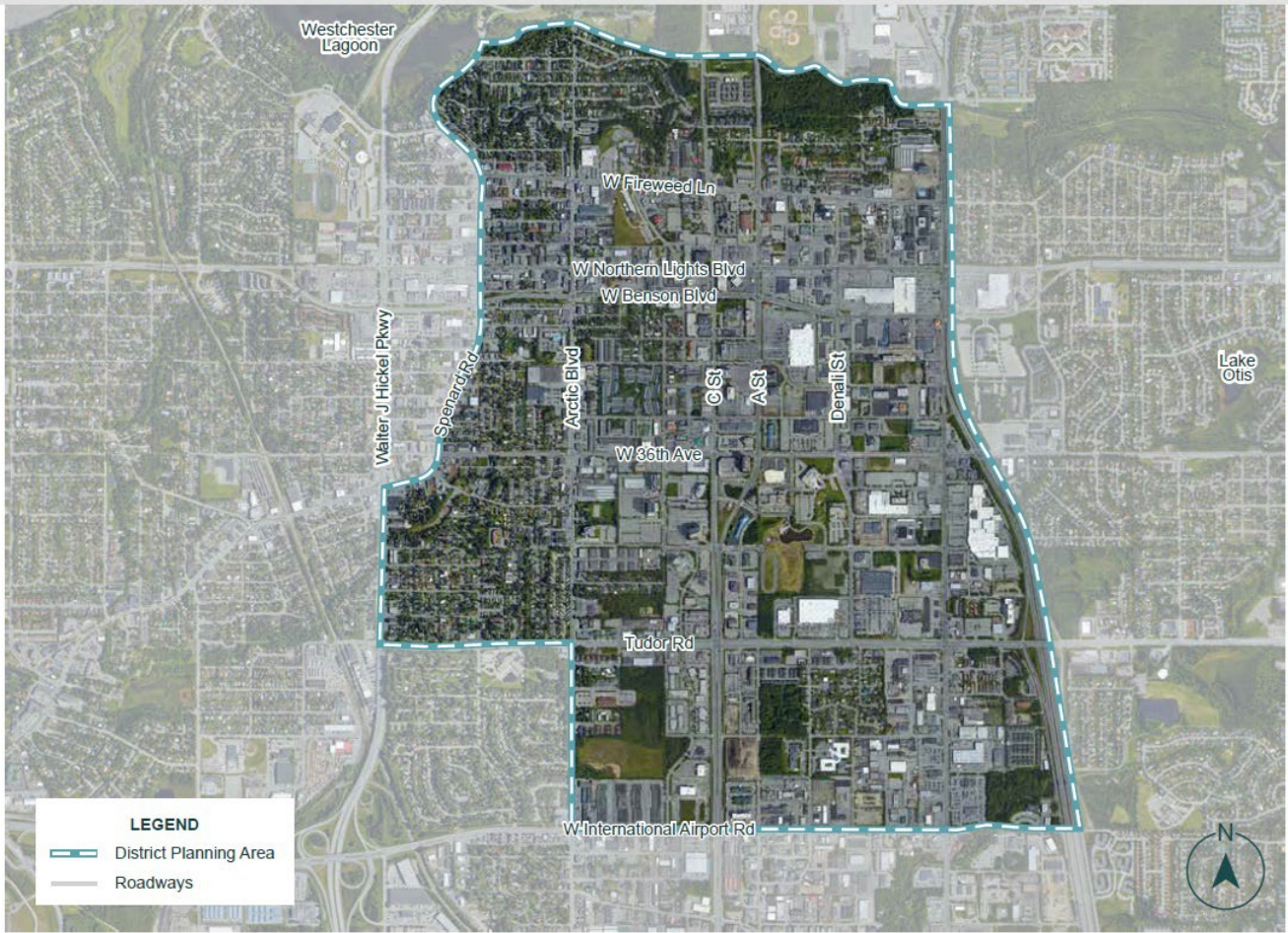


Midtown District Planning Area



Midtown DISTRICT PLAN

Existing Conditions Report – 11/2024 (final draft)

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- B. Commercial market analysis – Agnew::Beck
- C. Housing Analysis Purpose + Methods – Agnew::Beck
- D. Step 3 Title 21 Code Working Group Report
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It is with gratefulness and respect the Planning Team wishes to acknowledge the traditional homeland of Dena'ina Athabaskans and the contributions Alaska Native Peoples make to our community and society today.

Executive Summary

Midtown District Plan Guiding Theme

Midtown is the vibrant center of our city's economic landscape, where business, innovation, and community converge. It's a dynamic district where enterprises thrive, residents engage, and visitors experience the unique blend of commerce that defines our community.

This plan's future-focused approach will foster sustainability, inclusivity, and engagement, guiding Midtown as a thriving, diverse district that welcomes all.

We will build on Midtown's current-dynamic urban environment that includes green spaces, innovative design, and many amenities, ensuring every resident enjoys a high quality of life in a beautiful, connected, and welcoming district.

What Midtown Offers

Midtown offers the highest concentration of jobs, retail offerings, hotels, restaurants, and access to transit, trails, local arterial roads, and the state highway system, making it the primary destination for many trips to and within Anchorage. Approximately 11,925 people (4% of Anchorage's population) live in the Midtown District. The planning team received many comments referring to Midtown as an essential destination.

This Existing Conditions Report describes the resources and the different types of residential and business areas that make up Midtown and establishes a foundation and baseline for recommendations included in the Midtown District Plan (MTDP). These areas include the Midtown commercial core area and residential neighborhoods to the west (from the commercial core westerly to Spenard Road (Spenard area) and northerly to the Chester Creek Greenbelt (North Star area).

What is the Midtown District Plan?

The Anchorage Community Development Authority (ACDA) and the three community councils (Midtown, Spenard, and North Star) that comprise the Midtown District planning area will guide the formation of the Midtown District Plan (MTDP) with assistance from the municipal Planning Department. This document and the accompanying commercial land and residential housing demand study will contribute to forming the MTDP's content. The MTDP will build on the Existing Conditions report to provide visions, goals, and action items to be implemented over the next 20-25 years.

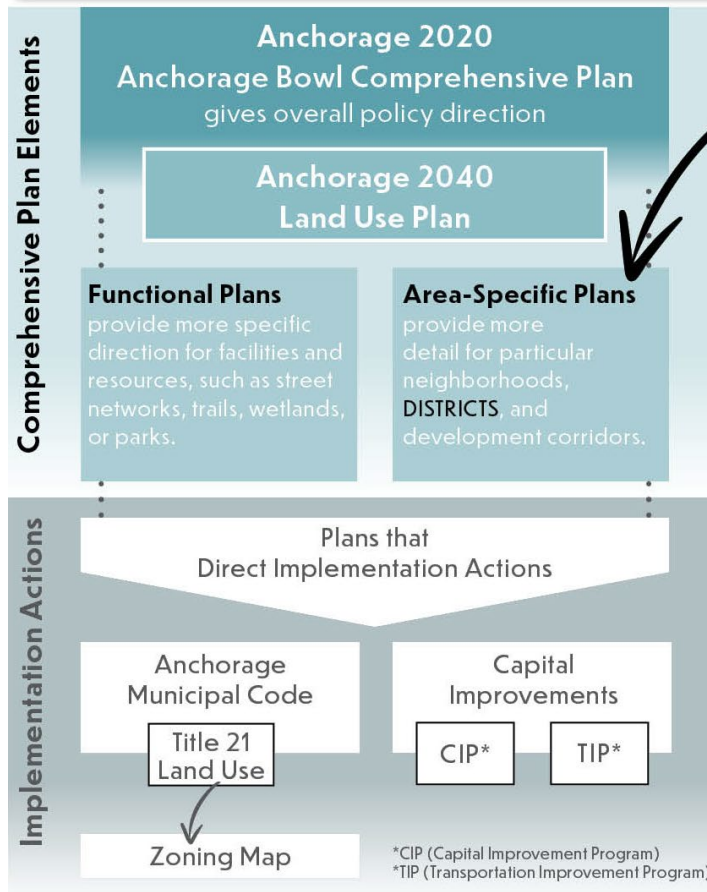
Illustration #1: What is a District Plan— The following page depicts the structure and content of the MTDP and how it fits as a comprehensive plan element as defined in Anchorage Municipal Code Title 21 ([AMC 21.03.130 Neighborhood or District Plans](#)).

District plans are required to have the following elements:

- Area-specific goals.
- In-depth policy direction.
- Tailored land use designations (land use plan map).
- Specific and tailored development guidelines (guidance for new and redevelopment).
- Implementation Actions (how actions will be funded, who will implement them).

These plans may also provide a housing target and recommendations for meeting that target. The plan will be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Anchorage Assembly in a public hearing. Plan adoption is anticipated by June 2025. **Illustration #2: Midtown District Plan Timeline**— gives the timelines and milestones for the plan.

What is the Midtown District Plan?



The **Midtown District Plan** will be an element of the *Anchorage Comprehensive Plan (Anchorage 2020)* and will be consistent with Anchorage 2020’s overall policy framework.

Anchorage 2020 called for **DISTRICTS PLANS** to respond to *area-specific issues* in more detail than what is possible at a citywide scale including:

- *Area-specific goals*
- *More in-depth policy direction*
- *Tailored land use designations*
- *More specific development guidelines*
- *Implementation Actions*

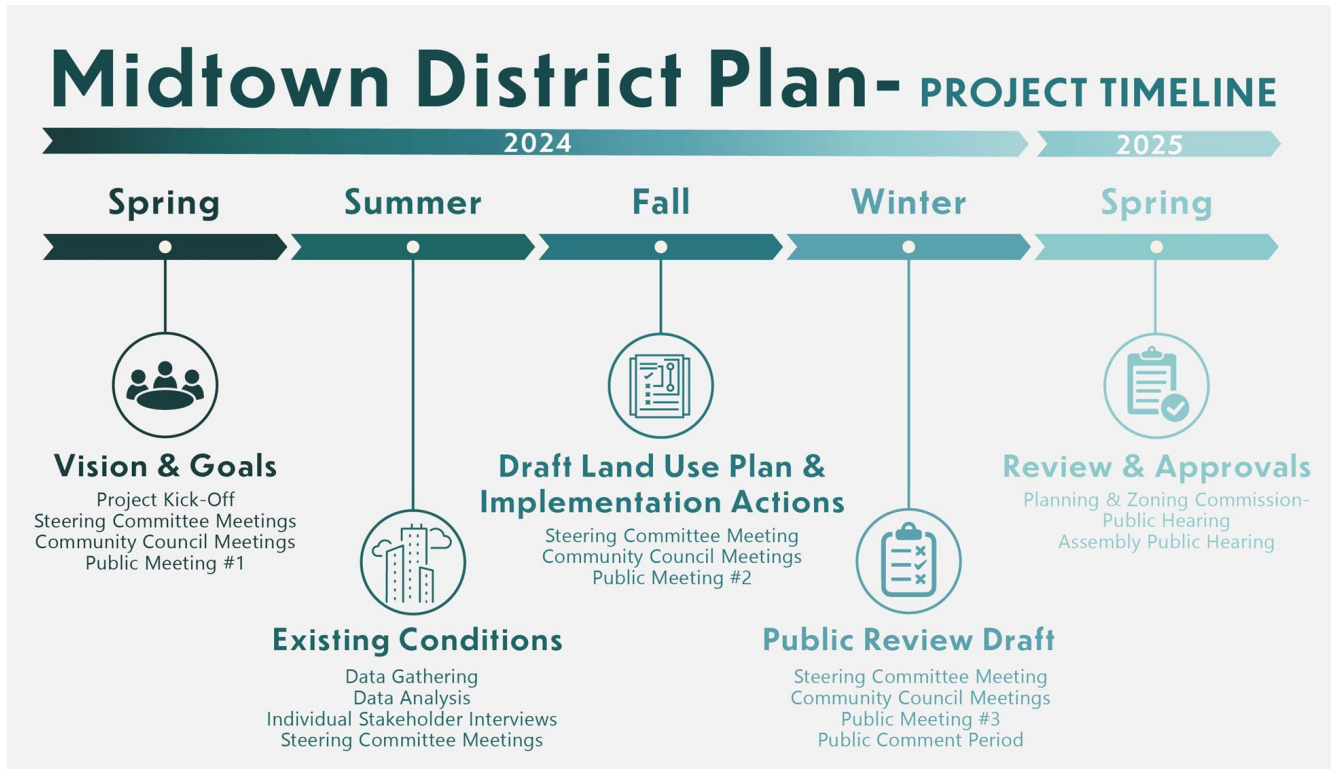
Why Now?

The municipality received a multimillion-dollar infusion of American Rescue Act (ARPA) grant funding to assist our community in recovery after COVID-19. ACDA applied for ARPA funds to complete the MTDPlan for the municipality, which was approved by the Assembly in 2021. This will be the first land use plan adopted for the Midtown District area.



Photo Credits: Left to right PropertiesofAlaska.com, K Bunnell.

District Plan Project Timeline



Planning Process

A planning process includes multiple steps: public engagement, a report on these existing conditions, an analysis of existing and estimated future commercial and residential capacity, zoning districts and land capacity determination, and a future housing estimate.

The vision, goals, and actions of MTDP provide the direction needed as Anchorage continues to recover from COVID-19 and the Great Recession. The plan will help answer questions about how well the existing zoning is meeting the needs and if the 2040 Land Use Plan Map is reflective and supportive of Midtown’s vision, goals, and actions for the future.

The plan will recommend where to focus investment, improvements to and for a multi-use transportation network, what services are encouraged, and proposals to ease development constraints. The future looks very bright for the center of Anchorage. As of this writing, commercial property owners are starting to fill long-empty spaces, the municipality has rezoned the vacant Archive property in anticipation of hundreds of new housing units, and the Assembly’s Anchored Home Plan 2024 was recently updated to increase supportive services.

Survey Results

2023 and 2024 Online Surveys

Two online surveys focused on Midtown contributed to the many visions, goals, and actions of the MTDP. The early 2023 online survey found that survey takers consider Midtown a great central location with shopping, dining, and business opportunities. **Illustrations #3: Midtown Impressions**, and **#4: What Respondents Like About Midtown** provide an overview of the 2023 survey takers' comments and recommendations, including the many benefits the Midtown area provides, including location, convenience, and accessibility. Comments on elements they thought were missing included walkability, housing, and safety.

A second online survey was posted in mid-2024. This survey was initiated between the two MTDP public meetings (May 14th at Natural Pantry and September 16th at the BP Energy Center). It garnered similar results, with over 500 people taking it.

Report Purpose and Structure

PURPOSE - This report gives an overview of the Midtown District Plan (MTDP) area's prehistory, settlement history, subsequent development, current uses, and current issues experienced by residents, visitors, businesses, and landowners. It is intended to be a point-in-time snapshot of what is occurring in the Midtown District planning area (District). An overview of the Title 21 and Title 23 codes, land use mapping, housing and economic development incentives, transportation systems (roadways and trails), safety, and security is included. This report provides recommendations for actions as “*Planning Team Notes*.” The *Notes* encourage the reader to identify existing characteristics of Midtown, opportunities for change within issues such as economic development, quality of life, travel choices, amendments to Title 21 and Title 23, and land use mapping. The report is structured as follows:

Section 1: Existing Conditions in Midtown

Alaska Native People’s prehistory, settlement, including homesteading, and the subdivisions that followed, the Oil Boom, and the Alaska Native Settlement Claims Act (ANSCA) all contribute to the Midtown area’s story. Census demographic information informs the reader about who lives in the region, including their income versus the cost of living. Property ownership data from the previous Midtown Business Improvement District Study informs us about commercial offerings and the current state of business operations. Municipal Geographic Information Systems data informs the reader about what is built on properties, how the property is zoned, and current and anticipated land uses.

State and local government agencies also own property and facilities, provide services, and are

WHAT RESPONDENTS LIKE ABOUT MIDTOWN

What does Anchorage enjoy most about MIDTOWN?

62%

of respondents recognized Midtown has a convenient **CENTRAL LOCATION**, easily accessible from all parts of town with great parking.



LOCATION | ACCESSIBILITY | CENTRAL | CONVENIENT | PROXIMITY

Most respondents commented that Midtown is centrally located with abundant free parking. Midtown offers many amenities, including a variety of shopping opportunities, restaurants, and jobs. With the creation of the new Midtown bike corridor pathway, it’s made it more accessible to bikers utilizing this east west access.



WHAT WOULD YOU IMPROVE IN MIDTOWN?

Survey respondents indicated they would like to see the following improvements in Midtown:

- Public Safety
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure
- Affordable Housing
- Road Improvements
- Road Maintenance
- Snow Removal
- Services for Those Experiencing Homelessness
- Sense of Community

WHAT IS MISSING FROM MIDTOWN

Walk - Bikeability //

Many survey respondents identified Midtown as being a central location, a convenient hub of businesses, shopping, and residential neighborhoods. However, what was heard most from respondents was the lack of walkability between these services and the need for safer streets. Improved pedestrian crossings and bike lanes or routes and signage are needed for safety. Respondents suggested that reducing the size of parking areas could provide space for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.



Public Safety //

With an increase in homelessness around Anchorage, the Midtown area has felt the weight of this problem. Public safety and more police presence were identified as needs to keep businesses and residents safe from theft and vandalism. Respondents feel that an increased police presence would help prevent crime in the area. It was suggested that Midtown provide a safe location for people experiencing homelessness to go during the day.



Affordable Housing //

Survey respondents identified all types of housing, affordable housing, multi-family housing, and new market rate residential developments as needed in the Midtown area. Respondents suggested that new mixed-use developments could encourage additional housing within the Midtown core. By adding housing, the area would be more active and vibrant after the workday has ended, creating a stronger sense of community.



expected to maintain the parks, trails, sidewalks, and roads to a standard that makes Midtown livable and contributes to the quality of life. These agencies are also expected to keep their properties and facilities safe. This report includes data on how the agencies are performing and discusses private service providers, including utility companies, and their contributions.

Lastly, this report discusses the many adopted plans and programs directly linked to Midtown and how these plans and programs may factor into the MTDP planning process. It's important to note that with the adoption of the MTDP, these existing plans and programs may need to be updated and changed to reflect the desires of the Midtown District Plan participants and what they see as the future of the Midtown area. This planning process gives the community the potential to shape a bright future for the Midtown area.

Sections 2, 3, and 4: Listing of Maps, Illustrations, and Tables

The last sections include reference maps, materials, and informational tables.

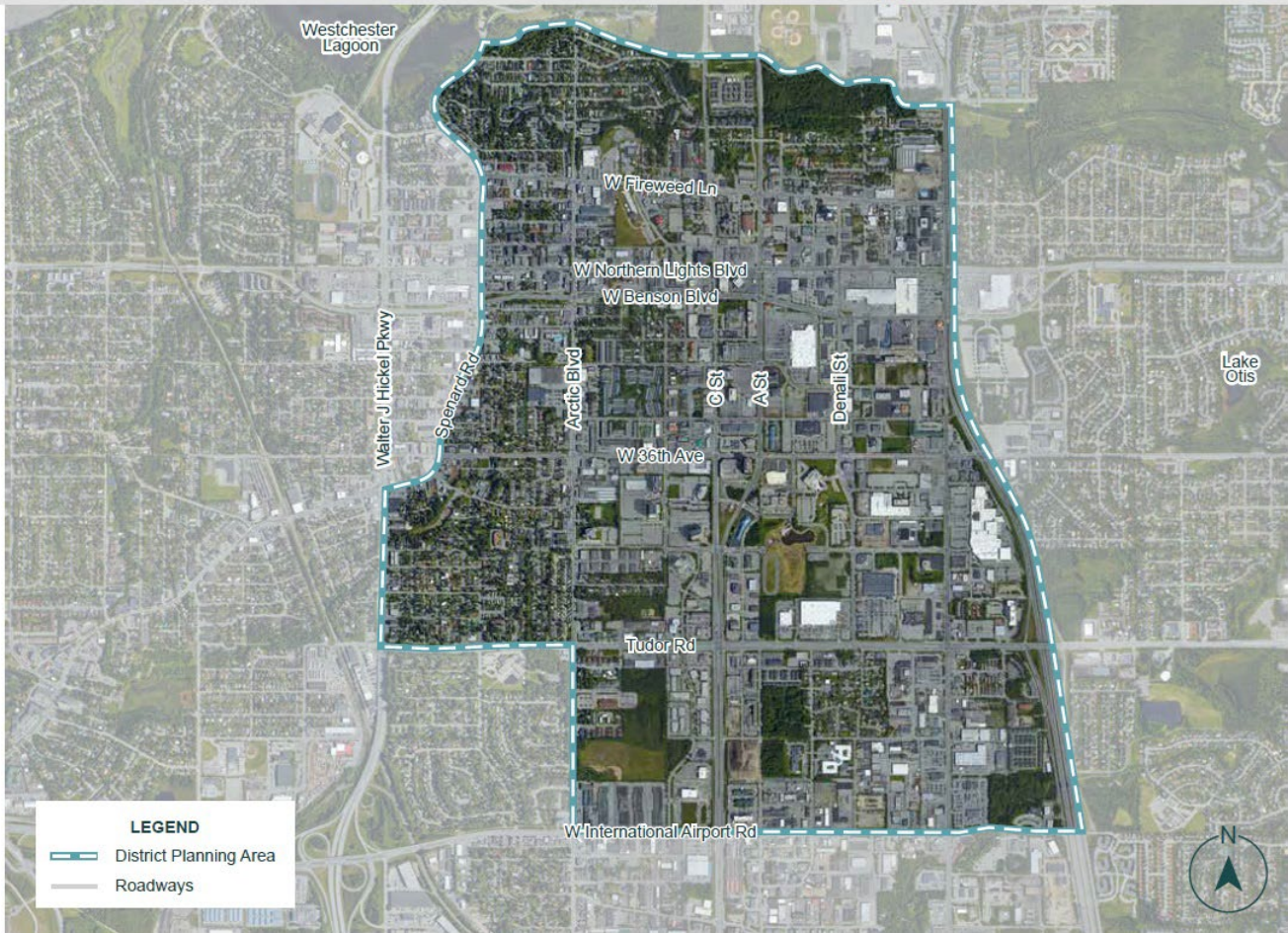
Attachments

- A. Land Suitability Analysis
A land suitability analysis maps out which lands are suitable for construction based on known environmental factors.
- B. Commercial Market Analysis
This section reports on personal interviews with business and property owners to provide an overview of the current commercial market demand. Growth and losses in the MTDP area over the last 25 years will be discussed. An estimate for future commercial demand concludes this section.
- C. Housing Analysis Purpose and Methods
Housing is among the top three priorities for businesses, families, and elected officials.
- D. Step 3 Title 21 Working Group Report
Discusses the issues and recommendations to enable new housing development.
- E. AMATS 2023-2026 TIP Midtown-projects excerpted.
- F. Crime Mitigation White Paper to provide statistics and best practices.

Planning Boundary

Three community council areas are incorporated into the planning boundary. This includes all of Midtown, most of North Star, and the portion of Spenard not included in the *West Anchorage District Plan* but covered by the *Spenard Corridor Plan*. Major district streets and Chester Creek were used to define this boundary. These streets include Seward Highway to the east, Spenard Road and Walter Hickel Parkway to the west, Tudor Road and International Airport Road to the south, and Chester Creek to the north. **Map # 1: Midtown District Planning Area**—depicts the district planning area.

Midtown District Planning Area



Historic Context

Alaska Native History

Anchorage is part of the *Dena'ina* traditional land, *Dena'ina Elnena*, of the indigenous Alaska Native Athabaskan people, *Dena'ina*. Alaska Native people have continuously occupied the area for thousands of years and are still here today. The Eklutna and Knik tribes of *Dena'ina Elnena* established seasonal camps along *Ch'atanaltsegh Liq'aka Betnu (Fish Creek)* 1,500 years before the 1900s settlement (*Spenard Road Statement of Significance, DOT&PF*).

Fish, wildlife, and berries were gathered throughout the district area. A *Dena'ina* settlement, *Chanshtnu*, was located west of what was surveyed and called South Addition near the mouth of Chester Creek, *Dgheyay Kaq' (Shem Pete 2003, 334)*.

Shem Pete's Alaska states, "Before the 1950s, the area was Black spruce forest and marshlands with a single lake, "O'Connell." O'Connell Lake was located approximately between what is now C Street and Cordova Street, just south of Northern Lights Boulevard. O'Connell Lake was not identified with a *Dena'ina* place name; however, according to the Friends of Fish Creek (Friends of Fish Creek | Spenard, Alaska (daylightfishcreek.org), O'Connell Lake may also be called Blueberry Lake, and part of the Fish Creek headwaters.

Homesteading History

The following includes references from the Bureau of Land Management and draft historic context statements for the Midtown, North Star, and Spenard community council areas. Individual community council historical context statements were drafted for the MOA-Wide Historic Preservation Plan planning effort 2016-2018. The context statements used several references, including Wikipedia, Anchorage Daily News, Anchorage Times, Shem Pete's Alaska, Alaska Business Monthly, Anchorage Economic Development Authority, Alaska Historical Society, and historic aerial photography.

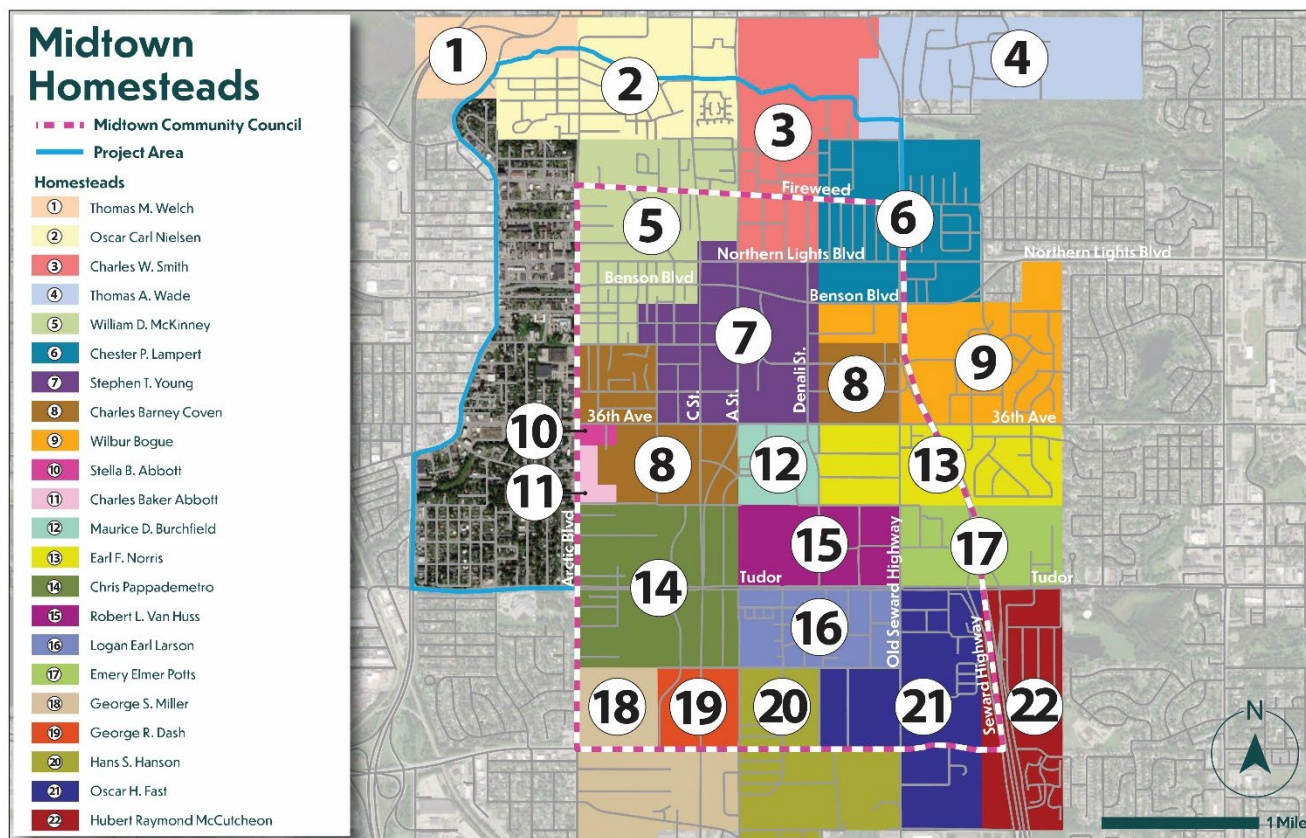
Homesteading Midtown District

Congress passed the original homestead law in 1862 to provide small farms to anyone over age 21, the head of a family, or immigrants willing to become citizens. The purpose was to help settle the country and provide new opportunities. From the start, women, minorities, and immigrants were allowed to homestead. Homesteading prevailed in Alaska through October 21, 1986.

On October 21, 1986, tens of millions of acres of federal land were withdrawn from homestead entry to allow the State of Alaska and Alaska Native corporations to select millions of acres under terms incorporated into the 1958 Alaska Statehood Act and the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Other federal lands that had not been evaluated as suitable for cultivation by the BLM also remained closed to homestead entry ([PublicRoom_HistoryofHomesteading_Brochure_508.pdf \(blm.gov\)](#)).
[North Star Homesteaders](#)

Homesteaders were awarded titles to land in Township 013N, Range 03W, Sections 19 and 30, within what is now a portion of the North Star and Midtown community council areas. Proving up a homestead was a difficult and expensive task. Many families made a go of homesteading with small farms and dairies. However, as time passed, the financial benefit of subdividing and selling far outweighed the rewards of homesteading. Midtown homesteaders may have purchased their homestead for a nominal fee (\$1.25+ per acre). Today, several subdivisions and streets are named for these hardy pioneers and their family members, including Smith, Lampert, and Eidet.

By 1919, 40-acre parcels were surveyed along the western and northern edges of the Midtown area. In 1926, Charles W. Smith, a railroad employee, and his wife Pearl homesteaded 160 acres near C Street and Fireweed Lane. According to the BLM GLO records, few other settlers lived along the Fireweed plateau area in the early 1920s.



Map #2: Midtown Homesteads Map—depicting the many homesteads in the Midtown District.

Spenard Road was the only route to the Fireweed plateau beyond Chester Creek. Smith borrowed a bulldozer from the railroad and cut an east-west road to join Spenard Road. That road is now Fireweed Lane (*Carberry and Lane*).

The Smith homestead still stands today at 100 24th Place. It was subdivided into the Charles Smith Subdivision, the Pearl V. Smith Subdivision, and Charles W. Smith Memorial Park. Mrs. Pearl V. Smith conveyed the Charles W. Smith Memorial Park land to the City of Anchorage after her husband passed away (dnr.alaska.gov).

Chester P. Lampert was awarded a homestead near the same area. He developed large swaths of property, including the corner of Northern Lights and Seward Highway, north, east, and south of Rogers Park. The Lampert homestead address at 1952 Fireweed Lane connected the newly built Old Seward Highway/Homer Road with Spenard Road, helping to define the northern edge. Lampert leased property at the intersection of the New Seward Highway and Fireweed Lane to the Lathrop Company. Lathrop constructed three movie theatres; Fireweed #1 & #2 opened in the early 1970s, #3 followed in the 80s, and closed on June 6, 2010 (<http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/10963>). The new CIRI building, which opened in 2015, occupies this location today.

The McKinney homestead (**Illustration # 5: McKinney Homestead Certification**) was located on Fireweed Lane from the Arctic to B Street. William D. (Bill) McKinney “enjoyed” a variety of employment opportunities, including working for the Alaska Railroad, turkey farming, and founding the Federal Transfer Company with partner Jerry Sigmund. Bill started McKinley Garden Service after retiring from the railroad as the Fire Chief. McKinney campaigned to establish the Anchorage Independent School District and the Spenard Volunteer Fire Department. McKinney was active in the Anchorage Elks Club and was President of the American Legion. One of only two couples married in Anchorage in 1920, Bill and Alice McKinney celebrated their 50th anniversary commemorating the incorporation of the City of Anchorage (*Bruce Parham, ed., “McKinney William D. “Bill” Cook Inlet Historical Society, Legends and Legacies, Anchorage, 1910-1940, <http://www.alaskahistory.org>*).

The property now includes several subdivisions, including Leo Wilder, Barnett, Wharton, Catholic School Tract, Meteor Heights, Anchorage Heights, and the McKinney Addition.

Fireweed Lane was initially called Blue Berry Lake Road. Notable other North Star homesteaders in Township 013N, Range 03W, Section 19, include Charles Balhiser, Jacob E. Darling, David Leopold, Hugh K. Dougherty, Henry A. Mills, Oscar Carl Neilsen, Albert Suomela, Wade A. Thomas, Thomas M. Welch, and Stephen T. Young ([Home - BLM GLO Records](#)).

Spenard Homesteaders

Joe Spenard arrived in Anchorage with one of the few automobiles in the area in 1916. Establishing himself in the delivery business, Spenard hauled and sold wood and came across Lake Jeter while searching for a source of timber. Recognizing the scenic qualities of Lake Jeter, Spenard homesteaded 160 acres near the lake (illegally on Forest Service land) and constructed a resort with a dance pavilion and swimming beach. To access his new resort, Spenard recruited members of the Bills' Club, a local fraternal organization, to assist in clearing and constructing the trail to the lake from the city's boundary at 9th Avenue and L Street, which eventually became Spenard Road and the area's name.

There was no "Spenard community" per se until Earl Hillstrand (the grandfather of the guys from Deadliest Catch) platted the corner of Spenard and Fireweed (the same subdivision where Chilkoot Charlie's sits today) in 1946. The exception was a collection of cabins and fur farms near the mouth of Campbell Creek, also known as Romig Hill.

Homesteads in the Spenard area transitioned to subdivided residential areas around the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1960s and 1970s, some subdivisions were designated for commercial zoning, allowing for an eclectic mix of uses and activities over time. These subdivisions had no sidewalks, parks, or pedestrian amenities, and many fell into disrepair.

Anchorage 08179

4-1003-R.

The United States of America,

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

WHEREAS, a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at Anchorage, Alaska, has been deposited in the General Land Office, whereby it appears that, pursuant to the Act of Congress of May 20, 1862, "To Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain," and the acts supplemental thereto, the claim of **William D. McKinney** has been established and duly consummated, in conformity to law, for the south half of the northeast quarter of the southwest quarter, the north half of the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter, the north half of the southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter, the southwest quarter of the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter and the Lots eight and ten of Section nineteen, and the Lot five, the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter of the northwest quarter, the northwest quarter of the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter and the west half of the southeast quarter of the northwest quarter of the northwest quarter of Section thirty in Township thirteen north of Range three west of the Seward Meridian, Alaska, containing one hundred fifty-seven acres and eighty-five hundredths of an acre,

according to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said Land, on file in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE:

NOW KNOW YE, That there is, therefore, granted by the UNITED STATES unto the said claimant the tract of Land above described; TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the said tract of Land, with the appurtenances thereof, unto the said claimant and to the heirs and assigns of the said claimant forever; subject to any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing, or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights, as may be recognized and acknowledged by the local customs, laws, and decisions of courts; and there is reserved from the lands hereby granted a right of way for the construction of railroads, telegraph and telephone lines in accordance with the Act of March 12, 1914 (38 Stat., 305).

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I, **Franklin D. Roosevelt,**
President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.
GIVEN under my hand, at the City of Washington, the TWELFTH day of AUGUST in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and THIRTY-NINE and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and SIXTY-FOURTH.
By the President: *Franklin D. Roosevelt*
By: *Jeanne Donovanagh*, Secretary,
A. S. Clinton
Acting
Register of the General Land Office.

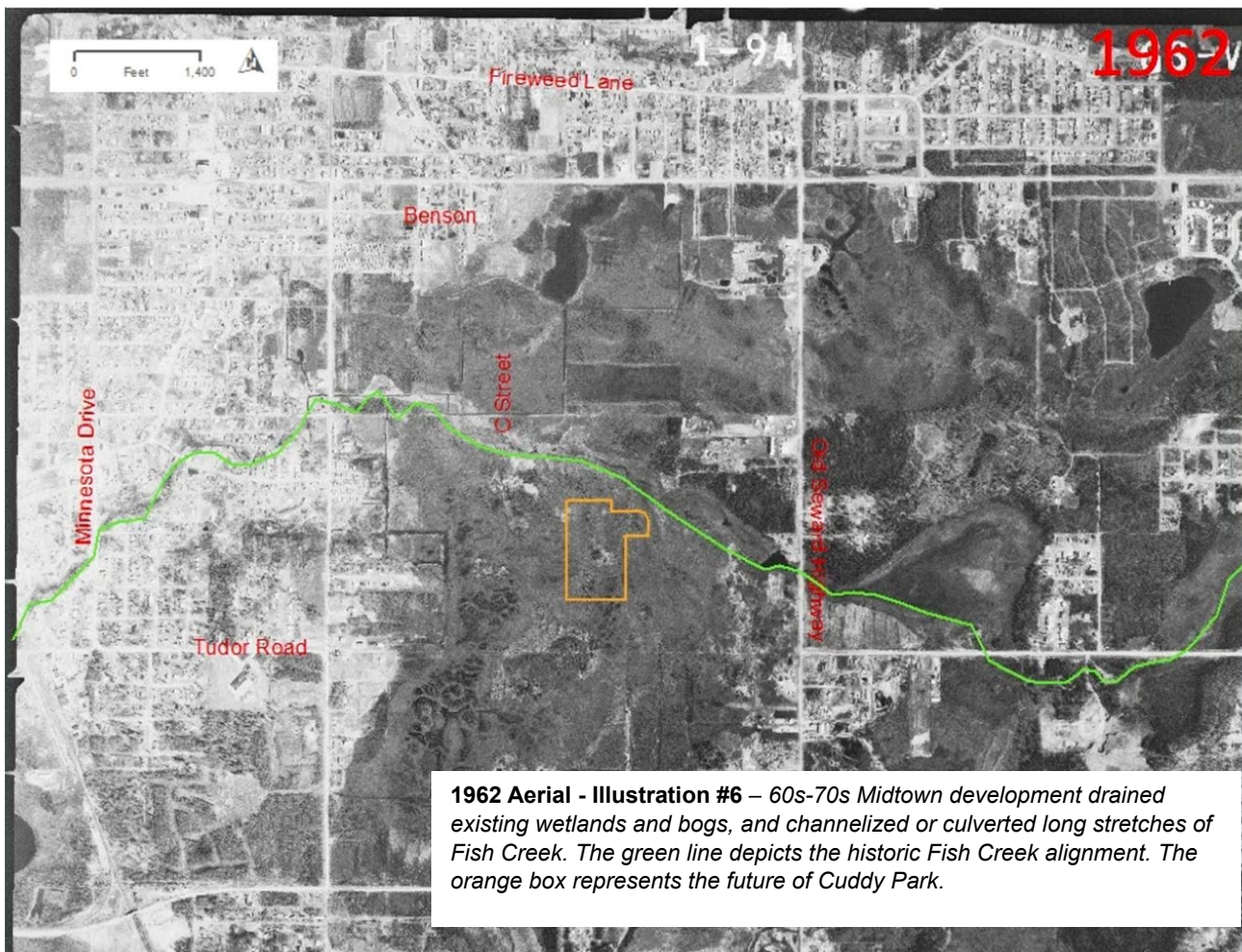
RECORD OF PATENTS: Patent Number **1104480**

Early Development – Beyond Homesteading

Midtown Area

The progress of Midtown’s development is found in historic aerial photos, local newspaper stories, and various websites. In the “[History of Anchorage’s](#) Chains, franchises, and National Retailers, local historian David Reamer shares interesting facts about the coming and going of various retailers. The aerial photo from Reamer’s story is helpful to this report as it depicts the construction of major streets, Northern Lights and Seward Highway (both 2-way streets at the time), and the residential housing built near the Sears Mall. Midtown was developed to provide employment, shopping, and housing located in a central and easily accessible area of Anchorage with a diverse mix of private and public offerings, many of which differed from what was found in the downtown core. The transition from homesteads to subdivisions created the essential residential and commercial opportunities provided by large tracts in the district area, which helped establish a new future for Anchorage.

Beginning in the 1950s, development was focused on several areas. Development spread, moving east from Spenard Road, occupying the northwestern corner of Midtown, from Fireweed Lane to the south of where Northern Lights Boulevard would be. Additional development is shown in the northeast corner of Midtown south of Fireweed. 1950s Maps and aerial photos show a dense collection of mainly residential buildings along Fireweed and the side roads extending south. In the far southwestern corner of Midtown, buildings are aligned with what would become Arctic Road (1951 1:250,000, 1952 1:63,360: *Anchorage Place Names by Rae Arno*). **Illustration #6—1962 Aerial**, from the Friends of Fish Creek website, not only indicates Fish Creek’s route and future Cuddy Park but also the large amount of housing built by 1962 in North Star and Spenard.



By 1962, Midtown had developed roads on all four sides. The northern area along Fireweed Lane looks fully built, and two churches appear. A line of buildings also occupies the east side of Arctic south of Fish Creek, and one of them is also a church.

Also, during the 1960s, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) constructed wider high-speed roads through Midtown. Along Northern Lights Boulevard and Benson Boulevard, they seized and demolished workforce housing for this construction. This effort created the wide one-way streets that typify the community's dependence on motor vehicle transportation. DOT&PF constructed Northern Lights Boulevard in the late 1960s or early 1970s as part of the urban renewal projects in Anchorage (*Decker and Chiei 2005, 24*). A few years later, the University of Alaska Anchorage built the University Center south of 36th along the Old Seward Highway north of Tudor Road.

Aerial photos from the late 1970s show Steller Alternative High School, Northern Lights Boulevard, Benson Boulevard, the Barnes and Noble building, and Fred Meyer. The strip mall at Old Seward and Tudor and the apartments on the east side of Tudor also exist.

By 1979, DOT&PF had constructed A and C Streets from Midtown into Downtown. Credit Union Drive had two large buildings, including the ACS building (1979 1:63,360). DOT&PF completed the four-lane New Seward Highway in 1971, along with several interchange expansions over the next two decades.

By the mid-1970s, the highway between south and midtown Anchorage looked to be a modern "controlled access" freeway, which means drivers could only get on and leave it at a limited number of designated entrances and exits.

No doubt, the residential development in the 1950s-70s provided much-needed housing to meet all

Overview of Past and Projected Change

Between 1959 and 1996, Alaska's population came close to tripling, the number of jobs more than tripled, and real—adjusted for inflation—personal income quadrupled, as Table 1 shows. That impressive growth in less than 40 years was not steady but rather came in cycles of very rapid growth followed by periods of consolidation.

TABLE 1. HISTORICAL ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS						
Alaska Statewide Summary						
		1961	1970	1980	1990	1996
Population	(thousands)	236,700	300,382	401,851	550,043	610,800
Households	(thousands)		79,739	131,463	188,915	216,400
Real Personal Income	(millions of 1995\$)	\$2,470	\$4,901	\$8,696	\$13,218	\$15,139
Wage & Salary						
Employment	(thousands)	56.9	92.5	170	236.2	261.8
Total Employment	(thousands)	94.32	133.42	211.35	285.57	306.7

incomes. Single family, duplexes, 4-plexes, and apartment buildings were all built in this area to meet demand caused by an influx of new residents. According to an ISER report by the Institute of Social and Economic Research, from UAA, published in 1997, Table #1: Historical Economic and Demographic Statistics—indicates from 1959 to 1996, Alaska's population almost tripled, with the number of jobs more than tripling. Anchorage was seen as a great place to live and work.

Unification of the Greater Anchorage Area

George Sullivan was elected mayor of the newly formed Municipality of Anchorage in 1975. The Sullivan administration is known for shifting support from Downtown to Midtown. This shift gave the Midtown District the boost it needed as the area became the new place for modern office buildings and

oil company headquarters. ANSCA was passed during this timeframe, bringing Alaska Native Tribal Corporations to Midtown. Municipality investments include the Z. J. Loussac Anchorage Public Library (*Hoagland 1993, 96*). Unsurprisingly, the development moved to the Midtown District, which had larger lots and cheaper tax obligations outside the downtown central business district.

Character Summary and Character-Defining Features

Midtown, like most of Alaska from the late 1970s through the early 2000s, experienced significant periods of growth and losses as the oil market ([1980s oil glut - Wikipedia](#)), the housing boom and bust, and the resulting Great Recession ([Great Recession - Wikipedia](#)) impacted Alaska's and therefore Anchorage's economy.

During this time, Midtown continued to supplant Downtown as the primary office center in Anchorage as other professional services relocated, including many banks and credit unions. Midtown surpassed Downtown in employee numbers sometime after the year 2000. Midtown's many small retail spaces and less expensive rent encouraged small business development. Large parking lots were built to support the many workers in new strip malls and office towers.

Commercial Landscape

Midtown's large office buildings, strip malls, major hotels and motels, big box stores, and major shopping centers characterize this auto-oriented southward expansion of the city.

Architectural styles of private and public buildings encompass a broad spectrum from Zamarelli's strip development to modern multi-story glass showpieces, including the ASRC building with its green glass cladding, J.L. Tower with its nightly Northern Lights display, and the late post-modern era Denali Towers. Stellar Secondary School is a low-rise Midcentury Modern beauty. Both Stellar and Willow Crest Elementary School were built during the Oil Boom.

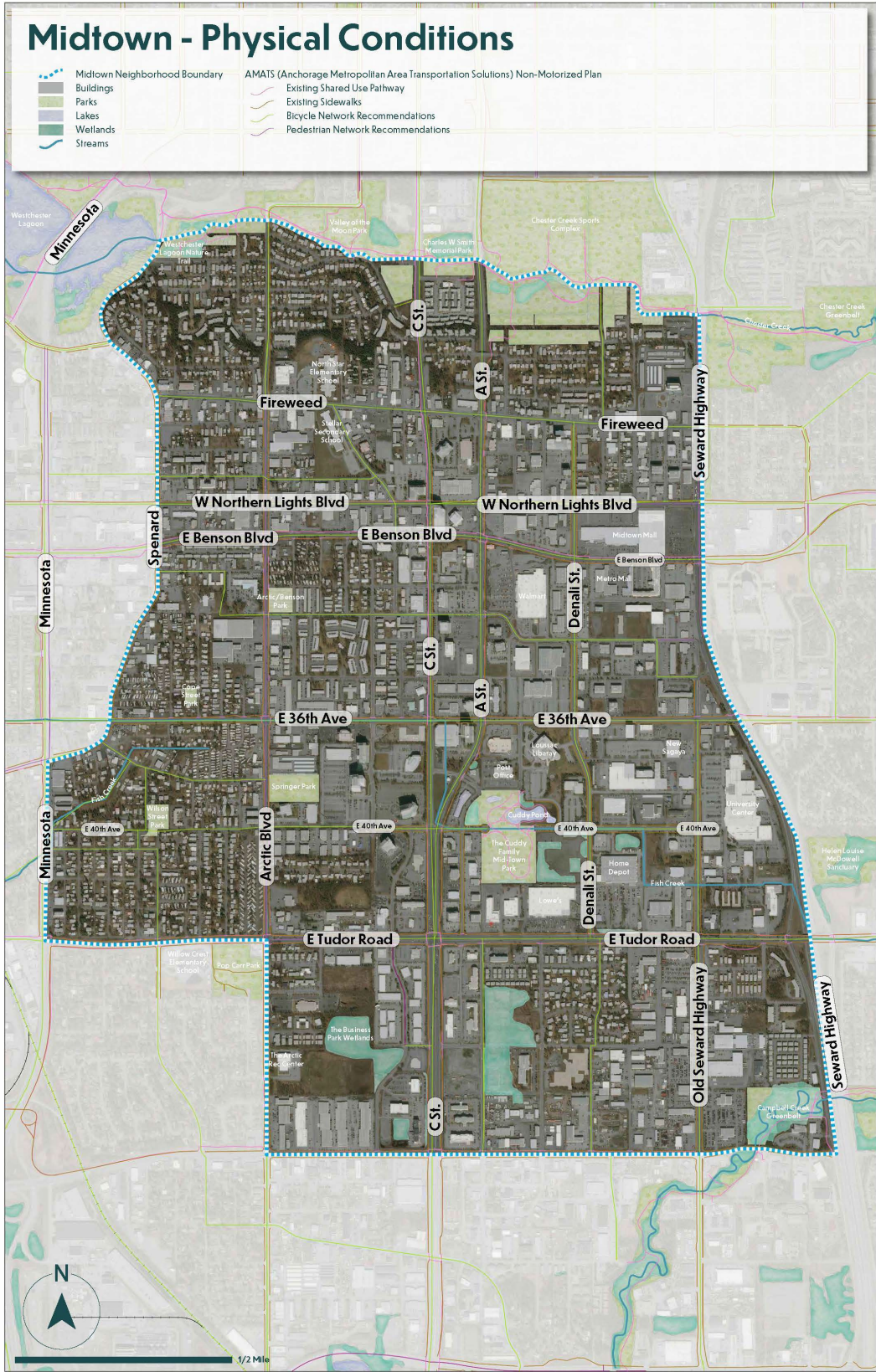
Loussac Library was constructed in Brutalist architecture. Before the 2016-2017 renovation, Loussac Library retained one of the most notable concrete waffle slabs in Alaska.



Photo Credit –360 W. Benson Boulevard – Midcentury Modern, K Bunnell

Planning Team Note and Recommendations:

The eclectic mix of commercial land uses (office buildings, strip malls, shopping centers, and fast-food establishments), older residential areas, mobile home parks, and ample surface parking provide many opportunities for this district planning process. Some areas may be identified as reinvestment focus areas. This could include prioritized utility upgrades, streets with bicycle lanes, wider sidewalks, and other amenities to provide a pleasant and welcoming new area.



Map #3: Midtown District Physical Conditions maps buildings, parks, lakes, wetlands, shared-use pathways, existing sidewalks, and the recommended bicycle and pedestrian networks.

Streetscapes

As depicted in **Map # 3: Midtown District Physical Conditions**—significant roadways bisect the planning area. East/West arterials include 36th Avenue, Tudor Road, Northern Lights Boulevard, and Benson Boulevard. North and South arterials include A and C Streets, Arctic Boulevard, and Old Seward Highway. All but Arctic are high-speed roadways with narrow sidewalks. C Street has broad shoulders south of 40th Avenue. None of these roadways are striped for bicycle travel. Arctic Road was rebuilt over the past few years from Fireweed Lane to International Airport Road. It has two center turn lanes and bike lanes with new sidewalks. Some residential and commercial streets are paved with rolled curbs. Alleys are typical in many of the district’s residential areas.



Photo Credit: Blueberry Road, K Bunnell

Residential Landscape

The residential population of the Midtown District planning area is almost exclusively concentrated in the western and northern parts of the planning area. The subdivisions noted on previous pages are primarily small- to medium-scale residential developments, including single-family homes, multi-family apartments, and condominiums in various architectural styles, including Log Houses, Vernacular Cottages, and Ranches. All subdivided areas within in the Midtown Community Council area developed on a standard grid pattern except for Heather Meadows, which has curvilinear streets.

Neighborhoods in North Star are a mix of minimal traditional, contemporary, ranch, and split-level and bi-level houses, along with a few multi-family complexes. Setbacks are consistent and streets are paved with rolled curbs with no sidewalks. Carports are more prevalent than garages, mainly west of Spenard. Streets are set on a north-south, and east-west curvilinear grid.

Some original neighborhoods along the Spenard corridor are platted in a traditional grid pattern of narrow streets, alleys, and small rectangular lots. The Spenard neighborhood is a mix of commercial and residential development. *Patterns of the Past*, published by the municipality, documenting the early stages of Anchorage settlement and development, speculated this is due to most of Spenard’s development occurring before FHA lending requirements and building standards, coupled with the absence of building regulations. Residences are generally designed in the vernacular log style, contemporary folk (Quonset huts and mobile homes), minimal traditional, early modern, and ranch styles. Of historical note, the first trailer home shipped to Alaska in 1945 found its home in Spenard.

Unlike most other areas in Anchorage, above-ground power and communication technology are still standard in many parts of Midtown.



Photo Credits: 2400 Barrow Street, 414 E 23rd – Midcentury Apartment Building and single-family, Kathy 'O Estates Mobile Home Park, Alpine detached duplex on 900 W. 19th Avenue, K Bunnell

Nature, Wetlands, Park, Views

Natural, Wetland, and Park features include Springer Park, Arctic/Benson Park, Cuddy Family Park, Chester Creek Greenbelt and Trail, Westchester Lagoon and Nature Trail, Wilson Street Park, and the Business Park Wetland area. Wetlands are shown north along the Chester Creek Greenbelt, adjacent to Denali Road and East 40th Avenue on the Archive property and behind Home Depot, and south of Tudor Road north and south of 42nd Avenue within the Spruce Heights subdivision.

The district planning area includes mature spruce, birch, other trees, landscaped lawns, and yards. Above-ground power and communication technology are also standard in the area.

Views of the surrounding mountain ranges, including the Chugach Range to the east, Talkeetna's to the north, and Alaska Range to the east. These ranges can be seen from taller buildings, open spaces, park areas, and the North Star Slope.

Fish Creek

According to Dena'ina elders Mike Alex and John Stump, Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu is the original name for Fish Creek, as recorded in Shem Pete's Alaska. Ch'atanaltsegh means "yellow water comes out," and Łiq'aka Betnu means "King Salmon Creek." Fish Creek is visible in short sections throughout the district. The Friends of Fish Creek support plans to daylight Fish Creek wherever viable.

[Friends of Fish Creek | Spenard, Alaska \(daylightfishcreek.org\)](http://daylightfishcreek.org). Photo Credit: Friends of Fish Creek



As late as 1950, Fish Creek remained relatively free-flowing. Channelization (placing the flow of the creek into culverts and straightening it) began in earnest around 1960. After oil was discovered on the North Slope in 1968, Anchorage's growth exploded, and the diversion of its creeks and wetlands began in earnest. During the oil

boom of the 1970s and '80s, many of the marshes and wetlands that fed Fish Creek were filled, including Blueberry Lake near the Northern Lights Walmart. Today, over 70 percent of Fish Creek's water is in underground pipes, destroying fish habitat and creating flood hazards. Most of its water now comes from storm drains. Fish Creek is Anchorage's most impaired waterway. Friends of Fish Creek is a dedicated group advocating for acknowledging Fish Creek's cultural significance and restoring its wild salmon habitat through daylighting.

Planning Team Recommendations: *The MTDP could support improvements to the Fish Creek waterway with goals and actions that support efforts by the Friends of Fish Creek. Comments have been received regarding the creation of a free-flowing waterway in Cuddy Park, where the current standing pond sits, to encourage more use by people.*

Historic or Cultural Resources in the Midtown District Area

Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places or the [Anchorage Local Landmark Register](#) are a way for a community to celebrate its history and culture. This can be done by determining eligibility and then nominating a building, district, structure, site, landscape, traditional cultural property, object, or travel route for recognition. The following touches on potential historic or cultural resources that the community could recognize and celebrate. The Anchorage Local Landmark nomination process can be accessed on Muni.org in the Planning Department.

Spenard Road is Historically Significant

The Spenard Road *Determination of Eligibility* found that Spenard Road is historically significant locally for contributing to our history and "serving as a vital and distinguishable link connecting Spenard to Anchorage." Local historians believe the road influenced development trends leading to Spenard's annexation into the Anchorage community. The road was vital in providing direct access to Spenard and the area south of Anchorage to accommodate the influx of federal and military personnel settling in the Anchorage area at the beginning of the late 1930s.

The road is described as "physically distinguishable" because it does not conform to the surrounding urban grid in Anchorage. The period of significance is 1939 to 1975, beginning when military and federal facilities were established in the Anchorage area in advance of World War II and ending when the City of Anchorage united with the Greater Anchorage Area Borough, which included the community of Spenard, resulting in the creation of the Municipality of Anchorage. Spenard Road meets local significance criteria for Community Planning and Development and could be listed on Anchorage's Local Landmark Register.

Fireweed Lane

Fireweed Lane plays a prominent role in the definition and character of North Star and Midtown, as does the access to the Chester Creek Greenbelt and Valley of the Moon Park. The southern half of the North Star Community Council area is perched on the bluff overlooking Chester Creek, while the northern half of North Star lies within the Chester Creek drainage area. Throughout North Star, pedestrian stairways facilitate connections between the Chester Creek valley and the bluff. The history behind how Fireweed Lane was built and who built it is part of our history and culture and could be celebrated in some way by the community. (See the Homesteading section for more information on the history of Fireweed Lane).

Midcentury Modern Buildings

Several Midcentury Modern buildings in the district warrant official recognition and celebration. The brutalist architecture of the Loussac Library and its history associated with the Oil Boom are notable historical events in Alaska and Anchorage.

Planning Team Recommendations:

The MTDP process is an opportunity to identify, catalog, and celebrate the buildings and landscapes of historical significance in the Midtown area. Coupled with the growth in RV travelers, Midtown has an opportunity to be "the place" visitors use as a base camp while they visit local historic and cultural

offerings. Midtown should not count itself out on offering long-term stays to heritage travelers who use Midtown as a base while accessing all that Anchorage can offer.

Economic Benefits of Cultural and Heritage Tourism

- Injects new money into the economy, boosting businesses and tax revenues
- Creates new jobs, businesses, events, and attractions, thus helping diversify the local economy
- Supports small businesses and enables them to expand
- Promotes the active preservation and protection of critical local resources
- Builds vital relationships among and within local communities
- Helps encourage the development and maintenance of new/existing community amenities

Community Resilience

Anchorage is recovering from many recent challenges (physical, social, and economic), including the November 2018 Earthquake, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Great Recession.

The administration and the assembly have taken a myriad of recovery actions to mitigate the impacts of these challenges, including the provision of emergency housing and associated services, adoption of the All-Hazards Mitigation Plan (2022), as required by FEMA, in response to the 2018 earthquake, and thoughtful distribution of millions of dollars in federal funding.

CDBGDR2018 FEMA funding was directed to housing repairs, relocations, and planning. COVID-19 recovery funding also includes housing, including interim and long-term housing and social services funding (2019-to-present) for our low-income and homeless neighbors. The Anchorage Assembly initiated a community-wide strategic planning process to determine the tools and actions needed to bring all housing types to Anchorage. Those tools and actions are included in the Assembly-adopted *Anchored Home Plan*. Several amendments to Anchorage's municipal Title 21 land use code were and continue to be spearheaded by Assembly members as difficulties in the code continue to come to light, adding costs and time to housing development. Additionally, the current administration made public safety her number one priority for resolution as she took office in July 2024. Supporting measures to gain more housing was expressed as her second priority.

Public Safety

This report illuminates the importance of fostering an informed discourse surrounding crime's impact. Based on current conditions and public input, the resulting MTDP will provide strategies to promote a resilient, safe, and healthy community.

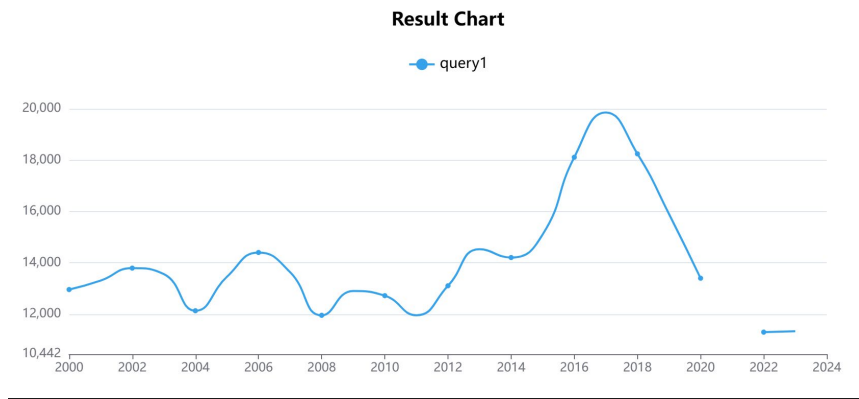
Anchorage, like other areas, large and small, has experienced an uptick in safety issues related to criminal behavior. Community council members regularly contact the municipal mayor and assembly to discuss the problems and find solutions.

Council advocates are looking to the municipality to increase officers and patrols as part of a host of solutions. The Anchorage Police Department (APD) has increased personal outreach by attending monthly council meetings. Attendance at council meetings by APD officers allows APD and the community to learn about each other's issues. APD also provides up-to-date information on various prevention and interdiction efforts.

Challenges in crime prevention are a direct consequence of Anchorage's ability to recruit new officers. Like many other cities, the police force is aging out of retirement. Open positions in the double digits translate to a lack of resources necessary to meet the safety needs of our community. Despite the lack of resources, the community has seen increased proactive measures and investigations as APD partners with state and federal agencies to bring bad players to justice. Thousands of dollars in drugs

were taken off our streets in early 2024 through a consolidated agency effort. APD reported in July 2024 on several interdictions that contribute to the safety of our roads and community wellbeing.

A review of the FBI Crime Data Explorer data in **Table #2 below** visualizes the drop in major crimes in Anchorage. According to the FBI website, APD provided this data to the FBI.



Based on reported data through April 2024, the FBI's crime statistic estimates show Anchorage's violent crime is down.

Other aspects of crime, such as theft, still need work. As new housing, 24/7 businesses, and activation of public and private spaces become a reality with the adoption of the MTDP, more people and activity on the streets will help create safe places for all to enjoy.

In [a study published under the University of Pennsylvania Law Review](#) and shared on [Forbes.com](#), data showed that it's more likely that neighborhoods with local cafes, bars, offices, and residential areas are inherently more likely to have more "eyes on the street" at more hours of the day. Collective public surveillance may deter criminals. The areas where commercial offices were heavily focused experienced over 40% more crime than in other neighborhoods, especially those that included residences. Even further, the areas that featured zoning, which added residential buildings to commercial areas, saw a 7% drop in crime.

MTDP Supports APD Recruitments

Former Mayor Bronson's transition report states, "As of early July 2024, the police department had 85 vacancies, including about 50 unfilled sworn officer positions out of the 415 budgeted." A 2023 NBC [news special](#), "[Police] Agencies of all sizes are struggling to fill open positions and shares the issues facing police departments of all sizes. According to this story, "the problem is especially dire in smaller communities that can't match the pay and incentives offered by bigger places." As noted above, Mayor LaFrance's transition team met several times in July 2024, and this issue was her top priority.

Anchorage Disaster Recovery Plan

A 7.1 Earthquake struck the Anchorage area in November 2018. Damage was incurred throughout Anchorage, primarily centered in the Eagle River/Chugiak areas.

The [earthquake's epicenter was near Point Mackenzie](#), about 10 miles (16 km) north of Anchorage, and occurred at a depth of 29 miles (47 km). Six minutes later, a magnitude 5.7 aftershock centered 2.5 miles (4.0 km) north-northwest of the municipality followed. The earthquake could be felt as far away as Fairbanks.

The National Tsunami Warning Center—inside the quake zone, in Palmer, Alaska, 42 miles (68 km) northeast of Anchorage—issued tsunami warnings for nearby coastal areas, including Cook Inlet and the Kenai Peninsula, but they were lifted shortly after.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded the State of Alaska millions in earthquake recovery funding to rebuild damaged homes and utilities. Additionally, planning funding was

awarded to the municipality. The resulting [All Hazard Mitigation Plan](#), updated in 2022, identifies natural and technological hazards and provides direction on mitigating and managing future disasters due to these hazards. Disaster preparedness is a primary theme of this plan.

Recovery and Opportunity through Housing

Lack of Housing Impacts Everyone

Like many cities across the United States, Anchorage is experiencing a severe lack of housing, especially low- to moderate-income housing. In early 2022, the Assembly adopted a platform focusing on the timely provision of all housing types ([Assembly Focus on Housing \(muni.org\)](#)). The assembly has amended several sections of AMC Title 21 to leverage limited resources and streamline the entitlement process. There is still much work to do by the administration, assembly, and municipal departments to streamline the entitlement process, which would reduce costs and risks to development.

Between 2021 and 2024, significant funding was provided for short—and long-term housing for our most vulnerable population. Federal COVID recovery funding was spent, and new initiatives were launched to meet the needs of low-income and vulnerable populations. A recent article (Anchorage Daily News, August 26, 2024—Next Step Initiative) shares how some low-income housing needs are being met.



Housing Takes Community Action

In 2023, the Assembly enlisted community input and ideas to learn how it could support new housing. Community input resulted in the Assembly's adoption of a housing action plan. In June-July 2024, Mayor LaFrance's transition team held housing forums to receive input and ideas.

The Anchorage Assembly adopted the Assembly Housing Action Plan in 2023 with a vision to support a city that has “affordable, abundant, and diverse housing opportunities, so everyone who wants to live here can find a home that fits their needs and preferences.”

Mayor LaFrance's Team published a lengthy transition report in September 2024. Housing actions from that report may be forthcoming.

Affordable and Median-Income Housing Does Not Pencil

According to our research from many different-sized cities, most financial tiers of housing are not financially feasible without municipal investment or support. Over the last few years, the assembly and the mayor's team have heard this same mantra. Tools adopted by the Assembly to assist with housing have included tax incentives and several code amendments.

The tax incentives (4 housing units in Downtown and Transit Supported Corridor—Designated on the 2040 Land Use Plan Map) have expired. The remaining lone tax abatement tool is AMC Chapter 12.35, a lengthy two-step process. First, the municipality must declare the property as “Economic Development” or a “Deteriorated” property. Second, the owner must apply for a 10-year tax abatement. Several high-density housing proformas show that the 10-year tax abatement is still insufficient to help projects pencil.

Goals and Actions in the MTDP can provide support.

The MTDP has the potential to encourage public/private partnerships for all spectrums of housing as is advocated for and is occurring in several cities across America.

Housing experts (public and private sectors) from several cities related the dilemmas Anchorage faces at a nationwide housing conference held in May 2024 in Dallas, TX.



See the website: [U.S. Housing & Community Development Conference – US Housing & Community Development Conference \(ushousingconference.com\)](#).

The MTDP can include actions to support incentives for new housing, such as those adopted throughout the country.

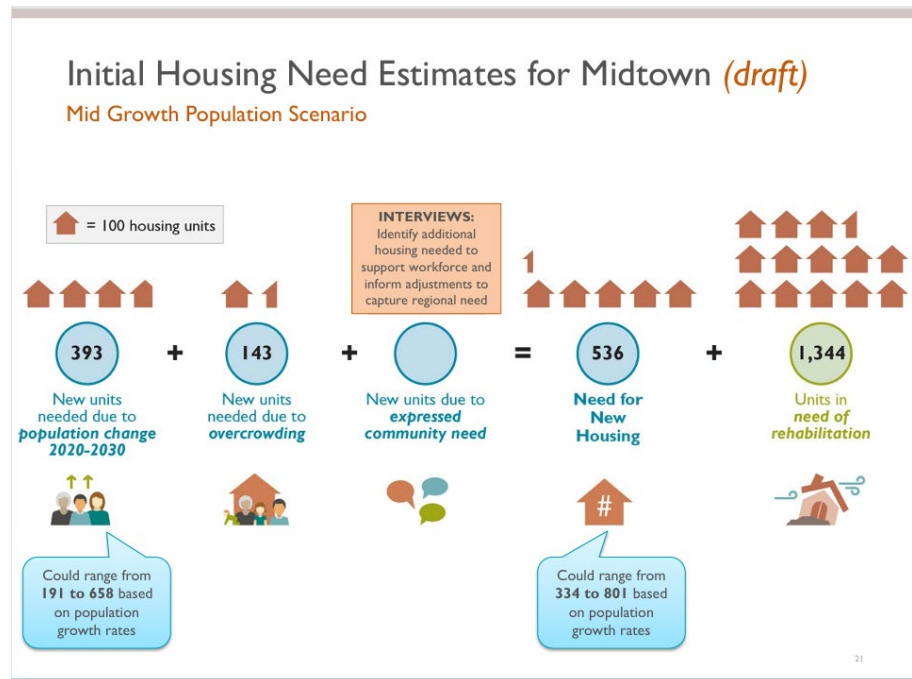
Housing Opportunities in the Midtown District

Much of the new construction in Midtown includes large hotels and commercial buildings, providing medical, banking, and commercial office space. These developments positively contribute to the overall economy, providing increased tourism and business commerce opportunities.

However, a lack of housing, including high-density housing priced at low—and mid-incomes, is being attributed to Anchorage’s inability to house those in greater need and garner and retain a full economic spectrum of workers, including teachers, police, medical, technical, and others.

Midtown has large vacant lots, and some developed with aging mobile home parks past their useful life could be identified as priority locations for new housing. Initial findings from the Agnew::Beck draft housing report (**Attachment C**) estimate a need for over 500 new housing units to meet population growth and overcrowding. Additionally, at least 1344 housing units need rehabilitation. A thoughtful plan is needed to help transition aging mobile home parks to new housing.

The Anchorage Assembly has been working to amend Title 21 to accommodate all



housing types. However, there is more that must be done. Coupled with code limitations is the cost of upgrading and installing new utilities to meet the housing needs. A *Utilities Subcommittee Report and Recommendations* was published during the update to the Downtown District Plan. The same issues identified by the utility providers carry over into Midtown. Developers may be able to capitalize on the recommendations formulated for downtown. Additionally, the municipality’s utility undergrounding program may be able to assist new development if capitalized on during the planning with the municipal public works department.

Planning Team Recommendations: Two recommendations are proposed here. A potential goal or action may include creating a process to work with utility providers to prioritize utility undergrounding. This plan may express the need to seize any opportunity to make more excellent spaces within the district, especially as funding for paving alleys and upgrading rights-of-way is prioritized through municipal and state capital improvement programs. Additionally, a STEP 3 code working group discussion has been requested to determine issues with current zoning requirements and if there are recommendations that can be made.

Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness - [Anchored Home](#)

Anchored Home states the belief that when people are supported in a place to call home, they can flourish in every aspect of their lives—from careers to relationships to physical and mental health. Housing provides a platform to address all needs, no matter how complex. *Anchored Home* is an action-oriented guide to solving homelessness in Anchorage.

A data portal on the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness webpage outlines the types of homeless people and families being supported. Any efforts to provide housing to our less fortunate neighbors are good news.

Real-time information regarding housing placements and other care services rendered is helpful to the Midtown community. This is in addition to progress updates made on the (100-200) housing units proposed annually in the Anchored Home plan.

Planning Team Recommendations:

The MTDP can recommend actions to assist the Municipality in providing incentives, funding, and programs to help Midtown return to a safer community for all. This plan can recommend actions to assist the Municipality in providing incentives, funding, and programs to help Midtown return to a safer community for all. The community should be informed of the many benefits of housing incentives, including providing more “eyes on the street” through the additional housing and activated mixed-use spaces. Through research, we know that housing helps deter crime while providing quality-of-life benefits.

Midtown Business Center

Businesses and Corporations

Midtown is the headquarters for much of Alaska’s banking industry, Alaska Native Corporations, oil and gas industries, property management and development companies, specialized health care providers, retail chains, and social service providers.

Financial institutions headquartered in Midtown include Global USA Credit Union (formerly Alaska USA Credit Union), Northrim Bank, First National Bank of Alaska, Key Bank, Wells Fargo, and Alaska NuVision Credit Union (formerly Denali Credit Union). These financial institutions hold billions in capital and investments for Alaskans. Their institutional leadership directs sound investments and is involved on governing boards in many community and government organizations or agencies, including the ACDA, Anchorage Economic Development Authority, and the Rasmusen Foundation.

Alaska Native Corporations headquartered in Midtown include Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), Koniag, Akhiol Kaguyak, Inc., Tanadgusix Corporation, Bethel Native Corporation, Chugach Alaska Corporation, Old Harbor Native Corporation, and Afognak Native Corporation. Collectively, these corporations provide thousands of jobs across the United States and Alaska.

Corporations such as ASRC and Bethel Native Corporation are headquartered in their traditional lands but have a significant presence in Midtown. ASRC and Bethel Native Corporation websites had the following information.

- [ASRC](#), along with its family of companies, is the largest Alaskan-owned and operated company, employing more than 15,000 people across Alaska and the Lower 48. The company has six major business segments: government contract services, petroleum refining and marketing, energy support services, industrial services, construction, and land and natural resources.
- [Bethel Native Corporation](#) subsidiary companies have 8(a) contracting capabilities, a vast range of services, strong bonding capacity, and a history of providing solutions for client needs. Bethel’s wholly-owned companies are available for government and private-sector contracting. All companies are headquartered in Bethel, with additional offices in Anchorage and the lower 48 subsidiaries.

Largest Land and Building Owners

Several large companies own the land and buildings in the district. Calais Company, JL Properties, Northrim Bank, and Peach Investments, to name a few, have a commanding presence in Midtown. Collectively, these companies provide thousands of square feet of commercial, office, and retail space in the district, contributing greatly to Anchorage’s overall economy.

BOMA

The Building Owners and Managers Association of Anchorage (BOMA Anchorage) is an organization of commercial property owners, managers, leasing agents, and allied professionals interested in

promoting the commercial property industry's professional, educational, and legislative interests in the State of Alaska. The local association, BOMA Anchorage, was established in 1983 and currently represents over 42 million square feet of commercial property in the Municipality of Anchorage.

[Calais Company](#)

Calais Company, Inc. is the largest single landowner in Midtown. It is a privately owned commercial real estate development corporation. It was formed in 1959 when four forward-thinking entrepreneurs pooled their resources and purchased a homestead in Anchorage, Alaska. Over the years, they worked together to develop the property and make it attractive to potential tenants. It is now a thriving part of the Midtown commercial area of Anchorage.

[JL Properties](#)

JL Properties is Alaska's leading real estate development and investment firm with a portfolio whose market value exceeds \$2 billion. In Anchorage, Alaska's largest market, JL Properties owns and manages over two million square feet of Class A commercial office space, nearly 25 percent of the Class A market. JL Properties developed the CenterPoint office park, including some of Alaska's iconic office buildings, like the JL Tower, the ASRC Building, and the Centerpoint West Building.

[Planning Team Recommendations:](#) *The MTDP will outline goals and actions to support commercial business recovery, such as identifying ways to promote and support small businesses in Midtown by decreasing barriers to rehabilitating and reusing older structures.*

Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan Map

An excerpt of the 2040 Land Use Plan map (2040 LUP) was overlaid with the Midtown District Plan boundary for the MTDP planning process. The 2040 LUP provides the planning area's future land development and growth pattern. The informative text in 2040 LUP provides land use designation proposals for implementing zoning districts and densities for residential development.

The 2040 LUP provides a citywide land use policy structure supporting and coordinating the various neighborhood and district plans with a common terminology. Detailed information on the 2040 LUP can be found here: [Anchorage 2040 LUP-Section2.pdf \(muni.org\)](#).

Several action items are included in the 2040 LUP to implement the goals and policies of this Anchorage Bowl-wide plan. Several actions may be implementable through the MTDP. These may consist of Action 2-7: Adopt and apply an adaptive reuse ordinance to promote reuse of older structures consistent with life safety standards, or Action 3-1: Amend Title 21 to simplify zoning regulations for mixed-use projects relative to commercial or other projects. See **Map #4: Midtown 2040 Land Use Plan**.

Questions to consider about the current land use map and action items found in the 2040 LUP:

1. Are these designations correctly illustrating the future of the district?
2. Is the Midtown District like Downtown Anchorage?
3. Are the land use designations pairing accurately with the existing zoning districts in Midtown?



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Land Use designations within the Midtown District are intended to facilitate various types of development and provide a pathway for future growth. During this planning process, the community

may wish to edit the 2040 land use plan map to better support the community's desired future for the district.

Planning Team Recommendation: *All neighborhood and district planning efforts require the community to discuss and visualize future land use. A new land use plan map for the Midtown District Plan will be produced that may or may not align with the 2040 LUP map. In this case, the MTDP Land Use Plan map would precede decisions about future zoning actions. Participants in the planning process will be able to provide input on how the future land use will develop. In 2022, the 2040 LUP was amended to allow the Downtown zoning districts of B-2A, B-2B, and B-2C to be implemented in all areas identified as "City Center" (Dark purple on the 2040 LUP map). Midtown can now adopt these important zoning districts (A.O. 2023-21).*

Midtown - 2040 Land Use Plan

Neighborhoods

- Large-lot Residential
- Single-family and Two-family
- Compact Mixed Residential-Low
- Compact Mixed Residential-Medium
- Urban Residential-High

Corridors

- Commercial Corridor
- Main Street Corridor

Centers

- Neighborhood Center
- Town Center
- Regional Commercial Center
- City Center

Open Spaces

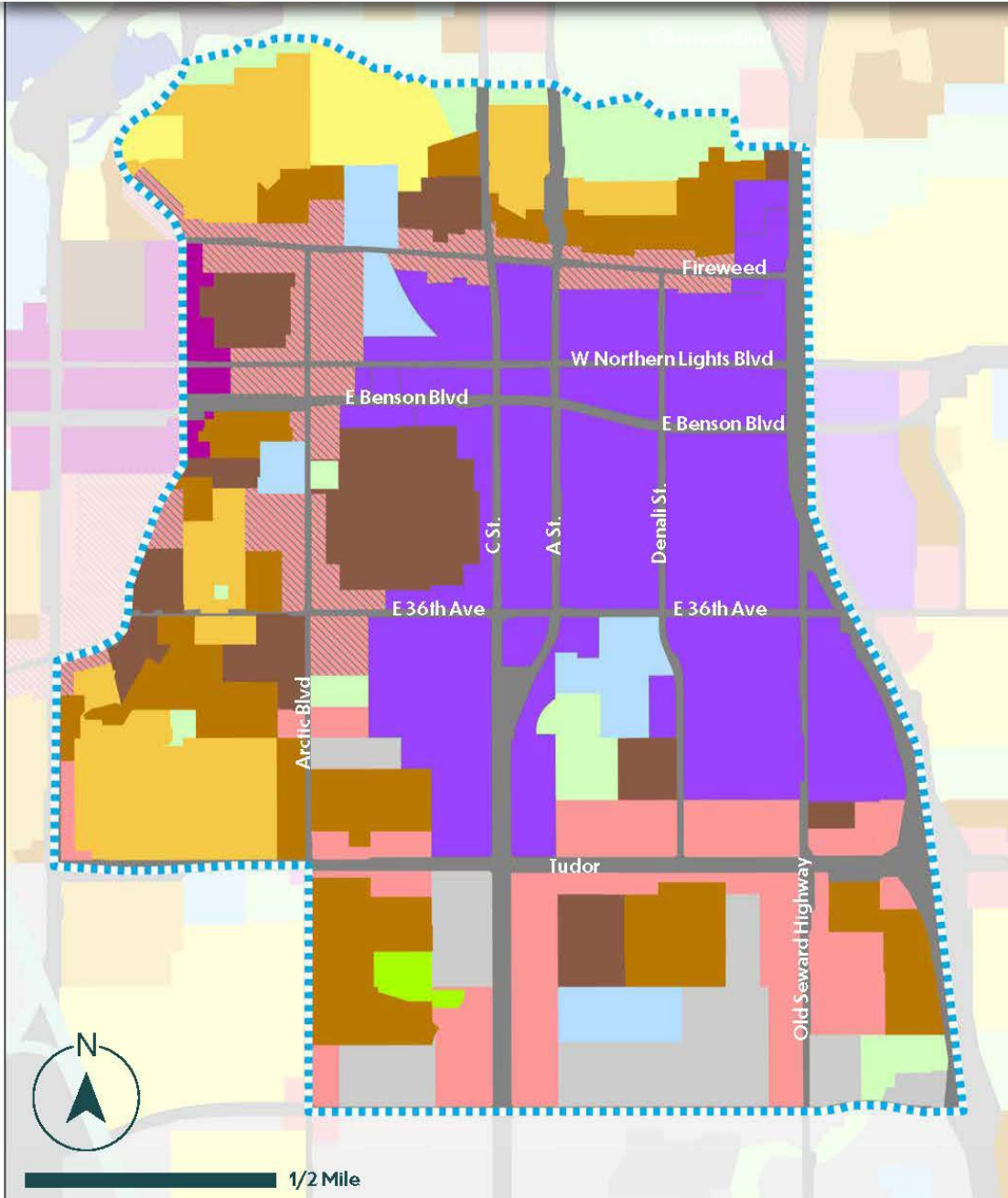
- Park or Natural Area
- Other Open Space

Facilities and Institutions

- Community Facility or Institution
- University or Medical Center
- Airport, Railroad, or Port Facility

Industrial Areas

- Light Industrial / Commercial
- General Industrial



Zoning Districts

How Zoning Works

Zoning refers to municipal or local laws or regulations that govern how “[real property](#)” can and cannot be used. Zoning also outlines what types of developmental and operational use of land are allowed within that specific zone (Investopedia.com). The purpose of Anchorage Municipal Code Title 21 (AMC Title 21) land use code is *to implement a comprehensive plan that protects public health, safety, welfare, and economic vitality by various means and methods.*

AMC Title 21 regulates zoning districts, uses, accessory uses, and dimensional and design standards. The first reference to Anchorage’s zoning code was found in a 1946 city ordinance. Minimum lot sizes were amended into the zoning code in 1947 (Ordinance 197 for Downtown Anchorage). These two zoning regulations set the stage for development in the Midtown District.







AMC 21.04, *Zoning Districts*, identifies 15 residential zoning districts, five commercial zoning districts, three industrial zoning districts, nine additional zoning districts, and a “commercial center overlay” district. AMC 21.05, *Use Regulations*, defines permitted and prohibited uses by zoning districts and use-specific standards. Some uses are allowed subject to a higher level of review, such as a site plan review or conditional use. AMC 21.06, *Dimensional Standards*, and AMC 21.07, *Development and Design Standards*, include regulations on minimum lot dimensions, setback requirements, and design standards such as landscaping, parking, and residential design standards for some developments.















KEY TAKEAWAYS

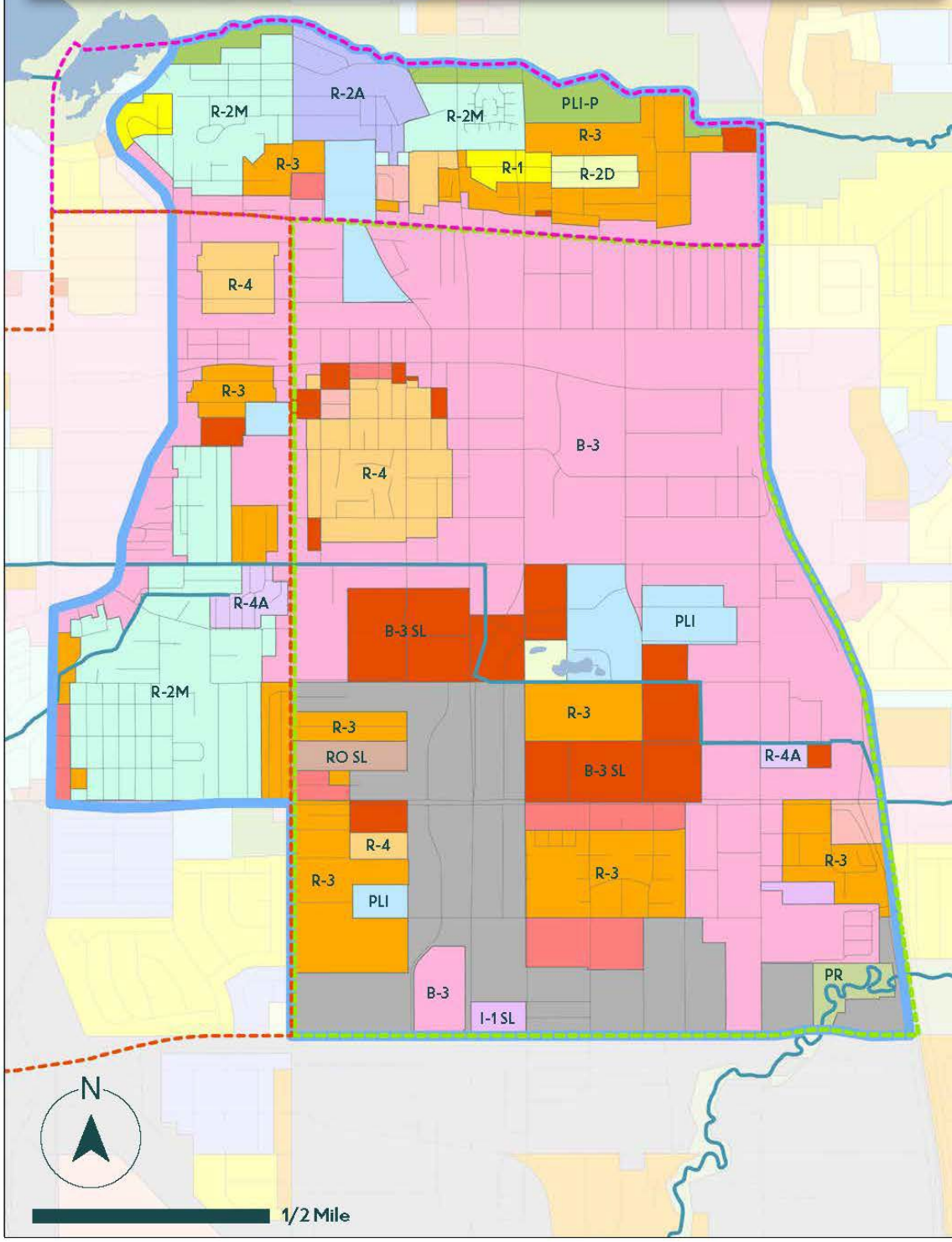
- Zoning allows local governments to regulate which areas under their jurisdiction may use the land for specific purposes.
- Examples of zoning classifications include residential (R—), commercial (B—), industrial (I—).
- Amendments and updates to the actual code can be initiated by elected officials or staff.
- The property owner(s) typically initiate a rezone of a specific property, but the MOA can also initiate a rezone at the owner’s request.
- A rezone of a property must be supported by an adopted Land Use Plan.

Planning Team Recommendation: *The 2040 Land Use Plan Map was amended in 2022 to allow the DT districts (B2A, B2B, B2C) to be included in any City Center designation (dark purple), including Midtown. Design standards found in Title 21, Chapter 11: Downtown would also apply. Any amendments to the table of allowed uses for Midtown should undergo the adopted public process, including public hearings by the Planning & Zoning Commission and Assembly. The land use designation does not guarantee a rezone. Any rezones to the B2 districts would also have to follow the adopted public process. No property will be forced into a rezoning by the 2040 Land Use Plan map. The map enables the rezone.*

Midtown - Zoning

-  Midtown Neighborhood Boundary
-  North Star Community Council
-  Spenard Community Council
-  Midtown Community Council
-  Streams
-  Lakes

 R-1	 R-4	 I-1 SL
 R-2A	 RO	 PLI
 R-2D	 RO-SL	 PLI-P
 R-2M	 B-3	 PR
 R-3	 B-3 SL	



Residential Buildout – Table #2: Analysis explores how much housing could be built in Midtown if every square foot of space available to be developed for housing was built to its maximum potential under current zoning regulations. While it is extremely unlikely that the reality of development in Midtown will ever meet its development potential, the analysis provides a snapshot of the existing code conditions that allows the team to compare the development potential of different areas in Midtown and how zoning regulations impact the results. Nine zoning districts allow residential.

MIDTOWN ANCHORAGE: MAXIMUM POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL BUILDOUT									
Zone	RO	R1	R2A	R2D	R2M	R3	R4	R4A	B3
Acreage	31.9	10.3	24.9	6	152.4	159.7	63.6	3	637.9
SF Calc	1389564	448668	1084644	261360	6638544	6956532	2770416	130680	27786924
site limitations contingency for 100%									
lot coverage zones	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	104544	N/A
Max Height (ft)	45	30	30	30	30	35	45	60	45
Floors by-right	3.21	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.14	2.50	3.21	4.29	3.21
Floors Calc	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	4	3
Max Lot Coverage	50%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	60%	100%	50%
Buildable Lot Capacity Calc(subtotal)	2084346	179467.2	867715.2	209088	5310835	8347838	4986749	418176	41680386
Circulation and Utility Calc. (70%)	1459042	125627	607401	146362	3717585	5843487	3490724	292723	29176270
percent expected residential use	30%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	50%	20%
adjusted value	437713	125627	607401	146362	3717585	5843487	3490724	146362	5835254
% studio	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
% 1-bed	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
% 2-bed	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%
% 3-bed	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
backcheck (should add up to 100%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total DU possible at maximum buildout	605	174	840	202	5141	8081	4828	202	8070

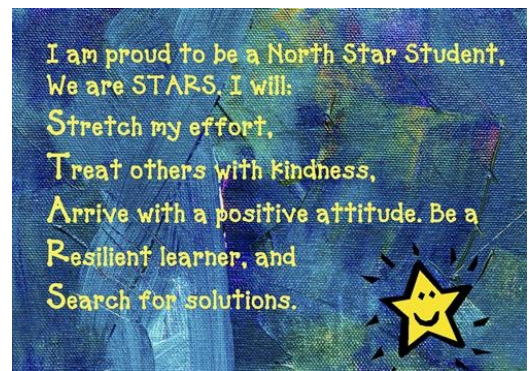
The Housing Analysis included in **Attachment C** is a more in-depth analysis of the existing housing and what could be possible in Midtown from the historic-built perspective.

Public Lands, Institutions

Public and Private Schools K-12

The Midtown District has the following public and private schools: Puffin Height Montessori, Holy Rosary Academy, Stellar Secondary School, North Star Elementary, Willow Crest Elementary School, Idea Homeschool, Frontier Charter School, and Family Partnership Charter School. The ASD website provides a short description of each school.

- **Puffin Height Montessori** provides preschool education based on the Montessori program's four tenets: Educating the Whole Child, Offering Prepared Environments, Using Montessori Materials, and using the Teacher as a Guide.
- **Stellar Secondary School** is an Anchorage School District (ASD) middle school “devoted to creating independent, courageous people capable of dealing with the shifting complexities of the modern world. Stellar runs on the energy and excitement of people committed to self-directed learning. With the support of parents and staff, Stellar provides students with a humane education experience based upon freedom and responsibility.” Stellar may be unique in its mission to encourage students to be independent.
- **Willow Crest Elementary School** is a Pre-K through sixth-grade neighborhood school and “one of the most diverse schools in the nation. Students and families speak many languages and come from all reaches of the earth. This school, as with many other ASD schools, celebrates all cultures, “making Willow Crest a unique place for students to learn and grow.”
- **North Star Elementary** is an ASD elementary school with the vision of “a community of lifelong learners that celebrates our successes, embraces diversity, and works to reach our highest potential” (Illustration #7).
- **Frontier Charter School** and Family Partnership Charter School are charter home schools established by the ASD to provide parent-driven, student-centered programs with individual academic performance goals that follow Alaska State Standards.



Private Schools

- **Holy Rosary Academy** is a “PreK-12 school in the heart of Anchorage, Alaska; Holy Rosary Academy supports parents in their quest to develop wisdom and virtue in their children. Through our curriculum rooted in the greatest traditions of Western civilization, we strive to instill a love for the truth, an appreciation for the natural wonders so prevalent in the Last Frontier, and a devotion to Christ and His Church.”

Technical Training Centers

- **Phlebotomy Training Specialists** is in the University Center Mall and offers specialized training to provide the skills and knowledge needed to enter the medical workforce.
- **Northern Industrial Training** is “Alaska's #1 resource for vocational training and corporate training support services.” “From special programs to grant opportunities for financial support, we can help you excel and succeed in a new chapter of your life through exceptional training that exceeds all industry standards. Our training team is to your advantage.”

KEY TAKE AWAYS

- According to a 2022 Bureau of Labor Statistics report, workers in Anchorage earned an average (mean) hourly wage of \$32.22 in May 2022. This wage is 8% (percent) above the nationwide

average of \$29.76. Anchorage still finds it challenging to fill these jobs despite the wages offered in Alaska.

- An Alaska Department of Labor report from August 2023 opined, "Finding workers in Alaska these days is tough." The report stated that roughly two jobs are open for everyone looking for work. This is 180 degrees from the historic job market in the early 2000s, where there were just over two job seekers for every available job. Alaska has a historically high rate of job openings, part of a national trend but made more pronounced by the state's declining population.

Team Recommendations: *The technical training offered in these two centers is essential for attracting and retaining a trained and professional workforce. There is an opportunity for the MTDP to provide goals and action items to support the quality-of-life elements workers seek, including attainable housing, easy and pleasant travel options (recognizing that not everyone can afford a car), and access to various amenities.*

Municipal Parks

[Anchorage Parks and Recreation](#) is responsible for beautifying parks, natural areas, and recreation facilities. The department operates year-round recreation programs for all ages and abilities, oversees Anchorage's horticulture park maintenance, and supports community gardens, dog parks, and a [Youth Employment in Parks](#) (YEP) program that offers teens a gateway into the natural resources workforce. Anchorage Parks and Recreation also supports hundreds of volunteers through special events, park adoptions, and program instruction at locations throughout the city.

Parks in Midtown:

Cuddy Family Midtown Park (Cuddy Park) is in the district's center. Cuddy Park and the Chester Creek Greenbelt, bordering the district's north, provide the entire community with regional park and trail experiences. Alaska.org referred to Cuddy Park as a volunteer's labor of love. The park was established in the early 1980s and has something for everybody: a large playground, paved aerobic trails, a paved speed skating oval, an outdoor amphitheater, and a promenade that steps down to the edge of a lake filled with waterfowl and seagulls. The park consists of 15 acres of grassy fields and a large lagoon. Special events are held in the park annually, including the upcoming 2024 Winter Solstice Festival, planned for December. **(Illustration # 8)** shows the design for the new playground to be built in 2024-2025.

Neighborhood Parks include Cope Street Park, Stringer Park, Arctic/Benson Park, and Wilson Street Park. Picnic shelters, dog parks, and athletic fields provide year-round outdoor opportunities for residents, and they are accessible by walking or riding a bicycle.

MOA Real Estate

The "Archive Property" on Denali Street totals approximately 9 acres of developable land within the south-central Midtown District. The property was initially intended for the Federal Archive, slated to be moved from Downtown Anchorage, but sat vacant for years as the project stalled. The MOA Real Estate Department is now the deeded owner, having purchased the property from the Federal General Services Administration during Mayor Dan Sullivan's administration.

Most recently, the MOA Real Estate Department initiated a master planning process (2018-2019) with community and agency input, laying out proposed housing and commercial development scenarios for the Archive property. The master plan could not be located on the department's webpage. In early 2024, the property was rezoned to R4-A in response to the housing crisis.



R4A zoning will allow the land to be developed into high-density multifamily housing, such as apartments and commercial uses. City officials are looking for ways to encourage new housing development. According to the Administration, the measure changes the rezoning from R-3 mixed residential to R-4A multifamily residential mixed-use zone, which has fewer zoning restrictions than any other residential zone (Assembly AM 163-2024). The request to rezone to the R-4A zoning district reflects the intent of the Municipality of Anchorage to see a mixed-use development with high-density multi-family dwellings. This type of housing has not been built in Anchorage in over 20 years.

Assembly members added a Special Limitation to the R-4A rezone, which states, “It must include an easement for Fish Creek to restore and “daylight” the natural waterway, which is currently diverted into underground drainage pipes through much of Midtown. The ponds nearby Cuddy Park are part of the creek’s historical course.” The property has not been listed for sale as of August 2024.

Related Resolutions from the Three Community Councils on MOA land management and housing provisions

The **Midtown** Community Council (MTCC) has approved several resolutions supporting redevelopment, management, and crime mitigation within the Midtown District. The following resolutions articulate concerns and possible solutions: Resolution 2024-01 asks the MOA Administration to fulfill its duties to “effectively manage publicly owned lands and facilities.” Resolution (2023-04 R2) Called upon the MOA to take “Meaningful action to provide safe shelter for the unhoused and reduce crime.” Resolution 2023-02 “A resolution opposing the proposed use of the Arctic Recreation Center (ARC) and its property as a location for a low barrier shelter and other homeless services.” Resolution 2022-01 “Supports the building and benefits of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).”

North Star passed Resolution 2022-03 responding to issues it foresaw and has experienced with the homeless impacts in its area, “Expressing Support for our Unsheltered Neighbors and Humane, Evidence-Based Housing Policies to be Enacted in the Municipality of Anchorage.”

Spenard passed Resolution 2023-07, “A Resolution on the Minnesota Drive Wall,” requesting specific actions by DOT&PF, 1. Remove the center wall structure along Minnesota Dr. between Benson and Northern Lights Boulevard ASAP; 2. Work with community stakeholders and the public to design pedestrian improvements to add crosswalks to the “missing” sections (the fourth legs) at Minnesota Drive at both Benson and Northern Lights Boulevards; 3. Construct the pedestrian improvements ASAP.

Service Providers

Alaska State Lands

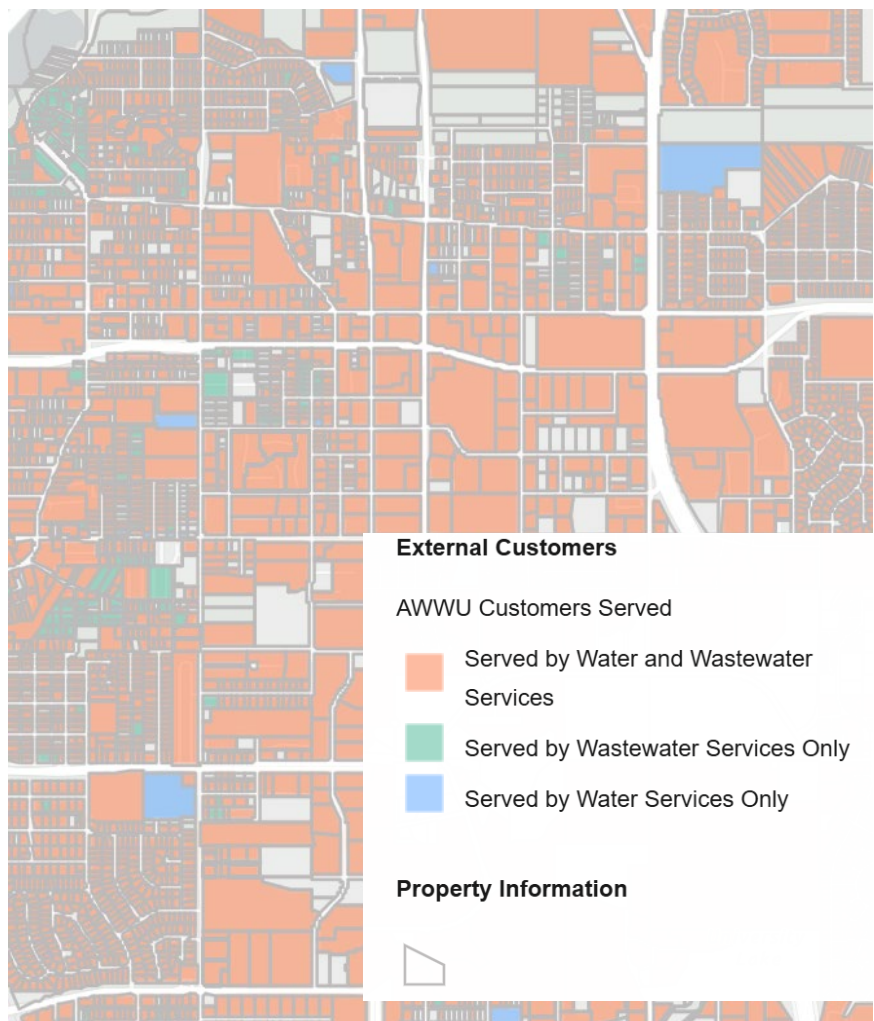
The State of Alaska owns several acres of developable land in the Anchorage Bowl through the Mental Health Trust Authority, Trust Land Office, and Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources. State-owned properties within the district are all currently developed.

Anchorage Water & Wastewater

Anchorage Water & Wastewater (AWWU), owned by the Municipality of Anchorage, is the only public water utility operating in the Midtown District. AWWU employs nearly 300 men and women who operate its treatment plants and other facilities while spending \$50 million annually to ensure Anchorage’s water and wastewater systems perform efficiently. The Utility’s Core Purpose—safeguarding Public Health and the Environment—is supported and attained by AWWU’s Infrastructure, its Financial Resources, and, most importantly, its Human Resources, our professional staff.

(Illustration #9) – AWWU External Customers depicts whether customers in the Midtown District may or may not have access to AWWU water and wastewater services. According to this map some properties remain on active wells and septic systems. The entire Midtown District is within AWWU’s service area boundary ([Service Area Boundaries | AWWU Maps Gallery \(arcgis.com\)](#)). AWWU controls hundreds of hydrants within the Midtown District. However, over 100 hydrants are privately operated. Four hydrants located along northwest Spenard Road (Anton Road and Solstice Way) are owned and operated by a different water provider ([Hydrants | AWWU Maps Gallery \(arcgis.com\)](#)).

AWWU has six “Active Projects” in their GIS System reporting [Active Projects \(Capital and Private Industry\) | AWWU Maps Gallery \(arcgis.com\)](#):



- Three Private Systems, 36th Avenue and C Street at Modern Age Estates, Fish Creek in the Price Subdivision on Chugach Way, and across from Loussac Place at 22nd Avenue and C Street in the Thompson Block 18.
- Private Development (Yukon Industrial and Project at Credit Union Drive and 40th Avenue), and
- Arctic and 30th Avenue and C Street south of W. 40th – Chlorine Analyzer Upgrade.

Stormwater

Stormwater runoff occurs as a natural result of rainfall or snowmelt occurs. Some precipitation infiltrates the soil surface, plants take some up, and some evaporates into the atmosphere. Stormwater runoff is the water that does not immediately soak into the ground. Stormwater runoff can occur on soil inundated with too much water or too dry to absorb water quickly. Hard surfaces such as streets, parking lots, and rooftops are not absorbent, creating the need for this water to be directed to drains or more absorbent surfaces. As stormwater flows across hard surfaces, such as parking lots, it may pick up pollutants such as fertilizers, sediment, pesticides, or oil and grease.

Stormwater runoff can have several impacts on the environment. As development and the number of hard surfaces increase in a basin or watershed, the soil and vegetation's natural capacity and total area to infiltrate and take up rainfall or snowmelt decreases, and more rainfall and snowmelt becomes stormwater runoff. This can produce negative impacts by causing erosion of land areas and stream banks and increasing flooding while also carrying pollutants to streams or wetlands ([How Stormwater is Regulated \(alaska.gov\)](#)).

The State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Watershed Management Department within the Municipal Project Management & Engineering Department work together to manage stormwater and its impacts. The Municipality regulates stormwater management at private construction sites under [Anchorage Municipal Code Title 21](#). The Municipality also regulates stormwater management during the construction of its own (public) projects through [Section 20.02 of its Standard Specifications](#). There has been some discussion in the Municipality about forming a Stormwater Utility to help organize stormwater facilities and defer some of the costs of stormwater treatment.

The 2024 Construction Projects Map ([const11x172024.pdf \(muni.org\)](#)) listed five projects by differing agencies for completion in 2024 in Midtown, including one stormwater project. These projects include:

- (DOT&PF) S01-Pavement Preservation on Northern Lights Boulevard.
- S02-at 36th Avenue and A Street for Annex Building Earthquake Repairs.
- PR02-Cuddy Family Park Raingarden.
- C01-40th Avenue Venture Cable Replacement.
- M16-PM&E Seward Highway and International Airport Road Storm Drain Improvement.

Electric

Chugach Electric Association, Inc. ("Chugach") originated as an Alaska electric cooperative in 1948 designed to serve its members exclusively. Owned and democratically controlled by its members, Chugach operates under a collaborative model, focused on keeping rates low and reinvesting excess revenue in infrastructure or returning it to members as capital credits. As the largest electric utility in Alaska, Chugach supplies power to nearly 91,000 members across approximately 113,000 locations. Chugach generates, transmits, and distributes electricity in our service area, which extends from Anchorage to the northern Kenai Peninsula, westward to Tyonek, including Fire Island, and eastward to Whittier. Chugach is part of a 400-mile interconnected regional electrical system called the Alaska Railbelt, stretching from the coastline of the Southern Kenai Peninsula to Fairbanks, Alaska.

According to the Chugach Electric website, in 2024, Chugach filed three tariff requests with the Alaska Regulatory Commission. One will streamline operating tariffs in the north and south districts. A second filing proposes raising rates in the north district. The third filing proposes raising rates in the south district.

Internet Providers

Anchorage, the largest city in Alaska, has various internet service providers serving its residents and businesses. Options for service include satellite internet, DSL, and fiber optic.

HughesNet provides satellite to almost all of Anchorage, with coverage running as far north as Eklutna Valley, south as Portage Valley, west as Sand Lake, and east as Turnagain Arm. Matanuska Telephone Association offers DSL to select Anchorage neighborhoods.

Alaska Communications (ACS), headquartered in Midtown. In a May 2024 press release, ACS and Matanuska Telecom Association (MTA) partnered to address the need for telecom workers across Alaska. The partnership supports NECA/IBEW's Alaska Joint Electrical Apprenticeship and Training Trust (AJEATT). GCI and AT&T also provide internet services in Midtown and across the Anchorage Bowl.

Waste Service Providers

The municipality of Anchorage's Solid Waste Services provides residential and commercial waste services in the district. Solid Waste Service's (SWS) mission is to provide safe, efficient, and innovative solid waste management for the Municipality of Anchorage. By distributing free dump passes, SWS intends that we can encourage Anchorage residents to clean up our green spaces and make Anchorage beautiful. Other specialized providers include Alaska Medical Waste, Alaska Waste, and Red Box Refuse, LLC. 1-800-Call Junk also operates in the area.

SWS provides a convenient transfer station in Midtown for residents and commercial waste providers. SWS also has an annual Christmas tree disposal lot and free annual spring dump days.

Natural Gas

ENSTAR has served Alaskan homes and businesses with clean-burning, economical, and efficient natural gas for 60 years. Located in Anchorage, Alaska, ENSTAR Natural Gas Company is a regulated public utility delivering natural gas to over 150,000 residential, commercial, and industrial customers in over 25 communities throughout Southcentral Alaska. ENSTAR's service area encompasses over 57% of Alaska's population. ENSTAR provides natural gas services throughout the district.

ENSTAR's website provides weatherization tips, weatherization grant program links, and energy conservation information for customers. The company has two active gas line projects in construction, one in Kenai and the other in the Matsu Borough.

In May 2024, ENSTAR filed two filings to the Alaska Regulatory Commission to obtain approvals for raising its Gas Cost Adjustment rate and annual revisions to its fees and allowances for installing new service connections, meters, and main extensions ("construction fees"). The new fees and allowances will be effective for calendar year 2025. ENSTAR is also working to consolidate operations and has its Spenard Road headquarters building up for sale.

Planning Team Recommendation:

The Utility Subcommittee established during the Downtown Plan update made recommendations that could be relevant to the Midtown District planning process. This included Establishing a Utility Subcommittee with representatives from such providers as ACS, AWWU, CEA, DOT&PF, ENSTAR, GCI, and MOA PM&E to provide information and expertise on their respective systems, upgrades, capacities, etc., to be facilitated by the MOA Planning Department.

A Utility Subcommittee would be invited to participate in MOA-scheduled Pre-Application Meetings. Depending on developer requests and other planning or programming efforts, Utility Subcommittee members may also be invited to meetings with MOA Development Services and the Long-Range Planning Division. The Utility Subcommittee Report is located on the Our Downtown Plan webpage at Muni.org.

Transportation System

Streets and a Highway

Map #6: Midtown Road Ownership—depicts roads identified in the AMATS Streets and Highways Plan. All the facilities noted on the map are located along minor and major roads within the district. DOT&PF-owned roads are in [red](#). Municipal-owned roads are outlined with [turquoise](#).

AMATS Official Streets & Highways Plan

The Official Streets and Highways Plan (OS&HP) is adopted by the Anchorage Assembly and classifies the municipality's major streets as collectors (class I), minor arterials (class II), significant arterials (class III), expressways (class IV), or freeways (class V). The OS&HP provides the foundation for federal, state, and local transportation-related funding to the OS&HP network.

Planning Team Recommendations:

The Anchorage Assembly will soon adopt a Long-Range Transportation Strategy Plan (LRTP) to guide all roadway project prioritization and funding. In addition to the Vision, Goals, and Action Items, the MTDP can provide input into future projects based on the more comprehensive strategy of the LRTP. The MTDP direction should reflect the future of the transportation network and the community's desires for the district. Plan recommendations should include amendments to the AMAT's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to meet the more comprehensive strategy of the LRTP and the community's vision for the future. More about the AMAT's TIP is included in the Planning Context.

AMATS

Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Anchorage Bowl and Chugiak-Eagle River areas. Every metropolitan area with more than 50,000 residents has a designated MPO.

AMATS develops and adopts various plans, maps, and studies to support Federal, State, and Local tax funding requests. Projects implemented with this funding may include shared-use paths, sidewalks, and bicycle and pedestrian routes along the roadway network. AMATS coordinates with the MOA and Alaska DOT&PF on project priority lists,

AMATS is vital in local project funding and coordination with Alaska DOT&PF. According to their operating agreement:

“...metropolitan planning organizations, in cooperation with the State, shall develop transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of the State. Such plans and programs shall provide for the development of transportation facilities (including pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities) that will function as an intermodal transportation system for the State, the metropolitan areas, and the Nation. The process for developing such plans and programs shall provide for consideration of all modes of transportation. It shall be continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive to the degree appropriate, based on the complexity of the transportation problems.” 23 USC §134(a).

Sidewalk and Pathway Network

AMATS completed a [Non-Motorized Transportation Plan](#) in 2021 that includes multiple recommendations for the Midtown area. The plan also includes recommendations for project prioritization and plan implementation, many of which have been accomplished as of this writing. While AMATS planning and funding focuses on comprehensive networks of shared-use paths, sidewalks, and pedestrian routes, improvements are primarily completed in segments because of adjacent public or private development.

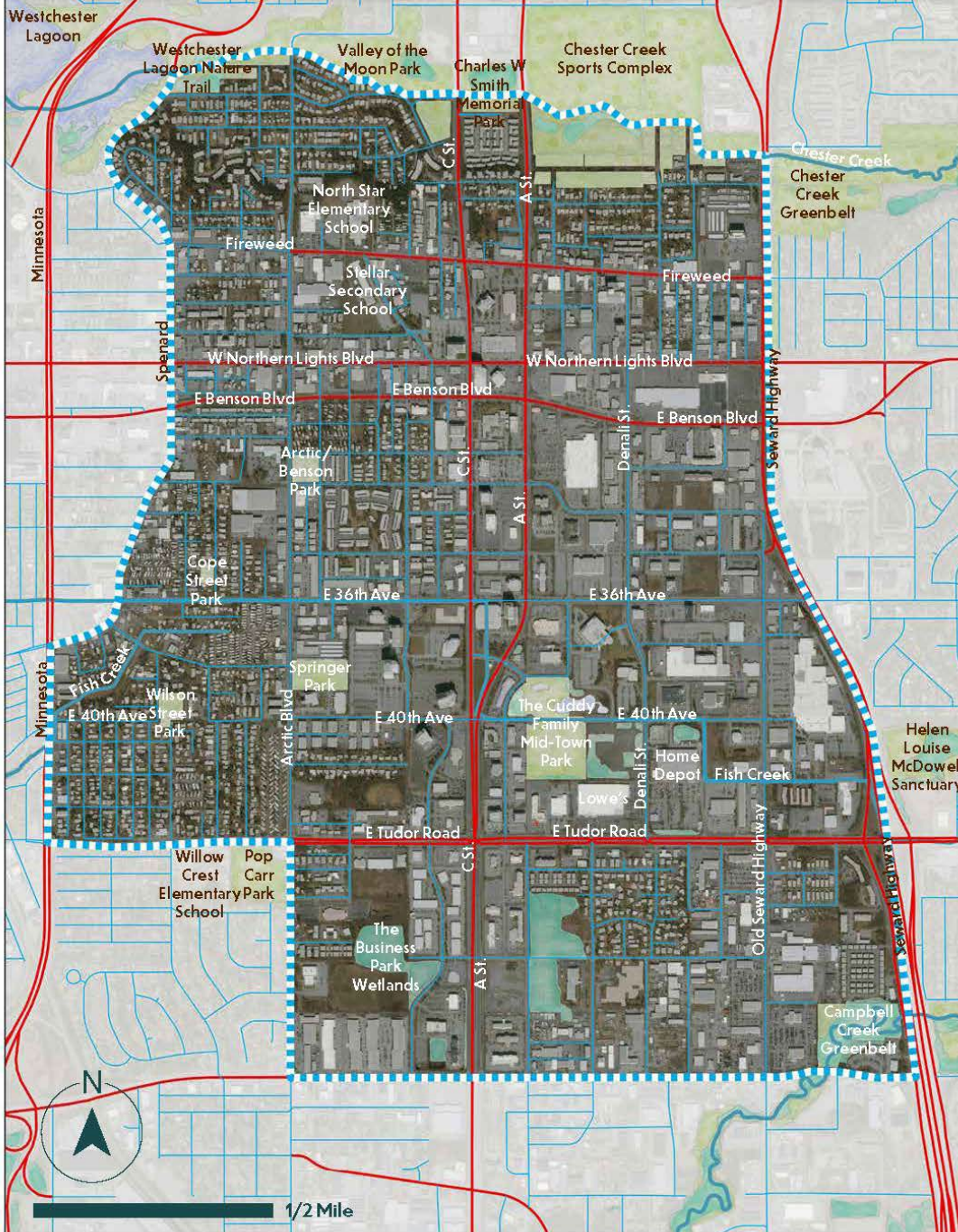
Midtown - Road Ownership

Midtown Neighborhood Boundary

- Buildings
- Parks
- Lakes
- Wetlands
- Streams

Road Ownership

- State (DOT & PF)
- Anchorage Road Maintenance



Public

Transportation

People Mover

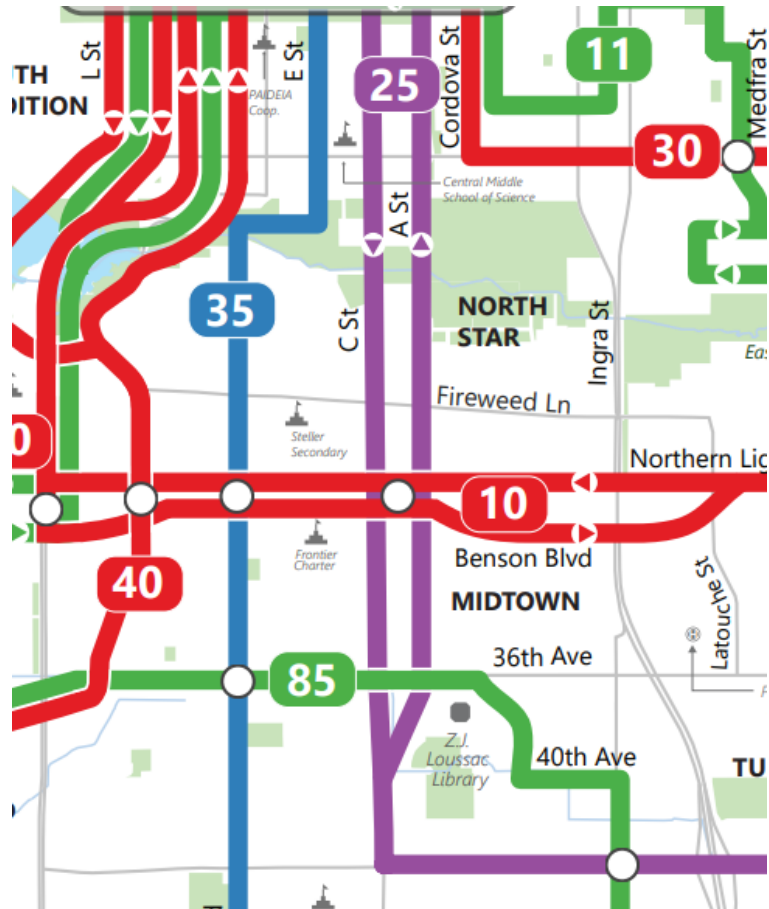
People Mover is a Municipality of Anchorage's Public Transportation Department (PTD) division and is Alaska's largest public transit provider. *People Mover's* website states, "buses hit the road on July 1, 1974, with 39,505 passengers hitching a ride during the first month." In 2008, *People Mover* set a ridership record of 4,220,667 trips. Today, about 12,000 passengers enjoy a weekday ride, boarding at one of our many bus stops in the greater Anchorage and Eagle River areas. The *People Mover* fleet includes modern, accessible, comfortable buses that travel 2.1 million miles annually - that is almost 85 trips around the world. *People Mover* has six routes servicing the district: 40, 35, 25, 11, 30, 10 and 85. According to a recent ADN article, service on routes 35, 11, and 85 may be changing soon due to the lack of bus drivers

(Illustration #10) the *People Mover* website shows the routes operating in the district area.

AnchorRIDES

AnchorRIDES connects our community with safe, reliable transportation options, emphasizing customer service while providing economic, social, and environmental benefits. It also operates as a division of the Municipality's PTD, providing shared rides and accessible door-to-door transportation within the urbanized Anchorage area.

The PTD administers AnchorRIDES as part of the state-designated coordinated paratransit system. [MV Transportation](#) contracts with PTD to provide operational, customer service, and vehicle maintenance services for AnchorRIDES on behalf of the department. PTD makes all determinations of customer eligibility and oversees the administration of the AnchorRIDES contractor.



Planning Context

Introduction

The following plans and studies influence this planning process. A short overview of each plan or study follows. Goals or action items from these plans or studies may be recommended for inclusion in the Midtown District Plan.

Anchorage 2020 Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan (Anchorage 2020)

This plan was adopted in February 2001 and includes policies and action strategies to guide Anchorage Bowl development over the last twenty-five years. The planning process focused on early 2000 issues, gave the best estimate of the future, provided general direction, and outlined general development patterns. Twenty-five years later, the plan may still provide context and guidance.

Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan (2040 LUP)

This plan supplements *Anchorage 2020* and incorporates any specific neighborhood or district plans adopted since 2001. The *2040 LUP* provides a land use plan map, goals, and actions reflecting the latest demographics, housing estimates, and district and neighborhood plans. The *2040 LUP* map will be used as the foundation for the Midtown District Plan land use plan map. However, an analysis will be made as part of this project to ensure the land uses, zoning districts, visions, and goals from the *2040 LUP* reflect and support this district plan.

AMATS Transportation Improvement Program (AMATs TIP)

AMATS adopts the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) every 5 years to identify projects, programs and plans to be funded by federal, state, and local funding. The Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration require the TIP. The agency may amend this plan as needed or requested to ensure projects are funded, designed, and built as identified in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (25-year planning horizon). (**Attachment D**) this *Existing Conditions Report* includes the AMATS TIP (2023-2026) with relevant Midtown District projects highlighted in pink.

DOT&PF State Transportation Improvement Plan

The Alaska Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is the state's four-year transportation system preservation and development program. It includes interstate, state, and some local highways, bridges, ferries, and public transportation but does not include airports or non-ferry-related ports and harbors. It covers all system improvements for which partial or complete federal funding is approved and is expected to occur during the STIP's four-year duration.

DOT&PF owns several wide, high-traffic, high-speed streets within the Midtown District planning area. Being aware of what projects are in the STIP is essential to the district planning process as the community makes recommendations for managing and improving DOT&PF roads. DOT&PF is required to include community input on all its plans and projects, including all adopted district and neighborhood plans throughout Alaska.

Planning Team Note: *As with the Seward/Glenn PEL project listed below and the many projects listed on the AMATS TIP, this 4-year action plan may significantly impact the Midtown District. Goals and action items in the MTDP may support a more welcoming walkable environment and include recommendations for multi-modal improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. Leveraging federal and state funding for these improvements will help the district residents and businesses achieve the visions and goals of this plan. Business owner participation in the redesign of streets must be encouraged for a project that may make significant changes, including loss of right-of-way for existing business uses.*

DOT&PF Environmental Linkages Studies

The most recent [Midtown Congestion Relief Planning & Environmental Linkages Study Report](#) (PEL) was completed and posted online at the DOT&PF website. This department claims that traffic numbers will substantially “increase to double in the next 20 to 30 years, despite Anchorage’s population decreasing at around 1.2% per year since its highest number (300,000+) around 2014. The study includes the 2040 Land Use Plan population growth estimate of .9% per year to justify its conclusions and recommendations.

Several departments from the Municipality of Anchorage and the neighboring community councils highly contested the study’s conclusions, resulting visions, and recommendations. The surrounding community wishes this facility was a lower-speed, pedestrian-friendly, welcoming gateway into the heart of Anchorage.

Seward Highway

The Seward Highway bisects the Midtown district from Rogers Park and Geneva Woods. Both neighborhoods consider themselves part of Midtown. A 2016 traffic study by Alaska DOT&PF indicated which sections of Seward Highway were the busiest. The study showed that just north of 36th Avenue in the Midtown District, there are close to 56,000 vehicles a day. For reference, Anchorage’s population in 2016 was just less than 300,000. In comparison, the busiest highway section of the state, the Glenn Highway, averaged 65,172 vehicles per day to the east of the Muldoon Road intersection.

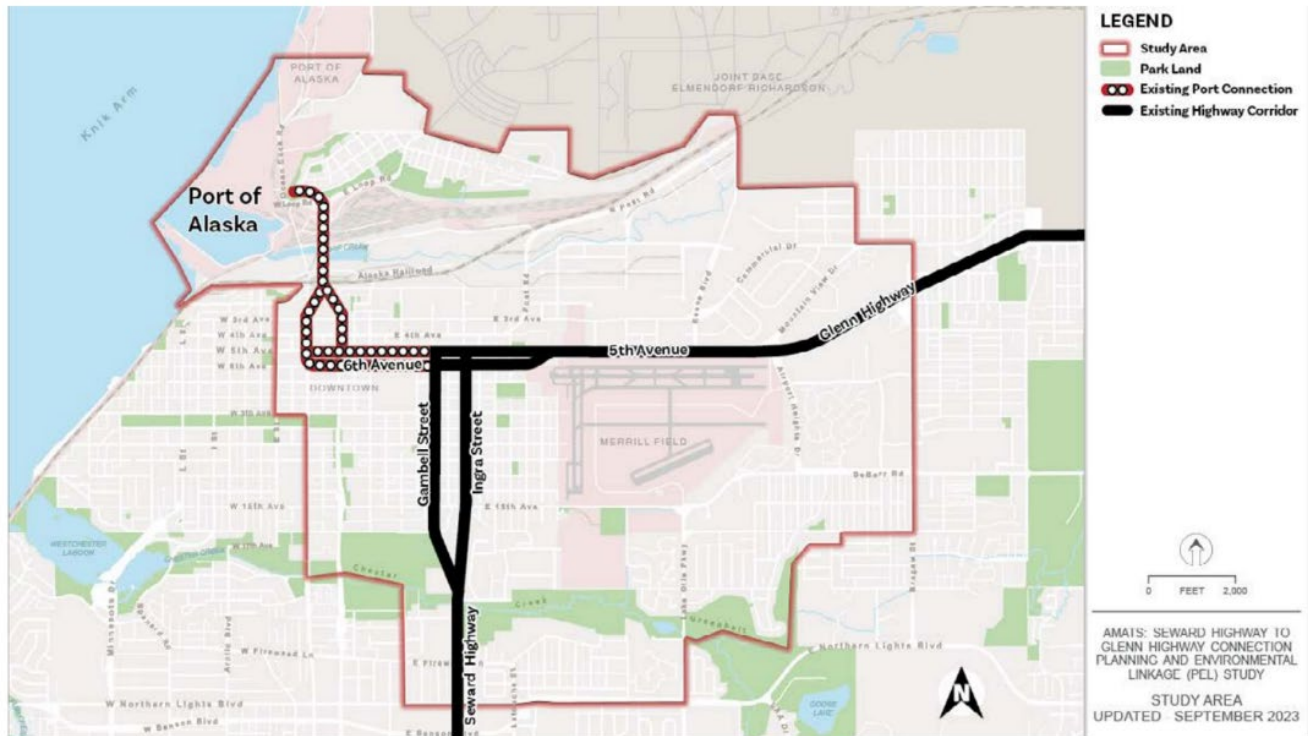
Alaska DOT&PF’s plans for the Midtown section of the Seward Highway are outlined in the [Midtown Congestion Relief Planning and Environmental Linkages Study](#) (Midtown PEL). The study includes conceptual plans for an expanded highway that would include a trenched highway corridor accompanied by multi-lane frontage roads on each side providing access to adjacent businesses and neighborhoods. The plan has met with some controversy and, four years after plan publication, Alaska DOT&PF has not completed the design of the Phase I project at the intersection of 36th Ave. and the New Seward Hwy.

Seward to Glenn Highway Connection PEL Study

This study is underway to address improvements to Seward Highway through Fairview between 20th and 5th avenues. Substantial comments from the public and Municipality of Anchorage departments indicate the building of a cut-and-cover project (as adopted in the Fairview Neighborhood Plan) is the only option that should be considered and funded. It’s time for the Fairview neighborhood to be restored and allowed to recover from past financial and environmental impacts to this low- and moderate-income community. (**Illustration #11: Figure 1 Study Area Map** below.

Planning Team Note: *There may be significant impacts to the Midtown District from either of these DOT&PF projects. Goals and action items that support the district could be warranted to ensure the district is welcoming and any roadway project helps to achieve the visions and goals of this plan.*

Figure: 1 Study Area Map



Spenard Corridor Plan

The Spenard Corridor Plan is the primary area-specific policy guide for future development and public improvements in the corridor planning area (**Map #7**). It documents the community’s vision and provides a framework for reviewing future growth and public improvements. Investments should be consistent with the vision and general recommendations included in this Plan.



Figure 1.2 Plan Area.

Spenard Corridor Plan, October 2020

The Plan is intended to be implemented and interpreted flexibly to respond to future market conditions, unknown opportunities, and property owner interests while ensuring the baseline vision and objectives are achieved. Integration of resiliency should be vital in looking at potential projects and developments; opportunities for food security through local production, floodplain management and management for other unforeseen climate impacts, reduction of carbon footprint, and social/economic health will place Spenard in a unique position to meet the needs of the future. The plan includes a land use plan map, goals, and actions relevant to Midtown District planning and should be considered for inclusion into the district plan. The Spenard Corridor Plan promotes redevelopment with new housing, commercial, and a

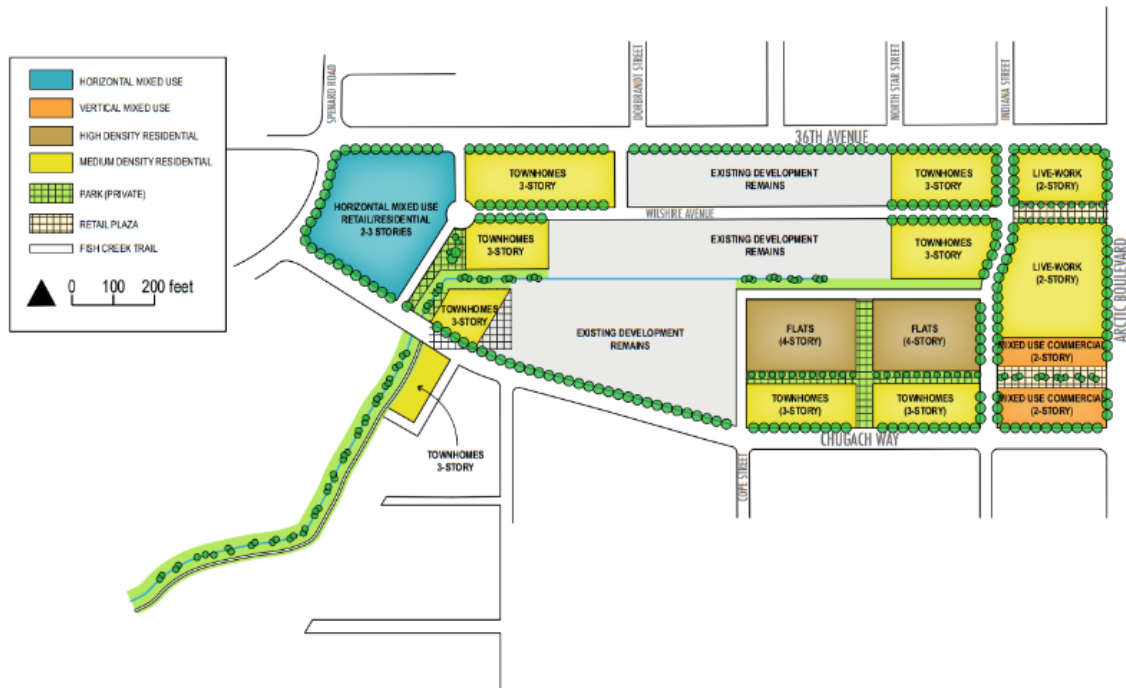
pedestrian and bicycle-friendly network while also connecting Spenard Road to the Fish, Campbell, and Chester Creek trails.

Chugach Way Reconnaissance Study

Chugach Way is located off Spenard Road and has become the center of affordable and workforce housing redevelopment by the Cook Inlet Housing Authority at 36th Avenue, Spenard Road, and Chugach Way (**Illustration #12**).

10

ALTERNATIVE 1: EAST-WEST MIXED USE NODES



Chugach Way Reconnaissance Study
May 2019

The reconnaissance study provides a technical report with concept alternatives and identifies the challenges and constraints for Chugach Way redevelopment. Potential redevelopment alternatives (1-3) were considered for an area that includes single-family homes, mobile home parks, businesses, and apartments. Redevelopment of this area could include several new land uses, new circulation patterns, streetscape improvements, and place-making opportunities. To date, Alternative 1 seems to be the option for implementation, with many new housing options built between 2022 and 2024.

The eastern edge of Chugach Way along Arctic Boulevard was rezoned to R-4A by the property owners. The Municipality has since amended the [R-4A zoning district](#) (A.O. 2023-42), “to create a more pedestrian-oriented environment, allow more commercial space within mixed-use developments, simplify phasing requirements, and make the zoning district’s requirements easier to follow.”

Team Recommendation: *The district plan could support implementing this study and its recommendations for Chugach Way redevelopment by identifying the area as a “focused development area” among the many that may be recommended with this plan.*

Anchorage School District Plans/Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

The Anchorage School Board is responsible for providing an adequate educational environment for the students of Anchorage. To fulfill this obligation, the school board regularly engages in comprehensive long-range planning of school facility construction, renovation, and maintenance.

On an annual basis, the school board adopts a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that addresses the anticipated levels of student enrollment, shifts in enrollment, and school facility conditions and functionality from an educational perspective. Anchorage School District (ASD) gives the public an opportunity each year to participate in the CIP's development and adoption. ASD must also comply with national standards that direct our schools' maintenance, construction, and operation. Typically, this plan delineates the district's construction priorities over a six-year or 10-year period.

As of 2023, the Anchorage School District (ASD) operates and maintains one of the largest physical plants of any public entity in the state, with over 7.8 million square feet worth over \$2 billion. The district has 90 facilities: 84 schools and six support facilities. Ten alternative and charter school programs utilize leased facilities. The district houses approximately 43,500 students and more than 5,700 staff members. One project was found in the ASD CIP for Midtown and approved in the 2024 Bond list.

ASD CIP Projects:

- **Steller Secondary School Access Control** - Install access control for facility safety and security - \$105,000.

All Hazards Mitigation Plan, 2022

The *2022 All Hazards Mitigation Plan (All Hazards Plan)* is one of the guiding documents created by the municipal Office of Emergency Management and adopted by the Anchorage Assembly. The Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) is vulnerable to various natural, technological, and human/societal hazards, including earthquakes, avalanches, landslides, ground failures, and hazardous material accidents. These hazards could cause costly disasters in neighborhoods, business districts, and rural areas. These hazards can endanger the population's health and safety and jeopardize economic and environmental vitality.

Due to the importance of avoiding or minimizing the vulnerabilities to these hazards, the public and private sectors have participated in providing the Mitigation Advisory Committee with the necessary information for the plan update. The MOA undertook a comprehensive, multi-jurisdictional planning process that culminated in the updated publication of the "All Hazards Mitigation Plan." This plan replaces the one adopted in 2016 by the MOA. Development and implementation of this plan have been directed by the Mitigation Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from a variety of municipal departments, including the Office of Emergency Management, Project Management & Engineering, Maintenance and Operations, Anchorage School District, Anchorage Water & Wastewater Utility, the Port of Anchorage, Anchorage Health Department, Anchorage Police Department, and Anchorage Fire Department.

The Mitigation Advisory Committee has identified the hazards threatening the MOA and estimated the relative risks posed to the community by those hazards. Information was gathered from various sources, including multiple departments within the Municipality, planning offices, and state and federal programs. The All-Hazards Mitigation Committee has used this information to assess the vulnerabilities of the municipality's facilities and neighborhoods and the impacts of future disasters potentially involving those hazards. This update reflects the growth experienced over the last five years.

Planning Team Recommendations: *The Goals and Actions from the All Hazards Plan are intended for incorporation into all new and amended neighborhood and district plans. The consultant team will review items relevant to the MTDP and present them to the Steering Team for their information and consensus.*

II. LIST OF MAPS

- #1–Midtown District Planning Area
- #2–Midtown Homestead Map
- #3–Physical Conditions Map
- #4–Midtown 2040 Land Use Plan
- #5–Midtown Zoning
- #6–Midtown Road Ownership
- #7–Spenard Corridor Plan

III. LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- #1–What is a District Plan
- #2–Midtown District Plan Timeline
- #3–Midtown Survey Impressions
- #4–What Respondents Like About Midtown
- #5–McKinney Homestead Certificate
- #6–1962 Midtown Aerial Photo
- #7–North Star School Vision
- #8–Cuddy Family Park Playground Render
- #9–AWWU Midtown Customers
- #10–People Mover Route Brochure
- #11–Seward to Glenn Highway Render
- #12–Chugach Way Study Alternative 1

IV. LIST OF TABLES

- #1–Midtown BID 10-Year Forecasted Earnings
- #2–Midtown Maximum Potential Residential Buildout

V. ATTACHMENTS: (FORTHCOMING)

- A. Land Suitability Analysis—Agnew::Beck
- B. Commercial market analysis—Agnew::Beck
- C. Housing Analysis Purpose + Methods—Agnew::Beck
- D. Step 3 Title 21 Code Working Group Report
- E. Midtown District Excerpt - AMATS TIP 2023-2026

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