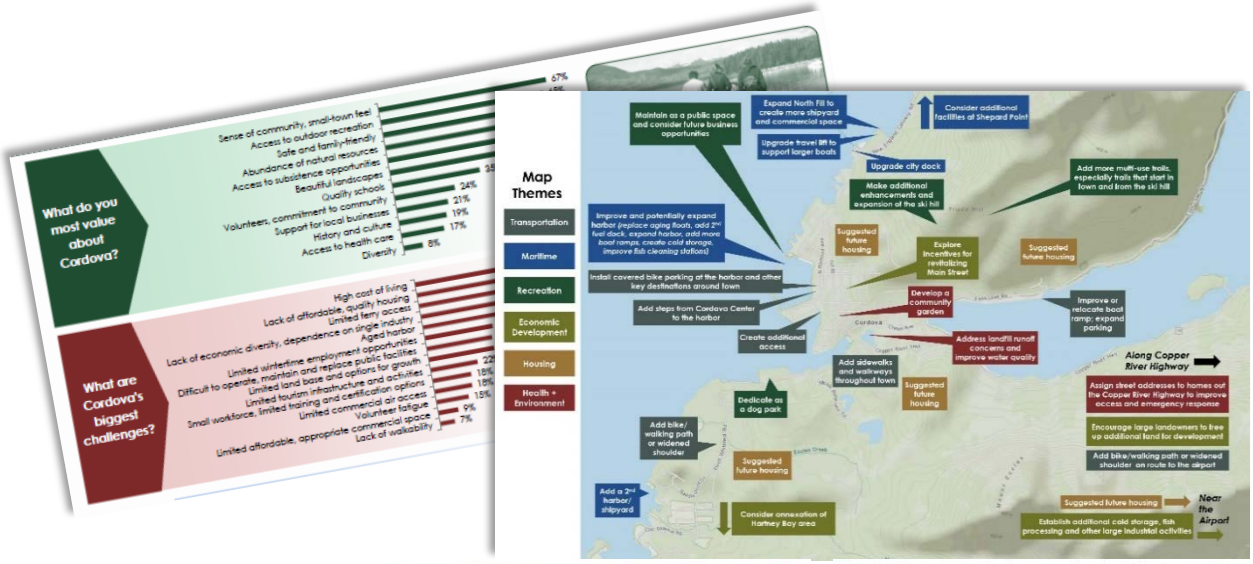
The planning process included the following steps and outreach efforts:

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.

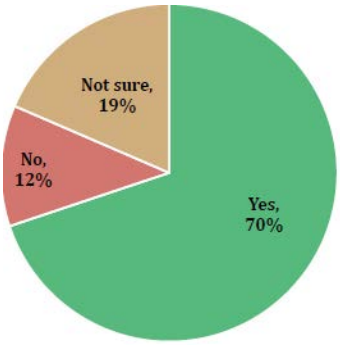
In-Person Activities, Continued	
Information Tables	Hosted informational booths at community events and engaged with hundreds of residents to talk about the plan, share draft products and collect input on how community members want Cordova to look in the future. City staff ordered and handed out customized 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: • Native Village of Eyak Sobriety Celebration (November 2018) • Cordova Holiday Bazaar (December 2018) • Iceworm Festival (January 2019) – more information below • Community Dance Performance (April 2019) • Cordova Health Fair (April 2019) • Back-to-School Night (August 2019) to meet with middle and high school students and their families
Iceworm Festival	Engaged with residents throughout the 2019 Iceworm Festival, including the following community events: • Talked with seniors and other residents during the **Senior Lunch** at the Cordova Community Medical Center (CCMC). • Spent two full days sharing information and talking with Cordova residents and visitors in the upper atrium of the **Cordova Center** as they passed through to other Festival activities. • Collected feedback from residents through a fun interactive activity at the **Iceworm Variety Show**. • Talked with residents and collected survey responses at the **Iceworm Breakfast at St. Joseph's Catholic Church**.
Interviews	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.



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	Launched a mini-survey series asking short, focused questions: • January 2019: "Do you see yourself living in Cordova in five years? What makes you want to stay in/leave Cordova?" (259 responses) • March 2019: "Pick the best idea! What project or strategy would bring the most economic benefit to Cordova residents?" (49 responses)
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.



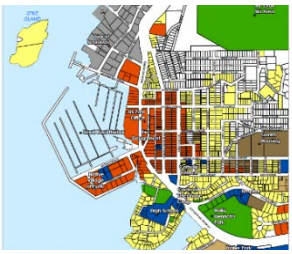
Do you see yourself living in Cordova in 5 years?

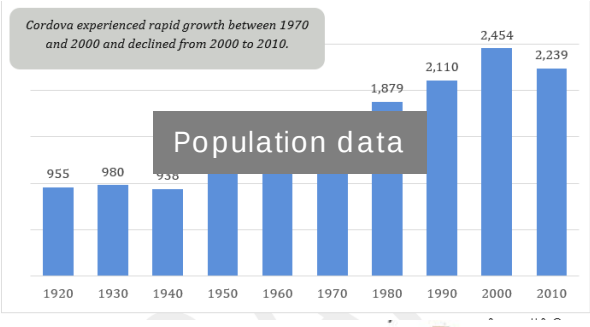


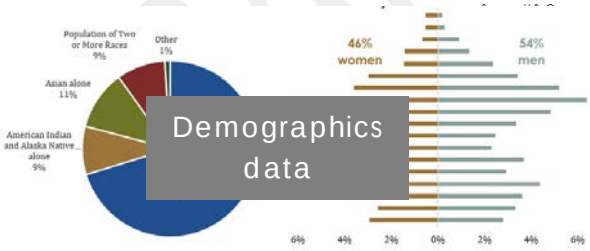
Word clouds developed using Tagul; repeated words appear larger. For more details see the summary in the appendix or on the website

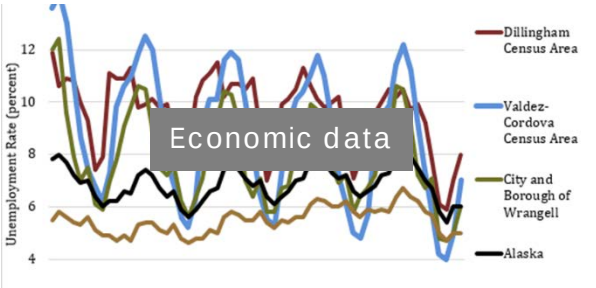
OUTREACH AND MEDIA	
Project Website	Created an informative, simple project website. The website included background information about the project, downloads of past presentations and draft files, announcements of upcoming meetings, links to project surveys and a form to sign up for project e-newsletters. Most printed project materials included a QR code which residents could scan to access the website via a mobile device.
Email Distribution	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.
Postcards	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.
Social Media	Announced project updates on social media, including the community Facebook page.
Radio	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.

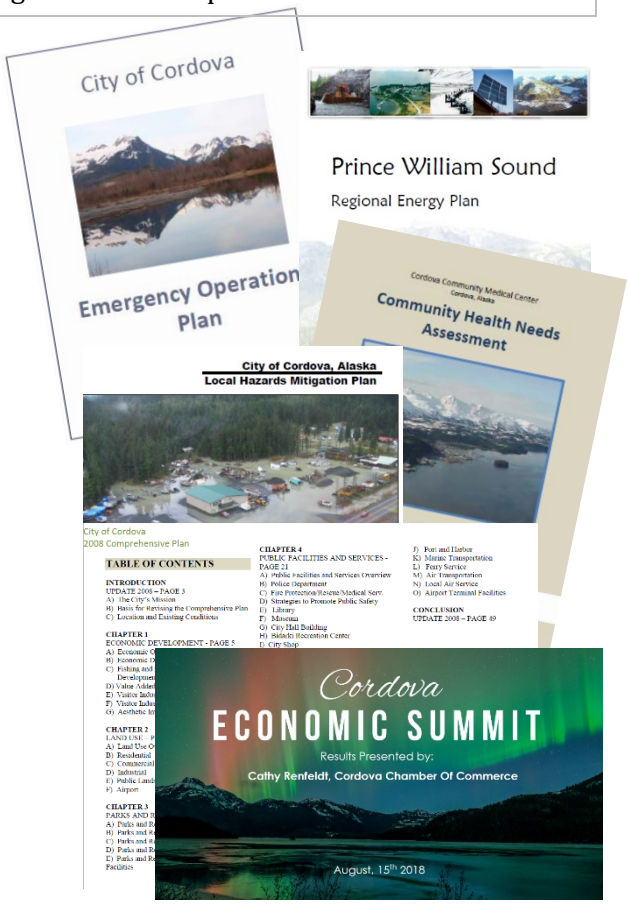
Newspaper	Published an ad in the Cordova Times and invited newspaper staff to cover community events and conversations; the ad included the link to the website and the survey, with a QR code for mobile phone users to quickly locate the page.	
	Throughout the planning process the Cordova Times provided regular coverage of the key project milestones through articles, staff interviews and photos.	 *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*
Extended Public Comment Period	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.	

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 3rd 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 polices 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.

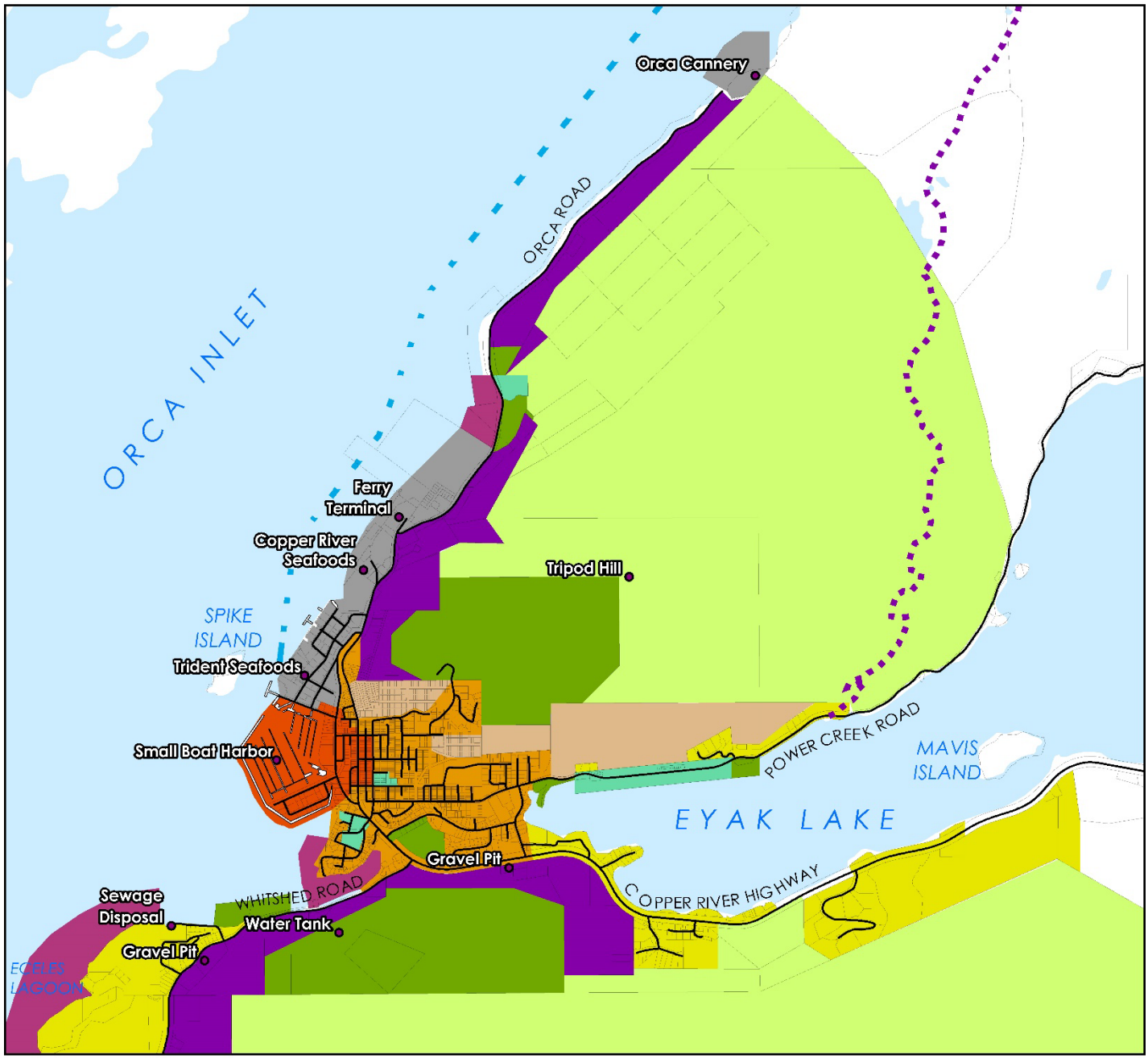
The map can help guide plans for road and other infrastructure improvements, expansion of economic opportunities, protection of important conservation areas, and sustain the qualities residents value most about the community. The map covers lands in all ownerships, including public and private lands.

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**
Community Core	Areas for continuing infill and densification, with a focus on mixed use development, walkability, redevelopment and policies for compatibility between differing uses. This is the primary business district for Cordova.	Historic downtown, harbor, South Fill and waterfront
In-Town Residential	Predominately residential with compatible public, commercial uses; an area for infill and densification, including neighborhoods that currently have public water, sewer, and other utilities.	Neighborhoods within reasonable walking distance (approximately ½ mile) from the Community Core
Outlying Residential	Predominately residential uses although other uses allowed; generally applied in areas with limited public water and sewer service and mixed sewer and septic.	Existing residential and other use properties in areas adjacent to the Community Core and In-Town Residential
Hillside Residential	Undeveloped, physically-constrained property intended for future residential use, in locations requiring rigorous subdivision, road and utility development to respond to the area's physical constraints.	Properties with significant physical development constraints on predominantly city-owned tracts, in areas adjacent to the Community Core and In-Town Residential
Rural Mixed Use	Variety of uses including residential, commercial, lodging and industrial with minimal rules on allowed uses.	Low density areas outside current/ anticipated utility service areas; generally, in areas on the outskirts of the city such as Whitshed Road, the airport, Six-Mile
In-Town Mixed Use	Areas that require further public engagement to determine best use, which could include residential, commercial or other developed uses.	City-owned and private land, typically in areas with strategic locations but significant physical development challenges

Industrial/ Commercial Waterfront	Industrial and commercial uses that benefit from or require a waterfront location.	Existing and proposed developed waterfront areas
Low Intensity/ Conservation Waterfront	Waterfront areas with identified conservation value, where development will be minimized.	Select locations that adjoin current or anticipated development areas including Shelter Cove, Odiak Slough
Community Facilities	Large parcels used for community and non-profit services and facilities.	Limited to larger tracts of land: community uses on smaller lots are not included
Parks & Developed Open Space	Large parcels used for developed, active recreation.	Ski hill, larger city parks
Watershed, Dispersed Recreation, Open Space	Public lands intended to remain in a largely natural state, providing protection for watersheds, scenic viewsheds and other valuable open space functions; also includes dispersed recreation such as trails and parks and some low-density residential development.	City, state and USFS upland properties

Future Land Use Map for Cordova (Local View)



Roads · Trails · Parcels · Marine Highway · Water

FUTURE LAND USE

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

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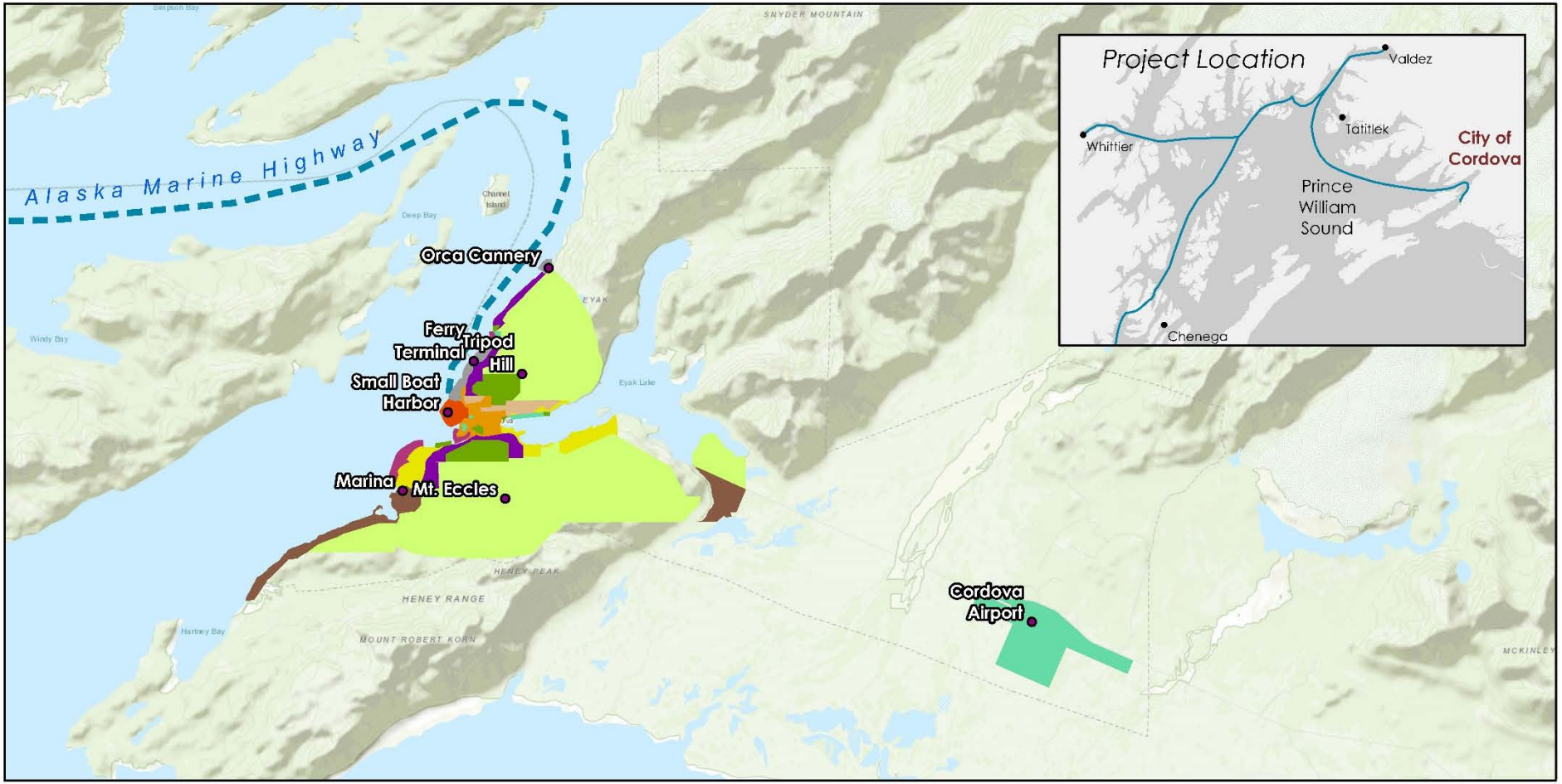
Produced for the City of Cordova
by Agnew::Beck and PDC Engineers, 2019

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

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

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



City Boundary — Marine Highway

FUTURE LAND USE

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

0 1 2 4 Miles

N

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.

← zoning code recommendations

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.[1]
   - ***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.[2]
   - "***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.[3]

← zoning code recommendation

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.

"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."

[1] "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.

[2] 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.

[3] "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.

← zoning code recommendation

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

"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.[4]
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?"

[4] 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.[5] 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."

[5] 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.[6] 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."

[6] 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.[7] 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."

[7] 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.[8] 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."

[8] 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.

a. 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.
b. Explore the feasibility of increasing community maritime amenities such as an indoor boat maintenance facility and community cold storage.
c. Support maritime-related businesses and encourage entrepreneurs to establish new businesses such as vessel repair, boat rebuilding and fiberglass modification.
d. Consider adding additional fill including at the shipyard to create space for new facilities and infrastructure.
e. Explore feasibility of adding industrial uses near the airport, including additional cold storage and fish processing.
f. Implement harbor enhancements to accommodate more small cruise vessels in Cordova.
g. 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.[9]
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."

[9] 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.

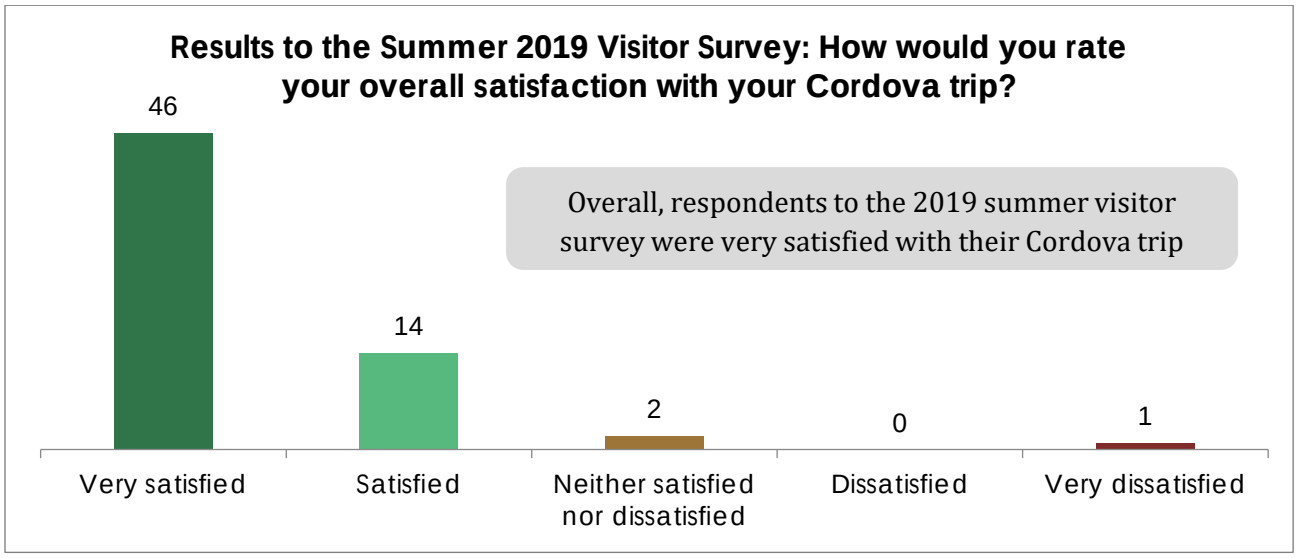
a. Work with regional, state and federal partners to update and implement strategies in the existing Cordova Tourism Plan, focusing on actions that strengthen the year-round Cordova economy.
b. Improve the overall marketing of Cordova, particularly as an outdoor recreation destination. Improve marketing 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."

l. 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.



What did you like most about your trip to Cordova? (sample responses)	What did you like least about your trip to Cordova? (sample responses)
• Drives out in the mountains. The town as we see it coming in on the ferry looks like magic! • The downtown area is a great place to walk around and shop. We enjoyed the museum. • I liked learning about the culture and the fishing industry. I also liked all of the nature and wildlife a lot. • The beauty of the town and friendliness of everyone.	• I had no wheels so travel was difficult. • The rain, and we haven't seen a bear yet. • Limited places to eat on the weekends. • Price of milk, orange juice and beer. • Missing the trip out to the glacier.

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/entrepeneurs 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. Encorage large local employers to collaborate on solutions to community-wide challenges related to employment such as recruitment, retainment, benefits administration, etc.
e. Promote telecommuniting 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 occupants such as electrical, plumbing, mechanical and welding.

Strategy #7: *Develop a strong business district and revitalize First Street.*[10]

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."

[10] 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 many 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	Goal B	Goal C
Secure reliable and affordable air and ferry service.	Maintain, preserve, and operate a safe and functional community transportation network that accommodates desired future change and growth.	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.*

← zoning code recommendations

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.

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.

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

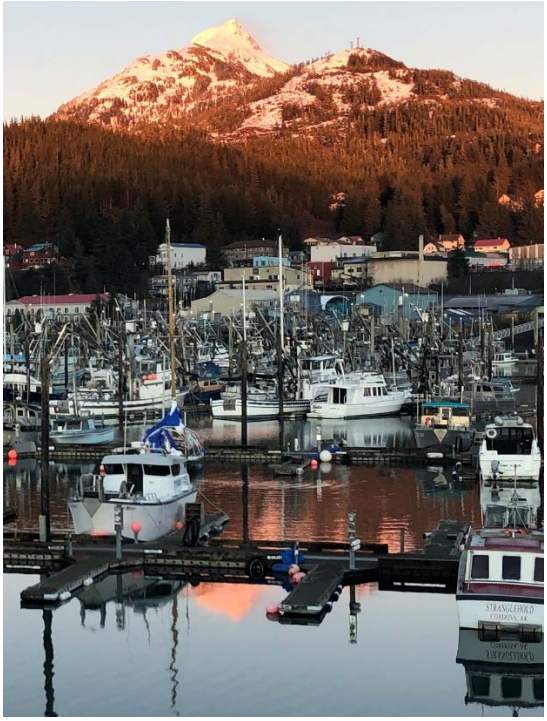
Strategy #8: *Support Cordova's thriving cultural and art organizations, activities and traditions.*

"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.[11] 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."

[11] 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	Goal B
Provide efficient, effective, fiscally responsible services, infrastructure and facilities.	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 **Goal:** What broad or long-term change do we want to make? **Objective:** What measurable change do we hope to achieve over the next year?			
Priority Strategy	**Actions** *(specific step)*	**Lead** *(who)*	**Timeline** *(when)*
1.	a. b.		
2.	a. b.		
3.	a. b.		
Indicators *(what specific measures or data can help us track progress)***:**			

CITY OF CORDOVA