

CHAPTER 3 COMMUNITY VISION

Vision Summary

Keep Palmer a vital community, a place that seeks opportunities for growth, and retains what is best about Palmer’s history and traditions.

Introduction

Chapter 2 describes the rapid growth occurring in Palmer and surrounding areas, and the resulting issues, opportunities and challenges facing the community. Chapters 4-8 present goals and strategies to respond to these issues. This Chapter presents the foundation to those goals – a broad vision for the future of Palmer. This material comes from the 1999 Plan and the comments received from the community in the preparation of this updated Plan. The Chapter includes representative comments made by the public during community meetings.



Broad Goals to Achieve Community Vision

Continue to Ensure the City of Palmer meets its fundamental obligations – that is Provision of Water and Sewer, Police and Fire, Roads

- “Palmer is destined to grow, and will probably grow rapidly. While flowers, parks, views are important, our biggest issues will be roads, water and sewer, police and fire. The faster we grow the more challenging those issues will be. That’s where the great majority of the City budget goes today, and making sure we do a good job providing those services will be our priority in the future.”

Retain and Strengthen Palmer’s “Small Town America” Character

- Keep and enhance the characteristics that make Palmer a distinctive community. Qualities that define Palmer’s character today to strengthened in the future include:
 - “A small town with the spirit of a small mid-western farming community”... “and a unique Alaska flavor”
 - A strong sense of community – “people know each other,” “a friendly community, a good place to raise a family”
 - “A mix of young and older residents, with facilities available to both”
 - A tradition of progressive business, research and innovation



- Easy access to parks, trails, recreational opportunities - “need more things for kids to do – a skate board park, movie theater, ice-skating rink and ice cream shop”
- A remarkable base of volunteers
- Quality schools
- Celebrate Palmer’s history and traditions, including downtown and the community’s historic buildings. Do a better job of telling the story of Palmer, including the agricultural colony and farm life, mining and rail development, the tradition of city planning, and the history of practical, frontier innovation.

Improve the Local Economy, Expand Local Business

- Work to attract well-paying professional jobs, for example, engineering, science, health care, and institutional jobs - “a center for high-tech, low-impact jobs.”
- Provide land for commercial growth. Help make Palmer a more self-sufficient community, “where more of the goods and services residents want are available in town.”
- Increase local economic opportunities, especially for youth, “so kids can grow up and find a good job in Palmer.”
- Take advantage of Palmer’s distinctive history and character as an “economic engine” to draw visitors, to retain and attract residents, and support local businesses, “capitalize on character.”



Strengthen Downtown Palmer

- Work so downtown Palmer is a more economically vital area, and remains the clear center of Palmer public life. Characteristics of downtown should include those listed below.
 - Space for growth – “more commercial space, better parking”
 - Historic character – “keep historic buildings and small houses”
 - Compact and easy to walk around – “fix problem intersections, keep sidewalks clear”
 - Mix of uses, residential and commercial
 - More evening activity – “we need more nightlife: eclectic restaurants, brew pubs, theaters”
 - Improved appearance and cleanliness of houses, businesses and landscaping
 - Predominance of locally-owned businesses
 - Open space and great views
 - A lively cultural scene, a place “where you can go to a play, then walk to a nice restaurant”

Attract Visitors by Promoting and Enhancing what is Unique about Palmer



- Encourage new attractions to draw people off the Glenn Highway. “We need new businesses, more things for people to do.”
- Emphasize attractions linked to community traditions: “Quilting, crafts, farmers market, public areas, farming history, water tower, Matanuska Maid, large vegetables, gardens, garden tour, walking tour.”
- Improve destination marketing.
- Improve town entries, signage and way-finding information.

Encourage High Quality, Attractive Development with Ready Access to Parks and Green Space

- Encourage high-quality, attractive buildings and site development. “Protect views.” “Buildings should be as distinctive as our mountains.” Be a “city of amenities.”



- Provide ready access to parks, trails, and open space.
- Preserve sense of views, open space and trees. “Require landscaping” “Keep the park-like feeling.”
- Ensure Palmer has clear boundaries. “An edge to town, so you can tell when you’ve arrived.”
- Strengthen zoning. Push for “Consistently high quality buildings,” and “Open space, paths and sidewalks in subdivisions.”

Improve Connections Within and Out of Town, by Road, Trail and Transit

- Provide a well-planned, efficient system of roads and trails so it is easy, safe and enjoyable to move around Palmer.
- Maintain a high quality airport.
- Ensure Palmer remains a pedestrian-friendly town.
- Improve trail and sidewalk connections between downtown and out-of-town recreation areas and rural areas.



- Continue to bring the Alaska Railroad train into town for events. Retain the option for future commuter rail service.

Guide Community Growth

- Respect private property rights. Find a practical balance between community policies that guide growth and the benefits of allowing individuals and businesses to develop properties as they see fit. Examples of representative views on this subject are listed below.

- “Facilitate quality development within guidelines, don’t stop growth.”
- “Need flexibility.”



- “Too much regulation and a business will fail.”
- “Create incentives for developers to comply with development guidelines.”
- “Palmer should be functional and beautiful.”

- Encourage commercial growth that generates revenues needed to improve widely-desired services and facilities, from better sidewalks and roads, to improved cultural facilities.

- Sustain Palmer’s tradition of fiscal responsibility. Encourage balanced residential and commercial development.
- Set priorities among competing demands for new City services and programs. Match needs and desires with available resources.