

PAST & CURRENT PLANNING IN ANCHORAGE

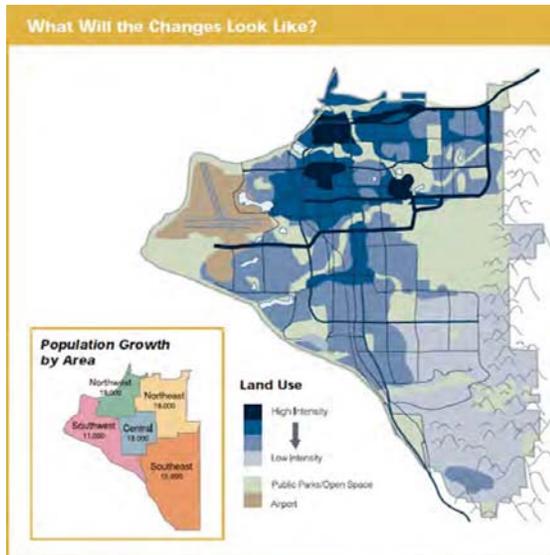


Fourth Avenue Theatre, 1947 & 2008.

The Municipality of Anchorage conducts many programs that govern its current and long-term planning, yet what do these programs say about historic preservation? Do they identify historic resources in the Downtown, Fairview, Government Hill, and South Addition neighborhoods? Aside from the Historic Preservation Project Fund created by the Anchorage Municipal Code, are other resources in place for historic preservation?

This chapter reviews how current and past Municipal plans address historic preservation in the Four Original Neighborhoods of Anchorage. All these plans are or will become part of the Anchorage Comprehensive Plan as outlined in Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal Code (Section 21.05.30, described above).

Anchorage 2020: Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan



The Municipality has been working towards the Urban Transition Scenario set forth in *Anchorage 2020* (discussed in detail in Chapter VI of the HPP).

In 1961 the Municipality of Anchorage drafted its first comprehensive plan to create a vision and development plan for Anchorage. Adopted on February 20, 2001, the *Anchorage 2020: Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan* (called *Anchorage 2020*) is the city's fourth comprehensive plan covering the Anchorage Bowl area. The purpose of the plan is to:

1. Establish a process among elected officials, municipal staff, and interested citizens to create a 20-year plan for land-use policy;
2. Communicate that policy to property owners, developers, elected and appointed officials, and other interested parties; and
3. Guide elected and appointed officials as they deliberate community development issues.

More specifically, the plan directs future growth in the Anchorage Bowl area and provides recommendations regarding the protection of natural areas and open space in relation to development.

Relevant Policies

Anchorage 2020 includes many provisions relevant to historic preservation, but most important is Policy #51, which directs the Municipality to prioritize historic preservation.

Policy #51: "The Municipality shall define Anchorage's historic buildings and sites and develop a conservation strategy."

Many other policies related to land use, urban design, zoning, density, housing affordability, open space, arts and culture, and education indirectly overlap with historic preservation goals. This HPP will support all these policies to help realize *Anchorage 2020*. For a complete list of *Anchorage 2020* policies that are relevant to historic preservation in the Four Original Neighborhoods, see **Appendix G: Anchorage 2020 Relevant Policies**.

Implementation Strategies

Anchorage 2020 identifies strategies that are essential to the implementation of the land-use and design policies described above. Most relevant to the HPP are the strategies identified to implement Policy #51:

- **Functional Plan (Historic Preservation Plan):** Study of and recommendations for the city's future preservation needs
- **Neighborhood or District Plans:** Detailed plans or studies for defined geographic area
- **Conservation Easements:** Property rights are sold to a third-party conservator to protect the building
- **Development Rights-Purchase:** Property owner sells development rights to a government agency
- **Development Rights-Transfer:** Property owners buy development rights from another property owner or sell them to others

Other strategies relevant to the Four Original Neighborhoods include Heritage Land Bank activities and decisions; Infill, Redevelopment, and Reinvestment Incentives to spur economic development; and Overlay Zones to create special zoning districts with regulatory incentives or restrictions. These historic preservation-related implementation strategies are fully defined in **Appendix H: Anchorage 2020 Relevant Implementation Strategies**.

Anchorage 2020 Planning Principles

Also applicable to the Historic Preservation Plan for Anchorage's Four Original Neighborhoods are the "Anchorage 2020 Planning Principles," which are intended to direct future public and private development in order to achieve the plan vision. *Anchorage 2020* includes two sets of Planning Principles: Design and Environment, and Public Facilities and Services. These principles articulate a desire to preserve the identity and vitality of neighborhoods in Anchorage as well as a balanced and diverse supply of housing options.

ANCHORAGE 2020 PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT

- Encourage architectural design that is responsive to the northern climate and seasonal light conditions.
- Adopt design standards that are suited to a northern urban environment to help revitalize streetscapes.
- Design and landscape roads to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of neighborhoods, open space, and commercial corridors and centers, and to reduce adverse impacts on neighborhoods.
- Promote community connectivity with safe, convenient, year-round auto and nonauto travel routes within and between neighborhoods, and to neighborhood commercial centers and public facilities.
- Link subdivision design with a sense of place to highlight connections to Anchorage's coastal setting, watersheds, mountains, wildlife, and subarctic forest and vegetation.
- Conserve Anchorage's heritage of historic buildings and sites.
- Protect Anchorage's scenic views.



ANCHORAGE 2020 PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- Use public infrastructure to help revitalize or renew aging neighborhoods.
- Improve maintenance, landscaping, and snow removal for streets, bus stops, sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, paved paths; and associated landscaping.
- Promote Downtown as the center for commerce, finance, government, arts, and culture.

The plan also identifies the need for well-planned development that incorporates the unique northern setting of the city and year-round public transportation respective of Anchorage's natural and built environments.

The sidebars in this section highlight selected planning principles that are most relevant to historic preservation, and will be supported by the HPP. The full list of Planning Principles for Design and Environment and for Public Facilities and Services are located in **Appendix I: Anchorage 2020 Relevant Planning Principles** of this report.



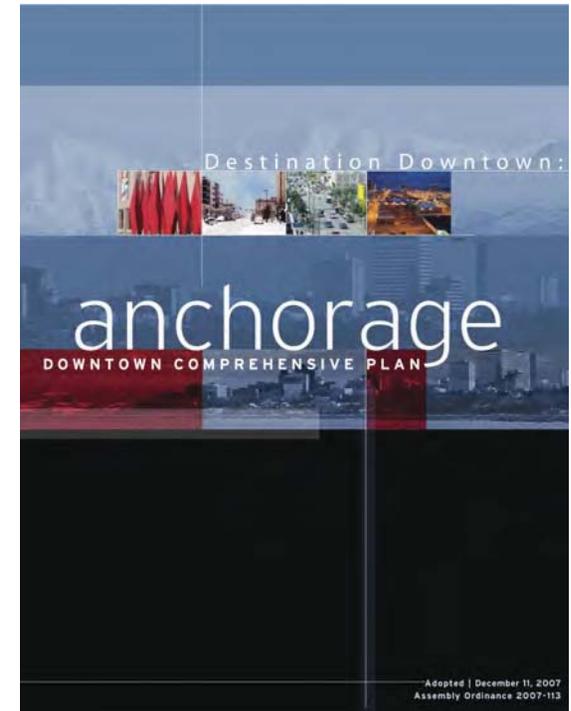
Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan (2007)

The Municipality developed and approved the *Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan* (ADCP) in 2007 to guide the future development of the central business district. This effort was one of the implementation strategies suggested in *Anchorage 2020*. The ADCP focuses on land-use policy and implementation in the Downtown neighborhood. Specifically, the ADCP responds to three policies identified in *Anchorage 2020*:

- #18: Strengthen the role of the CBD [Central Business District] as the regional center for commerce, services, finance, arts and culture, government offices, and medium- to high-density residential development.
- #19: Locate municipal, state, and federal administrative offices in the CBD.
- #23: Downtown is a designated major employment center.

The ADCP established the overarching goal of creating a “Downtown for All.” Additional goals of the ADCP include the creation of more housing Downtown, development incentives, improved transportation connectivity, activation of the ground floor of businesses, and creation of a sensible regulatory framework. The goals of the HPP will support this vision for Downtown Anchorage.

Additionally, 14 of Downtown’s most prominent historic resources were identified as assets to the neighborhood in the “Existing Conditions Analysis” completed during the early stages of the ADCP planning process. This is good news for historic preservation. Continued support and community-wide recognition of these 14 historic buildings were reiterated through the HPP public comment process. See **Appendix J: Downtown Comprehensive Plan: Existing Conditions Analysis** for a full list.



The *Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan* (2007) established the goal of creating a “Downtown for All.”



Historic and cultural resources were identified in the *Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan* (2007).

Relevant Policy Objectives

The “Land Use and Economic Development” section of the ADCP recommended many strategies for Downtown historic preservation to be undertaken by the Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission. The HPP will support the ADCP historic preservation issues and strategies, outlined as follows on page 68 of the ADCP:

Downtown Anchorage features a rich and diverse collection of significant historic and cultural sites that has increasingly become a major focal point of attraction for both Alaskan residents and out-of-state visitors. This section recommends the development of an overarching historic preservation strategy specifically for Downtown...to identify historic resources, issues and opportunities, and create a framework of historic preservation policies, guidelines and strategies for Downtown. The general policy objectives for this effort would be to:

- Promote public awareness of Downtown’s historic resources and their value for the future of Downtown and the overall community;
- Promote consideration of historic resources in planning and development decisions by the public and private sectors;
- Promote strategic partnerships to further the interests of historic preservation; and
- Leverage historic resources as cultural and economic development assets for the future growth and vitality of Downtown.¹⁸

See **Appendix K: Downtown Comprehensive Plan: Relevant Policy Objectives** for a discussion of additional policies that overlap the vision and goals of the HPP.

Recommended Actions and Programs

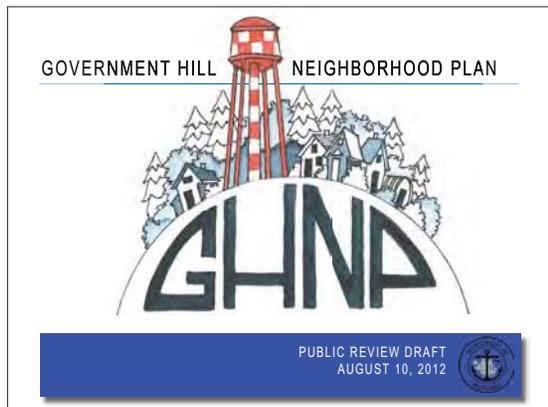
To implement these policy objectives, the ADCP recommended the consideration of a historic overlay zone in Downtown to help define key historic areas as well as to serve as a cultural anchor to preserve and celebrate Downtown's heritage and unique sense of place. It was anticipated that an overlay zone would provide a focus area for incentives, programs, and development guidelines related to historic preservation. In addition to the creation of such a zone, the ADCP identified other potential actions or programs, such as:

- Maintaining an inventory of historic resources;
- Recommending procedures to identify and designate historic resources;
- Providing financial incentives such as grants, tax relief, loans, and/or loan guarantees;
- Furnishing information to historic property owners on methods of maintaining and rehabilitating, and the like;
- Developing guidelines for historic preservation, and identifying appropriate zoning and development provisions applicable to historic properties; and/or
- Expanding public information and interpretive programs and activities.¹⁹

Many of these strategies are expanded on in later chapters of this HPP and could be applied across the Four Original Neighborhoods.



Other Plans & Documents



Government Hill Neighborhood Plan (2012).



Fairview Community Plan (2009).

Concepts discussed in the Historic Preservation Plan for Anchorage’s Four Original Neighborhoods—especially those related to quality-of-life issues, design standards and guidelines, transportation and infrastructure, and Municipality-owned buildings—also overlap with policies and regulations established in other municipal planning documents. The policies and implementation strategies in the HPP will need to be coordinated with these other documents to effectively achieve the Municipality’s preservation goals.

Area-Specific Plans

Government Hill Neighborhood Plan (2012)

The Government Hill Neighborhood Plan (GHNP) is currently being prepared by the Municipality of Anchorage. The purpose of the plan is to identify those assets and values important to the community and to celebrate the area’s heritage as the first neighborhood in the city. Like the Historic Preservation Plan for Anchorage’s Four Original Neighborhoods, the GHNP is a mitigation measure for indirect effects identified during the Section 106 consultation process for the Knik Arm Crossing Project. The Municipality of Anchorage has held a series of public workshops and design charrettes to begin preparing the GHNP, which is scheduled for completion in December 2012. For more information about the GHNP, visit: <http://www.anchorageghnp.com/GHNP/Home.html>.

Fairview Community Plan (2009)

After the adoption of *Anchorage 2020* enabled the creation of official Neighborhood Plans, members of the Fairview Community Council prepared a draft community plan for their neighborhood. The Fairview Community Plan documented the history of the area, identified common values and goals, and advocated that the neighborhood be revitalized through a variety of action strategies. A Revised Final Draft was published in 2009; the draft currently awaits formal adoption in the Municipal Assembly. For more information about the draft Fairview Neighborhood Plan, visit: <http://www.communitycouncils.org/servlet/content/644.html>.

Ship Creek Master Plans

The Municipality of Anchorage has been working for many years to plan for Ship Creek’s future, starting with the Ship Creek/Waterfront Land Use Plan (adopted in 1991 as part of the Anchorage Comprehensive Plan). In 1998, the Alaska Railroad and the Municipality of Anchorage initiated a 20-year master planning effort at Ship Creek that would redevelop the area into an intermodal transit hub. The Ship Creek Master Plan examines potential uses such as housing, hotels, retail, restaurants, trails and recreation, arts and crafts, transportation facilities, and a railroad museum. The plan also focuses on public access, transportation, environmental quality, area-based land use, and historical restoration. The Municipality will initiate an update to the 1998 plan in early 2013. The Alaska Railroad has since been working to complete upgrades to its facilities and infrastructure and to prepare design guidelines to shape future development. The renovation of its historic freight shed—Alaska’s first historic building certified under the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program—is a key project for the revitalization of Ship Creek. Completed in 2011, this project is intended to catalyze the vision of Ship Creek as a community commerce center and to create a market atmosphere akin to Vancouver’s Granville Island or Seattle’s Pike Place Market.²⁰

Functional Plans

The Municipality and other agencies have prepared a number of functional plans to address specific concepts and/or property types. The following plans are applicable to the Four Original Neighborhoods and may overlap with the concepts discussed in the HPP:

Environmental Quality

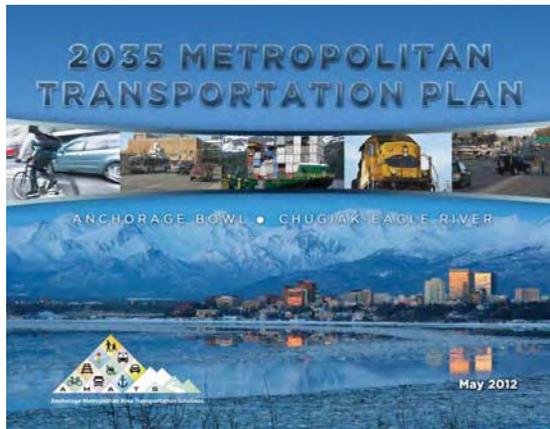
- Anchorage Wetlands Management Plan (1995, update currently in progress)*

Parks, Greenbelts, and Recreational Facilities

- Anchorage Bicycle Plan (2010)
- Anchorage Pedestrian Plan (2007)
- Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan (2006)*
- Anchorage Area-Wide Trails Plan (1997, update currently in progress)*



Anchorage Bicycle Plan (2010).



2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2012).

Streets and Highways

- 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2011-12, currently undergoing Assembly adoption process)*
- Strategy for Developing Context Sensitive Transportation Projects (2008)
- Official Streets and Highways Plan (2005)*
- Street and Highway Landscape Plan (1981)*

Facilities Management

- Anchorage School District Capital Improvements Master Plan (2011)
- Regional Port of Anchorage Master Plan (1999)
- Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Facilities Master Plan

Economic Development

- Live.Work.Play. 2025 Initiative (2011, prepared by Anchorage Economic Development Corporation)
- Anchorage Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2009-2013)

* Included as an element of the Anchorage Comprehensive Plan (AMC 21.05.030).

Transportation Projects

The planning of two transportation projects is currently under way. Both could affect the historic character of the Four Original Neighborhoods: Knik Arm Crossing (KAC), a bridge across the Knik Arm connecting the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and Anchorage, and Highway to Highway (H2H), which would connect the Seward and Glenn Highways. Although these projects are not addressed directly in this document, the HPP can be used as a tool to influence the design and planning of these and other transportation projects. For those interested in managing the effects of these and other similar projects, please read **Chapters VI and VII** of the HPP to gain a clear understanding of the effectiveness of public participation.

More information is available online: <http://www.knikarmbridge.com/>.