



City of Whittier

# **WATERFRONT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**2025-07-28 PUBLIC REVIEW PLAN**

JULY 2025



# **Waterfront and Economic Development Plan**

**Whittier, Alaska**

**JULY 2025**

Prepared for:

The City of Whittier



Prepared by:

Corvus Design



in collaboration with:

PND Engineers

Northern Economics

ECI Alaska

SolsticeAK

DRAFT

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## CLIENT

The City of Whittier

## CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Daniel Blair – Mayor, Peter Denmark – Vice Mayor, Dave Dickason, Renner Macal tao, David Pinquoch, Victor Shen, Tom Wagner

## CITY MANAGER

Jackie C. Wilde

## PROJECT MANAGER

David Borg, Harbormaster

## PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Owen Ala, Heather Brazelton, Aubrey Jurgerson, Meagan Zimpelmann, Charlie Howard, Mike Adams, Tim Alderson

## PORTS AND HARBORS COMMISSION

Nick Olzenak (Chair), Trey Hill (Vice-Chair), Ross Carlson, Dave Goldstein, Jamie Loan, Dori Yelverton

## THANK YOU

To Whittier's citizens, businesses, stakeholders, and all who participated in the development of this master planning document. We would also like to thank the past elected officials and managers who held positions during the development of this plan.

## PLANNING TEAM

Corvus Design, Inc.; PND Engineers, Inc.; Northern Economics; ECI; SolsticeAK

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**Balancing growth, access,  
environment, and resilience.**







# PROJECT BACKGROUND

**The City of Whittier is completing a Waterfront and Economic Development Plan to articulate a community vision for Whittier's waterfront and address critical issues impacting the waterfront and the overall economic vitality of Whittier.**

Whittier, a unique community situated on Passage Canal within Prince William Sound and accessible primarily by the Anton Anderson Tunnel, is experiencing a growing tourism industry and is looking to improve economic development opportunities on its waterfront. Whittier's economic potential is constrained by limited developable land and a waterfront burdened by conflicting uses and underutilized assets. Increasing demands on the waterfront threatens the preservation of Whittier's remaining natural shoreline and the ecological integrity of Prince William Sound. Balancing economic development with environmental stewardship is especially crucial, given Whittier's role as a gateway to this pristine ecosystem.

The primary goal of the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan is to collaborate with the community and waterfront users to develop a vision that aligns with Whittier's character, environmental conditions, and regional context. This project aims to develop a strategic plan that addresses these challenges, fostering sustainable growth and ensuring a vibrant future for Whittier.

The Waterfront and Economic Development Plan will provide a balanced approach, encompassing waterfront planning and economic analysis, while also addressing community resilience against extreme weather events.

# PROJECT CONTEXT

Whittier, a community of strategic importance, is situated 65 road-miles south of Anchorage on the pristine shores of Passage Canal within Prince William Sound. Its unique accessibility, primarily through the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel shapes its development and connectivity. This isolation, coupled with its proximity to Anchorage (home to over half of Alaska's population) and the vast expanse of the Chugach National Forest (5.4 million acres), positions Whittier as a gateway to both urban access and wilderness adventure.

Historically, Whittier has served as a critical transportation hub. Its status as the closest year-round, ice-free port to Anchorage makes it a key location for marine freight, ferry service, and rail transport. This infrastructure, coupled with the influx of recreational boaters and cruise ship passengers, results in significant traffic and tourism. Annually, Whittier welcomes over 250,000 cruise ship passengers, 20,000 ferry passengers, 75,000 rail passengers, and sees over 240,000 vehicles passing through the tunnel, alongside 12,000 boat launches from the Small Boat Harbor. This intense activity highlights the need for effective waterfront management.

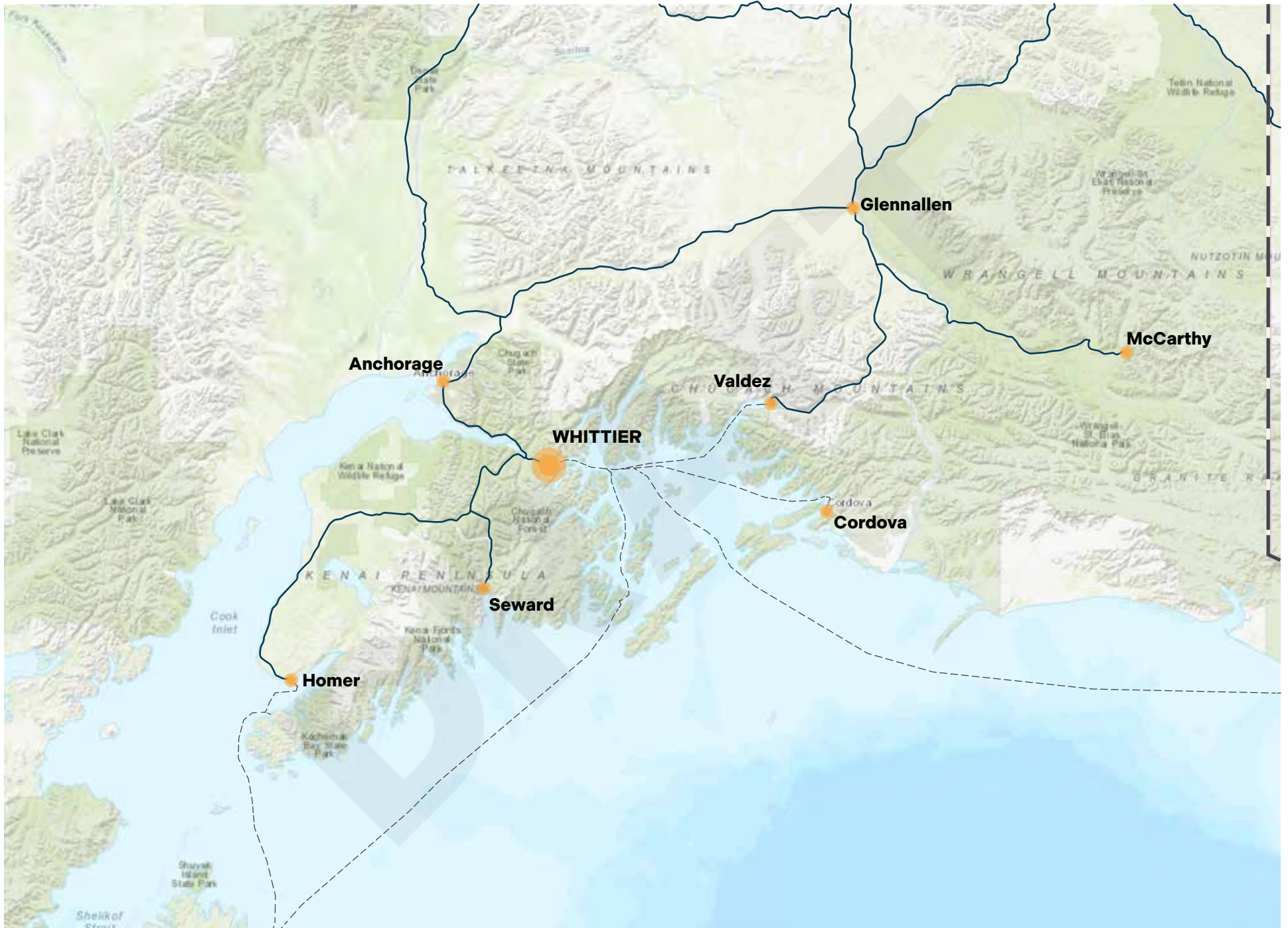
Recent developments have significantly altered Whittier's trajectory. The City of Whittier's acquisition of 58 acres at the Head of the Bay presents a pivotal opportunity for

expansion, though environmental constraints necessitate careful planning. This land, previously considered for a new boat harbor, launch facilities, and commercial activities, is central to Whittier's future development. Simultaneously, Ongoing negotiations with the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) for the purchase of master lease lands could redefine development possibilities, necessitating flexibility in planning.

Furthermore, the burgeoning cruise ship industry is transforming Whittier. The acquisition of the existing cruise ship dock by Holland America-Princess (HAP) in 2022 and the construction of a new cruise ship terminal through Glacier Creek Development, LLC at the Head of the Bay are poised to dramatically increase visitor numbers by an estimated 150,000 annually. These developments, along with the existing reliance on tourism for local businesses, charter fishing, and recreational activities, underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive Waterfront and Economic Development Plan.

Given Whittier's shoreline-centric layout and the pressure to balance economic growth with environmental preservation, the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan is crucial. It must address issues of congestion, conflicting land uses, and the protection of Prince William Sound's ecological integrity, ensuring sustainable development and a vibrant future for the community.





# PROJECT SCOPE

## PROJECT GOAL

The goal of this project is to assist the City of Whittier in developing a comprehensive Waterfront and Economic Development Plan that reflects the community's vision for its waterfront. The plan will focus on enhancing public access, expanding recreational opportunities, stimulating economic development, protecting tidelands, and maximizing the use of scarce City of Whittier-owned and leased land.

The project will conduct a preliminary review of Whittier's waterfront resources, challenges, and opportunities and define and delineate the specific boundaries of two distinct planning areas: the Waterfront Development Area and the Harbor Management Area.

## Waterfront Development Area

The Waterfront Development Area spans from the Head of the Bay to Smitty's Cove and includes all city-owned tidelands. This area will focus on economic and recreational expansion. This includes developing a pedestrian corridor linking the Head of the Bay to Smitty's Cove, evaluating water-dependent activities and mixed-use development strategies, prioritizing marine-related economic development and retail, and ensuring the protection and enhancement of Shakespeare Creek and natural beach area.

## Harbor Management Area

The Harbor Management Area encompasses the core harbor area, including Harbor Loop, Harborview, and the Harbor Triangle, and will address harbor congestion and infrastructure improvements, enhancing the functionality and user experience. This may include creating additional uplands, assessing existing harbor infrastructure for upgrades or replacement, developing strategies for managing the black bear presence, identifying potential uses for available lands, and optimizing space and improving harbor operations.

## CORE OBJECTIVES

### Economic Development and Expansion

Identify opportunities to stimulate economic development and promote a stable economy. Whittier's geography and land availability create unique constraints to economic growth. The Waterfront and Economic Development Plan will emphasize the optimal use of limited space.

### Access, Recreation, and Connections

It is essential to understand how Whittier residents and visitors recreate, how they use the waterfront, and what improvements are needed to optimize Whittier's recreational amenities. Development at the Head of the Bay, with the new cruise ship terminal, emphasizes the need for connectivity between the Head of the Bay and Smitty's Cove, serving as a pedestrian corridor for locals and visitors. Protecting and highlighting the natural beach area and fostering opportunities to interact with the landscape and waterfront are critical.

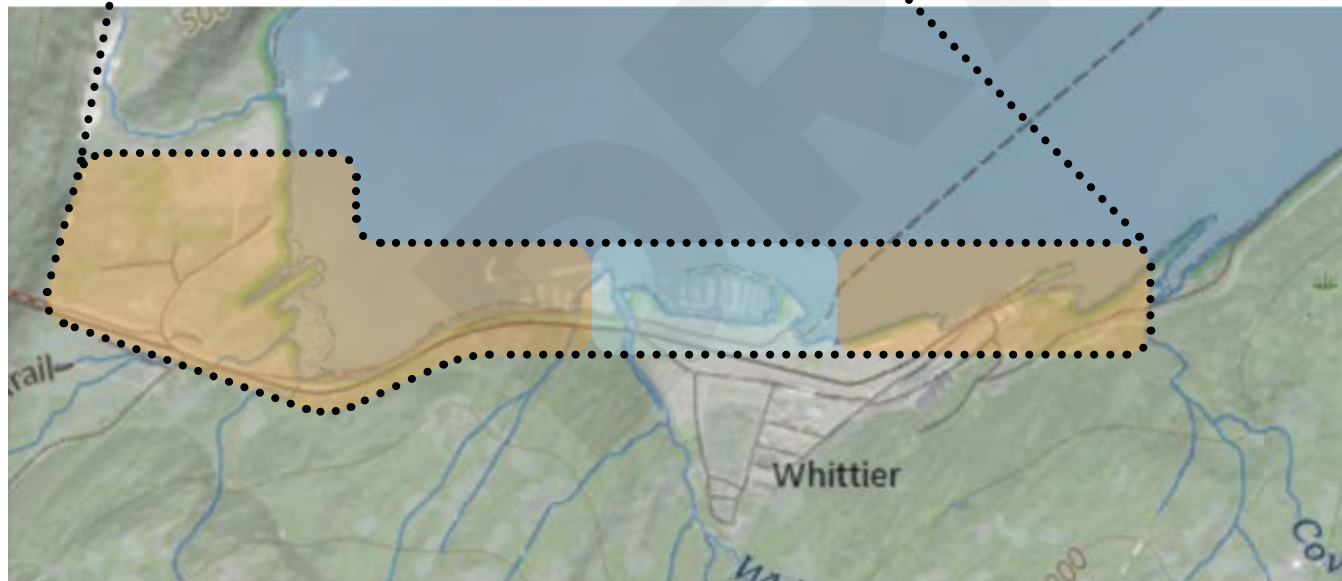
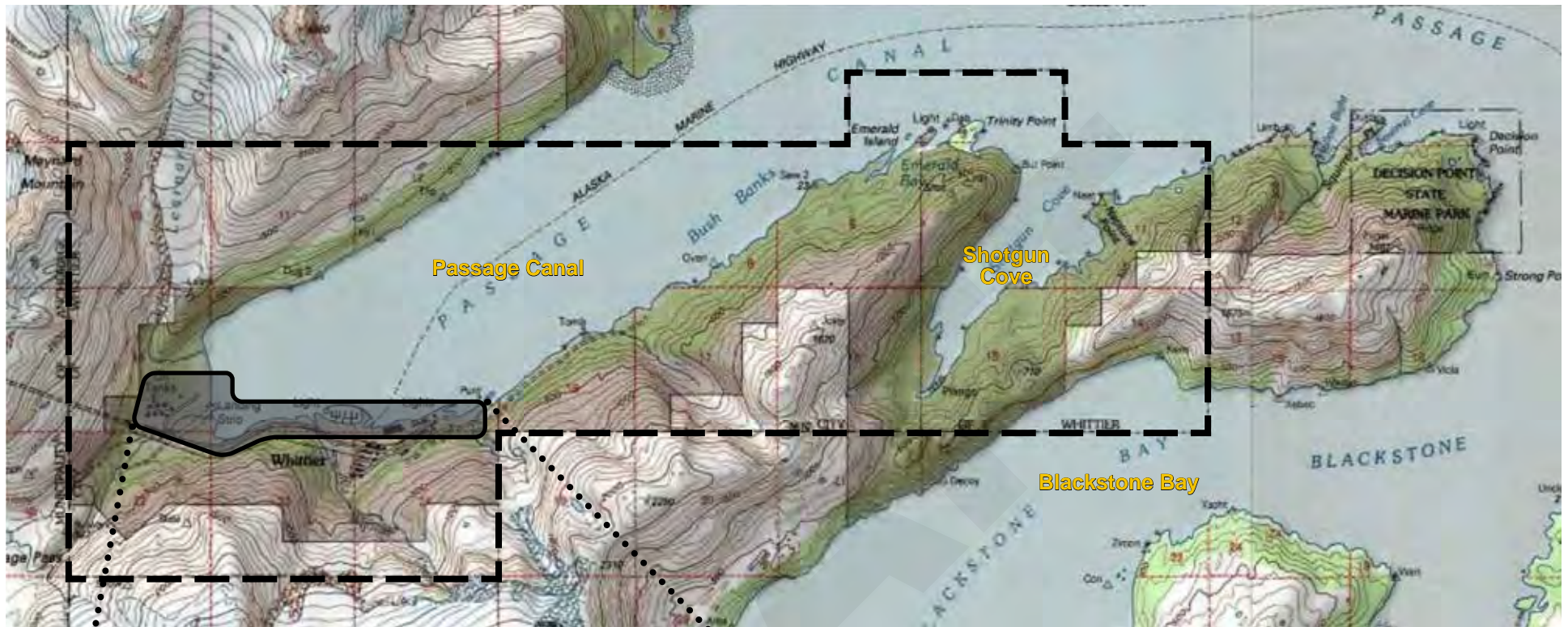
## Tideland Control and Protection

Due to the limitation of buildable land, there is increased pressure to develop the City of Whittier's tidelands. However, tidelands provide essential benefits for their ecological function and recreational opportunities. The Waterfront and Economic Development Plan will establish criteria to understand the critical value of the tidelands within any given area, balancing waterfront development and protection.

## Resilience and Extreme Weather

Focusing on community resilience and improving the ability to cope with extreme weather events is critical for Whittier's waterfront. These events significantly risk health and well-being, community infrastructure, subsistence lifestyles, valuable natural resources, and livelihoods. The Waterfront and Economic Development Plan must analyze climate change impacts and identify critical issues to develop logical and applicable solutions for Whittier.





#### Legend:

-  City of Whittier Boundary
-  Project Boundary
-  Waterfront Development Area
-  Harbor Management Area



**City-wide revenues total  
approximately \$6 million in 2024.**







# ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

**Northern Economics conducted an economic assessment summarizing Whittier's community profile, city revenue sources, key industries, and port and harbor operations. The city supplemented this assessment with information on its financial management practices, revenue generation strategies, and recent major changes.**

Detailed economic data is available in the Appendix. This summary extracts key points relevant to the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan and future waterfront planning. Whittier's 2024 revenues total approximately \$6 million, distributed across five self-sustaining funds: General, Harbor, DeLong Dock, Water and Sewer, and Cruise Passenger Vessel (CPV) Tax.

Notably, commercial lease revenues average 4.5% of assessed land value, significantly below the city's 10% ordinance. For comparison, Seward and Valdez utilize 8% and 10% lease rates respectively, adjusted regularly. This disparity suggests potential revenue enhancement opportunities for Whittier through lease rate adjustments.

# CITY OF WHITTIER REVENUE

## CITY-WIDE BUDGETED REVENUE

Total City-wide budgeted revenue averages approximately \$6 million in 2024. City of Whittier revenues include the:

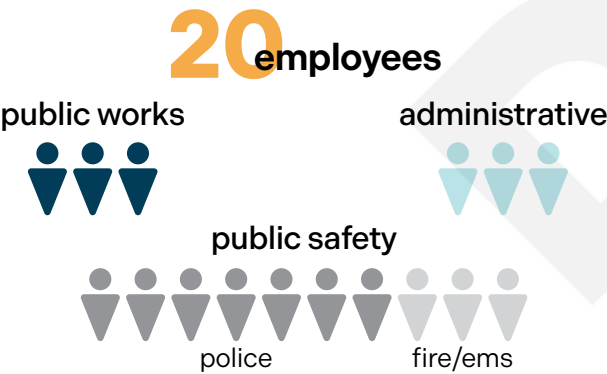
- General Revenue Fund
- Enterprise Funds (Harbor Revenue Fund, DeLong Dock Revenue Fund, Water and Sewer Revenue Fund)
- CPV Tax Revenue Fund

City-Wide Budgeted Revenue **~ \$6 million** in 2024  
Projected Revenue 2024-2026

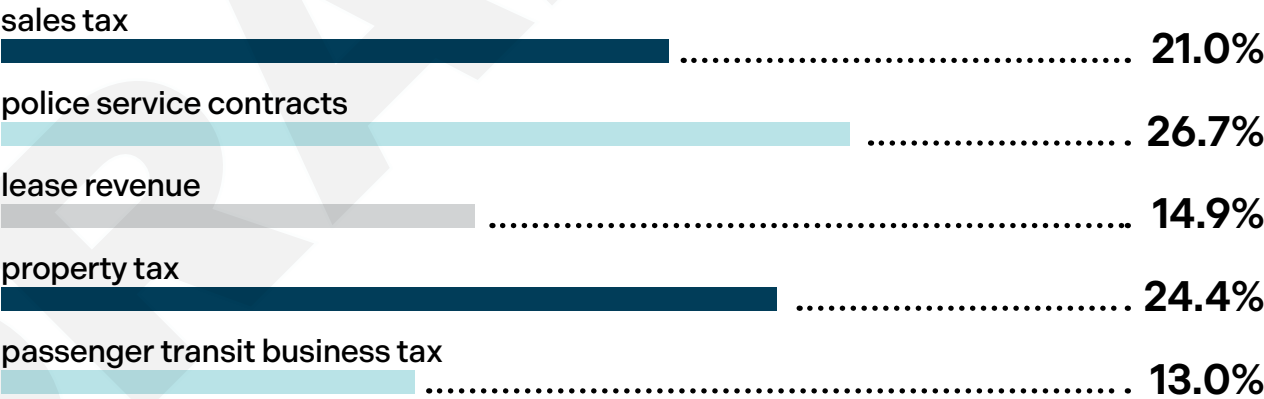
CITY-WIDE BUDGETED REVENUE	2024	2025	2026
General Revenue Fund	\$3,576,000	\$3,441,733	\$4,924,027
Harbor Revenue Fund	\$1,726,343	\$1,704,270	\$1,753,655
DeLong Dock Revenue Fund	\$269,000	\$160,000	\$163,000
Water and Sewer Revenue Fund	\$416,565	\$360,500	\$436,500
TOTAL	\$5,612,908	\$5,666,503	\$7,277,182

## GENERAL FUND

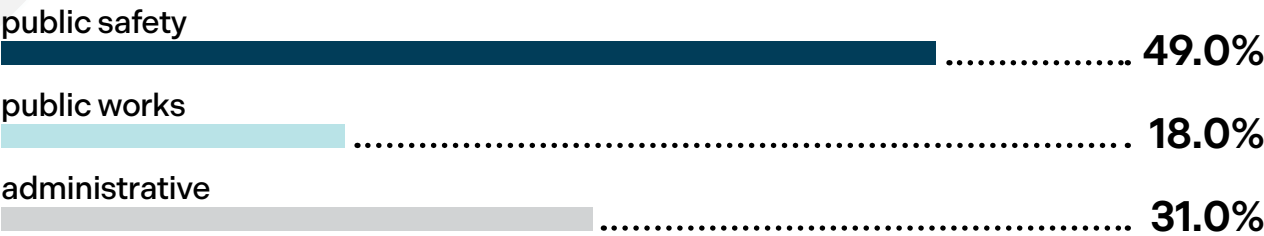
For most cities, the General Fund is where they account for services paid for by taxes and which benefit the overall community. This includes Public Works (roads, sidewalks, storm drains, snow removal, infrastructure, and building maintenance), Public Safety (police, fire, and emergency medical services), and Administration (city council, city clerk, city manager, finance, and parks and recreation).



General Fund Revenue **~ \$3.5 million** per year



**98%** of General Fund Expenditures are for



## ENTERPRISE FUNDS

The City of Whittier has three separate business-like funds that are called Enterprise Funds. They are operated and accounted for separately to ensure that each is self-sustaining. Each should generate not only enough money to cover operating costs, but also to either pay for debt service on capital assets and infrastructure or set aside depreciation funds to replace existing assets and infrastructure at the end of life.

## Harbor Revenue Fund

In the past, the Harbor has not generated any funding to replace capital assets and infrastructure, and relied on the CPV Tax Revenue Fund to cover Harbor Debt Service on harbor float and infrastructure replacement. Recent changes to the City of Whittier's fee structure will enable the Harbor to have a recurring source of revenue to replace a significant portion of capital assets and infrastructure, so that the operating costs of the Harbor should be able to be sustained through typical rates (moorage, parking, leases, launch fees).

## DeLong Dock Revenue Fund

Harbor staff also operate the DeLong Dock Revenue Fund. The DeLong Dock Revenue Fund generates its own revenues separate from the Harbor through off-loading of seafood in the summer. Harbor Revenue Funds are not used to subsidize operations at the DeLong Dock. Harbor staff costs are charged to the DeLong Dock when staff work in that area.

Harbor Revenue Fund ~ **\$1.7 million** per year

**87%** of Harbor Fund Revenue comes from:



**7** full-time employees  
+ **1.4** seasonal employees



DeLong Dock Revenue Fund  
~ **\$269,000**  
per year

## Water and Sewer Revenue Fund

The Water and Sewer Revenue Fund generates approximately \$415,000 per year and has one full-time employee. When needed, staff from Public Works are provided.

Water and Sewer Revenue Fund  
~ **\$415,000**  
per year  
**1** full-time employee

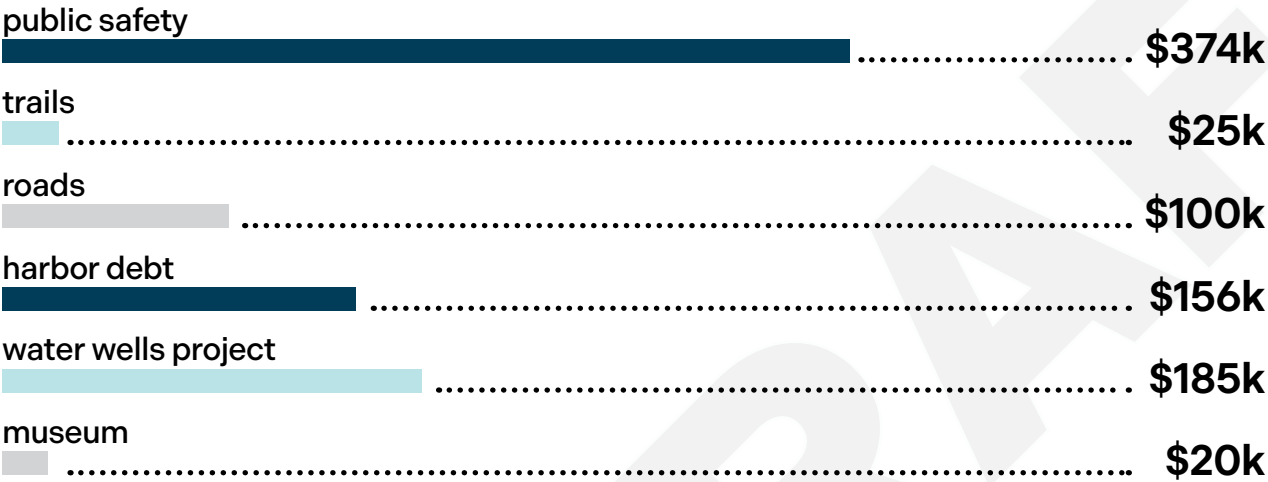


COMMERCIAL PASSENGER VESSEL TAX FUND

The CPV Tax Revenue Fund is where the City accounts for cruise ship vessel tax; \$5 per cruise ship passenger. This generates approximately \$1 million per year and is used to serve cruise ships and their passengers.

CPV Tax Fund Revenue ~ \$1.0 million per year

CPV tax is currently being used for:





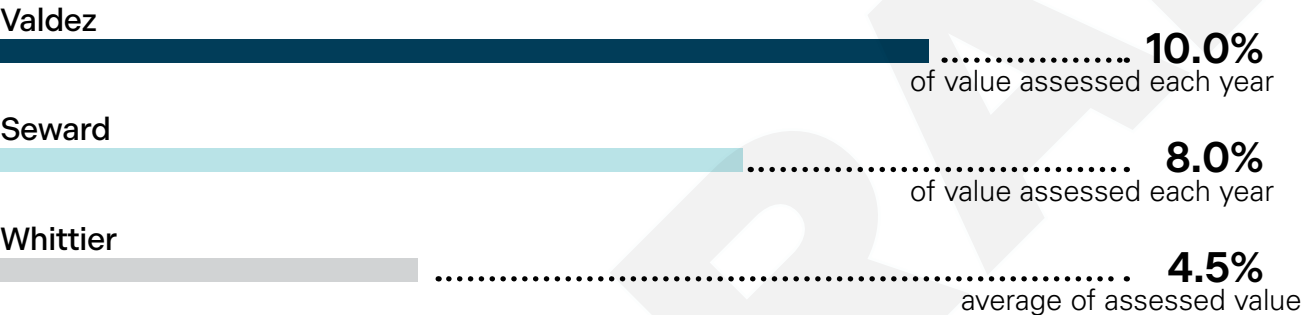
# COMMERCIAL LEASE RATES

The City-manages several commercial lease properties in the harbor under the Master Lease agreement with the ARRC. This agreement allows the City to sublease approximately 250 acres of ARRC land, thereby empowering the city to manage development activities and bolster its tax base. In return, the ARRC retains a share of the lease revenue and maintains essential rights to ensure their operations remain unhindered.

There are 38 commercial properties along the waterfront and within the Harbor Management Area that fall under this agreement. Further information on the properties and commercial leases can be found in the Inventory and Assessment section.

Under the Code of Ordinances, city-owned property “shall be leased at no less than ‘fair market rent,’ which is defined as no less than 10% of the ‘fair market value’.” That value is defined by an appraisal (or estimated value), at the time it is appraised.

## In comparison with Valdez and Seward



City’s property assessment  
**\$4.0 million**

City’s annual lease revenue  
**\$183,500**

**= 4.5%**  
of assessed value

## Potential and Foregone Revenue

LEASE LOCATION	# OF PARCELS	TOTAL ANNUAL RENTAL	TOTAL ASSESSED VALUE	LEASE RATE	ANNUAL RENTAL AT 10% LEASE RATE	FOREGONE REVENUE
Harborview	9	\$27,069	\$765,500	3.5%	\$76,550	\$49,481
Harbor Loop	17	\$112,769	\$2,387,200	4.7%	\$238,720	\$125,951
Harbor Triangle	8	\$38,178	\$786,500	4.9%	\$78,650	\$40,472
TOTAL	34	\$178,016	\$3,939,200	4.5%	\$393,920	\$215,904

If the city were to charge 10% of the assessed land value, the annual rental revenue would be \$393,920. It is important to note the date of the last appraisal for each parcel is not readily available and therefore the potential revenue could be significantly higher when lease revenue is adjusted for both the appraised value and the 10% rate. Based on current rates, the City’s foregone revenue equals \$215,904.

# INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

## TOURISM

Whittier serves cruise ship visitors, ferry passengers, and in-state visitors who come for recreational activities.

### Cruise Ship Visitors

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Over the past 5 years Whittier has received ships starting the second week of May through mid-September during the weekends with a total annual visit of 46 ships. The average time for vessels in port is 20-22 hours. With the addition of the new cruise ship terminal the city expects to receive additional vessels for a total of 72 annually.

### Ferry Passengers

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Whittier receives ferries and is on a route that serves other communities in Prince William Sound. Ridership has been steady in recent years, though it is down from 2014 and 2015.

### Recreational Activities

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Whittier offers a variety of activities for visitors, making it an attractive destination for in-state as well as out-of-state visitors. Most activities near Whittier cater to people interested in seeing and experiencing the natural beauty of Alaska. Whittier's proximity to the Chugach Mountains and glaciers combined with its waterfront location make it a beautiful waterfront and mountain destination.

## COMMERCIAL FISHING

In recent years, only 3 Whittier residents have held commercial fishing permits, down from a high of 13 in 2011.

Though only 3 Whittier residents have commercial fishing permits, Whittier Harbor is still used by commercial fishing vessels owned by residents of several communities around the state. Anchorage, Girdwood, and Wasilla residents have the most vessels homeported in Whittier harbor.

Despite its location, Whittier has a small number of commercial fishing users relative to other harbors on Prince William Sound. Contribution factors include Whittier's insurance requirement, a lack of uplands to allow boat owners to pull their boat out of the water to do maintenance, and limited services and supplies needed for commercial fishermen relative to other harbors.

## CARGO AND TRANSPORTATION

### Waterborne Cargo

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Facilities within Whittier's municipal boundary, which essentially represents activity by ARRC, received 580 thousand short tons and shipped 9 thousand short tons of waterborne cargo in 2022. Manufactured equipment made up more than 70% of cargo.

Whittier's cargo volume has grown over time, while Seward's shrunk due to coal exports ending in 2016. Valdez handles the most cargo of the four ports, by an order of magnitude, driven by exported crude oil from the pipeline. Without petroleum included, Valdez's cargo activity is lower than that of Seward and Whittier.

### Tunnel Traffic

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Road and rail access to Whittier relies on the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel to connect to facilities along Turnagain Arm. In recent years, traffic has generally been higher than it was for much of the period, other than the 2020 dip.

# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Whittier has road, rail, and direct ocean access, one of only three communities in Alaska with all three. By developing supporting facilities, Whittier has an opportunity to serve more cruise passengers, move more cargo, and provide other logistical support.
- Whittier offers recreational boaters the fastest access to Prince William Sound from the north, cutting the road distance by about 66 miles compared to Seward. New facilities and increasing available capacity could capture additional boaters, cargo activity, and services from the Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna Borough population bases.
- Whittier has several organizations contributing to its waterfront offerings, providing diversification of funding sources and a greater shared capacity for investing in waterfront improvements.
- The Head of the Bay offers opportunities to expand Whittier's cruise-handling capacity, add moorage space to address the large waitlist of boats wanting a stall at the harbor, and provide additional land for maritime-related economic development and additional storage.
- Increasing upland lease rates comparable to typical market rates could provide additional revenue to the city without cost of investment.
- Increasing small boat harbor stall rental rates commensurate with demand could provide additional revenue to the city without additional investment.
- City of Whittier boundary covers the shores of Shotgun Cove and extends to Blackstone Bay. While undeveloped for commercial and industrial use, and encapsulating a number of recreational areas, there is a considerable amount of waterfront within the city limits that could eventually be developed to serve maritime needs.
- The United States Forest Service (USFS) is interested in developing day-use cabins to the east of Shotgun Cove. If developed, Whittier's businesses would have the opportunity to serve those users if they offered the right mix of services (e.g., food, general store needs, tie-ins with other activities during the trip, and potentially lodging before and after a stay in a cabin). Depending on the nature of access to the cabins, it's possible they could be available year-round.

## CHALLENGES

- Undercharging for the lease of city lands and/or allowing scarce and commercially valuable land to remain undeveloped could be placing a burden on the city from both financial and economic development perspective.
- Whittier is constrained by the limited amount of land available for development. A lack of housing and land are constraints on economic development, both for the businesses themselves but also for the workforce to run them.
- The vast majority of harbor users – approximately 95% – do not reside in Whittier, which results in competing interests between users and residents.
- Given the predominant use of the harbor by non-local users, the city and its residents are in effect subsidizing people who do not live in the community. Some of these non-local users operate businesses and make other expenditures that yield a net benefit for the city, though this is not the case for most users. This results in a financial loss for the city.
- The City of Whittier generates insufficient revenue at DeLong Dock to cover operating expenses. A new dock will address operational issues, but the rates will likely need to increase for it not to be a financial loss.
- While critical for access to Whittier, the tunnel does create a constraint for passenger and cargo operations due to its schedule.
- The drop in daily launch ramp fees in 2023 raises questions about the amount of use the ramp sees versus the amount of fees collected for it. This phenomenon has been observed in other waterfront communities in Alaska and it has been addressed with better monitoring of ramps with video surveillance.
- Maritime-support businesses are limited in Whittier and the lack of such services means that harbor users need to travel to other communities to have work done on their boats.



Charting a course between  
opportunity and challenging tides.





# INVENTORY & ASSESSMENT

**This document presents an inventory and assessment of Whittier, Alaska's waterfront areas, encompassing the Harbor Management Area and Waterfront Development Area. These areas are critical to Whittier's economic vitality and recreational appeal, necessitating a thorough understanding of their current conditions and future potential.**

The following section provides a detailed inventory of existing facilities, infrastructure, and natural features within each area, including the harbor, uplands, and surrounding waterways. This inventory and assessment delves into the existing facilities, infrastructure, and natural landscape. The inventory assesses harbor moorage, utilities, public spaces, available uplands, waterways, and existing structures, assessing current conditions and identifying areas for improvement.

This assessment examines the opportunities and challenges associated with each location, highlighting infrastructure deficiencies, environmental considerations, and development potential. By comprehensively documenting the current state of Whittier's waterfront, this inventory and assessment lays the foundation for informed planning and strategic development, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for the community.

# HARBOR MANAGEMENT AREA

The Harbor Management Area is bound on the west by Whittier Creek and extends offshore to the north, where the boundary parallels the harbor breakwater. The eastern extents are the City of Whittier-held offshore Alaska Tidelands Survey located adjacent to and excluding the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) Ferry Terminal. The south boundary is the southern edge of the 'Master Lease – Parcel No. 3' north of the existing ARRC rail lines. The current parking and camping area, or 'Master Lease – Parcel No. 2', is located south of the railroad and included in the Harbor Management Area for planning purposes. Overall, the Harbor Management Area encapsulates the City of Whittier's harbor-focused interests.

## EXISTING FACILITIES

- Harbor moorage floats
- Harbormaster Office
- Water, sewer, and electrical utilities
- City Dock/travel lift pier
- Boat grid
- Restrooms
- Launch ramp
- Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) collection building
- Ocean Dock
- Public restrooms
- Waterfront boardwalk and community pavilion

## OPPORTUNITIES

### Harbor:

- Boat grid renovation and/or relocation
- Consider new location for US Coast Guard (USCG) auxiliary caboose
- Provide fish cleaning station(s)
- Consider demolishing the City Dock and replace with a drive-down dock for water-borne freight or other alternative use
- Improve the Ocean Dock including an abutment structure and wave break
- Alternative uses for the Ocean Dock

### Uplands:

- Expand uplands through boardwalk and/or sheet pile bulkhead with backfill
- Emphasize retail businesses (increasing tax revenue)
- Emphasize mixed-use development inclusive of workforce housing
- Upgrade or replace the Harbormaster Office building
- Replace or relocate the EVOS building
- Enhance public restrooms
- Improve the harbor pavilion
- Improve garbage services (aesthetic screening, better location(s), and better bear management)

### Recreation:

- Find better location for kayak storage and launch

### General:

- Assess land-use revisions enabled by potential changes of use in other areas (Head of the Bay)

## CHALLENGES

### Harbor:

- Lack of background data for the existing Ocean Dock (design drawings or as-built).
- The harbor area is below projected tsunami inundation. Consideration of Tsunami run-up is critical when planning for any proposed nearshore structures.
- Limited availability of developable shoreline for marine infrastructure.
- Bathymetry offshore of the harbor breakwater and Harbor Triangle is a steep drop-off, limiting expansion options.

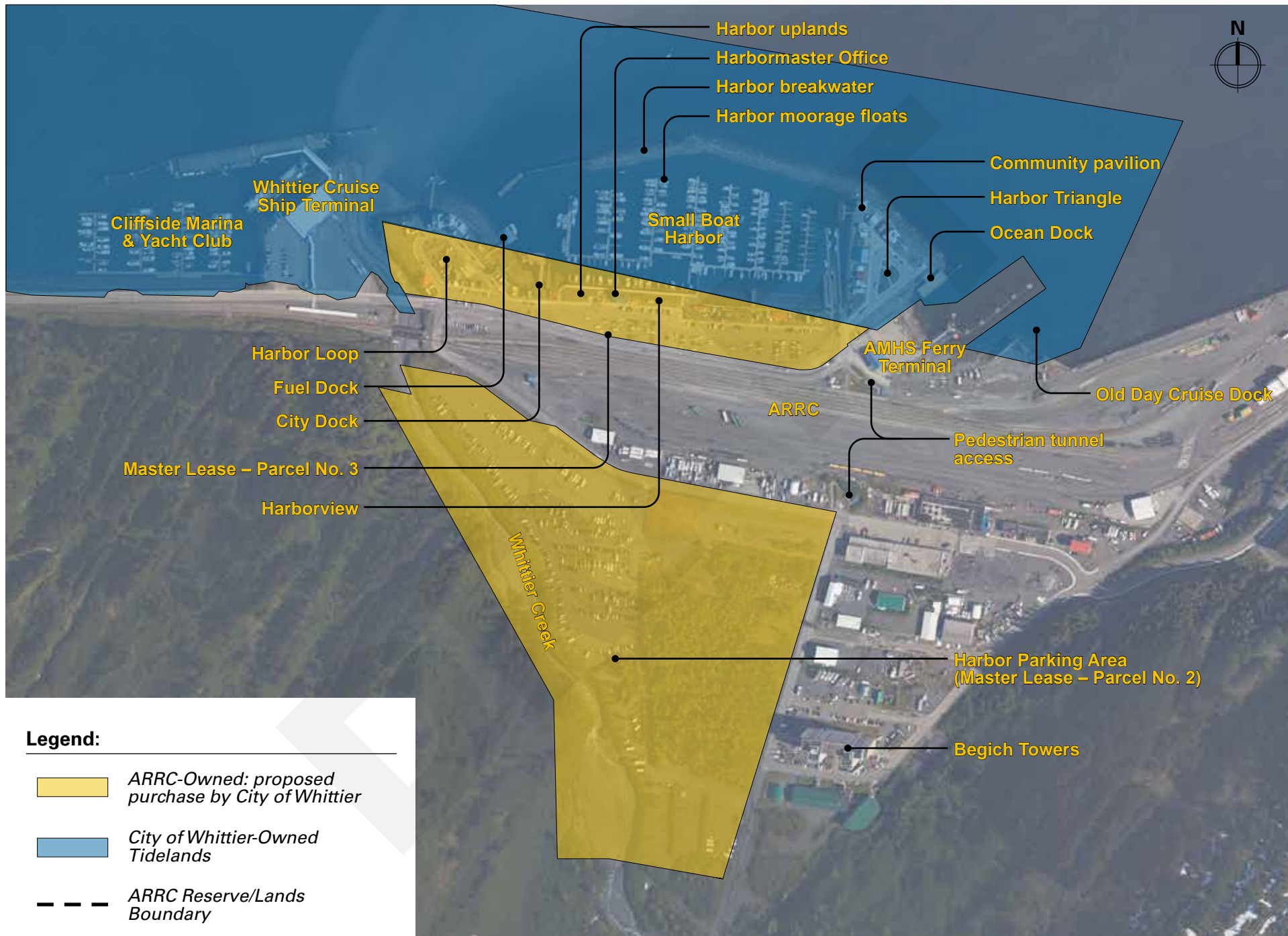
### Uplands:

- Uplands immediately adjacent to the harbor have an extended history of fuel-based contamination (i.e., 1940's era tank farm damaged by the 1964 earthquake).
- Varying conditions for the public restrooms, City Dock, Harbormaster Office, boardwalk, and EVOS building.
- Lack of convenient parking for harbor users and boat trailers.
- Congestion and impeded traffic flow during busy use times at the boat launch.

### General:

- Due to limited land, there are areas where all user groups need to interact. This includes arriving at and moving within uplands areas, transferring from land to water, and navigating within the area.
- Limitations within the master lease requirements and conditions (i.e., the requirement for upland structures to be on temporary foundations, etc.).





# Harbor Business District

The Harbor Business District consists of Harbor Loop on the west, Harborview in the center, and Harbor Triangle on the east. A sidewalk connects the three areas, but improving the visual consistency or connecting waterfront elements would significantly enhance this area and promote a central waterfront character.

The Harbor Business District is a focal point in Whittier for those who live, work, or visit here. At this time, Whittier does not have a Visitor Information Center to provide visitors with information on things to do or places of interest. Visitors looking for information

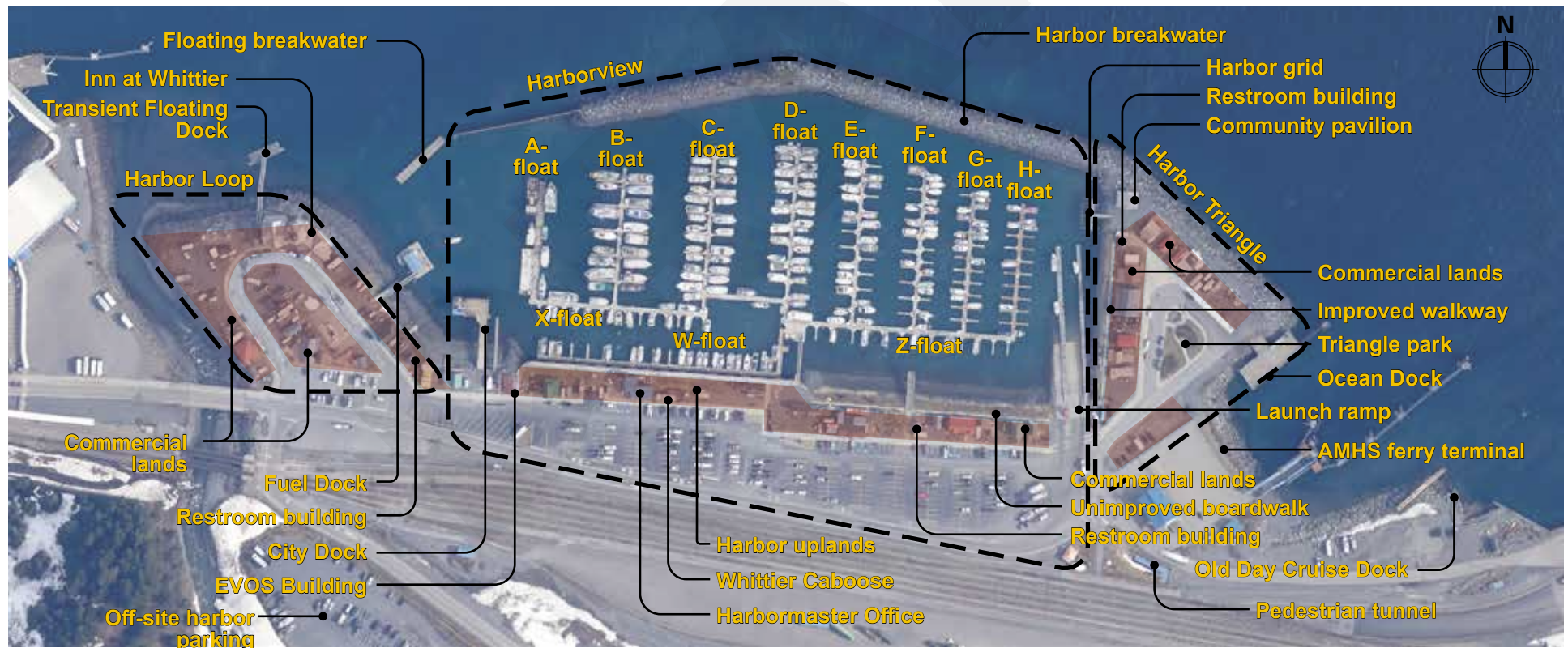
typically visit the Harbormaster Office or the business located on the west point of the district nearest the Whittier Cruise Ship Terminal.

Although the Harbor Business District makes up the majority of publicly accessible waterfront within the city center, it doesn't create a cohesive and consistent waterfront experience. There are no consistent design standards, and the boardwalk or waterfront walkway would benefit from improved visual connectivity to direct visitors and tie the three areas together.

There is an opportunity to develop the Harbor Business District into a central hub of Whittier and develop a connection between this area and the central town area, improving pedestrian flow along the waterfront and between these two areas.

## Legend:

- Commercial Lease Properties*
- Area boundary*





## HARBOR LOOP

The Harbor Loop area along the waterfront includes the Inn at Whittier, commercial businesses, transient floating dock, the fuel dock, and restroom facility. The Harbor Loop is directly to the east of the Whittier Cruise Ship Terminal and privately owned Cliffside Marina and Yacht Club.

### Harbor Facilities

#### *Transient Floating Dock*

The transient floating dock is west of the harbor entrance. The dock is nominally 60-ft long by 20-ft wide and supported by two two-steel restraint piles. The floating dock was replaced in 2014 and is in good condition. Access to the floating structure is by a trestle and gangway west of the Inn at Whittier. Due to direct exposure to Prince William Sound, the dock is used primarily for transient moorage and loading/unloading of vessels.

#### *Fuel Dock*

The fuel dock on the western side of the small boat harbor and near the harbor entrance consists of a 60-ft by 40-ft concrete floating dock supported by steel restraint piles. The floating dock was replaced in the late 1990s and is currently in good condition. A trestle and gangway on the eastern side of Harbor Loop provide access to the float from the uplands. The facility is currently operated by Shoreside Petroleum and is the only provider of direct fueling for vessels in the small boat harbor.

## Public Infrastructure

### *Pedestrian Circulation*

There is a concrete sidewalk outside Harbor Loop Road and no boardwalk or walkway on the waterfront side of the commercial buildings.

### *Restrooms*

The current restroom facility was built in the late 1990s in the style of the USFS outhouses with two stalls. The restroom has reached the end of its life and is inadequate for the volume of traffic visiting the harbor.

### *Site Features*

There were no site features present in the Harbor Loop area.



*Fuel Dock*



*Harbor Loop restrooms*



*Harbor Loop uplands*



*Harbor loop uplands*

## Commercial Lands

INTENDED LEASE	CURRENT USE
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 1 Lot 1</b>	
Whittier Boat Rental LLC – Displaying Rental Boats, Storage of Boats, Storage Unit for Fishing Tackle, Shrimp Pots, Parts, etc.	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 1 Lot 2</b>	
Whittier Boat Rental LLC – Hotel/Office	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 1 Lot 3</b>	
Shoreside Petroleum, Inc – fuel float, marine and automobile fueling service	Consistent with lease application

INTENDED LEASE	CURRENT USE
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 1 Lot 5A</b>	
Whittier Inn, LLC – Multi-Story Commercial/Retail Space and Associated Parking; Physical or Mental Health Treatment Center	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 1 Lot 9</b>	
No lease	Passenger Dock ramp and entrance
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 1 Lot 10</b>	
GCI Communications/ Supervision – Receiving and Transmitting Radio/ Cellular/Cable Signal	Consistent with lease application

INTENDED LEASE	CURRENT USE
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 1 Lot 11</b>	
Passage Canal Development – Constructing/Maintaining Parking and Commercial Facilities	Inconsistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 1</b>	
Hai Han Ye – Retail Sales or Food Services	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 2</b>	
Shoreside Petroleum, Inc – fuel float, marine and automobile fueling service	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 3</b>	
Whittier Inn, LLC – Multi-Story Commercial/Retail Space and Associated Parking; Physical or Mental Health Treatment Center	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 4</b>	
Whittier Inn, LLC – Multi-Story Commercial/Retail Space and Associated Parking; Physical or Mental Health Treatment Center	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 5</b>	
Whittier Inn, LLC – Multi-Story Commercial/Retail Space and Associated Parking; Physical or Mental Health Treatment Center	Consistent with lease application



### Legend:

- Commercial Lease Lands – Block 1
- Commercial Lease Lands – Block 2

INTENDED LEASE	CURRENT USE
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 6</b>	
Jeremiah Eneix – Café, Eating Establishment, Souvenir Shop	Inconsistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 7</b>	
Whittier Inn, LLC – Multi-Story Commercial/Retail Space and Associated Parking; Physical or Mental Health Treatment Center	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 8</b>	
Whittier Inn, LLC – Multi-Story Commercial/Retail Space and Associated Parking; Physical or Mental Health Treatment Center	Inconsistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 9</b>	
R.C. Collin – Retail Tourist Facility	Inconsistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 10</b>	
Paddler's Realm – Kayak and Watersports Rental Business	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 11</b>	
Epic Charters – Gift Sales and Food Services	Inconsistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 12</b>	
Wild Catch Cafe – American/Asian and Chinese Food	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Loop – Block 2 Lot 13</b>	
Wild Catch Cafe – American/Asian and Chinese Food	Consistent with lease application



## HARBORVIEW

The Harborview area is located directly to the south of the Small Boat Harbor and makes up the majority of waterfront uplands in the Harbor Management Area. The Harborview area includes the City Dock, EVOS building, harbor uplands, Small Boat Harbor and boat launch, and the Harbormaster Building.

### Harbor Facilities

#### City Dock

The City Dock is a nominally 70-ft by 35-ft pile-supported timber structure accessed by a nominally 12-ft by 100-ft lift trestle, also used as a lift pier. Approximately 20 feet to the east of the primary dock is a second timber lift pier. The dock is believed to be over 50 years old and is in poor condition. The City Dock's lifting capacity was downgraded in 2021 to not to exceed 20,000 lbs load rating. It is no longer capable of being used for boat lifts. The City Dock serves a primary function for offloading fish and light cargo.



Utility structures

#### Harbormaster Office

The Harbormaster Office is on skids, poorly insulated, and does not have a foundation. The building was constructed as part of the state-owned harbor project in the 1980s and relocated in 2011 as part of the initial phase of the Small Boat Harbor replacement project. The siding was installed in 2016, and the building is not ADA-compliant other than the restrooms. The building requires significant upgrades, including the roof, ADA compliance, workspace, storage areas, work surfaces, and restrooms, which require a complete overhaul.

#### EVOS Building

Constructed in the early 1990s, the fire suppression system is outdated, the waste-oil burner is non-operational and requires third-party removal every 1,250 gallons (approximately every 6 months), and many components need replacement. Relocating the facility would improve the aesthetics and safety of the harbor.



Harborview uplands and commercial businesses



City Dock



Harbormaster Office



EVOS Building



### Small Boat Harbor

The Small Boat Harbor consists of eight mainwalk floats (A through H) accessed by two headwalk floats (X and Z) and a separate headwalk float (W) located adjacent to the southwest harbor seawall.

The harbor float system provides stalls for over 350 vessels with slip lengths ranging from 24-ft to 48-ft; large vessel moorage is along both sides of A-float in addition to this count. All of the floats within the harbor, with the exception of W-float, are constructed with concrete float units.

Since the early 2000s, the City of Whittier has implemented several harbor float replacement projects to progress the replacement of the aging float system. W-float and the adjacent harbor seawall were constructed in 2011, D-F and Z-float were replaced in 2015, B-C and X-float were replaced in 2017, and the City of Whittier has a current project to replace A/G/H floats to complete the float replacement and replace all of the timber restraint pile in the harbor with steel pile.

Access to the floats within the harbor is by a single 80-ft gangway located at the eastern end of the upland seawall and landing at a central float near the end of D-float.



Small Boat Harbor and breakwater

### Harbor Grid

The harbor grid is in the northeast corner of the harbor basin, north of the boat launch. The grid is a timber and steel structure consisting of horizontal steel caps supported by driven steel piles. The graving area on the grid is approximately 60-ft long by 20-ft wide. A timber trestle that spans to the adjacent uplands near the Harbor Triangle area provides access to the grid. The grid is tidally accessed by vessels, allowing for boat maintenance during low-tide conditions. The structure is in good working order but needs electrical services, a new water service installed, and on-demand lighting.

### Launch Ramp

A three-lane launch ramp is in the southeast corner of the harbor basin, adjacent to the Harbor Triangle area. The launch ramp, constructed in 2009, is pre-cast concrete ramp planks with two heavy-timber boarding floats supported by steel restraint piles. The ramp and floats are in good condition.



Harbor grid



Launch ramp



Small Boat Harbor – X-float and W-float



Small Boat Harbor

## Public Infrastructure

### Parking

Parking in the Harborview area is south of the Small Boat Harbor and commercial uplands. It is a paved parking lot with a capacity for approximately 250 vehicles and 15 buses. During cruise ship days, bus parking needs can increase to 40 buses, causing conflicts with the parking area and staging.

### Pedestrian Circulation

From the launch ramp to the central Harborview area, or when it reaches the bulkhead and extended uplands, the boardwalk is a narrow wood boardwalk that is slippery, degrading, and in need of an ADA-compliant replacement with more robust materials that are capable of withstanding Whittier's extreme weather.

Once at the developed uplands area in front of the Harbormaster Office, the updated boardwalk is a wide wood walkway with a guardrail that abuts the bulkhead. This section of the boardwalk extends to the City Dock, where it ends.

South of the commercial lands and north of the parking area is a concrete sidewalk that spans the Harborview area, connecting from the east with the Harbor Loop sidewalk and to the west connecting with the Harbor Triangle sidewalk.

### Restrooms

The current restroom facility was built in the late 1990s in the style of the USFS outhouses with two stalls. The restroom has reached the end of its life and is inadequate for the volume of traffic visiting the harbor. The City of Whittier has a portable restroom trailer in the summer as a temporary fix for added capacity.

### Site Features

**Benches:** City of Whittier standard benches are located along the new concrete walkway.

**Garbage Collection:** two dumpsters are located in the central Harborview area and have no screening. These dumpsters are not bear-proof and have created issues with bear conflicts. Dumpsters are present at the gangways, piers, and launch ramp.

**Light Poles:** a mixture of new light standards in the Harborview West area along the new boardwalk and older light standards in need of replacement in the Harborview East area.

**Whittier Caboose:** is the retired ARRC #1076. Built in March 1949 it served the railroad until the 1990s when it became outdated due to the use of electronic devices. The retired caboose was acquired by the City of Whittier and serves the Whittier Flotilla of the USCG Auxiliary. In 2001, it the caboose was placed where it stands now and was officially brought into service to the boaters of Prince William Sound as the only caboose that wears USCG colors.



Whittier Caboose



Harborview west boardwalk and uplands



Restroom building and portable restroom



Harborview east boardwalk



## Commercial Lands

INTENDED LEASE	CURRENT USE
<b>Harborview – Lot 1</b>	
Whittier Fudge Shop – Food Service, Gift Store	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harborview – Lot 1A</b>	
No lease	City of Whittier easement
<b>Harborview – Lot 2</b>	
Lazy Otter Charters Inc – Charter Bookings, Retail Related Sales	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harborview – Lot 3 &amp; 3A</b>	
Lazy Otter Charters Inc – Charter Services	Inconsistent with lease application

INTENDED LEASE	CURRENT USE
<b>Harborview – Lot 5A</b>	
Phillips Cruises & Tours – Charter Services	Inconsistent with lease application
<b>Harborview – Lot 7</b>	
Whittier Inn Lodging, LLC – Storage/Office Space, Gift Store	Inconsistent with lease application
<b>Harborview – Lot 8</b>	
Whittier Harbor Store & Avis Rent-A-Car – Wholesale, Retail, Rental, Charter, and Food Service	Inconsistent with lease application

INTENDED LEASE	CURRENT USE
<b>Harborview – Lot 9</b>	
Crazy Ray – Gift Shop, Fishing Charter Services, Business	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harborview – Lot 10 &amp; 11</b>	
Alaska Sea Kayakers – Kayak Rental Office	Consistent with lease application



## HARBOR TRIANGLE

The Harbor Triangle is east of the Harborview area and directly west of the AMHS Ferry Terminal. It includes commercial businesses, a central park, and a community pavilion. Ocean Dock connects to the Harbor Triangle on the east side of the triangle.

### Public Infrastructure

#### Triangle Park

Within the center of the Harbor Triangle is a small park space. The park contains shrubs, a concrete sidewalk, and an interpretive kiosk. A concrete sidewalk is located on the park's exterior and connects through the park.

#### Community Pavilion

The community pavilion was built in the early 1990s at the northernmost corner of the Harbor Triangle, surrounded by a small open space gathering area. The community values the open space and pavilion; however, Whittier's extreme weather can pose challenges to the use and function of this space. The pavilion is in poor condition and has been identified as needing replacement.

#### Pedestrian Circulation

The western side of the triangle has an improved concrete sidewalk with benches that extend from the boat launch to the community pavilion. The north section of the triangle is a level gravel base adjacent to the riprap edge. A concrete sidewalk extends from the Harborview area and runs along the interior of commercial lease properties adjacent to Harbor Road.

#### Restrooms

The current restroom facility was built in the late 1990s in the style of the USFS outhouses with two rooms with single stalls. The restroom has reached the end of its life and is inadequate for the volume of traffic visiting the harbor. The City of Whittier places a portable restroom trailer here in the summer as a temporary fix for added capacity.

#### Site Features

**Benches:** City of Whittier standard benches are located along the new concrete walkway.

**Waste Bins:** a standard bear-saver waste bin is installed in the central park.

**Light Standards:** light standards on the west side of the harbor triangle match the light standards in the eastern Harborview area and need replacing.

**Mariner's Memorial:** a large stone Mariner's Memorial is located on the northeastern point of the Harbor Triangle, dedicated in 1998.



Restroom building



New concrete walkway west side of the triangle



Community pavilion



## Commercial Lands

INTENDED LEASE	CURRENT USE
<b>Harbor Triangle – Lot 1A</b>	
Whittier Ice Cream & Pizza Parlor – Storage/Office Space and Gift Store	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Triangle – Lot 3</b>	
Alaska Sea Kayakers – Kayak and Watersports Rental Business	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Triangle – Lot 4A</b>	
Alaska Wild Guides – Marine Charter, Retail Sales, Storage/Office Space, Gift Store	Consistent with lease application

INTENDED LEASE	CURRENT USE
<b>Harbor Triangle – Lot 6 &amp; 7</b>	
Prince William Sounds Salt Co – Commercial and/or Retail Space, Production and Sale of Salt Products, Native Art Display, Gift Shop	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Triangle – Lot 8</b>	
Swiftwater Seafood Café – Food Service, Storage/Office Space, Gift Store	Consistent with lease application

INTENDED LEASE	CURRENT USE
<b>Harbor Triangle – Lot 9 &amp; 10</b>	
Oceanfront Cafe – Sale of Beer and wine, Storage/Office Space/Services, Gift Store	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Triangle – Lot 11</b>	
Log Cabin Gifts – Gift Shop	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Triangle – Lot 12 &amp; 13</b>	
Fees Custom Seafoods – Retail Sales, Charter Services, Seafood Processing	Consistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Triangle – Lot 13A &amp; 16A</b>	
The Outpost – Liquor Store, Restaurant, Sale of Beer and Wine	Inconsistent with lease application
<b>Harbor Triangle - AMHS Off-Site Parking Lease</b>	
Alaska Marine Highway System – Off-site parking for the Whittier Ferry Terminal	Consistent with lease application



### Legend:

Commercial Lease Lands

# Ocean Dock

The Ocean Dock is on the eastern side of the Harbor Triangle adjacent to the AMHS Ferry Terminal. The dock was originally constructed in 1981 and consists of a nominally 120-ft wide by 40-ft depth and is constructed of hollow-core pre-cast concrete superstructure supported by steel substructure and steel piling. The dock has timber-faced fenders along the face to support vessel berthing. A steel pile mooring dolphin with a steel trestle for access is located northeast of the dock.

The Ocean Dock was damaged in the 2018 earthquake and required repairs, including the repair of a damaged concrete approach panel nearest the paved road. It currently has a weight limit of 12,000 lbs per axle and 24,000 lbs total. Galvanized coatings on the steel support piles is failing and are at risk of corrosion degradation. Other needs are installing a fresh water supply and electricity and repairing the lighting. The dock serves large, day-cruise vessels or boutique cruises. The dock sees a lot of wave action.

## *Phillips Cruises & Tours*

Provide day cruises from Whittier. Philips Cruises currently operates four ships with two trips a day.

## *UnCruise Adventures:*

Started operating in 2024, it offers a 7-night round trip from Whittier. People board in Whittier on a Friday and disembark in Whittier the following Friday. It offers a 20-25-person cruise.



*Ocean Dock*



*Ocean Dock surfacing*

# Old Day Cruise Dock

The day cruise dock is located southeast of the AMHS Ferry terminal and west of the ARRC marine facilities. The dock was originally constructed in the early 1990s and expanded in the mid 2000s. The facility consisted of a floating dock that was removed seasonally that was restrained by two steel pile dolphins with access provided by a steel trestle and gangway. Operations at cruise dock were suspended in the mid-2010s, with the floating dock relocated outside of Prince William Sound. The access trestle and steel pile dolphins remain at the site.



*Old Day Cruise Dock Area*



# Harbor Parking Area

Off-site harbor parking is available south of the harbor, across the ARRC lines and Whittier Street. The parking area comprises a 15-acre sublease of the City of Whittier's master lease with ARRC. The parking area is unpaved and is used primarily for parking for users of the harbor launch ramp and storage of vessels and trailers. A camping area is north of the parking area.



# WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT AREA

The Waterfront Development Area is bound on the west by the proposed ARRC and City of Whittier land transfer boundary and to the east by Smitty's Cove and the DeLong Dock, excluding the Harbor Management Area, Whittier Cruise Ship Terminal, Cliffside Marina and Yacht Club, AMHS Ferry Terminal, and ARRC lands. Between the Head of the Bay and the Harbor Management Area, the southern boundary of the Waterfront Development Area extends to the ADOT&PF right-of-way on West Camp Road. Between the Harbor Management Area and DeLong Dock, the southern boundary for the Waterfront Development Area is the southern extent of City of Whittier-held tidelands, excluding onshore ARRC infrastructure and the footprint of the ARRC's historical marginal-wharf.

The two focus areas for the Waterfront Development Area include the Head of the Bay on the west side of the boundary and Smitty's Cove and DeLong Dock on the eastern extent of the boundary.

## Opportunities

### Harbor:

- Replace Smitty's Cove boat ramp (250'x26' launch ramp). Primary use is for commercial landing craft servicing the communities of Chenega, Tatitlek, and various hatcheries located throughout Prince William Sound, delivering fuel, food, and commodities.
- Concept plans for replacing the DeLong Dock include expanding the uplands to provide additional storage and improved intermodal transfer.

- The ARRC is evaluating replacing port infrastructure adjacent to the Smitty's Cove and DeLong Dock area. There is potential synergy and coordination with ARRC to replace the DeLong Dock.
- Potential at the head of the bay for new boat launch ramp and harbor facilities, including breakwater.

### Uplands:

- Emphasize marine-related economic development, retail use, and recreational access for the 58-acre head of bay parcel acquired by the City of Whittier
- Improve parking for vehicles and trailers.
- Investigate possible seasonal boat storage

### Recreation:

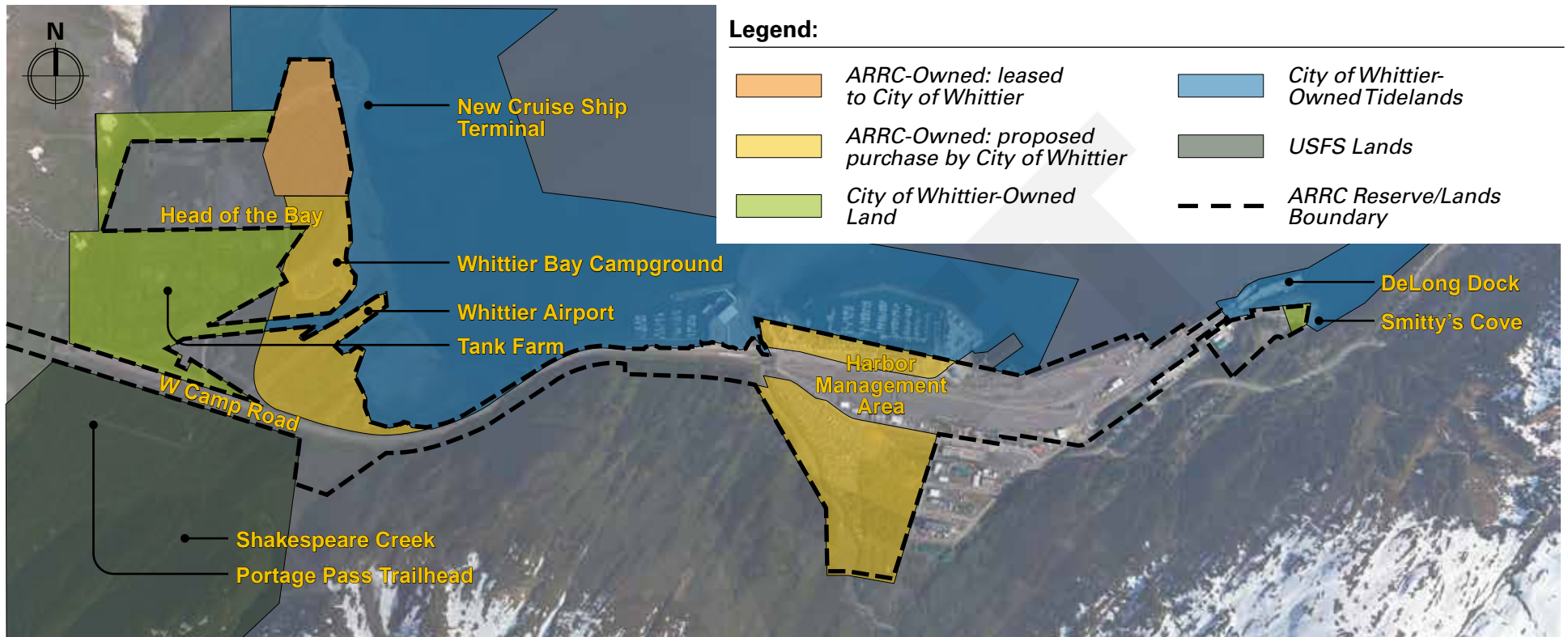
- Improve the Whittier Bay Campground
- Partner with the USFS to develop a new RV campground in the vicinity of Portage Glacier Trailhead
- Maintain and enhance Smitty's Cove for public recreation, including optimizing access facilities to minimize potential conflicts with commercial uses.

### General:

- Develop a corridor that connects the tunnel and head of bay to Smitty's Cove that considers bike and pedestrian pathways, wayfinding signage, interpretive signage, pocket parks, and other essential features.
- Consider possible water-dependent activities and allowable mixed-use development
- Protect and highlight Shakespeare Creek
- Protect and retain natural beach and recreational water access

## Challenges

- Preserving Smitty's Cove as a valued recreational feature in the community and maintaining public access within Smitty's Cove.
- Limited City of Whittier-owned, developable uplands property
- Water depth limitations (shallow and deep)
- Environmental exposure (wind, wave, snow, etc.)
- Potential historical contamination within uplands areas
- Unknown but potentially difficult geotechnical conditions (shallow bedrock, liquefiable soils, etc.) may exist in developable areas



New Cruise Ship Terminal



Head of the Bay

# Smitty's Cove & DeLong Dock

Smitty's Cove and the DeLong Dock are on the eastern extent of the Waterfront Development Area, adjacent to the ARRC-owned railyard, industrial area, and port. The ARRC holds the title to the uplands in this area, with agreements in place for access to the City of Whittier-owned marine infrastructure and public access to Smitty's Cove.

The DeLong Dock and surrounding tidelands were transferred from ARRC to the City of Whittier in 2018. ARRC maintains a lease for the integrated tub and barge ramp area located on the west face of the DeLong Dock. The City of Whittier holds title to the surrounding tidelands, including the area of Smitty's Cove.

## Smitty's Cove

Smitty's Cove offers a barge ramp (constructed in the late 1980s), kayak launch, and diving area. The cove has year-round water access and is an access point for diver search-and-rescue certification and training. It is a popular destination for divers in Alaska, with World War II wreckage and industrial slag, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reef installations, sunken cranes and planes, and vibrant marine life. Smitty's Cove also offers a small gravel beach at low tide and a small boat launch for fishermen, kayakers, stand-up paddle boarding, etc.

## DeLong Dock

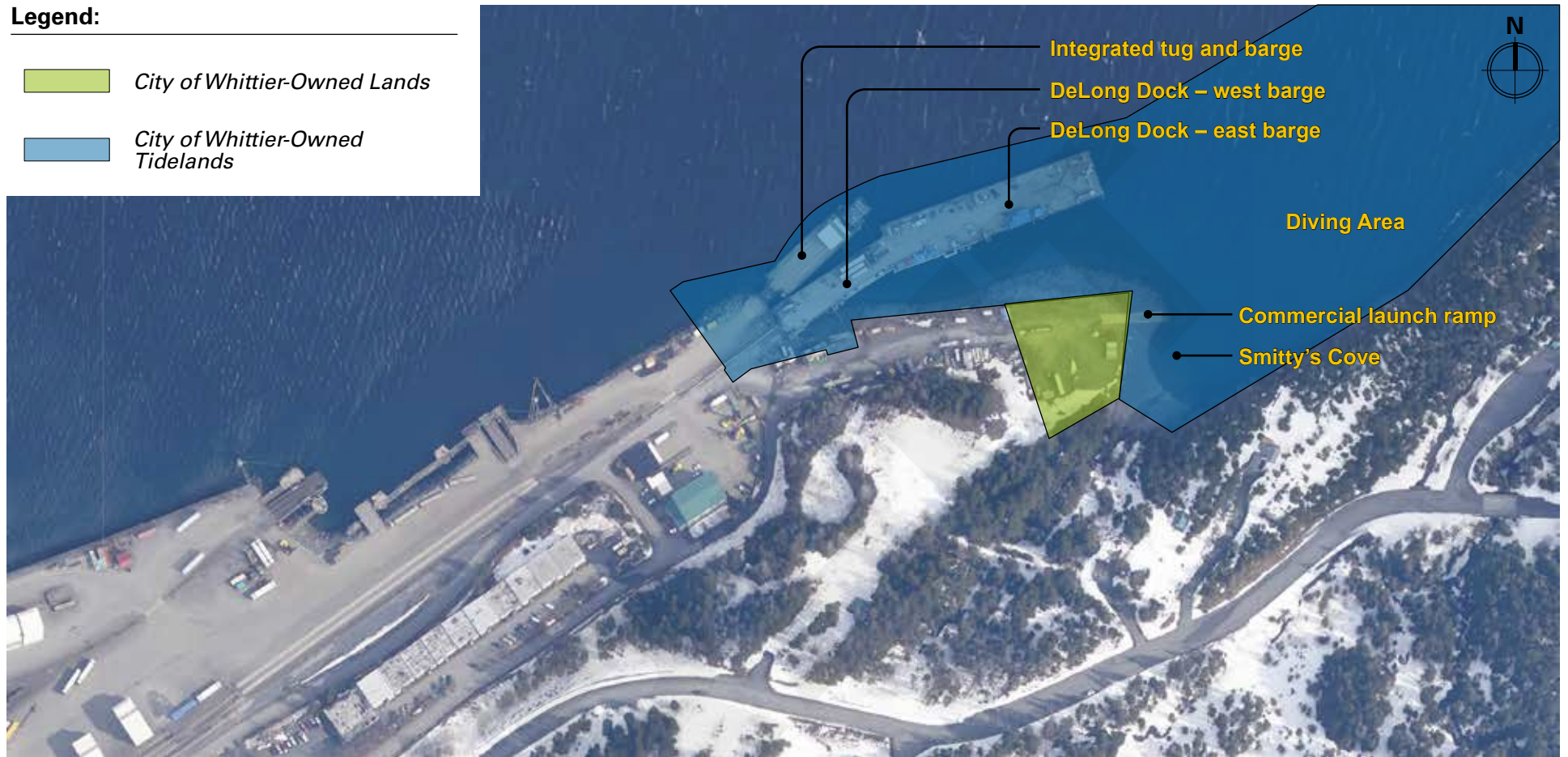
The DeLong Dock was designed and constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers in 1953 as a 'temporary docking facility' and was transferred to City of Whittier ownership in 2018 as part of a land transfer with ARRC. It consists of two self-elevating barges and fifty each 6' diameter steel caissons. The west barge is about 60-ft wide and 250-ft long and is supported by twelve caissons. The east barge is about 90-ft wide and 427-ft long and is supported by thirty-eight caissons.

The dock was used extensively for fuel transfer operations to support military operations and included fuel and fire system piping along the south side of the dock. The original timber decking was removed, and an 8-10 inch thick reinforced concrete deck has been cast over the steel barge deck. The fuel transfer system is no longer in use, and the remaining piping has been stripped, capped, and abandoned. Inspections in 2014 and 2018 found the dock to be in poor to critical condition due to extensive corrosion. The inspection report concluded the dock does not meet modern seismic standards and "would likely fail in a significant earthquake." The City of Whittier is working to replace the dock as soon as possible to avoid impacts on the local seafood industry.



**Legend:**

- City of Whittier-Owned Lands*
- City of Whittier-Owned Tidelands*



*Smitty's Cove*



*DeLong Dock*



*Commercial launch ramp*

# Head of the Bay

Head of the Bay, located at the western edge of Passage Canal, is sited on a delta formed by creeks flowing from Portage Pass, Shakespeare Creek, and Leanard Glacier. The majority of lands at the Head of the Bay are owned by ARRC and leased to the City of Whittier under the 'Master Lease' program. The City of Whittier and the ARRC are currently in negotiations for a purchase that would allow the City of Whittier to acquire nearshore uplands. They currently hold the title to the tidelands adjacent to Head of the Bay.

The area is relatively undeveloped, with existing infrastructure consisting of an access road, the new cruise ship terminal, Whittier Bay Campground (managed by the City of Whittier), parking area, and the Whittier Airport (State of Alaska-held airport). Recreational access points are available at the terminus of the access road near the City campground, near Shakespeare Creek, and the Portage Pass Trail. The tidelands remain relatively in-tact. The Head of the Bay has a long history as a focal point for potential development including ideas for a deep water port, construction of a new harbor, improved recreational opportunities, business developments, and habitat restoration.

## Opportunities

### Upland

- An abundance of available developable land that can support varied and mixed uses, including industrial, recreational, and business development.
- Potential development of varied marine infrastructure (port, harbor, boat storage, etc.).

- Acquisition and decommissioning of the airport would eliminate height restrictions and allow for increased use of the nearshore area.
- Retail businesses at the new cruise ship terminal
- Develop large-scale parking to alleviate congestion and transportation conflicts

### Harbor:

- Develop boat launch facility supported by convenient large-scale parking.

### Recreation:

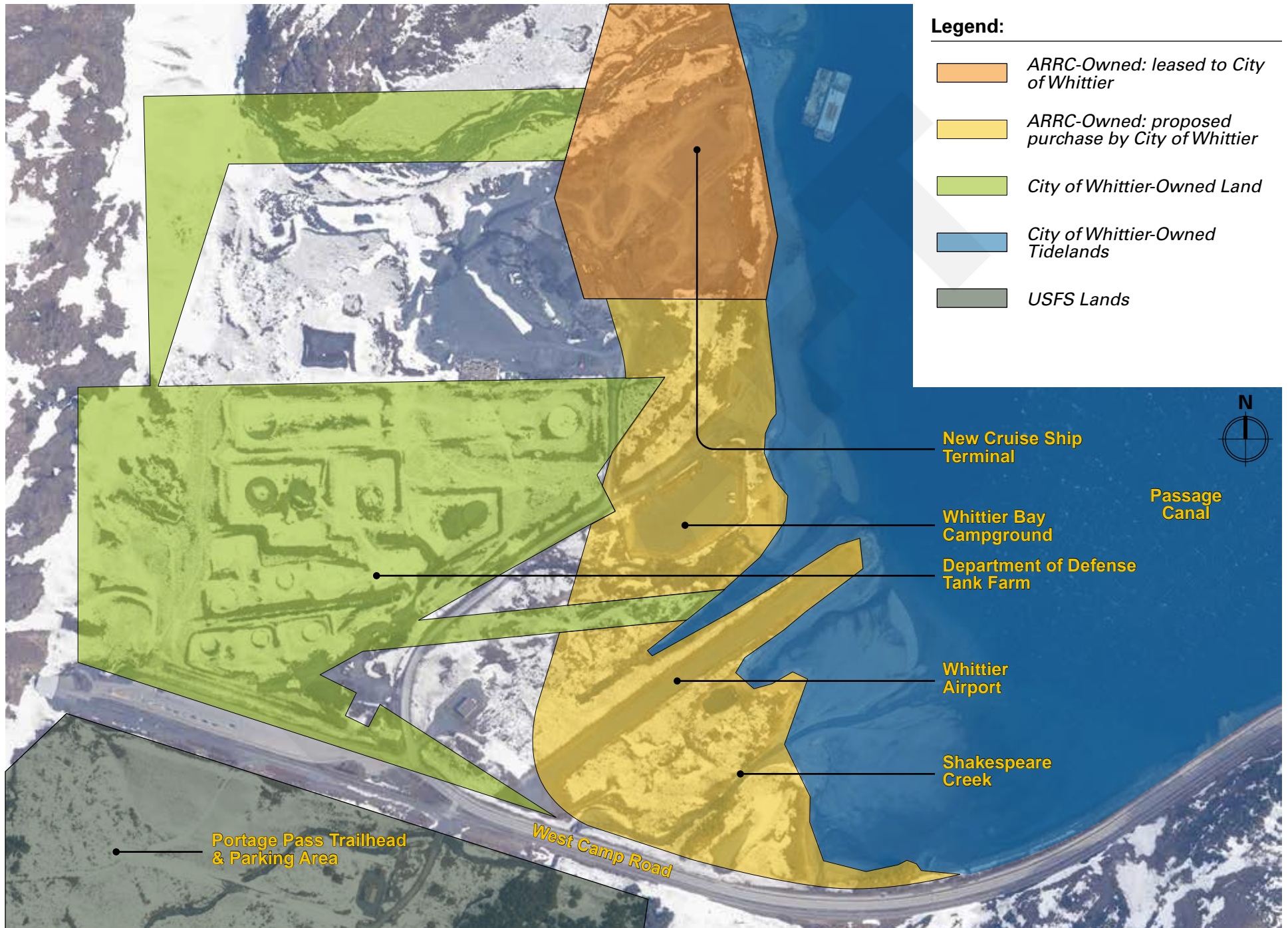
- Freshwater streams that could potentially support terminal fishing areas (Shakespeare Creek has been investigated for a fishing lagoon similar to the Homer Spit).
- Expand campground
- Preserve natural tide-lands at the head of the Passage Canal for recreation.

## Challenges

- If maintained, the Federal Aviation Administration approach requirements restricts the height of development.
- Tsunami run-up should be considered for any proposed nearshore structures.
- Historical significance includes tribal, gold rush era, WWII, and beyond.
- Environmental conditions offshore of the Head of the Bay are anticipated to be exposed to very large waves (> 10' 100-year significant wave height). These environmental conditions may restrict the feasibility for marine infrastructure suitable for the environment.

- The uplands at the Head of the Bay have an extended history of fuel-based contamination primarily from the decommissioned Department of Defense tank farm area (further confirmation on restrictions required).
- Bathymetry offshore of the Head of the Bay consists of a shallow offshore shelf that extends from the high tide line out to an approximate elevation of -10 mean low low water (MLLW) followed by a steep (1:1) drop off in elevation to an undetermined depth (presumably -200 MLLW or greater). The significant drop in offshore elevation will restrict options for offshore infrastructure.
- Geotechnical conditions at the Head of the Bay may restrict or complicate development. The sedimentary nature of the soils forming the Head of the Bay delta may be sensitive to liquefaction or instability under seismic loading. This concern is increased for waterfront structures.
- Preservation or restoration of the environment is significant for the community. This should be balanced with development.







**Smitty's Cove is a recreational  
gem for Whittier!**





# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

**Community engagement was prioritized through several avenues, including the formation of a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) at the project's outset, focus group meetings with community stakeholders, and three proposed public meetings (both online and in-person).**

A Community Outreach Plan (COP) was developed at the project's outset to define the scope of community and stakeholder engagement and outline engagement strategies for the planning process.

The COP aims to maximize community participation in shaping positive outcomes, building trust, and strengthening relationships. This effective and responsive plan clearly defines the project's engagement scope, desired outcomes, and measurable success

targets, while also incorporating adaptive strategies for flexibility. Community outreach is a shared responsibility that leverages valuable insights from the community and stakeholders to enhance decision-making. The City of Whittier plays a vital role in actively fostering trust and strengthening community connections.

The COP provides opportunities for community and stakeholder participation that will generate constructive feedback for the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan's development and keep them informed of its progress.

# KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder engagement is crucial for a successful planning process. Their diverse perspectives and experiences provide valuable insights into waterfront development opportunities and potential risks, fostering collaboration and ownership of the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan. This inclusive approach strengthens relationships and creates a more supportive environment for plan implementation, ensuring the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan is well-informed, supported, and aligned with the needs and interests of those it affects.

The stakeholder list was developed in collaboration with the City of Whittier to identify focus groups. The focus groups included representatives from freight and passenger transportation, major waterfront and surrounding landowners, waterfront service providers, the tourism and recreation industries, city departments and commissions, and non-governmental and community-based organizations.

## FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

Seven focus group meetings were held the week of December 9, 2024, to gather feedback on waterfront operations and encourage active participation. Participants received a packet containing discussion questions and a map exhibit to facilitate place-based input. Key discussion points included:

- Their relationship with the waterfront.
- Existing assets and their locations.
- Unmet infrastructure needs.
- Potential improvements to better serve their needs or expand opportunities.
- Other information relevant to plan development

Meeting minutes are available on the City of Whittier project page. The following organizations were invited to participate.

## STAKEHOLDER LIST

### Freight and Transportation

- State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Alaska Railroad Corporation
- Alaska Marine Highway System
- Alaska Marine Lines
- Dojer Services, LLC

### Passenger Transportation

- Alaska Cruise Transportation
- Bear Valley Road Runner
- The Park Connection Motorcoach
- Wild Journey's – Private Transfers
- Salmon Berry Tours
- BAC Transportation
- Premier Alaska

## Major Land Management Agency

- United States Forest Service
- Alaska Railroad Corporation
- Huna-Totem Corporation

## Waterfront Service Providers

- Custom Marine Services, LLC
- Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation
- Copper River Seafoods

## Tourism and Recreation

- Huna-Totem Corporation
- Norwegian Cruise Lines
- Phillips Cruises and Tours
- Holland America-Princess Cruises
- UnCruise Adventures
- United States Forest Service
- Whittier Chamber of Commerce

## City Departments and Commissions

- City Council
- Port & Harbor Advisory Commission
- Planning & Zoning Commission
- Parks & Recreation Committee

## Non-Governmental and Community-Based Organizations

- Whittier Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- Prince William Sound Economic Development District
- Prince William Sound Stewardship Foundation
- Greater Whittier Chamber of Commerce

## Indigenous

- Chenega Corporation
- Chenega IRA Council



# PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The PAC, composed of seven community representatives, plays an advisory role in the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan project, working in collaboration with City of Whittier staff and project consultants. The PAC contributes to project development and reviews findings and documents throughout the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan process. Project deliverables are shared with the PAC for review and feedback. PAC members serve as liaisons, interacting with their respective stakeholder groups to both inform the process and represent community perspectives.

As beneficial to the process, additional meetings may be arranged.

## PAC MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held before major deliverables and after public meetings to gather PAC feedback. Anticipated meetings include:

- **Meeting #1:** PAC convening, project requirements review, roles and responsibilities clarification, identification of information needs and next steps, project timeline, deliverable, and review period overview, and identification of City of Whittier tasks.
- **Meeting #2:** Review and input on the Draft Inventory and Analysis and Draft Economic Assessment.
- **Meeting #3:** Review and input on community feedback from Public Open Houses.
- **Meeting #4:** Presentation of the Draft Waterfront and Economic Development Plan.
- **Meeting #5:** Feedback and recommendations on the Draft Waterfront and Economic Development Plan.
- **Meeting #6:** Review community feedback and recommended actions for finalizing the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan.

# PUBLIC MEETINGS

## ONLINE LISTENING SESSION

Online listening sessions were held on January 7th and 8th, 2025, to introduce the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan project. Participants received a review of previous Waterfront and Economic Development Plan efforts and an overview of Whittier's economic background, both generally and specifically related to the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan. Each session concluded with a question and answer period.

Discussions covered the project and its designated areas, with a focus on the Harbor Management Area and the Waterfront Development Area. The Economic Assessment was also reviewed, highlighting waterfront commercial lease properties and a comparison of Whittier's harbor rates with similar waterfront cities like Seward and Homer.

Kris Erchinger, Whittier's Finance Director, presented an overview of the city's current financial status, including financial management practices, revenue generation and expenditures, and recent or anticipated changes affecting the city's and its infrastructure's financial health.

*Advertisement poster for the online listening session and public open house meetings*

## Waterfront & Economic Development Plan

## Help Plan Whittier's Waterfront!



# COMMUNITY MEETINGS



**Learn & Contribute!** The City of Whittier is developing a Waterfront & Economic Development Plan. Attend these upcoming public meetings to learn more and share your vision.

### First Meeting: Online Listening Session

Learn about project background, economic analysis, waterfront facilities, and development opportunities.

#### on Zoom

**JANUARY  
7TH**

**STARTS AT  
6:30PM**



**ONLINE ZOOM MEETING**

<https://tinyurl.com/4ht6tpz9>

-or-

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83987871739?pwd=PvFJaa99i72CegaJdO56cBwR77vqd6.1>



**City of Whittier**

### Second Meeting: Public Open House

Review early ideas and share your feedback on the preliminary waterfront concepts.

#### in Anchorage

**JANUARY  
15TH**

**STARTS AT  
4-6PM**

**ANCHORAGE COWORK SPACE**

202 East Northern Lights Boulevard,  
Anchorage, AK 99503

#### in Whittier

**JANUARY  
16TH**

**STARTS AT  
4-6PM**

**WHITTIER COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

3rd Floor, Public Safety Building,  
660 Whittier Street, Whittier, AK 99693

DRAFT VERSION JULY 28, 2025

## PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

Two public open houses were held to collect community knowledge and feedback. The project team was available to review potential opportunities, challenges, and constraints with the community and to answer questions.

An open house was held on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 in Anchorage and on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025 in Whittier. Comments from the Anchorage open house were available for Whittier residents to review.

Feedback was documented and summarized as:

### Smitty's Cove:

- Smitty's Cove is a recreational gem.
- Best kayak launch in town for 3-4 kayak businesses.
- Provide better signage to help visitors get to Smitty's (and Lu Young Park).
- Improve parking
- Improve trash facilities, including bear-proofing.
- Consider improvements that would better separate user groups with different needs for water access (such as freight, jet ski, divers, swimmers). Accessibility should be included to allow inclusive use.
- Consider improvements that would facilitate recreational use of the area, such as picnic tables, gear storage, signage, kayak storage racks.
- Consider educational signage related to an established population of invasive European Black Slugs at Smitty's.

## Waterfront: Pedestrian and Vehicles

- Develop clearer pathways/connections between the tunnel and parking/destinations.
- Implement better pedestrian and vehicle wayfinding signs throughout town.
- Repair or replace wooden boardwalks
- Artistic signage for harbor walkways (i.e., boardwalk)
- Apply Complete Streets principles for improvements: safety for all users, bike lane, clear crosswalk, signs directing pedestrian traffic
- Optimize parking to provide economic benefit to the city.
- Consider developing a covered walkway from parking lot to day cruise area (Cliffside Marina)
- Bears are a significant concern, including their presence in the tunnel and on the docks. Improvements should include consideration of this.
- A City-wide solution is needed for trash storage issue (to resolve environmental and safety concerns).

## Waterfront: Uplands

- Provide consistent lighting throughout the waterfront (for wayfinding, comfort, and bear safety). Consider motion detection.
- Provide consistent and convenient access to restrooms.
- Provide picnic tables in grassy area adjacent to the Harbormaster Office.
- Harbor businesses need addresses.
- Harbor Loop is a good area for AirBNB.
- Plan for a tunnel or overhead crossing to separate vehicle circulation from the train.



*Attendees discuss the project with the team*



*Attendees discuss the project with the team*



*Attendees discuss the project*



## Waterfront: Facilities

- Include safety considerations such as harbor ladders, fire hydrants, fire-extinguishers, slip-resistant surfacing, and bear safety.
- Consider another gangway/ramp to the docks.
- Provide covered fish cleaning stations, including water
- Harbor needs winter water access for larger vessels
- Consider improvements (such as sheet pile or rocks) to block east waves from coming into Cliffside Marina
- Provide a boat lift or include improvements to support operation of one by others.
- Replace the current City Dock with a boat lift capability and a new boat lift.
- Repair City Dock and include 2 – 2 ton cranes for cargo.
- Boat haul-out facilities with drain (for contamination) with manhole with hose bib and electricity for painting (scraping) – 6 pads
- Boat lift and a “fixed” sewage pump-out located with in the harbor
- More 50’ commercial vessel moorage
- GFCI shore power
- Cleats that don’t rip off
- New harbor skiff that has more capability than the current harbor skiff
- Light harbor entrance
- Ocean Dock: Floating pile (something to leave boat on overnight), shore power, confirm the loading capacity

## City of Whittier Facilities

- Plan for a Community Recreation Center.
- Plan for a Visitor Center
- City park is in need of renovation, especially for children and youth.

## Miscellaneous

- The Caboose is unique even in Alaska and adds to the flavor of the town.
- Partner with existing school playground.
- Repair or remove the busted binoculars (pavilion)

## Head of the Bay:

- Emphasize the preservation of tidelands and beaches, and maintain salmon habitat.
- Plan for new boat ramps and parking sufficient to address needs (including breakwater improvements).
- Consider a harbor, with options that include moving larger vessels to the head of the bay (including breakwater improvements).
- Provide dumpsters and trash cans.
- Consider boat haul-out and boat storage areas.
- Plan for commercial uses and opportunities related to marine uplands.
- Maintain or increase camping access.
- Hydraulic trailer



*Attendees at the meeting*



*Map displays at the open house in Anchorage*







**Income generation to support improvements and maintenance.**





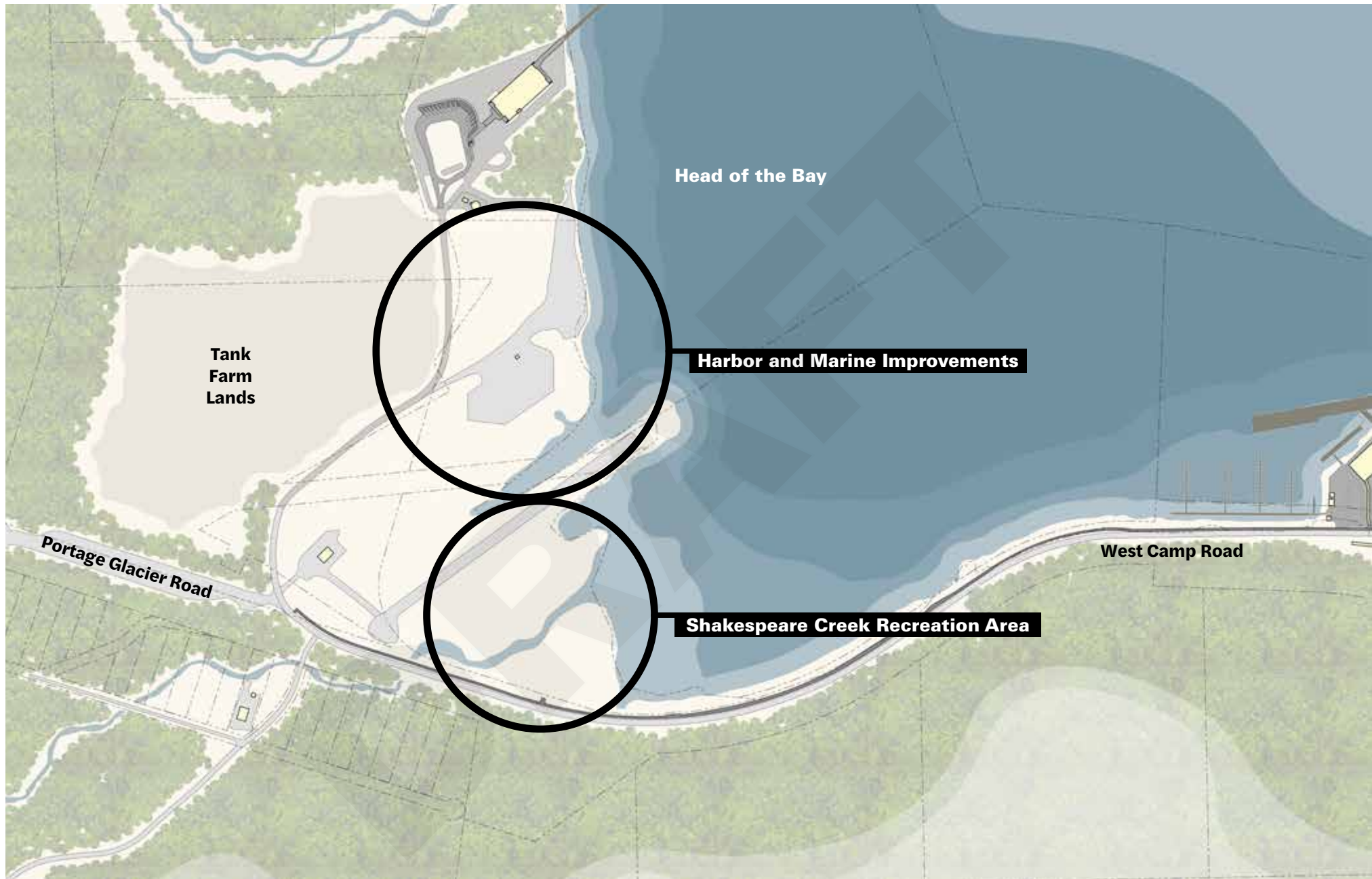


# WATERFRONT PLAN

**Opportunity-based development is key to implement a 20-year vision for Whittier's waterfront areas. The desired outcome is a mix of direct marine facility improvements and enhancement of upland areas for businesses and enjoyment by locals and visitors.**

This chapter provides an overview of community-desired improvements to Whittier's waterfront areas and their adjacent uplands. The highest pressure on Whittier is a lack of available land for improvements (due to terrain and ownership), and the accompanying challenge of minimizing conflicts between incompatible uses that are forced to co-exist. Underlying this plan is the need to optimize areas for specific uses. This is contingent upon development at the Head of the Bay that will allow separation of user groups, and provide land that can be developed to reduce the need for existing lands to serve all purposes.

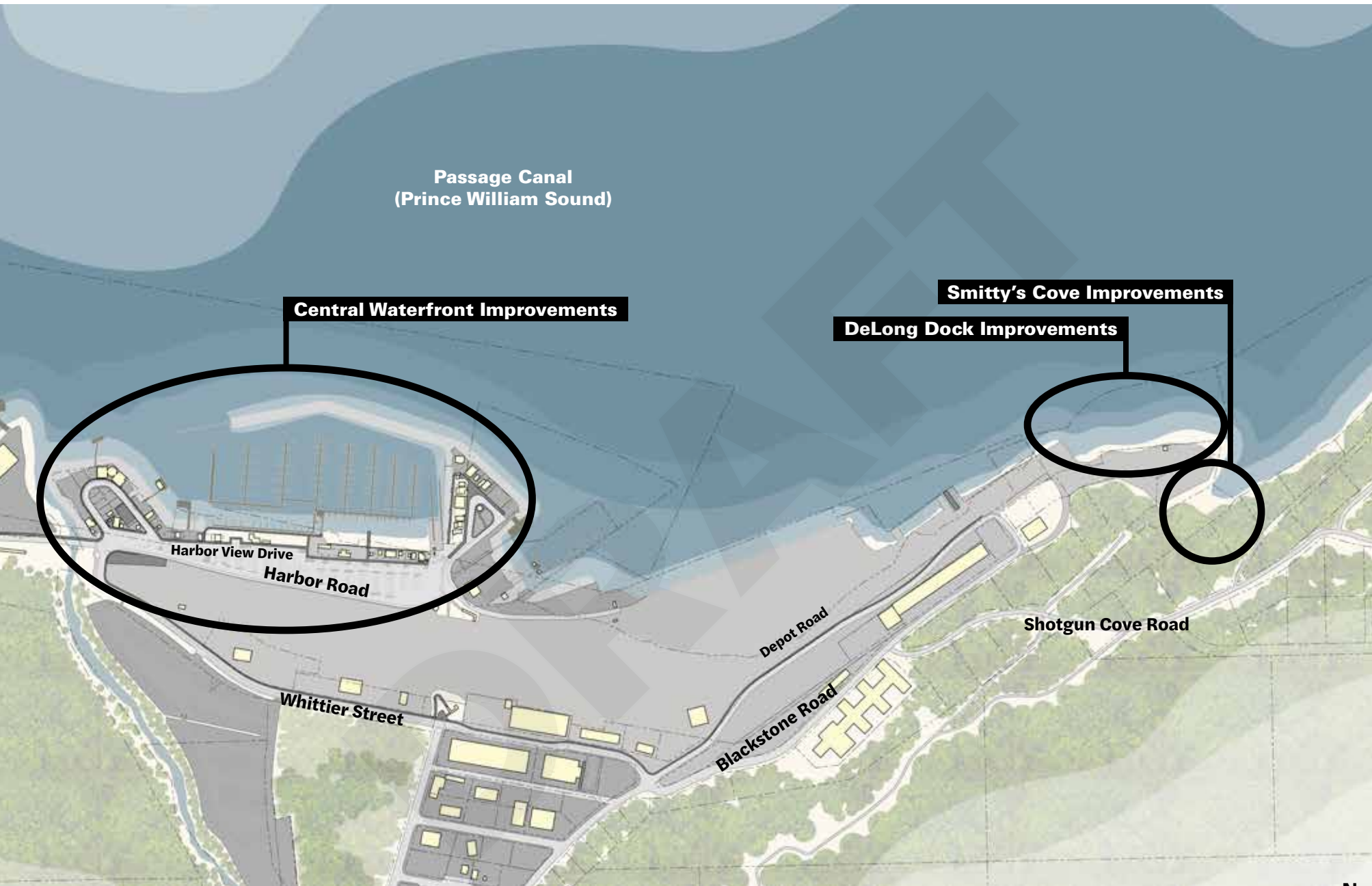
The following pages provide an overview for the Central Waterfront (Harbor Management Area) and Smitty's Cove & DeLong Dock and Head of the Bay (Waterfront Development Area), and detailed information for areas within these. These narratives focus on Harbor Facilities and upland improvements for Public Infrastructure and enhancements to support Economic Opportunities. Overwhelmingly, public comment related to development that would enhance safety and aesthetics for visitors and users, improve commercial opportunities, and strengthen/expand revenue for the City of Whittier to reinvest in its waterfront areas.



# WATERFRONT MASTER PLAN | CONTEXT MAP

DRAFT VERSION JULY 28, 2025





Passage Canal  
(Prince William Sound)

Central Waterfront Improvements

Smitty's Cove Improvements

DeLong Dock Improvements

Harbor View Drive  
Harbor Road

Depot Road

Shotgun Cove Road

Whittier Street

Blackstone Road

0 300 600 1200

1 inch = 600 feet @ 8.5x11



DRAFT VERSION JULY 28, 2025



# OVERVIEW

The intent of this section is to provide general guiding information for all areas of the plan, more specific information related to zones, and detailed location-specific information for potential improvements. All of this information is at the master plan level. Implementation projects will need additional planning and assessment to confirm their economic viability, confirmation of programming and design criteria, and the development of an outcome that achieves the desired function, budget, and aesthetics.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Successful commercial and working waterfronts are defined by their ability to deliver tangible functional benefits to a diverse range of users. Whittier currently serves as a critical gateway to and from Prince William Sound. Recognizing the trend of increasing cruise ship arrivals, a strategic objective is to evolve Whittier from a transit point into a compelling destination where visitors extend their stay to immerse themselves in the town's unique character and offerings. Such enhancements will concurrently attract independent travelers and provide improved amenities and experiences for local residents.

While the City of Whittier will plan for the positive outcomes of this plan, and is the correct entity to fund and construct supporting infrastructure and facilities, much of the effort will need to come from the private sector to build on local commercial success and expand opportunities. Directly indexed to commercial success, lease revenue, sales tax, and head tax revenue will support the City of Whittier's ability to invest in, operate, and maintain infrastructure.

## CORE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The following summarizes the goals, needs, and aspirations expressed during this process:

### *Market-Driven Experiences*

The waterfront must deliver experiences that resonate with target visitor markets and generate demonstrable economic value for local businesses, requiring a deep understanding of visitor expectations and preferences.

### *Achieving Critical Mass*

To establish Whittier as a "magnetic destination," a sufficient density and diversity of businesses, activities, and attractions must be cultivated. This critical mass is essential to encourage initial visits, prolong stays, and inspire repeat visitation.

### *Perceived and Delivered Quality*

All aspects of the waterfront experience, from infrastructure and services to retail and recreational opportunities, must be high quality. A meaningful variety of engaging activities and points of interest is crucial.

### *Authentic Identity (The "Whittier" Brand)*

Development initiatives must align with and amplify Whittier's authentic local identity. The plan will seek to define what makes Whittier unique and ensure that this distinct character is supported, enhanced, and serves as an enduring foundation for its appeal.

### *Public Realm Excellence*

Drawing inspiration from successful Alaskan working waterfronts, the plan will prioritize the creation of high-quality public spaces and amenities. These spaces will be designed to support visitor objectives, including shopping, leisurely exploration, sightseeing, educational opportunities, and active pursuits, thereby facilitating the creation and acquisition of lasting memories.

### *"The Place to Be" - Landmark Status*

The ultimate aspiration is to transcend mere functionality and establish the Whittier waterfront as a landmark destination – "the place to be." This involves fostering an environment that attracts and sustains a thriving and engaged community.

### *Social Media Integration and "Shareability"*

A metric for success will be the waterfront's presence and portrayal on social media. The physical design and curation of experiences will intentionally provide compelling opportunities for visitors to document and share their time in Whittier, amplifying its reach and appeal.

## AVAILABLE LAND

Whittier has an extreme limitation on available land for all uses. When combined with low lease rates and significant challenges for viable commercial businesses, this has resulted in land uses that are incompatible with desired development outcomes. Available land is subject to the current needs of the landowner or leaseholder. While lease requirements dictate allowable uses, this requires compliance and enforcement. A land-use goal should be that each parcel is optimized to its highest and best use.



*Commercial lease properties in the Harbor Loop being used for storage.*

The City of Whittier intends to purchase land from the ARRC, including land at the Head of the Bay adjacent to existing City of Whittier lands. New marine facilities will reduce pressure on the Central Waterfront and allow it to refocus on commercial development. Development of lands at the Head of the Bay will allow marine-related businesses, and other commercial and industrial uses that are currently disadvantaged by limited available land.



## PARKING

As the main commercial destination, the Central Waterfront has limited parking. This places importance on good pedestrian connections. As visitation and commercial opportunities increase, other parking opportunities should be investigated including: parking at the Head of the Bay and taking a shuttle to town, increasing the availability of visitor parking by reducing the quantity of permitted parking (or relocating), and due to the overall lack of developable land, consideration of structured parking.

## WINTER CITY

The average annual snowfall for Whittier is approximately 20 feet. January sees an average of approximately 4 feet. Planning and design need to place priority on snow movement, storage, and removal. This includes minimizing obstructions within areas that need snow removal, and considering the ability for improvements to be designed to allow seasonal removal/relocation when they would be within or directly adjacent to vehicular areas.

## WAYFINDING

An effective wayfinding system is critical for Whittier to guide a diverse mix of residents and visitors through a compact and bustling environment. Clear and intuitive signage is essential for tourists navigating from arrival points to key attractions such as tour operators, the central waterfront, local businesses, and historical landmarks. For the community, a well-designed wayfinding strategy will improve pedestrian circulation, create a more cohesive and visually connected waterfront, and safely guide people to destinations. Given the concentration of industrial, commercial, and recreational activities in a limited space, an effective wayfinding system will not only improve the visitor experience and support local economic development but also ensure the safe and efficient movement of all users, mitigating potential conflicts and fostering a more enjoyable and accessible waterfront.



*Valdez primary wayfinding signs*

## REGULATION & INFORMATION

A clear and consistent system of regulatory signage is essential for safety, compliance, and order in Whittier's operationally complex environment. Given the dense mixture of pedestrians, passenger vehicles, railroad traffic, and commercial port activities, regulatory signs are vital for preventing user conflicts, enforcing traffic patterns, and clearly defining public areas. For harbor function, signage is necessary to manage vessel operations, define moorage and launch rules, and communicate environmental regulations that protect the sensitive ecosystem of Prince William Sound. The goal is a safe, predictable, and legally sound waterfront for all residents, visitors, and operators.

Specific messaging should include bear interactions and the importance of proper garbage disposal, invasive species knowledge and actions that people can take to assist with control, and proper behavior within the habitats of Prince William Sound. There are specific locations where these messages may be more effective including where people are waiting (trips, tours, or shuttles), gateways such as the top of gangways, and visitor contact locations.



*Interpretive signs at the Sitka Sound Science Center*

## IDENTITY & INTERPRETATION

Rich interpretation will help in the transformation from a logistical hub into an engaging destination that tells the story of the community's unique identity. For the multitude of visitors arriving by cruise ship, train, and tunnel, interpretive elements (signage, public art, and interactive displays) will narrate a history of cultural and traditional use, military significance, and an evolution into a fishing and tourism gateway. Interpretation also fosters a deeper appreciation for the Prince William Sound's natural environment, educating users about its glaciers, wildlife, and the dynamic forces that shape the landscape. Weaving these historical, cultural, and ecological narratives into the physical design of the waterfront, the master plan can cultivate a strong sense of place, enrich the visitor experience far beyond scenic views, and instill a deeper connection and understanding of Whittier for all.

Interpretation should be site-specific and focus on information relevant to the place or for direct view opportunities. Where interpretive subjects or experiences are off-site, interpretation should be simple and provide people with information on how they could have a closer experience (whether self-guided or assisted by a tour). With the Central Waterfront as a primary destination, visitors should be encouraged to visit the museum as a key interpretive opportunity. This should include clear direction to the pedestrian tunnel as the preferred route of travel.



## TRAIL CONNECTIVITY

Connecting pedestrians and cyclists (and other non-motorized modes of travel) from the Head of the Bay to Smitty's Cove is recommended. The entire route should be developed as a multi-use pathway that accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists, or be clear where there is pedestrian priority requiring slow speed from other modes of travel. While there are portions that need improvement, and better wayfinding will be necessary, this route currently exists from the Whittier Tunnel to the Harbor Triangle. A stronger connection should be developed from the Central Waterfront to the pedestrian tunnel through to Whittier Street and to the Museum.



*Music node on Ketchikan's waterfront shared use path*

While an alternative pedestrian route is to walk along Whittier Street to the Museum, this should be de-emphasized due to the need to cross the railroad tracks. From the Museum, the route should be extended to Smitty's Cove via Blackstone Road, Shotgun Cove Road, and Kittiwake Court. The connection from Kittiwake down to Smitty's Cove will need to address a steep site through the use of stairs or preferably a slope.

Rest stops should be provided at regular intervals. These locations are opportunities for interpretation. Areas of interest should be highlighted, with the provision of side routes to access them as appropriate.



*Seawalk adjacent to Crescent Harbor in Sitka*

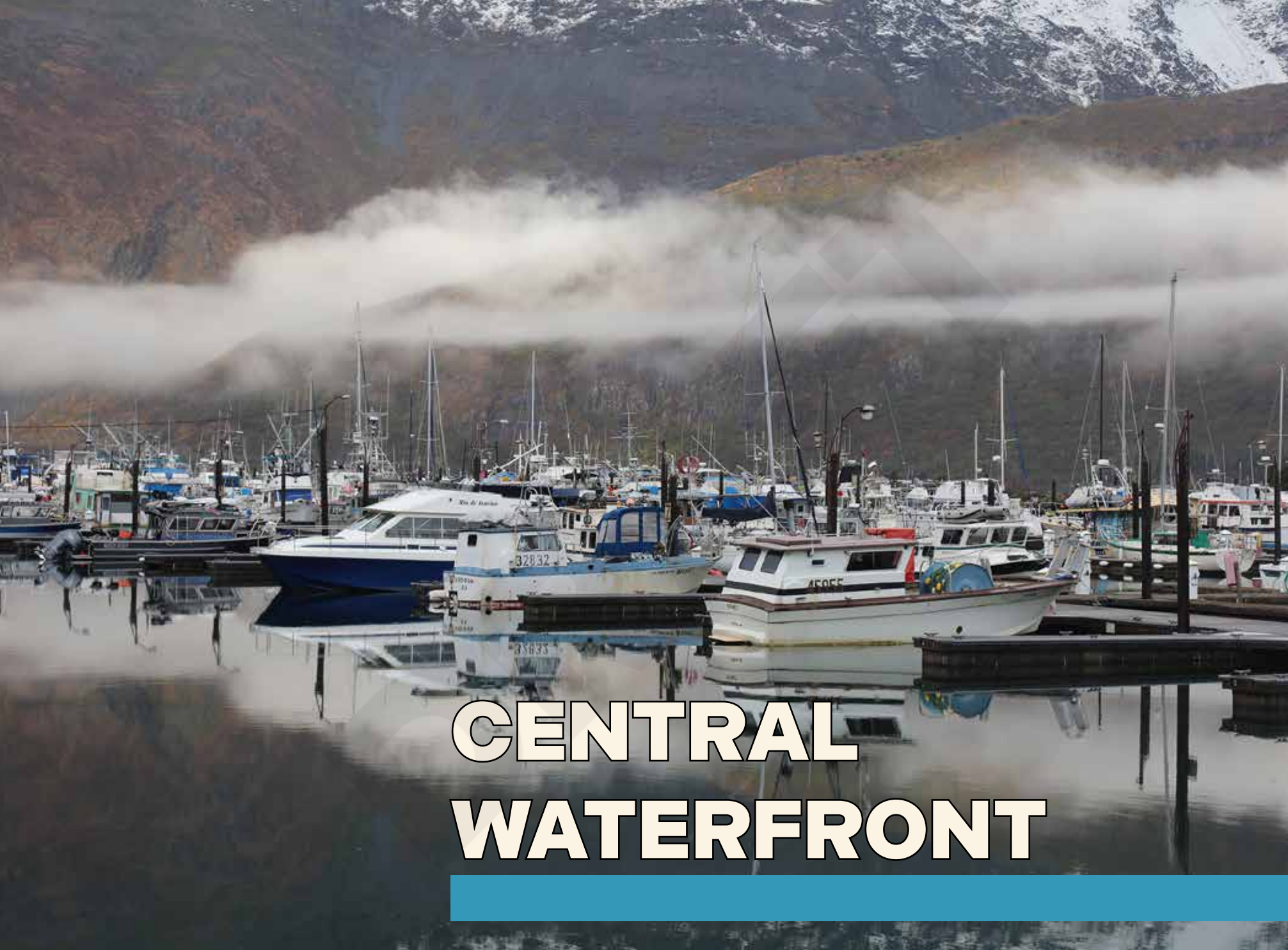
## MAINTENANCE

Public infrastructure will be maintained for quality, safety, and long-term optimization of development investments. While materials and construction methods will be selected for durability and longevity, ongoing maintenance for roads, pathways, and other facilities will be expected to minimize deferred maintenance obligations. Existing and new facilities should have schedules to ensure that equipment and materials are maintained to meet or exceed manufacturer/installer recommendations.

Maintenance activities will be expected to increase in the summer, with more frequent need for garbage services, cleaning of restrooms, and general maintenance of public spaces for litter and cleanliness.

## HARBOR WALK

The Harbor Walk will be concrete where it is on-grade. Where conditions require an elevated walkway, the walk would be expected to be timber or a material like fiberglass decking. Materials with slip resistance should be prioritized. Where the Harbor Walk is adjacent to the Harbor, it will have a guardrail on the water side. In addition to safety, this provides an opportunity for the mounting of horizontal format interpretive signs on the top of the rail.



# CENTRAL WATERFRONT



# CENTRAL WATERFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

## HARBOR LOOP

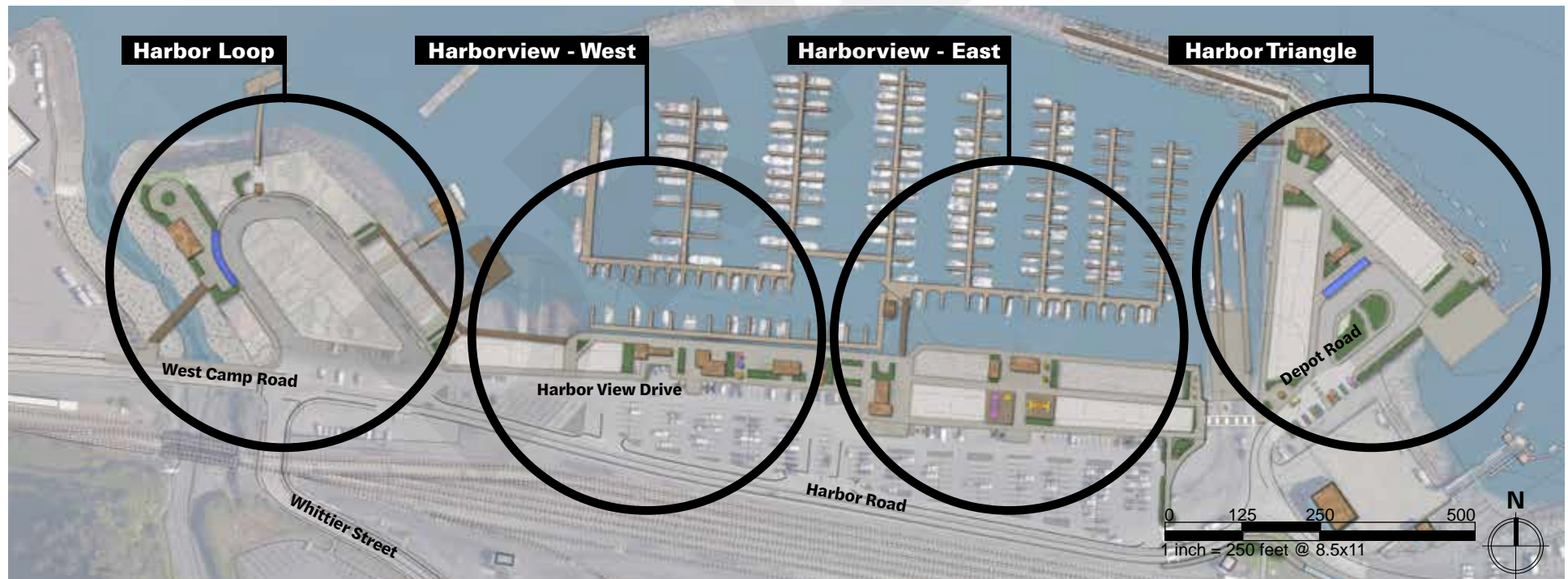
Harbor Loop will act as a gateway into the Central Waterfront, focusing on providing a visitor service hub with the provision of new and improved pedestrian routes and amenities directing people further along the waterfront. New and improved pedestrian routes and amenities include more facilitated walkways, visitor contact facilities, and comfort facilities (restrooms and shelters). This area will include a shuttle/bus transfer facility to bring visitors to and from the waterfront. City of Whittier investment will focus on attracting and supporting visitors that will benefit local businesses.

## HARBORVIEW

Harborview focuses on improving harbor operations, expanding harbor capacity, and providing upland improvements to support business development. Harbor uplands will be expanded on the eastern side of the harbor to create the opportunity for additional lease properties. New pedestrian areas, amenities, visitor facilities, and comfort facilities (restrooms and shelters) will be provided. Replacing the City Dock and relocating the majority of boat ramp traffic to the Head of the Bay will improve harbor functions. City of Whittier investment will focus on improving the harbor and attracting and supporting visitors that will benefit local businesses.

## HARBOR TRIANGLE

Harbor Triangle will create a visitor service hub focusing on shuttle traffic and providing new and improved pedestrian routes and amenities such as walkways, open space, visitor facilities, and comfort facilities (restrooms and shelters). This will include prioritizing pedestrians within the Harbor Triangle by limiting vehicular access to this area seasonally. A shuttle/bus transfer facility will improve visitor access to and from the Central Waterfront. City of Whittier investment will focus on attracting and supporting visitors that will benefit local businesses and create public open space for visitors and residents.





## ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

Access will allow anxiety-free vehicle travel and arrival to the desired destination, or a location where once parked, pedestrian movement allows access to all Central Waterfront amenities.

### Wayfinding

The Central Waterfront (Harbor Management Area) is often congested with pedestrians and vehicles. This includes traffic for the AMHS ferry terminal, ARRC terminal, shipping and cargo, boat harbor and launch ramp, visitors (independent and cruise ship), and locals. A unified vehicle and pedestrian wayfinding system will reduce confusion through clear direction to destinations. Within the public realm, once parked, wayfinding will include informational contact (maps or a person) supported by directional and interpretive signage. Directional signage will guide people to their destinations, with intuitive and comfortable pedestrian flow through and within this area. Signs should be located at points of entry and intersections where directional decisions are made. Interpretive opportunities and public amenities along the way will support the quality of experience. Displayed information should have a unified branding and graphic style.

## MATERIALS - GENERAL

Materials and construction methods shall be appropriate for a harsh marine climate and prioritize durability, longevity, and minimize the need for ongoing maintenance.

### Pedestrian Routes

Pedestrian walkways and plazas should be constructed of concrete. Colored concrete or decorative scoring patterns can be used for aesthetic benefit.

### Convenient Parking

Parking should prioritize customer parking close to businesses. Employee parking should be prioritized outside of these areas. Within visitor areas, day-time service access (loading/unloading) should be minimized to reduce impacts to visitor use. Long-term parking for harbor users shall be located outside high demand parking areas close to businesses and waterfront attractions. To create convenient parking, properly sign all parking areas and enforce parking requirements. Provide accessible parking stalls adjacent to destinations.

The development of a new boat launch at the Head of the Bay will decrease congestion, and reduce the demand for parking with the benefit of increasing parking available to visitors and users of the Central Waterfront.

### Landscaping

Landscape areas for trees, shrubs, and perennials should receive a minimum of 18 inches of planting soil and be planted with hardy, low-maintenance plant material appropriate for Whittier's environment. Turf areas will receive 4 inches of planting soil.



*Interactive digital information sign*

### Site Furnishings

All furnishings should be galvanized steel, powder-coated stainless steel or aluminum, or stainless steel. Where wood or a wood-look is required, treated wood, plastic wood, or marine-appropriate wood should be used.

## AMENITIES AND SUPPORT

### Visitor Support

---

Visitor contact will contribute to good experiences, support businesses, and assist with selection of destinations. A main visitor contact facility will provide the most detailed information, with the potential for staffing (i.e. seasonal or permanent structure to provide shelter and allow access to materials such as pamphlets and rack cards). Mid-level contact facilities will provide a map and general information (i.e. a small open kiosk with roof, similar to the existing structure next to the boat ramp). The most common form (low-level) of visitor support would be directional signage/maps to provide ongoing orientation and navigation assistance, with interpretation opportunities. Clear access to these resources will reduce the need for local businesses to provide this assistance.

Static or staffed visitor facilities will increase the potential for visitors to be directed to local businesses, within and outside of the waterfront. Consideration should also be given to digital tools for visitors to access information. Referencing websites or applications via URL or QR codes is a flexible way to connect users. Other options include on-site touch screens to access information directly, including online information or as an interface developed specifically for Whittier.

### Seating

---

Seating will be provided frequently for both resting and enjoyment. Seating is to be located at gathering areas, points of interest, or locations with excellent views or activity areas. Locate benches to not obstruct pedestrian circulation. The majority of benches should include backs and armrests, with backless benches an option for locations where clearer views are desired.

### Restrooms

---

The existing restroom facilities will be upgraded with new bathroom buildings including multi-stall restrooms, utility and small supply rooms, drinking fountains, and one facility containing showers for harbor users. Additional restrooms will be added to provide additional convenience. Restrooms should be available during business operation hours, including businesses that require early arrival.

### Garbage Management

---

Bear-proof garbage receptacles will be installed in main public use areas and at regular intervals along pedestrian routes. A significant improvement will be the provision of a central garbage collection location where dumpsters can be located within a gated area to exclude bears and provide ease and safety for garbage to be consolidated.

## MARINE FACILITIES

Harbor improvements will enhance or replace marine facilities for existing uses, provide facilities that minimize conflict between different user groups, expand adjacent uplands, extend the harbor walk, and improve safety and access. A key component is the relocation of most private boat trailer traffic to the Head of the Bay.

### SAFETY

The harbor should be assessed for lighting improvements specific to the function of harbor facilities. For upland areas and public infrastructure improvements, additional lighting should be installed to ensure that pathways and areas are well lit and aesthetic.



# Harbor Loop

Harbor Loop is the gateway to the Central Waterfront, whether it be for people walking or driving into this area. Redevelopment will focus on enhancing commercial opportunities by supporting visitor access and movement. Enhancements include improvements to visitor access and parking, bus/shuttle access, pedestrian connections into and through the area, and information and directional signage. A key opportunity is establishing a visitor contact facility to act as a starting point for a visitor’s Whittier experience.

## Public Infrastructure

### Whittier Gateway

The area around the Whittier Creek vehicle bridge and adjacent intersection will be developed as a community gateway. There is an opportunity to do this in tandem with a pedestrian bridge located closer to the road, or significant improvement of the existing pedestrian walkway on the bridge.

### Visitor Support

A small visitor center will serve as a destination where visitors can access information including maps, local attractions, transportation options, shopping, dining recommendations, and cultural events. This can be staffed or unstaffed and will provide with information on this to do or see, enhance their experience, and support the local economy.

The facility would be a single story building approximately 1,800 square feet and include an information lobby, service desk, and restrooms with one-fixture per side. The open lobby concept will allow flexibility for visitor services and gatherings.

Another benefit of visitor contact is the opportunity to promote local businesses, tours, and services, encouraging visitors to spend money within the community. The facility can also facilitate data collection on visitor interests and needs to provide information and allow strategic service improvements for future development and business expansion.



Gateway feature ‘Instagram moment’



**HARBOR LOOP**

Extend harbor walk, develop visitor center/park, and develop a Whittier Gateway.



## Public Infrastructure (Cont'd)

### Interpretive Plaza

The function of the interpretive plaza is to create a space that provides all-hours information within the adjacent outdoor areas of the visitor contact building. The 3,000 square foot paved plaza located adjacent to the building will help to orient visitors and assist them with planning their visit. The plaza will also provide a valuable opportunity for interpretive displays that will enrich a visitor's understanding and appreciation of Whittier and the region through exhibits, artwork, and content about its unique history, heritage, and natural environment, fostering a more meaningful interaction with Whittier.



Small visitor contact facility with interpretive plaza.



Interpretive and information (Kelsey Dock, Valdez)

### Harbor Walk Extension

The existing timber Harbor Walk near the Drive Down Float will be extended 400 linear feet along the waterfront, past the Fuel Dock, and end at the existing Harbor Loop sidewalk. The majority of the Harbor Walk extension would be elevated with guardrails along both sides. It should be a minimum of 8-feet wide and up to 10-feet wide in anticipated congestion areas. Widened sections should be provided at approximately 200' intervals along the extension with benches and a proportional number of trash cans. A small paved gateway plaza to the Harbor Walk is proposed adjacent to Lot 3 to create an intentional entrance to the Harbor Walk and direct users off the sidewalk in Harbor Loop. A wayfinding kiosk will be located in the gateway plaza to direct visitors onto the Harbor Walk.

### Shuttle/Bus Access

With or without a visitor contact building, the loop should include a drop-off/pick-up zone sized for a motor coach (approx. 50 passenger) plus a shuttle bus (approx. 24 passenger). A permanent or seasonal covered staging area for passengers with seating should be provided. A similar facility within the Harbor Triangle will provide a destination where visitors can be picked up without needing to walk back to their origin. Traffic flow and parking within the loop will need to be evaluated and adjusted to ensure safe entry and egress for the largest desired vehicle type.

### Restrooms

Restrooms would be included within the visitor center, and would be expected to be four stalls in one restroom and two stalls/two urinals in another. Design should consider allowing exterior access as an option for use when the main facility may not be open.

The existing restroom at the beginning of Harbor Loop road should be replaced with a plumbed facility with four stalls in one side and two stalls/two urinals in the other with cleaning closet, plumbing raceway, and a drinking fountain.



Shuttle shelter with signage and information.



Portable visitor contact facility.



## Public Infrastructure (Cont'd)

### Pedestrian Access

A pedestrian bridge over Whittier Creek and extension of the Harbor Walk into the Harbor Loop area will improve access between the Central Waterfront and operations to the east and west. A sidewalk should be added to the center of the loop to provide safe access to future commercial redevelopment.

### Vehicle Access

Vehicle access through the loop should allow safe movement of the largest expected motor coach or emergency response vehicle.

### Parking

In addition to the available perpendicular parking lot to the south of Harbor Loop, on-street parallel parking will prioritize visitor use with minimum 9'x23' marked spaces, with business parking limited to after-hours or limited loading areas.



Natural wood aesthetic with a decorative safety feature

## Harbor Facilities

### City Dock

Plans propose that the existing dock structure be demolished and replaced with a new dock to the west of the existing dock, and rotated to align with the current fuel dock, improving vessel access to W and X floats and a reduction of congestion near the shoreward end of A float.

The replacement dock will have a similar configuration to the existing structure, with a face approximately 70 feet in length and 20 feet wide. The replacement structure is not planned to serve the dual function as a lift pier; vessel lifting would be discontinued within the Central Waterfront. The new dock will be constructed using modern, durable materials to enhance longevity and performance. The foundation will consist of driven steel piles, while the superstructure will be built using precast concrete components.

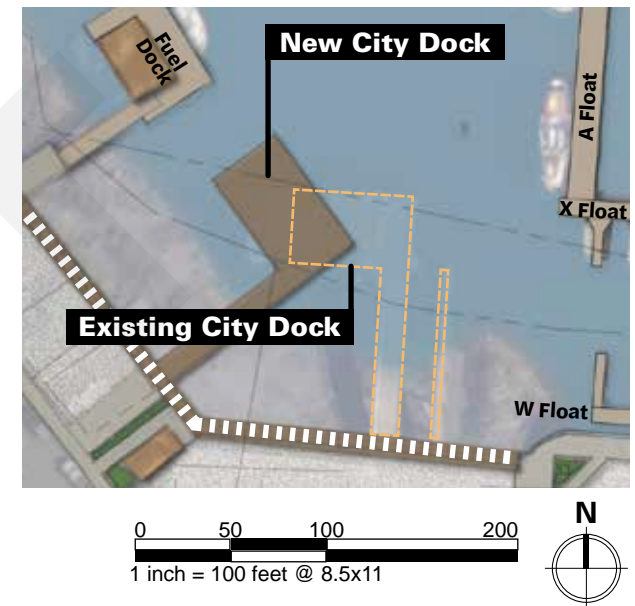
The dock will be outfitted with upgraded appurtenances, including pedestal cranes to facilitate the efficient offloading of goods and supplies. These enhancements are designed to support increased function, safety, and resilience in marine operations.



Gateway or bridge as artistic opportunity

## CITY DOCK

Existing versus new location



## Economic Opportunities

### Positive Impacts on Revenue

- Visitor-friendly infrastructure (parking, pathways, park amenities, wayfinding, and interpretation)
- Business development (visitation increasing business viability)
- Shuttle Operation

### Revenue Sources

- Public Infrastructure (advertisement)
- Marine Infrastructure (City Dock, Passenger Dock)
- Business (sales tax and head tax)
- Real Estate (property lease rates)
- Operator (shuttle)



# HARBORVIEW WEST

## Harborview West

Harborview is the hub to the Central Waterfront and Harborview West acts as an introduction into this area from Harbor Loop. Redevelopment will focus on enhancing and supporting harbor uses and fostering commercial opportunities through supporting visitor access and movement. This will include renovated or new marine facilities and harbormaster office, centralized bear-proof garbage disposal, open space with restrooms, a shelter with accompanying plaza for food trucks or other vendor use, and improved pedestrian connections into and through the area.

### Public Infrastructure

#### Harbormaster Plaza

A welcoming park plaza and shelter area, designed to accommodate food trucks and vendors, will create a central gathering space adjacent to the Harbormaster building. This space would be designed to accommodate community events, markets, or serve as a place for people to socialize and enjoy the waterfront.

The community plaza is 4,000 square feet of paved area with space for four food carts or trucks, approximately 800 square foot of retail, and a shelter. The open area will include various pieces of movable tables, chairs, and picnic-style seating. Capacity for the community plaza is approximately 100 people seated or 300 people comfortably standing.

The 20 by 40 foot shelter will provide a comfortable place for the community or for visitors waiting for tours or transportation. The shelter would need to be designed to provide protection from Whittier's frequent rain and wind, ensuring it is usable in various weather conditions and could be a timber structure with metal roof or pre-manufactured metal structure.

#### Outdoor Marketplace

A designated food truck area would diversify the dining options available in Whittier, offering quick and convenient meals for visitors, enhancing their experience and encouraging them to spend more time in town. Providing power and pedestrian-scaled lighting will support use.



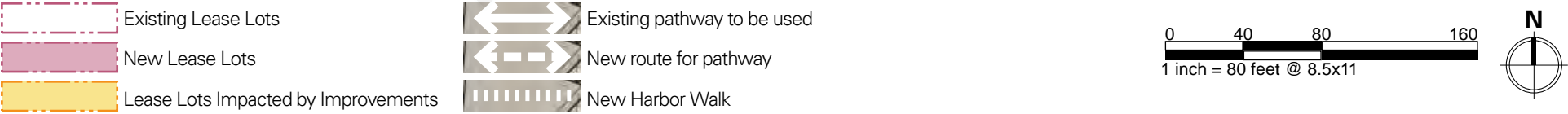
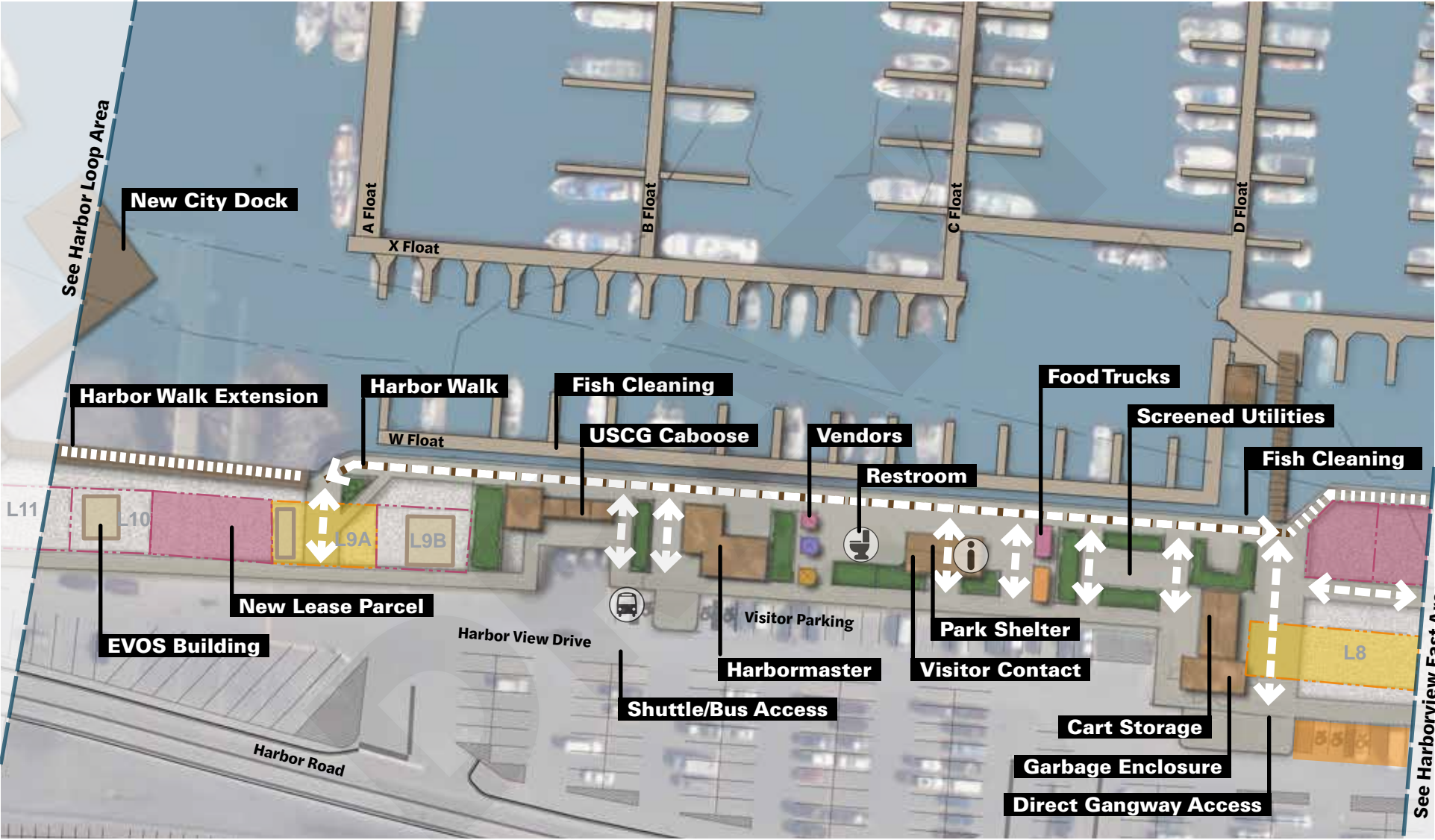
Waterfront park shelter



Food truck area with picnic tables or seating areas

**HARBORVIEW WEST**

Remove city dock and replace with drive down float, create centralized public amenities around Harbormaster Office





## Public Infrastructure (Cont'd)

### Shuttle/Bus Access

Adjacent to the plaza, a shuttle stop will allow visitors to be picked up or dropped off at this location.

### Visitor Support

As a central destination, the Harbormaster Plaza is an ideal location for an information kiosk. Alternatively, information could be integrated into the side of the restroom or within the shelter. As needed, a portable visitor contact station could be brought on site and set up in the plaza.

### Harbor Walk & Harbor Walk Extension

The existing Harbor Walk in this area is timber and is in good shape. Due to the expected higher use in this area, as the area is redeveloped, the Harbor Walk should be replaced with concrete a minimum of 10-feet width (with wider areas where beneficial to adjacent uses). The Harbor Walk will be extended to the west, continuing into the Harbor Loop area. An elevated timber boardwalk should be considered for this area due to slopes, and also to provide variety in the walk's experience.



Harborwalk in Statter Harbor (Auke Bay, Juneau)

### Restroom

The existing restroom (and seasonal restroom trailer) should be replaced with a plumbed facility with four stalls in one side and two stalls/two urinals in the other with cleaning closet, plumbing raceway, and a drinking fountain.

### USCG Caboose

The caboose is an interesting destination, and when staffed, provides another contact opportunity for visitors. The caboose will be relocated to the west of the Harbormaster Building to allow the development of Harbormaster Plaza to the east.

## Harbor Facilities

### Garbage Enclosure

To address Whittier's significant challenges with human-bear interactions, a secure and thoughtfully designed enclosed dumpster building is needed. The interior should feature easy-to-clean surfaces and a drainage system for regular washing to mitigate odors.

The proposed centralized location will ensure accessibility for harbor users and businesses while providing efficient access for waste management. The enclosure is sized to accommodate a 20 or 30-yard roll-off dumpster, with dumpster sizing to be based on harbor use and frequency of pick-up. A facility that includes compaction should be evaluated, decreasing waste volume and frequency of disposal.



Secure and bear-proof dumpster enclosure

### Cart Storage

Whether in the open or covered, cart storage should be close to the harbor gangway in a centralized location to reduce clutter on the waterfront. If covered, a simple 700 square foot timber or metal structure will meet the needs of this facility. Providing a low railing system around portions of the perimeter will encourage users to keep carts within the contained location. The shelter can also be used for other harbor related storage.

### Screened Utilities

Numerous above ground utilities are found adjacent to the harbor gangway and throughout the waterfront. These utilities should be screened with landscaping or fencing and can be used as an opportunity for community art. The intent is that they do not detract from aesthetics, and can perhaps contribute to identity and character. Any improvements should not interfere utility access requirements.





Public art with a message in Gastown, Vancouver



Covered fish cleaning station

## Harbor Facilities (Cont'd)

### Harbormaster Office

The Harbormaster Office was built in the 70s and has been added to over the years. In 2011, it was relocated to its current location and placed on temporary skids. It is recommended that the City of Whittier develop plans to demolish and replace the Harbormaster Office with a new facility in its current location.

### Fish Cleaning

Providing fish cleaning tables will meet a harbor need and help keep the harbor clean. Tables should be stainless steel or marine-grade aluminum with a high-density polyethylene table top. Provide water service at each table for ease of clean up. Planned locations include on W Float and at the top of the gangway. Additional locations may be considered at convenient locations on the floats, with upland location(s) considered.

### Previous City Dock Access

If not allocated to another City use, the upland lot used for access to the current City Dock could be redesignated for use by displaced or new lease holders.

### Safety

Locations within the harbor should be provided with self-retrieval ladders.

## Economic Opportunities

### Positive Impacts on Revenue

- Visitor-friendly infrastructure (parking, pathways, park amenities, wayfinding, and interpretation)
- Business development (visitation increasing business viability, new lease lots)
- Small business and incubator support (food trucks, marketplace)
- Shuttle Operation

### Revenue Sources

- Public Infrastructure (advertisement)
- Marine Infrastructure (moorage)
- Business (sales tax and head tax)
- Real Estate (property lease rates, vendor permits)
- Operator (shuttle)



# Harborview East

Harborview East acts as a connection with the Harbor Triangle and a central hub to the waterfront. Redevelopment will focus on enhancing and supporting harbor uses, increasing harbor capacity, increasing available uplands, and fostering commercial opportunities through supporting visitor access and movement. This will include renovated or new marine facilities, relocating boat trailer traffic to the Head of the Bay, a park and playground with restrooms and a shelter, and improved pedestrian connections into and through the area.

## Public Infrastructure

### *Upland Expansion*

The proposed redevelopment of Harborview East is aimed at enhancing retail and commercial opportunities and development of community facilities. These improvements center on constructing a new bulkhead to create additional upland area. The structure to achieve this will consist of a containment bulkhead located approximately 60 to 70 feet offshore from the current top of slope. This location is within the existing rip rap slope, and will not need dredging. The bulkhead will be constructed from interlocking sheet pile with sealant to ensure watertight containment.

Constructing a new bulkhead along the north edge of the east end of the harbor will create space to develop commercial lease lots, renovate and relocate the Harbor Walk, and add space to contribute to a central Harbor Park and Playground.

### *Harbor Park & Playground*

This central public destination will be designed for a broad range of activities (active and passive), and host as a space for a wide range of events and activities. Contributing to existing City of Whittier land, the new bulkhead will add approximately 5,000 square feet of land for these improvements.

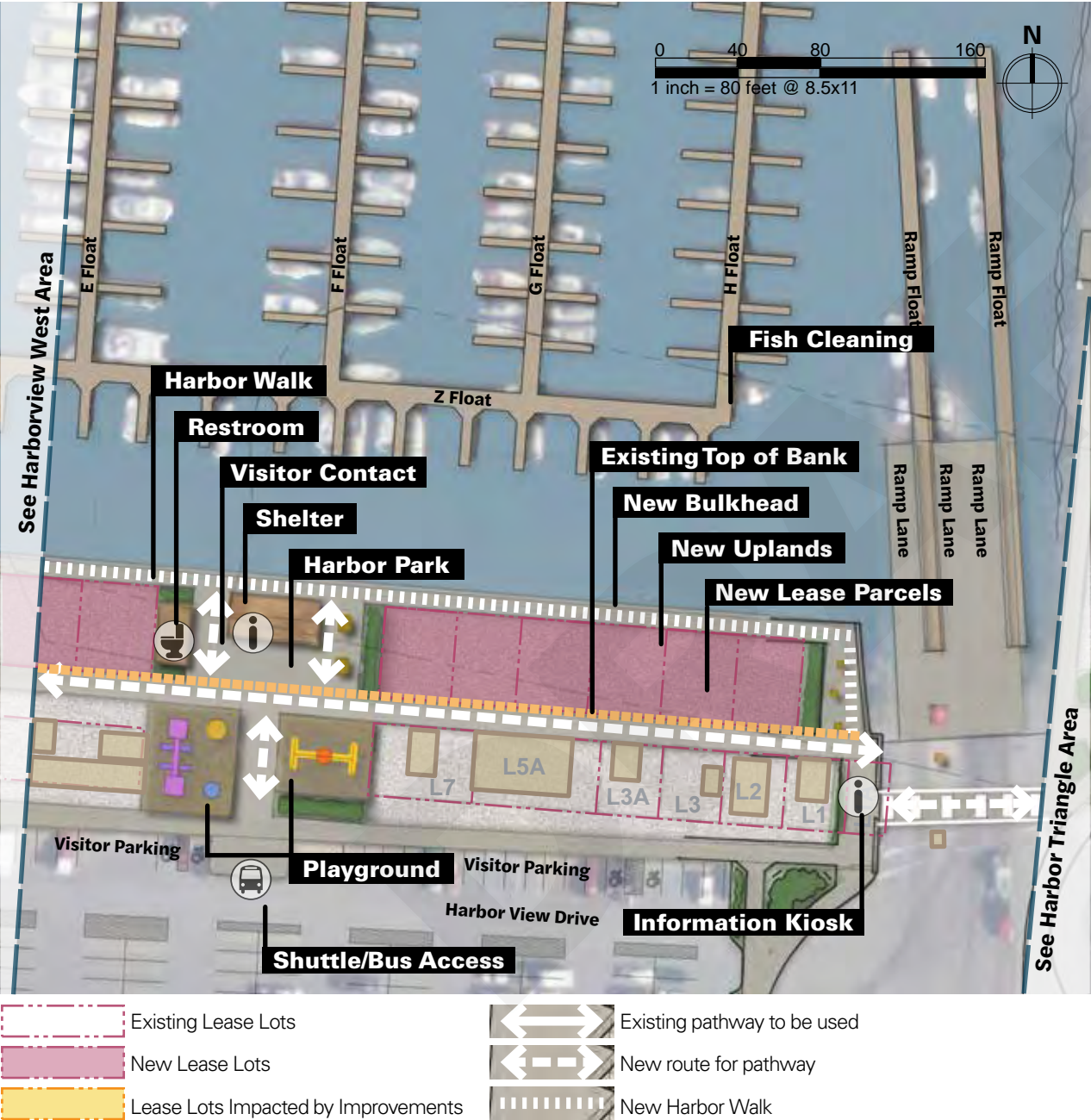
An inclusive playground will provide a variety of play opportunities for children ages two and older and will tie in with Whittier's waterfront persona. All playground areas will have accessible safety surfacing, support cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development, and include seating. The playground will consist of approximately 6,000 square foot of play activities with safety surfacing, accessible pathway connections, benches, and a turf area. The playground has capacity for approximately 50 children and will be an attraction for visitors and residents. Fencing (42 or 48" height) will keep children separated from the adjacent parking lot.

Harbor Park is next to the playground and has a pavilion for picnics and other gatherings. The 800 square foot shelter could be a timber structure with a metal roof or premanufactured metal structure. The 3,000 square foot park includes benches, picnic tables, and landscaping.



HARBORVIEW EAST

Install bulkhead to create more uplands and public areas.



Identity features



Integration of play with public spaces



Emphasizing pedestrian routes with identity



## Public Infrastructure (Cont'd)

### Visitor Support

As a central destination, the Harbor Plaza and Playground will be an ideal location for an information kiosk, or the integration of information into the side of the restroom or within the shelter.

An information kiosk should also be provided at the west of the pedestrian crossing at the top of the boat ramp.

### Restroom

The Harbor Park should be provided with a plumbed facility with four stalls in one side and two stalls/two urinals in the other with cleaning closet, plumbing raceway, and a drinking fountain.

### Shuttle/Bus Access

Adjacent to the park, a shuttle stop will allow visitors to be picked up or dropped off at this location.



Kodiak Crabfest Event Audience

### Harbor Walk

The existing narrow wooden shoreline boardwalk will be replaced with concrete a minimum of 10-feet width (with wider areas where beneficial to adjacent uses).

### Pedestrian Safety

An important part of this plan is get pedestrians safely and comfortably to the Harbor Triangle and to the Pedestrian Tunnel.

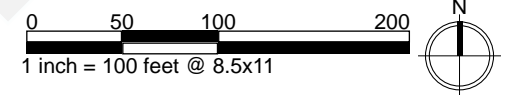
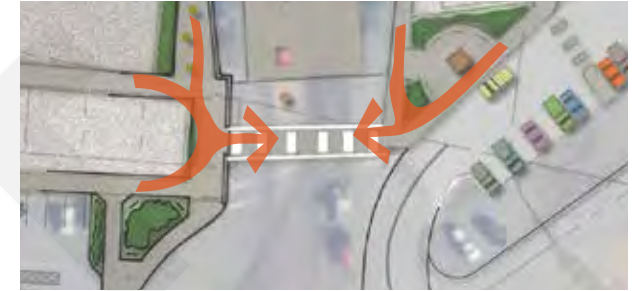
The pedestrian route that passes through the boat ramp to the Triangle will be redesigned to emphasize pedestrian priority. This may include installation of a flush concrete sidewalk to clearly demarcate it as sidewalk, painting of the route (with an expected need to repaint every few years), and pedestrian refuge areas on each end of the crossing.

Even more challenging is pedestrian access to the Pedestrian Tunnel, the encouraged route for visitors to move from the Central Waterfront to the Museum and other Whittier destinations. This will require redefining vehicle movements for the boat ramp and the T-intersection in front of the Ferry Terminal. This plan includes a potential refinement of this intersection to prioritize pedestrian movement and clarify vehicle routes by separating driving areas from the boat ramp area. This would require permanent improvements including curbed landscape areas, curbed pedestrian refuge areas, and changes to vehicular circulation. Beyond clear and safe pedestrian movement, the area needs to operate for boat ramp vehicle movements.

The removal of boat trailer traffic to the head of the bay will greatly assist in allowing both of these routes to have a pedestrian priority.

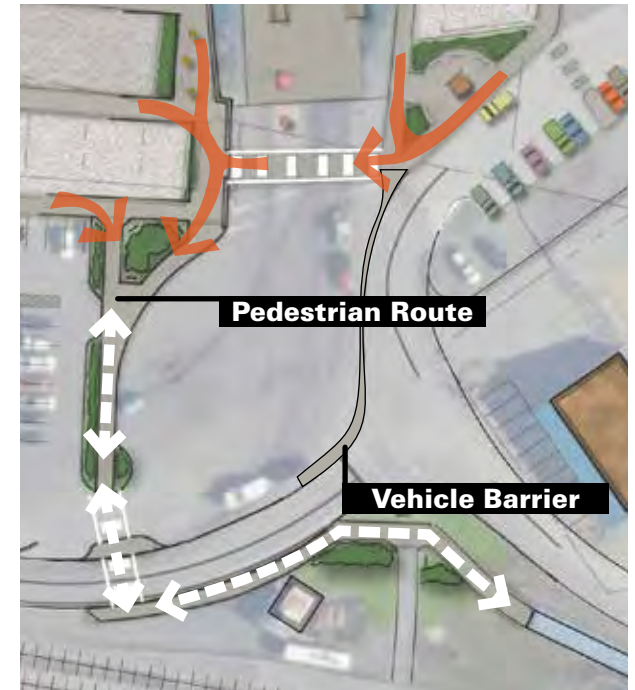
## PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

Pedestrian priority and destinations at each side.



## ACCESS TO PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL

Pedestrian priority for access to tunnel.



## Commercial Infrastructure

### Creation of Upland Lease Lots

As described by the “Core Development Principles,” market-driven private sector success is essential for redevelopment. While the creation of new upland lease lots is an opportunity, its implementation will need to be planned including lease lot sizes and lease conditions including the potential for design and use standards that reflect development principles and make the area a destination.

Approximately 12,400 square feet (0.28 acres) of new upland lease lots would be created. If lease lots were 1,500 square feet, this would provide eight new lots to expand opportunities for retail and commercial development on the waterfront.



Sheet pile uplands expansion (Whittier and Seward)

## Harbor Facilities

### Gangway Access

The current gangway is not directly aligned with clear access to the parking lot or a loading zone. Direct access will be provided for the gangway, allowing easier movement between the harbor and the adjacent loading/parking areas.

### Fish Cleaning

Providing fish cleaning tables will meet a harbor need and help keep the harbor clean. Tables should be stainless steel or marine-grade aluminum with a high-density polyethylene table top. Provide water service at each table for ease of clean up. These should be provided at convenient locations on the floats, with upland location(s) considered.

### Safety

Locations within the harbor should be provided with self-retrieval ladders.

### Boat Ramp

The boat ramp will be limited for access, to encourage boat ramp use at the Head of the Bay.

## Economic Opportunities

### Positive Impacts on Revenue

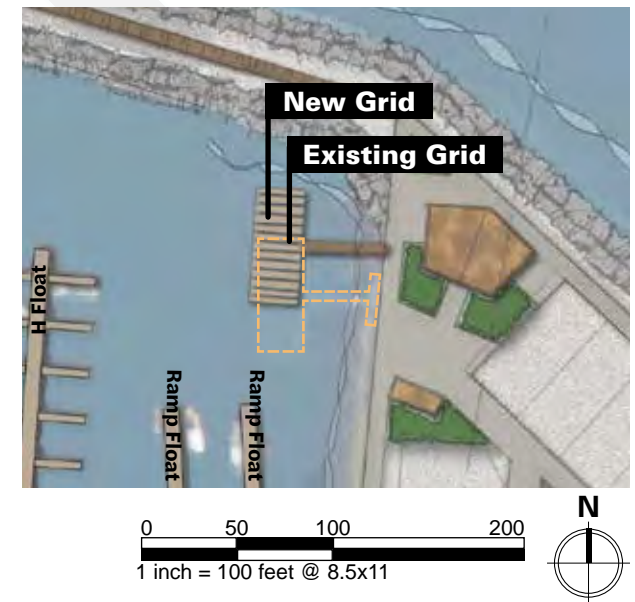
- Visitor-friendly infrastructure (parking, pathways, park amenities, wayfinding, and interpretation)
- Business development (visitation increasing business viability, new lease lots)
- Small business and incubator support (food trucks, marketplace, vendors)
- Shuttle operation

### Grid

The existing grid impacts navigation around the boat ramp floats. When the grid is due for replacement, it should be moved to the north to increase available room for navigation.

### GRID

Existing versus new location



### Revenue Sources

- Public Infrastructure (advertisement)
- Marine Infrastructure (moorage, boat ramp, grid)
- Business (sales tax and head tax)
- Real Estate (property lease rates, vendor permits)
- Operator (shuttle)





# Harbor Triangle

The Harbor Triangle acts as the terminus to the Central Waterfront area, offering an opportunity to create a transit hub for arriving and departing visitors. Redevelopment will focus on supporting visitor access and movement to enhance commercial opportunities through improved visitor access and parking, bus/shuttle access, open space and pedestrian connections into and within the area, and information and directional signage. Key opportunities are to remove or reduce private vehicles to focus on a fully pedestrian experience and a visitor contact facility that will complement the Harbor Loop.

## Public Infrastructure

### *Seasonal Traffic Reduction*

The area will be reconfigured to promote efficient movement of motor coaches and shuttles, increasing the area that is dedicated to pedestrian use. Public parking will be relocated outside of the Harbor Triangle to the south.

### *Parking*

Perpendicular parking to the south (adjacent to the ferry terminal property) will provide visitor parking. Business parking will be limited to after-hours or limited loading areas. For businesses without direct roadway access, pedestrian pathways will be designed to allow after-hours or limited vehicle access for support.

### *Harbor Triangle Park*

The souther vegetated portion of the park will be retained, with the north portion being removed for bus/shuttle circulation. The intent is that the function of this park (including a now removed shelter) will be replaced and enhanced to the north with the development of the Harbor Triangle Plaza.

### *Harbor Triangle Plaza*

Harbor Triangle Plaza will include motor coach and shuttle improvements, with a focus on a pedestrian friendly commercial environment that connects visitors to businesses and the redeveloped park area to the north. The plaza will have a 480 square foot central shelter and information structure. The loop should include a drop-off/pick-up zone sized for a motor coach (approx. 50 passenger) plus a shuttle bus (approx. 24 passenger). A permanent or seasonal covered staging area for passengers with seating should be provided.

### *Visitor Support*

At full implementation, the Harbor Triangle will provide static information to help connect visitors with wayfinding guidance and assistance for selecting experiences. As a key location for shuttle/bus drop-off, improvements should focus on making it easy for visitors to navigate toward Harborview, Harbor Loop, and the pedestrian tunnel. A similar shuttle/bus drop-off and pick-up location at the Harbor Loop will help with a comfortable and known experience.

As this is at the logical “end of the road”, this location is another expected area for independent travelers to orient themselves.



## HARBOR TRIANGLE

Expand public amenities and make bus/shuttle only in summer



Bus shelter and drop off (Juneau Cruise Ship Terminal)



Information shelter with wayfinding and interpretive signs



Open plaza space (Juneau Cruise Ship Terminal)



## Public Infrastructure (Cont'd)

### Upgraded Harbor Walk

The Harbor Walk on the western side of the Harbor Triangle was improved as an 8-foot-wide concrete sidewalk in the summer of 2023. This 8-foot-wide sidewalk should be extended along the shoreline of the Harbor Triangle to connect with the Mariners' Memorial and loop back to the crossing at the top of the boat ramp.

Another opportunity is to extend a trail along the existing top of the harbor breakwater.

### Mariners' Memorial Park

The existing Mariners' Memorial will be improved and expanded. These are sacred spaces and the intent is to improve the memorial's function, aesthetics, and create a space that enhances the memorial. The existing stone memorial would remain and the plaza space around the memorial expanded to 1,200 square foot to accommodate celebrations and events for over 100 people. The orientation of the memorial towards the water and the addition of interpretive elements, flagpoles, landscaping, and benches create an appropriate sacred space on the waterfront.



Wrangell Mariners' Memorial

### Public Park and Shelter

The existing park shelter will be replaced with a 1,400 square foot shelter that is constructed to prioritize durability, weather resistance, and user comfort. Fixed, retractable, or sliding and removable walls should be considered to provide adaptability for changing weather.

The shelter will be surrounded by a paved plaza that includes seating, picnic tables, landscaping, and a grilling area or fire pit. Improvements should be located and oriented to maximize views of the waterfront and surrounding scenery.

### Restroom

The existing restroom at the north of the Triangle should be replaced with a plumbed facility with four stalls in one side and two stalls/two urinals in the other with cleaning closet, plumbing raceway, and a drinking fountain.



Movable tables and decorative paving



Park pavilion and shelter (Skagway Arts Pavilion)



Weather protection and screening



View looking down the Passage Canal

## Harbor Facilities

### *Public Dock*

The public dock located adjacent to the AMHS Ferry Terminal could be rehabilitated and maintained for continued long term use although current usage is minimal.

Alternative options under consideration include demolishing the existing structure and replacing it with either a sheet pile bulkhead or a rock revetment embankment. These alternatives would create expanded upland areas suitable for other uses. A sheet pile bulkhead, in particular, would support continued use of the site as a dock. The offshore extent of any replacement structure would be constrained on the southwest side by the boundary of the adjacent Ferry Terminal Tidelands, which lies approximately 70 feet offshore from the existing top of slope. A kayak ramp could be incorporated into the improvements at this location, however usage would be weather dependent.

Alternatively, with the addition of a temporary or permanent guardrail system, the Ocean Dock could be transformed into a flexible community space. An opportunity could be to partner with the Whittier Museum to create an interpretive space, acting as an extension of the museum and improving their reach and generating awareness of the museum to people visiting Whittier. The Harbor Triangle could serve as a high-traffic area that would significantly increase the museum's visibility, attracting more visitors who might not have known about or visited the museum. This would essentially act as an advertisement and feature for the waterfront.

## Economic Opportunities

### *Positive Impacts on Revenue*

- Visitor-friendly infrastructure (parking, pathways, park amenities, wayfinding, and interpretation)
- Business development (visitation increasing business viability, new lease lots)
- Small business and incubator support (food trucks, marketplace, vendors)
- Shuttle Operation

### *Revenue Sources*

- Public Infrastructure (advertisement)
- Marine Infrastructure (public dock)
- Business (sales tax and head tax)
- Real Estate (property lease rates, vendor permits)
- Operator (shuttle)





# SMITTY'S COVE



# SMITTY'S COVE IMPROVEMENTS

Smitty's Cove is a cherished, recreational area in Whittier that is used for scuba diving, a non-motorized launch, swimming, beach combing, and as a recreational area. Redevelopment will focus on enhancing recreational use and accessibility and clearly defining a separation between recreational and commercial uses. A new developed recreation area will feature a day-use shelter, vault toilet, and bear-proof trash receptacle to ensure safety and convenience. To facilitate enjoyable visits, picnic tables, firepit area, and personal watercraft launch access with kayak and watercraft storage will be provided.

## Public Infrastructure

### Access

Access to Smitty's Cove is either directly via Depot Road, or via Blackstone Road connecting to the end of Depot Road. These roads (specifically Depot Road due to large vehicle traffic) should be improved with regular maintenance to maintain predictable access for commercial and recreational users. The ARRC is exploring an alternative route to access Smitty's Cove from Blackstone Road (without the use of Depot Road) that will allow recreational users to bypass the industrial access road, reducing conflicts and congestion. It is important to note that the conceptual route shown by ARRC has substantial grade differences and geological challenges. Alternatives to this route, with the same outcome, should be explored.

### Wayfinding

Vehicular wayfinding should clearly mark the route to access Smitty's Cove. Access through Depot Road should be discouraged to reduce conflicts with industrial operations.

### Parking

Approximately seven parking spaces (including one van-accessible space) should be provided and separated from adjacent commercial/industrial uses.

### Visitor Support

As an "end of the road" destination that may be a visitor's first destination, a kiosk will be provided in this area for orientation and direction to other more developed visitor contact facilities. A kiosk is also expected to provide regulatory guidance and information (such as invasive species).

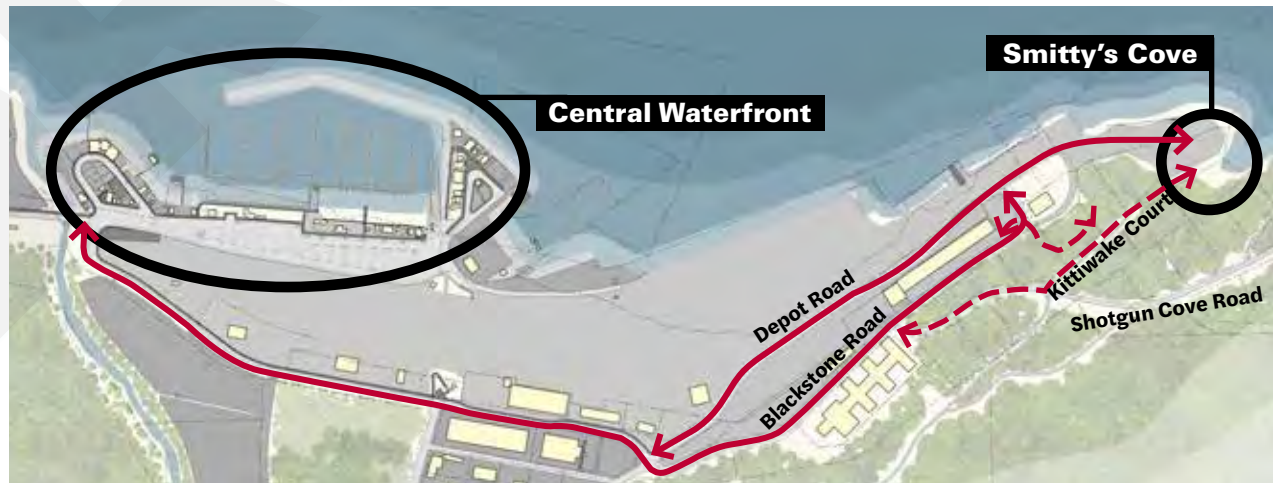
### Restroom

An accessible single restroom should be provided adjacent to the parking area. This would be expected to a vault toilet with frequent cleaning and scheduled pumping.

### Smitty's Cove Park

Park improvements are expected to include enhancing access, shelter, seating, and amenities such as a firepit with seating.

Increasing the available area above high-tide will be achieved with a rock embankment that would provide an enlarged level gravel area. This would provide enhanced day-use recreation opportunities and the space for a larger 800 square foot timber picnic shelter. The area would include a fire pit, picnic table and grill.

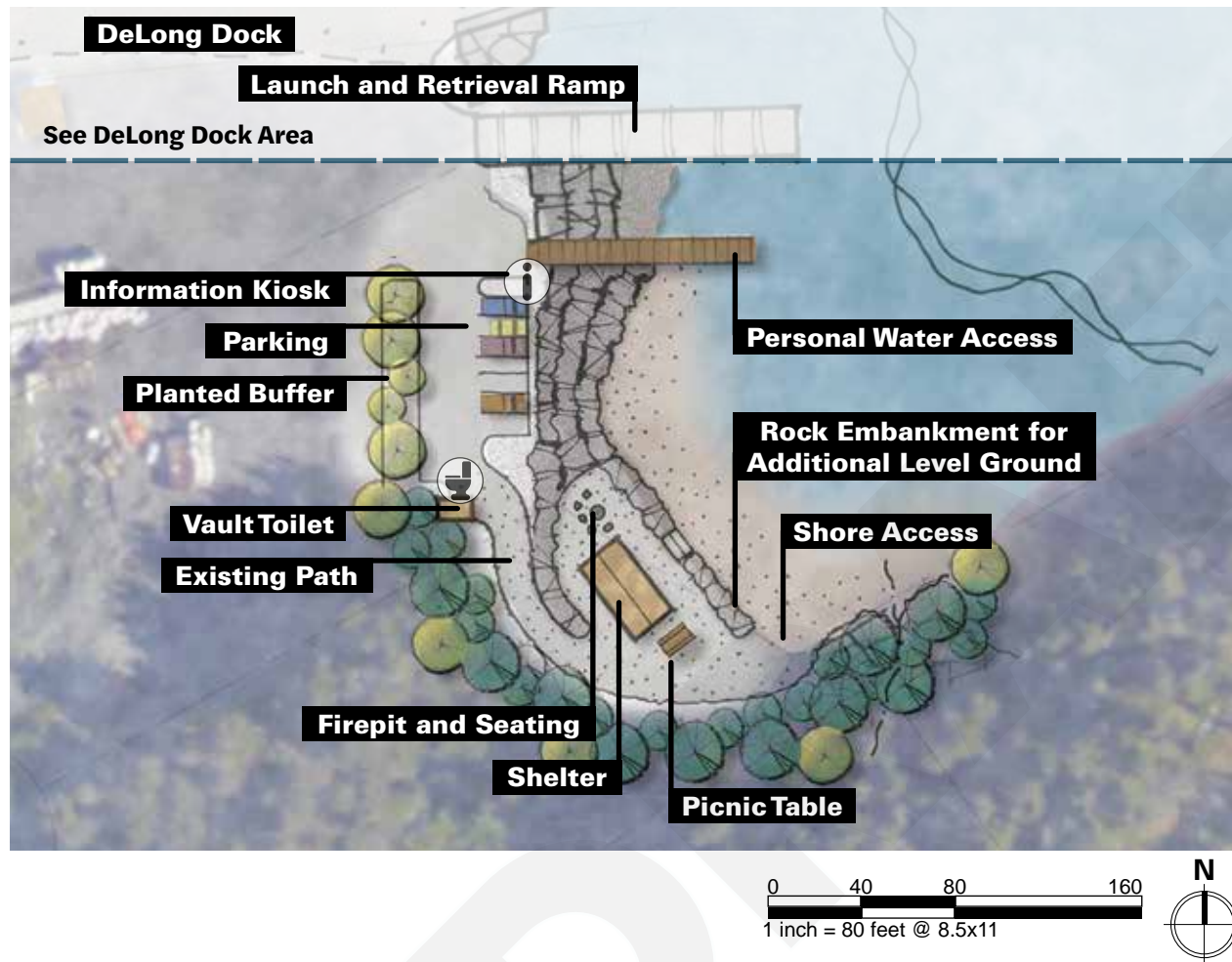


Existing route to Smitty's Cove (solid line) and proposed future route (dashed)



## SMITTY'S COVE

Separation of recreation from commercial users and increase area above high-tide line



## Marine Facilities

### Smitty's Cove Water Access

The area will be improved with water access for non-motorized personal watercraft, swimming, and scuba (separated from commercial or industrial uses). This will be a hardened ramp to provide access through the riprap shoreline to the sandy beach below. The preferred slope for a non-motorized launch ramp is 8-10% and the materials used for the ramp should be slip resistant. Kayak and canoe storage should be considered in the upland area (such as open racks).



Kayak launch (Amalga Harbor, Juneau)



Park shelter and fire pit (Lena Beach, Juneau)

## Economic Opportunities

### Positive Impacts on Revenue

- Visitor-friendly infrastructure (parking, pathways, park amenities, wayfinding, and interpretation)
- Infrastructure for small tour operators
- Shuttle operation

### Revenue Sources

- Public Infrastructure (advertisement, shelter rental)
- Business (sales tax and head tax)
- Operator (shuttle)

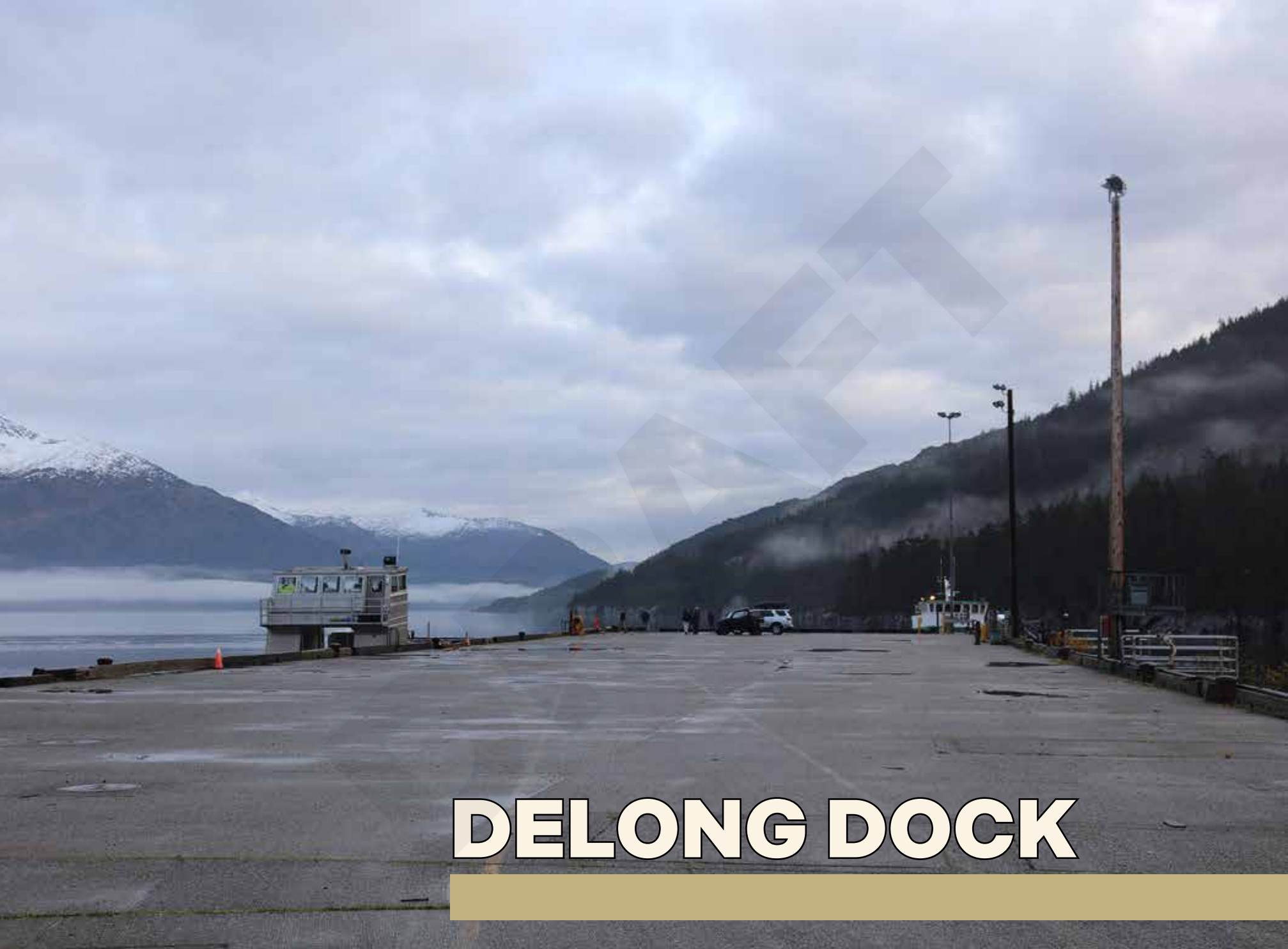


Park information kiosk

## Options

If enlarging the available level area above high-tide is not achievable, any recreation improvements will need to be sized for the limited land between the beach and rock bluff within the trees. It is expected the picnic shelter would be roughly 450 square foot and have limited usable space around the shelter.





# DELONG DOCK

# DELONG DOCK IMPROVEMENTS

A new DeLong Dock will focus on commercial and industrial marine infrastructure enhancements. This will include the removal and replacement of the existing DeLong Dock with a backfilled bulkhead with float, and the replacement of the Smitty's Cove Launch and Retrieval Ramp. Beyond supporting marine businesses, a goal is to focus on better separation for recreational uses, and enhancements that allow better and more efficient use by respective user groups.

## Marine Facilities

### DeLong Dock

The proposed DeLong Dock replacement involves the construction of a new 1,150-foot-long sheet pile bulkhead, creating approximately 2.5 acres of upland staging area. The existing pile-supported dock structure will be fully demolished and replaced with the new facility. The existing ITB ramp, located to the west of the dock, will remain in place and will not be affected by the replacement project.

The new dock will be positioned at a nominal elevation of -30 feet MLLW, balancing efficient design with the required water depth to accommodate vessel operations. The primary north face of the dock, measuring approximately 510 feet in length, will feature new fendering systems and a removable floating dock. This floating dock will facilitate efficient fish pumping operations and reduce or eliminate the need for line tending. The east face of the dock will provide 150 feet of available mooring space, while the existing ITB berth will remain operational on the northwest face of the dock.

Additional site improvements include paved surfacing, stormwater drainage infrastructure, potable water service, electrical utilities, and high-mast lighting.



Sheetpile dock example (Chignik Public Dock)



Sheetpile dock examples (Crowley Fuels Dock, Kotzebue)

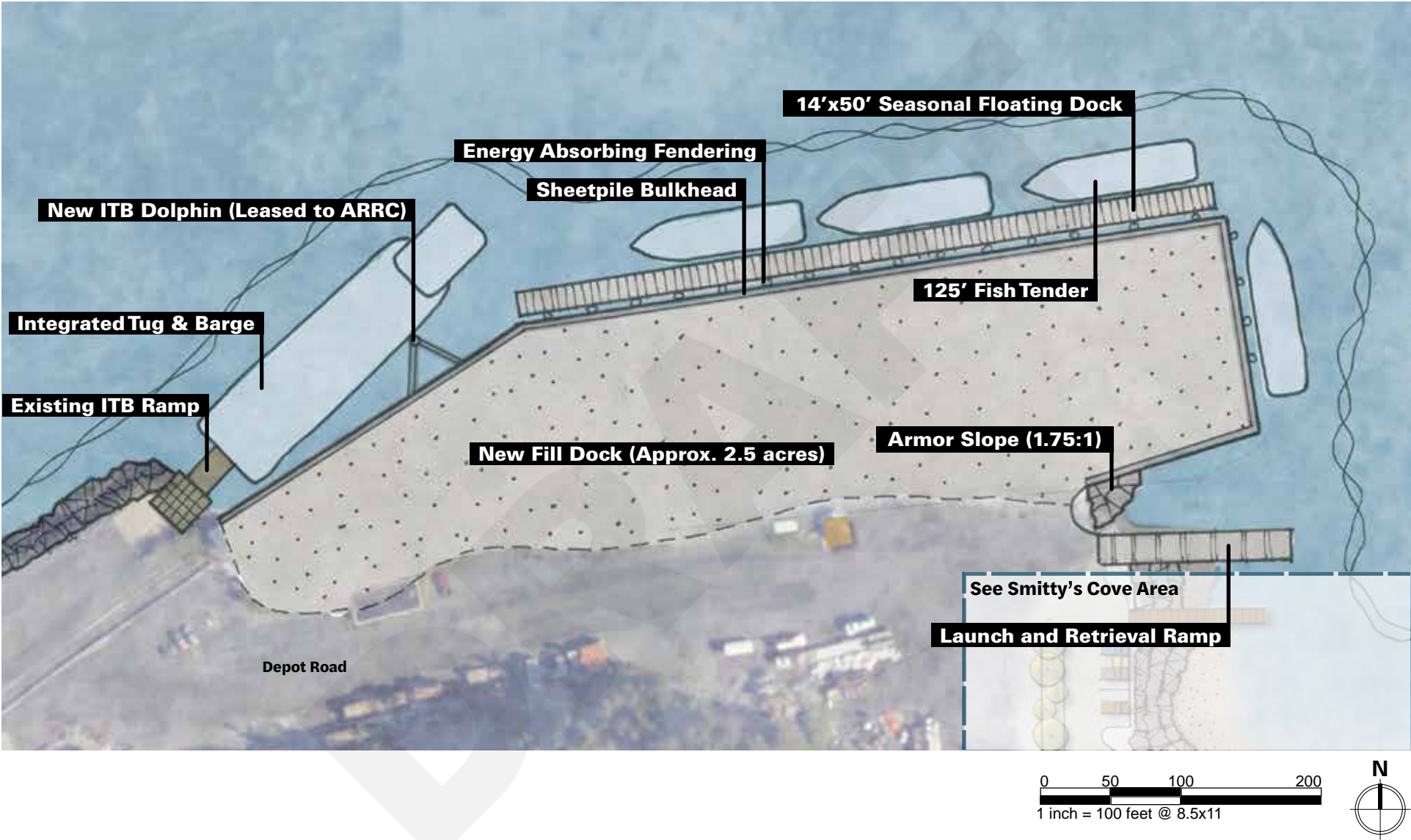


Sheetpile dock example with roll on-roll off ramp (Nome)



**DELONG DOCK**

Full replacement and improvement



## Marine Facilities Cont'd

### *Launch and Retrieval Ramp*

The existing launch and retrieval ramp to the east of DeLong Dock will be demolished and replaced with a new, upgraded ramp structure. Following demolition, the subgrade beneath the ramp will be prepared and, if necessary, replaced with suitable engineered fill materials to provide a stable foundation.

The new ramp will be constructed using interconnected precast concrete planks, supported on a sleeper system installed over a prepared shot rock subgrade. Rock revetment will be placed along both sides of the ramp to protect against erosion and prevent undermining of the structure. To accommodate all-tide access, the new concrete ramp will extend below the waterline to a minimum elevation of -7 feet MLLW. Additional rock revetment will be installed below the toe of the ramp to safeguard against structural undermining caused by wave action or vessel propulsion during 'power loading' operations.

The replacement ramp will be built with a nominal 13-percent grade to allow for efficient launching and retrieval of trailered vessels. The surface of the precast planks will feature an aggressive non-skid finish to enhance safety during use.

### *Access*

Depot Road will be improved with regular maintenance to maintain predictable access for commercial and recreational users. The ARRC is exploring an alternative route to access Smitty's Cove from Blackstone Road that will allow recreational users to bypass the industrial access road, reducing conflicts and congestion.

### *Dock Manager's Building*

The existing Dock Manager's Building will also be replaced with a new structure to provide shelter and workspace for City of Whittier personnel.

## Economic Opportunities

### *Positive Impacts on Revenue*

- New and enhanced facilities

### *Revenue Sources*

- Marine Infrastructure (DeLong Dock)
- Real Estate (property lease rates)





# SHAKESPEARE CREEK

# SHAKESPEARE CREEK RECREATION AREA

Shakespeare Creek beach front is one of the last remaining accessible natural waterfront areas in Whittier and it is important to the community that this be preserved. Improvements will focus on preserving the natural areas of Shakespeare Creek and the tidal flats with minimal development to support recreational use by residents and visitors. As a day-use recreation area, this site will offer a variety of recreational opportunities supported by parking, a restroom, shelters, trails, and the potential for interpretation and wildlife viewing opportunities.

## Public Infrastructure

### Recreation Facilities

A short walk from the parking area a 700 square foot beach day-use shelter will provide space for gatherings that is complemented by picnic facilities and a fire pit. A smaller 225 square foot viewing shelter is also provided along the shoreline trail. It is expected these would be timber shelters to blend into the natural environment.

Bear-proof trash receptacles should be provided at the day-use shelter, and considered for placement at other locations within the area.

Seating will be provided at the day-use shelter, shoreline viewing shelter, at the fishing basin, and at good view locations and regular intervals along the trails.

### Vehicle Access

The existing driveway connection to the highway will be lengthened and filled to provide smooth access to a new parking area.

### Parking

An existing gravel area will be formalized to provide 20 parking spaces, including accessible spaces.

### Shuttle/Bus Access

The provision for a shuttle stop would allow visitors to be picked up or dropped off at this location. The design as shown would need to be modified to allow the turning movement for the desired vehicle type.

### Pedestrian

Trails are provided to connect back to the highway corridor trail, and to access various parts of the site, including looped routes. At a minimum, the trail loop that includes the fishing basin and the shoreline viewing shelter should be 4 foot wide compacted gravel or paved to allow full accessibility. The loop trail is approximately 1/2-mile long. Interpretive panels would be provided at points of interest along its route.

### Visitor Support

As a destination, this will be a good location for an information kiosk, or the integration of information into the side of the restroom or within the shelter. This would also be expected to provide regulatory guidance and information (such as invasive species).



*Fishing platform and shelter (Pullen Creek Pond, Skagway)*



*Wildlife viewing platform with interpretive signage.*



## SHAKESPEARE CREEK RECREATION AREA

Provide dedicated parking, trail improvements, shelters/seating, and fishing basin.



0 100 200 400  
1 inch = 200 feet @ 8.5x11



## Public Infrastructure (Cont'd)

### Restroom

An accessible double restroom should be provided adjacent to the parking area. This would be expected to a vault toilet with frequent cleaning and scheduled pumping.

### Fishing Basin

An existing basin adjacent to the airstrip will be enhanced as a location to stock with salmon to provide an easily accessible fishing experience, with an accessible fishing dock or pier and a small shelter for comfort. The fishing basin would be similar to the Homer fishing lagoon "The Fishing Hole."

### Campground

The Head of the Bay Harbor and Marine Improvements (next section) will displace the existing campground. Depending on the amount of upland area allocated to support the improvements, there is an option that includes option a new (looped) camping facility adjacent to the new parking lot.

The future of the airstrip is unknown. The current plan Recreation Area improvements is based on leaving a buffer around the airstrip to minimize the potential for unintentional conflicts airstrip function. This provides a useful separation between the Recreation Area and the adjacent marine and harbor uses. Should the airstrip be abandoned, all or a portion of the airstrip could be considered for campground or recreational uses.



*Fishing at the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon in Homer.*



*Beach access for non-motorized recreational access.*



*Pedestrian bridge and trails (Pullen Creek, Skagway)*

## Marine Facilities

### *Personal Watercraft Launch Access*

The Recreation Area parking lot will provide reasonably close water access. Due to the gradual slope of the shore, the convenience of this will depend on the tide. While there could be an opportunity to support somewhat convenient launching at this location, the development of harbor facilities to the north may be a better location to allow entry into fully floated watercraft (for example, from a floating dock).

## Economic Opportunities

### *Positive Impacts on Revenue*

- Visitor-friendly infrastructure (parking, pathways, park amenities, wayfinding, and interpretation)
- Shuttle Operation

### *Revenue Sources*

- Public Infrastructure (advertisement, shelter rental)
- Operator (shuttle)





# HEAD OF THE BAY



# HEAD OF THE BAY IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements will focus on access to Prince William Sound and supporting related businesses. The relocation of boat trailer traffic from the Central Waterfront to the Head of the Bay is critical for this Development Plan. This will result in an efficient facility that is convenient to the Tunnel, and positioned within an area that has space to develop in support of marine uses. Upland lease lots will be expected to directly support water access, provide opportunities to expand marine services, and also opportunities for other services and businesses due to available land.

## Public Infrastructure

### Access

Vehicle access will be via the Tank Farm Road and its intersection with West Camp Road and Portage Glacier Road. Boat-ramp related traffic will be internal to the site.

### Shuttle/Bus Access

The area should include a drop-off/pick-up zone sized for a motor coach (approx. 50 passenger), also allowing access for shuttle bus (approx. 24 passenger). A permanent or seasonal covered staging area with benches will be a benefit waiting passengers.

### Visitor Support

A kiosk will provide orientation and direction to other more developed visitor contact facilities. A kiosk is also expected to provide regulatory guidance and information (such as invasive species).

### Restroom

Two accessible double restrooms should be provided adjacent to the parking area. This would be expected to a vault toilet with frequent cleaning and scheduled pumping. If future opportunity allows for utilities within this area, the restrooms should be replaced with a plumbed facility with four stalls in one side and two stalls/two urinals in the other with cleaning closet, plumbing raceway, and a drinking fountain. The restroom building is an opportunity for visitor information.

### Parking

The Phase 1 boat launch would be supported by a parking lot to the south and southwest. The existing campground use would need to be abandoned in this area. The gravel parking lot would provide approximately 150 full-sized pull-through stalls for vehicles with trailers and 50 non-trailer vehicle spaces. Trailer spaces could also be reallocated for staging of motor coaches. Long term, the parking lot could be paved to allow the striping of stalls and reduce environmental concerns related to dust.

### Recreation and Day-Use

Recognizing that at times ramp users will be waiting, not all group members may be boating, and that harbor facilities can be a visitor draw, amenities and recreation opportunities should be provided. This will include pathways and seating (including picnic tables), and the potential for a small park with shelter. Public infrastructure should include sidewalks and trails to connect parking to destinations, and the Phase 1 breakwaters should include pathways. Pathway connections should connections to off-site destinations including the Shakespeare Recreation Area to the south and the Cruise Terminal to the north.



Separated boat and kayak launch (Amalga Harbor, Juneau)

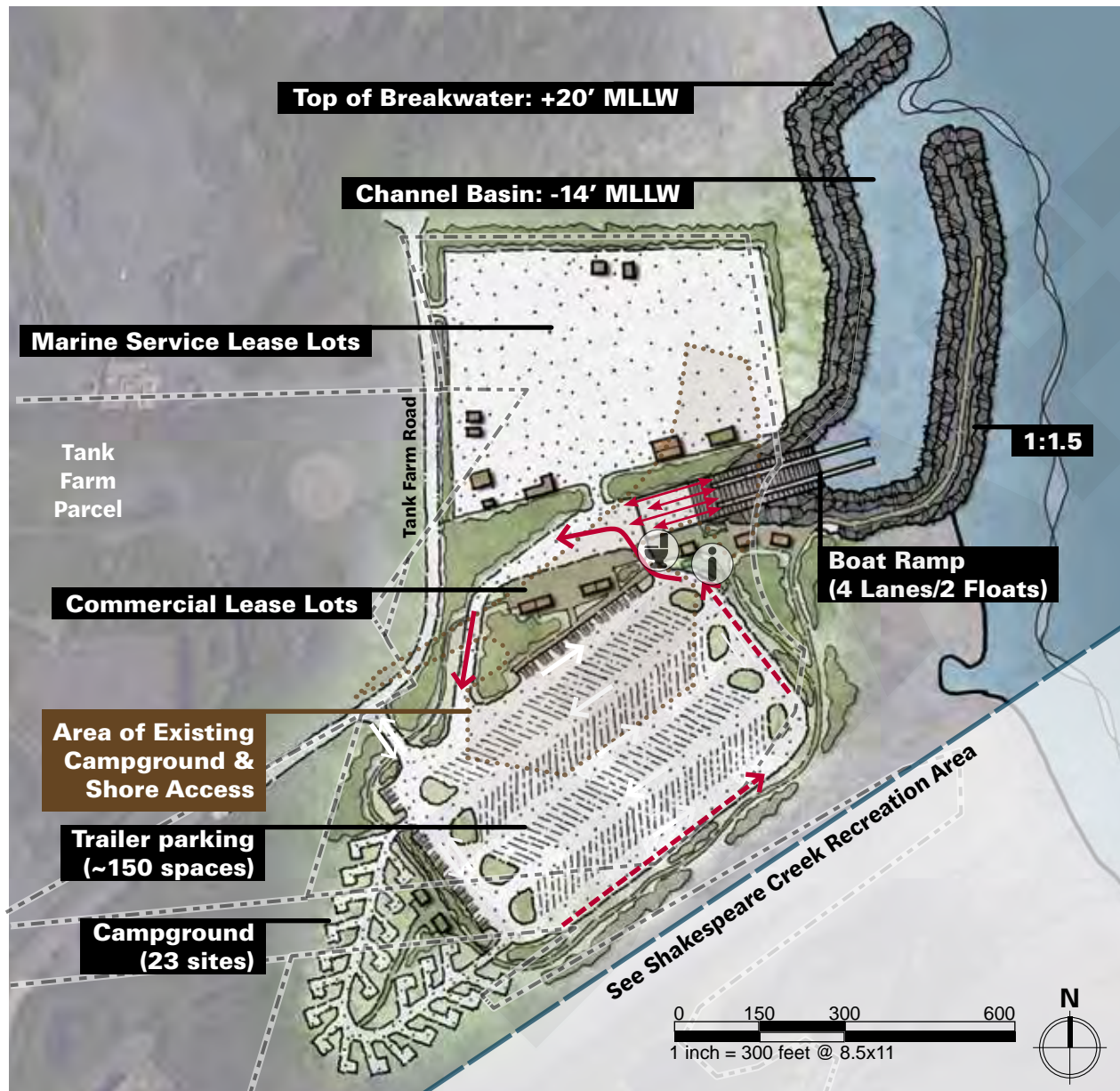


Breakwater Trail (Cordova)



## MARINE IMPROVEMENTS - PHASE 1

Breakwater, Channel, Boat Ramp, Parking, and Lease Lots



## Marine Facilities

### Head of Bay Marine Development Project

The proposed project is two-phases designed to improve vessel access, enhance marine infrastructure, and support a range of recreational and commercial boating activities.

### Phase 1: Boat Launch & Berm Breakwater

A berm-style breakwater that provides wave protection for a new, multi-lane boat launch ramp. The breakwater will be built using large revetment rock, specifically sized to withstand wave energy generated within Passage Canal. To allow safe and reliable vessel access, an entrance channel will be excavated and dredged to a minimum elevation of -14 feet MLLW to ensure adequate under-keel clearance at all tide levels. This channel is planned to accommodate vessels up to 120 feet in length.

The new launch facility will consist of four 16-foot-wide lanes equipped with two centrally located boarding floats. The launch surface will be constructed using interconnected precast concrete planks (with an aggressive non-skid finish), supported by a sleeper system placed over compacted shot rock fill. To ensure all-tide access, the ramp will extend below the waterline to a minimum elevation of -7 feet MLLW. Additional rock revetment will be placed below the toe of the ramp to protect against structural undermining caused by wave action and vessel propulsion during power loading operations. The ramp will have a nominal slope of 13% for efficient launching and retrieval of trailered vessels.

A payment system for boat ramp access and parking will be needed.

## Marine Facilities (Cont'd)

### Phase 2: Harbor Basin Construction

Excavating and dredging to the west to create a harbor basin adjacent to the launch ramp. The basin will cover an area of approximately three acres, excluding the entrance channel. Dredging the basin will require removal of a significant quantity of material with excavation/dredging in excess of 50-ft in some areas. Dredged material will be disposed of offshore or used uplands as fill depending on results from environmental sampling.

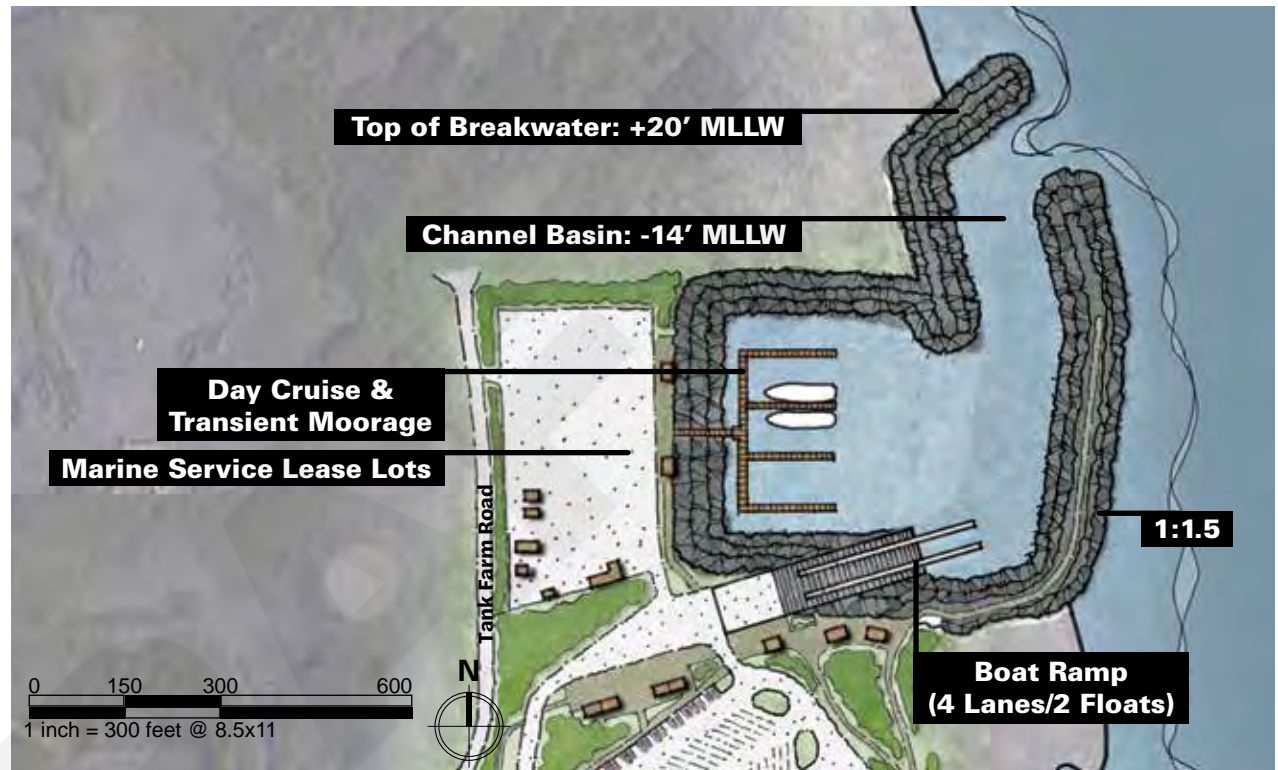
The harbor is planned to be designed to accommodate day cruise vessels up to 120 feet in length. Alternatively, the basin can be equipped with moorage floats configured to support a broader mix of smaller vessels, providing flexibility in use. Rock revetment slopes will be constructed along the perimeter of the basin to stabilize the shoreline and protect against erosion. Travel lift facilities should also be considered. Further assessment will identify the extent facilities are constructed by or operated by the City of Whittier versus a private entity or service provider. Phase 2 will impact any marine service yard uses, requiring their abandonment or relocation within the area impacted.

### Personal Watercraft Launch Access

Harbor improvements provide an opportunity for float-based watercraft launching. Beyond individual or small-group use, there may be an opportunity for tours to be staged from this location with the convenience of having watercraft on dock. It is recognize that this location can be weather dependent, and is beneficial only for closer access to Kittiwake colonies as a specific desired destination.

## MARINE IMPROVEMENTS - PHASE 2

### Harbor Basin and Moorage



Double boat launch (Seward)



Que lanes and parking (Seward)



## Commercial Infrastructure

Opportunities at the Head of the Bay include creating lease parcels for commercial and retail businesses that support the boat ramp and harbor functions and for other uses as land allows. With the movement of boat ramp users away from the Central Waterfront, new businesses would be expected to include those that provide services or supplies to ramp users.

To the north of the ramp, approximately six acres of land would be available when Phase 1 is complete, with three of the acres outside of the footprint of the Phase 2 Harbor Basin Construction. These areas would function as a gravel marine service yard, that could allow storage of boats, a wash down pad, and allow the maintenance and service of boats once out of the water. The six-acres would provide new economic opportunities for the community and assist in meeting the need for expanded marine services. The three-acres that would be available upon the completion of Phase 2 should be filled and planned carefully to any development compatible with future area plans and needs.



*Commercial waterfront businesses (Valdez)*



*Marine service yard (Wrangell)*



*Commercial waterfront businesses with harbor walk (Valdez)*



*Marine service yard (Wrangell)*



*Marine services*



*Marine service yard (Valdez)*

## Economic Opportunities

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### *Positive Impacts on Revenue*

- Visitor-friendly infrastructure (parking, pathways, park amenities, wayfinding, and interpretation)
- Business development (new lease lots)
- Infrastructure for tour operators
- Small business and incubator support (food trucks, vendors)
- Shuttle Operation

### *Revenue Sources*

- Public Infrastructure (advertisement)
- Marine Infrastructure (boat ramp, moorage)
- Business (sales tax and head tax)
- Real Estate (property lease rates, vendor permits)
- Operator (shuttle)

### *Short-Term Summary*

In the short-term, boat ramp and associated businesses will have a net-zero economic impact for the City of Whittier related to annual revenues. Any increase in revenue in this area would be accompanied by a reduction within the Central Waterfront. Overall revenue may increase if the use of boat ramp facilities exceeds pre-development levels.

Boat ramp income would not be expected to increase unless the new facility would validate higher fees, allow a higher level of use, or have significant new operational efficiency. Provision of well-designed, convenient parking could provide increased revenue through the delivery of higher value. Parking revenue would depend on whether it was owned and operated by the City of Whittier, or provided as a private operation (similar to existing conditions).

### *New Business Opportunities*

Business-related revenue would not be expected to increase until new businesses resulted in increased lease and business-related revenue (sales and head tax). New facilities and an increase in available land will provide additional opportunities for businesses and services. This would be expected to include typical marine services and support, and services such as general storage (that Whittier lacks due to land scarcity).



The 'deep dive' for those who want more context.







# APPENDICES

The following pages provide a listing of abbreviations used in this document, and the full background documents summarized within the Economic Assessment section of this master plan.

- Economic Analysis for the Whittier Waterfront Development Plan, 2025 (developed by Northern Economics)
- Waterfront Economic Development Plan - City of Whittier Current Financial Data and Future Changes, 2025 (developed by City of Whittier)

## ABBREVIATIONS

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities	ADOT&PF
Alaska Marine Highway System	AMHS
Alaska Railroad Corporation	ARRC
City of Whittier	City
Community Outreach Plan	COP
Cruise Passenger Vessel	CPV
Exxon Valdez Oil Spill	EVOS
Holland America-Princess	HAP
Mean low low water	MLLW
Project Advisory Committee	PAC
United States Coast Guard	USCG
United States Forest Service	USFS



# **Economic Analysis for the Whittier Waterfront Development Plan**

*Prepared for*

**City of Whittier**

**January 2025**

Prepared by



P.O. Box 1109140  
Anchorage, Alaska 99511  
Phone: 907-274-5600  
Fax: 907-290-2464  
[www.northerneconomics.com](http://www.northerneconomics.com)

**PROFESSIONAL CONSULTING SERVICES IN APPLIED ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**Principals:**

Marcus L. Hartley, M.S. – President  
Michael Fisher, MBA – Vice President  
Diane Sauer – Office Manager

**Consultants:**

Leah Cuyno, Ph.D.      Tom Sanborn, MSc  
Melissa Errend, M.S.      Don Schug, Ph.D.  
Colleen File, MBA

**Administrative Staff:**

Terri McCoy, B.A. – Editor



P.O. Box 110914  
Anchorage, Alaska 99511  
Phone: 907.274.5600  
Fax: 907.290.2464

Email: [mail@norecon.com](mailto:mail@norecon.com)  
[www.northerneconomics.com](http://www.northerneconomics.com)

## Preparers

Team Member

Project Role



Mike Fisher	Project Manager and Lead Author
Colleen File	Analyst
Terri McCoy	Technical Editor

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## Abbreviations

ADCCED	Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
ADOLWD	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
ADOR	Alaska Department of Revenue
ADOTPF	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
ARRC	Alaska Railroad Corporation
BTI	Begich Towers Incorporated
CFEC	Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission
CPV	Commercial Passenger Vessel
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
HAP	Holland America & Princess
KPB	Kenai Peninsula Borough
MSB	Matanuska-Susitna Borough
MOA	Municipality of Anchorage
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NCL	Norwegian Cruise Line
QCEW	Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
USCB	U.S. Census Bureau
WCSC	Waterborne Commerce Statistics Center



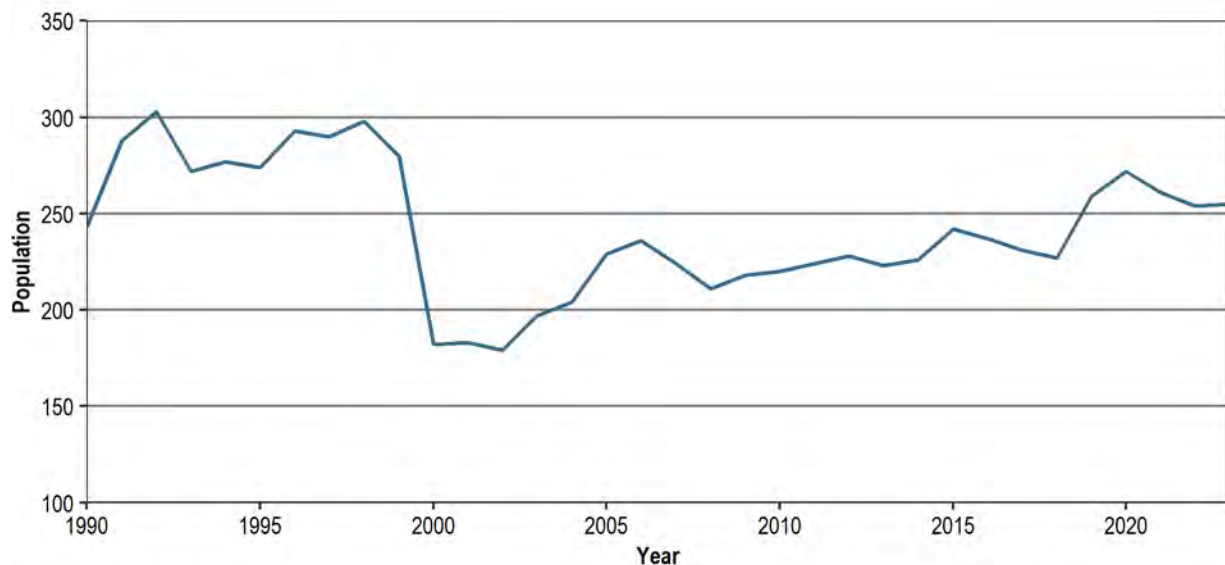
## Community Overview

Whittier is located at the head of Passage Canal, to the northwest off Prince William Sound, in Southcentral Alaska. It is in an unincorporated area designated as the Chugach Census Area and is 61 road miles from Anchorage, 88 road miles from Seward, and 110 water miles from Valdez (Google Maps 2024, NOAA 2019). Development of the community took off in 1941, when the U.S. Army chose to construct a tunnel to connect it to the rail line in the event of a supply disruption at the Port of Seward (Alaska.org 2024). The community incorporated into the City of Whittier in 1969 (City of Whittier 2024d). Today, Whittier is home to fewer than 300 residents but offers access to the water and multiple tourism-focused goods and services for Alaskan and outside visitors.

## Population and Demographics

Whittier was home to 255 residents in 2023 (ADOLWD 2024c). After a decline in the city's official population to under 200 in 2000, it has been growing steadily over the last two decades, as shown in Figure 1.

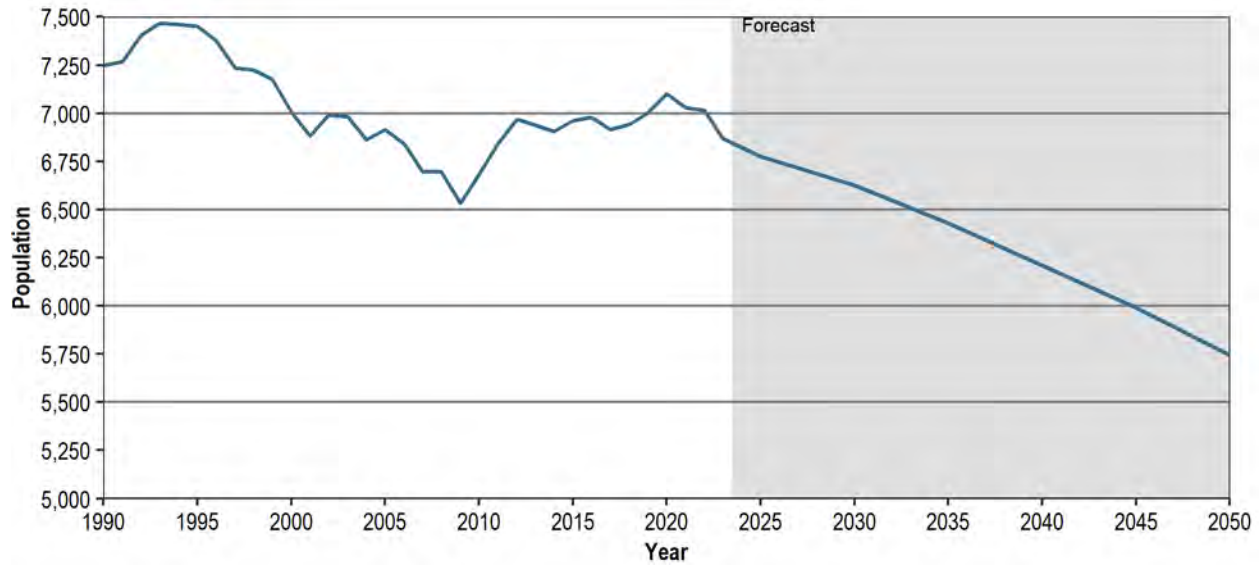
**Figure 1. Historical Population, Whittier, 1990–2023**



Source: ADOLWD (2013b, 2013c, 2022c, 2024b, 2024c) and Northern Economics analysis

The population in the broader Chugach Census Area (Figure 2) has mostly remained flat during the last two decades, and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (ADOLWD) projects the census area's population to decline by about 1,000 people by 2050.

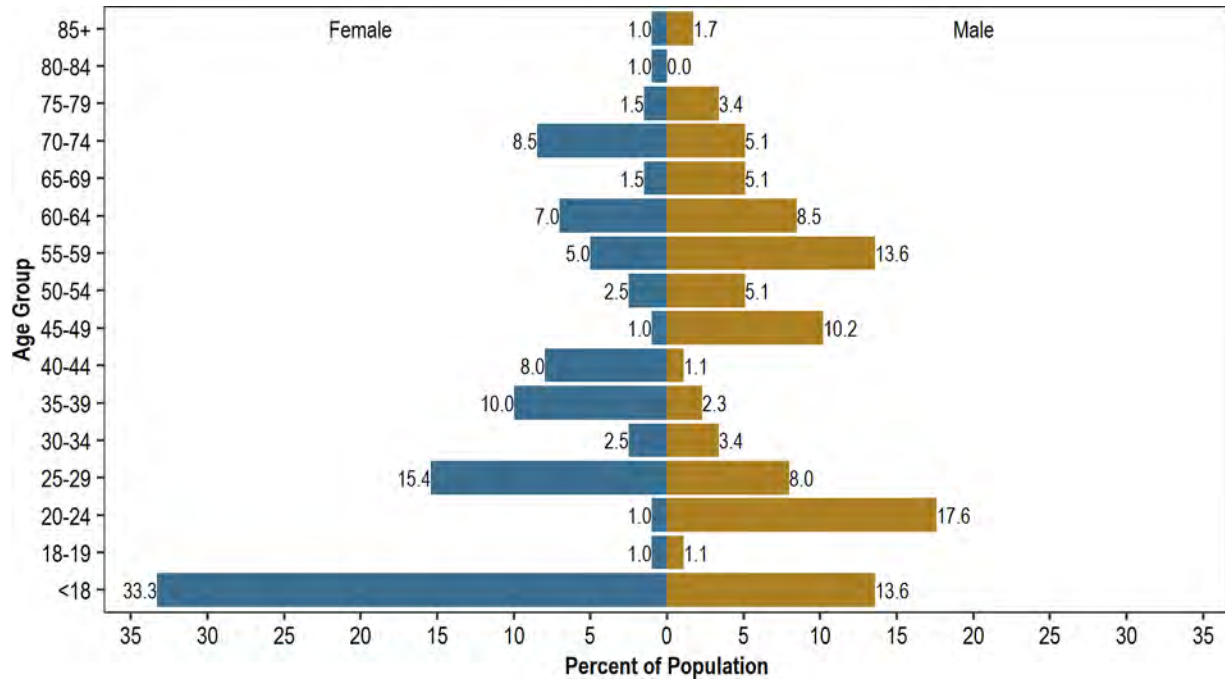
**Figure 2. Historical (1990–2023) and Projected (2024–2050) Population, Chugach Census Area**



Source: ADOLWD (2013a, 2022a, 2022b, 2024b, 2024c)

The U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) estimates that Whittier has a large population of children under the age of 18, especially young women (Figure 3). Note that these estimates have a large margin of error.

**Figure 3. Population Pyramid for City of Whittier, 5-Year Estimate, 2018–2022**



Source: USCB (2024) and Northern Economics analysis



## **Housing and Land Ownership**

Whittier is a unique community with respect to its housing. The limited amount of land for housing may impact Whittier's housing future with respect to having sufficient housing for a local workforce to capture economic opportunities. The unique nature of the existing housing in the Begich Towers Incorporated (BTI) building may attract some workers and their families, but it may turn away other workers who want a different lifestyle. As noted in McKinley Research Group (2019), residents are frustrated with the condition of the BTI building and a perceived concentration of power in the facility. The report identifies the need for a new, 200-unit or larger multi-family residential building to accommodate Whittier's population. Identifying areas where additional housing could be developed could help to support future economic growth.

Most of the town's residents live in the 14-story, 196-unit BTI building, which was built during the cold war in 1954. As a result of Whittier's military history, 93.1% of housing units in Whittier were constructed between 1940 and 1959. The building is also home to a general store and the post office. It is also connected to the school via a tunnel. In addition to the BTI building, the Whittier Manor facility was built in 1986. In Whittier, there are an estimated 347 housing units, 45% of which are occupied and 55% are vacant according to USCB (2024) estimates. Some of the vacancy could be explained by vacant crew housing based on the timing of USCB data collection, since housing data is sampled and conducted at different times of the year. A little over half of vacant units are for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use (USCB 2024), with the remainder likely within Begich towers.

Additionally, most people living in Whittier do not own their homes, with only 27.7% of housing units owner-occupied. Most homeowners do not have a mortgage on their home (88.4%), and the median monthly ownership costs for those without a mortgage is \$643. There were only 5 housing units with mortgages, and 1 unit had monthly owner costs between \$500 and \$999, while the other 4 were between \$1,500 and \$1,999. Among those who rent their homes, 92% of people paid between \$500 and \$1,499 per month in gross rent, the majority of which is between \$500 and \$999. Median gross rent in 2022 dollars is \$957 (USCB 2024).

Table 1 shows the various types of housing available in Whittier and in the State of Alaska. Since most residents live in the BTI building, it is not surprising that 75.8% of housing units in Whittier are in a structure with 20 or more units. This type of housing is unusual in the state, with only 4.9% of housing units in Alaska found in this type of large structure. There is also some housing Whittier in lower-density multifamily structures, ranging from as few as 5 units to as many as 19 units. Additionally, there are very few single-family detached housing units in Whittier (3.7% of housing units), while in Alaska they are the most common housing unit type (63.3%) (USCB 2024).

Table 3 shows the number of bedrooms in housing units in Whittier and Alaska. Housing units with more than 3 bedrooms are unusual in Whittier, making up less than 5% of housing units. In Alaska, 19% of housing units have greater than 3 bedrooms. Additionally, Whittier has many more studio housing units with no bedrooms compared with the state (21.6% versus 6.4%, respectively) (USCB

2024). While this is not particularly surprising given that most residents live in high density housing, it is something that makes Whittier unique among Alaskan communities.

**Table 1. Housing Types in Whittier and Alaska, 5-Year Estimate, 2018–2022**

Housing Units in Structure	Whittier	Alaska
1-unit, detached	3.7%	63.3%
1-unit, attached	0.0%	7.7%
2 units	0.0%	5.3%
3 or 4 units	0.0%	7.3%
5 to 9 units	8.9%	4.6%
10 to 19 units	11.0%	2.8%
20 or more units	75.8%	4.9%
Mobile home	0.0%	4.1%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0.6%	0.1%

Source: USCB (2024)

**Table 2. Owner-Occupied Housing Value (2022 Dollars), Whittier and Alaska, 5-Year Estimate, 2018–2022**

Value	Whittier	Alaska
Less than \$50,000	11.6%	5.5%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	44.2%	4.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	20.9%	4.9%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	18.6%	7.3%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	0.0%	24.1%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	4.7%	38.3%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	0.0%	14.6%
\$1,000,000 or more	0.0%	1.2%
Median (dollars)	\$79,500	\$318,000
Mortgage Status		
Housing units with a mortgage	11.6%	61.0%
Housing units without a mortgage	88.4%	39.0%

Source: USCB (2024)

**Table 3. Number of Bedrooms per Housing Unit, Whittier and Alaska, 5-Year Estimate, 2018–2022**

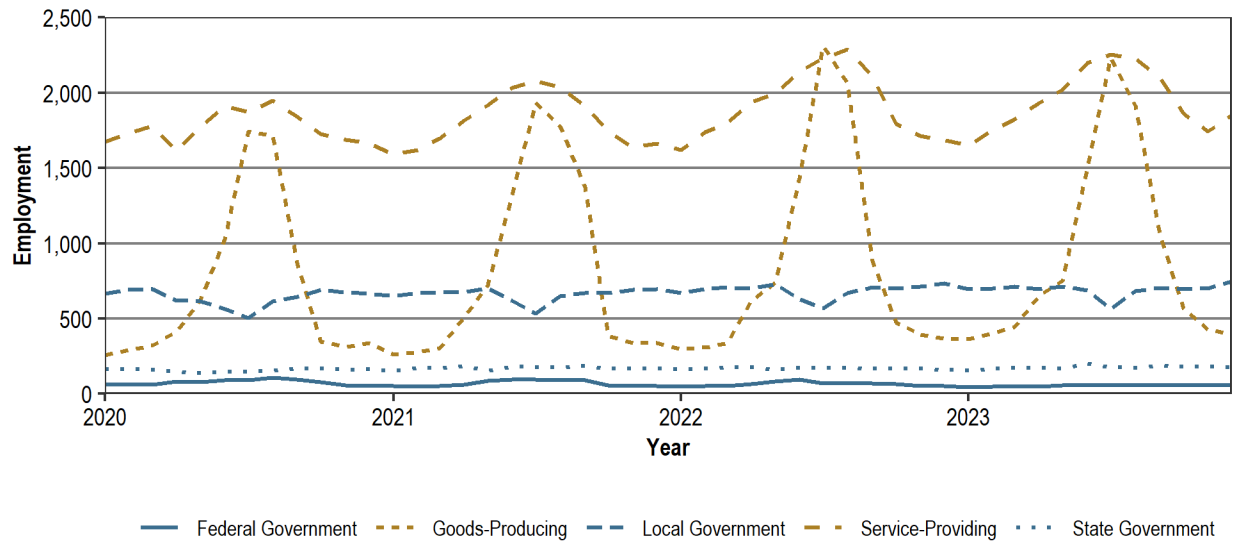
Number of Bedrooms	Whittier	Alaska
No bedroom	21.6%	6.4%
1 bedroom	11.5%	13.2%
2 bedrooms	31.7%	25.9%
3 bedrooms	30.5%	35.2%
4 bedrooms	3.2%	15.6%
5 or more bedrooms	1.4%	3.7%

Source: USCB (2024)

## Employment and Wages

Employment is tracked by ADOLWD at the census area level, though Whittier’s employment is anticipated to be similar to that of the Chugach Census Area due to its location and large tourism industry. Figure 4 shows the seasonal fluctuation of employment in the private sector, especially in service-providing industries. Government employment is more stable, though federal employment still increases somewhat during the summer months and local employment dips.

**Figure 4. Employment in Chugach Census Area, 2020–2023**



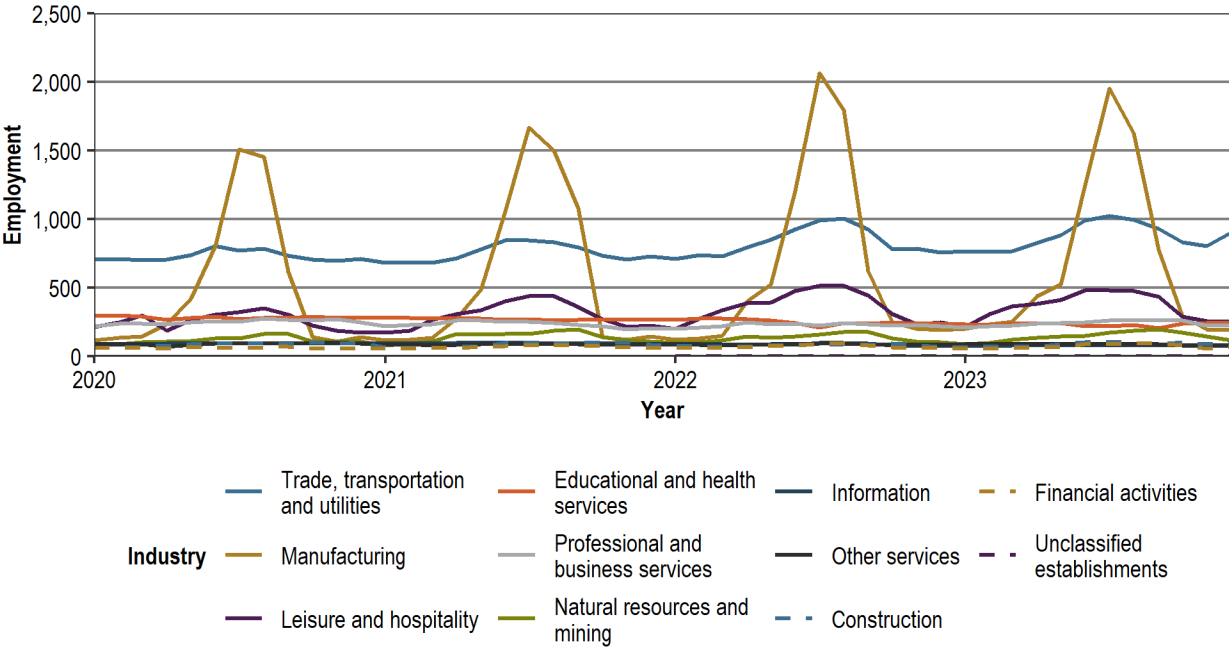
Source: ADOLWD (2021, 2024d, 2024e, 2024f, 2024g)

Figure 5 shows the seasonality of employment by industry. While there are a lot of industries shown in the figure, a few stand out. The manufacturing industry has the largest variation in employment, from close to zero during the winter to nearly 2,000 in the summer of 2023. This industry includes fish processing, which spikes midyear. Trade, transportation, and utilities, which has a higher level



of employment overall but also spikes in the summer. Finally, leisure and hospitality exist year-round but increase in the summer. Each of these three industries has a strong tie to tourism. Specific activities within tourism fall under different sectors. For example, fishing guides are under leisure and hospitality, while rentals of recreational goods (motorized or non-motorized) fall under trade, transportation and utilities. Campgrounds are classified as leisure and hospitality.

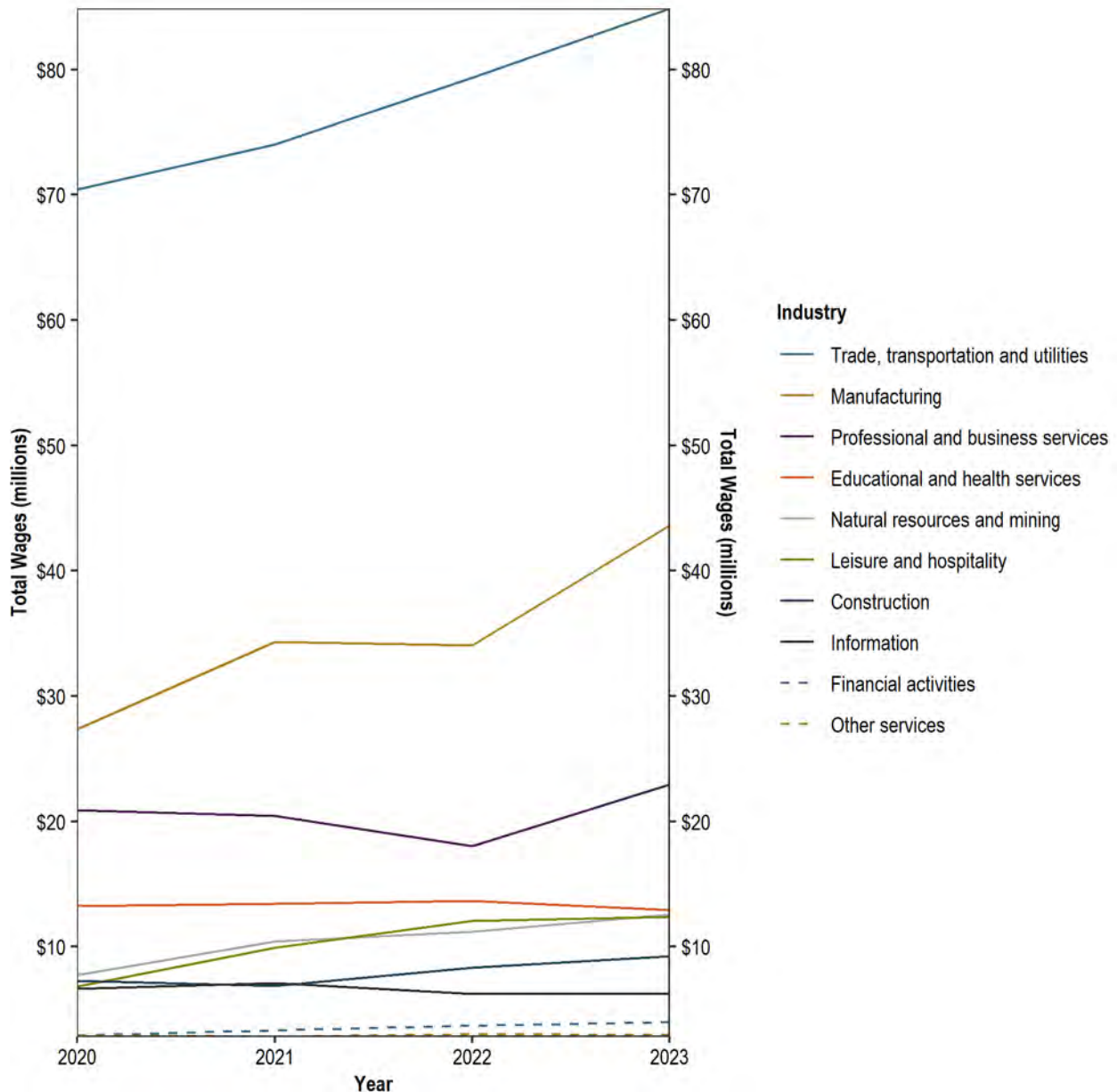
Figure 5. Employment by Industry in Chugach Census Area, 2020–2023



Source: ADOLWD (2021, 2024d, 2024e, 2024f, 2024g)

Total wages by industry, as shown in Figure 6, generally follows the order of employment shown in the prior figure, though total wages from the leisure and hospitality industry are below those of professional and business services and educational and health services, each of which tend to feature high-paying jobs.

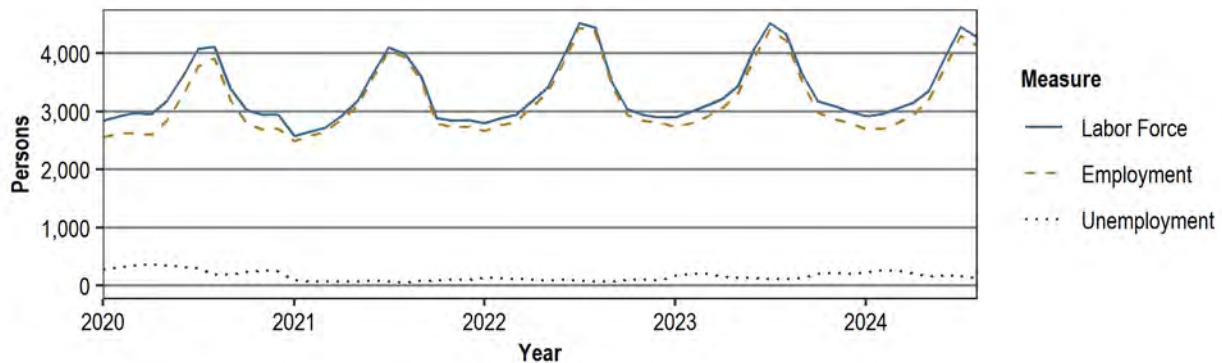
**Figure 6. Total Wages by Industry in Chugach Census Area, 2020–2023**



Source: ADOLWD (2021, 2024d, 2024e, 2024f, 2024g)

Figure 7 shows the size of the labor force and the employment and unemployment rates in the census area. As with employment, the labor force and employment rate peak in the summer as there are more tourism-related jobs and the population increases with the seasonal workers who fill many of those jobs.

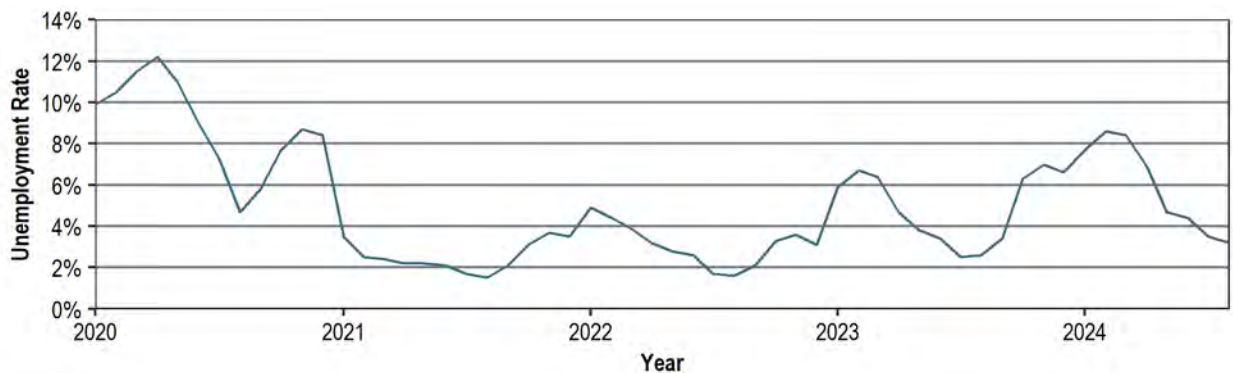
**Figure 7. Labor Force, Employment, and Unemployment in Chugach Census Area, 2020–2024**



Source: ADOLWD (2024a)

Figure 8 provides more detail about the unemployment rate over time, indicating the ability of individuals looking for work to find it. Other than the pandemic year of 2020, which affected the availability of jobs, the unemployment rate is generally under 9% and spikes during the winter months. Unemployment in the Chugach Census Area seems to have been growing over the last three years, both in its summer lows and its winter highs.

**Figure 8. Unemployment Rate in Chugach Census Area, 2020–2024**



Source: ADOLWD (2024a)

Development of the Head of Bay could create demand for additional workers and support businesses, potentially providing employment opportunities for unemployed residents. The scale of the need is



not known at this time, and the ability of jobs to be provided by residents will depend on the nature and magnitude of the opportunities and sufficient housing for any imported workforce to become residents.

## Personal Income

Table 4 shows annual household incomes in Whittier and Alaska. There are two large points of difference between Whittier and Alaska with respect to household incomes. The first is the share of households earning \$200,000 or more. In Whittier, only 3.2% of households earn \$200,000 or more, while across Alaska 12.3% of households fall into this category. The second is the share of households earning between \$35,999 and \$49,999 annually. In Whittier, just over 25% of households fall into this income range. However, in Alaska only 9.4% of households fall into this range.

Residents of Whittier earn \$30,928 per capita, which is less than the \$42,828 per capita income in Alaska as a whole (USCB 2024). Similarly to per capita income, Whittier residents have lower household incomes compared with Alaska as a whole. The median household income in Whittier is \$48,828, which is 43% less than the Alaska median household income. Additionally, the mean household income in Whittier is \$69,677 and \$110,602 in Alaska.

**Table 4. Household income (2022 Dollars), Whittier and Alaska, 5-Year Estimate, 2018–2022**

Household Income	Whittier	Alaska
Less than \$10,000	7.10%	3.90%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	4.50%	2.50%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	9.70%	5.80%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	8.40%	5.50%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	25.20%	9.40%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	12.90%	15.70%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	9.00%	14.20%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	11.60%	19.70%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	8.40%	11%
\$200,000 or more	3.20%	12.30%
Median income (dollars)	\$48,828	\$86,370
Mean income (dollars)	\$69,677	\$110,602

Source: USCB (2024)

Table 5 shows the sources of household income in Whittier, Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB), Chugach Census Area, and Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) (USCB 2024). Among these areas, Whittier has a substantially higher share of households with income from cash public assistance or food stamps/SNAP (31% of households in Whittier, while the next closest is 12%). Whittier has a relatively low share of households with retirement income at 18.7%, the lowest among the areas

included in the table. Whittier also has a relatively high percentage of households with social security income (34.2%).

**Table 5. Sources of Household Income, 5-Year Estimate, 2018–2022**

	Whittier	Chugach Census Area	Kenai Peninsula Borough	Municipality of Anchorage
Percentage of households with earnings	78.1%	86.7%	72.1%	85.1%
Percentage of households with interest, dividends, or net rental income	31.6%	29.0%	41.8%	42.0%
Percentage of households with Social Security income	34.2%	26.0%	35.4%	21.1%
Percentage of households with Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	3.2%	2.2%	4.8%	4.6%
Percentage of households with cash public assistance or food stamps/SNAP	31.0%	10.9%	12.0%	12.0%
Percentage of households with retirement income	18.7%	21%	27.4%	22.9%
Percentage of households with other types of income	61.9%	57.3%	36.0%	29.8%

Source: USCB (2024)

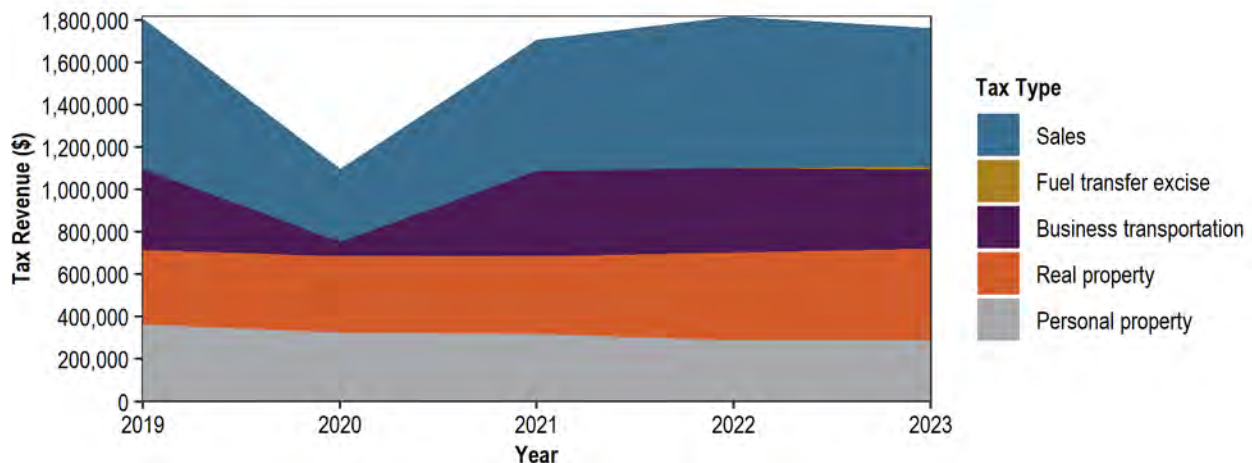
## Revenue Overview

### City Tax Revenues

This section provides an overview of city revenues from taxes. Financial information for Delong Dock and Whittier Harbor is shown later, under *Port and Harbor Operations*. The City of Whittier receives around \$1.7–1.8 million annually from five categories of taxes. Over the last five years, personal property<sup>1</sup> tax revenue has been declining while real property tax revenue has been growing, totaling about \$700,000 each year. One-third of the city’s tax revenue comes from sales tax, except for the 2020 dip that affected sales and business transportation taxes.<sup>2</sup> Tax revenues are shown in Figure 9.

According to the city tax roll, the total assessed value of real property in Whittier was \$52 million in 2024 (Whittier 2024f). Commercial property accounted for 41% of the total taxable value and condominiums and residential properties were another 53%. Vacant property accounted for the remaining 6%. Applying the 2024 taxable value to the property tax revenues for 2023 (City of Whittier 2024a) suggests that real property tax revenues from commercial properties were \$296,500 of the \$721,400 total.

**Figure 9. City of Whittier Tax Revenues. 2019–2023**



Source: City of Whittier (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023b, 2024a)

The city also received shared taxes from the State of Alaska, predominantly from the Commercial Passenger Vessel (CPV) Excise Tax and Fisheries Business Tax (Figure 10). Overall, these taxes

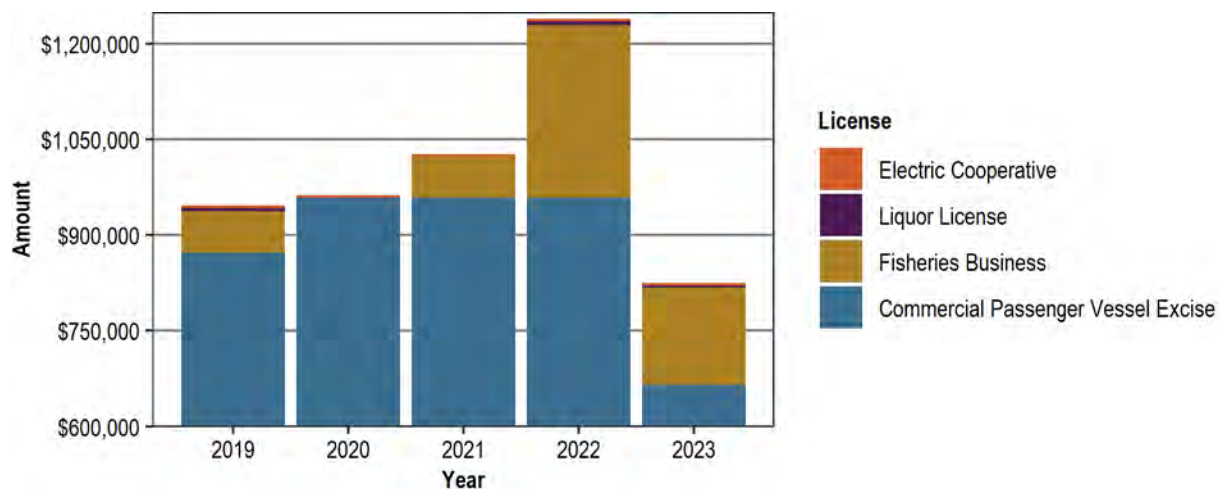
<sup>1</sup> Personal property is defined as any property that is not defined as real property. It includes motor vehicles and boats.

<sup>2</sup> Whittier was originally collecting sales tax for only 6 months of the year. Effective January 2025, taxes will be collected year round. This will increase sales tax revenues, though the extent of the increase cannot be determined at this time.



dropped in 2023 relative to their average values over the prior four years (see notes under the figure). Each is subject to volatility, however, based on cruise ship itineraries (since the tax is only paid to the first several ports of call) and seafood processing activity. With additional cruise vessels arriving in 2025, the CPV revenues are expected to increase.

**Figure 10. Shared Tax Revenues Received by City of Whittier, by License Type, 2019–2023**



Notes: The City of Whittier received actual CPV revenue in 2020 (\$958,385). Due to COVID-19, the 2021 and 2022 amounts shown were actually legislative appropriations of \$958,385 in each year. After a dip in 2023 caused by a slow year of ramping up, activity has returned to normal and the 2024 CPV revenue exceeds \$1 million, though the 2024 shared revenue report is not yet out to show that.

Source: ADOR (2020, 2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2023)

## Harbor Moorage Rates

From a market rates perspective, Whittier's harbor moorage rates are generally higher than that of its peers in Seward and Valdez, as described below. However, the relatively high rates can be justified by the strong demand for its harbor, travel cost savings due to its location, and residency of its user base. Whittier is located near the MOA and Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) and has strong demand from that population center. Its location also offers a shorter road distance for that population to access Prince William Sound. Approximately 85% of stall usage in Whittier Harbor comes from that population (see *Whittier Harbor* section). These three factors help to explain how it can charge a high moorage rate, and how it could likely raise rates and still have a large waitlist (which is primarily occupied by MOA residents).

Whittier charges daily transient use at \$1.22 per foot and monthly at \$17.53 per foot in the summer. It offers a winter rate of \$51.55 per foot that covers October 1–March 31. Preferential moorage is billed annually at a rate of \$76.90 per foot (City of Whittier 2023a).

By comparison, Seward charges transient users a daily rate of \$0.86 per lineal foot and an annual rate of \$62.80 per lineal foot. Monthly moorage is 18% of the annual rate (\$11.30) and semi-annual moorage is 60% (\$37.68). Reserved moorage is offered on a semi-annual basis at a rate of \$28.55 per lineal foot (City of Seward 2024).

Valdez charges transient users of its A–W Docks a rate of \$0.80 per foot per day and an annual rate of \$58.36 per foot for boats in the 24–40-foot range and \$62.74 per foot for boats over 40 feet. At its Tour Dock, it charges \$1.50 per foot daily and \$92.27 annually. Reserved moorage is charged on boats based on the length of boat (\$50.74 per foot for 24–40 feet and \$54.55 per foot for 48 feet or longer) or the length of the stall, whichever is greater (City of Valdez 2023).

The private Cliffside Marina often has stalls that the owner has rented out on a monthly basis. The average rental rates for a forty-foot slip is \$780 per month, a 50-foot slip is \$1,040 per month, and a 60-foot slip averages \$1,350 per month (Cliffside Marina 2011). On a per foot basis on the stall length, those monthly costs amount to \$19.50, \$20.80, and \$22.50, respectively. Each of these per-foot rates exceeds those in the Whittier Harbor.

The higher rates charged at the Cliffside Marina and the real property taxes charged for the condominiums represent a potential for the city to raise rates in Whittier Harbor, as long as the users perceive level of service and other benefits to justify the rates.

## **Lease of City Lands**

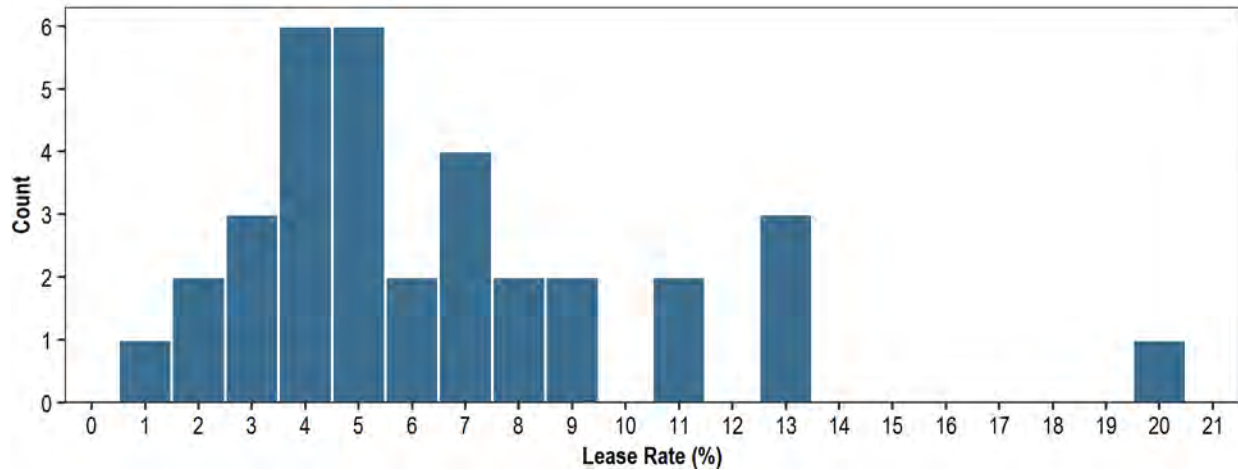
Under the Code of Ordinances, city-owned property “shall be leased at no less than ‘fair market rent,’ which is defined as no less than 10% of the “fair market value.” That value is defined by an appraisal (or estimated value), at the time it is appraised. The code requires appraisals to be completed with each new or transferred lease, and within two years of each lease renewal, though the lease rate cannot be increased more often than every five years (City of Whittier 2024b). Unlike Seward and Valdez, the code does not explicitly state that appraisals must be completed each year, except for lands that the city has leased from the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC). The ARRC master lease agreement requires the city to appraise the lands every five years. The City of Whittier has not appraised leased property according to the 5-year requirement, though it is currently pursuing a contractor to conduct appraisals.

For comparison, City of Seward (2023) notes that it leases city-owned property at an 8% rate, with the value of the property adjusted by appraisal every 5 years, and that most communities around the state charge 6% to 10% of the assessed value. City of Valdez (2024) specifies a lease rate of 10% of fair market value annually, also adjusted every fifth year.

The City of Whittier’s leased property is assessed at \$4.0 million and generates almost \$183,500 of annual lease revenue (City of Whittier 2024f). The revenue generated by these properties is 4.5% of its assessed value, which is less than half the fair market rent in the city’s code (City of Whittier

2024b). The histogram in Figure 11 shows the distribution of lease rates; all but six of the parcels have a rate under 10%.

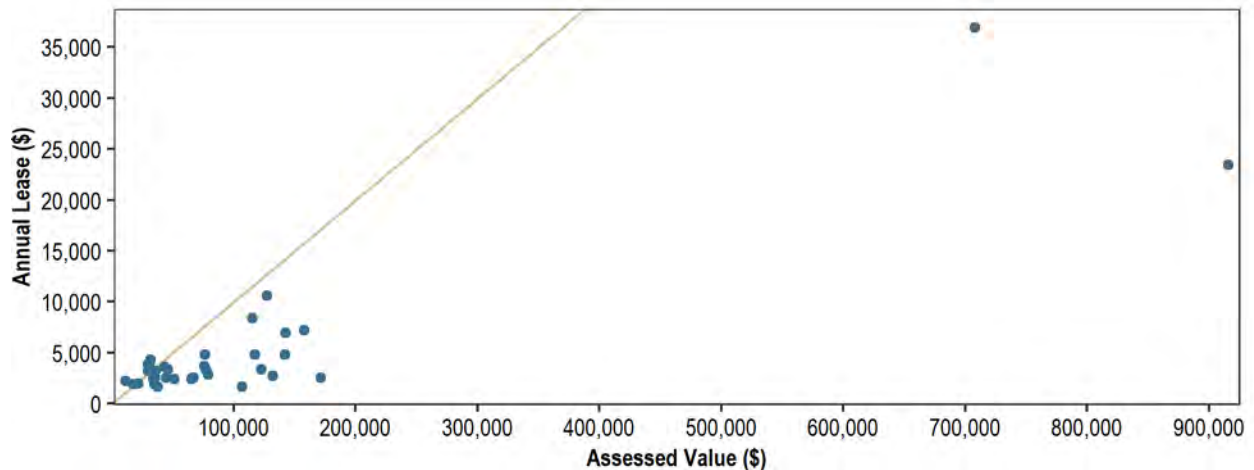
**Figure 11. Distribution of Lease Rates (%)**



Source: City of Whittier (2024f) and Northern Economics analysis

Figure 12 compares the annual lease revenue per parcel against the total assessed value of the land and improvements for each parcel. The line indicates the annual lease rate that each parcel would be paying, based on the assessed value and the fair market rent of 10%. Zooming in on the bottom left portion of the chart, Figure 13 shows the lease rate percentages for parcels assessed at under \$80,000. The six parcels with a lease rate over 10% are all valued under \$40,000, with the others ranging from 3.6% to 8.9%.

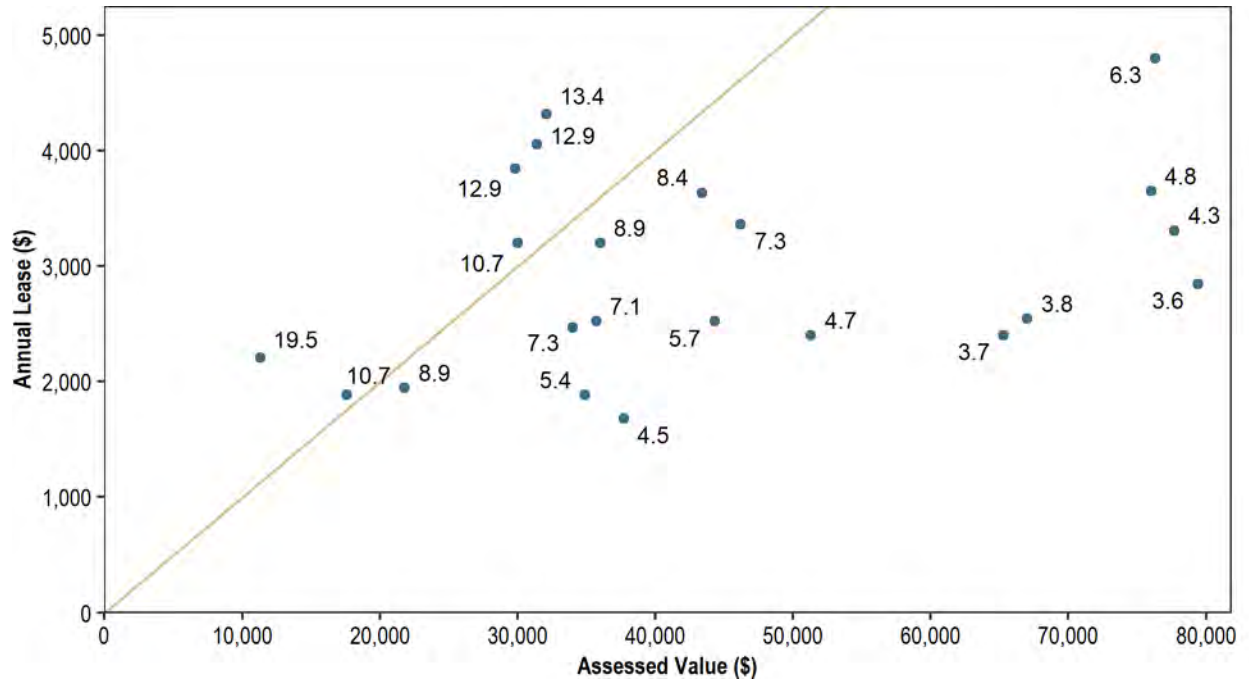
**Figure 12. Assessed Value and Lease Rate for Each Leased Parcel**



Source: City of Whittier (2024f) and Northern Economics analysis



**Figure 13. Assessed Value and Lease Rate for Parcel Valued Under \$80,000**



Source: City of Whittier (2024f) and Northern Economics analysis

If the city were to charge 10% of the assessed value of all parcels, reducing the rate for those six parcels and raising it for the others, the annual rental revenue would be \$393,920, an increase of \$215,904 over the current revenues (see Table 6). It is important to note, however, that the date of the last appraisal for each parcel is not readily available and therefore the potential revenue could be significantly higher when lease revenue is adjusted for both the appraised value and the 10% rate.

**Table 6. Potential and Foregone Revenue from Charging Less Than 10% Lease Rate**

Lease Location	Number of Parcels	Total Annual Rental (\$)	Total Assessed Value (\$)	Lease Rate (%)	Annual Rental at 10% Lease Rate	Forgone Revenue (\$)
Harbor View	9	27,069	765,500	3.5%	76,550	49,481
Harbor Loop	17	112,769	2,387,200	4.7%	238,720	125,951
Harbor Triangle	8	38,178	786,500	4.9%	78,650	40,472
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>178,016</b>	<b>3,939,200</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>393,920</b>	<b>215,904</b>

Source: City of Whittier (2024f) and Northern Economics analysis

## Industry Overview

This section covers three major waterfront-related industries: tourism, commercial fishing, and cargo and transportation.

### Tourism

Whittier serves cruise ship visitors, ferry passengers, and in-state visitors who come for recreational activities.

#### Cruise Ship Visitors

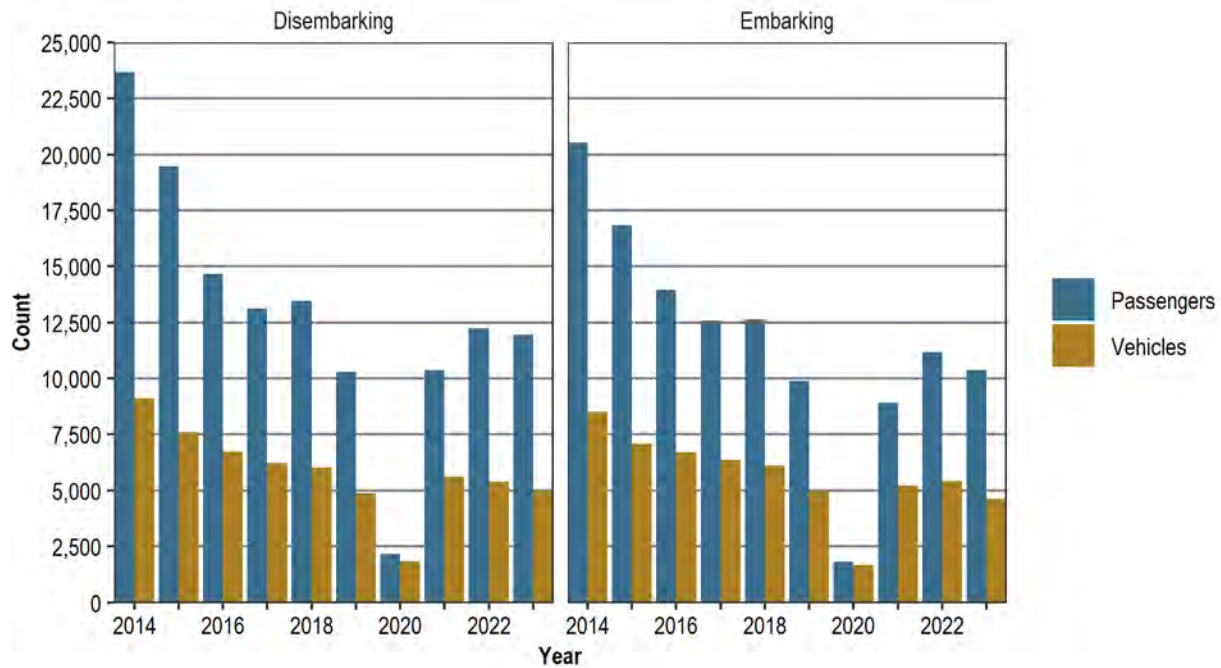
City of Whittier (2024c) provided a general overview of cruise ship activity and visitors: Over the past 5 years Whittier has received ships starting the second week of May through mid-September during the weekends. One ship arrives on Friday evening (2200) and that vessel departs on Saturday evening around 2100-2200. The departing vessel passes an inbound ship that moors at around 2200-2300 Saturday evening and that vessel will depart around 2100-2200 Sunday evening. The community also receives a ship every other Wednesday for a total annual visit of 46 ships. The average time for vessels in port is 20-22 hours. Whittier didn't receive any vessels in 2020 due to Covid-19. With the addition of the Huna-Totem partnership with Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), the city expects to receive additional vessels for a total of 72 annually. It is not clear there will be any other changes to cruise service in Whittier, such as length of time in the community or additional demand for locally-provided services.

Northern Economics contacted the Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska to request additional information about cruise ship visitors to Whittier but did not receive information back in time for the publication of this report.

#### Ferry Passengers

Whittier receives Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) ferries and is on a route that serves other communities in Prince William Sounds. Ridership has been steady in recent years, though it is down from 2014 and 2015. Figure 14 shows the number of passengers and vehicles that have disembarked or embarked in Whittier from 2014 through 2023.

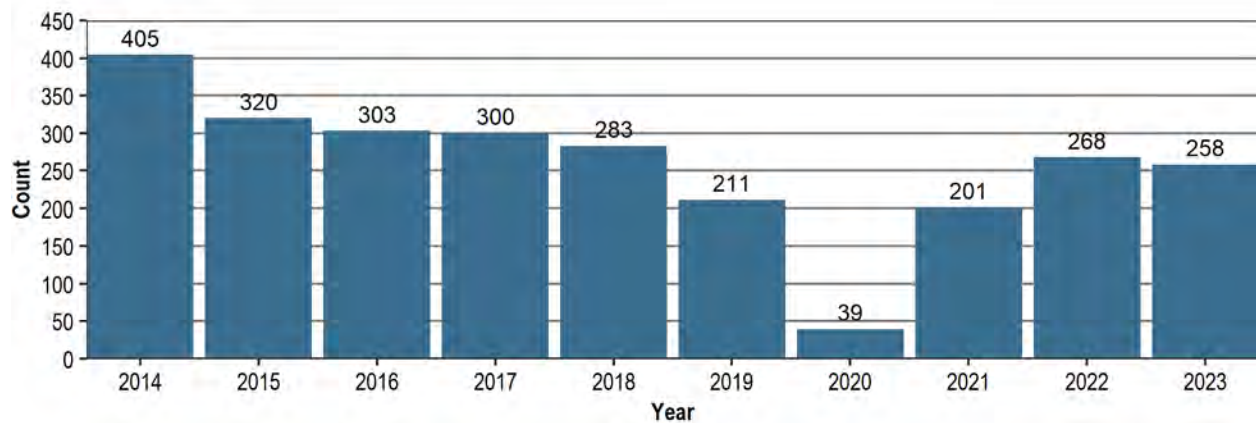
**Figure 14. Ferry Passengers and Vehicles Disembarking and Embarking at Whittier, 2014–2023**



Source: AMHS (2024a)

Figure 16 shows the number of ferry sailings at Whittier for 2014–2023, a figure that highlights the decline from 2014, when there were 405 sailings compared to 258 in 2023.

**Figure 15. Ferry Sailings at Whittier, 2014–2023**



Source: AMHS (2024a)

The *MV Aurora* and *MV Kennicott* serve Whittier.

*MV Aurora* is a smaller vessel, with a capacity of 250 passengers and 660 linear feet of vehicles (AMHS 2024b). She serves Prince William Sound and in 2023 reached a passenger capacity of 30.1% from



Valdez to Whittier and 24.0% from Whittier to Valdez. The next highest capacity route in 2023 was between Whittier and Tatitlek. The route between Whittier and Cordova was slightly under 15% capacity. Vehicle capacity (measured by linear feet sold) was between 47% and 63% out of Whittier was 70.4% from Valdez to Whittier.

*MV Kennicott* is a mainline ferry with a capacity of 499 passengers and 1,340 linear feet of vehicles when calling at Whittier (AMHS 2024c). She provides a cross-gulf connection between Whittier and Juneau. She generally has low passenger capacities to and from Whittier, though she operates at a much higher capacity for vehicles since she serves Juneau and Whittier offers a much shorter drive and entirely in-state drive from Anchorage than a ferry from Haines can offer. In 2023, she was at 96.0% capacity from Whittier to Juneau and 84.5% from Juneau.

### **Recreational Activities**

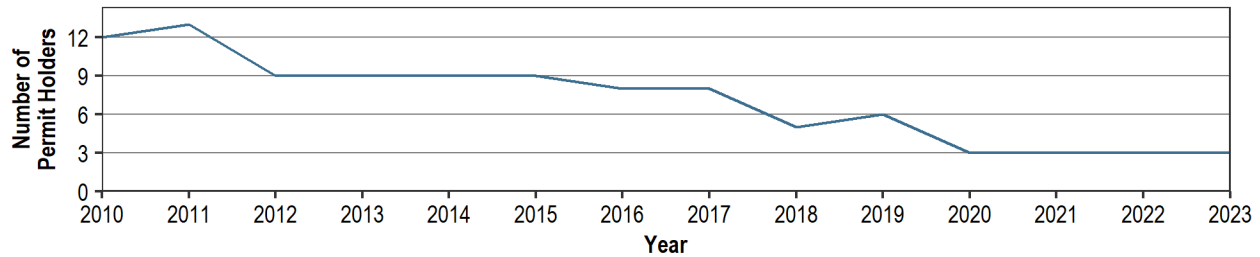
Whittier offers a variety of activities for visitors, making it an attractive destination for in-state as well as out-of-state visitors. Most activities near Whittier cater to people interested in seeing and experiencing the natural beauty of Alaska. Whittier's proximity to the Chugach Mountains and glaciers combined with its waterfront location make it a beautiful waterfront and mountain destination. Popular activities in the summer include fishing, boating, jet ski tours, sea kayaking, wildlife viewing cruises, fishing charters, biking, hiking, stand-up paddleboarding, and camping. Popular winter activities include recreational snowmobiling, snowmobile tours, heliskiing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, hunting, back-country skiing, and ice climbing. The Prince William Sound welcomes visitors year-round.

There are 76 businesses licensed with a physical address in Whittier (ADCCED 2024). Of those, 8 are categorized as arts, entertainment, and recreation (NAICS code 71) and 18 as accommodation and food services (NAICS code 72).

## **Commercial Fishing**

In recent years, only 3 Whittier residents have held commercial fishing permits, down from a high of 13 in 2011 (CFEC 2024). Figure 16 shows the number of permit holders since 2010. Due to the small number of permit holders, information on earnings is withheld due to confidentiality constraints.

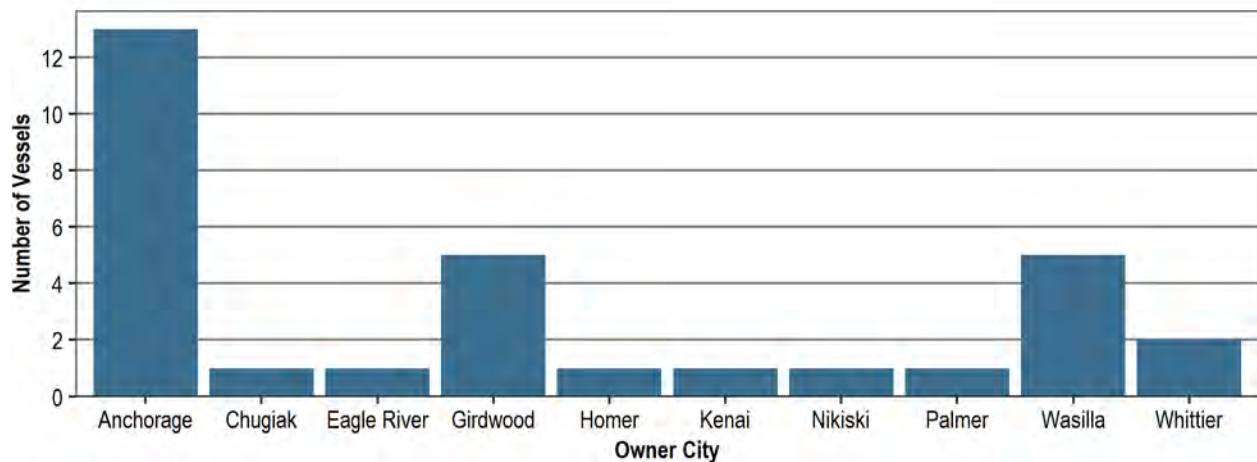
**Figure 16. Number of Commercial Fishing Permit Holders Residing in City of Whittier, 2010–2023**



Source: CFEC (2024) and Northern Economics analysis

Though only 3 Whittier residents have commercial fishing permits, Whittier Harbor is still used by commercial fishing vessels owned by residents of several communities around the state. Figure 17 shows the number of commercial fishing vessels homeported in Whittier, by city of residence. Anchorage, Girdwood, and Wasilla residents have the most vessels homeported in Whittier harbor.

**Figure 17. Number of Commercial Fishing Vessels Home Ported in Whittier, by Owner City, 2024**

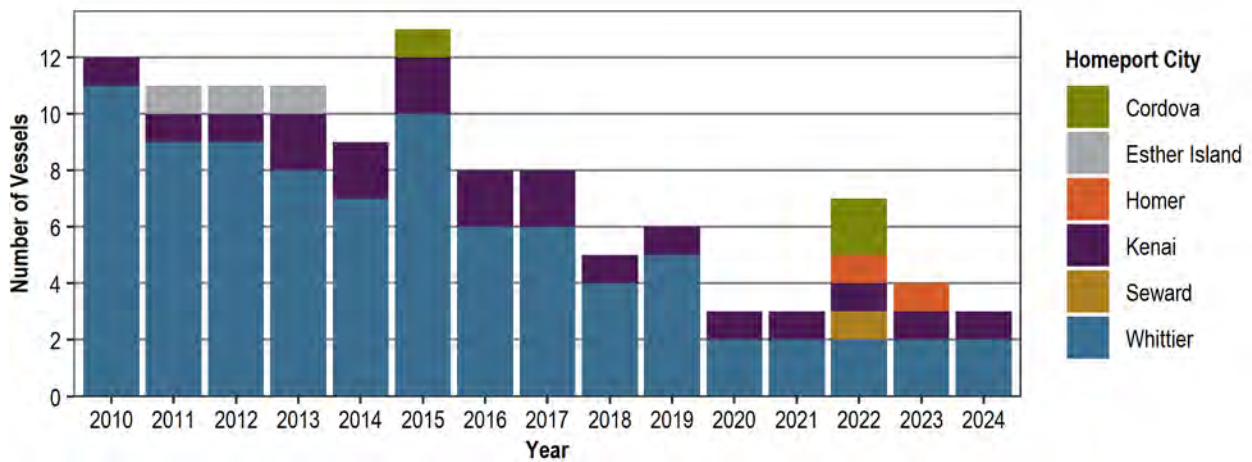


Source: CFEC (2024) and Northern Economics analysis

Despite its location, Whittier has a small number of commercial fishing users relative to other harbors on Prince William Sound. Contribution factors include Whittier’s insurance requirement, a lack of uplands to allow boat owners to pull their boat out of the water to do maintenance, and limited services and supplies needed for commercial fishermen relative to other harbors.

Figure 18 looks at the home port of commercial fishing vessels owned by Whittier residents. While in recent years only 2 vessels have been in Whittier Harbor, in the past there had been as many as 11 of them.

**Figure 18. Commercial Fishing Vessels Owned by Whittier Residents, by Home Port Location, 2010–2024**



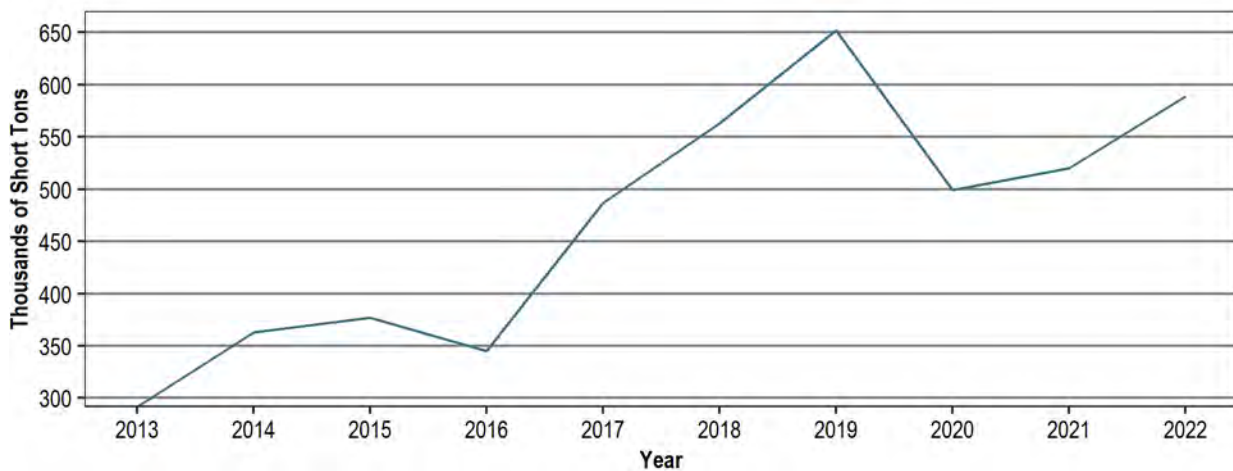
Source: CFEC (2024) and Northern Economics analysis

## Cargo and Transportation

### Waterborne Cargo

Facilities within Whittier’s municipal boundary, which essentially represents activity by ARRC, received 580 thousand short tons and shipped 9 thousand short tons of waterborne cargo in 2022. Manufactured equipment made up more than 70% of cargo. (WCSC 2024).

**Figure 19. Waterborne Cargo Handled in Whittier, Thousands of Short Tons, 2013–2022**



Source: WCSC (2024)



The Seward Master Plan (ARRC 2017) provides inbound and outbound cargo handled in Seward, Whittier, and Anchorage (each with ARRC access) and in Valdez for the prior years of 2004–2013. Though dated,<sup>3</sup> the cargo numbers have had coal removed from Seward’s cargo volumes and petroleum removed from Valdez’s to provide a better comparison of general cargo volumes handled in each community.

Table 7 presents total inbound and outbound freight by port for 2004–2013, excluding coal and petroleum.

**Table 7. Total Cargo by Southcentral Alaska Port, Excluding Coal and Petroleum, 2004–2013**

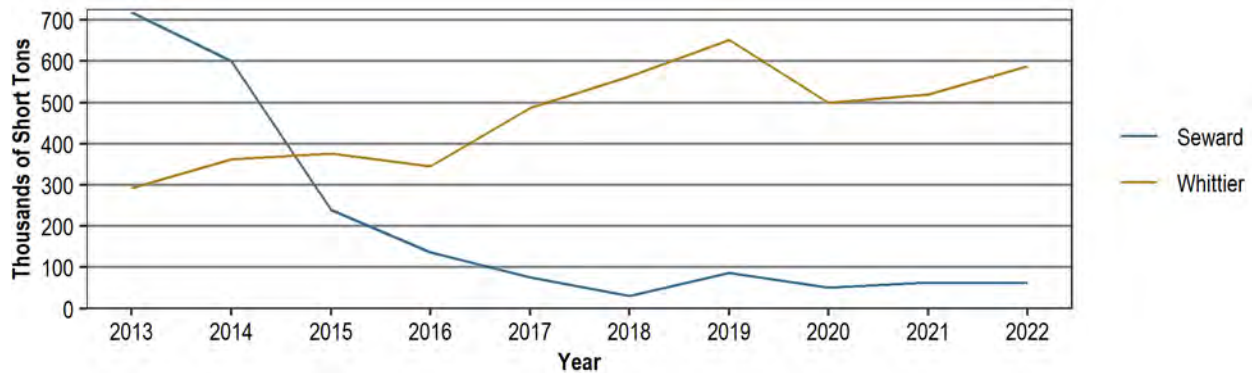
Port	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Inbound Freight (thousands of short tons)										
Seward	26.0	17.9	25.9	24.6	12.1	13.6	10.6	40.6	71.5	48.1
Whittier	208.1	247.7	264.3	251.4	266.1	316.4	259.5	247.0	253.1	280.6
Anchorage	2,129.8	2,535.6	2,298.6	2,005.6	1,989.5	1,862.2	2,452.4	2,645.3	2,520.7	2,286.6
Valdez	4.4	29.7	1.0	4.3	186.2	134.0	35.6	52.7	20.5	7.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,496.2</b>	<b>3,008.7</b>	<b>2,962.6</b>	<b>2,801.0</b>	<b>2,635.4</b>	<b>2,485.0</b>	<b>2,923.8</b>	<b>3,352.6</b>	<b>3,104.0</b>	<b>2,965.2</b>
Outbound Freight (Excluding Coal and Petroleum) (thousands of short tons)										
Seward	2.6	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.0	3.4	0.0	1.9	2.0	29.3
Whittier	47.1	24.9	32.2	18.3	10.0	11.9	11.5	10.4	8.5	11.7
Anchorage	122.1	180.9	138.6	141.6	156.7	129.6	148.0	164.2	152.8	151.0
Valdez	3.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.0	1.0	11.0	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>286.3</b>	<b>327.3</b>	<b>235.9</b>	<b>218.1</b>	<b>253.9</b>	<b>190.6</b>	<b>302.9</b>	<b>248.4</b>	<b>286.0</b>	<b>370.1</b>

Source: ARRC (2017)

Cargo data for more recent years are available from WCSC (2024) since 2013. As noted above, ARRC operates cargo ports in Seward and Whittier. Cargo handled in each of those ports is shown in Figure 20. Whittier’s cargo volume has grown over time, while Seward’s shrunk due to coal exports ending in 2016 (George 2024). Excluding coal, Seward’s cargo movements are relatively steady.

<sup>3</sup> ARRC is working on a master plan for its Whittier Terminal, which should provide updated cargo data, but it is still a draft.

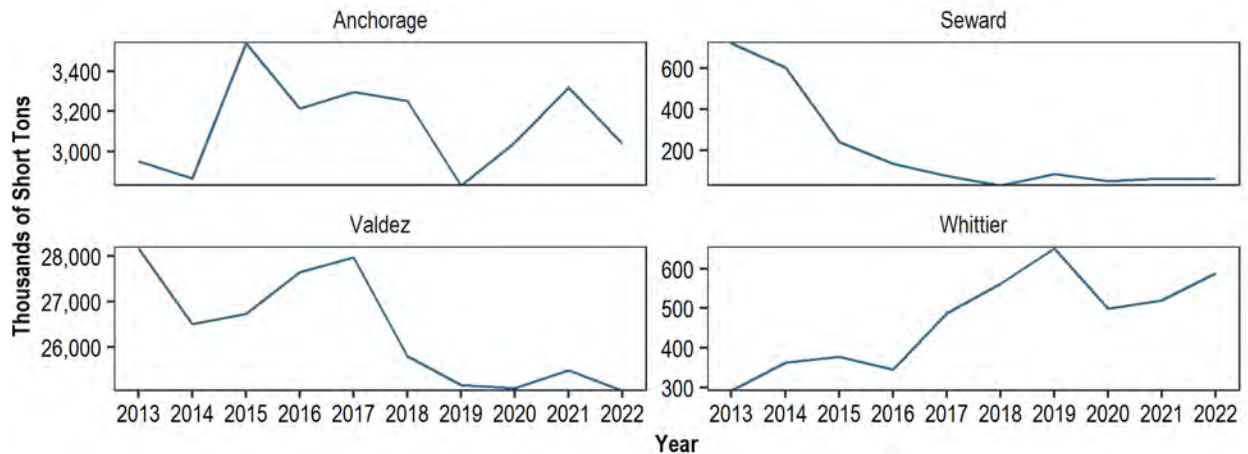
**Figure 20. Waterborne Cargo Handled in Whittier and Seward, Thousands of Short Tons, 2013–2022**



Source: WCSC (2024)

Figure 21 add Anchorage and Valdez to the cargo handling picture. Valdez handles the most cargo of the four ports, by an order of magnitude, driven by exported crude oil from the pipeline. Without petroleum included, Valdez's cargo activity is lower than that of Seward and Whittier, as seen in the prior years in Table 7.

**Figure 21. Waterborne Cargo Handled in Whittier and Comparison Ports, Thousands of Short Tons, 2013–2022**

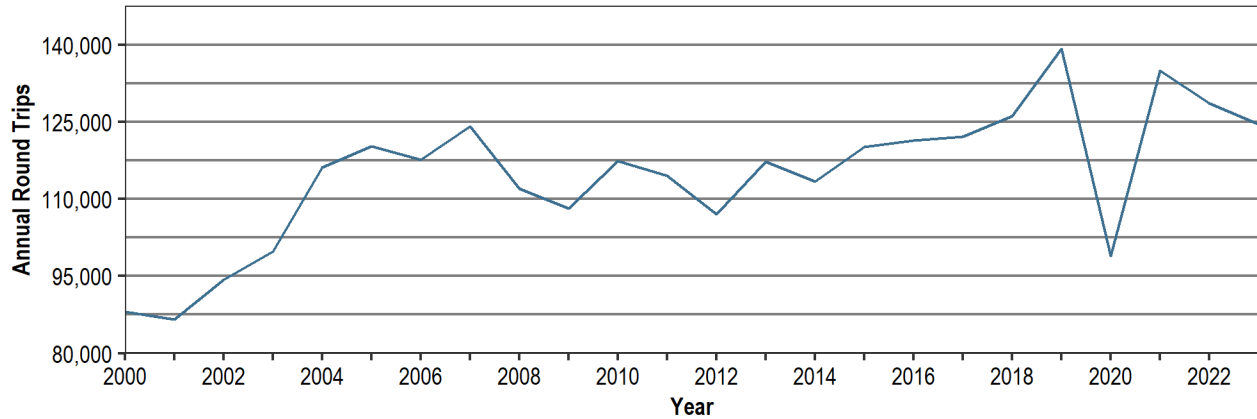


Source: WCSC (2024)

## Tunnel Traffic

Road and rail access to Whittier relies on the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel to connect to facilities along Turnagain Arm. Figure 22 summarizes the road traffic in the tunnel for 2000–2023. In recent years, traffic has generally been higher than it was for much of the period, other than the 2020 dip.

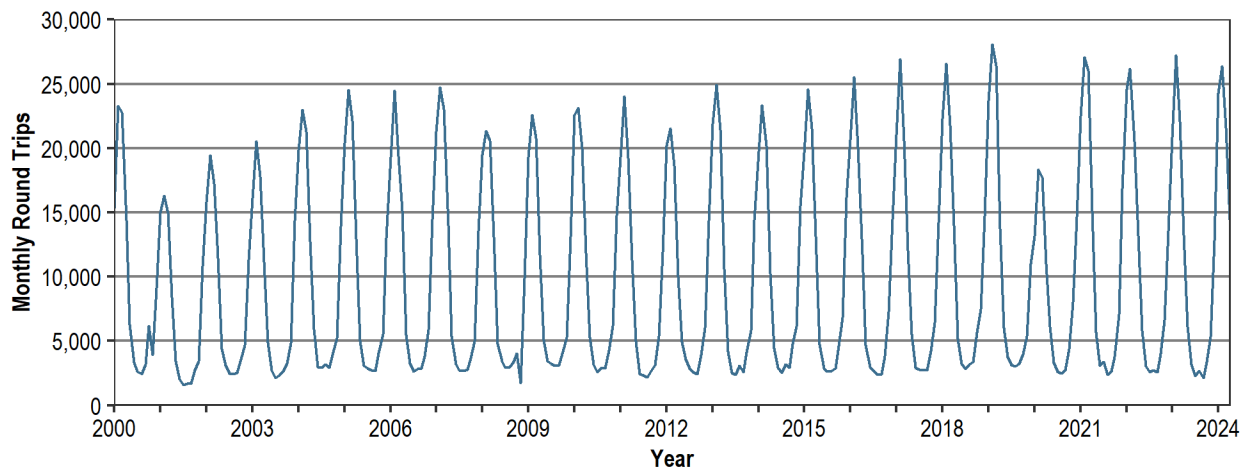
**Figure 22. Whittier Tunnel Traffic by Year, 2000–2023**



Source: ADOTPF (2024)

Figure 23 shows the seasonality of tunnel traffic, which expected peaks during the summer months due to tourism.

**Figure 23. Whittier Tunnel Traffic, Monthly, June 2000–August 2024**

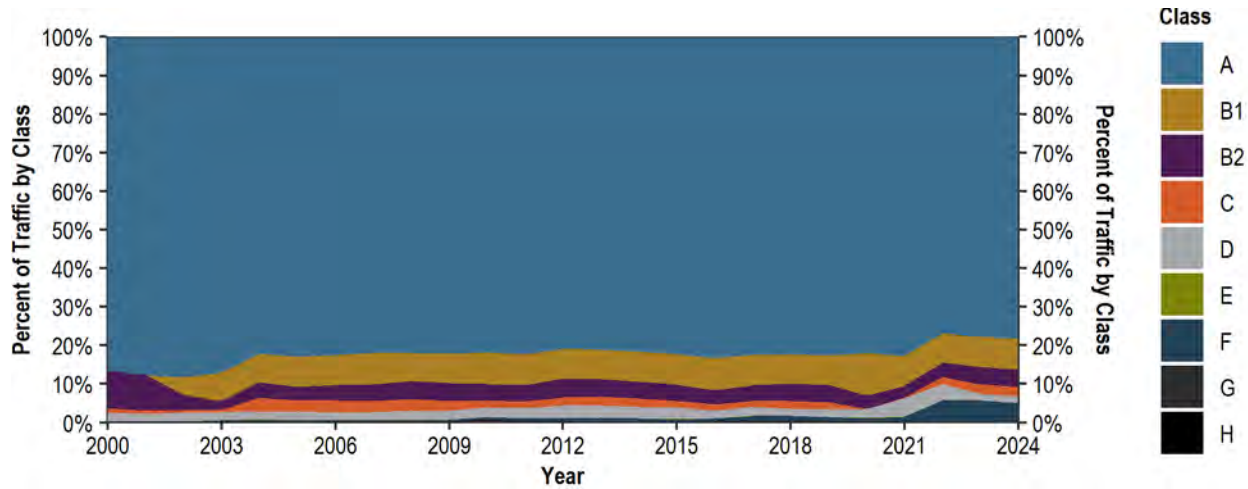


Source: ADOTPF (2024) and Northern Economics analysis

The majority (approximately 80%) of traffic in the tunnel comes from class A passenger vehicles, with classes B1, B2, and C typically accounting for most of the remaining traffic. Since 2021, however, class D and F traffic has increased to 5%–10% of the total. Vehicle classes are summarized in Table 8, but in general passenger vehicles are class A, RVs and vehicles pulling trailers (including boats) are classes B1 or B2, and tour busses are class C. Class A vehicles account for about 80% of traffic and class B1 and B2 vehicles another 10%.



Figure 24. Tunnel Traffic by Vehicle Type, 2000–2024



Source: ADOTPF (2024) and Northern Economics analysis

Table 8. Vehicle Classes, Summarized from 17 AAC 38.025

Class	Description
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passenger vehicles that are not pulling trailers</li> </ul>
B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passenger vehicles that are pulling trailers</li> <li>RVs under 28 feet that are pulling trailers</li> <li>RVs over 28 feet that are not pulling trailers</li> <li>Trucks with a gross vehicle weight under 12,000 pounds that are pulling trailers</li> </ul>
B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passenger vehicles and recreational vehicles pulling trailers carrying boats, with a trailer width of 8.5–10 feet</li> <li>RVs over 28 feet that are pulling trailers</li> <li>Vans and buses designed to carry 10–29 people including the driver</li> <li>Trucks with a gross vehicle weight of 12,000 pounds or more with up to 3 axles in the down position that are not pulling trailers</li> </ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buses designed to carry 30 or more people including the driver</li> </ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trucks with a gross vehicle weight of 12,000 pounds or more with 4 or more axles in the down position that are not pulling trailers</li> <li>Trucks with a gross vehicle weight of 12,000 pounds or more with 3 or more axles in the down position that are pulling trailers</li> <li>Truck-tractors with a gross vehicle weight of 12,000 pounds or more that are pulling trailers</li> <li>Motor vehicles, including any trailer and load, if more than 8.5 feet wide, excluding mirrors, but no more than 10 feet wide and 14 feet high, and if the combined length of the vehicle, trailer, and any load is no more than 75 feet long</li> <li>Any vehicle that is not otherwise specified</li> </ul>
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motor vehicles, including any trailer and any load, if they are more than 10 feet wide, excluding mirrors, but no more than 11 feet wide; or 14 feet high, but no more than 15 feet high</li> </ul>
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motor vehicles exempt from tolls</li> </ul>
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government motor vehicles, other than those that fall within class F</li> </ul>
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unknown (not in 17 AAC 38.025)</li> </ul>

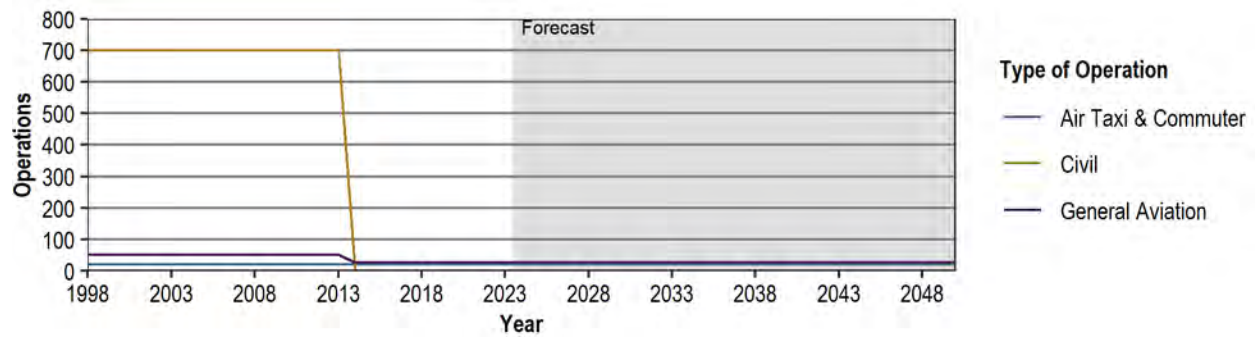
Note: Please refer to the Alaska Administrative Code for exact definitions, since this is an approximate summary for comparison purposes.

Source: Alaska State Legislature (2024) and Northern Economics analysis

## Aviation

FAA (2024) shows no based aircraft at the Whittier Airport, though it reported 2 aircraft prior to 2011. Available FAA data are shown in Figure 25.

**Figure 25. Historical (1998–2022) and Forecasted (2023–2050) Operations at the Whittier Airport**



Source: FAA (2024)

## Port and Harbor Operations

This section looks at city-owned and other facilities on Whittier's waterfront.

In addition to the existing facilities described here, the Whittier Capital Improvements Plan (City of Whittier 2023c) includes several harbor-related projects to improve the floats, launch ramps, and uplands facilities, along with planned replacement of Delong Dock. At the Head of Bay, the city is also envisioning a new harbor along with other major uplands facilities like new parking lots, boat launch ramps, water and wastewater systems, and cruise facilities. These projects would help to address the harbor's waitlist and improve the safety and reliability of port and harbor operations.

### City of Whittier Facilities

#### Delong Dock

Delong Dock had been used to offload refined fuels, but it is no longer used for that purpose. Over the years, it has been used as a raw fish offload point for Whittier Seafoods (2019–2023) and Copper River Seafoods. Whittier Seafoods did not operate in 2024 and has filed for bankruptcy.

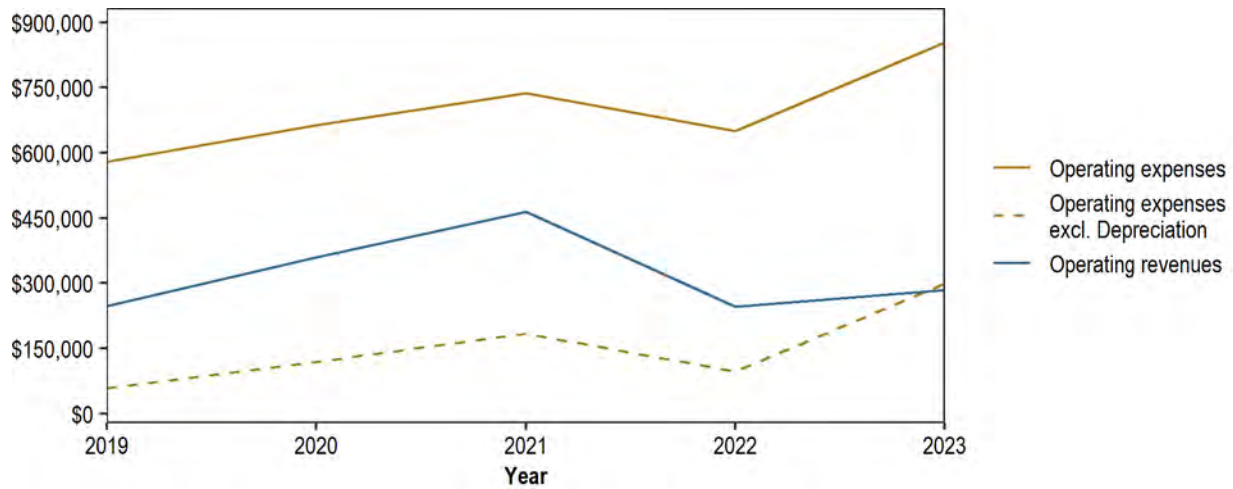
The dock has operated at a financial operating loss for the last five years.<sup>4</sup> Note that depreciation expense, which represents wear and tear on the dock over its useful life from an accounting standpoint, is included in the operating expenses. Depreciation was \$553,513 in 2023, making up most of the \$568,846 loss from operations. In 2019–2022, the dock did generate enough revenue to cover operating expenses excluding depreciation. Ideally, the excess revenue would be used to cover deferred maintenance and contributions to a replacement fund, though the city plans to replace the dock in the near future. Figure 26 shows the dock's revenues and expenses for 2019–2023.

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<sup>4</sup> The increased expenses in 2023 were an anomaly for Delong Dock due to a Bad Debt expense of \$186,440 related to the doubtful collection of Whittier Seafoods' charges. This largely explains the increase in expenses from 2022.



**Figure 26. Operating Revenues and Expenses for Delong Dock, 2019–2023**

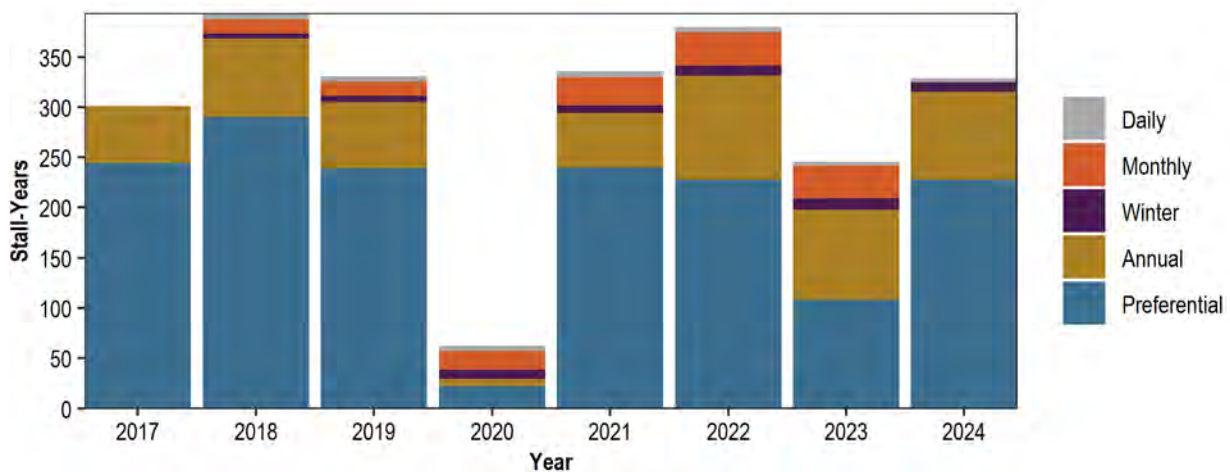


Source: City of Whittier (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023b, 2024a)

### Whittier Harbor

Whittier Harbor has 360 total slips/berths, with 195 assigned and the remaining treated as transient (City of Whittier 2024c). A breakdown of harbor use by length of permit is shown in Figure 27. Preferential and annual moorage holders make up the bulk of use when standardized to the length of stay. Other than a dip in 2020 due to the pandemic and another dip in 2023, the level of use has been relatively consistent.

**Figure 27. Harbor Use Based on Duration, Standardized to Stall-Years, 2017–2024**

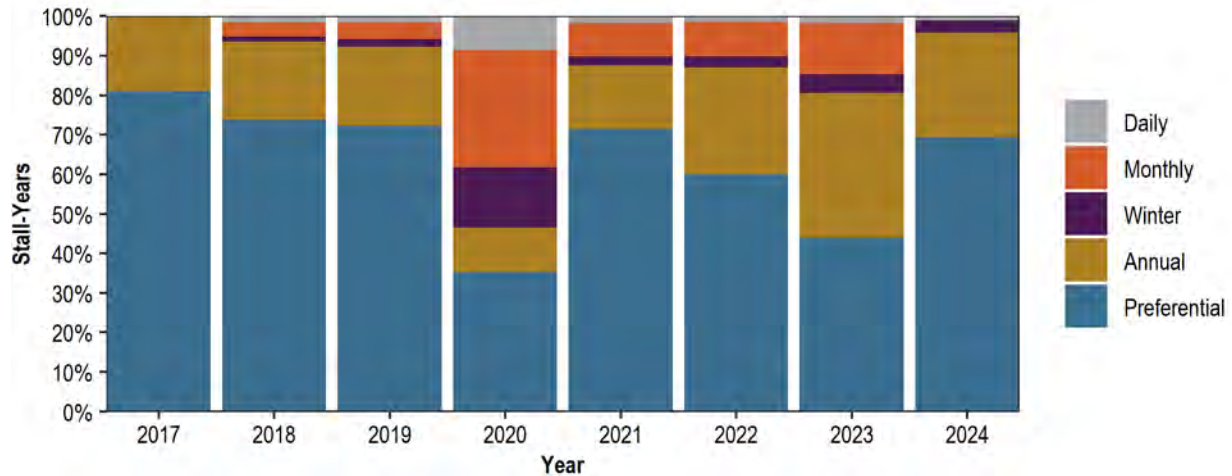


Source: City of Whittier (2024c) and Northern Economics, Inc. analysis

Figure 28 presents the information show in Figure 27 on a percentage basis to provide a look at the relative size of each type of user. Other than 2020 and 2023, preferential use generally accounts for

70% of the time stalls are used, and annual holders generally account for another 20% or more. Daily, monthly, and winter users make up a much smaller amount of the time the stalls are occupied.

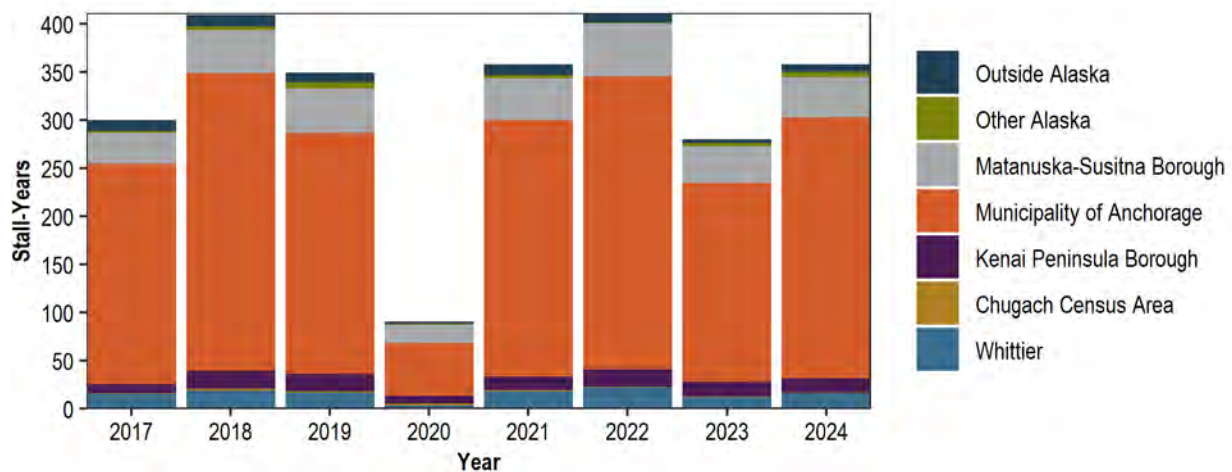
**Figure 28. Share of Harbor Use by Duration, Standardized to Stall-Years, 2017–2024**



Source: City of Whittier (2024c) and Northern Economics, Inc. analysis

Figure 29 shows harbor use by residency, again based on time. Residents of the MOA make up the bulk of the harbor’s use.

**Figure 29. Harbor Use Based on Residency, Standardized to Stall-Years, 2017–2024**

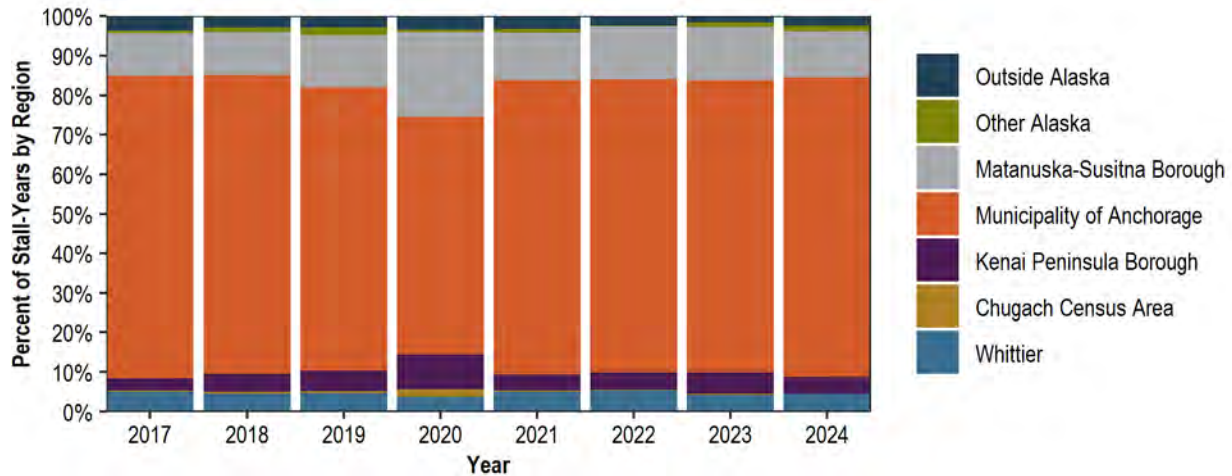


Source: City of Whittier (2024c) and Northern Economics, Inc. analysis

Figure 30 presents the information shown in Figure 29 on a percentage basis to provide a look at the relative amount of use by boaters’ residency. Whittier residents generally occupy about 5% of slips. Users from the KPB, MOA, and MSB consistently account for about 90% of the harbor’s use when

measured by time that stalls are occupied. Only a handful of residents from elsewhere in the Chugach Census Area, elsewhere in Alaska, or outside Alaska use the harbor.

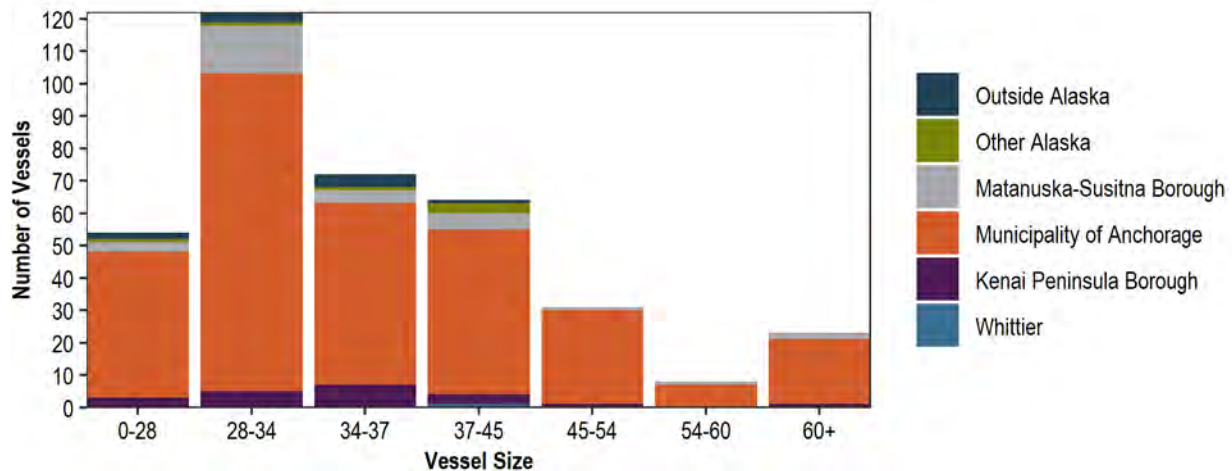
**Figure 30. Share of Harbor Use Based on Residency, Standardized to Stall-Years, 2017–2024**



Source: City of Whittier (2024c) and Northern Economics, Inc. analysis

The city maintains a waitlist with 374 entries (City of Whittier 2024e).<sup>5</sup> Figure 31 shows the vessel size and residency of vessels on the waitlist. Residents of the MOA make up the majority of waitlist entries, and the greatest demand is for vessels up to 45 feet.

**Figure 31. Whittier Harbor Waitlist by Vessel Size and Region of Owner**



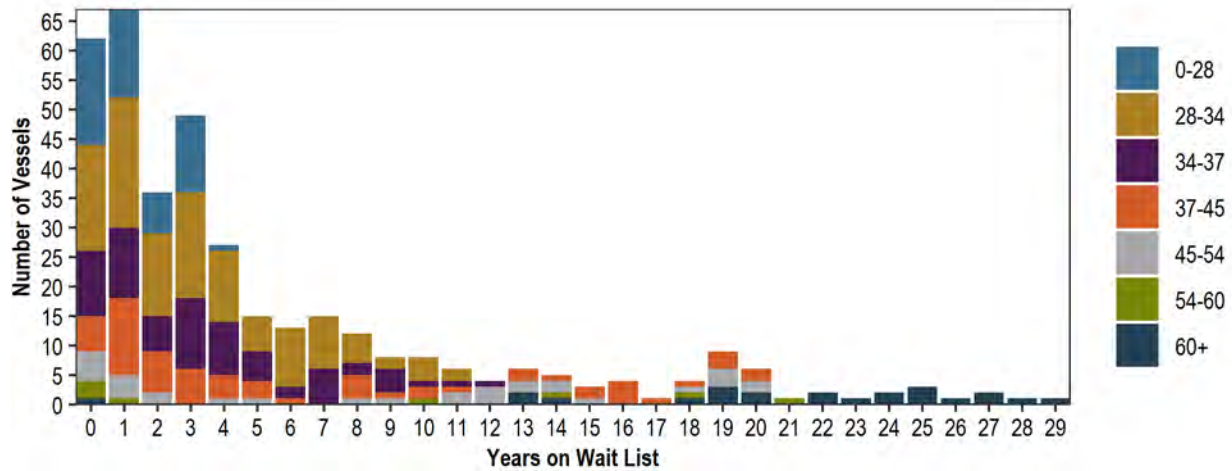
Source: City of Whittier (2024e) and Northern Economics, Inc. analysis

<sup>5</sup> An analysis of annual changes to the waitlist (additions, slip offers, and slip acceptances) is pending.



Figure 32 shows the amount of time vessels have been on the waitlist, by vessel size. Sixty-two vessels were placed on the list in 2024 and 67 in 2023. Vessels over 60 feet cannot be accommodated in Whittier Harbor, so the city does not charge for vessels of that size to be on the waitlist. Except for one addition in 2024, all vessels of that size have been on the waitlist for at least 13 years.

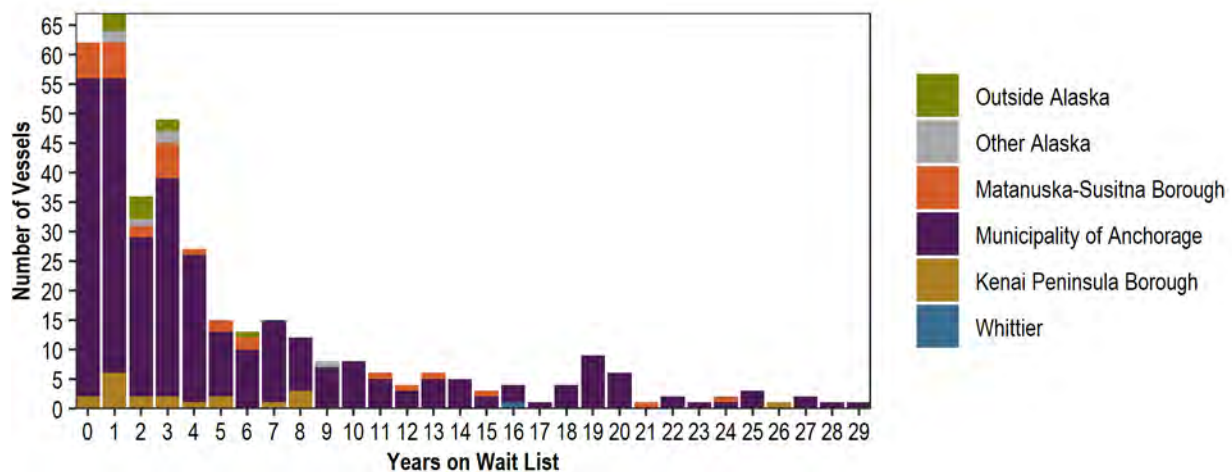
**Figure 32. Whittier Harbor Waitlist Time by Vessel Size**



Source: City of Whittier (2024e) and Northern Economics, Inc. analysis

Figure 33 shows the amount of time vessels have been on the waitlist, by the owner's residency.

**Figure 33. Whittier Harbor Waitlist by Time on Waitlist and Region of Owner**

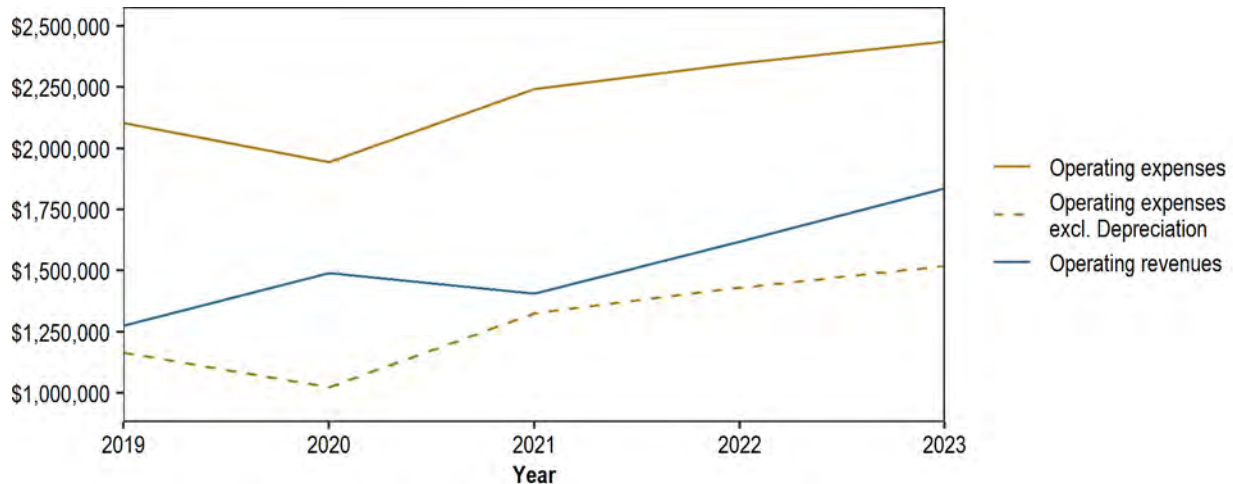


Source: City of Whittier (2024e) and Northern Economics, Inc. analysis

Whittier Harbor has operated at a financial loss for the last five years. Depreciation was \$917,392 in 2023, exceeding the overall \$599,178 loss from operations. While the harbor would ideally generate enough revenue to cover deferred maintenance, depreciation, and contributions to a replacement

fund, it does generate enough revenue to cover its operating expenses excluding depreciation. Figure 34 shows the harbor's revenues and expenses for 2019–2023.

**Figure 34. Operating Revenues and Expenses for Small Boat Harbor, 2019–2023**



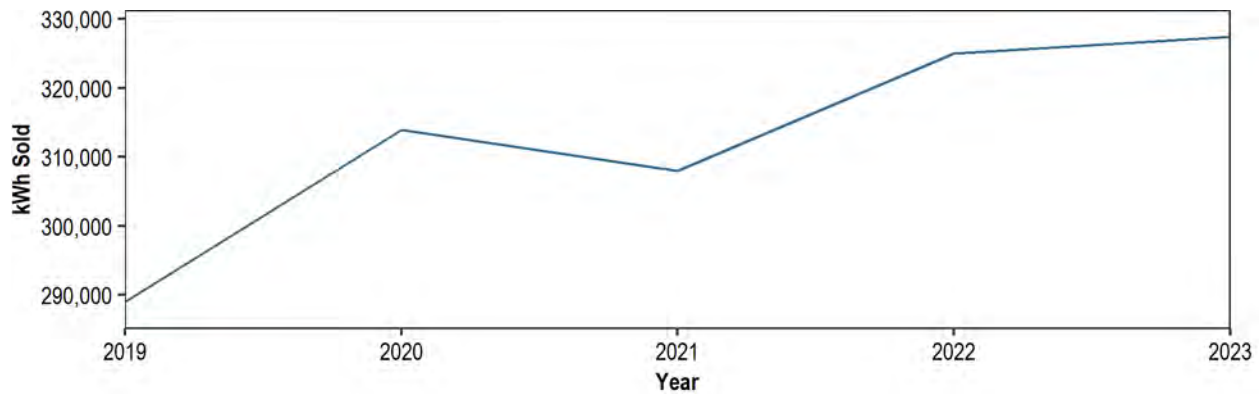
Source: City of Whittier (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023b, 2024a)

Wharfage and dockage revenues have been variable over the years. Wharfage exceeded \$200,000 in 2022 and 2023 and dockage was just over \$10,000 in 2023. Permits and storage fees (see the *Storage* section) make up a minor portion of port and harbor revenue (City of Whittier 2024c).

Beginning January 2025, the city is implementing a new water-borne passenger fee of \$8 per customer (see Ordinance 2024-004). This revenue source is to be dedicated in the future to repair and replacement of major harbor infrastructure and capital assets, reducing the drain on operating funds from the harbor and improving its future financial condition.

The harbor has sold a growing amount of electricity over the last five years, exceeding 325,000 kWh sold in 2023 as shown in Figure 35. Electricity is charged at the Chugach Electric rate, with a service charge added to cover power pedestal maintenance. The city will increase the rates by 4.8% in 2025 and another 4.6% in 2026.

**Figure 35. Power Sold in the Small Boat Harbor, kWh, 2019–2023**

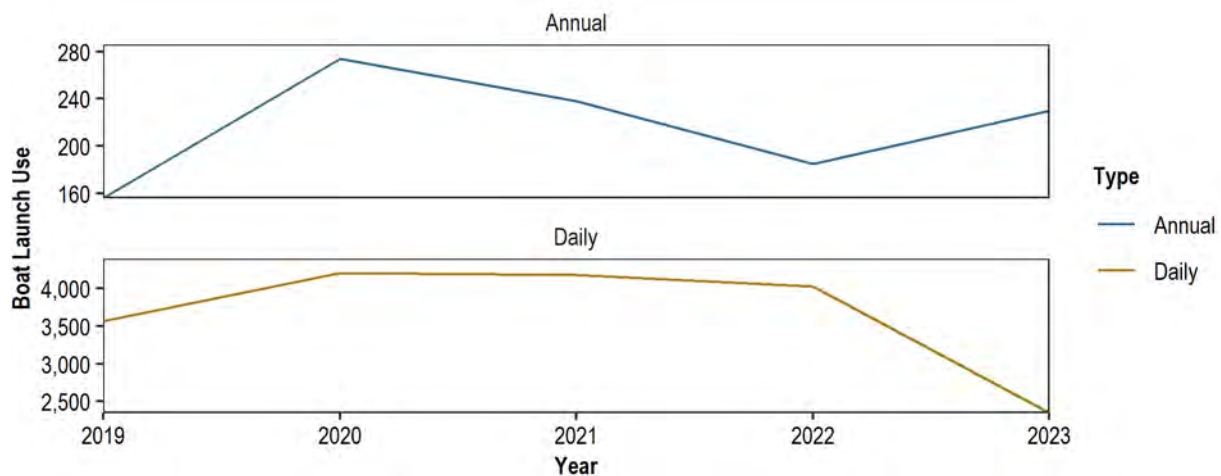


Source: City of Whittier (2024c) and Northern Economics, Inc. analysis

### **Launch Ramp**

Whittier has sold an average of about 200 annual boat launch permits over the last 5 years and had collected over 3,000 daily launch fees over the period before dropping to about 2,500 in 2023 (Figure 36).

**Figure 36. Boat Launch Use, Daily and Annual Permits, 2019–2023**



Source: City of Whittier (2024c) and Northern Economics, Inc. analysis

### **Storage**

The city receives revenue from dry storage during the winter, though the amount is a very small part of its waterfront revenues. Over the last five years, storage has generated less than \$10,000 of revenue, more than half of which was earned in 2023 (City of Whittier 2024c).



## Other Facilities

Four notable waterfront facilities—cruise ship terminal, AMHS ferry terminal, ARRC terminal and railyard, and Cliffside Marina & Yacht Club—round out the offerings in Whittier. In addition to these facilities, which are described briefly below, the city has several planned waterfront improvements, as discussed in the *Port and Harbor Operations* section.

### Cruise Ship Terminal

A new cruise ship terminal was recently constructed in Whittier that features a double-berth dock. In addition to boosting cruise ship capacity and anticipated traffic (see the *Cruise Ship Visitors* section) in 2025, it will also provide an indoor space for community events. The terminal was built through a collaboration of the City of Whittier, Huna Totem Corporation, Norwegian Cruise Lines and Alaska Railroad Corporation (Mancl 2024).

The city generates annual lease revenues from the two cruise facilities of approximately \$80,000 for the Holland America & Princess (HAP) cruise ship facilities and \$200,000 for the Huna-Totem cruise ship facilities, with Consumer Price Index escalator provisions which are capped at 2.0% and 2.5%, respectively. The HAP lease increases each year, while the Huna-Totem lease increases every five years.

### AMHS Ferry Terminal

As noted in the *Ferry Passengers* section above, Whittier sends and receives about 20,000 passengers and 10,000 vehicles on the ferry each year. The ferry uses the AMHS-owned Whittier Port & Terminal.

### ARRC Terminal and Railyard

As noted in the *Cargo and Transportation* section above, the Alaska Railroad Corporation transports cargo and passengers to and from the ARRC-owned terminal in Whittier. ARRC is responsible for all of the waterborne cargo arriving in Whittier and also transports passengers, though no ridership information is available.

### Cliffside Marina & Yacht Club

In addition to Whittier Harbor, the privately-owned Cliffside Marina & Yacht Club offers 99 slips, including slips eligible for ownership ranging from 40 to 100 feet and rental slips from 40 to 65 feet. The marina offers metered electrical power to all slips and has a pump-out station. The marina also hosts Phillips Cruises and its 26 Glacier Cruise (Cliffside Marina 2011). See the *Harbor Moorage Rates* section for information about the average stall rates that owners have charged. When users become tenants of Cliffside Marina & Yacht Club, they own the stall and pay property tax on it as well as personal property tax on their vessels.

## Opportunities, Challenges, and Trends

This final section looks at opportunities, challenges, and trends that Whittier faces as it developed its waterfront and economy.

### Opportunities

Whittier has a number of opportunities to develop activity around its waterfront and boost the local economy. Some of those opportunities and advantages include:

- Whittier has road, rail, and direct ocean access, one of only three communities in Alaska with all three. The other two are Seward and Anchorage. This provides an opportunity to serve more cruise passengers, move more cargo (as ARRC plans), and provide other logistical support if supporting facilities are developed.
- Whittier has proximity to the MOA and MSB population centers to the north, connected by road and rail, and it offers recreational boaters the fastest access to Prince William Sound from the north, cutting the road distance by about 66 miles compared to Seward and providing more protected waters for access to Prince William Sound. New facilities and increased capacity could capture additional boaters, cargo activity, and services from that population base because of that relative convenience.
- Whittier has several organizations contributing to its waterfront offerings, providing diversification of funding sources and a greater shared capacity for investing in waterfront improvements.
- Development of the Head of Bay will provide additional moorage, parking, and land. This infrastructure will expand Whittier's cruise-handling capacity, add moorage space to address the large waitlist of boats wanting a stall at the harbor, and provide additional land for maritime-related economic development and additional storage.
- Increasing upland lease rates comparable to typical market rates, could provide additional revenue to the city without cost of investment.
- Increasing small boat harbor stall rental rates commensurate with demand could provide additional revenue to the city without additional investment.
- The City of Whittier boundary covers the shores of Shotgun Cove and extends to Blackstone Bay. While undeveloped for commercial and industrial use, and encapsulating a number of recreational areas, there is a considerable amount of waterfront within the city limits that could eventually be developed to serve maritime needs.

- The U.S. Forest Service is interested in developing day-use cabins to the east of Shotgun Cove. If developed, Whittier’s businesses would have the opportunity to serve those users if they offered the right mix of services (e.g., food, general store needs, tie-ins with other activities during the trip, and potentially lodging before and after a stay in a cabin). Depending on the nature of the access to the cabins, it’s possible they could be available year-round.

## Challenges

Whittier does face a number of challenges, which it must address or overcome to take full advantage of its opportunities:

- Whittier has a low community participation in the waterfront, as measured by use of the city’s harbor by residents. The vast majority of harbor users—approximately 95%—do not reside in Whittier, which results in competing interests between users and residents. The city has a need to generate additional revenue, yet non-residents have a louder voice than residents when there are discussions about rates.
- The city generates insufficient revenue at Delong Dock to cover operating expenses. A new dock will address operational issues, but the rates will likely need to increase for it not to be a financial loss to the city.
- Given the predominant use of the harbor by non-local users, the city and its residents are in effect subsidizing people who do not live in the community. Some of these non-local users operate businesses and make other expenditures that yield a net benefit for the city, though this is not the case for most users. This results in a financial loss for the city.
- Whittier is constrained by the limited amount of land available for development, both commercial and residential. A lack of housing and land are constraints on economic development, both for the businesses themselves but also for the workforce to run them.
- Undercharging for the lease of city lands and/or allowing scarce and commercially valuable land to remain undeveloped could be placing a burden on the city from both financial and economic development perspective.
- While critical for access to Whittier, the tunnel does create a constraint for passenger and cargo operations due to its schedule. Some businesses perceive the tunnel fee as a barrier to Whittier’s competitiveness to Seward, though it likely costs visitors less than the additional travel time and cost of driving to Seward.
- The drop in daily launch ramp fees in 2023 raises questions about the amount of use the ramp sees versus the amount of fees collected for it. This phenomenon has been observed in other waterfront communities in Alaska and it has been addressed with better monitoring of ramps



with video surveillance, which not only increases enforcement of fees but also improves overall security. Left unaddressed, unpaid ramp use could be a drag on revenues to the extent that the ramp is being used without payment, though the magnitude of the lost revenue cannot be determined.

- Maritime-support businesses are limited in Whittier, with only a few businesses providing boat repair services, based on a review of business licenses (ADCCED 2024). The lack of such services means that harbor users need to travel to other communities to have work done on their boats. The causes of this are unknown but could include lack of land, lack of housing for support business owners, the ease of bringing in tradespeople and parts from outside the community (approximately an hour away from Anchorage and Seward), and lack of a local user base (to the extent that non-resident users trailer their vessels and can have work done or buy parts in their home town).

## **Trends**

Related to items discussed above, Northern Economics noted the following trends:

- Whittier's population has been gradually increasing since 2000.
- Cargo movements through Whittier have been on a gradual increase.
- Whittier residents' use of Whittier Harbor has been decreasing.

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# WATERFRONT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## CITY OF WHITTIER CURRENT FINANCIAL DATA AND FUTURE CHANGES

The Waterfront & Economic Development Plan (WEDP) contains interesting statistics and data around the City of Whittier's (City) economic activity, with a retrospective look into the past. Recent public meetings have requested additional information about how the City *currently* manages its finances, how the City generates revenue, how much revenue is generated, and how the City spends its revenues. Additionally, information will be provided on how recent major changes, implemented by the City, will impact the financial condition of the City and its infrastructure in the future.

First, we will discuss where the City's revenues come from and how they are spent. Next, we will explain tangible steps the City has taken, in the past 2 or so years, to place the City on a strong and more sustainable financial path into the future.

### CITY'S REVENUE FUND STRUCTURE

The City maintains five primary "funds" for accounting purposes allowing the segregation of financial activities to ensure that each "fund" is financially sustainable, on its own.

In total, City-wide revenues total approximately \$6 million per year and the City has a total of 28 full-time employees.

### GENERAL REVENUE FUND

For most cities, the General Fund is where they account for services paid for by taxes and which benefit the overall community. This includes Public Works (roads, sidewalks, storm drains, snow removal, infrastructure, and building maintenance), Public Safety (police, fire, and emergency medical services), and Administration (city council, city clerk, city manager, finance, and parks and recreation).

General Revenue Funds average \$3.5 million per year. The majority (92%) of General Revenue Funds come from:

- 47% Taxes and Fees;
- 24% Police contracts;
- 21% Leases

General Revenue Funds (in order from highest revenue to lowest) come from:

- \$833,044 Police service contracts (Girdwood, Tunnel),
- \$760,000 Property Tax,
- \$650,000 Sales Tax,
- \$464,860 Lease Revenues, and until 2025,
- \$405,000 Passenger Transit Business Tax on charter and tour boat operations.

The majority (98%) of General Revenue Funds expenditures are for:

- 49% Public Safety
- 31% Administration
- 18% Public Works

The General Revenue Fund has 20 employees in total and are allocated as follows:

- Seven in the Police Department
- Three in the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department
- Three in the Public Works Department
- Seven in Administration (city manager, city clerk, finance, and administrative)

## ENTERPRISE FUNDS

The City has three separate *business-like* funds that are called Enterprise Funds. They are operated and accounted for separately to ensure that each is self-sustaining. Each should generate not only enough money to cover operating costs, but also to either pay for debt service on capital assets and infrastructure or set aside *depreciation funds* to replace existing assets and infrastructure at the end of life.

- Harbor Revenue Fund
- DeLong Dock Revenue Fund
- Water and Sewer Revenue Fund

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## HARBOR REVENUE FUND

The Harbor Revenue Fund is approximately \$1.2 million per year. In total, 87% of Harbor Revenue comes from:

- Moorage 62% (\$1,070,000)
- Parking 9% (\$155,000)
- Leases 9% (\$150,000)
- Launch Fees 7% (\$125,000)

The Harbor has 7 employees and 1.4 FTE seasonal summer help.

In the past, the Harbor has not generated any funding to replace capital assets and infrastructure, and relied on Cruise Passenger Vessel (CPV) Tax Revenue Funds to cover Harbor Debt Service on harbor float and infrastructure replacement. That is no longer the case. Recent changes to the City's fee structure will enable the Harbor to have a recurring source of revenue to replace a significant portion of capital assets and infrastructure (new Passenger Fee which goes 100% to the Harbor), so that the operating costs of the Harbor should be able to be sustained through typical rates (moorage, parking, leases, launch fees).

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## DELONG DOCK REVENUE FUND

Harbor staff also operate the DeLong Dock Enterprise Revenue Fund. The DeLong Dock Enterprise Revenue Fund generates its own revenues separate from the Harbor through off-loading of seafood in the summer. Harbor Revenue Funds are **NOT** used to subsidize operations at the DeLong Dock. Harbor staff costs are charged to the DeLong Dock when staff works in that area.

The DeLong Dock is in serious need of replacement. Currently, the City is seeking grant funds to replace the dock with a multi-purpose freight dock which will also continue to meet the needs of our seafood processors.

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#### WATER AND SEWER REVENUE FUND

The Water and Sewer Revenue Fund generates approximately \$415,000 per year and has one full-time employee. When needed, staff from Public Works will be provided when needed.

#### COMMERCIAL PASSENGER VESSEL TAX REVENUE FUND

The CPV Tax Revenue Fund is where the City accounts for cruise ship vessel tax; \$5 per cruise ship passenger. This generates approximately \$1 million per year and is used to serve cruise ships and their passengers. The City uses these funds to provide:

- Additional fire and emergency medical response services and equipment
- Trail improvements
- Replacement of public restrooms on the waterfront
- Improvements to walking paths and the boardwalk
- Lighting upgrades
- Improvements to wayfinding signage

#### CITY'S CASH RESERVES

At the end of 2024, City Cash Reserves for major focus areas include:

- General Revenue Funds: \$2.6 million
- Water and Sewer Revenue Funds: \$1.4 million
- Harbor Revenue Funds: \$2.6 million

#### CITY'S DEBT

Currently, City Debt is as follows:

- Harbor Floats and Improvements: \$6.0 million
  - \$4.5 million will be started 2025
- Sewer Lift Station Project: \$820,000
  - Replaced the majority of the City's lift station infrastructure in 2024

#### CITY-WIDE BUDGETED REVENUE

City-wide total budgeted revenue averages approximately \$6 million in 2024 and includes:

Revenue Funds	2024	2025	2026
General Revenue Fund	\$3,576,000	\$3,441,733	\$4,924,027
Harbor Revenue Fund	\$1,726,343	\$1,704,270	\$1,753,655
DeLong Dock Revenue Fund	\$269,000	\$160,000	\$163,000
Water and Sewer Revenue Fund	\$416,565	\$360,500	\$436,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,612,908</b>	<b>\$5,666,503</b>	<b>\$7,277,182</b>



## FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Over the past three years, the City has developed and implemented a plan to:

- 1) Strengthen its financial condition.
- 2) Identify specific and sustainable revenue sources to replace harbor capital assets and infrastructure in the future.
- 3) Make the Harbor Revenue Fund financially self-sustaining.
- 4) Change the tax structure to the extent possible that fee payers benefit from services and improvements.
- 5) Clean up the Sales Tax Code.
- 6) Eliminate Passenger Transportation Business Tax (PTBT) and replace it with new Passenger Fees.
  - a. Water Fees go 100% to Harbor.
  - b. Ground Fees go 100% to the General Fund.

Tangible steps have been taken to prioritize improvements to public services and infrastructure needed to address the growing number of visitors and to set the City on strong financial footing into the future. This includes:

- A new fee structure spreads the cost burden as broadly as possible.
- A new 10-year Capital Improvement Plan that prioritizes capital infrastructure and asset replacement needs.
- Newly-established budget policies to drive fiscal sustainability.
- Identifying areas for operational improvement:
  - Implementing a biennial (two-year) budget to allow time for long-range financial planning.
  - Better focus on enterprise fund rates.
  - Time for our small staff to address or clean-up inconsistencies (such as with commercial leases or code enforcement).
- Amended Lease Code to standardize future leases.
- Continuing to address identified problems and close loopholes such as:
  - Curbed practices that offered certain rate payers advantages over others (such as receiving multiple parking passes but paying for only one or more favorable moorage rate treatment).
  - Amended Lease Code to establish consistent terms for future leases.
  - Amended Sales Tax Code to eliminate unfair tax exemptions.
  - Identified significant problems with existing leases such as:
    - Inconsistent terms regarding fair market value (FMV) rent – 8% vs 10% vs 12%
    - FMV versus assessed value
    - Inconsistent use relative to that authorized in the lease
    - Lease terms (i.e. 90 years) that are inconsistent with the nominal use of property
    - Lack of opportunity for the City to review/amend lease terms that do not ensure the highest and best use of land for taxpayers
    - Failure to properly record lease changes
    - Failure to timely appraise properties
    - Lack of political will to enforce contractual lease terms
    - CPI provisions in some leases and not in others
    - Some leases lacking escalation provisions, etc.

The City recognizes that persistent staffing turnover and lack of consistent leadership has led to inconsistent application of the City Code and regulations, errors in drafting lease terms, failure to enforce lease provisions, and/or

Code requirements. We are systematically identifying problems and correcting them. This has not come without significant ongoing challenges and requires political will to resolve. Ongoing tasks include:

- 1) A Request for Proposals (RFP) to obtain FMV appraisals of land under the Master Lease with the Railroad;
- 2) Next Step is an RFP for FMV appraisals of all lands leased by the City;
- 3) Develop a Land Allocation Plan to drive future land lease decisions; and
- 4) In partnership with Alaska Railroad, preparing to meet with legislators to seek authorization for a land purchase and/or exchange of current Railroad lands in Whittier, enabling the City to determine its own destiny with regard to future economic development, residential housing, critical public infrastructure, etc.

## OTHER REFERENCE INFORMATION:

### TAXES AND FEES:

A summary of specific taxes and fees which have recently been reviewed and/or amended include the following.

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#### PRIOR TO 2025

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##### CITY 5% SALES TAX

- Seasonal-only May – September.
- Changed to year-round in 2025.

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##### PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION BUSINESS TAX

Businesses operating charters on tours from Whittier (excluding cruise ships):

- Collected PTBT tax of \$3.00 each way (\$6.00 round-trip), generating approximately \$400,000 per year.
- 100% of the PTBT went to the General Fund.
- PTBT businesses are NOT charged Sales Tax.
- This tax is eliminated in 2025.

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##### COMMERCIAL PASSENGER VESSEL TAX

- \$5 per cruise ship passenger (to first 7 ports of call) per State law that is used to serve vessels and their passengers and generates approximately \$1 million per year. This is estimated to rise in 2025 to \$1.6 million.
- Many City visitor impacts cannot be addressed through use of CPV Funds, since they do not directly serve vessels and/or their passengers
- Currently used for:
  - Public safety: \$374K
  - Trails: \$25K
  - Roads: \$100K
  - Harbor debt: \$156K
  - Water wells project: \$185K
  - Museum: \$20K
- Future uses will not include harbor debt, but will include:
  - Weather service reporting
  - Bear-resistant trash cans

- Restroom supplies
- New tourism best management practices (TBMP)
- Shore power project HAP
- Beautification
- Public works (plowing to head of the bay)
- Port-a-potty service at trailheads

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## BEGINNING IN 2025

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### CITY 5% SALES TAX

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- Year-round beginning in 2025.

### PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION BUSINESS TAX

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- This tax is eliminated and reduces General Fund revenue by <\$400,000>.

### WATER-BORNE TRANSPORTATION FEE

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A new water-borne transportation fee is implemented:

- Through Ordinance 2024-004 and will be effective January 1, 2025
- \$8.00 assessed once per passenger embarking or disembarking from within City of Whittier limits
- Estimated to generate \$520,000 per year
- 100% of this fee goes to Harbor Major Repair & Replacement Fund. First to pay Harbor Bond Debt Service and then to pay for Harbor Capital Asset and Infrastructure Replacement.
- Annual Harbor Debt Service (Principal + Interest) is approximately \$795,500 annually.
  - 2017 Bonds balance at 12/31/2026 = \$1,325,000
  - 2025 Bond balance at 12/31/2026 est. = \$4,303,140

### GROUND-BASED TRANSPORTATION FEE

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A new ground-based transportation will be implemented:

- Through Ordinance 2024-005 and will be effective January 1, 2026
- \$5.00 assessed to passengers; commercial transportation businesses collect and remit the fee assessed to passengers entering or departing the city by ground conveyance, including bus, rails, shuttle and the like.
- Estimated to generate \$1.37 million per year (based on 275,000 visitors)
- 100% of this fee goes to the General Revenue Fund or Major Repair & Replacement Fund to offset impacts to general government services and to construct/repair/replace general government infrastructure and capital assets that service visitors to Whittier.
- 2025/2026 Intended Uses:
  - Engineer/design new museum: \$85K
  - Fire and emergency medical services equipment: \$88K
  - Public works repairs: \$44K
  - Public building Wi-Fi and baby changing stations: \$30.5K
  - Plan/design Lu Young Park improvements, City Core road and sidewalk improvements, and a water well replacement project: \$80K



## CRUISE PARCEL LEASES

- The Holland America-Princess (HAP) Lease is an \$80,000 per year lease with CPI escalations not to exceed (NTE) 2% per year and assessed every five years.
  - Considerably less than FMV, but a great example of the City's previous decision to incentivize economic development by offering lower-than-market-value leases.
  - Unfortunately, leases that are essentially 90 year leases, are not easily modified to address shortcomings or to ensure taxpayers are receiving fair compensation under the principle of highest-and-best-use for scarce public property.
- The Huna-Totem lease begins at rate of \$200,000 per year and escalates by CPI up to 2.5% per year, capped at 12.5% increase every five years.
  - This lease was modeled after the HAP lease and in the interest of maintaining equity, the lease rate is also less than FMV and is an essentially 85-year lease.
  - To incentivize construction of the new cruise terminal, the City agreed to provide economic development property tax incentives under AS 29.45.050m:
    - Exempt from property tax for 2023, 2024, 2025, (essentially during the period of construction and first year of operation).
    - Followed by 2 years of property tax *deferral* (2026 and 2027) which allows for the delay of property tax payments for those two years. These payments will need to be made instead in 2028 and 2029, along with those years' property taxes.

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## COMPARISON WITH SEWARD:

- Seward's sales tax rate is 7% (4% City, 3% Kenai Peninsula Borough)
- Seward water-borne tours are assessed both sales tax and Passenger Fee of \$3.50 per passenger whether one-way or round-trip

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### \$150 TICKET:

- Whittier passengers pay (beginning 2026) \$8 water fee, \$5 ground fee, \$0 sales tax, for total \$13
- Seward passengers pay \$3.50 passenger fee, \$10.50 sales tax, for total \$14

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### \$350 TICKET:

- Whittier passengers pay \$8 water-borne fee, \$5 ground fee, \$0 sales tax, for total \$13
- Seward passengers pay \$3.50 passenger fee, \$24.50 sales tax, for total \$28

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## ADDITIONAL COMPARISON

- Whittier has a \$13 tunnel toll with funds going 100% to the State of Alaska DOT, not to the City.
- Seward is an added 120 miles round-trip from Anchorage.
  - At 25 miles per gallon equals 4.8 gallons of fuel, at \$3.99 per gallon, added fuel cost is estimated to be \$19, which is higher than the tunnel toll.
- Whittier is less expensive, takes less time, does not require overnight for bus drivers, enables buses to make multiple Whittier to Anchorage round-trips per day, so more efficient.
- Seward has significantly more amenities than Whittier. From a customer cost perspective, Whittier is less expensive.