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# CHAPTER 2

## Anchorage Today

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Before realistic plans can be made for future development, it is essential to first understand what the Anchorage Bowl is like today, how it got that way, and how it is likely to change in the future. This chapter assesses existing population and economic conditions, recent trends, and makes projections for probable future growth. It contains analyses of land use trends and land suitability, plus the location, amount and zoning of vacant land. These analyses are needed to determine how much and what types of land will be needed to accommodate the Anchorage Bowl's projected population. In addition, the future impacts of projected growth on Anchorage's public facilities, utilities, and transportation systems are evaluated.

### Population

#### Regional Trends Issue:

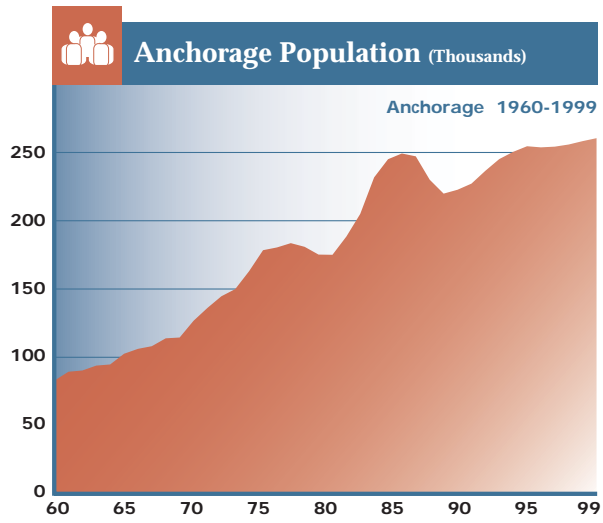
- Shifting regional settlement patterns are changing the Anchorage Bowl's relationship with outlying areas of the Municipality and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (Mat-Su).

Anchorage's population has tripled since state-

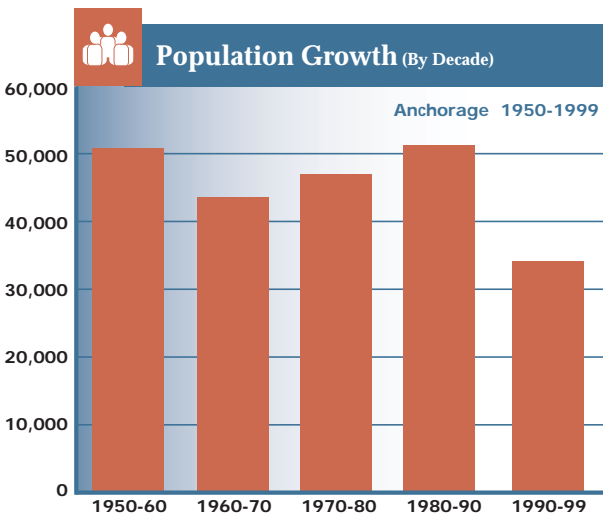
hood, from 83,000 in 1960 to more than 259,000 today. Between 1990 and 1999, Anchorage added almost 33,000 residents, less than in any other decade since 1950. Still, its average annual growth rate for the past decade was greater than that of most metropolitan areas in the nation.

The Municipality of Anchorage accounted for nearly half of the State's population growth in the 1990s, and 42 percent of the State's population now lives here. However, the Kenai Peninsula and Matanuska-Susitna Boroughs are growing more rapidly. In 1980, 80 percent of Southcentral Alaska's residents lived in Anchorage, versus 71 percent in 1999.

Within the Municipality, the trend has been toward growth at the fringes. Most people live in the Anchorage Bowl. However, between 1990 and 1998, the proportion of Anchorage residents living in Chugiak-Eagle River rose from about 7 percent to 12 percent. Faster growth in satellite communities in Chugiak-Eagle River and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough is due partly to lower land costs, the appeal of a more "rural" lifestyle, and highway improvements that

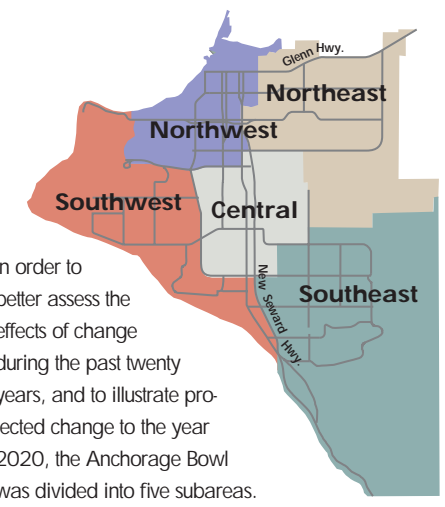


have made daily commuting faster and safer. Since 1980, all areas within the Anchorage Bowl have experienced strong growth. However, the rate of growth has been slower in Northeast and Northwest Anchorage (refer to Table 1 and map-above).



**Table 1. Population by Subarea**

Anchorage , 1980-1998			
Area	1980	1990	1998
Northwest	36,804	42,616	46,192
Northeast	57,024	63,042	70,443
Central	14,353	29,946	39,048
Southeast	12,684	19,186	23,333
Southwest	22,486	29,767	34,903
<b>Total, Anchorage Bowl</b>	<b>143,351</b>	<b>184,557</b>	<b>213,919</b>
Chugiak-Eagle River	12,858	25,324	31,654
Military Bases	17,346	15,097	11,117
Girdwood/Turnagain Arm	876	1,360	2,108
<b>Total, All Areas</b>	<b>174,431</b>	<b>226,338</b>	<b>258,798</b>



**Population Composition Issues:**

- The Anchorage School District projects that over the next six years average enrollment will decline by 3 percent, with reduced demand for new classroom space and other child-oriented facilities. In the longer term, the District predicts the number of school children will again start to climb.
- Anchorage’s older neighborhoods, such as Rogers Park, Turnagain, and South Addition, will probably be “recolonized” by younger families as seniors in these areas move out of single-family homes.
- Fewer young adults and young family households, but more empty-nesters and seniors, signal a shift in new housing demand from single-family homes toward multi-family dwellings.
- Rapid growth of Anchorage’s senior population means rising demand for housing, facilities, and services, including public transportation services suited and conveniently located for seniors.

Anchorage has traditionally been a community of newcomers. The 1990 census found that only 28 percent of Anchorage residents were born in Alaska, unlike the nation as a whole where two-thirds of the people lived in their state of birth. The 2000 census is expected to show a higher percentage of Anchorage residents born in Alaska.

Population mobility has slowed dramatically since 1980. The percentage of people who moved to or from Anchorage each year declined from about 25 percent in the early 1980s to less than 13 percent in 1998. Because of reduced in-migration and mobility, Anchorage now has a larger percentage of residents who have lived here ten years or more.

Long-term trends in household size and type reflect Anchorage’s changing population and changing living patterns. Average household size fell to 2.7 persons by 1990. Meanwhile, one-person, non-family and single-parent households rose to 46 percent of all households in 1990, and married couple households decreased to 54 percent of the total.

Anchorage is also becoming more ethnically diverse. Racial and ethnic minorities accounted for about 27 percent of the total population in 1998, more than the national metropolitan average. Alaska Natives are the largest minority group, followed closely by African-Americans, Hispanics, and persons of Asian/Pacific Island descent. In 1998, one-third of the students enrolled in the Anchorage School District were minorities, suggesting that the minority population will continue to grow.

With slower growth and lower in-migration and population turnover, the age profile of Anchorage's residents has changed markedly since 1990.

- **Anchorage's total population is growing**, but the number of young adults (20 to 34 years) fell by 10,600 persons between 1990 and 1998. This continues a downward trend due to a lack of growth in high-paying jobs that attract young workers, fewer military personnel due to downsizing at Fort Richardson, young adults' pursuit of college education and job opportunities outside Alaska, and the attraction of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough for young families.

- **Anchorage's population is aging**, but it is still relatively young. In 1998, the median age of Anchorage residents was 32.1 (up from 26.3 in 1980) versus 36.2 for the nation.

- **School-age population stands almost unchanged** since 1990, at nearly a quarter of the total population.

- **The number of "empty-nesters" (50 to 65 years) has increased**, a trend that is likely to continue. This age group could have a major impact on the housing market if many choose to move from single-family homes to condominiums, townhouses, or apartments.

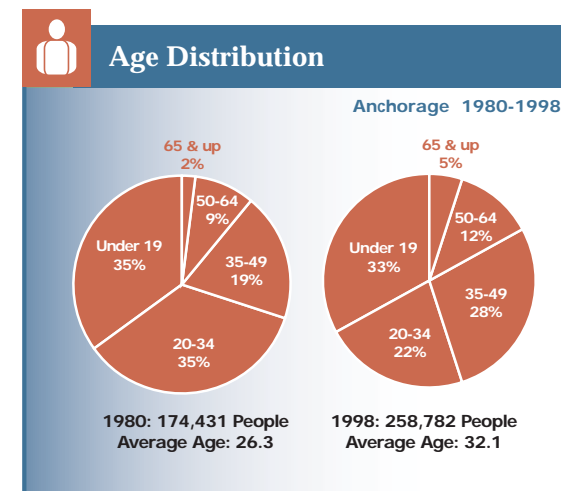
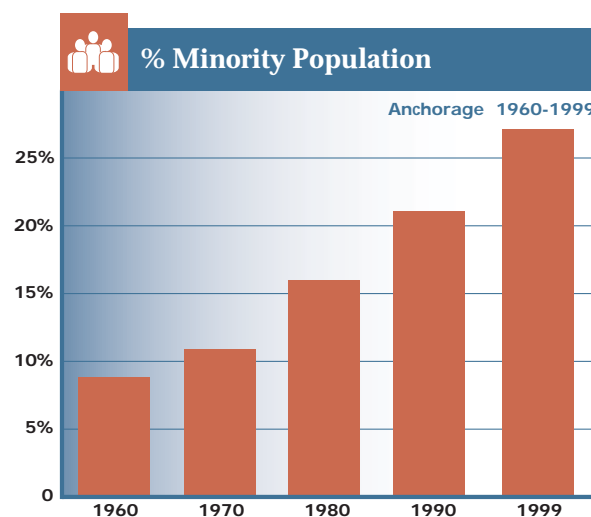
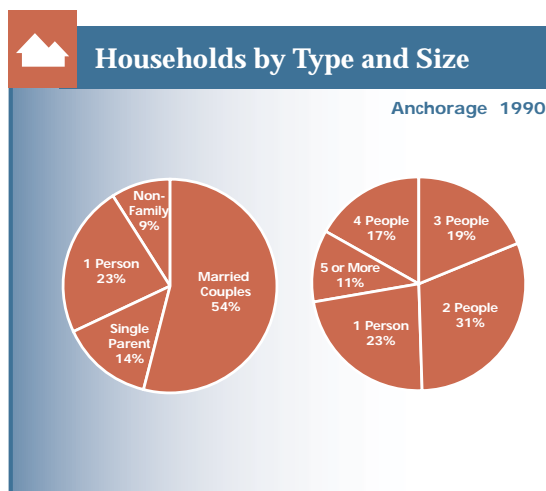
- **The proportion of seniors (65 years and older) has increased** since 1990. This is expected to continue to be Anchorage's fastest growing age group. The Alaska Department of Labor estimates that seniors will make up 12 percent of Anchorage's population by 2018, although this is still lower than the national projection of about 17 percent.

## Economy

Anchorage's economy has undergone fundamental changes since the first half of the 1980s. An understanding of economic change is important because it impacts the demand for different types of land. A considerable amount of detail is therefore provided in this chapter on recent economic changes and trends affecting development in the Anchorage Bowl. An overview of the local economy is followed by more detailed analyses of selected activities.

## Background

When the 1982 *Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Development Plan* was adopted, Anchorage was on the threshold of the biggest building boom in its history. From 1982 through 1985, Anchorage saw \$2.8 billion in new construction, including more than 21,000 new homes, over 2 million square feet of office space, and nearly 4 million square feet of retail space. Between 1982 and 1985, Anchorage added 19,000 jobs and 44,000 residents. Several major civic buildings were built or expanded during the 1980s, including the

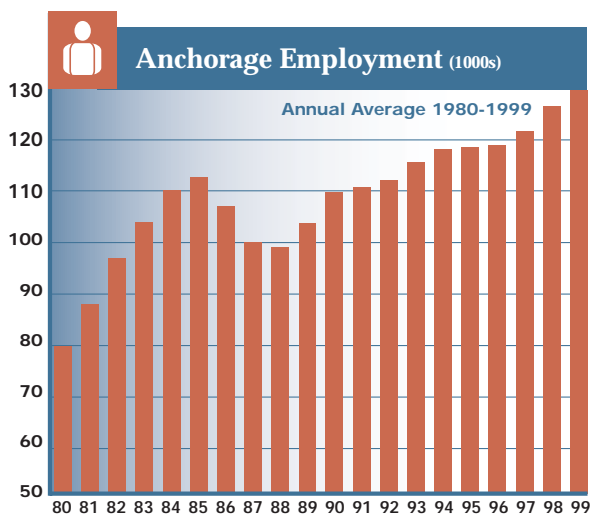




Alaska Center for the Performing Arts (ACPA), Lousac Library, Egan Convention Center, Sullivan Arena, and Anchorage Museum of History and Art. Anchorage also expanded its utility infrastructure by completing the regional landfill, the Eklutna water project, and the wastewater treatment plant.

When oil prices slumped in early 1986, state revenues and expenditures shrank, and Anchorage's economy abruptly stalled. Between 1985 and 1988, Anchorage lost 12,000 jobs and 29,000 residents. Many jobless workers walked away from mortgages. Rental apartment vacancies skyrocketed from 3 percent in 1982 to 25 percent in 1986. Anchorage was left with an oversupply of homes, retail space, and commercial offices. Residential and commercial property values fell by nearly half. Anchorage suffered a lengthy real estate recession, marked by foreclosures, bankruptcies, and bank failures.

In 1989, Anchorage's economy rebounded strongly with a 4.5% increase in employment. Part of the increase was due to clean-up activities associated with the Exxon Valdez oil spill, but all employment



sectors, except for finance, increased that year. Average wage employment rose from 111,400 jobs in 1990 to 128,900 in 1998, an increase of nearly 16 percent. In 1999, Anchorage completed its tenth consecutive year of modest but steady economic growth and employment increases. The community's unemployment rate is at an all-time low—under 5 percent in both 1998 and 1999.

Anchorage is the State's primary transportation, communications, trade, service, and finance center. Anchorage makes up 42 percent of the State's population, but accounts for 47 percent of the employment. Nine of the ten largest private employers are headquartered here. More than 70 percent of the State's legal, business, engineering, and management service employment is based in Anchorage. Anchorage is also the State's government center. Although Juneau is the state capital, in 1998 Anchorage had 8,300 state employees, compared to 5,300 in Juneau. The disparity is much greater for federal workers. In 1998, Anchorage's 10,100 federal employees accounted for nearly 60 percent of the statewide total, while only 1,800 federal workers were based in Juneau.

Anchorage has good fundamental economic assets, including a well-educated and skilled workforce and two universities. Other assets are efficient air and marine transportation, a strategic location for international air logistics and modern communications, and reliable low-cost utility services with capacity for growth. There are also excellent educational and health services, competitive wages, low taxes, modern infrastructure, excellent environmental quality, and, overall, a superior quality of life.

Anchorage's job profile largely resembles that of the nation's except that it has few manufacturing workers—less than 2 percent versus 15 percent nationwide. Expansion and diversification have given Anchorage's

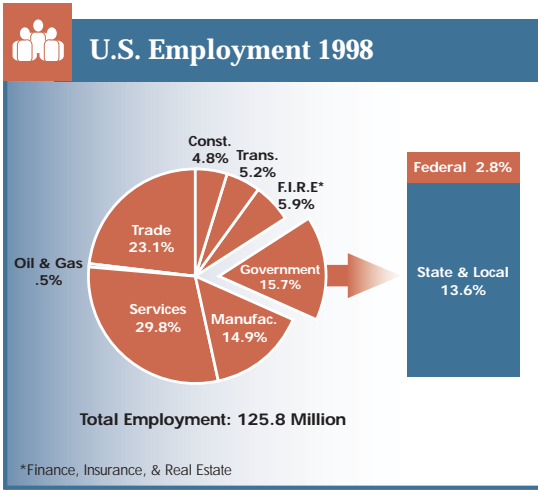


Construction continues to be an indicator of growth in the Anchorage economy.

economy the ability to absorb fluctuations in the business cycle or unexpected economic events. Anchorage now has a steady year-round employment base, with a summer boost from tourism and construction activities.

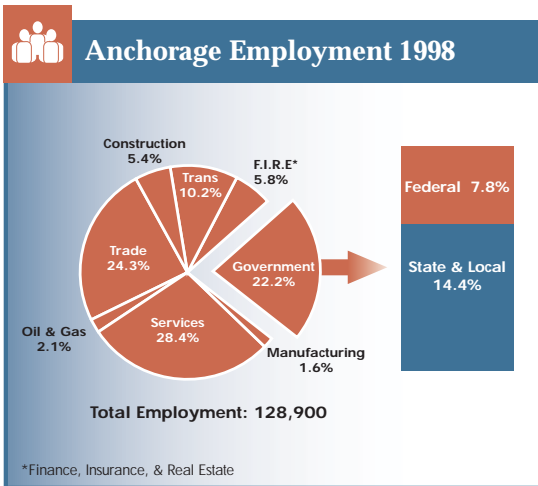
Anchorage is closely tied to national and global economies. Alaska exports more of its natural resources and imports a larger share of consumables than any other state. As the State's chief trade, transportation, and distribution center, Anchorage's prosperity is tied to national and international markets for oil, gas, minerals, timber, and seafood. Likewise, the flow of tourists and air cargo to and through Anchorage largely depends on trends in national and world economies. Cheaper and faster transportation and telecommunications negate Anchorage's one-time isolation from world markets.

During construction of the oil pipeline in the mid-1970s, Anchorage's per capita income was 77 percent above the national average, and its cost of living was more than 40 percent above national norms. In the last two decades, Anchorage incomes and living costs have become more in line with national trends. By 1998, per capita income was only 20 percent above the national



average, and cost of living was only about 24 percent higher.

Some of the decline in wages is related to a shift in the local job mix. Over 80 percent of the jobs added since 1990 have been in the lower skilled, lower paid retail trade and service sectors. Although lower paying jobs such as hotel workers predominate in the service sector, Anchorage has also added higher paying jobs in health care, business, engineering, and legal services.



Growth in the highest paid sectors (oil and gas, construction, government and transportation, communications and utilities) has been negligible except for air transportation. The narrowing of the cost-of-living gap has helped lift Anchorage’s relative purchasing power. The main factors contributing to this trend are lower housing costs (compared to the Lower 48), the entry of major national retailers into the Anchorage market, more efficient transportation and distributions systems, and low state and local taxes.

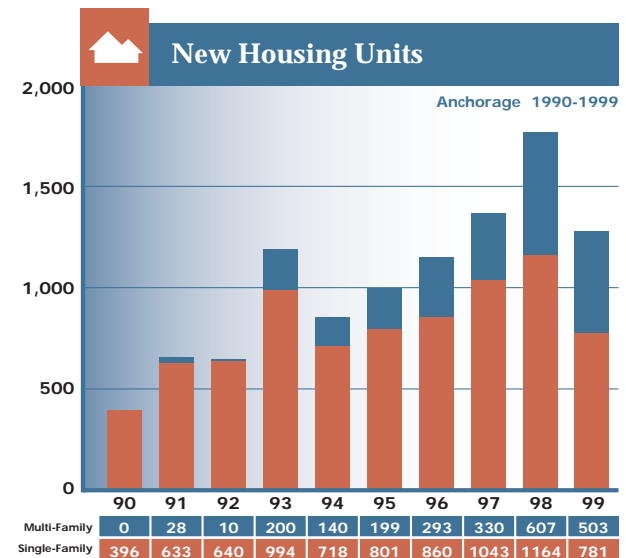
### Construction

Nearly \$7 billion in new construction has occurred in Anchorage since the last comprehensive plan was done. About \$3.9 billion in construction valuation was added in the 1980s and another \$3.2 billion in the 1990s. Not included in these totals were major federal projects such as the \$165 million Alaska Native Medical Center and a large number of on-base military construction projects. Road construction projects are also not included in these figures.

Several major federal, state, municipal, and private construction projects were completed in Anchorage in the 1990s. New government facilities included the Alaska Railroad Headquarters Building, a Base Exchange on Elmendorf Air Force Base, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) headquarters facility, a Veterans Affairs clinic, and a municipal permit center. Private developments included new bank offices, 1,700 hotel rooms, a 16-screen theater complex, and a 9-screen movie theater addition. The \$125 million Alaska Seafood International manufacturing facility opened in 1999 and construction has begun on a new \$60 million jail and a downtown fire station.

After the Anchorage housing market collapsed

in the late 1980s, some predicted that it could take decades to absorb the over-supply of apartments and condominiums. The inventory, however, was fully absorbed by the early 1990s. Between 1987 and 1989, less than 500 single-family homes and only seven multi-family units were built in the Anchorage Bowl. The housing market began to recover in 1990, but almost no new multi-family units were added until 1993, when 200 units were built, primarily through government tax credit financing programs. Since then, multi-family housing, especially owner-occupied duplexes, tri-plexes and four-plexes, has increased in popularity. Some multi-family housing has been aimed at the entry-level market, but it is also a popular choice among “empty nesters” who choose to move out of single-family homes and purchase higher end townhouses. In 1998 and 1999, multi-family housing accounted for over 40 percent of the housing built in the Anchorage Bowl. In 1999, a large-scale (180 units) rental complex was financed privately without government tax credits. One indicator of the increased



demand for additional rental housing was the 3.6 percent vacancy rate at the end of 1999.

Since 1990, housing developments in Chugiak-Eagle River have competed with the Anchorage Bowl housing market. Recent prices for new homes in Eagle River have equaled or exceeded those in the Bowl. Consequently, increasing numbers of Anchorage residents are choosing to buy homes in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. They are attracted by abundant land, lower land prices, lower building costs, overall lower housing costs, and less local government regulation.

In the late 1980s, it seemed possible that one of Anchorage’s two military installations might close. Although this did not happen, Fort Richardson’s troop level dropped from about 4,100 to 2,100 in 1994. There are about 5,000 fewer military personnel and dependents in Anchorage today than there were in the early 1980s. Although there has been a decline in the overall military population, both military installations have upgraded on-base housing in the last decade. Old housing units were either torn down or renovated and enlarged. Because renovation reduced the number of on-base units, military personnel and families living off base increased from about 8,500 in the early 1980s to 12,000 in the late 1990s. This helps explain some of the absorption of the over supply of multi-family housing. In 1999, Elmendorf Air Force Base proposed plans for a private developer to build 300 new units of housing on base. This could affect multi-family housing demand in the Anchorage Bowl.

More than a half billion dollars in roads and transportation-related projects were built in Anchorage in the last decade, mostly with federal funds. In the late 1980s, completion of the Minnesota Bypass gave Anchorage residents a second freeway route to Mid-

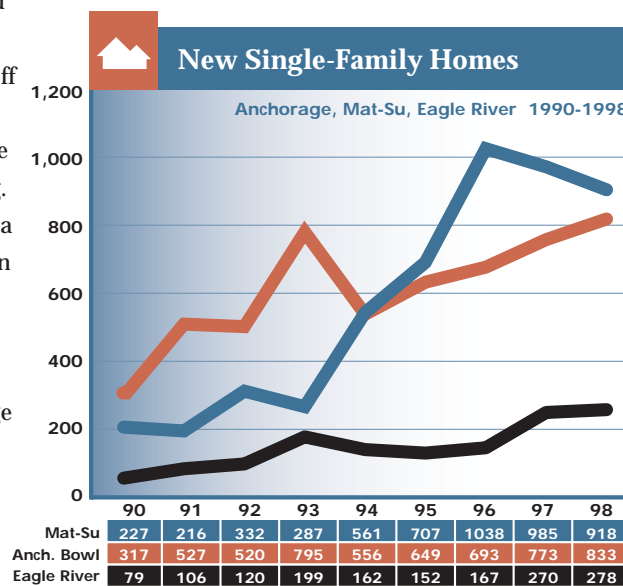
town and Downtown from South Anchorage. North of Anchorage, the Glenn Highway was widened from two to four lanes from Eklutna to the junction of the Parks Highway in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. This dramatically cut commuting time and increased safety for Mat-Su commuters. South of Anchorage, the Seward Highway was rebuilt to Girdwood. Roadway projects in the Anchorage Bowl included improvements to most major arterials and collectors.

In the early 1990s, \$30 million was spent to upgrade Spenard Road to help remove neighborhood blight and promote economic development. The road design included wide pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, extensive landscaping, benches, pocket parks, bus stops, and attractive lighting. Spenard Road soon became a major transit corridor. These public improvements were followed by major private investments, particularly in hotels, restaurants, and tourist-related services. Since that time, most transportation improve-

ments in the Anchorage Bowl have been designed with greater emphasis on landscaping, trails, bike routes, and transit enhancements. Access to Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport was improved in the fall of 1999 with completion of a \$25 million overpass and interchange at Minnesota and International Airport Road.

### Petroleum Industry

Petroleum revenues fund more than 75 percent of the cost of Alaska’s state government. The oil and gas industry is also an important employer and purchaser of local goods and services. This means that oil price fluctuations have a strong impact on the Anchorage economy. Oil industry employment peaked at 4,200



Alaska’s families embody our industrious and independent spirit.

jobs in 1985, but dropped to 3,700 jobs by 1990 and 2,500 in 1998. In response to low oil prices in the early 1990s, the industry cut costs and payrolls. As part of the downsizing, petroleum companies contracted with private businesses to perform functions formerly carried out by company employees. Today, most support personnel are contract workers who earn lower wages, with fewer benefits and minimal job security.

### Air Transportation

In the late 1980s, about 1.7 million international travelers passed through the state-owned Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. Passenger jets flying between the U.S. and Asia, or over the North Pole from the U.S. to Europe, stopped in Anchorage to refuel and change crews. The Duty Free Shop at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport was one of the largest retailers in the State. Anchorage also benefited from aircrews staying in local hotels. In 1989, most of the \$22 million in state revenues from airport concessions came from the Duty Free Shop. By the early 1990s, however, most international carriers bypassed Anchorage because they had switched to planes that could fly longer distances without refueling. At about the same time, the end of the Cold War saw the opening up of formerly forbidden Russian airspace. By the mid-1990s, only about 500,000 international travelers passed through Anchorage each year.

The decline in international passenger traffic was offset by the expansion of the air cargo industry. Federal Express opened an \$11 million package sorting facility in 1989 and made Anchorage one of its principal hubs. During the decade, other domestic and international carriers, including United Parcel Service, DHL, Alaska Airlines, Japan Airlines, and Northern Air Cargo, expanded their Anchorage cargo operations. In

1999, Federal Express opened a new \$48 million facility at the airport. Air cargo passing through Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport rose from 600 million pounds in FY 1988 to 3.6 billion pounds in FY 1999. Today, attempts are being made to target the airport area's potential for light manufacturing and high-tech assembly as a complementary activity to the expanding air cargo industry.

The University of Alaska Anchorage has established a new global logistics management major within the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree program to further support the air cargo industry. The program is designed to provide specialized training for students in the field of logistics, both nationally and in Alaska. This program will enhance the success of global logistics in Anchorage by providing to the industry a locally based labor force that understands and can manage logistics systems. Also, in response to expanding air cargo and tourism activities, a \$350 million expansion and upgrade of the airport terminal and other facilities is underway.

### Tourism

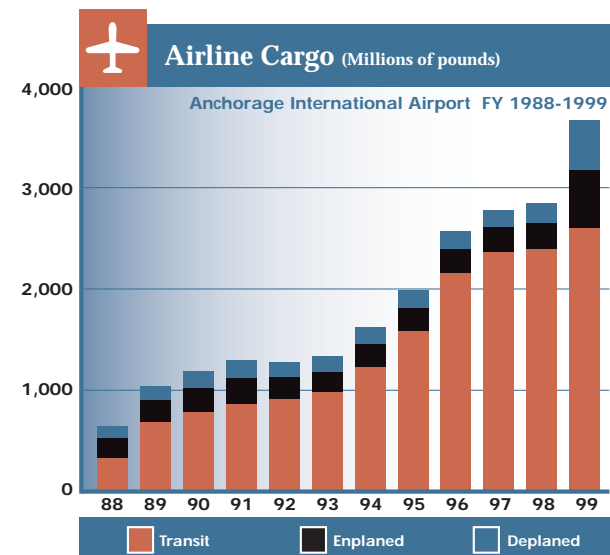
Of the estimated 1.1 million visitors traveling to Alaska in the summer of 1998, about 60 percent traveled to Anchorage. The number of visitors to Anchorage has increased more than 5 percent annually since 1990. Efforts are underway to develop more local attractions and lengthen visitor stays. A \$16 million Alaska Native Heritage Center opened in 1998. Plans are underway for a major expansion of the Anchorage Museum of History and Art.

Until recently, a factor limiting tourism growth in Anchorage was an inadequate supply of modern hotel rooms. New hotel development was considered a risky

investment due to the short tourist season. Skepticism lifted after the Regal Alaskan Hotel was identified as one of the nation's most profitable airport hotels. Soon other chains began to explore potential investments in the Anchorage area.

Between 1990 and 1999, more than 1,700 hotel rooms were built in the Municipality of Anchorage. In 1994, the Alyeska Prince, a 307-room luxury hotel, opened in Girdwood. All of the other rooms were built in the Anchorage Bowl, mostly in Downtown, Midtown, and near the airport. Nearly all of the new hotels are mid-priced national chains with modern amenities and services oriented to both tourist and business travelers. A new upscale high-rise hotel opened in Downtown Anchorage in 2000. This increase in the inventory has helped increase hotel room sales from \$78 million in 1990 to \$150 million in 1999.

Before 1990, nearly all Anchorage visitors arrived by air. This changed in the early 1990s when about 100 cruise ships a year began to dock in Seward. These cruise ships bring 125,000 visitors to Anchorage





each summer. Conventions have also increased the number of visitors. The Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) reported that convention sales increased from less than \$30 million in 1988 to more than \$60 million in 1998. A 1998 study by a major accounting firm found that there was a need for a larger convention center.

### Retail Development

In the 1980s, retail expansion was dominated by shopping centers and strip malls. Retail expansion in the 1990s was characterized by an influx of national “big box” chain stores. Today, Anchorage has two each of Costco warehouses, Sam’s Club warehouses, Wal-Marts, K-Marts, Office Max shopping centers, and Office Depots. It also has a Barnes & Noble, Pier 1 Imports, Toys-R-Us, Borders Books, Sports Authority, Lowe’s Hardware, Home Depot, and three Fred Meyer shopping centers. Other retail-related expansion included innumerable freestanding restaurants, particularly fast-food outlets with drive-through lanes. In the last decade, nearly every Anchorage gas station has been renovated or replaced. Many have been expanded to include groceries, eateries, and other services.

Much of the over-supply of retail space built in the 1980s was recycled in the 1990s. Space in many retail strip malls and shopping centers was converted to other uses such as churches, health clubs, offices, and service businesses. Two large secondhand stores currently occupy a building that was formerly an expensive furniture store. At the other end of the scale, two large buildings vacated by Long’s Drugs were fully renovated and transformed into a Barnes & Noble bookstore in Midtown and a CompUSA store in South Anchorage. A former Safeway Store now houses



The Alaska Visitor’s Center is a hub for travel in the city and around the State.

the Anchorage Police Department training center and firing range. A former movie theater is now occupied by an alternative public school. An obsolete building that had been a succession of retail groceries, is now City Market, an upscale neighborhood grocery store that also features an espresso bar, Italian bakery, deli, and restaurant. It is anticipated that redevelopment will continue. There is a growing potential for re-use of shopping malls and other large vacant or under-utilized commercial buildings for mixed-use developments, including residential, office, and retail.

### Downtown Anchorage Development

A strong downtown is an important indicator of a community’s economic vitality. Anchorage took a number of steps to bolster its downtown area. A major public investment decision in the early 1980s by the Municipality to construct a parking garage at Fifth Avenue and C Street was critical to retaining Downtown’s two major retailers. Municipal investment in the parking facility was key to the development of the Fifth Avenue Mall with the retention of JCPenney and Nordstrom as anchors. In addition, the commitment to construct the Seventh Avenue and G Street parking



Retail development in the mid-1990s

garage was instrumental in ARCO (now Phillips 66) Alaska’s decision to expand its headquarters office building Downtown. These investments, along with others in a variety of major public improvements, kept the downtown area from stagnating during the economic downturn later in the 1980s.

During the economic slump in the mid-1980s, the future of Downtown Anchorage appeared precarious. Several older buildings had been torn down or vacated with the expectation that the land would soon be developed. When this did not happen immediately, vacant buildings and lots detracted from the area’s appearance. A number of retailers and restaurants abandoned Downtown, and many offices stood vacant. More than half the space in a new 250,000 square-foot mall adjacent to the Nordstrom and JCPenney department stores was vacant. The Municipality’s lease on its downtown headquarters was expiring, and officials considered whether to renovate the existing building or lease space elsewhere. High vacancy rates left municipal parking garages under-utilized.

In the heart of Downtown, the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts (ACPA) was nearing completion. It was the focus of negative sentiments from some resi-

dents due to cost overruns and controversial design. Shortly after the opening of ACPA, the Alaska Repertory Theater, one of the primary tenants, folded due to a lack of funds.

Against this negative backdrop, Downtown Anchorage experienced a renaissance in the 1990s. A major catalyst was the development of Town Square, located between the ACPA, City Hall, and the Convention Center. The Municipality raised \$1 million to develop the park by selling more than 13,000 personally inscribed granite bricks to pave the perimeter of the square. This public involvement in developing Town Square helped lessen negative feelings about the park and adjacent ACPA. Extensive landscaping transformed Town Square into a public plaza with spectacular flower beds along the walkways. A privately funded waterfall fountain was added in 1998. Town Square has become a centerpiece for community events, including Anchorage's Millennium Celebration that attracted more than 30,000 people on a sub-zero night.

A beautification program featuring flowers, benches, new streetlights, and road design improvements has greatly improved the attractiveness of the

downtown area. In the summer, planters and hanging baskets adorn streets, sidewalks, and buildings. In the winter, small white lights decorate the streetscape. The ACPA has become a magnet for cultural and social events. It currently hosts popular Broadway shows as well as nationally acclaimed dance and musical performances and is virtually booked year-round. The Anchorage Museum of History and Art, located three blocks west of Town Square, is another downtown cultural cornerstone. In 1999, it was announced that a \$50 million endowment from a private donor will help fund future expansion of the museum.

Downtown has also become a weekend destination for residents and visitors. In 1992, the Anchorage Downtown Association and the Anchorage Parking Authority developed Saturday Market on a paved Third Avenue parking lot that saw little use on weekends. An attractive cedar entry, market headquarters, stage, sound system, and landscaping were installed using mostly donated materials and labor. The market opened in 1993 with 60 vendors, and by the end of the first summer, there were 200. Today all 300 spaces are full, with a waiting list.

The Fifth Avenue Mall, which was more than half

vacant in the mid-1980s, is nearly full and has attracted major national retail chains such as Eddie Bauer, The Gap, Body Shop, and Banana Republic. Several new hotels have opened. Many new restaurants and businesses have either opened Downtown or have relocated there. Recent government projects in the area include a new \$35 million state courthouse, a new FBI headquarters building, a \$12 million renovation of City Hall, and restoration of Historic City Hall on Fourth Avenue. The State recently acquired the Bank of America Building and is relocating most state offices Downtown.

Additional efforts to improve the downtown area are also underway. In 1997, the Municipality worked with local businesses to establish a Downtown Improvement District. Most businesses within the District agreed to an additional property tax assessment in return for new and enhanced services to improve the area's safety, cleanliness, attractiveness, and quality of life.

The Ship Creek area, just north of Downtown, has been the focus of a major master planning effort by the Alaska Railroad Corporation, which owns most of the property in this area. Proposed developments include road, rail, and utility improvements; trails and landscaping; and a mixed use of residential, commercial office, and retail development.

### Education and Health Care Expansion

Anchorage school enrollment increased rapidly during the 1990s, from about 40,000 students in 1988 to almost 50,000 in 1999. During this period, Anchorage voters approved more than \$500 million in school construction projects. New educational facilities were built, including two middle schools and nine elementary schools. In 2001, construction will begin on a



New hotel construction in downtown Anchorage



The annual flower display in Town Square Park, a part of Anchorage's City of Flowers campaign

replacement for Dimond High School, and a new South Anchorage high school is planned. Most other Anchorage schools have undergone expansions or upgrades since 1990. The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and Alaska Pacific University (APU) constructed several new buildings and expanded programs. UAA established a new logistics program to train students for jobs in this field related to air cargo expansion. A new \$29 million UAA dormitory, housing more than 500 students, opened in 1999.

Education and health care have been identified as resources for further expansion of Anchorage’s economic base. Most higher education, medical, and social service institutions are located in a 1,130-acre area in the center of the Anchorage Bowl. The organizations are currently involved in a university and medical district master plan, which assesses existing land use patterns and makes recommendations for future development. Participants include the Municipality, Mental Health Land Trust, Providence Alaska Medical Center, UAA, Alaska Native Medical Center, APU, Alaska Psychiatric Institute, Anchorage Trails and Gre-

enways Coalition, Anchorage School District, and McLaughlin Youth Center.

Much of the expansion in the service industry in Anchorage in the past decade has been related to growth in health care services. Health care employment increased from 3,000 jobs in 1980 to nearly 8,000 in 1998. Major health care building projects also took place in the 1990s, including expansion and renovation of both the Alaska Regional Hospital and Providence Alaska Medical Center, and construction of the new \$165 million Alaska Native Medical Center and a new \$160 million hospital on Elmendorf Air Force Base.

Anchorage residents can now receive local treatment for medical conditions that formerly required a trip to the Lower 48. Improved medical care has also encouraged a higher percentage of Anchorage seniors to remain in Alaska after they retire. The development of special housing projects, home health care services, and assisted living facilities have added several hundred housing units for Anchorage seniors.

In Fall 1998, UAA opened three residence halls with plans for two more by 2005. APU also is planning

a residential facility. UAA has embarked on a campaign to retain a higher portion of state college-bound high school graduates. The University-Medical District will be a major attraction for such group quarters serving off-campus student housing and assisted-living facilities.

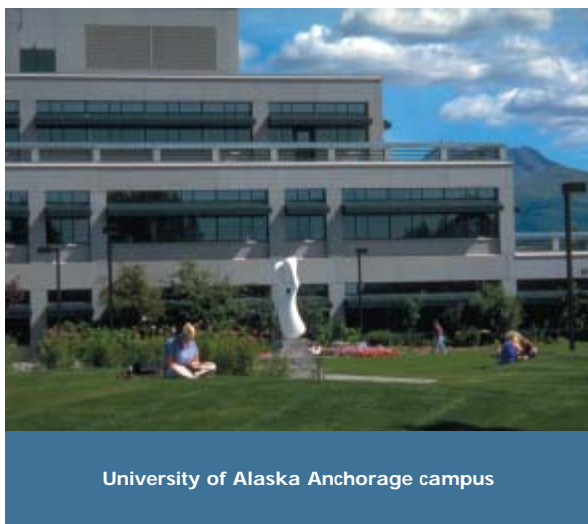
### Parks, Trails, and Recreation Development

Anchorage’s trails, parks, and recreational facilities are major community assets. The extensive trail system attracts both residents and visitors and is currently ranked second in the nation. One of the most popular routes is the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, a 10-mile asphalt trail that runs from Downtown to Kincaid Park. Plans are presently being explored to extend the existing trail south to Potter Marsh. The addition of trail segments to connect major trails is also planned to ensure that nearly all Anchorage Bowl residents are within ten minutes of the trail system.

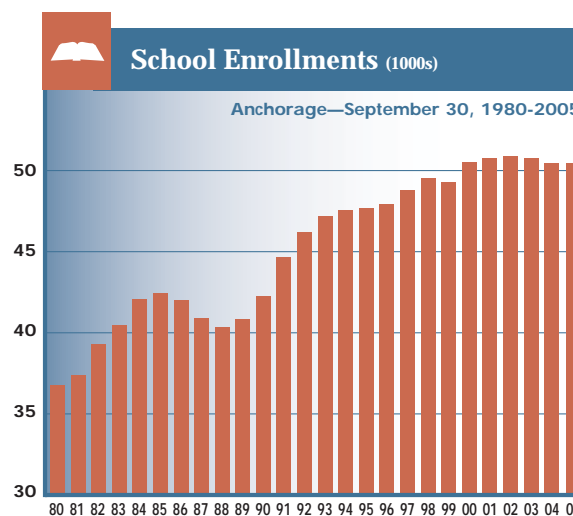
One of Anchorage’s premier winter attractions is more than 200 kilometers of groomed cross-country ski trails, including 40 kilometers lit for night skiing. Anchorage also has recreation centers, swimming pools, ball fields, skating rinks, parks, and playgrounds that were built or renovated during the 1990s. For example, a new community center opened in Mountain View in 1999, and major improvements were made to Kincaid Park and Hilltop Ski Area for the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games.

### Other Economic Factors

Despite oil industry job reductions and predictions of less than 2 percent employment growth, Anchorage’s economy appears strong. A University of Alaska economist recently noted that although tourism and the air cargo expansion have helped to diversify



University of Alaska Anchorage campus





the local economy, their actual dollar impacts are small when compared to recent increases in Permanent Fund Dividends and federal funds. The Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend was \$953 per person in 1990 and \$474 million was distributed statewide. In 2000, the dividend was \$1,964 per person and statewide payments totaled \$1.1 billion—more than double the 1990 distribution. The other economic engine was a large increase in federal funding to state government. Federal receipts to state government increased from an average of about \$1 billion annually from fiscal years 1996-98 to more than \$1.7 billion in fiscal year 2000. More than \$700 million of this total was earmarked for transportation projects.

### Land Use

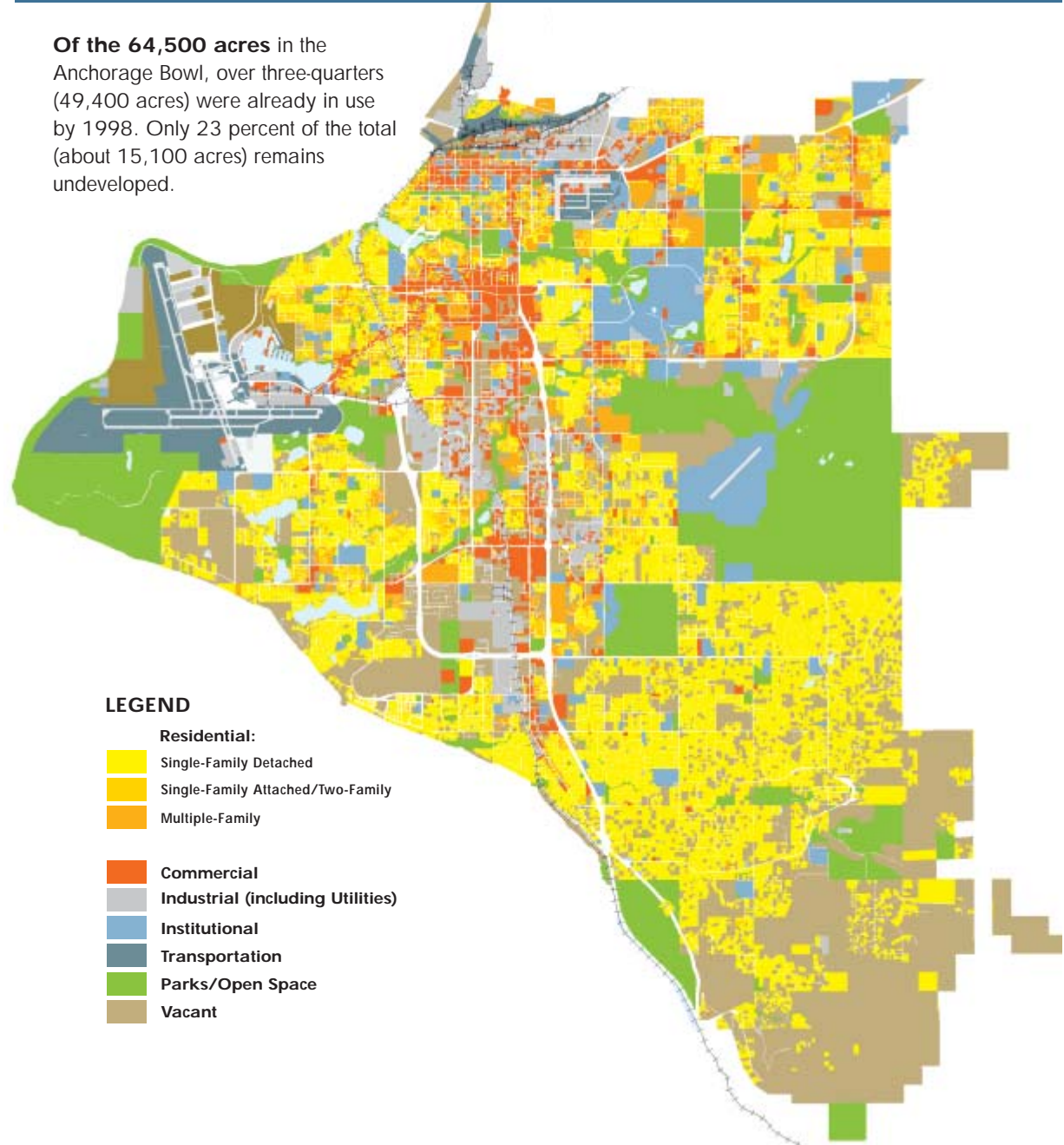
#### Existing Land Use Issue

- Most of the suitable land in the Anchorage Bowl is already developed. Much of the remaining vacant land is in areas where development is more difficult.

Residential uses occupied 17,600 acres in 1998, or 36 percent of all developed land in the Anchorage

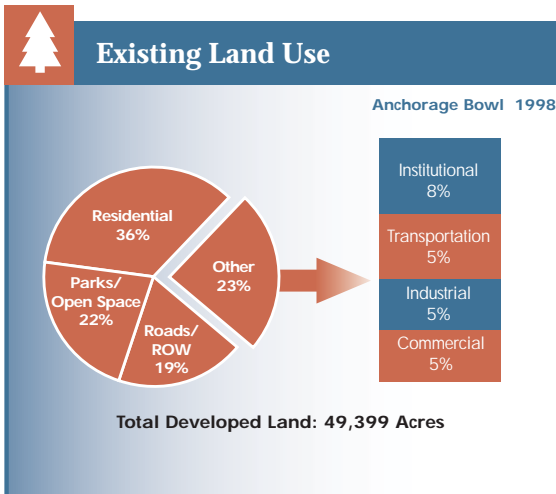
### Existing Land Use - 1998

Of the 64,500 acres in the Anchorage Bowl, over three-quarters (49,400 acres) were already in use by 1998. Only 23 percent of the total (about 15,100 acres) remains undeveloped.



#### LEGEND

- Residential:**
  - Single-Family Detached
  - Single-Family Attached/Two-Family
  - Multiple-Family
- Commercial**
- Industrial (including Utilities)**
- Institutional**
- Transportation**
- Parks/Open Space**
- Vacant**





The land use analysis uses data and findings from three land use studies done in support of the Comprehensive Plan:

- The 1994 Anchorage Bowl land use inventory conducted by the Planning Department. The inventory identified current uses of land parcels within the Anchorage Bowl.
- The *Anchorage Bowl Commercial and Industrial Land Use Study* (HDR Alaska, Inc., July 1996), which was based on the detailed inventory of commercial and industrial land uses. The study analyzed trends, and estimated land requirements for future commercial and industrial development.
- The 1998 municipal-wide inventory of residential land use, housing, and vacant land done by the Planning Department. This inventory was an update of the 1994 Land Use Inventory for all residential and vacant land parcels within the Municipality.

Bowl. Parks and open space accounted for 22 percent of all developed land, and public rights-of-way took up another 19 percent. The remaining land was shared by commercial (5 percent), industrial (5 percent), and institutional (8 percent) uses, and by airport, railroad, and port uses (5 percent).

Overall, 77 percent of the existing land supply is already committed to use, but development is unevenly spread. The oldest settled areas, the Northwest (90 percent developed) and Northeast (89 percent) subareas, are the most built up. The Southwest (79 percent) and Central (81 percent) subareas are less developed, while the Southeast (59 percent) subarea is least developed. It holds well over half of Anchorage’s remaining vacant land.

### Vacant Land – Suitability for Development Issue

- The remaining supply of vacant land in the Anchorage Bowl that is suitable for development is limited.

The 15,100 acres of vacant land in the Anchorage Bowl were assessed to determine if site conditions such

as steep slopes, wetlands, poor soils, or seismic or other hazards limited their development potential. About 6,675 acres were found fully suitable. Another 5,050 acres were limited by environmental constraints and classified as marginally suitable for development. The remaining 3,375 acres were limited by more severe environmental constraints and classified as being generally unsuitable for development. Thus, about 11,700 acres—about one-sixth of the Anchorage Bowl’s total land area—are presently vacant and suitable or marginally suitable for future community expansion (see Vacant Land Status map, page 24).

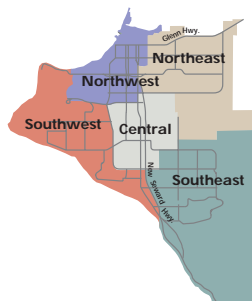
Approximately one-half (5,847 acres) of the developable vacant land is in the Southeast subarea, with lesser amounts in the Southwest (20 percent), Northeast (12 percent), and Central (12 percent) subareas. The Northwest subarea has the smallest share (6 percent) of vacant developable land.

In addition to vacant land, some parcels in use are developed well below their allowable intensity and are considered underdeveloped. For example, some residential parcels have the potential to be subdivided in the future to yield additional vacant lots. Based on

**Table 2. Existing Land Use, Anchorage Bowl, 1998**

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Residential	17,595	36%
Commercial	2,731	5%
Industrial	2,581	5%
Transportation <sup>1</sup>	2,442	5%
Institutional	3,773	8%
Parks/Open Space	10,823	22%
Rights-of-Way & Misc.	9,454	19%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,399</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, Alaska Railroad, and the Port of Anchorage.



**Table 3. Existing Land Use (acres), by Subarea**

Anchorage Bowl, 1998						
Land use	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast	Total
Residential	1,990	3,837	2,156	2,834	6,778	17,595
Commercial	1,068	555	686	354	68	2,731
Industrial <sup>1</sup>	1,161	326	948	2,529	58	5,022
Public Lands/Institutions	2,652	8,740	2,484	5,455	4,720	24,051
<b>TOTAL LAND IN USE</b>	<b>6,871</b>	<b>13,458</b>	<b>6,274</b>	<b>11,172</b>	<b>11,624</b>	<b>49,399</b>
Vacant land	772	1,723	1,510	2,878	8,219	15,102
<b>TOTAL LAND</b>	<b>7,643</b>	<b>15,181</b>	<b>7,784</b>	<b>14,050</b>	<b>19,843</b>	<b>64,501</b>
Percent developed	90%	89%	81%	79%	59%	77%

<sup>1</sup> Includes Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, Alaska Railroad, and Port of Anchorage.

Vacant Land Status - Anchorage Bowl 1998

TOTAL 64,500 acres

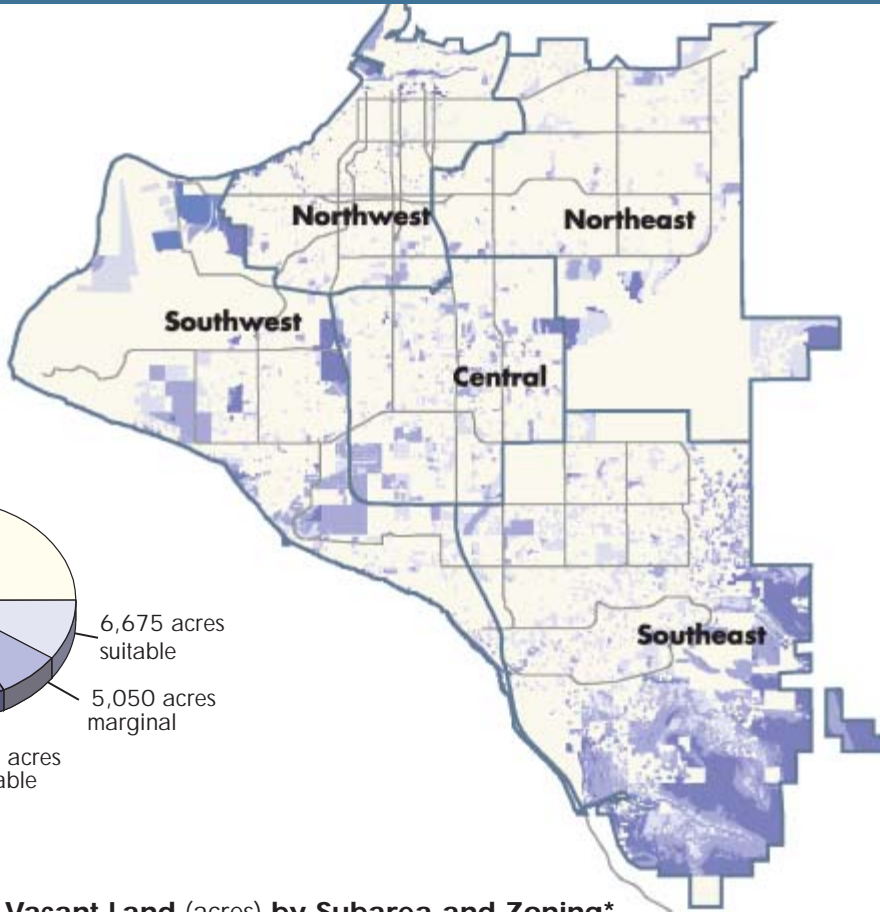
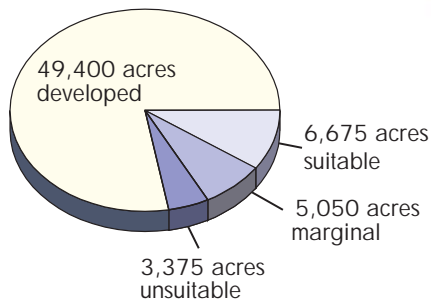


Table 4. Developable Vacant Land (acres) by Subarea and Zoning\*

Anchorage Bowl, 1998

Zoning	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast	Total	Percent
Residential	231	804	649	1,406	5,447	8,537	73%
Commercial	145	98	113	61	4	421	4%
Industrial	204	53	589	88	0	934	8%
PLI	4	381	33	155	273	846	7%
Other	82	130	40	618	123	993	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>1,466</b>	<b>1,424</b>	<b>2,328</b>	<b>5,847</b>	<b>11,731</b>	<b>100%</b>
Percent	6%	12%	12%	20%	50%	100%	

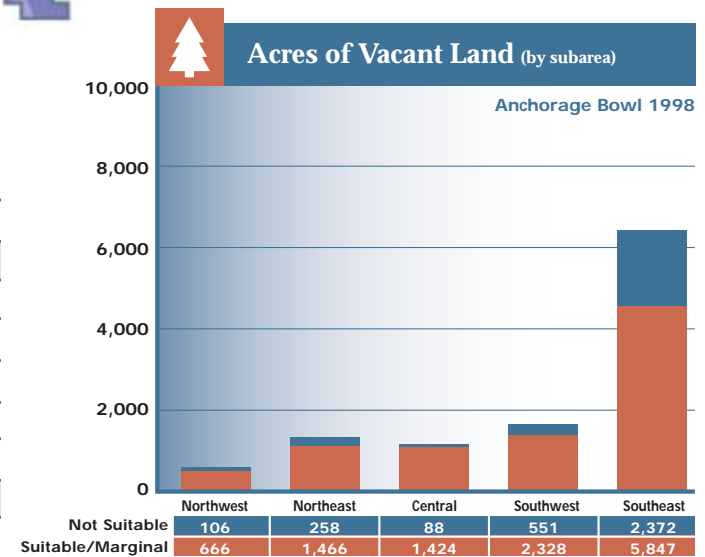
\*Includes suitable and marginally suitable vacant land

the land use inventory, about 600 acres in residential use have potential for further subdivision. As with vacant land, nearly two-thirds of underdeveloped residential acreage is in the Southeast subarea.

Vacant Land - Zoning Status Issues:

- The current supply of land for new urban single-family homes in the Anchorage Bowl is limited. Unless this can be remedied, the outflow of new single-family home construction to Chugiak-Eagle River and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough will continue to increase.
- The supply of land for multi-family housing will need to be retained for future housing demand.

The future use of vacant land will be set by its zoning status. At present, 73 percent of developable vacant land in the Anchorage Bowl is zoned for residential use, 4 percent for commercial use, 8 percent for industrial, 7 percent for public lands and institutions (PLI), and 8 percent for other uses (Table 4). Sixty-four percent (5,447 acres) of vacant residential land is in the



Southeast subarea (Table 4). Most vacant commercial land is in the Northwest, Central, and Northeast sub-areas, with a minimal amount in the Southeast sub-area. Vacant industrial land is concentrated in the Central subarea, with a secondary concentration in the Ship Creek sector of the Northwest subarea. In addition, the Southwest subarea includes over 400 acres of developable vacant acreage (zoned “T”) within the boundaries of the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. Most—over 75 percent—of vacant PLI lands are in the Northeast and Southeast subareas. They consist mainly of undeveloped university property, and Heritage Land Bank lands in and near Far North Bicentennial Park and Section 36 in Southeast Anchorage. Another 18 percent of this vacant acreage is in the Southwest subarea, with over 100 acres located within the boundaries of Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport.

Among residential land uses, single-family and multi-family housing accounted for 78 and 13 percent respectively of developed residential land in the Anchorage Bowl in 1998 (Table 5). Urban (under 40,000-square-foot lot) single-family homes, including attached single-family units, were by far the most popular type of single-family housing, with 37,541 dwellings on 7,824 acres, or 5.1 homes per acre. There were 3,196 rural (over 40,000-square-foot lot) single-family homes on 5,514 acres, or 0.6 homes per acre. The 37,419 multi-family housing units used residential land much more intensively, averaging 16.6 dwellings per acre.

Table 6 compares the housing capacity of vacant residential land with existing residential development. At current zoning and density patterns, it is calculated that the Anchorage Bowl’s remaining vacant and underdeveloped residential land could support about 20,700 additional dwelling units. This does not mean

that the capacity of the Anchorage Bowl’s remaining undeveloped residential land is limited to 20,700 more dwellings. It does mean that higher average residential densities than what now prevails will be needed to absorb growth in excess of 20,700 added dwellings, or that non-residential land will be converted to residential use.

The percentage of vacant residential land zoned for multi-family and attached single-family dwellings is similar to the existing distribution of these types of development. This suggests that the zoning of vacant land for these housing types is roughly in line with current housing market choices.

However, the zoning allocation for future urban and rural single-family development is very different than for existing development. Urban single-family homes (under 40,000-square-foot lot) now occupy 44 percent of residential land, but only 28 percent of the

**Table 5. Developed and Vacant Residential Land**

By Type of Residential Unit, Anchorage Bowl, 1998

Zoning Status	Developed <sup>1</sup>		Vacant	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Single-Family	13,760	78%	7,198	84%
Detached Urban <sup>2</sup>	7,824	44%	2,360	28%
Detached Rural <sup>2</sup>	5,514	31%	4,595	54%
Attached	422	2%	243	3%
Multi-Family <sup>3</sup>	2,257	13%	1,339	16%
Mobile Home/Other	1,578	9%	n/a	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,595</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,537</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes only parcels where the primary use was residential.

<sup>2</sup> Urban refers to homes on lots smaller than 40,000 square feet; rural to homes on lots larger than 40,000 square feet.

<sup>3</sup> The amount of vacant land zoned multi-family includes a large area in the Potter Valley which is zoned R-3 with special limitations. Existing development in this area is in the form of single-family housing.

**Table 6. Existing Housing Stock and Capacity of Vacant Land**

By Housing Type, Anchorage Bowl, 1998

Housing Type	Existing Housing		Vacant Land Capacity	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single-Family Urban	37,541	43%	6,900	33%
Single-Family Rural	3,196	4%	1,900	9%
Multi-Family	37,419	43%	9,850	48%
Other	8,998	10%	2,050	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>87,154</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>20,700</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Land Use Intensity

The supply of land may be finite, but its capacity to support development is adaptable to demand. For example, Manhattan Island supports about 1.5 million residents and 2.6 million jobs on 22 square miles—less than one-fourth the area of the Anchorage Bowl.

vacant residential land is zoned for this type of development. By contrast, 54 percent of vacant residential land is zoned for rural single-family dwellings (over 40,000-square-foot lot), a type of housing that now accounts for only about 4 percent of the total housing stock.<sup>1</sup>

These comparisons indicate that the zoning of vacant residential land for urban and rural single-family homes does not match present housing market preferences. The shortage of land zoned for urban single-family homes will worsen if the strong demand for that type of housing continues. This supply imbalance helps explain two trends in the local housing market:

- Every year since 1994, more single-family homes have been built in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough than in the Anchorage Bowl. The pace of single-family construction is also picking up in Chugiak-Eagle River.

- The market for new multi-family housing has revived. In 1998, 36 percent of new housing units in the Anchorage Bowl were multi-family.

Both of these trends are likely to persist as the limited local supply of urban single-family lots dwindles.

### Vacant Commercial and Industrial Land Issue

- A significant amount of Anchorage's industrial and commercial land is currently underused and can help meet future industrial and commercial, as well as residential, land demand.

The 1996 *Anchorage Bowl Commercial and Industrial Land Use Study* compiled a comprehensive inventory of commercial and industrial land uses, analyzed the trends, and estimated land requirements for future commercial and industrial development. In 1970, Downtown was the retail and office center. For the

next two decades, the Midtown area captured the largest share of new retail and office development. Since 1990, the Dimond Center area has taken the lead in new retail development. For several decades, the Central and Southwest subareas have absorbed most new industrial-type development.

The study's key conclusion was that the Anchorage Bowl had an adequate supply of commercially zoned land and a comfortable surplus of industrially zoned land.

A substantial amount of commercial and industrial land in use within the Anchorage Bowl is underdeveloped. The 1996 study concluded that only 24 percent of land in industrial use was fully developed.

### Excerpts from the ANCHORAGE BOWL COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL LAND USE STUDY

“There is no apparent Bowl-wide commercial or industrial land shortage existing today or anticipated over the immediate planning time horizon and there is not a localized shortage of commercial ground.”

“With few exceptions, there appears to be enough excess zoned land inventory to sustain a land supply that avoids precluding newcomers from entering the marketplace, thereby enhancing choices and keeping costs down for end consumers.”

“Unlike many other cities, Anchorage is blessed with a rare overall balance between subareas in terms of land supply, infrastructure and market growth characteristics.”

“A simple drive around town suggests there is more than sufficient vacant land, underdeveloped land, or basically obsolete properties to provide the needed inventory to feed the potential demand over the anticipated planning time horizon.”

Forty-four percent had high potential for redevelopment or more intensive development; and another 32 percent had low or moderate potential for added development. This pool of under-utilized industrial property holds potential for more intensive industrial use or for redevelopment to other uses, depending on its location and site characteristics. The Central subarea and Ship Creek area contain a significant share of Anchorage's vacant or under-used industrial property.

The same study also found that 37 percent of land in commercial use was fully developed, while 11 percent had high potential for more intensive use or redevelopment for commercial or other uses.

## Forecasts for Planning

### Future Employment and Population Issue

- Anchorage should plan to provide for 31,600 more households, and for 39,600 more employees by 2020.

To plan for a community's future, assumptions about the level of future growth must be made. This plan follows the most recent economic, population, and household forecasts published by the University of Alaska Anchorage's Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER).<sup>2</sup>

ISER evaluates economic and demographic trends, and produces a range of forecasts based on varying economic assumptions. ISER typically makes three forecasts: a base case forecast that reflects the most probable growth assumptions, and high and

<sup>1</sup> Much vacant land is zoned for rural residential use because of site-specific environmental conditions that limit development density. However, some land has been zoned to maintain existing density patterns or because of infrastructure deficiencies rather than because of inherent site constraints.

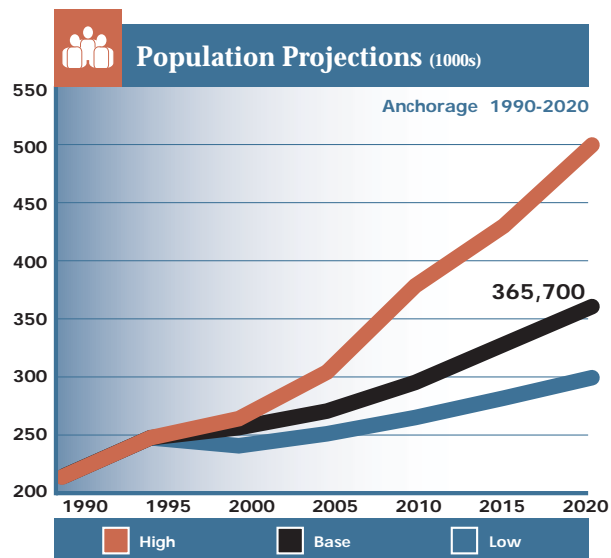
<sup>2</sup> ISER July 1999. ISER's forecasts were used because they are (1) most widely used for planning purposes by other state and local agencies, including AMATS; (2) consistently and regularly updated; and (3) useful to assess the planning implications of changing economic and population trends.



low forecasts that reflect more or less optimistic assumptions.

The base case population forecast for the Municipality as a whole by the year 2020 is 365,700 persons, with high and low case forecasts of 449,300 and 307,200 persons respectively (Table 7). ISER assumes that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough will capture a rising share of regional population growth and support sector employment under all scenarios.

ISER’s base case or “most probable” forecast was used as the basis for population and employment fore-



**Table 7. Population & Employment Forecasts, Year 2020**  
Municipality of Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna Borough

	Municipality of Anchorage		Matanuska-Susitna Borough	
	Population	Employment	Population	Employment
Current*	258,800	126,800	54,500	10,700
Base Case	365,700	172,900	89,800	18,300
High Case	449,300	216,700	113,300	24,000
Low Case	307,200	147,300	79,800	16,300

\* Current population and employment as of 1998 (Alaska Department of Labor).

casts for the Anchorage Bowl. The base case assumes an average annual population growth rate of 1.6 percent, similar to the local growth rate since 1990, and still higher than the forecasted national growth rate. A minor shift in projected rates of local population growth would not significantly affect the planning outlook, but a major shift could justify a review of plan assumptions and recommendations.

As in Anchorage’s past, surprise events—big resource projects, military crises, a severe recession, or a natural disaster—could affect rates of growth. Even so, Anchorage’s economy has grown larger and more diverse, and is now less prone to boom-bust cycles. Also, its residents are more rooted in the community. These factors will help buffer future population and economic fluctuations.

Of the Municipality’s 1998 population of 258,800 persons, 216,500 (84 percent) lived in the Anchorage Bowl. Based on recent trends and anticipated settlement and work patterns, it is estimated that about three-quarters of residents projected to be added by 2020—about 81,800 new persons—will live in the



Construction accounts for 5.4 percent of Anchorage employment.

**Table 8. Employment, Population, & Household Forecast**

Year	Population		Households		Employment	
	Total	Increase	Total	Increase	Total	Increase
1998	216,500	—	80,300	—	119,000	—
2005	238,300	21,800	88,100	7,800	129,900	10,900
2010	255,100	38,600	94,700	14,400	137,800	18,800
2015	275,800	59,300	102,700	22,400	147,700	28,700
2020	298,300	81,800	111,900	31,600	158,600	39,600
Percent Change 1998-2020	<b>+38%</b>		<b>+39%</b>		<b>+33%</b>	

Note: The Planning Department allocated a share of ISER’s Base Case forecast for the Municipality of Anchorage to the Anchorage Bowl.

Anchorage Bowl, with the rest settling in Chugiak-Eagle River or Turnagain Arm communities. Similarly, most new jobs are expected to be located in the Anchorage Bowl (Table 8).<sup>3</sup>

The forecasts for growth by 2020 indicate that the Anchorage Bowl will need to accommodate 31,600 more households and workplaces for 39,600 more employees. It should also plan for other private and public improvements to serve the forecasted population of 81,800 residents, plus additional commuters and visitors.

<sup>3</sup> The ISER forecasts are for the entire Municipality of Anchorage. The Planning Department allocated ISER's forecast to the Anchorage Bowl, Chugiak-Eagle River, and elsewhere outside the Anchorage Bowl.

## Infrastructure

This section reviews the status of major public services and facilities in the Anchorage Bowl, and identifies significant issues for future service delivery. Some issues are addressed by recommendations in this plan, while others are more appropriately addressed by departmental or other planning efforts.

### BASIC SUPPORT SYSTEMS:

#### • Water

The Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) delivers water to about 80 percent of the population in the Bowl. AWWU does not serve portions of Hillside, areas west of Sand/Sundi/Jewel Lakes, and Klatt neighborhoods that rely on private wells. Even though access to the Municipality's water system is available, a number of other individual and community water systems are in use throughout the Anchorage Bowl. Anchorage's groundwater aquifers continue to provide an adequate supply of water for these systems. AWWU's water supply comes from Eklutna Lake,

Ship Creek, and wells. Existing capacity should meet demand through 2020. If needed, the Eklutna Water Facility could be expanded to supply additional water.

#### Issues:

- Better data on groundwater supply and quality outside AWWU's service area;
- Monitoring and remedial action where water supply or quality is compromised.

#### • Wastewater

AWWU collects and treats wastewater from most of the Anchorage Bowl, plus the military bases. Other areas, such as portions of Hillside, areas west of Sand/Sundi/Jewel Lakes, and Klatt neighborhoods use indi-

vidual or group on-site treatment systems. The Point Woronzof plant provides primary treatment of wastewater and septic tank sludge. After treatment, effluents are discharged into Cook Inlet. The collection system and treatment plant have adequate capacity through 2020. Future expansion into Southwest Anchorage is planned.

#### Issues:

- Revision of the *Hillside Wastewater Management Plan* to meet future wastewater disposal needs;
- Need for a new or modified plant if secondary wastewater treatment is required.

The Eklutna Water Treatment Facility supplies water to the Anchorage Bowl area.



### •Solid Waste

Solid waste is disposed of at the Anchorage regional landfill near Eagle River. The landfill has adequate capacity to meet projected demands to year 2043. Within the Anchorage Bowl, the Municipality operates a transfer station and provides residential and commercial garbage pickup in areas north of Tudor Road. A private firm provides service in most areas south of Tudor Road.

#### Issues:

- Improved on-site trash management (e.g., compaction, dumpster screening);
- Possible deregulation of refuse collection;
- Inconsistent requirements for mandatory refuse collection;
- Recycling.

### •Storm Drainage System

Storm drainage systems in the Anchorage Bowl are owned and maintained by both the Municipality and the State. Storm water is collected to reduce flooding from rain and snowmelt. Treatment is important because most systems discharge into area creeks, lakes, or wetlands.

#### Issues:

- Land use policies to meet federal storm water discharge permit conditions;
- Use of undeveloped lands for storm water retention;
- Improved road maintenance practices to reduce runoff pollution;
- Land acquisition for water quality treatment facilities.

### •Snow Disposal

The Municipality clears snow from more than 640 miles of road in the Anchorage Roads and Drainage

Service Area. The State, local road service areas, and private parties also remove snow. The Municipality operates eight snow disposal sites and jointly operates two more with the State. There are also private snow storage sites. Five new municipal sites may be needed by 2020, and the State may need new sites in South Anchorage, Midtown, and near the airport.

#### Issues:

- Upgrade of public and private sites to meet environmental standards;
- Snow management and disposal site study;
- Right-of-way encroachments which affect snow storage capacity.

### •Electric Power

Municipal Light and Power and Chugach Electric Association deliver electric power in the Anchorage Bowl. Their combined capacity is adequate to meet near-term peak demands. Additional capacity may be needed by 2015 to 2020. Anchorage is tied to the Railbelt grid. Major projects planned include new transmission lines, new transmission facilities, line upgrades, and undergrounding of lines.

#### Issues:

- Revision of the *Utility Corridor Plan* and *Underground Utilities Implementation Plan*;
- Impact of new technologies on distribution and marketing of power;
- Future power generation capacity;
- Increased reliance on the intertie grid;
- Shared utilities with military installations.

### •Natural Gas

ENSTAR Natural Gas Company delivers natural gas from Cook Inlet to customers throughout the Anchorage Bowl. In 1998, Cook Inlet gas reserves were

estimated at 3 trillion cubic feet. As much as 2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas could be consumed by 2008.

#### Issues:

- Future supply of natural gas for domestic consumption and local power generation;
- Siting of a proposed liquefied natural gas storage facility to supplement Cook Inlet gas supplies.

### •Communications

Telephone and cable television infrastructure is largely in place. Long distance fiber optic capacity for voice, video, and data transmissions should be adequate for the next five to ten years. New television transmission towers may be required. The proliferation of transmission and receiving facilities for wireless communications is also likely.

#### Issues:

- Increased capacity and speed for voice, video, and data transmissions;
- Possible visual and other impacts associated with wireless telecommunications facilities.

## CIVIC BUILDINGS:

### •Anchorage Museum of History and Art

The Anchorage Museum of History and Art is located in Downtown Anchorage. A planned major addition will occupy the remaining area of the block known as Rasmuson Center. Once completed, the museum should be able to meet community and visitor needs through the year 2020.

#### Issues:

- Architectural design and site plan for the proposed addition;
- Connections to parking and nearby activity centers.



### •Municipal Library System

The Z.J. Loussac Public Library, located in Midtown, accounts for 70 percent of circulation and two-thirds of patron visits. It also houses the Assembly Chambers and the Wilda Marston Theater. Loussac Library is nearly at capacity. There are also three branch libraries (Muldoon, Samson-Diamond, and Mountain View) in the Anchorage Bowl.

#### Issues:

- Update of the *Areawide Library Plan*;
- Long-term expansion at Loussac Library.

### •Alaska Center for the Performing Arts

This facility, opened in 1988, houses three theaters, with the largest able to seat 2,000 people. An enclosed skywalk connects to the Egan Center.

#### Issues:

- Proposed redesign and completion of the large rehearsal hall.

### •William A. Egan Civic and Convention Center

The Egan Center, built in 1984, is used for conventions, conferences, trade shows, and meetings. It can serve conventions of up to 2,000 people but has limited on-site expansion potential. It also has poor loading dock access, aging technology, and insufficient space for major trade shows.

#### Issue:

- Evaluation of the feasibility for an additional downtown convention center.

### •George M. Sullivan Arena

The Sullivan Arena, built in 1983, is used for sports events, trade shows, and concerts. Its 9,000 seating capacity meets present demands, but the facility has major maintenance needs.

#### Issue:

- Continued operation and maintenance needs.



City Hall, Downtown Anchorage

### •Municipal Office Buildings

Municipal offices are located in two main areas – Downtown and Bragaw Street/Tudor Road. City Hall is leased by the Municipality until 2007 and was extensively renovated in 1993. The Department of Health and Human Services building at 825 L Street is functionally obsolete and is proposed for replacement in five to ten years. The 43-acre Bragaw Street/Tudor Road complex houses a variety of municipal offices, mainly related to building permits, and operations and maintenance functions.

#### Issues:

- Established policy of locating principal municipal office functions Downtown;
- New master plan for the Bragaw Street/Tudor Road site.

### •Public Parking Facilities

The Anchorage Parking Authority operates 3 downtown parking garages with a combined capacity of 2,100 vehicles. It also manages 6 surface pay lots (1,100 spaces) and 2,300 on-street spaces. Downtown

parking is generally adequate, although on-street parking in the core area and near L Street is at capacity during peak summer hours.

#### Issues:

- More efficient use of on-street parking in the downtown area;
- Long-term need for additional parking structures;
- Revision of the *Anchorage Central Business District Comprehensive Development Plan*.

### •Community Recreation Centers

Community recreation centers in Fairview, Spennard, and Mountain View support recreational, cultural, and leisure activities for all age groups. A fourth community center is proposed for Muldoon.

#### Issues:

- Identification of the roles of community centers and schools in meeting community needs;
- Lack of a recreation center in South Anchorage and potential for converting Dimond High School pool and gym to a recreation center facility.



The newly renovated Mountain View Community Center is an example of a project made possible by neighbors helping neighbors.





Goldenview Middle School in South Anchorage

### • Anchorage Senior Center

The Anchorage Senior Center, located in Fairview, serves seniors over the age of 55. A planned addition to satisfy needs for at least ten years includes classrooms and crafts rooms, an exercise room, and library expansion.

#### Issue:

- Future need for additional senior centers.

### • Indoor Ice Rinks

The Municipality owns two ice arenas in the Anchorage Bowl (Ben Boeke and Dempsey Anderson). These facilities have a combined total of four ice sheets. Sullivan Arena is also used for major hockey and skating events. There are two privately owned arenas. Use of the municipal ice arenas is generally at capacity from September to April.

#### Issue:

- Need for additional private and/or public ice arenas.

### • Indoor Swimming Pools

There are five indoor swimming pools located at all of the Anchorage Bowl's major high schools.

#### Issue:

- Continuing operation and maintenance.

### • Anchorage Public Schools

The Anchorage School District manages 46 elementary schools, 7 middle schools, and 5 senior high schools in the Anchorage Bowl. The District estimates that it will have 67,500 students (K-12) by 2025.

#### Issues:

- Need for a long-range school siting plan;
- Coordination of municipal capital improvements programs and school infrastructure needs;
- Municipal policy on the construction of off-site improvements associated with schools;
- Safe winter-walking conditions to school bus stops.

## PUBLIC SERVICES:

### • Police Protection

Police facilities in the Anchorage Bowl include the headquarters building, eleven substations, and a regional training center. Expanded police headquarters, a Hillside substation, and technology upgrades are proposed within ten years. By 2020, another substation may be needed in South Anchorage.

#### Issue:

- Additional facilities for future needs.

### • Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

Fire protection and emergency medical services in the Anchorage Bowl are delivered from ten fire stations. The fire insurance rating for some areas of the Hillside is lower than the rest of the Anchorage Bowl, mainly due to limited water supplies. Within ten years, two more fire stations are planned. A fire station location and risk analysis study is being conducted to project the fire and emergency medical needs to year 2025.

#### Issues:

- Completion of the long-range fire station location study;
- Community-wide fire risk assessment every five years;
- Inadequate emergency water supplies in some areas;
- Compliance with fire/building/life and safety codes;
- Fire truck access in steep areas;
- Minimize wildfire hazard.

### • Road Maintenance

Over two-thirds of the Bowl is within the Anchorage Roads and Drainage Service Area. Here, the State maintains freeways, expressways, most arterials, and some collectors, while the Municipality maintains all remaining public streets. Elsewhere, the State maintains collector and arterial streets. Other roads are in Limited Road Service Areas or are privately maintained.

#### Issue:

- A lack of historical uniformity in design standards, road construction, and road service levels.

### • Parks and Outdoor Recreation

The Municipality manages 191 park and open space areas in the Anchorage Bowl. Three large regional parks (Kincaid Park, Far North Bicentennial

One of the scenic overlooks along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail



Park, Ruth Arcand Park) account for approximately 60% of the total park acreage. The Municipality also maintains an extensive trails system, with more than 120 miles of paved trails.

**Issues:**

- Update of the *Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan*;
- A shortage of neighborhood parks, especially in high-density neighborhoods and in South Anchorage;
- Mechanisms for neighborhood park acquisition;
- Lack of public sports field facilities;
- Lack of a proactive plan for acquiring additional sports fields.

## TRANSPORTATION:

Anchorage's transportation system is made up of several major elements that meet the diverse transportation needs of Anchorage residents and businesses, as well as the needs of the Port of Anchorage, Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, and the Alaska Railroad.

Transportation systems are typically evaluated in terms of mobility and choice. Mobility is the ability of people and goods to move quickly, easily, and affordably to their destinations. Choice is the opportunity to choose among various modes of transportation.

### Personal Transportation

Automobiles, carpooling, bus transit, walking, or bicycling meet the personal transportation needs of Anchorage residents. Like most American cities, the automobile dominates personal travel in Anchorage. In 1990, 72 percent of Anchorage residents traveled to work by a single-occupancy vehicle versus 15 percent

by carpool, 5 percent by bicycle or walking, and 2 percent by public transit.

### •Automobile Travel

The primary cause of traffic bottlenecks and delays in Anchorage is inadequate intersection capacity. In turn, congested intersections slow traffic movement along roadway segments. Based on the November 1999 draft *Status of the System Report*, eight intersections in the Anchorage Bowl perform at a poor level of service during the morning peak, midday off-peak, and afternoon peak periods. Another three intersections are congested only during the morning peak and ten are congested only during the afternoon peak period.

The afternoon peak period is usually the most congested period on a typical weekday in Anchorage. Nineteen of 30 intersections evaluated in November 1999 operated at poor levels of service during that time, versus 12 during the morning peak and 8 during the midday off-peak periods.

Congestion can also be measured by speed of travel. As with the intersection level of service analysis, the afternoon peak period is the most congested. Generally, travel times are longer and average travel speeds are slower at this time of day. During the afternoon peak hour, the most congested corridors in the Anchorage Bowl are C Street northbound and southbound, DeBarr Road/15th Avenue eastbound and westbound, Lake Otis Parkway northbound, Muldoon Road northbound and southbound, Tudor Road eastbound and westbound, New Seward Highway northbound and southbound, and Northern Lights Boulevard eastbound.

Carpooling is one of the main strategies available for Anchorage to reduce traffic congestion. According

to data obtained from a Vehicle Occupancy Survey, the average number of passengers per vehicle for Anchorage rose from 1.12 persons in 1985 to 1.19 persons in 1998. This is lower than most other cities of Anchorage's size.

**Issues:**

- Traffic congestion;
- Coordination of Transportation Improvement Program with Land Use Plan.

### •Bus Travel

The Municipal Public Transportation Department operates a system of fixed bus routes and provides specialized transportation services for senior citizens and people with disabilities. The "People Mover" bus system currently operates thirteen bus routes in the Anchorage Bowl. In 1999, the system served 3.1 million riders, down from 4 million riders in 1982. Budget cuts have reduced transit service substantially since 1982, eliminating service to some parts of town altogether. Remaining transit routes have relatively high ridership. By adding transit service, the system can expect to attract additional ridership. In addition, increased residential and commercial densities are also likely to improve transit ridership.

There is a direct relationship between residential and employment densities and public transit usage. The most successful People Mover routes in terms of passengers per revenue hour are those which pass through relatively high-density residential neighborhoods such as Spenard and Mountain View.

**Issues:**

- Promotion of transit use;
- Frequency of service;
- Winter sidewalk maintenance for transit access;
- More bus stop improvements.

### •Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel

There are about 129 miles of multi-use paved trails within the Anchorage Bowl for use by bicyclists and pedestrians, plus some on-street bicycle routes. The most pedestrian-friendly areas are older neighborhoods, such as Downtown, Mountain View, and Fairview. Factors which inhibit pedestrian travel elsewhere include a lack of sidewalks, poor street connectivity due to cul-de-sac subdivision patterns, difficulty in crossing arterial streets with double left- and right-turning lanes, and a lack of sidewalk snow removal.

#### Issues:

- Gaps in the Anchorage Bowl bicycle trail system;
- Poor street connectivity;
- Winter sidewalk maintenance for pedestrian access;
- Inadequate residential street design standards;
- Use of sky bridges.

### MUNICIPAL FACILITIES:

#### •Port of Anchorage

The Port of Anchorage takes in 122 acres of uplands and 1,400 acres of tidelands. About 90 percent of consumer goods and foodstuffs for Anchorage and the Railbelt move through the port, which also handles petroleum products. Existing facilities are generally adequate to meet current demands.

#### Issues:

- Expansion of a petroleum terminal to a multi-purpose dock;
- Additional cargo transit areas to the north;
- Construction of a south access route;
- Emergency access route;
- North access corridor for truck and rail traffic.

### •Merrill Field

Merrill Field occupies a 436-acre site in North Anchorage. Currently proposed improvements include a new gravel/ski runway, additional tie-downs and hangars, plus circulation upgrades. Long-term proposals include new taxiways and a new public terminal.

#### Issue:

- Non-airport road traffic within the Merrill Field airport property.

### STATE AND FEDERAL FACILITIES:

Major state and federal office buildings located Downtown include the State of Alaska's Robert B. Atwood office building, the state courthouse, the old and new federal buildings, and the FBI building. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities building is located at the airport. Most other state

and federal offices occupy leased space throughout the Anchorage Bowl. Major state and federal complexes include Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, Alaska Railroad facilities, University of Alaska Anchorage campus, Cook Inlet Pre-Trial Facility, Kulis Air National Guard Base, and Bureau of Land Management facilities. Two major military bases, Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson, abut the Anchorage Bowl to the north and east.

### •Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport

Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (TSAIA) occupies a 4,680-acre site in West Anchorage. It is the gateway to Alaska and an important refueling stop and transshipment hub for international air cargo flights. Major renovation of the domestic terminal is underway, including a railroad passenger link to the mainline, parking, and access. Possible long-term proj-



The new Alaska Native Medical Center provides a full range of health services and houses a wonderful collection of Alaskan Native art.



ects include a new north-south runway and associated taxiways.

**Issues:**

- Possible need for additional land for airport expansion;
- Impacts of increased airport development and operations on adjacent neighborhoods and on natural open space and recreational areas;
- Recreation/open space lands that may be proposed for TSAIA development;
- Need to ensure compatible development in noise-impacted areas;
- Accessibility to the airport and its leased properties;
- Potential loss of natural open space that serves as a buffer between the airport and adjoining residential neighborhoods.

• **Lake Hood General Aviation Airstrip and Seaplane Base**

Future projects for the Lake Hood Airstrip and Seaplane Base include taxiway upgrades, a terminal, and more floatplane slips and airplane tie-downs.

**Issues:**

- Approach and departure paths from Lake Hood, and noise impacts on surrounding residential areas;
- Conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians, and aircraft on roads and taxiways.

• **Alaska Railroad**

Major railroad facilities, including offices, maintenance yards, and a passenger depot, are located in the Ship Creek area. The Railroad owns most of lower Ship Creek Valley, which was Anchorage's original industrial and warehousing district. The Railroad still leases

some land for fuel storage and other industrial uses, and is pursuing plans to redevelop its under-used real estate for residential, commercial, and office purposes.

**Issues:**

- Redevelopment of the lower Ship Creek Valley;
- Grade-separated crossings;
- Improved screening of industrial uses;
- Potential commuter rail service.

• **Military**

The military is an important component of the economy and identity of Anchorage. They are a major landowner and a primary consumer of goods and services provided in Anchorage.

**Issues:**

- Land exchanges that may be beneficial to the Anchorage population while meeting the needs of the military;
- Cooperation in meeting utility infrastructure needs of both the military and Municipality of Anchorage.