

**City of Palmer, Alaska**  
**Special City Council Joint Meeting**  
**With the Board of Economic Development**  
**June 14, 2022, at 5:15 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:**

Steve Carrington, Mayor  
Pamela Melin, Deputy Mayor  
Carlina Anzilotti  
Thomas Ojala  
Joshua Tudor  
John Alcantra  
Richard Best

#### **Board of Economic Development:**

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

### **C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

### **E. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Committee of the Whole (Note – action may be taken by the Council following the committee of the whole)
  - a. **Information Memorandum 22-005**, Discussion of Board of Economic Development's Resolution Recommending City Council Provide Funding for a Concept Master Plan for Downtown Palmer and Implement Elements of Brownfield Area Wide Plan and Urban Revitalization Plan

### **F. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

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

### **H. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS**

### **I. ADJOURNMENT**



**City of Palmer  
Information Memorandum No. 22-005**

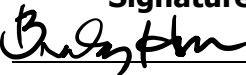
**Subject:** Discussion of Board of Economic Development's Resolution Recommending City Council Provide Funding for a Concept Master Plan for Downtown Palmer and Implement elements of Brownfield Area Wide Plan and Urban Revitalization Plan

**Agenda of:** June 14, 2022, Special Meeting

**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. Board of Economic Development Resolution 22-001
2. Eastern Downtown Palmer study concepts and Urban Revitalization Plan excerpts

**Summary Statement/Background:**

The Board of Economic Development passed BED Resolution 22-001 requesting council fund a Concept Master Plan for downtown Palmer. The resolution identifies five priorities the council should consider for improved connectivity and increased economic development opportunities. The BED made this a priority after completion of the Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield Area Wide Plan (AWP) Eastern Downtown Palmer study in 2020. The AWP identified the railroad right of way as an opportunity for increased utility for events and residents.

The BED passed a BED Resolution 21-001 and presented to City Council in August 2021 recommending they consider implementation of elements of the Brownfield Area Wide Plan and the Palmer Urban Revitalization Plan. The Resolution encouraged the city to pursue development and beautification of land within the railroad corridor for public use and enjoyment, now. The BED recognized when Resolution 21-001 was passed that the Alaska Railroad will retain within their existing leases with the city the right to rehabilitate the tracks and utilize them whenever they desire. Further, anything placed in the right of way would need to be relocated with no obligation to preserve or protect by the Alaska Railroad.

The BED recommends the development of A Concept Master Plan for the downtown Palmer area to help guide discussion and assist the implementation of downtown improvements, it should include:

- Railroad corridor concept for elements/improvements
- Comprehensive approach to parking and circulation
- Preservation of historically important items, concepts, or architectural features
- Pre-approved specialty features the community members or groups can purchase or install
- Active discussion with City Council and the City of Palmer Advisory Boards
- Alaska Railroad concurrence

BED members identified their top prioritized five project elements for the railroad right of way as:

1. Community Event Space (North of Depot)
2. Parking Enhancements on Colony Way and Valley Way
3. Motorized and Non-motorized connectivity
4. Park and Playground improvements in downtown
5. Branding and Signage recognizing Palmer's History

CITY OF PALMER BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Resolution No. 22-001**

**A Resolution of the Palmer Board of Economic Development Recommending City Council Provide Funding for a Master Plan for the Railroad Right of Way to Implement Elements of the Brownfield Area Wide Plan.**

WHEREAS, the purpose of the city of Palmer Board of Economic Development (BED) 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 Palmer's quality of life and economy; and,

WHEREAS, Palmer has invested heavily in 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, in 2020 a United States Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield Area Wide Planning Study was conducted for downtown Palmer which outlined improvements that could enhance the connectivity and economic opportunities; and,

WHEREAS, the BED unanimously passed Resolution No. 21-001 supporting improvements in the downtown railroad right of way; and,

WHEREAS, the BED recognizes that the Palmer Railroad branch MP A5.1 – MP A6.7 has been placed out of service by the Alaska Railroad and the branch beyond MP 6.7 is under long term permit to the Mat-Su Borough for use as a trail; and

WHEREAS, the BED recognizes railroad reintroduction in downtown Palmer will require significant economic investment for reconstruction of the branch MP A5.1 – MP A6.7 and until this investment is made the community would benefit through utilization of this space NOW through a lease or permit from the ARRC and removal of the current railroad tracks while retaining existing elements of the track to preserve historical significance; and,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Economic Development requests the Palmer City Council fund a Downtown Concept Master Plan with the assistance of a landscape architect and community meetings not to exceed \$20,000; and,

NOW THEREFORE, IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that the BED supports these prioritized projects that have been identified in the Palmer Comprehensive Plan, the Area Wide Plan – Eastern Downtown Palmer Study, and the Palmer Urban Revitalization plan, including.

1. Community Event Space (North of Depot)
2. Parking Enhancements on Colony Way and Valley Way
3. Motorized and Non-motorized connectivity
4. Park and Playground improvements in downtown
5. Branding and Signage recognizing Palmer’s History

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Dusty Silva, Chairperson

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Brad Hanson, Director Community Development



# 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.

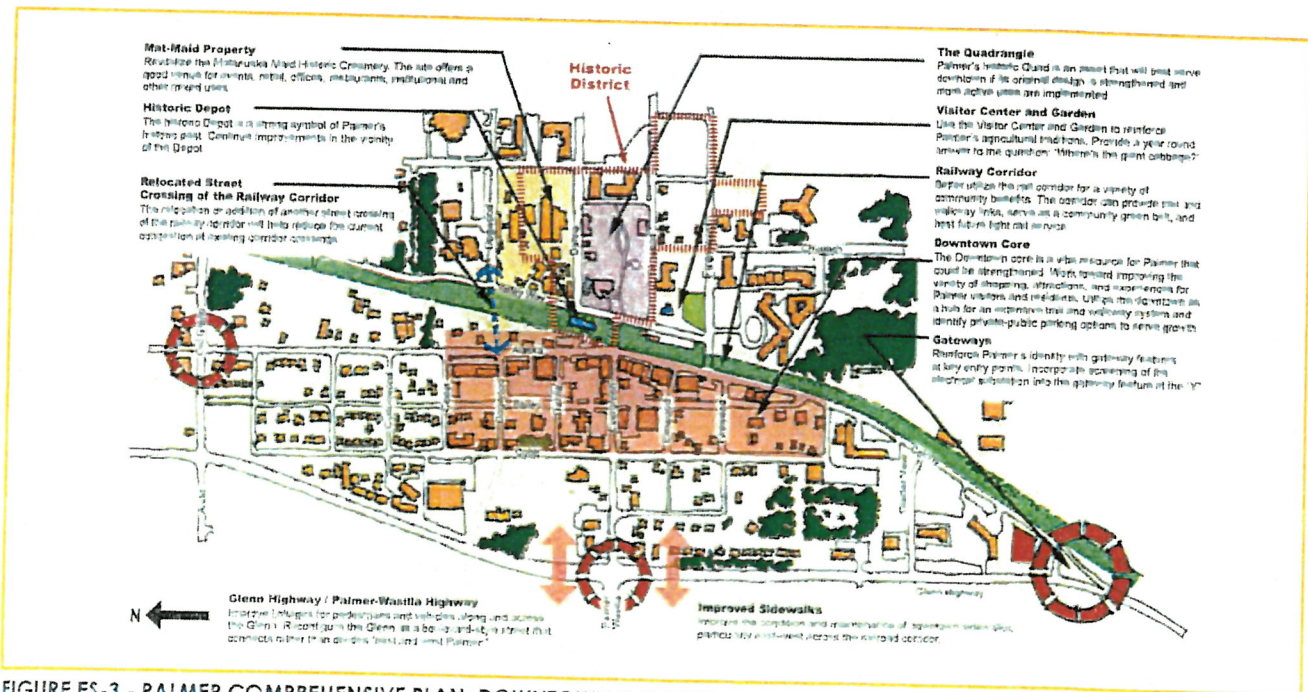
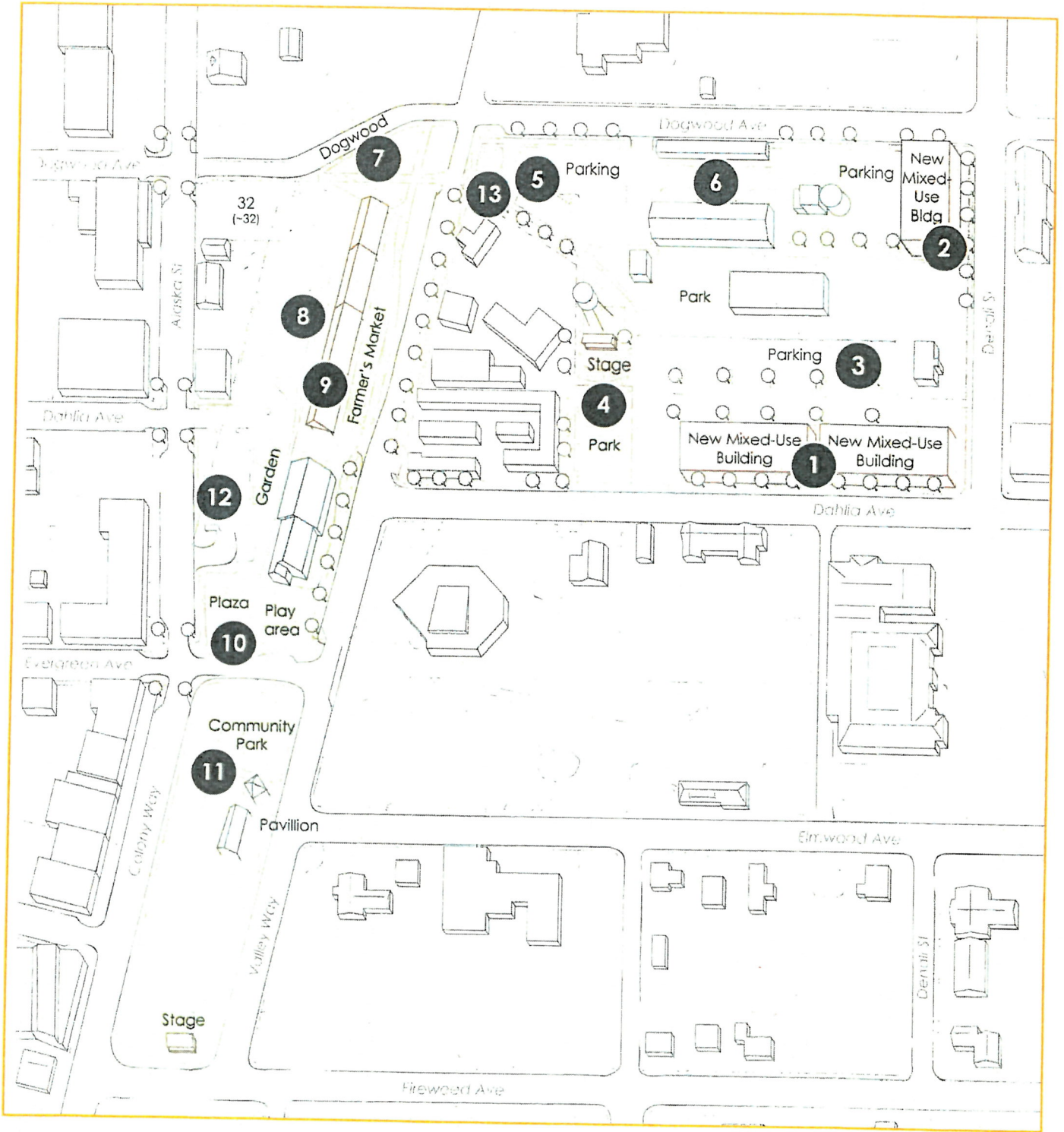


FIGURE ES-3 - PALMER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN OPPORTUNITIES MAP

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)



### 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)

# Palmer Revitalization Project Development Plan

## 1.0 Introduction

This report provides a Development Plan with specific, implementable community design and development recommendations for the enhancement of Palmer's historic railroad corridor. The Development Plan identifies the vision and values to be achieved in Palmer over the next five years or more. The plan is based on a thorough public involvement process led by a Citizen's Advisory Group (CAG) and includes an action-oriented implementation strategy, which recommends both public and private sector initiatives. The plan must be viewed as a flexible document that can evolve over time in response to changing conditions and funding opportunities.

In times of rapid growth in the Palmer area, the vision for a Palmer "Rail-with-Trail" corridor set forth in this report is timely, realistic, and achievable. Palmer is ideally suited for the development portrayed in this plan that creates strong physical and visual linkages to the historic Palmer Railroad Depot at its heart, to core area businesses, surrounding neighborhoods, and community facilities including the Palmer Library and the Alaska State Fair. The rail-trail open space corridor is the backbone of the plan and provides an opportunity for the City to establish a policy of community-focused public access through the heart of Palmer.

The public improvements recommended in this plan will contribute significantly to the enhancements of downtown Palmer as a place to live and do business by helping to establish a fresh image and market identity for the area. These improvements will serve as a powerful catalyst to encourage private investment in downtown Palmer.

### 1.1 Background

The Palmer Rail-with-Trail project has been an important concept to the residents for more than a decade. The Palmer Comprehensive Plan identified the corridor for public use and development as did as the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Trails Plan and the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. The Parks, Arts, Recreation, Culture and Sports (PARCS) group commissioned two studies (1997 & 1998) in cooperation with Andrews University Division of Architecture that identified development opportunities along the railroad corridor. The Chamber of Commerce, the City Council, local businesses and residents overwhelmingly support the project.

In April of 2002, the City of Palmer began the formal planning process by selecting the consulting team of Lounsbury and Associates (Lounsbury) with Land Design North (LDN) as lead planners for the project. As part of this process a Citizens Advisory Group was formed by the City of Palmer to guide the consulting team through the planning process. The CAG is composed of representatives from the City of Palmer, the Chamber of Commerce, and various Palmer residents and business owners.

## 1.2 Study Process

Over the past six months, the CAG and the consultant team of Lounsbury and LDN have conducted an intensive effort to prepare a Development Plan for the Palmer Rail with Trail Corridor. Throughout the planning process, particular emphasis has been placed on the need to build a consensus-based plan—a plan that can win the support of a broad range of community interests.

The CAG met at key intervals in the planning process to set objectives, discuss alternatives and share ideas. The consultant team conducted interviews with city officials, business people, property owners, the Alaska Railroad and others interested in the future of Palmer. Additional input from area businesses and residents was obtained through a series of open houses and workshops to identify opportunities, constraints and key development issues related to the project.

A thorough physical assessment of the study area was conducted, along with a review of previous plans and existing information. A complete Scoping Summary Report was developed in July, 2002, which summarized the public process and site assessment for the area. The scoping assessment process served as the basis for a series of route alternatives that were presented to the CAG for selection of a final preferred route and provide for the development alternatives outlined in this report.

The Palmer Urban Revitalization Project is intended to contribute to the quality of life in Palmer by improving recreation and economic opportunities along the Alaska Railroad right-of-way from the Alaska State Fairgrounds to the Matanuska River. The development plan is intended to identify key projects and funding needs for the Citizen's Advisory Group and Palmer City Council for the next five years. Included as part of the plan are design guidelines, plan drawings and a detailed phasing plan that begin to illustrate each of the proposed actions outlined below as well as an implementation strategy with sufficient detail for carrying out the work.

Based on public input and agreement, the Development Plan presented in Section 3.0 provides a framework for decisions to be made over the next five years. The plan focuses on the railroad right-of-way corridor through Palmer and seeks to enhance mountain views, and connections to businesses, local government, parks, schools and surrounding neighborhoods. The plan illustrates proposed public improvements (trails, sidewalks, streetscape, lighting, and public gathering areas and amenities) as well as private investment opportunities. The Strategic Action Plan presented in Section 5.0 outlines key initial projects that have been identified as part of the first phase of development.

## **2.0 Assessment and Concept Development**

### **2.1 The Study Area**

The Palmer Rail with Trail Corridor is contained within the boundaries of the Alaska Railroad ROW, which runs north through Palmer. The 2.5 mile corridor starts at the Alaska State Fairgrounds near Springer Loop Road and terminates to the north at the Matanuska River overlook. The railroad ROW is 200' wide with significant roadway encroachments permitted along much of its length.

This project will develop approximately 60 acres of currently under-utilized Alaska Railroad land from the Fairgrounds to the Matanuska River. The primary element of the project is a pedestrian "rail-with-trail", or pedestrian/bike path adjacent to existing railroad tracks. The trail and other improvements will enhance the ribbon of open space through Palmer while at the same time preserving the opportunity for future railroad service, which may include day tour passenger service as well as the potential for freight services to northern communities.

### **2.2 Regional Context**

The City of Palmer lies at the center of the historic Matanuska-Susitna Borough farming district. Formerly, the rail corridor through Palmer provided a link to coal deposits at Sutton to the north and transported the pioneers who made up the Matanuska Farming Experiment in the 1930's. The Alaska State Fairgrounds form the southern terminus of the corridor and the Matanuska River forms the northern boundary. The heart of the project is the historic Palmer railroad depot and the surrounding downtown core area shops.

Residential areas surround the study area to the north and through much of the core area. The southern portion is primarily industrial in character. The Palmer vicinity, as well as the surrounding "Core Area" of the Borough to Wasilla, is a rapidly-growing residential community with much of the employment centers located in Anchorage. The primary access to Palmer is via the Glenn Highway linking Palmer to Anchorage, 45 miles to the south and to the north access to the Trans-Alaskan Highway to Canada. The Palmer-Wasilla Highway links Palmer to Wasilla to the west as well as interior Alaska communities to the north.

### **2.3 Existing Development Patterns and Zones**

The Palmer Rail-with-Trail vicinity contains a variety of existing uses: commercial, retail, industrial, institutional and residential. It also has significant open areas of undeveloped land.

The historic railroad depot is the centerpiece of the study area located at the heart of the downtown core business district. To the west is Alaska Way, an established commercial-retail corridor with a mixture of older buildings, primarily two-story and single-story with

no particular architectural style. Gaps between buildings exist along the avenue. The eastern side through the downtown core is open along the railroad corridor with panoramic views to the mountains. The businesses and shops on Alaska Way provide a mixture of long-established uses and a variety of services. To the east lie the public library, community park, police station, visitor center, Borough offices, senior center and senior housing as well as the vacant, historic Mat-Maid properties.

The southern end of the study area is occupied by the Alaska State Fairgrounds and bounded by industrial lands to the east and the Glenn Highway to the west. Where Colony Way intersects the Glenn Highway, the character of the western edge becomes commercial in nature and is backed by residential development. Senior housing and community services are located along the eastern boundary of the project. To the north of the downtown core, Alaska Way and Valley Way border the project and the character is predominantly a mix of residential and commercial to Arctic Avenue, and then residential from Arctic Avenue to the northern terminus at the Matanuska River.

Development zones have been identified along the corridor based on observation of the surrounding land uses and the potential for the area to support specific types of activities related to the use of the trail corridor such as active recreation and commercial opportunities. These include the five following zones (See Development Zone Map 1):

- **Industrial Zone – Inner Springer Loop Road to Industrial Way.** The primary design characteristics along this section should focus on the safe movement of pedestrians between the rail and road corridor and at major road crossings. Secondary concerns include improving the storm drainage systems and maintaining a vegetative buffer along the eastern boundary to screen the industrial areas from the trail. Landscape treatment for this zone should primarily consist of grasses and low shrubs that do not obstruct the critical sight lines. Entry signage and wayfinding signs should be located at the beginning of the project.
- **Gateway Zone – Glenn Highway Intersection with Colony Way to Bailey Street.** The primary characteristics of this zone are a mix of strip commercial shopping along the western boundary with a continuation of the industrial zone to the east that is screened by existing trees. The primary design characteristic along this section should be to welcome visitors to Palmer and provide a “gateway” into the community. Trail safety should insure compatibility with active rail corridor and include barrier fencing and screening.
- **Core Area Zone – Bailey Street to Dahlia Avenue.** The primary design characteristic along this section should focus on pedestrian movement and connections between shops, offices, governmental services, senior housing and visitor facilities. As the heart of the project, particular attention will need to be spent on the depot and surrounding area. The separation of the active trail users (bikers, skateboarders, in-line skaters, etc.) from the walkers, strollers and shoppers could be accomplished by developing two separate trails. Safety concerns should focus on development of safe pedestrian crossings between the east and west side of the tracks.

The active railroad track may need to be separated with barrier fencing similar to urban transit rail depots if rail activity increases.

- **Transition Zone – Dahlia Avenue to East Arctic Avenue.** The primary design characteristic along this section should provide a focus on active recreational facilities and special events. This section is bounded to a great extent by commercial and governmental activities and has the largest open space along the corridor. Outdoor concerts, open fields for special events such as Colony Days, skateboard parks, exercise par-course, basketball and tennis are some of the opportunities that could be located safely within this area. There are a few residential areas to the west and east that will need to have privacy screening, low fencing and other considerations to reduce trail incursions onto their property.
- **Residential Zone – East Arctic Avenue to the Matanuska River.** The primary design characteristic along this section should focus on family recreational enjoyment along the length of the trail. The development of destination amenities along this section should be minimal with the focus on the trail overlook and terminus at the Matanuska River. The privacy of residential areas should be protected with landscape plantings, fencing, a road crossing at Caribou Avenue, and by limiting the development of areas to gather for active play. Small seating areas and low scale lighting should be the focus along this section. Safety concerns will focus on the major road crossing at Arctic Avenue and with secondary crossings at Eagle and Caribou Avenues.

## 2.4 Objectives

Based on public input and an analysis of existing conditions, the CAG formulated broad community objectives to guide the planning process. These are summarized below:

- Maximize the railroad corridor as a resource for public enjoyment and as a unifying element with strong linkages to encourage pedestrian circulation.
- The heart of the project is the historic Alaska Railroad Depot and should be the "crown jewel" of Palmer.
- Preserve and enhance the railroad operations within Palmer.
- Use historic themes of the Colony period and Alaska Railroad as design elements to promote a distinct image for Palmer.
- The trail should be designed first and foremost for the residents of Palmer.
- Involve the community in the process to increase a sense of ownership and community pride.
- Provide facilities that are safe, inviting and easily maintained.

- Design multi-use spaces where possible to encourage a mix of activities and events.
- Provide amenities that include a variety of experiences and opportunities for all.
- Enhance the economic opportunities and promote downtown businesses by creating a positive climate for existing businesses and encourage new employment-generating uses.
- Provide convenient access and parking within the trail corridor.
- Respect the surrounding residential neighborhood character. Accommodate a complementary mixture of uses where appropriate.

## 2.5 Alternative Trail Route Options

From the issues and opportunities explored in the CAG work sessions and the public open houses, a series of alternative route options were prepared and discussed. These alternatives displayed varying locations for the trail in relationship to the Alaska Railroad right-of-way and main track centerline and will vary depending on which development zone they are located within (see Map 8 in the July 2002 project Scoping Report for more detail). The alternative routing options that have been developed for the corridor include the following:

1. West route orientation maintaining the trail along the west side of the railroad main line where possible,
2. East route orientation maintaining the trail along the east side of the railroad main line where possible.
3. Meandering trail between both sides of the centerline of the railroad main line where possible.

## 2.6 Preferred Trail Route Option

Based on a work session with city staff, the CAG and meetings with representatives of the Alaska Railroad, a preferred trail route was identified. This was accomplished by combining features of several of the alternatives so that the trail corridor switches back and forth from the east to the west side through specific zones. This preferred routing concept provided the basis for the development plan but will require additional modifications to secure final approval from the Alaska Railroad. The preferred trail routing as identified by the City of Palmer and the CAG includes the following locations through each zone:

- **Industrial Zone (Springer Loop to Industrial Way)** – The CAG agrees that the east side of the track will provide the safest trail location. The trail will be set in the outer 30 feet of the right-of-way at a minimum of 50 feet from the track centerline and will meander slightly between 50 and 70 feet to preserve a natural tree barrier along the

2. Commercial Drive trail crossing with trail stop signs located at both junctions. Special consideration needs to be given to the elevation change as the trail approaches the road crossing which is elevated to provide ample sight line for trail users.
3. A gateway entry sign located at the railroad spur track approach to the airport that provides location map and entry feature to the trail.

### 3.2 Gateway Zone – Glenn Highway Intersection with Colony Way to Bailey

This segment starts at Colony Way's south end at the Y intersection to the Glenn Highway and provides for the development of a focal landscape gateway to welcome visitors to Palmer. It also continues the trail north to downtown. The trail segment will run along the east side of the railroad track centerline until it reaches the extension line of Industrial Way. There it will cross the tracks with an at grade crossing and continue along the west side along Colony Way joining the existing path to Evergreen Street. An alternative trail option would maintain the trail along the east side of the rail centerline from Industrial Way to Evergreen Street to avoid the crossing.

Key elements include a 10-foot wide trail section, an at-grade crossing of the Alaska Railroad with safety features including barrier fencing, grading and drainage. Site improvements include pedestrian scale lighting to match downtown along Colony Way, gateway features such as signage, flags, banners, a new focal point landscape entrance feature, new landscape and an automatic irrigation system. Specific elements include

1. Gateway Entry Feature and Sign should be located on the east side of the Glenn Highway at the approach to Colony Way. A low wall with a "Welcome to Palmer" sign with accent lighting and landscape provides a sense of arrival to the community.
2. Screening of MEA Power Station should be located between the access road from the Glenn Highway and provide a visual screen to the existing MEA electrical station. Care should be taken to preserve visual sight lines for vehicle traffic through the area. This may not be required as MEA has indicated a desire to relocate the power station to the east side of the track.
3. Colony Way Gateway Streetscape Improvements should be developed along both sides of the street extending to the downtown core area. Features should include decorative street lights with banners to match those in the downtown area. Street trees should be located at 30-40 foot intervals along the street to help frame views into town.

### 3.3 Core Area Development – Bailey Street to Cottonwood Avenue

The heart of Palmer, as identified by the community and CAG members, is the historic Alaska Railroad Depot with its adjacent downtown businesses that serve the local community. Key design considerations in this zone include linking the depot to the downtown shops and surrounding residential, senior housing and public facilities with



safe and attractive pedestrian walkways. Development is framed around saving all the existing transportation routes and limiting impacts to the surrounding parking, roads and access points. A number of development opportunities exist for both public and private development within this zone.

Because of the high level of pedestrian traffic and the potential for conflicts, two trails are recommended for this area. A pedestrian-only promenade should be developed along the west side of the track centerline utilizing the existing sidewalk along S. Colony Way that provides seating, wide sidewalks, decorative lighting and amenities. A secondary bike/active pathway should be developed to allow a mix of trail traffic along the east side of the railroad centerline. Together these two trails will provide access to facilities on both sides of the track and link the community together.

Specific elements of the plan include:

Alaska Depot Improvements -The Alaska Railroad Depot is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and as such is accorded special design considerations and limitations. The depot interior has recently undergone major renovations, and the Alaska Railroad has permitted existing uses within the proposed development boundaries. Design features will replicate and restore the original intent and functions of the depot and surrounding area. The connecting plaza should be improved with new connections to the historic rail engine display and to downtown shops. A formal paved platform area should replace the asphalt drive on the west side of the depot and a new parking lot should be added to the north end of the depot with access to South Valley Way. Removable bollards could be used to limit auto access to emergencies and special events. The existing parking lot occupies an important location between downtown and the depot, and in addition to parking, it could potentially be used for staging community events. Additional parking could be located directly to the north along the west side of the ROW and behind the businesses along South Colony Way.

South Colony Way & Alaska Way Promenade Improvement -The primary business street in Palmer is the historic South Colony Way with shops, businesses and food and beverage services along the western side and a pedestrian sidewalk (asphalt from Evergreen south) with landscape along the eastern edge of the street up to the tracks. The western curb line is approximately the right-of-way edge for the Alaska Railroad, but the project boundaries should encompass the sidewalks fronting the local shops to create a unified design theme. A unified streetscape is integral to community life because it provides safe and comfortable pedestrian connections, street lighting, banners, street trees, specialty accent lighting, quiet setting areas and an opportunity to walk, stroll, shop, meet friends or just watch people. South Colony Way provides an opportunity to restore the small town atmosphere and make the area a hub for local residents.

Loading Dock Relocation and East Side Improvements - The loading dock on the east side of the depot should be removed and relocated to a location closer to the users of this facility. A preferred location is at the MEA yard just south of Fireweed Avenue with a second possible location on city land near the airport spur line. Removal of the dock will

open up the east side of the track and allow for better connections to be made to the library, visitor center, borough offices, city park, senior center and the Pioneer Home as well as to the surrounding residential areas. The parking lot and picnic shelters can be enhanced with improved connections, paving and landscape screening and a new parking lot can be developed to the north side of the depot. The removal of the spur track along the eastern side of the Depot will permit an active trail link for bypass of the downtown area by bikers and other active trail users.

Potential Spur Removal - The spur track to the historic Matanuska Maid plant has not been used for a number of years. The city recently met with the current owners of the plant to discuss possible future use of the spur and to explore this option, but found that the owners have compelling reasons to leave the spur, although they are willing to continue talks with the city.

Pedestrian Crosswalks and Bulb-Outs should be developed to improve safety at South Valley Way and Alaska Street crossings at Evergreen, Fireweed, and Cottonwood Avenues. The crossings should utilize specialty pavement to clearly indicate to vehicles the pedestrian zone. Bulb-outs should be used at Evergreen to improve pedestrian safety.

Trail Head Kiosk and Interpretive Signage should be developed in connection with the central plaza area that provides orientation to the entire trail segments and general information on the history of the area and opportunities to take side trips to local businesses and points of interest.

Outdoor Theatre & Band Shell - The opportunity exists to develop an outdoor performance and seating area north of the depot in the approximate vicinity of the existing loading dock. The existing timber wall and grass slopes can be designed to accommodate seating using timber or concrete steps and a raised platform with band shell should be oriented to block the north winds. Overflow seating on top can be developed on a large grass lawn area that can also serve as a special event staging area.

Community Gardens could potentially be located in either plan adjacent to the Pioneer Home to the east of the track center line. This area provides a clear view from downtown and the entry roads into Palmer providing a sense of arrival and connection to the past farming in the valley. By locating it close to the Pioneer Home and other senior services elderly residents can conveniently visit the area on foot and continue to garden or provide oversight to novice gardeners. In addition to community garden plots the area could also house a small green house and garden shop and serve as the Farmer's Market headquarters. Additional elements include:

- A small parking lot can be located adjacent to the garden entry for 8-10 vehicles.
- Mix of beds with some raised for ADA accessibility
- Raised timber edging
- Decorative fencing
- Seating on benches and on seating walls that could also act as walls for raised beds

different, there is a good deal of overlap. Based on common priorities, a phase one plan and construction budget was developed.

**Exhibit 1**

Zone Rank	CAG Project Ranking	Public Project Ranking
1	<b>Gateway Zone</b> 1. Screening MEA Power Station 2. Gateway Entry Feature 3. Colony Way Streetscape Improvements 4. Trail Construction 5. East side trail	<b>Core Area Downtown Zone</b> 1. Promenade on west side 2. East side trail 3. Ice Skating 4. Depot Improvements 5. Parking Lot expansion north of the depot
2	<b>Core Area Downtown Zone</b> - Depot Improvements - Railroad Platform - Ice Skating - Trail-head Kiosk and Signage - Pave Colony Way extension - East side trail - Promenade on west side	<b>Gateway</b> 1. Screening MEA Power Station 2. East side trail 3. Gateway Entry Feature 4. Rest Area and Interpretive Kiosk
3	<b>Industrial Zone</b> 1. Trail Construction 2. Trail landscape and Signage 3. Security Fencing and lighting 4. Springer Loop Crossing	<b>Transitional Zone</b> 1. Trail Construction 2. Active play area (basketball/skateboard) 3. Upgrade South Valley Way 4. Picnic shelters 5. Outdoor theater / bandshell
4	<b>Transitional Zone</b> 1. Trail Construction 2. Picnic Shelters 3. Active play area (basketball/skateboard) 4. Rest Area, Kiosk and Signage 5. Upgrade South Valley Way	<b>Residential Zone</b> - River Overlook - Trail - Public restrooms - Eagle Street Trail Head and Parking
5	<b>Residential Zone</b> - River Overlook - Trail - Public restrooms - Interpretive signage	<b>Industrial Zone</b> - Trail landscape and Signage - Trail Construction - Springer Loop Crossing

Beyond phase one, the City of Palmer can use the community priorities presented above and select projects for development as funding becomes available. As the Development Plan is implemented project by project, the City should also keep the overarching goals of the effort in mind, and especially those identified as most important by the public at the final open house:

- Develop the rail corridor into a unifying element of the community
- Involve the youth in developing the project
- Enhance Economic opportunities and promote downtown business

## 5.2 Strategic Action Plan Phase One Projects 2003-2004:

The heart of Palmer, as identified by the community and CAG members, is the historic Alaska Railroad Depot and the adjacent downtown businesses that serve the local community. The development of the first segments of the trail north from the depot to the Matanuska River are also included in phase one development. We believe that this mix of projects should be the first focus of redevelopment in Palmer. They have wide community support as well as the support of the Alaska Railroad, which is working with the City to develop a Trail Permit. Most importantly, improvements to this area will have the greatest impact on economics and community character providing an immediate benefit to the city.

The matrix in Exhibit 2 on the attached pages provides a detailed listing of the priorities for all early action priority projects in the Strategic Action Plan. The matrix lists phase one projects, actions required, estimated costs and schedules. The Strategic Action Plan Map in Exhibit 3 following this page shows general project locations by their number. Following is a description of each of the projects recommended for development as part of Phase One construction for the 2003 and 2004 season.

Gateway Entry Feature and Sign should be located on the east side of the Glenn Highway at the approach to Colony Way. A low wall with a "Welcome to Palmer" sign with accent lighting and landscape to provide a sense of arrival to the community.

South Alaska Way Promenade - The primary business street in Palmer is the historic South Alaska Way with shops, businesses and food and beverage services along the western side and a pedestrian sidewalk with landscape along the eastern edge of the street up to the tracks. A unified streetscape is integral to community life because it provides safe and comfortable pedestrian connections, street lighting, banners, street trees, specialty accent lighting, quiet setting areas, bulb outs at Evergreen, pedestrian cross walks will provide an opportunity to walk, stroll, shop, meet friends or just watch people. South Alaska Way provides an opportunity to restore the small town atmosphere and make the area a hub for local residents.

Alaska Depot Improvements -The Alaska Railroad Depot is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and as such is accorded special design considerations and limitations. The depot interior has recently undergone major renovations, and the Alaska Railroad has permitted existing uses within the proposed development boundaries. Design features will replicate and restore the original intent and functions of the depot and surrounding area. The existing plaza should be improved with new connections to the historic rail engine display and to downtown shops.

Railroad Depot Platform and Pedestrian Crossing - A formal paved platform area should replace the asphalt drive on the west side of the depot with pedestrian track crossing at the entrance to the depot. Removable bollards can be used to limit auto access to emergencies and special events.

Trail Head Kiosk and Interpretive Signage should be developed in connection with the central plaza area that provides orientation to the entire trail segments and general information on the history of the area and opportunities to take side trips to local businesses and points of interest.

Parking Lot Expansion - North of the depot a new parking lot should be developed for up to 40 vehicles with pavement and emergency access to the depot.

Trail from Depot north to Arctic Avenue - A 10-foot paved path should meander through the area with access to surrounding neighborhoods. The trail should utilize the existing railroad bed where possible and lower the grade at Blueberry.

Colony Way Gateway Streetscape Improvements should be developed along both sides of the street extending to the downtown core area. Features should include decorative street lights with banners to match those in the downtown area. Street trees should be located at 30-40 foot intervals along the street to help frame views into town.

Trail from Arctic Avenue to the Matanuska River - The primary design characteristic along this section should focus on enhancing family recreational enjoyment along the length of the trail. Improvements include a 10 foot meandering trail, grading and drainage improvements, pedestrian crossings at Caribou and Eagle Avenues, low level lighting features, amenities such as benches, information signage, new landscape and an irrigation system.

Matanuska River Overlook - An overlook can be located at the terminus of the trail and serve as a trailhead north towards Sutton. The area should provide for ADA access to an elevated platform with benches, interpretive signage and telescopes for viewing. Trail head map and general information should also be located in this vicinity.

Eagle Avenue Crossing and Trail Head Parking should be developed at the northern terminus of the trail project. Parking can be provided for 4-6 vehicles.

### 5.3 Conclusions

The Palmer Revitalization Plan is ambitious and its implementation will require the full energy of the CAG, Palmer Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, local government and the entire community. Yet the vision is also incremental; there are a number of small, moderate-cost projects that will bring immediate benefit while paving the way for the more long-term investments. These important early action projects will demonstrate to the community and to potential investors that real progress is being made.

The planning process has focused the attention of public and private sector leaders on the future of Palmer. The current level of enthusiasm and momentum must be maintained and put into a systematic and continuing program of implementation. The first steps should include:

- Official adoption of the Development Plan by the CAG, the City Manager and by the Palmer City Council as the framework for future decisions regarding development in Palmer.
- Unofficial adoption of the Development Plan by the Palmer Chamber of Commerce, Rotary and other relevant organizations that can lend support for the development process.
- Authorization of Phase One Design and Development to prepare construction drawings for initial public investment to begin construction during the 2003 season.

This is an exciting time for the community of Palmer and the basic commitment to reclaim the railroad corridor as a primary development opportunity will benefit the entire community. The right decisions will come from a shared vision and the cooperation of all parties who hold responsibility for making that vision a reality.