



Gulkana Community Master Plan

Public Review Draft, January 25, 2024

Prepared for the Gulkana Village Council by Agnew::Beck Consulting

Let us know what you think!

Send your comments on the draft to Molly by **Monday, February 26th, 2024:**
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Contents

1. Executive Summary	4
Introduction.....	4
What is a Community Master Plan?.....	4
Community Voices: Life in Gulkana	5
Vision, Mission, and Values	7
Goals and Strategies by Focus Area	7
2. Plan Process, Structure, and Updates	9
Process to Prepare the Plan	9
Relevant Community and Regional Plans.....	9
Structure of the Plan	9
Plan Amendments and Updates.....	10
3. About Gulkana	11
Location.....	11
History and Culture.....	12
Population and Economy.....	12
Community Maps	14
4. Community Facilities and Utilities	19
Key Themes Guiding the Plan	19
Community Facilities and Utilities Goals and Strategies.....	19
Community Facilities and Utilities Actions	20
5. Culture, Wellness, and Safety	21
Key Themes Guiding the Plan	21
Culture, Wellness, and Safety Goals and Strategies.....	22
Culture, Wellness, and Safety Actions	22
6. Economic Development	23
Key Themes Guiding the Plan	23
Economic Development Goals and Strategies	24
Economic Development Actions.....	24
7. Environment	25
Key Themes Guiding the Plan	25
Environment Goals and Strategies	26
Environment Actions.....	26
8. Land Use and Housing	27
Key Themes Guiding the Plan	27
Land Use and Housing Goals and Strategies	28
Land Use and Housing Actions	28
9. Community Facility Planning	30
Community Hall.....	31
Transit Center.....	34

List of Figures

Figure 1. Project Boundary Map.....	11
Figure 2. Gulkana CDP Population, 1930-2020.....	13
Figure 3. Gulkana CDP Race	13
Figure 4: Median Household Income for Gulkana CDP, Copper River Census Area, and Alaska	14
Figure 5. Housing Units in Gulkana CDP, Copper River Census Area, and Alaska	14
Figure 6. Map of Village of Gulkana Land Ownership, 2023.....	15
Figure 7. Map of Village of Gulkana Land Utilities, Close Up of Village Center, 2023.....	16
Figure 8. Map of Village of Gulkana Environmental Constraints	17
Figure 9. Map of Gulkana Existing Uses, Close Up of Core Area.....	18
Figure 10. Future Land Use Map for the Village of Gulkana	29
Figure 11. Potential locations for new community hall.....	31
Figure 12. Comparison of other Tribal community centers in Alaska	33
Figure 13. Potential locations for a new multi-purpose operations and maintenance facility	34

Acronyms

ANCSA	Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
ANTHC	Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
CEDS	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
CDP	Census Designated Places
CRBRHA	Copper River Basin Regional Housing Authority
CRNA	Copper River Native Association
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GVC	Gulkana Village Council
VPSO	Village Public Safety Officer

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Gulkana Village Council, all Gulkana residents and Tribal members, organizations, and other local, regional, and state partners who have contributed to the Gulkana Master Plan development process. Key individuals and entities include:

Planning Team Members

- Eileen Ewan, Council President, Native Village of Gulkana (also Ahtna)
- Teri Nutter, Council Vice President, Native Village of Gulkana (also Copper River Basin Regional Housing Authority)
- Eveline Frank, Council Member and Bookkeeper, Native Village of Gulkana
- Kambriya Ewan, Administrative Assistant, Native Village of Gulkana
- Roberta Eleazer, Tribal Administrator, Native Village of Gulkana

Stakeholder Interviews (alphabetical by organization)

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- Joe Bovee, Ahtna, Inc.
- Michelle Anderson, Ahtna, Inc.
- Teri Nutter, Copper River Basin Regional Housing Authority
- Angela Vermillion, Copper River Native Association
- Cecil Sanford, Copper River Native Association
- Colleen Merrick, Copper River Native Association
- Katherine McConkey, Copper River Native Association
- Sharla Huckabey, Copper River Native Association
- Theresa Laville, Copper River School District
- Jennifer Rosenthal, Copper Valley Development Association
- Jason Severs, Gakona Volunteer Fire Department
- Eileen Ewan, Gulkana Village Council
- Allen Davis, Gulkana Village Staff
- Eveline Frank, Gulkana Village Staff
- Harvey Jackson, Gulkana Village Staff
- Kambriya Ewan, Gulkana Village Staff
- Roberta Eleazer, Gulkana Village Staff
- Karen Petersen, Southeast Conference Biomass Coordinator

All photos courtesy of Gulkana Village Council and Agnew::Beck Consulting, unless otherwise noted.

I. Executive Summary

Introduction

The Gulkana Village Council initiated this planning process in fall 2023. This plan was inspired by a series of upcoming infrastructure projects, and the recognition that the community would benefit from defining the long-term needs and desires of residents to inform upcoming growth and investment.

The Gulkana Village Council is a federally recognized Tribe and operates as a non-profit business with many programs to help improve the lives of its Tribal members such as the Indian General Assistance Program, Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program, Soaring Eagle Transit, Fire Fuels, Indian Reservation Roads, and Indian Child Welfare Act.



What is a Community Master Plan?

Community planning is the process of coming together to agree on a future direction and gathering momentum to carry it forward. A master plan includes the following elements:

- A long-term vision and goals, and short-term strategies and actions.
- An analysis of existing conditions, including the community's population, economy, housing, and land use.
- Policies that protect what residents value most about the community while benefiting the quality of life for current and future residents.
- Decision-making guidance on topics such as land use, economic development, facilities, and others.







By planning, communities can act on new opportunities and be prepared for challenges associated with economic, demographic, and environmental changes.



Community Voices: Life in Gulkana

Below are summary results from the community survey, conducted in summer 2023 with 23 responses. While the primary audience for the survey were Tribal members residing in or near the community, non-Tribal members were also invited to respond to the survey. For more information on survey methodology, see Appendix C.

Question #1: What do you like most about Gulkana? Top themes from open-ended responses

		
<p>Quality Infrastructure Safe roads to walk and exercise. The constant improvements for the betterment of our kids. Paved roads, streetlights, cameras.</p>	<p>People and Community Everyone knows each other. All the blessings. I grew up here. My family.</p>	<p>Land and Wilderness The beautiful landscape and scenery of the Gulkana River and Copper River at our backyard.</p>
		
<p>Peaceful and Quiet Peace of nature. Quiet rural life.</p>	<p>Clean Water The good water. We make our own drinking water.</p>	<p>Subsistence Opportunities Living close to subsistence activities. Fish camp.</p>

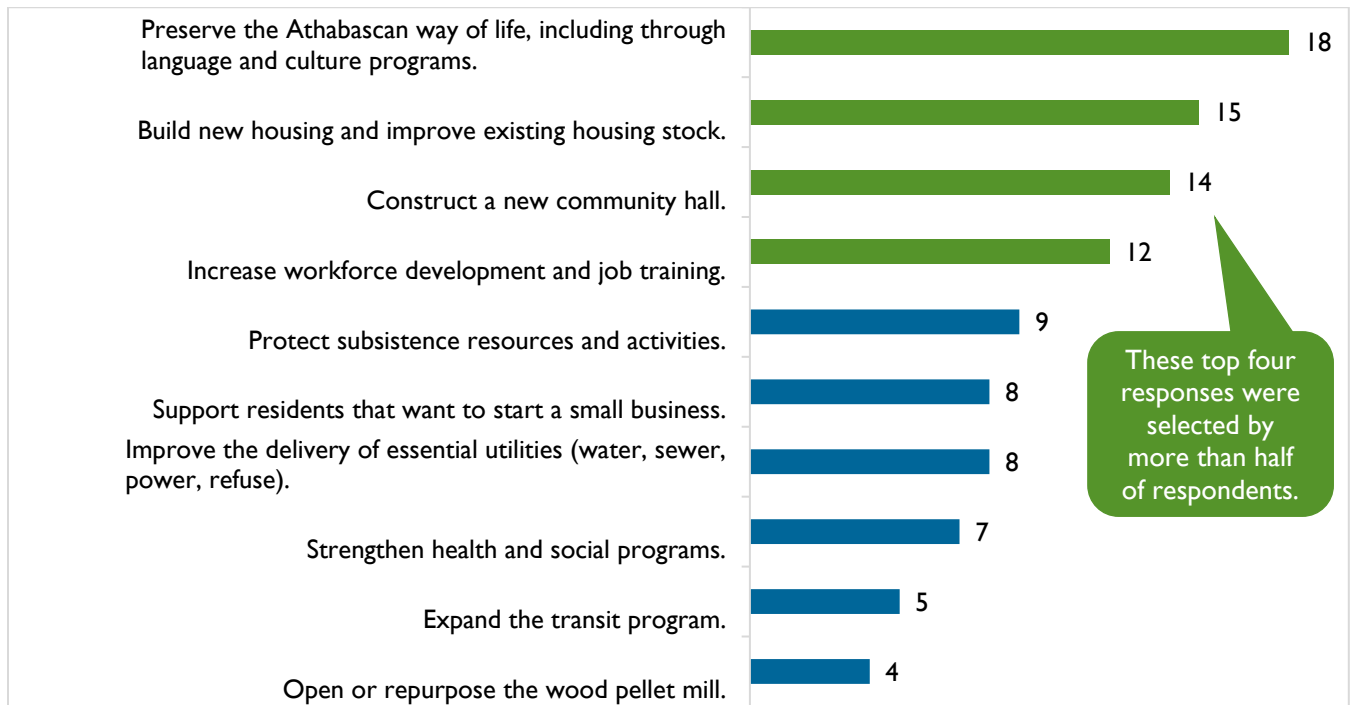
Question #2: What is most challenging about living in Gulkana? (top themes from responses)

- High cost of living
- Distance to services, isolation
- Harsh weather
- Limited housing

Question #3: Twenty years from now, what do you want Gulkana to look like? (top themes from responses)

- More active and culturally vibrant community
- More jobs
- Growth
- Self-sustaining

Question #4: What are the most important priorities for Gulkana to focus on over the next ten years?
(respondents could choose up to 3)



Question #5: What other ideas do you have to improve life in Gulkana? All open-ended responses

Coffee shop, beauty shop.	Gulkana should teach traditional language and crafts.	Help the people who don't live there.	Maybe tourism. Get more houses, get funding to help those that want to build a house to connect to sewer and water.
We have clean water which is prized in the region. Our water plant is constructed for more connections we should use land for housing	Community engagement, life lessons to children, classes on traditional ways, community bonding, and safer environment.	Have more activities for the youth and young people.	More gym equipment
Community minded. Subsistence/learning teaching.	Need treatment for addicted people.	Activities for kids. Skill building/culture for kids.	A gym.
Just more stuff to do I guess.	Wood pellets	Continue what is being done. Doing a good job.	Tear down old buildings and remove old cars.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

To responsibly steward the land, honor the legacy of our people, and enhance the lives of Gulkana Tribal Members.

Mission

To improve the quality of life for our people by promoting self-independence and wellness while honoring and respecting our traditions, providing stewardship of our lands, and inspiring unity and faith for future generations.

Values



Honor Our Christian Beliefs	Preserve Our History and Heritage	Provide Visionary and Responsible Leadership	Responsibly Manage Financial Resources	Strive for Excellence	Maintain Integrity and Fairness in Our Service Delivery to All Tribal Members
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Goals and Strategies by Focus Area



Community Facilities and Utilities

Goal A: Quality, multi-use facilities that meet community needs.	Goal B: Efficient, affordable utilities that meet the needs of today and the future.	Goal C: A roads network and transit system that meet community needs.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Determine best locations for new community center and transit facilities. Collaborate with partner organizations on specific needs for clinic space, emergency shelter function, and cultural spaces within the new community center. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to protect Gulkana River as source of clean drinking water. Plan for and invest in utility upgrades and expansion to meet needs (water, sewer, power). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the sustainability of Soaring Eagle Transit. Plan for long term transportation infrastructure needs.



Culture, Wellness, and Safety

Goal A: Families are healthy, safe, and connected.	Goal B: Residents are food secure, with access to subsistence resources.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide services and programs for healing historical trauma. Identify tools to encourage cooperation with the Village's alcohol ban. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to preserve and protect subsistence use of lands and waters around the community. Address erosion threats to local fish camps, including supporting fish camp relocation as needed.



Economic Development

Goal A: Residents have access to quality employment and training opportunities.	Goal B: Unused community facilities are repurposed and/or removed, opening space for new uses.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote existing workforce development and scholarship programs (e.g., Ahtna scholarships, RI's leadership program, etc.). 2. Assess support for and feasibility of a local store. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demolish deteriorated buildings, including the old clinic, to open space for other uses and future development. 2. Decommission the wood pellet mill.



Environment

Goal A: The community is resilient and prepared to respond to climate change impacts.	Goal B: The community is protected from known environmental hazards such as fire, pollution, and flooding.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider climate change impacts (e.g., melting permafrost, air quality from wildfires, etc.) when planning future facilities. 2. Implement recommendations from the Copper River Climate Change Adaptation Plan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the State of Alaska to continue to protect Gulkana River as a drinking water source (see also Utilities chapter). 2. Implement recommendations from the Gulkana Community Wildfire Protection Plan. 3. Conduct erosion monitoring and discourage development in areas prone to erosion/flooding.



Land Use and Housing

Goal A: Protect the places Gulkana residents value and strategically use developable land to meet community needs.	Goal B: Residents have quality, affordable housing.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect and preserve the Old Village site. 2. Use the future land use map as a guide for how the community grows over time. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rehabilitate existing homes in need of stabilization and weatherization; demolish abandoned homes that are beyond repair. 2. Create additional housing, including building out new roads and utilities when needed.

2. Plan Process, Structure, and Updates

Process to Prepare the Plan

Completed (Summer 2023 – Winter 2024)	What's Next (Winter 2024)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talked with GVC members and regional partners at Village Council meetings and via interviews,• Compiled the numbers that tell the story about Gulkana,• Reviewed existing plans and documents,• Met with Gulkana Planning Team for conversations around facility locations, land use, and mapping,• Gathered feedback from residents via a community survey and at the annual GVC meeting,• Shared draft goals, strategies, and community land use map on posters in the Gulkana Community Hall and invited feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Release draft community master plan for public comment, (♦ we are here)• GVC adopts the draft community master plan,• Begin community master plan implementation.

Relevant Community and Regional Plans

The following plans were reviewed as part of master plan development:

- Ahtna Natural Resource Management Plan (2014, update in progress as of January 2024)
- Copper River Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2022)
- Gulkana Village Council (GVC): COVID-19 American Rescue Plan Act Community Survey (2021)
- Gulkana Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2017)
- Gulkana Small Community Emergency Response Plan for Unincorporated Area (2017)
- Gulkana Native Village Hazard Mitigation Plan (2013)
- Copper Valley Development Association Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2012, update in progress)



Project presentation at July 2023 Annual Gulkana Village Council meeting

Structure of the Plan

This plan includes the following components:

- **Chapter 1. Executive Summary:** Highlights key themes in the plan, plus the community's vision and key policies (goals and strategies) for achieving that vision.
- **Chapter 2. Plan Process, Structure, and Updates:** A summary of the planning process, timeline, and other relevant community plans.
- **Chapter 3. About Gulkana:** Gulkana information, including its location, history, maps, and numbers that tell the community's story.
- **Chapters 4 – 8:** A series of chapters organized around key plan topics. Each chapter starts with a summary of guiding themes for that topic, followed by goals and strategies, developed with input from residents,

partners, and the Village Council. A draft action plan is also included for each topic, with initial ideas for implementing the plan and tracking progress.

- **Chapter 9. Community Facility Planning:** Community facility matrices that identify potential sites for new community facilities and identify what additional information is needed for site selection.
- **Appendices** with additional materials from the process, including the project flyer, a blank copy of the community survey, and a detailed set of community survey results.

Plan Amendments and Updates

Outlined below are the steps for amending and/or updating the Gulkana Community Master Plan:

- A minor change is a change that does not modify or add to the plan's basic intent, and that serves only to clarify the plan, facilitate its implementation, or make technical corrections. Such changes can be made administratively and do not require additional approval.
- An amendment permanently changes the plan by adding to or modifying the basic intent. Such changes can be recommended by the staff, Council members, or residents, and approved by the Gulkana Village Council.
- A more detailed update of the Gulkana Community Master Plan should be conducted every five to ten years, starting with a thorough review by the Gulkana Village Council and key Council staff to determine which goals and strategies have been accomplished and which may need to be revised, added, or deleted. Residents and other key stakeholders should also be engaged during the update process.

3. About Gulkana

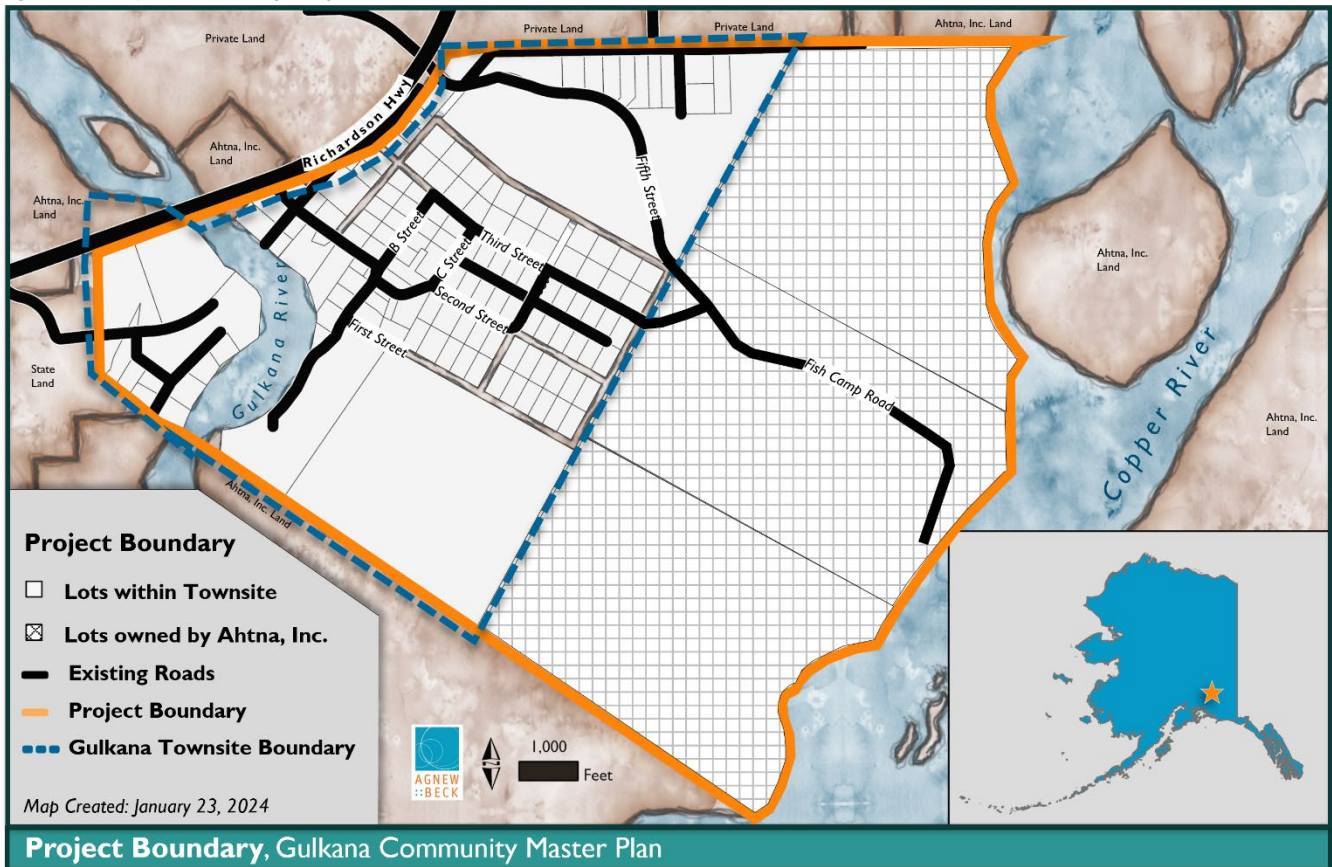
Location

Gulkana Village is located on the east bank of the Gulkana (Kulkana) River at its confluence with the Copper River at mile 127 of the Richardson Highway, 14 miles north of Glennallen. Gulkana Village is in the Gulkana Census Designated Place (CDP) within the State of Alaska’s Chitina Recording District. The Gulkana CDP encompassed approximately 36 square miles and runs north to the Gakona junction, and south to Glennallen.

This plan focuses on the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Village Corporation boundary established by Congress in 1971. The Village encompasses an area of about one square mile between the Richardson Highway and Copper River (west to east) and between Chinook Avenue and the southeast corner of Tract A, US Survey 4861.

The **project boundary**, which is the area of focus for this community master plan, includes all Village Townsite land east of the high and three large lots owned by Ahtna, Inc. along the Copper River (Figure 1). These large lots encompass approximately 500 acres and have been set aside for future development of the Village in Ahtna’s 2014 *Ecosystem Management Plan*. The project boundary reflects areas that Gulkana residents frequently use, reside in, or have identified as culturally significant. The project boundary also includes infrastructure that is essential for providing services to Gulkana residents.

Figure 1. Project Boundary Map



Source: Lot boundaries, ownership and townsite boundary data from Ahtna, Inc. Map by Agnew::Beck Consulting.

History and Culture¹

The Ahtna people have occupied this area for 5,000 to 7,000 years. Chief Ewan and his family settled on the south side of the Gulkana River in the early 1890s. Around the same time, a trail was constructed for miners traveling between Valdez and Eagle, and a U.S. Army Signal Corps telegraph station was established. Gulkana became a stop along the way, and the Ahtna used long-established camps for harvesting salmon to trade with travelers on the Valdez-Eagle Trail.

Gulkana was originally located across the Gulkana River from its present site. In 1943, the Alaska Road Commission crews began construction of a new bridge across the Gulkana River. The approach from the west side of the river divided the Village, unexpectedly forcing Village members to move and establishing the current location of the Village on the north side of the Gulkana River. The land at the Old Village side was ceded to the State of Alaska in the 1970s without the Village’s knowledge or compensation. In 2018, the GVC came to an understanding with the State of Alaska acknowledging that Gulkana lost its traditional land unlawfully. An agreement to restore ownership of the land was formalized with the State of Alaska and signed on October 13, 2020.



Interpretive sign at the Gulkana Bridge pullout along the Richardson Highway

Population and Economy

Below are some quick facts about the Gulkana community.

Federally Recognized Tribe	Gulkana Village Council
Incorporation Type	Unincorporated Census-Designated Place
Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Regional Corporation	Ahtna, Inc.
Village Corporation	Gulkana does not have a Village corporation; the original Village corporation merged with Ahtna, Inc in 1980.
ANCSA Non-Profit	CRNA
School	Children attend Copper Valley School District in Glennallen or correspondence courses.

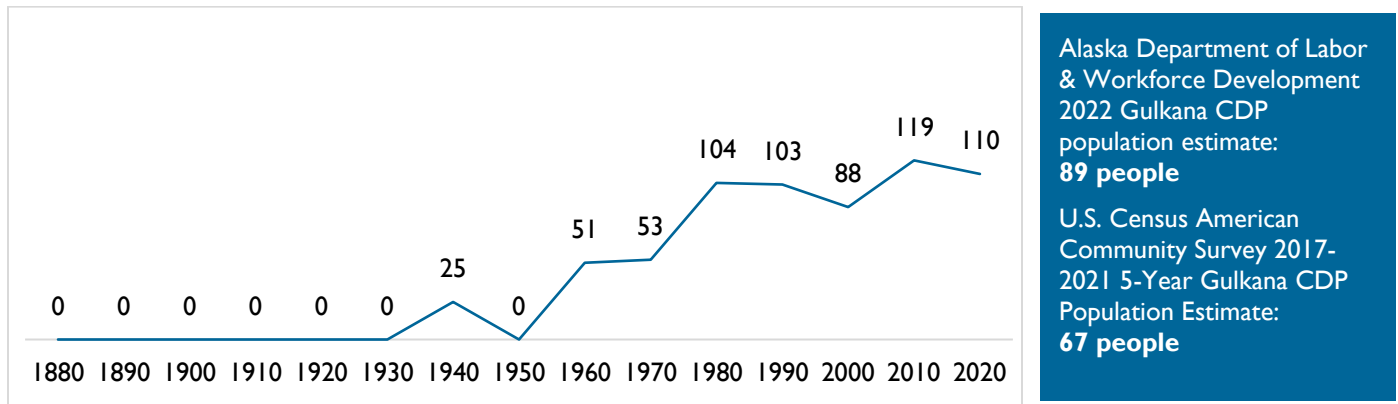
¹ Source: Copper Valley Development Association 2012 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and interpretive signs at the Gulkana Bridge pullout, developed by the Gulkana Village Council and Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

The following section includes additional information about the community. In some cases it also includes comparative information for the full region, the Copper River Census Area. Most of this data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau. The community-level information is for the entire Gulkana CDP, which is much larger than just the Gulkana townsite. Given the small population of the area, the data contains high error margins and should be considered approximate. For example, the American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate for 2017-2020 age data reports no children under the age of 10 in Gulkana CDP, while there are multiple families with young children in the community.

Population

Census data shows a relatively stable population over the past ten years for the Gulkana CDP; recent estimates have high error margins but suggest some population loss (Figure 2). Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend migration data suggests most people who move in/out of Gulkana CDP are relocating within the Copper River Census Area. The State of Alaska’s Department of Labor and Workforce Development population projection estimates forecast a loss of population (-18%) in the Copper River Census Area due to outmigration over the next 30 years.

Figure 2. Gulkana CDP Population, 1930-2020



Source: U.S. Decennial Census.

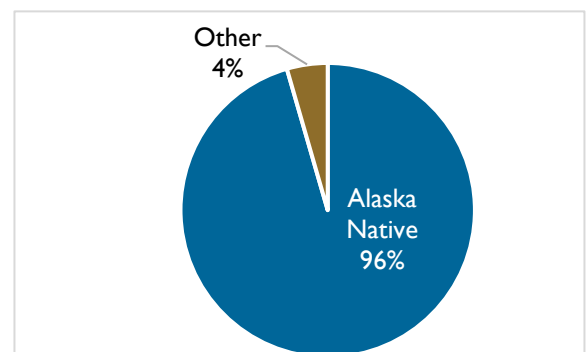
Race

Gulkana CDP is predominantly Alaska Native (96% see Figure 3); comparatively, the Copper River Census Area is 25% Alaska Native, while Alaska overall is 15% Alaska Native.

Income and Employment

According to American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates from 2017-2021, the median household income in the Gulkana CDP is \$50,833; approximately 70% of income comes from labor earnings (Figure 4). On average, Gulkana CDP income is less than Copper River Census Area and statewide incomes. Many Gulkana residents commute to jobs with the Copper River School District, Ahtna, Copper River Native Association (CRNA), the GVC, and other employers in Glennallen or Copper Center.

Figure 3. Gulkana CDP Race



Source: American Community Survey Five Year Estimates 2017-2021.

Figure 4: Median Household Income for Gulkana CDP, Copper River Census Area, and Alaska

	Gulkana CDP	Copper River Census Area	Alaska
Per capita	\$27,543	\$33,894	\$39,236
Median household	\$50,833	\$67,439	\$80,287
% of earnings from labor	70%	75%	83%

Source: American Community Survey Five Year Estimates 2017-2021.

Housing

The Gulkana CDP has 56 housing units. Both the community and the surrounding region have a higher vacancy rate than the rest of Alaska.

Figure 5. Housing Units in Gulkana CDP, Copper River Census Area, and Alaska

	Gulkana CDP	Copper River Census Area	Alaska
Total units	56	2,676	327,889
Occupied	36%	35%	83%
Vacant	64%	65%	27%
Median gross rent	\$488	\$780	\$1,279

Source: American Community Survey Five Year Estimates 2017-2021.

Community Maps

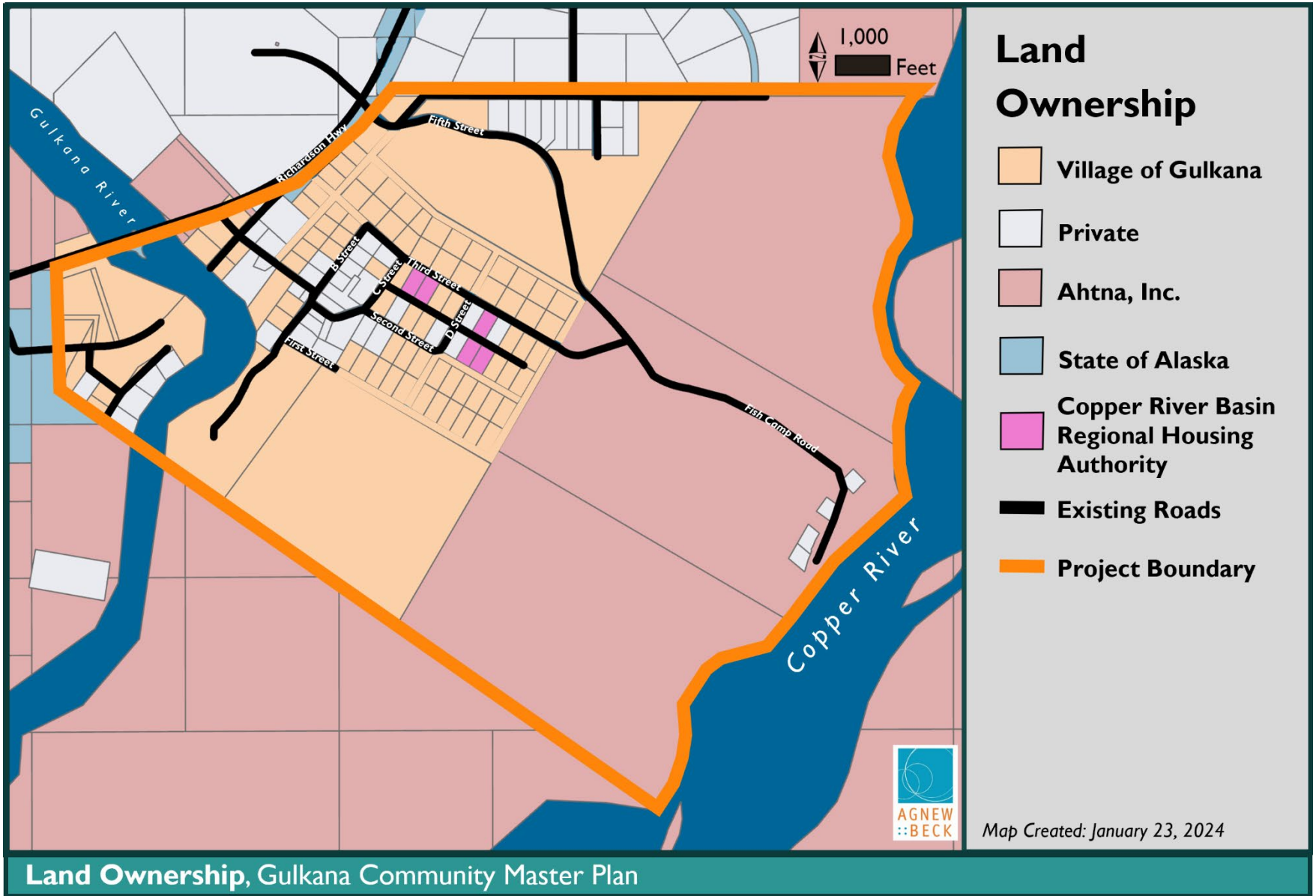
Location-specific information offers insight into a community’s needs and contains information about resources and limitations of the lands in and around communities. Most of the mapping data in the following section comes from the lands department at Ahtna, Inc.² While Ahtna, Inc. strives to ensure the mapping data is as accurate as possible, there may be errors and omissions in the information. The following maps should be used as a starting point for the community to build and maintain a collective inventory of assets and places, furthering its goals and community vision. This section includes the following maps:

- **Land Ownership (Figure 6):** The layout of property boundaries and ownership within the Village and immediate surrounding area determines where the Village can control development and where there may be opportunities for collaboration.
- **Utilities (Figure 7):** Water, sewer, and electricity infrastructure assets foster discussions about expansion and where new facilities may be costly to build.
- **Environmental Constraints (Figure 8):** Permafrost, areas prone to flooding, and riparian habitats help determine areas more suitable for new development.
- **Current Uses (Figure 9):** A snapshot of current building and land uses facilitates decisions about future uses, developed from community visits and conversations with residents.

² View Ahtna’s interactive land maps, including land ownership status, at <https://www.ahtna.com/lands/maps/>

Land Ownership Map

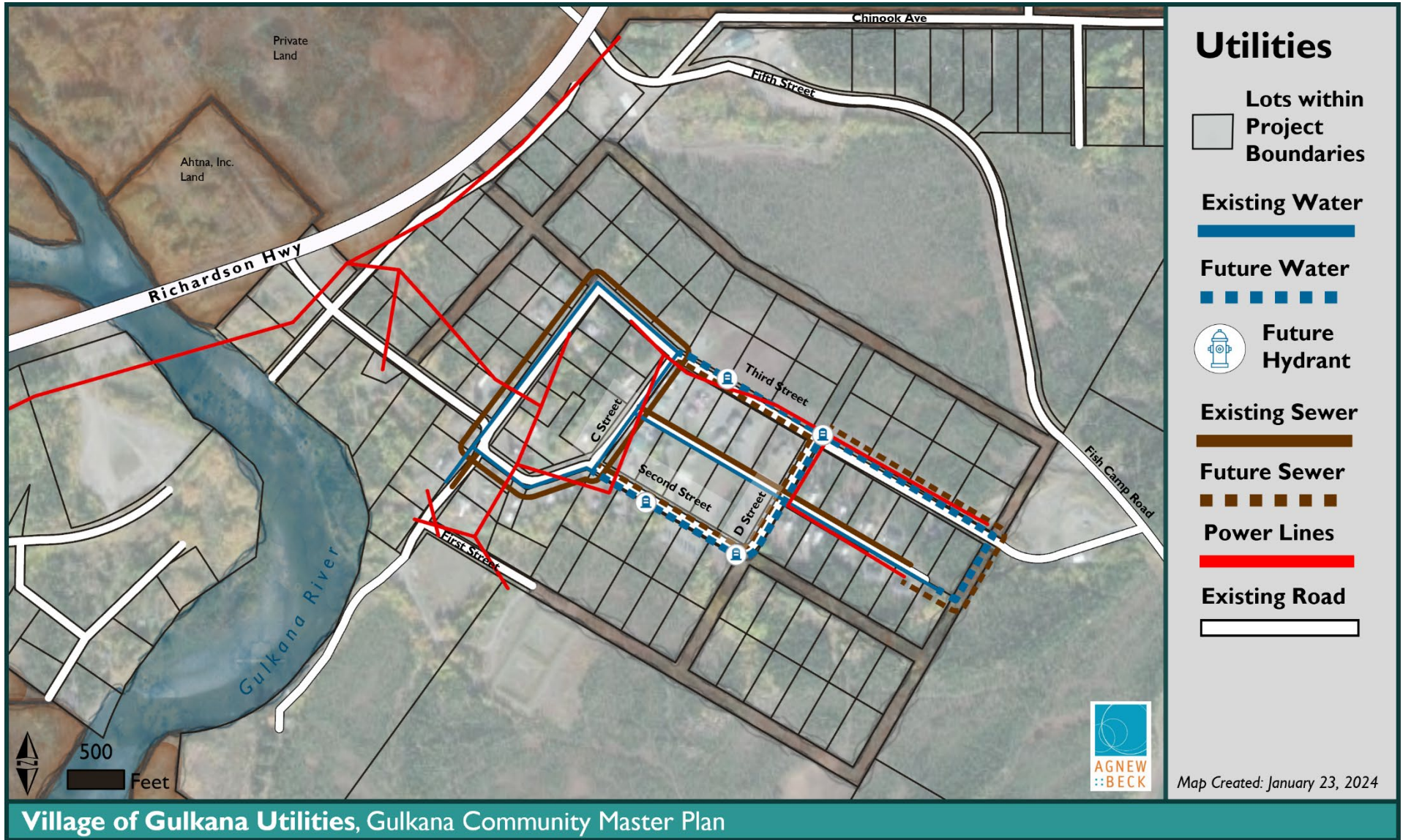
Figure 6. Map of Village of Gulkana Land Ownership, 2023



Source: Ahtna, Inc., 2023.

Map Name: Utilities

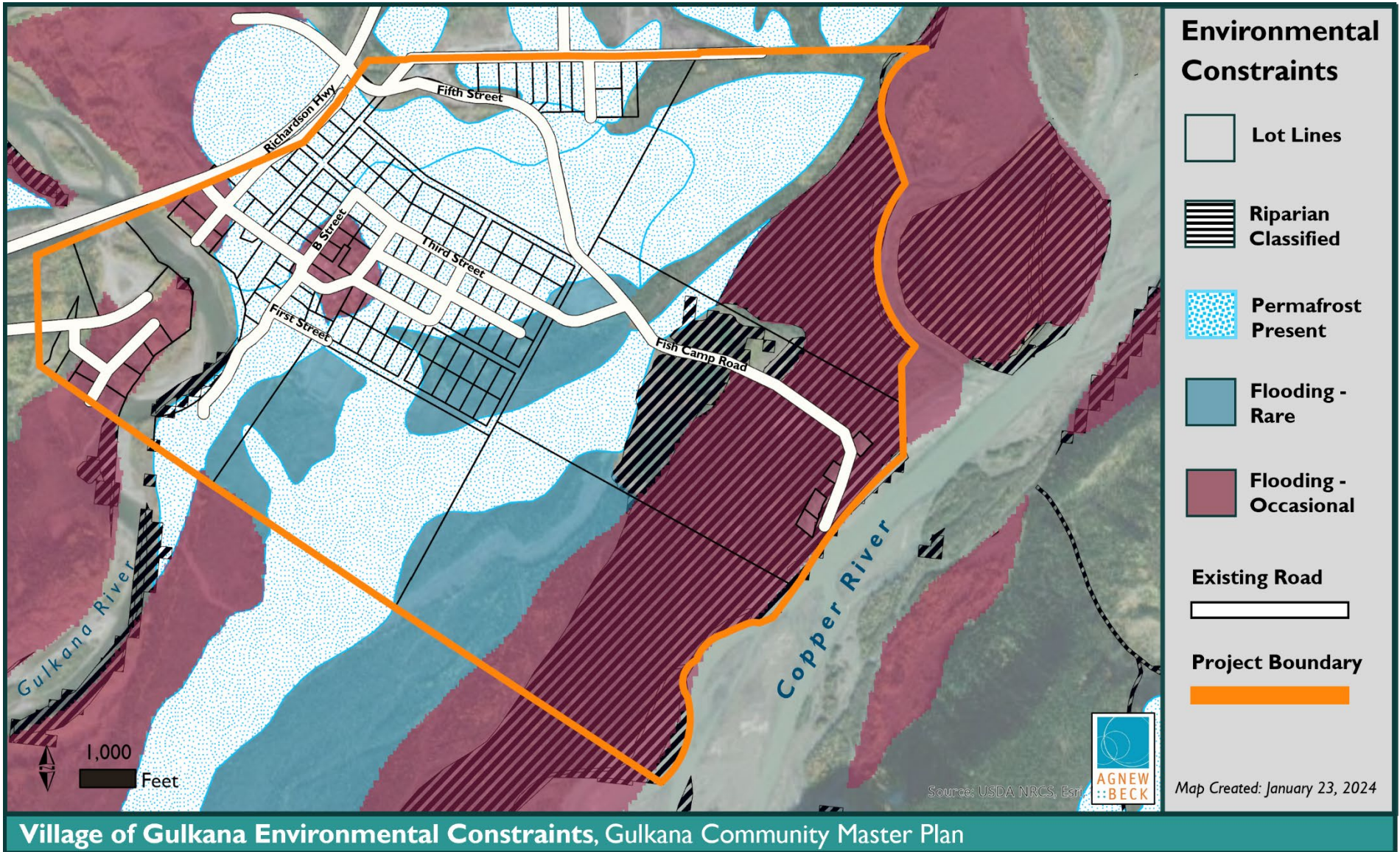
Figure 7. Map of Village of Gulkana Land Utilities, Close Up of Village Center, 2023



Source: Ahtna, Inc., 2023; Copper Valley Electric Association, 2023.

Map Name: Environmental Constraints

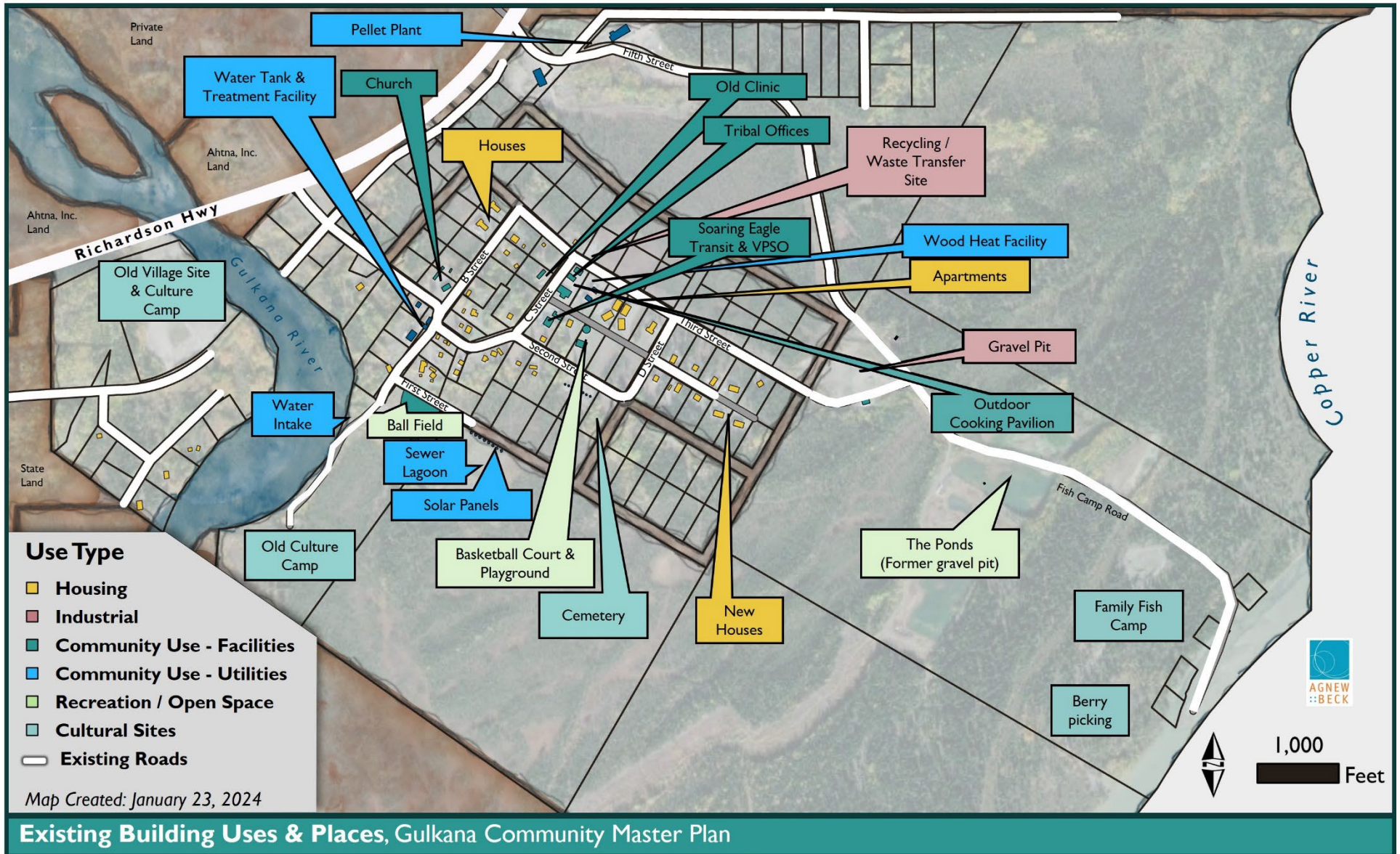
Figure 8. Map of Village of Gulkana Environmental Constraints



Source: Riparian and permafrost data from Ahtna, Inc., 2023; Flooding data from U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Survey Geographic Database, 2022.

Map Name: Existing Uses for Buildings and Places

Figure 9. Map of Gulkana Existing Uses, Close Up of Core Area



Source: Gulkana Village Council, 2023; Gulkana residents, 2023; Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs, 2005.



4. Community Facilities and Utilities

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- Quality Infrastructure.** In interviews and the community survey, residents highlighted the community’s existing infrastructure, including paved roads, streetlights, security cameras, a piped water system, and a wood boiler heating system for centrally located community facilities.
- Road Accessible.** Unlike many rural Alaska communities, Gulkana is on the road system.
- New Community Hall.** The current community hall is in disrepair and in need of replacement. The GVC has received a small planning grant for the project. The community is exploring possible locations; see the community facility planning chapter for a list of options under consideration. A new community hall could also include expanded features such as a library and clinic.
- Water Storage.** The Village is in the process of getting a new water storage tank. The current one is leaning and requires constant upkeep, including more frequent fillings.
- New Transit Facility.** The GVC operates Soaring Eagle Transit, a transit service serving the region. In 2022, Gulkana received \$4.2 million in federal funding for a multi-purpose operations and maintenance facility. The facility will provide heated, dry space for emergencies, a warming shelter for customers, administrative and operations offices, and three maintenance bays. The community is exploring possible locations; see the community facility planning chapter for a list of options under consideration.



Wood supply for the community’s boiler



Current Community Hall



Soaring Eagle Transit vehicle

Community Facilities and Utilities Goals and Strategies

Goal A: Quality, multi-use facilities that meet community needs.	Goal B: Efficient, affordable utilities that meet the needs of today and the future.	Goal C: A roads network and transit system that meet community needs.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine best locations for new community center and transit facilities. 2. Collaborate with partner organizations on specific needs for clinic space, emergency shelter function, and cultural spaces within the new community center. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to protect Gulkana River as source of clean drinking water. 2. Plan for and invest in utility upgrades and expansion to meet needs (water, sewer, power). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure the sustainability of Soaring Eagle Transit. 2. Plan for long term transportation infrastructure needs.

Community Facilities and Utilities Actions

The following table includes potential actions to support implementation of the goals and strategies in this section, as well as a means of tracking progress.

Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Completion
A. Identify site for new community hall. A list of potential sites is identified in Figure 11 in the community facility planning chapter (Section 9).	GVC		
B. Construct new community hall in same location as existing hall. Key features of the community hall to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functionality to be used as mass/emergency shelter (e.g., showers, air conditioning, air filtration, emergency supplies). • Clinic facilities, in coordination with CRNA to determine specific service and space needs. • Built to highest fire safety and climate mitigation standards. • Space to feature cultural artifacts, local art, and history. 	GVC; with CRNA to collaborate on clinic space	Partially funded	
C. Decommission/remove building on old clinic site.			
D. Extend community hall parking across street at old clinic site.			
E. Pursue U.S. Department of Agriculture grant for space for residents to process wild game and fish. Determine if this space is included in new community hall or a standalone space.	GVC	In progress	
F. Identify site for new transit facility. A list of potential sites is identified in Figure 13 in the community facility planning chapter.	GVC		
G. Complete upgrades to water plant.	Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), GVC		
H. Extend water and sewer lines to planned development areas and to existing homes currently without utilities.	ANTHC, GVC		
I. Add hydrants for cleaning/flushing to town center.			
J. Ensure water lines at future water plant can integrate with emergency tanker vehicles for fire protection.			
K. Complete needed efficiency upgrades and maintenance repairs to the boiler.	GVC	In progress	



5. Culture, Wellness, and Safety

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- **Subsistence.** Maintaining and protecting subsistence activities is a priority for the community.
- **Health Care.** CRNA serves Gulkana with mental and behavioral health services. There used to be a primary clinic in Gulkana but it closed when the facility fell into disrepair. There is a primary care clinic in the nearby community of Gakona.
- **Alcohol-Free.** Gulkana is a dry community, although enforcement of the policy is sometimes difficult due to the process for complaints, which must go through the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO). The Native Village of Gulkana also has some community-based sobriety resources and programs.
- **Safety.** Safety is a priority for residents. The Village Council has invested in streetlights and cameras to support safety and visibility in the community. Some residents expressed ongoing concerns around safety, especially given the community’s proximity to the Richardson Highway.
- **Old Village site.** In 2020, Gulkana reclaimed the former Village site from the State of Alaska. The community is still deciding how to use the space, which is across the Gulkana River from the current Village site. There are no utilities at the site. In the short term, the community is exploring ways to secure and protect the site from unwanted uses such as unauthorized camping.



Fish wheel on the Copper River



The former Gulkana Clinic



Signage at community entrance from the Richardson Highway reminding visitors of alcohol restrictions

Culture, Wellness, and Safety Goals and Strategies

Goal A: Families are healthy, safe, and connected.	Goal B: Residents are food secure, with access to subsistence resources.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide services and programs for healing historical trauma. 2. Identify tools to encourage cooperation with the Village’s alcohol ban. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to preserve and protect subsistence use of lands and waters around the community. 2. Address erosion threats to local fish camps, including supporting fish camp relocation as needed.

Culture, Wellness, and Safety Actions

The following table includes potential actions to support implementation of the goals and strategies in this section, as well as a means of tracking progress.

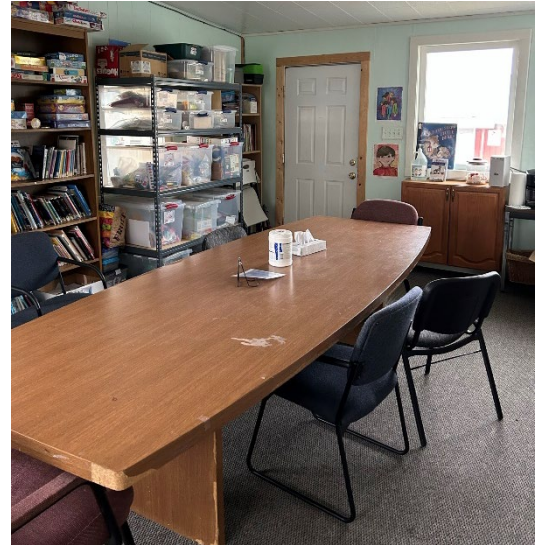
Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Completion
A. Partner with Copper Valley School District to provide space for afterschool and summer tutoring.	Copper Valley School District	In progress	
B. Encourage CRNA to provide more evening/ weekend programs so more residents can participate.	CRNA	In progress	
C. Maintain and expand outreach for community activities like game night and holiday meals, especially in the winter.	GVC		
D. Maintain cameras and signage at Village entrance to discourage uninvited visitors.	GVC		
E. Encourage Gulkana volunteers to join the Gakona Volunteer Fire Department.	GVC, Gakona Volunteer Fire Department		
F. Provide additional subsistence skills training (like culture camps) for children and adults. <i>See community facilities and utilities for related action to establish a fish and game processing facility.</i>	GVC, CRNA		



6. Economic Development

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- **Employment.** Many residents work outside the community, primarily in Glennallen, Copper Center, or Tok. Interviews indicate unemployment is not a major concern in the community. The Village has job opportunities available for residents but sometimes has trouble filling those positions. While there does not appear to be a lack of jobs, residents expressed interest in more job training opportunities for people wanting to stay in the region. There was also a desire for skills-based training opportunities, like subsistence skills.
- **Local Store.** Some residents indicated they would like to see a store in Gulkana; however, most residents find access to the Richardson Highway and nearby Glennallen make that unnecessary. Others expressed concern that a new local store would bring undesired traffic into the otherwise quiet and residential community. Soaring Eagle Transit also provides rides to Anchorage and Valdez for additional shopping resources.
- **Regional Economic Development.** The Copper River Development Association is currently updating the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a five-year regional economic development that will outline more economic development initiatives that may affect Gulkana. The Copper Valley CEDS was last updated in 2012.
- **Wood Pellet Mill.** In the last 15 years the community constructed a wood pellet mill to create local jobs and to produce a locally needed product. The mill was completed but never opened. The local project champion has since moved away, there is a limited supply of nearby wood, and the community is not big enough to form a company to source/import wood from elsewhere. Some community leaders have suggested components of the mill be sold, and there is likely a market for the components.



Gulkana Library, open to all residents



Headquarters for the ANSCA Regional Corporation, Ahtna, in Glennallen (Ahtna photo)

Economic Development Goals and Strategies

Goal A: Residents have access to quality employment and training opportunities.	Goal B: Unused community facilities are repurposed and/or removed, opening space for new uses.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote existing workforce development and scholarship programs (e.g., Ahtna scholarships, RI's leadership program, etc.). 2. Assess support for and feasibility of a local store. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demolish deteriorated buildings, including the old clinic, to open space for other uses and future development. 2. Decommission the wood pellet mill.

Economic Development Actions

The following table includes potential actions to support implementation of the goals and strategies in this section, as well as a means of tracking progress.

Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Completion
A. Continue to provide on the job training and prioritize local hires for GVC positions.			
B. Evaluate the condition of the wood pellet mill machinery and sell components to existing wood pellet plant operators.			



7. Environment

Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- **Rivers.** The community is located at the confluence of the Gulkana and Copper Rivers. The Gulkana River is a designated National Wild and Scenic River under Bureau of Land Management.
- **Climate Change.** The Copper River Native Association prepared a Copper River Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the region, which documents climate change hazards to communities and offers recommendations for increasing community resiliency in the face of known climate change threats.
- **Hazards.** The Gulkana River flooded in 2022, eroding about 30 feet of riverbank at the on the southwest side of the Gulkana townsite, near the water intake and culture camp site. The community is still under Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declaration. The flooding also impacted water intake at the river, covering it with silt, which is being addressed in collaboration with local partners such as Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. See Figure 8 in the About Gulkana section, which features a map of environmental constraints, including areas at risk of flooding. The GVC also recently updated its Hazard Mitigation Plan, which identifies both natural hazards (e.g., earthquakes, flooding, erosion, volcano, wildfire) and technological/manmade hazards (e.g., hazardous material spills) that could threaten the community.
- **Programs for Environmental Health.** The GVC oversees various programs that support environmental protection and restoration, including Indian General Assistance Program and Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program.



Gulkana River where it flows under the Richardson Highway, near the Old Village site



The nearby Wrangell Mountains are volcanic in origin; volcanic activity is one of the community hazards identified in the community's hazard mitigation plan

Environment Goals and Strategies

Goal A: The community is resilient and prepared to respond to climate change impacts.	Goal B: The community is protected from known environmental hazards such as fire, pollution, and flooding.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider climate change impacts (e.g., melting permafrost, air quality from wildfires, etc.) when planning future facilities. 2. Implement recommendations from the Copper River Climate Change Adaptation Plan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the State of Alaska to continue to protect Gulkana River as a drinking water source (see also Utilities chapter). 2. Implement recommendations from the Gulkana Community Wildfire Protection Plan. 3. Conduct erosion monitoring and discourage development in areas prone to erosion/flooding.

Environment Actions

The following table includes potential actions to support implementation of the goals and strategies in this section, as well as a means of tracking progress.

Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Completion
A. Work with CRNA to implement recommendations in the Copper River Climate Change Adaptation Plan.	CRNA, GVC		
B. As part of planning for new facilities, consider climate change impacts (e.g., melting permafrost, air quality from wildfires, etc.) on the future facility.	GVC, Copper River Basin Regional Housing Authority (CRBRHA), CRNA		
C. Implement recommendations in the updated Gulkana Hazard Mitigation Plan.	GVC, FEMA, Ahtna	Hazard Mitigation Plan was updated in 2023	
D. Implement outstanding actions from 2017 Gulkana Community Wildfire Protection Plan.	GVC, Ahtna Inter-Tribal Resource Commission, Ahtna, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, Alaska Department of Forestry, utilities	In progress	
E. Continue with Gulkana River erosion monitoring work in partnership with ANTHC and other organizations.	GVC, ANTHC, FEMA		

8. Land Use and Housing



Key Themes Guiding the Plan

- **Preservation of Cultural Areas.** Preserving areas of the Village – like fish camps, cemeteries, and cultural camp areas – is important to the community for cultural preservation and practices. This also includes how to protect and use the Old Village site. Many ideas have emerged from preserving the site for cultural activities to building infrastructure to support tourism and visitors.
- **Near Term Housing Needs.** Two new duplexes are planned for construction. They will allow for single person households currently housed in the multi-family housing to move to the new duplex so that multi-person family housing needs can be filled. According to a recent housing needs assessment completed by CRBRHA, once the new duplexes are built, housing needs in Gulkana will be satisfied for the near term. However, much of the existing stock is of poor quality and in need of rehabilitation, including energy efficiency and air quality upgrades.
- **Long Term Housing Needs.** In the long term, utility and road extensions will need to happen for future housing and community growth.
- **Environmental Constraints.** Future growth and development should consider some of the known environmental constraints in the area, including permafrost, steep slopes, and areas vulnerable to flooding. See the environmental constraints map in the About Gulkana chapter for additional details.



Land Use and Housing Goals and Strategies

Goal A: Protect the places Gulkana residents value and strategically use developable land to meet community needs.	Goal B: Residents have quality, affordable housing.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect and preserve the Old Village site. 2. Use the future land use map as a guide for how the community grows over time. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rehabilitate existing homes in need of stabilization and weatherization; demolish abandoned homes that are beyond repair. 2. Create additional housing, including building out new roads and utilities when needed.

Land Use and Housing Actions

The following table includes potential actions to support implementation of the goals and strategies in this section, as well as a means of tracking progress.

Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Completion
A. Construct planned housing.	CRBRHA		
B. Shift single-person households to new housing to provide openings for families.	GVC, CRBRHA		
C. Rehabilitate existing homes in need of stabilization and weatherization.			
D. Demolish abandoned homes that are beyond repair.			
E. Provide more signage and/or install fencing to protect the Old Village site and educate visitors about appropriate use.		In progress	
F. Use the Old Village site for culture camps and outdoor community gatherings.			

Introduction to the Future Land Use Map

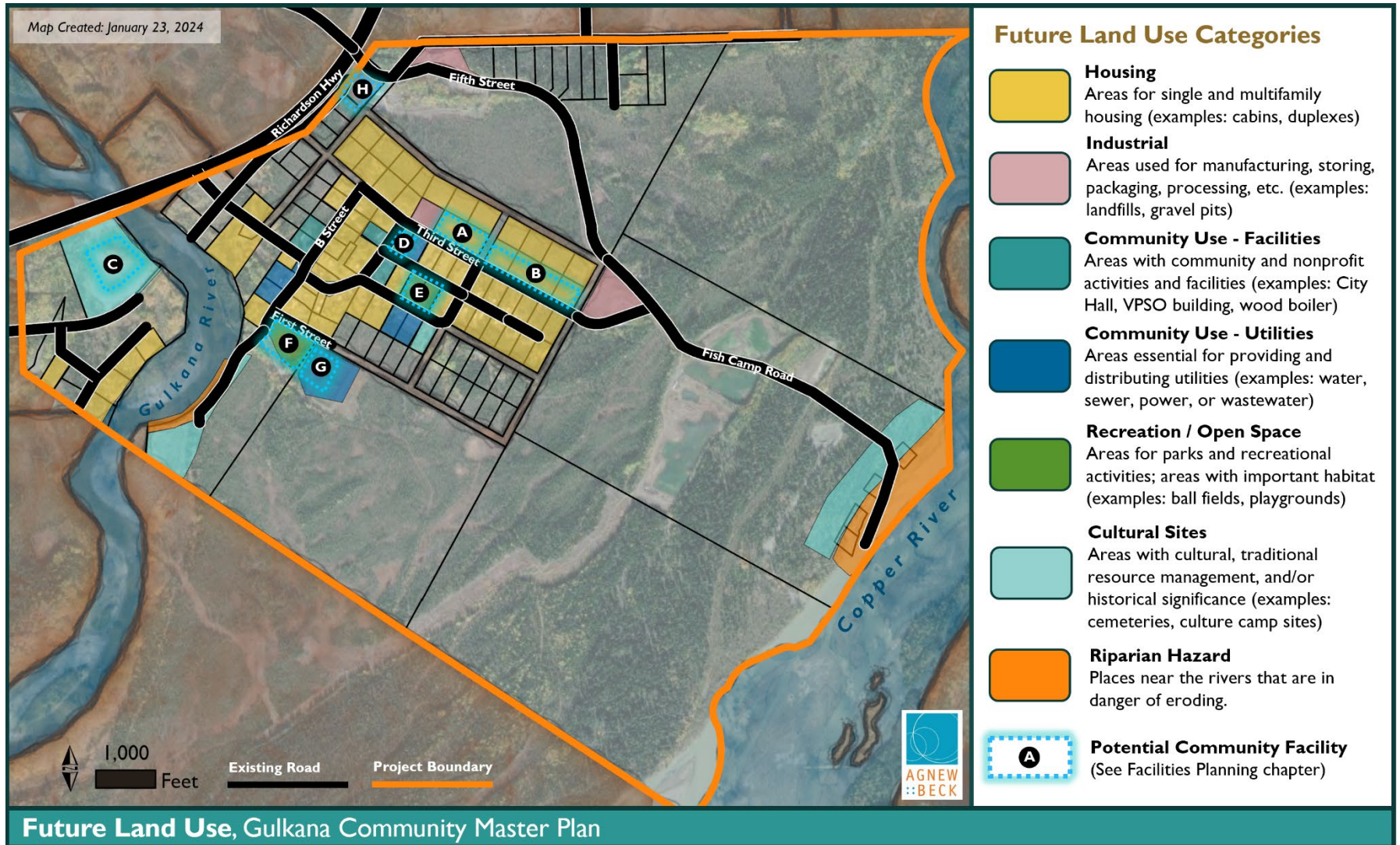
The Gulkana Future Land Use Map will provide a tool for the Village Council, residents, and partners to plan for growth and change. The map expresses objectives for the general location of different types of growth and land use.

The Gulkana Village Council does not currently have a future land use map. This map was developed by working with the Planning Team to first document current land use (Figure 9). From there, the Planning Team considered feedback from the community on what to protect, such as subsistence areas and culturally significant places, as well as the types of growth desired in the future, such as room for more housing and needed community facilities like a new community hall and transit facility. The current land use map was then revised to reflect these future and anticipated needs, creating the future land use map in Figure 10.

The future land use map is not a zoning map. The map provides broad guidance for future policy and development decisions. The map is intended to be used as a generalized map and is not intended to follow specific property lines. The map can help guide plans for road and other infrastructure improvements, expansion of economic opportunities, protection of important subsistence areas, and sustain the qualities residents value most about the community. The map covers lands in all ownerships, including public and private lands.

Future Land Use Map

Figure 10. Future Land Use Map for the Village of Gulkana



9. Community Facility Planning

The community of Gulkana is seeking two sites for new facilities: a site for a new community hall to replace the current facility, and a site for a new transit center. The community identified potential sites for the community hall (Figure 11) and transit center (Figure 13) and compared each with qualities that a new development might possess. The below analyses – or **facilities matrices** – evaluate each site for some known qualities but are not comprehensive given limitations in currently available information. Site selection, feasibility, and operations planning are all essential parts of building new community facilities but are beyond the scope of this plan. See related strategies and actions in Chapter 4, Community Facilities and Utilities.

Site selection requires many considerations. Some attributes may be standard, while others may develop during public participation processes. **Below are set of standard attributes included in the facilities matrices:**

- **Property ownership, lot size, and current use:** All potential sites are within the Village of Gulkana Townsite and owned by the Village of Gulkana, as verified by Ahtna, Inc. land records.
- **Adjacent uses:** Although there are no zoning regulations in Gulkana, it is important to determine whether existing uses on adjoining properties would be compatible with proposed facility locations.
- **Presence of flooding, permafrost, and riparian habitats:** Permafrost is present in nearly all potential sites. Some flooding potential exists, but none of the proposed sites are along riverbanks (riparian areas).
- **Accessibility:** People using the facilities should be able to get there using multiple modes of travel (vehicle, bike, on foot). All sites are located on existing roads, but some are located farther from the village center.
- **Utilities:** The matrices note whether water, sewer, and electricity utilities exist or are planned at each location. The presence or absence of utility access can leverage or increase the cost of constructing new facilities.
- **Cultural connections and other factors:** Certain sites are located near or within areas of noted cultural significance, while others have qualities that may impact the feasibility of a new development.
- **Lot size comparisons for other city halls:** The community center will have to be large enough to accommodate the building, any parking needs, stormwater retention, future expansion, landscaping, and outdoor uses. A comparison of building-to-land ratios for a sample of city halls in Alaska is provided.





Following are a set of standard site attributes that are not included in the facilities matrices, but which will ultimately be important to consider. This list could be used to help guide next steps for finalizing the proposed locations of the two facilities.

- **Geotechnical (soil), and stormwater information:** Determining the characteristics of soil and seismic activity is necessary to determine the suitability of a construction project and whether the cost of building is feasible. Stormwater reports analyze the flow of water over property from rain and snowmelt and provide recommendations for drainage and building design to mitigate pollutant runoff, water flow, and erosion. These analyses should be performed by a qualified engineer at various stages of design and construction.
- **Site control:** Although all potential sites are owned by the Village of Gulkana, further research is needed to determine whether there are deed restrictions in place, such as covenants, easements, or other regulations that would interfere with the intended use of the site.
- **Adequate lot size:** What constitutes ‘adequate’ varies depending on the intended use of the property, which is not fully known for either facility currently.
- **Public notice and support:** Site selections for public facilities are chosen by the community at large during multiple planning phases. Additionally, the community may have other factors that are important to include in analyses, such as site amenities (water-body access, viewsheds, etc.) or cultural values.

Community Hall

A new community hall would replace the current hall at a different location or at the same location on C Street. The new facility will include a community meeting space, library, and office spaces. It might also include a new clinic, an indoor gymnasium, an emergency shelter (with showers, air conditioning, air filtration, and emergency supplies) and/or include an area to feature cultural artifacts, local art, and Gulkana history. Since all uses of the facility have not yet been determined, the potential locations displayed in the below matrix vary widely in lot size. Refer to the Future Use Map for each potential site's location in the Village (Figure 10).

Figure 11. Potential locations for new community hall

Potential Location	(A) Lots Third Street (East of Transfer Site)	(B) Lots on Third Street (Next to Gravel Pit)	(C) Old Village Site	(D) Current Site	(E) Two Lots at Basketball Court	(F) Ball Field Site
Photo						
Ownership	Village of Gulkana	Village of Gulkana	Village of Gulkana	Village of Gulkana	Village of Gulkana	Village of Gulkana
Lot Size (Square Feet)	80,000	240,000	357,000	28,000	65,340	300,000
Current Lot Use	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Tribal Office Building	Playground, Basketball Court	Ball Field
Adjacent Uses						
North	Vacant	Vacant	Highway	Residential	Residential, Utilities	Residential, Utilities
East	Vacant	Gravel Pit	River	Old Clinic, Residential	Residential	Utilities, Residential
South	Residential	Residential, Vacant	Vacant, Unknown	VPSO Office, Residential	Utilities, Cemetery	Vacant, Old Culture Camp
West	Transfer Station	Residential, Vacant	Vacant, Unknown	Wood heat facility, Residential	Residential	Gulkana River






Potential Location	(A) Lots Third Street (East of Transfer Site)	(B) Lots on Third Street (Next to Gravel Pit)	(C) Old Village Site	(D) Current Site	(E) Two Lots at Basketball Court	(F) Ball Field Site
Environmental Constraints						
Permafrost Present	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flooding	No	Yes (Rare)	No	No	No	No
Riparian	No	No	No	No	No	No
Accessibility						
Drivable	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Walkable	Yes	Semi	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Near Community Center	Nearer	Near	Farthest	Nearest	Nearest	Near
Utilities						
Power	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No (But close)
Sewer	No (Planned)	No (Planned)	No (Not planned)	Yes	Yes	No
Water	No (Planned)	No (Planned)	No (Not planned)	Yes	Yes	No
Cultural Connection	--	--	Historically & culturally significant	--	--	Near old culture camp
Other	If selected, would remove available land for housing	If selected, would remove available land for housing	Community hall could also contain features for visitors. Historic preservation office guidelines may be a constraint.	Could use old clinic site for parking, but little room for expansion	Could use old clinic site for parking, but little room for expansion	

Sources: Property ownership and environmental constrains data provided by Ahtna, Inc., 2023; Utility information provided by Copper Valley Electric Association and Ahtna, Inc., 2023; Other information provided by Gulkana Village Council and residents, 2023.

Site Size Comparisons of Other Community Centers in Alaska

For a better sense of how much land might be needed for a multi-purpose community center, see below comparison of estimated building and land area ratios (square feet) of other Tribal community centers in Alaska. Population size served and building amenities are also included.

Figure 12. Comparison of other Tribal community centers in Alaska

Community Center Name	Est. Population Served	Est. Building SQFT	Est. Land SQFT	Amenities	Photo of Land Measurements (via Google Earth)
Gakona Village Council	200	9,000	90,000	Site appears to have auxiliary buildings for storage and maintenance, parking, and overflow parking on opposite site of street, Includes stormwater retention area.	
Chickaloon Village Administration	188	7,000	174,000	Two main buildings, separated. Some auxiliary buildings.	
Ahtna, Inc. Headquarters (Glennallen)	537	17,000	220,000	Auxiliary building and other infrastructure on site. Extra parking available.	
Kokhanok Village Council Community Center	100	3,000	27,000	One main building – clinic is located offsite. Minimal parking. Connex storage.	
Huslia Tribal Council Community Hall	306	4,000	100,000	One main multi-purpose building for meeting space and behavioral health and family services programs. No auxiliary buildings; plentiful parking.	

Source: Google Earth, 2023.

Transit Center

The existing Soaring Eagle Transit dispatch center is located southwest of the current community hall on the adjacent property and shares space with the Village Public Safety Officer program. In 2022, Gulkana received \$4.2 million in federal funding for a multi-purpose operations and maintenance facility. The facility will provide heated, dry space for emergencies, a warming shelter for customers, administrative and operations offices, and three maintenance bays. Refer to the Future Land Use Map for each potential site’s location in the Village (Figure 10).

Figure 13. Potential locations for a new multi-purpose operations and maintenance facility

Potential Location	(B) Lots on Third Street (Adjacent to Gravel Pit)	(G) Sewer Lagoon Site (SE of Ball Field)	(H) Wood Pellet Site
Photo			No photo available
Ownership	Village of Gulkana	Village of Gulkana	Village of Gulkana
Lot Size (Square Feet)	240,000	500,000	58,000
Current Lot Use	Vacant	Sewer Lagoon & Solar Panel Site	Wood Pellet Mill (Not in Use)
Adjacent Uses			
North	Vacant	Vacant, Residential	Highway, Residential
East	Gravel Pit	Vacant	Utility site, private subdivision
South	Residential, Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
West	Residential, Vacant	Ball Field, Vacant	Highway, Residential
Environmental Constraints			
Permafrost Present	Yes	Yes	Semi
Flooding	Yes (Rare)	Yes (Rare)	No
Riparian	No	No	No
Accessibility			
Drivable	Yes	Yes	Yes
Walkable	Semi	Yes	No
Near Community Center	Near	Near	Far
Utilities			
Power	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sewer	No (Planned)	No	No
Water	No (Planned)	No	No (Old Well)
Cultural Connection	(to be determined)	(to be determined)	(to be determined)
Other	If selected, would remove available land for housing	Sewer lagoon may need to be relocated or mitigated	Good foundation and accessible equipment nearby. Security may be an issue.

Sources: Property ownership and environmental constrains data provided by Ahtna, Inc., 2023; Utility information provided by Copper Valley Electric Association and Ahtna, Inc., 2023; Other information provided by Gulkana Village Council and residents, 2023.