

ANCHORAGE 2020



Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan



ANCHORAGE 2020

ANCHORAGE BOWL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Adopted February 20, 2001
Assembly Ordinance 2000-119 S

Prepared by the
Planning Department
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MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
GEORGE P. WUERCH, MAYOR



Dear Citizens of Anchorage:

I am pleased to present *Anchorage 2020*, the Comprehensive Plan for the Anchorage Bowl. The plan was produced over a five-year period through the collective efforts of many individuals and groups throughout the community.

Anchorage 2020 has three main purposes. First, it served as an inclusive process that allowed interested citizens to work with municipal staff and elected officials in making policy concerning the use of land in the Anchorage Bowl. Second, the plan communicates that policy and intended programs of action to property owners, developers, elected and appointed officials, and other interested parties. And finally, it serves as a guide for elected and appointed officials as they deliberate community development issues.

In the course of developing the plan, we had to address the realities of how to accommodate projected population and employment growth within the geographic limitations of the Anchorage Bowl. These physical limitations are giving added incentive for us to grow more efficiently, and to maximize the potential of our existing infrastructure and resources. We discussed the complex and important relationships between land use, economic vitality, the natural environment, quality neighborhoods, and transportation.

Through this process of developing a comprehensive plan for the next 20 years, we gained a better understanding of the many factors that contribute to the quality of life we enjoy in Anchorage. This plan will help us to make Anchorage one of the most attractive cities in



Town Square was the focal point for Anchorage's millennium celebration.



Anchorage hosted the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games.



Concerts in Downtown attract residents and visitors alike.



The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race starts in Anchorage.

the world with safe, clean neighborhoods, a first-class education system, and a wide variety of economic, cultural and recreational opportunities. In an era when many people and businesses can choose where they want to live or locate, cities are facing tough competition for providing both economic and quality of life advantages.

As Anchorage approaches its first 100 years as a city, we can proudly look back on its evolution from a small frontier town to a city with over one quarter of a million residents. Recalling many changes that have occurred through the generations reminds us that change is an inevitable and necessary ingredient to healthy growth. The new direction outlined in **Anchorage 2020** ensures our continued success as we begin this new century.

Adopting a comprehensive plan, however, is just the start. Implementation and follow-through are the most important and difficult parts of our commitment to the future. As your Mayor, I pledge my support to implementation of this plan. Moreover, it will take the vision and commitment of all our citizens, working together, to continue to maintain and enhance our quality of life.

Sincerely,

George Wuerch
Mayor

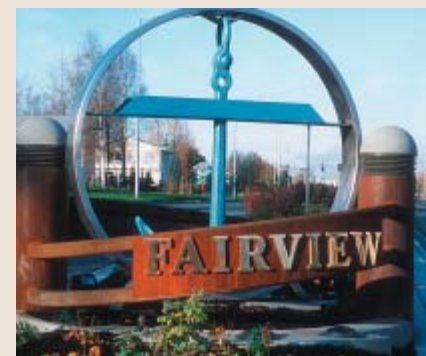
“ This plan will help us to make Anchorage one of the most attractive cities in the world with safe, clean neighborhoods, a first-class education system, and a wide variety of economic, cultural and recreational opportunities. ”



Anchorage firefighters participated in a community remembrance of September 11.



Anchorage has running events nearly every summer weekend.



A major upgrade of 15th Avenue is a centerpiece for neighborhood revitalization.



Downtown Anchorage has scenic views in all directions.

Municipal Assembly

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Anchorage

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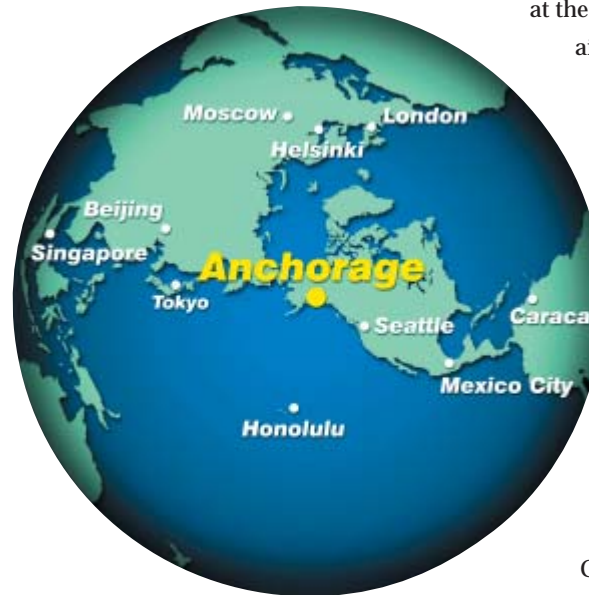


Introduction to Anchorage

Location

Anchorage is located in Southcentral Alaska at the head of Cook Inlet. It lies about 1,400 air miles northwest of Seattle and 3,500 air miles northeast of Tokyo. Situated on the Pacific Rim, its location is closer to Asia than that of any other major North American city.

The Municipality of Anchorage makes up a sizeable 1,955 square mile area between northern Prince William Sound and upper Cook Inlet. The area consists of mostly rugged mountainous terrain, with 84 percent taken up by national forest or state parklands and tidelands. Six percent is occupied by military reservations. Only about 10 percent of the entire Municipality is inhabited.



Facts About Anchorage

Global Position

- Longitude: 149° 53'W, similar to Honolulu, Hawaii
- Latitude: 61° 13'N, similar to Helsinki, Finland
- 1,000 miles farther north than Seattle, Washington
- Closest North American city to Japan & China

State Location

- Alaska: NW extremity of the U.S.A., west of Canada
- Anchorage: Southcentral Alaska
- Anchorage Bowl: foot of the Chugach Mountains, at the head of Cook Inlet between Knik Arm & Turnagain Arm

Most residents live in the Anchorage Bowl, the most urbanized area of the Municipality. It occupies approximately 100 square miles, bounded by Chugach State Park, Turnagain and Knik Arms, and by the Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson Army Post. Anchorage residents outside the Bowl either live on military reservations, further north in the suburban/rural community of Chugiak-Eagle River, or in small settlement areas along Turnagain Arm.

Lying as far north as Helsinki, Finland, and almost as far west as Honolulu, Hawaii, at first glance Anchorage seems off the beaten path. However, this strategic location, together with air, road, port, and rail transportation facilities, is the city's prime economic asset. Anchorage has capitalized on its location and versatile transportation assets to build a solid economic base. The community is firmly established as the state-wide trade, finance, service, and administrative center. It is the distribution gateway for central, western, and northern Alaska. Today, it is also the nation's busiest air cargo airport.

Settlement and Development History

The First Cultures

Dena'ina Athabascan Indians inhabited the Anchorage area when British navigator Captain James Cook explored the Inlet in 1778. They derived their sustenance from fishing, hunting, and other food gathering. Located near the northern end of the Municipality, the Native Village of Eklutna was one of eight winter settlements and is the last occupied Dena'ina village in the Anchorage area. During the summer months, the villagers moved down Knik Arm to Ship Creek and Fire Island to fish from traditional camps. In the fall, they returned to Eklutna for the winter where they hunted and trapped.



Early Settlement

The earliest white people arriving in the area were Russian fur traders and missionaries. They were later followed by gold prospectors and traders passing through on their way to other gold fields. Some stayed to prospect the area, resulting in a few mining camps and small settlements along Turnagain Arm, most notably Girdwood. However, Anchorage did not come into being until the federal government decided to build a railroad from the tidewater community of Seward to the interior gold mining community of Fairbanks.

Anchorage was founded when the government

established the field headquarters for the construction of the Alaska Railroad at Ship Creek in 1914. Shortly thereafter, a tent city was set up along the shores of the creek by people seeking work on the railroad or business opportunities associated with it. The following year, a townsite auction of 600 lots established the downtown grid pattern that is still in place today. Soon after, in 1920, Anchorage incorporated as a city.

During World War II, Anchorage's strategic location made it well positioned for the construction of defense support facilities serving the North Pacific. This advantage resulted in the building of Elmendorf

A Look Back



~3,000 B.C.

Archeological evidence of human habitation near Anchorage

1778

Captain Cook discovers and names the "River Turnagain"

1867

U.S. purchases Alaska from Russia

1915

Alaska Railroad construction headquarters established at Ship Creek; "tent city" springs up

1915

Anchorage townsite auction of 600 lots

1918

Alaska Railroad completed between Anchorage and Seward

1920

City of Anchorage incorporated

1930

Merrill Field opens

1939

Original Providence Hospital opens

1940

Fort Richardson and Elmendorf constructed

1950

Completion of Anchorage-Seward Highway

1951

Anchorage International Airport opens

1964

Good Friday Earthquake (9.2 in magnitude), largest recorded in North America





1959
Alaska statehood

1968
Oil discovery at Prudhoe Bay

1969
Oil lease sale raises \$900 million for State



1971
Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act approved by Congress

1973
First Iditarod Sled Dog Race from Anchorage to Nome

1974
Trans-Alaska oil pipeline construction begins



1975
City of Anchorage and Greater Anchorage Area Borough merge to form Municipality of Anchorage

1977
Trans-Alaska pipeline completed

1981
Project 80s begins—library, convention center, performing arts center, sports arena, and museum addition

1986
Oil price falls, beginning of economic slump in Anchorage



1989
Exxon oil spill in Prince William Sound

1989
Federal Express begins Anchorage expansion

1993
"Big Box" retail expansion begins

1994
Hotel expansion begins

1998
New Alaska Native Medical Center opens

2000
Anchorage enters the new millennium



Air Force Base and Fort Richardson Army Post. During the same period, construction of the Glenn and Alaska Highways gave Anchorage an overland link through Canada to the Lower 48. Anchorage’s strategic location continued to play a valuable role during the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam and throughout the rest of the Cold War era. It remains a vital national security asset today.

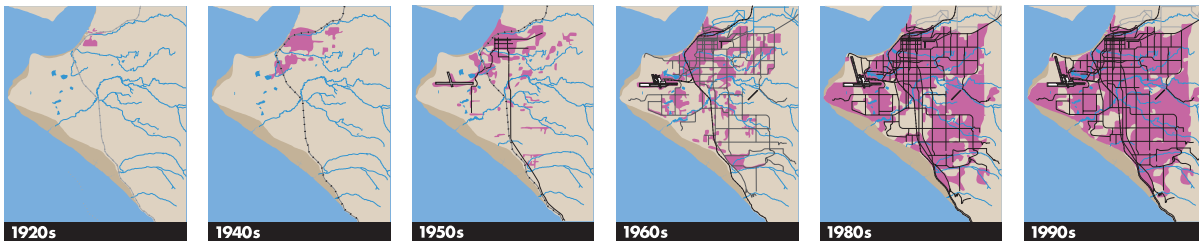
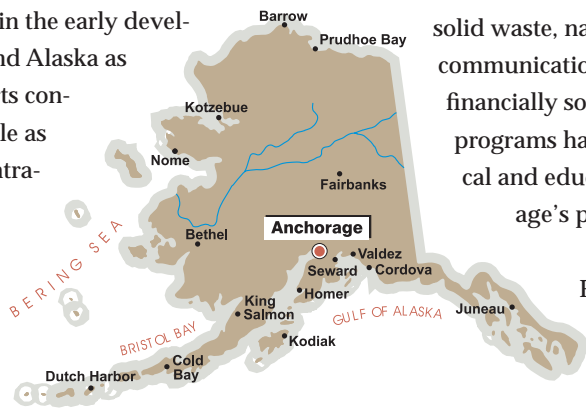
Civil air facilities—first Merrill Field and Lake Hood, and later Anchorage International Airport—played an extraordinary role in the early development of both Anchorage and Alaska as a whole. Anchorage’s airports consolidated the community’s role as Alaska’s premier center for intra-state and inter-state air travel and commerce.

In the half-century between 1940 and 1990, Anchorage grew in fits and starts. Military build-ups, post-1964 earthquake reconstruction, the Trans-Alaska pipeline construction in the mid-1970s, and the early 1980s petro-dollar boom—each pumped up the economy and spurred rapid community growth. Often, the aftermath was recession. By the 1990s, however, Anchorage had a much more diverse and stable economy and the community has recently experienced modest, steady growth.

Anchorage Today

Anchorage is still young enough that some residents have seen it progress from a small pioneer town to a modern metropolitan center. A positive legacy of the community’s recent growth and public prosperity is that its buildings are relatively new. Many key public facilities—the performing arts center, civic/convention center, sports arena, regional library, and a major addition to the museum of history and art—were all built in the mid-1980s. Utilities such as water and sewer, solid waste, natural gas, electric power, and communications are well designed and in financially sound condition. Ongoing programs have built or renovated medical and educational facilities. Anchorage’s port and airport facilities are modern and efficient. Recently, Anchorage was commended for having the nation’s best drinking water, best-managed sanitary landfill, and one of the best year-round recreational trail systems.

Once known for its high prices, Anchorage now has living costs comparable to those of many other Lower-48 metropolitan areas. Modern construction, real estate, and banking industries have lowered housing costs. While most consumer goods and supplies are imported, Anchorage’s reliable, efficient cargo transport



Facts About Anchorage



The Sullivan Sports Arena and the Egan Convention Center host many of Anchorage's cultural, business, and social gatherings.



and distribution systems have helped keep local costs down. Pipelines deliver bulk petroleum fuels and natural gas from in-state energy producers. Anchorage also has relatively cheap and abundant natural gas for power generation, space heating, and domestic use.

Since most of Anchorage's growth took place after World War II, settlement patterns outside the original downtown area reflect the decentralizing influence of the automobile. Urbanization has reached the edge of the Anchorage Bowl, leaving limited space for new home sites, and home-building activity is shifting toward bedroom communities in Chugiak-Eagle River and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. This trend is motivated partly by the appeal of lower cost home-sites and partly by the desire for a more rural Alaska lifestyle. Highway improvements that reduce commuting time have helped accelerate the trend.

Natural Setting

Anchorage residents have an experience of city

life in the wilderness that no other American metropolitan area can match. Several thousand acres of municipal greenbelts and parkland link settled areas with surrounding natural open space and wildlife habitat in Chugach State Park (the second largest state park in the country) and the 50-square-mile Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge. All of these natural features endow Anchorage with a distinctive sense of place at both the neighborhood and citywide scale. This sense of place is imprinted on community lifestyles and attitudes, and is embodied in existing land use and activity patterns.

The Anchorage Bowl contains numerous small lakes and streams, wetlands, and wooded foothills

Climate

- Average Temperatures: January: 6° to 13° F
July: 58° to 65° F
- Record High: 85° F
- Record Low: -45° F
- Average Snowfall: 69 inches
- Average Rainfall: 15 inches
- Typical Snow Cover: Late October – Early April

Average Daylight

- December: 5.5 hours
- June: 19.3 hours

Size

- Alaska: 586,412 square miles
- Muni. of Anchorage: 1,955 square miles
- Anchorage Bowl: 100 square miles
- 84% of the Municipality is uninhabited, most of which is unbuildable land

Population (1998)

- Alaska: 621,400
- Anchorage: 258,782
- Anchorage Bowl: 212,613

Natural Setting

- Shoreline: City with most miles of shoreline in North America
- Port: America's northernmost ice-free port
- Tidal range: 38.9 feet; second greatest in North America
- Streams: 46 permanent streams flow through the Municipality, 14 flow through the Bowl.
- Native vegetation: black spruce, white spruce, mountain hemlock, paper birch, balsam poplar, black cottonwood, willow, alder



Kincaid Park is the perfect spot for a long summer walk, jog, or bike ride.

which create local topographic variety and visual interest. The northern boreal forest survives in stands of birch, aspen, and spruce throughout the city.

Anchorage residents enjoy views of an unspoiled coast and distant mountains to the west. The Chugach Mountains rise as high as 5,000 feet a short distance to the east. Mount McKinley, North America's tallest peak, lies 160 miles to the north and is often visible from Anchorage. Long summer days and long winter nights mark the seasonal extremes. Northern lights often paint the winter night sky.

Anchorage's People

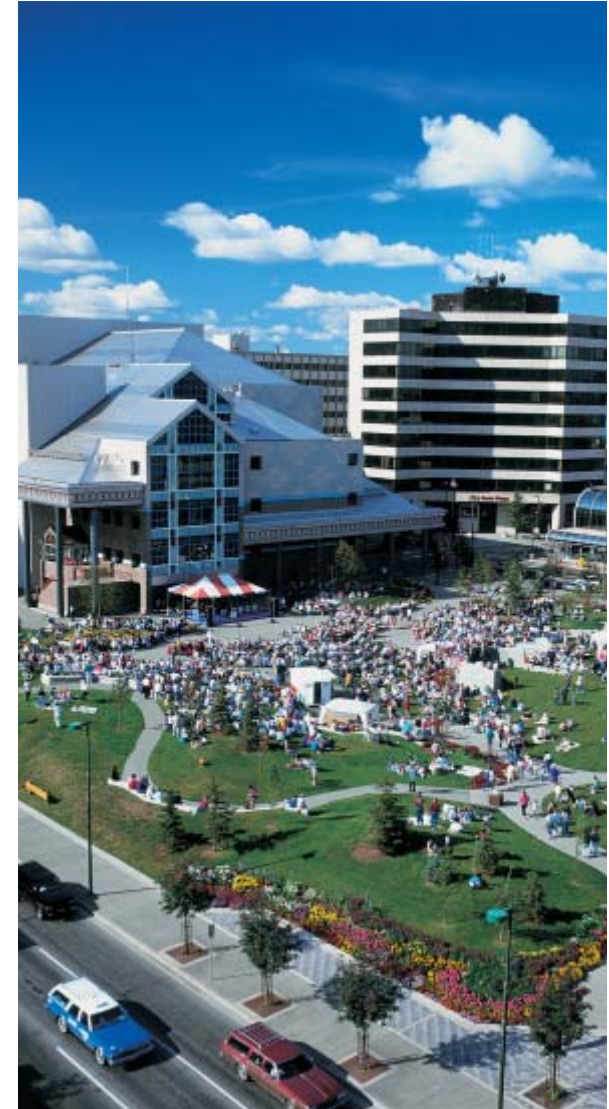
For most of its history, Anchorage grew as a community of immigrants—newcomers from outside the State and Alaska Natives from rural areas within the State—all in pursuit of opportunity. At the time of the

1990 census, barely a quarter of Anchorage residents were born in Alaska.

For decades, a seasonal boom-bust economy and military personnel rotations made Anchorage a fast-growing town of transients without a strong stake in the community. Those who stayed as permanent residents lived in Anchorage by personal choice, not by chance of birth. They were rooted by their liking for the place and for the distinctive lifestyle it offered.

In the 1990s, economic stability and military cut-backs dramatically slowed in-migration and reduced annual population turnover by half. As a result, Anchorage's population has become much less transient and more committed to long-term community betterment.

Today, Anchorage's population is diverse. Racial and ethnic minorities are the fastest growing segment of the population and now account for about 27 percent of the total, a higher proportion than the national average for metropolitan areas. Alaska Natives make up 8 percent of the total population and are the largest minority group. Anchorage is often called Alaska's largest "Native village." There are also substantial African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic communities, each making up about 7 percent of the total population. The size of the Asian community reflects Anchorage's important commercial ties to the Orient.



Town Square offers the perfect venue for a celebration of long days and good friends.

Facts About Anchorage

Recreation

- Park System: Shares the category of most extensive park system in a metropolitan area with Boulder, Colorado, and has over 400 kilometers of hiking, walking, biking, and skiing trails.
- Skiing: world-class nordic ski venue, 200 kilometers of groomed trails; 40 kilometers are lit for night skiing

Wildlife

- Fish: 5 species of salmon in Anchorage
- Mammals: 52 species, including wolf, lynx, moose, and bear
- Birds: Only metropolitan area with nesting loons

Community Profile

- Median Age of Anchorage: 32.1 versus United States: 35
- Males per 100 females in Anchorage: 105 versus United States: 98
- Anchorage residents: 28% born in Alaska, 66% born in another state, 6% in another country

Economic Profile 1998

- Unemployment: 4.1%
- Education: 27% of adult population have a college degree
- Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport: 5 million passengers, 2.8 billion pounds of cargo
- Main economic sectors: oil, government, construction, transportation, tourism, trade, and services

Anchorage "Highlights"

- Winner of the 1998 USA City Water Taste Test
- Lowest state and local taxes of any metropolitan area in the United States.
- Highest air cargo landed weight of any airport in the United States.
- High per capita ratio of open space, parks, and trails
- Flourishing urban wildlife populations, including an estimated 2,000 moose
- Mountain vistas in all directions, including Mt. McKinley



Every walk of life, every opportunity, everyone a part of the whole: Anchorage!

