Construction Cost Survey
Spring 2004

Prepared for

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Introduction

In January 2004, the twelfth survey of building supply and shipping companies was conducted to determine the cost of a market basket of construction materials in Alaska. This survey simulates contractor pricing for a model single-family home by tracking a basket of items representing approximately 30 percent of the home's total cost. It does not represent the home's total construction cost. Figure 6-1 shows the floor plan of the model house used in this survey.

The market basket provides a benchmark for comparing costs between the urban communities of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Sitka, and Wasilla, as well as the rural communities of Barrow, Bethel, and Nome. In addition to the materials included in the market basket, suppliers also report the cost of doors and windows for the model home, while shipping companies provide the cost of transporting the market basket materials from Seattle to each community. A complete list of the market basket items and their specifications is included in Table 6-1.

Construction techniques, building requirements, and styles vary greatly from region to region, so not all of the materials surveyed may be used in every area. Beginning in 2003, Barrow, Bethel, and Nome included metal roofing, which is more common in rural areas, instead of the asphalt shingles used in urban areas. Costs for the three rural areas surveyed, Barrow, Bethel, and Nome, exclude concrete and rebar, since pilings support houses above permafrost in these locations instead of slab foundations. Unless specified, the market basket prices quoted exclude concrete, rebar, doors, and windows.

Comparing 2004 to 2003

Alaskan Market Baskets - All areas, except for Barrow, experienced an increase in the cost of the market basket materials. The percentage increases ranged from a low of four percent (Kodiak) to a high of 25 percent (Juneau). Barrow's market basket decreased by three percent to $37,873. Juneau's market basket price increase of $4,079 was the highest of all areas surveyed.

Seattle Market Basket - The Seattle market basket increased $1,909 in 2004 to $16,936. Large percentage decreases in the prices of ABS pipe (59 percent), single breakers (53 percent), and copper pipe (51 percent) were not enough to overcome the price increases of 11 market basket items. Substantial percentage increases occurred with the prices of underlay (41 percent) and trusses (31 percent).

Concrete - Fairbanks was the only location that experienced a decrease in the cost of concrete, as prices dropped 21 percent to $2,861. Ketchikan's concrete costs were unchanged. Otherwise, the remaining six surveyed locations all experienced concrete price increases. The percentage increases ranged from one percent (Anchorage) to 10 percent (Juneau).

Rebar - All but two Alaskan locations experienced increases in the cost of rebar. The price of rebar in Sitka dropped 26 percent, while the price decreased in Anchorage by five percent. Seattle suppliers reported an eight percent decrease in the cost of rebar. Sizeable percentage increases were evident in Kodiak (30 percent), Ketchikan (26 percent), and Fairbanks (25 percent).

Doors and Windows - Five Alaskan locations experienced decreases in the cost of doors and windows. The percentage decreases ranged from six percent (Anchorage) to 29 percent (Bethel). The remaining six locations experienced price increases. The percentage increases ranged from one percent (Ketchikan) to 30 percent (Juneau).

Shipping Costs from Seattle - The cost of transporting the building materials from Seattle decreased in three areas: Bethel, Nome, and Fairbanks. The biggest percentage decrease occurred in shipping the Seattle market basket to Bethel, where shipping costs decreased by 10 percent to $9,768. The percentage increases ranged from two percent (Anchorage) to 12 percent (Ketchikan). Barrow's shipping cost increase of $901 was the highest of all areas surveyed.

Construction Costs Around the State

- Consistent with prior years' findings, urban and rural Alaska continue to show a wide spread in pricing the market basket items. The weighted-average cost of the market basket (excluding concrete and rebar) ranged from a low of $15,294 in Sitka to a high of $37,873 in Barrow (Barrow prices include metal roofing materials rather than asphalt shingles).

- The gap between the most expensive urban location and the least expensive rural location decreased slightly. In 2004, Kenai became the most expensive urban location with a cost of $20,917. Bethel remained the least expensive rural location for the second consecutive year with a cost of $29,467.

- Building materials cost more in rural areas than urban areas and more in northern Alaska than in South Central and Southeast Alaska. The main reason for the cost differential is the added cost of transportation — the further a community is from Seattle, the more expensive the price of building materials. The lack of infrastructure in rural areas requires materials to be barged or flown to the different areas.

- Nome is the most expensive area for doors and windows. The total cost of $6,313 represents a 29 percent increase over 2003's total cost. However, unlike the market basket of building supplies, the three rural areas do not occupy the top three spots for most expensive doors and windows.

- Bethel experienced the greatest percentage decrease in the cost of doors and windows (29 percent) of all of the surveyed areas, rural or urban. Bethel's total cost of $2,976 placed them as the second least-expensive area overall, with only Sitka ($2,947) being less expensive. Barrow's 22 percent decrease moved them down from the most expensive to the fourth most-expensive area on the overall list. With a nine-percent increase in total cost, Fairbanks became the most expensive urban area for doors and windows with a cost of $4,189.

- The Anchorage market basket cost $17,667 in 2004. Eighty percent of the Anchorage market basket items cost more in 2004 than in 2003. The only items that decreased in price were T-111 siding, R-38 insulation, and single breakers. The price of plywood increased 35 percent to $2,517, the largest increase of any market basket item for Anchorage. Single breakers experienced the largest percentage decrease of the Anchorage market basket items, dropping 52 percent to $62.

- Fairbanks reported a market basket cost of $19,967. Prices were lower for over one-half of the market basket items. The most significant increases in the market basket were single breakers and electric wire. They increased by 104 percent and 50 percent, respectively. Large percentage decreases were reported for type X sheetrock (20 percent) and trusses (18 percent).

- Juneau's market basket increased 25 percent in 2004 to $20,712. The largest percentage increases were found with underlay (52 percent), plywood (46 percent), and T-111 siding (28 percent). Of all of the market basket items, only the price of single breakers decreased (seven percent).

- Barrow saw decreases to 11 out of 15 of the market basket items and increases in the remaining items. Large percentage decreases were evident with R-21 insulation (41 percent), plain sheetrock (33 percent), 2x6 studs (22 percent), and R-38 insulation (22 percent). The most significant price increase occurred with the price of metal roofing, which soared 83 percent from $2,339 in 2003 to $4,287 in 2004.

- Underlay was the only market basket item that did not experience a price decrease in any of the surveyed areas. The price of underlay was unchanged in Nome ($3,794). Percentage increases ranged from three percent (Bethel) to 54 percent (Wasilla).

- The price of plywood increased in all but two Alaskan communities. The percentage increases ranged from 23 percent (Bethel) to 53 percent (Ketchikan). Barrow was the only area that experienced a decrease in the cost of plywood in 2004 (two percent), while Nome's cost remained the same ($3,386) as 2003.

- Anchorage, with a cost of $2,687, remained in the top position in 2004 as the area with the least expensive price for concrete. Kodiak retained its position at the bottom with a cost of $5,190. In fact, the price difference between Kodiak and Ketchikan, the second most-expensive area for concrete, widened from $600 in 2003 to $840 in 2004.

- With its 26 percent price reduction, Sitka jumped from the second most-expensive area for rebar in 2003 to the least expensive in 2004. Fairbanks remained securely at the bottom of the list in 2004 at $553, a $111 increase over 2003's rebar cost.

Alaskan Suppliers Comparison Index

Fluctuations in cost can best be examined in terms of the change each area experiences in relation to another. One way to do this is to establish an index comparing each community's market basket cost to a benchmark. The Alaskan Suppliers Comparison Index uses the largest city in Alaska, Anchorage, as its benchmark. To create this index, Anchorage's market basket cost is given an index value of 100. Dividing the average cost for a survey area by the Anchorage value ($17,667) produces the index value for that area.

- The Anchorage market basket cost increased by $1,266, or eight percent. Areas with cost decreases or with increases below eight percent experienced decreases in their indices. Areas with cost increases of greater than eight percent experienced increases in their indices.

- Half of the areas (not including Anchorage) saw decreases to their Alaskan Suppliers Comparison Index, while the other half saw increases.

- Sitka and Ketchikan reported market basket prices less than Anchorage in 2004. Sitka's index was 87, while Ketchikan's was 90.

- Kenai had the highest index value of the urban areas at 118; Juneau and Fairbanks followed closely behind with index values of 117 and 113, respectively. At 109, Kodiak and Wasilla are the other urban areas that had higher index values than Anchorage.

- The rural areas' index values remained significantly higher than the Anchorage benchmark. Barrow's index value decreased 24 points from 238 to 214. Nome's value increased six points from 178 to 184, while Bethel's decreased slightly from 170 to 167.

- Since 2001, the Alaskan Suppliers Comparison Index values for Fairbanks, Ketchikan and Kodiak have decreased yearly. Although its index value increased by 20 points in 2003, Barrow saw the largest cumulative decrease in its index since 2001 (19 points). Kenai was the only area to have its index value increase yearly since 2001. Kenai also experienced the greatest cumulative increase in its index in the same time-period (16 points).

Construction Costs in Alaska vs. Seattle

Suppliers from Seattle, Washington, and the surrounding area are included in the Alaska Construction Cost Survey since some contractors acquire their materials from outside Alaska. For Alaskan suppliers, the market basket price already includes the cost of shipping the goods to the work-site in their community. Transportation costs are added to Seattle's market basket total to estimate what local contractors would pay if they bought directly from Seattle and shipped their materials to Alaska. Seattle prices cannot be compared directly to prices in the three rural areas because Seattle prices include asphalt shingles, not metal roofing.

- The Seattle market basket increased 13 percent in 2004 to $16,936. Except Juneau, all of the urban areas offered lower local prices than delivered Seattle goods.

- The greatest difference in prices occurred in Sitka, where local prices beat Seattle prices by $6,024. Of the areas with cheaper local prices, Kenai's difference was the smallest at $1,727.

- As in prior years, all of the rural locations reported higher total market basket prices than Seattle. In comparison, Juneau was the only urban area where the cost of local building materials was higher than items purchased and shipped from Seattle. Local Juneau prices were $748 more expensive than Seattle prices.

- Seattle prices continue to beat the local prices in the three rural areas. Although Seattle and the rural areas cannot be compared directly, the difference in costs still indicates that rural homebuilders can save money buying construction materials in Seattle. The highest savings can be experienced in Barrow, where buying and shipping from Seattle can save a contractor $5,929.

Transportation Index

One of the primary factors determining differences in building costs in Alaska is transportation. The cost of transporting materials from Seattle to the survey's building sites is directly related to the distance from Seattle. Shipping costs are primarily based on weight. The Transportation Index uses basic market basket items to compare the different communities rather than substituted items. Metal roofing is lighter than asphalt shingles and, unlike shingles, can be shipped inside or outside a container. In areas where metal roofing is substituted, the cost of shipping the roofing materials could be as much as two-thirds less than asphalt shingles.

Like the Alaskan Suppliers Comparison Index, the Transportation Index assigns Anchorage an index value of 100. Dividing the average value for a survey area by the Anchorage value ($4,554) produces the index value for that area.

- Two important revisions were made to last year's data that impacted this year's Transportation Index values. First, the 2003 shipping costs were modified to accommodate a survey that arrived after the data collection stage of the 2003 survey. Thus, the new 2003 Anchorage shipping cost baseline, which increased from $3,528 to $4,484, created new 2003 shipping index values for all of the surveyed communities. Second, Kodiak's shipping cost was understated by 50 percent in 2003. Kodiak's 2003 Transportation Index is now listed as 135, whereas it was listed as 84 in the 2003 survey.

- Shipping costs to Anchorage increased by $70, or two percent. Areas with cost increases of greater than two percent experienced increases in their indices. Areas with cost decreases or increases of less than two percent experienced decreases in their indices.

- Three communities experienced a decrease over last year's index value. Fairbanks, Bethel, and Nome all decreased their shipping prices, and, therefore, showed a decrease in their indices.

- Barrow experienced the greatest increase in index value, climbing 15 points to 330. As the farthest Alaska city from Seattle, Barrow reported the highest cost for shipping ($15,008). This equates to a figure over eight times higher than the lowest shipping value, which was found in Ketchikan ($1,752).

- Other than Fairbanks, all of the urban areas experienced index increases. These increases were quite small, ranging from one point (Kenai, 124 to 125) to five points (Juneau, 61 to 66).

- With the revisions to last year's data, shipping costs to the urban areas have remained relatively consistent since 2002 when compared to the Anchorage baseline.

Construction Cost Survey Methodology

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section conducts this survey annually on behalf of Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. This survey simulates contractor pricing for a model single-family home by tracking a basket of items representing approximately 30 percent of the home's total cost.

- Eleven communities in Alaska are surveyed. These include the urban areas of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Sitka, and Wasilla. The three rural cities of Barrow, Bethel, and Nome are also represented. In addition, the largest Seattle suppliers are also surveyed.

- Of the 59 building suppliers surveyed, 32 local suppliers in Alaska and 13 in Washington responded to the survey, a 76 percent response rate. The 32 Alaskan respondents represent 17 unique firms since some companies have stores in multiple locations. In addition, 19 out of 21 concrete suppliers surveyed (90 percent response rate) and six shipping companies participated in this year's survey.

- All companies are given an itemized list of building materials with specific quantities to price. The complete list of materials in the market basket and the quantities used to calculate costs are in Table 6-1. The market basket includes selected construction materials, comprising approximately 30 percent of the materials used for the model house. It does not represent the total construction cost. Prices of concrete, rebar, doors and windows are also collected but are not included in the market basket total.

- Figure 6-1 shows the floor plan of the model house used in this survey.

- Transportation costs are added to Seattle's market basket to simulate what local contractors would pay if they bought directly from Seattle and shipped their materials to Alaska. To determine the cost of transportation, carriers are given the weight (approximately 49,000 pounds) and the volume (about 2,000 cubic feet) of the materials. These measurements generally require a 20-foot platform and a 20-foot container for all materials. Other assumptions are that all fees for required services are included in the reported cost of the shipment. These services include loading/unloading, protection and fastening of goods, and delivery to the building site. The shippers' market basket includes asphalt shingles rather than metal roofing.

- It is expected that larger building supply firms get volume discounts that are passed on to the contractor. To reflect the vendors' market share, respondents' values are weighted by the size of the firm. For Alaskan firms, size is based on the reported number of employees from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's employment security tax wage database for the second quarter of 2003. America's Labor Market Information System provides 2003 employee counts for Seattle suppliers.

- Two comparison indices are used: one for the building material market basket and the other for the transportation costs from Seattle. These indices allow communities to measure changes in the cost of construction in relation to a fixed value. The benchmark values are the costs for the largest Alaskan community, Anchorage. Dividing the average cost of a survey area by the Anchorage value produces both indices. This creates an Anchorage benchmark of 100. In this way, communities can be gauged in relation to Anchorage for a particular year.

- Changes in the makeup of the market basket make year-to-year comparisons difficult. In 2001, cedar bevel siding was replaced with T-111 siding. This lowered not only the cost of the market basket, but also transportation costs. In 2002, Barrow did not report prices for asphalt shingles because most new construction on the North Slope incorporates metal roofing materials. This affected both the transportation costs and the market basket total. In 2003, metal roofing was substituted for asphalt shingles in the three rural areas.

Appendix A
Construction Cost Survey Charts and Graphs

Average Price for Construction Materials

Table 6-1

Alaska Suppliers
2004

Market Basket Items	Quantity	Units	Size	Length	Urban								Rural *		
					Anchorage	Fairbanks	Juneau	Kenai	Ketchikan	Kodiak	Sitka	Wasilla	Barrow	Bethel	Nome
BCI 60 Series	768	ft	14"		$2,279	$2,024	$2,154	$2,570	$1,836	$2,496	$1,722	$1,946	$6,400	$1,885	$4,224
2-4-1 T&G FF Underlay 4' x 8'	62	pcs	1 1/8"		2,871	3,319	3,124	3,098	2,754	2,626	2,536	3,374	6,197	3,024	3,794
T-111 8" Center Groove 4' x 10' Siding	60	pcs	5/8"		2,103	2,543	2,926	2,870	1,927	2,443	2,249	2,443	3,957	3,444	3,401
CDX 4' x 8' #53	106	pcs	5/8"		2,517	2,926	2,568	2,897	2,307	2,469	2,194	2,758	4,084	3,210	3,386
Studs #2 & btr Kiln-dried	164	pcs	2" x 4"	92 5/8"	423	485	464	479	351	429	300	490	890	623	818
Studs #2 & btr #14 Kiln-dried	263	pcs	2" x 6"	92 5/8"	999	1,218	1,169	1,111	809	1,014	568	1,113	1,913	1,449	1,654
4' x 12' Plain Sheetrock #84	95	pcs	1/2"		1,050	1,156	1,373	1,243	829	1,179	812	1,062	2,579	3,335	2,030
4' x 12' Type X Sheetrock #109	68	pcs	5/8"		868	1,009	1,087	1,042	682	1,052	734	819	2,921	2,387	2,228
Fiberglass Bat Insulation (2,560 sq ft)	40	bags	R-38" x 24"	64 sq ft	1,895	2,169	2,331	2,066	1,704	1,901	1,634	2,300	2,600	4,209	4,032
Fiberglass Bat Insulation (2,034 sq ft)	30	bags	R-21" x 15"	68 sq ft	1,103	1,177	1,343	1,258	1,006	1,193	957	1,190	1,350	2,625	2,203
NMB Electric Wire	3	boxes		250'	90	102	96	78	141	78	65	68	240	141	123
Single Breaker	15	pcs	15 Amp		62	110	99	138	120	67	105	104	97	148	119
Copper Pipe Type 'M'	150	ft	3/4"		97	117	116	128	164	144	110	94	158	146	156
ABS Pipe	100	ft	3"		98	121	132	114	125	196	96	116	200	170	158
3 Tab Shingles Brown	102	bundles			1,212	1,491	1,730	1,825	1,130	1,886	1,212	1,376	N/A	N/A	N/A
Metal Roofing	3,215	sq ft	3' x 20'		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,287	2,671	4,180
Total (Without Concrete & Rebar)					**$17,667**	**$19,967**	**$20,712**	**$20,917**	**$15,885**	**$19,173**	**$15,294**	**$19,253**	**$37,873**	**$29,467**	**$32,506**
Concrete	30	yds			2,687	2,861	3,359	2,921	4,350	5,190	4,110	2,781			
#4 Rebar	93	pcs	1/2"	20'	403	553	386	406	464	483	314	371			
Total (With Concrete & Rebar)					**$20,757**	**$23,381**	**$24,457**	**$24,244**	**$20,699**	**$24,846**	**$19,718**	**$22,405**			

* Rural areas exclude concrete & rebar

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, "AHFC Market Basket Construction Cost Survey" 2004
Weighted average using 2003 Q2 ODB202 number of employees where applicable
Totals may not sum due to rounding

Average Price for Doors & Windows

Table 6-2

Alaska Suppliers
2004

Market Basket Items	Quantity	Units	Size	Urban								Rural		
				Anchorage	Fairbanks	Juneau	Kenai	Ketchikan	Kodiak	Sitka	Wasilla	Barrow	Bethel	Nome
R7 Metal Insulated Doors with 6" Jamb	2	pcs	3'	$357	$388	$393	$371	$496	$400	$415	$349	$540	$379	$658
Low E Argon Windows with R > 2.8 Vinyl Casements	3	pcs	2.6' x 3'	562	752	674	635	677	645	462	609	750	694	1,095
Low E Argon Windows with R > 2.8 Vinyl Casements, 5.7 E-Gress	6	pcs	2.6' x 4'	1,305	1,790	1,482	1,432	1,481	1,770	1,185	1,349	1,800	1,505	2,370
Low E Argon Windows with R > 2.8 Vinyl Casements, 5.7 E-Gress	2	pcs	8.0' x 4'	945	1,259	1,272	975	1,438	730	885	894	1,000	398	2,190
Total Cost of Doors & Windows				**$3,169**	**$4,189**	**$3,821**	**$3,413**	**$4,092**	**$3,545**	**$2,947**	**$3,201**	**$4,090**	**$2,976**	**$6,313**

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, "AHFC Market Basket Construction Cost Survey" 2004
Weighted average using 2003 Q2 ODB202 number of employees where applicable
Totals may not sum due to rounding

Average Price for Construction Materials

Table 6-3

Seattle Suppliers (without Concrete, Doors & Windows)
2004

Market Basket Items	Quantity	Units	Size	Length	Seattle Area
BCI 60 Series	768	ft	14"		$2,095
2-4-1 T&G FF Underlay 4' x 8'	62	pcs	1 1/8"		2,770
T-111 8" Center Groove 4' x 10' Siding	60	pcs	5/8"		2,654
CDX 4' x 8' #53	106	pcs	5/8"		2,305
Studs #2 & btr Kiln-dried	164	pcs	2" x 4"	92 5/8"	397
Studs #2 & btr #14 Kiln-dried	263	pcs	2" x 6"	92 5/8"	905
4' x 12' Plain Sheetrock #84	95	pcs	1/2"		725
4' x 12' Type X Sheetrock #109	68	pcs	5/8"		707
3 Tab Shingles Brown	102	bundles			970
Fiberglass Bat Insulation (2,560 sq ft)	40	bags	R-38" x 24"	64 sq ft	1,994
Fiberglass Bat Insulation (2,034 sq ft)	30	bags	R-21" x 15"	68 sq ft	1,105
NMB Electric Wire	3	boxes		250'	79
Single Breaker	15	pcs	15 Amp		45
Copper Pipe Type 'M'	150	ft	3/4"		98
ABS Pipe	100	ft	3"		87
Total (Without Rebar)					**$16,936**
#4 Rebar	93	pcs	1/2"	20'	357
Total (With Rebar)					**$17,293**

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, "AHFC Market Basket Construction Cost Survey" 2004
Weighted average using 2003 America's Labor Market Information System number of employees where applicable
Totals may not sum due to rounding

Transportation Cost of Market Basket

Table 6-4

Shipping & Handling (Without Concrete & Rebar)

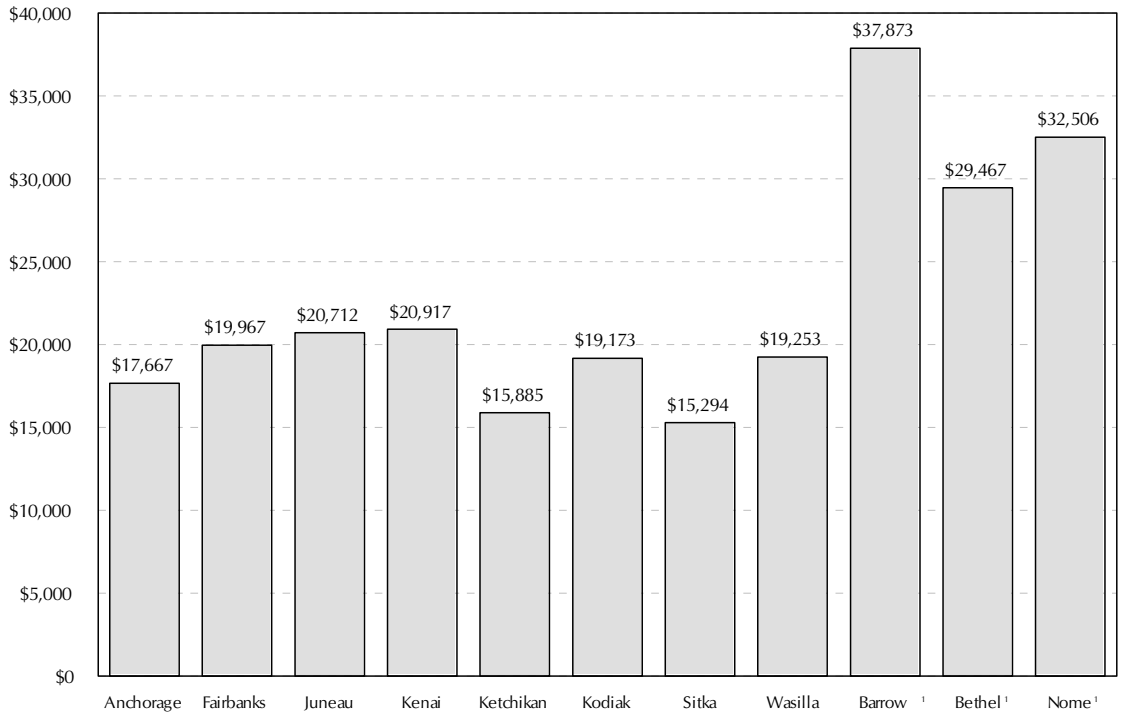
2004

Destination	Seattle
Ketchikan	$1,752
Juneau	3,028
Sitka	4,382
Anchorage	4,554
Wasilla	4,987
Kenai	5,708
Kodiak	6,299
Fairbanks	6,328
Bethel	9,768
Nome	10,068
Barrow	15,008

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, "AHFC Market Basket Construction Cost Survey" 2004
Weighted average using 2003 Q2 ODB202 or America's Labor Market Information System number of employees where applicable

Average Cost of Market Basket 2004

Alaskan Suppliers (without Concrete, Rebar, Doors, & Windows)



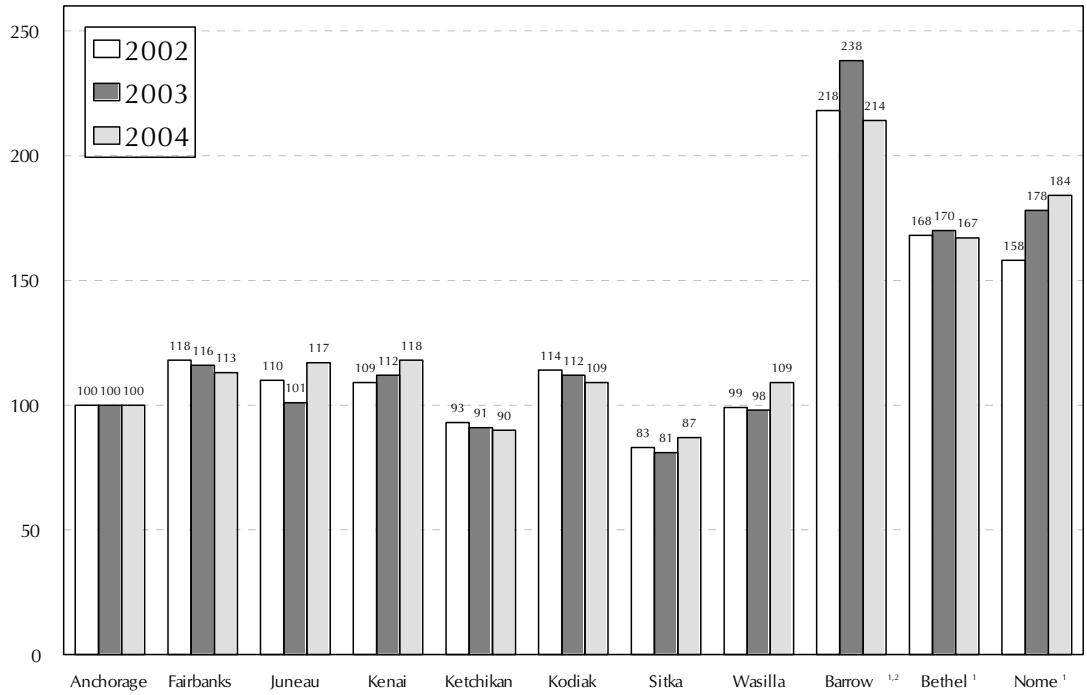
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, Construction Cost Survey 2004

[1] Prices include metal roofing instead of asphalt roofing.

Alaskan Suppliers Comparison Index

Urban & Rural Residential Construction (without Concrete, Rebar, Doors, & Windows)

Index by community with Anchorage as Baseline

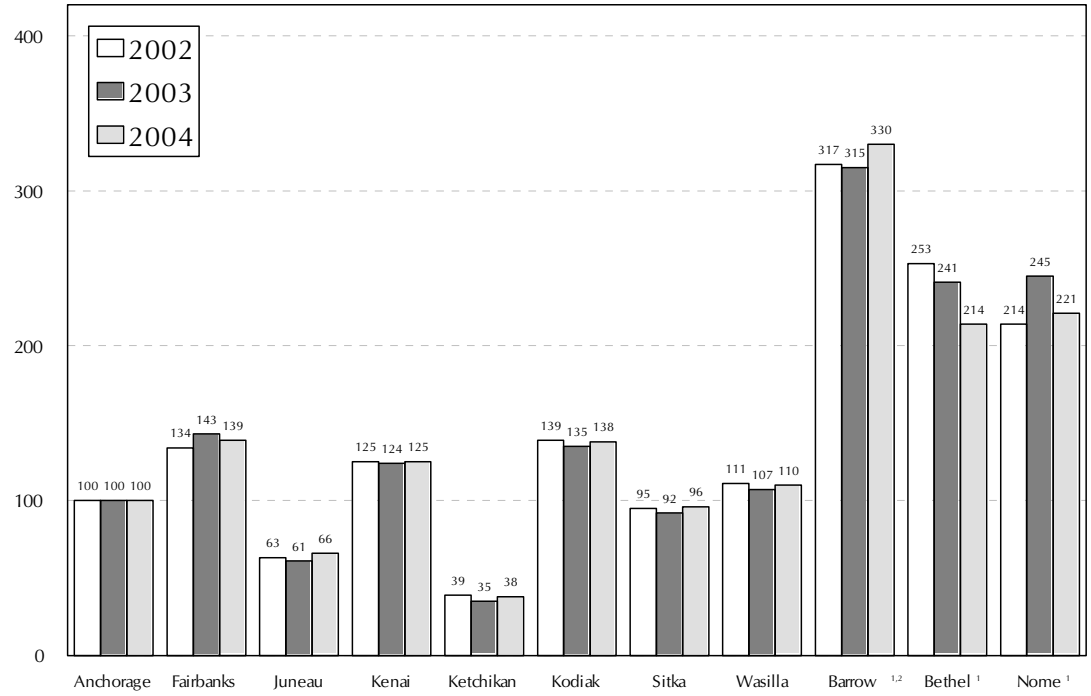


Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, Construction Cost Survey 2004

[1] 2003 and 2004 include metal roofing. [2] 2002 includes an estimate for asphalt shingle roofing materials.

Transportation Index for Market Basket from Seattle

Index by community with Anchorage as Baseline (without Concrete & Rebar)

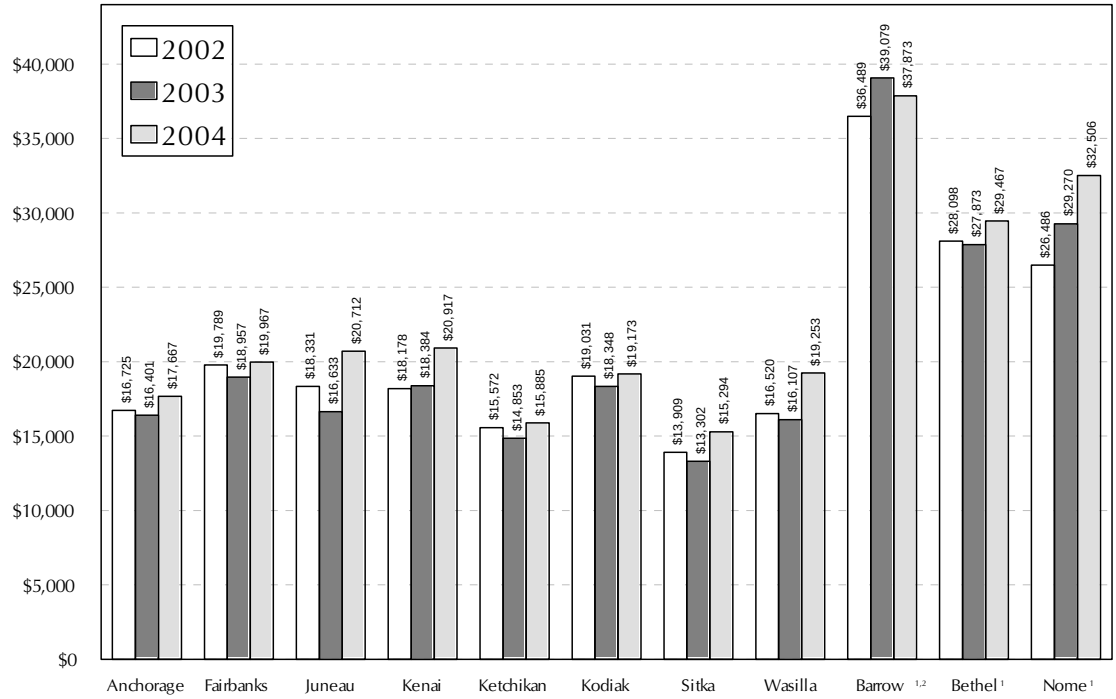


Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, Construction Cost Survey 2004

[1]2003 and 2004 include metal roofing. [2]2002 includes an estimate for asphalt shingle roofing materials.

Average Cost of Market Basket 2002-2004

Urban & Rural Residential Construction (without Concrete, Rebar, Doors, & Windows)
Alaskan Suppliers

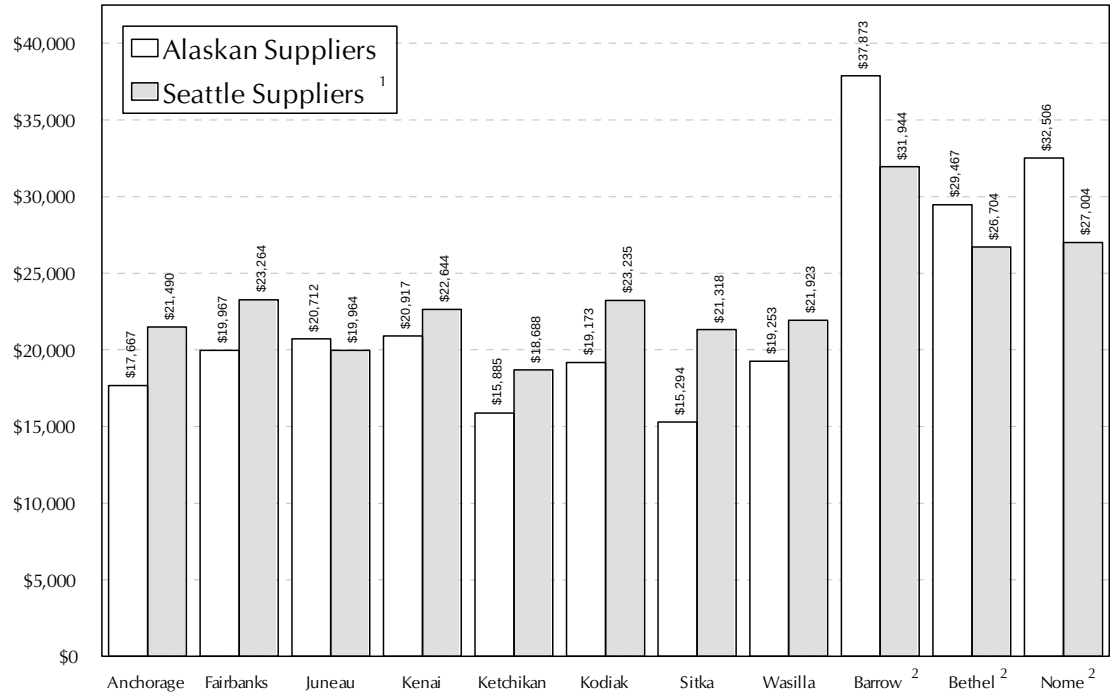


Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, Construction Cost Survey 2004

[1]2003 and 2004 include metal roofing. [2]2002 includes an estimate for asphalt shingle roofing material.

Average Cost of Market Basket 2004

Alaskan & Seattle Suppliers (without Concrete, Rebar, Doors, & Windows)



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Section, Construction Cost Survey 2004

[1] Seattle-area prices include asphalt roofing. [2] Alaska rural areas include metal roofing.