

## PREFACE

### PURPOSE OF PLANNING

The purpose of planning is to provide the residents, property owners and other members of the community the ability to make effective decisions about the needs and goals of their community. The 1970 Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan included a short section pertaining to the Sutton area. The population has grown from 6,509 people in the Borough in 1970 to over 80,000 at the time of this plan revision. As a result, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan has been recently (2005) updated to reflect the changing needs of Borough residents. There are a number of people who currently reside in the Borough that were not involved in the 1970 planning process. This Comprehensive planning effort expands upon the Borough-wide 1970 plan and the Borough-wide 2005 update with recommendations developed specifically by the Sutton community.

A comprehensive plan is a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social, and economic development, both private and public, of a community. It is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public's peace, health, and safety.

Alaska Statute Title 29.40.030 requires that the Assembly of a second-class Borough adopt a comprehensive plan by ordinance. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough was incorporated as a second-class Borough in 1964. Alaska Statute defines a comprehensive plan as "a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social, and economic development, both private and public," of an area. The comprehensive plan may include, but is not limited to, statements of policies, goals, standards, a land use plan, a community facilities plan, and recommendations for implementation of the comprehensive plan.

Matanuska-Susitna Borough Title 15.24.030 requires the Borough Assembly to prepare comprehensive plans designed to:

- Promote safety for vehicular and pedestrian traffic, prevent congestion and preserve the function of roads;
- Secure safety from fire, flood, pollution, and other dangers;
- Promote health and general welfare;
- Provide for orderly development with a range of population densities, in harmony with the ability to provide services efficiently, while avoiding overcrowding of population;

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- Provide adequate light and air;
- Preserve the natural resources;
- Preserve property values;
- Promote economic development; and
- Facilitate adequate provision for transportation, water, waste disposal, schools, recreation, and other public requirements.

The comprehensive plan provides the community with a method of analyzing past development and influencing the future outlook of their community. Information about a community, its economy, land use, public facilities, and transportation facilities are collected and analyzed. Projections of community growth and future needs are made. Through citizen participation, community goals and objectives are identified. Recommendations for land use, public facilities, and transportation facilities are developed based on these goals and objectives.

The effectiveness of a plan is determined by the extent to which it is used. Public agencies use a comprehensive plan as a guide when determining the best location of schools, parks, streets, and other public improvements. The comprehensive plan enables a community to reserve land necessary for public uses in advance of rising costs or competing land use. The plan is also a guide to individuals and private companies when making investment and development decisions. It should be used as a guide whenever questions affecting development within the community arise.

Planning should be a continuing process. A comprehensive plan is based on information available at a particular time. In the future, new developments may occur and the needs of the community may change; at that time the plan should be reviewed and updated. Because of the rapid growth within the Borough and the potential development impacts to the Sutton community, the Community Council requested that this comprehensive plan be updated in 2006.

## **BOROUGH PLANNING PROCESS**

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough was incorporated on January 1, 1964 as a second-class borough. Alaska Statute Title 29, Chapter 40 directs that the Assembly of a second-class Borough, with the recommendations of the Planning Commission, adopt a comprehensive plan. Alaska Statutes further require the Assembly, after receiving the recommendations of the Planning Commission, to undertake an overall review of the comprehensive plan and update the plan as necessary.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission is required by State law to develop a Comprehensive Plan for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. It is the intent of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough government to learn of and respect each community's desires for its present and future way of life and to ensure that these desires become each community's portion of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan. It will be the responsibility of the community to determine the extent, or lack, of land use restrictions to be applied in the community.

Based on the Assembly's action, the Planning Commission established a process for developing community based comprehensive plans. Under the process, local planning activities may be initiated by request of a community or area. A request for local planning assistance is forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration. Upon Planning Commission approval of the request, planning staff advertises for members of a local advisory planning "team." The policy for membership applicable to the Sutton Plan requires that an individual be a resident, property owner, business owner or agency with an interest within the planning area boundaries. All applications for membership are reviewed and appointments to the planning team made by the Planning Commission.

In 2005, the Sutton Community Council made a formal request to the Planning Commission to update the comprehensive plan. Their request was approved by the Planning Commission and a citizens' planning team was formed in 2006 for the development of the Sutton Comprehensive Plan.

During the planning effort one community survey was conducted. The survey was prepared by the planning team and conducted by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Department. In April 2007, these surveys were mailed to all Sutton property owners listing mailing addresses. These surveys have been useful in identifying community concerns and desires.

In October 2008, the planning team finalized their recommendations and released a draft plan for 30-day public review and comment. Notification was provided individually to all property owners and registered voters within the planning area. Comments were received from 11 individuals/organizations. The planning team met following the 30-day public review period and made amendments to the plan, then forwarded their approved draft to the Sutton Community Council for recommendation in May 2009. The council approved the draft at their June 2009 meeting and forwarded the document to the Planning Commission recommending adoption of the plan.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE PROCESS**

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough received a formal request from the Sutton Community Council in January 2006 to update the current comprehensive plan. With more development occurring in Palmer and Wasilla, the Community Council felt that Sutton was fast becoming a favorable place to live outside of the “commercial development” of the Borough core area. Approval for updating the comprehensive plan by was given by the Planning Commission in March 2006.

- Advertised in March and April, 2006 - Planning Team Applications sought
- Planning Team Members approved by the Planning Commission – May 2006
- Planning Team met on a regularly scheduled basis (once a month)
- Survey conducted in April 2007
- Draft Plan presented and Comment Response Forms available at the Annual Sutton Community Council Meeting on October 12, 2008
- Updated Plan presented at a Sutton Community Council Meeting and consideration to approve the updated plan, June, 2009
- Planning Commission review of plan: August 3, 2009
- Assembly review and final adoption of plan: November 3, 2009