

## WEST ANCHORAGE DISTRICT PLAN SCOPE, PURPOSE & INTENT

### *WADP PURPOSE*

The West Anchorage District Plan (WADP) is one of several district plans that is intended to implement the policies and strategies of *Anchorage 2020 - Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan*, particularly in the policy areas of land use and transportation. Other district plans completed or underway include the Downtown, Mid-town, and Hillside District Plans. Each area has their unique and common elements.

There are a number of planning issues that the WADP must address:

- **Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (TSAIA)**. TSAIA , an important transportation hub and major economic generator for Southcentral Alaska, is located in West Anchorage. In addition to its direct employment, TSAIA supports indirect employment and associated land uses beyond airport boundaries, and accounts for an estimated one of every eight jobs in Anchorage. However, as growth has occurred around and within the airport, concern over off-site impacts has increased, particularly noise, traffic, water and air quality impacts from airport land uses. *Anchorage 2020* identifies the state-owned and -operated airport as one of seven key planning issues that will influence future growth in the Anchorage Bowl. *Anchorage 2020* provides direction for development of the West Anchorage District Plan (WADP) through a collaborative planning process involving the State, Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), and the community to address issues of mutual concern.

In consideration of that direction and in response to airport growth, community growth surrounding the airport, recreational uses on and around the airport, and related airport impacts on the adjacent area, *Anchorage 2020* created a **West Anchorage Planning Area**. The planning area "recognizes a symbiotic relationship between the airport and the surrounding community, and that activities from one can impact the other." The planning area serves as a mechanism to formally identify, address and resolve land use conflicts within and near the airport.

The WADP will provide strategies that are consistent with both *Anchorage 2020* and the *TSAIA Master Plan* (and its related documents), and that provide guidance for growth and development in the planning area. Impacts from airport and area growth and development on adjacent neighborhoods, traffic, land use, public infrastructure, open space and recreational lands, and the natural environment will be identified and addressed. The WADP will also address the location of future off-site airport-related industrial uses so that efficient transportation links are established to and from the airport with minimal impacts to residential

neighborhoods. *Anchorage 2020* specifically identifies the WADP as one strategy to preserve key industrial lands in the Bowl for future industrial use.

- *Anchorage 2020* identifies potential sites for several **Town Centers** throughout the Anchorage Bowl. As depicted in *Anchorage 2020*, the West Anchorage Planning Area includes or is adjacent to two town centers, one at the intersection of Northern Lights/Benson Couplet and Minnesota, and one at the intersection of Dimond and Jewel Lake. West Anchorage also includes a prospective neighborhood commercial center, a transit-supportive development corridor, and an industrial reserve area. Certain areas such as Spenard Road and Dimond Boulevard may need additional attention. The WADP will address these elements in the plan development process.
- *Anchorage 2020* provided a **Land Use Policy Map**, which is intended to provide guidance to zoning, subdivision, and municipal land management decisions. District Plans are intended to provide specific guidance to development of land use policy maps based on local issues and characteristics. While much of the acreage in West Anchorage is dominated by airport and recreational uses, the planning area includes a mix of other uses. Residential development is the predominant non-airport/park use, ranging from older subdivisions (some with on-site water and septic) to newer subdivisions of large homes constructed to meet current standards. Anchorage 2020 objectives regarding increased residential density and mixed residential/commercial uses (as exemplified by town centers and transit supportive corridors) must also be addressed. Commercial development is concentrated in certain corridors, such as Spenard Road, Dimond Boulevard, and International Airport Road, and in pockets elsewhere in the planning area. Industrial uses occur outside the airport, particularly along International Airport Road and along the C Street corridor; identification of industrial reserves is an element of *Anchorage 2020*. Finally important fish and wildlife habitat, natural open space, and wetlands and lakes/watersheds important to flood control and water quality must be addressed in the West Anchorage Planning Process. The West Anchorage District Plan will include a land use plan map, which will help summarize and implement the issues and strategies listed above.
- Finally, West Anchorage has other important **transportation assets** besides TSAIA. The Alaska Railroad traverses the West Anchorage planning area, and provides service to TSAIA, as do several municipal transit routes. Several major east-west and north-south transportation corridors are located in the planning area, including areas crucial to freight movement. The WADP must look at the relationships between TSAIA and rail and truck traffic, and land use requirements. It must also analyze the potential for residential, commercial, and industrial growth, and implications for transportation facility condition and service levels. The transportation system analysis should recognize the diversity of needs related to transportation: freight, bike, automobile, pedestrian, transit, and rail. Recognizing the Municipal policy of context sensitive solutions for

roadways, the plan may also emphasize these differing contexts as opportunities to enhance residential, commercial, industrial, or mixed use developments.

**Planning Area Boundaries**

Anchorage 2020 shows the West Anchorage Planning Area generally spanning the area bordered by Knik Arm/Cook Inlet to the north and west, Dimond Boulevard to the south, and C Street/Midtown District Plan Boundary to the east. The Midtown District western boundary is Spenard Road, and the West Anchorage Plan must address how to approach the Spenard Road and Dimond Boulevard corridors as a functional whole. In the course of preparing the West Anchorage District Plan, particularly the District Profile, land use analysis, and public involvement, the District Plan boundaries will be defined.

## **PLANNING MILESTONES**

Initial tasks will involve developing a public involvement program with initial implementation to identify stakeholder issues and concerns; preparing a district profile that provides a description of existing conditions in the planning area; specific delineation of the planning area boundary; developing an area-specific land use policy map; and recommending plan implementation actions and strategies. The interim result of the project will be a Public Review Draft of the WADP followed by a Public Hearing Draft that will be submitted for formal review of agencies and the general public, recommendations by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and adoption by the Anchorage Assembly as part of Anchorage's Comprehensive Plan.

The first meeting of the West Anchorage Planning Committee (WAPC) will outline the roles and responsibilities of the committee members, describe the vision and core values of the individual members and the organizations they represent, and start discussion the first milestone of the WADP planning process.

### ***Milestone 1: Develop West Anchorage District Profile***

The district profile report is intended to serve as a baseline for plan development. It will provide stakeholders with a clear picture of community characteristics and historic trends. This document will summarize historic and existing conditions in the West Anchorage area.

The district profile will include: planning area boundaries, population and demographics, housing, employment and income, land use and ownership, zoning, public facilities, parks and trails, transportation, and utilities. It will also include characteristics of the natural environment, such as wetlands, wildlife habitat, surface and groundwater hydrology, and soils. A description will be provided of the sources used to develop the report, as well as a discussion of the opportunities and challenges posed, and implications for future land use and regulations.

Data, research, and input gathered from this task will assist MOA to evaluate the suitability of existing vacant land and underdeveloped land that may be developed for future residential use. The profile will contribute to the development of a potential residential buildout scenario for the planning area by calculating the potential number of additional housing units that could be constructed under existing zoning, taking into account environmental values that must be protected and environmental constraints on potential development.

### ***Milestone 2: Designate Planning Area Boundaries***

MOA has considered the West Anchorage District to be the area bordered by Knik Arm/Cook Inlet to the north and to the west, Dimond Boulevard to the south and C Street (exclusive of the Midtown District Plan boundary) to the east. However, the actual planning boundary will be defined by working with the stakeholders and the Advisory

Group, in accord with guidance from *Anchorage 2020*, and implications of the district profile. There is specific concern regarding the outer edge of the plan boundary in relation to the TSAIA, particularly regarding airport-related commercial and industrial activities, requirements for public infrastructure, interaction with residential, transportation, and recreational land uses. The boundary delineation process will also review the applicability and suitability of the eight-minute travel time standard for the airport support service sector that was used in *Anchorage 2020*. Public involvement will be crucial in refining the planning area boundaries.

### ***Milestone 3: Identify Issues and Opportunities***

Effective goals and objectives must reflect community issues, concerns, vision, and opportunities in order to provide clear direction for developing implementation recommendations. Areas that appear to be common priorities among the stakeholders can be emphasized while also addressing areas of conflict that must be resolved. Clear links between issues, goals, objectives, and recommendations, will maximize the potential for public consent with the implementation measures developed in the planning process.

Building on the information gathered from Tasks 1 and 2, following direction from *Anchorage 2020*, and identifying issues to resolve and planning area characteristics to be strengthened will assist in formulating goals, objectives, and future implementation action items. The WAPC will review and comment on the initial draft of issues and opportunities developed. The products from this task will be summarized in a report that will be included in the Public Review Draft WADP.

It is important to link transportation systems and land use, quality of life and amenities, business opportunities and economic vitality. Employment and demographic data closely relate to transportation and associated land use. The WADP will support planning strategies in *Anchorage 2020*, and other MOA policy, and the TSAIA Master Plan, integrating transportation elements with land use elements to reflect needed improvements.

### ***Milestone 4: Public Review Draft WADP***

The public review draft WADP will convey comprehensive information in a manner that is easy for the public, staff members, municipal councils, and decision makers to use. We will build upon products developed in the prior tasks in compiling the draft plan and its elements.

A detailed WADP framework will be developed in the early stages of the planning process. Elements will focus on major policy categories of land use and transportation, while incorporating other elements such as: community amenities, connections and links to recreation opportunities, and environmental concerns, based on the results of work completed in the prior tasks.

Community input will shape the goals and objectives. The District Profile will serve as a baseline for the plan and the planning area boundary will define the physical parameters

of the project. The issues and opportunities identified and the goals and objectives will be key elements.

Critical elements of the Public Review Draft will likely include:

- ▶ Introduction to the Planning Area and Stakeholders
  - \* Vision statement
- ▶ Overview of the Planning Process, and Integration with Anchorage 2020 and the TSAIA Master Plan and other guidance plans and policies
- ▶ Existing Conditions and Issues in the West Anchorage Planning Area
- ▶ Land Use/Development Considerations
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Detailed Land Use Plan Map
- ▶ Concept Plan
- ▶ Implementation Plan including Strategies and Recommendations
- ▶ Technical Appendices

WAPC comments will be incorporated to develop the Public Review Draft, which will be released to the public for review and linked to the Municipality website.

***Milestone 5: Completion of the WADP Public Hearing Draft***

Comments from the public, municipal departments, agencies, and the WAPC will be incorporated into a Public Hearing Draft. The plan will again be presented to the Municipality for internal review. Suggested changes will be incorporated prior finalizing the Public Hearing Draft. This version will also be available to the public review including a public hearing at the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Public Hearing Draft will be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Municipal Assembly for review, recommendation, and adoption. The final version of the WADP will be produced by the Municipality which would incorporate changes made by the Assembly.