

PALMER PUBLIC FACILITIES ELEMENT

Community utilities and facilities are provided to protect the public's health and safety and to provide for the general welfare of the citizens. Community facilities and services usually cover essential functions such as water and sewer systems, flood control and drainage management, public safety, and education. Other public services, like libraries, museums, and parks and recreation, can be provided to enhance the well-being of the population.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To continue to provide and improve the quality of community services.

Objective: Retain government offices and associated facilities in Palmer.

Objective: Retain private utility corporate offices in Palmer.

Objective: Promote water and sewer improvements as well as alternatives to the use of city services.

GOAL: To increase annual recreational events in Palmer.

Objective: Promote Palmer as a site for tournaments and exhibitions.

GOAL: Continue providing and expanding opportunities in public areas for adults and children.

Objective: Promote the development of safe public areas for adults and children.

Objective: Promote multi-use facility in Palmer.

Objective: Promote a youth-oriented facility in Palmer.

GOAL: Maintain Palmer's unique historical flavor.

Objective: Preserve historic sites and structures within Palmer.

GOAL: Coordinate efforts with the Chamber of Commerce, PEDDA, City Council, Planning & Zoning, City personnel, and civic organizations to improve overall community communications and development.

Objective: Develop focused planning for community development.

Objective: Develop promotional strategy (electronic and printed media).

Objective: Encourage volunteering with the City acting as a volunteer clearinghouse for the community to include organizational contacts, schedule of events, etc.

GOALS: Provide increased opportunities for youth and children to develop their inherent potential to become good parents, informed citizens, and competent workers.

Provide increased opportunities for youth to build their physical, emotional, and intellectual strengths through a variety of development programs in a safe environment.

Objective: Establish a Youth Council in the City of Palmer.

Objective: The Palmer Youth Council will have the authority to solicit funds to design, build, and maintain a Youth Activity Center, or remodel a currently existing facility. The center will host a variety of activities.

Some of the activities that should take place at the facility are community activities that make people feel welcome and involve the whole family. The center should act as a community information center to publicize current regional activities and coordinate with other organizations. It should act as a formal education support center with areas designated for these types of activities and those closely related. The center should have support services such as a snack bar/coffee shop or others, to be determined by popular demand.

Objective: The Youth Council will assist in development of the local sports facilities and events, including, but not limited to, ice arenas, tennis courts, ballparks, playgrounds, and skateboard parks.

Objective: The Youth Council shall consist of residents of the city of Palmer or the Palmer service district in a configuration, number, and qualifications to be determined by the City Council, but will include mostly youth with several adult mentors.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

People

The "community" of Palmer is far more than a description of city government and its various departments, and public facilities and services. Above all, the community consists of its people. The Greater Palmer Chamber of Commerce aptly describes the people of Palmer as:

"a fine mix of selfless volunteers of all ages, numerous organizations, actors, bird watchers, runners, dog mushers, horse people, skiers, politicians, artists, entrepreneurs, softball players, farmers, sportsmen, and musicians, all of whom make Palmer the very special community it is."

Quality of life in Palmer is directly related to the depth of commitment and concern for the community shown by its residents. The community has a long history of volunteering since the

colony days of the 1930s that has directly contributed to the excellent reputation, relative prosperity and general well-being the community now enjoys.

Examples of civic groups active in Palmer include:

Palmer Pride	Mat-Su Council on Alcoholism
Greater Palmer Chamber of Commerce	Mat-Su Humane Society
American Legion Post 15	Mat-Su Miners Baseball
Matanuska Lodge #7 F.&A.M.	Mat-Su Youth Activities Council
Matanuska Valley Chapter #14, Eastern Star	Moose Lodge
Matanuska Valley Lions Club	Palmer Community Schools
Palmer Senior Citizens Center, Inc.	Palmer Historical Society
Valley Women's Resource Center	PSI - The Association for Office Professionals
Blue Birds and Camp Fire Boys & Girls	PTA
Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts	Rotary
Girl Scouts and Brownies	Salvation Army
DeMolay	Soroptimists International
Emblem Club	Valley Homemakers Clubs
4-H Clubs	Volksmarching Clubs
Human Resources Adult Education	
Kiwanis	

Civic volunteer efforts are many and widespread:

- The Palmer Fire Department consists almost entirely of volunteers, saving the City thousands of dollars in operating costs each year.
- The historic Palmer water tower was rescued from its blighted condition by a private/public effort lead by the Palmer Historical Society.
- Flowers and hanging baskets beautify the downtown each summer as a result of combined efforts of Palmer Pride, the City of Palmer and other service groups.
- The roof protecting the historic locomotive near the depot was constructed as an Eagle Scout project by local boy scouts.
- Colony Days and other annual seasonal celebrations are sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and many local organizations.
- The Palmer Tourist Center was constructed through donations and volunteer labor in the early 1960s.

In addition to civic groups, public/private partnerships are becoming more widespread throughout the United States as community governments and civic groups recognize the synergistic effects that result when combining forces and working together.

PEDA - Palmer Economic Development Authority

Palmer's most notable experiment toward a public-private partnership was its establishment of the Palmer Economic Development Authority (PEDA) in 1990. Launched by the City Council, PEDA's goals were to:

- Publicize and promote the city of Palmer;
- Work to enhance existing businesses and organizations;
- Attract new business and development;
- Foster community support for development;
- Develop a data base of statistics about Palmer.

Initially funded by city appropriation, PEDA has a long-term goal to achieve operational self-sufficiency. PEDA has accomplished a great deal in its eight years of existence.

As the City considers strategies for the future, it is imperative that the talents and energy of its citizens, the wide variety of civic groups, and organizations that work with the City and PEDA be understood and used for the common good. This is especially important as government revenues continue to decline in the future. The monetary value of volunteer groups and their efforts is extraordinary. The City could not afford to pay full-time firefighters to defend public and private property, for example, nor could it hire a crew of gardeners to prepare and hang flower baskets each year.

SISTER CITY

In 1980, former Mayor R. J. Maze established a sister city arrangement with Saroma on the island of Hokikado, Japan. The driving force behind the association was Palmer resident Edward Holmes. Saroma is a city of about 8,000 (1990) located next to Lake Saroma. The city is a farming and seafood center for the island. As part of the sister city program the two cities have exchanged students, teachers and community leaders over the last 17 years. The exchange of culture, industry, education, and economy has been a benefit to the residents of each community.

GOVERNMENT

The City of Palmer is a home rule municipality. The city has an elected mayor, six council members, and a city manager who is the administrator. The city also has a 7-person planning commission appointed by the mayor and approved by the council. Palmer was the first municipal government established in the Valley. The city covers about three and a half square miles. The city property tax mil rate is 3.00 and the city has a 3 percent sales tax with a \$15.00 cap. Palmer has a strong sense of community, many active volunteer organizations and a history of progressive government.

City Departments

Administration

The Administration Department includes the city manager's office and city clerk's office. Primary duties include City Council support, Finance, Planning and Building. The Community Center and Tourist Center are significant responsibilities. The department has four positions.

Major city services (water, sewer, and solid waste) are provided for by city enterprise funds that are funded by bonds paid for by user fees. The city has raised rates for service connected to the enterprise funds to accurately reflect costs. City sales tax, transfers from other governments and real property taxes make up most of the city revenue. The 1998 city budget is based upon a 3.00 mill rate that is the same as 1997. The city levies a sales tax of 3 percent with a \$15.00 cap on items over \$500. The city has had to become innovative for new sources of funding such as payment in lieu of taxes for fire and police services.

Water and Sewer

The City of Palmer is exceptional in Alaska for having a well planned and operational water and sewer system since the early 1960s. About 20 acres inside the city is not served by municipal water and sewer mainlines. City policy is to require new additions to the systems to annex to the city. The city and the area to be provided services enter a subdivision agreement that sets up a time table for the needed improvements and hookups to the network. Other public improvements such as roads and drainage are also provided for in this agreement.

The city water supply is provided by a system of wells and storage tanks west of the city off Scott Road. Well number one has a capacity of 550 to 600 gallons per minute (gpm), number two is 300 to 400 gpm, and number three is 150 to 200 gpm. The nearness of the first two wells can decrease flow rates during heavy use. Two nearby 125,000 gallon underground storage tanks provide temporary holding for the 1,000,000-gallon main storage tank that is further to the north. A booster pump and 60,000-gallon storage tank serves the Cedar Hills Subdivision at the far northwest corner of the city limits. A fourth well with a flow of 1,200 gpm has been developed at the south end of the airport. The city meters over 248 commercial accounts, has about 1,267 residential customers, and maintains 30 miles of water main.

The department continues to develop improved as-built maps for the system, including Autocad and GIS systems to improve the utilities mapping efficiency, and continues to replace old water meters, and has begun a testing, repairing, and flushing system. The water distribution system is mostly ductile iron pipe. Some areas in the core area still have older steel pipe which is too small and is deteriorating. The city replaced some problem pipe in the T.A. Smith Subdivision in 1992.

The city sewer treatment system is a series of three lagoons near the Matanuska River south of the city limits. The plant effluent out-falls into the river. A 24-inch sewer line runs from the city to the facility. The first two ponds are mechanically aerated with the third serving as a finishing pond.

Sludge is removed from the ponds every few years and buried nearby in a trench (DEC approved). The system has an estimated capacity of 600,000 gallons per day (gpd). The current water discharge permit allows up to 500,000 gpd and the plant operates in the range of 500,000 gpd. The plant is presently undergoing significant expansion.

Land uses in this area of the system are agricultural and large lot residential with little conflicts noted. The system is used at about 50 percent of capacity and the resulting low flow has caused some problems with sludge blocking the inlet syphon. The collection system has about 26 miles of sanitary sewer lines. Past problems with the aeration system have been resolved and the lagoons are functioning well. The plant location is a cause for some concern as the Matanuska River has a recent history of eroding its banks. The lagoon is near an area of erosion and may eventually need to be relocated or protected. In the past, the plant has reached or exceeded capacity. The city is working with neighbors, state government, federal government to improve and upgrade. This will improve additional capacity and resolve compliance issues.

Recommendations:

- When water lines are put on section lines, they will be a minimum of 16" in diameter. When water lines are put on half-section lines, they will be a minimum of 12" in diameter. All other lines will be a minimum of 8" in diameter and in accordance with the C.S.S. book.
- When sanitary sewer lines are put on section lines, they will be a minimum of 24" in diameter. When lines are put on half-section lines, they will be a minimum of 18" in diameter. All others will be a minimum of 8" in diameter. There can be latitude of up to a quarter-section in this requirement depending on the terrain of the area. When there is need for a greater distance, a variance must be obtained. All sanitary sewer lines must be installed in accordance with the C.S.S. book.

Storm Drainage

The city takes care of 24 miles of storm sewer lines and 265 catch basins. The state maintains the storm drainage system along the Glenn Highway. Storm drainage is provided for in new subdivision design. Older areas have had storm drains installed as the streets are upgraded and under a program to alleviate flooding problems conducted from 1979 to 1983. The older areas which received sewers are south of Eagle Street. Storm drainage from north Arctic Avenue and east of the Glenn Highway is routed to the Matanuska River through a storm sewer. The installation of storm sewers in the older areas reduced man-hours spent thawing culverts and allowed a street upgrade program that replaced unsuitable subgrade material. The most significant storm drainage problems occur during breakup when frozen ground and ice accumulation block runoff and restrict infiltration. The spring breakup problem endemic to most of Alaska.

Solid Waste

The City of Palmer collects solid waste within a service area with mandatory service consisting of curbside pickup. The service reaches about 248 commercial and 1,019 residential customers. Waste is collected once a week and hauled to the 160-acre Matanuska-Susitna Borough landfill. Palmer pays a flat fee to use the Borough landfill site. A few commercial users in Palmer not in the service area are served by a private firm. The city solid waste fleet consists of one 1-person truck, two 2-person trucks, and approximately 120 large dumpsters. The solid waste department budget for 1998 is \$312,820, including depreciation.

Maintenance

The city is responsible for the maintenance of the city-owned road system that covers about 32 miles. Besides basic road maintenance and snow removal, the city:

- sweeps and washes 12.5 miles of paved streets;
- maintains street lights and signs;
- maintains seasonal decorations and landscaping;
- maintains the airport;
- maintains the following city buildings: City Hall, Tourist Center, FSS Building, Shop, Courthouse, Depot, Library, Public Safety.

The basic maintenance of streets is complicated by the division of responsibility between the city, borough, and state. In some areas the ownership of the right-of-way doesn't promote efficient service.

Many streets in Palmer are paved but in some residential areas, even in the core section of the older downtown, the streets are still unpaved. The traffic load in these areas is typically low but dust can sometimes be a problem. The city will pave streets if property owners along the street are willing to form an assessment district. The city requires that owners pay for paving their half of a residential street about 14 feet wide along their frontage, usually less than 100 feet. On wider streets the city has assumed the cost of paving the additional width beyond 14 feet.

The budget for the Public Works Department that includes streets, building, and vehicle maintenance, and the airport is \$1,217,918. This is about 28 percent of the total city budget and includes matching funds and grants.

Police

Palmer has a full service municipal police department headquartered in the public safety complex at Valley Way and East Dogwood. Palmer has a low crime rate. Crimes against property, traffic violations, security investigations, helping other agencies and domestic disturbances are the leading causes of action for the department. Most traffic citations are for speeding. The level and types of activity are in sharp contrast to the Anchorage urban area.

The State of Alaska Division of Corrections' 32-bed pretrial facility is next to police headquarters.

The local State Trooper detachment is based here and has a lease agreement with Palmer. With over 40,000 people in the area to serve and only Palmer with local police, the trooper detachment is spread thin. The state administration has proposed legislation to require cities and areas with significant population to provide local police services. Occasionally Palmer police will respond to emergency calls next to the city limits when troopers are unavailable.

The public safety holding and court facilities have made Palmer a very important center for law enforcement and associated uses.

The Palmer police force employs 27 people. There are 10 enforcement positions that include one chief, one sergeant, and eight officers. Support staff includes 13 dispatchers, one clerical and one janitor. There are two grant positions. The dispatchers coordinate public safety responses for the entire Matanuska-Susitna Borough, over 22,000 square miles. The dispatch service covers 10 fire districts and 9 ambulance services. 911 calls that require a state trooper are transferred to an Anchorage facility.

About one-third of the city budget is for police services. The 1998 city budget includes \$1,758,894 for the Police Department. Of this amount, one full-time position is funded through a federal grant of \$52,000. The department also received \$230,331 from the Borough for services and \$35,000 from the State Troopers for dispatch and 911 service.

Fire Department

The Palmer Fire Department serves the city of Palmer and the surrounding area. Through a contract with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the city fire department serves the Greater Palmer Consolidated Fire Service Area. This fire district covers about 60 square miles. Within this area are approximately 6,600 people who rely on the fire department for 24 hours a day emergency service. The system relies upon a full time chief and volunteer participants. The City has achieved a fire insurance rating of four and the outlying area is rated at eight (a lower number is the better).

Residential Insurance Rates Outside versus Inside Palmer City Limits:

Coverage:	Deductible	\$500
	Liability	\$300,000
	Medical Payments	\$5,000
Dwelling Value	Class 4	Class 8
\$100,000	\$258	\$375
\$150,000	\$355	\$545
\$200,000	\$471	\$735

The Palmer Fire Department manages six different stations and the city fire training center as well as 20 vehicles and apparatus. The department responded to 175 calls in 1996 and 163 calls in 1997.

Emergency Medical Rescue Service (EMS)

This service is a division of the Fire Department and is funded through a contract with the Borough. EMS supplies pre-hospital emergency medical care at the EMT I, II, and III levels to residents of the city and to the surrounding area. The service consists of 29 volunteers that are EMT qualified. The EMS area covers approximately 225 square miles and serves about 10,000 people in and around Palmer. Most of the clients needing care are transported to Valley Hospital in Palmer or in some cases to Anchorage hospitals. The service had 563 calls in 1996 and 671 calls in 1997.

Public Health

Palmer has assumed limited public health powers in an oversight role under its home rule charter. Valley Hospital and Valley Women's Resource Center are located in Palmer. Palmer supports continuing operation of the Public Health Office located here.

Valley Hospital is a 23-bed, acute care facility owned by a membership association with an elected board of directors. The hospital administrator is also the chief executive officer of the board. Valley Women's Resource Center provides borough-wide assistance and housing for victims of domestic violence. Twenty-six physicians are on the hospital staff. The hospital has about 185 full time equivalent employees. Office condominiums have developed in the neighborhood that mainly serve medical professionals.

Alaska Statutes allow for up to a \$250,000 grant per year for hospital operation and \$2,000 per bed for Valley Women's Resource Center. The city passes these funds on to the Hospital and Resource Center. The state has decreased the amount of support to about 48 of the statutory maximum. State support at a full level would amount to only a small percentage of the 26 million dollar annual budget for the hospital.

The Valley Hospital Board has submitted a Certificate of Need for improvements and renovations including converting several wards and birthing wards. It is anticipated that this Certificate of Need will be finalized in October of 1998. Upon implementation, Valley Hospital will retain its acute care in Palmer.

Library

The Palmer library is a city facility that serves residents inside and outside the city through an agreement with the Borough. The library is linked to the borough system and is able to connect with the state system through the Internet. The library serves about 14,000 people in and around Palmer. The building is about 11,500 square feet and has about 40,000 volumes. The state annual circulation per library staff averages about 12,800; the Palmer circulation is a little over 20,000 per staff member. Library staff consists of a head librarian, a senior library assistant, and a youth

services coordinator. There are also two part-time library technicians. Thirty volunteers worked over 2,200 hours in 1997.

The library contains a multimedia collection, a historical archive and a computer area for general access to all patrons for their computing needs. Internet access is also available.

Funding for the library is supported by the state, borough, city, and volunteers. The 1998 budget is \$393,296 for the library system. The state guidelines call for about \$30,000 to be spent on the library collection per year.

Parks and Recreation

Palmer has a variety of recreational and cultural facilities. Sport facilities include the following:

- Municipal 18-Hole Golf Course
- Tennis courts
- Softball fields
- Baseball field (Mat-Su Miners semi-pro)
- Swimming Pool
- Football and Soccer fields
- Horse Show Grounds
- Playgrounds

All parks in the city are part of the borough-wide parks system. The City assists in the maintenance of the ball fields next to the borough complex and the Bill Hermann Tennis Courts. Volunteer labor from civic organizations is an important part of the program to keep the parks in good shape. The city would like to develop an agreement with the borough to contract for the maintenance of the neighborhood parks.

Park Facilities include:

• Sherrod Park	41.00 acres
• Lucas Kiwanis	3.53 acres
• Ken Soule Fields	3.00 acres
• Eagle Street	1.40 acres
• Highlands	.32 acres
• John Bugge Tot Lot	.26 acres
• Bill Hermann Tennis Court	.25 acres
• Merritt Long Park	.10 acres

The Matanuska River Campground is a Borough-owned campground located east of the city, north of the Old Glenn Highway. The facility is very popular in the summer with a large amount of use from local and out of state visitors. The facility has a day use area that is very popular with local residents.

Cultural Facilities include:

- Alaska State Fairgrounds
- Palmer Library
- Colony Museum
- Colony Village
- Palmer Visitor Center
- Church of a Thousand Logs

Softball

Palmer is home to an abundance of very active softball enthusiasts. Soft ball tournaments are held throughout the summer with a usual eight game schedule every evening. The Chamber of Commerce and the State Fair sponsor major tournaments during the Fair and Colony Days. The area little league is active for youth and the Mat-Su Miners provide semi-professional hard ball at Hermann Brothers Field.

Golf Course

The Palmer Golf Course is a tremendous community asset that is still in its developing stages. It has the longest season of any golf course in Alaska. The 18-hole course lies in a breathtaking, world-class setting of historic farmland and rugged mountain peaks. Plans for the course include the following improvements: maintenance facility, plant trees, develop a picnic area, improve the Clubhouse. The Golf Course employs a golf manager/superintendent and a number of part-time positions.

Airport

The Palmer Airport is discussed in detail as part of the Transportation Element.

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Pioneer Home

The Pioneer Home in Palmer has a 95-bed capacity. It is usually filled with a long waiting list. The facility is funded and administered by the State and is considered a very important community asset.

University

The University of Alaska Agricultural Experiment Station occupies about 20 acres of land on the south side of the city. The station is a world leader in arctic plant materials and northern climate farming. The University Cooperative Extension Service is located in Palmer and offers advise and training for both local farmers and home gardeners.

The Alaska Job Corps Center

The Alaska Job Corps Center was built in Palmer in 1993 on a 18.9-acre site south of the Palmer Airport. This \$16-million facility has received the highest quality rating standard from the U.S. Department of Labor and has consistently ranked among the top centers in the country since its inception. With a goal toward assisting young adults to become employable, the Center currently employs over 110 staff who work 24 hours a day, seven days a week teaching social, academic, and vocational skills to 250 students who come from various communities and villages throughout Alaska. Several buildings comprise the campus setting which include a men's, women's, and family living quarters, a day care center, a gym, a fully-equipped kitchen and dining room/multi-purpose room, in addition to classrooms and administrative offices. The curriculum includes training in marine/fishing technology, carpentry and painting, health occupations, business and clerical skills, facilities maintenance, early childhood education, and culinary skills. Soon after its opening, the Director established a very effective Community Relations Council for the purpose of interacting with and keeping the community informed of its events and accomplishments. The Job Corps has been and continues to be an active participant and supporter of community endeavors and events in Palmer and the City considers it a very important asset to the community.

Federal Government Offices

The NOAA-National Weather Service Alaska Tsunami Warning Center is a facility that is important to the entire state as well as to countries along the Pacific Rim. It is the primary warning center for Alaska, Canada, Washington, Oregon, and California. The center monitors earthquake activity and issues warnings for the possibility of resulting tsunami (tidal wave) action. The center is located just off the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, west of the Glenn Highway.

The FAA Flight Service Station is one of three remaining manned flight service stations in Alaska.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a significant presence in Palmer. The city has the following USDA offices: Department of Rural Development, Palmer ASC Office, Alaska Agricultural Statistics Service, State ASCS Office, and Soil Conservation Service.

State Offices

In addition to Palmer being the center of government for the Borough, it is also the location for many State offices, including:

- Department of Fish and Game
- Department of Transportation
- Division of Motor Vehicles
- Alaska State Troopers
- Fish and Wildlife Protection
- Department of Corrections
- Alaska Court System

- Public Defender's Office
- District Attorney's Office
- Department of Natural Resources
 - Division of Agriculture
 - District Recorder's Office
- Division of Health and Human Services

Matanuska-Susitna Borough

- Borough Headquarters
- School District Administration
 - Swanson Elementary (K-2)
 - Sherrod Elementary (3-5)
 - Palmer Jr. Middle School (6-8)
 - Palmer High School (9-12)

Palmer School Enrollment (1997-98):

Elementary	881
Middle	752
High	882

UTILITIES

Electricity

Electrical power for Palmer is provided through the Matanuska Electric Association Inc. (MEA). MEA has administration offices and its major supply and service center in Palmer. MEA has supplied power to the Valley and the Chugiak/Eagle River areas since 1941. It is a rural electric cooperative that operates under the federal Rural Electrification Act. MEA experienced rapid growth between 1970 and the mid-1980s. MEA is the second largest in terms of members of nearly 1,000 cooperatives in the nation. The cooperative serves an area of over 3,360 square miles with 2,838 miles of distribution line. MEA is principally a transmission utility although it does own about 10 percent of the Bradley Lake Hydro Project near Homer. The power supply base for MEA is part of the south central Alaska power system that receives power from gas turbines owned by Chugach Electric and the Eklutna and Bradley Lake Hydro Projects. The current residential rate for power in Palmer is .09784 per KW. MEA has operations and administration facilities in the Palmer Industrial Park. Approximately 100 of 131 employees are stationed in Palmer. MEA celebrated its 50th year of service in 1991.

Telephone

The Matanuska Telephone Association, Inc. (MTA) is a membership cooperative headquartered in Palmer. Approximately 70% of the utility's work force is based in Palmer. MTA is Alaska's

largest and the nation's fourth largest telephone cooperative. MTA serves approximately a 10,000 square mile area of South Central Alaska from Clear in the north to Eagle River in the south. Service expansion for MTA followed a similar pattern to MEA with rapid rises during the 1970s and 1980s with a decrease late in the decade and slow recovery and growth in 1990 and 1991. The association serves 7,295 residential and 3,100 commercial lines in Palmer. Since the mid-1980s MTA has completely modernized its telephone switching equipment and has installed more than 167 miles of fiber optic cable in Palmer and the Valley, providing state-of-the-art telecommunications equal to best in the nation. MTA has also installed fiber optic cables to provide an interactive television system between four valley high schools. MTA's construction in 1992 of a new 7.4 million dollar headquarters building in the Palmer Industrial Park helps ensure that MTA will continue to be Alaska's telecommunication leader into the 21st century.

Natural Gas

Enstar Natural Gas Company provides gas service to the City. The service was initiated in 1984 with completion of a major transmission line from the Beluga field to Anchorage. About 90 to 95 percent of the area within the city is served. Service has been extended to the airport and industrial park areas on the south side of the city, including much of the Springer road system. The charge for providing new hookups is \$7.70 per foot for the service line. A billing credit for later hookups is made to offset initial costs. The system is built to match expected future demands in the area.

Recommendations:

- Encourage and support the continuation of the water and sewer planning currently underway.
- Examine methods of obtaining funding for an additional well.
- Develop a schedule for replacement of deteriorated water and sewer lines.
- Examine methods for obtaining funding for replacement of deteriorated water and sewer lines.
- Consider the need for well head protection planning for city wells.
- Periodically review the policy relating to the extension of water and sewer utility service outside Palmer's corporate limits.
- Increase public awareness of zoning provisions allowing for larger lot sizes which may be able to utilize onsite septic or community septic and wells as an option to utilizing both city water and sewer service.
- Examine alternatives to utilizing the sewer lagoon.
- Examine methods of obtaining funding for the expansion of the sewage lagoon.
- Develop policies for alternatives to requirements of the use of city services to provide options for developers.
- Examine methods of providing master planning for the storm sewer system.