

**February 12, 2024  
Planning Commission  
Meeting Packet**



## Guiding Principles for the Borough-wide Comprehensive Plan

The Borough-wide Comprehensive Plan is a guide that helps the Matanuska-Susitna Borough government be more transparent and accountable to the public when making decisions. Developing a comprehensive plan builds trust by facilitating a robust public outreach process where staff listen to the concerns and ideas of residents across the borough and develop goals and strategies to meet the community's needs. Once completed, the Plan will help decision-makers consider what is best for the organization's and residents' long-term goals.

Planning staff spent 2023 talking with individuals, community councils, stakeholders, staff, elected officials, and government leaders. The Guiding Principles encompass a year's worth of outreach effort regarding planning issues like economic development, growth management, service delivery, transportation, environmental impacts, and more. The Principles are the first step towards developing the final goals and strategies for the plan.

### Below are the ten Guiding Principles for the Borough-wide Comprehensive Plan:

1. **The Mat-Su Borough is a place where residents share common values in family, freedom, and fiscal responsibility.** For the comprehensive plan, this means livable wage jobs, safe and affordable places to live and learn, respect for private property rights, and efficient growth that can be serviced in a tax-friendly manner.
2. **The Mat-Su Borough is deeply invested in cultivating opportunities for commercial enterprises to prosper.** Through all the research and outreach, one thing is clear: everyone agrees that creating sustainable, well-paying jobs in the Mat-Su is paramount to the borough's future. The Comprehensive Plan should focus on defining the role of local government in economic development and providing actions the MSB can take, such as designating land uses, investing more in public infrastructure, and rewriting Title 26 to create an environment that is genuinely open for business.
3. **Growth in the Mat-Su should be managed as locally as possible.** Residents of the Mat-Su Borough have expressed a desire for changes in land use policies to address the increase in incompatible land uses and lack of economic development. They also believe that although different and/or more land use regulations would be better than what is happening now, those regulations should not come in a "one size fits all" approach. The Comprehensive Plan should provide a growth management framework based on regional community identity, promoting economic development, and the protection of the enjoyment of private property.
4. **The growing population of the Mat-Su Borough is adding stress to the environment.** Residents agree that future land use policy should enhance the living environment and promote the enjoyment of our shared natural assets for future generations. The Comprehensive Plan should address this by providing goals for how the Borough could further consider natural resources in the subdivision and building requirements and how the Borough can support protecting historical access to trails.

## Guiding Principles for the Borough-wide Comprehensive Plan

5. **Current growth pressures are outpacing the capabilities of the current transportation network.** Residents in every region of the Mat-Su Borough expressed concerns about the transportation network, especially regarding increased traffic congestion due to subdivision development. The Comprehensive Plan should address the transportation network related to borough powers, land use development, public facility sites, and existing plan implementation.
6. **Mat-Su residents share a core value of desiring an efficient and transparent government.** Residents are calling for the MSB to provide higher levels of accountability. The Comprehensive Plan should provide a basis for holding the government accountable for implementing the community vision through executable actions with quantifiable progress measures.
7. **There is a growing need for community-minded infrastructure, such as community centers.** Residents would like to see the Mat-Su Borough invest in public facilities that foster a sense of community and provide services such as job training, education and outreach opportunities for borough projects, mental health and addictive services, and opportunities for year-round indoor recreation. The Comprehensive Plan should include, where possible, identified infrastructure that supports strong, connected communities. It should also identify community partners and funding mechanisms where possible.
8. **Residents outside of the Core Area want to see consistent levels of service across the Borough.** Residents in the Glenn Highway, Greater Butte, and Upper Parks regions agree that ambulance services are the top priority for their tax dollars. The Comprehensive Plan should understand each region's needs and develop creative solutions to allocate resources more effectively based on regionally identified needs.
9. **Efforts should be made to develop multiple revenue streams to support Borough operations, infrastructure, and community development.** The Mat-Su Borough relies heavily on State and Federal funding to meet its infrastructure goals, which affects how the MSB can plan for and fund capital improvements. The Comprehensive Plan should provide ideas for how the MSB can become a more resilient and financially self-sufficient government.
10. **Residents want to see the Borough explore ballot initiatives to receive police and road powers.** Residents would like to learn more about existing Borough Powers and be allowed to vote on police and road powers. While this is outside the scope of the Comprehensive Plan, consideration should be given to how added powers would affect the Assembly's ability to meet its strategic goals of promoting economic development, delivering quality services, and effectively managing growth.

## Consolidated Issues MSB Comp Plan Public Workshops Oct 2023 - Jan 2023

Deliver High Quality Services			
Transportation - land use focused:	Transportation - mobility, safety and connectivity focused	Services:	Government:
Existing roads cannot carry the growing pressures from new subdivisions	Need to protect existing and invest in more non-motorized facilities, including connections, safety measures, etc.	Not enough ambulances	Lack of government accountability and transparency
Road Service Area boundaries should be revisited	Need to protect motorized recreation trails and should expand and invest in safety measures, connectivity, etc.	Lack of potable water sources in rural areas	Lack of public involvement and notification
Lack of funding for roads	Lack of coordinated transit options, including park-n-rides, reliable transit routes, and commuter bus to Anchorage	Lack of school maintenance	Taxes keep going up!
Lack of road maintenance	Need to find a way to allow safe recreation of motorized and non-motorized in Rights-of-Way/pathways	Lack of borough oversight for utility placement	Lack of access to Assembly and government staff
Lack of safe routes to school	Lack of safety features on Old Glenn Highway	Lack of water/wastewater infrastructure	Need to maintain efficient governance
Sprawl causing more stress on rural roads	Need a connection between W. Carmel Road to W. Hollywood Road	Lack of reliable school transportation	Find the balance between taxes and services
Lack of winter maintenance for sidewalks and pathways	Parks Highway Alternative Corridor	Combined Jr/Sr High not a good model	Lack of project follow-through
Need to protect multiple access options for remote and rural areas (ATV, snowmachine, trail access, etc.) when considering new roads	Lack of wayfinding and street signage	Lack of information for residents to connect to businesses, borough services, and facilities	Lack of funding for community projects
	Need more seasonal safety measures (eg: KGB during dipnetting)	Lack of funding for additional educational services	Lack of engagement with local boards and community councils
	Lack of connectivity	Should be planning for future scenarios to cover fluctuating population	
	Traffic congestion	Lack of code compliance	
		Lack of dependable grant funding	
		Inadequate potable water sources in rural areas	
		Need more staff to provide adequate services	

## Consolidated Issues MSB Comp Plan Public Workshops Oct 2023 - Jan 2023

Managing Growth			
Land Use - Platting	Land Use - Planning	Community Development	Environment
Protection of historical trail access in new developments	Lack of zoning	Need to protect existing green space and plan for more as we get more people	Need to be preparing for natural disasters
Lack of subdivision requirements for road/safety standards	Needing tools to protect the existing character of the region/community	Lack of year-round community recreation/gathering centers	Need to consider environmentally-sensitive areas in all development
Lack of transparency in the development and platting process	Too much recreational shooting in neighborhoods	Lack of after school programs	Lack of mitigation of wildfire fuels
Lack of consideration of current land use when developing new lots	Junk and trash - including landfill growth	Lack of youth activities, especially teenage	Lack of stormwater management
Increase in land use conflicts	Need to designate areas for commercial/industrial uses	Need more access to Settler's Bay Park	Need to protect our natural resources
Don't know end land use for developments/subdivision of land	Losing agricultural land to development	Need more playgrounds and pocket parks	Lack of food security and emergency preparedness
State condo plat process needs to be amended	Lack of townsite development	Borough selling land without enough public input	Lack of notification/communication for subdivision development in natural hazard areas
Lack of vegetative buffers and standards for development	Lack of mixed-use development	Need to protect access to community assets	Should consider hazardous materials placement in subdivision location
	Slow response to abandoned vehicles	Lack of ADA compliant trails	Need to do more for flooding and erosion problems
	Resource extraction as incompatible use near neighborhoods		
	Lack of planning for public facilities - including schools, EMS stations		
	Needing protection for existing businesses in or near residential areas		
	Need planning to keep up with growth		

## Consolidated Issues MSB Comp Plan Public Workshops Oct 2023 - Jan 2023

Economic Growth and Diversification			Additional Comments
Affordable Housing	Job Creation/Business Development	Workforce Development	Outside Scope/Not in Borough Power
Lack of housing diversity and stock - leading to a lack of affordable housing	Lack of economic development outside of cities	Need more job options for kids in middle/high school	Lack of facilities for mental health and addiction support
Too many short-term rentals, not enough year-round rentals, or rentals for seasonal workers	Lack of infrastructure for economic development	Lack of workforce development	Noticed increase in drug addiction
Noticed increase in homelessness and squatters	Not retaining skilled labor		Lack of police powers
Need more dense housing development	Underutilization of Port MacKenzie - including lacking transportation connectivity and access		Lack of daycare options
Need more senior and veteran housing	Lack of local, family wage jobs		Noticeable increase in crime
	Need responsible development of natural resources		Not meeting energy needs - including natural gas
	Tourism infrastructure is not paying its own way - collecting fees/taxes from visitors		Lack of internet connection/broadband
	Need to finish the rail spur		Mail not getting to residents
	Lack of business and industry incentives		Lack of building codes
	All the commuters spend their money in Anchorage not MSB		
	Talkeetna at carrying capacity of tourism, needs more infrastructure to support the demand.		

**Consolidated Solutions MSB Comp Plan Public Workshops Oct 23 - Jan 2024**

<b>Deliver High Quality Services</b>			
<b>Transportation - land use focused:</b>	<b>Transportation - mobility, safety and connectivity focused</b>	<b>Services:</b>	<b>Government:</b>
Design Criteria Manual for road standards, including subdivision road standards, safety features, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities	Well lit path from Palmer Fishhook to Arctic	Properly staff the MSB to deliver services that communities need	Require Assembly to vote on idea before staff time and resources can be allocated to it
Comprehensive audit of road service area boundaries	More Park-n-Rides	Partnerships for increased need for services	Identify alternate revenue streams
Increase traffic studies	Use micro-transit for school transportation	Empower/promote volunteerism for community services	Implement a seasonal sales tax
Develop and fund alternate route to Anchorage	Work with Alaska Railroad to fund the commuter rail	Evaluate services and consider fee-based structure	Include junk and trash in borough taxes
Increase budget for winter maintenance of pathways for pedestrian and bicycle users	More safety features on Old Glenn Highway	Increase code enforcement staff to implement the plans and regulations we already have	Utilize existing resources more efficiently - track and limit administrative costs of projects
	Borough should take the lead on public transit	Assess properties more regularly to get accurate tax revenue	Increase youth engagement in local government/planning
	Use conflict between non-motorized and motorized recreation in ROW needs to be addressed - make sure that there are opportunities for both in future planning		Educate the public on borough powers and what the point of local government is - public needs to know more about the services they currently get
			Consider adding solar improvement districts to code
			Increase the public notice boundaries
			Educate the public on how to be involved - consider giving computer training to seniors so they can find information easier



**Consolidated Solutions MSB Comp Plan Public Workshops Oct 2023 - Jan 2024**

<b>Managing Growth</b>			
<b>Land Use - Platting</b>	<b>Land Use - Planning</b>	<b>Community Development</b>	<b>Environment</b>
Require safe routes to school for subdivisions within walking/biking distance of existing and proposed school sites	Designate and enforce land use areas	Build community centers with help from private partnerships - include public health partners for addiction services, mental health services, and senior services; and workforce development/training	Tax break for agriculture land
Revise subdivision standards to include utility connection where feasible	Plan for future public facilities based on population growth and designate land now	Seek out partnerships for building and staffing community centers	Enforce existing setbacks and development standards and best practices
Require more pocket parks and neighborhood green spaces in developments	Identify community assets and resources that need to be protected and leveraged for the benefit of the community (community treasure chest)	Establish a Park Site Selection Committee	
Incentivize vegetative buffers	The Planning Department should advocate for plans and drive implementation	Use platted access to increase access for Settler's Bay	
Enhance the platting code to require proper noticing for development in natural hazard areas	Implement development/impact fees so residents aren't subsidizing developers	Need more adequate parking for recreation users in Trapper Creek & Petersville (Kroto)	
Change platting code to require subdivider disclose end land use	Develop regulations for recreational shooting based on neighborhood density	Libraries should house MSB satellite offices with dedicated staff and room for community council, and Assembly should be required to meet there periodically	
Lobby State of Alaska to change state statute for condo plats	Dedicate staff to implementing the plans we already have	Prioritizing protecting access and traditional recreation areas	
Requirement for notification and comment periods for platting actions should be increased to two months	Continue to develop more planning studies to keep up with growth		
Require subdivisions to have two way egress	Create a mandatory land use permit		
	Plan for townsites with zoning and water/sewer - enhance and protect community character		
	Reduce/reuse facility at transfer stations to reduce landfill waste		

**Consolidated Solutions MSB Comp Plan Public Workshops Oct 2023 - Jan 2024**

Economic Growth and Diversification			Additional Comments
Affordable Housing	Job Creation/Business Development	Workforce Development	Outside Scope/Not in Borough Power
Invest in infrastructure that allows for denser development	Define regional economic drivers and incentivize growth that's compatible with community character	Invest in workforce development	Ask for cluster mailboxes to be required with new development
Feasibility study for sewer connection in the Core Area	Designate business districts	Strengthen partnership with Mat-Su College	Increase education for best practices for building standards
Expanding water and sewer	Bring back the Economic Development Department	Increase education of responsible resource development jobs	Create more cities
Tax incentives for senior, veteran, low income housing	Look at industrial opportunities and offer incentives to get more investment in the Mat-Su	More training for vocations, intern programs, linking high school students with local companies	Ballot initiative for police powers
AirBnb/short-term rental permitting	Increase development at Port MacKenzie - including coordinated partnerships with private sector and rail development		Ballot initiative for road powers
Increase partnerships with organizations that are working on senior services	Develop better incentives for businesses of all sizes		Ballot initiative for public health powers
	Support Responsible Natural Resource Development		
	Provide land or tax breaks for a medical facility in Butte		
	Develop a regional economic development coalition		
	Incentivize food processing businesses and food storage		