



Ketchikan Gateway Borough 2035 Comprehensive Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Adopted
February 2, 2026

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 is a comprehensive plan?

A comprehensive plan is a combination of long-term goals and short-term strategies that guide decisions about land use, housing, public utilities and facilities, transportation, economic development, culture, wellness, education, and more. The plan provides a road map for implementation with clear priorities and action items. The Future Land Use Map in the comprehensive plan provides a blueprint that sets intent for how the community will accommodate change and meet resident needs through clearly defined future land use categories and objectives.

What is a zoning code?

Zoning code and the zoning map are local laws governing how land is used or developed, where and how buildings are sited, and other rules related to how a property functions. Zoning is the tool the Borough uses to achieve the intent set by the goals set in the Future Land Use Map component of the comprehensive plan.

Community Survey Highlights

<p>What do you value most about living in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough?</p> <p><i>Top 3 themes:</i></p>	<p>What is most challenging about living in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough?</p> <p><i>Top 3 themes:</i></p>	<p>If you were responsible for funding community priorities, which three priorities would you fund first?</p> <p><i>Top 3 themes:</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close to nature and wilderness • Clean air and water • Recreational opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing availability and affordability • Food costs and availability • Access to quality health care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase supply and accessibility of affordable housing • Advocate for stable K-12 education funding • Balance the needs of residents with the economic benefits of tourism

What is your **preferred level of growth*** for the Ketchikan Gateway Borough over the next 10 years?

**Growth is defined as a combination of increased population and number of jobs in the borough*

42% of participants would like to see moderate growth. Industries receiving the most support for growth are Healthcare, Marine Trades, Construction, and Education.



Our People and Our Economy Highlights

The Background Research and Data Analysis document (available in Appendix B) compiled information and analysis from a variety of data sources to analyze demographic and economic trends in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough. This data was important to consider in the development of the Comprehensive Plan.



2023 Population: Ketchikan Gateway Borough: **13,475** | Ketchikan City: **7,803**

Like other boroughs and census areas in Southeast Alaska, the population in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough is projected to decline approximately 20 percent from 2023 to 2050. Nearly 15 percent of the population identifies as Alaska Native/American Indian and nearly 10 percent identify as Filipino, comprising the two largest non-white racial/ethnicity groups in the Ketchikan community.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development and U.S. Census Bureau



Median household income: **\$86,370** | Poverty rate: **4.2 percent** | Unemployment rate: **3.4 percent**

Residents of the borough earn more per capita than Alaskan residents, but their median household income is slightly lower compared to other Alaskan residents due to Ketchikan households having fewer earners than the statewide average. It also reflects that more Ketchikan residents work in higher-paying seasonal jobs than the statewide average.. From 2013 to 2024, the borough often had higher rates of unemployment during the winter than Alaska as a whole and lower rates of unemployment during the summer, also due to the amount of seasonal jobs. Source: U.S. Census Bureau



2023-2024 School enrollment (PK-12): **2,095 students**

Enrollment peaked in the 2014–2015 school year at 2,474 students. Since then, enrollment has declined slowly, reaching its lowest in the past 10 years in the 2023–2024 school year. The KGBSD is forecasting substantial declines in enrollment between the 2023–2024 and 2028–2029 school years. Source: Ketchikan Gateway School District



KGB residents who fished on commercial permits in 2023: **188**
Pounds landed by KGB residents: **34.8 million lbs.**
Estimated gross earnings: **\$22.3 million**

The number of permit holders in 2023 is about 7 percent less than 2014. From 2014 to 2023, the percentage of permit holders who fished decreased from 69 percent to 58 percent. The total pounds landed in 2014 is slightly below the total pounds landed in 2023. Estimated gross earnings in 2023 were also similar to those in 2014.

Source: Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission



Ketchikan is the **second most visited destination in Alaska**, with 47 percent of visitors to the state making a stop here.

There was an estimated 1.5 million cruise ship passengers to Ketchikan in 2024, remaining about the same as the number of cruise ship passengers to Ketchikan in 2023..

Source: Alaska Travel Industry Association



Community



Rich History

Our Vision and Values



Cultural Diversity

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.



Natural Beauty



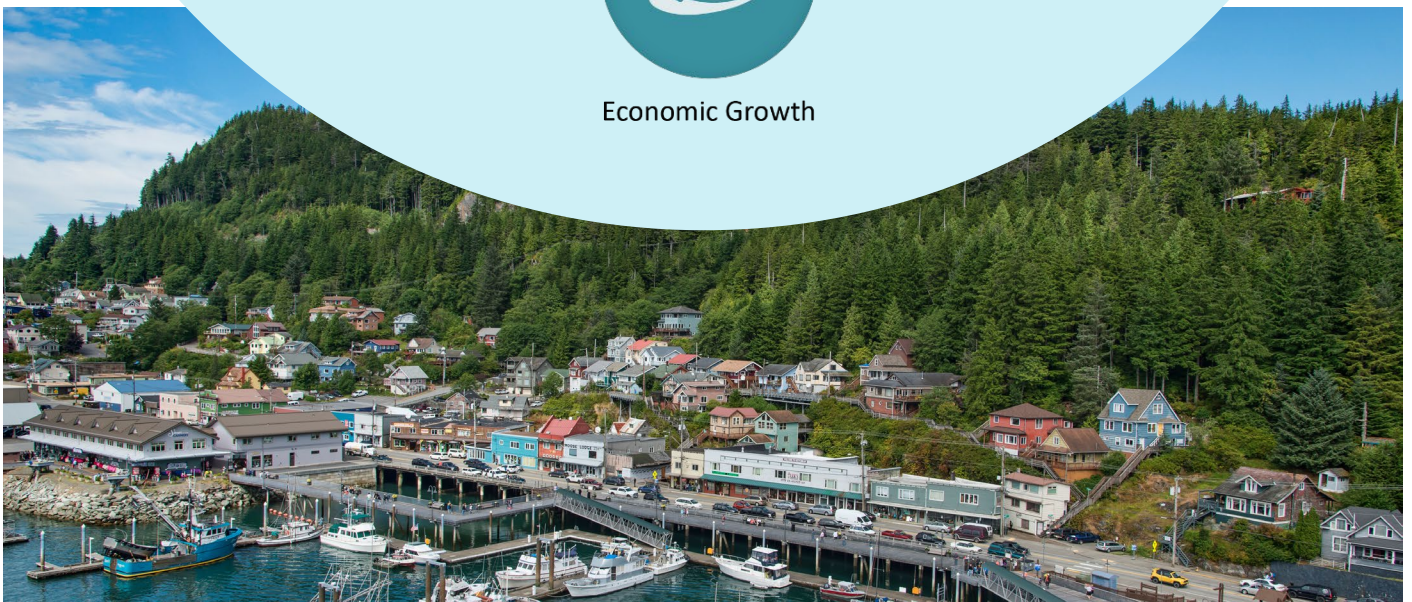
Innovation and Opportunity



Resilience and Safety



Economic Growth



Land Use and Environment



Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Strategic growth protects land and serves community needs.
- Consistent and modernized code revisions can unlock development goals.
- Diverse areas require place-based planning.
- Historic preservation strengthens community identity.
- Land use decisions reflect community values.
- Collaboration catalyzes effective implementation.

Goal A

Guide growth through coordinated, predictable, and place-based land use planning approaches.

Goal B

Plan for safe and adaptive use of land in the face of natural hazards and changing conditions.

Strategies

1. Implement a future land use map that guides future decisions about land use and growth.
2. Update and improve the Borough's zoning and subdivision code to better respond to existing and future issues and opportunities.
3. Reduce risks from landslides, flooding, erosion, and other natural hazards by improving maps, updating land use policies, and investing in resilient infrastructure.
4. Promote coordinated area and neighborhood planning to guide future development, infrastructure investment, and zoning updates in priority locations.
5. Preserve cultural, environmental, and recreational resources through land use planning and partnerships.

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

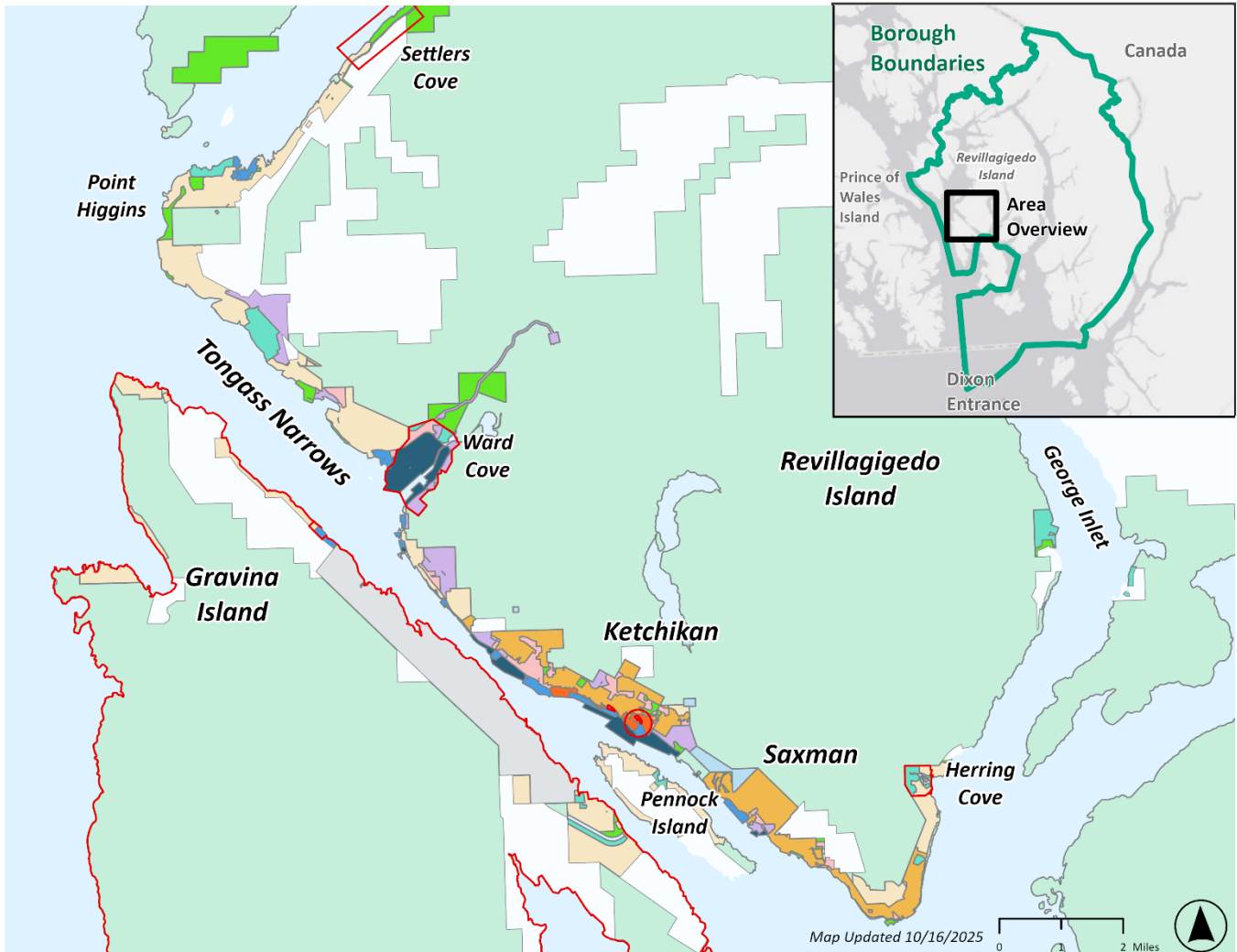
Land Use Category	Intended Land Uses	Application Areas	Use Examples
Commercial Waterfront	Waterfront dependent uses that combine light industrial, recreation, and commercial uses, balancing working waterfronts with community spaces. Residential uses are accessory.	Areas along harbors	Boat harbors, docks, 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.

Future 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 Kudzitee (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=1CgaYbgGaeojaYXZslmsWfSiW1VUuYKM&ll>

Transportation



Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Residents emphasize the need for resilient, hazard-mitigating infrastructure.
- Investment in marine transportation supports critical links between communities and regional economies.
- Strengthening airport infrastructure and access supports regional connectivity.
- Improvements to mobility during tourist season ensures access for residents.
- Multimodal and ADA-accessible transportation systems improve livability.
- Scaled and accessible public transit service keeps the community connected.
- Improving access to Gravina Island is essential for long-term development.
- Transportation access affects food security and cost of living.

Goal A

Build and maintain a safe, resilient, and accessible transportation network.

Goal B

Strengthen regional and inter-island connectivity.

Goal C

Enable growth and development through infrastructure investment.

Strategies

1. Advocate for hazard-resilient transportation infrastructure.
2. Strengthen marine and inter-island connectivity.
3. Continue to improve airport access and modernize infrastructure.
4. Expand public transit reach and efficiency.
5. Address accessibility and traffic congestion by designing safer, inclusive streets that serve residents of all ages and abilities.

Public Facilities and Services



Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Expanded utility infrastructure can unlock development opportunities and stabilize neighborhoods.
- Wastewater planning efforts are needed to modernize existing systems and expand capacity.
- Ongoing emergency management efforts are improving coordination and readiness.
- Investments in public facilities and harbors support transportation and commerce.
- New and diversified waste management solutions are in demand.

Goal A

Enable sustainable growth through strategic utility and infrastructure investment.

Goal B

Enhance regional connectivity and access through investment in harbors, ports, and public facilities.

Goal C

Maintain, improve, and modernize public facilities and infrastructure to support access, equity, and long-term community use.

Strategies

1. Support coordinated utility infrastructure expansion to enable new housing development.
2. Address challenges to wastewater capacity.
3. Modernize core infrastructure to improve resilience.
4. Enhance and maintain port and harbor infrastructure to support safe transportation, economic development, and community access.
5. Improve connectivity and development readiness on Gravina Island.
6. Equip emergency and public safety services to meet evolving community needs.
7. Promote cleaner communities through education, outreach, and responsible solid waste management.

Housing



Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Improving housing affordability and availability are key to unlocking economic growth.
- Workforce housing and options beyond single family homes are in high demand.
- Accessible housing enables community stability for residents of all ages and abilities.
- Opportunities exist for innovative partnerships and housing strategies.
- More information is needed about the effects of short-term rentals on housing supply.

Goal A

Increase the supply and diversity of housing to meet current and future needs.

Goal B

To support the development and preservation of housing options that are affordable and accessible to the needs of current and future Borough residents.

Goal C

Foster collaboration and innovation to expand housing solutions.

Strategies

1. Accelerate housing development through policies.
2. Partner with employers on workforce housing solutions.
3. Improve housing accessibility and safety through rehabilitation and infill development.
4. Leverage local partnerships and new models to deliver diverse housing solutions.

Economic Development



Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Economic diversification is necessary for Ketchikan’s long-term stability.
- Emerging workforce development programs are attempting to address skills gaps.
- Sustainable tourism strategies offer solutions that contribute to Ketchikan’s fiscal health and improve year-round livability.
- Commercial fishing remains core to Ketchikan’s identity.
- Strengthening local food systems can improve food security and economic resilience.
- Infrastructure improvements can spur growth and increase livability.

Goal A

Diversify and strengthen the local, year-round economy.

Goal B

To advance economic development efforts that are responsive to community values, support quality of life, and encourage community engagement.

Goal C

Invest in people and infrastructure to build and retain a skilled, inclusive, and future-ready workforce.

Strategies

1. Diversify the local economy to expand beyond tourism and address cost of living burdens.
2. Align tourism activities and management with community values and residents’ quality of life.
3. Build a skilled and resilient local workforce.
4. Strengthen the commercial fishing and mariculture economies.
5. Strengthen growth of local food systems to expand food security and help address high living costs.
6. Continue support for local nonprofit, arts, community services, and cultural activities and initiatives.

Health and Wellness



Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Affordability of basic needs contributes to community health and well-being.
- Community connectivity programs support mental health.
- Indoor recreation and activities support physical and mental health.

Goal A

Promote community well-being by improving access to health, housing, and support services.

Goal B

Support prevention, recovery, and community resilience through coordinated behavioral health and substance misuse response.

Goal C

Support planning and investment decisions that improve access to healthy environments, recreational amenities, and active transportation options across the borough.

Strategies

1. Consider access to housing, childcare, food, and health care as essential components of community health.
2. Promote physical and mental wellness across generations by strengthening support in schools, homes, and shared community spaces.
3. Develop inclusive indoor recreation and gathering spaces.

Education and Culture



Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- A strong, supported public education system builds stable communities.
- Cultural identity and belonging are central to community well-being.
- Arts, history, and cultural expression strengthen community identity and quality of life.

Goal A

Strengthen education systems through sustained investment, support, and youth engagement.

Goal B

Celebrate cultural identity and promote a connected, inclusive, and welcoming community.

Goal C

Support access to arts, career technical training, and cultural opportunities, for the economic benefit of borough residents.

Strategies

1. Ensure capital, planning, and advocacy efforts reflect desire for stable, high-quality K–12 education.
2. Empower youth to participate in local government and shape the future of their community.
3. Strengthen collaboration between the Borough, Tribes, Filipino community, and other cultural connections and service providers to support culturally rooted wellness, awareness, and education.
4. Support local arts and cultural programming as important components of our community.

Governance



Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Strong financial management practices provide a foundation for stability.
- Tourism-driven revenues create both opportunity and risk.
- Infrastructure and service demands are growing.
- External funding and partnerships are critical for fiscal resilience.

Goal A

Maintain a stable and resilient fiscal foundation.

Goal B

Build transparent, inclusive, and collaborative governance.

Goal C

Strengthen government capacity.

Strategies

1. Enhance government transparency and community engagement.
2. Strengthen intergovernmental collaboration
3. Strive for fiscal resilience through long-range planning.
4. Foster government workforce stability and capacity.
5. Promote long-term fiscal stability through equitable tax policy and strategic investment.