

Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Consolidated Issues and Solutions Tables

Comprehensive Plan Update Public Workshops, Oct 2023 – Jan 2024

General Information:

The Mat-Su Borough Planning Department facilitated nine public workshops from October 2023 to January 2024. There were seven in-person workshops and two virtual workshops. The workshops were held for the Glenn Highway Region, the Greater Butte Region, the Greater Palmer Region, the Greater Wasilla Region, the Lower Parks Region, the Upper Parks Region, and the Knik-Fairview Region. In-person workshops were held in school libraries in the region and were open to MSB residents of all ages. In-person meetings were scheduled from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. One virtual meeting was scheduled from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. to offer an alternative time. There were approximately 160 attendees. Planning staff relied heavily on Facebook advertisements, radio interviews, and Public Service Announcements to get the word out. They also posted flyers in MSB libraries and emailed all community councils a schedule of all the workshops. Two workshops had to be rescheduled due to winter storms. Planning staff included Kelsey Anderson, Project Manager; Kim Sollien, Planning Services Manager; and Maija DiSalvo, Long-Range Planner. Staff reported on the public workshops to the Planning Commission on January 15, 2024, and held a Planning Commission workshop on the Guiding Principles on February 12, 2024. The Assembly received an update on the public workshops and the Guiding Principles on February 17, 2024.

Engagement Method:

Staff set up each meeting space by numbering between five and six tables, with four to five chairs at each table. As residents came in, they were asked to sign in and given a nametag with a number corresponding to the table number they were supposed to sit at. This was meant to randomize the seating and bring more diversity of thought to the small groups. Once everyone was seated, the Planning staff started each workshop with a short presentation titled *Comprehensive Plan 101*, where they taught attendees the basics of the comprehensive plan update and what planning issues are. Once the presentation was completed, residents were asked to work with the people at their tables to answer two questions.

1. What are the most pressing planning issues you're experiencing in your community?
2. What solutions would you like your local government to start prioritizing?

Groups were given 20 minutes for each question and then reported back to the group. Residents were encouraged to talk through ideas and get specific about wording so staff could better recognize the nuances of potential solutions based on each region's particular needs. Once all the issues and solutions were recorded, attendees were given 14 dots to help staff prioritize the information: 6 for issues, 6 for solutions, and 2 'super dots' to mark their top priority in each category. Not all attendees decided to participate in this final exercise.

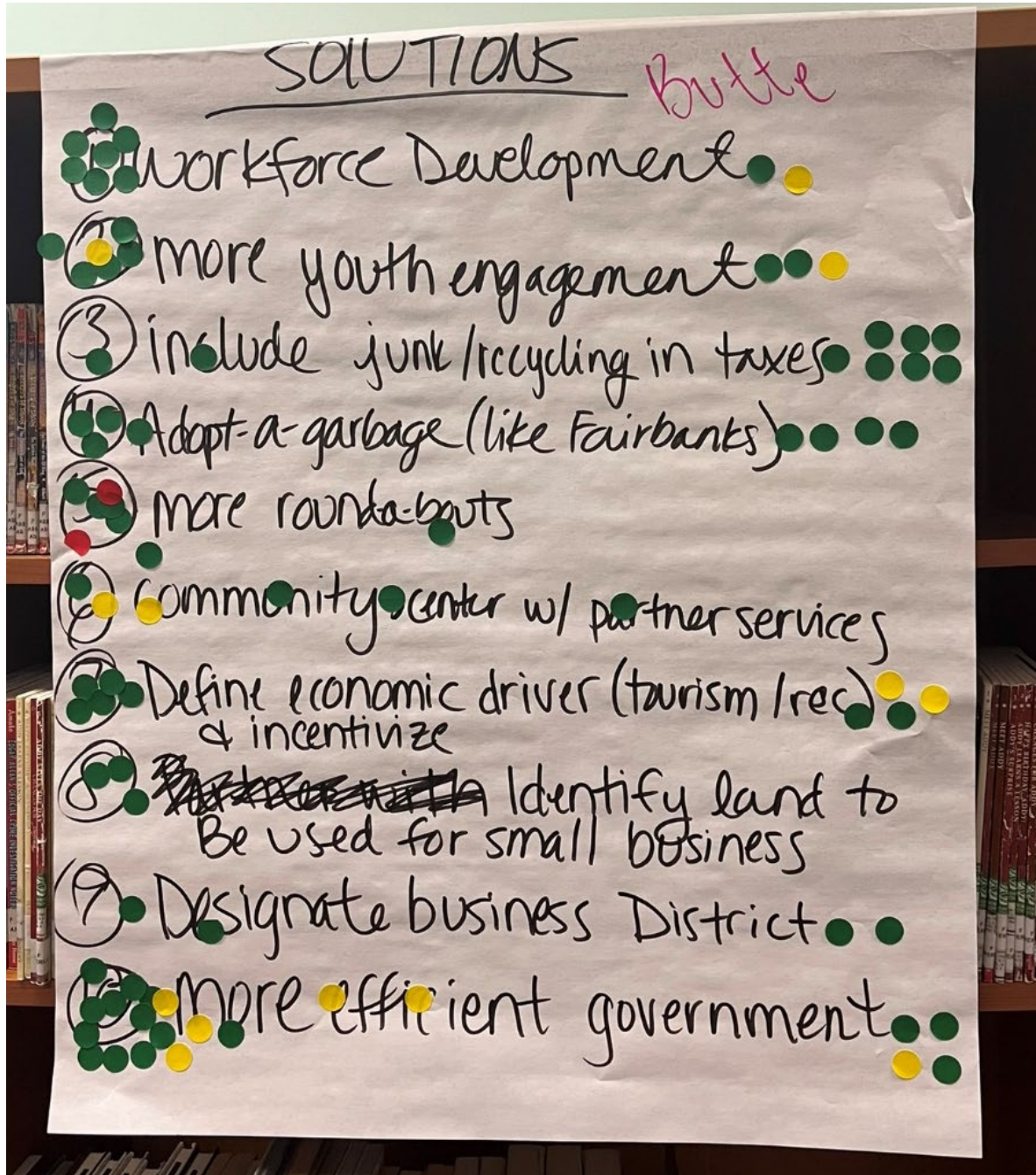
Takeaways:

The number one takeaway from the public workshops is that there is no such thing as a borough-wide response to planning issues. Each region approached issues and solutions differently, reminding staff of the vast differences between rural and urban needs and distinct community struggles. For example, in the Upper Parks meeting, residents were very clear that their

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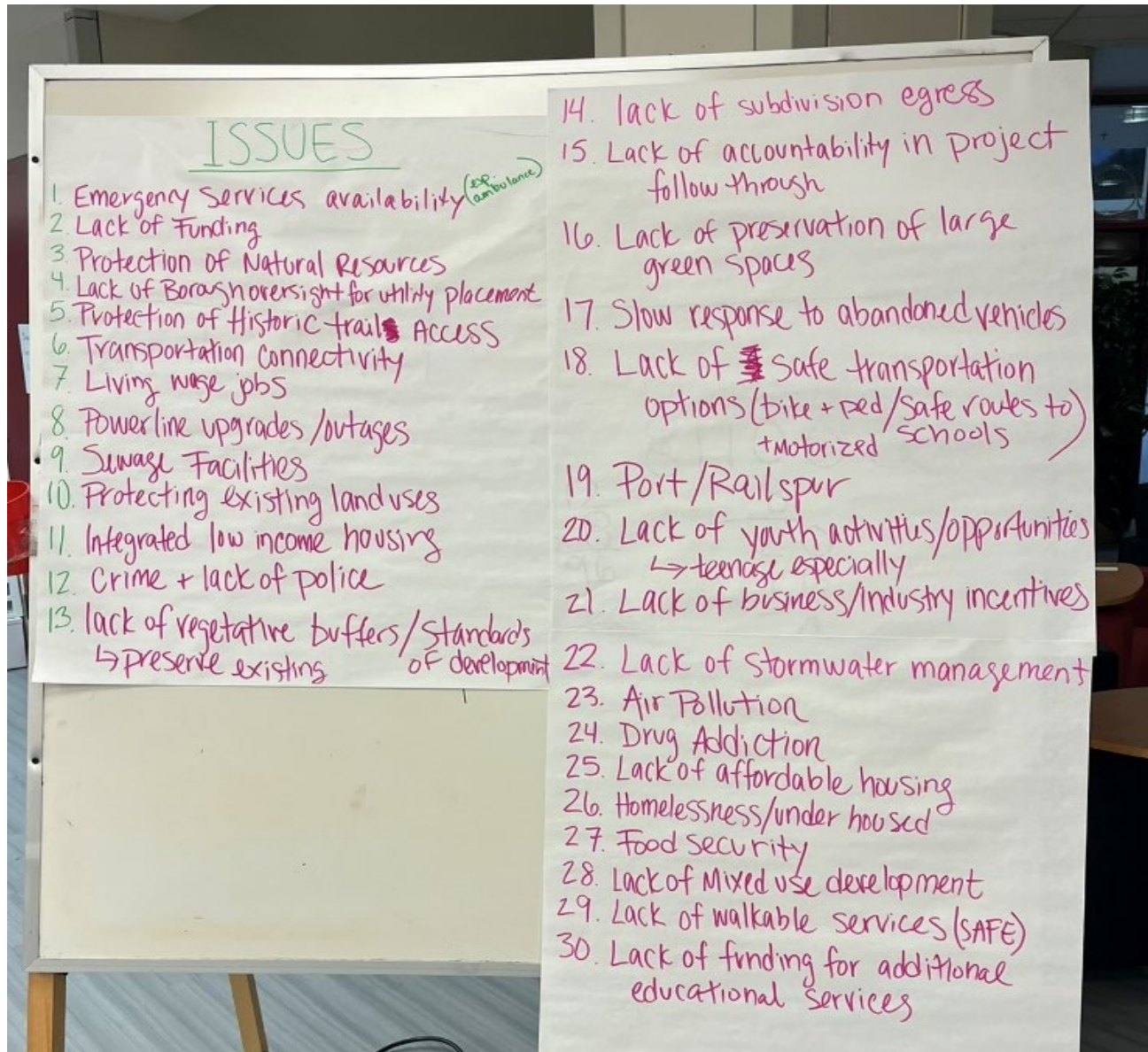
infrastructure is not keeping up with the increase in tourism in their area. At the same time, the Greater Butte Region was heavily focused on planning ways to increase economic growth in sectors that support the existing businesses and character of the Butte, like motorized recreation businesses and expanding existing recreation infrastructure. Staff created spreadsheets to capture each meeting's issues and solutions verbatim. In an effort to use the issues and solutions exercise as a tool for creating the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, staff consolidated the issues and solutions into a table for easier consumption by other staff, elected officials, and MSB leadership. The Project Manager will begin drafting the Comprehensive Plan following the Assembly Strategic Meeting on February 17. The Project Manager believes that writing an issues-based plan will provide an added opportunity for government accountability, which was a significant theme discussed at every public workshop.

Example Solutions from the Greater Butte Region:



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Example Issues from the Lower Parks Region:



JOIN US!



The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is holding **community meetings** for the **Borough-wide Comprehensive Plan update!**

Join your neighbors as they identify common community issues and develop solutions together that will guide the future development of the MSB. **These events are in person and for all ages.** We look forward to seeing you at a school near you!



DATE	LOCATION	TIME	SERVED COMMUNITIES
Wednesday, November 1, 2023	Colony High School Library	6 p.m. to 8 p.m.	City of Palmer, Sutton, Farm Loop, Gateway, Buffalo Soapstone
Thursday, November 2, 2023	Redington Jr/Sr High School Library	6 p.m. to 8 p.m.	Knik-Fairview, Point MacKenzie
Monday, November 27, 2023	Teeland Middle School Library	6 p.m. to 8 p.m.	Fishhook, City of Wasilla, North and South Lakes, Tanaina
Wednesday, November 15, 2023	Butte Elementary School Library	6 p.m. to 8 p.m.	Lazy Mountain, Butte, South Knik River
Thursday, January 11, 2024	Su-Valley High School Library	6 p.m. to 8 p.m.	Petersville, Trapper Creek, Talkeetna, Caswell Lakes, Chase, Susitna
Tuesday, November 28, 2023	Glacier View School	6 p.m. to 8 p.m.	Chickaloon, Glacier View, Eureka, Louise/Susitna/Tyone
Wednesday, November 29, 2023	Houston Middle School	6 p.m. to 8 p.m.	Willow, City of Houston, Big Lake, Meadow Lakes

WHY ATTEND?



You want to voice your concerns, opinions, and suggestions to ensure your perspective is considered in developing the Comprehensive Plan.



You want to advocate for changes that align with your vision for the community's future.



You are curious about future development goals and would like to meet Borough staff who can answer some questions.

HAVE QUESTIONS?

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!



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<https://compplanupdate.matsugov.us/>



JOIN US FOR A PUBLIC WORKSHOP!

We still have workshops available; they are for all ages and open to everyone. Let us know, what are the pressing issues you see in your community, and what are some solutions you'd like your local government to start prioritizing!

DATE/TIME	LOCATION
Friday, December 15, 2023 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Meeting Call in: 907-290-7880 Code: 501 060 276
Wednesday, December 20, 2023 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Virtual Meeting Call in: 907-290-7880 Code: 550 071 588
Thursday, January 11, 2024 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Su-Valley High School Library 42748 S Parks Hwy, Talkeetna, AK 99676

Project Manager: Kelsey Anderson, 907-861-8525, kelsey.anderson@matsugov.us

Issues

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	

Issues

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		

Issues

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.		

Solutions

Deliver High Quality Services			
Transportation - land use focused:	Transportation - mobility, safety and connectivity focused	Services:	Government:
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

Solutions

Managing Growth			
Land Use - Platting	Land Use - Planning	Community Development	Environment
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		

Solutions

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		