



EAST DOWNTOWN PALMER

Area-wide Planning Study

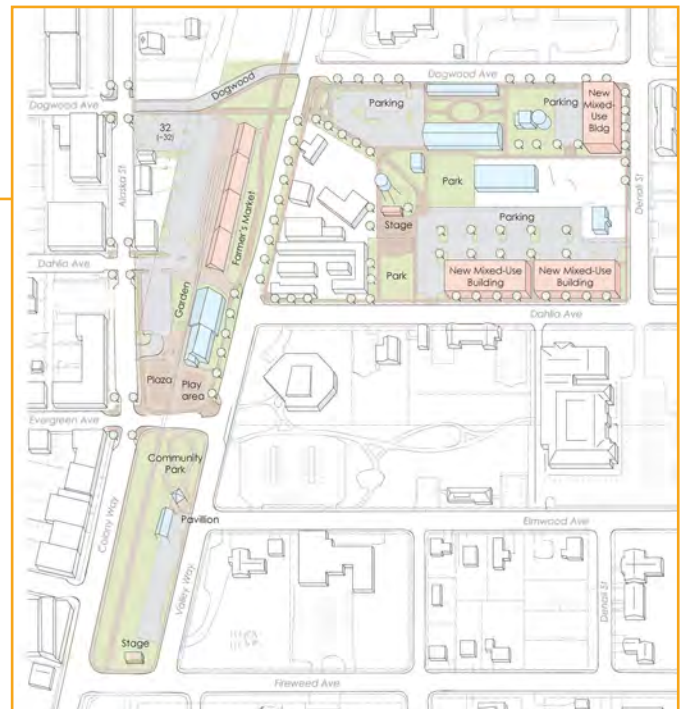
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PROLOGUE

This planning study was created to establish a vision and strategy plan to address brownfield conditions, underused sites, and abandoned properties in the eastern portions of Downtown Palmer by focusing on a prominent former industrial/commercial block as a catalyst site. In 2015, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB or the Borough) and its coalition partners, the cities of Wasilla and Palmer, received a \$550,000 United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment (CWA) Grant for use in inventorying, prioritizing, assessing, and planning the reuse of priority brownfield sites throughout the Borough.

A brownfield is defined by EPA as “a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.” Former industrial sites, rail lines, abandoned properties, and older structures are included in the EPA definition of brownfields.

Challenges for Abandoned Properties/Brownfield Sites: Brownfield sites can present a multitude of challenges for local communities associated with their blighted condition, documented (and undocumented) environmental liabilities, and underused status. The

environmental liabilities can include the presence or perception of hazardous chemicals or petroleum products in soil, groundwater, and soil vapor, as well as hazardous building materials (such as asbestos, lead-based paint, and polychlorinated biphenyls [PCBs]) commonly used in the construction or maintenance of older buildings. These conditions can pose a hazard to both human health and the environment.

The presence or perceptions of environmental and other liabilities, such as those listed above, can significantly complicate the redevelopment of these sites, as well as result in significant added costs (and delays) for abatement, demolition, and environmental investigation and cleanup. In extreme cases, brownfield cleanup costs can far exceed a site’s market value. Thus, many developers avoid brownfield sites and focus on development of other properties, including “greenfield” sites located on the edges of cities. Many brownfield sites remain underused and hinder revitalization efforts in the larger community as a consequence of their blighted condition and documented (or perceived) environmental conditions. The brownfield conditions in the eastern portions of downtown Palmer are presented in the Appendix of this document.



Area-wide Planning: An eligible activity under EPA CWA grants is the performance of area-wide planning (AWP) in target areas or neighborhoods impacted by the presence of multiple brownfield sites and abandoned properties. The resulting area-wide plans are useful in helping cities establish an action plan to return these properties to productive use and bring positive change to the community. Rather than a site-by-site approach, an AWP process considers several brownfields and abandoned sites simultaneously in the context of other properties in a defined study area. An effective AWP process identifies a reuse strategy for one or more catalyst brownfield sites as well as for the larger study area and considers other shared impediments to redevelopment (such as missing or inadequate public or private infrastructure components).

The AWP program allows cities to partner with local stakeholders and citizen groups to develop a vision and action plan for the target areas. The AWP program is an inclusive place-based planning strategy that considers surrounding conditions, community assets, public needs, and barriers to brownfield redevelopment.

AWP in Palmer: Through a separate inventory process, the coalition identified known or potential brownfield sites within the City which included abandoned properties in its downtown. Using the AWP approach, the City and its coalition partners chose to focus on the eastern portions of downtown to define a vision and redevelopment strategy for underutilized sites and former industrial/commercial properties. In doing so, the City designated the former Mat-Maid industrial complex as a catalyst site. The City explored redevelopment opportunities for the catalyst site and identified access/recreation enhancements to the adjacent railway corridor as a means to increase investment and improve connectivity in downtown Palmer. ***The overarching goal of the AWP was to focus on ways to repurpose underutilized and abandoned former industrial sites within the study area, and return these properties to productive uses to catalyze economic change and contribute to the overall prosperity of the community.***





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



(Source: Stantec)

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Palmer is experiencing success in its Downtown Core with active storefronts, local businesses, and community gathering spaces and the City of Palmer (City) sees an opportunity to expand this vibrancy to the areas east of the railway corridor to create a complete, interconnected city center. The railway corridor bisects the downtown and the City has completed recreational improvements to transform the downtown segments into a linear green space. East Downtown Palmer (the city blocks east of and including the railway corridor) has several underutilized properties that have the redevelopment potential for housing, commercial, recreation, and employment to serve residents and visitors alike.

The Mat-Maid block is a notable property in East Downtown Palmer. The block was the center of the industrial and commercial heart of the 1935 Matanuska Colony, the largest of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration New Deal planned communities. The Mat-Maid block is located along Dahlia Street between S. Valley Way and Denali Street, and contains both current and former industrial operations. Several legacy structures remain abandoned including a former powerhouse building, warehouse and silo. Today, portions of the block area are ripe for redevelopment into new community businesses, additional recreation, and housing.

Abandoned rail lines and industrial sites, as well as many other types of vacant, abandoned or underutilized properties are included in the EPA definition of brownfields. Through thoughtful reuse strategies, these

properties can be redeveloped with productive uses that can contribute to the community's vitality. Thus, the City of Palmer saw an opportunity to designate the Mat-Maid Block as a catalyst site and explore redevelopment opportunities that would both improve the site and influence other reinvestment projects in East Downtown Palmer.

AWP Project Overview

This AWP initiative is focused on advancing the implementation of specific goals in the City's Comprehensive Plan to repurpose the Mat-Maid Block and the railway corridor to support new uses. (SEE Figure ES-3 - Palmer Comprehensive Plan: Downtown Opportunities Map on page 8) These sites once supported industrial and commercial operations; thus, have brownfield characteristics and redevelopment challenges that require proactive planning strategies to return these properties to productive use that will benefit the downtown area and the larger community.

The City established a project team, sought community partners, and designated a formal AWP study area. Through the AWP process, the City explored design alternatives, future uses, and an implementation strategy to attract redevelopment in East Downtown Palmer, whereas, the planning efforts were prioritized on the Mat-Maid Block and the railway corridor. This AWP document describes the planning process, the community vision resulting from this process, and recommendations together with an action plan.

Top: Existing Historic Depot Building with the Palmer library in the background

Study Area

The City designated an AWP study area for East Downtown Palmer early in the process to ensure community planning on the Mat-Maid Block considered impacts and opportunities on the immediately surrounding properties. The study area included a ten-block region east of and including the former railway between Cottonwood Avenue and Fireweed Avenue; whereas, conceptual site planning was focused on the Mat-Maid Block with supporting access and recreational improvements within the railway corridor.

The City chose this study area location for three specific reasons: (a) East Downtown Palmer lags behind the other downtown areas in terms of vibrancy, business activity, and infill development; (b) the Comprehensive Plan Downtown Opportunities map identifies several long-term initiatives that have yet to be implemented; and (c) the Mat-Maid Block is underutilized and has multiple abandoned former industrial buildings/properties that are ripe for redevelopment.



LEGEND

--- AWP Study Area Boundary

□ Catalyst Site

🌳 Park / Open Space Area

FIGURE ES-1 - AREA CONTEXT MAP

(Source: Google Earth | Stantec)



FIGURE ES-2 - DOWNTOWN AREA CONTEXT MAP

(Source: Google Earth | Stantec)

Existing aerial of Downtown Palmer (delineated in orange) and the AWP Study Area (delineated in red dashed line)

Community Planning Objectives

The City approached the AWP process as a collaborative effort with government partners, community stakeholders, and the general public to develop a vision and action plan for the AWP study area with a particular focus on the Mat-Maid Block. Stantec Consulting Services Inc. (Stantec), a multidisciplinary consulting firm, provided planners and landscape architects to help the City with this AWP process. The City structured the AWP process around the following community planning objectives:

- **Engagement:** Engage government partners, stakeholders, and property owners to define a cohesive community vision for East Downtown Palmer that will guide the development of conceptual plans for a catalyst site and the surrounding neighborhood in the study area.
- **Catalyst Site:** Designate the Mat-Maid Block (a block with abandoned, former industrial uses) as the catalyst site and develop detailed conceptual redevelopment plans for its properties. Simultaneously, plan for improvements in the railway corridor to connect the catalyst site with the Downtown Core. Build upon the Palmer Comprehensive Plan’s vision for these properties.
- **Transportation Connections:** Identify multimodal connections to weave together downtown assets. Identify transportation connections that will make the downtown areas more accessible to all users.
- **Urban Design and Land Use Opportunities:** Evaluate and identify the community’s desire for long-term redevelopment in the study area in terms of future amenities, commercial services, housing, building scale, and spatial arrangement of the urban form.
- **Regulatory Support and Amendment:** Identify regulatory options to better support the desired land uses for the catalyst site and the larger study area. Identify specific amendments to the City’s regulations that align with the vision for the AWP study area.
- **Implementation Strategies:** Identify actions to implement individual projects on the catalyst site that will spur redevelopment throughout the study area. Develop an action plan to implement the individual ideas, policies, and projects outlined in this AWP process.



Left: Existing former silo and agricultural storage buildings and an existing antique shop on the east end of the Mat-Maid Block.
Right: Existing Historic Depot, north side parking lot, and multi-use trail

Key Components of the East Downtown Palmer AWP

As key components of the AWP process, the City focused on defining redevelopment strategies for the catalyst site and planning for supportive capital investments in the railway corridor and throughout the study area. This AWP document includes three specific components that shape and guide the redevelopment strategy in the study area:



Conceptual Plan: The The project team used community engagement feedback to develop three initial conceptual plan alternatives for the catalyst site. Through additional community guidance, the project team selected a single conceptual plan and made refinements to show the long-range projects, land uses, and spatial layout for the catalyst site and the AWP study area. This final conceptual plan depicts future uses, building locations, open space areas, and circulation.



Project List and Land Use Designations: The project team created a project list to call out individual initiatives, buildings, and capital improvements as depicted on the conceptual plan. The project list organized the individual elements from the conceptual plan so that the City can work towards implementation. The project list corresponds to specific sites and locations within the study area.



Action Plan: The project team created an action plan that lists specific initiatives and actions that the City can complete to move the study area towards the community's redevelopment goals. Each initiative and action correspond to an item on the project list and/or the planned land use designations.

AWP Planning Process (Scope of Work)

This AWP planning project followed a detailed scope of work that included stakeholder engagement, data collection and analysis, conceptual planning, and development of an implementation strategy. The AWP process focused on evaluating and refining plans for desired redevelopment projects on the catalyst site and within the railway corridor. The AWP scope of work included five tasks as summarized below.

- **Task I. Community Engagement:** The project team engaged residents, property owners, governmental partners, and other stakeholders to provide comment and recommendations on the AWP process and the catalyst site redevelopment/reuse components. Beginning in early 2019 and continuing through the fall, the project team hosted two community workshops, conducted stakeholder interviews, engaged the City Council and Planning Commission, and hosted an engagement table at Palmer's Colony Day Celebration.
- **Task II. Data Gathering:** The project team began the AWP process with an existing conditions/data gathering task to understand the area's assets, challenges, abandoned/underused sites, and brownfield conditions. The project team reviewed current plans, development standards, and public services in and around the study area. This data gathering task established baseline conditions to conduct the AWP process.
- **Task III. Demographic Conditions and Market Opportunities:** The project team reviewed demographic and market data through a data subscription through ESRI (an on-line Geographic Information System [GIS] dataset company). The project team identified current and projected demographic conditions, current housing supply, and retail opportunities for this area of the City.
- **Task IV. Conceptual Site Planning:** Using stakeholder feedback and existing conditions data, the project team created three initial conceptual plan alternatives for the catalyst site and railway corridor to show potential redevelopment scenarios for access, new buildings, parking, and open space. Through community feedback, the project team then created a locally preferred conceptual plan.
- **Task V. Planning Document:** The project team created this AWP planning document to summarize the process, the findings, community feedback, analysis, concepts, and final redevelopment strategy.



Top: Former powerhouse building on the Mat-Maid Block along Dahlia Avenue with the Palmer water tower in the distance



(Source: Stantec)

COMMUNITY VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Through public engagement, the project team formalized a community vision for the AWP study area and the designated catalyst site. The community's vision is to *redevelop East Downtown Palmer into a vibrant, mixed-use district with quality amenities, open space, and destinations that reflect the City's history and local culture.*

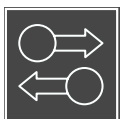
To support this vision, the community established a set of guiding principles that reflect local desires for the study area in terms of character, land uses, amenities, and urban design. The project team used these guiding principles to influence and shape the conceptual planning for the catalyst site and adjacent areas. The principles are as follows:



Economic Vitality: Support Downtown Palmer to keep the area viable and prosperous as a center within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.



Mixed-Use Redevelopment: Provide opportunities for mixed-use development including housing, office, retail, park and open space, and entertainment opportunities in Downtown Palmer and in the Mat-Maid Block.



Connectivity: Encourage transportation access and connections for all modes into and around Downtown Palmer and the Mat-Maid Block. Balance the needs of parking and automobile circulation with bicyclists and pedestrians.



Housing Diversity: Provide high-quality and diverse housing stock including a mix of medium and high-density units to meet the demands of all populations and households in Palmer.



Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces: Connect existing local and regional parks, open spaces, and trails to each other and Downtown Palmer. Support for these amenities will provide opportunities for residents and tourists to support the diverse shops and restaurants.



(Source: Adrien Olchon | Unsplash)

CONCEPTUAL PLAN

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

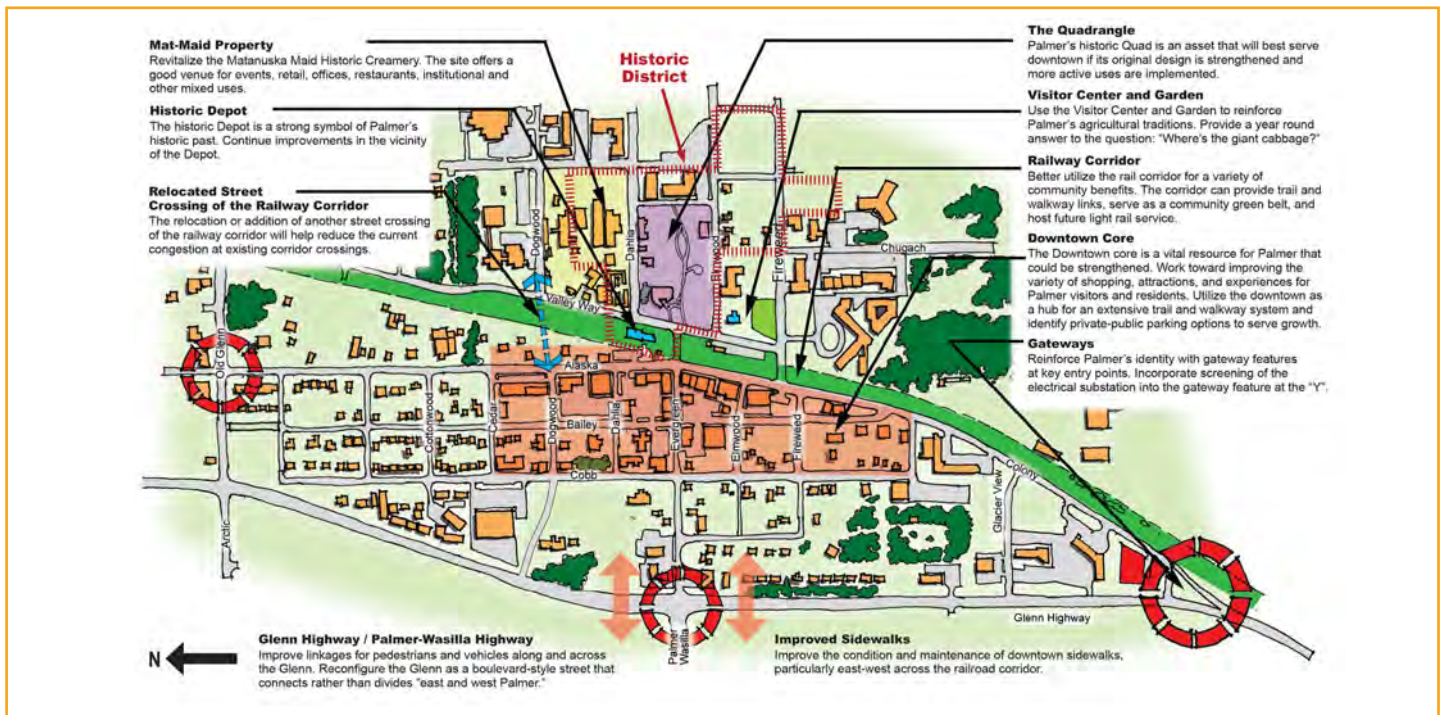
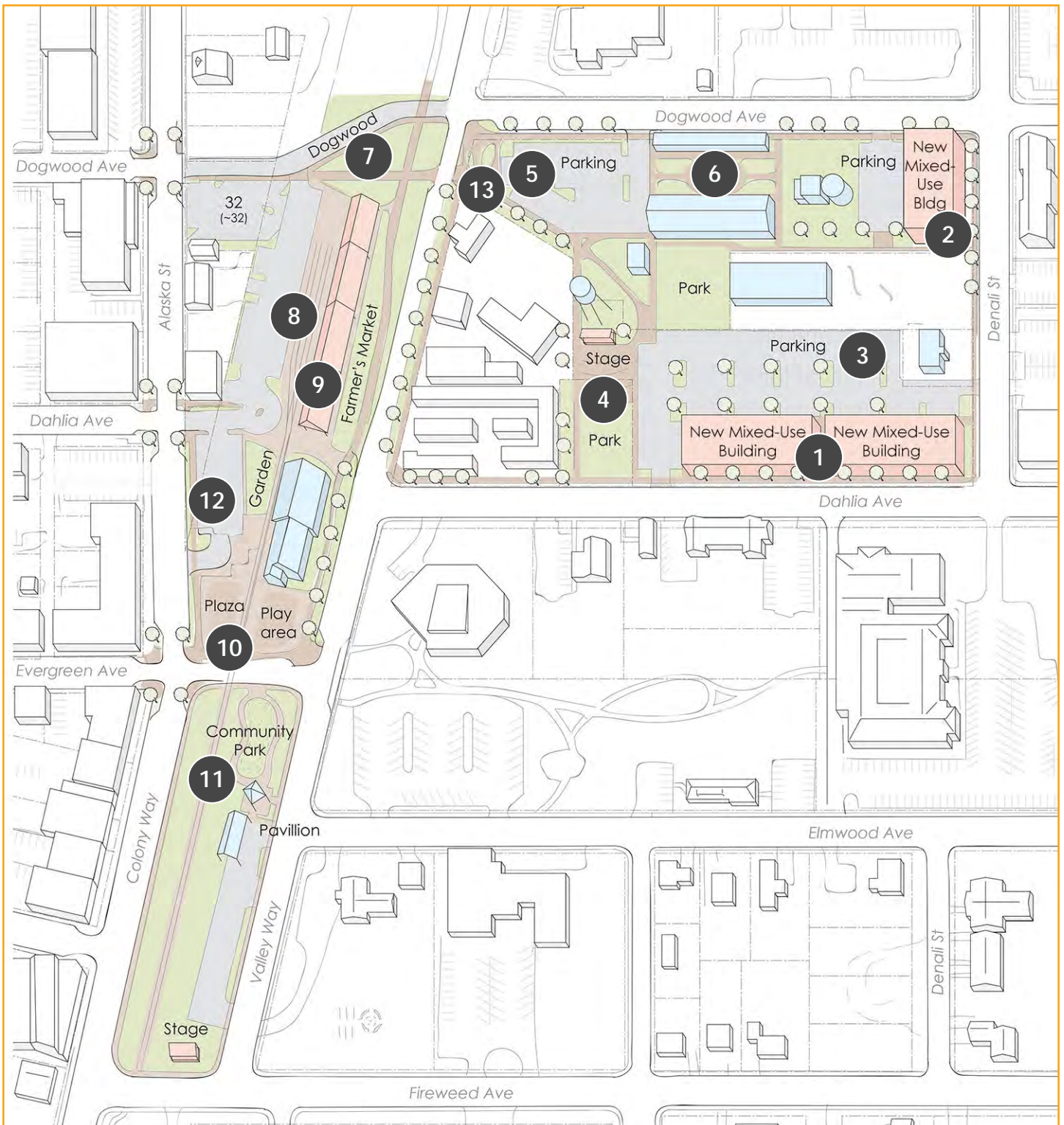


FIGURE ES-3 - PALMER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN OPPORTUNITIES MAP

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



LEGEND

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

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

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

Mat-Maid Block

The community envisions that the Mat-Maid Block would redevelop as a distinct mixed-use destination that reflects the City's past in terms of materials, colors, and facade design. This vision includes adaptive reuse of the block's heritage buildings (e.g., old warehouse structures and the water tower) and new infill buildings.

- **Open Space:** The Mat-Maid Block would redevelop around a community green central to the block with park segments that connect to the public rights-of-way. The iconic Palmer water tower rests central to the green and buildings would frame the space. The adjacent uses can use the green as a gathering space, event center, and focal point. Other smaller, intimate outdoors spaces would develop throughout the block.
- **Adaptive Reuse:** Private investors would transform the original warehouse structures into new commercial spaces (e.g., restaurants, breweries, art galleries, and other artisan trades). Adaptive reuse projects should preserve the original building style and architectural forms (e.g., facade materials/colors, roof forms, and doors/windows).
- **Infill Mixed-Use Buildings:** Other private investors would develop mixed-use infill buildings along the block's periphery. New buildings would be multi-level and oriented to adjacent streets to reflect downtown's historic urban form. The ground level of the buildings would support active uses such as restaurants, retail, and business services. The upper floors may support housing units, lodging, and/or offices.
- **Parking:** Investors would develop surface parking lots concurrent with infill building construction and adaptive reuse projects. These parking lots would be sited to the side or rear of the buildings that they serve and would be screened with landscaping and architectural elements. On-street parking would remain on the adjacent roadways that abut the Mat-Maid Block.



Top: Example of commercial buildings oriented around an outdoor community green space (Lynnfield, MA)

Middle: Example of makers/artisan business and restaurant (Tacoma, WA)

Lower: Example of mixed-use building (Issaquah, WA)

Railway Corridor and Historic Depot

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

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

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



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



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



(Source: Jeff Sheldon | Unsplash)

CONCEPTUAL PLAN PROJECT LIST

The conceptual plan includes a set of projects that would create an attractive community environment for businesses, residents, and visitors. These projects would lay the foundation for future development and capital improvements in the AWP focus area. The following table lists the key projects identified on the AWP Concept Plan.

Table ES-1 – Conceptual Plan Project List

| Number Reference | Project | Description |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Mixed-Use Development | Develop two new multi-story mixed-use structures with commercial tenant spaces on the lower level and residential units on the upper story. New structures would be oriented as closely as possible to the right-of-way to reinforce pedestrian streetscape experience and define the neighborhood corridor. Buildings are recommended to be constructed of materials and colors that reflect the unique character and heritage of the Palmer community. |
| 2 | Mixed-Use Development (future) | Explore the option to develop a third multi-story mixed-use structure at the corner of Dogwood Avenue and Denali Street, which would provide greater intensity of use for the existing parcel and may be developed with compatible uses to complement the Matanuska Brewing Company, which currently occupies industrial structures within this block. |
| 3 | Off-Street Parking (A) | Provide additional off-street parking lots within the interior portions of the site for greater accessibility to community green spaces as well as to commercial and residential units within newly developed structures. |

Table ES-1 – Conceptual Plan Project List

| Number Reference | Project | Description |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| 4 | Community Green Space | Construct community green space areas and park lands in central portions of the site to support neighborhood activities and community festivals. Orient performance venues and gathering spaces near the iconic Palmer water tower and provide pedestrian connections to link other adjacent sites to the Mat-Maid Block. |
| 5 | Off-Street Parking (B) | Expand off-street parking areas at the Matanuska Brewing Company to support expanded business operations. Develop higher-visibility pedestrian trailhead at the corner of Dogwood Avenue and Valley Way to serve as a pedestrian hub for the downtown region. |
| 6 | Outdoor Gathering Spaces | Provide opportunities for outdoor eating areas, tasting rooms and complementary green spaces that can be used year-round by patrons of the Mat-Maid site and the Matanuska Brewing Company. |
| 7 | Dogwood Ave. Extension | Study the feasibility to extend Dogwood Avenue westward into Downtown Palmer and expand the existing Valley Inn parking area to maintain the current number of off-street parking stalls provided to patrons of the downtown district. |
| 8 | Alaska Railroad Tracks | Maintain Alaska Railroad tracks north of the Depot to facilitate occasional use but terminate tracks south of the proposed Dogwood Avenue extension to maintain north/south pedestrian trail use. |
| 9 | Farmer’s Market | Develop a formal covered farmer’s market pavilion north of the depot and expand vehicular parking and circulation within the site. |
| 10 | Depot Plaza and Playground | Develop a cohesive joint plaza and railroad-themed play area south of the Depot to support seasonal festivals and year-round use and interest by residents. Develop this space to merge activities and aesthetics of west downtown Palmer with east downtown Palmer. |
| 11 | Maintain Existing Park | Maintain existing community park amenities south of Evergreen Avenue and the Depot and expand community park opportunities to provide increased continuity with other outdoor amenities within the downtown district. |
| 12 | Downtown Streetscaping | Improve downtown streetscaping with improved landscaping, art installations, tree plantings, and planters on Colony Way and Alaska Street. |
| 13 | Pedestrian Trails | Develop pedestrian trails and connections around the perimeter of the Mat-Maid Block, through the Mat-Maid Block, and into downtown to support pedestrian and bicycle safety for all residents and visitors. |

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

1.1 Project Introduction

1.2 Project Objectives & Key Components

1.3 Planning Process (Scope of Work)



(Source: Stantec)

1.1 - PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Palmer has a quaint and active downtown with heritage buildings, local businesses, annual events, and engaged community members. The bulk of activity is in the Downtown Core located west and along S. Colony Way / S. Alaska Street; whereas, the areas to the east lack the same degree of vibrancy. The eastern portions of downtown – referred to hereinafter as “East Downtown Palmer” have several community assets including the library, government offices, museum, residential enclaves, and emerging businesses. At the same time, East Downtown Palmer has several abandoned and underutilized properties. Through infill, redevelopment, or adaptive reuse, future investment on these properties could complement existing downtown assets and serve residents and visitors alike.

This Area-Wide Planning (AWP) Study was created to establish a vision and redevelopment strategy for the eastern portions of East Downtown Palmer. The process focused on the Mat-Maid Block as a catalyst site and the community explored redevelopment and adaptive reuse strategies for the block’s underutilized properties. The community also explored access and recreational enhancements to the adjacent railway corridor to ensure the Mat-Maid Block catalyst site and East Downtown Palmer are better connected to the Downtown Core.

The Mat-Maid Block is a notable site in East Downtown Palmer. The Mat-Maid block includes the former Mat-Maid Dairy operation and powerhouse; these former operations have several remnant structures including warehouses, the Palmer water tower, and a masonry structure. Recently, the Matanuska Brewing Company and tasting room moved in to occupy portions of a former warehouse. Other businesses on the block include a mini-storage facility, a sewing store, a mechanic shop, and a bulk fuel distributor. The block has the capacity to support infill development and adaptive reuse of its heritage buildings to support new, community-serving uses. Redevelopment on the Mat-Maid Block could serve as a catalyst for other investment in East Downtown Palmer.

In addition to the Mat-Maid Block, East Downtown Palmer has several abandoned properties that are ripe for redevelopment. The City’s goal is to establish an action plan to return these properties to productive use and bring positive change to the community. This document summarizes the process, existing conditions, design/land use opportunities, and action plan to bring redevelopment and enhancements to the Mat-Maid block, the railway corridor, and the immediately surrounding areas in East Downtown Palmer.

Top: Existing railway corridor in Downtown Palmer



Top: Existing aerial of Downtown Palmer (delineated in orange) and the AWP Study Area (delineated in red dashed line)

Downtown Context Overview

Downtown is the center of commercial, institutional and civic activities in the City. Downtown is bisected by the Alaska Railroad, a railway corridor with remnant tracks and the Historic Depot building. Today, the corridor mostly functions as a linear park and the central gathering place for community events and recreation. The Downtown Core, area west of the railway corridor, is characterized by a collection of small heritage buildings arranged along a tight urban street grid. S. Colony Way/S. Alaska Street serves as the community's historic main street corridor that has active storefronts and received recent streetscape enhancements. Overall the western portions of downtown are experiencing vibrancy and business investment.

East Downtown Palmer has a different urban character. East Downtown Palmer has large super blocks, and many of its historic structures reflect the community's industrial past. The Mat-Maid Block is located in this area and across from the railway corridor. The newer

buildings in this area of downtown mostly house government facilities (City of Palmer, Matanuska-Susitna Borough and State of Alaska) and are standalone structures with surface parking lots. There are several active industrial sites dispersed through this area. The railway bisects East Downtown Palmer from the Downtown Core, and there are few east-west roadway access points between these two downtown areas. East Downtown Palmer struggles with a lack of vibrancy, new development, and private investment. At the same time, the area has tremendous infill potential on its underused blocks.

As a whole, downtown has a collection of older buildings and sites that support both current and former industrial uses. Through a separate brownfield inventory and field verification, the City confirmed that downtown has several abandoned or underutilized former industrial sites (brownfields). This is typical of older urban districts and areas with historic industrial and railway uses.

Comprehensive Plan Vision Overview

The City of Palmer's Comprehensive Plan has goals and policies that support the community's desire to grow the downtown area. The Comprehensive Plan has a specific objective to "expand institutional, commercial and mixed-use areas in downtown east of the Alaska Railroad." To support this objective, the Comprehensive Plan includes the "Downtown Opportunities" map that illustrates long-term initiatives that the City would like to implement in downtown. These initiatives designate specific sites for future uses and capital projects. If implemented, these initiatives can bring the City closer to its redevelopment goals for downtown.

Three of the long-range planning initiatives call for the creation of reuse plans for the Historic Depot building, the railway corridor, and the former Mat-Maid Dairy property. In the past, the City improved the Historic Depot and railway for public use. Today, the railway serves as public open space, and the depot building functions as a community center and gathering space. The Mat-Maid property is a former dairy and is presently unoccupied. The Mat-Maid property shares the block with other industrial parcels that collectively form the "Mat-Maid Block". These sites can play a catalytic role in the City's redevelopment strategy.

Area Wide Plan Study Area

The City designated a formal East Downtown Palmer AWP study area early in the process to ensure community planning on the Mat-Maid Block catalyst site considered impacts and opportunities on the immediately surrounding properties. The study area included a ten-block region east of and including the former railway between Cottonwood Avenue and Fireweed Avenue, whereas, conceptual site planning was focused on the Mat-Maid Block with supporting access and recreational improvements within the railway corridor. The City chose this study area location for three reasons:

- (a) East Downtown Palmer lags behind the other downtown areas in terms of vibrancy, business activity, and infill development;
- (b) the Comprehensive Plan Downtown Opportunities map identifies several long-term initiatives that have yet to be implemented; and
- (c) the Mat-Maid Block is underutilized and has multiple abandoned former industrial buildings/properties that are ripe for redevelopment.

Chapter 2 describes the study area in more detail.



Not to Scale

LEGEND

--- AWP Study Area Boundary

▭ Catalyst Site

🌲 Park / Open Space Area

FIGURE 1.2.1 - DOWNTOWN CONTEXT MAP

(Source: Google Earth | Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)

1.2 - PROJECT OBJECTIVES & KEY COMPONENTS

Community Planning Objectives

The City used the AWP process to designate a catalyst site (Mat-Maid Block), conceptually plan the area for new uses, and to strategize on overall redevelopment in East Downtown Palmer. The City approached the AWP process as a collaborative effort with government partners, community stakeholders, and the general public. Stantec Consulting Services Inc. (Stantec), a multidisciplinary consulting firm, provided planners and landscape architects to help the City facilitate this AWP process. The City structured the AWP process around the following community planning objectives:

- **Engagement:** Engage government partners, stakeholders, and property owners to define a cohesive community vision for East Downtown Palmer that will guide the development of conceptual plans for a catalyst site and the surrounding neighborhood in the study area.
- **Catalyst Site:** Designate the Mat-Maid Block (a block with abandoned, former industrial uses) as the catalyst site and develop detailed conceptual redevelopment plans for its properties. Simultaneously, plan for improvements in the railway corridor to connect the catalyst site with the Downtown Core. Build upon the Palmer Comprehensive Plan's vision for these properties.
- **Transportation Connections:** Identify multimodal improvements to better interconnect downtown assets located in and around the study area. Create a mobility strategy to connect the study area with the Downtown Core. Identify new street, pedestrian, and bicycle connections that will make the downtown areas more accessible to all users.
- **Urban Design and Land Use Opportunities:** Define and refine the community's vision for long-term redevelopment in the study area in terms of future amenities, commercial services, housing, building scale, and spatial arrangement of the urban form.
- **Regulatory Support and Amendment:** Identify regulatory options to better support the desired land uses for the catalyst site and the larger study area. Identify specific amendments to the City's regulations that align with the vision for the AWP study area.
- **Implementation Strategies:** Identify actions to implement individual projects on the catalyst sites that will spur redevelopment throughout the study area. Develop an action plan to implement the individual ideas, policies, and projects outlined in this AWP process. Identify the implementation strategy, time frame, and deliverable/outcomes for each action item.

Top: Existing silo and former agricultural storage buildings on the Mat-Maid Block in East Downtown Palmer



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)

Top Left: Existing Historic Depot across from S. Alaska Street and the Downtown Core
 Top Right: Former agricultural buildings on the Mat-Maid Block and areas of underdeveloped property
 Lower: Existing business on the west end of the Mat-Maid Block along S. Valley Way

Catalyst Sites

The City chose to designate the Mat-Maid Block as the catalyst site for their AWP project with supporting improvements within the railway corridor and at the Historic Depot to interconnect new uses with the Downtown Core. The City recognizes that redevelopment on these properties support the corresponding initiatives as shown on the Comprehensive Plan - Downtown Opportunities map. Specifically, the City wants the catalyst site to redevelop with uses and amenities that would benefit residents, support economic development efforts, and elevate the quality of life in Downtown Palmer. The City wanted to explore conceptual plan options for the catalyst site and the adjacent railway corridor to show their redevelopment potential.

The Comprehensive Plan identified general redevelopment goals for this area of downtown; whereas, the City wanted to use the AWP process to achieve more specific redevelopment plans for the catalyst site in terms of future uses, site programming, and spatial arrangement for site improvements. The following summarizes the community's vision for the catalyst site and adjacent railway corridor:

- **Mat-Maid Property / Block:** The catalyst site is comprised of the block along E. Dahlia Avenue between S. Valley Way and Denali Street; this includes the former Mat-Maid Dairy property and the adjoining parcels. The community identified a long-range vision to adaptively reuse many of the existing structures as community landmarks and commercial tenant spaces (e.g., the water tower, silo, and storage buildings). The plans also include three new multi-story mixed-use buildings along Dahlia Avenue and Denali Street.
- **Railway Corridor and Historic Depot:** This includes portions of the railway corridor property between Cottonwood Avenue and Fireweed Avenue. The Historic Depot building is located central to the corridor just north of Evergreen Avenue. The community envisions the Historic Depot would continue to serve as a civic gathering space. The conceptual plan illustrates a garden area, formal plaza, a children's play area, and a new Farmer's Market building. The community envisions the segment south of Evergreen Avenue will continue as a public open space area. The conceptual plan calls for modest improvements that would include additional recreational amenities, landscaping, a community gathering space, and pedestrian connections.



Left: Existing Historic Depot and north side parking lot
Right: Existing Railway Corridor block south of Evergreen Avenue



Left: Existing former silo and agricultural storage buildings and an existing antique shop on the east end of the Mat-Maid Block.
 Right: Existing mini-storage warehouse business on the southeast end of the Mat-Maid Block



LEGEND
 - - - - AWP Study Area Boundary Catalyst Site

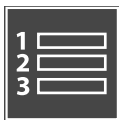
FIGURE 1.2.2 - CATALYST SITE LOCATION MAP
 (Source: Google Earth | Stantec)

Key Components of the East Downtown Palmer AWP

As key components of the AWP process, the City focused on defining redevelopment strategies for the catalyst site and the railway corridor, and planning for capital projects throughout the study area. This AWP document includes three specific components that shape and guide the redevelopment strategy in the study area. The AWP components include:



Conceptual Plan: The project team developed concept plans for the catalyst site and the railway corridor. The project team used community engagement feedback to guide the design for three conceptual plan alternatives. Through additional community guidance, the project team selected a single conceptual plan and made refinements to show the long-range projects, land uses, and spatial layout. The conceptual plan depicts future uses, building locations, open space areas, and circulation.



Project List and Land Use Designations: The project team created a project list to call out individual initiatives, buildings, and capital improvements as depicted on the conceptual plan. The project list organized the individual elements from the conceptual plan so that the City can better work towards their implementation. The project list corresponds to specific sites and locations within the study area. The project team designated the future land uses on the catalyst site and within the railway corridor so that long-term development and tenants align with the vision as depicted on the conceptual plan.



Action Plan: The project team created an action plan that lists specific initiatives and actions that the City can complete to move the study area towards the community's redevelopment goals. Each initiative and action correspond to an item on the project list and/or the planned land use designations. For each initiative and action, the action plan lists the implementation strategy time frame, support services, community partners, and deliverables/outcomes.

AWP Document

This AWP document explains the community planning process for Palmer's AWP study area. The subsequent chapters provide more detail pertaining to the process, the existing conditions, brownfield sites, the catalyst sites, the proposed redevelopment conceptual plan, and the implementation strategy.



(Source: Stantec)

1.3 - PLANNING PROCESS (SCOPE OF WORK)

The AWP process followed a detailed work plan that included stakeholder engagement; data collection and analysis; conceptual planning; and development of an implementation strategy. The process focused on the redevelopment projects on the catalyst site and the railway corridor. The AWP project team includes the City and Stantec. This planning document summarizes the process, findings, vision, and implementation actions. The AWP scope of work included five tasks as summarized below.

Task I. Community Engagement:

The project team created and executed a Community Engagement Plan to involve the City's residents, property owners, governmental partners, and other stakeholders to provide comment and recommendations on the AWP process and the catalyst site components. Beginning in early 2019 and continuing through the fall, the project team hosted two community workshops, provided regular updates to the City Council, engaged feedback from the Planning Commission, and hosted an engagement table at Palmer's Colony Day Celebration in June 2019. The team also participated in regular project updates with the local radio station (Big Cabbage Radio) to help communicate the objectives of the project and to solicit input from the community.

Task II. Data Gathering:

The project team began the AWP process through completion of a robust data gathering phase designed to help the project team to better understand the area's existing assets, challenges, and brownfield conditions. The project team reviewed current plans, development standards, and public services in and around the study area. The project team conducted a separate brownfield inventory process at the same time as to the AWP scope, and incorporated into the AWP process and report. This data gathering task established baseline conditions with the study area, an important initial step for conducting the AWP process.

Top: Existing view Palmer from a hill overlooking the City.

Task III. Demographic Conditions and Market Opportunities:

The project team reviewed demographic and market data available through ESRI (an on-line Geographic Information System [GIS] dataset company). The project team identified current and projected demographic data (population, household characteristics, and income), as well as, current housing supply (units, tenure, and building type). ESRI data were also used to identify local retail spending habits; in particular which services are consumed in Palmer verse outside the City.

Task V. Concept Development:

The project team explored different land use and urban design opportunities for the catalyst site and the railway corridor. The initial concepts considered stakeholder feedback, existing conditions, adopted plans, demographic characteristics, market findings, and the City's regulatory framework (zoning). The detailed conceptual plans included locations for access, new buildings, parking, and open space. Through community feedback, the project team created a locally preferred conceptual plan.

VI. Planning Document:

The project team created this AWP planning document to summarize the process, the findings, community feedback, analysis, concepts, and final redevelopment strategy.



FIGURE 1.3.1 - AREA-WIDE PLANNING (AWP) PROCESS DIAGRAM



CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

- 2.1 Community Context
- 2.2 Study Area Development and Land Use Patterns
- 2.3 Land Use and Zoning
- 2.4 Transportation Systems
- 2.5 Demographics and Commercial Market Conditions



(Source: Stantec)

2.1 - COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The City of Palmer is a prominent city in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and serves as the borough’s seat of government. The City enjoys a small-town character, though it is in proximity to larger commercial services and urban amenities in nearby cities. The City is located within 45 miles of Anchorage and its urban services. While the City has a traditional main street and local retail, nearby Wasilla is larger in size and serves as the borough’s commercial hub, with regional shopping centers and big-box retailers. The City has highway access to these nearby communities via Glenn Highway and E. Palmer-Wasilla Highway.

The City rests in a valley between the Talkeetna Mountains (north) and the Chugach Mountains (southeast). The community lies west of the Matanuska River and at the center of a region rich in outdoor amenities and recreational opportunities. The City is the last sizable town for travelers before continuing north into the Alaskan hinterlands.

Pursuant to the City’s Comprehensive Plan, Palmer is in the midst of a significant transformation, hereby it is “evolving into a new kind of community”. While features from Palmer’s history continue to define its identity, the City now faces a very different future. The City, along with southern Matanuska-Susitna Borough, has experienced two decades of sustained growth. In 20 years, this region has evolved from a rural Anchorage bedroom community to its own increasingly

self-sufficient commercial and employment center. These changes present both challenges to the historic character of the City and opportunities to emerge as a new kind of community—one that holds on to the best aspects of its historic character while embracing the need to grow and change¹



FIGURE 2.1.1 - REGIONAL VICINITY MAP

(Source: Alvercarto.com)

Top: Existing map excerpt of the Palmer/Wasilla/Anchorage region

¹ City of Palmer Comprehensive Plan 2006 – Introduction Chapter

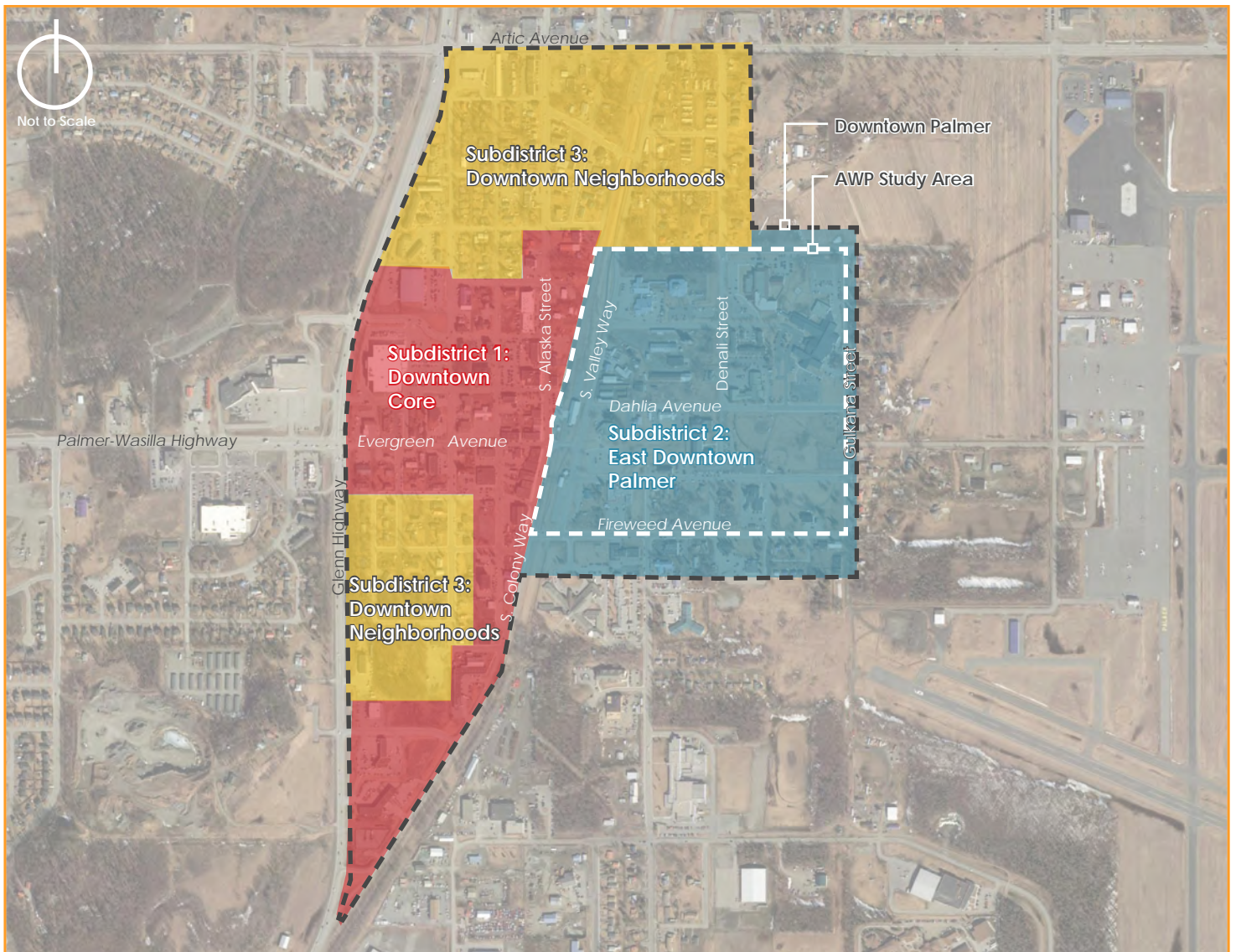


FIGURE 2.1.2 - DOWNTOWN PALMER SUBDISTRICTS MAP (approximate boundaries)

(Source: Google Earth | Stantec)

Downtown Palmer

The City’s downtown serves as the center of commercial, service, and civic activities. The City’s Comprehensive Plan describes downtown as “the heart of community public life.” Downtown reflects the city’s past in terms of heritage buildings, landmarks, urban scale, and spatial layout. Downtown Palmer radiates outward on a formal street grid from a former railway that runs along a north-south alignment through the City.

Downtown is defined as the area bounded by N. Arctic Avenue on the north, the S. Colony Way entrance on the south, the Glenn Highway on the west, and S. Gulkana Street on the east. The City repurposed the former railway as a linear park and community gathering space. The former railway serves as a significant downtown destination and transition area

between distinct subdistricts within downtown. In general, the City’s downtown can be described as three distinct subdistricts: (1) the Downtown Core west of the railway and along S. Colony Way/S. Alaska Street; (2) the predominately institutional district (or East Downtown) east of the railway; and (3) the downtown neighborhoods along the periphery. These subdistricts possess different characteristics, land use mix, and long-term goals.

The City acknowledges the unique character of these downtown subdistricts and has approached its long-range planning in a way that builds upon existing assets through land use planning, capital projects, and infill redevelopment. Following are brief descriptions of the City’s three downtown subdistricts.



Subdistrict 1: Downtown Core – The Downtown Core resembles a traditional small American town. Streets form a tight grid, and blocks average 330 feet in length. Many buildings line public sidewalks. Most east-west streets terminate at the railway corridor, but E. Evergreen and E. Fireweed Avenue cross over the railway to connect the Downtown Core to East Downtown Palmer. The S. Colony Way/S. Alaska Street corridor serves as downtown’s main street. Buildings along this corridor overlook the former railway and linear park. These buildings have retail and restaurant uses on the street level, and offices occupy the upper floors. Most streets provide parallel parking, but surface lots (both private and publicly-owned) provide ancillary parking for individual businesses. Overall, the Downtown Core has vibrancy and continues to see commercial investment.

Subdistrict 2: East Downtown – East Downtown is less vibrant than the Downtown Core and includes a collection of institutional and industrial uses. Streets form a larger street grid, and blocks exceed 410 feet in length. There are a collection of government uses in the subdistrict, including the library, Borough offices, the police department, and state offices. This area also has several industrial and warehouse businesses. A few heritage buildings are scattered through this subdistrict. The former Mat-Maid Dairy operation and former powerhouse are central to this subdistrict (located on the Mat-Maid Block). The subdistrict has tremendous potential for infill development.

Subdistrict 3: Downtown Neighborhoods – A mix of single-family houses, multifamily apartment buildings, and a few enclaves of commercial buildings comprise the areas to the north and south of the Downtown Core and East Downtown. The urban street grid pattern extends into these surrounding neighborhoods. Most streets are lined with trees and sidewalks, and possess parallel parking.

The City’s Comprehensive Plan has several goals, objectives, and policies that guide planning in and around downtown. The Comprehensive Plan states a specific objective to “make downtown the place to be”. This objective reflects recognition by the City that downtown needs to offer a greater mix of unique specialty shops, services, restaurants, and night time entertainment venues, as well as public amenities and housing options. To help advance this vision for downtown, the City supports improvements to make downtown more attractive for private investment, including improved roads, trails, parking, events, public attractions, and a set of actions outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. Section 2.3 provides more detail pertaining to Comprehensive Plan goals and its vision for downtown. The Comprehensive Plan outlines future projects, community improvements, and infill goals for the East Downtown subdistrict.

Top: Existing commercial/mixed-use buildings along S. Colony Way/S. Alaska Street in Downtown Palmer (Downtown Core)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)

Top: Existing railway corridor the runs between the Downtown Core (Subdistrict 1) and East Downtown Palmer (Subdistrict 2) / the corridor serves as a linear community park and event space
 Middle Left: Existing warehouses along S. Valley way
 Lower Left: Existing antique shop in East Downtown Palmer

Middle Right: Underused property along Dogwood Avenue at S. Valley Way
 Lower Right: Existing warehouse buildings along Dahlia Avenue on the Mat-Maid Block



(Source: Stantec)

2.2 - DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE PATTERNS

The study area covers most of the East Downtown Palmer subdistrict and encompasses ten city blocks. The study area has diverse development and land use patterns. It is important to understand these patterns, so that the AWP redevelopment strategy and associated concept plans effectively respond to the surrounding context and community assets. An effective planning process must also address negative conditions, infrastructure deficiencies, and perceived environmental hazards in the study area.

Each block within the study area has its own character, land use mix, and redevelopment potential. Following are descriptions of each block within the study area.

Block A / Mat-Maid Block (Catalyst Site)

Block A (commonly referred to as the Mat-Maid Block) is the designated catalyst site for the AWP study area and encompasses 8.9 acres. In the past, the block supported a multitude of agricultural, commercial, and industrial operations. The Mat-Maid property occupies the northern portions of the block. The legacy structures include a large warehouse space, industrial outbuildings and grain elevators. The iconic Palmer water tower stands in the center of the block. Portions of the former warehouse have been repurposed for the Matanuska Brewing Company and tasting room.

A mini-storage facility and a small sewing store occupy the southwest corner. These properties project an industrial character, including an office, mechanic shop, and drum storage for a bulk fuel distributor. The former Matanuska Colony powerhouse property is located mid block along E. Dahlia Avenue and contains remnants of the dilapidated cinder block powerhouse structure. Nonprofit organizations have recently expressed interest in reusing the building, but a recent structural analysis determined the building is in a severely deteriorated condition.

A vehicle storage lot and restoration businesses occupy the east end of the block, which is a recognized retail destination for antique enthusiasts and salvage pickers from around the region. A standalone residential building sits along Denali Street and operates as a short-term rental property. The block has several vacant or underused areas that can support additional development or outdoor use areas. Overall, the Mat-Maid Block has tremendous infill and adaptive reuse potential. New uses can complement the brewery and short-term rental. Furthermore, redevelopment of the block would bring new active uses to the property and create a psychological bridge between the government offices in the AWP study area and the Downtown Core.

Top: Existing railway corridor south Evergreen Avenue /between S. Valley Way and S. Colony Way/ Historic Depot in the background



LEGEND

- Catalyst Site
- 🌳 Park / Open Space Area
- AWP Study Area Boundary
- A Block Identification
- 🏛️ Public Use (various icons)

FIGURE 2.2.1 - EAST DOWNTOWN PALMER AWP EXISTING CONDITIONS MAP

(Source: GoogleEarth | Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)

Top: Existing silo and former agricultural storage buildings along Dogwood Avenue on the Mat-Maid Block
 Middle: Former powerhouse building along Dahlia Avenue with the Palmer water tower in the distance
 Lower Left: Existing Matanuska Brewery Company
 Lower Right: Existing fuel distributor business at the west end of the Mat-Maid Block along S. Valley Way



Block B / Institutional Block

Block B encompasses 17.6 acres at the northeast edge of the AWP study area. The Northridge Terrace Apartments rest mid-block along Denali Street. State offices and court facilities occupy large portions of the block. The government functions are housed in two large, multilevel buildings. Surface parking lots surround these structures. There are several undeveloped tracts around the government buildings that could support building and parking expansions. A commercial/office building rests at the southwest corner of Block B.

Block C / Law Enforcement Block

Block C encompasses 7.3 acres on the northern edge of the AWP study area. Several law enforcement buildings and agencies occupy the block, including the Palmer Police Department, Alaska State Troopers, and the Mat-Su Pre-Trial Facility. These buildings are set back from area streets. Surface parking lots occupy the E. Dogwood Avenue frontage, and a wooded area occupies the E. Cottonwood Avenue frontage.

Top: Existing courthouse building on the Institutional Block at the eastern terminus of Dogwood Avenue at Denali Street

Lower: Existing Palmer Police Department/Alaska State Troopers building on the Law Enforcement Block at Dogwood Avenue and S. Valley Way



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)

Block D / Historic Depot Block & Rail Corridor

Block D encompasses 5.4 acres along the study area's western edge. Block D is within the railway corridor and contains the Historic Depot structure. The City improved portions of the block as a linear park (Gateway Plaza) with a trail and passive open space. A parking lot and public plaza area rests at the corner of S. Alaska Way and Evergreen Avenue. A vintage train engine is on display under a roof structure. Block D represents a community gathering space and gateway into downtown Palmer from the south. There is opportunity to improve the Historic Depot block with additional landscaping, pedestrian linkages, and community uses.

Block E / Railway Corridor

Block E includes the southern portions of the railway corridor; south of Evergreen Avenue. Block E is a large, outdoor public open space covering 1.86 acres. A surface parking lot occupies the mid-block frontages along S. Valley Way. Two shelters are present adjacent to the parking area. The block contains remnant railroad tracks. Lawn covers most of the block, and there are opportunities to provide additional recreational amenities on the property.

Top: Existing Historic Depot property with covered engine and parking lot

Lower Left: Existing community garden project in the former railway corridor north of the Historic Depot

Lower Right: Existing remnant tracks in the railway corridor block south of Evergreen Avenue



(Source: Stantec)

Block F / The Quadrangle Block

Block F is referred to as the Quadrangle in the Palmer Comprehensive Plan. The block is the largest in the study area, encompasses more than 16 acres, and has over 3,300 feet of frontage along E. Dahlia Avenue. The block has large open recreational spaces, the western edge is passive open space, and sports fields comprise the east end. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough offices and the Palmer Ale House are located mid-block along E. Dahlia Avenue and overlook the recreational spaces. The Palmer Library is at the west of the block and across the street from the Historic Depot. There are several surface parking lots clustered around buildings on the block. There is opportunity for infill development along the E. Dahlia Avenue frontage and between the existing structures.

Block G / Visitors Center and Garden Block

Block G is referred to as the Visitors Center and Garden block in the Comprehensive Plan. The block is among the smallest in the study area and includes 3.6 acres. The Palmer Visitor Information Center and a garden occupy the west end of the block and overlook the linear park and former railway property. A commercial building occupies the eastern portions of the block. There are opportunities to expand the gardens around the visitor center, and there is adaptive reuse potential at the commercial property.

Blocks H, I, and J

The residual blocks form the southern/southeastern edge of the study area. Block H includes a collection of single-family homes. Block I contains two church buildings. Block J is largely undeveloped with a heritage building that houses the University of Alaska Research Center.



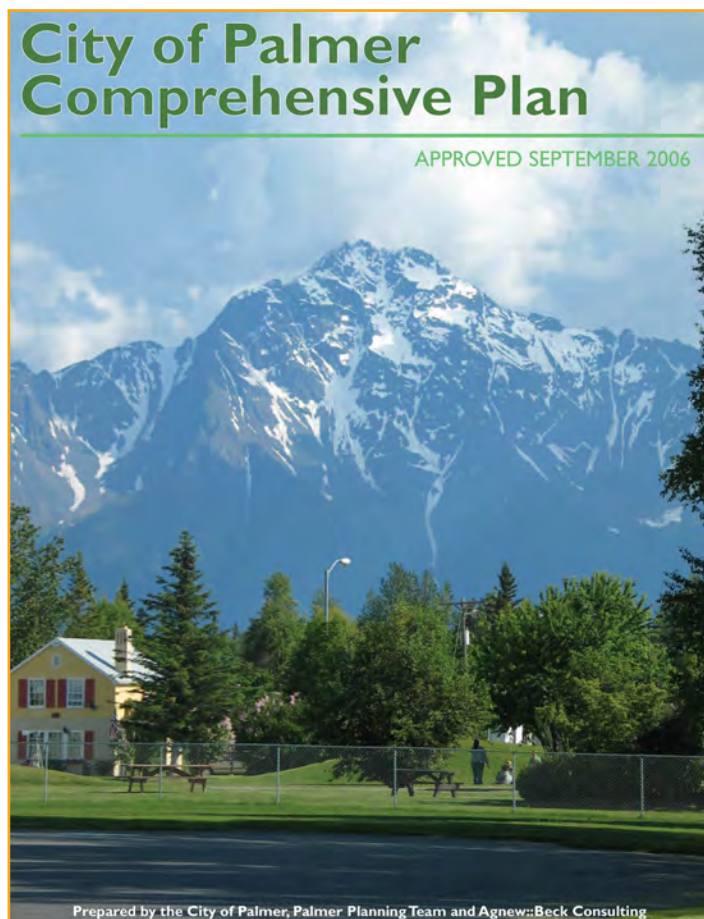
Top: Existing Palmer Library building in the Quadrangle Block at Dahlia Avenue and S. Valley Way / Historic Depot in foreground
 Lower: Existing buildings along Dahlia Avenue along the northern edges of the Quadrangle Block



(Source: Stantec)

2.3 - LAND USE AND ZONING

The City of Palmer *Comprehensive Plan* and *Title 17 – Zoning* of the *Palmer Municipal Code* guide development, land use, and capital improvements in and around the study area. The following subsections summarize the City's adopted long-range vision and development standards for the study area.



Comprehensive Plan

The City of Palmer's Comprehensive Plan establishes the community's vision for growth and redevelopment. The Comprehensive Plan is organized as a series of chapters pertaining to land use, transportation, and open space. Its *Chapter 6: Land Use* applies most directly to the AWP study area, and it provides local policy direction on land use, development form, and civic amenities. The Comprehensive Plan does not include a separate land use map, but the City uses its zoning map and associated regulations to ensure that development and land use aligns with its adopted vision.

Adopted Comprehensive Plan Goals:

The following table lists the Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives that are applicable to the AWP study area and should guide the planning process..

Top: Existing Palmer Ale House building facing the recreational areas in the Quadrangle Block (East Downtown Palmer)
Right: City of Palmer 2006 Comprehensive Plan cover

Table 2.3.a – Comprehensive Plan Applicable Goals and Objectives

| Goals | Objectives |
|---|---|
| <p>GOAL 1: Guide growth to make Palmer an increasingly attractive place to live, work, invest and visit.</p> | <p>Objective A: Guide growth so the overall development pattern for the community has the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective A: Guide growth so the overall development pattern for the community has the following characteristics: • Adequate space for expansion of commercial uses, primarily in downtown, along the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, and along the Glenn Highway. • A concentration of institutional uses, primarily in downtown but extending into other parts of the community. • Space for new residential neighborhoods, primarily around the outer portions of the community, but also within mixed use areas in the downtown core. Residential areas include internal open space, parks, and connecting trails. • Convenient access to places to work, commercial services, schools, and other public facilities by vehicle, sidewalk, and trail. • A high-quality system of community parks, open space, trails and other recreation amenities. • Compact, walkable, dynamic, mixed use downtown core. • The right balance of residential and commercial uses to ensure that the City maintains its fiscal health. |
| <p>GOAL 2: Maintain high quality residential neighborhoods; promote development of a range of desirable new places to live in Palmer.</p> | <p>Objective A: Promote a diverse range of quality housing from attractive higher density housing in or near downtown to outlying housing in more rural settings.</p> <p>Objective C: Encourage infill and higher density housing in and around downtown. Prepare new zoning standards and design guidelines to ensure that higher density housing is high quality to benefit the residents and the community.</p> <p>Objective E: Encourage rehabilitation of older residential structures.</p> |
| <p>GOAL 3: Support the continuation of institutional and appropriate industrial uses.</p> | <p>Objective A: Provide for the continuation and expansion of Palmer’s traditional role as a center for institutional and governmental users for the Mat-Su Borough and state.</p> <p>Objective B: Support continued industrial use consistent with other plan goals.</p> |
| <p>GOAL 4: Encourage new commercial development, so residents of Palmer, residents of surrounding areas, and visitors can find the goods and services they need in Palmer.</p> | <p>Objective A: Expand institutional, commercial, and mixed-use areas in downtown east of the Alaska Railroad.</p> <p>Objective C: Strengthen Palmer’s traditional downtown core.</p> |
| <p>GOAL 5: Guide the form and character of growth to encourage high-quality buildings and site development that reflects Palmer’s history and setting.</p> | <p>Objective A: Revise zoning code to allow for growth, encourage quality development, and shape development to reflect Palmer’s unique identity.</p> <p>Objective B: Adopt policies to keep Palmer a visually attractive community, including maintaining good views of surrounding mountains.</p> |

Table 2.3.a – Comprehensive Plan Applicable Goals and Objectives

| Goals | Objectives |
|---|---|
| <p>GOAL 6: Support efforts by the Downtown Business Improvement District to help ensure Palmer’s traditional downtown is lively, attractive and inviting for residents and visitors.</p> | <p>Objective A: Expand the base of downtown users within walking distance of downtown, including more residential uses, office uses, and tourist accommodations.</p> <p>Objective B: Give residents and visitors new reasons to spend time and money in downtown. Encourage more commercial development, upgrades of existing facilities, new attractions and new events.</p> <p>Objective C: Improve downtown circulation, starting with the entries to the City, to make access, parking, and walking efficient, safe, enjoyable, and inviting year-round.</p> <p>Objective E: Identify near-term actions as first priorities for improving downtown.</p> |

Comprehensive Plan Strategic Actions

The Comprehensive Plan identifies strategic actions to improve quality of life and market viability in downtown Palmer. The long-term vision for the AWP study area is articulated in Land Use Goal 6, Objectives A and B.

Many of these strategic actions were incorporated into this AWP planning process. The following table lists the Comprehensive Plan’s strategic actions that are applicable to the AWP study area.

Table 2.3.b – Comprehensive Plan Applicable Strategic Actions

| Strategic Actions | Description |
|--|---|
| <p>Diverse Shops, Stores, Restaurants</p> | <p>The core attraction of small downtowns remains a diverse, concentrated set of businesses. To compete successfully against big box discount stores, downtown needs to offer a greater mix of unique specialty shops, services, restaurants and night spots, as well as public amenities. To encourage this expansion, the City supports improvements to make downtown more attractive for private investment, including improved roads, trails, parking, events, and public attractions.</p> |
| <p>“Bridge the Barrier”</p> | <p>The railroad tracks and depot area provide an open space with both positive and negative impacts on downtown. On the plus side, this area offers an open, parklike corridor in the center of the City. On the less positive side, it acts as a barrier that splits downtown, and creates a ‘dead space’ in what should be the heart of the community. The depot and railroad area is undergoing a change to become a focal point of activity that would unite and energize downtown. The City, Alaska Railroad Corporation, and other affected land owners need to continue to work together to meet the needs of all parties and maximize the value of this key location.</p> |
| <p>Rail Corridor</p> | <p>Future economic development actions would turn the rail corridor into a greenbelt park with a trail connecting the downtown with surrounding residential areas, recreation destinations, and the Fairgrounds. Other planned actions include improvements at the depot, improved landscaping, developing a new east-west road, and improving east-west sidewalks (with signage, benches, kiosks, other features plus improved maintenance).</p> |
| <p>Mat Maid</p> | <p>The vacant Mat Maid historic creamery and its 3-acre site have the potential to be a major mixed-use development. For example, this facility could house expanded offices of existing local institutions and also include specialty shopping, dining, and a museum or art galleries, all done in a way that evokes the town’s history.</p> |
| <p>Downtown Road Improvements</p> | <p>Downtown will function better if strategic road improvements are made, including a second link across the railroad north of the Historic Depot. Pursuant to the Comprehensive Plan’s Transportation Chapter, Dogwood appears to be the logical extension, but further study is needed to ensure that this is the preferred route.</p> |

Comprehensive Plan Downtown Opportunities Map

The Comprehensive Plan Land Use Goal 6 includes the "Downtown Opportunities" map that illustrates long-range initiatives that the City would like to implement in downtown. These initiatives designate specific sites for

future uses and capital projects. If implemented, these initiatives can bring the City closer to its redevelopment goals for downtown. Portions of the Downtown Opportunities map apply directly to the AWP focus area. Thus, the City chose to designate catalyst sites that coincide with this map (See Figure 2.3.1).

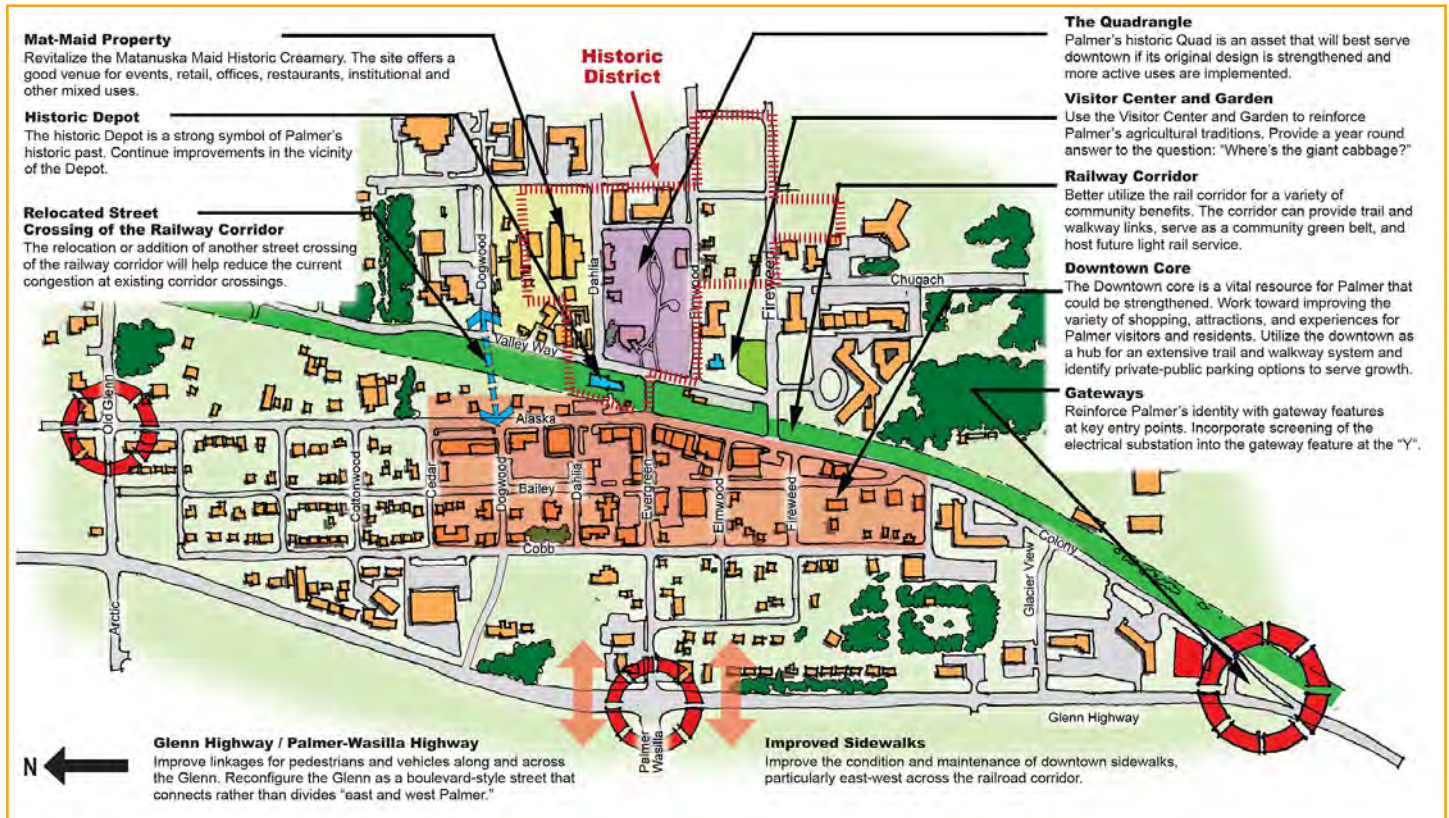


FIGURE 2.3.1 - PALMER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN OPPORTUNITIES MAP

(Source: City of Palmer 2006 Comprehensive Plan)



Existing Downtown Vicinity Aerial (oriented to match the Comprehensive Plan - Downtown Opportunities Map)

Zoning / Development Standards

Title 17 – Zoning of the Palmer Municipal Code defines the applicable zoning and development standards for properties within the City limits. Palmer’s Zoning Map assigns a zoning district to each property within the City. These districts implement the goals, objectives, and policies of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Each zone has a list of permitted uses and corresponding development standards (e.g., building setbacks, structure height, etc.). Some zones list conditional uses that the City may allow on a case-by-case basis where an applicant demonstrates that certain compatibility measures are in place (e.g., buffering, screening, etc.).

The study area includes five zoning districts. It may be necessary for the City to rezone some parcels or amend certain development standards to allow some of the AWP projects. Figure 2.3.2 depicts the Palmer Zoning Map; the study area limits are delineated on the map. The following summarizes the zoning districts within the study area, and the subsequent tables list the development and land use standards for each zone.

Commercial General (CG): The CG district is intended for the principal land use to be commercial enterprises that serve the needs of a large population over a large land area, and to provide a centralization of services by allowing more intensive uses.

Commercial Limited (CL): The CL district is intended for land to be used as combination of dwellings and

commercial enterprises. The commercial enterprises are to serve daily or frequent convenience shopping and personal service needs of residences. The specific intent for this district is to provide a buffer between uses allowed in the general commercial area and residential areas and to provide a mix of uses.

High Density Residential (R-4): The R-4 district is intended for residential areas with a combination of multiple-family structures and single-family residences with a high population density. Nonresidential uses may be permitted if they are compatible with the predominantly residential character of this district.

Industrial (I): The I district is intended to apply to areas where land is best used for industrial purposes. Regulations in this district are intended to permit a wide range of industrial and heavy commercial uses. The specific intent for this district is to provide for heavy commercial or moderate industrial uses, to concentrate the industrial and heavy commercial uses so as to protect residential areas from noxious or noisy operations.

Public (P): The P district is intended for public buildings and for certain lands to be reserved and protected for compatible public uses. The specific intent established for this district is to reserve land for future municipal use and to permit public parks, playgrounds, swimming pools or other recreational uses or buildings, including community or social buildings.

Table 2.3.c – Zoning District Development Standards Summary

| | CG | CL | R-4 | I | P |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Building Setbacks | <p>Residential Front: 25 ft / Side: 15 ft / Rear: 25 ft</p> <p>Mixed-use and Non-residential: Front: 0 ft / Side: 0 ft / Rear: 0 ft</p> <p>Non-residential abutting or across an alley from R-1, R-1E or R-2 zones: Front: 0 ft / Side: 25 ft / Rear: 25 ft</p> | | <p>Front: 25 feet</p> <p>Side (less than 4 units): 15 feet</p> <p>Side (more than 4 units): 25 feet</p> <p>Rear: 25 feet</p> | 25-ft from public rights-of-way AND any residential district | 25-ft from public rights-of-way AND any residential district |
| Building Height (max.) | 50 feet | 35 feet | 50 feet | 3 stories or 50 feet | 50 feet |
| Lot Width (min.) | 60 feet | 60 feet | 0 to 50 feet (lots as of 1/17/78) | 60 feet | 60 feet |
| Lot Size (min.) | 7,200 square feet | 7,200 square feet | 8,400 square feet (new lots) | 7,200 square feet | 7,200 square feet |
| Open Space (min.) | 200 square feet of open space per dwelling unit. | 200 square feet of open space per dwelling unit. | 200 square feet of open space per dwelling unit. | N/A | N/A |

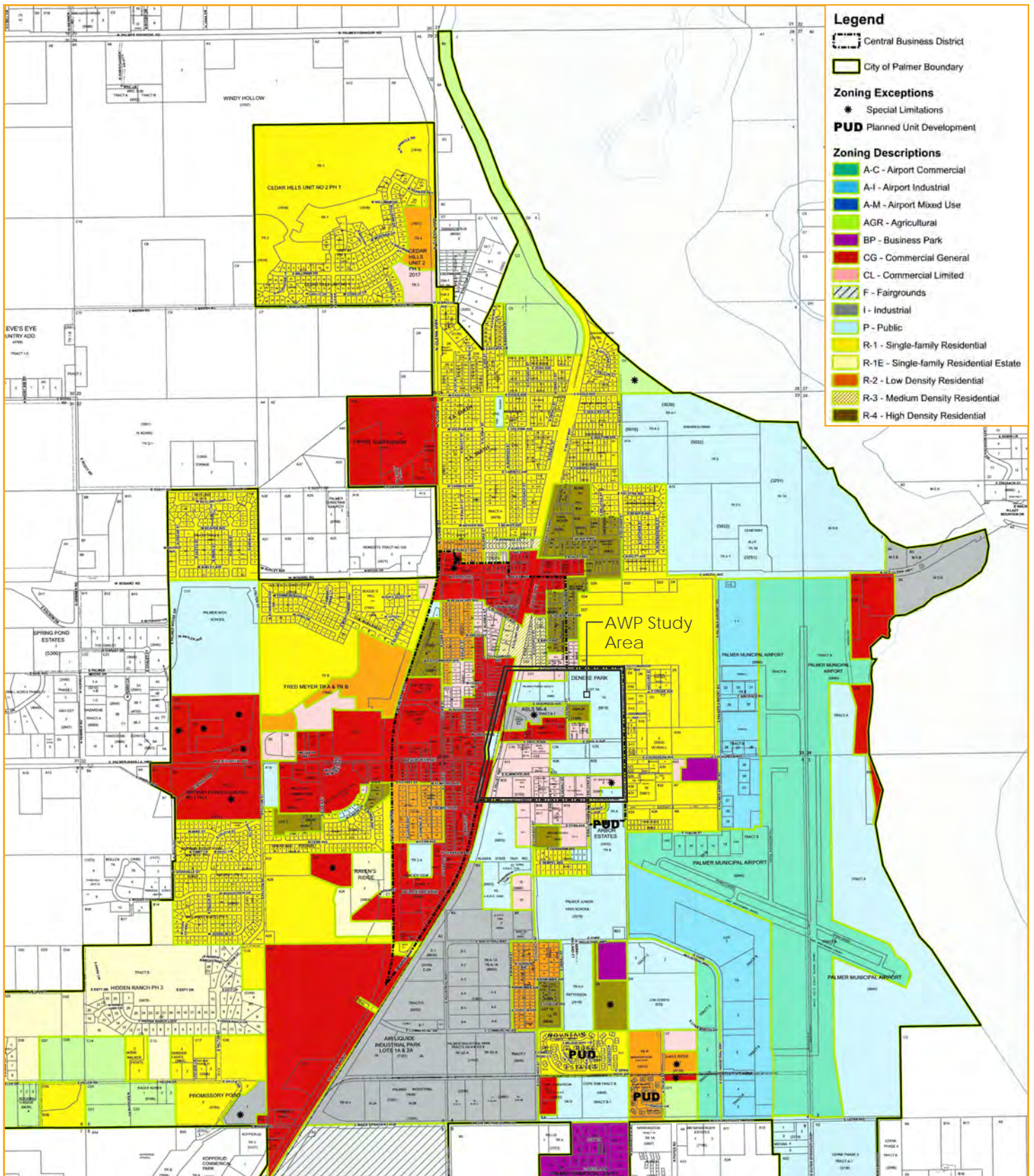


FIGURE 2.3.2 - CITY OF PALMER ZONING MAP

(Source: City of Palmer)

Table 2.3.d – Zoning District Land Use Allowances

| | Permitted Uses: | Conditional Uses: |
|---------------------|---|--|
| CG District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single and multi-family dwellings • Home occupations • Churches • Banks and offices • Medical clinics, dentist offices • Drycleaners and laundromats • Motels, hotels • Bar, cocktail lounge, liquor and beer sales, including brewpubs and wineries; • Cafes, bakeries, bars and restaurants • General retail (consolidated, see Title 17) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laundry and linen supply service, dry-cleaning businesses; • Propane or butane service; • Car washes; • Crematory; • Welding service and supplies; • Mental health facility; • Residential care facilities. |
| CL District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single and multi-family dwellings • Flower gardening and greenhouses; • Home occupations; • Churches; • Banks and offices • General retail (consolidated, see Title 17) • Medical • Drycleaners and laundromats • Assisted living facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility substations • Funeral parlors • Residential care facilities • Brewpubs and wineries • Public and private schools. |
| I District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly plants • Auction business • Machine shops • Packinghouses and wholesale uses • Dry-cleaning and laundry services • Cold storage • Automobile uses • Utility substations • Manufacturing (consolidated, see Title 17) • Warehousing (consolidated, see Title 17) • Freight, transportation or trucking yard or terminal, railroad and motor freight terminals • Other comparable uses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete / concrete products manufacturing • Coal yard • Contractor's equipment yard • House moving business • Sewage treatment plants • Industrial planned unit development; • Airport and heliports • Slaughterhouses • Power plants. |
| R-4 District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-family dwellings • Multi-family dwellings • Boardinghouses • Home occupations • Parks, playgrounds, child care facilities, and preschools • Other compatible uses and accessory uses such as storage structures for use by residents of the development • Storage of travel trailers, campers, pleasure boats and motor homes neither used nor occupied as living quarters • Places of religious worship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and private schools • Public buildings and structures • Residential planned unit development • Mobile homes that are used for occupancy in a mobile home court • Residential care facilities with eight or fewer patients and special needs day services facilities; • Utility substation. |
| P District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public buildings • Playgrounds, parks and greenbelts • Other compatible uses | |



(Source: Stantec)

2.4 - TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

The study area has an existing multi-modal transportation network that serves motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. However, the current transportation network prioritizes motor vehicle travel in terms of its spatial layout and roadway design.

Primary Streets and Roadways

Palmer has regional roadway connections via Glenn Highway and E. Palmer-Wasilla Highway. The AWP study area has an urban street grid network though the former railway corridor interrupts east-west connectivity. In comparison to most of the urbanized areas in Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Palmer has a well-developed road system that accommodates both vehicles and non-motorized modes. The area has a clear street hierarchy ranging from main collectors to local side streets.

The study area lacks street connectivity between the Downtown Core and East Downtown Palmer subdistricts on each side of the former railway corridor. Evergreen Avenue and E. Fireweed Avenue represent the street connections between the two subdistricts. Downtown currently lacks public right-of-way options to create new, direct east-west street connections; the City continues to explore alignment options for a new east-west roadway connection. The following describes key transportation facilities within the study area.

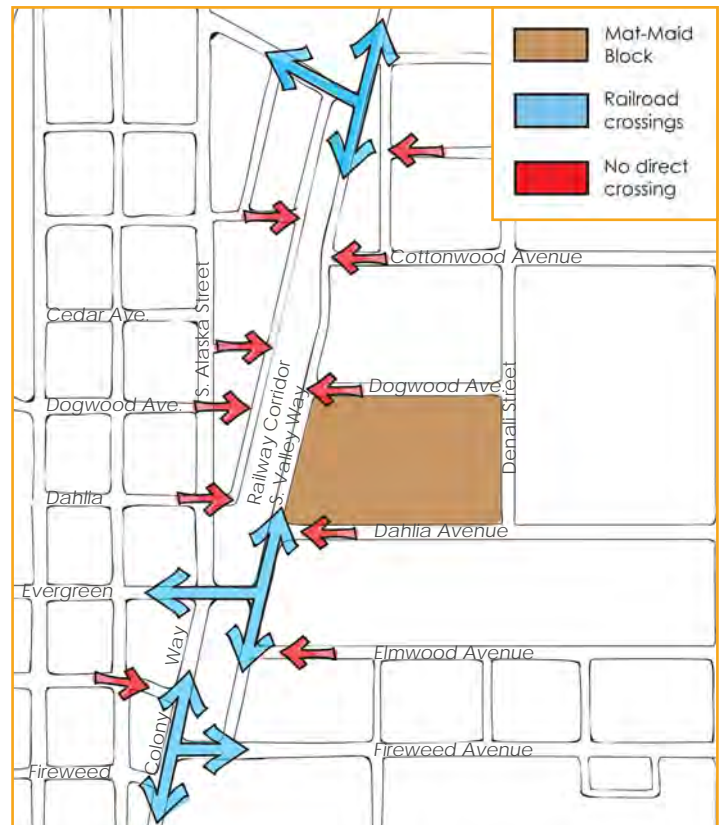


FIGURE 2.4.1 - AWP EXISTING ROADWAY ACCESS MAP

(Source: Stantec)

Top: Existing multi-use trail north and community garden of the Historic Depot in downtown Palmer

Table 2.4.a – Existing Street Characteristics

| Street | Travel Lanes | Sidewalks | Bicycle Lanes/ Facilities | Street Parking |
|--|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| S. Valley Way | 2-3 | N | N | N |
| Dahlia Avenue | 2 | Y | N | Y |
| Denali Street | 2 | Y | N | Y |
| Dogwood Street | 2 | Y | N | Y |
| Elmwood Avenue | 2 | Y | N | Y |
| Fireweed Avenue | 2 | Y | N | Y |
| Chugach Street | 2 | Y (West only) | N | N |
| Gulkana Street | 2 | Y | N | Y |
| S. Colony Way (South of Evergreen Ave) | 2 | Y | Y (AK Railroad Trail) | Y |
| S. Colony Way (North of Evergreen Ave) | 2 (unpaved) | N | N | N |
| S. Alaska Street (North of Evergreen Ave) | 2 | Y | Y (AK Railroad Trail) | Y |

Yes (Y) = complete coverage | No (N) = no coverage

Pedestrian Facilities

Downtown has continuous sidewalk connections throughout its subdistricts. Most of the streets in the AWP study area are lined with public sidewalks. The exception is the S. Valley Way segment north of E. Dahlia Avenue. The former railway corridor has a continuous, paved multi-use pathway originating at the Historic Depot. There are a few pedestrian pathways that traverse the former railway to connect the subdistricts on either side. Most of the newer buildings in the study area have paved pedestrian pathways that connect the public sidewalks to the main entrances.

Transit Facilities

Valley Transit is the public transportation provider in Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Valley Transit operates commuter bus service that connects Wasilla area park-and-ride lots with the Anchorage Veterans Administration (VA) Clinic and the Downtown Anchorage Transit Center. All park-and-ride lots are outside the

Palmer municipal limits; the nearest are along E. Parks Highway to the west of Palmer. Valley Transit also operates weekday demand response service within the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. There are no local, frequent service lines in Palmer.

Planned Projects

At the time of this planning study, the City did not have any significant projects planned in the community. However, during the development of the Palmer AWP, the Alaska Department of Transportation initiated roadway improvements to the Glenn Highway which provides direct access into the community. While this project has not directly impacted the catalyst sites, it is a significant project for the overall community as many key corridors were impacted by highway construction and will benefit from the improvements once construction is complete.



(Source: Unsplash)

2.5 - DEMOGRAPHICS AND COMMERCIAL MARKET CONDITIONS

Palmer and the greater Matanuska-Susitna Borough region have their own unique demographic characteristics in terms of population, household characteristics, and housing and retail trends. To understand what types of development and land use may be suitable for the City, it is important to understand both the demographic and market context. To gain an understanding of the population, housing, and retail dynamics in the city, the project team reviewed Census data and projections collected through the ESRI Community Profile, the ESRI Retail MarketPlace profile, and information collected by Northern Economics (Memorandum – Wasilla Profile and Real Estate market Discussion, August 2, 2018) regarding the neighboring City of Wasilla. This information helped the project team form assumptions about the market context in the City and the wider Matanuska-Susitna Borough area.

Population Forecast

The population of the City is increasing at a steady rate and is projected to nearly double between 2020 and 2023. As can be seen in Table 2.5.a, the population in 2023 is estimated to be more than 8,000 people.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is projected to grow significantly, seeing nearly an 83 percent increase in population by 2045. This growth outpaces the growth of the State of Alaska, which is only projected to increase by 22 percent by 2045. These trends can be seen in Table 2.5.b.

Table 2.5.a: Population in the City of Palmer 2000-2023

| | 2000 | 2010 | 2018 | 2023 |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| City of Palmer | 4,216 | 5,937 | 7,392 | 8,154 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

Table 2.5.b: Projected State of Alaska and Matanuska-Susitna Borough Populations 2015-2045

| | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 | 2030 | 2035 | 2040 | 2045 | 2015-2045 Growth |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|
| State of Alaska | 737,625 | 771,529 | 802,352 | 829,620 | 854,104 | 877,134 | 899,825 | 162,200 |
| Population Growth Rate | | 4.6% | 4.0% | 3.4% | 3.0% | 2.7% | 2.6% | 22% |
| Matanuska-Susitna Borough | 100,178 | 113,415 | 124,144 | 141,247 | 155,442 | 169,418 | 182,836 | 82,658 |
| Population Growth Rate | | 13.2% | 12.1% | 11.1% | 10.0% | 9.0% | 7.9% | 83% |

Source: Northern Economics - ADOLWD 2016

Cities across the country are experiencing a trend of aging population, and Palmer is no exception. Table 2.5.c shows that the City is experiencing a slight increase in population above the age of 65. Although the City as a whole may be aging, data shows that the median age of the City's population in 2018 was 33.5 years old. According to the 2010 Census, most people (76.8 percent) lived in family households.

The City is also projected to experience an increase in overall household income and home values. While the median household income is projected to increase from \$76,638 in 2018 to \$93,399 in 2023, the median home value is projected to increase from \$238,912 in 2018 to \$285,266 in 2023. The majority of residents work in white collar jobs, with the main employment sectors in 2018 being services, public administration, and retail.

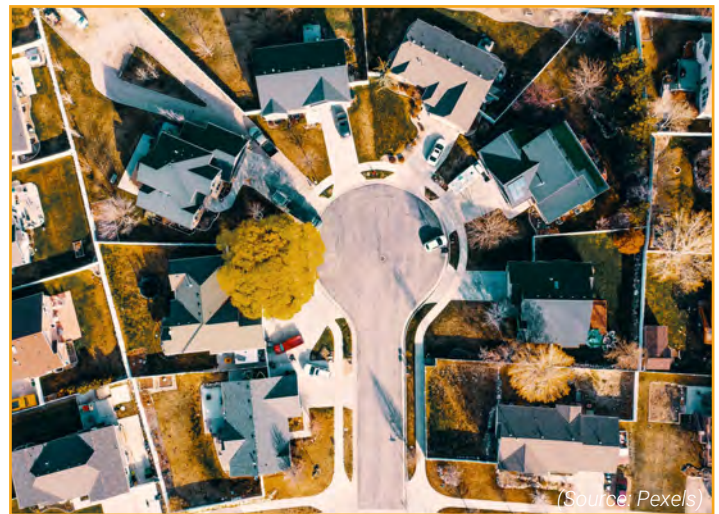
Table 2.5.c: Percentage of Population by Age 2010 - 2023

| Age | 2010 | 2018 | 2023 |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 0-14 | 23.8% | 22.3% | 22.5% |
| 15-64 | 66.6% | 66.7% | 64.8% |
| 65+ | 9.6% | 11% | 12.6% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

Housing

Consistent with what one would expect given the projected increase in population, the number of households is expected to nearly double between 2000 and 2023. The data suggests that there may be a current and projected undersupply of housing units to meet the demand from the household and population growth. Based on an average household size of 2.79 in 2018 and a total population of 7,392 we would expect a demand for 2,843 housing units. However, the supply of existing housing units in 2018 was only 2,533. This trend is projected to continue in 2023. A vacancy rate of 1 percent in 2018 and a projected vacancy rate of 1 percent in 2023 also suggest that housing supply is not meeting demand. Table 2.5.d shows overall owner and renter occupied housing units, as well as vacant units, while Table 2.5.e shows current and projected households and average household size.



Top: Example of a single-family residential neighborhood

Table 2.5.d: Total Housing Units – owner, renter and vacant

| | 2000 | 2010 | 2018 | 2023 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total Housing Units | 1,511 | 2,281 | 2,522 | 2,820 |
| Owner Occupied Housing Units | 67.6% | 54.5% | 63.1% | 64.5% |
| Renter Occupied Housing Units | 26.8% | 38.1% | 35.9% | 34.5% |
| Vacant Housing Units | 5.6% | 7.4% | 1% | 1% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

Table 2.5.e: Current and Projected Households and Household Size

| | 2000 | 2010 | 2018 | 2023 |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of Households | 1,427 | 2,113 | 2,527 | 2,793 |
| Average Household Size | 2.83 | 2.61 | 2.79 | 2.80 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

The average household size is roughly 2.8 people; however, data in Table 2.5.f shows that more than half the population is living in 1- to 2-person households. This could indicate a potential demand for smaller (1 to 2 bedroom) housing units.

Finally, while most of the population lives in owner-occupied housing units, the percentage of people living in rental units is projected to increase from 26.8 percent

in 2000 to 34.5 percent in 2023. Table 2.5.g shows that between 2018 and 2023, home prices are projected to rise by 22 percent while wages are only projected to rise by 19.7 percent. This data could indicate that the cost of buying a home is outpacing the average income, while only slightly. This could also be contributing to the increasing number of people choosing to live in rental housing.

Table 2.5.f: 2010 Households by Size

| People Living in a Household | Percent of Total Households |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Person Household | 30.6% |
| 2 Person Household | 26.8% |
| 3 Person Household | 16.2% |
| 4 Person Household | 13.3% |
| 5 Person Household | 7.8% |
| 6 Person Household | 3.1% |
| 7+ Person House-hold | 2.2% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

Table 2.5.g: Average Household Income and Average Home Value

| | 2018 | 2023 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Average House-hold Income | \$94,282 | \$112,871 |
| Percent Increase (Income) | | 19.7% |
| Average Home Value | \$286,499 | \$349,945 |
| Percent Increase (Home Value) | | 22.1% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

Retail Conditions

Analyzing retail conditions can guide economic development efforts. Retail leakage and surplus show in which sectors and services the City is gaining business from other areas, and where the City may be losing out on business to other municipalities. Figure 2.5.1 shows the sectors with the highest leakage factor, including electronics and appliance stores, clothing and clothing accessories stores, and motor vehicle and parts dealers. The high leakage factor indicates that people are traveling outside the City to access these goods and services. Figure 2.5.1 also shows the industry sectors with the highest surplus value, indicating that people from outside Palmer are spending money in the City at establishments such as food and beverage stores and gasoline stations.

Breaking down the industry sectors even further, Figure 2.5.2 shows that the City is not providing a market for car dealers, furniture stores, electronics and appliance stores, lawn and garden equipment stores, clothing and clothing stores, florists, electronic shopping opportunities, and special food services. We can also see that the City is experiencing a surplus of stores and retail opportunities that generally serve a wider area, such as grocery stores, gas stations, and restaurants. Two possible conclusions about economic development are that the City should continue to support businesses that are proven to attract business from other areas, and that the City should support the creation of businesses providing needed goods and services as indicated by a high leakage factor.



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)

Top: Example of national chain retail
Lower: Example of big-box commercial

FIGURE 2.5.1 - LEAKAGE/SURPLUS FACTOR BY INDUSTRY SUBSECTOR (PALMER 2017)

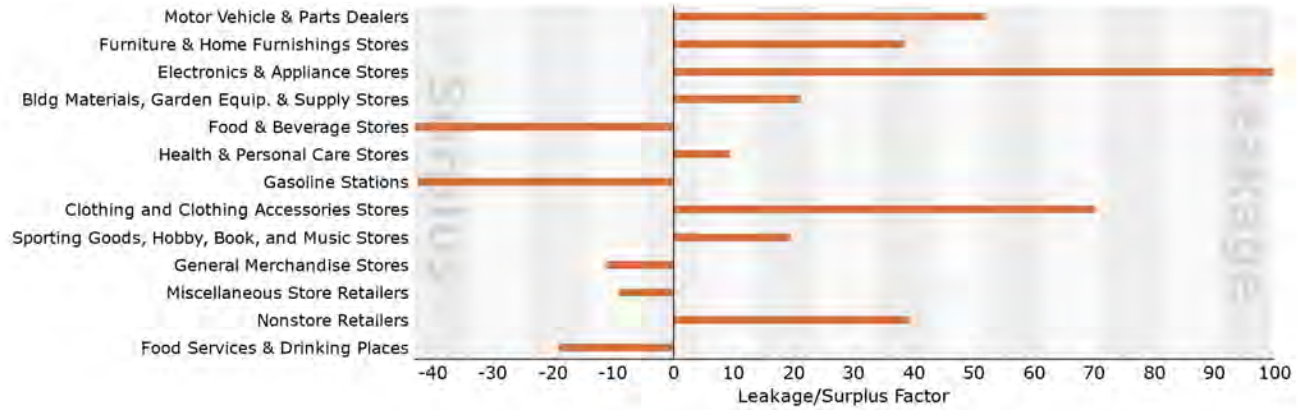
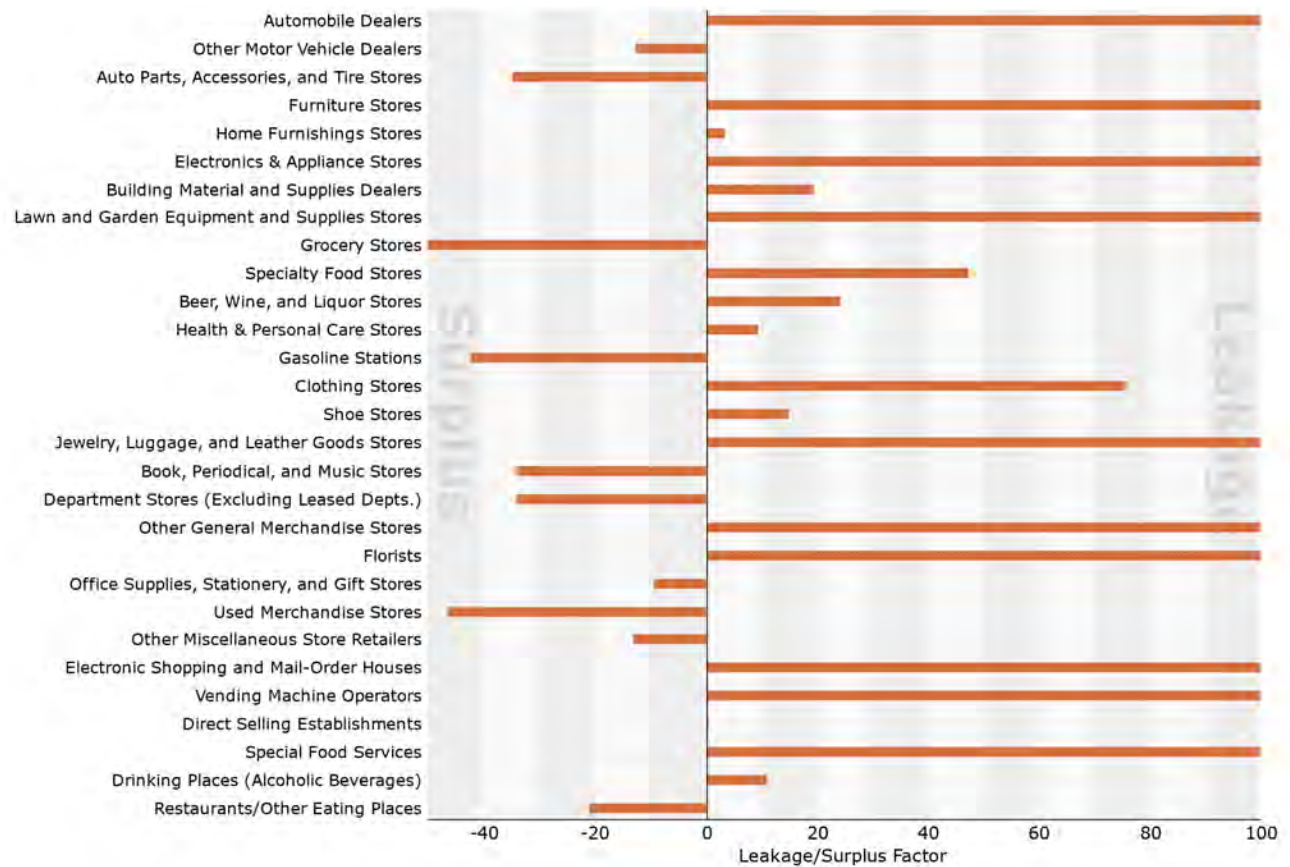


FIGURE 2.5.2 - LEAKAGE/SURPLUS FACTOR BY INDUSTRY GROUP (PALMER 2017)

(Source: Esri)



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CHAPTER 3:

CREATING THE VISION

- 3.1 Vision Overview
- 3.2 Guiding Principles
- 3.3 Community Outreach and Participant Desires
- 3.4 Community Preferences
- 3.5 Concept Alternatives



3.1 - VISION OVERVIEW

The City and the project team engaged residents to reach consensus on a community vision for the study area. They did this by facilitating roundtable discussions with local stakeholders, providing regular updates to City leaders, attending pop-up events, and hosting community meetings to collect input and allow the community to articulate its aspirations for East Downtown Palmer.

Through this engagement, the project team formalized a community vision for the AWP study area and the designated catalyst sites. The community's vision is to *redevelop East Downtown Palmer into a vibrant, mixed-use district with quality amenities, open space, and destinations that reflect the City's history and local culture.*

The following sections outline the community's guiding principles, community outreach efforts, participant design preferences, and desired outcomes for the study area.

“*Vision:
Redevelop East Downtown Palmer into a vibrant,
mixed-use district with quality amenities, open
space, and destinations that reflect the City's
history and local culture.*”



(Source: Kari Shea | Unsplash)

3.2 - GUIDING PRINCIPLES

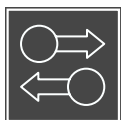
Early in the AWP process, the community established a set of guiding principles that reflect local desires for the study area in terms of character, land uses, amenities, and urban design. The project team used these guiding principles to influence and shape the conceptual planning for the catalyst sites and adjacent areas. The principles are as follows:



Economic Vitality: Support Downtown Palmer to keep the area viable and prosperous as a center within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.



Mixed-Use Redevelopment: Provide opportunities for mixed-use development including housing, office, retail, park and open space, and entertainment opportunities in Downtown Palmer and in the Mat-Maid Block.



Connectivity: Encourage transportation access and connections for all modes into and around Downtown Palmer and the Mat-Maid Block. Balance the needs of parking and automobile circulation with bicyclists and pedestrians.



Housing Diversity: Provide high-quality and diverse housing stock including a mix of medium and high-density units to meet the demands of all populations and households in Palmer.



Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces: Connect existing local and regional parks, open spaces, and trails to each other and Downtown Palmer. Support for these amenities will provide opportunities for residents and tourists to support the diverse shops and restaurants.



(Source: Stantec)

3.3 - COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PARTICIPANT DESIRES

Community outreach and engagement was critical to the planning process. The project team engaged stakeholders, elected officials, and the general public during meetings in March, June and October of 2019. This engagement shaped the community’s vision and guides the planning recommendations and concept plan ideas for the catalyst site and the railway corridor. The initial concept plan alternatives are shown in Section 3.5, and the final, recommended conceptual plan is explained in Chapter 4. The following subsections outline the community outreach events, participant feedback, and the community’s desires.

Public Meetings

The City hosted two public meetings to share project information and to gather insight from the general public. The City wanted to understand the public’s desire for future services and redevelopment types in East Downtown Palmer. The City engaged the public through candid conversations, interactive planning exercises, and surveys pertaining to redevelopment scenarios. The team also participated in regular project updates with the local radio station (Big Cabbage Radio) to help communicate the objectives of the project and to solicit



Top: Pop-up public engagement event during Palmer’s Colony Days Celebration in 2019

Lower: Project planners promoting the AWP process on Big Cabbage Radio

Public Meeting #1

On March 14, 2019, the project team held a public meeting at the Historic Depot to introduce the AWP process and gain an understanding for the community's desires for the area. Generally, participants expressed a need for improved bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, quaint mixed-use development intermingled with public outdoor areas, and a departure from auto-oriented development. There was a lot of discussion about the unique, eclectic characteristics that define the community and a desire to build on those assets, including extension of existing trails, a focus on local businesses, and expansion of events and activities that attract locals and visitors alike. Community members raised concerns regarding dangerous conditions for walking and biking, particularly with ice and snow drifting over sidewalks during cold weather months. Participants wanted redevelopment plans to celebrate the City's history and showcase its artistic and artisan character.



Public Meeting #2

At the beginning of June 2019, the project team hosted a pop-up station at the City's Colony Days event. During this activity, project representatives provided an overview of the proposed redevelopment concepts, solicited input from attendees, and advertised for Public Meeting #2.

On June 10, 2019, the project team held the second public meeting at the Historic Depot to solicit feedback on three concept plan alternatives for the Mat-Maid Block and railway corridor. The three concept alternatives were entitled "Concept A: Limited Development," "Concept B: New Investment," and "Concept C: Full Development" to reflect varying land use intensities on the Mat-Maid Block.

Those who gave comments generally supported the more intense "Full Redevelopment" concept. Comments generally pushed for an increase in green space and decrease in areas dedicated to driving and parking. Participants expressed excitement for an amphitheater/ stage and recreation features in one concept, as well as a desire to include more programming such as a fire pit, skate park, and roller-skating area. Participants supported the introduction of quaint buildings, with opposition to three-story structures, and were in favor of development that would help preserve view sheds of neighboring mountains.



Top: Public meeting participants providing feedback to the AWP planning concepts
Lower: Community engagement station at Palmer's Colony Days Celebration

Stakeholder Engagement

The City chose to target a community stakeholder segment that included private property owners, developers, and real estate professionals. The project team scheduled a series of round table discussions with various stakeholder groups to have more in-depth dialogue on redevelopment planning and land use in the study area. Two meetings were held with each of those stakeholder groups at key AWP milestones. The groups were asked to provide insight with regards to their interests in the Mat-Maid Block and revitalizing Downtown Palmer. The following summarizes the meeting topics for each stakeholder group:

- **Property Owners Meeting & Topics:** At the first meeting with property owners, they were asked to provide insight into their use of property, the types of businesses that they run, the challenges that they face, and goals that they have with regards to their property and downtown as a whole. At the second meeting, the stakeholders were asked to review the development concepts and provide their insight with regards to the strengths and weaknesses of

each. They were asked to reflect on the access and phasing and which issues were most relevant to them.

- **Developer Meeting & Topics:** Developers were asked to reflect on recent developments in the area and to provide observations for what has worked well and what has not; they were asked what challenges developers face locally and about their vision for the downtown area. The project team asked developers to articulate any perceived regulatory challenges. At the second meeting, developers were asked if the development concepts reflected their vision for the site, about the strengths and weaknesses of each concept, and about the potential stimulation that such concepts might inspire.
- **Realtors/Brokers Meeting & Topics:** Real estate professionals were asked about the local market, which types of properties sell and which do not, and about the motivations of buyers. In the second meeting, they were asked to review the three development concepts and share how they thought that the market would react.

General Stakeholder Comments: Meetings #1

In the first set of stakeholder meetings, property owners, developers, and real estate professionals commented on the strengths that the City has to offer and the desire to build from those strengths. In summary, the feedback explained that the City is already a destination—it is a government hub, a cultural hub, and there are events and local shopping opportunities that bring people to town and make the City a great place to live. The following summarizes the key considerations expressed by the stakeholder groups:

- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Options** - Stakeholders said that opportunities to build from strengths include supporting the walkable and bikeable nature of the city – widening sidewalks and increasing bicycle connectivity to the neighborhoods north of downtown as well as the fairground and out to the airport. There were ideas brought up regarding creative connections to the fairgrounds using a recreational train, and bike connections to the airport so people could fly in from Anchorage and bike into the city center.
- **Anchorage Connections** – Many of the stakeholders expressed that connections to Anchorage in general were considered an opportunity. They affirmed that attracting people to relocate from Anchorage is

supported by lower housing costs and downtown Palmer's shopping and walkability.

- **Connection Challenges** – Stakeholders advised that east-west connections were considered a challenge. The railway corridor, while providing opportunities, also provides a barrier. It limits the number of streets that cross town in that direction, and subsequently disconnects the Mat-Maid Block and the surrounding government offices from the Downtown Core.
- **Affordability** – Stakeholders noted that continuing and improving affordability for both housing and start-up retail and industrial spaces was a concern. Stakeholders thought that maintaining affordability was important for supporting the vitality of Palmer as an eclectic, unique hub. People suggested to looking to other cities like Portland, Ft. Collins, and Scottsdale as comparable creative communities but wanted the City to be mindful of affordability.

General Stakeholder Comments: Meetings #2

In the second set of stakeholder meetings, participants commented on downtown's urban form including capital improvements, design, and amenities. The following summarizes the key considerations expressed by the stakeholder groups.

- **Accessibility Concerns** - Participants expressed a concern for accessibility. The need for connections to the north was reiterated, as were those related to east-west connections between the downtown subdistricts.
- **Parking Accommodation** – Stakeholders expressed their anxiety related to long-term availability for parking while there appears to be current surplus. They acknowledged that most parked cars are clustered around the courthouse during major proceedings and around the hotel. Some wondered if covered parking is necessary.
- **Development Pattern** – Participants stated their desire for a consistent development pattern, both with respect to the Mat-Maid Block and with relation to the larger downtown area. Participants requested the City achieve an integrated development style amongst redevelopment on the Mat-Maid block and the larger downtown context.
- **Open Space Availability** - Stakeholders said they appreciated the green spaces presented in the design concepts. They would like to maintain views of the mountains south and east.

Stakeholder Recommendations for the Catalyst Sites

Through the duration of the AWP process, stakeholders provided recommendations to guide the final concept plan for the three catalyst sites. Stakeholders wanted redevelopment plans to respond to the surrounding context, support the local culture, and create opportunity for business, recreation and quality of life. The following is a synopsis of the stakeholder recommendations for the redevelopment plans on the catalyst sites.

- **Connectivity** - Integrate greater connectivity into the downtown area in terms of street, sidewalk and trail improvements. Create a visual connection between the downtown subdistricts.
- **Mixed-use Development** - Develop the Mat-Maid Block with mixed-use opportunities. Mixed-use concepts allow different activities in a compatible way. Plan for commercial spaces for restaurants, stores and services on the street level. Plan for housing units on upper levels. Locate buildings close to the street to enhance comfort of the streetscape and “frame” center green spaces and parks.
- **Community Open Space** - Provide community parks and green spaces in the central area of the Mat-Maid Block. Parks and green spaces can provide community linkages to industrial and

commercial space and enhance the activity of the site for all residents. In addition to large, open areas for gathering, consider specialized areas to attract unique community activities such as: performance venues, community gardens, outdoor “tasting” rooms, specialized playgrounds and play features.

- **Historic Depot** - Develop the Depot as the “link” or “bridge” between Downtown and future redevelopment on the Mat-Maid Block. Continue to support community events and activities—support ongoing services at the “Community Center” for Palmer. Display historic railroad equipment and engines and embrace cold-weather activities and programming of outdoor areas for all seasons of the year. Establish the depot as the “hub and link” for the broader trail system to connect outlying areas such as the north commercial district and the fairgrounds. Remove tracks for more recreational opportunities.
- **Aesthetic and Placemaking** - Incorporate aesthetic treatments into the downtown space that reflect the character and design of the Mat-Maid redevelopment. On-street landscaping bump-outs provide additional areas for landscaping and beautification. Extend decorative light poles and site furnishings to reflect the industrial character and history of the community. Supplement seasonal banners to advertise events and activities and promote the identity of Palmer. Enliven the downtown framework with alley art depicting the artistic and cultural flair of the community and include representation of the visual arts through art-wrapped utility boxes.
- **Seasonal Adaptability** - Public spaces shouldn't be enjoyed only a few months out of the year; whereas, design should be approached in a way to promote livability in all seasons. Proposed concepts should address livability for all seasons in the following ways:
 1. Incorporate design strategies to block wind, particularly prevailing winds and downdrafts.
 2. Maximize exposure to sunshine through orientation and design. Use color to enliven the winterscape.
 3. Create visual interest with light, while being mindful of intensity, spread contrast and color.
 4. Design and provide infrastructure that supports desired winter life and improves comfort and access in cold weather.



(Source: Priscilla du Preez | Unsplash)

3.4 - COMMUNITY PREFERENCES

As a result of the project team’s community outreach efforts, clear preferences for design alternatives were identified. These preferences provided specific guidance for the development of the final concept plan for the catalyst site and the railway corridor, within the following areas.

Land Use

While most of the parcels within the study area are currently zoned for industrial purposes, majority feedback indicated that a preference for more mixed-use development options was desirable. Mixed-uses to support both commercial development (retail, restaurants, small businesses) alongside residential (condos, apartments, multi-family) would support greater activation of the Mat-Maid Block and support the needs and design preferences from residents who participated in the study. Although mixed-use development scenarios would also imply greater building density and increased building heights, the community indicated most support for those scenarios that would maintain critical viewsheds of the surrounding mountains and building types that reflect the historic character of Palmer.



(Source: Stantec)

Top: Example of outdoor gathering spaces that mix food/drink with performances and events.

Right: Example of new low-height mixed-use development; retail on street level and residential above (Seabrook, WA)



Top Left: Example of mixed-use building (Issaquah, WA) Top Right: Example of townhouse residential (Issaquah, WA)
 Center Left: Example of adaptive reuse of older buildings into retail (Issaquah, WA) Center Right: Example of flexible street level space for retail/office (Issaquah, WA). Lower: Example of makers/artisan business and restaurant (Tacoma, WA)

Transportation and Mobility

Vehicular connectivity is limited to a few street connections between the Downtown Core and the East Downtown Palmer subdistrict. Specifically, the Mat-Maid Block is segmented from more active downtown enclaves. Community and stakeholder feedback indicated a preference for scenarios that provide greater street connectivity, while also maintaining and improving existing pedestrian connections (trails, sidewalks) between the catalyst sites and the Downtown Core. Vehicular connectivity was discussed at-length with the existing property owner's stakeholder group, as specific concerns regarding right-of-way acquisition were raised amongst this group. After further discussion with key property owners, it was determined they would support the extension of Dogwood Avenue if existing parking stall counts could be maintained.

Amenities

In addition to preferred development types, community stakeholders also indicated the need to develop green space amenities to bring greater cohesiveness to the myriad of development types that currently exist within the study area. Stakeholders prefer outdoor parks and passive green spaces that can be activated by outdoor performance venues, play areas, trails, farmers markets and outdoor tasting rooms that might complement other area businesses. The project team also discussed design options that would provide four-season use of outdoor amenities through all months of the year—including cold winter months where temperatures are extreme and daylight hours are limited.



Top: Example of commercial district with street parking, landscaping, and wide sidewalks (Bremerton, WA)
Lower: Example of a multi-use pathway that links open space with other uses (Calgary, AB)

Top: Example of a community gathering space and small food vendors in a courtyard setting (Olympia, WA)
Lower: Example of public open space to support community events (Issaquah, WA)

Services

The community supported a mixed-use development scenario for the Mat-Maid Block. Recent discussions within the community have focused on livability for retirees and members of the baby-boomer generation. Participants supported options for low-maintenance housing that can be leased as short-term rentals (via platforms such as Vrbo and Air B&B). Participants also requested community-oriented businesses such as coffee shops, restaurants and neighborhood grocery stores. Walkability was a central idea in nearly all conversations; whereas, future uses, services, and public infrastructure should support a walking neighborhood character (e.g., sidewalks, neighborhood-oriented businesses, etc.).

Colors and Textures

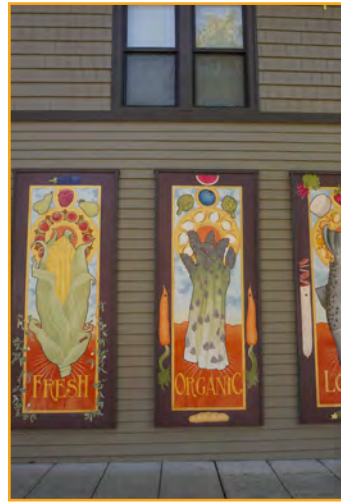
During all conversations with stakeholders, all groups emphasized the need for redevelopment of the catalyst sites to reflect the existing character and “quirkiness” that many find so endearing of Palmer. While specific design recommendations aren’t included in the final documentation of the plan, it is helpful to include recommendations for specific colors, textures and materials types that might be considered when development occurs. Keeping the authenticity of the site, and reflecting the true character of the community, will be integral to the success of redevelopment. Design cues for new buildings and improvements should be taken from natural elements as well as from the agricultural legacy of the colonists and industrial (repurposed) character of the existing structures within the Mat-Maid Block.



(Source: Pexels)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)

Top Left: Example of a local cafe/bakery
 Top Right: Example of a cooperative market (Portland, OR)
 Lower: Example of a neighborhood restaurant near residences (Tacoma, WA)

Images: Example of traditional building materials and a lively color palette



(Source: Daniel-Mccullough | Unsplash)

3.5 - CONCEPTUAL PLAN ALTERNATIVES

The project team created three conceptual plan alternatives for the catalyst site and the railway corridor. These conceptual alternatives reflect the guiding principles and the community's preferences regarding land use, mobility, amenities and services. These concepts were shared with the general public at the pop-up event during the Colony Days celebration and the second community meeting. These conceptual alternatives were also shared with the individual stakeholder groups at the second round of meetings. These initial conceptual plan alternatives proposed most redevelopment elements on the Mat-Maid Block with only minor enhancements to the railway corridor. The following describes each conceptual alternative.

Concept A: "Limited Development"

The objective for Concept A would be to incrementally develop the site with the least amount of improvement to existing infrastructure. This would include the following key design themes:

- Develop two 3-story, mixed-use structures.
- Provide surface parking for patrons, residents, and community activities in green space.
- Establish green space with playgrounds, trail connectivity, and community gardens.
- For community connectivity, provide pedestrian trail connection across the railway corridor into downtown and provide trail linkages and pedestrian trails along the perimeter of the site.

Concept A included a design scenario with the lightest approach to development. This concept addressed pedestrian connectivity between the Downtown Core and the Mat-Maid Block but stopped short of providing

a vehicular extension of Dogwood Avenue across the railway corridor. Within the Mat-Maid Block, minimal development was recommended, with proposed re-development only occurring at the southeast corner and along the Dogwood Avenue frontage.

Overall, community reception to Concept A determined that this approach was too minimal, and this concept received the lowest level of support. Most stakeholders communicated that, if development is going to occur within the Mat-Maid Block, a higher density and more extensive redevelopment approach was desired.

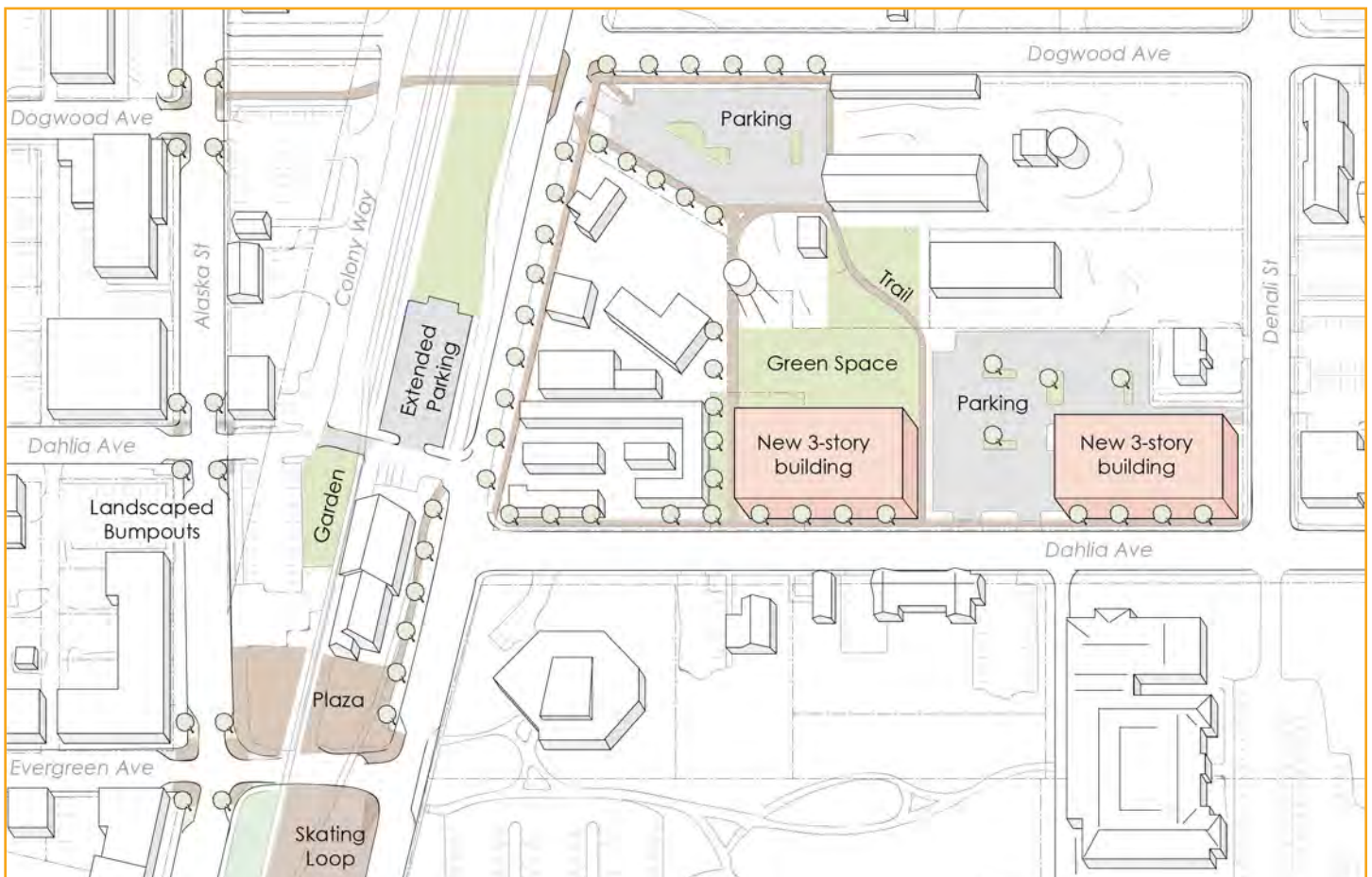


FIGURE 3.5.1 - CONCEPT PLAN ALTERNATIVE A: "LIMITED DEVELOPMENT"

(Source: Stantec)

Concept B: "New Investment"

The objective for Concept B was to take a more active role in developing the site with a few improvements to surrounding community infrastructure. This included the following key design themes:

- Develop three 3-story, mixed-use structures with commercial on the lower level and upper-level housing units.
- Provide surface parking for patrons and residents and community activities in green space.
- Establish green space with playgrounds, trail connectivity, and community gardens.
- Develop cohesive plaza space near the Historic Depot.
- Add a new street connection between the Downtown Core and the Mat-Maid Block to improve vehicular connectivity.

Concept B included development recommendations with a moderate approach to development. This concept addressed pedestrian connectivity between the Downtown Core and the Mat-Maid Block, which shows an extension of Dogwood Avenue across the railway corridor. Within the site, moderate development was recommended, with infill buildings occurring in the eastern portions of the block along the Dahlia and Denali street frontages.

Many stakeholders appreciated the increased connectivity of Dogwood and pedestrian connections, and mixed-use development with new buildings within the Mat-Maid Block. However, there was participant concern for the building scale in terms of height and impeded views to the mountains.

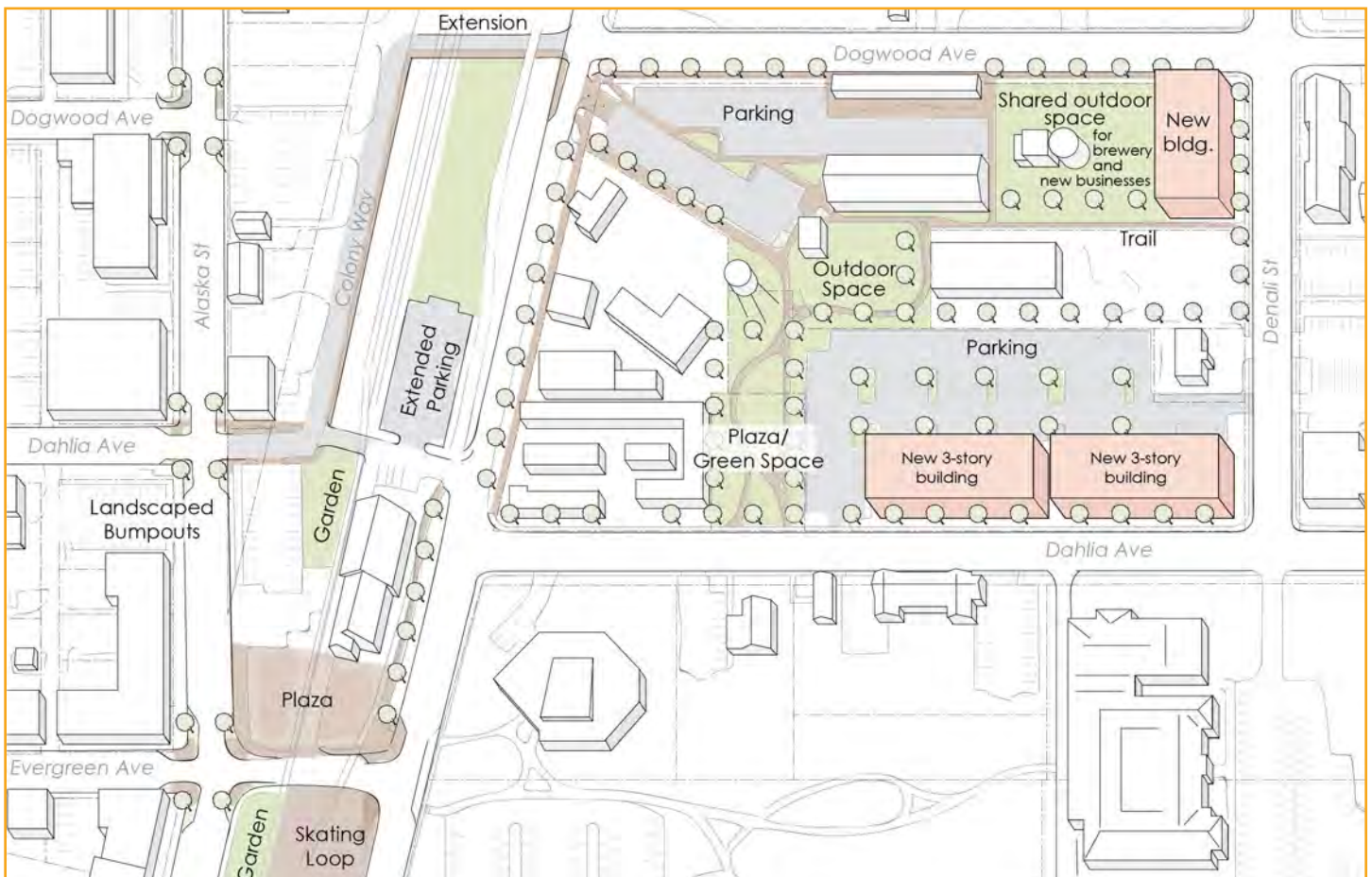


FIGURE 3.5.2 - CONCEPT PLAN ALTERNATIVE B: "NEW INVESTMENT"

(Source: Stantec)

Concept C: "Full Development"

The objective for Concept C was to maximize site redevelopment opportunities with the most changes to existing community infrastructure. This included the following key design themes:

- Develop five 3-story, mixed-use structures with commercial on lower level and upper story housing units.
- Provide surface parking for patrons and residents and community activities in green space.
- Establish green space with playgrounds, trail connectivity, and community gardens.
- Develop a cohesive plaza space near the Historic Depot.
- Add a new street connection between the Downtown Core and the Mat-Maid Block to improve vehicular connectivity.

Concept C included design recommendations with the heaviest approach to development. Like Concept B, this concept addressed connectivity between the Downtown Core and the Mat-Maid Block and included extension of Dogwood Avenue across the railway corridor. Within the Mat-Maid Block, extensive redevelopment was recommended, with new buildings occurring along the Dahlia and Denali street frontages.

Stakeholders preferred the more dramatic redevelopment approach of the Mat-Maid Block within Concept C and the increased green space along the railway corridor. Furthermore, many stakeholders indicated support for a shared park and amenities south of the Palmer water tower.

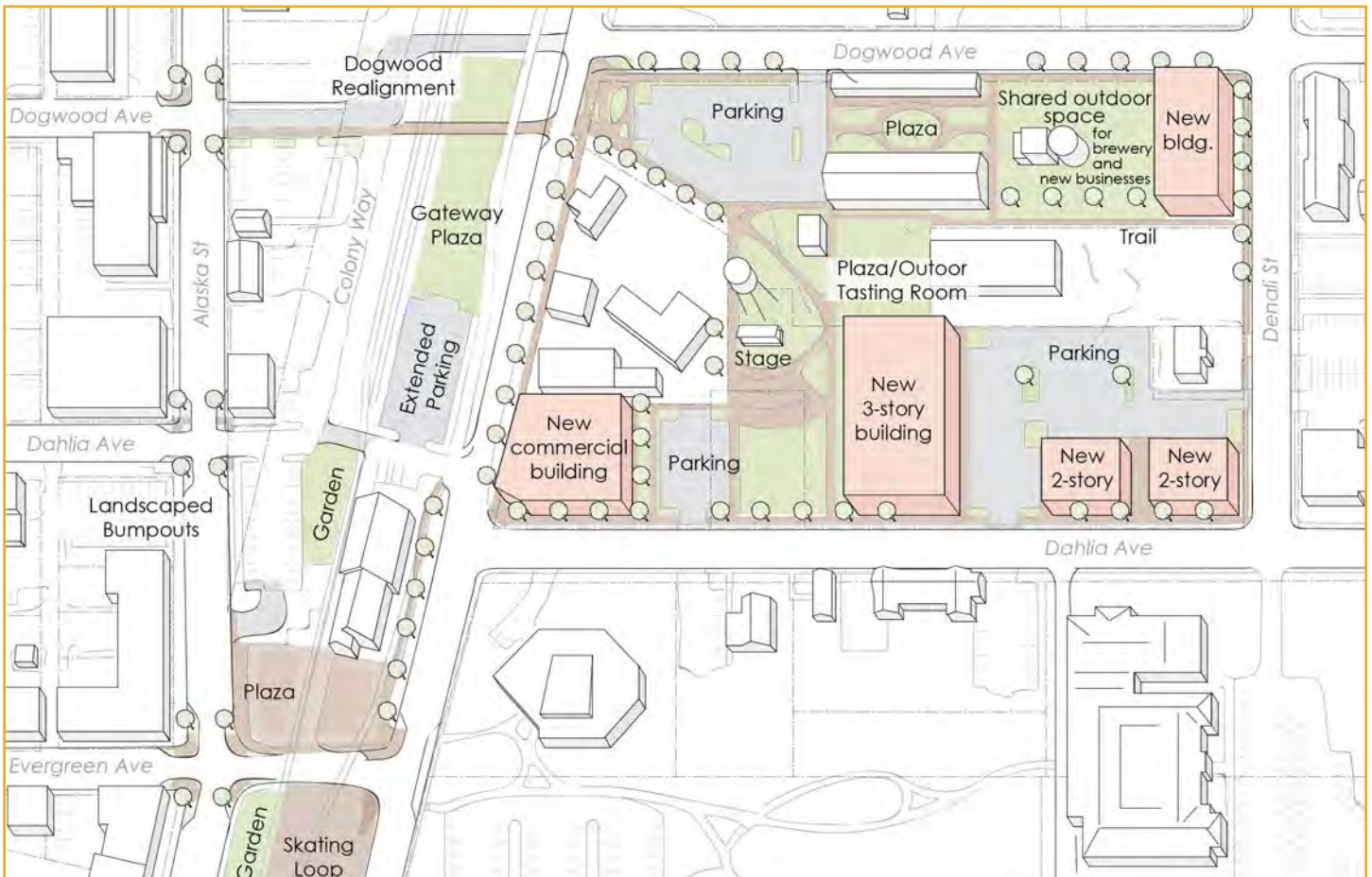


FIGURE 3.5.3 - CONCEPT PLAN ALTERNATIVE C: "FULL DEVELOPMENT"

(Source: Stantec)

Locally Preferred Concept Plan Components

After considering the three conceptual plan alternatives, community preferences leaned heavily toward Concept B and C—with a strong predilection toward significant infrastructure and site improvements. To address this feedback, the project team used the community’s preferred elements and recommendations to create the final conceptual plan for the AWP catalyst sites. The final conceptual plan is discussed in Chapter 4. The following lists the community’s desires for the final conceptual plan.

- 1. Mixed-Use Buildings** - Develop two new multi-story, mixed-use structures with commercial uses on the lower level and residential units on the upper story. New structures will be oriented as closely as possible to the public rights-of-way to reinforce the pedestrian streetscape experience and to define the neighborhood corridor. Buildings should contain materials and colors that reflect the unique character and heritage of the City’s community.
- 2. Future Infill Options:** Create an option to develop a third multi-story mixed-use structure at the corner of Dogwood Avenue and Denali Street, which would provide greater intensity of use for the existing parcel and may be developed with compatible uses to complement the Matanuska Brewing Company, which currently occupies industrial structures within this block.
- 3. Parking Lots:** Provide additional off-street parking lots within the interior portions of the Mat-Maid Block for greater accessibility to community green spaces, as well as to commercial and residential units within newly developed structures. Expand off-street parking areas at the Matanuska Brewing Company to support expanded business operations.
- 4. Community Green Space:** Construct community green space areas and park lands in the central portions of the Mat-Maid Block to support neighborhood activities and community festivals. Orient performance venues and gathering spaces near the iconic Palmer water tower and provide pedestrian connections to link other adjacent sites to the Mat-Maid Block.
- 5. Outdoor Event Space:** Provide opportunities for outdoor eating areas, tasting rooms and complementary green spaces that can be used year-round by business patrons on the Mat-Maid Block and the Matanuska Brewing Company.
- 6. Street and Trail Extensions:** Extend Dogwood Avenue westward into the Downtown Core while maintaining the current number of off-street parking stalls to downtown patrons. Develop pedestrian trails and connections around the perimeter of the Mat-Maid Block, through the block, and into the Downtown Core to support pedestrian and bicycle safety for all residents and visitors. Develop a higher-visibility pedestrian trailhead at the corner of Dogwood Avenue and S. Valley Way to serve as a pedestrian hub for the downtown region.
- 7. Streetscaping:** Improve downtown streetscape appearance with new landscaping, art installations, and trees on S. Colony Way/Alaska Street.
- 8. Railway Corridor:** Maintain rail tracks north of the depot to facilitate occasional use but terminate tracks south of the proposed Dogwood Avenue extension to maintain north/south pedestrian trail use. Maintain existing community park amenities south of Evergreen Avenue and the Historic Depot. Expand community park opportunities to provide increased continuity with other outdoor amenities within downtown.
- 9. Farmer’s Market Pavilion:** Add a formal covered farmer’s market pavilion north of the Historic Depot and expand vehicular parking and circulation within the site.
- 10. Plaza Space:** Develop a cohesive joint plaza and railroad-themed play area south of the Historic Depot to support seasonal festivals and year-round use and interest by residents. Develop this space to merge activities and aesthetics of the Downtown Core with East Downtown Palmer.



CHAPTER 4: CONCEPT PLAN AND PROJECT LIST

- 4.1 Concept Plan and Projects Overview
- 4.2 Concept Plan
- 4.3 Project List



4.1 - CONCEPTUAL PLAN AND PROJECTS OVERVIEW

The community's vision is to *redevelop East Downtown Palmer into a vibrant, mixed-use district with quality amenities, open space, and destinations that reflect the City's history and local culture*. To support this vision, the project team created a final, locally preferred conceptual plan for the three designated catalyst sites. The project team used public and stakeholder feedback towards the initial conceptual plan alternatives to create this final conceptual plan.

The final conceptual plan includes several proposed improvements on the Mat-Maid Block, along the railway corridor, and around the Historic Depot building. The project team also created a project list that calls

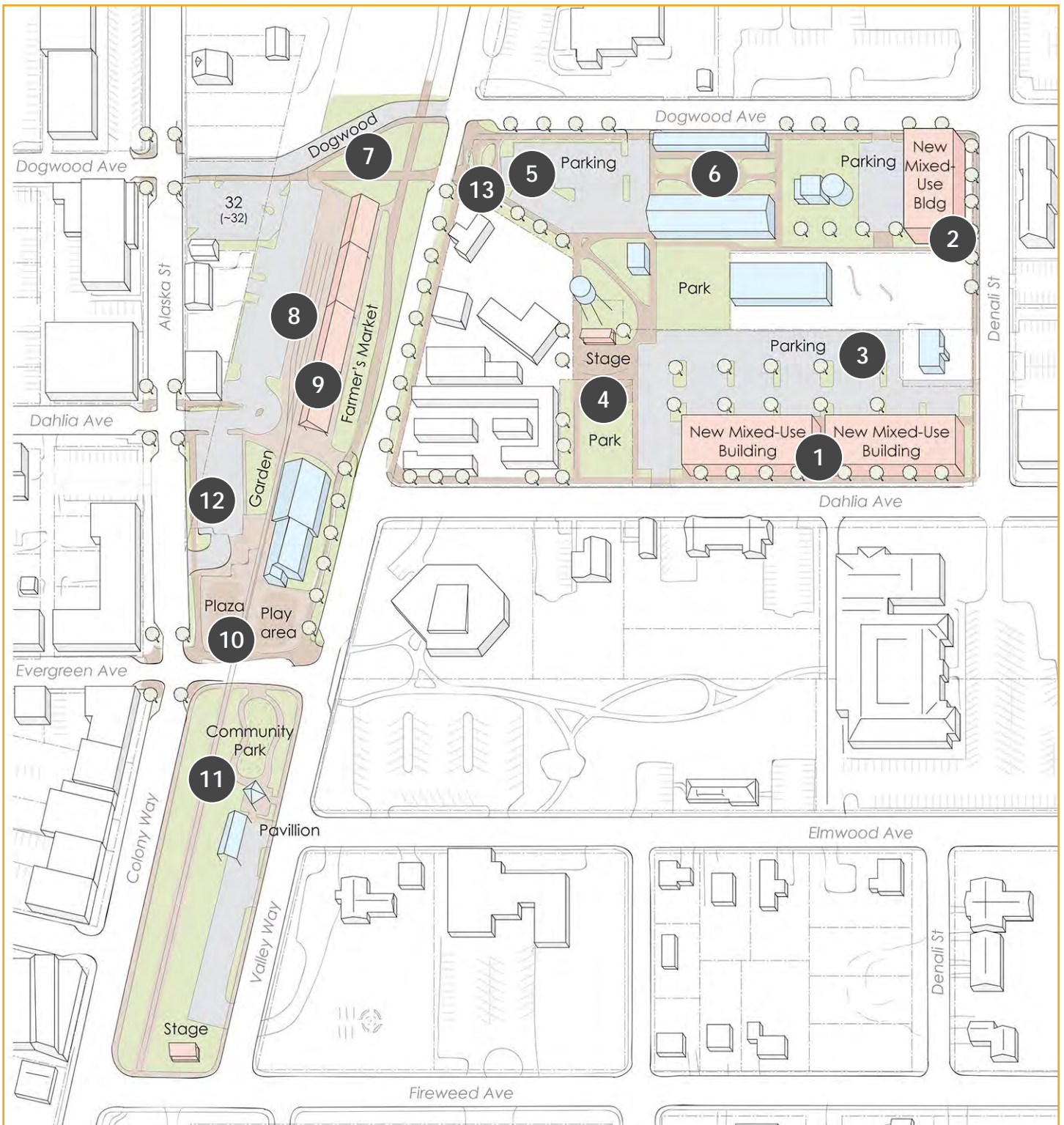
out specific elements and capital improvements that are depicted on the conceptual plan. Together, the conceptual plan and the corresponding project list establish a redevelopment scenario for catalyst site and the railway corridor. Chapter 5 lists an action Plan for the City to implement the conceptual plan and the associated projects. Moving forward, the City can support the ideas from the conceptual plan/project list through regulatory amendments, capital improvement plans, and marketing efforts to private investors. The following sections describe the conceptual plan and the project list.

4.2 - CONCEPTUAL PLAN

The conceptual plan depicts the long-range vision for redevelopment on the Mat-Maid Block, the Historic Depot, and railway corridor properties in terms of future land uses, open space areas, and building locations. Redevelopment, community gathering space, and adaptive reuse are the common themes in the conceptual plan. The conceptual plan calls for future infill development in terms of new mixed-use buildings. The conceptual plan includes several outdoor gathering areas to support community events

and passive recreation. Finally, the conceptual plan establishes opportunities for the adaptive reuse of the area's heritage structures and to repurpose them for new tenants and community landmarks. The following summarizes the conceptual plan elements within the catalyst site and the railway corridor.

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



LEGEND

- # Conceptual Plan Project Reference Number (See Table 4.3.a)
- Adaptive Reuse of existing structures
- New Infill Structures
- Enhanced Open Space Areas

FIGURE 4.2.1 - CONCEPTUAL PLAN: EAST DOWNTOWN PALMER AWP CATALYST SITES

See Table 4.3.a for the corresponding Conceptual Plan Project List (Source: Stantec)

Mat-Maid Block

The community envisions that the Mat-Maid Block would redevelop as a distinct mixed-use destination that evokes the City's artisan crafts and heritage. This vision includes adaptive reuse of the block's heritage buildings (e.g., old warehouse structures and the water tower). It would also include new infill buildings that architecturally reflect the City's past in terms of materials, colors, and facade design. Most of all, the vision is for the block to grow with community-oriented uses and businesses that promote civic gathering and celebration.

- **Open Space:** The Mat-Maid Block would redevelop around a community green central to the block with park segments that connect to the public rights-of-way. The iconic Palmer water tower rests central to the green and buildings would frame the space. The green would include a stage for planned performances. In a sense, the green would become the "community's backyard". The adjacent uses can use the green as a gathering space, event center, and focal point. Other smaller, intimate outdoors spaces would develop throughout the block.
- **Adaptive Reuse:** Private investors would transform the original warehouse structures into new commercial spaces with experiential business enterprises (e.g., restaurants, breweries, art galleries, and other artisan trades). As investors and tenants repurpose these structures, they would be mindful to preserve the original building style and architectural forms (e.g., facade materials/colors, roof forms, and doors/windows).
- **Infill Mixed-Use Buildings:** Other private investors would develop mixed-use infill buildings along the block's periphery. New buildings would be oriented to adjacent streets to reflect downtown's historic urban form. Buildings would be multi-level complement downtown's original urban scale and protect mountain views. The ground level would support active uses such as restaurants, retail, and business services. The upper floors may support housing units, lodging, and/or offices.
- **Parking:** Investors would develop off-street, surface parking lots concurrent with infill building construction and adaptive reuse projects. These parking lots would be sited to the side or rear of the buildings that they serve and would be screened from street view via landscaping and architectural elements. On-street parking would remain on the adjacent roadways that abut the Mat-Maid Block.



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)

Top: Example of local restaurant with outdoor seating to activate the streetscape (Issaquah, WA)

Lower: Example of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings interconnected with pedestrian pathways (Issaquah, WA)



(Source: Prellwitz Chillinski Associates |Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)

Top: Example of commercial buildings oriented around an outdoor community green space (Lynnfield, MA)
 Lower Left: Example of a pedestrian gateway to community open space behind downtown buildings (Issaquah, WA)
 Lower Right: Example of a local brewery with residential on the upper floors (Tacoma, WA)

Railway Corridor and Historic Depot

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

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



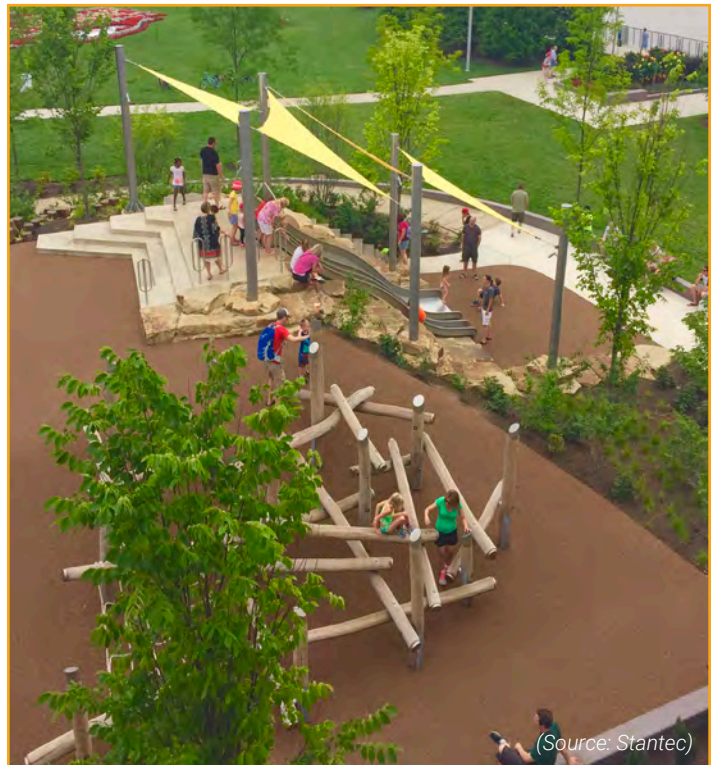
Top: Example of a public Farmer’s Market building (Olympia, WA)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)



(Source: Stantec)

Top: Palmer's Colony Days Event as example of community events in the railway corridor and adjacent streets
Lower Left: Example of a public stage structure in community park
Lower Right: Example of a play area in a downtown linear park (Cincinnati, OH)



(Source: Unsplash)

4.3 - PROJECT LIST

The conceptual plan includes several components that would create a redevelopment scenario with vibrant downtown destinations. These components correspond to a set of projects that would create an attractive community environment for businesses, residents, and visitors. These projects would lay the foundation for future development and capital improvements in the AWP focus area. The following table lists the key projects identified on the AWP Concept Plan.

Table 4.3.a – Conceptual Plan Project List

| Number Reference | Project | Description |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Mixed-Use Development | Develop two new multi-story mixed-use structures with commercial zoning on the lower level and residential units on the upper story. New structures would be oriented as closely as possible to the right-of-way to reinforce pedestrian streetscape experience and define the neighborhood corridor. Buildings are recommended to be constructed of materials and colors that reflect the unique character and heritage of the Palmer community. |
| 2 | Mixed-Use Development (future) | Explore the option to develop a third multi-story mixed-use structure at the corner of Dogwood Avenue and Denali Street, which would provide greater intensity of use for the existing parcel and may be developed with compatible uses to complement the Matanuska Brewing Company, which currently occupies industrial structures within this block. |
| 3 | Off-Street Parking (A) | Provide additional off-street parking lots within the interior portions of the site for greater accessibility to community green spaces as well as to commercial and residential units within newly developed structures. |

Top: Example of local restaurant with roll-up doors for connections to the outdoors and adjoining green space

Table 4.3.a – Conceptual Plan Project List

| Number Reference | Project | Description |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| 4 | Community Green Space | Construct community green space areas and park lands in central portions of the site to support neighborhood activities and community festivals. Orient performance venues and gathering spaces near the iconic Palmer water tower and provide pedestrian connections to link other adjacent sites to the Mat-Maid Block. |
| 5 | Off-Street Parking (B) | Expand off-street parking areas at the Matanuska Brewing Company to support expanded business operations. Develop higher-visibility pedestrian trailhead at the corner of Dogwood Avenue and Valley Way to serve as a pedestrian hub for the downtown region. |
| 6 | Outdoor Gathering Spaces | Provide opportunities for outdoor eating areas, tasting rooms and complementary green spaces that can be used year-round by patrons of the Mat-Maid site and the Matanuska Brewing Company. |
| 7 | Dogwood Ave. Extension | Study the feasibility to extend Dogwood Avenue westward into Downtown Palmer and expand the existing Valley Inn parking area to maintain the current number of off-street parking stalls provided to patrons of the downtown district. |
| 8 | Alaska Railroad Tracks | Maintain Alaska Railroad tracks north of the Depot to facilitate occasional use but terminate tracks south of the proposed Dogwood Avenue extension to maintain north/south pedestrian trail use. |
| 9 | Farmer’s Market | Develop a formal covered farmer’s market pavilion north of the Depot and expand vehicular parking and circulation within the site. |
| 10 | Depot Plaza and Playground | Develop a cohesive joint plaza and railroad-themed play area south of the Depot to support seasonal festivals and year-round use and interest by residents. Develop this space to merge activities and aesthetics of west downtown Palmer with east downtown Palmer. |
| 11 | Maintain Existing Park | Maintain existing community park amenities south of Evergreen Avenue and the Depot and expand community park opportunities to provide increased continuity with other outdoor amenities within the downtown district. |
| 12 | Downtown Streetscaping | Improve downtown streetscaping with improved landscaping, art installations, tree plantings, and planters on Colony Way and Alaska Street. |
| 13 | Pedestrian Trails | Develop pedestrian trails and connections around the perimeter of the Mat-Maid Block, through the Mat-Maid Block, and into downtown to support pedestrian and bicycle safety for all residents and visitors. |

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CHAPTER 5: ACTION PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

5.1 Implementation Overview

5.2 Action Plan

5.3 Potential Fundings Sources



(Source: Pexels)

5.1 - IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

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

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

5.2 - ACTION PLAN

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

Table 5.2.a: Palmer AWP Action Plan

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

Table 5.2.a: Palmer AWP Action Plan

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

Table 5.2.a: Palmer AWP Action Plan

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



(Source: Josh Appel | Unsplash)

5.3 - POTENTIAL FUNDINGS SOURCES

The AWP process identified catalyst projects and several capital improvements that will support future reinvestment in the AWP study area. There are numerous state and federal funding sources that may help finance the capital projects described throughout this plan. The City should work with other agencies, departments, and property owners to identify specific funding sources that are appropriate for each project. The following lists potential state and federal funding sources to support the revitalization of the study area and the public improvements depicted in the conceptual plan.

Table 5.3.a - Potential Federal Funding Sources

| Funder | Program | Program Details | Funds | Application Cycle |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Environmental Cleanup Funding Sources | | | | |
| US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) | Cleanup Grants | Funding for eligible entities to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites. An applicant must own the site for which it is requesting funding. The performance period for these grants is 3 years. The grant can cover one or multiple sites. Website: https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/types-brownfields-grant-funding#tab-4 | Up to \$500K, a 20% match is required | December annually |
| EPA | Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grants | RLF Grants provide funding for a grant recipient to capitalize a RLF and to provide subawards to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites. RLF programs are designed to operate for many years with multiple sites. Website: https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/types-brownfields-grant-funding#tab-3 | Up to \$1 million | Unknown (no 2019 solicitation) |
| Transportation Funding Sources | | | | |
| US Department of Transportation (DOT) | Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) | Transportation improvement projects including bicycle and pedestrian elements and intermodal projects. Website: https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/about | At least \$1 million with a 20% match | April Annually |
| DOT | Bus and Bus Facility Grant | Federal resources for states and direct recipients to replace, rehabilitate and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities. Website: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=306423 | Varies, a 20% match is required | Solicitations Annually |
| Federal Transit Administration | Urbanized Area Formula Program | Provides grants for public transportation capital, planning, job access and reverse commute projects including bicycle routes to transit, bike racks, shelters and equipment for public transportation vehicles. https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/urbanized-area-formula-grants-5307 Website: https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/urbanized-area-formula-grants-5307 | Varies, 1 20% match is required | Solicitations Annually |

Table 5.3.a - Potential Federal Funding Sources

| Funder | Program | Program Details | Funds | Application Cycle |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| DOT | Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning | Funds for planning transit-oriented development and traffic calming, to improve transportation efficiencies and reduce the impact on the environment. Website: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=305503 | Up to \$2 million | Due in July Annually |
| Alaska Department of Natural Resources | Recreational Trails Program | Provides reimbursable, matching funds to develop and repair recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. The Recreational Trails Program also provides funds for trail related environmental protection, safety and educational projects. Website: http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trails.htm | TBD, Currently updating application documents | TBD, Currently updating application documents |

Housing and Neighborhood Development Funding Sources

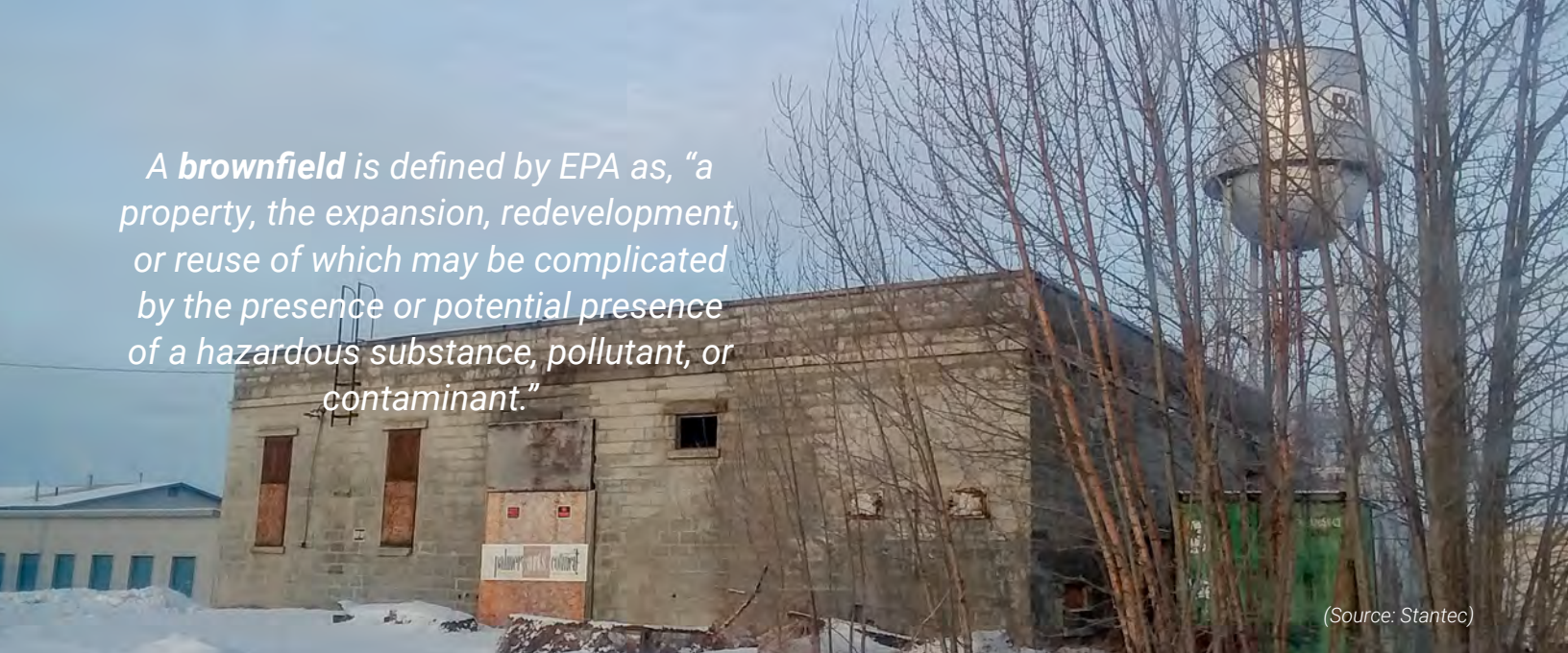
| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--------------------|---|
| US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) | Community Development Block Grant | Funds for public improvements and housing development including streets, neighborhood centers, property acquisition, economic development. Website: https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg-entitlement/ | Varies | Solicitations Annually – contact local office |
| HUD | Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant | Funds for implementation of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plans that are expected to achieve the following three core goals: 1. Housing 2. People and 3. Neighborhood. Website: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html | Up to \$30 million | November annually |



Appendix

Brownfield Conditions in East Downtown Palmer

*A **brownfield** is defined by EPA as, “a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.”*



(Source: Stantec)

BROWNFIELD CONDITIONS

Area-wide Planning for Brownfield Redevelopment

The EPA defines a brownfield as “a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.” The former industrial sites and railway corridor within the study area are included in the EPA definition of brownfields.

Brownfield sites can present a multitude of challenges for communities due to their blighted condition, documented (and undocumented) environmental liabilities, underused status, and redevelopment challenges. Additionally, the EPA has a national objective to help local communities identify, assess, and plan for the reuse of brownfield sites. EPA supports communities through grant money.

In accordance with community-wide assessment grants, the EPA created the AWP program to help communities confront local environmental and public health challenges related to brownfield conditions in a defined geographic area. Specifically, the AWP program allows communities to define a vision for an area and create redevelopment strategies for the brownfield sites as well as the surrounding neighborhoods. The AWP approach allows communities to plan reuse strategies for several brownfield sites simultaneously so they fit into a larger revitalization framework and vision for the

area. When a community has a vision and revitalization strategy in place, there tends to be increased confidence and interest by developers in making private investments necessary to convert brownfield sites for new desired uses.

The AWP program uses a place-based planning strategy that is inclusive of local stakeholders, surrounding conditions, and community assets while breaking down barriers to brownfield redevelopment. AWP for brownfields encourages community-based involvement in site assessment, cleanup, and reuse planning, as well as overall neighborhood revitalization. Through a brownfields AWP approach, the community identifies a specific project area that is affected by brownfields, then works with residents and other stakeholders to develop reuse plans for high priority brownfield sites and their surrounding areas. The AWP is most effective when it includes a focus on one or more “high priority” brownfield sites with significant redevelopment potential and strategic locations or other characteristics whereby their redevelopment is likely to result in investments being made in additional properties. These catalyst brownfield sites can be keys to instigating transformation and revitalization of the area as a whole.

As communities implement AWP strategies, and properties within the area affected by brownfields are cleaned up and reused, EPA expects that there will be positive environmental outcomes related to public health: soil, air, and water quality (such as reduced exposure to contaminants, reduced greenhouse gas

Top: Existing building for a former powerhouse on the Mat-Maid Block with the iconic Palmer water tower in the distance

emissions, and other air pollutants); reduced stormwater runoff, and substantial reductions in pollutant loadings in local waterways.

For the East Downtown Palmer study area, it is anticipated that the AWP process will provide a strategy for some property owners to redevelop sites with new uses that fit into a larger vision for the downtown vicinity. For other sites, the AWP will serve as a tool for attracting increased interest of developers who will purchase, clean up, and redevelop these sites, providing the confidence and knowledge that the projects have community support, and that the government agencies have strategies to address associated infrastructure needs. Brownfield redevelopment within the study area will capitalize on existing infrastructure, benefit from nearby amenities, build upon established business enterprises, and help achieve the City’s vision for the area.

Brownfield Inventory of Area-wide Planning Study Area

In 2018, Stantec completed a comprehensive brownfield inventory that evaluated nearly 100,000 parcels located within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, including 44 parcels and a former railway corridor located within the East Downtown Palmer AWP study area. Stantec identified 17 of the sites within the AWP study area as exhibiting brownfield characteristics; this includes 15 tax parcels and two remnant railway corridor segments. The following subsections summarize the methodology and results of the brownfield inventory of properties in the AWP study area.

Inventory Criteria: The purpose of the inventory was to gather the data necessary to determine which properties are potentially eligible for use of EPA Brownfield CWA grant funding, as well as to gather data useful in evaluating the redevelopment potential of each parcel. While all of the parcels were retained in the inventory, Stantec attempted to identify sites considered to have “brownfield characteristics” based on a combination of the following criteria:

- (i) documented or potential environmental impacts;
- (ii) vacancy or underused status; and
- (iii) past or present commercial or industrial use.

These criteria are discussed in Table A.1.a.

Priority Brownfield Sites (Tier Rating): The project team wanted to create a system to identify priority brownfield sites in the AWP study area. During the preliminary inventory activities, Stantec assigned parcels to one or three “tiers” based on the number of inventory criteria that those parcels possessed. If a parcel met all three of the inventory criteria, it was classified as ‘Tier 1’; if two of the three criteria were met, it was classified as ‘Tier 2’; and if one of the identifying criteria was met, it was classified as ‘Tier 3’. For the purpose of the AWP process, Tier 1 and Tier 2 sites were considered most likely to: (a) meet the EPA definition of a brownfield, (b) to have significant redevelopment potential, and (c) thereby be appropriate sites for potential detailed evaluation as “priority” or “catalyst” brownfield sites as part of the AWP study.

Table A.1.a – Brownfield Inventory Criteria

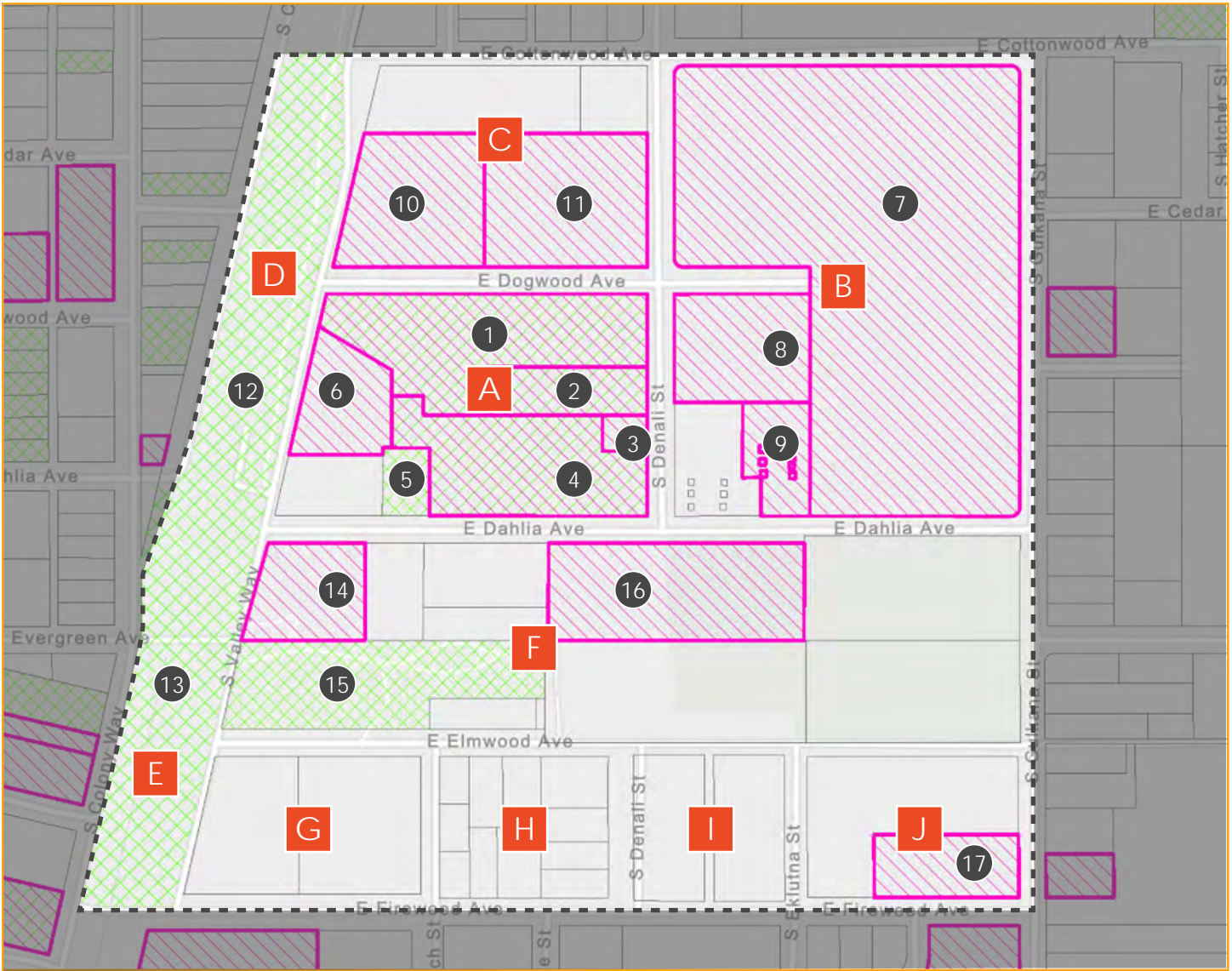
| Criterion | Description and Methodology |
|--|--|
| Criterion I - Potential Environmental Impacts | The project team reviewed environmental database listings and historical records to identify parcels with potential environmental impacts. This also included a review of historical aerial imagery, city directories, and topographic maps. The historical research identified 12 parcels totaling 33.35 acres within the study area that may have environmental impacts based on their inclusion on one or more environmental agency databases or through features or land uses identified through one or more of the historic records reviewed. |
| Criterion II- Vacancy or Underutilization | The project team examined the vacancy and underuse condition of parcels within the study area by examining the ratio of parcel improvement value relative to land value. The team also reviewed tax delinquencies and foreclosures and whether parcels were for sale or lease at the time that the preliminary inventory was completed. The team calculated the improvement-to-land-value ratio (ILVR) by dividing the assessed value of the improvements on each parcel by its land value: a value of 0 indicates that a parcel may be vacant, while an ILVR between 0 and 1 may indicate that a site is underused (e.g., a parcel having a land value of \$300,000 would be considered underused in terms of development potential if occupied by a commercial building having a value of only \$100,000, which would result in an ILVR of 0.33). The analysis shows five parcels and two former railway right-of-way segments totaling 16.78 acres in the study area are vacant and/or underused. |
| Criterion III - Commercial or Industrial Use | The project team determined whether the properties supported commercial or industrial uses (either in the present or the past). The project team determined property use via the City’s zoning designations and through field verification. The analysis shows 14 parcels and two former railway right-of-way segments covering 42.26 acres as having past or present commercial or industrial uses. |

Brownfield Inventory Results

Stantec completed an inventory for the AWP study area that identified 17 sites that exhibit “brownfield characteristics” as defined by the three brownfields criteria described on Table A.1.a. These included 15 tax parcels and two remnant railway corridor segments. To date, the actual environmental and other “brownfields” liabilities associated with these parcels are mostly undetermined, as Phase I and II environmental site assessments (ESAs) have been completed for only one property in the AWP study area (the former powerhouse

property located along Dahlia Street – on the Mat-Maid Block). Thus, the City can use this brownfield inventory to strategically reach out to other property owners in the study area whose sites may be in need of future ESAs.

The inventoried brownfields in the AWP study area are shown on Figure A.1.1, which identifies each brownfield with a site number. Table A.1.b. lists the 17 brownfield parcels in the AWP study area and includes information on the location, size, land use, and brownfield conditions for each parcel.



LEGEND

- # Brownfield Site Label / ID
 - # Block Identification
 - Unterutilized Property
 - Parcels in Environmental Database
 - AWP Study Area Boundary
- Note: Gray shaded areas are outside the AWP Study Area*

FIGURE A.1.1 - CITY OF PALMER AWP STUDY AREA BROWNFIELD INVENTORY MAP

(Source: Stantec)

Table A.1.b – Brownfield Inventory Summary (AWP Study Area)

| Brownfield Site Label / ID | Tax ID | Address | AWP Block Location | Site Area (acres) | Site Utilization | Environmental Listings | Industrial/Commercial Use (past or present) | Tier Rating |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| 1 | PA05_54871000T00A-1_1 | 513 S VALLEY WAY | A | 3.03 | Underutilized | Y | Y | 1 |
| 2 | PA05_54871000T00B-1_1 | 562 S DENALI ST | A | 0.85 | Underutilized | Y | Y | 1 |
| 3 | PA05_118N02E33C041_1 | 564 S DENALI ST | A | 0.18 | Utilized | N | Y | 2 |
| 4 | PA05_54871000T00B-2_1 | 325 E DAHLIA AVE | A | 2.51 | Underutilized | Y | Y | 1 |
| 5 | PA05_51779000T001_1 | 237 E DAHLIA AVE | A | 0.36 | Underutilized | N | Y | 2 |
| 6 | PA05_55031000T00A-1_1 | 523/575 S VALLEY WAY | A | 1.09 | Utilized | Y | Y | 2 |
| 7 | PA05_56819000L001A_1 | 515 E DAHLIA AVE,435 S DENALI ST | B | 14.00 | Utilized | Y | Y | 2 |
| 8 | PA05_51159000L00A_1 | 424 E DOGWOOD AVE | B | 1.67 | Utilized | Y | N | 3 |
| 9 | PA05_590130000000_S_1 | Not Assigned | B | 0.76 | Utilized | Y | Y | 2 |
| 10 | PA05_53085000L001_1 | 423/453 S VALLEY WAY | C | 2.06 | Utilized | Y | Y | 2 |
| 11 | PA05_53085000L002_1 | 339 E DOGWOOD AVE | C | 2.48 | Utilized | Y | Y | 2 |
| 12 | Not Assigned | Not Assigned | D | 5.40 | Underutilized | N | Y | 2 |
| 13 | Not Assigned | Not Assigned | E | 1.86 | Underutilized | N | Y | 2 |
| 14 | PA05_118N02E33C030_1 | 655 S VALLEY WAY | F | 1.22 | Utilized | Y | Y | 2 |
| 15 | PA12_117N02E04B011_1 | Not Assigned | F | 2.77 | Underutilized | N | Y | 2 |
| 16 | PA05_118N02E33C034_1 | 350 E DAHLIA AVE | F | 2.83 | Utilized | Y | Y | 2 |
| 17 | PA12_55341000L001_1 | 533 E FIREWEED AVE | J | 1.03 | Utilized | Y | Y | 3 |

Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)

The labeling of a site as a brownfield or the assignment of a “Tier rating” does not mean that there are environmental liabilities or other brownfields challenges associated with a property. In order to better understand a brownfield site’s environmental liabilities or constraints, and how these may impact the site’s redevelopment/reuse, it is necessary to perform Phase I and II ESAs. Additional information on the Phase I/II ESA process is provided below. To date, the City has used EPA CWA funding to complete Phase I/II ESAs for one of the 17 brownfields identified in the AWP study area. It is possible that Phase I/II ESAs have previously been completed for other parcels, but these reports are not publicly available or provided to Stantec by the property owners, if they do exist.

There are two primary types of ESAs:

- **Phase I ESA:** Phase I ESAs are studies that are completed in accordance with a detailed American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) Standard Practice (E1527-13) which specifies the scope of work, procedures, and the report content. The scope of a Phase I ESA includes review of environmental database and local agency records, interviews with past/current property owners/operators, a visual inspection, and review of various types of historic records pertinent to past and present use of a property and neighboring properties. A primary purpose for the Phase I ESA is to identify “recognized environmental conditions” which are defined as: “the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products in, on, or at a property:
 1. Due to any release to the environment;
 2. Under conditions indicative of a release to the environment; or
 3. Under conditions that “pose a material threat of a future release to the environment.”Performance of a Phase I ESA is a necessary step in order for prospective buyers or developers of the property to gain access to certain environmental liability protections. But as importantly, the Phase I ESA is a key initial step in identifying confirmed, likely, or potential environmental liabilities that may impede or complicate redevelopment of a site.
- **Phase II ESA:** A Phase II ESA is an investigation designed to further evaluate confirmed, likely, or potential environmental liabilities identified at a property during a Phase I ESA. Sampling of environmental media (i.e., soil, groundwater, soil vapor) is conducted at a minimum in areas of a site considered to have the greatest potential for environmental impacts. Samples are submitted for various types of chemical analyses based on the contaminants that are most likely to be present based on the identified land uses or areas subject to chemical storage/use. Sampling may also be conducted to evaluate impacts from potential contaminant sources on neighboring properties. The Phase II ESA may also include sampling of regulated building materials (i.e., asbestos, lead based paint, etc.) within structures on the property that may be subject to demolition or renovation as part of redevelopment/reuse plans. If well designed, the Phase II ESA will provide data needed to confirm and evaluate the significance of the primary environmental liabilities associated with the property and how these may impact redevelopment/reuse. However, in many instances, additional testing will be required to fully define the nature, magnitude, and extent of contaminants, in particular, those present at concentrations that exceed applicable state or federal cleanup standards or exposure limits.

Railway Corridor and Catalyst Site Environmental Conditions

The City and its project team designated the Mat-Maid Block as the catalyst site for the AWP study area based on its brownfield conditions, underused status, and their potential for redevelopment. Additionally, the team wanted to identify supporting improvements within the railway corridor to ensure future redevelopment on the Mat-Maid Block would be integrated with the Downtown Core to the west. The following subsections summarize the known environmental conditions for the railway corridor and the Mat-Maid Block catalyst site.

Railway Corridor and Historic Depot

The railway corridor which includes the Historic Depot used to support railroad operations. Pursuant to other EPA case studies around the United States, former rail lines may have a variety of potential environmental liabilities associated with the construction and maintenance of the rail lines; operation and maintenance of locomotives and railcars, and use for transporting various materials (including petroleum products and various hazardous materials). Former railway facilities include rail tracks, rail depots, maintenance buildings, and other support facilities.

The most commonly reported contaminants along rail corridors include arsenic (which was used as a herbicide to control weeds), metals and constituents of oil or fuel (petroleum products), which likely dripped from the rail cars and locomotives as they passed over the tracks. Other possible contaminants include creosote

used to preserve wood ties, coal ash from engines, and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) from diesel exhaust. In addition, rail spurs are typically used for the delivery of raw materials and various chemicals associated with the industrial use. The unloading of railcars may have resulted in historical spills of unknown chemicals .

Through the AWP process, the project team did not identify, or have access to site-specific environmental studies for the properties or structures in the railway corridor. Based on the potential environmental concerns commonly associated with rail corridors and facilities, it is recommended that Phase I and II ESAs be completed prior to major development projects within the corridor¹.

¹ *Rails to Trails Conservancy, (2004). "Understanding Environmental Contaminants – Lessons Learned and Guidance to Keep Your Rail-Trail Project on Track", September 24, 2004.*



(Source: Stantec)

Top: West side of the Historic Depot and remnant tracks in the railway corridor

Mat-Maid Block

The Mat-Maid Block has a long history of industrial use activity. In 2019, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the City arranged for Stantec (the coalition's consultant) to conduct Phase I and II ESAs for the former powerhouse site (located mid-block at 237 E Dahlia Avenue). The Borough and its coalition partners used portions of the EPA CWA grant to fund the Phase I/II ESAs.

The ESA reports provided historical environmental data for the powerhouse property and with some insight on the adjacent properties. As part of the ESA for the powerhouse property, Stantec reviewed and incorporated the findings of a 2012 Phase I ESA (by AlaskChem Engineering of Palmer, Alaska) that was written for other properties on the block. Stantec's research and analysis allowed the City to understand some of the conditions on the block that will help with future site planning and property owner collaboration. The following summarizes the ESA findings.



Top: Existing powerhouse property
Middle: Vacant and unmaintained field on the Mat-Made Block.
Lower: Existing retail business that sells salvaged materials and antiques

Phase I ESA (237 E Dahlia Ave.) Key Findings – February 2019

The Block has a long history of industrial use, and the Phase I ESA discovered site conditions that suggest the properties may have associated environmental liabilities. The Mat-Maid Block was the center of the industrial and commercial heart of the 1935 Matanuska Colony, the largest of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration New Deal planned communities. The Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Corporation owned the original colony assets; however, by 1936 the Matanuska Valley Farmers Cooperative Association (MVFCA) formed to manage the colony's assets (produce and dairy). The Alaska Rural Rehabilitation Corporation transferred ownership of the entire Mat-Maid Block to MVFCA in 1942. MVFCA reportedly changed their name to Matanuska Maid, Inc. in 1962. Until the 1960s, the Mat-Maid Block had remained under single ownership. Beginning in the early 1960s, the dairy moved to Anchorage, and the Palmer operations were ended. The block was subsequently subdivided into individual parcels, sold to new owners, and used for a multitude of commercial and industrial enterprises.

Mat-Maid Block Parcel Descriptions and Historic Use:

The following bullets describe the seven parcels that comprise the Mat-Maid Block in terms of site conditions and historic use. (see Figure A.1.2).

- **Parcel 1:** The 3.03-acre parcel was owned by MVFCA from 1942 until 1985, when the Division of Agriculture foreclosed on the site. Prior to 1950, this site contained a frame shed for lumber storage. By 1960, the entire site was used to support expanded farming operations and a building and hardware supply business. Buildings were used to house the feed and storage mill, a steel granary, a silo and weighed bulk sales and storage, and a small boiler building. The boiler was oil fired for a period after the powerhouse shutdown in the early 1970s. Mat-Maid marketed large quantities of pesticides and herbicides. There were no known spills of fuel or hazardous releases at this parcel; however, dark staining is shown in an area north of the warehouse building in a 1974 aerial photograph.
- **Parcel 2:** The 0.85-acre parcel is in the east central portion of the former Mat-Maid complex. MVFCA owned the property from 1942 until 1985. KLH, Inc. acquired the property for vegetable and produce operations. This occurred within a slab on grade concrete block building until the 1970s. KLH subsequently leased the site to various tenants that used the site for heavy equipment maintenance, forming rolled metal panels, manufacturing blown Styrofoam insulation, and molded fiberglass products. The tenant used the building for parts storage and vehicle restoration. There are no report of petroleum or hazardous substance spills or releases on the parcel.
- **Parcel 3:** The 0.18-acre parcel fronts South Denali Street. The site reportedly contained a frame structure built as the chicken hatchery. MVFCA owned the site between 1942 and 1977 when it was acquired by KLH and used for offices. The property was sold in the early 2000s and converted to apartments and a beauty shop. There were reports of a buried heating oil tank at the site.
- **Parcel 4:** The 2.51-acre parcel fronts E. Dahlia Avenue. The parcel was owned by MVFCA between 1942 and 1984 and later acquired by the Department of Natural Resources. A 70,000-gallon water tower was constructed in 1936 and remained in service until the 1960s. The property contained a creamery building which was later converted for hardware supply operations in the 1960s. The hardware supply business ceased operations in 1985. The parcel once contained a large (40 feet by 200 feet) frame warehouse that contained cold storage and an electric transformer. The owners stored pesticides and herbicides in the warehouse. In the late 1980s, the community began efforts to purchase the property for historical restoration. In 1994, Alaska Pollution Control, Inc. supervised a comprehensive removal of products and hazardous wastes from the parcel buildings. These reportedly included used oils, lubricants, and solvents from the creamery building. The main frame warehouse was found to contain "miscellaneous chemicals" and several hundred pounds of pesticides and herbicides. This removal effort apparently resulted in Resource Conservation Recovery Act identification number AK000007831, with the Division of Agriculture listed as the generator. Fire destroyed the warehouse in 2012.

- Parcel 5 (powerhouse property):** The 0.36-acre parcel was owned by MVFCA between 1942 and 1979; later it was sold to subsequent owners. The Palmer Arts Council acquired the Property in 2007. The existing 3,240 square-foot cinder block powerhouse building was constructed in 1954 as a replacement for the original 1930s structure, which was lost in a fire. The powerhouse reportedly contained a chlorination station feeding the water tower using gaseous chlorine. The basement contained an emergency diesel generator and diesel tank. The powerhouse provided steam via two coal fired boilers until the area coal mines (the fuel sources) were reportedly closed in the late 1960s. The boilers were then switched to PS3000 grade heavy oil with a heated storage tank installed next to an oil fired boiler in the basement. Steam generation was discontinued by the mid-1970s. and the equipment was removed.
- Parcel 6.a:** This parcel consists of 1.11 acres of land and was owned by MVFCA between 1942 and 1963. The parcel contained a bulk fuel storage facility and a rail spur for tanker delivery. By 1963, subsequent owners added an office and five additional bulk storage tanks. A new vehicle maintenance shop was constructed in 1982 and an office in 1987. Until 1964, fuel was delivered to the site via underground pipes to onsite tanks. Later, fuel deliveries were via truck and pumped directly into the tanks. According to the 2012 ESA report, there were eight storage tanks, including three from 1935. Apparently, two of the tanks were later replaced by a single larger tank.
- Parcel 6.b:** This parcel is comprised of 0.7 acre of land and was owned by MVCFA between 1942 and 1963 when it was sold to various individuals. The property contained the Mat-Maid garage and machine shop with various storage sheds dating back to 1935. The previous operations dispensed motor vehicle fuel from underground storage tanks. Prior site activities included blacksmithing, maintenance, and repairs to vehicles and farm equipment. Vehicle maintenance, body work and painting reportedly continued until the 1960s when the garage burned. The property was leased for farm equipment sales, and gradually the storage sheds were converted into mini-storage units between 1978 and 1981. The owners added additional offices and storage units in 1994, 1995, and 1998. In 1994, in preparation for construction, the property owner removed the concrete slab associated with the old garage, excavating to reported depths of 9 feet below ground surface. The excavation revealed a walk-down style "grease-pit", a hydraulic lift with two rams, and a hydraulic oil tank that was still full.



Left: Existing powerhouse building (Parcel 5) with the Palmer watertower in the distance
 Right: Existing silo and former agricultural storage buildings on the Mat-Maid Block (Parcel 1) / Existing apartment building in the foreground (Parcel 3)



FIGURE A.1.2 - MAT-MAID BLOCK: HISTORICAL USES OF ADJACENT PROPERTIES

(Source: Stantec - Powerhouse Property Phase I ESA - February 2019)

Powerhouse Property Recognized Environmental Conditions: Stantec performed a Phase I ESA for the powerhouse property in conformance with the scope and limitations of ASTM International Practice E1527-13. During site visits, Stantec discovered evidence of recognized environmental conditions (RECs) in connection with the powerhouse property. The following summarizes the RECs:

- **REC -1: Historic Industrial Use** - The historical use as a steam power house for the Mat-Maid Block using coal-fired boilers from the 1930s to the early 1960s and subsequent use of fuel oil-fired boilers until the mid-1970s is considered a REC due to potential soil impacts by pollutants (heavy metals, petroleum hydrocarbons) associated with these operations.
- **REC 2: Northside Site Debris** - Stantec observed an area of debris on the north side of the powerhouse building. The debris included sheet metal ducting, corrugated metal panels, coiling door assemblies, a commercial freezer-style door, a section of metal railing, and miscellaneous steel components (six industrial equipment components, a minimum of three industrial type motors, four control panel assemblies, two ceiling unit heaters and flues, and a small heater unit). Equipment control panels, control panel assemblies, and industrial motors are suspect for containing PCBs and mercury-containing devices, and the potential release of hazardous materials from this equipment is considered a REC.
- **REC-3: Drum Storage** - Stantec observed a 55-gallon drum on the north side of the powerhouse building. The drum was red with a yellow lid and labeled Automatic Transmission Fluid. Stantec observed a second drum that was heavily degraded. The drum did not possess a lid and contained a concealing layer of snow; therefore, Stantec could not see the drum's contents. The potential release of petroleum products or hazardous materials from these drums is considered a REC.
- **REC-4: Adjoining Former Warehouse** - The east-adjacent property formerly contained a large (40-foot by 200-foot) frame warehouse used for cold and dry storage. In 1994, Alaska Pollution Control, Inc. supervised a comprehensive removal of "products" and hazardous wastes. These included used oils, lubricants, and solvents and other "miscellaneous chemicals" as well as several hundred pounds of pesticides and herbicides. A 2013 EPA Targeted Brownfield Assessment grant funded the collection

of soil and groundwater samples from this property. Chromium and arsenic were identified over regulatory cleanup levels in soil samples but were reported to be of natural occurring sources. Lead, mercury, benzo(a)pyrene, benzene, xylenes, naphthalene, trimethylbenzene, and pesticides gammahexachlorohexane and heptachlor were identified in soil at concentrations greater than the regulatory cleanup levels. The full extent of soil contamination was not defined. Additionally, groundwater samples identified chromium, lead, mercury, phthalates, and nickel at concentrations greater than regulatory cleanup levels. Since the extent of the impacts was not defined and due to the proximity of this site to the powerhouse property, the impacted soil and groundwater are considered a REC.

- **REC-5: Adjoining Former Garage** - The former Mat-Maid garage and machine shop with outbuilding were present on the adjoining property to the west. The previous site operations dispensed fuel from underground tanks. Additional activities included blacksmithing, maintenance, and repairs to vehicles and farm equipment. No known environmental investigations have been performed at this property. The historical use of petroleum products and potentially hazardous materials in site operations is considered a REC.
- **REC-6: Adjoining Petroleum Distributor** - The Crowley Petroleum Distribution, Inc. occupies the northwest-adjointing property. Beginning in 1942, the site was used for bulk petroleum fuel storage, and in 1982, site operations also included vehicle maintenance. The historical use of petroleum products and potentially hazardous materials in site operations for more than 77 years is considered a REC.

It should be noted that in addition to RECs above, Stantec observed suspected asbestos-containing materials at the building interior and roof. The suspect materials included black mastic located in a utility vault, gypsum board wall assemblies that are finished with joint compound, and a built-up roof system that has a history of containing asbestos-containing felts. Additionally, the debris area on the north side of the powerhouse building contained equipment components, industrial motors, and control panels that may contain lead-based paint coatings. Given these observed RECs, additional site assessment was recommended by Stantec.

Phase II ESA (237 E Dahlia Ave.) Key Findings
- August 2019

Stantec completed a Phase II ESA for the powerhouse property in August 2019 and collected environmental media (soil and groundwater) samples from locations most likely to have been impacted by historical site uses or activities (i.e., “areas of concern”). Stantec analyzed these samples for suspected contaminants (i.e., the “constituents of concern”) to help determine whether impacts were present, and if present, at what magnitude. The following lists the initial study objectives and the associated resolutions.

Objective #1: Determine Soil Impacts from Former Boilers and Storage Tanks - Evaluate whether the historical use of the Property to generate steam via coal fired and later fuel-oil powered boilers impacted soil and groundwater at the powerhouse with petroleum hydrocarbons, Polynuclear Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), or heavy metals.

- **Resolution** – Stantec noted potential impacts from Contaminants of Potential Concern (COCs) in the property’s soil, with higher detections in the near-surface soil samples. The measured concentration of Diesel-range Organics (DRO) from one sample location exceeds the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) cleanup level. Stantec detected multiple PAHs in some near-surface soil samples. Stantec also discovered that 1-methylnaphthalene and naphthalene concentrations in samples exceed the ADEC cleanup levels. The pattern is consistent with historical undocumented releases or leaks to the ground surface from petroleum-containing equipment or vehicles.

Multiple metals were detected in each soil sample. Furthermore, the measured concentrations of arsenic and mercury exceed the ADEC cleanup level in some soil samples. Groundwater samples indicated the presence of dissolved arsenic, dissolved lead and dissolved mercury at concentrations that exceed the ADEC cleanup levels. The arsenic concentrations are consistent with those that could be attributable in whole or in part to naturally occurring arsenic within soil and soil fill materials, and the dissolution of arsenic in groundwater.

Objective #2: Determine Soil Impacts for Debris - Evaluate whether the debris fields containing equipment control panels, panel assemblies, industrial motors and drums on the north and east sides of the Property building impacted soil and groundwater with petroleum hydrocarbons, PAHs, VOCs, PCBs, or heavy metals.

- **Resolution** – As discussed under Objective #1, the soil samples from the north side of the powerhouse building reveals contaminant characteristics that exceed ADEC cleanup levels, including DRO, 1- methylnaphthalene, and naphthalene in the near-surface soil sample and mercury in the deep soil sample. No elevated COCs other than arsenic was detected in the boring to the east of the Property building.

Objective #3: Determine Soil/Groundwater Impacts from Adjoining Warehouse Property - Evaluate whether historical activities on the east adjacent property from the former Mat-Maid warehouse used for cold storage, warehousing of chemicals, and dry storage impacted soil and groundwater at the powerhouse property with VOCs, PAHs, organochlorine pesticides, heavy metals, or phthalates.

- **Resolution** – No organochlorine pesticides or phthalates were detected in the borings along the eastern margin of the powerhouse property, and the measured concentrations of nickel in these borings was less than the ADEC cleanup level. The other COCs discussed for Objective #1 are not wholly indicative of impacts from the east adjacent property.

Objective #4: Determine Soil/Groundwater Impacts from Adjoining Mat-Maid Garage Property - Evaluate whether the former use of the west adjacent property as the Mat-Maid garage and machine shop impacted soil and groundwater at the powerhouse with petroleum hydrocarbons or hazardous substances.

- **Resolution** – Based on the COCs discussed under Objective #1, it cannot be ruled out that the west adjacent property contributed wholly or in part to the petroleum and PAH impacts in soil at the Property.

Objective #5: Determine Soil/Groundwater Impacts from Adjoining Fuel Distributor - Evaluate whether the historical use of the northwest adjacent Property as a bulk fuel distributor impacted soil and groundwater at the Property with petroleum hydrocarbons or hazardous substances.

- **Resolution** – Based on the COCs discussed under Objective #1, it cannot be ruled out that the west adjacent.

Recommendations for Future Actions: After completing the site sampling, Stantec developed a set of recommendations for the powerhouse site which are also applicable to other parcels on the Mat-Maid Block. These recommendations include the following:

- **Recommendation A:** The data for analytes for which concentrations exceed ADEC cleanup levels should be reported by the property owner to ADEC, as required by 18 Alaska Administrative Code (AAC) 75; and
- **Recommendation B:** A supplemental investigation may be needed to more fully characterize the extent of soil and groundwater impacts prior to redevelopment of the powerhouse property contributed wholly or in part to the petroleum and PAH impacts in soil at the site.

