

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **Dillingham Comprehensive Plan 2024: Evolution and Strategic Enhancements**

**Prepared By: Christopher Maines, Planning Director**

### **Introduction for Planning Commissioners**

As a Planning Commissioner, understanding both the content of our 2024 Comprehensive Plan and how it has evolved from previous iterations is critical to making informed decisions. This executive summary highlights the substantive updates and strategic shifts from the 2010 plan while providing context on emerging priorities that will shape Dillingham's future.

### **Historical Context and Evolution**

The 2024 Comprehensive Plan represents the latest chapter in Dillingham's ongoing planning history, which began with our first formal planning efforts in 1963 and includes significant updates in 1971, 1981, 1985, 1998, 2006, and 2010. Each iteration has responded to changing community needs, economic conditions, and regional dynamics.

The 2010 plan was developed during a period of economic uncertainty following spikes in energy costs, regional out-migration, and concerns about potential upstream mineral exploration. The 2024 update builds on accomplishments since 2010 while addressing new challenges that have emerged in the past decade, including:

- Recovery and stabilization of the fishing industry after the 2001 economic disaster declaration
- Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2023) on city operations and community life
- Intensifying housing shortages affecting workforce recruitment and community stability
- Climate change implications for infrastructure and subsistence resources
- Emerging opportunities in renewable energy and digital connectivity

## **Key Enhancements and Strategic Shifts**

### **1. Land Use & Housing: From General Vision to Specific Housing Crisis Response**

**Evolution:** While the 2010 plan identified housing diversity as important, the 2024 plan recognizes housing as a critical infrastructure crisis requiring immediate, coordinated action.

#### **New Approaches:**

- Quantifies specific housing need (232 units over next decade) based on rigorous analysis
- Proposes a collaborative housing coalition to coordinate resources and implementation
- Addresses workforce housing explicitly as an economic development imperative
- Incorporates findings from the 2023 Dillingham Housing Needs & Strategies report
- Links housing development to downtown revitalization through higher-density, mixed-use strategies

### **2. Transportation: From Separate Systems to Integrated Network**

**Evolution:** The 2024 plan shifts from treating roads, trails, and transit as separate systems to an integrated transportation network approach.

#### **New Approaches:**

- Incorporates findings from the 2020 Curyung Tribal Transportation Safety Plan
- Emphasizes coordination between City, Tribe, and DOT&PF through formalized protocols
- Prioritizes maintenance investments alongside new construction
- Addresses emerging concerns around pedestrian safety, ATV usage, and winter mobility
- Proposes a comprehensive Trails Master Plan to resolve longstanding access issues

### **3. Waterfront: From Conceptual Vision to Phased Implementation**

**Evolution:** The 2024 plan transforms conceptual waterfront goals from 2010 into a detailed, phased implementation strategy.

#### **New Approaches:**

- Incorporates the 2020 Dillingham Waterfront Strategic Plan findings
- Organizes improvements into defined Phase 1 and Phase 2 capital projects
- Addresses coastal erosion threats to critical infrastructure more explicitly
- Balances industrial/commercial needs with public access and recreation
- Strengthens coordination between waterfront planning and downtown revitalization

#### **4. Economic Development: From Recovery to Diversification**

**Evolution:** While the 2010 plan focused on economic recovery after fisheries decline, the 2024 plan emphasizes diversification and sustainability.

##### **New Approaches:**

- Acknowledges the rebounding commercial fishery while seeking to increase local value capture
- Recognizes tourism potential more explicitly, including partnership opportunities with lodges
- Emphasizes workforce development aligned with regional needs and opportunities
- Incorporates digital connectivity (broadband) as an economic development foundation
- Addresses local food production and energy independence as economic resilience strategies

#### **5. Energy: From Concept to Implementation**

**Evolution:** The 2024 plan transforms energy concepts from 2010 into actionable implementation strategies aligned with available funding and technology advances.

##### **New Approaches:**

- Incorporates momentum from the Nuyakuk Hydroelectric Project feasibility studies
- Reflects technological advances in renewable energy since 2010
- Proposes regional energy collaboration through the Bristol Bay initiative
- Emphasizes energy efficiency in city facilities as a budget stabilization strategy
- Links energy strategies more directly to housing affordability and economic development

#### **6. Community Wellness & Education: From Services to Systems**

**Evolution:** The 2024 plan shifts from focusing on individual services to strengthening interconnected community systems.

##### **New Approaches:**

- Incorporates findings from the 2023 Community Perspectives on Interpersonal Violence report
- Recognizes the establishment of the Bristol Bay Teaching & Learning Collaborative
- Elevates childcare access as both a wellness and economic development priority
- Addresses homelessness and mental health services more comprehensively
- Strengthens integration between school system and workforce development

## 7. Public Facilities & Services: From Maintenance to Asset Management

**Evolution:** The 2024 plan shifts from reactive maintenance to proactive asset management across all city systems.

### New Approaches:

- Incorporates findings from the 2022 City Services Assessment
- Addresses critical staff recruitment and retention challenges
- Proposes comprehensive parks and recreation planning rather than piecemeal facility development
- Prioritizes technological upgrades for improved operations (GIS, asset management software)
- Addresses wastewater treatment lagoon vulnerabilities from coastal erosion

### Implementation Innovations

The 2024 plan introduces several implementation enhancements:

1. **Integrated digital systems:** Emphasizes GIS and asset management software to track infrastructure and guide decisions
2. **Revenue diversification:** Expands strategies to stabilize city finances beyond traditional sources
3. **Public-private partnerships:** Identifies more opportunities for collaborative implementation
4. **Performance measurement:** Establishes clearer metrics to evaluate progress
5. **Capacity building:** Addresses staffing and organizational development more explicitly

### Accomplishments to Build Upon

The 2024 plan acknowledges key accomplishments since 2010 that create momentum:

- Downtown Streets Rehabilitation project completion
- Lake Road Fire Hall addition
- Waterfront development progress and strategic planning
- Improved community outreach and engagement tools
- Enhanced intergovernmental coordination with tribal entities
- Educational partnerships through the Bristol Bay Region Career and Technical Education Program
- Progress on asset management and financial systems

## Emerging Challenges Requiring Attention

The plan identifies newly emerging challenges that will require Planning Commission focus:

1. **Climate resilience:** Increasing impacts of climate change on infrastructure and natural systems
2. **Critical infrastructure vulnerabilities:** Particularly erosion threats to the wastewater lagoon
3. **Housing crisis impact:** Effects on workforce recruitment and community stability
4. **Municipal finance sustainability:** Need for diversified revenue to maintain service levels
5. **Regional coordination:** Increasing need for solutions that cross jurisdictional boundaries

## Planning Commission's Enhanced Role

The 2024 plan envisions an expanded role for the Planning Commission in implementation:

- Annual review of plan implementation with structured reporting to City Council
- Coordination with regional planning efforts through BBNA and other entities
- Integration of plan priorities into land use decisions and capital improvement planning
- Public education about the comprehensive plan's role in community development
- Monitoring of key indicators to assess progress toward goals

## Conclusion

The 2024 Comprehensive Plan represents not merely an update but a substantive evolution in Dillingham's approach to planning. It builds on past accomplishments while addressing emerging challenges through more integrated strategies, clearer implementation pathways, and stronger coordination mechanisms. As a Planning Commissioner, your role in translating this plan from vision to reality is more important than ever as Dillingham navigates the complex challenges and opportunities of the next decade.