

Strategic Plan 2003 Anderson, Alaska



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Anderson Strategic Plan
2002 Vision Statement

We are a community of 500 military and civilian residents. We value a small, active community in which people know each other and cooperate to provide a safe, healthy, affordable place to grow, live, work and retire. We value our remote location and the access to wilderness that it provides. However, we strive to stay connected to economic opportunity so that our community may continue to prosper in connection with the Clear Air Force Station and independent of it as well. We desire a stable future for Anderson/Clear when people will come to stay and children will be able to return to live socially and economically sustainable lives.

Community Description for Anderson , Alaska

History

Anderson, Alaska's townsite was originally inhabited by three homesteaders, Art Anderson, William Devon and Charles DeWitt, who settled in the area during the late 1950s. In 1959, Art Anderson, the town's namesake, divided his 80-acre homestead into 1/4 acre lots and sold the majority of these lots to civilian workers from Clear Air Force Station. The station, a ballistic missile early warning site, was completed in 1961. In the same year, an elementary school was established in Anderson. The city's incorporation followed quickly in 1962. A road was soon completed between Anderson and Nenana which allowed access north to Fairbanks. At Nenana, between Anderson and Fairbanks, cars had to be ferried across the broad channel of the Tanana River. In 1968 the state completed a \$6 million steel bridge that spanned the Tanana and provided quicker access for Anderson to its northern neighbors. By 1971 construction of the George Parks Highway allowed Anderson residents access to Anchorage as well.

Geography, Land Use & Climate

Anderson is located in Interior Alaska, 76 miles south of Fairbanks on a spur road, six miles off of the George Parks Highway. The town's area includes 263.9 square miles of water and 1,697.2 square miles of land, nine of which are restricted to military use. Anderson's primary form of land use is residential. Its two major public land users are the school and the city that each occupies one of two forty-acre tracts of land at the town's south end. The town is also accessible by rail and air. A state-owned 4,000' lighted asphalt runway lies four miles south of town and the Alaska Railroad passes through the entire length of the municipality, though the only unloading spurs in the area are located at Clear AFS.

February of 1978 marked the beginning of a significant change for Anderson. That year the town flooded as a result of overflow from the Nenana River. By 1979, the Army Corps of Engineers had built a dike to prevent future flooding, and the city gained permission to use the land for recreational purposes. Now the town's western border is the scenic 616-acre Riverside Park that stretches alongside the Lost Slough of the Nenana River. The park offers an excellent view of Denali, "the Great One," on clear days as well as multi-use trails, campsites, restrooms, showers, RV dumping, electrical hookups, telephones and a covered pavilion and shooting range. During July of each year the park hosts the Annual Anderson Bluegrass Festival, which features musicians from across the country. In the summer of 2002 the festival attracted a crowd of 3,000. The Good Sam's RV Club, the Tundra Rollers and Alaska Machine Guns are some other organizations that hold annual events in the park. Residents also frequently use the park for local graduation and retirement parties, family picnics and weddings.

Anderson's mild summers are a great asset in attracting visitors. The average high temperature in July falls between 66 and 70 degrees. In the past five years, high temperatures and dry conditions, however, have helped fuel numerous forest fires that have burned close to the town's borders. In 2002 a forest fire threatened the town of Anderson and, particularly our park. Quick response from residents, local and state fire crews contained the damage, but 150 acres, including acreage in our park, were damaged. The incident served to dramatically underscore the city's need for updated fire equipment

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Winters in Anderson are cold and extreme temperatures have been measured as low as -63 degrees. January's average low temperature is between -6 and -24. Average annual precipitation is 12.7 inches, with an annual snowfall of 49.3 inches.

Population and Economy

While 6.5% of Anderson's population is Native or part-Native, non-Native civilian and military workers from Clear Air Force Station, seasonal Denali National Park employees, school, City and retired employees make up a large part of Anderson's 513 inhabitants. There are currently 148 housing units in town; 47 are vacant. Eighteen of those vacant units are used seasonally. One third of Anderson's population lives on base in group quarters. Recently, the construction of a \$106.5 million intercontinental ballistic missile radar warning system, "PAVE PAWS," was completed at Clear Air Force Station. The system is designed to identify and warn the military of missiles launched from Asia and Europe.

Anderson residents not employed at the base make their living through work with Anderson School, the City of Anderson or with their own businesses. Limited groceries and gas are provided by a local store, but Anderson residents travel to Fairbanks for a majority of their purchases. Anderson has a total potential workforce of 294; 207 are employed. The town's current unemployment rate is 10.19%.

In 2002, the school graduated two seniors. One plans to join the military, and the other plans to attend college. Both will leave town. Unfortunately, few viable job opportunities exist for Anderson graduates. Trade jobs periodically open at Clear Air Force Base, but those are highly competitive and difficult to obtain. Some young people travel forty miles south to Denali National Park for seasonal work. Other job opportunities in Anderson include seven professional and three trade jobs at the school, and one full-time and three part-time jobs with the city. These positions are all currently filled.

Anderson has a per capita income of \$23,827 and a median household income of \$58,750. Median family income is \$62,188. The 2000 Census showed 17.55% of Anderson residents living below the poverty level.

Government

Anderson is a second-class city located in the Denali Borough. City government consists of seven volunteer council members who appoint a mayor and vice mayor. The council meets once a month, and the seats are held for two years. The local government functions out of a city hall building, which includes council chambers, city offices, the post office and the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The city employs a permanent workforce of four including a city clerk/treasurer, maintenance foreman, janitor and Department of Motor Vehicles clerk. During the summer, the city provides several seasonal positions to local resident adults and youth. The following municipal services are offered by the city: library, parks, emergency medical services (volunteer), fire protection (volunteer), planning and platting, schools and animal control. Included in the city's sources of revenue are the Riverside Park, cable TV service, raw sewage disposal, fish and game licenses, copy, fax and notary services and the sale of gravel. At present, the only tax that the town charges is an 8% utility tax.

Education

Anderson School serves 74 students from kindergarten through high school: 36 elementary students, 12 junior high students and 26 secondary students. The school offers a progressive, standards-based curriculum as well as a wide range of after-school sports and activities. Throughout the school, children have been found painting the walls with past visiting artists and climbing the walls on the gymnasium's indoor climbing wall. Basketball games, frequently attended by the school mascot, "Sammy T," the grizzly, are a popular form of indoor winter entertainment for the community.

Local college opportunities include a limited range of audio-conference options offered through the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Anderson is also a part of the Interior-Aleutians rural campus of UAF, but there are rarely enough interested/financially able students to justify the expense of a local course.

Utilities & Public Health

All Anderson homes have individual wells, septic systems and plumbing. A well at Anderson School also functions as a water source. The city runs a sewage disposal lagoon located several miles outside of town. Residents haul their refuse to the new borough landfill located south of Anderson. The old Borough landfill is located southeast of town and is now covered and closed to further use. Clear AFS provides its residents with sewer and running water as well as a permitted landfill for disposal of solid waste. The Golden Valley Electric Service provides electricity to the town. Matanuska Telephone Association provides telephone and Internet service.

Anderson has a health clinic staffed once a month by a dentist and a visiting rural nurse practitioner. More severe medical emergencies can be attended to by emergency medical technicians who have access to the Clear Air Force Emergency Care Center in life-threatening situations. Staffed clinics exist 40 miles south in Healy and 30 miles north in Nenana. The nearest hospital is the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital.

Results from the Anderson Strategic Plan Survey 2002

Anderson's Strategic Plan Survey was conducted during August and September of 2002. Questions were taken, in large part, from the USDA's rural development guide for strategic planning. Anticipated answers, or "check box answers" were taken from informal conversations with residents and were added during the survey if people frequently offered the same answer to a survey question. The first part of the survey was conducted in the city of Anderson, primarily by phone, due to the higher cost and anticipated ineffectiveness of survey by mail. 70 homes were initially contacted between August 20-22. Those not contacted were called again during the following week or contacted in person. Residents also received surveys at Anderson school, at the City Office, the quilting club and at a recent community-wide potluck. For those who could not be contacted in person or by phone, surveys were made available on the community board at the City Office.

By Thursday, September 4, 2002, Anderson residents had completed 80 adult surveys; 7 Anderson residents under the age of 18 had also participated. The results of surveys completed by adult residents are included in this summary. Answers are listed in order of popularity with the number of positive answers recorded, followed by the percentage that they represent. Answers that tied are starred and share the same priority number.

Question #1

What do you like about Anderson?

1)Inexpensive Land / No Property Taxes	4	81%
2)It's Safe.	62	78%
3)People	60	75%
*4) Small Size	59	74%
*4)Good School System	59	74%
5)Location (remote but connected to road system)	58	73%
*6)Freedom	55	69%
*6)Wilderness (hiking, boating, hunting, fishing)	55	69%
7)It's Quiet.	29	36%
8)I have a good job.	15	19%

Answers to this question will help form our values statement for the strategic plan. Residents made it clear that they almost equally appreciated the top six characteristics of the town. "It's quiet." may have ranked lower because it was added later in the survey.

Question #2

In what ways would you most like to see Anderson improve?

1) More Job Opportunities	63	79%
*2) More Activities for Youth/Community	62	78%
*2) More Local Businesses	62	78%
3) More Summer Jobs for Youth	54	68%
4) Removal of Abandoned Homes	51	64%
5) More Adult Education Opportunities	38	48%
6) Staffed Health Clinic	33	41%

Answers to this question point toward economic development in Anderson as a key concern of Anderson residents. Equally important seems to be more activities for youth and for the community as a whole. "Removal of Abandoned Houses" may have ranked slightly lower because it was added later in the survey. However, that topic alone garnered just under 20 separate public comments in favor of removing abandoned houses and cars.

Question #3

What projects would you like to see the City Council pursue?

1) More Local Businesses/Alternative Economic Base	63	79%
2) Community Center	48	60%
3) Expansion/Improvement of Trails	42	53%
4) Piped Sewer System	41	51%
5) Automation of DMV Office	32	40%
6) Visitor's Center	30	38%
*7) Expansion of the Sewage Lagoon	29	36%
*7) Upgrade of Heavy Equipment	29	36%
8) Expansion/Improvement of the Riverside Park	27	34%
9) Upgrade of Sewage Lagoon Road	24	30%

Comments are important to read on the continued improvement of the park and on the possibility of a sewer system. Both will draw heated support from people on either side of the issue. People often seemed to know less about the sewage lagoon or the automation of the DMV. There were also many comments encouraging continued future efforts to improve communication in our community.

Question #4

What type of businesses would you support in Anderson?

1) Expansion of Grocery and Gas Services	68	85%
2) Restaurant (year-round)	57	71%
3) Automobile/Snow Machine Repair	46	58%
4) Video/DVD Rental	44	55%
5) Hardware/Lumber Store	40	50%
6) Coffee House/Stand	34	43%
7) Bed and Breakfast for Visitors	31	39%
8) Towing	25	31%

An overwhelming number of residents would like to see the expansion of gas and grocery services, but many mentioned the difficulty of making any business economically feasible without the population base to support it. These stats could be helpful in attracting more local business in the future. There was frequent mention of a water bottling plant in public comments.

Other businesses mentioned included: water bottling plant (x7), holding warehouse at the airport, computer company, craft store, movie theater, general purpose store, bookstore, bank, courthouse, daycare, eco-tourism, and contract post office.

Question #5

When you think about the future of Anderson, what concerns you most about the community?

1)Lack of Job Opportunities	55	69%
2)Lack of Youth/Community Activities	49	61%
3)Economy	43	54%
4)Lack of Housing	41	51%

Lack of jobs and community activities came up on this question, once again, as a top community concern. Other concerns included upgrade of EMS equipment, the need for more EMS personnel, and the need for a firebreak around town. Drug / alcohol abuse and addiction were also mentioned as a concern. Finally, general concern over the community's lack of motivation to improve things was a frequently cited concern.

2002 Strategic Plan for Anderson, Alaska

1) Value: Economic Viability

Goal: To develop a long-term economic development plan that would allow Anderson to capitalize on its unique economic potential.

Measure of Success: Completed Economic Development Plan

2) Value: Economic Stability.

Goal: To develop an alternative economic base for the City of Anderson that would ensure the city's stability regardless of governmental status of Clear Air Force Base.

Measure of Success: Increase in the number of full-time, non-base jobs available in the city of Anderson.

3) Value: Effective Government

Goal: To maintain and expand or improve, when appropriate, current sources of government and other alternative revenue including the Anderson Sewage Lagoon, Riverside Park, Department of Motor Vehicles, Cable TV Services, Gravel Sales and other smaller services so that the council might best serve its residents while also increasing its economic leverage to do so.

Measure of Success: Automation of DMV Office
Steady Increase in the Number of Park Visitors

4) Value: Strong Community Bonds and Healthy, Active Youth

Goal: To build an economically viable town/community center that would replace the existing, aged city hall and serve as a city social & information hub while providing safe and healthy activities for local youth and an adequate gathering place for all city residents.

Measure of Success: New Self-supporting Town Hall that includes a Community Gathering Area
Year-round Parks and Recreation Activities Program

5) Value: Good Health, Safe Environment

Goal: To ensure the safety of Anderson's water supply by properly maintaining the Anderson Sewage Lagoon and researching the feasibility of a future piped sewer system.

Measures of Success: Expansion of the Anderson Sewage Lagoon
Continued Safe Regulation of the Facility
Feasibility Study for Anderson Piped Sewer System

6) Value: Safe Environment

Goal: To provide an efficient, up-to-date, well-staffed Emergency Medical and Fire Service to Anderson residents.

Measure of Success: EMS staffed with an adequate number of active members.
New Ambulance
New Fire Truck
Fire Break Around Town?

7) Value: Stable, Welcoming Small Town / Economic Viability

Goal: To continue to promote Anderson as a safe, profitable, stable, small town in which people and business can flourish.

Measure of Success: Creation of a Small Visitor's Station to be Staffed in Summer Months
Creation of a Promotional Brochure for the City of Anderson
Strong, Working Relationship with Clear Air Force Base, Anderson School, the University of Alaska System, and Local Organizations.
Creation of a New Resident Welcoming/Information Group

8) Value: Stable, Welcoming Community / Safe Environment

Goal: To remove in-town abandoned houses and cars as well as unsafe dumping grounds located in high visibility areas and restore land to reusable, resalable condition, when possible.

Measure of Success: Removal of all abandoned cars, dump sites, and abandoned houses.
New Mapping of Anderson that includes ownership information on all residential properties.

Initial City Infrastructure Report

Structure	Age	Condition
Public Works Shop	Built in 1980's, renovated in 2000.	Good Condition
Fire Hall	Built in 1980's	Good Condition
Medical Building	Built in 1980's	Good Condition
City Building	Built in late 1950's	Fair Condition—City should consider replacing within next 10 years.
Park Restrooms & Shower Facility	Built in the 1990's	Good Condition, Needs minor electrical upgrade
City Streets & Streetlights	Major improvements in 1980's and continued upgrades and maintenance	Excellent condition on 90% of the streets, still working on remaining 10%
Sewage Lagoon	Built in the early 1990's	Good condition, but exceeding annual limits for waste water discharge. Further expansion is needed.
Shooting Range	Built in the 1980's	Fair, Needs signs and markers replaced.