

SUBJECT: Community Profile

REQUESTED BY: Planning/Finance

PREPARED BY: Planning Staff

DATE: July 9, 2001

FOR AGENDA OF: August 13, 2001

SUMMARY:

A community profile, supplemental to the budget showing the current figures gathered in the 2000 Census and how Wasilla compares to other communities locally as well as nationally.

The intent is to include this document on the City's web page when the design of the web page is completed. This document will be used for marketing new businesses to Wasilla and will be forwarded to Wasilla Chamber of Commerce.

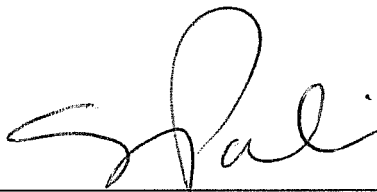
FISCAL IMPACT: No Yes, amount requested: \$

Fund:

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

No action required.

MAYOR REVIEW/COMMENT:



Reviewed by: SARAH PALIN, Mayor

Presented to Council
Date: 8/13/01
verified by: TK

Attachments:

Community Profile

Wasilla

**Living Life Richly
in Alaska's Heartland**



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The City of Wasilla is one of the fastest growing communities in the United States. Along with this growth comes challenges for our community to keep up with the increased demand for services made upon the City based on the population growth. My commitment is to keep our local government small, efficient and accountable, while pro-actively assisting the private sector. The main goal of the City of Wasilla is to prioritize tax dollars to support Wasilla's much needed infrastructure improvements and public safety needs.

The City of Wasilla, through economic development and investment in our infrastructure, has developed itself into the retail trade center for the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough. It is estimated that the City of Wasilla provides services to over 40,000 citizens. Based on the investment trends of large retail companies and small business entrepreneurs locating in Wasilla, and the demographic trend for the Mat-Su Borough, the City of Wasilla will continue to retain its position as the financial and retail center for the Mat-Su Borough in the coming years.

One of the key economic factors in the continuing financial health of the City, and one of the key ingredients for the robust economy that the City of Wasilla has seen over the past years, is population growth. The Mat-Su Borough's population has grown by almost 50% in the last 10 years and the City of Wasilla's population has grown by over 66% in this same period. We believe that based on factors such as our superb quality of life here in the Valley, the availability of developable land and less expensive housing compared to Anchorage, and our improved transportation infrastructure, that this robust population growth trend will continue into the foreseeable future. It is projected that the population of the Borough could surpass 100,000 people by the year 2018.

Other factors that will continue to fuel the economic growth in the City of Wasilla will be the continued expansion of the tourist industry and the creation of private sector jobs. An example of the dramatic expansion of the tourist industry is the growth in hotel receipts (600% increase since 1993) and hotel employment (300% increase since 1990). We will continue to support the development of these sectors in the City and the Mat-Su Borough.

In summary, the future looks very bright for the City of Wasilla and our economy. Our economy is ultimately linked to the Mat-Su Borough's and the Municipality of Anchorage's. As long as southcentral Alaska's economy expands, the City of Wasilla will retain its place as one of the strongest performing economies in the State of Alaska.

As we face the growing needs and desires in this community that we call home, I am confident that we are up to meeting the challenges and opportunities in front of us. This is an exciting time for Wasilla! Be assured that our team of dedicated employees work hard every day for all of our benefit, and we realize we have been truly blessed beyond any individual efforts. We are entering this new fiscal year with renewed energy . . . full of hope and anticipation of more good things to come.

Sincerely,

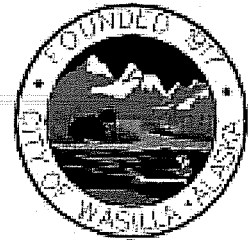
Sarah Palin
Mayor

Dynamic Wasilla...

- **A progressive community in a spectacular natural setting**— Wasilla offers the best of Alaska. A thriving crossroads with a booming economy, this rapidly growing city is the heart of a diverse and dynamic region. Wasilla is the commercial and retail center for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough in Southcentral Alaska. (The area, considered Alaska's breadbasket because it is the state's major agricultural region, is often called "the Mat-Su Valley" or simply "Mat-Su.")
- **In Alaska terms, the size of Wasilla is just right**— large enough to have metropolitan amenities and a blossoming growth center for business, yet small enough to preserve the charm, security, and familiarity of small-town living. The active population enjoys affordable land and housing, unparalleled recreation, a thriving economy, and a responsive local government committed to assisting private development.
- **The fastest growing region in Alaska**— statistics for population, employment, housing construction, in-migration, and highway travel all indicate that this inviting borough is developing and growing faster than any other area of Alaska.
- **The population is young and family-based**— according to Census 2000, 34 percent of Wasilla's population is younger than 18, and the median age is 29.7 years. Health, education, recreation, and quality of family life are priorities addressed daily by civic leaders and residents.
- **Strategic link**— Wasilla's advantageous location along the George Parks Highway and the Alaska Railroad make it a strategic link between Anchorage and Fairbanks, the largest population centers and transportation hubs of Southcentral and Interior Alaska. The 50-minute commute between Wasilla and Anchorage is manageable and scenic.



...Versatile Wasilla

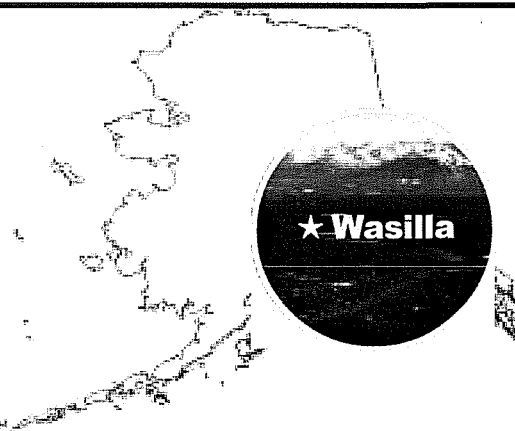


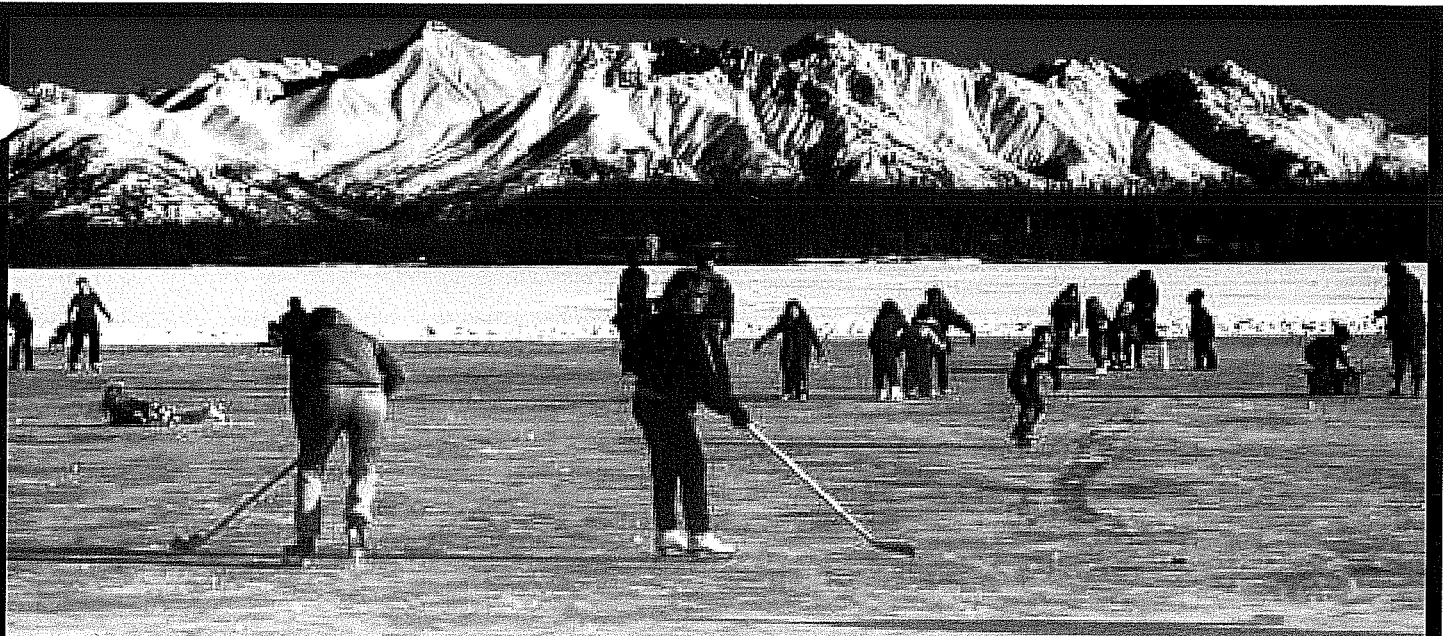
The City of Wasilla, incorporated in 1974, serves the greater Wasilla area.

- **Surrounded by majesty**, Wasilla sits between two river valleys carved by prehistoric glaciers. The city is sheltered from extreme weather by the Talkeetna Mountains and nestled between two beautiful lakes—Wasilla and Lucille. The unique locale appeals to those who seek an Alaskan lifestyle while raising a family, taking advantage of economic prospects, or retiring in comfort.
- **The quality of life is excellent**, the water is clean and abundant, the air is fresh, and the people are friendly. Wasilla embodies the small-town values of family, community, and caring for neighbors. Residents have easy access to major cities, other small towns, suburban areas, farmlands, and isolated cabins. Proximity to Anchorage and the magnificent coastal areas of the Southcentral region provides residents with additional economic, educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities.
- **A year-round recreation paradise**, Wasilla is the home of the world-renowned Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race and the Tesoro Iron-Dog 2000, the world's longest snowmobile race. Fishing, swimming, boating, hiking, and biking are popular activities during summer's long daylight hours, and mountains, lakes, streams, wetlands, tundra, and boreal forests are within easy reach.
- **Wasilla's rich history and diversity of people and ideas** are actively treasured and preserved. The community's heritage includes the indigenous Athabaskan (Dena'ina) people, gold miners, and homesteaders, as well as contemporary entrepreneurs and wilderness enthusiasts.

Located 12 miles north of Knik Arm on Cook Inlet, Wasilla is in Alaska's fastest growing area, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Encompassing more than 24,000 square miles, the borough is larger than West Virginia.

Wasilla is 30 air miles north-northeast of Anchorage, at about 61° North Latitude and 149° West Longitude. Wasilla comprises about 11 square miles of land and 1 square mile of water.





The people of Wasilla

In July 2000, *Alaska Economic Trends* highlighted the vigorous growth occurring in the Mat-Su Borough, stating that "an increasing number of developers, investors, and others are eyeballing the area with interest" because of its standing as a strong economic performer.

U.S. Census Bureau data for the year 2000 indicate that the populations of Wasilla and the borough have increased by 26 and 49 percent, respectively, since 1990. Wasilla's 26 percent increase is nearly twice Alaska's statewide increase of 14 percent.

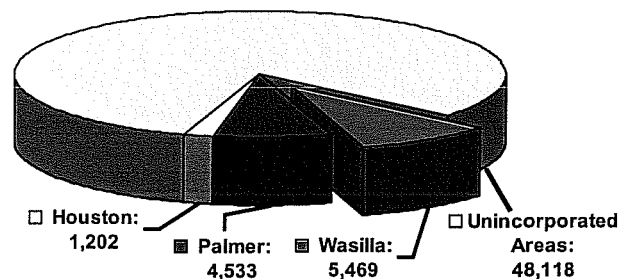
Population Growth for Selected Areas, 1990-2000

	1990 Census	2000 Census	Percent Change
Wasilla	4,029	5,469	26.3
Mat-Su Borough	39,683	59,322	49.5
Anchorage	226,338	260,283	15.0
Alaska	550,043	626,932	14.0
U.S.	248,709,873	281,421,906	13.2

Percentage of the Borough Population

The bulk of the Mat-Su Borough population resides within a core area around the incorporated cities of Wasilla, Palmer, and Houston. Among these cities, Wasilla has the largest population.

Borough Population Distribution, 2000

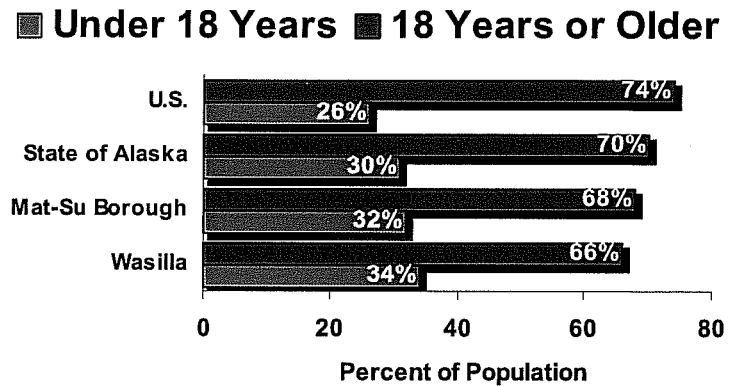


Source: All population data presented on these pages are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

Age

Wasilla's population is young compared to state and national averages. According to Census 2000, 34 percent of Wasilla's population is younger than 18 as compared to 30 percent for Alaska as a whole, and 26 percent for the United States. The median age is 29.7 years for Wasilla residents, compared to 32.4 years for all Alaskans.

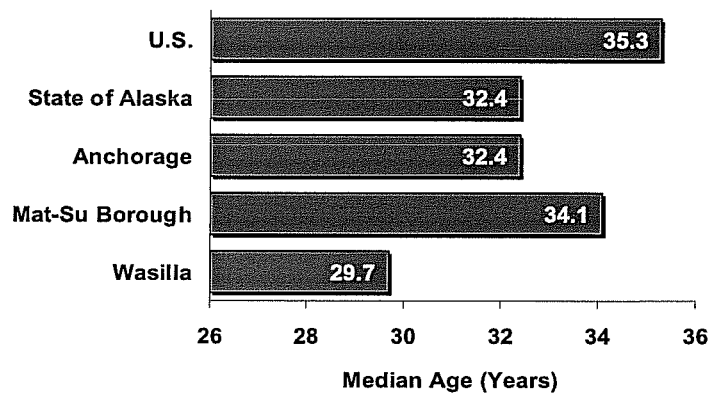
Percentage of Population Under 18 and Age 18 or Older, Selected Areas, 2000



Age Distribution for Wasilla, 2000

Age Level	Percent of Population at Age Level
Younger than 5	8.8%
5-19	27.6%
20-34	20.6%
35-54	30.2%
55 and Older	13.0%

Median Age, Selected Areas, 2000



Educated Workforce

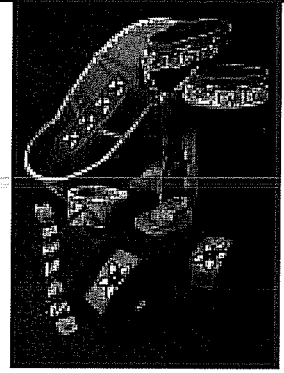
Alaska ranks first among all 50 U.S. states in the percentage of citizens 25 and older who are high school graduates, with 92.8 percent compared to a national average of 83.4 percent.

Educational Attainment of Alaskans 25 Years of Age and Older, 1999

Highest Educational Level Achieved	Percent of Population Achieving Level
High School Graduate or Higher	92.8%
College Graduate or Higher	25.5%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 2000.

Between the rivers and the lakes...

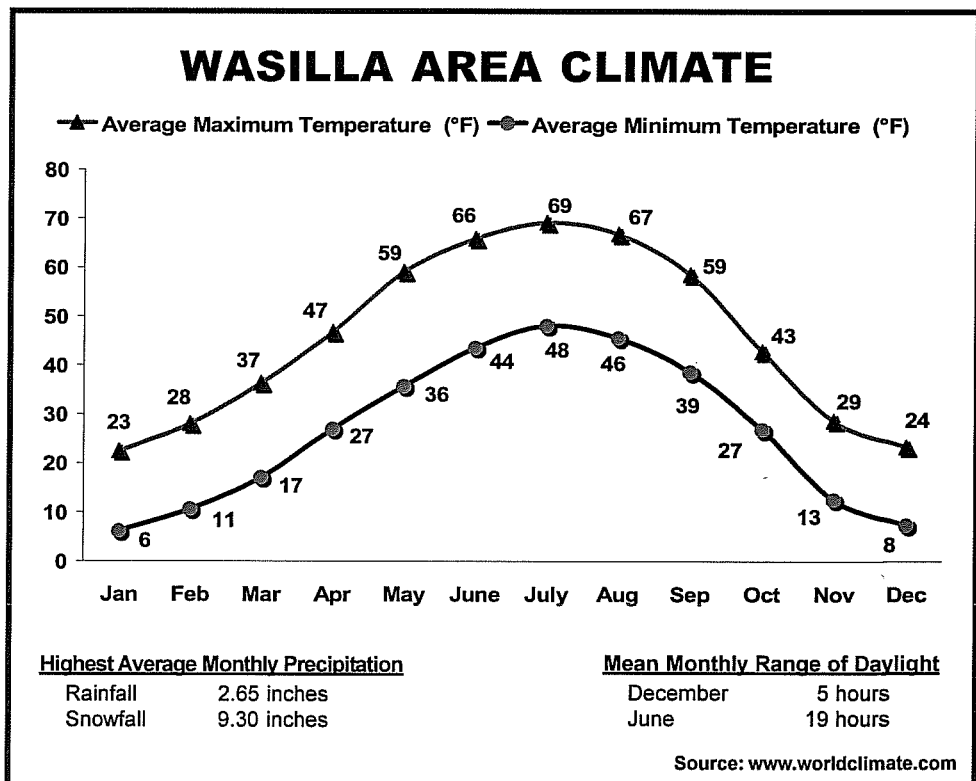


Wasilla's roots lie in its natural resources and mild coastal climate, which have provided shelter and sustenance to inhabitants for thousands of years. Surrounding areas are replete with fish, game, and fresh water. One explanation of the city's name underscores its natural history—"Wasilla" is said to mean "breath of air" in the Dena'ina dialect. With its rivers, lakes, and coastal areas, the Matanuska-Susitna Valley has always been a climatic haven from the adjacent, formidable mountain ranges.

The Wasilla area has long been a natural junction for trade and transportation. Dena'ina hunting and trading trails developed and multiplied as gold was discovered in the Talkeetna Mountains in the late 1800s. Gold was transported by wagon south to the Cook Inlet port of Knik and shipped to market. When a railroad was built between Seward and Fairbanks, Wasilla's importance in transloading gold increased. The townsite originated in 1917, and over time, many businesses relocated to the new community.

Expansion continued as Wasilla served as a supply base for gold and coal mining through World War II. Later, this major role declined, but the rich land revived population growth. Many homesteaders settled the valley in the 1930s and 1940s.

Agriculture and natural resources sustained growth and the city was incorporated in 1974. Wasilla remains a vital financial, commercial, and retail supply center that is increasingly attractive to businesses and families.





Economics and employment

Wasilla's expanding economy offers a wide range of employment and business development opportunities, particularly in the retail and services industries.

- Retail shopping outlets provide increasing local employment—since 1999 a new Fred Meyer store and an expanded new Wal-Mart have opened. A Sears store opening in fall 2001 will employ more than 100 people.
- Recent Census Bureau statistics (1998) rank Alaska third nationwide in retail sales per household, with average annual expenditures of \$33,148.
- Wasilla's unique location has helped make it a retail and service center for an area that extends far beyond its borders and beyond what would be expected from its population of 5,469. It is a central shopping area not only for residents and tourists, but also for Alaskans from remote communities and rural areas.
- Wasilla is home to branches of several statewide banks as well as utility, real estate, insurance, and medical organizations. A growing number of automobile dealerships cater to local residents and compete successfully for Anchorage business.
- Industrial activities that contribute to the economic base include steel fabrication, agriculture, manufacturing of concrete products and wood products, and distribution of building materials. Robust residential and commercial markets have kept the construction industry busy, making it a significant contributor to job growth.
- Tourism and recreation services are important sources of income and revenue. Every year, thousands of visitors vacation in the area. Flight services and aircraft support are especially important—there are several hundred small, private aircraft in the area.

Wasilla at work

According to *Alaska Economic Trends*, May 2001, employment in the Mat-Su Borough grew by a remarkable 73.6 percent between 1990 and 2000, compared with the state average of 18.2 percent. Wasilla shared in this employment growth, with new businesses opening and existing businesses expanding.

Major Employers in the City of Wasilla

Wal-Mart	375
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District	361
Fred Meyer	320
Carrs Quality Center	194
Nye Frontier Ford	150
Valley Hospital	145
Tony Chevrolet Buick*	83
Spenard Builders Supply, Inc.	70
City of Wasilla	64
Lake Lucille Inn (Best Western)	60
Sears	100-124**

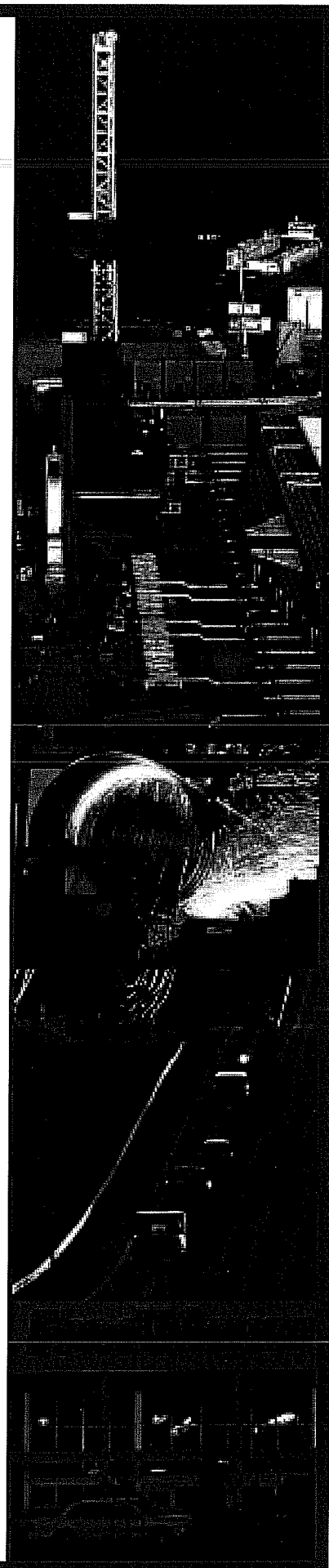
*Tony Chevrolet Buick is in the process of being annexed into the City limits.

**estimated number of employees for the new store opening in fall 2001; current store employs 40.

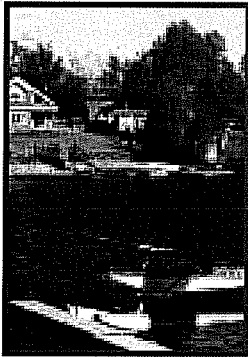
One of the Mat-Su borough's chief exports is labor. Wasilla residents and most of the borough's population live within 40 to 50 miles of the state's largest city, Anchorage, and approximately 38 percent of the Mat-Su workforce commutes. In fact, Wasilla has long been considered a bedroom community for Anchorage. Many local residents who work in other locations were first drawn to Wasilla because of its affordable housing and the benefits of small-town living.

A significant number of workers travel even longer distances. These commuters—about 10 percent of borough residents—include North Slope oil workers, construction workers who travel among various parts of the state, and commercial fishers (124 area residents hold commercial fishing permits).

Though these mobile workers are employed elsewhere, they and their families invest their earnings in housing, consumer goods, businesses, and services locally, spurring economic activity and employment, and helping Wasilla become a self-sustaining economic engine.



Housing and homes



- Wasilla and the surrounding area offer a variety of housing styles and values, giving potential residents a wide range of choices. The majority of housing in Wasilla can be characterized as single-family homes situated on large lots in a semi-rural area.
- Buyers get more housing value for their money in the Mat-Su Valley than in Anchorage. For the year 2000, the Valley Board of Realtors Multiple Listing Service cited an average selling price of \$143,872, compared to the \$187,999 average selling price cited by the Anchorage Multiple Listing Service.
- Rental housing is more affordable in Wasilla. According to the June 2001 issue of *Alaska Economic Trends*, a two-bedroom apartment rents for \$694 a month in Wasilla, versus \$775 a month in Anchorage.
- Wasilla's total of 2,119 housing units have an occupancy rate of 93.4 percent. Owner-occupied housing accounts for 55.8 percent of all units.
- A large amount of vacant, subdivided land is available for single-family or multiple-family residential use in Wasilla. Several large unsubdivided tracts are available for development.
- In addition to year-round residences, there are over 5,000 seasonal, recreational or occasional homes in the Mat-Su borough.

Housing Indicator Data for Wasilla and Selected Areas, 2000

	<u>Wasilla</u>	<u>Mat-Su Borough</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Alaska</u>
Total No. of Housing Units	2,119	27,329	100,368	260,978
No. of Occupied Units	1,979	20,556	94,822	221,600
No. of Vacant Units	140	6,773	5,546	39,378
Seasonal, Recreational, Occasional	34	5,244	1,107	21,474
Percent of Occupied Housing	93.4%	75.2%	94.5%	84.9%
No. of Owner-Occupied Units	1,104	16,218	56,953	138,509
No. of Renter-Occupied Units	875	4,338	37,869	83,091
Percent of Owner-Occupied Units	55.8%	78.9%	60.1%	62.5%

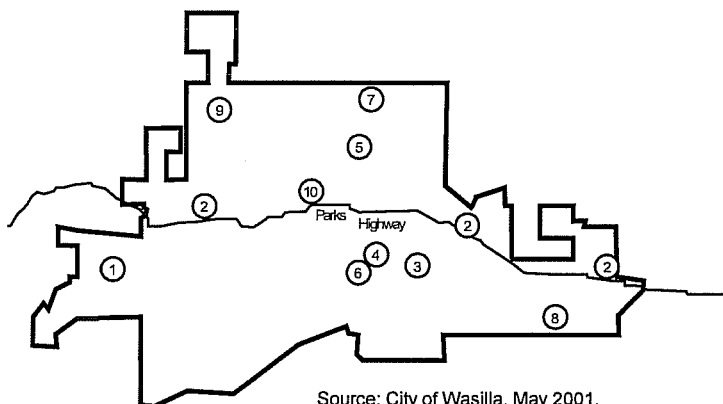
Source: Census 2000.



Future development

One of Wasilla's greatest assets is, simply put, space. Located at the junction of major highway and rail connections, and surrounded by acres of affordable, developable land, Wasilla and the Mat-Su Valley are strategically positioned for further commercial and residential growth. By contrast, because of its location between the Chugach Mountains and Cook Inlet, Anchorage is increasingly constrained in its capacity for expansion.

Wasilla is focused on the needs of its current residents while planning for the future.



Source: City of Wasilla, May 2001.

1. **Wasilla Municipal Airport:** future plans under consideration include a commuter rail facility, runway expansion from 3,700 to 5,000 feet, and city water
2. **High-demand retail locations and available commercial space along Parks Highway**
3. **Future town center:** planned for development upon completion of Palmer-Wasilla Highway extension
4. **Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc.:** planned retirement housing and amenities
5. **Forest Hills Apartments:** planned low-income housing close to retail business area
6. **Center Point Subdivision:** planned single-family and multi-unit residential development in a gated community
7. **City water**
8. **City sewer**
9. **Bumpus Recreational Complex:** baseball, softball and soccer
10. **Iditapark:** includes basketball, tennis, and sand volleyball courts, Wonderland—a children's playground, a world-class skateboard facility, BMX trails, an amphitheater, and an armed forces honor garden

Cost of living

“What does it cost to live in Alaska?” Alaska has a reputation for being an expensive place to live. But what is the reality? The answer varies from person to person. No two households spend their money in exactly the same way; however, everyone needs certain basic things, including food, housing, and medical care. The American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association’s comparison of some common items shows the variability in costs from city to city. Not surprisingly, living in Alaska comes with a price, but the cost differences are less than one might expect. And there are offsetting factors. For example, Alaska has no statewide income tax—in fact, a dividend is paid each resident every year from the Alaska Permanent Fund. And in 1999 Census data, Alaska ranked 11th nationwide in a state-by-state comparison of average annual pay.

Average Price for Various Goods and Services in Selected Cities-Fourth Quarter 2000

	Wasilla (Anchorage)*	San Diego	Denver	Oklahoma City	Orlando	Washington, D.C.
1 Pound T-bone Steak	6.85	8.83	6.32	5.66	7.19	8.39
1/2 Gallon Whole Milk	2.29	2.09	1.92	1.52	1.83	1.53
1 Dozen Grade A Large Eggs	1.53	1.98	1.06	0.89	0.93	0.95
13 ounce Coffee (canned)	3.76	3.90	3.76	2.48	2.97	3.05
Total Monthly Energy Cost	95.24	148.95	85.55	112.22	121.49	100.79
1 Gallon Gasoline	1.65	1.91	1.52	1.36	1.44	1.60
Hospital Room/Day semi private	800.50	956.17	692.67	396.22	754.30	550.15
Doctor's Office Visit	87.43	59.83	71.20	55.45	58.50	71.50
McDonald's Quarter Pounder with cheese	2.87	2.33	2.01	1.85	2.29	2.24
Mens' Dockers No Wrinkle Khakis	48.00	32.14	36.59	37.66	35.74	40.39

Source: American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association, Urban Area Index Data, Fourth Quarter 2000, as cited in *Alaska Economic Trends*, June 2001.

*Costs in Wasilla are assumed to be similar to Anchorage

**Not including utilities

In and around Wasilla

Resources

- **The Greater Wasilla Chamber of Commerce** is a non-profit, private, voluntary organization with the mission of creating a positive economic and civic climate in the greater Wasilla area. The Chamber has 320 members and is housed in the restored historic Wasilla Railroad Depot, which can be seen from the Parks Highway.
- **The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District** operates the public schools in the City of Wasilla. With approximately 12,600 students and more than 1,500 employees, the school district has distinguished itself. Wasilla High School had six National Merit Scholars for the 2000-1 School year, and among the ranks of the district's employees are winners of several state and national awards, including the 2001 Alaska Teacher of the Year, the Alaska Distinguished Principal, the Milken Family Foundation Educator, and the Alaska 2001-2 Christa McAuliffe Fellow.

The number one priority of the district is student safety and a healthy, positive learning environment. The district has a low dropout rate of 3.2 percent, and a low student-teacher-ratio of 18 students to each full-time teacher. While committed to reducing class sizes at all levels, plans are in place to ensure that kindergarten classes contain no more than 18 students per class during the 2001-2 school year.

- **Matanuska-Susitna College** has its main campus on a 950-acre site halfway between Wasilla and Palmer. This extended college of the University of Alaska Anchorage serves approximately 1,650 students each semester in a modern 97,076 square foot facility. The school offers Associate of Applied Science degrees in Accounting, Electronics, Technology, Fire Service Administration, Human Services, Office Management and Technology, Refrigeration and Heating Technology, Small Business



Administration, and a Microcomputer Support Specialist Program. Vocational certification programs are conducted in association with the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Through an arrangement with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, area high school students are allowed to take selected college level classes.

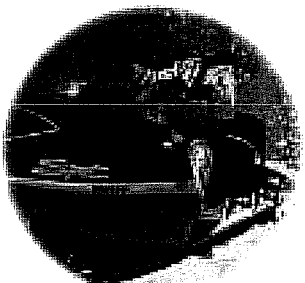
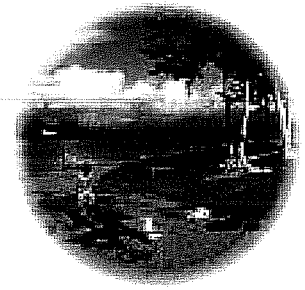
- **Mat-Su Youth Court** is a diversion program for juvenile, first-time minor offenders with the goal of promoting accountability, restorative justice, and education through early intervention. Criminal law training and experience is offered to middle and high school students who in turn defend, prosecute, and judge their peers.
- **Valley Hospital Association (VHA)** is a fully accredited, not-for-profit, community-based healthcare organization providing medical care to the residents of the Mat-Su Valley. VHA offers services through a continuum of care at campuses in Wasilla and Palmer. Valley Hospital is located in Palmer while the Valley Hospital Medical Center in Wasilla offers an outpatient hospital with full diagnostic capabilities as well as office space for local healthcare providers. Wasilla Campus includes a walk-in urgent care center, full service pharmacy, laboratory, imaging services, and the Susitna Surgery Center.

The Palmer-Wasilla Highway Office includes the first Medicare certified hospice in the State of Alaska. The Hospice of Mat-Su provides medically directed, comfort care for the terminally ill and their families with 24-hour availability. The Palmer-Wasilla Highway Office includes Valley Health Services, which provides around the clock, quality healthcare services, including skilled nursing care, rehabilitation services, I.V. therapy services, social work services, and home health aid and personal care attendant services to those who are homebound. Wasilla Infusion Therapy provides medical-directed, in home and outpatient I.V. therapy.

- **Wasilla Library** serves residents of the greater Wasilla area with funding from the City of Wasilla and the Mat-Su Borough. The Wasilla Library is the fourth busiest library in the state and participates in the state interlibrary loan system.



Sod roof at old townsite museum



- **Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc.** operates the Floyd Smith Senior Center providing meals, rides, a food bank, information, exercise opportunities, and social activities to seniors in the greater Wasilla area. Connected to the Senior Center are 50 independent living units. According to the 2000 Census, 9.5 percent of the residents of the City of Wasilla are 60 years of age or older.

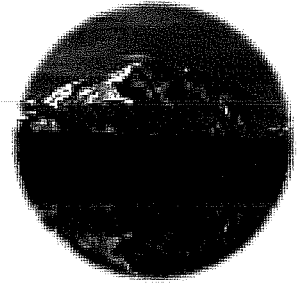
Transportation

- **The George Parks Highway and the Glenn Highway** connect the city of Wasilla to Palmer, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Canada. While the borough is larger than West Virginia, approximately 90 percent of the residents live along the 55-mile stretch of the road system between Willow on the Parks Highway and Sutton on the Glenn Highway.
- **Alaska Railroad Corporation**, a full-service railroad, runs passenger and freight service between Anchorage and Fairbanks. Projects are currently underway to reduce the travel time between Wasilla and Anchorage from 90 to 58 minutes. A Commuter Rail Study and Operations Plan is underway to create a profile of Wasilla residents and other Alaskans who would use a commuter rail service. Some of the essential issues to be addressed include questions about location of depots and park and rides, transport of commuters from the train depot to the workplace, ticket prices, and facilities and equipment upgrades.
- **Floatplanes** land at Wasilla Lake, Jacobsen Lake, and Lake Lucille. In addition, 10 private airstrips can be found in the vicinity. Anchorage International Airport with commercial jet service is a little over an hour away.
- **The Mat-Su Community Transit (MASCOT)**, is a non-profit organization that runs a fixed-route system with five 20-passenger, wheel chair accessible buses. MASCOT operates Monday through Friday covering Wasilla, Palmer, and Big Lake with connections to the Eagle River Transit Center.
- **Wasilla Airport**, constructed on 370 acres by the City of Wasilla in the heart of the Mat-Su Borough in 1992, replaced the old gravel airstrip in the center of town. The 3,700-foot runway was paved by the City in 1999. A Wasilla Airport Master Plan is currently being prepared addressing issues related to safety, expansion potential, minimizing encroachments, and the changing transportation needs of the area in light of its economic growth. The integrated master plan will include a plan for a regional multi-modal transportation center at or near the airport for rail, trail, highway, and airport users.



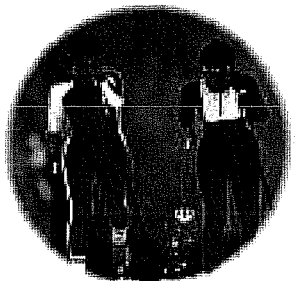
Wasilla Museums

- **Dorothy G. Page Museum & Visitor Center.** The heritage of the Wasilla, Knik, and Willow Creek area is preserved in an archive of historical printed materials, a variety of regional history exhibits, native artifacts, homesteading exhibits, and natural history dioramas of Alaska wildlife and fossils. Historic buildings including Wasilla's first school are grouped behind the museum in Old Townsite Park. The Museum welcomed over 6,000 visitors last year. A farmers market is held on Wednesday afternoons during the summer on the grounds of the Old Townsite Park.
- **Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry.** The museum is a non-profit organization with the mission to collect, preserve, display, and interpret artifacts related to Alaska's transportation and industrial history. Their display includes aircraft, 30 items of rolling stock (train cars, etc.), special vehicles related to the development of Alaska, tractors and farm implements, and fishing boats along with historic photos, maps, artifacts, and equipment documenting the area's mining history.

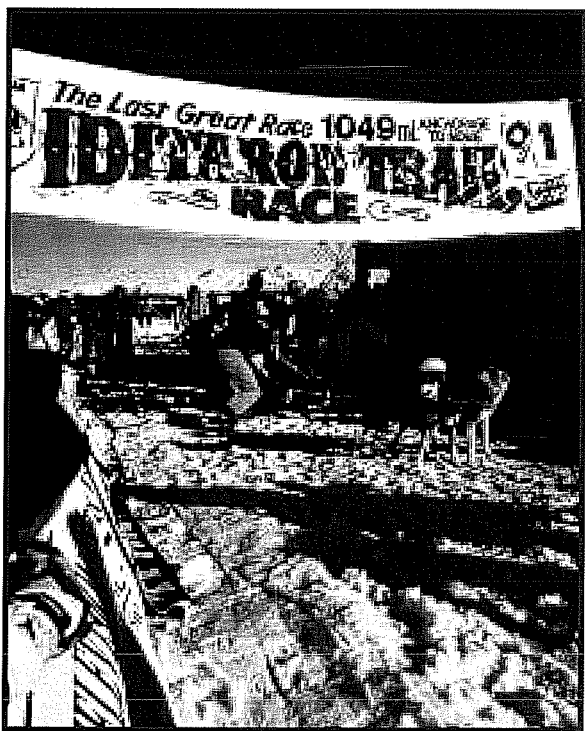


Nearby Recreation Areas

- **Big Lake** is both a beautiful lake with 50 miles of wooded shoreline and a community of 2,000 year-round residents located at the west end of the Mat-Su Valley, 15 miles north of Wasilla. With numerous winter and summer recreational opportunities including fishing, boating, snow machining, cross country skiing, wildlife viewing, and sled dog racing, it is easy to understand why approximately 58 percent of the housing in the Big Lake area is recreational.
- **Independence Mine State Historical Park** is set in scenic Hatcher Pass high up in the rugged Talkeetna Mountains. About 17 miles from Wasilla, the park contains the abandoned buildings and machinery of a hard rock gold mining operation. In the summer, the park is a popular area for hiking, berry picking, and recreational gold panning. Heavy snowfall in the winter makes the park a popular snowboarding, cross country skiing, and snow-machining destination.
- **Nancy Lake State Recreation Area**, with its network of 130 lakes and ponds is a popular area for hiking, canoeing, camping, skiing, and snow machining 25 miles north of Wasilla.



Special events



Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race and Iditarod Days Festival

Mushers from around the world compete in "The Last Great Race on Earth," covering more than 1,150 miles of rugged terrain with teams of 12 to 16 dogs. The race is a contest of animal and human endurance and a link to Alaska's past, when dog sleds were the primary transportation mode. The present-day race is the result of efforts by two well-known and widely-recognized past Wasilla residents: Dorothy Page and Joe Redington, Sr.

Wasilla is home to the Iditarod headquarters and is the official starting point for the race. (The ceremonial start takes place in Anchorage.) The Iditarod Days Festival runs for ten days before the start of the race (First Saturday in March)

Mat-Su King Salmon Derby

The Greater Wasilla Chamber of Commerce offers more than \$20,000 in prizes. The winning fish may be caught anywhere in the Susitna drainages and the Little Susitna River. (May 25 - July 4)

Wasilla Water Festival

Enjoy what a small town has to offer in numerous events that include an Independence Day Parade, an ice cream social, water-ski and skateboard competitions, raft races, fireworks, and a community picnic with games. (First week of July)

Tesoro Iron Dog 2000

In the world's longest, most challenging snowmobile race, two-racer teams travel almost 2,000 miles to Nome from the starting point at Wasilla and finish at Fairbanks. Drivers face subzero temperatures, blinding snowstorms, and treacherous terrain in this test of both athletic endurance and mechanical skill. The 2001 winning team, competing in a field of over 30 teams, finished in 38 hours and 46 minutes. (February)



WASILLA FACTS

Status

Classification	First Class City
Year of Incorporation	1974
Population	5,469
Educational Facilities	Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District Matanuska-Susitna College/UAA Campus
Form of Government	Elected mayor and 6-person City Council

Land Area Within City Core

Total Area	8,458 acres
City	700 acres
Borough	150 acres
State	140 acres
University of Alaska	40 acres
Private	7,428 acres

Economics

Total Local City Annual Revenue	\$11,978,040
Median Family Income	\$40,685 (1990 Census)
No. of Business Licenses	1,249
City Sales Tax	2 percent
Annual Sales Tax Revenue	\$5,750,000
Property Tax	City: .9 mills, Borough: 14.133 mills; Total: 15.033 mills
Accommodations (Bed) Tax	Borough: 5 percent

Services

Public Water System	City: serves 725 customers
Public Sewer System	City: serves 435 customers
Heating	Primarily piped natural gas
Police	City Police Department: 17 officers including chief and 1 support staff
Fire/Rescue	Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fire Department
Ambulance	Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Medical	West Valley Medical Campus—Wasilla Valley Hospital—Palmer
Public Transportation	MASCOT operates 20-passenger buses in the local area.