



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1.1 PLAN PURPOSE AND PLANNING TEAM

This plan was funded by an Alaska Legislative grant at the request of the UMED District organizations, and completed in partnership with the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA). The purpose of the plan was to achieve specific goals defined in the grant request.

The primary purpose of the 2016 District Plan Update (District Plan Update) is to assess current needs and to identify future actions and land use changes to address those needs. Planning updates for the UMED District are recommended on a five-year basis to re-ground the thinking and development in the district, identify new strategies and programs for implementation, and to engage the community in an open public process.¹

The UMED organizations include Alaska Public Media (KAKM), Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), Alaska Pacific University (APU), Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API), Anchorage School District (ASD), McLaughlin Youth Center (MYC), Providence Alaska Medical Center (PAMC), Southcentral Foundation (SCF), Trust Land Office (TLO), and the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). The organizations provided staff representatives to the UMED District Steering Team, along with project partners including several Alaska Legislators and the Airport Heights, Rogers Park, and University Area Community Councils.

The Municipality of Anchorage began working with Page & Turnbull (prime consultant), Kittelson & Associates, RSA Engineering, and Strategic Economics to prepare the UMED District Plan Update in the spring of 2013.

The planning team met with the UMED organizations, student groups, community councils, and the public through several workshops and one-on-one interviews. A detailed overview of the public outreach process is included in Methodology-Section 2.4.

This plan presents visions, goals, recommendations, and implementation items related to the built environment, natural areas, transportation systems, recreational opportunities, economic development, and organizational support. The plan is intended to provide a framework for future actions to be taken by the Municipality of Anchorage, the UMED District organizations, developers, residents, and community partners.

The plan also includes an updated land use plan map which amends the Anchorage Bowl land use plan map that will guide future development. The multimodal transportation system and Transportation Demand Management program is encouraged. Watershed and natural resource protection, trail and park planning and management is supported.

The plan encourages master plan development, mixed-use commercial, retail and housing development, and helps maintain stable neighborhoods. The plan defines the sensitive natural landscape and distills the “sense of place” that defines the District.

The plan will be implemented by: District Plan Update recommendations, master plans, Anchorage Wetlands Management Plan, Chester Creek Watershed Plan, Metropolitan Transportation Plan, University Lake Park Master Plan, MOA Capital Improvement Program, and legislative requests.

1.2 PLAN SUMMARY

Good planning leads to healthy communities by striking the right balance of services, economic and physical development, aesthetics, and recreational opportunities. The Plan Update presents a cohesive strategy that integrates these aspects as they relate to the UMED District. The District Plan Update includes the following sections:

- **Introduction:** The introduction sets the District’s boundaries and further discusses the purpose of the Plan Update. This Plan Update will replace the 2003 U-MED Universities and Medical District Framework Master Plan (2003 UMED Plan). The Public participation process is also summarized.
- **Context:** The context describes the setting, planning considerations, master planning processes, UMED transportation system, natural resources including parks and lakes, trail and pedestrian system, and the involvement of the various stakeholders within the UMED. Planning influences include the proposed Northern Access Road, increasing density, infill and mixed-use development, the Chester Creek Watershed Plan, and MOA Title 21.
- **Challenges and Opportunities:** This section discusses existing conditions and viable opportunities for: ongoing development of the educational, medical, and public service offerings, parks, trails, public land management strategies, parking, and the multi-modal transportation system.

The desire for more food options, stable neighborhoods with housing choices and redevelopment opportunities, and the perception of public versus privately held lands was considered in many of the recommendations. The UMED District is well positioned to capitalize on its many strengths and opportunities to continue toward sustained growth, expanded education and research opportunities, and the provision of world-class medical services.

- **Vision Elements:** The Vision Elements contain eight specific subject areas: Supporting Organizational Missions, Quality of Life, Quality of the Built Environment, Transportation & Mobility, Community & Partnerships, Natural Resources, Economic Sustainability, and Growth & Change. This chapter describes each Vision Element, recommendations and implementation items.
- **Implementation:** This section includes the implementation matrix for the recommendations listed in the Vision chapter. Implementation phasing, potential responsible parties and funding are listed.
- **Resources:** Case Studies, Examples, and the *2013 UMED Plan Cogeneration Report* (Cogen Report) executive summary are included. This section contains analysis in specific subject areas that informed the development of the recommendations. The Case Studies examine Transportation Demand Management and mixed-use “village” development combining retail and residential uses.

- The Examples cover topics important to the area, but contain less detailed analysis than the case studies. They cover the topic of town-gown relationships, night lighting, and fresh food access. The Cogen Report executive summary gives an overview of the technology, cost analysis and recommendations. Cogen is financially feasible in the UMED District with a change in the ML&P Tariff, which is further explained in the Cogen Report.
- **Supporting Documents:** The *Supporting Documents* report is a separate publication that contains an in-depth summary of various existing conditions within the District. The analysis presented in this document provided beneficial information critical to shaping the Plan Update. The *Supporting Documents* report is referred to throughout this plan and is available online or in hard copy.

1.3 PLAN PRIORITIES

The UMED District Plan Update recommends the following seven priorities for early action funding and implementation:

1. UNIVERSITY LAKE PARK MASTER PLAN

It was consistently heard that off-leash dogs around University Lake Park impact surrounding private properties. The UMED Steering Team suggested a master planning process for University Lake Park. The master plan would be used to further identify issues, funding, and management options. The MOA Parks and Recreation Department agreed to provide \$30,000 for the University Lake Park Master Plan.

It is anticipated that additional funding will be necessary to upgrade the level of management at this park and for proposed mitigation elements that may come from the Park Master plan. The Chester Creek Watershed Plan will also be considered during this Park Master planning process scheduled for fall 2015. MOA Park staff supports this recommendation.

2. TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT STUDY

Traffic management and parking were also discussed at length during the planning process. The parking analysis completed by Kittelson & Associates found that there is adequate parking in the District. With the latest parking information, the transportation focus shifted from parking to roads, trails, pedestrian amenities, transit and shuttle services.

The District Plan Update recommends several improvements to contribute to the completion and operation of the District’s multi-modal transportation network. However, as the District grows there will be a need to mitigate travel demand through increased transit, carpools, vanpools, and other Transportation Demand Management (TDM) options. The intent of the proposed TDM study will be to examine incoming traffic from all parts of the Anchorage Bowl and the Mat-Su Valley to determine options for reducing single-occupant vehicle travel into the District and the potential for increasing transit-related access options. People Mover staff provided comments in support of a TDM study.

3. TRAILS AND PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM MASTER PLAN

This plan is essential to the continued funding and management of the Anchorage Trail and Pedestrian System. The UMED District sits at the junction of two major trail corridors; Chester and Campbell Creek. Identifying desired connections, and also providing connectivity to the future Northern Access Road, will ensure that the District remains and supports a first-class multimodal transportation system to and within the UMED District. This effort could also address trail grooming, maintenance, snow plowing, patrols, future pedestrian improvements, and connections on District neighborhood streets.

This project would also help facilitate communication between the community councils as they submit projects for the MOA's annual capital improvement programming process. Recommendations from the District Plan Update will be an important element of the AMATS trail planning effort. AMATS staff support this recommendation.

4. UMED TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY

An Anchorage-area Transit Study would complete analysis and recommendations for increased transit opportunities with a focus on the UMED District. Ridership in the UMED District is the highest in the Anchorage area. The District has not been studied for improvements or potential increases to service for several years according to People Mover staff. An updated transit study would help justify future federal funding for transit. People Mover staff support this recommendation.

5. COGEN ENERGY CONSERVATION PILOT PROJECT

The 2013 UMED District Cogeneration Study Update (Cogen Report) was requested by the UMED organizations in their grant application. Analysis and recommendations were completed as a tool for future Cogen implementation in the UMED District. The Cogen Report has positive implications for the UMED and Cogen implementers across the State of Alaska. Priority five supports the recommendation for a UMED District Cogen Energy Conservation Pilot Project. The details of the Pilot Project would be developed by interested parties among the UMED organizations, the MOA, and the State of Alaska. The Executive Summary can be found in section 5.7 of the appendix. The full report is available online at Muni.org. The UMED Steering Team supports this recommendation.

6. ONGOING OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

UMED Organizational Leadership, the UMED District Plan Steering Team, community councils, and the public expressed a desire for early-on and continuing communication between the neighborhoods, the organizations, and the MOA as projects are planned and developed. Therefore, UMED Steering Team quarterly meetings are recommended along with other public outreach and engagement programs. Currently MOA staff facilitate the Steering Team meetings and will continue to do so as identified in the Community and Partnerships vision. The UMED Steering Team supports this recommendation.

7. NEW TITLE 21

The MOA is tasked to create an educational program for the new Title 21. Title 21: Section 21.03.110-Institutional Master Planning was developed to facilitate increased communication between organizations and residents and to foster submittal of organizational master plans for Assembly approval. Section 21.03.110 provides tools to streamline the approval process for new development on a more holistic and campus-wide basis. The MOA recognizes that amendments to this section may be necessary as issues are discovered when a master plan is submitted for MOA review and approval.

The MOA will continue to work with the UMED District organizations to facilitate a cohesive master plan adoption process, along with any changes that might be necessary to this specific section of Title 21. A summary overview and action items will be developed in partnership with the organizations to enable a better understanding of this section for future institutional master plan submittals as a product of this priority. Identification and resolution of potential regulatory barriers to development are acknowledged in the Quality of the Built Environment vision to enable desired development in the UMED District. The UMED Steering Team and MOA staff support this recommendation.