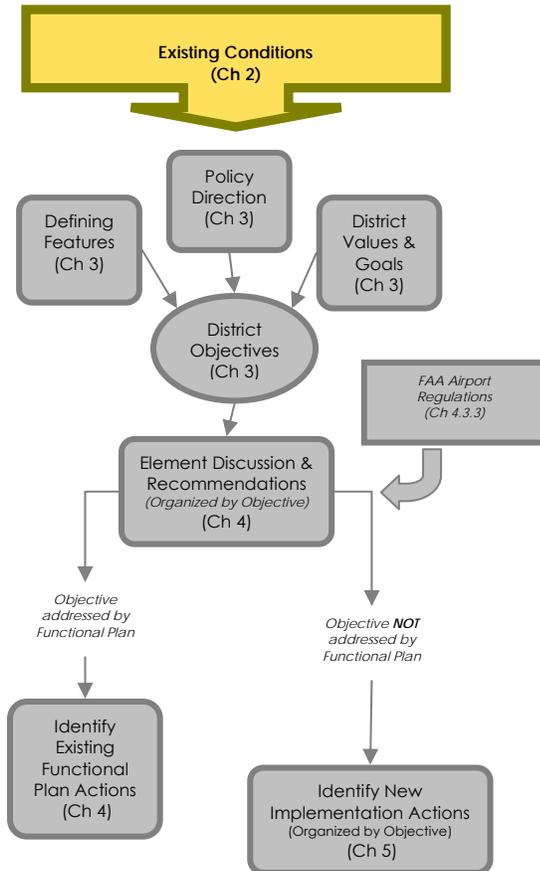




## 2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS



This chapter presents an overview of the physical, land use, and socioeconomic characteristics that define West Anchorage. These existing conditions provide baseline information about the planning area, framing the context for planning and decision making. An overview is provided for demographics, economics and housing; land use; infrastructure and public services; transportation; conditions at TSAIA; recreation and open space; and the natural environment.

This chapter was excerpted from the West Anchorage Baseline Profile, which is available on the MOA Community Development Department's Planning Division website.

### 2.1 Demographics, Economics, and Housing

#### 2.1.1 Population

The Anchorage Bowl population was estimated to be 240,300 in 2010,<sup>1</sup> with a projected average annual population growth rate of 0.8% from 2010-2030.<sup>2</sup> This would increase the population of the Anchorage Bowl to a total of 283,700 residents (240,300 + 43,400) by the year 2030. Of this total, approximately 44,000 people (or about 16.0% of the Bowl population) in the Sand Lake, Spenard, and Turnagain Community Council areas call West Anchorage home.

<sup>1</sup> The 2010 Decennial US Census Data

<sup>2</sup> Base case growth rate estimate from the Institute of Economic and Social Research (ISER), 2009. "Economic and Demographic Projections for Alaska 2010-2035" Table II.1. This is a slower growth rate than the 1.6% estimate by ISER during the writing of *Anchorage 2020*.

## ***2.1.2 Age and Race***

West Anchorage roughly mirrors the age distribution and racial characteristics found across the Bowl. West Anchorage contains a greater distribution of 15-64 year olds (70.0%) than the Bowl average of 63%, and fewer racial minorities comprising the overall population (28%) than the Bowl average of 30%. Key ethnic distinctions for West Anchorage include a slightly higher percentage of Black/African American residents (6% compared to 3% for the Bowl) and Asian residents (9% compared to 8% for the Bowl).

Within West Anchorage, there are some noteworthy age distribution statistics that reveal unique characteristics about the major community council areas as follows:

- Sand Lake contains the higher percentage of school-age residents (22% of total population);
- Spenard contains the higher percentage of young adults (16% of total population); and
- Turnagain contains the higher percentage of baby boomers<sup>3</sup> and seniors (36% and 8% respectively of total population).

Anchorage School District (ASD) enrollment data reveal the growing trend toward higher minority student populations with an important milestone reached in 2008. For the first time, more than half the citywide ASD student population consisted of ethnic minorities. In West Anchorage, five of ten elementary schools (Campbell, Lake Hood, Northwood, Sand Lake, and Willow Crest) exceed 50% "minority" populations. Willow Crest is the highest at 75%.

## ***2.1.3 Economy***

The Bowl's highest employment concentrations are found in the Downtown and Midtown business districts. Employment centers in West Anchorage include the TSAIA complex and the Spenard Road commercial corridor.

Direct employment at TSAIA in 2007 was 10,222 annual average full-time equivalent jobs generating an annual payroll of \$562 million. The indirect economic impact is the equivalent of one in eight jobs in Anchorage and a total contribution of \$850 million annual payroll.<sup>4</sup>

The average unemployment rates for Anchorage declined steadily from 6.3% in 2003 to 5.0% in 2007. The rate went up to 5.3% in 2008 and the rate was higher in the final 2009 calculations, due to the global economic downturn. The Alaska Economic Development Corporation predicts employment increases in the trade and health care sectors; these require office space and health service facilities. Public construction projects should remain strong, including projects at TSAIA, which should help the city's construction industry remain stable. However, the air transportation and leisure and hospitality sectors are the first to experience employment loss during times of recession.

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<sup>3</sup> The post-WWII "baby boom" is generally acknowledged as persons born between 1946 and 1964.

<sup>4</sup> Institute of Social and Economic Research, 2007. "Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport: Economic Significance"

## 2.1.4 Housing

Home ownership rates in West Anchorage are equivalent to those within the larger Bowl (58%). Spenard contains the highest concentration of renters (63%) and highest vacancy rate (8%) of the three community council areas. Housing density is relatively low in the Bowl, exceeding 10 dwelling units in only a few areas. By comparison, the neighborhoods around the north end of Spenard Road, Northern Lights Boulevard, and Minnesota Drive have some of the highest housing densities in the Bowl.

Table 2.1-1 demonstrates the current number of housing units in West Anchorage and the number of new units that could be constructed under existing zoning conditions.

Table 2.1-1 Housing Units in West Anchorage			
Zoning Districts with Housing	Existing Housing	New Housing <sup>a</sup>	Total Housing
<b>Residential</b>			
Single-family	7,864	485	
Two-family	3,654	437	
Multi-family <sup>b</sup>	6,073	220	
<b>Commercial</b>	74	-	
<b>Industrial</b>	11	-	
<b>Institutional</b>	15	-	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,691</b>	<b>1,142</b>	<b>18,833</b>
Source: MOA, 2009 <sup>a</sup> The number of additional new residential units that could be built if parcels are built-out to their allowed density according to current zoning. <sup>b</sup> Multi-family designation includes three or more units and mobile home parks. NOTE: Data from adjusted planning boundary northeast of Spenard Road is not included.			

*Anchorage 2020* addressed the need to accommodate future population growth in subareas of the Bowl. The northwest part of the Bowl (Spenard and Turnagain) has the opportunity to create a certain number of new housing units, even without zoning changes. At the time *Anchorage 2020* was written, the southwest area of the Bowl (Sand Lake) had large undeveloped tracts of land, which provided a strong base of new housing units to accommodate growth in that section. Given population projections at the time and existing zoning, *Anchorage 2020* predicted that new growth could be generally accommodated with the existing disposition of vacant residential land, except in the northwest section of the Bowl. For the West Anchorage District planning area, accommodating population growth would require strategically located areas of increased residential densities and full build-out to maximum densities on remaining vacant lands. These were to be located within certain of the *Anchorage 2020* land use policy areas, including along transit corridors, around neighborhood commercial centers, and the two designated town centers. Growth allocations in these specific sections of West Anchorage, along with redevelopment potential sites with increased densities were to have made up any shortfalls in providing for population increases.