



**City of Palmer, Alaska  
Joint City Council and  
Board of Economic Development Meeting  
August 10, 2021, at 6 PM**  
City Council Chambers  
231 W. Evergreen Avenue, Palmer  
[www.palmerak.org](http://www.palmerak.org)

**AGENDA**

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

**B. ROLL CALL**

City Council:

- Edna DeVries, Mayor
- Sabrena Combs, Deputy Mayor
- Julie Berberich
- Richard Best
- Steve Carrington
- Brian Daniels
- Jill Valerius

Board of Economic Development:

- Dusty Silva, Chair
- Lorie Koppenberg, Vice Chair
- Chris Chappel
- Peter Christopher
- Barbara Hunt
- Janet Kincaid
- Ronalee Moses

**C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

**F. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Committee of the Whole (note: action may be taken following the committee of the whole)
  - a. Recap of 2018 Board Accomplishments
  - b. 2019 Board Projects and Goals
  - c. Other Matters Related to the Board
  - d. City Council Direction to the Board

**G. RECORD OF ITEMS PLACED ON THE TABLE**

**H. COUNCIL AND BOARD MEMBERS COMMENTS**

**I. ADJOURNMENT**



**City of Palmer  
Information Memorandum No. 21-004**

**Subject:** Presentation to the Palmer City Council Outlining the 2021 Economic Development Strategic Plan and a Resolution Encouraging a Marketing Plan and Infrastructure Improvements to Expand the Economic Opportunities in Palmer

**Agenda of:** August 10, 2021

**Originator Information:**

**Originator:** Brad Hanson, Director Community Development

**Department Review:**

Route to:	Department Director:	Signature:	Date:
_____	Community Development	_____	_____
_____	Finance	_____	_____
_____	Fire	_____	_____
_____	Police	_____	_____
_____	Public Works	_____	_____

**Certification of Funds:**

Total amount of funds listed in this legislation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

This legislation (√):

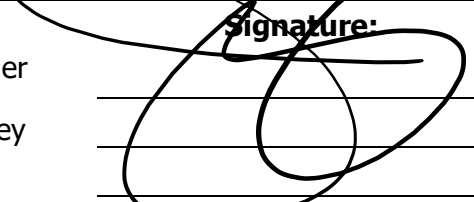
- Creates revenue in the amount of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Creates expenditure in the amount of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Creates a saving in the amount of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Has no fiscal impact

Funds are (√):

- Budgeted      Line item(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Not budgeted      \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Finance Signature: 

**Approved for Presentation By:**

	Signature:	Remarks:
City Manager		_____
City Attorney	_____	_____
City Clerk	_____	_____

**Attachment(s):**

1. BED Resolution 21-001
2. 2021 Economic Development Strategic Plan

**Summary Statement/Background:**

The Board of Economic Development (BED) annually updates the economic development strategic plan for presentation to the Palmer City Council for consideration. The BED is also tasked with advising the City Council on economic matters. In 2020, because of the pandemic, the City Council and the BED were unable to meet to present the economic development strategic plan.

The BED established as their work plan for 2021 to include commercial district evaluation, tourism and local events, railroad right of way and annexation strategies. This resolution combines elements of the work plan points of emphasis. The BED considered the recently completed Brownsfield Area-Wide Plan that was completed in January for areas of infrastructure improvement.

In preparation for the 2022 budget deliberations the BED has prepared a resolution for City Council's consideration on economic matters related to the city. The resolution encourages City Council to consider developing a marketing strategy and public improvements in downtown to enhance the economic climate.

**Resolution No. 21-001**

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

WHEREAS, the purpose of the city of Palmer Board of Economic Development is to provide research, public input and disseminate information to the City Council to evaluate economic development opportunities and strategies; and

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

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

WHEREAS, Palmer serves as the hometown to many surrounding neighborhoods and communities acting as the gateway to endless Alaskan experiences and activities; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 a Brownfield Area Wide Planning Study was conducted for downtown Palmer which outlined improvements that could enhance the connectivity and economic opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Palmer Comprehensive Plan identifies the Matanuska Maid Complex as a development priority and Palmer City Council legislative priorities identify trails, parks and acquisition of the "Palmer Water Tower"; and

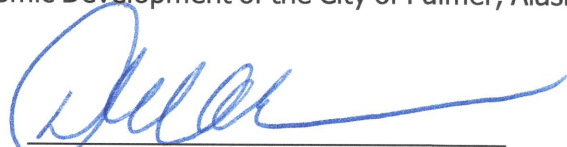
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Economic Development supports implementation of an authentic coordinated destination marketing strategy to further the goals of the City Council of enhanced economic development, including;

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

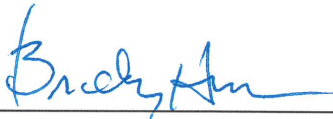
NOW THEREFORE IT FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED the Board of Economic Development identifies these projects as a priority, as supported by past community studies, that support community values and the enrichment of life in Palmer.

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

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



Dusty Silva, Chairperson



Brad Hanson, Director Community Development



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOARD OF  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO  
CITY COUNCIL

**2021 CITY OF PALMER  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

## Community Economic Development Goals

Goal 1 ... Strengthen Palmer's position as the preferred location as the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's institutional and utility co-operative hub.

Goal 2 ... Encourage expansion of medical, healthcare, technology and research-related economic sectors, and other professional jobs in the Palmer area to make this the medical, health-care and vocational career center for Southcentral Alaska.

Goal 3 ... Strengthen Palmer's role as a retail and professional services hub and as a unique place to shop for residents of Palmer, area residents and visitors.

Goal 4 ... Strengthen Palmer as a tourism destination and hub for travel through the southern Matanuska-Susitna area.

Goal 5 ... Strengthen efforts to improve Palmer's quality of life by supporting Palmer as the agricultural center of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.

Goal 6... Promote beautification of Palmer's open space and parks.

Goal 7 ... Maintain quality residential neighborhoods and promote a diverse range of quality housing from high density to single family housing which satisfies the needs of all sectors of the housing market.

Goal 8 ... Provide the necessary public infrastructure to support and retain existing industrial uses and expand industrial development within the community.

Goal 9 ... Palmer remains and continues to grow as the industrial education and career center of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Goal 10 ... Continue to develop and market the municipal airport to maximize its economic benefit to the community.

Goal 11 ... Increase marketing of Palmer and its diverse attractions, events and location.

Goal 12... Create a business-friendly environment for commerce and industry.

Goal 13...Review Economic Development Plan Each August and prepare report on progress in implementing Goals and Objectives

Goal 14... Study the feasibility of annexing property into the city limits to prepare for future commercial and industrial growth and to preserve the character of the community.



# Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2021

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## **Goal 1 ... Strengthen Palmer's position as the preferred location as the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's institutional and utility co-operative hub.**

**Objective A** – Maintain existing institutions and secure new institutions by developing an action plan with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Matanuska-Susitna School District, Job Corps, the University, state agencies and Justice System to determine and pursue a very specific list of action items necessary to meet their long-term needs.

**Objective B** – Develop an action plan with the Hospital, Clinics, and other health-care providers to determine and pursue a very specific list of action items necessary to meet their long-term needs.

## **Goal 2 ... Encourage expansion of medical, health-care, technology and research-related economic sectors, and other professional jobs in the Palmer area to make this the medical, health-care and vocational career center for Southcentral Alaska.**

**Objective A** – Promote the Palmer area as a hub of higher education by working with the University of Alaska, Alaska Pacific University and other educational institutions to increase the number of highly trained medical and health care specialist and technology and research related specialist who are available in the community.

1. Determine what new programs might be developed in the Palmer area, and how the City might help these institutions to expand.
2. Encourage the development of learning opportunities in medical and healthcare fields at local institutions of higher learning and the Mat-Su Regional Medical Center.

**Objective B** - Market the community to desired businesses, including technology and research-based businesses, and professional businesses such as law, medicine and veterinary science.

## **Goal 3 ... Strengthen Palmer's role as a retail and professional services hub and as a unique place to shop for residents of Palmer, area residents and visitors.**

**Objective A** – Work with the Planning & Zoning Commission to provide space for commercial expansion through the development of a new central business zoning district or zoning overlay.

# Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2021

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**Objective B** – Promote Palmer as a more attractive retail and professional service destination.

**Objective C** – Actively pursue infrastructure improvements and identify areas appropriate for developing new areas and redeveloping vacant properties for commercial general development.

**Objective D** – Identify need and options for effective public parking in downtown and within the city.

1. Resolve fee in lieu of formula and parking waiver issues.
2. Examine interest in forming Special Assessment District or Business Improvement District.

## **Goal 4 ... Strengthen Palmer as a tourism destination and hub for travel through the southern Matanuska-Susitna area.**

**Objective A** – Preserve, improve and celebrate Palmer’s historic character; develop design guidelines for the historic district.

**Objective B** – Support efforts to improve and promote community attractions, including cultural facilities and multiple trails systems. Improve linkages between attractions.

**Objective C** – Build on the success of existing community events, including the Alaska State Fair.

**Objective D** – Support efforts to attract more team sports activities, sporting events and outdoor activities in and around Palmer.

**Objective E** – Establish, improve and maintain city-wide parks and recreation facilities and programs.

**Objective F** – Discuss and study the possibility of a permanent Friday Fling/Farmer’s Market area as well as a public stage.

## **Goal 5 ... Strengthen efforts to improve Palmer’s quality of life by supporting Palmer as the agricultural center of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.**

**Objective A** - Promote distribution, awareness of, and sales of local agricultural products.

**Objective B** - Promote and expand farmers' market opportunities within the city limits and the greater Palmer area.

# Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2021

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**Objective C** - Collaborate with state funded organizations and the agricultural community to promote Alaska Grown products.

**Objective D** - Open dialogue with the agricultural community to promote agricultural products and agricultural heritage.

## **Goal 6... Promote beautification of Palmer's open space and parks.**

**Objective A** – Establish, improve, and maintain neighborhood parks and recreation facilities and programs.

## **Goal 7 ... Maintain quality residential neighborhoods and promote a diverse range of quality housing from high density to single family housing which satisfies the needs of all sectors of the housing market.**

**Objective A** - Encourage a diverse range of quality housing, from attractive higher density housing to housing for a more rural setting.

**Objective B** - Encourage new housing developments to have adequate access to transportation, employment opportunities, services, and social and support networks.

**Objective C** – Encourage infill development and higher density housing and prepare new zoning standards and design guidelines to ensure higher density housing is high quality.

**Objective D** – Encourage the development of areas for single family housing appealing to the upper end of the housing market.

**Objective E** – Encourage rehabilitation of older residential structures.

**Objective F** – Promote continued development and maintenance of high quality elder care facilities and senior citizen campuses in Palmer.

**Objective G** – Review code enforcement process and provide a report with recommended actions to City Council on a quarterly basis to gain perspective of property owners and residents understanding and compliance with city standards to protect the long-term stability of neighborhoods and Palmer's economic vitality.

# Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2021

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## **Goal 8 ... Provide the necessary public infrastructure to support and retain existing industrial uses and expand industrial development within the community.**

**Objective A** – Review and identify logistical, environmental and other beneficial resources in the Palmer area available to attract new technology industries and prepare a map of existing utility lines and anticipated utility network expansions that serve developable property in the Palmer area.

1. Develop a survey questionnaire to determine what industrial sector needs to invest and develop in Palmer.

**Objective B** – Review current infrastructure master plans to ensure they place a priority on maintaining effective municipal services.

**Objective C** – Ensure that adequate areas are identified within the city for industrial growth.

## **Goal 9 ... Palmer remains and continues to grow as the industrial education and career center of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.**

**Objective A** – Promote vocational, aviation, technical and career training centers and opportunities within the greater Palmer area to prepare individuals for a global marketplace.

## **Goal 10 ... Continue to develop and market the municipal airport to maximize its economic benefit to the community.**

**Objective A** – Promote the Palmer Municipal Airport as a site for air taxis, aircraft maintenance and repair companies, flight schools, and aircraft rental and leasing businesses.

**Objective B** - Operate the Airport in a balanced manner, and as an integrated function of the whole community. Activities of the airport which generate revenue to the City are desirable, however, not at the risk of diminishing the quality of life for the residents of the City.

## **Goal 11 ... Increase marketing of Palmer and its diverse attractions, events and location.**

**Objective A** - Collaborate with the Palmer Visitors Center, the Greater Palmer Chamber of Commerce, the Mat-Su Visitors and Convention Center, and other organizations to actively promote Palmer.

## Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2021

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1. Develop multimedia promotional material showcasing the attributes of Palmer as a business friendly, geographically key location.
2. Budget funding for development and publish quality brochure for Palmer as a marketing tool.

**Objective B** - Work to maintain and improve Palmer's quality of life. Continually enhance hiking and biking trails, parks, health care resources, downtown upgrades, etc.

**Objective C** – Continue to develop and promote the city owned Golf Course, Community Center (Depot), and MTA Events Center as economic factors.

### **Goal 12... Create a business-friendly environment for commerce and industry.**

**Objective A** – Implement online business transaction with the City, for example electronic filing of sale tax.

### **Goal 13...Review Economic Development Plan Each January and prepare report on progress in implementing Goals and Objectives.**

### **Goal 14... Study the feasibility of annexing property into the city limits to prepare for future commercial and industrial growth and to preserve the character of the community.**

**Objective A** – Develop an annexation document that clearly explains pros and cons of annexation.

**Objective B** – Consider where future annexation should logically occur.

**Objective C** – Prepare transition plan regarding potential future zoning.

**Objective D** – Study and make recommendations regarding new proposed zoning districts: Central Business District and Highway Commercial District.

### **Goal 15... Acknowledge and consider Palmer's unique connectivity and pedestrian access with all existing and future developments.**