B. Recreation and Open Space

General Background Information

Big Lake has significant recreational resources which are important to the area’s quality of life, the local economy, and the community’s identity. The community’s lakes and rivers, fish and wildlife, open space, trails, open meadows and mix of opportunities – for both solitude and quiet and for active recreation, and for both summer and winter activities – are one of the primary reasons year-round residents choose to live in the community. Outdoor recreation is also a major draw for recreational users and second-home owners in Big Lake.

Although there are ample recreational and open space resources currently, there is concern now and into the future about the eroding quality of recreation and a potential loss of the area’s rural, scenic, and recreational character. Critical issues include:

- A lack of recreational facilities to meet user demands (restrooms, docks, parking areas, pullouts, trailheads, etc.);
- A lack of logical, legal, well-defined, and adequately posted and developed system of access points for key recreational attractions such as larger lakes (20 + acres), and for streams, and trails;
- Development that removes significant vegetation (including the limited number of mature trees in areas untouched by the fire) and degrades the scenic character;
- Limited or no buffers between recreation types and/or with residential uses causing ongoing noise and safety conflicts; and
- Lack of enforcement of existing rules (access, water pollution, motorized safety and noise near populated areas).

Previous Planning Efforts

In 1996, the previous Big Lake Comprehensive Plan covered many recreation and open space issues and made recommendations. Although there are a few markers of significant progress such as completion of the Big Lake Management Plan, and transfer of acreage from the State of Alaska’s Willow Sub-Basin Area to serve community recreational purposes, most issues and needs identified remain to be addressed. These break into the following broad issue areas:

- Character and Identity: The plan expressed a strong desire to develop the area to its fuller potential as a “year-round, highly diversified recreational and residential community”, with significant upgrades to parks, new scenic pullouts and waysides, and enhancement and permanent legal preservation of recreational and scenic attractions (25% of the entire area, along with an interconnected system of trail
routes). Of these desires, very few beyond the pullout in the vicinity of MP 9.6 South Big Lake Road have been addressed.

- **Recreational Inventory and Access:** The plan identified the need to do a “thorough analysis of recreational needs – activities as well as facilities”, including an inventory of neighborhood, community, and regional parks; major attractions; recreation corridors; and public access points. Although broad scale regional planning in this area has occurred (e.g. Matanuska-Susitna Borough Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan 2001), there is a strong sense that an easy-to-understand, easy-to-implement “inventory and access plan” is badly needed. For example, the recent mapping of legal access for Big Lake is helpful, but is not easy for landowners to understand (let alone a visiting recreational user), and does not provide direction for how to proceed in working with landowners to purchase needed easements, or enforcing existing blocked access points.

- **Governance and Management:** Plans and rules are not productive if there is no implementation and/or enforcement. A significant issue raised in the 1996 plan is the need for action on the part of the Mat-Su Borough, and the State of Alaska in partnership with the local community to implement plans, enforce rules and adequately manage recreational resources. This still remains an important issue, especially in high-demand areas where pressures are impacting and degrading the quality of recreation and quality of life for residents.

**Summary of Preliminary Goals**

1. **Identify and reserve regional trail system (public trails)**
2. **Identify and reserve lake access points**
3. **Inventory Big Lake recreation attractions, determine what the town has, what it needs, and who is responsible for managing and developing facilities**
1. **Identify and reserve regional trail system (public trails)**

**Important Issues**
- Great trail system but most of the trails are not surveyed or secured – mostly winter trails across wetlands and lakes, many crossing private lands
- There are not enough trailheads or parking
- Some trails are particularly important for dog teams, e.g., trails southwest of Big Lake
- Railroad could block trails
- Bike trail system – need to sort out pedestrian versus motorized use of paved bike path

**Potential Strategies to Identify and Reserve Regional Public Trail System**
- Prepare an updated, complete and accurate Big Lake trails map, including both summer and winter trails; specific steps below.
  - Bring together a set of local users to work as an informal trails committee
  - Review and integrate trail mapping info from the 1996 Big Lake Comp Plan (Map 10), the 2001 MSB Recreation and Open Space Plan, the 2003 MSB Trail Map, and trail maps prepared by the community of Willow, and local dog mushers and snow machine users
  - Working with the Borough trails planner, identify the ownership of land over which trails cross
  - Review the map with the Big Lake community, and identify the highest priority trails
- Multi-purpose system – based on the results of the task outlined above, identify a system of priority trails for motorized and non-motorized uses, for skis, bikes, dog team, hikers, four wheelers, snow machines. Other specific, identified needs include:
  - Work toward having some lighted loops
  - Resolve issue of who would own and manage trails that now cross private land, but could be dedicated for public use
  - Develop a trail south of Big Lake, connecting the “town square”/ East Lake mall area to the western boundary of the community council area
- Improve trail management (brush trails, deal with dust, etc.)
- Build more trailheads with ample parking areas
- Identify/inventory density in lakes
2. Identify and reserve lake access points

Important Issues

- Theoretically Big Lake has 160 legal access points, but many are blocked, overgrown, undeveloped, not signed – “they are blocked off by individuals or they’re not maintained, or they’re inaccessible.”

- Big Lake resources: quiet, lakes, “start of good snow,” beautiful lakes. “People are blocking off legal public lake access - I complain to the borough and they don’t do anything.”

- Have to drive across private property to access lake

- Not enough boat ramps

- No boat ramp docks to accommodate persons with physical disabilities

Potential Strategies for Identifying and Reserving Lake Access Points

- Develop a systematic, strategic plan for lake access. This needs to take into account a range of factors including: access to the sites, the availability of funds for managing access sites, the effects of lake access on adjoining private land owners, and the fact that purposes of lake access vary greatly (from boat launching to picnic areas, to swimming areas, to winter trails). Some specific issues to address in this process include:
  - Need more quality access points at west end of Big Lake
  - Re-open legal section line access currently being blocked by an adjoining private owners (location – north western side of lake – see map)
  - Need more lakeside recreation sites with day parking, docks, picnic areas, etc. (and somehow deal with the waste management issues that come with these)
  - Need to protect access to the lake for winter car use – major access point on small peninsula on lake’s southern shore is private, could go away
  - Locate MSB and State lands to use for public access

- Provide better information for the public on the location and facilities at different lake access points. Specific actions include:
o Prepare a map for the general public that will show people the locations of lake access points. Use the 2007 Big Lake Public Access Documentation Project map as a starting point, but translate this into a format that is easier to understand, and that reflects conclusions of the lake access strategy outlined above.

o Clearly mark access points with proper signage

- Make plans for upgraded physical facilities and maintenance at lake access points. Specific needs include:
  - Need to build boat ramp docks and include ramps for persons with physical disabilities
  - Improve maintenance of existing boat ramps
  - Need to more clearly define community priorities for improved facilities: which sites most need improvements? Given finite funding, what forms of improvements are most important, e.g., bathrooms, picnic benches, trash cans?

- Need more organized strategies to gain access to needed capital and maintenance funds. Options include: regular application to the Borough for a share of annual bed tax dollars and/or to the state for legislative appropriations; formation of a local group of volunteers to upgrade facilities and to provide an in-kind contribution of labor to increase the odds of receiving funds; mechanism to raise funds through fees (e.g., parking or boat launch fees) that could be used for ongoing maintenance

3. Inventory Big Lake recreation attractions, determine what the town has, what it needs, and who is responsible for managing and developing facilities

**Important Issues**

- Viewpoints – places to look out over the lake, places offering good views of distant mountains (not many today)

- RV dump station, perhaps included in plan for garbage transfer station

**Potential Strategies**

- Integrate inventory info from the 1996 Comp Plan, the 2001 MSB Recreation and Open Space Plan, and MSB Trail Map to develop a more complete, up-to-date listing and mapping of area recreational resources.

- Improve and take full advantage of the relationship between Big Lake and the State of Alaska:
  - Define and make clear how the State of Alaska manages the public spaces under its care
  - Work with State department that awards private contracts – identify how community can provide comments/suggestions on maintenance approach
  - Encourage the State and MSB to make presentations to the community regarding their maintenance plans, especially during critical seasonal transitions (i.e. freeze and thaw)
  - Need for a more open relationship with the State of Alaska and clearer understanding of its progress and role in implementing the management plan for Big Lake
• Inventory and prioritize specific community needs, including:
  o Public toilets
  o Private camp sites
  o More overnight campsites
  o Sports fields, facilities for organized outdoor events
  o More parking
  o More boat ramps and launch facilities
  o Options to improve “Mud bog” area (volleyball, sledding, community events)
  o Options for town center parks, trails, gathering areas
  o Possible golf course? (suggestion for a golf course on State land near Rocky Lake and Old Fish Hatchery)

• Address lake management plan issues, e.g. noise on lake, limits on boat traffic
• Develop and implement educational program for recreational lake users, e.g., sticker that indicates boat owner has received education info packet – work with concessionaires
• Develop and implement a local recycling program
• Work with MSB to research option for a National Heritage Areas (NHA) in Big Lake or the Mat-Su Borough as a whole. National Heritage Areas are designated by Congress, to help celebrate, interpret and preserve unique cultural resources, including evidence of mining, industrial development, transportation development. MSB staff is investigating the option to designate the entire Mat-Su Borough as a National Heritage Area, which could create more reasons for visitors to travel to the area, and bring funds for a range of recreational and cultural heritage projects. Questions to be answered regarding this option include:
  o Is this something the community wants?
  o What kind of funding/projects are connected to NHAs?
C. Transportation

General Background Information

Big Lake’s transportation system includes all the roads, paths and facilities that allow the movement of private vehicles, trains and planes, as well as walking, skiing, four wheelers, snow machines and other trail activities. Today this system includes Big Lake Road, a minor arterial; major collectors – Susitna Parkway and Hollywood Road; a number of minor collectors; and many residential subdivision roads, some of which are beginning to function as local collectors. Also present are the Big Lake Airport, and an extensive, but mostly informal trail system. Water transportation and ice roads are provided by private groups.

Big Lake is “in the crosshairs” of several major future transportation improvements. One is the possible extension of a rail spur from Port MacKenzie north to the existing rail line, perhaps running through Big Lake. Another is the extension of a major roadway, from the Port MacKenzie area, crossing through Big Lake, and connecting to the Parks Highway. This latter project would connect with the proposed Knik Arm Bridge. All of these projects would have major impacts on Big Lake. Neither the rail, the road nor the Knik Arm Bridge is a certainty. However, the impacts of these projects are sufficiently large and the odds of the project being developed are sufficiently high that the community needs to at least consider these projects in this comprehensive plan.

Summary of Preliminary Goals

1. Improve Big Lake Airport

   The Big Lake Airport needs general physical expansion, possibly a float plane base and improved control of potential ground conflicts.

2. Improve Big Lake Area Roads

   The Burma Road is for the most part little better than a dirt track through the woods. Improvement has been planned for many years, and now it appears at least portions of the road will be improved. This route is expected to carry truck traffic from Port MacKenzie.

   Big Lake Road needs to be re-aligned in two places – South Big Lake Road to straighten the road and improve access, and West Big Lake Road to route the road around downtown Big Lake. This latter improvement will not be built until through traffic grows to a level that becomes disruptive to the Big Lake town center area.

   The Big Lake Road system consists of residential streets developed piecemeal and connected with Big Lake Road. Needed collector routes should be completed to connect neighborhoods to the main roads and to keep residential streets from becoming de-facto collectors.

   Road access is needed to the west side of Big Lake, providing access to lots currently not connected to the road system.
3. Port MacKenzie Rail Spur

The extension of the Alaska Railroad to Port MacKenzie will pass near or through the Big Lake Community Council area. The route needs to be designed carefully to minimize impacts to residential areas, trails and sensitive environmental areas, but still be an efficient route for the railroad.

4. Improve Big Lake Area Trails

Big Lake has some excellent trails, but for the most part they are informal. Without purchase of land or easements to establish the trails, the community runs the risk of losing the trails as development proceeds.

1. Improve Airport

Important Issues

The MSB Aviation System Plan has identified the need for a regional airport and float plane base, comparable to the Lake Hood area in Anchorage. Options for this facility include the Big Lake area, the 7-mile Lake area (south of Big Lake), and Goose Bay. As small plane traffic at small airports has increased and the number of small airports has increased, there is concern with the close proximity of these airports with crisscrossing approaches. The Aviation Plan also identifies the need for general improvement of the Big Lake airport.

More work is needed to determine the most appropriate role of the existing Big Lake airport.

Discussions in the community to date suggest that the Seven-Mile Lake area would be a reasonable location for the regional float plane base. Because of conflicts with existing residential and recreation uses, the existing Big Lake airport was generally not seen as an appropriate location for either a regional floatplane base, or the proposed Borough regional airport.

Potential Strategies for the Big Lake Airport

- Expand runway length (need 3,000 feet, only have 2,700) and develop a parallel taxiway.
- Control uses under flight path, which will improve safety for residents on the ground and in aircraft.
- Make more space for economic activities; use the airport as a commercial supply hub to rural destinations.
- Make the airport more “user friendly” – generally clean up the airstrip and make it a stronger asset for Big Lake
- Improve connections between the lake and the airport in order to facilitate airplane maintenance and related issues.
2. Improve Big Lake Area Roads

Important Issues

Many Big Lake Area roads are in need of improvement – both the key links to the community as well as the neighborhood routes. Many roads are skinny, curvy, substandard and dangerous. Big Lake Road and Burma Road have been planned for improvement for many years.

Another issue surrounding Big Lake roads is funding. Who will pay to build, improve and maintain existing and new roads? Local roads are funded by residents and developers while collectors and arterials are funded by the Borough and the State with local support.

Potential Strategies

• Develop strategies to generally improve Big Lake roads. The primary roads, like Big Lake Road, are the responsibility of the Borough and the State. Collector routes that are shown in the MSB Official Streets and Highways Plan but have not been built should be completed in order to connect neighborhoods to the main roads and to keep residential streets from becoming de-facto collectors. (See Map 16A on the following page). Develop creative approaches to financing improvement of residential road improvements.

• Work with the MSB and State to initiate the South Big Lake Road realignment. This project will improve safety and reduce travel time.

• Work with the MSB and State to advance the Burma Road upgrade project. The project will improve access to Port MacKenzie and the Point MacKenzie area, and will likely increase truck traffic through Big Lake.

• Reserve a route for the West Big Lake Road re-route project. (The West Big Lake Road links Big Lake and the Parks Highway, and is most commonly known as “Big Lake Road.”) The Big Lake Road to re-route project will go around “downtown” Big Lake to reduce impacts of truck traffic on the center of the community, improving safety and aesthetics. As was stated above, this bypass needs to be reserved in the near term, but will not need to be constructed until through traffic increases.

• Work with the MSB and State to complete the road extension across the Little Susitna River to the Fish Creek area. This improvement will create more opportunity for recreation, new residential development, and commercial activity.

• Add a road (on section lines to the degree possible) connecting the roads north of Big Lake, with the roads south and west of the lake. This route would provide connectivity and emergency access to the many lots currently located on the west end of Big Lake. Developing this road will require solving a number of challenges including road standards, wetlands/lake crossings, and acquiring rights-of-way.
  o If built locally there are no requirements to meet Borough standards
  o If there is an expectation of Borough ownership and maintenance, Borough road standards will be required

• Improve Hollywood Road. This route carries a growing amount of through traffic. Improvements needed include widened shoulders and lanes, improved site distances, and added bike lanes.
Map 16A. MSB Official Streets and Highways Map
• Improve Knik Goose Bay Road south of Settlers Bay, by expanding to four lanes as far to the southwest as possible.

• Form a new Local Road Service Area and/or modify capabilities of existing Service Area – Big Lake has many road needs, both for maintenance and construction. Currently the area is completely dependent on the State, Borough and developers for road improvements. The community should consider forming a road improvement district. This would allow the community to raise money locally, which could be used as matching funds for state and borough projects, as well as a way to raise funds for local priorities.

3. Port MacKenzie Rail Spur

Important Issues

The Borough and the Alaska Railroad are planning for design and construction of a rail spur from the Alaska Railroad mainline to Port MacKenzie. Three main route options have been identified: a route west of the Little Susitna River that ends up in Willow, the “Houston route” which traverses the western part of the Big Lake Community Council area (splitting into one of two routes at its north end), and an alternative passing east of the Big Lake community through the Fishhook area. Map 16B shows these alternative alignments.

Currently, the Houston route is seen as the most likely route. A number of Big Lake residents have expressed concern about the impacts of this route on their community. Of particular concern is potential interference of the rail with traditional trails.

Potential Strategies

• Make sure that the community is informed of developments in the project so that residents can participate in the decision-making and development process.

• Review and comment on the proposed rail corridor alternatives.
  o Consider how to preserve future collector right-of-ways /routes
  o Develop strategies to allow for trail crossings. The ARRC has said it will provide crossings for all dedicated trails. Big Lake trail users need to work aggressively to identify and reserve key trails before the railroad proceeds into the design phase of this project.
  o Identify rail routes in comprehensive plan and identify related, future developable areas.

4. Regional Trail System

Important Issues

Trails are an important part of Big Lake life. The community enjoys a set of traditional trails, extending west, south and north, and linking to trails that extend into Nancy Lakes State Park and west across the Big Susitna River. Most trail use occurs in winter, when lakes and bogs are frozen.

It is important for a number of reasons to identify and reserve a system of regional trails. Big Lake has many good trails, but since they are generally not surveyed or formally
reserved, the community risks loosing many routes as development proceeds. In addition, trailheads and associated parking need to be developed. Some trails are particularly important for mushers, such as the trails southwest of Big Lake. Some trails are also used as major modes of transportation to get from point to point while others are used primarily for recreational activities.

**Potential Strategies (see also recreation section)**

- The trail system should be developed for residents and for visitors; and for recreation and for transportation
- The trails should form a multi-purpose system – trails for motorized and non-motorized users, for skiers, bikers, dog teams, hikers, four wheelers, snow-machiners. Specific trail needs include:
  - walking trails in “downtown” Big Lake (in and through)
  - trail access to Big Lake and other lakes in the area
  - lighted loops for wintertime use
  - a trail south of Big Lake, connecting the “town square”/Big Lake mall area to the western boundary of the community council area
- Direct action is needed to secure ownership or easements for trails that cross private land, but that ideally should be dedicated and maintained for public use.
- Trail maintenance needs to be implemented sustained for trails in the Big Lake area (brush trails, deal with dust, bridge or boardwalk wet areas, etc.).
- Both summer and winter trails are in need of improvement, including the trails themselves and development of trailheads to include parking.
D. Economic Development

General Background Information

In times past, Big Lake was mostly known as a weekend escape destination for Anchorage and other Southcentral Alaskan communities. Depending on the season, boats, jet skis, water skis and snow machines sprinkled the landscape. The economic center of the community was once local hotels and bars that catered to these visitors’ needs. Today, Big Lake is home to more retirees and year round residents. Many of the once-thriving lake front businesses have closed, and both summer and winter recreation use of the lake has diminished. Some traditional access points have been closed, many new houses built, and recreation use has shifted to less developed, more outlying areas of the Borough.

In addition to changes in recreation use, the number and character of people living and working in Big Lake has continued to evolve. Today, there is a more diverse and stable population of year round Big Lake residents. People who were once Big Lake weekenders have turned into year-round residents, as older homeowners retire and settle down into houses that were once only used occasionally. More people are living in Big Lake year round, and commuting to jobs in the surrounding area and Anchorage.

There are a number of different options for the next chapter in Big Lake’s future. Options range from a quiet retirement community, to a rapidly growing residential, commercial and visitor center. Likewise the foundation for the future economic vitality of Big Lake is currently unknown. There are many economic development opportunities facing Big Lake and other Mat-Su communities. One major category is tied to large state-initiated transportation projects. These include a proposed rail corridor connecting Mat-Su communities with Point MacKenzie, the Knik Arm Bridge and Road corridor project, the West Mat-Su Access project, and proposed expansion of the Parks Highway. These projects, coupled with large blocks of developable land and key recreation sources, put Big Lake in a unique position – the community has many options, and if it chooses, can greatly affect its future.

To set the stage for the future, one must first grasp the current economic climate in Big Lake. As indicated in Table 17, although businesses have decreased in number, the community still has a range of established local businesses that support year round local residents, weekend recreational users and recreationists passing by and through Big Lake on the Parks Highway.
Consideration of all of these factors, past and present, puts the community in the position of discussing new options for who they are and what they want to be. The community is asking itself critical questions that will help shape economic development policy, and in turn, guide decisions on land use, roads, trails, and other public infrastructure.

Considering the community’s strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, is Big Lake:

- A sleepy retirement and second home community?
- A bedroom community, with few local jobs, but good access to jobs in other communities?
- An economic development hub, a new “gateway to Alaska,” with road and rail access from Port MacKenzie, and a growing base of commercial and industrial activity, supporting new jobs and a growing population?
- An intense, 4 season Alaskan recreation playground? Or even a destination for a growing number of out-of-state visitors?

Decisions on a general direction for economic development affect many other components of this plan. For example, if the community wants to focus on attracting more recreationists, this translates into a need for an active effort to improve trails, lakefront parks, and other recreational resources. This also might imply that the community would put more effort into keeping the community visually attractive, for example, developing guidelines for signage or for the retention of vegetation along the Big Lake Road.

The next section of this chapter presents economic development goals and objectives that build from the ’96 plan but that also take into consideration the ideas of Big Lake community members that have contributed to this update. As has become evident in the planning process, decisions that shape economic development goals are central to the overall direction and value of the comprehensive plan. Decisions on economic development goals and strategies speak to issues at the heart of the community, its identity and future.

In the 1996 Big Lake Comprehensive Plan, the economic development goal and all associated recommendations were tourism related. More specifically, the community was focused on recognizing and taking advantage of Big Lake’s range of year round economic development activities and opportunities. To date, there has been some progress on goals and recommendations outlined in the ’96 plan. They include the following:

- Working with the State and Borough to maintain and upgrade existing regional parks within the Big Lake Community Council boundaries.
- A day parking area (and regional park?) has been established on the shoreline of Bug Lake adjacent to the Sailing Club at MP 9.5 on South Big Lake Road.

The Big Lake Planning Team has recognized the importance of the implementation of these recommendations as well as those recommendations for which there has been little or no progress to date. All are still important to the overall economic vitality of Big Lake.

Most economic development goals and recommendations represented in this chapter are linked to other issues addressed in other chapters of this report. For example, recommendations regarding the natural environment are included here and in the land use chapter. This chapter represents the consolidation of all desired planning policies that tie into the economic vitality of Big Lake.
**Figure 17. Big Lake Businesses Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUSINESS</th>
<th>OWNER</th>
<th>CURRENT FACILITIES</th>
<th>ISSUES/NOTES/NEEDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grocery and general supplies stores</td>
<td>Steve Fish</td>
<td>Steve’s Food Boy</td>
<td>• Anchor store of East Lake Mall. Full service grocery, meat, produce, bakery, floral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodges and B&amp;Bs</td>
<td>Kathy Glines?</td>
<td>Sunset View Bed &amp; Breakfast Hanger Motel</td>
<td>• Sunset – Located on Big Lake, hosts many weddings &amp; events • Hanger – Located on South Big Lake Road near airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel Facilities (gasoline)</td>
<td>RMB, LCC</td>
<td>Big Lake Super Store-Tesoro</td>
<td>• Gas, some groceries,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Centers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aviation Businesses</td>
<td>Fred &amp; Lance Johnson Joe Majerle Jim? Dano Bradwell Dennis Water</td>
<td>AMTS J &amp;M Northern Pioneer Helicopters Bedrock Aviation Water’s Aviation</td>
<td>• Full service airplane rebuilding • Aircraft repair service • Helicopter service • Aircraft Aviation &amp; Painting • Aircraft rebuilding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Century 21 North Homes Big Lake</td>
<td>• Others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Consumer Goods &amp; Services</td>
<td>Matanuska Credit Union Donna Love</td>
<td>Matanuska Federal Credit Union Donna’s Corner</td>
<td>• East Lake Mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants &amp; Bars</td>
<td>Kathy &amp; Glen Carpenter ? ? Robin’s Landing Islander Lodge</td>
<td>Kathy’s Restaurant Hanger Lounge R &amp; R Robin Jeffery Kathy Connaker</td>
<td>• Kathy’s – Full restaurant, banquet/meeting room • Hanger-full bar, restaurant, banquet/meeting rooms • R&amp;R-cafe • Robin’s – bar • Islander – Located on Long Island in Big Lake Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquor Stores</td>
<td>Jules &amp; Leslie Meade ?</td>
<td>Moonshine Shop Big Lake Liquor</td>
<td>Located in East Lake Mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundromats</td>
<td>Robert Jillson Jr</td>
<td>Doc Rockers Bob’s Mini Mart</td>
<td>• Doc Rocker’s-built in 2007 • Bob’s-Laundry and some groceries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS</td>
<td>OWNER</td>
<td>CURRENT FACILITIES</td>
<td>ISSUES/NOTES/NEEDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdressers</td>
<td>Paula Clark, Kathy Sniker</td>
<td>Clip &amp; Curl, Nell's Salon</td>
<td>- Clip &amp; Curl-East Lake Mall, Nell's South Big Lake Rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Stands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- At least 3 names?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhouses</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Lakesway Greenhouse, McGuire's Greenhouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction &amp; Snowplowing</td>
<td>Tim &amp; Lindsey McGhan</td>
<td>McGhan Construction &amp; Storage, Jolt Construction, Woody Works</td>
<td>- Many small companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marinas</td>
<td>Rod Cook Estate, Jerry Harris, Dave?</td>
<td>Burkshorae Marina, Southport Marina, Dave's Marina</td>
<td>- All on Big Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation Sales</td>
<td>? Happy &amp; Helen Herriett</td>
<td>Big Lake Cat House, Xtreme Marine &amp; Sports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>? Jake's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Engine Repair</td>
<td>Wes Hamerick, Mark?</td>
<td>Under the Tower, At the Y?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrift Stores</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 3?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Rentals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Neighborhood Video</td>
<td>- Eastlake Mall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Preliminary Goals

1. Keep the natural environment clean and green.
2. Improve access to area lakes.
3. Improve public facilities and services.
4. Improve marketing and attract visitors to Big Lake.
5. Create an attractive town center.
6. Capitalize on airport as center for economic activity
7. Develop commercial lands around certain business/industry types.
8. Support economic growth and decrease overall dependence on outside funding.
9. Define the critical role Big Lake Elementary School plays in the strength of the Big Lake community and improve parent involvement in school activities.

1. Keep natural environment clean and green.

   Important Issues
   It is arguable that Big Lake’s most important economic resource is its natural setting – its lakes, streams, views and open space. These are the features that attract and hold many year round and seasonal residents, as well as short term visitors.

   Potential Strategies for Keeping Natural Environment Clean and Green
   The community has identified several strategies that will both maintain the natural character of the Big Lake region while enhancing the economic vitality of the community.
   • Attract clean, non-polluting businesses.
   • Protect water quality, streams, lakes, wetland and natural features
   See more on this topic in Land Use & Environment Chapter (page 17).

2. Improve access to area lakes.

   See Recreation & Open Space Chapter for detailed information on important issues and potential strategies for improving access to area lakes. Improved lake access is one key part of the effort to expand recreational use of the area, and in turn, to increase spending by out of town visitors at local businesses.

3. Improve public facilities and services

   Potential Strategies for Improving Public Facilities and Services
   In addition to goals and strategies outlined in Chapter IV for improving public facilities and services for Big Lake, the community recommends the following strategies that will not only increase visibility of the area’s recreational opportunities for visitors and local residents, but will also support economic development in other sectors of the local economy.
• The State and Borough, with input from Big Lake community, should plan and implement a comprehensive interpretive and directional recreational signage program for the Big Lake area.

• Advocate for public facilities and services that support tourism and economic development activities.

• Improve the road system

• Improve public facilities and services

• Improve options for access to water and wastewater services

See more on this topic in the Land Use and Public Facilities & Services Chapters.

4. Improve marketing to attract visitors to Big Lake

Important Issues

One of the challenges for Big Lake residents has been defining what currently attracts visitors to Big Lake and what will increase visitor activity and add to the experience of recreating and exploring the Big Lake area. In other words, what does Big Lake have to offer visitors that other Alaskan communities do not have?

Overall, the community is in agreement that Big Lake has a lot to offer visitors in the form of recreational activities that take advantage of the area’s natural landscape. Additionally, it is clear that the area is a recreating and visiting place for many Southcentral Alaskans and weekend visitors. To this end, the community recognizes the need for a multi-entity approach to marketing an improved image of Big Lake. At the same time, community members want to respect the desire of some community members to maintain the privacy and quiet some residents have sought and found in Big Lake.

Potential Strategies for Improving Marketing and Attracting Visitors to Big Lake

Recommended approaches for improving the community’s image, maintaining resident desires for privacy and quiet, increasing visitor activity and thereby increasing job opportunities and the economic health of Big Lake include:

• Big Lake Community Council and/or Chamber of Commerce should work with the Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau to develop a tourism plan for Big Lake and for assistance in marketing Big Lake’s recreational attractions. Two particular goals are to better define the visitor market (who they are, what they want) and then to identify what changes or improvements are needed to attract this target market.

• Develop an advertising theme and “brand”.

• Big Lake businesses should research new markets and merchant consolidate of advertising efforts in multiple mass media markets.

• Increase visibility and accessibility to lake system for general visitor base.

• Organize community (Big-Lake branded) events.
5. Create an attractive town center

Important Issues

Overall, the community of Big Lake hopes to encourage continued operation and success of all businesses in Big Lake. Additionally, the community would like to take actions to encourage development of a more diverse and attractive town center in the current area of “downtown” Big Lake. Ultimately, this area would include a mix of businesses that cater to local residents and visitor-related business. As described in the chapter on land use, the goal for the town center is to create a cluster of shops, restaurants, public facilities and recreation activities in a concentrated, walkable area. This environment would encourage more spending by local residents in Big Lake, and would give visitors more reasons to spend time (and money) in the community.

Potential Strategies for Creating and Attractive Town Center

Potential strategies for addressing these desires are outlined in the land use chapter. Several additional ideas are added below:

- Develop art fair/open market in town center
- Encouraged existing building owners where needed to upgrade signage, landscaping and building facades; prepare advisory design guidelines for new structures.

6. Capitalize on airport as center for economic activity

Important Issues

Currently there are several small businesses at the airport including plane maintenance and restoration businesses. However, the relationship between the community and the airport has never been clearly defined and the relationship has been described as occasionally awkward. Plans for the development of a float plane base at the lake south of Big Lake and the future of other infrastructure projects in the region will affect the impact of the airport on commerce in the community. Community members feel that the airport as it currently exists should be more directly tied to economic activities in Big Lake.

Potential Strategies for Capitalizing on Airport as Center for Economic Activity

Possible strategies for taking advantage of the economic benefits of the airport include:

- Inventory community aviation needs (e.g. residential, small and large-scale commercial, tourism) and compare to local aviation capacity.
  - There is a difference between a 50-float plane airport and 1500-float plane airport. With a larger magnitude, more businesses may be willing to locate near airport.
7. Develop commercial lands around certain business/industry types

Important Issues

If the railroad and through highways currently being discussed for Big Lake eventually are built, the Big Lake area could become an attractive destination for expanded commercial and industrial development. The community needs to think further about this option, and for example, decide if it would like to direct such uses to a certain portion of the community, or simply let the market decide.

See Land Use & Environment Chapter for further discussion.

Potential Strategies for Developing Commercial Land Around Certain Business/Industry Types

See Land Use & Environment Chapter.

8. Support economic growth and decrease overall dependence on outside funding

Important Issues

The community recognizes the need for more Big Lake public services and facilities that cannot all be supported by outside funding. One route to this goal would be encourage more local growth and to then find a way to funnel more of the tax revenues from these activities back into community needs. Currently, there are an estimated 150 full-time jobs in Big Lake. These are mostly in the construction, fuel and mechanical sectors. Most year-round residents work in Anchorage, Palmer, Wasilla or on the North Slope. Successful and sustained expansion of the private sector in the community could also set the stage for improvements in Big Lake public services, such as upgrades to the school, improved trails and recreation facilities, and improved road maintenance.

Potential Strategies for Supporting Economic Growth and Decreasing Overall Dependence on Outside Funding

- Develop a comprehensive business plan – for business recruitment and to increase job opportunities.
  - Plan for diverse economy that doesn’t have dependence on one sector
    - Telecommuters – IT, engineers, accountants
    - Medical facilities
  - Plan for infrastructure that will support different job opportunities
  - Take advantage of job opportunities that arise from Borough development projects. For example, proposed new prison will have 1,000-2,000 prisoners with no facilities for guards. Big Lake could be home to guards and other prison staff.
- Establish local improvement districts, e.g., for trails and parks and/or for roads, so new businesses help to pay for needed public services and facilities
- See more in Governance Chapter

9. Define the critical role Big Lake Elementary School plays in the strength of the Big Lake community and improve parent involvement in school activities.
E. Public Facilities and Services

General Background Information
As an incorporated area, Big Lake relies on the Mat-Su Borough and partnerships with adjoining communities for the services and facilities it requires. In many areas, community services and facilities are generally acceptable, but there is a desire for further improvements.

Summary of Preliminary Goals
1. Improve community facilities; top priorities include the school and a community center.
2. Improve community services; top priorities include solid waste management and utilities provision in underserved residential areas.
3. Improve the community’s capacity to pay to develop and operate needed community services and facilities.
4. Improve community facilities; top priorities include the school and a community center.

1. Improve community facilities; top priorities include the school and a community center
   Important Issues
   • School facilities are in need of improvement – poor quality of school causing families to leave Big Lake for neighboring communities with better schools.
   • Community Center is a high priority

2. Improve community services; top priorities include solid waste management and utilities provision in underserved residential areas
   Important Issues
   • Poor solid waste management – people dump garbage in any open space
   • Access to natural gas all around lake
   • Access to utilities on far west end of Big Lake (and other lakes to west – names?)
   Potential Strategies
   • Can graduate from onsite by lot to community systems to sewer as population/density increases

3. Improve the community’s capacity to pay to develop and operate needed community services and facilities
   Important Issues
   • MSB maintenance ends in an area where many people have homes
Additional Public Facilities & Services issues are listed in the Public Facilities & Services Matrix that follows.

**Figure 18. Public Facilities & Services Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACILITY</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE ENTITY</th>
<th>CURRENT FACILITIES</th>
<th>ISSUES / NOTES / NEEDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Public Administration</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Center</td>
<td>Anyone we can get</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>● High priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Art fair/open market?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Possibly expand library with community center?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Better to have a separate facility next to but not attached to the library (library doesn’t want to maintain or bicker about who pays for what)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Lake Fish Hatchery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Idea to turn it into a golf course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>Leased from private owner</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Lucky to have a Big Lake address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Facilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Built 2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Wonderful &amp; well incorporated with Jordan Lake Nature Area – does not include the amount of community dedicated space originally planned that is now needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Possibly expand library with community center?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic &amp; Cultural Sites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Cultural center probably would have to be the same as the community center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Buffers along waterways/greenways best protection, especially areas where rivers come into the lake (Fish Creek in particular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Interpretive signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Do need a cemetery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Would have to be on MSB or State land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Many residents prefer to scatter ashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Safety</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Safety</td>
<td>US Coast Guard and State Troopers</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Not so much an issue of making more rules, but enforcing Fed rules that already exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Don’t need a facility. Good as is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>AK State Troopers</td>
<td></td>
<td>● No trooper station in Big Lake (moved to Pittman by the Three Bears)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Possible new station downtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Every area is a fire service area; many of them within Big Lake community council. Some people don’t have fire service (don’t pay tax, but don’t get service)</td>
<td>Volunteer with Scattered around Big Lake</td>
<td>● Some areas not served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Just passed a bill that gives municipalities power to annex areas as long as they use any portion of other roads in service areas to get access for fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● If people have a road they should be able to get fire service – have to get signatures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Dry hydrant at Jay’s house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Hope to get fire protection throughout Borough wherever possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Make Big Lake a firewise community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Medical Services</td>
<td>Coupled with Fire dept right now</td>
<td>Coupled with Fire dept right now</td>
<td>● See “Health Services” and “Fire”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Clinic or extension of hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Best near airport for easy medical evacuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACILITY</td>
<td>RESPONSIBLE ENTITY</td>
<td>CURRENT FACILITIES</td>
<td>ISSUES / NOTES / NEEDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Schools         | Title 1 - MSSD     | PTA at school is trying to get more playground equipment and turn it into more of a community play area | • Huge immediate need for structural improvement  
• Would like land for expansion & repair |
| Daycare / boys club |                  |                                                                                   | • Suggested during discussion                                                            |
| **Utilities**   |                    |                                                                                   |                                                                                        |
| Water & Sewer   | Private/public creation | Public water & sewer to be encouraged where feasible – possible infrastructure could be created via transitional private/community systems | • Question of feasibility in time frame – possible on site systems as required by DEC  
• Want to explore possibility of securing ROW in short term |
| Electricity     | MEA                | More access?                                                                      | • would like to have as widely as possible eventually                                    |
| Telephone       | MTA                |                                                                                   | • would like to have as widely as possible eventually                                    |
| Internet        | MTA                |                                                                                   | • would like to have as widely as possible eventually                                    |
| Solid Waste Disposal | Transfer station on Hollywood |                                                                                   | • Definitely need to address dumping in open space areas, especially of large items that people don’t want to have to pay to have hauled  
• Need an RV dump station (Tesoro station has a good open area, used to be one next to Montie’s but shut down); best to put one near one of the parks/campground on north shore |
| Natural Gas     | More access?       |                                                                                   | • Want natural gas as widely distributed as possible                                      |
F. Governance and Finance

General Background Information

Community members agree that the 1996 Big Lake Comprehensive Plan included some well intentioned goals and good recommendations for guiding future development of Big Lake. Some of the recommendations were implemented and tasks were accomplished. However, a review of the goals and status-to-date revealed that a large majority of the plan recommendations were never acted upon.

This chapter includes information, goals and strategies for increasing the community’s capacity to control its future and to accomplish comp plan goals and projects. Examples of approaches include gaining a better understanding of funding options and finding new ways to partner with the Borough, the state and other established governing bodies. As the community looks forward, major concerns include the following:

- Maintaining and increasing local control – Big Lake is an unorganized community, located within the Mat-Su Borough boundaries. The Borough provides a range of community services. Property owners pay borough property taxes and are subject to borough codes and ordinances. The Big Lake Community Council (BLCC) works in an advisory capacity to the Borough, advocates for community interests and coordinates community activities.

- Communication between governing bodies and community members – Like all elected bodies, there are times when the BLCC is at odds with some community members. There also times when the BLCC and community members do not agree with Mat-Su Borough approaches to handling key issues in Big Lake. Community members hope to streamline communications between all governing bodies and to better articulate their needs to the borough assembly, state legislature and congressional delegation.

- Capacity to generate funds for local projects – The community wants to better understand existing streams of revenue and funding cycles that affect community and borough-wide projects. Additionally, if the community wishes to apply for funds directly, it is critical that a body be in place to apply for, accept and manage project funds.

- Capacity to carry out projects – The community wants to ensure the implementation of goals and strategies outlined in the comprehensive plan including more complex projects that require more intense hands-on project management at the local level (e.g. construction of a community center).

“\textit{We know we need some rules, but not too many – we need a few good rules.}”
Summary of Preliminary Goals

1. Explore options for better communications within the community, and between the community and outside interests.

2. Explore organizational structures / funding options for creating greater capacity to carry out community goals and projects.

1. Explore options for better communications within the community, and between the community and outside interests.

   Important Issues

   Communities are stronger when it is easy for everyone to be involved, and to be aware of important community issues. It is also helpful to set up systems that make it simple for communication between community members, and between the community and entities like the Borough and the State Legislature. Small Alaskan communities deal with these issues in a variety of ways; some options are listed below.

   Potential Strategies to Improve Communications

   • Develop a community website – a place to post meeting announcements, summaries of community council meetings, and public notices about projects affecting the area.
   • Develop a community bulletin board.
   • Develop a better method (legislative sub-committee?) for assessing and communicating community legislative priorities to legislators and to the Mat-Su Borough in a timely manner.
   • Develop information for people who are considering living or starting a business in Big Lake.

2. Explore organizational structures / funding options for creating greater capacity to carry out community goals and projects.

   Important Issues

   Big Lake Community members are interested in exploring different organizational and funding options that would enhance the administrative and financial capacity of the community, both for funding and managing priority projects for the community (e.g. ice roads). Currently, the community of Big Lake relies on the Mat-Su Borough’s existing tax structure and organized status for funding community projects and most services (including fire protection, road maintenance, schools, library, recreation, land use). In more specific terms, the Mat-Su Borough collects property taxes from local residents (11.483 mills) and an accommodations tax (5 percent) from visitors to fund a myriad of community needs and services. A discussion of what Big Lake property owners contribute to borough coffers is presented on the following page.
As outlined in the Community Overview (Chapter X), the most current assessment of Big Lake parcels indicates a low land assessment of zero dollars (outlier parcels that have no value because they sit on existing wetlands or for other reasons) and a high of $572,000, with an average assessed value of $37,331. Building assessments for Big Lake also range from a low of zero dollars (indicates no building) to a high of $5,187,700, with an average assessment of $49,170. This data does not include buildings or land that are held by the State, Mat-Su Borough or University of Alaska. Over 3,000 parcels of Big Lake’s total 5,744 parcels, have no buildings (and therefore are not assessed for any improvements). Of the total property tax revenues for the Borough, over six million dollars are collected from Big Lake property owners. The monies the Borough collects in the form of property taxes go toward providing services to the community including those items listed in Figure 18.

**Figure 18. Mat-Su Borough Revenue & Expenditures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenues</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taxes</strong></td>
<td>Council/Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$64,487,287</td>
<td>$534,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service Charges</strong></td>
<td>Admin/Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7,759,953</td>
<td>$6,627,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enterprise</strong></td>
<td>Planning/Zoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,395,577</td>
<td>$1,406,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Local</strong></td>
<td>Other Gov't</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$31,468,978</td>
<td>$2,747,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federal Operating</strong></td>
<td>Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,919,269</td>
<td>$3,024,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other State</strong></td>
<td>Ambulance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,297,709</td>
<td>$4,535,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State/Fed Education</strong></td>
<td>Other Pub Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$106,457,763</td>
<td>$960,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State/Fed Capital Projects</strong></td>
<td>Roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$12,213,544</td>
<td>$5,280,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>Harbor/Dock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$231,000,080</td>
<td>$1,012,871</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Revenues**

| **Refuse/Landfill** | $2,574,810 |
| **Water/Sewer**     | $131,295   |
| **Other Public Works** | $2,245,812 |
| **Library/Museum**  | $888,143   |
| **Parks & Rec**     | $1,624,235 |
| **Misc Public Services** | $1,689,792 |
| **Debt Retirement** | $13,549,662 |
| **Capital Project** | $19,139,386 |
| **TOTAL**           | $247,616,278 |

Source: MSB
Potential Strategies to Expand Community Capacity to Raise Funds and Carry Out Projects

Expanding community capacity is a large topic, and one that can generate strong views. Perhaps the most important point on this subject is that unincorporated communities have a number of options other than incorporation to increase their control over their futures.

Below for discussion is a set of possible strategies for increasing local administrative capacity, and for increasing local options for funding that have not or cannot be met through the community’s relationship with the borough:

- Complete this comprehensive plan – produce a plan that expresses broadly shared community goals and sets out practical strategies to reach these goals. Many funders require communities to have an approved plan as a condition of applying for grants.
- Research options for strengthening the local Chamber of Commerce, to promote Big Lake, advocate on behalf of the community, and carry out projects of importance to the local business community.
- Research options, benefits, drawbacks of forming a 501(c)(3) organization – this would allow the community to seek and receive grant funding from a variety of government and foundation sources.
- Research specific potential grant and partnership opportunities – unincorporated communities have access to wide range of funding sources, if they are well organized and can demonstrate they have the capacity to manage project funds.
- Research user fees and fine options – Are there options for the local community to raise funds for community projects through establishing user fees and/or fines, for example for parking or other services the community might provide?
- Discuss the options, benefits, drawbacks of organizing as an incorporated city. To date the planning team has not suggested this idea, and there have been no discussions of this option. This idea is being floated for discussion by the consultants, who recognize that while this subject is controversial, it is nonetheless an option that should at least be discussed.