

INCARCERATION AND REHABILITATION FACILITIES

The Palmer Correctional Center, located within the Sutton planning boundary, is now, and has consistently been, proposed for expansion by the Alaska Department of Corrections because it is the least costly



Palmer Correctional Center, photo from <http://www.correct.state.ak.us/corrections/institutions/pcc/pcc.jsf>

facility able to provide additional medium security beds. The

improvements proposed as part of the expansion will mitigate some of the existing and potential impacts of this facility. Incarceration centers, including jails, juvenile detention centers, prisons, and similar facilities, are land uses that raise unique concerns when compared to other land uses. Chief among the concerns is the safety of the surrounding community. In 1997 a community survey performed by the Alpine Civic Club (the precursor to the Sutton Community Council) revealed that the majority of the community is opposed to expanding the existing Palmer Correctional Center. In addition, the April 2007 community survey also indicated Sutton residents have continued concerns about prison expansion and community safety.

Another concern of the community is that there is an inadequate backstop for the Correctional Center's shooting range. Because the negative impacts on the community of Sutton increase proportionally with the size of a correctional facility, a prison population in excess of 700 inmates is not recommended. The planning team opposes the construction of any new prison facilities within the planning area. Expansion of the existing facility is acceptable only when certain conditions are met.

Recommendations:

- **Prohibit all types of incarceration facilities within the Sutton Planning Area.**
- **The existing Palmer Correctional Facility is “grandfathered” and may be allowed to expand if and when certain conditions are met that will reduce the impact on the surrounding community. These conditions include:**

- **Substantially reducing the glare from light fixtures emanating off-site or into the night sky using the best available technology, and**
- **Enclosing all inmate facilities with perimeter fencing and adequate security systems, and**
- **Constructing other improvements needed to assure the safety of the surrounding community, including improved safety measures to the existing shooting range, and**
- **Limiting the hours of operation of the prison's rifle range to normal business hours; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and**
- **Adhering to other measures to mitigate existing and potential negative impacts on the surrounding community.**
- **Developing and implementing regulations that protect water, land, and air quality.**
- **Protecting water availability and water quality.**
- **Protecting residential neighborhoods and associate property values.**
- **Limiting prison population to no more than 700.**

In addition, Department of Correction's personnel have indicated that the Palmer Correctional Center will never be converted to a maximum security prison. The community of Sutton has historically and continues to adamantly oppose any large, medium or maximum security facility being established in the Sutton Planning Area.

Recommendations:

- **Prohibit the conversion of the existing facility to a maximum security facility.**
- **Prohibit large, medium security facilities.**

The 620-acre site of the Palmer Correctional Center was also considered as the site of an additional privately operated prison facility. While a site at Point MacKenzie was selected for the Borough's future prison site, the temptation of a for-profit organization to make cost-cutting concessions sacrificing the safety of the surrounding community was deemed inappropriate by the planning team. Public agencies such as the Department of Corrections are more directly responsible to the public and to the community of Sutton than privately run facilities.

Recommendations:

- **The community of Sutton continues to oppose and desires to prohibit privately run incarceration facilities, including conversion of the existing Palmer Correctional Center to private management or operation.**
- **Protect the Sutton area from future prison site selection.**

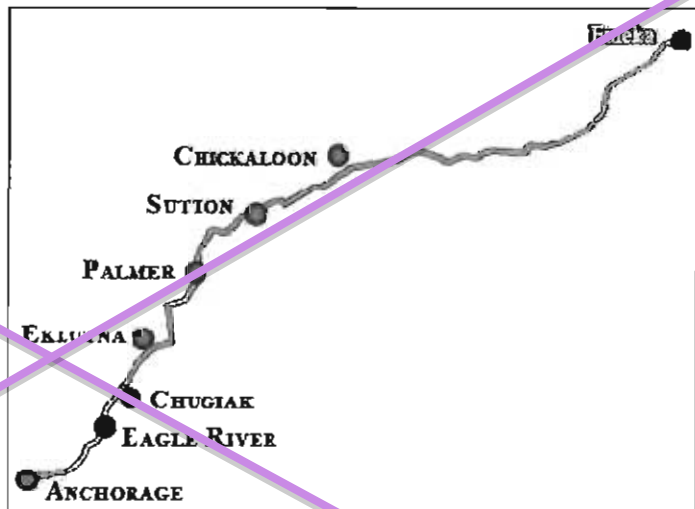
Rehabilitation centers including community residential correctional centers (halfway houses) and other facilities for which the treatment of drug or alcohol addiction may be mandated to the facility’s participants have raised similar safety concerns to incarceration facilities. The community of Sutton is especially ill suited to the needs of a community residential center which must be in close proximity to jobs and other facilities to allow residents to lead a semi-autonomous but supervised transition to a productive working life. The rural community of Sutton lacks the job opportunities, public services, and other community infrastructure necessary for such a facility to be successful; however, it recognizes that some type of treatment facility may be appropriate, with adequate public input and safeguards.

Recommendation:

- **Community Residential Correctional Centers (halfway houses) and drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers catering to individuals mandated to seek drug and alcohol rehabilitation should be conditionally permitted in the Sutton Planning Area.**

DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO THROUGH ROAD CORRIDORS

The Glenn Highway is the only road within the planning area connecting Sutton with communities and services outside the planning area. The Glenn is of special importance because of its link to the more developed areas of the Mat-Su Borough and Anchorage. Residents in the Sutton area must rely on this transportation corridor for emergency services and, in many instances, shopping and commuting. Hence, the functionality of this highway is especially important. Development and



Glenn Highway Map
Found at <http://glennhighway.org>