

3.0 BIG LAKE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE (2009)

3.1 Overall Purpose

The purpose of the 2009 plan was to update the 1996 Plan and protect Big Lake's special character as a place to live and visit while accepting and even encouraging growth. Key components of the updated plan included a broad, long-term vision for Big Lake's future; policies to guide land use, growth, and development; priorities to improve public facilities and services; and policies to promote economic development, retain community character and protect the natural environment.

3.1.1 Local Land Use

The MSB is recognized by the State of Alaska as a second class borough. One of the requirements from the state to second class boroughs is to provide for planning, platting, and land use regulations on an area-wide basis. The cities of Palmer, Houston, and Wasilla have been delegated their own planning powers. However, the remainder of the borough, including Big Lake, is governed through the MSB Comprehensive Plan, which is "A compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social, and economic development, both private and public, of the borough". The Comprehensive Plan included a statement of policies, goals and standards; a land use plan; a community facilities plan; and a transportation plan. Some of the most common implementation methods for the borough's comprehensive plan are land use regulations (zoning), the CIP, and subdivision regulations.

Currently, the borough has zoning regulations which are generally applicable on an areawide basis (outside of the Palmer, Houston, and Wasilla), except that some of the communities have chosen to adopt more stringent regulations (Special Use Districts, or SPUD's), specific to their community comprehensive plans and consistent with their community council boundaries. Big Lake has adopted their own community comprehensive plan, and has contemplated a SPUD a couple of times in the past, but the SPUD has not passed. Currently, the borough-wide zoning regulations apply in Big Lake, which require a conditional use permit for certain potentially objectionable uses, such as gravel pits, towers, alcohol or marijuana facilities, race tracks, adult businesses, and junk yards, to name a few. In addition, setback requirements, permits for driveway and utility encroachments into rights-of-way, development in flood hazard areas, and other general regulations are applicable in most areas throughout the borough, including Big Lake.

3.1.2 Transportation and the Airport

As shown in Figure 7, the plan identified a spectrum of use areas for the Big Lake area from concentrated development, to dispersed development, to a system of connected conservation areas intended to protect water quality and other natural resources.⁴

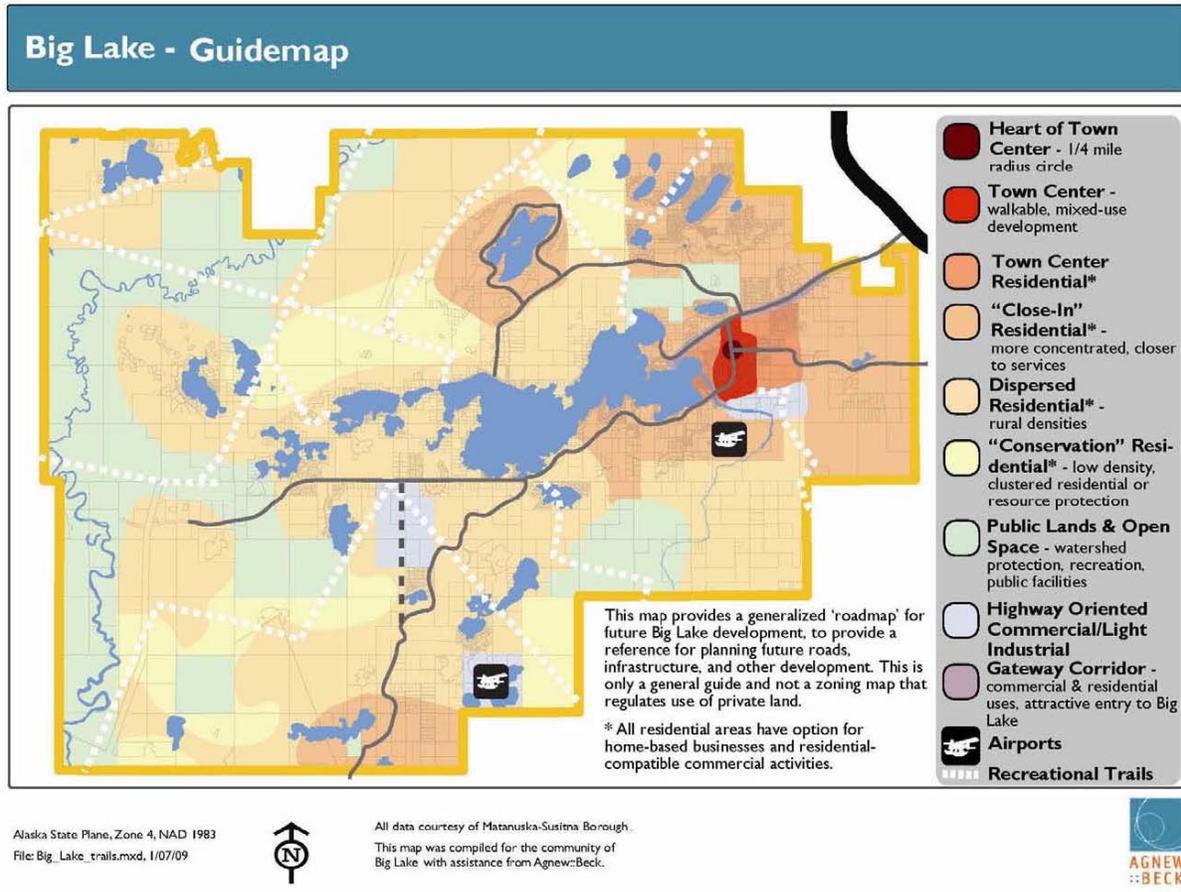
The Comprehensive Plan designated the area around the airport for Highway Oriented Commercial/Light Industrial land uses. According to the plan, “Unlike the town center, where the hope is to concentrate uses to invite walking, these areas are expected to be more traditional, auto-oriented commercial developments.”

One of the transportation goals of the Big Lake Comprehensive Plan update was to “Ensure and enhance the future of air transportation in the Big Lake area by protecting and improving the existing airport.” Five strategies were identified in the Comprehensive Plan to accomplish this goal:

- Strategy 1: Protect the existing Big Lake Airport by maintaining the approach zones in accordance with FAA guidelines. This can be accomplished by having the MSB acquire right-of-way at the east end of the runway for future expansion.
- Strategy 2: Control the placement and height of buildings within the approach zones of the airport.
- Strategy 3: Improve the airport by providing water and sewage systems when systems are available in the Big Lake area.
- Strategy 4: Expand the lease area at the Big Lake Airport to allow for further development.
- Strategy 5: Encourage the Alaska DOT&PF to clean up the existing "junk" aircraft and mow weeds so that additional auto parking is available.⁵
- Strategy 6: Encourage community support of the continued permitting process for a float plane and emergency service access in Fish Creek Park which provides access for float planes from Big Lake to the Big Lake Airport.

⁴ The Big Lake Airport is north of the location shown in the MSB graphic in Figure 7.

⁵ Note: Aircraft on lease lots are the responsibility of airport leaseholders.



Source: MSB Big Lake Comprehensive Plan (2009)

Figure 7. Big Lake Land Use Guidemap