



I ♥ SPENARD



Public Hearing Draft | January 2020





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The Spenard Corridor Plan was prepared by the Municipality of Anchorage under a partnership between the Planning Department's Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) and the Long-Range Planning sections.

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# I INTRODUCTION

Compared to most Anchorage neighborhoods, Spenard is unique. No other neighborhood has quite the same mix of eclectic businesses, cultural diversity and enduring entrepreneurial spirit. Although it is now a part of Anchorage, Spenard was once an independent community.

Anchorage is located in the Dena'ina Elnena (homeland). Dating back 1,500 years ago, Dena'ina Tribal groups arrived to the area. The Eklutna and Knik tribes of the Dena'ina Elnena (Dena'ina Country) established seasonal camps along Fish Creek Ch'atanaltsegh Liq'aka Betnu. Around the 1930s, planning began to play a role in the area's growth. The neighborhood started to take shape around a winding road connecting Anchorage's famous "tent city" to a lumber camp owned by Joe Spenard, hence the name "Spenard Road." Some of the original neighborhoods along the corridor were platted in a traditional grid pattern of narrow streets, alleys and rectangular lots. In the 1960s and 1970s, some of these subdivisions were given a commercial zoning designation which, over time, has allowed for a unique mix of uses and activities. These subdivisions had no sidewalks, parks or pedestrian amenities and many fell into disrepair. Spenard Road quickly evolved into a mix of auto-oriented businesses that regularly changed ownership or uses, causing the corridor to lose a sense of cohesiveness. By the 1980s, redevelopment potential and reuse of existing, aging structures were hampered by inflexible land use regulations and outdated infrastructure. The Municipality and the Spenard Community Council collaborated in the early 1980s to infuse public funds into the south third of the corridor, which led to the installation of a new parkway design for Spenard Road. This Spenard Corridor Plan seeks to continue improvement to the corridor, this time with a focus on transit-supportive development.

Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) partnered with the Municipality of Anchorage's (MOA) Long Range Planning section to prepare this Spenard Corridor Plan (SCP), Anchorage's first transit-supportive development plan. It provides a long-term community vision for the Spenard Corridor and outlines public and private investment objectives that will support a symbiotic relationship between land use and transportation to be implemented over the next 30 years.





## A. Purpose of the Spenard Corridor Plan

The Spenard Corridor Plan serves as the primary area-specific policy guide for future development and public improvements in the Plan Area. It documents the community's vision and provides a framework for review of future development and public improvements. Investments should be consistent with the vision and general recommendations included in this Plan; however, the Plan should be implemented and interpreted flexibly in order 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 key 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.

## B. Local Setting

As shown in Figure I.1, the Plan Area is located within the western section of the Anchorage Bowl, just south of Downtown, west of Midtown, north of Tudor Road and northeast of Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. It is bisected by the Alaska Railroad line and connected to the rest of the city by several regional corridors, including Minnesota Drive, Tudor Road and Northern Lights Boulevard.



**Figure I.1** Plan Area Context.

## C. Plan Area

The Plan Area is shown in Figure 1.2. It is bounded to the west by Wisconsin Street, Turnagain Boulevard and Forest Park Drive; to the north by Northern Lights Boulevard and Hillcrest Drive; to the east by Arctic Boulevard; and to the south by International Airport Road. While this Plan focuses on planning and design for the properties and blocks immediately adjacent to Spenard Road, it also promotes improved connectivity to surrounding blocks, neighborhoods and corridors for bicyclists and pedestrians. As such, the Plan Area includes many neighborhoods to the east and west of Spenard Road itself.



## D. Statement of Significance

A Statement of Significance was developed for Spenard Road as a component of the Applied Historic Context of Alaska Roads Project completed in 2012-2014 for the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities. The statement of significance is as follows:

“Spenard Road possesses significance at the local level under Criterion A for its direct and important association with Transportation, and under the supplemental areas of significance of Community Planning and Development and Recreation/Entertainment and Conservation. Spenard Road has an association with Transportation because its construction improved local access to recreational areas around Lake Spenard and the seaplane base that was developed.

Spenard Road provided direct access to an important early recreation area for Anchorage residents. Beginning in 1916, the beach at Lake Spenard was the site of a popular bathing area and dance pavilion, and within three years the City of Anchorage persuaded the U.S. Forest Service to officially designate the area for recreational purposes. Spenard Beach Park was developed by the Spenard Lions Club in 1969 and recreational use continues to the present day. The period of significance is 1916 to 1951, encompassing the period in which the road provided primary access to a locally important recreation area. It begins with the establishment of Joe Spenard's resort and continues until the construction of the Seward Highway in 1951, which together with International Airport Road created an alternate route south from downtown Anchorage to reach this area.

Spenard Road meets the requirement for significance in the area of Community Planning and Development at the local level. Spenard Road served as a vital and distinguishable link to Anchorage and influenced development trends leading to the annexation of Spenard into the community of Anchorage. The road was vital in providing direct access to Spenard and the area south of Anchorage for settlement to accommodate the influx of federal and military personnel settling in the Anchorage area the beginning in the late 1930s. The road is physically distinguishable by not conforming 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 does not possess significance under National Historic Register Criteria B, C, or D.”



## E. Community Planning Process

The SCP was developed and informed by an extensive public outreach process, the elements of which are described below.

### Initial Steps

A Community Outreach Strategy was developed during the early stages of the planning process to guide outreach efforts and inform the community of opportunities to stay updated and get involved. A project website was established as a clearinghouse for all information and documentation related to the project.

### Spenard Advisory Committee

The Spenard Advisory Committee is a group of community members assembled to advise the Municipality staff and consultant team throughout the planning process. The group was comprised of community members with a wide variety of interests, including Plan Area business owners, residents and other stakeholders. The Committee's primary charge was to monitor project steps, ensure that public participation was inclusive, and the Plan's content is representative of community objectives. All meetings of the Spenard Advisory Committee were advertised and open to the public, providing an important avenue for community participation.

### Community Workshops

Two interactive community workshops were held during the planning process as described below.

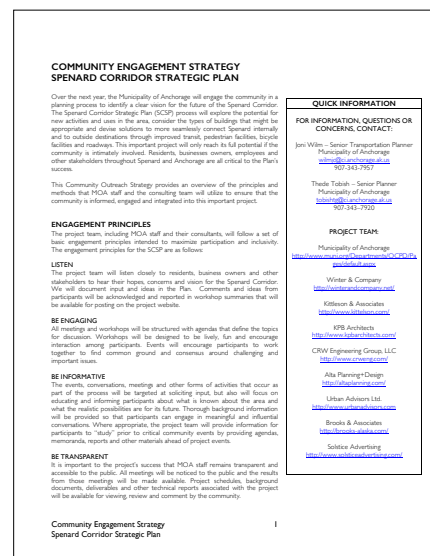
- » **Community Workshop #1.** Community Workshop #1 was held on July 27, 2016 at the Spenard Community Center. Participants learned about the planning process and worked in teams to establish objectives for land use and connectivity in the Plan Area. The ideas generated at this workshop informed the subsequent development of Plan concepts.
- » **Community Workshop #2.** Community Workshop #2 was held to present the Draft SCP in an interactive open house where community members could learn about the Draft Plan's content and provide feedback.

### Spenard Community Council Meetings

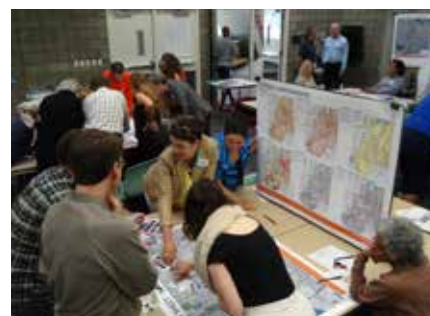
Municipality staff intermittently checked in with the Spenard Community Council for updates and feedback on the planning process and content.

### Special Public Meetings

Updates were provided at key public meetings during the planning process, including with the AMATS Policy Committee and AMATS Technical Advisory Committee.



Cover to the Community Outreach Strategy Plan.



Interactive community workshops engaged the public in shaping their vision for development throughout Spenard.



On-site team strategy sessions followed Community Workshop #1.

## SCP at Community Events

Municipality staff collected feedback and ideas for the Plan at community events to make it easier for those unable to attend evening meetings to weigh in. An SCP booth was included at a number of events including multiple occasions at the Spenard Farmers' Market and Spenard Food Truck Carnival. Additionally, Municipality staff, in coordination with Bike Anchorage, led community members on an evening bike tour of the Plan Area in July 2016.



*Municipality staff collected feedback and ideas for the Plan at community events to make it easier for those unable to attend evening meetings.*



## F. Planning Context

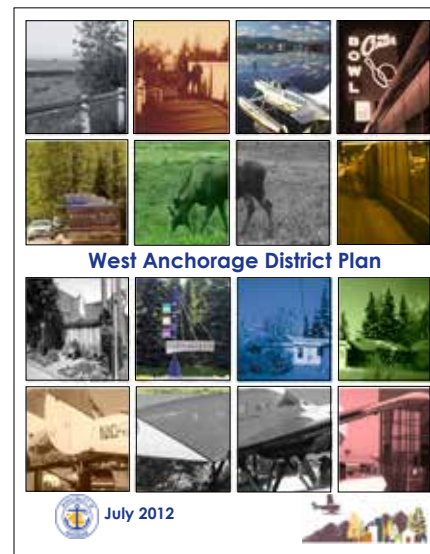
The SCP is a critical planning document in and of itself, but it is also interwoven with broader planning efforts being undertaken around the Municipality. The SCP provides more tailored, specific, and in-depth guidance than the WADP and 2040 LUP provides for land use, transportation, and development for its planning area. Its greater level of detail fits within the citywide policy framework of these plans. Key planning policies and efforts relevant to the SCP include:

- » Spenard Commercial Development Strategy (the SCP is intended to replace this document)
- » Anchorage 2020 - Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan
- » Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan (2040 LUP)
- » West Anchorage District Plan (WADP)
- » Interim 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- » AMATS Pedestrian Plan
- » AMATS Bicycle Plan
- » Municipality Historic Preservation Plan
- » Freight Mobility Study
- » Minnesota Drive Study
- » Vision Zero Action Plan

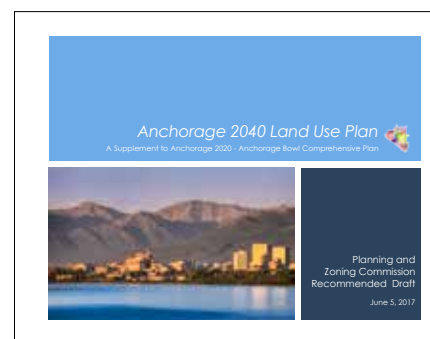


*Spenard Road and 27th Avenue Future Perspective Rendering from [midtownroads.com](http://midtownroads.com)*

The Spenard Corridor Plan is conceptual in nature and is meant to serve as a “living” document that is adaptable and able to respond to the changing needs of the plan area over time. Implementation of the vision, goals and principles within the plan will require close coordination with other local and state transportation agencies. Figure I.3 shows a typical process for how coordination between these agencies might occur. It includes necessary steps such as traffic modelling and other tools that are able to estimate impacts beyond the Spenard planning area that may result from any change to current traffic patterns. A determination of significant potential impacts could result in a “no-build” determination, a search for other solutions, or may lead to amendments to the AMATS Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the applicable land use planning elements of the Comprehensive Plan prior to design and

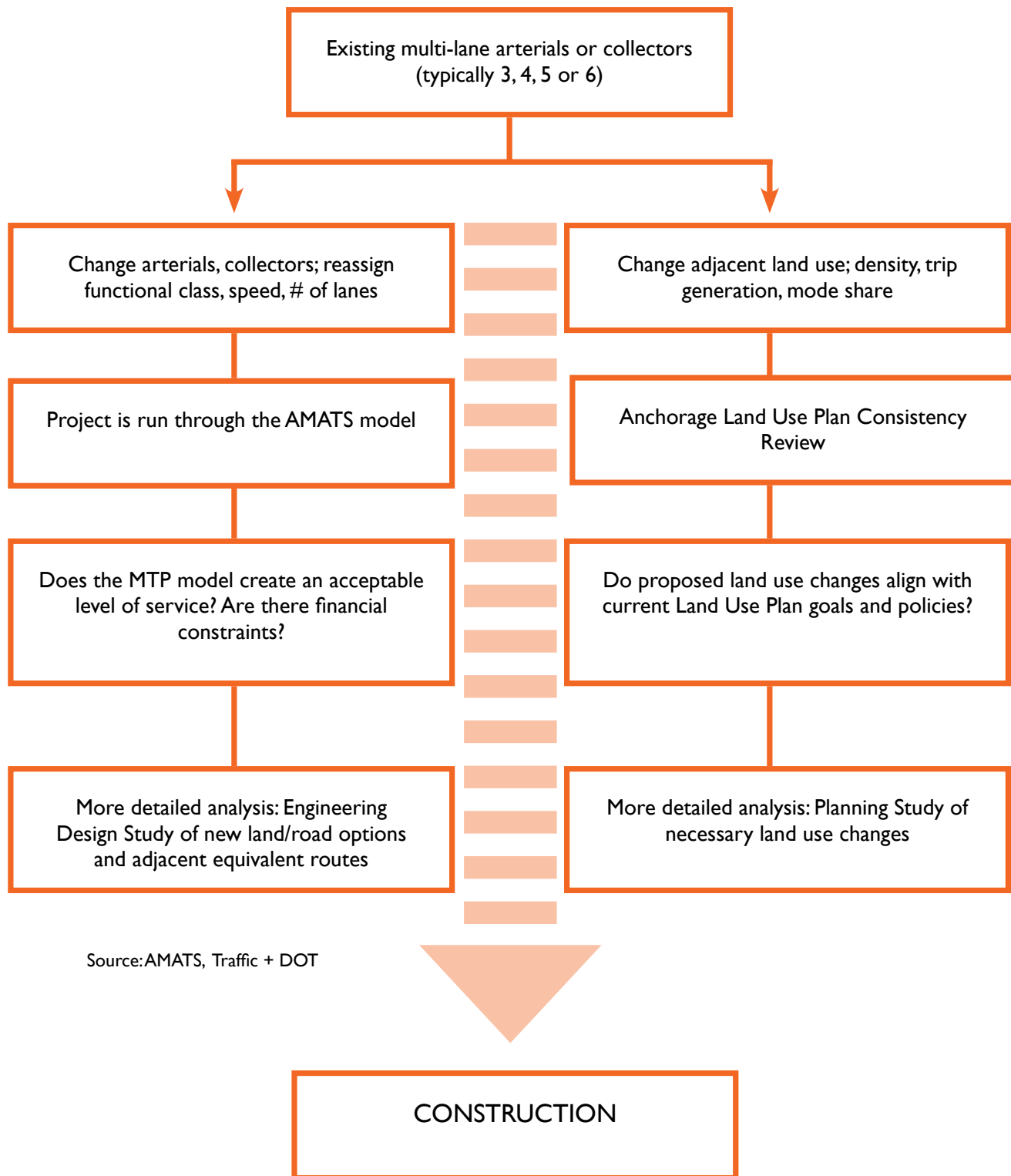


*West Anchorage District Plan*



*Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*

## Determining Impacts of Transportation and Land Use Changes



**Figure 1.3** Determining Impacts of Transportation and Land Use Changes.

## G. Plan Content

The following chapters follow this introduction:

- » **Chapter Two: Vision and Overarching Goals.** This chapter tells the “story” of the SCP. It provides a vision statement for the Spenard corridor 30 years into the future and establishes a set of overarching goals that serve as a baseline for the more detailed concepts and recommendations in subsequent chapters of the Plan.
- » **Chapter Three: Plan Concept/Framework.** This chapter describes major urban design and circulation concepts for the Plan Area, which are to be used as a framework for considering future private development and public infrastructure investments. It generally focuses on concepts and systems at a Plan Area-wide level.
- » **Chapter Four: District-Specific Concepts.** Building on Chapter Three, this chapter identifies land use, design and circulation recommendations for each of the three Transit-Supportive Development (TSD) Districts (North Spenard, Central Spenard and South Spenard).
- » **Chapter Five: Circulation.** This chapter focuses on technical circulation recommendations for pedestrians, vehicles, bicycles and transit.
- » **Chapter Six: Utility Infrastructure.** This chapter identifies utility infrastructure improvements that are anticipated to be required for the Plan Area as it experiences growth identified in the SCP. This chapter also provides broad guidelines for investments in public utility infrastructure, including stormwater, water, wastewater and snow management.
- » **Chapter Seven: Implementation.** This chapter provides strategies, actions and options, including funding and financing opportunities, for implementation of the recommendations identified in the SCP.



