

PALMER LAND USE ELEMENT

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Overall Land Use

GOAL: Make Palmer an increasingly attractive place to live and work.

Objective: Promote Palmer's competitive advantages for commerce and residence in terms of the superior level of municipal services that are available for essentially no additional cost when items such as low fire insurance rates are taken into consideration.

Objective: Encourage development of parks and green belts in Palmer.

Objective: Develop policies regarding uninhabitable structures.

GOAL: Encourage long term community growth by providing a variety of types of commercial, industrial, institutional and residential land uses.

Objective: Periodically review Palmer's zoning ordinance to ensure that sufficient lands in the different zones are available for anticipated future development.

GOAL: Encourage creation of compatible uses within zoning districts.

GOAL: Eliminate enclaves within Palmer's existing corporate limits.

Objective: Work with property owners to eliminate enclaves within Palmer's corporate limits.

GOAL: Establish annexation conceptual boundaries to take place within the next twenty years. Those boundaries are defined as the area for which the City of Palmer is now certificated by the Alaska Public Utilities Commission to extend municipal sewer services.

Objective: Continue to pursue annexations at the request of individual property owners where the property is physically contiguous with Palmer's corporate limits and annexation will not be detrimental to the City's interests.

- Objective: Publicize the City's agreed-upon conceptual boundaries, so that residents and developers realize which properties are likely to be annexed to the City of Palmer within the next twenty years. Additionally, prepare a cost benefit analysis to facilitate acceptance.
- Objective: Work with developers outside the present city limits but within Palmer's conceptual boundaries to plan for the future extension of municipal water and sewer services.
- Objective: Pursue legislative annexations where the City's interests are clearly paramount and where agreement of all affected property owners is not possible.

Commercial Land Use

GOAL: Balance the needs for different types of commercial space, recognizing the need to strengthen Palmer's traditional retail core and, at the same time, acknowledging the need for highway-related retail frontage.

- Objective: Ensure that sufficient land is zoned for different types of commercial development.
- Objective: Work with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to ensure safe and efficient access into and out of commercial businesses fronting on the Palmer-Wasilla Highway.
- Objective: Promote Palmer airport.
- Objective: Promote retail development.

GOAL: Expand the total amount of developed retail and professional office space in Palmer.

- Objective: Promote professional office development which is complementary to the operation of Palmer's institutions, as well as that serving the area's business and financial needs.

GOAL: Develop and implement a tourism strategy for Palmer.

- Objective: Encourage increased visitor and tourist traffic by promoting tourist attractions in the Palmer area, by greater recognition of Palmer's past, and by building on events, most notably the Alaska State Fair, which bring visitors to the Valley.
- Objective: Work to help preserve key unrestored structures in Palmer's historic district for tourist-related commercial uses or for other visitor activities.

Industrial Land Use

GOAL: Provide for the efficient use of industrial land within areas already established for that purpose, i.e., the existing industrial park and the newly designated Palmer Commercial Center.

Objective: Encourage industrial uses within the main part of town, such as the School District's physical plant maintenance and fabrication shop, the Borough maintenance yard and industrial operations within the Mat-Maid block, to relocate to the Palmer industrial park or the Palmer Commercial Center.

Objective: Provide for the effective screening and buffering of industrial uses from residential and other adjacent uses.

GOAL: Increase development of the Palmer airport for aviation-related industrial uses.

Objective: Extend municipal water and sewer services to the northern portion of the airport property.

Objective: Promote greater use of the Palmer airport, including uses related or complementary to State firefighting operations and tourism/flight-seeing activities.

Institutional Land Use

GOAL: Maintain, protect, and expand Palmer's traditional role as the institutional center for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Objective: Meet with Palmer's institutions on a regular basis to monitor possible future land use requirements.

Objective: Work with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District to accommodate the existing and probable future administrative needs of that institution in the City of Palmer.

GOAL: Anticipate and accommodate additional institutional growth.

Objective: Meet with Palmer's institutions on a regular basis to monitor possible future land use requirements.

Objective: Recognize the need for expansion of Palmer's traditional central institutional area to accommodate the growing needs of the Alaska Court System and other criminal justice uses.

Objective: Make provision to accommodate the possible future expansion needs of the Alaska Job Corps Center, Valley Hospital, and other institutions, as needed.

Residential Land Use

GOAL: Accommodate Palmer's projected population growth in a variety of types of housing.

Objective: Review requirements for municipal sewer and water.

Objective: Encourage infill and expansion of existing partially developed subdivisions west of the Glenn Highway.

- Objective: Promote the construction of additional senior housing in the vicinity of the Palmer Pioneer Home and Senior Center.
- Objective: Require that new subdivisions in areas west of the Glenn Highway be developed in relation to existing subdivisions and that, where feasible, linkages between subdivisions be built to reduce the amount of neighborhood traffic which would otherwise be forced out onto major highways.
- Objective: Develop the enclave north of Arctic, next to the Cranberry Meadows subdivision, for single family residential use.
- Objective: Work with developers to promote more high end residential construction within Palmer's corporate limits.
- Objective: As additional areas are annexed into the City, make provision for large lot residential development in areas where it is not feasible to extend sewer services.

GOAL: Improve the quality of existing residential areas.

- Objective: Obtain Parks and Recreation daily management authority from the Borough.
- Objective: Upgrade local streets by utilizing all available methods of financing, including paving and the installation of curbs, gutters and sidewalks.
- Objective: Increase enforcement of local ordinances relating to the storage of inoperative vehicles and other debris in residential areas.

EXISTING LAND USE

Overall Land Use Patterns

Palmer's overall land use pattern owes much to the manner of its settlement in the 1930's, to location decisions on the routing of highway and railroad corridors, and to the fact that the City has a long history of sound planning. Palmer, unlike many other communities in South-Central Alaska, has established well-defined land use areas. Residential areas are buffered from adjoining incompatible uses. Most industrial uses are located within a long established industrial park. In addition, Palmer has retained a traditional "Main Street" business district as well as accommodating highway related commercial uses. (See Existing Land Use Table, page 2-6)

Palmer, as of 1996, had approximately 1,400 acres of land in use excluding rights-of-way (See Table on page 2-6). Approximately three-quarters of this area was used for industry, institutions, and parks and recreation. Palmer has long been the institutional center for the Matanuska-Susitna Valley and a relatively large amount of land is taken up by institutional-type uses. This plan promotes, preserves, and seeks ways to expand the institutional uses in Palmer. The importance of institutional land uses in Palmer is also reflected in the City's zoning, which designates over half of the City's area (excluding rights-of-way) for "Government" purposes.

By contrast, residential and commercial uses together consumed only about 350 acres of land in 1996, making Palmer's development much more compact than is typically seen in South-Central Alaska communities. Most residential development is in the form of single family housing, although Palmer does have a relatively large amount of multi-family housing by Valley standards.

The municipally-owned Palmer Airport borders the eastern edge of town and is the single largest consumer of land in the City. Two major regional recreation amenities, the Palmer Golf Course (located on Airport property) and the Matanuska River Park, are also located along the eastern edge of town.

Vacant land accounted for slightly more than 580 acres in 1996. The largest tracts of vacant land are located west of the Glenn Highway in four partially developed subdivisions – Brittany Estates, Greatland Terrace, Golden Glenn Estates and Cedar Hills.

**EXISTING LAND USE
CITY OF PALMER, 1996**

LAND USE	LAND AREA (acres)	PERCENT OF DEVELOPED AREA(%)	PERCENT OF TOTAL CITY AREA (%)
Residential One & Two Family	249.41	17.8	10.8
Residential Multi- Family	16.24	1.2	0.7
Residential Mobile Home Park	3.41	0.2	0.1
Commercial	83.81	6.0	3.6
Industrial	340.68	24.4	14.7
Institutional	414.59	29.7	17.9
Parks & Recreation	289.11	20.7	12.5
TOTAL DEVELOPED AREA	1,397.25	100.0	60.4
Rights of Way	333.56		14.4
Vacant	583.81		25.2
TOTAL	2,314.62		100.0

Sources: Gillian Smythe & Associates; Matanuska-Susitna Borough

**EXISTING ZONING
CITY OF PALMER, 1996**

ZONE	LAND AREA (acres)	PERCENT OF TOTAL
R-1	537.66	27.2
R-2	92.06	4.6
CL	48.57	2.5
CG	89.49	4.5
I	150.08	7.6
Public	1,062.21	53.6
TOTAL AREA	1,980.07	100.0

Note: Total area excludes 334.55 acres taken up by rights-of-way.
Sources: Gillian Smythe & Associates; Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Existing Commercial Uses

Commercial uses occupied a total of 83.81 acres in Palmer in 1996, accounting for six percent of the community's developed area. Retail and office uses are concentrated in several different locations in town in response to changing economic conditions.

Palmer has traditional established business districts which have evolved over the years similar to many American small towns. There are two hotels, one motel, two flower shops, a thriving fabric shop (which helps put on a town quilt show in the spring in conjunction with the City's "Colony Days"), numerous beauty salons, insurance brokerages, a car wash, a printing shop, a secretarial service, a hardware store, two travel services, an antique shop, several interesting second-hand stores, gift shops, a T-shirt shop, two parts stores, three banks, one credit union, one art gallery, three picture framing shops, a feed store, several video stores, a tool and U-Haul rental service, four gas stations, three or four car repair services, a Harley-Davidson motorcycle shop, a car body repair shop, two dry-cleaning services, an Alaskan Laundromat (includes showers for those who live in the "bush" and availability of potable water), an industrial independent telecommunications company, engineering firms, an oil and gas company, one bakery, one cake shop, and more.

Palmer is very fortunate to have a large selection of eating establishments including ethnic cuisine such as Mexican, Greek, Chinese, and Italian. Valley Hotel has a 24-hour traditional small town coffee shop providing an atmosphere where you might find people meeting for coffee and talking about the weather or other current events. There is a unique restaurant with the updated feel of a coffee house featuring small community theater groups and local jazz musicians. There is also a small intimate dining room located in a renovated Colony dormitory reminiscent of old inns and serves international cuisine. There are three national fast-food chains, McDonald's, Subway, and Taco Bell, located in Palmer in addition to several drive-through espresso shops. The night life in Palmer is served by two country-western bars and a nicely redone lounge with a pub atmosphere at the Valley Hotel.

The Carr's at Pioneer Square (a large supermarket chain) serves a large area including the Glenn Highway to Glennallen, the Butte, the Knik River Valley area, and the Palmer Fishhook area to Hatcher Pass. The Palmer Industrial Park is fully owned and occupied by two major cooperative utilities, Matanuska Telephone Association and Matanuska Electric Association (who also planted a small experimental tree farm for the enhancement of surrounding area). Other businesses occupying the Industrial Park include an ATCO trailer storage and assembly business, an equipment storage area for a large construction firm, a State Department of Corrections meat packing plant, a farm equipment and feed store, a towing yard, a Department of Transportation maintenance station, the headquarters for a local construction firm, a state of the art contaminated material recycling plant, and the City of Palmer Public Works Department.

Palmer also has many professional offices (doctor, lawyer, consulting, accounting, engineering) associated with Valley Hospital, Mat-Su Pretrial, and the State of Alaska Court System. Palmer Airport property houses many commercial entities including an airplane storage facility, Woods Air

Services, New Horizons Telecommunications, Grasshopper Aviation (flight-seeing), B.J.'s (aircraft engine repair), Nugget Aviation and Maintenance (fueling/maintenance), Glacier Parts, Everfly Maintenance, and Hinchbrook Aerofuel and Maintenance.

Palmer's unique and exquisitely beautiful setting at the junction of two glacial rivers and the beginning of an unusual mountain valley has fortunately allowed commercial growth to escape the strip mall development which can decimate a town's character. Businesses are encouraged to incorporate landscaping in their development and as a result the City is developing beautiful park-like aesthetics. Alaskans are very proud of their growing capabilities and this overflows into the commercial areas as well. Many opportunities for growth still exist which could include car dealerships, light manufacturing as a spinoff to the rocket base in Kodiak, tourism, and recreational support businesses relating to rafting, hiking, cross country skiing, snow-machining, golf course support, and airport support. Palmer is fortuitous to have one of the few designated Historical Districts in the nation because of the 1935 Colony. This area offers unlimited possibilities for tourism related endeavors.

Palmer's primary retail area today is centered around the intersection of the Palmer-Wasilla Highway and the Glenn Highway. The community's major retail complex, Pioneer Square, is located on the northwest corner of this intersection, McDonald's is on the southwest corner and a Chevron station is on the northeast corner. Additional commercial development fronting on the Palmer-Wasilla Highway is planned immediately to the west of McDonald's. All of the existing businesses are accessed from the Palmer-Wasilla Highway/Evergreen Avenue.

Palmer is no longer an isolated community where people shop for all of their needs. Instead, it is a relatively concentrated population center within a much larger settled area.

Commercial development extends eastward along Evergreen Avenue between the Glenn Highway and the traditional central business district. Although some retail uses are present in this area, the combination of small lots, relatively heavy traffic and a lack of on-street parking, particularly on the south side of the street, make it more attractive for offices than retail activities.

The Palmer Business Park, located off the Glenn Highway a short distance south of the South Colony Way entrance into Palmer, is a former shopping center. It now houses a number of State agency offices. A significant amount of space in this complex remains vacant.

Elsewhere, several commercial uses are located within the Palmer Industrial Park. Most notably, both the Matanuska Telephone Association and the Matanuska Electric Association have recently made major investments in office facilities in this area. In addition, two medical office buildings are located adjacent to Valley Hospital. Other commercial office and bank buildings are located in the area between the Glenn Highway and the Alaska Railroad right-of-way, mostly a short distance north and south of Evergreen Avenue, although several buildings are located along Arctic Avenue.

Existing Industrial Uses

Industrial uses occupied slightly more than 340 acres of land in Palmer in 1996 and accounted for almost one-quarter of the community's developed area. As elsewhere in the Valley, Palmer has almost no manufacturing activity. Most industrial uses in Palmer involve warehousing and storage activities. However, the City has generally been successful in segregating such activities from other urban uses.

The greatest amount of industrial land in Palmer is taken up by the City-owned airport located along the eastern margin of the community. For the most part, existing industrial uses at the airport are either airport facilities and amenities or aviation-related activities such as hangars.

The Palmer Industrial Park, established during the 1970s, is the primary location for general warehousing and storage-type activities. Aside from utility company office and equipment storage operations (Matanuska Telephone and Matanuska Electric), major industrial uses here include a State highway maintenance station, the City of Palmer Public Works Department, a meat and sausage manufacturing plant operated by the State Department of Corrections with prison labor, petroleum products recycling, propane tanks and storage, enclosed and open storage of pipe and building materials, and an ATCO trailer storage and assembly business.

Within the main part of town, the "Mat-Maid" block located north of the Library between South Valley Way and South Denali Street is largely occupied by industrial uses. This area was the traditional industrial heart of the Palmer Colony and is accessed by a railroad spur. Today, however, many of these uses, including the old Mat-Maid creamery and associated structures, are vacant. Active industrial uses here include a fuel storage operation, a bottling plant and a mini-storage business. There is renewed interest in this area as an Historical Renovation site. The plan will be to turn this area's industrial use into an office/retail complex. This project is in the design stages and is expected to be in the rehabilitation stage of the structures sometime in 1999.

Other industrial uses in Palmer are scattered. They include the Mat-Su Borough School District's physical plant maintenance and fabrication facility at East Auklet and West Gulkana Street, the Mat-Su Borough maintenance yard on East Arctic and a fuel storage operation on the corner of East Arctic and South Alaska.

Existing Institutional Uses

Palmer is the premier institutional center for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. In addition to functions provided by the City of Palmer, it is the Borough seat and the headquarters for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District. It is also the major location in the Valley for both State and federal government offices and special government facilities. Included in the latter group are the Palmer Pioneers' Home, the Mat-Su Pre-Trial Center, the Alaska Court System, the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, and the Alaska Job Corps Center. Other major institutional uses

in Palmer include Valley Hospital, the Alaska State Fair, four public schools, a private school, and a significant number of churches, nursery schools and lodges.

All told, institutional uses took up about 415 acres of land in Palmer in July 1996, close to 30 percent of all developed land in the City, and more than any other single use. However, over half of the total institutional acreage is occupied by the Alaska State Fair's 222 acre site. The State Fair occupies a very large acreage and is available for use year-round. A second major institutional use, the Alaska Job Corps Center, occupies a 20-acre site located off Industrial Way.

Palmer's main institutional area dates from the time that the community was established. This area, located east of the Railroad right-of-way between East Cottonwood and East Cope, includes the Mat-Su Borough administration building, the Palmer library, Valley Hospital, the Alaska Court System, the Mat-Su Pre-Trial Facility, the Palmer Police Department/Alaska State Troopers, the Palmer Visitor Center, a private school, the Pioneers' Home, the University of Alaska's agricultural experiment station administrative offices, the Palmer Senior Center, Palmer Junior Middle School, and many religious denominations are well represented in Palmer.

Some uses within Palmer's main institutional area are further clustered by type. Judicial/law enforcement uses are clustered along East Dogwood. In addition, several institutions serving the elderly (the Pioneers' Home, the Palmer Senior Center and senior citizen housing) are located in the vicinity of East Fireweed and South Chugach.

Elsewhere in Palmer, a smaller concentration of institutional uses is associated with the City of Palmer offices, the Dan Contini Fire Station and Mat-Su Borough School District offices. The Salvation Army church and food bank is located on Evergreen between City Hall and the School District offices.

A new regional Post Office serves as the main distribution center for mail entering and leaving the Valley, located next to a new church on South Cobb Street. The Post Office is a major traffic generator, although it is generally well located off the main commercial street, but still within Palmer's business district. The Palmer High School, located off West Arctic at the edge of Palmer, plus Sherrod and Swanson Schools, co-located off North Gulkana Street, and the Palmer Junior Middle School, located at the junction of South Chugach and East Cope, also consume major amounts of land.

Existing Residential Uses

At the time of the July 1996 land use survey, residential development in Palmer occupied almost 270 acres of land, including housing units under construction. Most of this acreage was taken up by single family homes. Multi-family housing with three or more units accounted for slightly more than 16 acres, while a single mobile home park occupied 3.4 acres.

Excluding rights-of-way, about 630 acres of land within Palmer's corporate limits are presently zoned for residential use, with 538 acres being zoned R-1 (single family) and the remaining 92 acres zoned as R-2 (medium density). For the most part, areas zoned R-1 are located in the northern and western portions of town. However, R-1 development west of the Glenn Highway differs from that in most other areas of town because it is newer and because most homes are located in distinct subdivisions which are relatively isolated from each other.

Land zoned as R-2 generally surrounds the downtown business district and commercial areas along Arctic Avenue. In addition, a small area zoned R-2 is located immediately east of the Palmer industrial park. Although the R-2 zone permits higher residential densities, most developed R-2 land is occupied by single family homes.

The 1996 land use survey identified a total of 1,327 habitable housing units within the City of Palmer. By type, 986 units were in single family homes (including 27 mobile homes located in one mobile home park), 28 were in duplexes, 274 were in multi-family structures, 24 were in located in structures which also included commercial uses and 15 units were under construction. (SEE TABLE). Palmer's multi-family housing inventory includes several large complexes built with federal subsidies to house low to moderate income families and low income elderly persons.

In addition to conventional housing units, about 432 persons, or about one in 10 Palmer residents, lived in group quarters in three institutions in 1996. Those institutions are the Palmer Pioneers' Home, the Mat-Su Pre-Trial Facility and the Alaska Job Corps Center.

**DWELLING UNIT DISTRIBUTION
CITY OF PALMER, 1996**

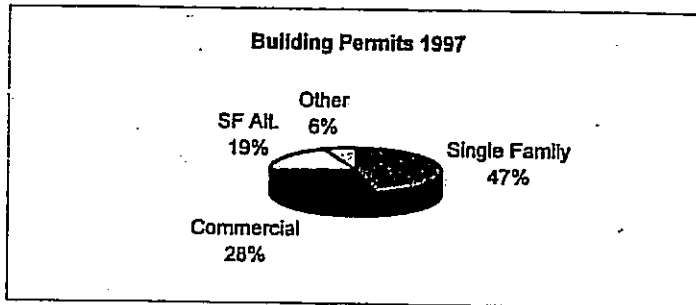
LOCATION	ONE & TWO FAMILY	MULTI- FAMILY	UNDER CONSTRUCTION	GROUP QUARTERS	TOTAL
West of Glenn Highway	328	35	12	0	375
Glenn Highway to Railroad, North of Arctic	240	22	3	0	265
East of Railroad, North of Arctic	205	41	0	0	246
Glenn Highway to Railroad, South of Arctic	108	117	0	0	225
East of Railroad, South of Arctic	107	47	0	(432)	154
TOTAL	988	262	15	(432)	1265

Note: Group quarters consist of the Palmer Pioneers' Home - 82; Mat-Su Pre-Trial Facility - 90; Alaska Job Corps - 260. Source: Gillian Smythe & Associates field survey, July 1996

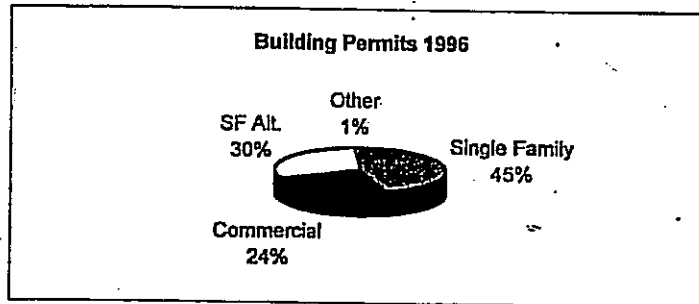
Palmer's established residential land uses include an adequate number of rental units. Palmer has seen a period of renewed housing construction activity since 1990. City records indicate that a total of 197 units were built between the beginning of 1990 and the end of October 1996. The Willow Pointe senior housing and the Alaska Job Corps Center have contributed to the increase of the population of Palmer since 1990. Most of this new construction has taken place west of the Glenn Highway within existing subdivisions where infrastructure was put in place in the 1980's. Those subdivisions include Cedar Hills, Golden Glenn Estates, Valley Trails and Brittany Estates. A number of single family units have also been built in two smaller subdivisions at the north end of the main part of town in the Gold Key Estates Addition and Diamond Willow Estates.

City of Palmer Building Permit Pie Charts 1997-1995

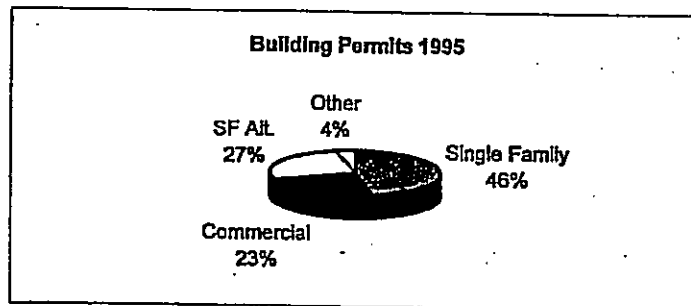
Single Family	52
Commercial	32
SF Alt.	22
Other	7
Total	113



Single Family	40
Commercial	21
SF Alt.	27
Other	1
Total	89

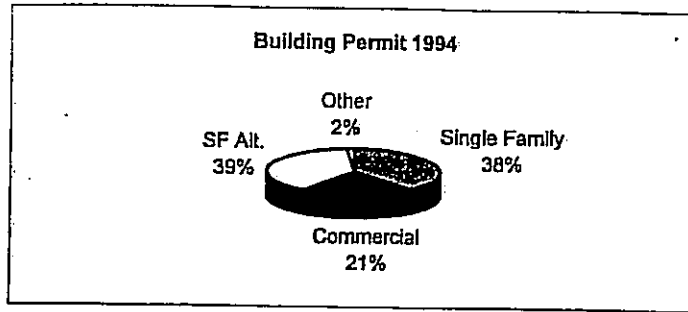


Single Family	47
Commercial	23
SF Alt.	27
Other	4
Total	101

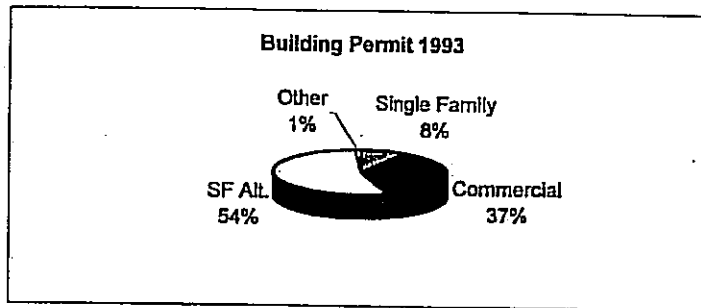


City of Palmer Building Permit Pie Charts 1994 - 1993

Single Family	51
Commercial	28
SF Alt.	51
Other	2
Total:	132



Single Family	8
Commercial	35
SF Alt.	51
Other	1
Total	95



FUTURE LAND USE NEEDS

Opportunities for Commercial Space

Palmer represents a large market area that is at present under-served considering explosive population growth. Within its corporate limits, Palmer lacks certain basic retail business that one would expect in a market area of 20,000. Commercial opportunities exist in Palmer because (1) it is strategically located, (2) it is served by all major roads in South Central, Alaska, and (3) it serves a large population base.

In the past, Palmer's market area has been defined conservatively as extending westward as far as the "Four Corners" area at the intersection of the Palmer-Wasilla Highway and Trunk Road. Palmer has significant opportunities for increased tourism. First, it is located within an area of the Borough that has several major tourist attractions, including Knik Glacier, the Musk Ox Farm, the reindeer farm and Independence Mine/Hatcher Pass. Second, tangible reminders of Palmer's origins are unique in Alaska and the nation. Most of the community's historic central core still stands. Furthermore, it has been incorporated into an historic district, unlike other New Deal settlements elsewhere in the Lower 48 which have largely disappeared. And third, the traditional center of town is relatively compact and is conducive to pedestrian traffic.

Increased tourism should lead to a strengthening and upgrading of Palmer's traditional downtown area. The broadening of local visitor attractions, such as the possible use of one of Palmer's historic buildings as a museum, plus organized Colony tours, would add to the area's prosperity.

Another potential area for commercial growth in Palmer, particularly in terms of sales tax revenues, is the Alaska State Fair. The scheduling of parallel civic events in town such as Colony Days, Palmer Pride, Colony Christmas, and events taking place immediately before and/or after the Fair would strengthen both the Fair's and Palmer's appeal to visitors. The Alaska State Fair in 1997 built a new facility large enough to host convention and other activities throughout the year. In addition, the State Fair's Master Plan provides for year-around utilization of its grounds and facilities for various functions.

There is an increased demand for highway-related commercial space. However, opportunities for this type of development within Palmer's present corporate boundaries are limited. Direct access onto the Glenn Highway is restricted for the most part, although three new driveways have recently been permitted in the area just north of the South Colony Way entrance into Palmer.

The Palmer-Wasilla Highway has higher volumes of traffic at Palmer than does the Glenn Highway and has proven to be more attractive for commercial development. However, only a small area along this route is now within the City of Palmer. Commercial development may very well expand in this direction.

The planned and likely future expansion of Palmer's function as the institutional center of the Valley will reflect an increase in retail activity. In addition, growth in Palmer's institutions will be accompanied by increased demands for professional office space. The intent of this plan is to provide adequate land for these uses. For example, the recent addition of a second Superior Court Judge in Palmer has not only created a need to expand the Court building, but it will likely result in an increased demand for related uses, such as legal offices, court reporters and copying services. It is very important that sufficient space be available so that the orderly expansion of Palmer's institutions and ancillary uses can take place.

The need exists for the Valley to add a long-term care unit to the Palmer hospital. This would solidify Palmer's position as the geriatric care center for the Valley. In 1998, Valley Hospital formed a strategic alliance agreement with Providence Hospital in Anchorage to provide a full range of health care resource to the Valley.

Future Needs for Industrial Space

Palmer should position itself for realistic demands for future industrial space that would require additional land area. Some examples include but are not limited to environmental technology firms, aerospace engineering and technology firms, light manufacturing supporting the aerospace industry, spinoff opportunities from Kodiak Rocket for engineering and machine shops, and warehousing. PEDAs is considered the lead agency for the marketing of Palmer.

The Palmer Airport Master Plan is currently being developed and maybe later adopted by reference as an element of the comprehensive plan.

The few industrialized activities in Palmer which have been encroached upon by residential uses should be encouraged to relocate to planned industrial-zoned locations within the city.

Future Needs for Institutional Space

Accommodation of the future space needs of its major institutional uses has always been of critical importance to Palmer's prosperity and growth. This will continue to be the case over the next twenty years.

Some of the town's institutions, such as the Alaska State Fair, Valley Hospital and the Pioneers' Home appear to already have enough space for their probable future needs. Nevertheless, the City of Palmer should continue to monitor activities at those institutions so that it can anticipate and accommodate any unanticipated future requirements for additional space or needs for expanded City services.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District's administrative offices already lack sufficient space to accommodate its day to day operations. As a result, a number of administrative functions have been moved to Wasilla. The School District has indicated that it needs a 6-acre site and 35,000

square feet of office space to house all of its administrative functions. A study done for the School District recommended a site in the Core Area, closer to Wasilla. However, there are advantages to retaining School District administrative functions in Palmer, the Borough seat. The City and the Mat-Su Borough should continue to work with the School District to investigate ways that School District functions could again be consolidated in Palmer.

More space will be required in the near future for Palmer's criminal justice uses. The City of Palmer, the Department of Corrections, and the Alaska Court System are already investigating options for expansion of their facilities. Additional expansion requirements beyond those currently being contemplated are also likely within the next twenty years.

For example, there are now four judicial officers (two Superior Court judges, one District Court judge and one magistrate) based in Palmer. The court system at Palmer also accommodates the grand jury process. The current investigations for additional space have been prompted by the recent addition of a second Superior Court judge. As the Valley's population continues to grow in the future, it is likely that more judicial officers will be located in Palmer and further expansion of court system facilities will be required.

Similarly, the Alaska Department of Corrections plans to increase the capacity of the Mat-Su Pre-Trial facility by about 64 beds within the next five years. This will not require the acquisition of additional land, nor will longer term plans to improve administrative linkages with the Palmer police station and to upgrade physical connections with the Courthouse. There is also a possibility in the longer term that a youth detention complex or further expansion of the Mat-Su Pre-Trial facility may take place. Such actions would require yet additional space.

The Alaska Job Corps site is largely developed. There are no immediate plans for the expansion of this facility, but it is possible that additional land will be needed during the next twenty years.

Finally, the administrative space needs of the City of Palmer and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough are likely to continue to grow over the next twenty years. There is not a pressing need for either agency to move into new quarters at the present time but this may not be true in the future. The possibility of co-locating administrative functions is also a subject worthy of further exploration.

Future Needs for Housing

Of all of Palmer's future land use needs, space to accommodate future residential growth is the most critical. By the year 2015, it is projected that a cumulative total of 587 new units will be required to house Palmer's projected population growth. Most of these new units are expected to be in the form of single family homes.

Palmer's ability to accommodate forecasted population growth within its present boundaries will be severely tested if present vacant tracts on the west side of the Glenn Highway are not subdivided and developed during the next twenty years and additional lands are not annexed to the City. Palmer

is literally running out of space. It already has the smallest area of any mid-sized (between about 2,000 and 5,000 people) Alaska city. Also, with 1,162 persons per square mile in 1996, Palmer is twice as densely settled as any other Alaska city of comparable size. In addition, it has experienced rapid population growth since 1990. Further population growth will only exacerbate what is rapidly becoming an untenable situation.

**FORECASTED NEW HOUSING DEMAND
CITY OF PALMER
1996 - 2015**

YEAR	BASE CASE	LOW CASE	HIGH CASE
1996 - 2000	106	52	161
2001 - 2005	145	68	230
2006 - 2010	160	71	267
2011 - 2015	176	75	309
Cumulative	587	267	967

Source: Kevin Waring Associates.

In the area east of the Glenn Highway, excluding enclaves now outside Palmer's corporate limits, there are a few vacant lots zoned multi-family in the vicinity of East Beaver Avenue and there are some vacant single family lots in the north end of town. Otherwise, undeveloped residential lots in this section of town are relatively few and scattered.

West of the Glenn Highway, there are still a significant number of undeveloped subdivision lots in Brittany Estates, south of the Palmer-Wasilla Highway. In addition, two adjacent large tracts of Brittany Estates are zoned single family residential but have not yet been subdivided. The only other large tracts of undeveloped residential land within Palmer's city limits are the area behind Carrs and undeveloped portions of Cedar Hills, off Marsh Road.

One very noticeable characteristic of residential development in Palmer is that it does not "match" the City's daytime population. A high proportion of Palmer's housing stock is relatively old, relatively small and relatively inexpensive. By contrast, Palmer is an important employment center, with large numbers of well-paid professional jobs. Judging from housing conditions in Palmer and traffic flows into and out of town via the Palmer-Wasilla Highway at the beginning and end of the working day, relatively few of these people presently choose to live within the City. A greater choice of housing types is needed for Palmer to be seen as an attractive place to live by more people in the upper income brackets.

THE COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

The comprehensive land use plan makes recommendations concerning the form, scale and location of future land use which will benefit the greatest number of people. In Palmer's case, four generalized land use alternatives were developed for consideration by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Each alternative embodied a different development philosophy and attempted to translate the impacts of that philosophy on land use.

The four land use alternatives developed were:

- **The Trends Alternative.** This alternative assumed that private market forces, with minimal governmental planning guidance, could produce the most desirable land use pattern.
- **The Economic Development Alternative.** The philosophy underlying this alternative is to maximize Palmer's economic position as an employment center for retail trade, industry and government services at the expense of residential development.
- **The Residential Alternative.** This alternative stressed means of enhancing Palmer's attractiveness and growth as a residential community for a variety of semi-urban living styles.
- **The Balanced Community Alternative.** The idea behind this alternative is to gear economic, housing and community development to attract new residents and customers, to revitalize the downtown area, and to reinforce Palmer's traditional community structure and character.

These alternatives, together with maps showing how future land use arrangements might look in each case, were presented to the Palmer Planning and Zoning Commission. The Commission selected the Balanced Community Alternative, but with a strong economic development component. This plan encompasses those ideas.

The effectiveness of a land use plan is dependent upon the extent to which it is used. The City of Palmer should use this plan as a guide whenever questions affecting its development arise. However, planning should also be a continuing process. The recommendations contained in this plan are based on information available at one point in time. In the future, unforeseen developments may occur and the needs of the community may change. This plan should be revised periodically in the light of new conditions and new City objectives.

The Plan for Commercial Development

Excluding lands occupied by rights-of-way, a total of 138.06 acres of land was zoned for commercial use in Palmer in 1996. Land occupied by commercial uses amounted to 83.81 acres, or about 61 percent of the total. This is a generally healthy ratio. An appropriate location is especially important for retailers and it is essential that prospective businesses be able to select a commercial site which meets their particular needs. Furthermore, although land may be zoned as

commercial, it may actually be occupied by another use, typically housing, and not be immediately available.

There is no easy answer to the amount of land that should be set aside for commercial use in Palmer. The community is located within the much larger "Core Area" of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and is within easy reach of Anchorage. Thus, any business with more than a strictly local clientele must be able to compete with those in the expanded Anchorage metropolitan area.

This plan attempts to balance the needs for different types of commercial space. It recognizes the need to strengthen Palmer's traditional retail business district along South Alaska/South Colony Way. It also acknowledges the attractiveness of highway-related retail frontage in an area of the State which has an especially strong dependence on automobile traffic.

The retention of a strong central business district is advantageous to both shoppers and retailers, regardless of whether it primarily serves residents or visitors. A strong central commercial area benefits shoppers as it encourages competition between businesses and promotes the establishment of specialty stores. In addition, because stores "share" business by being located in a major shopping area, individual retailers can realize a greater volume of trade than if they were in a more isolated location. The City can help strengthen its traditional business district by actively working to increase tourist and visitor traffic into Palmer and by encouraging the expansion of visitor activities.

Certain types of retail businesses are not normally located within central business districts. Typically, such businesses have large land requirements which make a "downtown" location uneconomic or their clientele is strongly highway-related. Such uses include shopping centers, discount stores, auto dealerships, service stations, drive-in restaurants, and equipment rental businesses. Because of Palmer's constricted corporate limits, the City's ability to encourage highway-related commercial development is presently limited. As it passes through the heart of Palmer, the Glenn Highway is primarily a limited access route. In addition, there is little remaining undeveloped highway frontage along the Palmer-Wasilla Highway. It is generally accepted that traffic helps to enhance business and in order to enhance business annexation should be considered in and along high traffic areas. Efforts should continue to remove the access restrictions on the Glenn Highway. As additional lands along the Palmer-Wasilla Highway to the west are annexed and as additional lands to the north and south of the Glenn Highway are annexed, it is important that any needed highway improvements be scheduled so that commercial expansion can be accomplished in an efficient and safe manner.

The Plan for Industrial Development

Except for expansion of uses associated with the airport, future demands for industrial space in Palmer are expected to be modest. The City's industrial park has been established for many years and now has few vacant lots. However, it and the nearby undeveloped Palmer Commercial Center should be able to accommodate anticipated future demands for industrial land.

The main challenge associated with Palmer's industrial lands is the need to define their boundaries and to screen them from existing and future residential uses in adjoining areas. Large tracts of land immediately to the east of the industrial park, some located inside and some outside Palmer's present city limits, are suitable for institutional or residential development. The attractiveness and value of such areas would be greatly diminished if nearby industrial uses are permitted to intrude. Outer Springer defines the southern boundary of Palmer's industrial lands, except for the Palmer Commercial Center, but additional screening is needed along this route. Similarly, screening around the Palmer Commercial Center should be required to protect existing and future residential development in adjoining areas.

Palmer should also make an effort to phase out industrial areas in other parts of town over the next twenty years. In particular, School District facilities off East Atuklet Avenue and Borough facilities off East Arctic should be relocated to established industrial areas. In addition, the relocation of industrial uses from the Mat-Maid block to permit higher and better use of this valuable property should be encouraged.

The Plan for Institutional Development

Palmer and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough should preserve and enhance its role as the Valley's premier institutional center. It can accomplish this by continuing to monitor the needs of its existing institutions. In addition, it can set aside lands required to accommodate new institutional development, as it did to meet the needs of the Alaska Job Corps Center and as it is currently doing for the Alaska Division of Forestry.

The sheer magnitude of existing public investment in Palmer, together with the availability of superior local public facilities and utility services, tend to discourage larger agencies from relocating elsewhere. Nevertheless, the City needs to ensure that some institutional functions do not drift away.

Expansion options for Palmer's traditional institutional district are limited. The old Mat-Maid block, currently occupied by industrial uses and by vacant historic buildings, has potential for institutional and related professional offices. There are also some undeveloped lands south of the Pioneers' Home and most University lands are either vacant or under-used. The City should work to ensure that these vacant lands are more efficiently utilized to meet the growing needs of Palmer institutions.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District has no plans to construct additional school facilities within Palmer's present city limits, although it does plan to construct a new elementary school south of town. The administrative space requirements of the School District needs to be addressed in the near future if Palmer is to continue to be the District's main base of operations. City lands south of the Palmer Junior Middle School have been identified as one possible site for a new School District administration building. Other nearby potential sites should also be investigated. If such

a building is constructed within the City of Palmer, this would represent a net gain in employment to the City.

An enlarged area is recommended to be set aside to meet the future needs of Palmer's criminal/judicial functions. Besides increased space needs which have already been identified, continued population growth in the Palmer area and the Valley will require further expansion of judicial, correctional and police functions in the longer term. As long as Palmer can continue to meet those needs, it is unlikely that such facilities will be duplicated elsewhere in the Valley during the next twenty years.

Since 1936, Palmer has been identified as the medical center for the Valley being served by Valley Hospital. Concerted efforts should be made to ensure that it continues to serve the Valley's medical needs. Valley Hospital has always been in Palmer, should continue to be located in Palmer, and should continue to provide the types of services that it has historically made available in Palmer. The relative roles of Valley Hospital's Palmer and Wasilla campuses continue to shift. The Palmer hospital now primarily serves inpatient needs, while the Wasilla campus is an outpatient facility. The very high cost of sophisticated new equipment has resulted in some diagnostic services not being available in Palmer. In addition, both campuses must compete with Anchorage hospitals. For these reasons, it is very important that Valley Hospital's site in Palmer continues to meet that facility's needs. The City also needs to ensure that sufficient space is available for a long-term care complex, should it be added.

The Palmer Pioneer Home requires more land. This includes the Senior Center and the Willow Pointe senior housing complex, which have potential for additional senior citizen uses including more senior housing. The Alaska Job Corps Center, currently ranked among the top five in the nation, may require additional land for future expansion. Its existing 20-acre site is almost fully developed.

The Plan for Residential Development

By the year 2015, it is estimated that to accommodate forecasted population growth, a total of about 1,914 housing units will be required in Palmer. This represents a net increase of 587 units over the 1,327 counted in the 1996 land use survey. In addition to new construction, it is likely that some of Palmer's older and less well maintained housing stock will reach the point of needing rehabilitation and the City should pursue and work with banks and agencies to enhance and improve this older and still valuable community asset.

The pattern of residential development in areas east of the Glenn Highway is already established. Apart from a modest amount of in-filling, mostly in the northern part of town, few new homes are anticipated here, primarily because there is almost no remaining undeveloped residential land within Palmer's present corporate limits. Future residential development in this area will therefore continue to be relatively compact, with high overall population densities.

Condominiums could well be developed in Palmer during the next twenty years. Condominiums would also help further the City's goal of increasing local rates of home ownership. Nevertheless, Palmer already has more than enough land zoned multi-family to accommodate foreseeable future needs for higher density residential development.

If the largest enclave within Palmer's city limits is annexed in the future, no immediate changes in the use of that land are anticipated, particularly portions which are now actively farmed. However, the area on the north side of Arctic, next to the Cranberry Meadows subdivision, is obviously suitable for single family residential development.

Residential areas west of the Glenn Highway are unlike those to the east in that the different subdivisions are not linked. This can contribute to traffic congestion on major routes because of a lack of internal circulation. Although a grid street pattern is probably neither suitable nor desirable in these areas, it is recommended that the City require subdividers to consider the relationship of their developments to adjacent subdivisions. Linkages need not be direct or, in some cases, may consist of only a walkway.

Almost all residential lots within Palmer's present city limits are connected to the city water and sewer system. However, this may not be the case in the future as the city expands its boundaries westward. For example, topographic constraints caused by kettles and moraines in the area immediately south of the Palmer-Wasilla Highway are likely to make the extension of sewer services there unfeasible. Large lot residential development with high-end single family units may be more practical in such areas. It would also serve to broaden the variety of Palmer's housing stock and make the city a more desirable place to live for a broader segment of the Valley's population. The City could also consider giving tax incentives to developers who include green ways and trails as part of their developments.

Within the mature established part of town, the city should continue to encourage the upgrading of its existing housing stock. One way that the City can accomplish this is through a city business and privately-sponsored rehabilitation program which would give incentives to homeowners to repair or make improvements to their homes. In addition, programs to require the removal of junked vehicles and inappropriate storage materials from residential subdivisions would help instill greater pride on the part of neighborhood residents.

The improvement of local streets including paving, curbs, gutters, and sidewalks would greatly improve the appearance of these areas. Since pavement is less expensive to maintain than gravel roads, the City of Palmer should contemplate picking up a percentage of the costs. In an effort to reduce the cost of construction, the City should also investigate the use of private contractors.

ANNEXATION

It is a major recommendation of this plan that Palmer adopt an annexation strategy to help guide its future development. The City of Palmer Planning & Zoning Commission will annually review the annexation policies and activities by no later than its April regular meeting and prepare a report

with recommendations to the City Council by July 1 of each year. Such a recommendation is consistent with findings of the Local Boundary Commission. A Local Boundary Commission staff report for Palmer's most recent annexation petition noted that "the local boundary commission has for several years been urging the City of Palmer to address the problem of jurisdictional enclaves in a comprehensive, rather than on a piecemeal basis."

Palmer's ability to plan for future growth is presently constrained by its very small physical area. Of Alaska's sixteen mid-sized (2,000 to 6,000 residents) cities, Palmer has the smallest area, greatest population density and strongest recent growth.

- Area. Palmer's land area takes in only 3.7 square miles, less than one-tenth the average area of Alaska's mid-sized cities.
- Density. Palmer's 1996 population density (1,162 persons per square mile) was double that of the next most densely populated city (Soldotna) and more than twelve times that of the average mid-sized city.
- Growth Rate. Between 1990 and 1996, Palmer has added more new residents (1,426 persons) than any other mid-sized city and has grown at a faster rate than all but Craig.

Given these impressive statistics, the City of Palmer's boundaries are extremely modest compared with other mid-sized cities. Palmer's boundaries are even more constricted when the relatively large amount of non-residential land within the city taken up by the airport, golf course, the Alaska State Fair and other institutional uses is considered. Unlike most of the other mid-sized cities, Palmer is not an isolated community. A significant share of the Palmer area's recent growth has taken place in the urban fringe outside the City's municipal boundaries.

Since its incorporation in 1951, the City of Palmer has completed 43 separate annexations, many of them during the early 1980's when the area experienced a period of rapid growth. Most annexations have been very small scale, typically in response to the desire of individuals and businesses to hook up to Palmer's water and sewer system rather than being the result of any coordinated plan for municipal expansion. As a result, the City's boundaries are very irregular and encompass several large inholdings. In the future, as Palmer continues to grow, the inadequacy of its existing boundaries is likely to increasingly cause difficulties in the logical delivery of City services.

**LAND AREA, POPULATION DENSITY & POPULATION GROWTH
MID-SIZED ALASKA CITIES, 1996**

City	1996 Population	Land Area	Persons Per Square Mile	1990-1996 Population Growth	1990-1996 Percent Growth(%)
Bethel	5,106	44.3	115	432	9.0
Wasilla	4,714	11.2	421	686	17.0
Palmer	4,282	3.7	1,162	1,426	50.0
Barrow	4,276	18.8	227	817	24.0
Valdez	4,254	218.8	19	186	5.0
Unalaska	4,087	104.3	39	998	32.0
Homer	4,064	10.9	372	404	11.0
Soldotna	3,968	6.9	572	486	14.0
Nome	3,511	13.8	255	11	0.0
Petersberg	3,356	43.8	77	149	5.0
Seward	2,914	15.4	189	215	8.0
Kotzebue	2,821	26.9	105	70	3.0
Wrangell	2,595	58.9	44	116	5.0
Cordova	2,537	4.6	549	427	20.0
Dillingham	2,226	32.7	68	209	10.0
Craig	2,109	5.9	357	849	67.0
AVERAGE	3,551	38.8	91		12.0

Note: Land area is in square miles, as reported by the 1990 decennial census.
Sources: Alaska Department of Labor
U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Not only can the City of Palmer make a very strong case that it needs additional area for community expansion, but it also has a great deal to offer urbanizing areas outside its corporate limits. No other place in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough comes close to offering the breadth and quality of municipal services that are enjoyed by Palmer residents. Four services in particular stand out. They are:

- An excellent piped water and sewer system, including sewage treatment, that serves essentially all areas within the city.
- High quality local law enforcement services provided by the City police department. The presence of Alaska State Troopers in the community is an additional asset.

- Exceptional fire protection services, which in combination with the citywide piped water system and the enforcement of local building codes, are reflected in a very good fire rating of 4, the best in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The good fire rating, in turn, results in significantly lower fire insurance premiums for Palmer residents than for people living outside the city.
- Good street maintenance and snow removal services. Palmer's compact form enables these services to be provided more efficiently than is possible in less densely developed areas.

Palmer also has many other assets. Included among these is the fact that Palmer residents have some certainty that structures within the City limits were built to code. Their neighborhoods are also protected from the intrusion of incompatible uses because Palmer has enforced local zoning for many years. Traditionally, these conditions have not always been considered to be assets in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. However, increasing densities and land use conflicts in the "Core" area are changing attitudes toward land use regulation.

Annexation Policies

After review and consideration of various alternatives, this plan recommends that the City adopt the certificated sewer service area as the conceptual boundary for the expansion of the City. This concept should be filed with the Local Boundary Commission and individual annexation petitions should be used to implement the concept (SEE APPENDIX A)

The implementation of this concept will serve the needs of the City and the land owners in areas of possible annexation. By providing advance notice to land owners and residences in areas of possible annexation, they would be in a stronger position to prepare for incorporation into the City. Land developers would have the opportunity to work with the City and plan land uses as well as timing. The City would be in a stronger position to plan for the extension of services to newly acquired areas, negotiate the possible timing of annexation with the land owners/developers, and be in a position to work with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to develop extraterritorial planning and zoning powers within the area proposed for annexation.

The City of Palmer shall pursue a policy of annexation to extend its boundaries for one or more of the following reasons:

- In response to a request by an individual property owner or group of property owners, where the property is physically contiguous with existing City boundaries, and the annexation will improve or not unduly impair the provision of City services.
- To eliminate enclaves within the City's boundaries.
- To promote investment in existing City facilities and their logical expansion. The primary examples of such facilities are the Palmer airport, including clear zones; the City's water and sewer system, including water wells and sewage treatment facilities; and the City's new commercial/industrial park.

- To promote the logical extension of City water and sewer utility systems. Any annexation for this reason must be preceded by water and sewer planning which provides at least conceptual layouts of expanded utility systems, together with preliminary cost estimates, and must go through a Local Improvement District process or be a grant.

This annexation policy promotes investment in existing city facilities and their logical, cost effective expansion and encourages the City to explore transitional measures as step annexation and/or contract zoning to facilitate the ongoing annexation efforts.

Municipal Policies in Future Annexation Areas

Existing land use in the area surrounding Palmer's existing city limits is primarily taken up by agriculture and single family homes, although the area also includes scattered commercial, industrial and institutional uses. The City of Palmer strongly supports continued agricultural development. Nevertheless, in the future, some lands now used for agriculture will be occupied by residential subdivisions. As the limited amount of remaining residential land within Palmer is developed, the financial incentive for owners to convert nearby agricultural land, particularly that used less intensively, will increase commensurately. Additional commercial development is also expected to take place, particularly at key spots along the Glenn and Palmer-Wasilla Highways.

During the next twenty years, significant amounts of land now outside Palmer's city limits will probably be annexed to accommodate community growth and the logical expansion of municipal utilities to serve that growth. Until such areas are actually annexed, the City of Palmer has no direct jurisdiction over how development in those areas takes place. Nevertheless, it is important that the City establish policies on how it plans to handle future annexation areas, particularly when use of the legislative annexation process is proposed. Not only will this assist Palmer in planning for its future overall growth, but it will enable land owners and businesses outside Palmer to better understand how they might be affected by annexation actions.

Although it has no direct jurisdiction over areas outside its corporate limits, the City of Palmer is using this plan to state its interest in eventually annexing lands within its existing sewer service area. As an interested party, the City requests that it be kept informed of major developments, including plans for transportation improvements and the siting of proposed community facilities within its sewer service area. Such developments have the potential for influencing the timing and direction of future annexation actions by the City.

The following annexation policies are recommended to be implemented by the City of Palmer.

1. **Annexation Planning.** Prior to proceeding with any annexation petition the City of Palmer will undertake a detailed planning study of the area proposed for annexation. This will include meeting with affected property owners to explain the reason(s) for the proposed annexation action and to obtain feedback, to delineate recommended future land uses, and to indicate how and when municipal services (including public safety, utilities, streets and

trails) will be extended to the area, together with any associated costs. Particularly when significant changes in land use are contemplated, factors such as topography, drainage, sight lines, traffic impacts and utility requirements must be considered. The recommendations of the planning study will be incorporated into any annexation proposal submitted to the Alaska Local Boundary Commission.

2. Zoning of Annexed Areas. At the present time, areas annexed to the City of Palmer are automatically classed as R-1, with any needed zoning adjustments being made within 60 days following the annexation action. It is recommended that the City of Palmer continue to implement this policy. However, regardless of future recommended land uses in areas proposed for annexation, it is recommended that existing uses in such areas be treated as "uses by right" (i.e., as a permitted use) and be given grandfather rights within the 60-day period following annexation. In other words, existing land use and zoning in annexed areas will initially be synonymous.

Two exceptions to the "use by right" policy are recommended. The first is to extend screening and buffering requirements contained in Palmer's zoning regulations to annexed areas and require compliance for all new development. The second exception is where an existing use poses a threat to health and safety. In such cases, the use will be required to be brought to an acceptable standard or otherwise abated.

3. New Development in Annexed Areas. Following annexation, all new development will comply with all applicable City of Palmer codes.