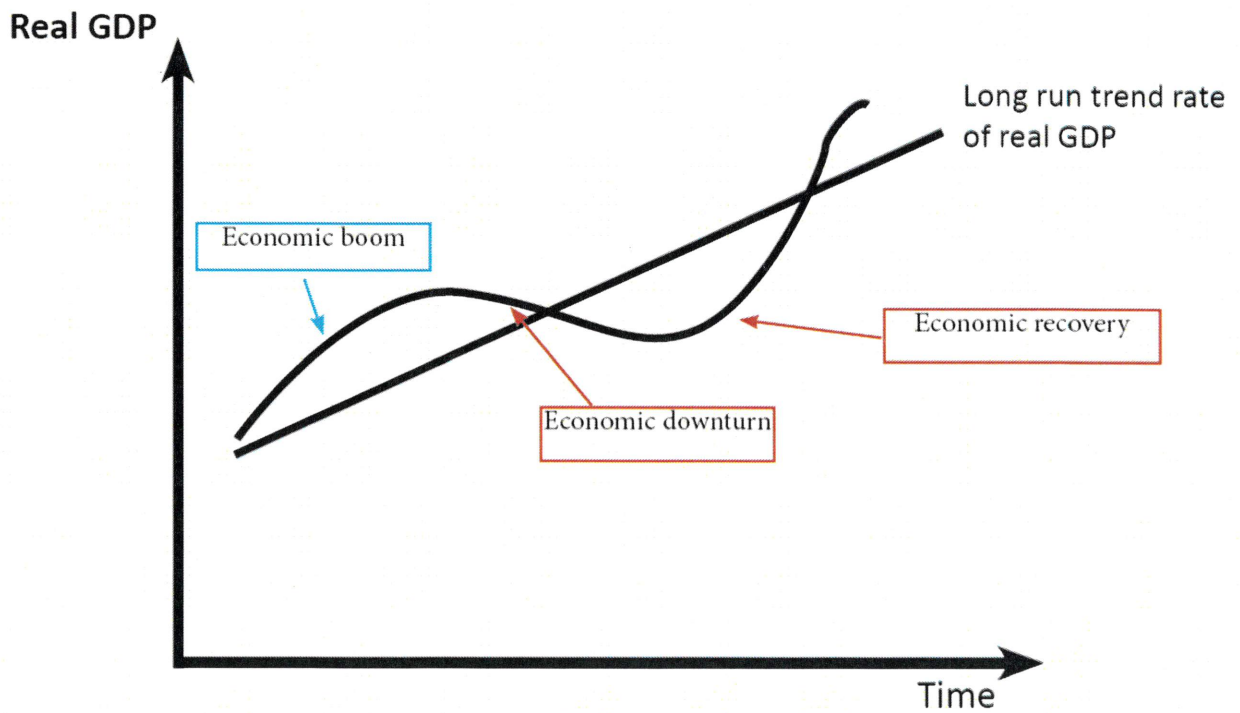


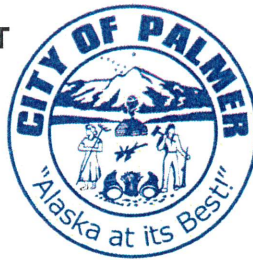


**City of Palmer**  
**Board of Economic Development**  
**January 17, 2022**





**BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 17, 2022 6 P.M.  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
231 W. EVERGREEN AVENUE, PALMER  
[www.palmerak.org](http://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. Organization of the Board
  - 1. Election of Chairperson
  - 2. Election of Vice Chairperson
- E. Approval of Agenda
- F. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings
  - 1. Regular Meeting of November 1, 2021
- G. Reports
  - 1. Manager/Staff Report
- H. Audience Participation
- I. Unfinished Business
  - 1. Committee of the Whole: Discuss IM 22-001, Homelessness and Vagrancy in downtown Palmer (note: action may be taken by the board following the committee of the whole)
  - 2. Committee of the Whole: Discuss IM 22-003, Railroad Tracks and more effective use of that area, including Farmers Market, Community Stage area and parking (note: action may be taken by the board following the committee of the whole)
- J. New Business
  - 1. Committee of the Whole: Discuss IM-22-002, Palmer’s Economic Development Strategic Plan – 2021 Update and Work Plan Update (note: action may be taken by the board following the committee of the whole)
- K. Board Member Comments
- L. Adjournment





## Minutes

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## Unfinished Business

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**CITY OF PALMER  
BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 22-001**

**SUBJECT:** Downtown Homelessness and Vagrancy

**AGENDA OF:** January 17, 2022  
November 1, 2021

**UPDATE**

Chairperson Silva and BED Member Koppenberg met with Chief Shelton and will report on that discussion. Chief Shelton has been invited to participate in the second round of discussion. Provided in the packet are agencies or organizations that the library uses for referrals for individuals in need.

Many communities around the country are experiencing homelessness and vagrancy at an increasing rate. The city of Palmer's Board of Economic Development has had former Police Chief Lance Ketterling present information of the status of police interaction and instances of homelessness in Palmer. Chairperson Silva wishes to conduct a brainstorming session that focuses on our current issues to determine if solutions should be anticipated and implemented to prevent an overwhelming problem in the future.

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**Family Christian Center (907) 373-2617**

203 W. Dogwood Avenue

Palmer, AK 99645

**Family Nutrition Program (907) 745-3423**

UAF Cooperative Extension Service [www.uaf.edu/ces](http://www.uaf.edu/ces)

*See "Education" for more information*

**5 Loaves 2 Fish Kitchen (907) 376-3522**

501 E. Bogard Road

Wasilla, Alaska 99654

*Prepares and delivers 200 meals per week to places around the Mat-Su Valley in need of food.*

**Palmer Food Bank (907) 746-3565**

221 S Valley Way

Palmer, AK 99645

*Mat-Su residents only: Mondays-Fridays 1:00 pm-5:00 pm*

**Salvation Army (907) 745-7079**

1517 S. Industrial Way

Palmer, AK 99645

*Mondays and Tuesdays 12pm-4pm; Wednesdays 10:00am-1:30pm*

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE RESOURCES  
MAT-SU VALLEY**

PALMER	WASILLA	EAGLE RIVER
Akeela (907) 707-1291	Alano Club (907) 376-8669	Volunteers of America Alaska: Adolescent Residential Center for Help (ARCH) (907) 279-9634
Alaska Dream Center (males only) (907) 746-3736	Nugen's Ranch (907) 376-4534	
Alaska Family Services (907) 746-4080	Mat-Su Health Services (907) 376-2411	TALKEETNA
Set Free Alaska (907) 373-4732	Olive Tree Counseling (907) 357-6513	Sunshine Community Health Center (907) 733-2273
The Recovery Connection (907) 746-6660	Fiend 2 Clean (907) 982-4673	
	Cook Inlet Tribal Council (907) 357-5400	
Alcohol Safety Action Program (907) 746-6260	MyHouse (907) 373-4337	

**All Ages**

**Youth Only**

**Adults Only**

**Resources**

24-Hour Crisis Hotlines:

Medical Emergency  
9-1-1

Alaska Family Services  
(907) 746-4080

Mat-Su Health Services  
(907) 376-2411

Free Community Support Groups & Programs:

Addicted No More  
(907) 373-3601

Fresh Start Recovery  
(907) 232-5797

Al-Anon Helpline  
(907) 357-2550

Mat-Su Alano Club  
(907) 376-8669

Alaska Tobacco Quit Line  
(800) 784-8669

Narcotics Anonymous  
(907) 352-3733

Alcoholics Anonymous  
(907) 376-4777

**ALASKA FAMILY SERVICES-  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL  
ASSAULT**

Services: Substance Abuse Evaluation,  
Substance Use Outpatient Treatment, Short-  
Term Housing, Immediate Safety, Safe  
Housing, Case Management Agencies, Family  
Counseling, Sexual Abuse, Group Therapy,  
Help Escape Violence

1825 S. Chugach St.

Palmer, AK, 99645

907-746-8026

<http://www.akafs.org>

Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Shelter  
32-bed emergency shelter for women and their children seeking safety from  
domestic violence or sexual assault.

**BLACK SHEEP MINISTRY**

7900 East Palmer-Wasilla Highway

Palmer, AK, 99645

907-982-0534

HOURS OF OPERATION	AGES SERVED	FEE	ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS	REFERRAL NEEDED
Non-standard	Adults Seniors 60+	Free	Homeless	No
<b>TRIBAL AFFILIATION REQUIRED FOR SERVICES</b>				
No				

**COUNSELING/MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES  
MAT-SU VALLEY**

PALMER	WASILLA	ANCHORAGE
Alaska Family Services (907) 746-4080 or (866) 746-4080	Alaska Family Services (907) 746-4080 or (866) 746-4080	Alaska Psychiatric Institute (907) 269-7100
Borealis Behavioral Health (907) 745-7080	Mat-Su (Behavioral) Health Services (907) 376-2411	Providence Alaska Medical Center Emergency Department (907) 212-2800
Southcentral Foundation (907) 631-7800	Full Circle Counseling Solutions (907) 864-0560	Southcentral Foundation (907) 729-3300
Co-Occurring Disorders Institute (ages 3-21) (907) 745-2634	Providence Medical Group, Mat-Su Behavioral Health (907) 761-5800	North Star Behavioral Health – The Trail Program (ages 4-18) (800) 478-7575 or (907) 258-7575
North Star Behavioral Health – The Summit Residential Treatment Program (males ages 11-18) (907) 761-7400	Benteh Nuutah Valley Native Primary Care Center Behavioral Health Clinic (907) 631-7670	Bean's Café (Shelter) (907) 274-9595
Family Centered Services of Alaska (under age 21) (907) 746-8617	Olive Tree Counseling (907) 357-6513	Brother Francis (Shelter) (907) 277-1731
Alaska Vocational Counseling Services (907) 745-5066	Southcentral Foundation (907) 631-7800	<b>RESOURCES</b>
<b>TALKEETNA</b>	Denali Family Services (under age 21) (907) 376-3275	United Way 211 Community Resource Directory *Dial 2-1-1
Sunshine Community Health Center, Behavioral Health Services (907) 733-2273	Family Centered Services of Alaska (under age 21) (907) 357-7519	Daybreak Mental Health Service Coordination (907) 746-6019 (Palmer)
	Playful Journeys (under age 18) (907) 376-9091	Alaska Attachment & Bonding Associates (907) 376-0366 (Wasilla)
<b>WILLOW</b>	Presbyterian Hospitality House (under age 21) (907) 357-6445	Mat-Su LINKS Community Parent Resource Center and Aging & Disability Resource Center (907) 373-3632 (Wasilla)
Sunshine Community Health Center, Behavioral Health Services (907) 495-4100	Mat-Su Veteran's Affairs Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (907) 631-3100	Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults, Inc (907) 352-1200 (Wasilla)
		Veteran's Center (907) 376-4318 (Wasilla)

**All Ages**

**Youth Only**

**Adults Only**

**24-Hour Crisis Hotlines and Suicide Prevention Hotlines:**

Careline Crisis Intervention  
(877) 266-4357  
Text the word "4help" to 839863  
(Tues-Sat 3-11PM)

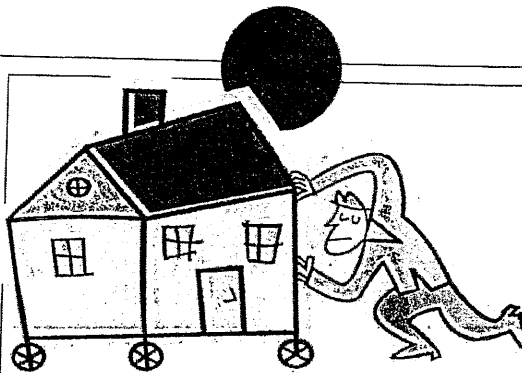
Crisis Text Line  
Text "START" to 741-741

VA Suicide Prevention Hotline  
(800) 273-TALK

Mat-Su Health Services  
24-Hour Crisis Line  
(907) 376-2411

Alaska Family Services  
24-Hour Crisis Line  
(907)746-4080

Providence Medical Group  
24-Hour Crisis Line  
(907) 563-3200



Do you need a warm place  
to stay tonight?

The Mat-Su Valley Warming Center  
may be just the right place for you!  
"Open During the Winter Months"  
(Hours of Operations: 9pm to 9am)

"A Black Sheep Ministry, Inc." 7900 E  
Palmer-Wasilla Highway across the  
street from Three Bears Alaska Store.

Please Contact an agency in your local area:  
A Black Sheep Ministry, Inc. 982-0534  
Mat-Su Coalition on H n H. 232-4450  
Valley Charities, Inc. 354-4660

Sponsored by the Mat-Su Coalition on Hous-  
ing & Homelessness, Valley Charities, Mat-Su  
Health Foundation, A Black Sheep Ministry.

CALL TO LEARN MORE

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**CITY OF PALMER  
BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 22-003**

**Substitute for 21-003**

**SUBJECT:** Railroad Tracks Utilization

**AGENDA OF:** January 17, 2022  
January 4, 2021  
November 1, 2021

**January 3 Update**

Included in the packet is BED Resolution No. 21-001 that was passed and submitted to the City Council for consideration of improvements that would promote economic development in the city. Also provided are past studies that support railroad right of way improvements that improve the quality of life in Palmer. Excerpts from the Area Wide Plan and the Palmer Urban Revitalization are included to show efforts that have been made to increase the utility of the corridor. Both studies can be found at <https://www.palmerak.org/community-development/page/economic-development>. Support for railroad improvements can also be found in the Palmer Comprehensive Plan and the University of Washington plan.

The city has applied to the Alaska Railroad to renew the Permit for Grow Palmer and Shane Woods Trail. If there any supplemental requests, now would be the time to approach the railroad.

The Parks and Recreational Advisory Board will be getting an update to the BED's progress on the railroad discussion at their January 6 meeting. The Parks and Recreational Advisory Board has not actively participated in the railroad discussion and will be presented similar information. A joint meeting should be considered if the BED wishes to pursue improvements further.

A strategic plan will help guide discussion and should include:

- Railroad corridor concept for elements/improvements
- Comprehensive approach to parking and circulation
- Preservation of historically important items, concepts, or architectural features
- Pre-approved specialty features the community members or groups can purchase or install
- Discussion and involvement of Planning and Zoning, Parks and Recreational Advisory Board
- Alaska Railroad concurrence

**Archived information**

Upon completion of the Downtown Palmer Brownfield Area-Wide Plan approval by the Mat-Su Borough and the Department of Environmental Protection, the BED should begin discussion

about the economic and community impact of the railroad corridor in Palmer.

**November 1 Update**

The BED at the July meeting passed a resolution for the Palmer City Council recommending they consider implementation of elements of the Brownfield Area Wide Plan. The Resolution encouraged the city to pursue development and beautification of land within the railroad corridor for public use and enjoyment, now. The BED recognized when Resolution 21-001 was passed that the Alaska Railroad will retain within their existing leases with the city the right to rehabilitate the tracks and utilize them whenever they desire. Further, anything placed in the right of way would need to be relocated with no obligation to preserve or protect by the Alaska Railroad.

The question for the BED is should we pursue a strategy that will encourage development within the railroad right of way that benefits residents and visitors today?

**Resolution No. 21-001**

**A Resolution of the Palmer Board of Economic Development Recommending City Council Implement Elements of the Brownfield Area Wide Plan to Support the Development of a Coordinated Marketing Strategy for Downtown Palmer**

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, unique local events, tourism and recreational opportunities have a significant impact on the Palmer quality of life and economy; and

WHEREAS, Palmer has invested heavily in the infrastructure, including the Community Center (Depot), MTA Events Center, Visitor Information Center, Palmer Airport, parks, bike paths, pedestrian access and downtown beautification projects; and

WHEREAS, Palmer serves as the hometown to many surrounding neighborhoods and communities acting as the gateway to endless 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 an authentic coordinated destination marketing strategy to further the goals of the City Council of enhanced economic development, including;

1. Have a strong coordinated internet and social media presence.
2. Visitor Information Center contract is consistent with goals of a coordinated marketing strategy, established by City Council.
3. Coordination should occur between entities promoting Palmer tourism and local businesses, i.e., City of Palmer, Greater Palmer Chamber of Commerce, Palmer Museum of History and Art, Mat-Su Convention & Visitor Bureau and local hospitality businesses.
4. Create a branding strategy for placement of signage at major highway entrances identifying Palmer's historical importance, access to recreation and events, and identifying signage for the gateway to the designated Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway.

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

1. Plan and implement downtown parking improvements on Colony and Valley Way.
2. Complete a feasibility analysis for East/West vehicular connectivity.
3. Pursue development and beautification of land within the railroad corridor for public use and enjoyment, now.
4. Develop and implement an outdoor venue for community events in the railroad corridor.
5. Complete non-motorized connectivity between Auklet and Old Glenn Highway.
6. Develop and implement a plan for city property on the Matanuska River for local usage and tourism.

Passed and approved by the Board of Economic Development of the City of Palmer, Alaska, this 12<sup>th</sup> day of July 2021.

---

Dusty Silva, Chairperson

---

Brad Hanson, Director Community Development



(Source: Adrien Olichon | Unsplash)

# CONCEPTUAL PLAN

The final conceptual plan for the East Downtown Palmer study area depicts the long-range vision for redevelopment on the catalyst site and the adjacent railway corridor in terms of future land uses, open space areas, and building locations. Redevelopment, community gathering space, and adaptive reuse are the common themes in the conceptual plan. The conceptual plan calls for future new mixed-use infill buildings and several outdoor gathering areas. The conceptual plan establishes opportunities for the adaptive reuse of the area’s heritage structures and to repurpose them for new tenants and community landmarks. The following summarizes the conceptual plan elements within the catalyst site and the railway corridor.

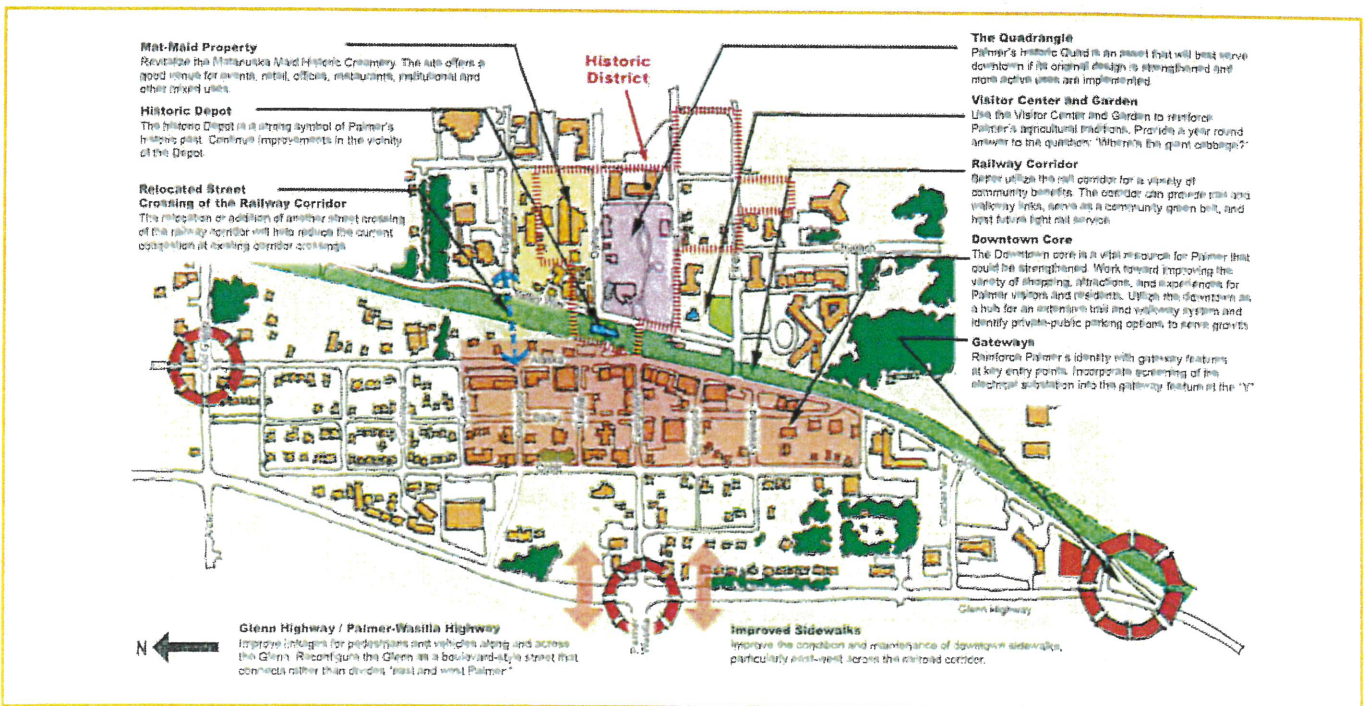
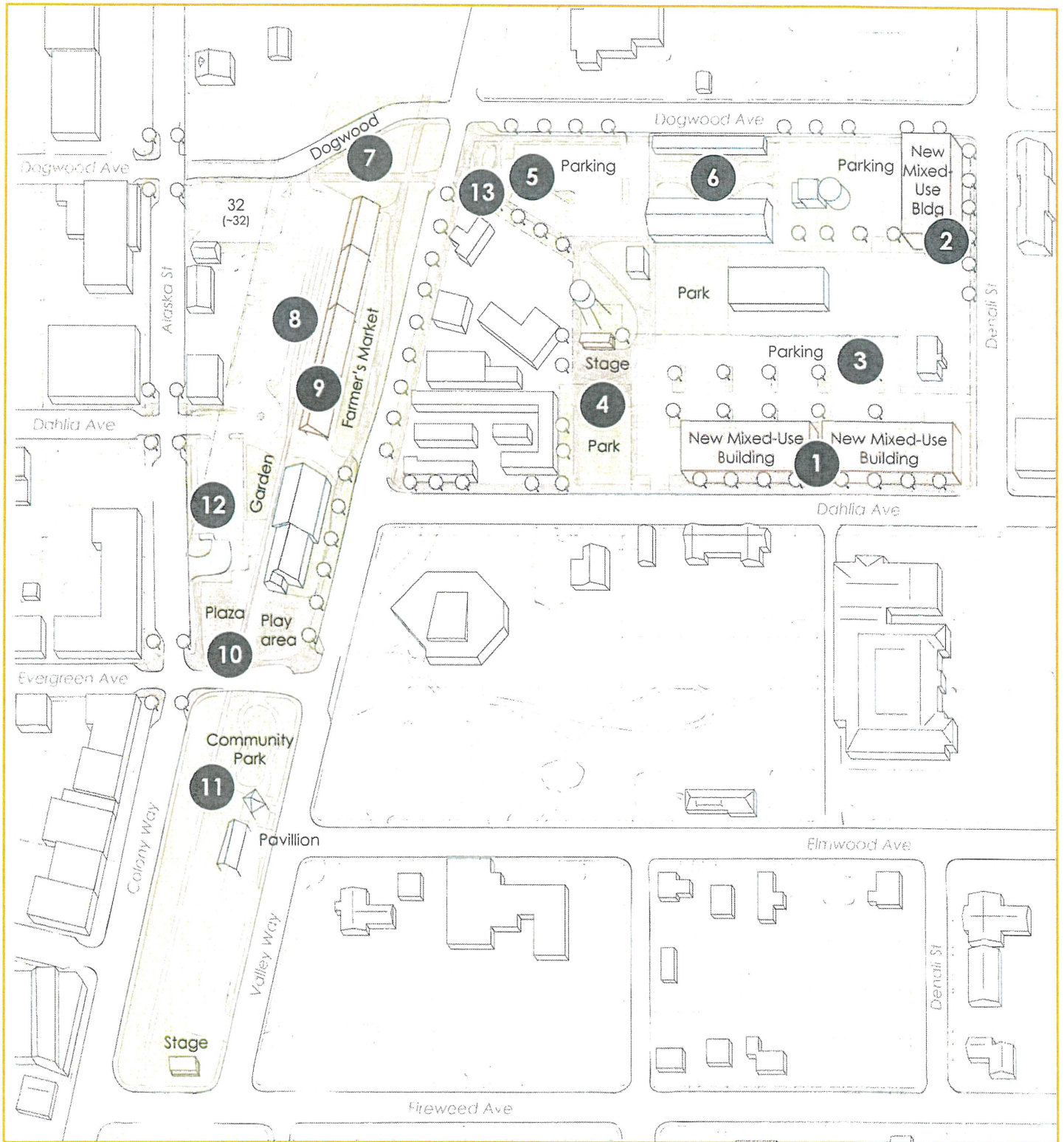


FIGURE ES-3 - PALMER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN OPPORTUNITIES MAP

Top: Example of a coffeehouse, a local venue for social gathering



**LEGEND**

- # Conceptual Plan Project Reference Number (See Table ES-1)
- Adaptive Reuse of existing structures
- New Infill Structures
- Enhanced Open Space Areas

**FIGURE ES-4 - CONCEPTUAL PLAN: EAST DOWNTOWN PALMER AWP CATALYST SITE AND RAILWAY CORRIDOR**

See Table ES-1 for the corresponding Conceptual Plan Project List (Source: Stantec)

### Railway Corridor and Historic Depot

The community envisions that the Historic Depot and the railway corridor would remain as Palmer’s signature civic gathering space and the City’s “central park”. This vision supports site improvements that create additional spaces for recreation and public gatherings.

- **Plaza and Play Area:** A new play area is planned at the corner of Evergreen Avenue and S. Valley Way. The plaza and play area would activate the areas alongside the Historic Depot.
- **Farmer’s Market:** The City would facilitate the development of a new Farmer’s Market pavilion within the railway corridor north of the Historic Depot. The pavilion would provide covered space for market functions during harvest times and civic gatherings during off seasons. The adjacent railroad tracks would remain in place to support occasional rail access.
- **Dogwood Avenue:** The City would study the feasibility to connect Dogwood Avenue through the railway corridor and would create a new roadway access between the Downtown Core and East Downtown Palmer. The street extensions design/strategy should achieve a no-net-loss of on-street parking in the downtown area. There is the opportunity to design the new Dogwood Avenue segment as a “festival street” that can be periodically closed to vehicular traffic to support community events.

- **Community Park:** The City would maintain and enhance the community park space within the railway corridor south of Evergreen Avenue. This may include landscape enhancements and additional trail/sidewalk linkages. A stage is planned at the south end of the railway corridor near Fireweed Avenue. The stage would support periodic performances and civic events.



Top Left: Example of a public stage structure in a community park  
Lower Left: Example of a play area in a downtown linear park (Cincinnati, OH)



Above: Example of a public Farmer’s Market building (Olympia, WA)

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# Palmer Revitalization Project

## Development Plan

### 1.0 Introduction

This report provides a Development Plan with specific, implementable community design and development recommendations for the enhancement of Palmer's historic railroad corridor. The Development Plan identifies the vision and values to be achieved in Palmer over the next five years or more. The plan is based on a thorough public involvement process led by a Citizen's Advisory Group (CAG) and includes an action-oriented implementation strategy, which recommends both public and private sector initiatives. The plan must be viewed as a flexible document that can evolve over time in response to changing conditions and funding opportunities.

In times of rapid growth in the Palmer area, the vision for a Palmer "Rail-with-Trail" corridor set forth in this report is timely, realistic, and achievable. Palmer is ideally suited for the development portrayed in this plan that creates strong physical and visual linkages to the historic Palmer Railroad Depot at its heart, to core area businesses, surrounding neighborhoods, and community facilities including the Palmer Library and the Alaska State Fair. The rail-trail open space corridor is the backbone of the plan and provides an opportunity for the City to establish a policy of community-focused public access through the heart of Palmer.

The public improvements recommended in this plan will contribute significantly to the enhancements of downtown Palmer as a place to live and do business by helping to establish a fresh image and market identity for the area. These improvements will serve as a powerful catalyst to encourage private investment in downtown Palmer.

### 1.1 Background

The Palmer Rail-with-Trail project has been an important concept to the residents for more than a decade. The Palmer Comprehensive Plan identified the corridor for public use and development as did as the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Trails Plan and the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. The Parks, Arts, Recreation, Culture and Sports (PARCS) group commissioned two studies (1997 & 1998) in cooperation with Andrews University Division of Architecture that identified development opportunities along the railroad corridor. The Chamber of Commerce, the City Council, local businesses and residents overwhelmingly support the project.

In April of 2002, the City of Palmer began the formal planning process by selecting the consulting team of Lounsbury and Associates (Lounsbury) with Land Design North (LDN) as lead planners for the project. As part of this process a Citizens Advisory Group was formed by the City of Palmer to guide the consulting team through the planning process. The CAG is composed of representatives from the City of Palmer, the Chamber of Commerce, and various Palmer residents and business owners.

## 1.2 Study Process

Over the past six months, the CAG and the consultant team of Lounsbury and LDN have conducted an intensive effort to prepare a Development Plan for the Palmer Rail with Trail Corridor. Throughout the planning process, particular emphasis has been placed on the need to build a consensus-based plan—a plan that can win the support of a broad range of community interests.

The CAG met at key intervals in the planning process to set objectives, discuss alternatives and share ideas. The consultant team conducted interviews with city officials, business people, property owners, the Alaska Railroad and others interested in the future of Palmer. Additional input from area businesses and residents was obtained through a series of open houses and workshops to identify opportunities, constraints and key development issues related to the project.

A thorough physical assessment of the study area was conducted, along with a review of previous plans and existing information. A complete Scoping Summary Report was developed in July, 2002, which summarized the public process and site assessment for the area. The scoping assessment process served as the basis for a series of route alternatives that were presented to the CAG for selection of a final preferred route and provide for the development alternatives outlined in this report.

The Palmer Urban Revitalization Project is intended to contribute to the quality of life in Palmer by improving recreation and economic opportunities along the Alaska Railroad right-of-way from the Alaska State Fairgrounds to the Matanuska River. The development plan is intended to identify key projects and funding needs for the Citizen's Advisory Group and Palmer City Council for the next five years. Included as part of the plan are design guidelines, plan drawings and a detailed phasing plan that begin to illustrate each of the proposed actions outlined below as well as an implementation strategy with sufficient detail for carrying out the work.

Based on public input and agreement, the Development Plan presented in Section 3.0 provides a framework for decisions to be made over the next five years. The plan focuses on the railroad right-of-way corridor through Palmer and seeks to enhance mountain views, and connections to businesses, local government, parks, schools and surrounding neighborhoods. The plan illustrates proposed public improvements (trails, sidewalks, streetscape, lighting, and public gathering areas and amenities) as well as private investment opportunities. The Strategic Action Plan presented in Section 5.0 outlines key initial projects that have been identified as part of the first phase of development.

## 2.0 Assessment and Concept Development

### 2.1 The Study Area

The Palmer Rail with Trail Corridor is contained within the boundaries of the Alaska Railroad ROW, which runs north through Palmer. The 2.5 mile corridor starts at the Alaska State Fairgrounds near Springer Loop Road and terminates to the north at the Matanuska River overlook. The railroad ROW is 200' wide with significant roadway encroachments permitted along much of its length.

This project will develop approximately 60 acres of currently under-utilized Alaska Railroad land from the Fairgrounds to the Matanuska River. The primary element of the project is a pedestrian "rail-with-trail", or pedestrian/bike path adjacent to existing railroad tracks. The trail and other improvements will enhance the ribbon of open space through Palmer while at the same time preserving the opportunity for future railroad service, which may include day tour passenger service as well as the potential for freight services to northern communities.

### 2.2 Regional Context

The City of Palmer lies at the center of the historic Matanuska-Susitna Borough farming district. Formerly, the rail corridor through Palmer provided a link to coal deposits at Sutton to the north and transported the pioneers who made up the Matanuska Farming Experiment in the 1930's. The Alaska State Fairgrounds form the southern terminus of the corridor and the Matanuska River forms the northern boundary. The heart of the project is the historic Palmer railroad depot and the surrounding downtown core area shops.

Residential areas surround the study area to the north and through much of the core area. The southern portion is primarily industrial in character. The Palmer vicinity, as well as the surrounding "Core Area" of the Borough to Wasilla, is a rapidly-growing residential community with much of the employment centers located in Anchorage. The primary access to Palmer is via the Glenn Highway linking Palmer to Anchorage, 45 miles to the south and to the north access to the Trans-Alaskan Highway to Canada. The Palmer-Wasilla Highway links Palmer to Wasilla to the west as well as interior Alaska communities to the north.

### 2.3 Existing Development Patterns and Zones

The Palmer Rail-with-Trail vicinity contains a variety of existing uses: commercial, retail, industrial, institutional and residential. It also has significant open areas of undeveloped land.

The historic railroad depot is the centerpiece of the study area located at the heart of the downtown core business district. To the west is Alaska Way, an established commercial-retail corridor with a mixture of older buildings, primarily two-story and single-story with

no particular architectural style. Gaps between buildings exist along the avenue. The eastern side through the downtown core is open along the railroad corridor with panoramic views to the mountains. The businesses and shops on Alaska Way provide a mixture of long-established uses and a variety of services. To the east lie the public library, community park, police station, visitor center, Borough offices, senior center and senior housing as well as the vacant, historic Mat-Maid properties.

The southern end of the study area is occupied by the Alaska State Fairgrounds and bounded by industrial lands to the east and the Glenn Highway to the west. Where Colony Way intersects the Glenn Highway, the character of the western edge becomes commercial in nature and is backed by residential development. Senior housing and community services are located along the eastern boundary of the project. To the north of the downtown core, Alaska Way and Valley Way border the project and the character is predominantly a mix of residential and commercial to Arctic Avenue, and then residential from Arctic Avenue to the northern terminus at the Matanuska River.

Development zones have been identified along the corridor based on observation of the surrounding land uses and the potential for the area to support specific types of activities related to the use of the trail corridor such as active recreation and commercial opportunities. These include the five following zones (See Development Zone Map 1):

- **Industrial Zone – Inner Springer Loop Road to Industrial Way.** The primary design characteristics along this section should focus on the safe movement of pedestrians between the rail and road corridor and at major road crossings. Secondary concerns include improving the storm drainage systems and maintaining a vegetative buffer along the eastern boundary to screen the industrial areas from the trail. Landscape treatment for this zone should primarily consist of grasses and low shrubs that do not obstruct the critical sight lines. Entry signage and wayfinding signs should be located at the beginning of the project.
- **Gateway Zone – Glenn Highway Intersection with Colony Way to Bailey Street.** The primary characteristics of this zone are a mix of strip commercial shopping along the western boundary with a continuation of the industrial zone to the east that is screened by existing trees. The primary design characteristic along this section should be to welcome visitors to Palmer and provide a “gateway” into the community. Trail safety should insure compatibility with active rail corridor and include barrier fencing and screening.
- **Core Area Zone – Bailey Street to Dahlia Avenue.** The primary design characteristic along this section should focus on pedestrian movement and connections between shops, offices, governmental services, senior housing and visitor facilities. As the heart of the project, particular attention will need to be spent on the depot and surrounding area. The separation of the active trail users (bikers, skateboarders, in-line skaters, etc.) from the walkers, strollers and shoppers could be accomplished by developing two separate trails. Safety concerns should focus on development of safe pedestrian crossings between the east and west side of the tracks.

The active railroad track may need to be separated with barrier fencing similar to urban transit rail depots if rail activity increases.

- **Transition Zone – Dahlia Avenue to East Arctic Avenue.** The primary design characteristic along this section should provide a focus on active recreational facilities and special events. This section is bounded to a great extent by commercial and governmental activities and has the largest open space along the corridor. Outdoor concerts, open fields for special events such as Colony Days, skateboard parks, exercise par-course, basketball and tennis are some of the opportunities that could be located safely within this area. There are a few residential areas to the west and east that will need to have privacy screening, low fencing and other considerations to reduce trail incursions onto their property.
- **Residential Zone – East Arctic Avenue to the Matanuska River.** The primary design characteristic along this section should focus on family recreational enjoyment along the length of the trail. The development of destination amenities along this section should be minimal with the focus on the trail overlook and terminus at the Matanuska River. The privacy of residential areas should be protected with landscape plantings, fencing, a road crossing at Caribou Avenue, and by limiting the development of areas to gather for active play. Small seating areas and low scale lighting should be the focus along this section. Safety concerns will focus on the major road crossing at Arctic Avenue and with secondary crossings at Eagle and Caribou Avenues.

## 2.4 Objectives

Based on public input and an analysis of existing conditions, the CAG formulated broad community objectives to guide the planning process. These are summarized below:

- Maximize the railroad corridor as a resource for public enjoyment and as a unifying element with strong linkages to encourage pedestrian circulation.
- The heart of the project is the historic Alaska Railroad Depot and should be the “crown jewel” of Palmer.
- Preserve and enhance the railroad operations within Palmer.
- Use historic themes of the Colony period and Alaska Railroad as design elements to promote a distinct image for Palmer.
- The trail should be designed first and foremost for the residents of Palmer.
- Involve the community in the process to increase a sense of ownership and community pride.
- Provide facilities that are safe, inviting and easily maintained.

- Design multi-use spaces where possible to encourage a mix of activities and events.
- Provide amenities that include a variety of experiences and opportunities for all.
- Enhance the economic opportunities and promote downtown businesses by creating a positive climate for existing businesses and encourage new employment-generating uses.
- Provide convenient access and parking within the trail corridor.
- Respect the surrounding residential neighborhood character. Accommodate a complementary mixture of uses where appropriate.

## 2.5 Alternative Trail Route Options

From the issues and opportunities explored in the CAG work sessions and the public open houses, a series of alternative route options were prepared and discussed. These alternatives displayed varying locations for the trail in relationship to the Alaska Railroad right-of-way and main track centerline and will vary depending on which development zone they are located within (see Map 8 in the July 2002 project Scoping Report for more detail). The alternative routing options that have been developed for the corridor include the following:

1. West route orientation maintaining the trail along the west side of the railroad main line where possible,
2. East route orientation maintaining the trail along the east side of the railroad main line where possible.
3. Meandering trail between both sides of the centerline of the railroad main line where possible.

## 2.6 Preferred Trail Route Option

Based on a work session with city staff, the CAG and meetings with representatives of the Alaska Railroad, a preferred trial route was identified. This was accomplished by combining features of several of the alternatives so that the trail corridor switches back and forth from the east to the west side through specific zones. This preferred routing concept provided the basis for the development plan but will require additional modifications to secure final approval from the Alaska Railroad. The preferred trail routing as identified by the City of Palmer and the CAG includes the following locations through each zone:

- **Industrial Zone (Springer Loop to Industrial Way)** – The CAG agrees that the east side of the track will provide the safest trail location. The trail will be set in the outer 30 feet of the right-of-way at a minimum of 50 feet from the track centerline and will meander slightly between 50 and 70 feet to preserve a natural tree barrier along the

2. Commercial Drive trail crossing with trail stop signs located at both junctions. Special consideration needs to be given to the elevation change as the trail approaches the road crossing which is elevated to provide ample sight line for trail users.
3. A gateway entry sign located at the railroad spur track approach to the airport that provides location map and entry feature to the trail.

### **3.2 Gateway Zone – Glenn Highway Intersection with Colony Way to Bailey**

This segment starts at Colony Way's south end at the Y intersection to the Glenn Highway and provides for the development of a focal landscape gateway to welcome visitors to Palmer. It also continues the trail north to downtown. The trail segment will run along the east side of the railroad track centerline until it reaches the extension line of Industrial Way. There it will cross the tracks with an at grade crossing and continue along the west side along Colony Way joining the existing path to Evergreen Street. An alternative trail option would maintain the trail along the east side of the rail centerline from Industrial Way to Evergreen Street to avoid the crossing.

Key elements include a 10-foot wide trail section, an at-grade crossing of the Alaska Railroad with safety features including barrier fencing, grading and drainage. Site improvements include pedestrian scale lighting to match downtown along Colony Way, gateway features such as signage, flags, banners, a new focal point landscape entrance feature, new landscape and an automatic irrigation system. Specific elements include

1. Gateway Entry Feature and Sign should be located on the east side of the Glenn Highway at the approach to Colony Way. A low wall with a "Welcome to Palmer" sign with accent lighting and landscape provides a sense of arrival to the community.
2. Screening of MEA Power Station should be located between the access road from the Glenn Highway and provide a visual screen to the existing MEA electrical station. Care should be taken to preserve visual sight lines for vehicle traffic through the area. This may not be required as MEA has indicated a desire to relocate the power station to the east side of the track.
3. Colony Way Gateway Streetscape Improvements should be developed along both sides of the street extending to the downtown core area. Features should include decorative street lights with banners to match those in the downtown area. Street trees should be located at 30-40 foot intervals along the street to help frame views into town.

### **3.3 Core Area Development – Bailey Street to Cottonwood Avenue**

The heart of Palmer, as identified by the community and CAG members, is the historic Alaska Railroad Depot with its adjacent downtown businesses that serve the local community. Key design considerations in this zone include linking the depot to the downtown shops and surrounding residential, senior housing and public facilities with

safe and attractive pedestrian walkways. Development is framed around saving all the existing transportation routes and limiting impacts to the surrounding parking, roads and access points. A number of development opportunities exist for both public and private development within this zone.

Because of the high level of pedestrian traffic and the potential for conflicts, two trails are recommended for this area. A pedestrian-only promenade should be developed along the west side of the track centerline utilizing the existing sidewalk along S. Colony Way that provides seating, wide sidewalks, decorative lighting and amenities. A secondary bike/active pathway should be developed to allow a mix of trail traffic along the east side of the railroad centerline. Together these two trails will provide access to facilities on both sides of the track and link the community together.

Specific elements of the plan include:

Alaska Depot Improvements -The Alaska Railroad Depot is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and as such is accorded special design considerations and limitations. The depot interior has recently undergone major renovations, and the Alaska Railroad has permitted existing uses within the proposed development boundaries. Design features will replicate and restore the original intent and functions of the depot and surrounding area. The connecting plaza should be improved with new connections to the historic rail engine display and to downtown shops. A formal paved platform area should replace the asphalt drive on the west side of the depot and a new parking lot should be added to the north end of the depot with access to South Valley Way. Removable bollards could be used to limit auto access to emergencies and special events. The existing parking lot occupies an important location between downtown and the depot, and in addition to parking, it could potentially be used for staging community events. Additional parking could be located directly to the north along the west side of the ROW and behind the businesses along South Colony Way.

South Colony Way & Alaska Way Promenade Improvement -The primary business street in Palmer is the historic South Colony Way with shops, businesses and food and beverage services along the western side and a pedestrian sidewalk (asphalt from Evergreen south) with landscape along the eastern edge of the street up to the tracks. The western curb line is approximately the right-of-way edge for the Alaska Railroad, but the project boundaries should encompass the sidewalks fronting the local shops to create a unified design theme. A unified streetscape is integral to community life because it provides safe and comfortable pedestrian connections, street lighting, banners, street trees, specialty accent lighting, quiet setting areas and an opportunity to walk, stroll, shop, meet friends or just watch people. South Colony Way provides an opportunity to restore the small town atmosphere and make the area a hub for local residents.

Loading Dock Relocation and East Side Improvements - The loading dock on the east side of the depot should be removed and relocated to a location closer to the users of this facility. A preferred location is at the MEA yard just south of Fireweed Avenue with a second possible location on city land near the airport spur line. Removal of the dock will



open up the east side of the track and allow for better connections to be made to the library, visitor center, borough offices, city park, senior center and the Pioneer Home as well as to the surrounding residential areas. The parking lot and picnic shelters can be enhanced with improved connections, paving and landscape screening and a new parking lot can be developed to the north side of the depot. The removal of the spur track along the eastern side of the Depot will permit an active trail link for bypass of the downtown area by bikers and other active trail users.

Potential Spur Removal - The spur track to the historic Matanuska Maid plant has not been used for a number of years. The city recently met with the current owners of the plant to discuss possible future use of the spur and to explore this option, but found that the owners have compelling reasons to leave the spur, although they are willing to continue talks with the city.

Pedestrian Crosswalks and Bulb-Outs should be developed to improve safety at South Valley Way and Alaska Street crossings at Evergreen, Fireweed, and Cottonwood Avenues. The crossings should utilize specialty pavement to clearly indicate to vehicles the pedestrian zone. Bulb-outs should be used at Evergreen to improve pedestrian safety.

Trail Head Kiosk and Interpretive Signage should be developed in connection with the central plaza area that provides orientation to the entire trail segments and general information on the history of the area and opportunities to take side trips to local businesses and points of interest.

Outdoor Theatre & Band Shell - The opportunity exists to develop an outdoor performance and seating area north of the depot in the approximate vicinity of the existing loading dock. The existing timber wall and grass slopes can be designed to accommodate seating using timber or concrete steps and a raised platform with band shell should be oriented to block the north winds. Overflow seating on top can be developed on a large grass lawn area that can also serve as a special event staging area.

Community Gardens could potentially be located in either plan adjacent to the Pioneer Home to the east of the track center line. This area provides a clear view from downtown and the entry roads into Palmer providing a sense of arrival and connection to the past farming in the valley. By locating it close to the Pioneer Home and other senior services elderly residents can conveniently visit the area on foot and continue to garden or provide oversight to novice gardeners. In addition to community garden plots the area could also house a small green house and garden shop and serve as the Farmer's Market headquarters. Additional elements include:

- A small parking lot can be located adjacent to the garden entry for 8-10 vehicles.
- Mix of beds with some raised for ADA accessibility
- Raised timber edging
- Decorative fencing
- Seating on benches and on seating walls that could also act as walls for raised beds

different, there is a good deal of overlap. Based on common priorities, a phase one plan and construction budget was developed.

**Exhibit 1**

Zone Rank	CAG Project Ranking	Public Project Ranking
1	<b>Gateway Zone</b> 1. Screening MEA Power Station 2. Gateway Entry Feature 3. Colony Way Streetscape Improvements 4. Trail Construction 5. East side trail	<b>Core Area Downtown Zone</b> 1. Promenade on west side 2. East side trail 3. Ice Skating 4. Depot Improvements 5. Parking Lot expansion north of the depot
2	<b>Core Area Downtown Zone</b> - Depot Improvements - Railroad Platform - Ice Skating - Trail-head Kiosk and Signage - Pave Colony Way extension - East side trail - Promenade on west side	<b>Gateway</b> 1. Screening MEA Power Station 2. East side trail 3. Gateway Entry Feature 4. Rest Area and Interpretive Kiosk
3	<b>Industrial Zone</b> 1. Trail Construction 2. Trail landscape and Signage 3. Security Fencing and lighting 4. Springer Loop Crossing	<b>Transitional Zone</b> 1. Trail Construction 2. Active play area (basketball/skateboard) 3. Upgrade South Valley Way 4. Picnic shelters 5. Outdoor theater / bandshell
4	<b>Transitional Zone</b> 1. Trail Construction 2. Picnic Shelters 3. Active play area (basketball/skateboard) 4. Rest Area, Kiosk and Signage 5. Upgrade South Valley Way	<b>Residential Zone</b> - River Overlook - Trail - Public restrooms - Eagle Street Trail Head and Parking
5	<b>Residential Zone</b> - River Overlook - Trail - Public restrooms - Interpretive signage	<b>Industrial Zone</b> - Trail landscape and Signage - Trail Construction - Springer Loop Crossing

Beyond phase one, the City of Palmer can use the community priorities presented above and select projects for development as funding becomes available. As the Development Plan is implemented project by project, the City should also keep the overarching goals of the effort in mind, and especially those identified as most important by the public at the final open house:

- Develop the rail corridor into a unifying element of the community
- Involve the youth in developing the project
- Enhance Economic opportunities and promote downtown business

## 5.2 Strategic Action Plan Phase One Projects 2003-2004:

The heart of Palmer, as identified by the community and CAG members, is the historic Alaska Railroad Depot and the adjacent downtown businesses that serve the local community. The development of the first segments of the trail north from the depot to the Matanuska River are also included in phase one development. We believe that this mix of projects should be the first focus of redevelopment in Palmer. They have wide community support as well as the support of the Alaska Railroad, which is working with the City to develop a Trail Permit. Most importantly, improvements to this area will have the greatest impact on economics and community character providing an immediate benefit to the city.

The matrix in Exhibit 2 on the attached pages provides a detailed listing of the priorities for all early action priority projects in the Strategic Action Plan. The matrix lists phase one projects, actions required, estimated costs and schedules. The Strategic Action Plan Map in Exhibit 3 following this page shows general project locations by their number. Following is a description of each of the projects recommended for development as part of Phase One construction for the 2003 and 2004 season.

Gateway Entry Feature and Sign should be located on the east side of the Glenn Highway at the approach to Colony Way. A low wall with a "Welcome to Palmer" sign with accent lighting and landscape to provide a sense of arrival to the community.

South Alaska Way Promenade - The primary business street in Palmer is the historic South Alaska Way with shops, businesses and food and beverage services along the western side and a pedestrian sidewalk with landscape along the eastern edge of the street up to the tracks. A unified streetscape is integral to community life because it provides safe and comfortable pedestrian connections, street lighting, banners, street trees, specialty accent lighting, quiet setting areas, bulb outs at Evergreen, pedestrian cross walks will provide an opportunity to walk, stroll, shop, meet friends or just watch people. South Alaska Way provides an opportunity to restore the small town atmosphere and make the area a hub for local residents.

Alaska Depot Improvements -The Alaska Railroad Depot is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and as such is accorded special design considerations and limitations. The depot interior has recently undergone major renovations, and the Alaska Railroad has permitted existing uses within the proposed development boundaries. Design features will replicate and restore the original intent and functions of the depot and surrounding area. The existing plaza should be improved with new connections to the historic rail engine display and to downtown shops.

Railroad Depot Platform and Pedestrian Crossing - A formal paved platform area should replace the asphalt drive on the west side of the depot with pedestrian track crossing at the entrance to the depot. Removable bollards can be used to limit auto access to emergencies and special events.

Trail Head Kiosk and Interpretive Signage should be developed in connection with the central plaza area that provides orientation to the entire trail segments and general information on the history of the area and opportunities to take side trips to local businesses and points of interest.

Parking Lot Expansion - North of the depot a new parking lot should be developed for up to 40 vehicles with pavement and emergency access to the depot.

Trail from Depot north to Arctic Avenue - A 10-foot paved path should meander through the area with access to surrounding neighborhoods. The trail should utilize the existing railroad bed where possible and lower the grade at Blueberry.

Colony Way Gateway Streetscape Improvements should be developed along both sides of the street extending to the downtown core area. Features should include decorative street lights with banners to match those in the downtown area. Street trees should be located at 30-40 foot intervals along the street to help frame views into town.

Trail from Arctic Avenue to the Matanuska River - The primary design characteristic along this section should focus on enhancing family recreational enjoyment along the length of the trail. Improvements include a 10 foot meandering trail, grading and drainage improvements, pedestrian crossings at Caribou and Eagle Avenues, low level lighting features, amenities such as benches, information signage, new landscape and an irrigation system.

Matanuska River Overlook - An overlook can be located at the terminus of the trail and serve as a trailhead north towards Sutton. The area should provide for ADA access to an elevated platform with benches, interpretive signage and telescopes for viewing. Trail head map and general information should also be located in this vicinity.

Eagle Avenue Crossing and Trail Head Parking should be developed at the northern terminus of the trail project. Parking can be provided for 4-6 vehicles.

### 5.3 Conclusions

The Palmer Revitalization Plan is ambitious and its implementation will require the full energy of the CAG, Palmer Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, local government and the entire community. Yet the vision is also incremental; there are a number of small, moderate-cost projects that will bring immediate benefit while paving the way for the more long-term investments. These important early action projects will demonstrate to the community and to potential investors that real progress is being made.

The planning process has focused the attention of public and private sector leaders on the future of Palmer. The current level of enthusiasm and momentum must be maintained and put into a systematic and continuing program of implementation. The first steps should include:

- Official adoption of the Development Plan by the CAG, the City Manager and by the Palmer City Council as the framework for future decisions regarding development in Palmer.
- Unofficial adoption of the Development Plan by the Palmer Chamber of Commerce, Rotary and other relevant organizations that can lend support for the development process.
- Authorization of Phase One Design and Development to prepare construction drawings for initial public investment to begin construction during the 2003 season.

This is an exciting time for the community of Palmer and the basic commitment to reclaim the railroad corridor as a primary development opportunity will benefit the entire community. The right decisions will come from a shared vision and the cooperation of all parties who hold responsibility for making that vision a reality.

## Specific Design Guidelines

The specific design guidelines provide the basic description for individual components of the overall Development Plan. Copies of catalogue cut sheets are included in the master document provided to the City that shows individual design elements.

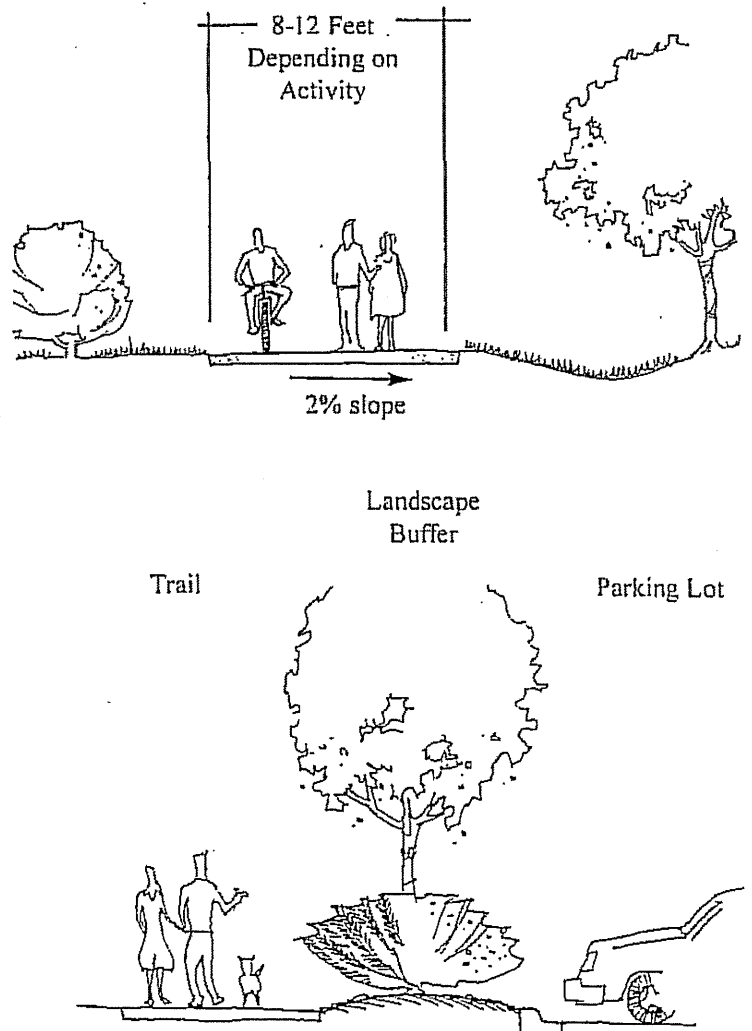
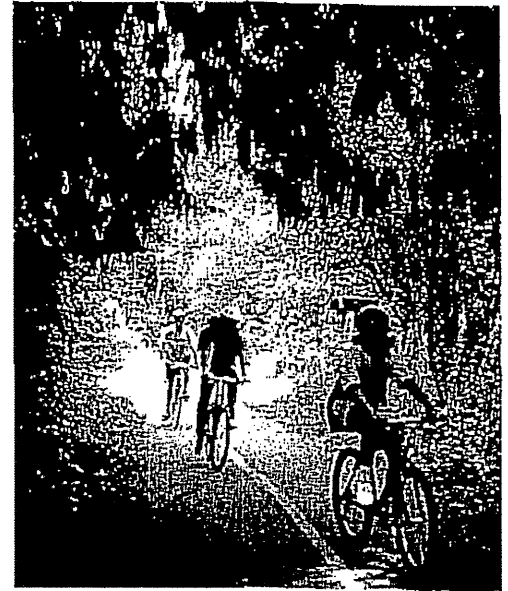
### Circulation

This design element addresses issues related to the safe and efficient movement through project boundaries.

**Trail Design** - The trail should include safety features such as fencing at active trail crossings, signage, textured paving, lighting and plantings. The trail should have a positive cross slope (2%) for drainage purposes. Along most sections of the project, the trail width should be 8 to 10 feet. In areas where there is higher pedestrian traffic and where emergency vehicles should be accommodated, the trail width should be a minimum of 10 to 12' wide.

**Paving** - The trail shall have asphalt as its main material, except in designated locations (plazas, intersections, crosswalks, or pedestrian streets) where concrete bands, textured pavement, concrete pavers or other specialty paving may be preferred. A change in the texture of the paving shall be used on the trail before all crossings, whether they are road crossings or rail crossings.

**Parking** - The plan seeks to improve the existing parking situation by either building new spaces or enhancing existing ones. The improved parking shall have asphalt paving and meet ADA specifications. All parking areas shall have clear, visible signage as to where the entrance is located and have a well defined direction of flow through the parking area. The parking area shall be easily seen by pedestrian and vehicular traffic. These improved or new parking areas shall have a clear separation between pedestrian and vehicular circulation, through the use of curb stops, curbing, bollards, planting decorative fencing or light fixtures. All parking shall be planned in locations that serve a high-use area such as an outdoor pavilion, the downtown business district, or the train depot.



## Signage

Signage shall be an integral element to trail development and have a common theme that matches the overall design concept of the trail and the other landscape amenities along the trail. The sign types follow these general guidelines:

Kiosks shall give wayfinding cues to the users along the trail and offer an opportunity for posting notices for events.

The trail mileposts measure the distance of the trail and should be two sided and have mileage on both sides of the sign, indicating the milepost for trail users going in either direction. These mileposts shall have a consistent theme and be reminiscent of railroad switching posts.

Historic signs shall link the place to a time by featuring some of the historic events that occurred on or near the corridor. These types of signs shall occur in areas of more highly concentrated pedestrians, at outdoor gathering areas and at points of historic interest.

Interpretive signs shall be incorporated at special locations along the trail. Some of these locations may include the Depot area, overlooks, outdoor gathering areas, and other areas of greater visibility and higher pedestrian use.

Gateway signage that announces thresholds into different zones shall be located at the beginning and end of the trail. As the trail moves into these areas of higher pedestrian use, these gateway signs may be used to accentuate the overall change in the character of the trail. For example, a gateway into another zone may give the trail user a visual cue in terms of slowing down on the trail.



## Landscape

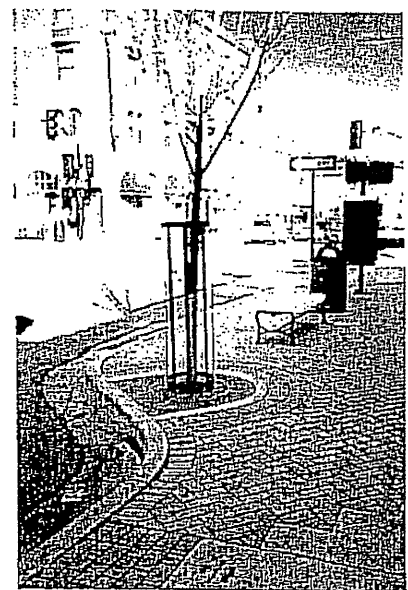
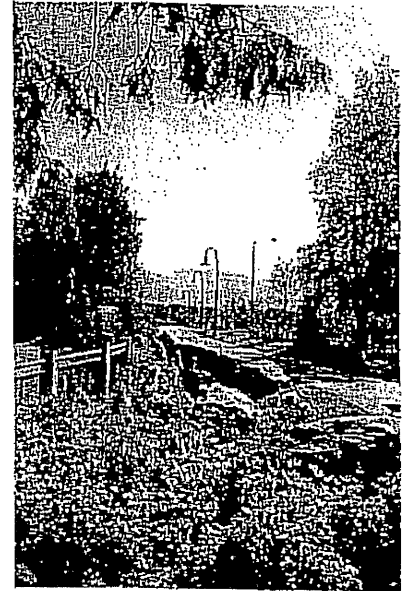
The overall landscape theme places importance on safety, preservation, quality of life, aesthetics and low-maintenance. We recommend the following when considering existing and proposed landscape plantings along the trail:

Preserve existing trees where deemed appropriate or beneficial for vegetative screens or focal points.

Existing and proposed vegetative screens and barriers should be set back far enough from the trail to preserve adequate sight visibility into potential hiding places. For deciduous trees, place plants at least 5 to 6 feet from the trail's edge, while evergreen trees require a distance of at least 8 to 10 feet from the trail.

Preserve sight lines at critical points with low plantings and grasses that do not compromise sight triangles or sight distance lines for pedestrians, bikers and drivers.

Low-maintenance plantings: A low-maintenance landscape means that plants are selected for hardiness and wind resistance. For this reason, there tends to be greater consideration given to native plants; however, the overall planting scheme should include non-natives as well as ornamental plantings in order to allow for variation in color, texture, and function. The Palmer Plant Material Center serves as a local resource for appropriate plants that would provide shade, screening, seasonal color, allow for low maintenance and reflect a history of the farming community.





## Landscape as Unifying Element

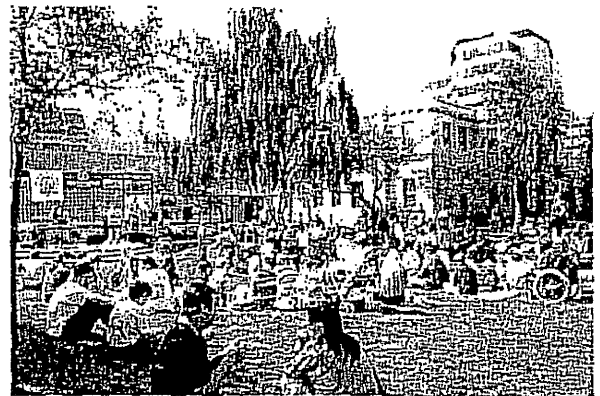
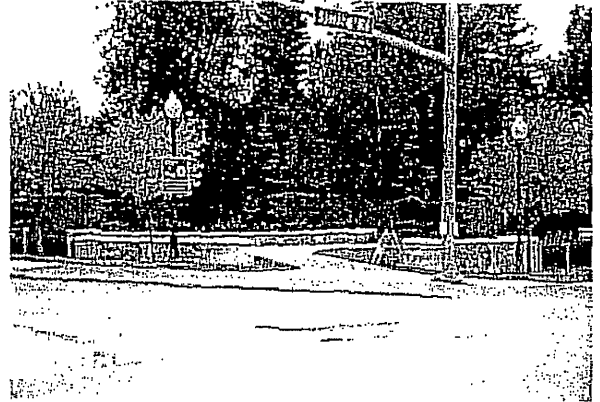
The landscape plantings shall function as another unifying element that enhances the gateways, nodes and corridors. Plant features can offer year-round interest to the landscape, and certain types of plantings can contribute to the experience in different ways.

Street Tree Plantings provide a transparent but distinct edge to the significant passageways. Providing adequate growing space for street trees ensures healthy life for this important landscape element.

Gateway Plantings mark key entry points into Palmer and along the trail. These areas shall feature ornamental plantings such as flowering trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals.

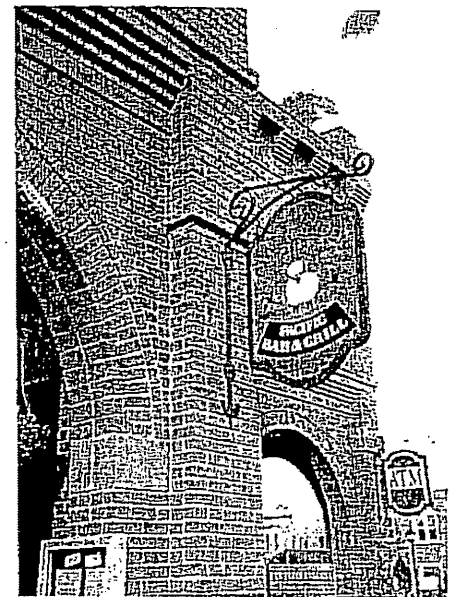
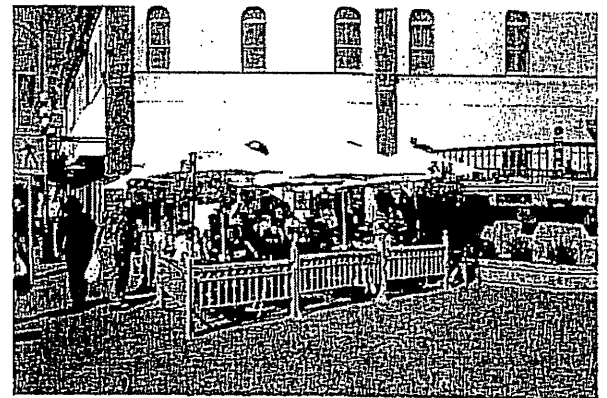
Focal Point Plantings bring attention to special areas of interest along the trail, such as the depot area, rest areas, pedestrian nodes and at overlooks. These areas shall include ornamental plantings, like flowering trees and shrubs, as well as provide the area with some seasonal color through the use of perennials and annuals displayed in planting beds or planters.

Open areas of lawn, native grasses and wildflowers allow for recreational activities on the manicured lawns to passive viewing of the native vegetation. The seed mix would vary for each zone so that areas of active recreation or passive use of greenspace would have manicured lawns whereas other areas may have a combination of seed mixes that would include mown lawns along with native grasses.



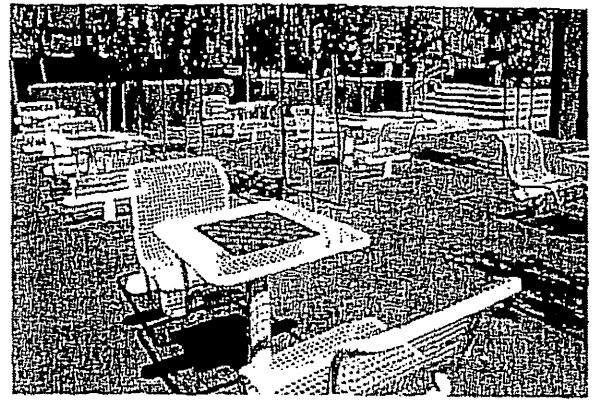
## Architectural Features and Elements

These features and elements should respond to Palmer's historic and civic character. Two themes from which to draw design elements include the historical Matanuska farms and the Alaska Railroad, each of which has played a significant part in Palmer's development. Both of these themes could be used to gain design ideas on forms, colors and patterns for specialty features, signage and pavement. These visual design references to Palmer's past pay tribute to the key forces in its development while playing an integral part in the initiative to make the rail corridor and its adjacent urban connections a vital part of the city's future.

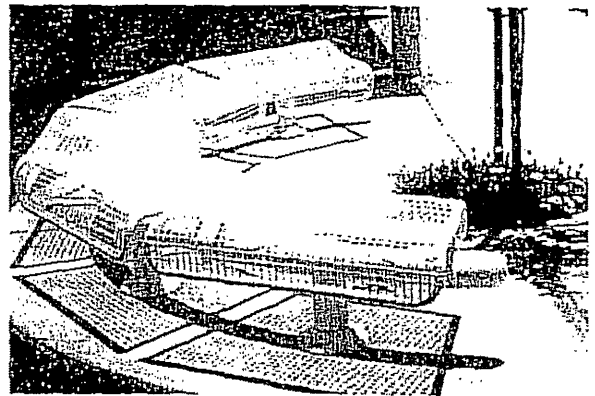


## Specialty Features

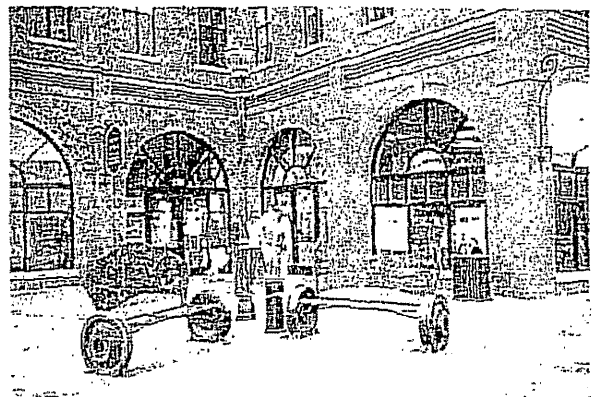
Site features may vary depending on specific use, e.g. the Depot, but overall they work to unify the entire corridor experience. These elements are durable and aesthetic, and they provide a permanence and level of detail to the pedestrian that adds cohesion to the entire design. The ADA guidelines should be applied to these specialty features when appropriate. The different types of specialty features include:



**Tables-** Gaming tables (e.g. chess, checkers) invite pedestrians to pause and play while in close proximity to other activity. This feature would be most appropriate adjacent to outdoor gathering spaces, the Depot area, and near the downtown business district.

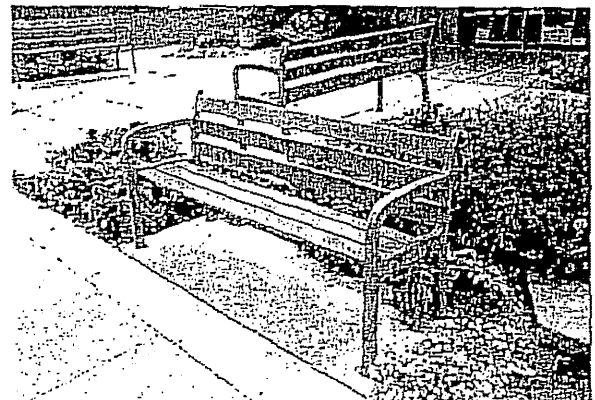


**Benches-** These features should accommodate the trail user the entire length of the trail. The quantity of benches in each zone along the trail will vary. They will be provided to a lesser extent at the beginning and the end of the trail, while as the trail enters the core of Palmer, there will be more opportunities for seating.



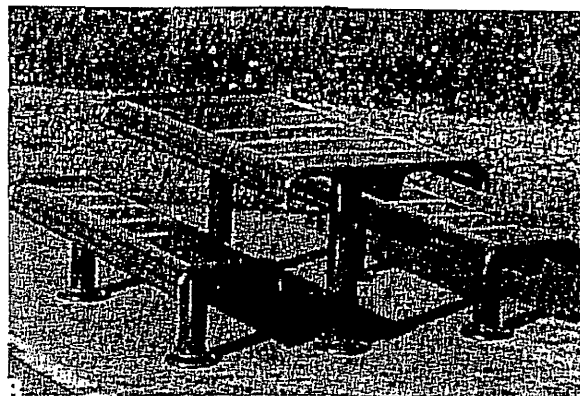
**Trash/Ash Receptacles-** They shall carry the same basic theme throughout the whole trail, as well as be provided in convenient places for the trail users. These receptacles shall be a combination feature that could be mounted on a street bollard to reinforce this idea of tying these features together.

**Rest Areas -** These areas shall accommodate the trail user with a resting point or a place to sit down and relax. These spaces will be off the main trail but adjacent to it. They will be sporadically placed along the fringes of the project, while areas of higher pedestrian use, such as the downtown area, will receive a higher concentration of these resting areas. They will be located in order to take advantage of a nice view



or have a pleasantly landscaped backdrop to them.

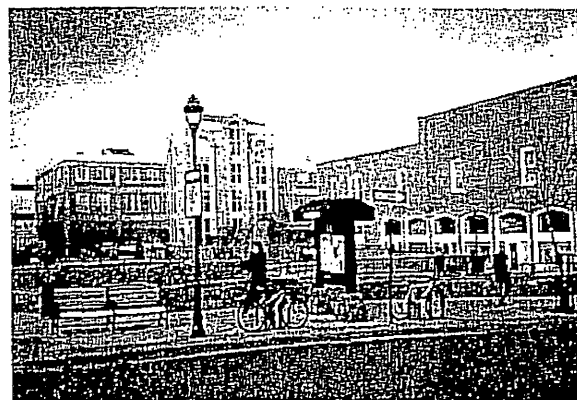
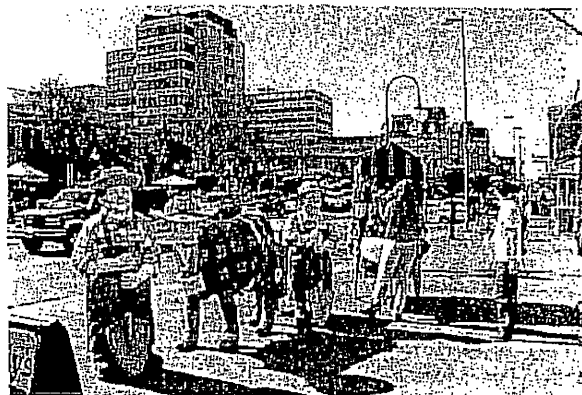
**Picnic Tables-** These features shall be incorporated in areas of outdoor gathering spaces, near active and passive recreation areas, and directly adjacent to any picnic shelters or structures.



**Bicycle Racks and Shelters-** The project seeks to encourage alternative modes of transportation for work and leisure by providing for safe and attractive opportunities for parking and storing a bicycle.



**Public Art -** The entire corridor is an invitation for artistic expression. Public art provides a potential site design opportunity that could add interest and enhance the sense of community. It also makes way for local artists and local materials to be used for projects, some of which could celebrate local history and themes, such as the farming legacy.



## Safety/Crossings

### Pedestrian Crosswalks at Road Crossings:

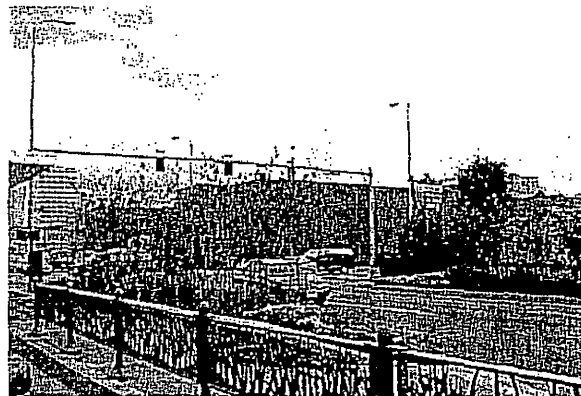
Pedestrian safety requires certain measures that facilitate safe movement across roadways.

Crosswalks shall meet ADA specifications in terms of slope (12:1) at curb cuts and textured surfacing. They shall also be at-grade and perpendicular to roadways, unless otherwise noted for a particular zone.



### Active Railroad Barrier Features and Rail Crossings

All railroad crossings should provide an at-grade crossing of the tracks by utilizing the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) specifications. Landscape amenities at road or railroad crossings vary depending on location and zone. In general, the following guidelines are recommended:



All crossings of the road and railroad tracks shall be at-grade and perpendicular with the tracks.

**Fencing:** A fence should be used to channel trail users to crossings. In areas of low pedestrian activity, the use of warning signage may supplement barrier measures such as fencing and grade changes. When this type of fencing is necessary for public safety, decorative fencing shall be incorporated with a theme that relates to the overall trail's design concept.



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## **New Business**

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**CITY OF PALMER  
BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 22-002**

**SUBJECT:** Annual Update of Palmer's Economic Development Plan

**AGENDA OF:** January 17, 2022

The BED reviews and updates the City of Palmer's annual Economic Development Plan and then presents to Palmer City Council for consideration during the City Council and Board of Economic Development joint meeting. The plan shall be consistent with City Council policies and the City's Comprehensive Plan. The current plan was originally developed in 2011 with yearly updates and was based on the City of Palmer's Comprehensive Plan's summary of goals for economic vitality.

2020 is a census year, demographic and economic data will be utilized to update the Economic Development Plan when the data becomes available from the US Census. To date this information has not been released to the city.



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.

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**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.

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**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 perspective of property owners and residents understanding and compliance with city standards to protect the long-term stability of neighborhoods and Palmer's economic vitality.

**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.

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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.**



**Resolution No. 21-001**

**A Resolution of the Palmer Board of Economic Development Recommending City Council Implement Elements of the Brownfield Area Wide Plan to Support the Development of a Coordinated Marketing Strategy for Downtown Palmer**

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, unique local events, tourism and recreational opportunities have a significant impact on the Palmer quality of life and economy; and

WHEREAS, Palmer has invested heavily in the infrastructure, including the Community Center (Depot), MTA Events Center, Visitor Information Center, Palmer Airport, parks, bike paths, pedestrian access and downtown beautification projects; and

WHEREAS, Palmer serves as the hometown to many surrounding neighborhoods and communities acting as the gateway to endless 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 an authentic coordinated destination marketing strategy to further the goals of the City Council of enhanced economic development, including;

1. Have a strong coordinated internet and social media presence.
2. Visitor Information Center contract is consistent with goals of a coordinated marketing strategy, established by City Council.
3. Coordination should occur between entities promoting Palmer tourism and local businesses, i.e., City of Palmer, Greater Palmer Chamber of Commerce, Palmer Museum of History and Art, Mat-Su Convention & Visitor Bureau and local hospitality businesses.
4. Create a branding strategy for placement of signage at major highway entrances identifying Palmer's historical importance, access to recreation and events, and identifying signage for the gateway to the designated Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway.

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

1. Plan and implement downtown parking improvements on Colony and Valley Way.
2. Complete a feasibility analysis for East/West vehicular connectivity.
3. Pursue development and beautification of land within the railroad corridor for public use and enjoyment, now.
4. Develop and implement an outdoor venue for community events in the railroad corridor.
5. Complete non-motorized connectivity between Auklet and Old Glenn Highway.
6. Develop and implement a plan for city property on the Matanuska River for local usage and tourism.

Passed and approved by the Board of Economic Development of the City of Palmer, Alaska, this 12<sup>th</sup> day of July 2021.

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Dusty Silva, Chairperson

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Brad Hanson, Director Community Development

## Upcoming Board of Economic Development Meetings

Meeting Date	Meeting Type	Meeting Time	Notes
April 4, 2022	Regular	6 PM	
July 11, 2022	Regular	6 PM	
October 3, 2022	Regular	6 PM	