

# 2025 UPDATE

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

**DRAFT**



KENAI PENINSULA ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

907-283-3335 - [Info@kpedd.org](mailto:Info@kpedd.org)

[www.KPEDD.org](http://www.KPEDD.org)

[www.KenaiPeninsulaWorkforce.org](http://www.KenaiPeninsulaWorkforce.org)

# Executive Summary



The Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD), in partnership with the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development (UAA CED); Economic Development Administration (EDA); Kenai Peninsula Borough; incorporated and unincorporated communities; Tribes; industry leaders; non-profit resource providers, and residents; develops the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every five years to provide strategic direction for the economic development of the region. Annual updates provide essential progress updates, insight into the changing economic landscape of the region, efforts to meet identified goals, and incorporate new partners and their respective roles. This plan also seeks to unite regional efforts, mitigating redundancies and waste.

The 2025 annual update incorporates and summarizes the major components of the 2021 full CEDS plan, and focuses on adjustments to the initial strategy, reports on economic development activities, identifies goals for the upcoming fiscal year, and ranks investment priorities in the region – all through the lens of economic resiliency.

For a copy of the full 2021 report – which includes data on the geography and climate, human capital, cost of living, quality of life indicators, infrastructure and transportation; an expanded SWOT analysis by industry, infrastructure, and human capital; resiliency threats and action plan; goals, and business survey results – please visit our website at [www.kpedd.org](http://www.kpedd.org)



**The CEDS plan encompasses an economically, geographically, and culturally diverse region, incorporating the projects and ideas of our communities. This plan is critical to the strategic and sustainable growth of the Kenai Peninsula Borough.**

Cassidi Cameron, Executive Director



# Introduction

## Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Overview

The Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) is a 501(c)(4) non-profit regional economic development organization. Established in 1988, KPEDD serves the residents and communities of the Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) in Southcentral Alaska.

As the first federal Economic Development District designated in Alaska, as well as the first Alaska Regional Development Organization or ARDOR, KPEDD has actively pursued development opportunities for the region. Over its lifetime, KPEDD has been involved in a variety of projects including public works advocacy, shellfish industry development, international trade, promotion of a North Slope Natural Gas Pipeline to Cook Inlet, building infrastructure, industry recruitment, and business retention and expansion (BR&E).

KPEDD, with funding provided by the KPB and U.S. Economic Development Administration, compiles and publishes the Kenai Peninsula Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and this document represents the most recent update, replacing the previous 2016 document.

## CEDS Strategy Committee

- **Larissa Arbelovsky**, *Safety Coordinator*, Epperheimer Inc.
- **Julie Engebretsen**, *Community Development Director*, Homer EDC
- **Laura Rhyner**, *Assistant to the City Manager*, City of Soldotna
- **Dana Cannava**, *Special Projects and Constituent Relations*, Borough Mayor's Office
- **Shanon Davis**, *Marketing Manager*, Central Peninsula Hospital

## KPEDD Board Members:

- Rusty Swan (President), KPB At Large – *Current*
- Liz DeMoss, (Vice President) KPB At Large – *2024*
- Chris Hough (Secretary), KPB At Large – *Current*
- Karin Marks (Treasurer), Homer – *Current*
- Jason Bickling, City of Seward – *Current*
- Todd Smith, Kenai – *Current*
- Bruce Richards, Soldotna – *Current*
- John Czarnecki, City of Soldotna – *2024*
- Brad Anderson, Homer – *Current*
- Jan Yaeger, City of Seldovia – *Current*
- Sara Bieber, City of Kenai – *Current*
- Jeff Hetrick, Seward – *Current*
- Christine Cunningham, City of Kenai – *2025*
- Randi Broyles, KPB At Large – *2025*
- Tim Redder, KPB At Large – *Current*
- Tyson Cox, KPB Appointee – *Current*

## KPEDD Staff:

- Cassidi Cameron, Executive Director;
- Caitlin Coreson, Program Manager; and
- Aubrey Carpenter, Community Coordinator



# Our Process

KPEDD's CEDS was developed in accordance with the U.S. Economic Development Administration's guidelines, with the Executive Director overseeing its completion. UAA CED conducted the initial plan's background research, coordination of public process, facilitation and creation of the action plan, and drafting of the document itself. Wherever possible and practical, the Executive Director and Board members participated in community forums and industry focus groups and provided extensive feedback and input on various drafts of the document.

Subsequent annual updates were created in house, documenting milestones, implementation, and additional key partnership created during the period. Key milestones in the CEDS update and implementation include:



July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Homer</li> </ul>		
August 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board Meeting</li> <li>CEDS Committee Meeting</li> </ul>		
October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board Meeting</li> </ul>		
November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEDS Committee Meeting</li> <li>Dept. of Energy</li> <li>Dept. of Transportation</li> </ul>		
January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board Meeting</li> <li>CEDS Committee Meeting</li> <li>AK Mariculture Cluster Governance Meeting</li> <li>Arctic Energy Ambassador Meeting</li> </ul>		
February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reg. Housing Meeting</li> <li>Arctic Energy Ambassador Meeting</li> </ul>		
		March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEDS Committee Meeting</li> <li>Tourism Working Group</li> <li>Board Meeting</li> <li>Arctic Energy Ambassador Meeting</li> <li>State Office of Broadband</li> </ul>
		April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industry Overview Forum</li> <li>CEDS Committee Meeting</li> <li>AK Mariculture Cluster Governance Meeting</li> </ul>
		May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEDS Public Comment Period</li> </ul>
		June 2025	Final CEDS Review by KPEDD Board

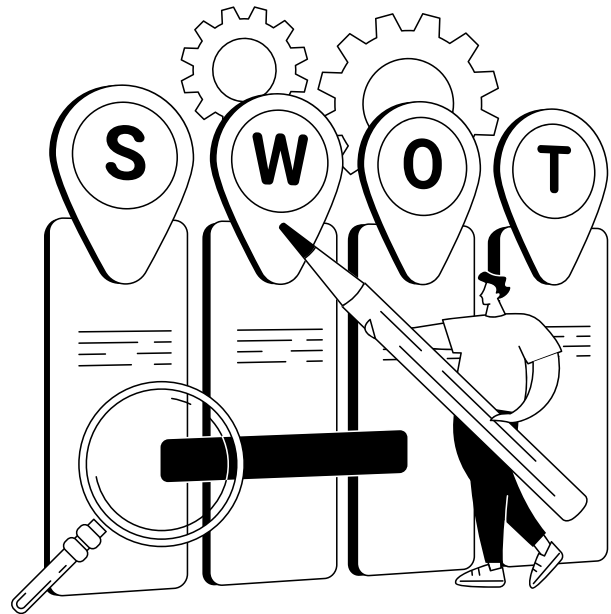
# SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) is a framework that allows regions to evaluate the position of their local economies. Factors affecting the region may be beneficial or harmful, and internal or external. Strengths are positive elements that are internal to the region, while weaknesses are negative internal factors. Opportunities and threats are external drivers the state's economy and national economic influences, for example. This section provides an overview SWOT of the Kenai Peninsula economy, its industries and business climate, infrastructure, and human capital; this matrix is intended to provide a deeper analysis of what factors are influencing our economic health on the Kenai Peninsula.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Government, Business, and Non-Profit Resources</li> <li>• Economic Diversity</li> <li>• Crime Rates</li> <li>• Natural Resources</li> <li>• Health Care Quality &amp; Access</li> <li>• Leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence on government revenues for essential services</li> <li>• Declining School Enrollment</li> <li>• Cost and Availability of Goods and Services</li> <li>• Changes to Fishery Policies</li> <li>• Oil and Gas Production</li> <li>• Cost of Energy</li> <li>• Housing Availability</li> <li>• Broadband and Wireless Communications</li> <li>• Public Transportation</li> <li>• Aging Infrastructure</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment Opportunities</li> <li>• Emerging Industries</li> <li>• New Industry Growth</li> <li>• Coast Guard Expansion</li> <li>• Land and Housing Development</li> <li>• Quality of Life</li> <li>• Access to Education</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Government Accessibility</li> <li>• Economic Resiliency Planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oil and Gas Instability</li> <li>• Changes to Seafood Harvests</li> <li>• Disruptions to Marine and Air Travel</li> <li>• State Government Budget</li> <li>• Early Childhood and Pre-Kindergarten Education</li> <li>• Out-Migration</li> </ul>

## **Strengths– Expanded analysis**

**Mature, diverse base industries.** While some regions of Alaska depend heavily on one industry—oil and gas for the North Slope, commercial salmon for Bristol Bay—the Kenai Peninsula has a relatively diverse industry mix. The region has three primary ‘base’ industries, which attract money from outside the Borough: Seafood, oil and gas, and recreation and tourism. These three sectors provide the underpinnings for a variety of other industries like health care, retail, construction, nonprofits, and others.



**Fisheries and seafood.** The Kenai Peninsula’s freshwater and marine environments support productive commercial and sport fisheries. In 2023, there were 1,392 permits held (832 active) creating an ex-vessel revenue of \$79M. The seafood industry makes up roughly 5% of the Kenai Peninsula Borough economy in terms of wages and employment. The major commercially-targeted species are sockeye salmon, pink salmon, halibut, and sablefish.

**Mining (Mostly oil and gas).** The Cook Inlet Basin produces oil and gas, most of which is refined, stored, and consumed in-region. In 2024, there were over 800 jobs on the Kenai Peninsula in oil and gas extraction and support businesses. According to the Bureau of Land Management, the Cook Inlet basin is Alaska’s oldest producing oil and gas basin, dating back to the 1950s. Production peaked in the early 1970s at 230,000 barrels per day, but is now at about 18,049 barrels per day. Southcentral Alaska has federal onshore petroleum resources on both sides of Cook Inlet, located west and south of Anchorage. Cook Inlet natural gas meets the heating needs of most Southcentral Alaskans, and provides power to all of Alaska’s Railbelt utilities.

**Tourism and recreation.** Tourists are attracted to the Peninsula’s wildlife, sport fishing, and scenery. Ports like Seward and Homer receive cruise ships during the summer, but the region also attracts independent travelers. The visitor industry experienced a strong return in 2023 and 2024 after a sharp drop in visitation in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024, 53% of visitors came from in-state, and 47% came from beyond Alaska. There were nearly 6.8M total visitor days with an average stay of 2.2 days. Travelers from Anchorage spent the most, with a total market share of 28.6%. One stabilizing feature of this sector is the large number of in-state visitors who come to the Peninsula to recreate.

**Health care.** Health care has been a growth sector for several years, creating jobs at hospitals and clinics while meeting the local population’s needs. Hospitals in Seward, Soldotna, and Homer minimize the need to leave the region to receive care. Healthcare and social assistance provided 13% of the average monthly employment in the regions, and 13% of the wages and earnings. A thriving healthcare sector enables retirees and families to settle in the area, and also encourages medical tourism for quality and specialized services.

## **Weaknesses– Expanded analysis**

**Regulatory barriers/development costs.** Responsible mineral, oil, and gas development all require extensive permitting processes and regulatory hurdles that raise development costs that are already high. This inhibits new investment to a degree, especially in Cook Inlet oil and gas development along with mining prospects on the west side of the inlet.

**High operating costs.** Although some parts of Alaska have much higher costs for real estate, energy, labor, and freight, operating costs on the Peninsula are still generally much higher than in the Lower 48.

**Workforce limitations.** Despite the strong presence of workforce programs, employers site limited workforce availability as a major obstacle to business expansion. Job growth grew by 6.8% between 2019 and 2023, with the introduction of 2,167 new workers. However, there were a recorded 1,818 workers who exited the workforce during the same period.

## **Opportunities – Expanded analysis**

**Emerging sectors.** Outside of the mature base industries, the Kenai Peninsula hosts a number of emerging sectors, or small industries with high growth potential. These include mariculture, marine services, natural resource development and farming/agriculture.

**Mariculture.** Oyster and shellfish farms already exist in Kachemak and Resurrection bays, and expansion potential is high. Additional shellfish species like geoducks could be farmed, greatly increasing the value of output. Experimental kelp farming is also taking place in Alaska waters, and offers possibilities to marine communities on the Peninsula.

**Marine services.** Seward and Homer both host vessel fabrication and repair facilities and infrastructure. With a large (and aging) in-state fleet, research indicates that there is an opportunity to capture more of the repair and service market from Washington State. Commercial and recreational boats made in Homer are sold both in-state and in the Lower 48. SMIC features the largest marine lift in the state and several private maintenance/repair providers.

**Agriculture.** According to the USDA, the Kenai Peninsula is the fastest-growing agricultural region in the state. There are at least five farmers markets on the Peninsula, found in Soldotna, Seward, Anchor Point, and Homer. Agricultural products include vegetables, potatoes, leafy greens, beef, pork, and peonies.

**New visitor markets.** While there is no shortage of visitors most years (COVID aside), significant potential exists to cultivate and expand new tourism segments. These niches include winter and shoulder-season visitation, ecotourism, and cultural tourism. Expanding these segments could grow and broaden visitor spending to create more business opportunities, jobs, and local government revenue.

**Liquified Natural Gas.** Nikiski is the most likely place for an export-focused LNG plant if a gas line is constructed between the North Slope and Southcentral Alaska.



## **Threats – Expanded analysis**

**Commodity prices.** A significant share of the Kenai Peninsula economy rests the export of commodities to region's outside of the borough—chiefly, oil, gas, and seafood. The prices for all of these valuable products depend on global market forces well outside of local control. This contributes to volatility and price cycles with a heavy influence on the local economy in terms of business success and employment.

**State fiscal uncertainty.** Many business owners cite the state fiscal situation—a lack of resolution on spending, revenues, and Permanent Fund Dividends—as an obstacle to growth and new investment. Potential cuts to state services could threaten public safety and education in the region, and new state taxes could dampen business success and investment.

## **The Kenai Peninsula's Resiliency Outlook**

In recent years, the Kenai Peninsula economy has been challenged by a series of unanticipated shocks that ultimately impacted all households and employers in the region in some way. Of greatest magnitude, naturally, was the COVID-19 pandemic that began in early 2020. The COVID-19 recession likely led to more job losses and business closures than any prior economic downturn in the Peninsula's history. Yet, COVID-19 is only the most recent of multiple natural disasters to impact the region. In November 2018, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake hit Southcentral Alaska, including the Peninsula, causing uncounted millions in property damage around the state. In 2019, the Swan Lake Fire raged between Sterling and Cooper Landing from June through September, causing public health warnings, loss of private property, disrupting visitation, and forcing the closure of popular recreation sites. Currently, the Alaska Volcano Observatory has elevated Mt. Spurr's activity to "Yellow", citing frequent earthquakes below the volcano's surface.

Even without these natural disasters, the Kenai Peninsula was not immune to broader forces weakening the statewide economy. Two headwinds in particular have been the volatility of oil prices, and the unresolved budget deficit in state government finances. Together, these two forces caused a three-year statewide recession, from 2015 to 2018, that destroyed thousands of Kenai Peninsula jobs. The fact that the state (and regional) economies were somewhat weak at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic could have meant a slower economic recovery compared to other parts of the US. The Peninsula, however, rebounded more quickly than the rest of the state, due partially to the diverse industries that make up the local economy.

## **Resiliency Action Plan**

Recognizing the very real danger posed by unexpected negative shocks, KPEDD has taken the lead in anticipating—and responding to—resiliency challenges. In cooperation with partner organizations, KPEDD lays out the following framework for resiliency.



**Pre-Disaster Planning.** Careful coordination and planning for potential disasters ahead of time can pay off when a negative event occurs. KPEDD has built a number of tools to help businesses become more resilient in the midst of an economic shock. Tools have included a video series on supply chain management, workforce resources, disaster planning, emerging industries, and a variety of speakers highlight economic changes and opportunities across the region. KPEDD has also authored a small business resource guide outlining common business deductions, funding and sources of capital, accounting and record keeping systems, product development, patents and copyrights, registering for EINs, insurance, marketing tools, and connections to local resource providers.

**Activating Information Networks.** The flow of timely and accurate information between governments, business groups, and residents is essential during a disaster. KPEDD is utilizing a network of partner organizations, detailed web resources, access to media outlets, and a large business distribution list to maintain the flow of information. Maintaining close contact with federal funding agencies, the State Legislature, and state agencies is also essential. During a prolonged downturn, business surveys can relay vital information to decisionmakers about near-term needs for policy fixes and financial resources. KPEDD's business surveys function as an early-warning indicator as well, flagging concerns that can lead to large-scale layoffs or closures, as well as to facilitate business retention and expansion (BRE) activities.

**Ensuring Access to Capital.** Disasters often cause businesses to experience sudden revenue shortfalls, often forcing them lay off workers, reduce hours, or close their operations entirely. KPEDD has operated a revolving loan fund for more than a decade, and is currently utilizing the fund as a source of emergency capital to respond to resiliency shocks. In addition to its own capital sources, helping business access other financial resources will play a key role in future disasters, should they occur. In 2020, KPEDD executed a contract with the State of Alaska to promote the AK CARES business grant program, resulting in \$50 million being distributed to over 1,000 COVID-impacted businesses—proportionately more than any other region of the state. Other government capital programs like the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) were critical resources, but businesses often required the assistance of organizations like KPEDD and the Alaska Small Business Development Center. KPEDD will reprise its role as both a facilitator and provider of capital during future events.

**Improve Broadband Access and Affordability.** Broadband is critical infrastructure in today's global economy. The pandemic resulted in roughly 40 percent of Alaska workers being forced to work from home for extended periods during 2020 and 2021. The education system, from K-12 through college, also had to utilize videoconferencing services to function. For households without affordable, high-speed internet, remote education and work were not feasible. In addition, many businesses also had to transition to selling their products or services online, such as restaurants using mobile apps for take-out and delivery. Although pandemic conditions were not permanent, they made clear the central role broadband access plays in economic life. In the Kenai Peninsula, less than half of households have access to speeds of 100 MBPS, compared to almost 99 percent in Anchorage. Some smaller communities, such as Hope, lack access to speeds greater than 25 MBPS. To improve broadband access, KPEDD is committed to advocating for federal funds to build middle-mile and last-mile satellite and fiber infrastructure.



**Streamlining Job Access.** Job loss is one of the most feared outcomes from any sort of resiliency shock. Declining revenues caused employers to lay off workers, but when conditions improved, employers struggled to find qualified workers. Both challenges have been apparent during the recent recession. At the same time, workforce readiness is a persistent challenge for businesses, who are often forced to hire non-locals when faced with high seasonal demand. With all of these in mind, KPEDD launched the Kenai Peninsula Workforce website as an extensive resource hub for jobseekers, employers, and training programs. The website provides detailed information about high-demand occupations in the region, including average salaries, qualifications, and associated training programs. It also links to job postings, scholarships, apprenticeships, and jobseeker tools like a resume builder.

**Ensure Transportation Reliability.** Transportation infrastructure is a vulnerability for the Kenai Peninsula. The Seward and Sterling Highways connect the Borough communities to each other and to Anchorage, and suffer frequent shutdowns due to fatal traffic accidents and, periodically, avalanches. Poor maintenance conditions in the winter can also sever this key artery. The Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS), which has suffered from budget cuts, is another area of transportation concern. AMHS serves Homer and Seldovia but has been forced to reduce the frequency of sailings, disrupting an affordable means to moving people and goods. Seldovia is particularly dependent on AMHS, as it lacks highway access. KPEDD advocates for ongoing support for highway maintenance and safety improvements, and continuing state funding for AMHS. Furthermore, residents needing transportation assistance to and from work and critical services has been limited and reportedly unreliable. This is a key element in workforce development efforts across the Peninsula.

**Efficient Land Use.** Although the Kenai Peninsula is vast in size, relatively little land is available for residential and commercial use. Between the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and the Chugach National Forest, private ownership is primarily limited to lands adjacent to the highway system. Efficient use of land to maximize economic benefit is therefore critically important. One protective measure to do so is erosion control and mitigation. As mentioned previously, lands in Homer, Kenai, and Seward, as well as other areas threatened by erosion will require mitigation and protection measures. The Kenai Bluff Stabilization Project is currently underway to protect 5,000 feet of shoreline along Kenai River to protect public and private investment in the area. Other sites formerly used for mining or another purpose can also be reused, such as Red Mountain near Seldovia, a former mine proposed for use as a recreational area.

**Energy Efficiency and Source Diversification.** The vast and often extreme geographical challenges of the region poses unique challenges when providing critical energy needs to remote communities. KPEDD currently serves as an Energy Ambassador on the Department of Energy's Arctic Strategy Program. KPEDD advocates for sustainable energy projects suitable for the region. Developing these resources sustainably and responsibly requires careful planning, technological innovation, and consideration of the borough's economic and environmental factors.

**A Focus on Emerging Industries.** One way to ensure a prosperous economic future amid uncertainty is to diversify the regional economy by promoting emerging industries. On the Kenai Peninsula, this includes shellfish farming, marine trades, agriculture, seafood byproduct utilization, and others. KPEDD assists these emerging sectors through business advising, project funding, workforce development, and lending activities. Emerging sectors often require specialized types of infrastructure to thrive. For example, the marine trades require ports and harbors, vessel hall outs, and specialized buildings. Both agriculture and seafood depend on cold storage. KPEDD and partner organizations work to source funding for these types of projects wherever possible.



# Goals

The regionally-driven goals are selected based on relevant data in the final 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The overarching goal is maintaining and cultivating the high Quality of Living/Place on the Kenai Peninsula. This includes continuing to develop the Kenai Peninsula "brand" for residents, visitors, and businesses, and promoting expansion of recreational amenities and public access. Within the overarching goal, five complimentary goals were developed as indicators of success for KPEDD to concentrate our efforts on throughout the lifecycle of the 2021 CEDS.

01

## Technology & Telecommunications

- Expanded broadband access across the Borough

02

## Workforce & Human Capital

- Industry partnerships and VOC-tech
- Attract, retain, and train a qualified workforce

03

## Infrastructure & Land Use

- Industry-focused infrastructure
- Stability and resiliency in transportation infrastructure
- Mitigation/responsible use of lands

## 04

### Business Climate & Entrepreneurship

- Outreach, education, and information sharing with government in support of businesses
- Promote responsible development of natural resources
- Develop and support entrepreneurship
- Create incentives to bring new businesses to the area

## 05

### Regional Partnerships

- Coordinate with industry
- Coordinate with municipalities, communities, and non-profits

The complimentary goals succinctly align with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration's national investment priorities. EDA's investment priorities provide an overarching framework to ensure its grant investment portfolio – ranging from planning to infrastructure construction -- contributes to local efforts to build, improve, or better leverage economic assets that allow businesses to succeed and regional economies to prosper and become more resilient.

- **Critical Infrastructure:** Economic development planning or implementation projects that support development of public facilities, including basic public infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, or telecommunications infrastructure.
- **Workforce:** Economic Development planning or implementation projects that –
- Support job skills training to meet the hiring needs of the area in which the project is to be carried out and that result in well-paying jobs; or Otherwise promote labor force participation.
- **Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** Economic development planning or implementation projects that support the development of innovation and entrepreneurship-related infrastructure; promote business development and lending; or foster the commercialization of new technologies that are creating technology-driven businesses and high-skilled, well-paying jobs of the future.
- **Economic Recovery Resilience:** Economic development planning or implementation projects that enhance the ability of an area to withstand and recover from adverse short-term or long-term changes in economic conditions, including effects from industry contractions or economic impacts from natural disasters.
- **Manufacturing:** Economic development planning or implementation projects that encourage job creation, business expansion, technology and capital upgrades, and productivity growth in manufacturing, including efforts that contribute to the competitiveness and growth of domestic suppliers or the domestic production of innovative, high-value products and production technologies.



# Action Plan

Overarching Goal: Quality of Place/  
Quality of Life



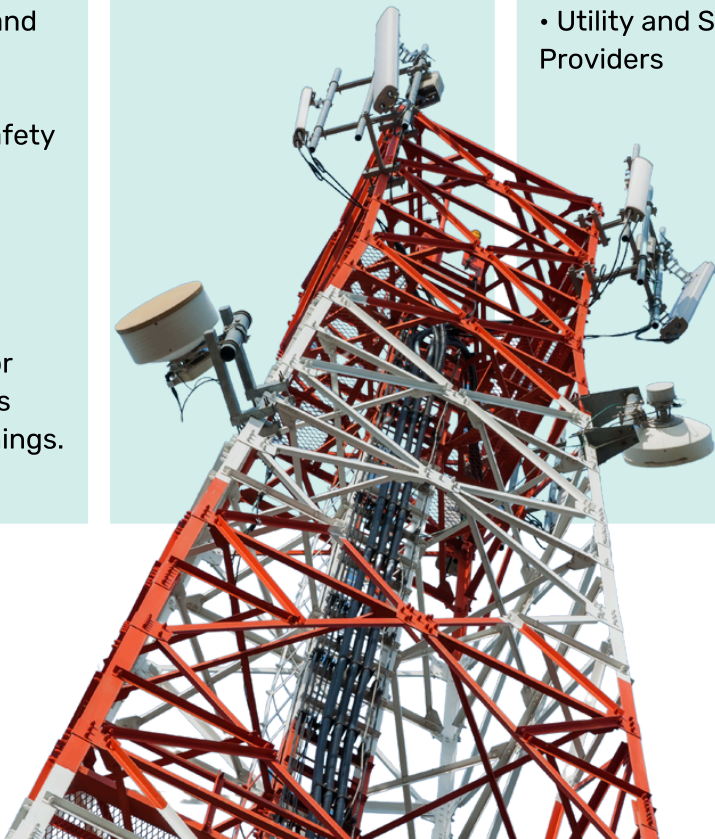
Objective	Strategies	Metrics	Partners
0.1 Develop the Kenai Peninsula "brand" for residents, visitors, and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initiate a promotion campaign to attract families to relocate to the Kenai Peninsula.</li><li>• Support telework/ remote work opportunities.</li><li>• Sustain and enhance visitor marketing efforts to attract more shoulder-season and independent visitors.</li><li>• Procurement of data-driven metrics that provide marketing guidance to attract both tourists and residents</li><li>• Support arts and cultural programming at the local level.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Above average tourism rates, increase in visitors to region, sales tax revenues, gross sales increases.</li><li>• Increase in fishing license sales (ADFG).</li><li>• Hashtags, locations shared on social media platform, increase in website visits.</li><li>• Approval and development of the Soldotna Sports Complex build-out</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kenai Peninsula Borough</li><li>• Municipal Governments</li><li>• Alaska State Parks</li><li>• Chambers of Commerce</li><li>• Local Businesses</li></ul>

Objective	Strategies	Metrics	Partners
0.2 Promote expansion of recreation amenities and public access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund, develop, and construct the Soldotna Fieldhouse.</li> <li>• Fund, develop, and construct the Soldotna Riverfront Redevelopment Project</li> <li>• Fund, develop, and construct the Kenai Waterfront Revitalization Project</li> <li>• Advance the Seward to Fairbanks trail concept.</li> <li>• Solicit additional recreational projects for federal funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased platforms to share project information.</li> <li>• Project approvals/votes.</li> <li>• Funding opportunities.</li> <li>• Increased number of handicap accessible amenities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Development Administration (EDA)</li> <li>• Municipal government</li> <li>• Tribes and Tribal government</li> <li>• Alaska State Parks</li> </ul>

## Goal 1: Technology & Telecommunications

Objective	Strategies	Metrics	Partners
1.1 Expand broadband access across the borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create regional Broadband Taskforce to identify specific needs</li> <li>• Secure federal or other funds to build or expand fiber optics lines or satellite internet access to all communities to improve speeds and costs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average speeds.</li> <li>• Monthly costs.</li> <li>• Percent of households with access.</li> <li>• Level of community investment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alaska Office of Broadband</li> <li>• Economic Development Administration (EDA)</li> <li>• Tribes and Municipal Government</li> <li>• Large employers</li> </ul>

Objective	Strategies	Metrics	Partners
<p>1.2 Improve digital infrastructure to advance economic activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access to videoconferencing services at public facilities such as libraries, civic buildings, and schools.</li> <li>• Encourage development of businesses related to information technology.</li> <li>• Enable hospitals and clinics to make better use of telemedicine.</li> <li>• Provide communities and residents with greater access to education through distance learning.</li> <li>• Make the Kenai Peninsula more attractive to technology driven businesses and corporations.</li> <li>• Enhance Public safety and emergency response systems.</li> <li>• Encourage and promote the use of distance delivery for business workshops and workforce trainings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of technology startups.</li> <li>• Number of public buildings with videoconferencing services.</li> <li>• Virtual trainings held</li> <li>• Infrastructure Maps Created</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USDA • State of Alaska (DCCED, Alaska Development Team)</li> <li>• Regional Tribes</li> <li>• Educational Institutions</li> <li>• Regional Public Service Providers such as Libraries</li> <li>• Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI) • Cook Inlet Tribal Council</li> <li>• Chugach Regional Resources Commission</li> <li>• Incorporated and Unincorporated Community Representatives</li> <li>• Utility and Service Providers</li> </ul>



Goal 2: Workforce & Human Capital

Objective	Strategies	Metrics	Partners
2.1 Build stronger industry partnerships for K-12, voc-tech., secondary, post-secondary, and adult education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create partnerships between industry and K-12 programs as a gateway and pipeline to facilitate career exploration and to build awareness of potential careers.</li><li>• Support apprenticeship or engaged learning opportunities that provide actual workforce readiness.</li><li>• Collaborate to start an agricultural training program for students to work on farms during the summer.</li><li>• Develop and implement Tyonek tribal workforce plan</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased apprenticeship program enrollment numbers</li><li>• Student outreach numbers</li><li>• Employer outreach surveys</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AVTEC</li><li>• State of Alaska/Job Center</li><li>• University of Alaska</li><li>• Employers • School districts &amp; home school programs</li><li>• Municipal Governments</li><li>• Chambers of Commerce</li><li>• Tribal governments</li><li>• Alutiiq Pride Marine Institute</li></ul>





## 2.2 Attract, train, and retain a qualified workforce.

- Expand on “attraction” campaigns to show off that this is a great place to live. Highlight remote work opportunities.
- Targeted outreach for specific community groups (veterans, adult learners, at risk/recovery population) focused on entering the workforce and accessing training.
- Provide online training opportunities including re-skilling or up-skilling programs. Including credit and non-credit options.
- Identify the need for new programs and certificates based on industry feedback; including training around new/emerging technology.
- Support affordable housing efforts/programs in the Kenai Peninsula through public/private partnerships

- Greater application rates
- Increased enrollment in colleges
- Increased apprenticeship applications
- Number of new housing units
- Increased in-migration of working-age adults/families

- Alaska Department of Labor
- Young Professionals Group
- Veterans groups
- AVTEC (or provider of reskilling/up-skilling training)
- University
- KPEDD; Workforce Development Website
- Kenai Peninsula School District
- Municipal Governments
- Chambers of Commerce

## 2.3 Connect job-seekers to employers and training opportunities.

- Maintain and grow the Kenai Peninsula Workforce website as a hub for employers, educators, trainers, and jobseekers.
- Develop an ongoing assessment of workforce needs for each industry.

- Increased website traffic and clicks.
- Number of employer engagements.
- Workforce locators built through GIS Map

- Local/borough employers
- Vocational/technical programs
- Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
- UAA Kenai Peninsula College

## Goal 3: Infrastructure, Land Use, and Natural Resources

Objective	Strategies	Metrics	Partners
<b>3.1</b> Develop industry-specific infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construct a second line between Soldotna and Healy to allow Bradley Lake power to reach consumers</li> <li>• Fund and develop the Alutiiq Pride Visitor Center in Seward.</li> <li>• Develop cold storage capacity to grow the agricultural sector.</li> <li>• Advocate and seek funding for port and harbor expansions in Homer, Kenai, Seldovia, and Seward.</li> <li>• Develop and expand shoreside infrastructure to support the seafood, oil and gas, and marine trade sectors.</li> <li>• Develop the “KPEDD innovation campus” concept with commercial kitchen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project dollars secured (public and private)</li> <li>• Complete implementation and completion of projects</li> <li>*New equipment available to mariculture/agriculture producers</li> <li>• GIS Displays created to identify gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alaska Railroad</li> <li>• Farming groups</li> <li>• Agrium USA Inc.</li> <li>• University</li> <li>• AVTEC</li> <li>• Chugach Regional Resources Commission</li> <li>• Alutiiq Pride Marine Institute</li> <li>• Municipal Government</li> <li>• Salmon Sisters</li> <li>• Saltwater Inc</li> <li>• Alaska Mariculture Cluster</li> </ul>
<b>3.2</b> Advance stability and resiliency in transportation infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for stable funding for the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) to maintain or improve service to Peninsula communities.</li> <li>• Assess impacts of reduced AMHS service for affected communities.</li> <li>• Airport expansions and improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of advocacy engagements.</li> <li>• Airport Master Plan development or update in regional communities</li> <li>• New development incentives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AMHS</li> <li>• ARDORs</li> <li>• Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&amp;PF)</li> <li>• FAA</li> <li>• Municipal Government</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for year-round maintenance of the Seward and Sterling Highways to maintain access and safety at all times.</li> <li>• Advocate for ongoing state support to improve and maintain airports.</li> <li>• Identify and advocate for other needed improvements in road, marine, rail, and air transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure overlaps and gaps identified through GIS build-out</li> </ul>	
<b>3.3 Mitigation &amp; responsible use of lands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete erosion mitigation projects in Kenai and Homer to enable continued development.</li> <li>• Assess the reuse/redevelopment of former gravel pits for new uses.</li> <li>• Identify and assess the need for zoning and increased safety improvements between municipal and borough governments.</li> <li>• Reclaim and redevelop the former Red Mountain Mine into a recreation area.</li> <li>• Mitigate spruce beetle damage by removing dead trees and milling the lumber for commercial or residential use.</li> <li>• Free-up land outside city limits in Seward to increase residential development opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dollar value of public and private investment.</li> <li>• GIS Map created for natural resources and current infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US Forest Service</li> <li>• US Fish and Wildlife Service</li> <li>• Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation</li> <li>• Borough Land Management Office</li> <li>• Municipal Government</li> <li>• Department of Natural Resources</li> <li>• Alaska Mental Health Trust</li> <li>• United States Forest Service</li> <li>• Army Corps of Engineers</li> <li>• Tribes and Tribal government</li> </ul>

<b>3.4</b> <b>Promote responsible development of natural resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for a stable and predictable tax structure for mining, oil, and gas operations at state and local level.</li> <li>• Advocate for ongoing incentives to encourage oil and gas exploration in Cook Inlet to secure energy supplies.</li> <li>• Support responsible mining projects that create local jobs and revenues.</li> <li>• Support the Kenai Bluff Stabilization Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of advocacy engagements.</li> <li>• Project funding secured</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of Alaska</li> <li>• Bureau of Ocean Energy management</li> <li>• Kenai Peninsula Borough</li> <li>• Chugach Regional Resources Commission</li> <li>• Industry Groups</li> <li>• Army Corps of Engineers</li> <li>• Tribes and Tribal government</li> <li>• Municipal Governments</li> </ul>
---	---	--	---

## Goal 4: Business Climate and Entrepreneurship

Objective	Strategies	Metrics	Partners
<b>4.1</b> <b>Outreach, education, and information sharing in support of businesses resiliency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue business retention and expansion (BRE) activities to determine health of businesses and ways to assist with pandemic recovery.</li> <li>• Promote buy local program</li> <li>• Help businesses access other support services such as the Small Business Development Center.</li> <li>• Conduct surveys of businesses to evaluate ongoing needs and areas of assistance needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of surveys completed.</li> <li>• Number of businesses provided with assistance.</li> <li>• Number of businesses reporting favorable views of business climate.</li> <li>• GIS maps and layers created to support business activities and investments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alaska Small Business Center (SBDC)</li> <li>• Small Business Administration. (SBA)</li> <li>• Municipal governments</li> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Economic Development Consultants</li> <li>• Wink Consultants</li> <li>• Industry groups</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide updates on the regional economy and business climate to chambers, local governments, and industry groups.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Datafy</li> </ul>
<b>4.2</b> <b>Improve access to capital for businesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructure KPEDD's revolving loan fund to meet needs during an economic downturn or natural disaster.</li> <li>• Assist businesses with obtaining relief funding through federal, state, and local assistance programs.</li> <li>• Assess the use of financial incentives such as tax credits and abatements to attract new businesses to the region or help existing businesses expand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding dollars awarded to businesses.</li> <li>• Number of businesses assisted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA)</li> <li>• Small Business Administration (SBA)</li> <li>• Economic Development Administration (EDA)</li> <li>• Private lenders</li> </ul>
<b>4.3</b> <b>Develop and support entrepreneurship and new business formation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host entrepreneurship workshops for individuals starting businesses.</li> <li>• Provide training on economic forecasting and planning</li> <li>• Advise and counsel startup businesses.</li> <li>• Promote Central Peninsula Small Business Week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of workshops hosted.</li> <li>• Number of businesses assisted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chambers of Commerce • UA Center for Economic Development (UA CED)</li> <li>• Alaska Small Business Development Center (SBDC)</li> </ul>

#### 4.4 Support emerging sectors with high growth potential

- Assist mariculture operations in meeting capital and expansion needs.
- Support the Soldotna Riverfront Development Project
- Counsel and assist industrial maritime businesses such as ship builders and repair operations.
- Initiate a pilot project to develop seafood byproducts into marketable products.
- Counsel and assist manufacturing businesses.

- Number of marine focused businesses assisted.
- Number of mariculture businesses supported
- Funding secured for Soldotna
- Number of businesses started and/or supported along Soldotna's developed business strip

- Alaska MEP Center
- Alaska Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Alaska Mariculture Alliance
- ARDORs
- Alaska Department of Commerce
- Chugach Regional Resources Commission
- Alutiiq Pride Marine Institute
- Municipal Governments



## Goal 5: Build and Grow Regional Partnerships for Resiliency

Objective	Strategies	Metrics	Partners
<b>5.1</b> Proactively coordinate roles for economic resiliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align and streamline assistance roles between funding agencies and resource partners in the event of an economic disaster.</li> <li>Promote, and expand current processes for regular communication, monitoring and updating business community needs and issues to be used post-event.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of resources created</li> <li>GIS Buildout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding agencies</li> <li>Borough government</li> <li>Municipal governments</li> <li>Tribal entities &amp; Native Organizations</li> <li>Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>EDC</li> <li>Wink Consultants</li> <li>Industry groups</li> <li>Nonprofits</li> </ul>
<b>5.2</b> Produce pre-disaster recovery plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a collection of resources (especially financial resources) of private, local, state, and federal tools for economic recovery for residents, businesses, and communities.</li> <li>Generate a plan describing key stakeholders, roles, actions, and responsibilities in the event of a natural disaster.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of resources created</li> <li>Borough-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding agencies</li> <li>Borough government</li> <li>Municipal governments</li> <li>Tribal entities &amp; Native Organizations</li> <li>Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>Industry groups</li> <li>Nonprofits</li> </ul>

# FY25 Efforts Based on CEDS Goals

## 1. TECHNOLOGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Continued leading broadband infrastructure development through the existing local and state networks; provided a platform for regular communication between federal and state funding agencies, providers, and consumers to ensure regional needs are met - including challenging fabric maps, prioritizing buildout locations, public outreach, stakeholder identification, and advocating at state and federal levels

## 2. WORKFORCE & HUMAN CAPITAL

Created and coordinated the Student to Career Launchpad Cohort to connect rural high school students with industry leaders and secondary education leaders. Over 120 students representing nine traditionally underserved schools participated, gaining insight into Peninsula-based high-paying careers in healthcare, oil and gas, renewable energy, and maritime trades.

Continued working with state-wide workforce development boards to tailor efforts for regional needs to improve community conditions that influence or effect program development on the Kenai Peninsula.

Supported local resource providers and advocacy groups identify transportation, housing, and childcare limitations by gathering regional data, building geographic information systems (GIS) to identify gaps, identify funding agencies and private investors, and provide consultation for “best practices” unique to community needs.

## 3. INFRASTRUCTURE & LAND USE

Continued developing a viable and sustainable mariculture industry to increase the production of shellfish and aquatic plants, increased mariculture-related manufacturing, and secondary industries in the region. Efforts focused on building private partnerships that encourage private investment into local economies, increase food security, create jobs, reduce carbon dioxide in coastal waters, and increase revenue for state and local government.

Served as the Arctic Ambassador for the CIRI region for the Department of Energy to empower sustainable energy projects suitable for the Kenai Peninsula. Ambassadors shared resources, built partnerships, and increased access to technical assistance to drive sustainable and affordable projects.



## 4. BUSINESS CLIMATE & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Maintained the existing Microloan Program to allow for support new and expanding private businesses, purchase equipment and inventory, and fill gaps in seasonality. KPEDD encouraged investment through traditional lenders and offered financial support to those who did not qualify.

Supported the municipal development projects through application support, providing necessary data, hosting discussion with funding agencies, sitting on applicable project boards, and communicating project needs and opportunities with regional stakeholders.

Provided webinar trainings free to the public for businesses and resource providers to understand how and where pertinent data is found, measuring a source's level of reliability, how to communicate the information collected, and how to use the data for stronger planning and forecasting.

## 5. REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Supported business and municipalities applying for state and federal funding pursuing projects the aligned with the goals and strategies outline in the Comprehensive Economic Development District. Strengthening applications and the strategy process helped to guide consistent and sustainable development in our communities. Support included funding opportunity identification, Identification of "best fit" projects, background research, package structure and presentation (effectively communicating goals, project needs, and anticipated outcomes), gathering and gauging community support (Identifying stakeholders, letters of support, tracking match), and measuring success (measurable and reportable deliverables, methods of measurements).

Provided up-to-date economic reports for local businesses, governments, and resource providers on population changes, local and comparative economies, employment trends, tourism outlooks, traffic volumes, industry ROIs, seafood forecasts, hidden employment numbers, housing prices, and rental trends.

The 2025 Industry Overview Forum continued to provide a platform for federal and state agencies, Tribes and Tribal Corporations, industry leaders, and resource providers to discuss project updates, economic projections, and changing regulations that effect the region.

Hosted visitor-specific data licenses to support regional chambers in their efforts to increase tourism in each of their communities.



Want to get involved? Send  
us an email or call us!



## Acknowledgements

This strategic plan was developed in partnership with the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development (UAA CED); Economic Development Administration (EDA); Kenai Peninsula Borough; incorporated and unincorporated communities; Tribes; industry leaders; non-profit resource providers; and residents, develops the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

### **KENAI PENINSULA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

[www.KPEDD.org](http://www.KPEDD.org) - [www.KenaiPeninsulaWorkforce.org](http://www.KenaiPeninsulaWorkforce.org)

14896 Kenai Spur Hwy - Kenai, AK 99611

907-283-3335 - [Info@kpedd.org](mailto:Info@kpedd.org)