

Palmer Board of Economic Development

May 3, 2021

Agenda Packet

**BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 3, 2021 6 P.M.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
231 W. EVERGREEN AVENUE, PALMER
www.palmerak.org**



CHAIRMAN	Dusty Silva
BOARD MEMBER	Christopher Chappel
BOARD MEMBER	Barbara Hunt
BOARD MEMBER	Lorie Koppenberg
BOARD MEMBER	Ronalee Moses
BOARD MEMBER	Peter Christopher
BOARD MEMBER	Janet Kincaid

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:
CITY MANAGER – John Moosey

AGENDA

- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Pledge of Allegiance
- D. Approval of Agenda
- E. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings
 - 1. Regular Meeting of April 5, 2021
- F. Reports
- G. Audience Participation
- H. Unfinished Business
 - 1. Committee of the Whole: Discuss IM-21-002, Tourism and Local Events (note: action may be taken by the board following the committee of the whole)
- I. New Business
- J. Board Member Comments
- K. Adjournment

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Minutes

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**Unfinished
Business**

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**CITY OF PALMER
BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 21-002**

SUBJECT: Tourism and Local Events

AGENDA OF: April 5, 2021
May 3, 2021

The Board of Economic Development chose as a strategic economic priority Tourism and Local Events. A committee of the whole will be conducted to discuss tourism. A series of questions regarding tourism is included in the packet to facilitate discussion. Also, as a reference a link to City of Palmer website where studies that are related to the discussion can be found.

Included for your reference is the 2021 strategic plan, as updated in January and the Action Plan and Implementation Strategies from East Downtown Palmer Planning Study.

May 3, 2021 Meeting

Members at the April meeting conducted a session identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats related to tourism.

Members identified these items important to the development of a strategy for both infrastructure improvements and development of a comprehensive marketing plan.

1. Tourism is both intra-state and inter-state.
2. Tourism takes many forms, independent, tour, event, eco, historical, recreational, etc...
3. Palmer is home to some very special events.
4. Palmer has invested significant resources to be able to maximize the realistic opportunity of becoming a destination community.
5. Investment must take place now in order to position the community for COVID recovery.
6. Palmer is the "gateway" to many natural attractions, hiking trails and recreational activities.
7. Tourism marketing is becoming internet based.
8. A presence is necessary for advance planning.
9. Hatcher Pass will evolve into a destination. It is important to create the physical and psychological connection to Palmer.
10. Coordination needs to occur between entities promoting Palmer tourism and local businesses. i.e., Chamber, PMHA, COP, Local hospitality businesses.
11. Encourage entrepreneurial and creative spirit.
12. Signage on the Glenn Highway identifying Palmer.
13. Review the Visitor Information Center Contract to make sure it is meeting the goals of the marketing strategy of the City.
14. Pursue development and beautification of the railroad corridor for public use and

enjoyment, now.

15. Parking improvements along Colony and South Valley Way.
16. Perform Feasibility analysis of connecting East and West sides of town.
17. Develop a concept for a outdoor venue for community events.
18. Creation of a downtown parking lot between Dahlia and Cedar/Cottonwood on Colony Way.
19. Creation of a historic route with signage
20. Develop marketing strategy for the city
21. Development of city property on Matanuska River for tourism and local usage

These identified factors should serve at the basis for the creation of the resolution and a market theme or strategy for the community. Please review and be ready to finish resolution and develop recommendations for a marketing strategy.

CITY OF PALMER BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Resolution No. 21-001

A Resolution of the Palmer Board of Economic Development recommending City Council implement elements of the Brownfield Area Wide Plan for Downtown Palmer and support a comprehensive marketing plan

WHEREAS, the purpose of the city of Palmer Board of Economic Development is to provide research, public input and disseminate information to the city council to evaluate economic development opportunities and strategies; and

WHEREAS, tourism and recreational opportunities have a significant impact on the Palmer economy; and

WHEREAS, Palmer has invested heavily in the infrastructure, including the Visitor Information Center, Palmer Airport, bike paths, and downtown beautification projects; and

WHEREAS, Palmer serves as the hometown to many surrounding neighborhoods and communities acting as the gateway to unique events, Alaskan experiences and activities; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 a Brownfield Area Wide Planning Study was conducted for downtown Palmer which outlined improvements that could enhance the connectivity and economic opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Palmer Comprehensive Plan identifies the Matanuska Maid Complex as a development priority and Palmer City Council legislative priorities identify trails, parks and acquisition of the "Palmer Water Tower"; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Economic Development supports implementation of the Area Wide Study to further the goals of the City Council of enhanced economic development; and

NOW THEREFORE IT FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED the Board of Economic Development identifies these projects as a priority to support community values and the enrichment of life in Palmer.

- A.
- B.
- C.

Passed and approved by the Board of Economic Development of the City of Palmer, Alaska, this 3rd day of May 2021.

Dusty Silva, Chairperson

Brad Hanson, Director Community Development
Palmer Board of Economic Development

Resolution No. 21-001

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CHAPTER 5: ACTION PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

5.1 Implementation Overview

5.2 Action Plan

5.3 Potential Fundings Sources



5.1 - IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

To prepare a community to proactively engage with rapidly changing trends, it must have an action plan in place to ensure that the City and its local partners take actionable steps towards its redevelopment goals. The project team created a formal Action Plan and identified some preliminary public funding sources that

respond to the individual projects that the community identified through the AWP process. This would be instrumental for the community to realize the vision and redevelopment projects outlined in this AWP document.

5.2 - ACTION PLAN

The project team created an Action Plan to support the community's vision, conceptual plan, and corresponding project list. The Action Plan is organized as a list of six overarching implementation strategies followed by corresponding actions. These are high level recommendations to ensure the AWP projects move forward; the City should develop internal work plans for each action. Table 5.2.a is the Action Plan for East Downtown Palmer. For each implementation strategy, the Action Plan lists actions, the target year, external partners, resources, and detail/components. This Action Plan can guide the City's work plan and budget allocations so that staff takes incremental steps to support redevelopment in the AWP study area.

Table 5.2.a: Palmer AWP Action Plan

Implementation Strategies and Actions	2020	2021	2022	Future	External Partners	Resource Required	Detail / Components
Strategy 1 – Create a supportive regulatory framework (zoning)							
Action 1.a. - Create a new zoning district for the Mat-Maid Block	X				Property Owners	Staff, Budget Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new zoning standards <i>Allow light manufacturing and artisan uses</i> <i>Allow mixed-use, commercial, and residential</i> <i>Prohibit drive-through windows, fuel stations, heavy industrial, and new mini-storage warehouse uses</i> • Rezone the Mat-Maid Block • Adopt zoning amendments
Action 1.b. - Amend the P District to support railway corridor	X					Staff, Budget Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend P district zoning standards <i>Allow farmer's market, event space, and outdoor performance venues</i> • Adopt zoning amendments
Strategy 2 – Plan for downtown streetscapes and connections							
Action 2.a. - Conduct a feasibility study for the Dogwood Street extension		X			Property Owners, Stakeholders, Alaska Railroad	Staff, Consultant, Budget Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a design firm to study and design a Dogwood Street extension • Explore design/alignment alternatives for the extension • Develop 30% engineering plans for the preferred roadway extension, cross section, and alignment • Develop cost estimates for the extension • Develop an implementation strategy for project development
Action 2.b. - Plan for parking improvements along rights-of-way, specifically Colony/Valley Way.		X			Property Owners, Stakeholders	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the City's requirements for roadway frontage improvements as part of private development projects • Determine whether changes are needed to ensure downtown streets are upgraded concurrent with private development projects • Examine the feasibility of transportation improvement fees for private development projects • Adopt revisions (if applicable) to the City's frontage improvement requirements
Action 2.c.- Develop streetscape designs for primary downtown streets		X			Property Owners, Stakeholders	Staff, Consultant, Budget Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a design firm to create cross section details for downtown streets • Create street cross section details <i>Identify the sidewalk widths, configuration, and pavement design</i> <i>Identify tree species and landscaping materials</i> <i>Identify parking location and configuration</i> <i>Identify travel lane widths</i> <i>Plan for bicycle traffic</i> • Adopt street cross section details

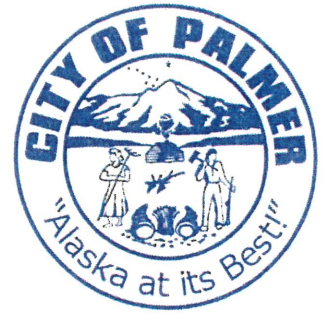
Table 5.2.a: Palmer AWP Action Plan

Implementation Strategies and Actions	2020	2021	2022	Future	External Partners	Resource Required	Detail / Components
Strategy 3 – Enhance the Historic Depot property							
Action 3.a. - Explore development options for the railway corridor			X		Stakeholders, Alaska Railroad	Staff, Consultant, Budget Allocation Alaska Railroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities for improving Railroad ROW with Ak Railroad Hire a design firm to design railway corridor improvements Identify the building programming, architectural features, and spatial layout Develop Cost estimates for the Farmer’s Market Building
Action 3.b. - Develop plans for a new plaza and children’s play area at the Historic Depot			X		Stakeholders	Staff, Consultant, Budget Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire a design firm to study and design the plaza/ play area Create a steering committee to guide the plaza/ play area design process Explore design alternatives for the plaza/play area Develop 30% construction plans for the plaza/ play area Develop cost estimates and an implementation strategy for the project
Action 3.c. - Develop a business plan for the Farmer’s Market			X		Stakeholders	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate operational, maintenance, and revenue terms of the community partner(s) Identify funding sources for project development and operations Create a business plan for project development, operations, and revenue/profits Adopt a project schedule for project development
Action 3.d. - Identify a community partner to develop and operate a new Farmer’s Market		X			Stakeholders	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise for a community partner(s) to develop and operate a new Farmer’s Market Create a selection committee to choose the community partner(s) Enter into an official agreement with the community partner(s) and establish roles and responsibilities amongst the entities
Strategy 4 – Enhance the railway corridor (south of Evergreen)							
Action 4.a. - Explore development options for a new stage				X	Stakeholders	Staff, Consultant, Budget Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire a design firm to design a stage and outdoor event space Identify the stage programming, architectural features, and orientation Develop cost estimates and an implementation strategy for the project

Table 5.2.a: Palmer AWP Action Plan

Implementation Strategies and Actions	2020	2021	2022	Future	External Partners	Resource Required	Detail / Components
Action 4.b. - Develop plans for pathway and landscaping improvements in the railway corridor				X	Stakeholders	Staff, Consultant, Budget Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a design firm to study and design pathway and landscaping improvements • Create a steering committee to guide the design process • Explore design alternatives for the railway corridor; incorporate the stage and outdoor event space into plans • Develop 30% construction plans for the railway corridor area • Develop cost estimates and an implementation strategy for the project
Strategy 5 – Proactively support Mat-Maid Block redevelopment							
Action 5.a. - Support developer and business recruitment to the Mat-Maid Block	X				Property Owners, Brokers, Chamber of Commerce	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify targeted businesses/industries for the Mat-Maid Block and the larger downtown context • Adopt a developer and business recruitment plan for the Mat-Maid Block • Allow flexibility in zoning code
Action 5.b. - Explore the feasibility of tax incentives for redevelopment projects		X			Chamber of Commerce, MSB	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential tax incentives that assist private redevelopment projects and targeted industries (e.g., housing, commercial, artisan manufacturing) • Engage the City Council to select (if any) tax incentives for redevelopment projects • Adopt tax incentive policies (if applicable)
Action 5.c. - Explore ways to expedite the development review process for redevelopment projects	X					Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the City's development review/permit process and identify areas to expedite City review • Partner with other City departments and build consensus on how to expedite the review • Amend City code sections (if applicable) that will reduce the development review/permit process
Strategy 6 – Support brownfield redevelopment							
Action 6.a. - Continue to identify and address brownfield conditions	X				Property Owners, MSB	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Borough to apply for Federal, State, and local grants to assist property owners, prospective purchasers, and developers with securing funds for Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) and cleanup planning activities.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOARD OF
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO
CITY COUNCIL

2021 CITY OF PALMER

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Community Economic Development Goals

Goal 1 ... Strengthen Palmer's position as the preferred location as the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's institutional and utility co-operative hub.

Goal 2 ... Encourage expansion of medical, health-care, technology and research-related economic sectors, and other professional jobs in the Palmer area to make this the medical, health-care and vocational career center for Southcentral Alaska.

Goal 3 ... Strengthen Palmer's role as a retail and professional services hub and as a unique place to shop for residents of Palmer, area residents and visitors.

Goal 4 ... Strengthen Palmer as a tourism destination and hub for travel through the southern Matanuska-Susitna area.

Goal 5 ... Strengthen efforts to improve Palmer's quality of life by supporting Palmer as the agricultural center of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.

Goal 6... Promote beautification of Palmer's open space and parks.

Goal 7 ... Maintain quality residential neighborhoods and promote a diverse range of quality housing from high density to single family housing which satisfies the needs of all sectors of the housing market.

Goal 8 ... Provide the necessary public infrastructure to support and retain existing industrial uses and expand industrial development within the community.

Goal 9 ... Palmer remains and continues to grow as the industrial education and career center of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Goal 10 ... Continue to develop and market the municipal airport to maximize its economic benefit to the community.

Goal 11 ... Increase marketing of Palmer and its diverse attractions, events and location.

Goal 12... Create a business-friendly environment for commerce and industry.

Goal 13...Review Economic Development Plan Each August and prepare report on progress in implementing Goals and Objectives

Goal 14... Study the feasibility of annexing property into the city limits to prepare for future commercial and industrial growth and to preserve the character of the community.

Goal 1 ... Strengthen Palmer’s position as the preferred location as the Matanuska-Susitna Borough’s institutional and utility co-operative hub.

Objective A – Maintain existing institutions and secure new institutions by developing an action plan with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Matanuska-Susitna School District, Job Corps, the University, state agencies and Justice System to determine and pursue a very specific list of action items necessary to meet their long-term needs.

Objective B – Develop an action plan with the Hospital, Clinics, and other health-care providers to determine and pursue a very specific list of action items necessary to meet their long-term needs.

Goal 2 ... Encourage expansion of medical, health-care, technology and research-related economic sectors, and other professional jobs in the Palmer area to make this the medical, health-care and vocational career center for Southcentral Alaska.

Objective A – Promote the Palmer area as a hub of higher education by working with the University of Alaska, Alaska Pacific University and other educational institutions to increase the number of highly trained medical and health care specialist and technology and research related specialist who are available in the community.

1. Determine what new programs might be developed in the Palmer area, and how the City might help these institutions to expand.
2. Encourage the development of learning opportunities in medical and healthcare fields at local institutions of higher learning and the Mat-Su Regional Medical Center.

Objective B - Market the community to desired businesses, including technology and research-based businesses, and professional businesses such as law, medicine and veterinary science.

Goal 3 ... Strengthen Palmer’s role as a retail and professional services hub and as a unique place to shop for residents of Palmer, area residents and visitors.

Objective A – Work with the Planning & Zoning Commission to provide space for commercial expansion through the development of a new central business zoning district or zoning overlay.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2021

Objective B – Promote Palmer as a more attractive retail and professional service destination.

Objective C – Actively pursue infrastructure improvements and identify areas appropriate for developing new areas and redeveloping vacant properties for commercial general development.

Objective D – Identify need and options for effective public parking in downtown and within the city.

1. Resolve fee in lieu of formula and parking waiver issues.
2. Examine interest in forming Special Assessment District or Business Improvement District.

Goal 4 ... Strengthen Palmer as a tourism destination and hub for travel through the southern Matanuska-Susitna area.

Objective A – Preserve, improve and celebrate Palmer’s historic character; develop design guidelines for the historic district.

Objective B – Support efforts to improve and promote community attractions, including cultural facilities and multiple trails systems. Improve linkages between attractions.

Objective C – Build on the success of existing community events, including the Alaska State Fair.

Objective D – Support efforts to attract more team sports activities, sporting events and outdoor activities in and around Palmer.

Objective E – Establish, improve and maintain city-wide parks and recreation facilities and programs.

Objective F – Discuss and study the possibility of a permanent Friday Fling/Farmer’s Market area as well as a public stage.

Goal 5 ... Strengthen efforts to improve Palmer’s quality of life by supporting Palmer as the agricultural center of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.

Objective A - Promote distribution, awareness of, and sales of local agricultural products.

Objective B - Promote and expand farmers' market opportunities within the city limits and the greater Palmer area.

Objective C - Collaborate with state funded organizations and the agricultural community to promote Alaska Grown products.

Objective D - Open dialogue with the agricultural community to promote agricultural products and agricultural heritage.

Goal 6... Promote beautification of Palmer's open space and parks.

Objective A – Establish, improve, and maintain neighborhood parks and recreation facilities and programs.

Goal 7 ... Maintain quality residential neighborhoods and promote a diverse range of quality housing from high density to single family housing which satisfies the needs of all sectors of the housing market.

Objective A - Encourage a diverse range of quality housing, from attractive higher density housing to housing for a more rural setting.

Objective B - Encourage new housing developments to have adequate access to transportation, employment opportunities, services, and social and support networks.

Objective C – Encourage infill development and higher density housing and prepare new zoning standards and design guidelines to ensure higher density housing is high quality.

Objective D – Encourage the development of areas for single family housing appealing to the upper end of the housing market.

Objective E – Encourage rehabilitation of older residential structures.

Objective F – Promote continued development and maintenance of high quality elder care facilities and senior citizen campuses in Palmer.

Objective G – Review code enforcement process and provide a report with recommended actions to City Council on a quarterly basis to gain prospective of property owners and residents understanding and compliance with city standards to protect the long-term stability of neighborhoods and Palmer's economic vitality.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2021

Goal 8 ... Provide the necessary public infrastructure to support and retain existing industrial uses and expand industrial development within the community.

Objective A – Review and identify logistical, environmental and other beneficial resources in the Palmer area available to attract new technology industries and prepare a map of existing utility lines and anticipated utility network expansions that serve developable property in the Palmer area.

1. Develop a survey questionnaire to determine what industrial sector needs to invest and develop in Palmer.

Objective B – Review current infrastructure master plans to ensure they place a priority on maintaining effective municipal services.

Objective C – Ensure that adequate areas are identified within the city for industrial growth.

Goal 9 ... Palmer remains and continues to grow as the industrial education and career center of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Objective A – Promote vocational, aviation, technical and career training centers and opportunities within the greater Palmer area to prepare individuals for a global marketplace.

Goal 10 ... Continue to develop and market the municipal airport to maximize its economic benefit to the community.

Objective A – Promote the Palmer Municipal Airport as a site for air taxis, aircraft maintenance and repair companies, flight schools, and aircraft rental and leasing businesses.

Objective B - Operate the Airport in a balanced manner, and as an integrated function of the whole community. Activities of the airport which generate revenue to the City are desirable, however, not at the risk of diminishing the quality of life for the residents of the City.

Goal 11 ... Increase marketing of Palmer and its diverse attractions, events and location.

Objective A - Collaborate with the Palmer Visitors Center, the Greater Palmer Chamber of Commerce, the Mat-Su Visitors and Convention Center, and other organizations to actively promote Palmer.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2021

1. Develop multimedia promotional material showcasing the attributes of Palmer as a business friendly, geographically key location.
2. Budget funding for development and publish quality brochure for Palmer as a marketing tool.

Objective B - Work to maintain and improve Palmer's quality of life. Continually enhance hiking and biking trails, parks, health care resources, downtown upgrades, etc.

Objective C – Continue to develop and promote the city owned Golf Course, Community Center (Depot), and MTA Events Center as economic factors.

Goal 12... Create a business friendly environment for commerce and industry.

Objective A – Implement online business transaction with the City, for example electronic filing of sale tax.

Goal 13...Review Economic Development Plan Each January and prepare report on progress in implementing Goals and Objectives.

Goal 14... Study the feasibility of annexing property into the city limits to prepare for future commercial and industrial growth and to preserve the character of the community.

Objective A – Develop an annexation document that clearly explains pros and cons of annexation.

Objective B – Consider where future annexation should logically occur.

Objective C – Prepare transition plan regarding potential future zoning.

Objective D – Study and make recommendations regarding new proposed zoning districts: Central Business District and Highway Commercial District.

Goal 15... Acknowledge and consider Palmer's unique connectivity and pedestrian access with all existing and future developments.

Upcoming Board of Economic Development Meetings

Meeting Date	Meeting Type	Meeting Time	Notes
August 2, 2021	Regular	6 PM	
October 4, 2021	Regular	6 PM	
November 18, 2021	Regular	6 PM	