

## 4.1 Land Use

### 4.1.1 Introduction

The land use pattern in West Anchorage is well established with discrete, relatively homogenous areas of residential, commercial, airport, industrial, and recreational use. The *West Anchorage District Plan (WADP)* responds to this structure and builds upon it. The plan provides opportunities for new development on vacant land, encourages redevelopment of underutilized land, and maintains the density and character of established residential areas.

In addition to considering existing uses, the *WADP* is also influenced by policy direction from *Anchorage 2020*. The *Anchorage 2020* Land Use Policy Map highlights five key land use considerations within the *WADP* study area, including town centers, neighborhood centers, transit-supportive development corridors, an industrial reserve, and the international airport. Other policies reinforced during public outreach relate to the importance of maintaining neighborhoods and recreational opportunities in West Anchorage. The *WADP* land use map has taken these into consideration and presents a plan that accommodates them in a cohesive and balanced fashion.

The location and amount of each designation, shown on exhibits 4-1 a-d, is compatible with the Anchorage Bowl Land Use Plan Map provisionally adopted by the Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission in 2006, with some minor refinements.

### 4.1.2 Major Land Use Components

#### *Residential*

Residential uses are spread throughout West Anchorage, including Spenard, Turnagain, and Sand Lake comprising about a quarter of the study area. Excluding airport and park/recreational/natural open space lands, residential areas are, by far, the most widespread land use in West Anchorage.

The *WADP* Residential designations offer a broad range of housing densities and types to meet the demand of current and future residents. In addition to the residential uses described below, other uses such as schools, places of worship, parks and child care facilities are often allowed in residential areas. Opportunities for small-scale, non-obtrusive neighborhood commercial services are identified at selective locations on the Land Use map to provide convenient neighborhood services that promote walking or biking from home.

The Land Use Plan Map residential density ranges are generalized descriptions of the density of development considered appropriate for a broadly defined area. The measure of housing units per gross acre is based on areawide densities rather than specific densities for individual parcels. This allows the Land Use Plan Map to indicate the intended overall distribution of population and housing units for entire contiguous geographic areas of West Anchorage. The measure of housing units per gross acre includes streets, open spaces, leftover or unusable lands and small non-residential uses within a residentially designated area on the Land Use Plan Map. It is not intended to be applied directly as the measure of how many housing units may be allowed on each lot or development site. Individual lots might have a somewhat higher net density because they do not include the land area occupied by streets.

#### *Airport*

TSAIA accounts for roughly a third of the total West Anchorage planning area and exerts a significant influence on land use in West Anchorage. Airport lands include a mix of aviation and light industrial activities accommodating passenger as well as air cargo service. These

activities generate truck and automobile traffic that uses local roads. The airport is situated in the westernmost portion of the study area adjacent to Knik Arm. Although two land use designations are assigned to the airport, both recognize that, given FAA regulations, all land within the boundary is reserved for future airport development.

### ***Park, Recreation, and Natural Open Space***

Recreation lands and facilities are an integral part of the quality of life in West Anchorage. Park, recreation, and natural open space areas that are designated on the Land Use Plan Map generally either exist or are identified on existing plans. They include dedicated parks with and without active recreational facilities as well as wetlands and other areas that provide natural open space value. Portions of airport land temporarily allowed for public recreation is also identified.

### ***Industrial Reserve***

*Anchorage 2020* identified an “industrial reserve” southeast of Minnesota and International Airport Road. The *WADP* implements this concept by assigning industrial land uses clustered around the intersection of Minnesota Drive and International Airport Road and extending as far south as Raspberry Road. This area is characterized by existing industrial uses proximate to major road, rail, and air transportation facilities.

### ***Commercial***

The Land Use Plan Map identifies only a few areas of commercial and office development located along existing transportation corridors. Where these designations occur, they are located in close proximity to the town centers and neighborhood centers described below.

### ***Town Centers and Neighborhood Centers***

*Anchorage 2020* identified two “town centers” and three “neighborhood commercial centers” within West Anchorage. The *WADP* refines these concepts by:

- Renaming neighborhood commercial center as “neighborhood center.”
- Assigning town center and neighborhood center designations to specific parcels.
- Eliminating one neighborhood center in Midtown (at International Airport Road and Arctic Boulevard) and adding one in Sand Lake (at Raspberry and Northwood Roads).
- Shifting the town center focus from Minnesota Drive and Northern Lights Boulevard to Spenard Road and Northern Lights.
- Downgrading the town center at West Dimond Boulevard and Jewel Lake Road to a neighborhood center.

The “commercial/mixed-use center” designations on the West Anchorage Land Use Map are intended to provide focal points of commercial, cultural, and entertainment activity, at the community and neighborhood scales. Each center is envisioned to serve the surrounding area with shopping, services, and/or employment at a scale in keeping with the area it serves. Spenard is the most significant center in West Anchorage and has begun to evolve as a compact, mixed-use activity center with high redevelopment potential and the opportunity to integrate various activities (including residential) within a pedestrian-friendly environment. Smaller centers in West Anchorage are identified at the neighborhood scale. Although they allow for mixed use, due to location and surrounding land use, these centers are likely to attract mostly commercial uses within the plan horizon.

### ***4.1.3 Land Use Map***

As required by *Anchorage 2020* and the Title 21, the Land Use Planning Regulations, the *WADP* includes a land use map depicted in Exhibit 4-1a. For clarification, portions of the map are replicated in greater detail in Exhibits 4-1b, 4-1c, and 4-1d. While the Land Use

Map includes all properties within the West Anchorage Planning Area, there are different expectations for the application of land use designations depending on whether they are inside or outside the TSAIA boundary.

Outside the airport, where the MOA has sole land use authority, the land use map presents decision-makers with a framework to help guide and evaluate individual land use decisions. Each land use designation includes one or more implementing zoning district(s). In instances where an existing zone is inconsistent with the Land Use Plan Map, development is allowed by right (grandfathered) under the current zone. However, rezoning requests that would create inconsistency are not allowed without concurrently amending the Land Use Map. If the Municipality determines that a land use map amendment is inappropriate, then the zoning district change must be denied. Concurrent amendments allow the Land Use Map to continue as a contemporary statement of evolving community policies, needs and opportunities while also considering the broader implications of individual land use actions.

Inside the airport, the MOA asserts that it has land use authority (AS 35.30.20), but recognizes that there are also complex FAA regulations and mandatory grant assurances, other State statutes (e.g., AS 02.25 et seq.), and shared land use responsibilities in effect that led the State to a different interpretation. Here the land use map is expected to function differently with two primary goals. First, the land uses shown on Fig. 4-1A are intended to provide TSAIA with a clear statement of municipal land use interests in future acquisition and use of existing airport property and, second, to provide MOA with a clear statement of TSAIA land use interest in future acquisition and use of existing MOA land. Accordingly, the map (along with other text and exhibits in the *WADP*) identifies candidate parcels for acquisition or exchange between the TSAIA and MOA and alternative land uses that may apply should trades occur. The alternative land uses shown for these parcels reflect public interests that may be achievable only with a change in ownership as discussed in Chapter 4.3.6.

#### ***4.1.4 Land Use Designations***

The following pages define each land use designation shown on the Land Use Map. Each designation includes a statement of intent and a description of essential characteristics, such as predominant uses, intensity of use, and the general nature of new development/redevelopment. The generalized land use designations depicted on the Land Use Maps are to be implemented over time via regulations and the most suitable zoning districts in the current or revised future Title 21, whichever is in effect. Where a land use designation has more than one corresponding zoning district, proposed zone changes should be demonstrated as the most appropriate, taking into consideration the purpose of each zone, the proposed rezoning site and the zoning and/or development pattern of surrounding land.

### **Residential Uses**

#### ***Limited-Intensity Residential***

##### Intent:

The limited-intensity residential designation in West Anchorage provides for large-lot, semi-rural residential neighborhoods.

##### Description:

- Conventional single-family detached houses on lots one acre or larger in size.
- Less than one housing unit per acre.
- Designation is applied to areas where large, irregular lots with environmental constraints preclude more intensive development. A variety of custom housing designs and the presence of natural vegetation create a semi-rural environment.

**Land Use Classifications**

- Major Transportation Facility
- Public Utility / Facility
- Schools and Community Institutional
- Other Area that Functions as Park and Natural Resource
- Parks and Natural Resource
- City Center Intensity (>35)
- Medium Intensity (>15-35 or up to 40)
- Low/Medium Intensity (>8-15)
- Low Intensity - Attached and Detached (>5-8)
- Low Intensity - Detached Houses (>1-5)
- Limited Intensity (0-1)
- Industrial / Commercial Reserve\*\*
- Industrial / Industrial Reserve\*\*
- Town Center
- Neighborhood Center
- Office - Low Intensity
- Commercial Corridor
- Spenard Commercial Corridor
- Small Scale Commercial

**Alternative Land Use Classifications**

- Buffer (Natural Resource)\*
- Major Transportation Facility
- Public Utility/Facility
- Parks and Natural Resource

(\* ) Areas identified as buffers indicate minimum requirement to provide that function. Final configurations will reflect consensus between TSAIA and MOA about underlying factors such as AO 2000-151 (S-2), TSAIA RPZs, etc.

**1**

TSAIA land interests for future North-South runway or airpark use may include additional acreage in the AWWU reserve parcel and/or west to the bluff in Pt. Woronzof Park. Either of these additions could only occur if they can be shown to effectively and fully accommodate AWWU facilities and Coastal Trail realignment requirements.

**Notes:**

1. Areas with pattern overlays depict two land uses for various MOA- and State-owned lands along the perimeter of Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. The underlying base color indicates the long-term land use that applies given the current airport ownership and boundary. The patterning reflects the long-term land use that may apply should the MOA acquire TSAIA land or the TSAIA acquire MOA land. Ownership changes could be accomplished via long-term land trades, fee-simple acquisition, or other permanent means subject to Municipal, State and FAA regulations.

2. This map assumes aviation easements, RPZs, and other FAA/Airport restrictions still apply.

3. The Major Transportation Facility designation includes areas that provide formal (via lease agreements) and informal public/recreation uses and important wetland functions. FAA regulations do not permit these areas on airport property to be formally designated for any uses other than long-term airport functions. Many of these areas are included in the Plan as targets for future MOA ownership.

4. Due to a late change to the planning area boundary, land use designations for the northeast corner of the study area between Spenard Road and Arctic Blvd are not depicted. This area will require coordination with the Midtown District Plan for appropriate land use designations.

- Runway Protection Zone (as of Nov. 2010)
- West Anchorage Planning Area Boundary
- TSAIA Boundary
- Coastal Trail
- Parcel Boundaries



Source: Municipality of Anchorage  
\*\*Revised: 7/9/13



Cook Inlet

Knik Arm

Exhibit 4-1c: Turnagain Land Use Detail

Exhibit 4-1d: International Airport/Minnesota Land Use Detail

Exhibit 4-1b: Sand Lake Land Use Detail



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**Land Use Classifications**

- Major Transportation Facility
- Public Utility / Facility
- Schools and Community Institutional
- Other Area that Functions as Park and Natural Resource
- Parks and Natural Resource

**Note:**

Areas with pattern overlays depict two land uses for various MOA and State owned lands along the perimeter of Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. The underlying base color indicates the long term land use that applies given the current airport ownership and boundary. The patterning reflects the long term land use that would apply should the MOA acquire TSAIA land or the TSAIA acquire MOA land. Ownership changes could be accomplished via long term land trades or fee-simple acquisition, subject to Municipal, State and FAA regulations.

- City Center Intensity (>35)
- Medium Intensity (>15-35 or up to 40)
- Low/Medium Intensity (>8-15)
- Low Intensity - Attached and Detached (>5-8)
- Low Intensity - Detached Houses (>1-5)
- Limited Intensity (0-1)

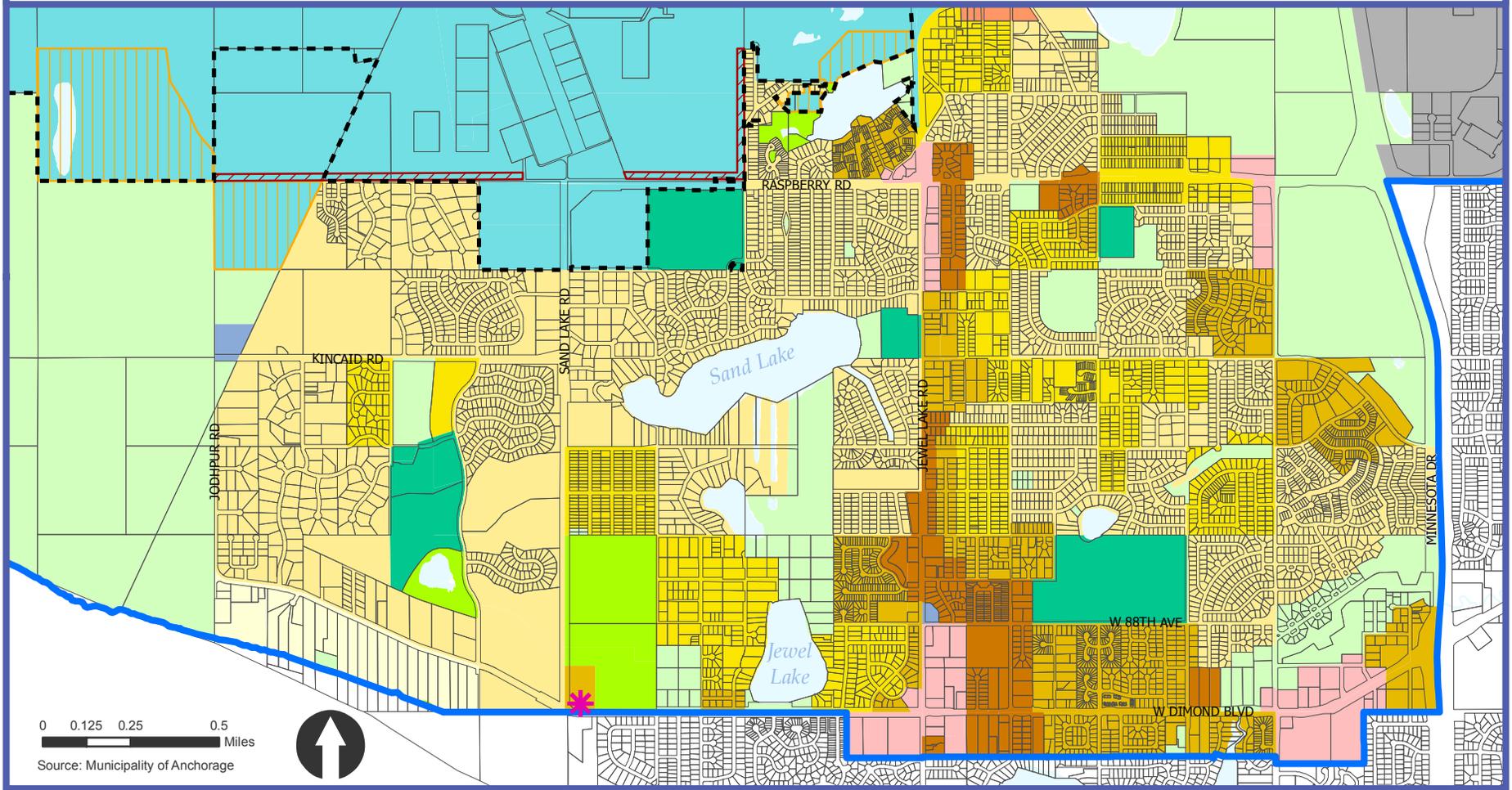
- Industrial / Commercial Reserve
- Industrial / Industrial Reserve
- Town Center
- Neighborhood Center
- Office - Low Intensity
- Commercial Corridor

- Small Scale Commercial
- Buffer (Natural Resource)
- Parks and Natural Resource
- Public Utility/Facility

**Alternative Land Uses**

- Major Transportation Facility
- Parcel Boundaries
- Runway Protection Zone (as of Nov. 2010)
- West Anchorage Planning Area Boundary
- TSAIA Boundary

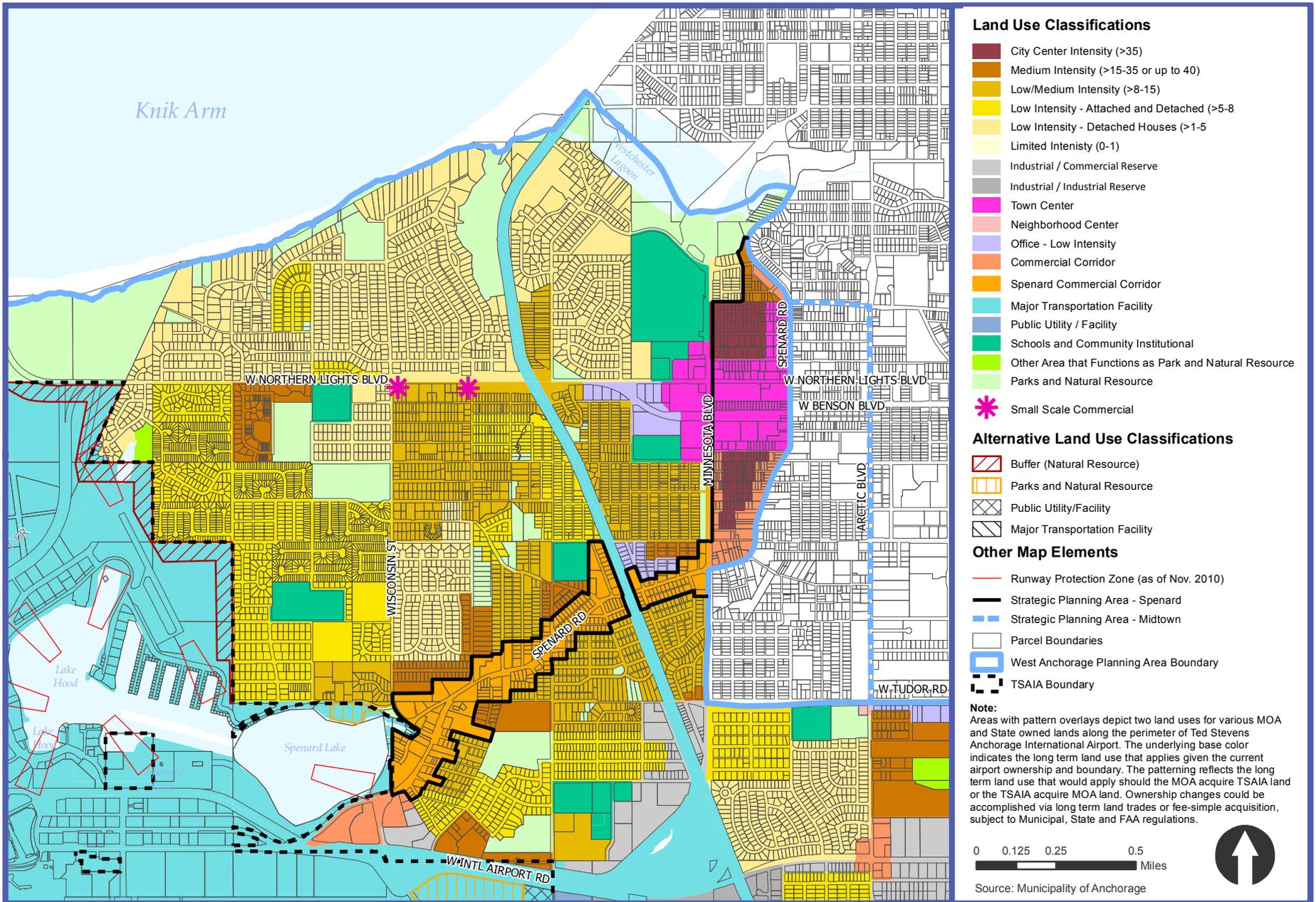
**Other Map Elements**

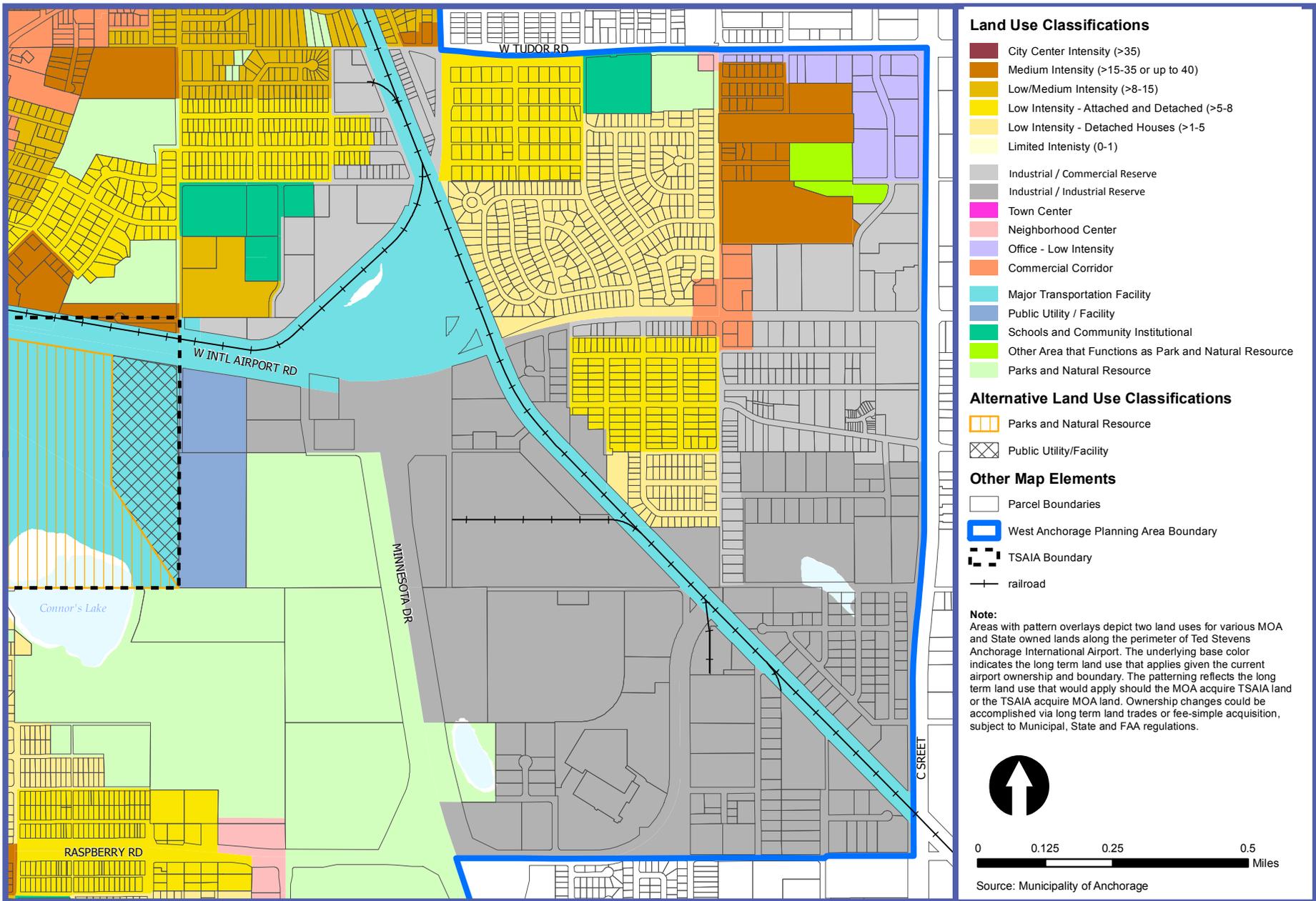


0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles  
Source: Municipality of Anchorage

West Anchorage District Plan  
**Exhibit 4-1b: Sand Lake Land Use Detail**







### ***Residential (Low-Intensity Detached)***

#### Intent:

The “low-intensity detached residential” designation provides for a diversity of single-family residential neighborhoods.

#### Description:

- Conventional single-family detached houses. Building scale, landscaped setbacks, and low traffic volumes on local streets contribute to a low-intensity living environment.
- Greater than 1 and up to 5 housing units per acre.
- Designation is applied to areas with an established single-family residential development pattern.

### ***Residential (Low-Intensity Attached and Detached)***

#### Intent:

The low-intensity attached and detached residential designation provides for a variety of single-family, single-family attached, and two-family residential neighborhoods.

#### Description:

- Conventional single-family detached houses, more compact attached and detached housing types such as small-lot, cluster, townhome, accessory units and duplex (two-family) units. Building scale, setbacks with landscaping or natural vegetation and low traffic volumes on local streets contribute to a low-intensity living environment.
- Greater than 5 and up to 8 housing units per acre.
- Designation is applied to areas with an established single-family or two-family detached development pattern and on vacant parcels where higher density is desirable in areas adjacent to parks or schools.

### ***Residential (Low-Medium Intensity)***

#### Intent:

The “low-medium intensity” residential designation provides for a range of single- and multi-family housing in neighborhoods that offer a compatible diversity of housing choices.

#### Description:

- Standard detached houses and small-lot, single-family homes, attached single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses and low-density multi-family. When located in a neighborhood environment, which includes any nearby single-family homes, the physical scale, appearance, and street orientation of multi-family/attached housing development should be compatible.
- Greater than 8 and up to 15 housing units per gross acre.
- Designation is applied to areas that have developed with a mix of single-family and multi-family housing units or are near a major street where public transportation is available.

### ***Residential (Medium Intensity)***

#### Intent:

The medium-intensity residential designation provides for a compatible mix of multi-family and attached housing choices in an attractive, living environment with a range of

amenities for residents, including easy access to parks and open space, retail services, employment centers, and public transportation.

Description:

- Multi-family complexes and townhouses characterized by low-rise, multi-story buildings, with design amenities such as private open space and recreation areas.
- Greater than 15 and up to 40 housing units per gross acre. The *WADP* encourages higher densities of up to 40 housing units per acre in residential medium-intensity districts that are near a designated neighborhood center or town center or where an existing development project already reflects these densities.
- Designation is applied to areas with an established multi-family housing development pattern. It is also applied to areas once designated for lower density residential and non-residential use that are either underutilized or are adjacent to commercial areas or major streets where transition to more intensive residential use is appropriate.

***Residential (City Center High Intensity)***

Intent:

The "high-intensity residential" designation provides for high-density housing concentrations intended to support the vitality of the Spenard core. Although small amounts of commercial development are allowed within a residential development, the district is intended to protect and retain a primarily residential character and supplement adjacent commercial areas.

Description:

- Multi-family complexes. Residential housing projects are expected to maximize their locational advantage within the Spenard Strategic Planning area with the use of structured parking and an intensive multi-story design.
- Greater than 35 housing units per gross acre.
- Small neighborhood parks, private courtyards, and other open space are essential to supporting the higher density residential environment.
- Development is intended to orient to the sidewalk with active uses, windows and entrances, and provide pedestrian connections to nearby mixed-use commercial, employment, and entertainment areas.
- Four stories; six stories with incentives.
- Appropriate maximum floor area ratio (FAR) is to be determined during final Title 21 revisions.
- Designation is applied within the Spenard Strategic Planning area.
- Greater than 40 housing units per gross acre.

**Commercial Uses**

The *WADP* "commercial" designations allow for a range of shopping, retail services, and low-intensity employment. Areas include linear transit corridors or office-residential transitions outside of town centers.

***Commercial Corridor***

Intent:

The "commercial corridor" designation is intended to provide local and regional retail sales and services on major street corridors which are already developed for commercial

purposes. For the *WADP*, it is located on the southern end of Spenard Road that has already received a road reconstruction treatment and minimal redevelopment is needed in the long term.

Description:

- West Anchorage commercial corridors are automobile dependent, characterized by individual low-rise, single-use retail buildings or strip malls with multiple tenants. Predominant land uses include a range of retail sales and service uses as well as similar commercial uses such as fast food, tourism services, and entertainment uses that generate customer vehicle traffic.
- It is important that site development be situated to have minimal impact on residential areas.
- This designation is applied to the Spenard Road corridor due to its existing mix of uses, location along a primary public transit route, and high redevelopment potential.

***Spenard Commercial Corridor***

Intent:

The “Spenard Commercial corridor” designation is intended to provide convenient and accessible services to adjoining medium-intensity residential land uses, as well as accommodating customers arriving by foot, bicycle, automobile, and bus using multi-modal facilities located along Spenard Road.

Description:

- Provides for continued redevelopment of Spenard Road with a mixture of local and regional uses including entertainment, hospitality, small-scale office, retail sales, and neighborhood services.
- Continues the development policies and patterns established by the Spenard Commercial District Development Strategy, which identified larger commercial nodes at each end of the roadway with controlled commercial expansion adjacent to residential neighborhoods.
- This designation is applied to the Spenard Road corridor due to its existing mix of uses, location along a primary public transit route, and high redevelopment potential.

***Office – Low-intensity***

Intent:

The “office–low-intensity” designation provides for small- to medium-sized office buildings with business, professional, and medical services.

Description:

- Three- to four-story maximum building heights, landscaped setbacks.
- A mix of multi-family residential with the office land use is encouraged. Low-intensity lodging, dining, and small-retail uses may occur, subject to limitations.
- New development is compatible with nearby residential uses in terms of scale, bulk, landscaped setbacks, and traffic volume.
- Designation is applied to existing office areas that remain optimal for medical or other office use, and that buffer residential areas from more intensive commercial uses or major roads.

## Commercial/Mixed-use Centers

### *Small-scale Commercial*

#### Intent:

The “small-scale commercial” designation provides for very limited neighborhood convenience services in close proximity to surrounding neighborhoods.

#### Description:

- Convenience retail such as coffee shops, florists, bakeries, and convenience-scale grocery oriented to the needs of the surrounding residential population.
- One-half to two acres in size.
- The scale, appearance, and function of new development should be pedestrian oriented and compatible with adjacent residential uses, and designed with the goals of reducing vehicle trips and driving distances, and minimizing traffic impacts. Parking lots shall be small, located beside or behind businesses, and adequately landscaped.
- Proposed small-scale commercial development applications shall include a site plan identifying connection points for potential nonmotorized access to surrounding neighborhoods and an assessment of traffic/pedestrian/bicycle interactions and safety considerations.
- Locations are not fixed but are indicated by a “floating” symbol at a focal intersection most central to surrounding neighborhoods. A small-scale center may be proposed within a quarter mile of the symbol shown. Where more than one focal intersection is possible, an alternative symbol is shown to expand the quarter-mile radius. However, only a single small-scale commercial facility is allowed at each location or pair of locations.

### *Neighborhood Center*

#### Intent:

The “neighborhood center” designation provides for small- to medium-size commercial convenience centers that serve the surrounding neighborhood or cluster of neighborhoods.

#### Description:

- Small-scale, non-obtrusive convenience retail and personal services, such as food markets, drug stores, restaurants, and professional services oriented to the needs of the surrounding residential population. The largest centers may be anchored by a full-sized grocery store.
- The scale, appearance, and function of new development should be compatible with adjacent residential uses, and designed with the goals of reducing vehicle trips and driving distances, and minimizing traffic impacts.

### *Town Center*

#### Intent:

The “town center” designation provides a focal point for integrating community-serving retail, public services, civic facilities, and residential housing.

#### Description:

- A range of retail shopping and services, including grocery stores and day care centers, provide most of the daily needs of residents of surrounding neighborhoods. Low-medium rise offices provide services and employment. Community facilities

such as post offices, recreational facilities, branch libraries, and schools add to the life and vitality of the center. Town centers also encourage mixed uses and residential uses up to 40 housing units per gross acre. Public improvements and the orientation of new stores to the street help to enhance the pedestrian environment. This implements the town center concept from *Anchorage 2020*.

## **Industrial Uses**

### ***Industrial/Commercial Reserve***

#### Intent:

The “industrial/commercial reserve” designation provides for a variety of employment and economic development opportunities in an industrial setting.

#### Description:

- Industrial and industrial-related commercial uses, including office industrial parks. Single-commodity bulk retail sales and building supplies and services are allowed. Other commercial uses that are supportive to industrial functions and character may occur, but are limited in intensity to maintain adequate industrial development opportunities.
- New development should be designed for compatibility with adjacent residential areas in terms of physical scale, intensity of activities, and thorough buffering and transition areas.
- Designation is applied to areas with access to major truck routes and rail lines, with established industrial uses and/or with proximity to a “major transportation facility”;

### ***Industrial/Industrial Reserve***

#### Intent:

The “industrial/industrial reserve” designation preserves key industrial lands for existing and future industrial economic development in areas served by major transportation corridors, and allows the most intensive industrial uses.

#### Description:

- This designation is a reserve for a wide range of existing and future industrial uses. Non-industrial uses are limited to prevent land use and traffic conflicts and to preserve land for industrial economic development. Uses may include manufacturing, major transportation operations, research and development, industrial/business parks, warehousing and distribution, equipment and materials storage, vehicle and equipment repair, waste management and similar uses. Certain areas may allow for processing and distribution of natural resources and hazardous materials.
- Designation is applied to areas with access to major truck routes and rail lines, with established industrial uses and/or with proximity to a Major Transportation Facility;

## **Other Uses**

### ***Parks and Natural Resources***

#### Intent:

The “parks and natural resources” designation provides for active and passive outdoor recreation, conservation of natural areas, trail corridors, and connections between neighborhoods.

Description:

- Includes neighborhood, community, and natural resource use areas. The character and design of parks and natural open space areas differ depending on their individual function and context.
- Designation is applied to existing municipal parks and greenbelts.

***Other Areas that Function as Park or Natural Resource***

Intent:

This designation applies to non-municipal lands, or other municipal non-park parcels that, by adopted plan, formal agreement, subdivision or easement, function as part of the community system of parks, outdoor recreational facilities or natural preservation areas (e.g., HLB mitigation parcels).

Description:

- Includes a small number of dispersed sites serving as private park, outdoor recreation, wetland mitigation, or natural resource areas, some of which may not allow public recreation access.

***Schools and Community Institutions***

Intent:

The “school and community institutions” designation provides for small- to medium-size institutions that can readily integrate at the local neighborhood scale and provide a community service or focus for the surrounding area.

Description:

- The most common use consists of public and large private schools with outdoor campus recreation facilities, including primary and secondary schools.

***Public Utility/Facility***

Intent:

The “public utility/facility” designation provides for public facilities and infrastructure that are industrial in character.

Description:

- Predominant land uses consist of public utilities (sewer and water treatment plants, power generation plants, industrial yards, water tank reservoirs, pump stations, and facilities for maintenance or fleet services) and public facilities (such as fire stations) not oriented to on-site customer service.

***Major Transportation Facility***

Intent:

The “major transportation facility” designation provides for large multi-use transportation facilities of regional, state, and national importance, including airports and railroads. This designation at the TSAIA includes areas that function as neighborhood buffers, important wetlands, or have historically been used for park or public use purposes, in some cases via formal lease agreements between MOA and TSAIA.

Description:

- This designation is applied to facilities with regional and global transportation importance that are land intensive and considered essential to the local and state economy and transportation infrastructure.

- This designation in West Anchorage comprises the TSAIA, subject to FAA grant assurances and other regulations, and the ARRC terminal railroad utility corridors subject, in some instances, to exclusive United States Surface Transportation Board regulation.

#### **4.1.5 Discussion and Recommendations**

##### ***Objective #1***

***Plan land uses throughout West Anchorage, especially along both sides of the airport boundary, to optimize compatibility and minimize conflict.***

The primary land use compatibility issues in West Anchorage are focused along the airport boundary where residential neighborhoods and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail adjoin the airport. The community wants land within the airport designated for buffers while TSAIA maintains that it should not be penalized because incompatible uses were allowed to develop there.

In response, the *WADP* identifies (a) those key areas where conflicts are most likely (see Exhibits 4-5 to 4-9), (b) buffer locations within the airport to address these (recognizing that these are advisory only) and recommending that a land exchange or other means of acquisition between the TSAIA and the MOA is the only permanent way to resolve the issue.

##### ***Objective #2***

***Maintain an adequate supply of residential housing of varying densities and affordability levels that promote quality residential living and stable long-term land values.***

The *WADP* land use map allows opportunities for a wide array of residential housing types, ranging from very low densities of less than one unit per acre to densities of up to forty units per acre at some locations. Much of the planning area contains existing residential housing, and land use designations were selected to reinforce existing neighborhood character. Most standard single-family neighborhoods were designated with low-intensity residential uses at densities ranging from 0-8 units per acre. Small-lot subdivisions were assigned slightly higher densities in the 8-15 units per acre range. Existing multi-family areas and/or areas felt to be candidates for transition to higher densities (typically near public transportation corridors, such as Jewel Lake Road and Spenard Road) were assigned the highest densities ranging from 15-40 units per acre. To maintain property values, care was taken to avoid haphazard placement of higher densities at locations that would be out of character with lower density neighborhoods. Land use designations were avoided that would encourage rezoning to higher densities in the Airport's 65 DNL Noise Contour.

Another influence on the selection of land uses was *Anchorage 2020's* projection of a housing shortage throughout the Bowl, assigning a portion of this to West Anchorage. In response, while seeking to maintain the character of existing neighborhoods, the *WADP* also attempts to add new housing in appropriate locations. New single-family housing will be created in the Sand Lake gravel pits, containing the largest reserve of large, vacant parcels suitable for master-planned residential development. However, this area will yield relatively few units per acre of land and generally serves the middle to upper income levels.

Beyond this, additional new housing is added by increasing density (i.e., constructing more units in a smaller area) The *WADP* assigns higher densities to underutilized land where redevelopment is practical. Higher density development also benefits housing availability and diversity by being more affordable, serving both owners and renters, and yielding more housing units per acre of land.

### ***Objective #3***

***Locate higher residential densities primarily near mixed-use development districts and along major public transportation corridors.***

Effective siting of higher density development can yield benefits that extend beyond merely providing additional housing. Public transportation systems benefit substantially from location near higher density development since higher density residents are more likely to be transit dependent. Locating potential users with convenient pedestrian access boosts ridership, which in turn increases service levels and frequency.

In addition, high-density development is an important component of effective mixed-use centers. High levels of pedestrian interaction add vibrancy to activity centers. Juxtaposing high-density residential development with employment, entertainment and shopping venues allows convenient, effective pedestrian access without automobile dependence.

Siting criteria used for higher densities include locations with access to public transportation routes, with proximity to town centers that avoid airport noise contours, where higher densities are already established (or would not conflict with existing single-family neighborhoods), and where higher densities would provide an incentive to redevelop underutilized properties.

The *WADP* Land Use Map focuses higher density residential designations primarily along the Jewel Lake Road and Spenard Road corridors and the town and neighborhood centers on either end of these corridors.

### ***Objective #4***

***Preserve and enhance the physical character of land uses valued by the local community, including established residential neighborhoods, proximity to natural open space, and the historic Spenard Road corridor.***

In general, most single-family residents own their homes and are more vocal about their desire to protect and maintain the quality of life in their neighborhoods. Characteristics considered valuable include the “patchwork” development pattern of older residential neighborhoods, mature trees, natural open space, safety and security, lack of through traffic, and access to recreational and trail amenities. In keeping with neighborhood desires, the land use pattern and densities in most single-family residential areas have been retained.

The *WADP* land use map provides for the complementary uses that enrich residential quality of life. It designates existing recreational and natural open space areas for public use and enjoyment. It also gives special recognition to the Spenard corridor as a special opportunity area for mixed-use development.

### ***Objective #5***

***Designate commercial land uses that support the continued viability of small, local businesses while also attracting new commercial ventures at appropriate locations.***

The Spenard corridor is home to a high concentration of small, well-established Anchorage businesses. Business success is seen as one ultimate measures of plan effectiveness since business vitality attracts private investment that, in turn, leads to an upwardly evolving level of improvement. Established businesses are a valuable asset since they have demonstrated a long-term commitment to the area and it is far easier to retain an existing business than to attract a new one. The *WADP* recognizes the special importance of Spenard by incorporating the Spenard Strategic Planning Area to focus attention on this core area.

The plan provides for traditional commercial development at key locations distributed throughout the area. These are sized at an appropriate scale to provide convenient neighborhood services.

#### ***Objective #6***

***Support the establishment of “appropriate scale” commercial districts that include a mix of retail, office and higher density residential land uses along with vibrant streets and urban amenities.***

In a mixed-use setting, residential, office and commercial uses nurture each other. Nearby residences provide retail businesses with a consumer base within walking distance. Nearby businesses provide residents and workers with convenient areas to shop and socialize, giving them a competitive advantage over other standard residential or office locations. Likewise, office uses provide restaurants with lunch and dinner customers while residents may choose to purchase a townhome or rent near their place of work.

One area in West Anchorage with emerging potential to function as a thriving Mixed-use Center is the Spenard Road environs north of the Benson Boulevard intersection. This area includes anchors like the REI Store, Tidal Wave Bookstore, Alaska Club, and Bear Tooth Restaurant. It is a popular destination for nearby residents as well as customers throughout the greater Anchorage Bowl. These businesses have successfully renovated older commercial buildings and now attract large numbers of customers to an area that was previously languishing. These anchor uses can serve to catalyze and attract other symbiotic uses that can benefit from and contribute to their continued success, reinvigorating a larger and larger area until a complete mixed-use town center emerges.

Recognizing the need for this diversity in a healthy mixed-use center, the *WADP* extends the town center designation to include the Carrs/Safeway grocery store and the Post Office.

*Anchorage 2020* proposed a neighborhood center at Raspberry Road and Jewel Lake. This area has an active commercial center with several anchor businesses, such as Tastee Freez and Kincaid Grill.

#### ***Objective #7***

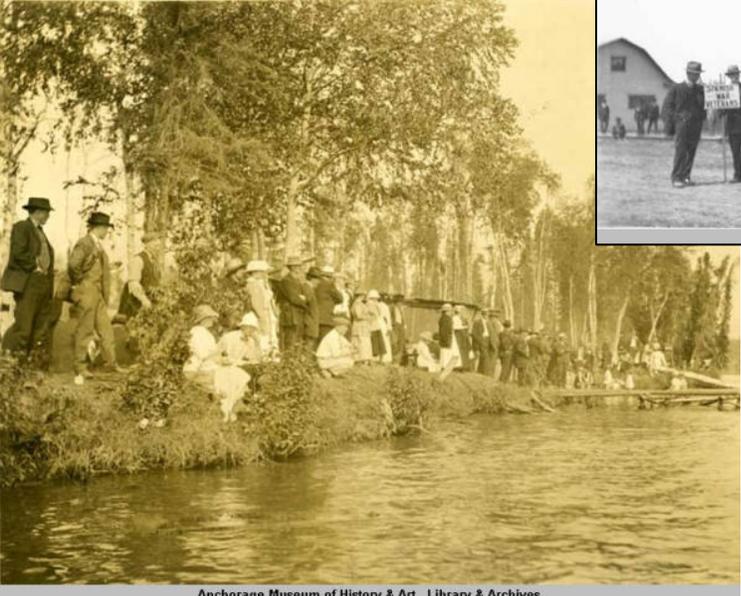
***Preserve sufficient developable industrial land with access to rail, air and truck transport, to meet estimated future demand and contribute to a strong, vibrant local economy.***

The *Industrial Lands Study*, commissioned by the Alaska Economic Development Corporation in 2009, concluded that the preservation of viable industrial land is a critical component in maintaining the health of Anchorage's resource and logistics driven economy. Given the relationship between employment growth and industrial land demand, the study estimated a deficit of developable industrial land in the Bowl. Growth in air cargo is one of the contributing industries with land needs.

*Anchorage 2020* reinforces this approach by identifying an Industrial Reserve in the eastern portions of the West Anchorage study area. The *WADP* implements this concept by assigning industrial land uses clustered around the intersection of Minnesota Drive and International Airport Road extending as far south as Raspberry Road. This area accommodates existing industrial uses and is proximate to major road, rail and air transportation facilities.

### 4.1.6 Spenard Strategic Planning Area

There is one area in West Anchorage that exhibits unique development potential and challenges that merit a more focused planning effort extending beyond the scope of the WADP. This area is centered along Spenard Road as shown on Exhibit 4-2.



Anchorage Museum of History & Art. Library & Archives.



Anchorage Museum of History & Art. Library & Archives.

#### History & Identity

Spenard Road was originally blazed as a 3-mile wagon trail to connect the lumber camp in Spenard to the tent city railroad camp at Ship Creek (also rumored to be a bootlegging route). The road became the commercial heart of the City of Spenard,

especially the initial mile from the Romig Hill southward. During its heyday, the City of Spenard was larger than the City of Anchorage. Unification of the City of Anchorage with the Greater Anchorage Area Borough occurred in 1975, but longtime residents retain their neighborhood pride and sense of separation from the city. During the Trans-Alaska Pipeline years, the bars, nightclubs, and massage parlors thrived, contributing to a colorful (and sometimes unsavory) reputation.

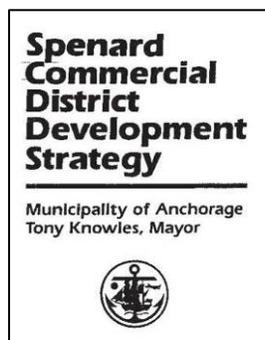


Since Spenard was one of the earliest areas in Anchorage to be developed, it exhibits many characteristics of lot configuration and street alignment that predate modern planning practices. This, combined with aging infrastructure, creates inherent problems in the area. For example, the ADOT&PF building at Benson and Spenard has no parking or street access, so it could not be reused or comply with zoning without combining parcels. Ironically, it is these same characteristics that lend Spenard the unique and unpredictable character that residents love and want to preserve.

Most of the Spenard corridor is zoned for general commercial land uses (B-3). This includes the former residential area between 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Benson Boulevard to the west of Spenard Road. The corridor's historic mix of uses—retail, arts, offices, residential, institutional, and hotels contributes to the eclectic nature of Spenard. Existing structures are old by Anchorage's standards. Development is often on small lots with inefficient layouts and parking configurations, but the same qualities that present challenges to redevelopment or reuse also make Spenard interesting and unique.

## Prior Planning Efforts in Spenard

### 1986 - Spenard Commercial District Development Strategy



Since at least the early 1980s, the Spenard business community, along with the adjacent residential neighborhoods, and the Municipality had actively supported commercial revitalization in this corridor. As a result, the *Spenard Commercial District Development Strategy* was prepared for the southern portion of Spenard in 1986 as part of a planning process to improve and revitalize the Spenard Road corridor. The strategy included recommendations for business district improvements and called for the establishment of a redevelopment agency that would support and fund improvements. Administrative recommendations included using tax increment financing, creation of a business association, and targeting a loan program through an agency called the Anchorage Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. This loan program was initiated and fostered some local business development in the corridor's south end (e.g., House of Harley). The road improvements, which included right-of-way acquisitions, demolition of blighted properties, and conversion to a three-lane road section with separate pedestrian facilities, was an essential strategy to the revitalization that was carried out in conjunction with local resident and business owner participation. The plan remains an element of the Municipality's comprehensive plan, and many of its recommendations are relevant today.

### 2001- Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan

*Anchorage 2020* provided a framework comprehensive plan for the Anchorage Bowl. It highlighted a growing need for infill and redevelopment in Anchorage's older commercial and residential neighborhoods. *Anchorage 2020's* Land Use Concept Plan specifically identified new or future commercial districts with different levels of development intensity, which included designating the northern portion of Spenard a "town center" and Spenard Road as a "transit-supportive development corridor."

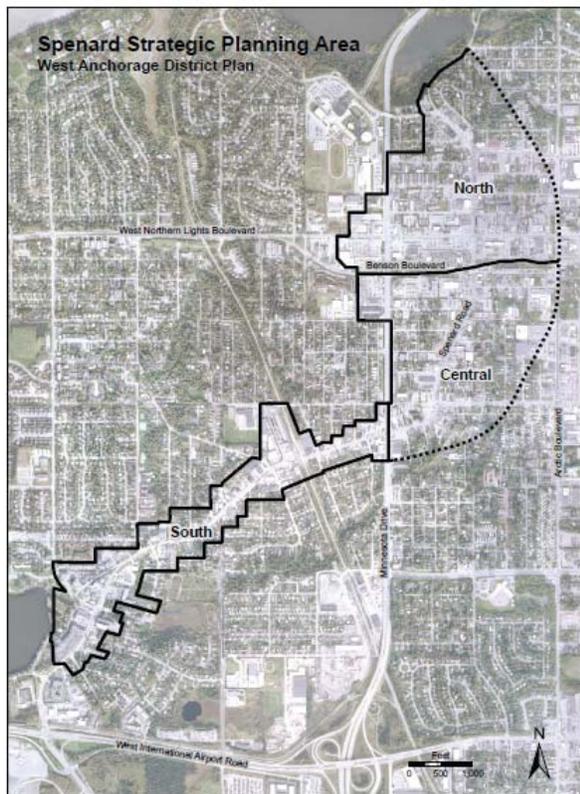
The "town center" concept incorporates a mix of retail shopping and services, public facilities and medium to high-density housing in an area approximately one-half mile to one mile in diameter. A "transit-supportive development corridor" represents optimal locations where increased commercial and residential intensities could support higher levels of transit service, and ideally result in 15- and 30-minute headways.

*Anchorage 2020* presented a series of implementation strategies for the plan's policies, including design standards, infill and redevelopment incentives, and zoning supportive of mixed-use development. The Title 21 Land Use Code rewrite is due to become code in 2011. It will represent a significant implementation step of *Anchorage 2020*. However, private investment within Spenard and community excitement about the corridor's potential has gone forward in the absence of these steps, primarily in the northern town center area. Examples of private business improvements include the Bear Tooth Theater and restaurant, the Sugar Spoon building, Spenard Roadhouse, and Northern Lights Mall (with REI, Title Wave, Kaladi Brothers). A Spenard Farmer's Market kicked off in 2010 and plans are in the works for the West-Romig campus improvements. The Municipality continues to plan for upgrades to Spenard Road, which would greatly enhance pedestrian amenities and safety. Recommendations from the 1986 Spenard Strategy plan and *Anchorage 2020* are still relevant, and public investment in the area would catalyze and guide redevelopment.

## 2010 - Spenard Road Reconstruction Project (MOA Project No. 03-22)



In 2006, planning began for the reconstruction and revitalization of Spenard Road from Minnesota Drive to Hillcrest Drive. Considerable effort was devoted to evaluation, analysis, new engineering design, and landowner outreach, which resulted in a final roadway design north of Benson. However, concern over construction closures and impacts to business, as well as a loss of on-site parking at several businesses contributed to delaying the project. The final plan had incorporated a three-lane roadway with pedestrian street amenities similar to the successful design for the road's south end. Most landowners, business owners and members of the public have accepted the three-lane concept as addressing most of the area's road corridor issues. Others, however, including various business owners, fear the new design will result in decreased traffic and drive customers away from area. The process has been restarted with public meetings to revisit the issues in the summer of 2010. Recent changes to state and federal road design standards support and favor three-lane roadways over the four-lane road configurations. Three-lane roadways generally offer safer vehicle access to businesses, have positive impact on the adjacent business environment, and calm traffic through reduced speeds while still carrying large traffic volumes.



### *Corridor Characteristics & Structure*

For purposes of discussion and future planning, the Spenard corridor is divided into three discrete segments. Beginning in the south, the first is situated west of Minnesota Drive, the second lies between Minnesota Drive and Benson Boulevard and the third extends from Benson Boulevard to Hillcrest Drive. Each segment is shown on the exhibit to the left and discussed in the following sections.

## Southern Segment [International Airport Road to Minnesota Drive]



### General Description

This segment was the focus of the *Spenard Commercial District Development Strategy*. As an element of the Anchorage Comprehensive Plan, this plan provided an outline for revitalizing what was then a deteriorating section of Anchorage. Land values, public safety, and Anchorage's gateway image near the airport were declining rapidly. This document provided an action plan to create economic stability, support redevelopment, along with major Spenard Road improvements. Construction of the recommended road improvements followed shortly after the plan. These included an expanded corridor based on a three-lane configuration, separated sidewalks on both sides, pedestrian and landscape amenities, and formal crosswalks at all traffic lights. Some short segments are the more typical four-lane road. A few small open space parks sites were acquired and interspersed in the area. This road project was based on the Spenard Strategy's goals, local business and community council support, and public participation. It carried a requirement that future planning efforts include public participation. Recent data show that this southerly section of Spenard Road handles more traffic volume than areas to the north with nearly half the number of accidents.

	North Spenard Road <i>4-lanes Hillcrest to 30th</i>	South Spenard Road <i>3-lanes Northwood to Tanglewood</i>
<i>Length</i>	0.51 miles	0.67 miles
<i>Average Traffic Volume</i>	13,860 trips/day	18,958 trips/day
<i>Total Accidents</i>	81	53

*Source: MOA traffic accident data from 1996-2007*

Spenard's south end includes office spaces, some light industrial uses, restaurants and other auto-oriented activities, and a concentration of newer hotels/motels. Single-family neighborhoods and an aging trailer park about the area. Pedestrian amenities and connectivity along the corridor and into adjacent neighborhoods is considered much

better here than other parts of the corridor. Given recent development activities and the relative younger age of existing structures, it appears that the area has comparatively low redevelopment potential compared to other sections of the corridor. This southern end does have some of the same parking problems and deficiencies that are common farther north, but many of the new developments have adequate on-site parking. On-street parking is limited.

### Development Recommendations

The *WADP* recommends some minor changes and upgrades to the area's land use. It focuses a new mixed-use designation and encourages some higher density residential to improve transit viability. The plan assigns various commercial corridor, medium- and high-density residential, and town center land uses along the Spenard Road corridor. These land use designations will help implement the *Anchorage 2020* policies and goals for this end of the transit corridor.

### **Middle Segment [Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard]**



### General Description

This segment is defined by major intersections on either end, one at Minnesota Drive and the other at Benson Boulevard. This middle section of the corridor includes the largest variety of land uses, the highest vacant parcel counts, and some of the oldest buildings. Business turnover appears to have been the highest here over the past few decades. An old trailer park is located in the southeast corner. The presence of two large curves, numerous direct access driveways, irregular curb and gutter, and nearly nonexistent sidewalks combine to make this stretch of the corridor the least safe section of Spenard Road. There are only two formal pedestrian crossings on Spenard, at the 36th Avenue traffic light and at the north end's Benson light. There is essentially no open space or nearby parkland.

The area west of Spenard and north of 36th Avenue contains an assemblage of older small subdivided lots, which include original residences, homes converted to cottage-industry and office uses, new and old commercial uses, recombined lots with new office buildings, and many underutilized, chronically vacant parcels. The east-west roads in this section are substandard and narrow with no pedestrian amenities, and there is no interior north-south road network--which forces traffic unnecessarily onto Minnesota Drive and Spenard Road. Parking is recognized as a particular problem in this middle segment and many

establishments rely on formal and informal parking agreements to provide for basic or augmented parking needs. This is particularly true at the north end of this segment.

### Development Recommendations

The *WADP* includes recommendations that support an evolution of this area towards a mixed-use, neighborhood commercial corridor. It identifies the area west of Spenard Road and north of 36th Avenue (where vacant underutilized parcels are concentrated), as city center residential. This includes fairly high densities, such as those found at the north end of Spenard, or near the downtown City Market. It is clear that achieving these land uses will require new regulation, upgrades to local roads and pedestrian infrastructure, participation by the Municipality, property owners and developers, and changes to Spenard Road that complement new uses and intensities. These upgrades may include acquiring new north-south road rights-of-way to support local circulation and access. Upgraded pedestrian amenities will be essential to the long-term success of this area. Here the corridor needs new pedestrian crossings and potentially adjusted alignments added to the roadway and to the new residential areas on the west side. The Municipality's original 1986 Spenard Strategy plan recommended a future planning effort to address this area and extend roadway and redevelopment solutions begun in the southern segment. Because of existing right-of-way constraints, this effort will take concerted effort with creative solutions that support the new land uses.

### **Northern Segment [Benson Boulevard to Hillcrest Drive]**



### General Description

North Spenard is developing into one of Anchorage's most exciting retail areas. This segment of Spenard is similar to the middle segment in that the area constitutes more than just a simple narrow road corridor. It was also identified as a potential "*town center*" by *Anchorage 2020*. This policy designation was intended for a mini city-center type district that would serve residents from the surrounding area with commercial anchors and mixed land uses but also attract residents from throughout the Bowl. The *town center* designation acknowledged that the area already had certain catalyst uses, including a post office, a two school campus, a large grocery store and pharmacy, significant and popular retail stores, restaurants, and related destinations. Coupled with the *town center* designation, *Anchorage 2020* noted that certain actions would be required to sustain the intended long-

term land use changes including possible zoning district changes, zoning overlays, and related regulatory items.

This center is emerging despite obvious challenges including traffic congestion and safety problems, inadequate and/or poorly located parking, and limited or unsafe pedestrian infrastructure. The only pedestrian crossings on Spenard Road exist at busy traffic lights. There are limited or unsafe connections between land uses on the west side of Minnesota with areas to the east, especially related to the West High School-Romig campus.

The northern portion of this segment also includes some of the Bowl's highest residential densities within a large number of apartment complexes (with densities greater than 35 (dwelling units per acre). The area has one of the highest rates of Anchorage Police Department (APD) calls within the Bowl. In general, and especially in this high-density section, there is a distinct lack of public open space or parks. Parking spaces at both commercial sites and within the residential developments on the east-west streets are inconsistent or deficient. The combination of narrow streets with no sidewalks, small lots, irregular easements, and inconsistent right-of-way, the presence of dumpsters, parking lot bollards, power poles, etc. further limits local parking, local traffic flow, snow removal, and pedestrian movements, and also limits business redevelopment and expansion. Commercial truck routes include Spenard Road. Local delivery truck traffic generally has limited maneuverability.

In 2008, the Municipality and its contractors undertook a detailed analysis of roadway conditions, traffic data, and landowner outreach, which ultimately led to a recommendation for a new three-lane configuration for Spenard north of Benson. According to the studies, the three-lane configuration will resolve the safety issues on the corridor, accommodate current and projected traffic volumes, and greatly improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation bringing both systems into compliance with ADA (American Disabilities Act) standards. Furthermore, the four-lane section without a center turn lane is no longer supported by AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials). Despite this, the three-lane section is opposed by a few businesses. Opposition appears to be based on the perception that fewer cars will use the road (thus reducing drive-by clientele), as well as the fear of losing convenient business access during construction for an extended period of time.

#### *Development Recommendations*

Consistent with *Anchorage 2020*, the *WADP* Land Use Plan designates much of Spenard's north end as a town center. As noted earlier, these centers are intended to integrate larger scale retail, public services, and civic facilities that support a significant segment of West Anchorage. Non-residential land uses support the needs of the adjacent residential neighborhoods and broader community and are to be pedestrian oriented in order to diversify access and transportation modes. These are essentially mini downtowns, and the district's evolution continues to contribute to the history of Spenard. Both north and south of the town center, city center residential intensities are designated to either mirror existing conditions or expand them into a larger area. These residential densities will further support the service and retail land uses in the town center. The remainder of the north end of Spenard is designated for commercial corridor uses. In order to facilitate these long-term land use goals, considerable supplemental regulation and support will be necessary. Chief among these would be future context sensitive upgrades to Spenard Road, especially between Benson and Hillcrest Drive, and increased parking and loading opportunities for local businesses. The roadway design must support and facilitate the plan's land uses.

As noted earlier, the process for finalizing this roadway upgrade is ongoing. This plan recommends that the three-lane section be implemented for Spenard Road alongside comprehensive parking, loading, and construction access solutions for local businesses. In addition to meeting the primary objective of safety, the new road is consistent with many of

the goals of this plan. Further outreach to local businesses is essential to help achieve buy-in to the design and create a construction mitigation plan. A redesigned Spenard Road is not the only step in a reinvigorated Spenard, but it is an essential one.

It is also worth noting that the *Midtown District Plan* ends at Spenard Road. A draft of that Plan places no special emphasis on Spenard as a self contained subdistrict. Consequently, the *WADP* shows an indefinite future Strategic Planning Area boundary for Spenard extending into Midtown and recommends that the policies and land uses of the two plans be revisited and reconciled in the future.

### ***Opportunities & Challenges***

From the discussion above, it is clear that Spenard is ripe for significant change. But due to the complexity and diversity of land use issues and existing conditions, it lies beyond the scope of this plan to sufficiently address them at the appropriate level of detail. In order to develop a comprehensive course of actions to overcome the constraints and capitalize on the opportunities in Spenard, this plan recommends that the Municipality undertake a ***Spenard Corridor Strategic Plan*** as a follow-on effort to the *WADP*.

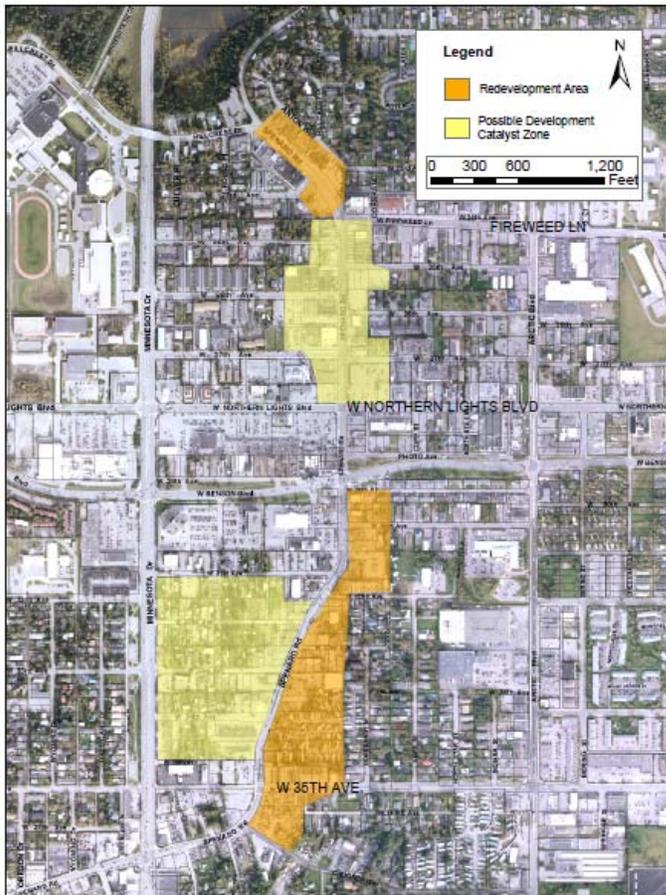
The following summarizes the essential opportunities and inherent challenges associated with the Spenard corridor. The following topics are highlighted for inclusion in the future corridor plan.

#### Challenges:

- Multiple curb cuts
- Parking deficiencies
- Small, substandard lot configurations
- Lack of sidewalks or narrow sidewalks
- Lack of N-S road access in some areas
- Unsafe vehicle movements
- Variable ROW widths
- Insufficient and/or deteriorating infrastructure
- Busy streets create barriers to pedestrian access
- Lack of active public parks and open space
- Aging buildings
- Undefined area boundary
- Stiff competition with nationwide commercial franchises in other areas



*In order to expand, the owner of Blaine's Art (a longtime Alaska business) had to consolidate 3 nearby lots because an expansion to square footage at the original location would not comply with current Title 21 requirements.*



*Sites with redevelopment potential are concentrated in the middle and northern portions of the Corridor. Redevelopment of these areas could expand on the successful business renovations on Spenard Road near Benson Boulevard and Northern Lights Boulevard.*

## Opportunities

- New building renovations
- Mixed uses
- Interesting, eclectic character
- Established businesses
- Loyal clientele
- Emerging entertainment and retail hub with citywide “anchors”
- Public transportation routes
- Affordable rental rates facilitate startup businesses
- Greenbelt and park interfaces
- Adjacent West-Romig community campus plan
- Hotel/hospitality hub
- Unified streetscape established on south Spenard Road
- Extra ROW width on the north side of Benson Boulevard between Minnesota Drive and Spenard Road

## ***Strategic Planning Directions***

The following items represent suggested physical planning features and redevelopment considerations that should be explored in a future planning effort. The plan should result in long-term policies and recommendations that support the redevelopment and growth of Spenard into a dynamic and thriving mixed-use town center. These concepts are illustrated in Exhibit 4-2.

### Physical Form

- Develop a comprehensive solution to redevelopment of Spenard Road that more efficiently accommodates existing and future traffic volumes, facilitates access by automobile, pedestrian and bicycle customers, and provides for convenient business parking and loading.
- Identify and locate entry/gateway monuments and directional signage to market and identify Spenard as a unique and distinct district.
- Consider feasibility of mid-block crossings or other design techniques to address barriers to pedestrian movement caused by high speed roadways such as Northern Lights Boulevard, Benson Boulevard, Spenard Road and Minnesota Drive. Traffic flow must also be taken into consideration and accommodated.

- Use “liner buildings” (buildings close to the sidewalk) near streets to break up large parking areas and/or create a more inviting and “pedestrian-friendly” street environment. Candidate locations might include the Carrs/Safeway Grocery (Aurora Village) and Northern Lights (REI) center.
- Address small substandard lots through land assembly, lot consolidation (re-platting), and/or model demonstration projects to create a main street catalyst project.
- Identify the acquisition of parcels to create new north-south right-of-way linkages in potential redevelopment areas between Spenard Road and Minnesota Drive both north of Northern Lights Boulevard and South of Benson Boulevard.
- Develop an attractive pedestrian gateway linking Spenard Road and the West-Romig Campus along West 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- Explore additional opportunities to use the Fish Creek Greenbelt as a design element and trail interface where it crosses Spenard Road
- Identify district-wide parking solutions, including eliminating or reducing individual off-street parking requirements, use of shared parking agreements, creation of strategically located public parking lots and on street parking. Loading solutions must also be considered for business deliveries and customer pick up of heavy merchandise.
- Provide safe access to local businesses for pedestrians and bicycles.
- Identify ways to enhance the public transit system as a component of a convenient mixed-use center. Identify optimal locations for bus stops considering new land use patterns and accessibility to pedestrian/bicycle facilities.

#### Land Use Components

- Delineation of Community and Commercial Activity Hubs;
- Interconnection of Employment Nodes and Activity Hubs;
- Commercial Redevelopment Catalyst Sites;
- New or expanded High-density Residential Opportunity Sites; and
- Commuter Rail Station Opportunity.

#### Redevelopment Strategies

- Areawide Parking/Redevelopment Authority;
- Spenard or Midtown Business Improvement District;
- Business Association; and
- Funding and tax strategies focused on funding infrastructure upgrades.

#### ***Recommendations/Conclusions***

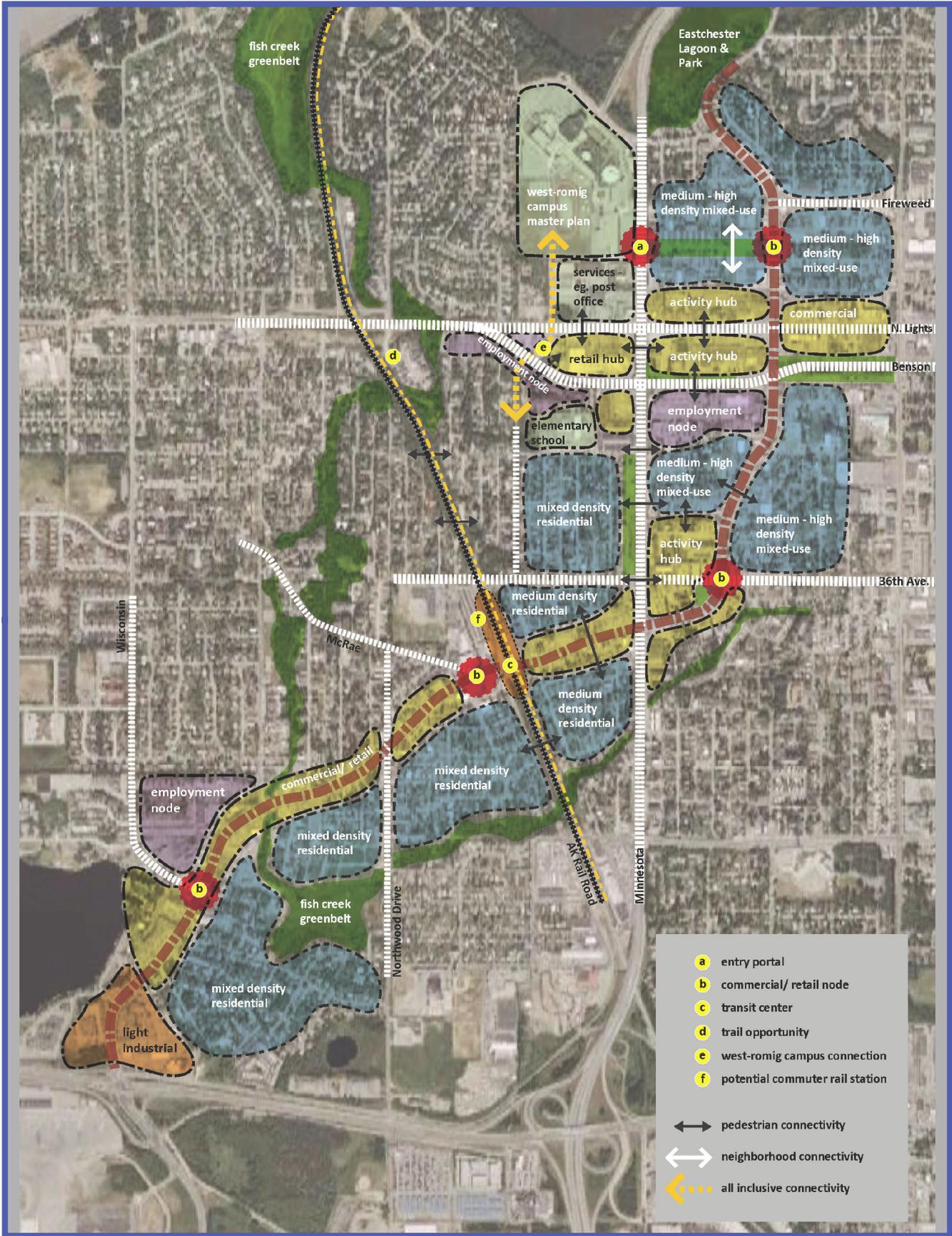
Municipalities across the country are taking an active role in redevelopment efforts to catalyze economic development in underutilized areas. Without local government incentives and participation, redevelopment is typically slow. Redevelopment is often viewed by developers, banks, and landowners as risky, so local government participation is often essential.

Given the economic conditions and redevelopment potential associated with the Spenard corridor, it is clear that Spenard is changing. Facets of the corridor’s built environment will require significant and possibly costly upgrades, especially road improvements to increase connectivity and develop pedestrian features, and parking solutions. Along with investment and land use regulation incentives and fixes, these improvements will serve as the building blocks for a revitalized Spenard corridor and town center. In the end, careful investment in the district can result in positive economic benefits to the Municipality, a thriving district for both visitors and residents, and the building block for sustainable growth.

Leadership among property and business owners and local residents is essential. A Spenard redevelopment plan should be centered on a common future vision and create clear expectations for the roles of the private and public sectors. Recent business interest in sidewalk maintenance, beautification, and participation in the Spenard Farmers Market are all promising signs of commitment to a common future. Adjacent residential development is essential to help create a thriving commercial area and supply housing to meet the *Anchorage 2020* growth targets.

In order to achieve the long-term vision of the Spenard corridor and the intent of *Anchorage 2020* policies and strategies for West Anchorage, the following are deemed essential. These initial actions should be undertaken in the next two to four years:

1. The Municipality should undertake a Spenard corridor redevelopment plan.
2. Focusing first on the North and Central subareas, the plan should include (a) more detailed analysis on the physical conditions, opportunities and constraints present, (b) a market feasibility analysis and (c) recommendations on current, effective economic development tools that could be applied to facilitate redevelopment. Equal attention should be given to commercial and residential development.
3. Based on the tasks in item 2, the plan should identify effective approaches to incorporate aspects of the *Anchorage 2020* town center concept for the area centered at the intersection of West Northern Lights Boulevard and Spenard Road.
4. Facilitate upgrade of Spenard Road by implementing a comprehensive program to establish solutions that improve traffic flow, parking, loading, pedestrian safety, and effective business access during future road construction. Focus is intended first on the segment from Benson to Hillcrest (Phase 1) followed by a second phase to undertake planning between Minnesota and Benson.
5. Evaluate two new zoning districts in the Title 21 Rewrite that would:
  - Apply to the town center area for boundaries, regulations and standards, and applicability, for the north end of the Spenard corridor (and subsequently other sections).
  - Pursue potential for a Spenard town center overlay district with a focus primarily on addressing parking requirements and locations, but also, to a lesser degree, pedestrian access, as well as some modest design standards to ensure protection of private and public investments.
6. The corridor plan should include methods, funding mechanisms, and identify parcels for strategic acquisition and/or parcel consolidation that promotes an expanded parking environment and that promotes redevelopment and the pedestrian environment throughout the corridor. Alternatives to individual off-street parking requirements should be explored, including public lots, shared parking, reduced requirements, and on-street parking. Opportunities should be explored for the creation of community spaces that will draw visitors and residents alike.
7. Formalize local leadership to form a Business Improvement District (BID) to maintain and market the area, and coordinate parking, parking lot maintenance, and snow removal.
8. The Municipality, in conjunction with landowners, commercial tenants, local residential neighborhoods, transportation planners, and the general public should pursue an engineered new Spenard Road design from the Spenard–Minnesota Intersection to Hillcrest Drive. This road project should be in context with and support the *WADP* and *Anchorage 2020* land use policies and recommendations, the pedestrian environment, and local businesses.



West Anchorage District Plan  
**Exhibit 4-2: Spenard Strategic Planning Area**

