



Ketchikan Gateway Borough

2035 Comprehensive Plan

CORE PLAN

Adopted
February 2, 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all Ketchikan Gateway Borough residents, businesses, Tribes, organizations, and other local, regional, state, and federal partners who have contributed to the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Comprehensive Plan development process, including Ketchikan Gateway Borough staff and Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly and Planning Commission members.

Key individuals and contributors are listed in the Appendices.

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INTRODUCTION

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough Comprehensive Plan 2035 is a forward-looking, community-guided roadmap for the next 10 years. It reflects a shared vision for the Borough's future and outlines goals and strategies across a range of key focus areas, from land use and infrastructure to housing, economic development, and community wellbeing. Developed through public input and grounded in data, the plan is designed to support thoughtful decision-making, responsible growth, and long-term community resilience.

This plan does not replace or override other adopted community plans. Rather, existing planning documents were reviewed to inform the development of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough 2035 Comprehensive Plan and it complements them by offering a broad, long-range lens through which to coordinate policies, projects, and investments. It builds on the foundation set by the 2009 Comprehensive Plan and other strategic initiatives, while acknowledging how the community has changed, and may continue to change, in the years ahead.

While the Borough is responsible for maintaining and updating the plan, it is not solely responsible for implementing every strategy and action it contains. Many priorities outlined in the plan are best advanced through shared leadership from both existing and new partnerships. Community organizations, Tribal governments, local nonprofits, regional agencies, and private sector partners all play a role in helping realize the vision laid out in the plan.

References calling on the borough to be inclusive are intended to affirm longstanding Borough values and practices. Such language shall not be intended to imply that the Borough is presently exclusive or discriminatory in its service to residents.

Statutory Authority Clarification: The Comprehensive Plan is a policy guidance document and does not expand the Borough's statutory authority. The Borough's role in health care, social services, housing, and related programs is limited to the powers granted by state statute or adopted by voters, and typically includes coordination, advocacy, planning, and support for partner-led efforts rather than direct service provision.

Alaska Statute, Title 29

Title 29 of Alaska Statute requires that cities and boroughs engage in some form of land use regulation:

AS 29.40.030(b). Comprehensive Plan.

*(a) The **comprehensive plan** is a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social, and economic development, both private and public and may include, but is not limited to, the following:*

- (1) statements of policies, goals, and standards;*
- (2) a land use plan;*
- (3) a community facilities plan;*
- (4) a transportation plan; and*
- (5) recommendations for implementation*

Role of a Comprehensive Plan

A Comprehensive Plan is a guiding policy document, providing a framework for future decisions made by the Borough Assembly, Planning Commission, and the community. Under Alaska Title 29, second class boroughs like Ketchikan Gateway Borough are required to adopt a Comprehensive Plan and implement it through zoning ordinances and other land use regulations.

The plan serves several purposes:

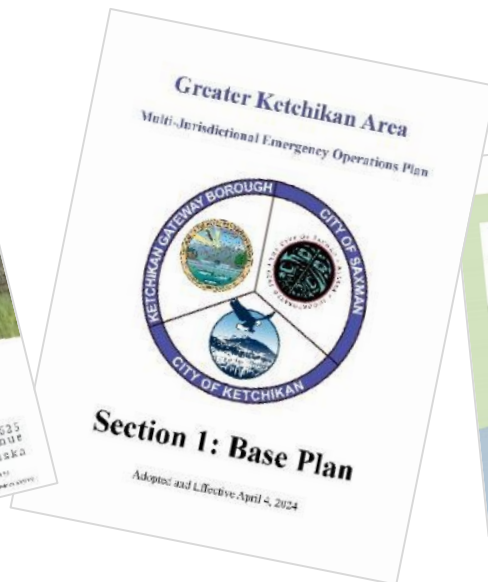
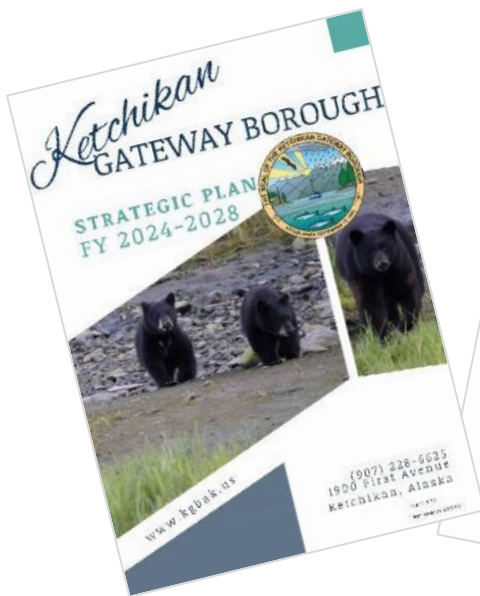
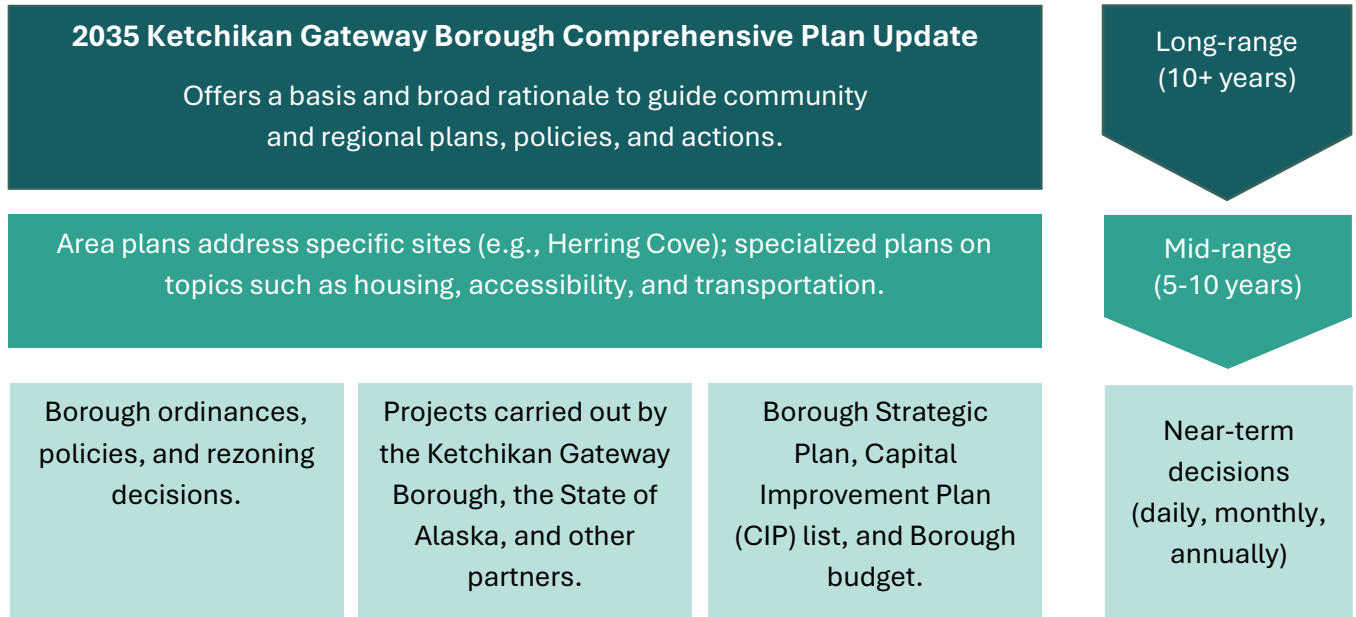
- Establishes a long-term vision for community growth and development.
- Guides public policy related to land use, housing, infrastructure, and other services.
- Informs regulatory updates, including zoning, subdivision, and capital improvement plans.
- Provides a stable, coordinated approach to public and private development.
- Lays the groundwork for decisions that are fair, transparent, and aligned with public values.

The plan offers flexibility with strategies and actions that can evolve over time in response to new data and information, community needs, and opportunities.

| What a Comprehensive Plan DOES: | What a Comprehensive Plan DOES NOT: |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outlines a long-term vision for the community.• Provides policy guidance for land use, housing, infrastructure, and development.• Informs decisions by the Borough Assembly, Planning Commission, and staff.• Encourages coordination between local governments, Tribes, organizations, and the public.• Reflects community input, demographic data, and economic trends.• Helps prioritize investments and capital projects. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create enforceable laws by itself.• Regulate zoning or land use.• Require property owners to change or develop land.• Guarantee funding or construction of projects.• Mandate that the Borough implement the strategies or actions listed.• Replace the need for zoning ordinances, permit rules, or other regulations. |

How does this plan relate to other community plans?

The Comprehensive Plan does not replace or supersede other current planning efforts – like the Borough’s Strategic Plan – but it is meant to complement those plans and provide a long-range lens to view those plans through and to develop others in the coming years.



Who Uses a Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan is a shared tool that can be used by different members of the community to guide decisions and align development plans. Here are some examples:

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Resident</p> | <p>Ketchikan Gateway Borough Planner</p> | <p>Local Representative</p> |
| <p>Use the plan as a tool to protect or improve the things they love about the area (for example, to propose a trail connection or learn about where the community agreed future development might occur and preservation should take place).</p> | <p>Use the plan as a guide for decision-making about land use changes such as zoning and permitting, as well as guidance for needed policy changes and enforcement priorities.</p> | <p>Use the plan as an official guiding document for Planning Commission and Assembly members when making decisions and rulings and creating policy in the project area.</p> |
| <p>Housing Developer</p> | <p>Business Owner</p> | <p>Grant Writer</p> |
| <p>Use the plan to identify areas where different types of growth are encouraged or discouraged and to better understand identified housing, transportation, and commercial needs.</p> | <p>Use the plan to understand where their type of business may be best located or how community priorities could inform their business idea/plan.</p> | <p>Use the plan to demonstrate communitywide support for key priorities in the project area when applying for funding from state, federal, and other sources.</p> |

Focus Areas

This plan addresses a broad range of interconnected topics that affect the quality of life in Ketchikan Gateway Borough. Focus areas include:

- Land Use and Environment
- Transportation
- Public Facilities and Services
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Health and Wellness
- Education and Culture
- Governance

Plan Organization

The Comprehensive Plan consists of three major components:



Executive Summary

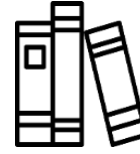
Offers a condensed summary of the plan including the community's vision, goals, and strategies for each element, and the Future Land Use Map.



Core Plan

(this document)

Includes additional information on the process, area, key issues to inform the plan policies (goals and strategies), and implementation actions.

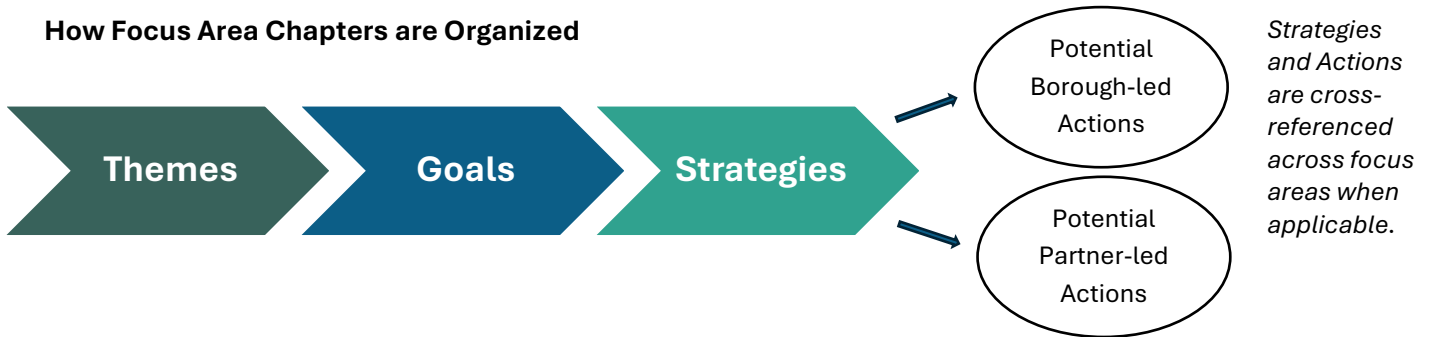


Appendices

Includes background information, context, and discussion used to inform the Future Land Use Map and related plan goals and strategies.

Each chapter begins with a summary of current conditions and community perspectives, followed by goals and a clear set of strategies and actions. Actions are categorized by who might take the lead - either the Borough or a community partner - and may be cross-referenced across focus areas where applicable.

How Focus Area Chapters are Organized



How Was This Plan Developed?

This plan was developed with input from residents, organizations, and businesses, Borough leadership and staff, committees, Tribal partners, and other community leaders, as well as regional, state, and federal partners. It is also informed by a variety of sources such as demographic data, economic and housing trends, and environmental conditions. For a detailed summary of the project activities and inputs that contributed to the plan, see Appendix C.

Implementation and Reporting

The process for implementing this plan could include developing an annual work plan of “priority actions” that support the strategies identified in the plan. The Ketchikan Gateway Borough Strategic Plan may also assist in directing annual priorities to address in the Comprehensive Plan. An annual work plan may consider existing and anticipated resources and will provide direction to Borough leadership, staff, and their partners. Ketchikan residents should be regularly encouraged to share comments, questions, and concerns on plan contents and implementation, and more importantly, to get involved in plan implementation.

The following tables outline a potential format for the annual work plan.

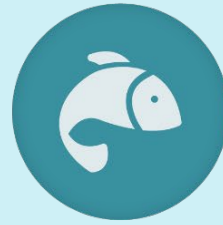
Figure 1: Implementation Table Example

| SAMPLE | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Goal: What broad or long-term change do we want to make? | | | |
| Objective: What measurable change do we hope to achieve over the 5-10 years? | | | |
| Priority Strategy | Actions <i>(specific step)</i> | Lead <i>(who)</i> | Timeline <i>(when)</i> |
| 1. | a. b. | | |
| 2. | a. b. | | |
| 3 | a. b. | | |

Equally important, the annual work plan will give Ketchikan elected officials, residents, businesses, and partners a detailed picture of how much progress is being made on the plan. A template for annual reporting on Comprehensive Plan strategies and actions is available at the end of the Governance chapter.



Community



Rich History

Our Vision and Values

Guided by History, Inspired by Community

Rooted in the traditions and stories of those who came before us, we look forward with intention. Ketchikan Gateway Borough will be a place where decisions reflect shared values, celebrate cultural diversity, and balance economic growth while respecting our environment and creating a thriving community for all.



Cultural Diversity



Natural Beauty



Innovation and Opportunity



Resilience and Safety



Economic Growth

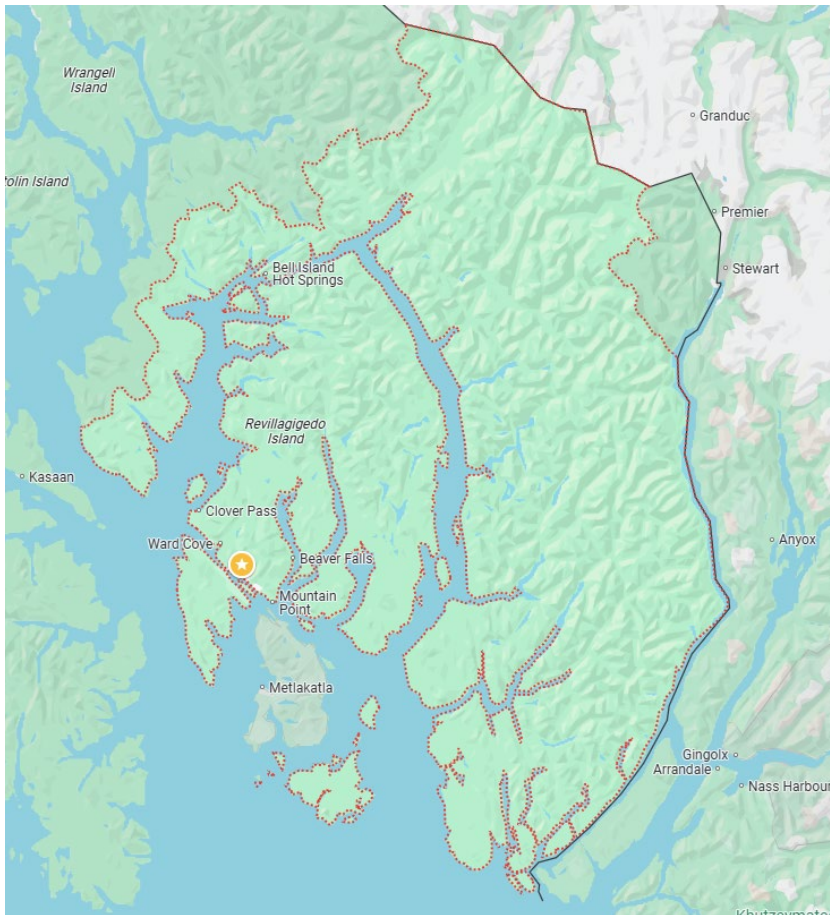


Project Area

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough is in Southeast Alaska, at the southern end of the Inside Passage. It includes the city of Ketchikan, the city of Saxman, and several outlying residential areas. The Borough is bordered by the Prince of Wales–Hyder Census Area to the west and north, the Canadian province of British Columbia to the east, and the open waters of Clarence Strait to the south and west. It is accessible by air and sea only, with no road connections to the rest of the state or Canada.

The Borough spans approximately 6,880 square miles, including about 4,899 square miles of land and 1,981 square miles of water. The area is characterized by rugged coastal mountains, dense temperate rainforests, island shorelines, and rich marine ecosystems. Steep terrain, heavy rainfall, and dramatic fjords define the landscape, with Tongass National Forest, the largest national forest in the United States, covering much of the Borough. Approximately 97 percent of the Borough is federally owned land.

Figure 2: Ketchikan Gateway Borough Map



The region is the traditional territory of the Tlingit and Haida peoples, who have lived in the area for thousands of years. Kichxáan (Ketchikan) is Lingít Aaní (Tlingit land), the territory of the Taant’a Kwáan (Sea Lion Tribe) of the Tongass Tlingit and Saanya Kwaan (People of the Southeast Wind). The present-day Revillagigedo Island community is home to two federally recognized and sovereign Tribes: The Organized Village of Saxman and Ketchikan Indian Community.





LAND USE AND ENVIRONMENT



Land Use and Environment Themes

Strategic growth protects land and serves community needs.

Ketchikan geography, combined with seasonal tourism pressures, makes it critical to guide growth in ways that serve residents long-term needs while managing visitor impacts. In the 2025 Community Survey, 89 percent of respondents expressed support for a more deliberate balance between the needs of residents and visitors. A substantial portion of the Borough's urbanized land base is located on steep slopes or in areas vulnerable to hazards, which limits the amount of land suitable for safe and efficient development. Aligning zoning and subdivision policies with land suitability, infrastructure capacity, and neighborhood context will reduce risk, protect natural systems, and promote growth that strengthen communities rather than amplifying seasonal strain.



Consistent and modernized code revisions can unlock development goals.

A unified, modern code will improve transparency, support infill development, and help staff and applicants navigate the permitting process more efficiently. Outdated and inconsistent development regulations - including subdivision, hazard, and design standards - undermine the Borough's ability to support resilient, site-appropriate growth. Misaligned rules contribute to avoidable project delays, legal ambiguity, and a reliance on case-by-case Borough discretion. These issues limit housing diversity, create legal risk, and complicate long-range planning.

Diverse areas require place-based planning.

Ketchikan Gateway Borough's communities vary widely in geography, land ownership, infrastructure access, and development history. From rural South Tongass to growing hubs like Ward Cove, land use conflicts arise where zoning and policy tools fail to reflect the specific needs, constraints, and character of each area. Residents consistently voice support for neighborhood-level planning efforts that reflect local values and resolve tensions, such as mismatches between allowable uses and actual site conditions. Place-based strategies, including sub-area plans and revitalization efforts, guide change in ways that reflect current uses and support the long-term vision of each community.



Historic preservation strengthens community identity.

Ketchikan’s buildings, environment, and landscape tell the story of the community shaped by its history. With more than 400 recorded heritage resources and 13 National Register–listed properties (plus multiple eligible ones), Ketchikan is rich with places that embody the region’s identity and economy. In the 2025 Community Survey, 30 percent of residents named culture, history, and arts as what they valued most about the Borough, underscoring the importance of preservation in local planning. Integrating preservation into land use and redevelopment decisions, through policies, design standards and incentives, can help maintain Ketchikan’s character and respect for its history by also supporting housing, tourism, and small business growth.



Land use decisions reflect community values.

Land use policies in the Borough have long been guided by a commitment to addressing present-day needs while respecting established community and neighborhood priorities. For example, Clam Cove Hamlet Plan shows how the Borough worked with local residents to support neighborhood goals and character. The Borough's support in reconsidering Ketchikan's federal subsistence designation demonstrates its dedication to supporting traditional subsistence lifestyles and honoring Indigenous practices. Future land use planning must continue to honor Ketchikan’s natural and cultural landscapes by balancing recreation, subsistence, and historic preservation.



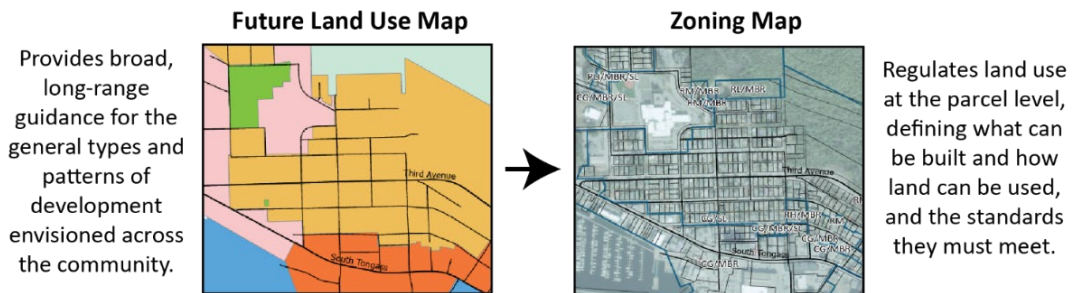
Collaboration catalyzes effective implementation.

In a region with overlapping jurisdictions and fragmented land ownership, successful planning and implementation depend on coordination across departments and with Tribal, municipal, state and federal partners and agencies. Strong collaboration allows the Borough to modernize development regulations, align zoning with infrastructure capacity, and deliver more consistent, community-supported outcomes on issues like housing, hazard mitigation, and traditional land use.



How Does This Plan Relate to Zoning?

“Zoning” is a regulatory framework or policy that describes how land can be used in the present; it provides some overarching restrictions to ensure land uses within a designated area do not conflict. “Zoning codes” are a way to implement and enforce land use within a specified area. Alternatively, the “Future Land Use Map” (FLUM) identifies broad future intentions for an area that does not immediately result in zoning changes; rather, the proposed land use categories and recommended zoning improvements in this plan provide categories and tools to guide land use decisions in the Borough in a way that aligns with the vision for the area, promotes planning best practices, and considers local context. If there are proposed changes to zoning in the project area, the Future Land Use Map will guide the zoning actions. Boundary lines in the Future Land Use Map are approximate. It is not the intent to divide lots or specific uses by these boundary lines.



Like the 2009 plan, the centerpiece of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Comprehensive Plan 2035 is a Future Land Use Map (see Land Use and Environment chapter for details).

| A Future Land Use Map DOES: | A Future Land Use Map DOES NOT: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate development needs. • Identify development issues, opportunities, constraints. • Identify suitable/unsuitable types of development. • Propose recommendations for how an area should develop. • Establish policies and standards to guide development. • Recommend improvements to zoning codes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as a regulatory or zoning document. • Make changes to existing zoning codes. • Apply retroactively. |

Land Use and Environment Goals

| Goal A | Goal B |
|---|---|
| <p>Guide growth through coordinated, predictable, and place-based land use planning approaches.</p> | <p>Plan for safe and adaptive use of land in the face of natural hazards and changing conditions.</p> |

Land Use and Environment Strategies and Actions

Strategy 1: Implement a future land use map that guides future decisions about land use and growth.

| Future Land Use Map General Categories The land use categories defined on the map cover areas with different uses, but with similar underlying characteristics. For example, the “Urban Residential” designation includes multiple housing types that have access to public sewer. | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Land Use Category | Intended Land Uses | Application Areas | Use Examples |
| Downtown Core | High-intensity mixed-use areas focused on infill and redevelopment in walkable districts with existing infrastructure. | Expansion of Central Commercial zone | Medical or professional office, restaurant, grocery store, mixed-use commercial buildings, cultural facilities |
| Urban Residential | Residential areas that support a mix of high- and low-density housing types located near core services, transit, and infrastructure to promote efficient land use and walkability. | Residential areas with access to sewer infrastructure | Fourplex, townhome, live-work units, group living facilities, single family units, corner store, cafe |
| Rural Residential | Residential areas outside of core service areas that may have limits to infrastructure or lot size minimums and where development patterns are shaped by access, terrain, and the capacity of on-site water and wastewater systems. | Residential areas outside the City of Ketchikan vicinity | Single-family home, duplex, accessory dwelling, manufactured home, cabin, small-scale farm, home occupation |
| Rural Mixed Use | A variety of uses are allowed, including residential, commercial, and light industrial with the general goal of preserving the residential character of surrounding neighborhoods. | Remote areas or neighborhood communities outside of municipal areas | Single-family home, cottage industry, lodge, general store, boat repair, storage yard |
| Commercial | Areas intended for retail, service, office, and automotive uses that support both residents and visitors, typically located along major corridors or highway-accessible sites. | Areas near the downtown core and some areas along Tongass highway | Retail, office, restaurant, grocery, hotel, gas station, auto repair shop, school, community facility |
| Industrial | Areas reserved for light and heavy industrial uses, including manufacturing, processing, storage, marine services, and other activities that require separation from residential or commercial uses due to noise, traffic, or operational intensity. | Light Industrial and Heavy Industrial zones | Warehouse, processing plant, freight terminal, construction yard, salvage operation, material storage area |

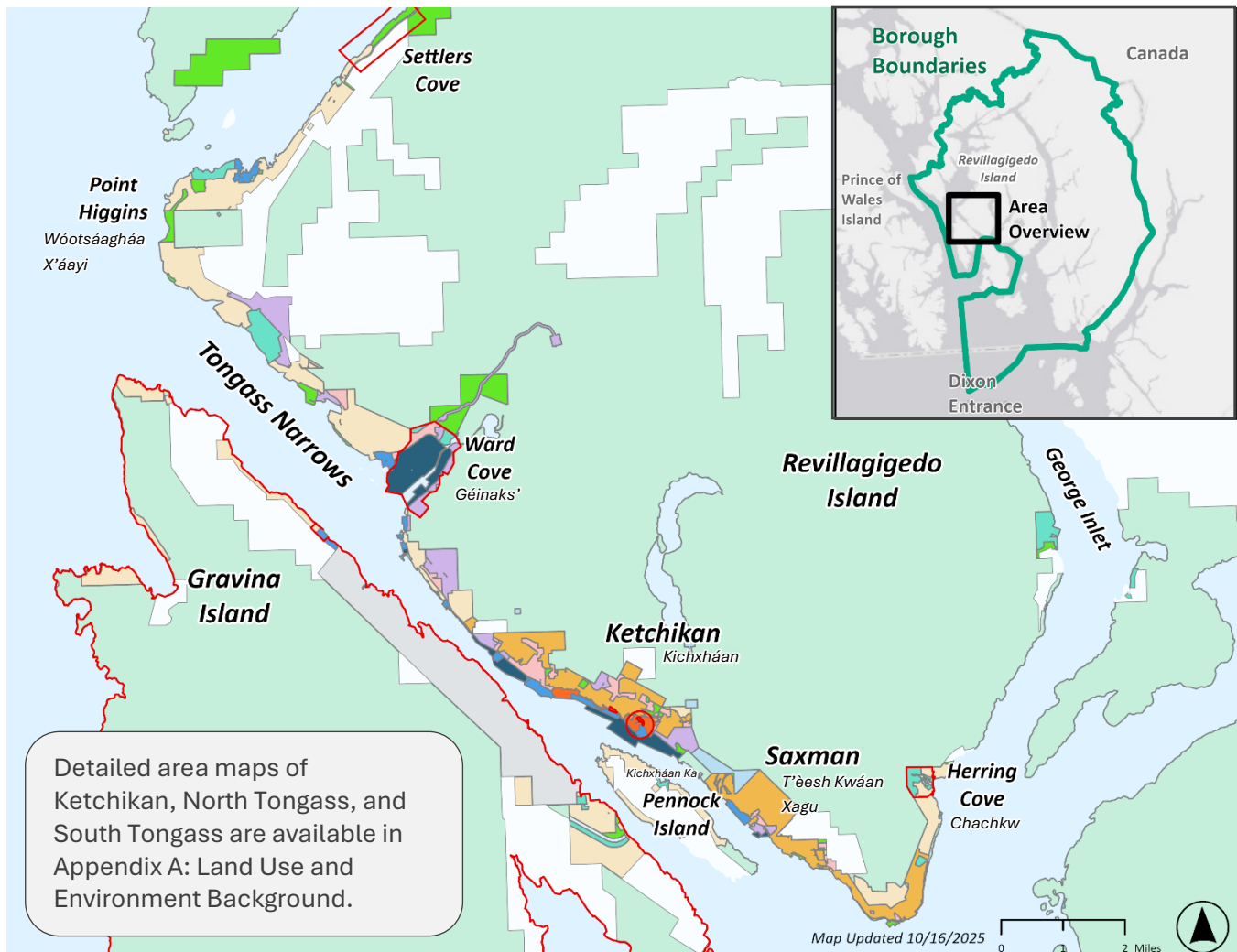
| Land Use Category | Intended Land Uses | Application Areas | Use Examples |
|----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Commercial Waterfront | Waterfront dependent uses that combine light industrial, recreation, and commercial uses, balancing working waterfronts with community spaces. Residential uses are accessory. | Areas along harbors | Boat harbors, docks, retail, parks, canneries. |
| Industrial Waterfront | Marine related waterfront dependent uses that are industrial in nature. | Areas west of A&P, Fuel Dock, Coast Guard Docks, Ward Cove | Freight docks, Ferry docks, cruise ship docks. |
| Airport | Lands supporting aviation-related uses, transportation facilities, and compatible commercial or industrial activities essential to regional mobility and freight access. | Airport District zone | Aviation uses and accessory uses |
| Institutional | Sites owned by municipal entities generally intended for public works purposes. | Ketchikan Creek, Carlanna Creek | Water treatment facilities and storage areas, utility fields |
| Recreation and Open Space | Areas designated for parks, conservation, and recreation as principal uses, not managed by State or Federal governments. | Parks, harbors | Playground, sports field, trailhead, beach access, picnic area, natural area |
| Public Management | State, federal, and other lands with multiple uses, including but not limited to flood protection, habitat value, traditional use, cultural and heritage protection by Tribal governments, recreation, tourism, and timber extraction. | Tongass National Forest, State lands, State Historic Preservation Sites | Uses designated by State and Federal agencies and Land Trusts |
| Unspecified Future Use | Large, vacant private lands where no specific future land use pattern has been identified at this time. | Remote areas borough-wide | None |

Future Land Use Map Overlay Categories

The overlays defined on the map cover areas with base land use designations but identify special provisions in addition to the base designation.

| Category | Description | Application Areas |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Area Plan | Areas where further planning efforts may be needed and/or where additional development regulations may apply. | Downtown, Ward Cove, Herring Cove, Creek Street, Hopkins Alley, Settlers Cove, Gravina Island |
| Environmental Constraints | Known areas of environmental constraints, such as steep slopes and flood areas, to help identify places where more detailed site analysis may be warranted if areas are to be developed or improved. | See Land Use and Environment Appendix. |

Figure 3: Land Use Map, Map 1: Area Overview



Future Land Use Map Area Overview

Prepared by Agnew::Beck, October 2025



Base Designation

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Downtown Core | Industrial Waterfront |
| Urban Residential | Airport |
| Rural Residential | Institutional |
| Rural Mixed Use | Recreation and Open Space |
| Commercial | Public Management |
| Industrial | Unspecified Future Use |
| Commercial Waterfront | Area Planning Overlay |

What is a Future Land Use Map?
Future land use maps anticipate development needs and constraints, identify suitable types of development, and establish policies to guide development. They do not act as regulatory zoning documents or make changes to existing code.

This map incorporates information from Haa Léelk'u Has Aani Saax'ú Kudzítsee (Saanya & Taant'a Place Names), a community-based project mapping traditional Tlingit placenames and territories. It is shared here for reference only. For the full map and source context, please visit: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1CgaYbgGaeojaYXZsImSWSiW1VUuYKM&ll>

Icon Key:

- ⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- ✳ Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2009: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Strategy 2: Update and improve the Borough's zoning and subdivision code to better respond to existing and future issues and opportunities. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions (See Appendix A for additional details on each of these actions.)

- a) Replace discretionary permits with administrative permit processes where feasible. ✳
- b) Introduce flexible zoning tools, such as form-based standards or mixed-use overlays in areas targeted for infill and redevelopment. *(Cross reference with Housing chapter.)* ✳
- c) Reform the use of special limitation (SL) zoning to improve zoning consistency and reduce precedent-driven spot zoning. ✳
- d) Evaluate the feasibility and community support for adopting site plan requirements in all Borough areas outside the City of Ketchikan limits to enhance life safety, structural integrity, and resilience, while considering local needs and capacities.
- e) Continue to improve the usability, applicability, and accessibility of Ketchikan Gateway Borough Code, Titles 17 Subdivisions and 18 Planning and Zoning. ✳

Potential Partner-led Actions

- f) Coordinate with the City of Ketchikan to promote infill and redevelopment of underutilized properties.

Strategy 3: Reduce risks from landslides, flooding, erosion, and other natural hazards by improving maps, updating land use policies, and investing in resilient infrastructure. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Implement and conduct regular updates of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) to ensure development decisions, infrastructure investments, and emergency preparedness efforts reflect the Borough's latest risk assessments. *(Cross reference with Transportation chapter.)* ◆
- b) Strengthen floodplain management policies through code updates, interagency coordination, and community outreach. *(More information in Appendix A.)* ◆ ✳

Potential Partner-led Actions

- c) Coordinate with local, Tribal, State of Alaska, and utility partners to close data gaps in hazard mapping, improve flood and landslide alert systems, and identify priority upgrades to emergency access routes in high-risk areas.
- d) Create a transportation infrastructure vulnerability map to guide capital investment decisions.
- e) Support development of a Ketchikan Creek Master Plan to address potential damage, infrastructure failure and economic impacts from flooding.

Strategy 4: Promote coordinated area and neighborhood planning to guide future development, infrastructure investment, and zoning updates in priority locations.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Develop and implement a Ketchikan Gateway Borough Land Management Plan to guide the acquisition, disposition, leasing, and use of Borough-owned lands in alignment with land use, housing, recreation, and conservation goals. *(More information in Appendix A.)* ♦
- b) Update and implement a consistent framework for area/neighborhood plans in the Borough, building on past policy commitments to guide development, public investments, and community character in neighborhoods and areas identified on the Future Land Use Map Area Planning Overlay. *(More information in Appendix A.)* ♦
- c) Develop an area plan for Herring Cove to guide land use, infrastructure improvements, and visitor management strategies that balance tourism activities with resident quality of life, public safety, and habitat protection. *(More information in Appendix A.)*
- d) Explore the creation of guidelines or agreements with tour companies to limit commercial tour activities in residential areas and protect non-commercial recreation areas. *(Cross reference with Economic Development chapter.)*

Potential Partner-led Actions

- e) Collaborate with property owners, the business community, the City of Ketchikan, and the State of Alaska to develop a Downtown Ketchikan sub-area plan that strengthens the district as a year-round hub of community life. The plan should build from existing conceptual and master planning efforts to identify strategies that balance resident-serving and visitor-serving uses, support cultural vitality, and address parking management. Implementation may include zoning updates, incentives for year-round businesses, and coordination with property owners to encourage diverse, locally serving tenants.
- f) Subject to Borough priorities and funding availability, collaborate with partners to develop an area plan for Ward Cove that addresses land use, infrastructure, and redevelopment opportunities, with a focus on improving access, coordinating utilities, supporting compatible mixed-use development, and guiding reinvestment in the former industrial site. *(More information in Appendix A.)*

Case Study: Chilkoot River Corridor Strategic Planning – The Chilkoot River Corridor in Haines, Alaska faced a similar challenge as Herring Cove: growing visitation concentrated in an area with limited infrastructure next to residential neighborhoods and critical habitat. Increased traffic, user conflicts, and human-wildlife interactions created safety concerns and strained the capacity of local stakeholders to manage the area effectively. In response, the community initiated the Chilkoot River Corridor Strategic Planning Project, a collaborative effort involving the State of Alaska, Chilkoot Indian Association, the Haines Borough, neighbors, and tourism operators. The plan created a shared vision for the corridor and introduced targeted strategies, including improved parking and circulation, interpretive signage, designated viewing areas, and limits on commercial access.

Strategy 5: Preserve cultural, environmental, and recreational resources through land use planning and partnerships.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Implement the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Recreation, Parks, and Playground Plan and Trails Plan by prioritizing capital projects, land acquisition, and maintenance partnerships. ◆
- b) Establish a recreation zone in the Borough zoning code to preserve designated parklands and community open spaces. *
- c) Where feasible, apply the land use guidance from the Hopkins Alley/Newtown Planning Framework. *
- d) Engage with the U.S. Forest Service and other partners during the Tongass National Forest Plan revision to advocate for Borough priorities, including the protection of cultural resources, recreational access, and sustainable land use practices.
- e) Continue to implement the Creek Street Historic District Plan through zoning coordination, infrastructure improvements, and funding alignment.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- f) Support the creation of community-wide plans, such as historic preservation plans and cultural plans, that build on previous community planning efforts and will be developed in partnership with local organizations. ◆
- g) Advocate for City of Ketchikan enforceable code to protect Ketchikan's historic buildings and cultural sites.

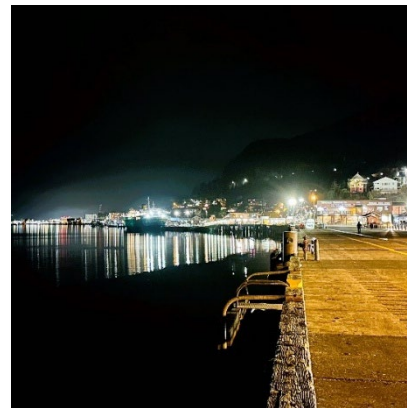
TRANSPORTATION



Transportation Themes

Residents emphasize the need for resilient, hazard-mitigating infrastructure.

The 2024-2027 State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) outlines more than \$50 million in regional investments but emphasizes that local advocacy is essential to ensure timely implementation. In recent community discussions, Ketchikan residents raised concerns about landslide risks cutting off road access and other vulnerable corridors. Transportation facilities and infrastructure in Ketchikan, including the Tongass Avenue and Water Street viaduct, ferry terminals, and bridges, are aging and in need of investment. About 80 percent of 2025 Community Survey participants said preparing for and addressing the effects of natural disasters and hazards was a top community priority.



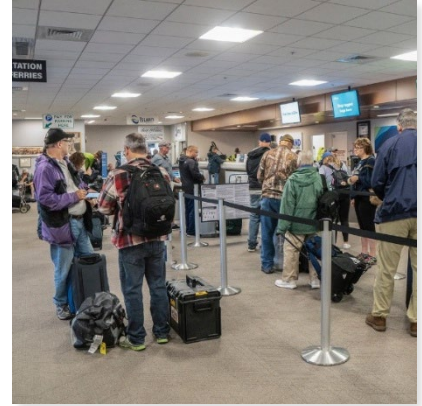
Investment in marine transportation supports critical links between communities and regional economies.



Marine access remains essential for inter-island travel, commerce, and community resilience. Aging marine vessels, high freight costs, and limited ferry availability have eroded reliability. The 2021 Coordinated Transportation Plan identifies ferry service between Ketchikan and Prince of Wales communities as a critical link for residents and regional economies. Participants in the April 2025 Partner Discussion meeting highlighted the need to reactivate emergency water routes, improve Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ferry access, and reduce marine shipping costs by encouraging backhaul cargo opportunities.

Strengthening airport infrastructure and access supports regional connectivity.

Ketchikan International Airport, located on Gravina Island, is a vital economic and transportation hub. The terminal was identified in the Terminal Area Plan (adopted in 2022) as undersized for peak-season demand, and Phase 1 terminal expansion is underway with completion expected in 2027. The airport's unique reliance on a ferry system for access makes redundancy and modernization crucial. A new airport operating lease was renegotiated between the Borough and the State of Alaska, extending the agreement to 2079 to sustain long-term airport operations. Work is ongoing, and recent actions reflect steady progress toward previously identified issues.



Improvements to mobility during tourist season ensures access for residents.

Downtown Ketchikan congestion during cruise ship season creates safety concerns, limits mobility, and impacts residents' lives. Residents in the 2025 Community Survey and the February 2025 Open House described difficulties navigating crowded streets, crossing safely, and accessing services during peak months. The surge in summer tourism, with more than 1.5 million cruise passengers annually, places strain on infrastructure built for a year-round population of about 13,500.

Multimodal and ADA-accessible transportation systems improve livability.

Community members and transportation partners voiced support for a "Complete Streets" approach to design infrastructure that safely accommodates drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and people living with disabilities. However, many sidewalks remain inaccessible or disconnected, particularly outside of downtown. The 2025 April Partner Discussions emphasized the need for integrated pedestrian paths, safer crossings, and ADA-compliant design as part of all major street upgrades.



Scaled and accessible public transit service keeps the community connected.

Ketchikan’s public transit system is valued by many and is expanding access for residents with mobility challenges and for outlying neighborhoods. In 2024, the Borough brought paratransit operations in-house as Bus +, with ridership growing significantly in FY25 and real-time bus tracking now available to riders. Accessible services were strengthened further when three new ADA vans were added to the fleet in 2025. Despite progress, coverage and reliability gaps remain in some neighborhoods and time periods. The Borough’s continued implementation of the Coordinated Transportation Plan, Strategic Plan, and updates to the Transit Development Plan are expected to expand span, frequency, and capacity.



Improving access to Gravina Island is essential for long-term development.

Gravina Island hosts key public infrastructure, including the airport and potential industrial and residential opportunities, but access currently relies on the airport ferry. With the Gravina Access Project nearly complete and no additional state funds identified for new access improvements, the near-term priority is maintaining reliable ferry service through vessel and terminal reinvestment. The Borough should intensify efforts to replace aging vessels and secure stable, multi-year funding for capital and operations. Clarifying the appropriate funding pathway, including eligibility

through state and federal programs, will be critical for long-term reliability and unlocking new development opportunities on the island while also expressing the Borough’s long-term vision of exploring and advancing a permanent, fixed, year-round transportation connection between the City of Ketchikan and Ketchikan International Airport. *(Gravina Island development and connectivity is also discussed in Public Facilities and Services chapter, Strategy 5.)*



Transportation access affects food security and cost of living.

More than 60 percent of participants in the 2025 Community Survey identified food costs and availability as one of their top challenges. Local freight and shipping limitations - particularly the cost of marine cargo - impact grocery prices and food imports. Participants in the February 2025 Open House suggested enhancing support for local agriculture and food delivery services, including transportation solutions for farmers markets, fish distribution, and groceries to outlying communities.



Transportation Goals

| Goal A | Goal B | Goal C |
|--|--|--|
| Build and maintain a safe, resilient, and accessible transportation network. | Strengthen regional and inter-island connectivity. | Enable growth and development through infrastructure investment. |

Transportation Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- ⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- * Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2009: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Strategy 1: Advocate for hazard-resilient transportation infrastructure. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- Prioritize and advocate for full funding of high-risk infrastructure projects, including the Tongass Avenue and Water Street Viaducts.
- Maintain and regularly update the borough-wide hazard mitigation plan with transportation assets, identifying routes vulnerable to landslides, flooding, and storm surge. *(Cross reference with Land Use and Environment chapter.*

Potential Partner-led Actions

- Collaborate with Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (AKDOT&PF) to integrate ADA-compliant upgrades into major projects and retrofits.
- Explore the creation of a transportation infrastructure vulnerability map to guide capital investment decisions.

Strategy 2: Strengthen marine and inter-island connectivity. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Continue advocacy and support for implementation of the AMHS South Tongass Ferry Terminal improvements as identified in the 2024-2027 STIP.
- b) Advocate for the Inter-Island Ferry Authority and Alaska Marine Highway System to address the aging ferry fleet and staffing needs to maintain essential passenger and freight service.
- c) Explore developing emergency marine access routes for disaster response and community resilience.
- d) Explore the long-term feasibility, potential benefits, and environmental considerations of improved overland connections between Ketchikan, mainland Alaska, and Canada, in coordination with state and federal partners.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- e) Convene public, Tribal, and private logistics partners to develop a community-wide freight coordination and cost-reduction strategy to evaluate options such as backhaul, schedule alignment, and shared facilities, and to expand shipping options and encourage competition.

Strategy 3: Continue to improve airport access and modernize infrastructure. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Complete Phase 1 of the airport terminal expansion project. ✖
- b) Pursue terminal site expansion to improve public parking and traffic flow at the airport terminal. ✖
- c) Pursue expansion of the ramp and associated grounds to accommodate increased aircraft operations and growth of aviation-related business at the airport. ✖
- d) Coordinate airport ferry schedules with Borough transit and shuttle service to ensure year-round resident and visitor access.
- e) Develop and pursue a funding plan for Gravina ferry vessels and terminal assets that identifies eligible state and federal funding pathways in coordination with ADOT&PF.
- f) Include airport infrastructure in Borough ADA planning and capital improvement programs in coordination with FAA ADA requirements. (*Cross reference with Public Facilities and Services chapter.*) ✖

Potential Partner-led Actions

- g) Collaborate with any non-Borough transit and shuttle services to coordinate airport ferry schedules to ensure year-round resident and visitor access.

Strategy 4: Expand public transit reach and efficiency. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Pursue funding to expand service coverage to areas not currently served, especially outlying neighborhoods and development zones on North Tongass and South Tongass.
- b) Pilot and scale demand-responsive service (*Bus +*) to reach underserved populations, including seniors and people living with disabilities.
- c) Improve coordination with non-Borough paratransit providers.
- d) Strive to regularly update the Transit Development Plan to incorporate changing demographics and emerging needs.

Note: At the time of this plan update, the Borough had budgeted and scoped an update to the Transit Development Plan (last revised in 2003) to evaluate service design, coverage, technology, and funding strategies. The comprehensive plan's transit strategies should be implemented in coordination with the TDP update and subsequent recommendations.

Strategy 5: Address accessibility and traffic congestion by designing safer, inclusive streets that serve residents of all ages and abilities.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Align Borough transportation planning with the State of Alaska's ADA and pedestrian infrastructure guidance. *(Cross reference with Health and Wellness chapter.)*

Potential Partner-led Actions

- b) Improve pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, and bicycle facilities (including protected bicycle lanes where feasible) in high-traffic areas, especially downtown and along Tongass Avenue, and develop continuous multi-use trail connections that link neighborhoods, schools, harbors, and downtown. ✖
- c) Expand ADA-compliant curb ramps and crossings in underserved areas and near public services. ✖
- d) Coordinate with visitor-industry partners to stagger coach arrivals at high-conflict locations during peak hours to reduce bottlenecks.



The Ketchikan Gateway Borough Transit Department was selected as the 2025 Community Transportation System of the Year - Small System by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). The national award recognizes outstanding achievement in rural and small urban transportation systems.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES



Public Facilities and Services Themes

Expanded utility infrastructure can unlock development opportunities and stabilize neighborhoods.

Expanded utilities - predominantly water, sewer, and roads - are needed to support new housing development and keep pace with community needs. Participants in the 2025 Community Survey indicate that developing utilities that lead to housing (e.g., roads, utilities) is the second-highest housing priority, and “creating development incentives through public-private partnerships” is in the top five housing priorities. Extending utility infrastructure is both costly and complex. The process is further complicated by multi-jurisdictional ownership. Proactive planning and flexible standards will be needed to unlock development in steep or high-cost areas, including exploring development opportunities on Gravina Island.



Wastewater planning efforts are needed to modernize systems and expand capacity.

Wastewater systems are nearing or exceeding capacity in several service areas, most notably at the Charcoal Point plant, which has little room for expansion. Financial and land constraints limit options for expanding or upgrading treatment facilities. Without a coordinated, long-term wastewater plan across Borough and municipal systems, it will be difficult to support growth or protect water quality.

Ongoing emergency management efforts are improving coordination and readiness.

Emergency management is the community’s most trusted public service, with 88 percent of participants in the 2025 Community Survey agree or strongly agree they have access to quality emergency response services. Multi-jurisdictional coordination is improving through the ongoing development of the Greater Ketchikan Multi-Jurisdictional Emergency Operations Plan (MJEOP), which outlines shared responsibilities across agencies.



Investments in public facilities and harbors support transportation and commerce.

Port and harbor infrastructure is central to Ketchikan’s transportation network and economy but requires upgrades to maintain safety, accommodate demand, and reduce emissions. Shore power, corrosion protection, and waterfront access improvements are needed alongside long-term port planning. Expanded facilities in Saxman and Gravina Island would enhance development opportunities, equity, and connectivity.

New and diversified waste management solutions are in demand.

Expanded outreach, enforcement, and partnerships, such as recycling fishing nets or lithium batteries, can help address growing waste management pressures. Concerns about illegal dumping and poor waste management practices were voiced during the 2025 April Partner Discussions, particularly in remote areas and among seasonal or short-term residents. While there is growing interest in composting and recycling, broader implementation is limited by logistics, funding, and public education about those efforts.



Public Facilities and Services Goals

| Goal A | Goal B | Goal C |
|--|---|---|
| Enable sustainable growth through strategic utility and infrastructure investment. | Enhance regional connectivity and access through investment in harbors, ports, and public facilities. | Maintain, improve, and modernize public facilities and infrastructure to support access, equity, and long-term community use. |

Public Facilities and Services Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- 🔥 Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂️ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- ✳️ Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2009: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Strategy 1: Support coordinated utility infrastructure expansion to enable new housing development. 🔥

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Consider incentivizing utility development in new growth areas by exploring reimbursement models, tax incentives, or other tools that encourage private investment. ✳️
- b) Establish a clear and consistent framework for deciding when and how public funds will be used for utility expansion, based on development readiness, community benefit, and cost-efficiency.
- c) Explore adopting flexible or graduated infrastructure standards to reduce early-stage development costs in steep or high-cost areas. ✳️
- d) Improve inter-agency coordination across municipalities, the State of Alaska, and developers by aligning priorities, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and seeking funding for needed utility infrastructure.
- e) Prioritize strategic road and utility investments in areas identified for housing development to reduce uncertainty and encourage construction. ✂️ *(Cross reference with Housing chapter.)*

Strategy 2: Address challenges to wastewater capacity. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Identify opportunities to consolidate plans from City of Saxman, City of Ketchikan, and the Ketchikan Gateway Borough to create a long-term wastewater treatment plan that addresses current capacity issues and guides current and future development. *(Cross reference with Governance chapter.)*
- b) Improve compliance and operational reliability at the Mountain Point Wastewater Treatment Plant by implementing system upgrades, expanding SCADA monitoring, and establishing a regular maintenance schedule. ✖
- c) Upgrade Forest Park's wastewater system and roads to replace leaking sewer mains and improve drainage and pedestrian safety. ✖
- d) Plan for wastewater collection in emerging development areas.
- e) Explore alternative infrastructure solutions such as modular systems or decentralized utilities in hard-to-reach areas.
- f) Support upgrades to the City of Ketchikan Wastewater Treatment Plant to comply with the wastewater discharge permit, including funding and implementation of a study, design, and construction of a major capital improvement. ✖

Strategy 3: Modernize core infrastructure to improve resilience. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Replace aging Borough water, sewer, and road infrastructure in priority areas to prevent environmental contamination and improve safety. ✖
- b) Support municipalities' efforts in providing safe, reliable drinking water by advocating for project resources and seeking partnership opportunities.
- c) Identify strategies to replace aging diesel generators and support grid resilience through new infrastructure and backup systems.
- d) Support municipalities and partners in pursuing projects related to energy efficiency, for example, Green Star ratings.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- e) Encourage partnerships with Canadian and northern providers to improve fiber optic system resiliency by developing redundant broadband routes.

Strategy 4: Enhance and maintain port and harbor infrastructure to support safe transportation, economic development, and community access.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- a) Install corrosion protection along the Port of Ketchikan berth face to preserve structural integrity and prevent long-term damage. ✖
- b) Conduct feasibility studies, including the impacts to existing electrical infrastructure and any potential necessary upgrades, for port berth electrification to reduce emissions and support shore power for cruise ships.
- c) Collaborate with public and private entities for strategic waterfront commerce.
- d) Align Ketchikan’s port planning with Southeast Alaska’s regional transportation strategy.
- e) Rehabilitate the Ketchikan Waterfront Promenade to maintain pedestrian access and support tourism. ✖
- f) Support the development of a site plan, design, and permitting for Totem Harbor in Saxman to support economic development and subsistence access.

Strategy 5: Improve connectivity and development readiness on Gravina Island.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Determine if an updated Gravina Island Plan (2005) or Gravina Island Access study (2017) may be needed to examine and facilitate the necessary road, water, sewer, and energy infrastructure required for development.
- b) Explore further integrating road accessible portions of Gravina Island into the infrastructure assets of the broader community. *(Cross reference with Transportation chapter.)*
- c) Collaborate with the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, the City of Ketchikan, and other partners to periodically evaluate the feasibility, costs, and community benefits or impacts of a bridge and/or tunnel connection to increase access to Gravina Island, as part of long-range transportation planning efforts.

Strategy 6: Equip emergency and public safety services to meet evolving community needs.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Continue collaborations between the Borough, City of Ketchikan, City of Saxman, Ketchikan Indian Community, and the State of Alaska to update the Borough’s multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan and launch a public disaster education campaign.
- b) Prioritize investments in new construction and major facility upgrades at South Tongass and North Tongass fire stations to address structural issues, improve safety, and expand emergency response capacity. ✖
- c) Support efforts to replace the Saxman Public Safety Building with a modern facility that meets current emergency service needs, supports equipment storage, and ensures the health and safety of responders and the community.
- d) Seek funding to install emergency standby generators in all critical infrastructure facilities.

- e) Ensure all new utility systems are designed to support emergency services by adopting standard water system standards including consistent hydrant types.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- f) Increase annual fire inspection enforcement for commercial buildings, especially those with outdated sprinkler systems.
- g) Expand fire prevention education, including outreach to short-term rental hosts.

Strategy 7: Promote cleaner communities through education, outreach, and responsible solid waste management.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Support efforts to install and promote the use of bear-proof trash containers in parks and neighborhoods.
- b) Continue Junk Vehicle Program and identify barriers to participation.
- c) Partner with regional and nonprofit programs to pilot expanded recycling for items like fishing nets or lithium batteries.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- d) Expand public education on proper waste disposal, landfill use, and available services.
- e) Strengthen enforcement against illegal dumping, particularly in high-risk areas.



HOUSING



Housing Themes

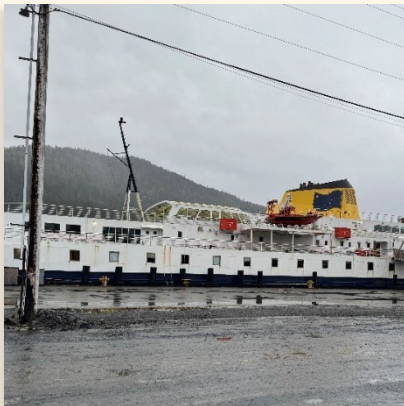
Improving housing affordability and availability are key to unlocking economic growth.

Across all community engagement inputs during the Comprehensive Plan process - the 2025 Community Survey, interviews, February 2025 Open House, and 2025 April Partner Discussions - the lack of attainable, available housing was consistently identified as the most pressing issue for residents. Rent and homeownership costs in Ketchikan have increased faster than regional averages, with Ketchikan experiencing a 9.4 percent rise in average rents in 2023 alone, the highest increase among Southeast Alaska communities, according to Southeast Alaska by the Numbers 2024 report from Southeast Conference. Residents and housing developers also noted that construction costs, limited developable land, and high land prices are significant barriers to addressing the housing challenges.



Workforce housing and options beyond single family homes are in high demand.

At the 2025 April Partner Discussions, business and economic development representatives underscored that the lack of workforce housing is one of the top barriers to economic growth in the community. There is a growing need for flexible housing types, such as triplexes, ADUs, and shared living arrangements, that support extended families and younger workers. Additionally, stakeholders highlighted opportunities to modernize zoning to allow for more creative housing forms and to encourage development of multi-generational housing that meets the needs of Ketchikan's aging population and diverse family structures.



Accessible housing enables community stability for residents of all ages and abilities.

Much of Ketchikan's housing inventory is aging and not designed to meet the needs of seniors and Elders or individuals living with disabilities. Participants at the 2025 April Partner Discussions reported that lack of accessible units is prompting some residents to leave the community. Accessibility concerns include proximity to services and mobility within neighborhoods. While some Borough investments have supported accessibility improvements (e.g., ADA features in parks and facilities), there remains a need for strategies that enable aging in place and people living with disabilities.





Opportunities exist for innovative partnerships and housing strategies.

While challenges exist, there is strong interest in pursuing collaborative housing solutions. Stakeholders at the April 2025 Housing Partners discussed land trust models, working closely with Tribal housing authorities such as the Ketchikan Indian Community, and forming cross-sector partnerships with nonprofits and developers. Adaptive reuse of existing structures, modular housing, and streamlining permitting processes were also recommended. Several partners called for improved housing data, like tracking vacancies, short-term rentals, and derelict properties, to help inform strategies.

More information is needed about the effects of short-term rentals on housing supply.

The growth of short-term rentals (STRs), fueled by Ketchikan’s expanding tourism industry, is driving the perception that STRs may be impacting the year-round housing market. Participants in 2025 April Partner Discussions and community members during the February 2025 Open House voiced concerns that homes are being converted into STRs, reducing availability for local workers and families. During the Partner Discussions, it was suggested that the Borough continue tracking the numbers of STRs and share that data more widely to help the community to understand the true impacts of STRs and if additional strategies are necessary.



Housing Goals

| Goal A | Goal B | Goal C |
|--|---|--|
| Increase the supply and diversity of housing to meet current and future needs. | To support the development and preservation of housing options that are affordable and accessible to the needs of current and future Borough residents. | Foster collaboration and innovation to expand housing solutions. |

Housing Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- ⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
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- ◆ 2009: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Strategy 1: Accelerate housing development through policies. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Consider development of a Housing Action Plan with additional housing data collected to support action planning and next steps.
- b) Track and update easily accessible housing indicators (suggested in the chart at the end of this chapter in Figure 4 to annually to track housing issues, constraints, needs, and opportunities.
- c) Identify, inventory, and prioritize Borough owned land suitable for housing development, particularly parcels near utilities, services, and transportation. (This action could also be undertaken by the City for City-owned land.)
- d) Evaluate the potential for issuing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to establish public-private partnerships for housing development on Borough properties designated for housing projects. *(Cross reference with Land Use and Environment chapter)*
- e) Continue to support construction of “missing middle” housing (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, “tiny” homes, small multifamily developments) through code updates and streamlined permitting. *(Cross reference with Land Use and Environment chapter) **
- f) Continue to monitor data on short-term rentals and their impact on the housing market.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- g) Host a developer roundtable to identify specific barriers to constructing small-scale infill housing in Ketchikan.

Case Study: The North Slope Borough convened a Housing Summit in Anchorage in January 2025 to explore solutions for expanding housing opportunities across the North Slope. The Borough published a summit report with an overview of presentations, discussions, next steps and detailed information on key topics including financing and funding, land ownership, contractors, skilled labor, and training, supplies, materials, and logistics and a tool kit of resources for residents - <https://www.north-slope.org/housing-summit-2025/>.

Strategy 2: Partner with employers on workforce housing solutions. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Develop pre-approved plans for small-scale, affordable workforce housing to reduce permitting time and costs.
- b) Continue to promote mixed-use development in walkable areas to integrate housing with jobs, transportation, and services. *(Cross reference with Land Use and Environment chapter.)*
- c) Explore offering density bonuses or relaxed parking standards for developments that include guaranteed workforce or seasonal housing.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- d) Develop a pilot employer-assisted housing program in collaboration with PeaceHealth, the school district, or other major employers. For example, explore a shared investment model where employers co-own seasonal or transitional housing units. *(Cross reference with Economic Development chapter.)*



Strategy 3: Improve housing accessibility and safety through rehabilitation and infill development.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Support outreach and promotion of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs for rehabilitation grants or low-interest loan programs that help owners upgrade older homes, especially for seniors and people living with disabilities.
- b) Incentivize universal design in new housing projects to ensure long-term accessibility for residents of all ages and abilities.
- c) Include universal design as a scoring criterion in any housing funding application reviewed by the Borough.
- d) Collaborate with healthcare providers and nonprofits to develop assisted living or senior-friendly housing in proximity to essential services.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- e) Support infill development on underused or vacant lots in older neighborhoods with existing infrastructure. *(Cross reference with Land Use and Environment chapter.)*
- f) Explore partnerships with utility providers to better understand patterns of long-term disuse or vacancy and use that information to guide outreach for housing rehabilitation.
- g) Advocate for building code updates and design incentives that support accessibility, such as encouraging ground-floor or elevator-access housing units, particularly for seniors and people living with disabilities.
- h) Collaborate with cities and housing partners to identify opportunities for promoting accessible design in new housing, such as ground-level entrances or elevator-equipped buildings.

Strategy 4: Leverage local partnerships and new models to deliver diverse housing solutions.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Support partners in efforts to identify and develop resources and services to assist unhoused residents and those in danger of becoming unhoused.
- b) Partner with Tribal housing authorities on joint developments and infrastructure funding strategies.
- c) Educate and promote information about the zoning policies that allow modular units.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- d) Assess the feasibility of modular or manufactured housing development pilot programs to lower construction costs and shorten project timelines; pursue partnerships with regional builders or modular manufacturers for a demonstration project.
- e) Support efforts of the Ketchikan Community Land Trust to expand housing in the community.

Figure 4: Examples of Easily Accessible Housing Indicators from Public Sources

| Indicator | Description | What it tells us | Sources |
|---|---|--|---|
| New Housing Units | Quarterly report of new single family, multi-family, and mobile home units | Tracking the number of new housing units added to the market can help track how well the market is responding to demand and track progress towards new housing goals. | AHFC Alaska Housing Market Indicators Report (available at https://www.ahfc.us/efficiency/education-and-events/research-information-center/alaska-housing-market-indicators or https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/housing/new.html) |
| Housing Occupancy and Vacancy Rates | Total occupied/vacant housing units, homeowner vacancy rate, rental vacancy rate | Vacancy rates below 5% are an indication of a tight housing market that could limit housing mobility and is often a sign of pent-up demand. A growing number of vacant units can also be an indication that the housing supply is not meeting the needs of residents and the existing housing stock is not being used to its full potential. | U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at https://data.census.gov/) |
| Housing Tenure | Owner-occupied housing units, renter-occupied housing units, and average household size for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units | The relative demand or need for ownership <i>versus</i> rental housing in your community. | U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at https://data.census.gov/) |
| Overcrowding | Occupants per room | Often an indication of pent-up demand within a community. Overcrowding is defined as more than 1.0 person per room. Severe overcrowding is defined as 1.5 or more people per room. | U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at https://data.census.gov/) |
| Population Estimates/ Components of Change | Components of change include births, deaths, and net migration. | Helpful information about how a community is changing/growing and what role housing could play in population dynamics moving forward. | Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce, Alaska Population Estimates (available at https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/data-pages/alaska-population-estimates) |

| Indicator | Description | What it tells us | Sources |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Affordability | Selected monthly ownership costs as a percentage of household income (SMOCAPI) and gross rent as a percentage of household income (GRAPI) | Households that spend more than 30 percent of their total income on housing costs are considered to be cost burdened. Spending a larger portion of household income on housing limits the amount of income available for other non-discretionary spending, such as food, clothing, and transportation. | U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates: Table DP04 SELECTED HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS (available at https://data.census.gov/) |
| Median Family Income | Median family income and HUD income limits broken down by persons in family and income limit category | The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sets income limits that determine eligibility for assisted housing programs including the Public Housing, Section 8 project-based, Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, Section 202 housing for the elderly, and Section 811 housing for persons with disabilities programs. | The Department of Housing and Urban Development, FY 2023 Income Limits Summary (available at https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html#query_2023) |
| Local Building Permit Activity | Data collected by local assessors on the number and or type of building activity occurring in the community | Data that describe current building activity in the community can help track how well the market is responding to demand and progress towards new housing goals. | KGB Planning Access database |
| Housing Wage | Housing wage is an estimate of the hourly wage a full-time worker must earn to afford a modest rental home at HUD's fair market rent (FMR) without spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs | Illustrates the gap between renters' wages and the cost of rental housing. | National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach Dashboards (available at https://nlihc.org/oor/state/ak) |

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Economic Development Themes

Economic diversification is necessary for Ketchikan’s long-term stability.

According to the results of the 2025 Community Survey, the industries where growth is generally supported are industries that also have potential for growth including mariculture and value-added seafood processing, healthcare, marine trades, construction, and small-scale manufacturing. The nonprofit sector, including arts, culture, and community services, serve as both an employer and an economic driver, reinforcing diversification and quality of life. Ketchikan’s historical reliance on timber and commercial fishing has shifted toward a more singular industry - tourism - creating economic vulnerability but residents broadly agree that diversifying the economy and seeking moderate growth in population and jobs is important.



Emerging workforce development programs are attempting to address skills gaps.

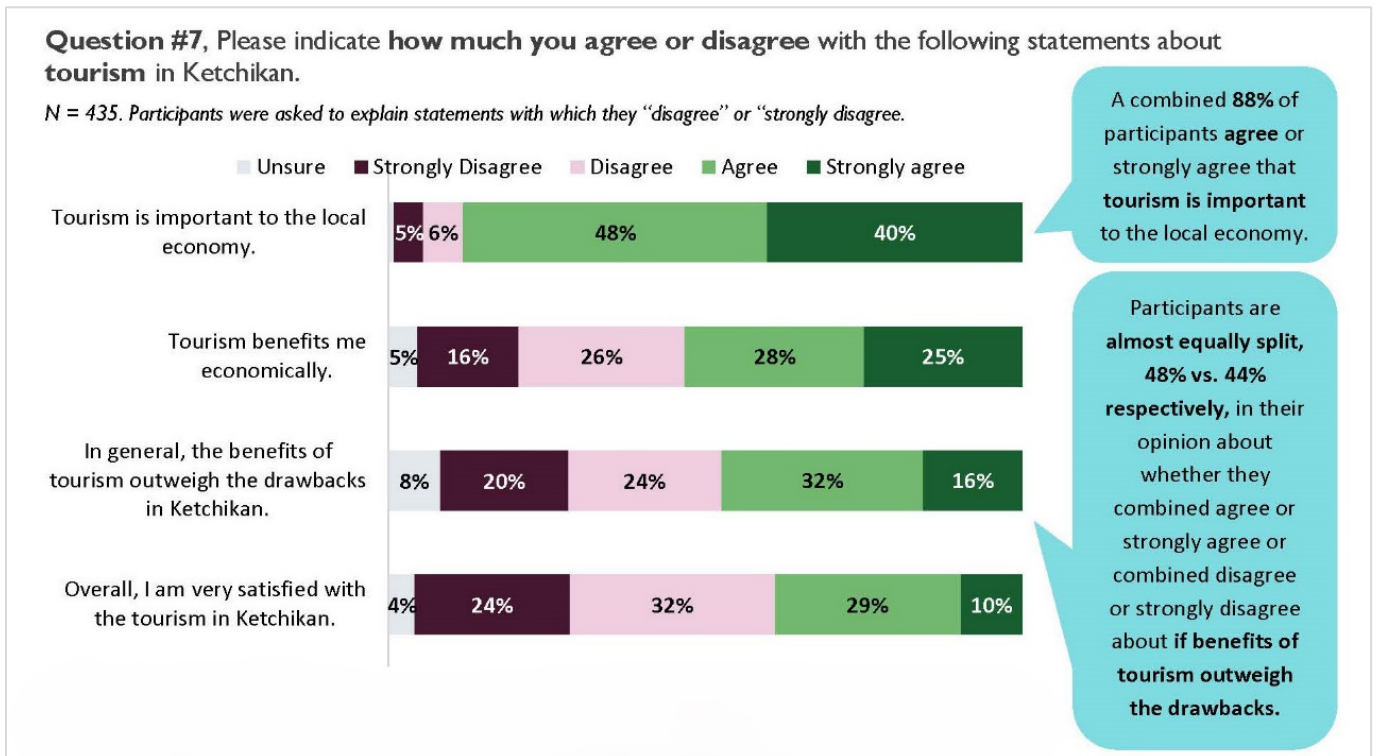
Ketchikan employers report difficulty recruiting and retaining skilled workers. Gaps in career pathways and training programs were highlighted in the 2025 April Partner Discussions and the 2025 Community Survey as key barriers for development, especially in the construction field, limiting the capacity for new housing development. At the time this plan was published, the Borough is exploring potential partnerships with University of Alaska Southeast Ketchikan campus on workforce development initiatives.

Sustainable tourism strategies offer solutions that contribute to Ketchikan’s fiscal health and improve year-round livability.

Cruise ship tourism remains a major economic engine for Ketchikan, as the second most visited port in Alaska (according to Alaska Travel Industry Association’s Alaska Visitor Volume report for summer 2024). There is also interest from the community to develop more non-cruise related tourism and sustainable tourism strategies that include cultural awareness. At the same time, residents express concern in the 2025 Community Survey (see Figure 5) about over-tourism and its impact on livability especially regarding infrastructure strain and seasonal crowding. These survey results also illustrate that community character is an important area of concern for residents. To address these concerns, economic development strategies should aim to incorporate measures that protect community well-being and ensure that the benefits of tourism are reinvested locally to sustain residents’ quality of life.



Figure 5: Question #7 from 2025 Community Survey





Commercial fishing remains core to Ketchikan’s identity.

While the industry faces headwinds, commercial fishing remains a defining pillar of Ketchikan’s identity and resilience, sustaining families, local businesses, and the broader coastal economy. The industry across Alaska is experiencing an aging workforce and high barriers to entry for younger participants. In Sea Grant Alaska’s report, “Graying of the Fleet in Alaska’s Fisheries: Defining the Problem and Assessing Alternatives” shows that the average age of fishermen in Alaska’s fisheries has increased by 10 years over the past generation. Environmental shifts and global market volatility are also contributing to uncertainty in the industry but ongoing

statewide initiatives are working to strengthen opportunity and long-term stability in the sector.

Strengthening local food systems can improve food security and economic resilience.

There is a strong community desire to expand local agriculture, invest in infrastructure for local food production and processing, like commercial kitchens and cold storage, and partnering with schools, Tribes, and nonprofits for food production, distribution, and education. Subsistence activities, including fishing, hunting, and gathering, remain an important part of Ketchikan’s food system and local economy. These practices supplement household food supplies, support cultural traditions, and help offset high grocery costs at a time when residents express concern about food costs and availability in Ketchikan.



Infrastructure improvements can spur growth and increase livability.

Aging infrastructure including roads, water and sewer, and public transit were frequently mentioned in community feedback as barriers to economic development (see Figure 6). These include needing ferry system improvements, road repairs, water and wastewater system upgrades, and site development standards that support sustainable housing and industrial growth. Lack of housing affordability and availability is also undermining the workforce and community economic stability.

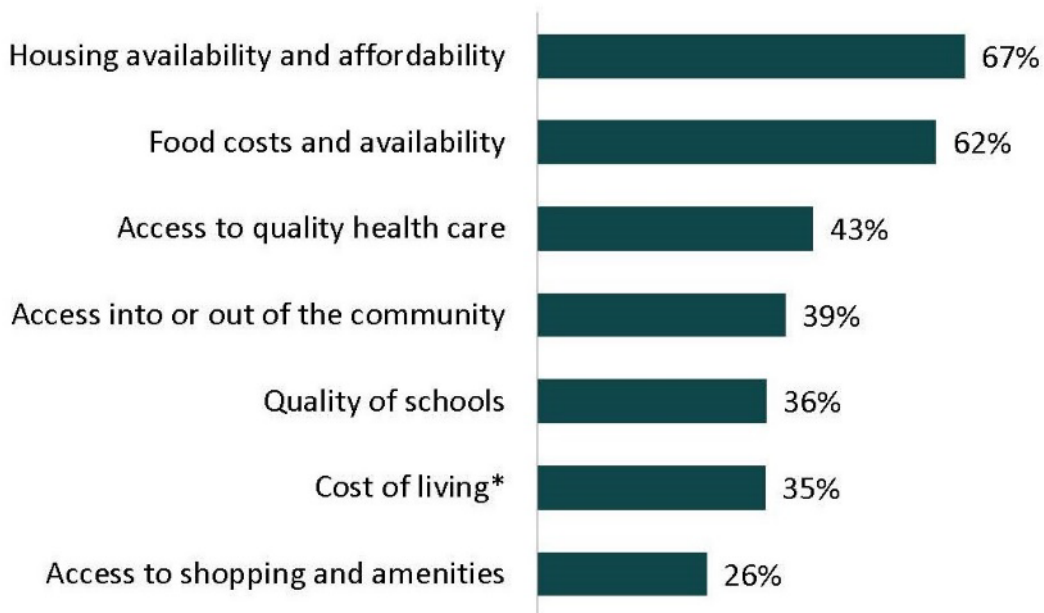


Figure 6: Question #2 from 2025 Community Survey

Question #2, What is most challenging about living in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough?

N = 466. Participants selected up to five options from a list of challenges. ^{2 3}

Over 60% of participants say that **housing availability and affordability (67%)** and **food costs and availability (62%)** are challenges to living in the KGB.



Economic Development Goals

| Goal A | Goal B | Goal C |
|---|---|--|
| Diversify and strengthen the local, year-round economy. | To advance economic development efforts that are responsive to community values, support quality of life, and encourage community engagement. | Invest in people and infrastructure to build and retain a skilled, inclusive, and future-ready work force. |

Economic Development Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- ⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- ✳ Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2009: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Strategy 1: Diversify the local economy to expand beyond tourism and address cost of living burdens. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Support development in current emerging industries and emerging industries identified in future planning documents such as marine trades, construction, value-added seafood processing, small-scale manufacturing, technology sectors, and the arts economy.
- b) Reassess the current sales tax cap on large purchases to reduce disproportionate burdens on lower-income residents. ✳ (Cross reference with Governance chapter.)
- c) Support local business development support services to small business owners.

Strategy 2: Align tourism activities and management with community values and residents' quality of life.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Explore the creation of guidelines or agreements with tour companies to limit commercial tour activities in residential areas and protect non-commercial recreation areas. *(Cross reference with Land Use and Environment Chapter.)*
- b) Support the promotion of Indigenous cultural tourism experiences in collaboration with local Tribes to diversify the visitor economy and enhance cultural education.
- c) Explore community tourism models that aim to improve the quality of life for residents, improve visitor experiences, support business growth, increase sales tax revenue, and foster community collaboration and coordination in conjunction with tourism industry. *(Cross reference with Health and Wellness chapter.)*
- d) Assess the cumulative impacts of visitor activity on community infrastructure, including transportation, utilities, broadband capacity, and public spaces. *(Cross reference with Public Facilities and Services chapter.)*
- e) Implement or continue implementing elements of the 2023 Ketchikan Tourism Strategy with Borough resources or providing funding to the Ketchikan Visitors Bureau, specifically the following Strategies:
 - 1.3 Increase enrollment of the tourism operators in the Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP)
 - 1.4 Support full roll-out and strengthening of the TBMP
 - 3.2 Build and maintain community engagement around tourism
 - 3.3 Develop an educational strategy to influence responsible and respectful behavior in the community and on public lands
 - 4.1 Build robust tourism workforce pipeline
 - 4.2 Improve recruitment and retention of workers
 - 5.1 Support development of a KGB transit plan
 - 5.3 Improve pedestrian, single occupancy vehicle, and tour operator mobility
 - 5.4 Increase transit options and hop-on-hop-off shuttle stops/access
 - 6.1 Foster public-private partnerships for workforce housing
 - 6.2 Identify and incentivize creative options for seasonal and long-term housing
 - 6.3 Create community education campaign to support housing development
 - 7.1 Establish a holistic and regularly updated destination data bank
 - 7.2 Publish an annual indicator report

Potential Partner-led Actions

- f) Invest in tourism infrastructure improvements, including traffic management, signage, and transit upgrades related to visitor mobility. *(Cross reference with Transportation chapter.)*
- g) Collaborate with local utilities and telecommunications providers to increase capacity during peak visitor seasons.
- h) Support implementation of shore power and port electrification projects that reduce noise and emissions, improving both visitor experience and livability for nearby residents.

Strategy 3: Build a skilled and resilient local workforce. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Support employers offering apprenticeships, internships, or on-the-job training in high-need sectors like construction and healthcare.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- b) Expand vocational and career-technical education (CTE) programs in schools focused on trades, marine careers, healthcare, and technology.
- c) Support training and certification programs through partnerships with local unions, University of Alaska Southeast, and the Department of Labor.

Strategy 4: Strengthen commercial fishing and mariculture economies.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Support regulatory stability and science-based fisheries management through Borough advocacy and partnerships with federal, state and Tribal agencies.
- b) Facilitate value-added processing opportunities by supporting facility upgrades, commercial kitchens, and market access programs.
- c) Promote mariculture expansion by supporting and advocating for infrastructure investments (e.g., cold storage, hatcheries, and processing facilities) and workforce support, working with Southeast Conference and Alaska Mariculture Alliance. ✂

Potential Partner-led Actions

- d) Expand access and support for young and new fishermen, including mentoring programs, equipment-sharing cooperatives, and capital assistance.
- e) Promote mariculture training programs (e.g., kelp and oyster farming) through partnerships.

Strategy 5: Strengthen growth of local food systems to expand food security and help address high living costs.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Support community gardens, small scale farming, gardening support and mentoring programs, and culturally relevant gardening initiatives (e.g., Alaska Native, Filipino, and traditional food practices).
- b) Evaluate and consider revising local codes or zoning regulations that may restrict small-scale greenhouse or food production efforts. *
- c) Explore sales tax exemptions or reductions on grocery items sold locally to improve food affordability. * *(Cross reference with Governance chapter.)*
- d) Work with residents and local Tribes to identify and document key subsistence areas to consider in future planning efforts.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- e) Invest in cold storage and freight capacity to prevent shortages and spoilage during high-demand periods.
- f) Support and expand on the work Ketchikan Agricultural Producers Association (KAPA) is doing to develop shared-use commercial kitchens and food processing spaces for small-scale producers and value-added businesses.
- g) Encourage coordination of a centralized food donation and redistribution network in partnership with nonprofits, schools, and Tribal organizations.
- h) Collaborate with the Food Bank of Alaska and local grocers to expand purchasing power for low-income households.
- i) Develop public outreach campaigns and create a “Food Access Map” to help residents locate available resources and food programs.
- j) Develop partnerships with schools, Tribes, nonprofits, and/or the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service to offer food preparation and preservation classes, with a focus on health and cultural foods.
- k) Support educational and intergenerational programs that promote subsistence harvesting skills and food preservation methods.

Strategy 6: Continue support for local nonprofit, arts, community services, and cultural activities and initiatives. *(Cross reference with Health and Wellness and Education and Culture chapters.)*

Potential Borough-led Actions:

- a) Continue support for funding grants and technical assistance for nonprofit organizations to strengthen their financial sustainability and local hiring capacity to ensure continued provision of critical community services.
- b) Promote volunteerism and civic engagement through nonprofit events and programs, strengthening community ties while supporting organizational capacity.

Potential Partner-led Actions:

- c) Support local activities and cultural events that target community participation.
- d) Expand year-round programming that draws both residents and visitors, helping stabilize the economy outside of peak tourism months.
- e) Encourage collaboration between nonprofits and local businesses (e.g., restaurants, retail, hospitality) to maximize the “multiplier effect” of event participation on the local economy.
- f) Track and report economic impacts of local nonprofit programming and events as part of the community’s broader economic development monitoring.





HEALTH AND WELLNESS



Health and Wellness Themes

Affordability of basic needs contributes to community health and well-being.

Ketchikan residents are facing increased cost-of-living that directly impacts their physical and mental health. According to the 2025 Community Health Need Assessment (CHNA), the average Borough household budget is roughly \$7,000 per month, nearly double the state average of \$4,300, and housing and food make up nearly half of that total. Over 60 percent of 2025 Community Survey participants cited housing and food affordability as significant barriers to living well in the Borough. These pressures correlate with increased mental health strain, as families are forced to make difficult trade-offs around essentials like housing, childcare, food, transportation, and healthcare. Local providers emphasized that many residents earn too much to qualify for assistance but not enough to afford basic needs. Partners in the community roundtables shared that financial stress may also contribute to elevated rates of anxiety, depression, and substance misuse across the region.



Community connectivity programs support mental health.

Partners like Ketchikan Wellness Coalition, PeaceHealth, Ketchikan Indian Community, Resilient Youth & Community, Community Connections, and others have all invested in programming to find solutions through community connectivity. Youth in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough are experiencing serious mental health challenges. According to the 2024 Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 41 percent of Ketchikan High School students and nearly 55 percent of Revilla students reported experiencing a major depressive episode in the past year. In the same period, 17 percent of Ketchikan students and 21 percent of Revilla students reported attempting suicide. Adults in the area also experience high levels of distress, compounded by economic strain and a lack of affordable care. These challenges are also impacting drug and substance abuse. Nonprofit arts and cultural programs also provide safe spaces for connection, creativity, and mental health support, giving youth and adults constructive outlets.



Indoor recreation and activities support physical and mental health.

In Ketchikan’s climate, indoor spaces like the Ketchikan Public Library, the Gateway Recreation Center, and others are important for staying active, reducing isolation, and supporting emotional wellness. Across all community inputs, residents repeatedly called for expanding the Gateway Recreation Center, a current strategy in the Borough’s 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. Of students who took the 2025 Youth Survey, 80 percent say Ketchikan is missing more indoor recreational space. Comments at the February 2025 Open House emphasized the need for expanded recreation center space, indoor playgrounds, and after-school programming linked to wellness. Health service providers at the 2025 April Partner Discussions suggested more holistic behavioral health interventions are needed, and that indoor facilities could support mental health and community connectivity during winter months.



Health and Wellness Goals

| Goal A | Goal B | Goal C |
|--|---|--|
| Promote community well-being by improving access to health, housing, and support services. | Support prevention, recovery, and community resilience through coordinated behavioral health and substance misuse response. | Support planning and investment decisions that improve access to healthy environments, recreational amenities, and active transportation options across the borough. |

Health and Wellness Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- ⚡ Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- * Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2009: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Strategy 1: Consider access to housing, childcare, food, and health care as essential components of community health. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Support and enhance high quality K-12 education programs by partnering with other education institutions and organizations.
- b) Review existing tax policies. Evaluate potential tax strategies that support long-term community affordability and reduce burdens on working families, while still funding public needs. *(Cross reference with Economic Development and Governance chapters.)* *
- c) Implement targeted housing strategies such as zoning flexibility, incentives for long-term rentals, and support for ADA-accessible and age-in-place housing. *(Cross reference with Housing chapter.)*
- d) Collaborate with employers, early childhood providers, and nonprofits to increase access to affordable, reliable childcare.
- e) Collaborate with educational institutions and healthcare providers to create workforce development programs aimed at training and retaining healthcare professionals, addressing the shortage of providers in the region. *(Cross reference with Economic Development chapter.)*
- f) Collaborate with community partners to establish a food security plan and local food systems plan.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- g) Strengthen food security and local food systems by supporting development of community gardens and considering sales tax exemptions for grocery items. *(Cross reference with Economic Development chapter.)*
- h) Support efforts to create new housing and food assistance programs.
- i) Partner with local service providers to expand emergency, supportive, and transitional housing for residents experiencing homelessness.
- j) Explore collaborations with healthcare and nonprofit partners to increase access to opioid treatment programs, including treatment and recovery housing.
- k) Support wraparound services that integrate mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and housing assistance for at-risk populations.

Strategy 2: Promote physical and mental wellness across generations by strengthening support in schools, homes, and shared community spaces.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Explore ways the Borough can support social service efforts, within its existing statutory authority.
- b) Continuing collaboration through Borough community grants program with social service providers and school leaders to promote the Icelandic Prevention Model, emphasizing youth protective factors, family engagement, and community accountability.
- c) Continue efforts to expand access to safe, youth-centered spaces and invest in indoor recreation, arts, and social-emotional learning programs through Borough community grants program.
- d) Advocate for increased sustained funding to expand access to local behavioral health services and provider capacity.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- e) Develop community-based education, outreach, and prevention programs targeting substance abuse, including opioids, in partnership with healthcare providers and nonprofits.
- f) Collaborate with local health and wellness organizations to expand school and community based nutrition and physical activity programs in accordance with generally accepted medical standards.
- g) Advocate support for Ketchikan Indian Community to deliver culturally responsive behavioral health outreach in schools, community hubs, and remote neighborhoods.

Strategy 3: Develop inclusive indoor recreation and gathering spaces.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Plan for additional facility space at the Gateway Recreation Center to provide additional fitness, classroom, and emergency shelter that serve youth, families, and Elders year-round.
- b) Pursue state and federal grants to fund indoor recreation infrastructure, including the Ketchikan Public Library and museums, that is accessible, culturally inclusive, and climate resilient.
- c) Support the restoration of the historic buildings to ensure continued community access, public programming, and cultural preservation.

EDUCATION AND CULTURE



Education and Culture Themes

A strong, supported public education system builds stable communities.

Ketchikan’s public schools are central to the community’s long-term stability, workforce development, and quality of life. Families consistently identify access to strong K-12 education as a key factor in deciding whether to live and remain in the Borough. In the 2025 Community Survey, advocating for stable K-12 education funding was one of the top 10-year community priorities, with 88 percent of participants indicating it was important or very important. At the same time, public education is facing multiple pressures, including limited financial resources, gaps in early academic support, and a need for stronger partnerships between schools and the broader community.



Cultural identity and belonging are central to community well-being.



Cultural identity, connection to place, and a sense of belonging are foundational to community well-being. Many cultures call the Borough home, including a significant Filipino population. The community’s cultural foundation is rooted in the traditions of the original stewards of Southeast Alaska - the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples. Uplifting Indigenous values, language, and knowledge systems strengthens health, education, and quality of life for Alaska Native people while also enhancing connection, understanding, and shared purpose for the broader community. Residents have voiced a desire to see Indigenous names, languages, and histories reflected in public signage, parks, and planning.

Arts, history, and cultural expression strengthen community identity and quality of life.

Ketchikan’s identity is deeply shaped by its vibrant arts scene, rich history, and enduring cultural traditions. The community’s artists, performers, and cultural organizations help preserve local heritage while fostering creativity, belonging, and connection across generations. Public art, cultural events, and heritage programming not only celebrate Ketchikan’s diverse stories but also contribute to education, tourism, and the local economy. Supporting opportunities for artistic and cultural expression enhances quality of life and helps maintain Ketchikan’s reputation as a uniquely creative and culturally rich place to live and visit.



Education and Culture Goals

| Goal A | Goal B | Goal C |
|---|--|---|
| Strengthen education systems through sustained investment, support, and youth engagement. | Celebrate cultural identity and promote a connected, inclusive, and welcoming community. | Support access to arts, career technical training, and cultural opportunities, for the economic benefit of borough residents. |

Education and Culture Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- 🔥 Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- * Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2009: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Strategy 1: Ensure capital, planning, and advocacy efforts reflect desire for stable, high-quality K–12 education. 🔥

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Foster a positive and collaborative working relationship between the Borough and the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District (KGBSD) to align shared education goals, funding priorities, and community needs.
- b) Assess the current and projected funding needs of the Local Education Fund and evaluate the Borough’s capacity to support stable, long-term contributions through its budgeting, advocacy, and capital planning processes. *
- c) Advocate against actions by the State of Alaska to shift costs of its constitutional obligation to maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, advocating for consistent, multi-year K–12 education funding.
- d) Maintain and consider investments in school facilities through Borough capital planning and bonding efforts, ensuring learning environments remain safe, functional, and adaptable.
- e) Coordinate with the KGBSD on population and enrollment trends during the Borough's comprehensive planning and housing development processes.
- f) Support improvements to school facilities that address safety hazards, modernize outdated systems, and ensure ADA compliance to create healthy, accessible learning environments for all students.

Strategy 2: Empower youth to participate in local government and shape the future of their community.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Continue collaboration with the KGBSD to include attendance at a Borough Assembly or Planning Commission meeting as a graduation requirement or credit-eligible civic engagement activity.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- b) Partner with local schools, Tribes, and nonprofits to offer civic education opportunities such as tours, mock assemblies, or guest speakers from local governments.
- c) Support the development of internships or fellowship programs that places high school or college students in governmental organizations to learn about public service and local decision-making.
- d) Support opportunities for youth to provide input to government organizations and to elected officials or through partnership with the student council.

Strategy 3: Strengthen collaboration between the Borough, Tribes, Filipino community, and other cultural connections and service providers to support culturally rooted wellness, awareness, and education.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Strive to include Indigenous representatives and cultural knowledge holders in Borough planning and advisory processes related to health, recreation, and education.
- b) Collaborate with Tribal health entities and cultural leaders to support public health initiatives, including behavioral health outreach and prevention efforts led by appropriate providers.
- c) Promote land-based healing programs, cultural mentorship, and intergenerational learning opportunities through shared-use agreements, coordinated programming, and supporting the expansion of cultural spaces.
- d) Coordinate with the Ketchikan Indian Community Tribal Health Clinic as feasible to identify infrastructure or facility needs that could be supported through Borough advocacy, or capital planning coordination consistent with Borough authority.
- e) Support local healthcare workforce attraction and retention through housing access, shared recruitment efforts, and Borough-Tribal-Service Provider coordination on provider retention strategies.
- f) Support local nonprofits and organizations as key partners in advancing cultural identity, connectedness, and inclusion.

Potential Partner-led Actions

- g) Collaborate with Tribes and cultural organizations to incorporate Indigenous languages and histories into signage, maps, and public spaces.

Strategy 4: Support local arts and cultural programming as important components of our community. *(Cross reference with Land Use and Environment chapter, Strategy 5.)*

Potential Partner-led Actions

- a) Support partnerships such as the Ketchikan Area Arts and Humanities Council, Tribes, Ketchikan Wellness Coalition and the Filipino community, and nonprofits to expand public art, cultural events, and arts education.
- b) Encourage integration of arts and cultural learning into youth and adult education programs.
- c) Encourage partnerships with schools, museums, and other groups to develop curriculum or exhibits celebrating local culture.



GOVERNANCE



Governance

Understanding Ketchikan Gateway Borough's (KGB) fiscal position - its revenues, expenditures, and economic capacity - is essential for informed and effective comprehensive planning. Municipal budgets are the foundation of local government operations. Like many Alaska communities, Ketchikan faces ongoing fiscal uncertainty that requires careful planning and prioritization of resources. This chapter begins with an overview of KGB's revenues and expenses as well as some of the challenges contributing to an uncertain fiscal environment.

Overview

The Borough, incorporated in 1963, operates under an Assembly-Manager form of government, serving as the regional governing body for Revillagigedo Island and surrounding areas. KGB is governed by an elected seven-member Assembly and Mayor.

Local Government Structure and Services

As a Borough, KGB is responsible for public school education, regional land use planning and regulation, property assessment, and tax collection for both the Borough government and any cities within the Borough. KGB has also adopted areawide economic development powers and areawide parks and recreation powers. The Borough operates the airport, the bus systems, and the recreation and aquatic facilities.

Services are delivered on three levels:

- **Areawide:** Covers most core services including planning, tax collection, economic development, and public transit.
- **Non-areawide:** Includes services such as wastewater collection, treatment, and discharge, solid waste management, public library services, fireworks regulation, alcohol regulation
- **Service Area-Based:** Covers geographically-specific services like road maintenance, fire and emergency management, docks, and water utilities.

The Borough collaborates with the City of Ketchikan and the City of Saxman, both incorporated within its boundaries; KGB is governed by laws and ordinances established by the Assembly.

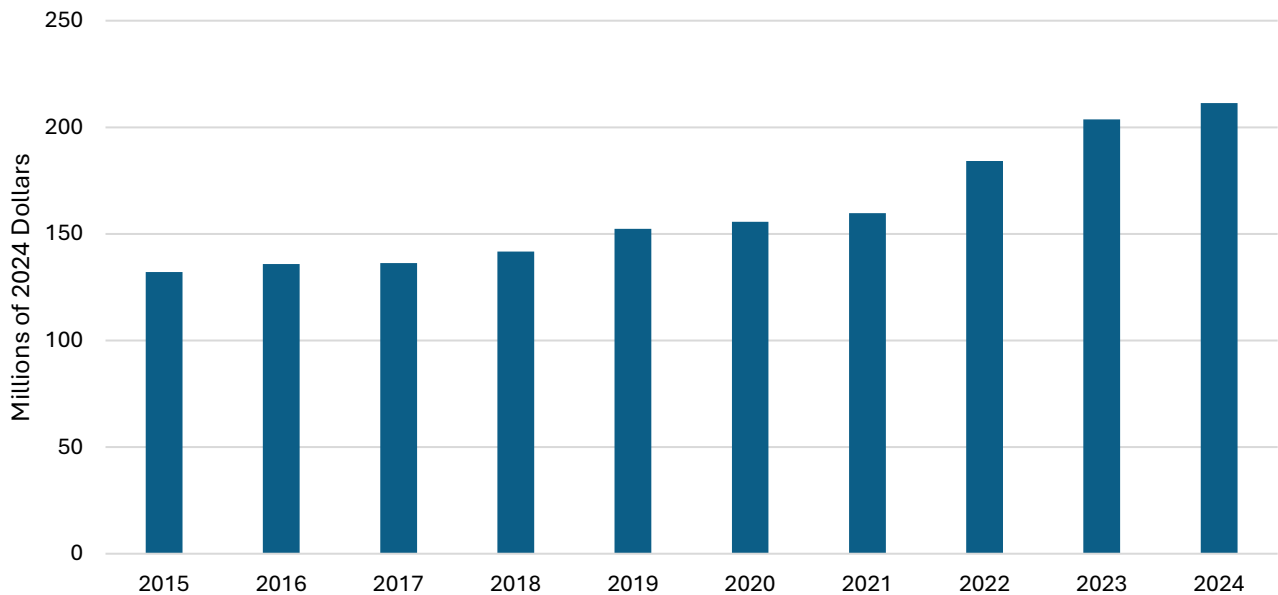
Fiscal Health and Financial Trends

Net Position and Budget Overview

The Borough's financial standing has steadily improved over the past decade. As of FY 2024, its net position reached a ten-year high of \$201.3 million (Figure 7). Between 2015 and 2024, revenues exceeded expenses in seven of 10 years, resulting in a cumulative surplus of \$40.7 million (Figure 8). This trend reflects conservative budgeting, steady tourism recovery, and strong sales and property tax performance.

The FY 2025 adopted budget authorizes \$72.7 million in total expenditures, with \$21.6 million allocated to the General Fund and \$9.2 million to the Local Education Fund.

Figure 7: Ketchikan Gateway Borough Community Net Position Over Time, 2015–2024 (Millions of 2024 dollars)



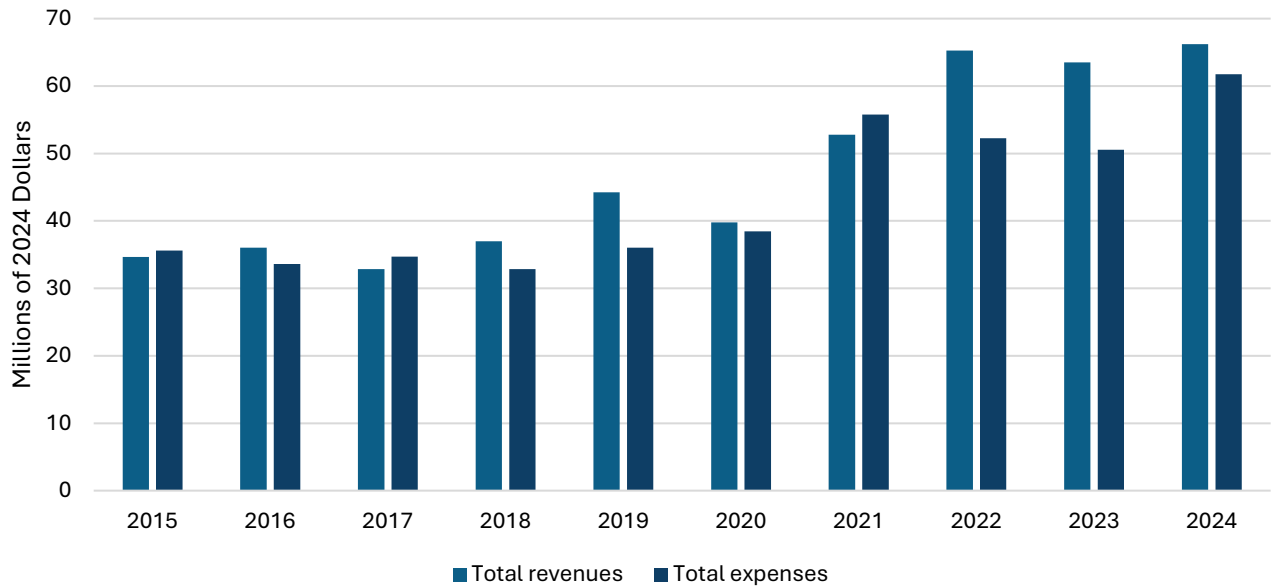
Source: Ketchikan Gateway Borough Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports (FY14 to FY 24), Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table 1.1.9 Implicit Price Deflators for Gross Domestic Product, and Northern Economics, Inc., analysis.

Key Borough revenue sources include:

- Sales Taxes: \$14.4 million in 2024, primarily from tourism-related activity.
- Property Taxes: \$12.4 million in 2024, levied mostly for education.
- Charges for Services: \$10.5 million from education services; \$5.6 million from airport operations.

Governmental activities make up approximately 85 percent of KGB's total revenue. Tourism plays an essential role, as the cruise industry contributes significantly to sales tax and passenger fee revenues. Charges for services and periodic grants also supplement revenue.

Figure 8: Ketchikan Gateway Borough Revenues and Expenses, 2015– 2024 (Millions of 2024 dollars)



Source: Ketchikan Gateway Borough Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports (FY14 to FY 24), Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table 1.1.9 Implicit Price Deflators for Gross Domestic Product, and Northern Economics, Inc., analysis.

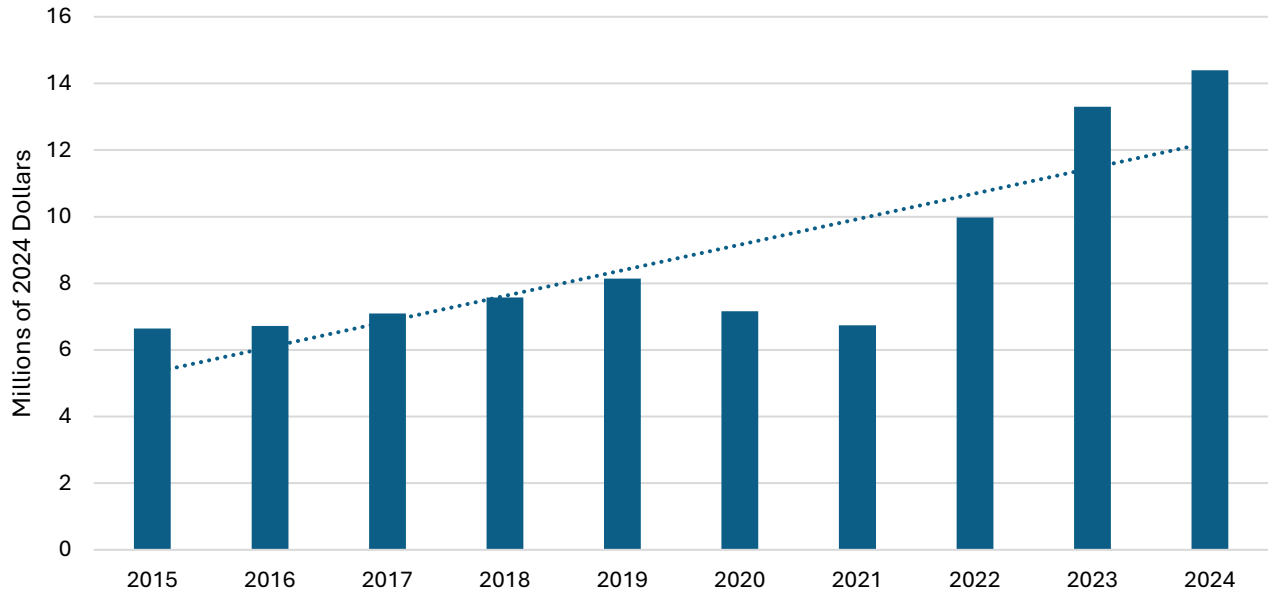
Taxation Structure

The Borough levies a 2.5 percent areawide sales tax (Figure 9). The City of Ketchikan adds a city sales tax that fluctuates by season (between 3 percent and 5.5 percent). The Borough collects both taxes and sends the city its share. The City of Saxman levies a 4 percent sales tax. Property taxes are set at 4.85 mills (as of June 2025) and dedicated entirely to the Local Education Fund. An increase in property assessments in 2024 allowed the mill rate to decrease from 5.2 to 4.75 without reducing revenue.

The City of Ketchikan collects 5.5 percent tax on residential rents, capped at the first \$1,000 of rent.

Transient Occupancy Tax and the State’s Commercial Passenger Vessel (CPV) tax provide additional tourism-based revenues. CPV funds are restricted to harbor, safety, and cruise-related improvements.

Figure 9: Ketchikan Gateway Borough Sales Tax Revenues 2015 – 2024 (Millions of 2024 dollars)



Source: Source: Ketchikan Gateway Borough Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports (FY14 to FY 24), Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table 1.1.9 Implicit Price Deflators for Gross Domestic Product, and Northern Economics, Inc., analysis.

Governance Themes

Strong financial management practices provide a foundation for stability.

The Borough has maintained stable fiscal performance through financial management, long-range forecasting, and internal controls. These practices have enabled the Borough to deliver services, manage reserves, and respond to changing economic conditions. Continued emphasis on proactive capital planning and intergovernmental coordination will continue sustaining this foundation as the Borough addresses future infrastructure and service needs, positioning the Borough to weather economic fluctuations.



Tourism-driven revenues create both opportunity and risk.

Tourism, particularly cruise ship visitation, generates significant local revenue and underpins many Borough services. However, the Borough’s fiscal health remains vulnerable to seasonal shifts and external conditions that affect visitor numbers. Strategic financial planning should account for this volatility by building flexible reserves, exploring revenue diversification, and leveraging strong tourism years to fund long-term investments.

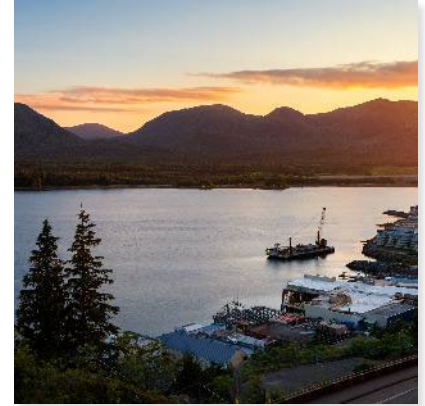
Infrastructure and service demands are growing.

Reliable public infrastructure and essential services form the backbone of the Borough’s quality of life and economic vitality. As systems age and the population shifts, including a growing senior population, service costs are increasing and the tax base is affected through exemptions. These pressures require thoughtful prioritization of capital and operational spending. By adapting service delivery models, pursuing cost-saving innovations, and planning proactively for demographic change, the Borough can maintain service levels and strengthen long-term fiscal sustainability.



External funding and partnerships are critical for fiscal resilience.

The Borough’s ability to leverage state and federal funding and build effective public-private partnerships strengthens its capacity to invest in infrastructure and community services. While reliance on sales and property taxes limits flexibility, particularly as economic and demographic shifts affect these sources, expanding access to grants and outside resources can help meet community needs without increasing the tax burden on residents. Long-term fiscal resilience will depend on continuing to diversify revenue tools, cultivate strategic partnerships, and align investments with shared community priorities.



Governance Goals

| Goal A | Goal B | Goal C |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Maintain a stable and resilient fiscal foundation. | Build transparent, inclusive, and collaborative governance. | Strengthen government capacity. |

Governance Strategies and Actions

Icon Key:

- 🔴 Priority: Emerging priority for implementation
- ✂️ Capital: An action that includes a potential capital project
- ✳️ Code: An action that recommends a specific code revision
- ◆ 2009: A strategy adapted from/carried over from the 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Strategy 1: Enhance government transparency and community engagement. 🔴

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Provide a transparent budget that shows revenues, expenditures, and major capital projects in plain language.
- b) Provide opportunities for the public to participate in the development of key projects and programs.
- c) Explore establishing a citizen financial advisory group to provide feedback on tax and investment strategies.

Strategy 2: Strengthen intergovernmental collaboration. ⚡

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Explore opportunities to open community dialogue about potential consolidation of City and Borough governments or services, including learning from models in other Alaska communities and assessing possible benefits and challenges, including gathering data and evaluating costs.
- b) Pursue joint grant applications for infrastructure or service improvements, especially in underserved or high-need areas.
- c) Update and expand service agreements or MOUs where overlapping jurisdiction or coordination is needed (e.g., road maintenance, solid waste, emergency services).

Strategy 3: Strive for fiscal resilience through long-range planning.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Strive to build and maintain a five-year financial forecast model that includes various growth, decline, and inflation scenarios.
- b) Update the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) annually based on long-range demographic and economic projections.
- c) Support local government agencies in establishing policies for financial reserves and regular financial forecasting of revenues and expenditures.
- d) Expand use of performance-based budgeting to link spending to measurable outcomes in education, transportation, and public safety.
- e) Prioritize energy efficiency upgrades for Borough facilities and utilities, leveraging state or federal funding where possible. ✂

Strategy 4: Foster government workforce stability and capacity.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Analyze wage and benefit overview of Borough departments to address recruitment and retention gaps.
- b) Expand cross-training programs and professional development opportunities for Borough staff.
- c) Consider partnerships to develop internship and apprenticeship programs in collaboration with local schools, University of Alaska Southeast Ketchikan, and Tribal training initiatives.
- d) Develop a succession plan for key leadership and technical roles to ensure knowledge continuity.

Strategy 5: Promote long-term fiscal stability through equitable tax policy and strategic investment.

Potential Borough-led Actions

- a) Encourage partnerships that help eligible service providers pursue state and federal grant opportunities, particularly for infrastructure, housing, homelessness, and health initiatives.
- b) Continue updating Borough Strategic Plan and multi-year capital and operating plans with clear priorities and performance metrics for education, transportation, and utilities.
- c) Consider publishing an annual fiscal health report summarizing key trends in Borough revenues, expenditures, reserves, and debt service. Use dashboards or infographics to make information accessible to residents, including updates on major projects and funding sources.

ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT *TEMPLATE EXAMPLE*

For the 2035 Ketchikan Gateway Borough Comprehensive Plan

Ketchikan Gateway Borough Comprehensive Plan 2035

Reporting Year: [xxxx]

Executive Summary

This Annual Implementation Report provides Borough officials and the community with a yearly update on the status of implementing the 2035 Ketchikan Gateway Borough Comprehensive Plan.

{Highlight major accomplishments and challenges from the reporting year, summarizing significant projects completed, progress on key goals, and any obstacles faced in implementation.}

Implementation Progress by Chapter

This section provides an update on implementation progress for each chapter of the comprehensive plan.

Summary of Activities

Summary of Strategies and Actions: *[Can be populated after comprehensive plan adopted by assembly with the strategies and actions from the plan that will be Borough led.]*

Strategy Implementation Status

| Focus Area/Strategy/Action | Lead Agency | Status | Timeline | Notes |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---|
| [Example: Land Use: Update zoning code to encourage mixed-use development] | <i>[Planning Dept.]</i> | <i>[In Progress]</i> | <i>[2024–2025]</i> | <i>[Draft zoning revisions completed; awaiting Assembly adoption]</i> |
| [Example: Transportation: Expand public transit routes to underserved neighborhoods] | <i>[Transit Department]</i> | <i>[Completed]</i> | <i>[2025]</i> | <i>[Two new bus routes launched in June 2025, increasing transit coverage borough-wide]</i> |
| [Example: Public Utilities and Facilities: Upgrade water treatment plant capacity] | <i>[Public Utilities Dept.]</i> | <i>[In Progress]</i> | <i>[2025–2027]</i> | <i>[Engineering design completed; construction funding secured]</i> |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Community feedback highlight or photos: *[If applicable, include a notable community comment or achievements related to any of the activities (e.g. newspaper articles, notable public comments, etc.)]*

Data and Trends Update

EXAMPLE -Use Indicators that illustrate progress in strategies and actions.

| Indicator | 2024 (Baseline) | 2025 (Current) | Change | Trend | Notes |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------|------------------|---|
| Housing Units Permitted | 85 units | 102 units | +20% | ▲ Increasing | New infill zoning and utility incentives helped |
| Median Monthly Wage | \$4,800 | \$4,964 | +3.4% | → Stable | Growth in healthcare and maritime retail |
| Utility Connections | 47 hookups | 53 hookups | +13% | ▲ Increasing | South Tongass expansion contributing |
| Transit Ridership | 152,000 | 165,000 | +8.6% | ▲ Increasing | Improved marketing, new route to Ward Cove |
| Borough Population | 13,450 | 13,410 | -0.3% | ▼ Slight decline | Net out-migration exceeded births |

Stakeholder Engagement

Summarize the public outreach and stakeholder engagement efforts conducted during the reporting year, focusing on how the community and partners were involved in the plan's implementation. In this section, Borough staff could document any community meetings, advisory committee sessions, inter-agency partner meetings, surveys, or other engagement activities that supported plan implementation during the year. For each major event or initiative, note the date, participants, and key outcomes. For example:

- **[Month Day, Year] – Public Workshop on Land Use:** *[Held at ___; ___ number of attendees. Briefly describe topics covered and feedback gathered.]*
- **[Month Day, Year] – Stakeholder Meeting (Transportation Partners):** *[Key agencies/organizations involved. Discussed progress on transit improvements; outcomes included improved coordination or next steps identified.]*
- **[Month Day, Year] – Online Survey:** *[Description of survey focus (e.g. housing needs); number of responses; summary of findings or community sentiments.]*

Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly Ordinance

adopting the 2035 Ketchikan Gateway Borough Comprehensive Plan