

## A. Setting

West Anchorage District Plan



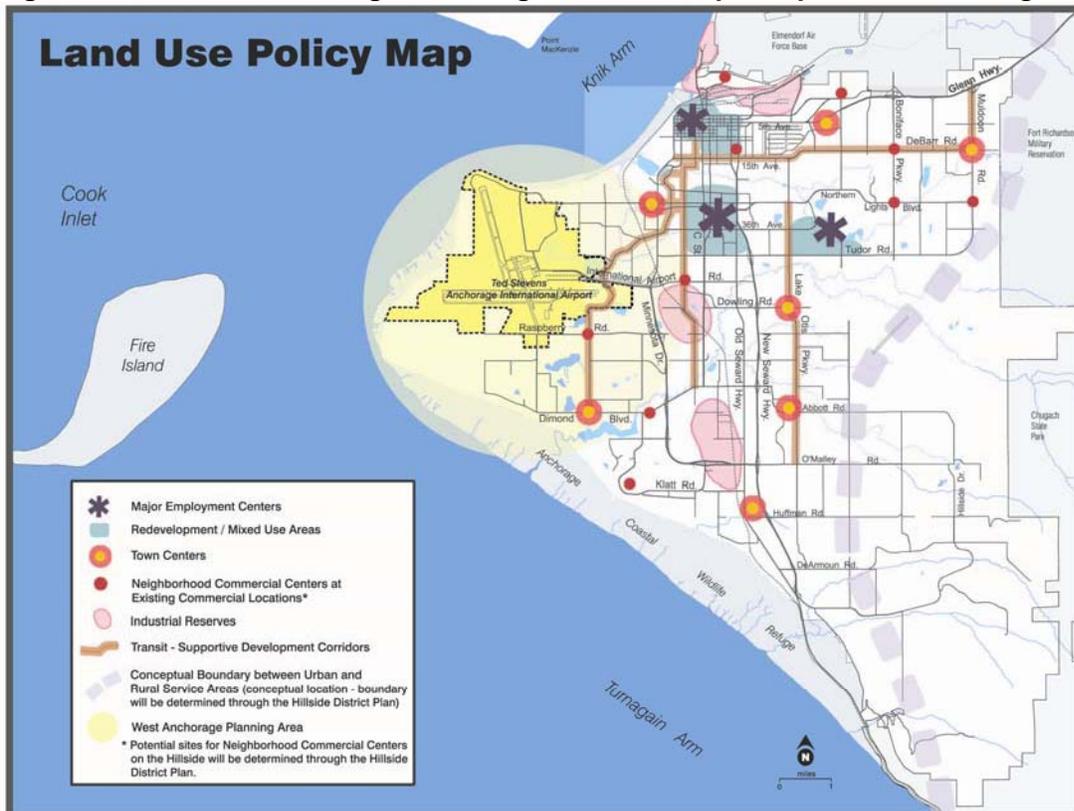
## LOCATION

The West Anchorage Planning Area is within the Anchorage Bowl; roughly bounded by Westchester Lagoon to the north, Minnesota Drive to the east, and Cook Inlet to the west. West Anchorage is known for its wide range of housing options, unique neighborhood character, urban international airport, busy general aviation and floatplane base, popular commercial corridors, and prized recreational lands and coastline.

The Anchorage 2020: Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan (*Anchorage 2020*) created the West Anchorage Planning Area in response to airport growth, community growth surrounding the airport, recreational uses on airport property, and related airport impacts to the surrounding community, and incompatible development adjacent to the airport. Other planning areas addressed in *Anchorage 2020* include Downtown, Hillside, and Midtown districts, each designed to address unique issues and opportunities.

Figure A-1 illustrates the conceptual area for the West Anchorage District that was originally identified in *Anchorage 2020*. One of the outcomes of this project was to define the planning area boundaries.

**Figure A-1. West Anchorage Planning Area Concept Map from Anchorage 2020**



Source: *Anchorage 2020*

## COMMUNITY COUNCILS

The West Anchorage Planning Area<sup>1</sup>, shown in Figure A-2, contains the Community Councils (CCs) of Turnagain, Spenard, and Sand Lake, as well as small portions of Taku/Campbell and Midtown. A portion of Spenard CC is contained within the Midtown District Plan, which can be found at <http://www.midtownplan.com>.

Below are three short descriptions of the main three West Anchorage CC areas as described by some local residents:

Turnagain is one of Anchorage's older neighborhoods, best known for its coastline/coastal trail and the impact it sustained from the 1964 earthquake. It contains Anchorage's first secondary school, now West High School, a hub of community activity. Residents appreciate the quiet, safety, and security found in Turnagain. There are several churches and an arts center, but little to no commercial business. Residential areas are in close proximity to the airport and floatplane base. Wildlife is abundant in corridors and estuaries, and the Coastal Trail is a recreational gem that the entire city flocks to.

**Balto Seppala Park** - This Turnagain-area park is named after Nome gold rush miner Leonhard Seppala who mushed the most difficult leg of the diphtheria serum run from Nenana to Nome. Balto was the dog at the head of the team at the finish.

- Anchorage Place Names (Arno, 2008)

Spenard has a colorful history that proud residents promote on T-shirts and bumper stickers- "same town, different attitude". Spenard started as a lumber camp during construction of the Alaska Railroad and grew to be larger than Anchorage before unification of the City of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Area Borough. Spenard Road was a 3 mile winding wagon trail from the Lake Spenard lumber camp to the tent city on Ship Creek. Today, the Spenard Road business district is quickly becoming a citywide attraction due to the density of popular bars, stores, restaurants, and theatre/pub. All housing types (single family to multi-family, high-end to affordable) are available in close proximity to the large employment center of Midtown.

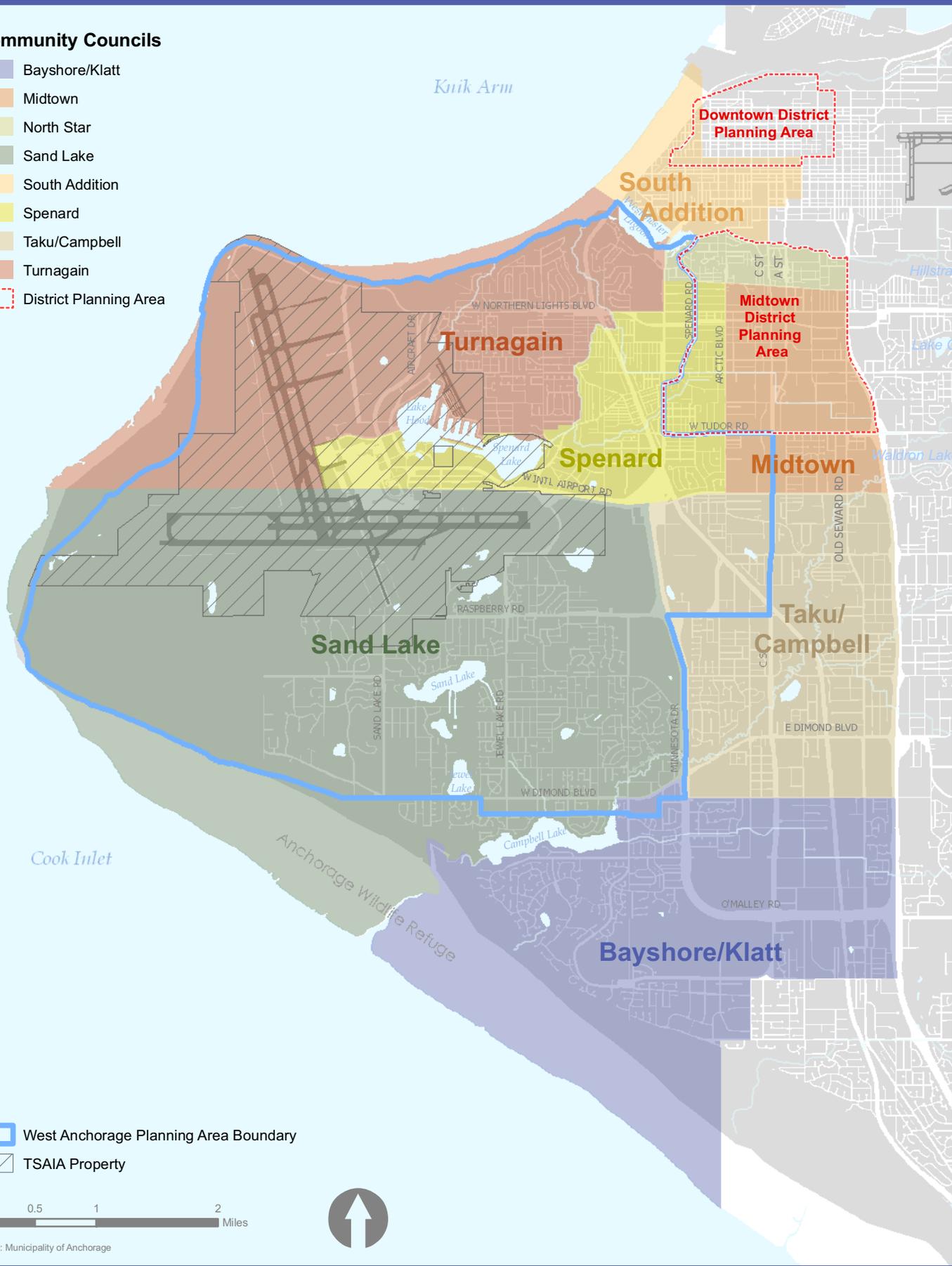
**Joe Spenard** - Spenard is the colorful character who built a beach resort on his self-named Lake. Often dressed in a yellow suit and top hat, he drove the City Express taxi. It was one of the first vehicles in town that drove passengers, goods, and fire-fighting equipment. - Anchorage Place Names (Arno, 2008)

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<sup>1</sup> The West Anchorage Planning Area includes adjacent mudflats that are not shown by the boundary line. The boundary utilizes parcel boundaries for the purposes of calculations, thereby excluding the mudflats visually.

**Community Councils**

- Bayshore/Klatt
- Midtown
- North Star
- Sand Lake
- South Addition
- Spenard
- Taku/Campbell
- Turnagain
- District Planning Area



- West Anchorage Planning Area Boundary
- TSAIA Property



Source: Municipality of Anchorage



Sand Lake is known for its coastline, undeveloped land, lakes, wetlands, and mature trees. Residents throughout the bowl travel to West Anchorage to recreate; particularly to Kincaid Park. There is less light pollution, close proximity to extensive park lands, often, that are accessed by popular separated multi-use pathways along major corridors. There is little neighborhood-scale commercial development in Sand Lake area. Sand Lake has substantial low-density residential development, some of which is served by on-site water and waste water systems. New multi-family developments are changing the character of some neighborhoods in Sand Lake - originally known for its large lot single family neighborhoods.

**Jewel Lake** - From the sky, pilots noted that Jewel Lake shimmered like diamonds. The name stuck. – Anchorage Place Names (Arno, 2008)

## Brief History

**~3,000 B.C.** earliest known human habitation near Anchorage

**1758** first European contact with Athabaskan Dena-ina people in Anchorage area

**1778** Captain James Cook mistakes the inlet for a river and calls it “River Turnagain”

**1867** Russia sells Alaska to America

**1915** Funds authorized to start Alaska Railroad and townsite of Anchorage started to develop

**1918** Alaska Railroad completed between Anchorage and Seward

**1920** City of Anchorage incorporated

**1926** First homestead application in Sand Lake area filed by Thomas Douglas Hogan

**1930** General aviation use of Lake Hood begins

**1939** Channel built between Lake Hood and Lake Spenard to increase takeoff area at Lake Hood Seaplane Base



University of Alaska Anchorage. Archives & Manuscripts Dept.  
Lake Spenard, 1939 (Thomas Culhane UAA Collection)

**1951** Anchorage International Airport opens

**1955** Alaska Air National Guard moves to the south site of Anchorage International Airport



University of Alaska Anchorage. Archives & Manuscripts Dept.  
Spenard Road, circa 1950s (Robert Mounteer UAA collection)



Aerial photograph from 1959 with current airport boundary superimposed (TSAIA)

**1959** Alaska becomes the 49th State in the Union

**1968** Oil discovery at Prudhoe Bay; Kincaid Park created from former Nike missile site

**1970s** Pipeline Boom - the proximity of Spenard to Anchorage International Airport resulted in unprecedented growth of bars, nightclubs, prostitution outlets, gambling clubs, and other disreputable businesses, which catered to pipeline workers laden with money after long stints in isolated construction camps.



Anchorage Museum of History & Art. Library & Archives.  
Anchorage Airport, 1970 (Anchorage Museum Archive)

**1975** Unification of City of Anchorage and Greater Anchorage Area Borough into the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA)

**1977** Completion of Trans-Alaska Pipeline System

**1980** MOA population reaches 174,431

**1983** Start of clean fill disposal at Sand Lake Disposal Site; Creation of Heritage Land Bank (HLB)

**1984** Spenard Recreation Center built

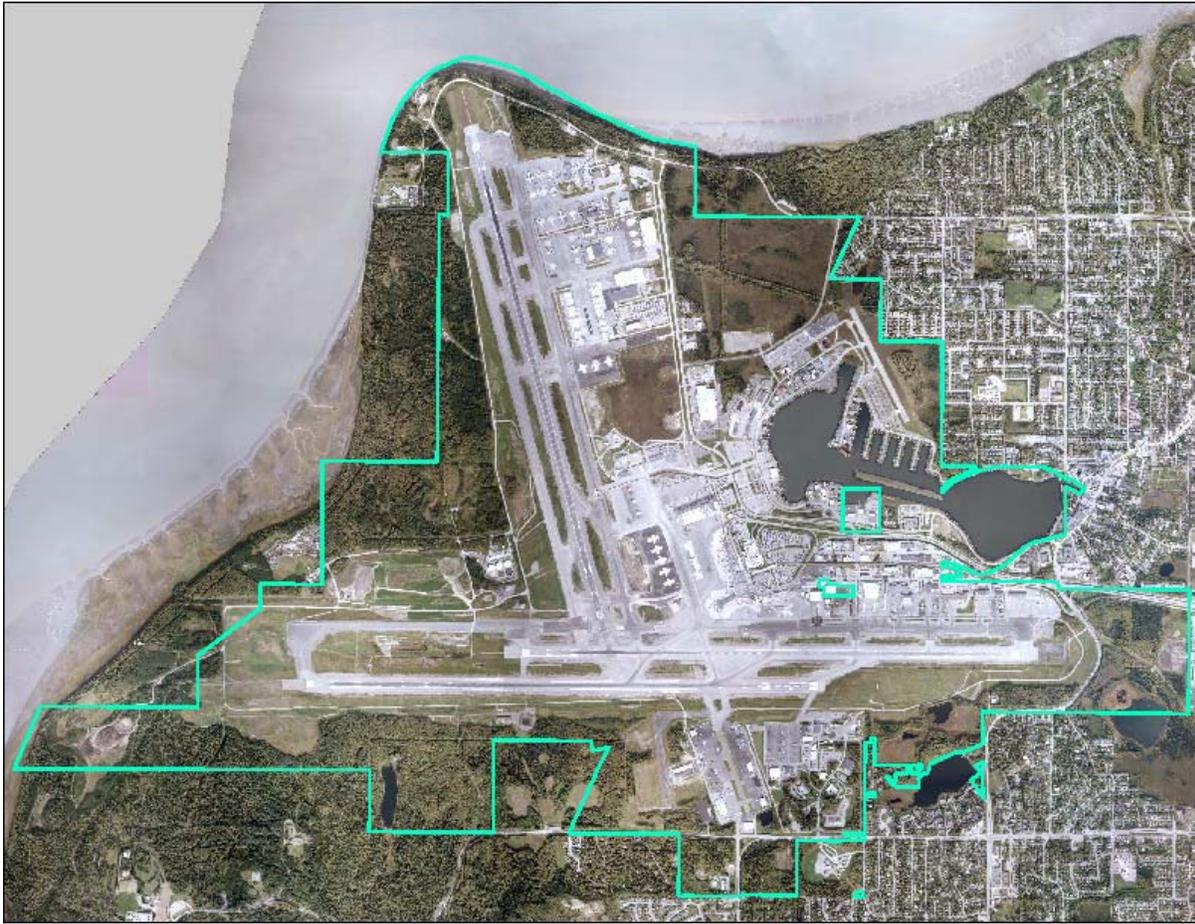
**1987** Coastal Trail connects to Kincaid Park

**1988** Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge (32,476 acres) established by the Alaska Legislature (Alaska Statute [AS] 16.20.031) as a state game refuge for the protection of waterfowl, shorebirds, salmon, and other fish and wildlife species.

**1990** MOA population reaches 226,338 (23% change from 1980-1990)

**2000** MOA population reaches 260,283 (13% change from 1990-2000)

**2004** Old A.J. Dimond High School demolished; new building occupied



al photograph from 2005 with current airport boundary superimposed (TSAIA)

**2008** MOA population estimated at 279,243