



St. Paul Island

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: 2024-2028

St. Paul Island, Alaska

Public Review Draft, December 2023



We want your feedback on the public review draft.

Submit your comments by email, or call the project team:

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The deadline for comments is Friday, January 12, 2024.

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Residents of St. Paul

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- Ray Melovidov, COO
- Shiona Melovidov, Administrative Manager

City of Saint Paul

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- Phil Zavadil, City Manager
- Aubrey Wegeleben, City Clerk

Pribilof School District

- Michael Baldwin, Superintendent

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- Tina Hanley, Ravn Alaska



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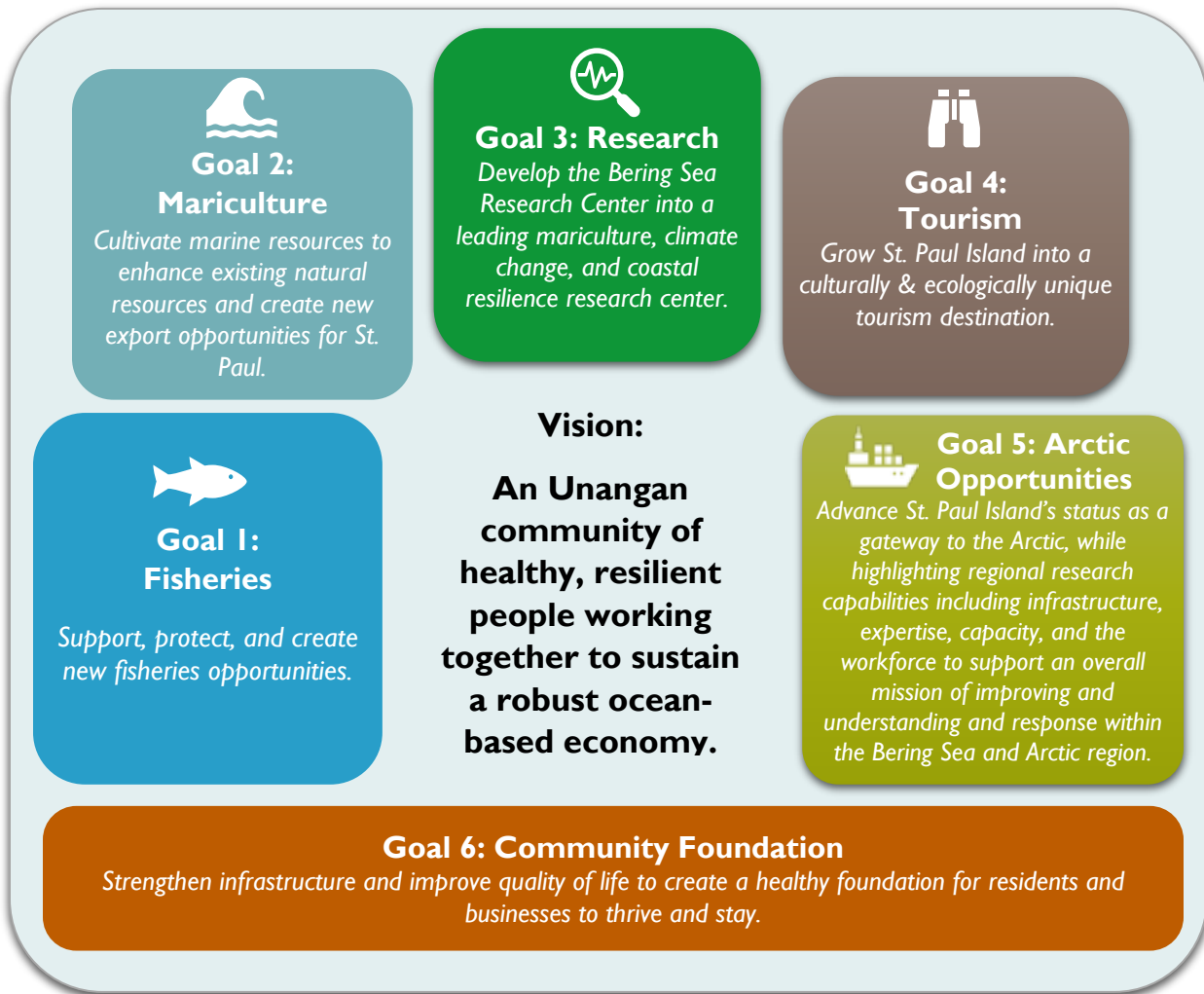
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Executive Summary

St. Paul Economic Vision and Goals



St. Paul Economic Strategies

Fisheries

1. Support and protect important fisheries and diversify into new fisheries. **(priority strategy)**
2. Develop value added fisheries that build from current fisheries.
3. Support residents in pursuing entrepreneurial fishing endeavors.

Mariculture

4. Invest in mariculture opportunities. **(priority strategy)**

Research

5. Grow the community's role in natural resource management. **(priority strategy)**
6. Support the health of St. Paul Island species.

Tourism

7. Increase local employment and participation in the tourism economy. **(priority strategy)**
8. Increase the range and quality of recreation and tourism activities for visitors.
9. Expand marketing and grow relationships with other regional tourism partners.
10. Improve community infrastructure that supports tourism.
11. Improve collection and consistent tracking of visitor data.

Arctic Opportunities

12. Develop the Bering Sea Research Center with designated staff, vessel(s), housing, and transportation for visiting researchers. **(priority strategy)**
13. Expand research partnerships and research employment opportunities.
14. Explore potential on-island partnerships and infrastructure investments with the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security (e.g., U.S. Coast Guard) and Department of Defense (e.g., U.S. Air Force, National Guard), in consultation with the community.

Community Foundation

15. Develop and maintain a highly skilled, employment-ready workforce that supports and enhances the economic health and quality of life on St. Paul Island. **(priority strategy)**
16. Expand local food production and increase food security. **(priority strategy)**
17. Continue to increase collaboration between island partners. **(priority strategy)**
18. Increase availability of affordable and quality housing.
19. Increase access, affordability, and dependability of essential utilities.
20. Promote healthy lifestyles and offer resources to support wellness and healing.
21. Support prospective entrepreneurs with launching and growing local businesses.
22. Advocate for increased frequency and reliability of transportation to and from the island.

What is Economic Development?

Economic growth happens when dollars come from off the island into the community, either by exporting a product (such as fish) or selling a service (such as tourism). More money coming in from off-island means more job opportunities, new and expanded businesses, and workforce development opportunities in St. Paul. Communities can also address economic development by strategically reducing the leakage of money out of the community – for example, by manufacturing building materials out of local resources instead of purchasing off-island products. Economic growth brings increased wages and job opportunities, which increases the spending power and overall wealth in a community. This in turn means residents have more money to spend at local businesses, pay for essential services, and to invest in new construction or projects. In addition, communities with growth and employment opportunities typically attract more residents.

The graphic below offers a visual example of what economic development looks like in a rural community.



Community Snapshot

The following graphic shares a summary of key characteristics the community and economy of St. Paul. For more detail, visit the Summary Background in Chapter 2 and the appendices. For additional context and descriptions of St. Paul’s key economic sectors, visit Chapter 3.



- St. Paul is in Southwest Alaska. It is the largest of the Pribilof Islands, surrounded by the Bering Sea and 300 air miles from Anchorage.
- The Island is part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge system.
- The community of St. Paul is located on the southern tip of 43 square mile island.



- Fishing has historically been a major economic driver on St. Paul. Recent declines in crab populations have negatively impacted the community.
- Average per capita income for St. Paul is approximately \$28,000. This has increased from the previous 5-year period, but is below regional, state, and nation levels.



- Government (Tribal, local, state, and federal) is the largest employment category on Island.
- In a 2023 community survey, 36% of residents say they have experienced some difficulty finding a job in the last 5 years.
- While there are vacancies, not everyone can meet job requirements; workforce development and retention are priorities.



- High food, transportation, utility, and fuel costs are a top concern for the community.
- Poverty levels for families (13.2%) and individuals (28.6% percent) are higher on St. Paul when compared with the region and Alaska.
- According to a recent St. Paul Food Security Assessment, 63% residents purchase some of their food online, and 97% identified costs as a barrier to purchasing healthy foods.



- In 2022, St. Paul had a population of 379 residents.
- St. Paul’s population has declined 6% since the CEDS was updated in 2017. Population decline means fewer workers available and declining school enrollment (down 20% since last CEDS).
- St. Paul’s population is predominantly Alaska Native, with 84% of residents identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native in the 2020 Census.



- Unangax culture and subsistence activities are vital to the St. Paul community and lifestyle.
- The environment, small town closeness, and sense of home are primary reasons people live and stay in St. Paul.
- The community has a shortage of housing. A recent housing needs assessment estimates St. Paul needs 7 new and 22 rehabbed units to meet current housing needs.




Community Snapshot Data Sources: **Location:** Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association. **Economy:** American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. **Employment & Workforce Development:** Summer 2023 St. Paul CEDS Community Survey, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. **Cost of Living:** American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association’s 2023 Food Security Assessment. **People:** U.S. Decennial Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Pribilof School District. **Community:** 2022-2023 Aleutian Housing Authority Housing Needs Assessment.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

The SWOT Analysis presents the internal and external factors that support and contribute to the community’s economic development, and factors that limit and threaten the region’s economy. A snapshot of key elements of the community’s overarching SWOT is shown below. See the regional strategic direction chapter for SWOT analyses by sector, and the appendix for a more detailed analysis.

Strengths <i>Internal attributes that contribute to success</i>	Weaknesses <i>Internal barriers to success</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small town feel and strong cultural identity Access to subsistence activities Unique natural surroundings, scenic, wildlife Ties to ocean and knowledge of fisheries Network of organizations providing services Strategic Western location in middle of Bering Sea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population decline High cost of living including costs of food, energy, shipping Air transportation challenges including availability, reliability, and cost Housing shortage
Opportunities <i>External forces that contribute to success</i>	Threats <i>External forces that could be barriers to success</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal funding opportunities, especially for infrastructure Alaska Mariculture Initiative Growth in birding-related tourism and Alaska tourism Increased interest in strategic Arctic locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crab crash and closures Trident plant closure Climate change Lingering effects of COVID-19 pandemic Dependence on single air carrier

What have we accomplished since the last 2017 CEDS update?

<p>Fisheries</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constructed a Vessel Repair and Marine Facility in 2021, providing space for vessel building and maintenance for St. Paul fishermen, plus space for entrepreneurs and small business start-ups. Researched the economic feasibility of a salmon hatchery on St. Paul and the economic potential of the local reindeer population. Successfully advocated for several halibut bycatch regulatory improvements, including the establishment of an Abundance-Based Management program for halibut with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, which was announced at the end of 2021. This change creates more equitable methods of managing and harvesting halibut populations during periods of low abundance, with benefits for St. Paul and other halibut dependent communities.
<p>Tourism</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed the St. Paul Island Visitor Development Study in 2020 and restarted the St. Paul Island Tour program in 2022 after a pandemic-induced pause in visitation services. Renovated the rooms, the exterior, and the kitchen of the King Eider Hotel and the adjacent airport waiting area in 2021.
<p>Community</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed several power, public safety, water, and wastewater improvements. In 2019, opened the Bering Sea Campus, a satellite campus hosted in the St. Paul School through a partnership with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Bristol Bay Campus, offering post-secondary education and training opportunities and classes to St. Paul residents. Provided economic assistance to assist St. Paul households through the pandemic.

Chapter I: Introduction

What is a CEDS?



Serves as a road map to economic resilience and prosperity.



Brings the private and public sectors together to develop a community strategy and action plan.



Must go through a robust update every five years.



Makes recommendations to support businesses, create more and better paying jobs, improve quality of life, and increase community resilience.

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a tool for community based economic planning, with strategies and an implementation plan for creating a stronger and more resilient community and economy. The goals, strategies, and actions in this document provide community and regional leaders, funders, and partners with the background and direction they need for allocating funding and prioritizing efforts that support economic development in St. Paul. The CEDS is updated every five years; this 2024-2028 CEDS builds upon the efforts of previous CEDS planning efforts.

The EDA recommends communities consider the concept of economic resilience when creating a CEDS. Building economic resilience requires a proactive approach to identify and mitigate current and potential threats and disruptions to a community or region's economy. Examples of ways to build resilience include diversifying the economy, enhancing business and workforce development supports, strengthening infrastructure, and conducting pre-disaster recovery planning.

"In 20 years, I'd like to see St. Paul be a healthy, thriving community with a good economy and no population loss."

- Community survey participant

What does a CEDS include?

Numbers

that tell the St. Paul story – people, economy, regional comparisons

Economic vision

that describes what the community wants a future economy to look like

Goals & strategies

that are specific, measurable, and describe what we hope to accomplish over the next 5 years

Implementation plan

that describes how the community will work on priorities and measure progress

SWOT

that examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) for St. Paul

Who developed the St. Paul Island CEDS?

The Tribal Government of St. Paul Island (“the Tribe”) is overseeing the CEDS process, with input from other community leaders, organizations, businesses, residents, and agencies.



Core community partners include the Central Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association, City of Saint Paul, Pribilof School District, and TDX Corporation. See the Acknowledgments page for a full list of stakeholders.

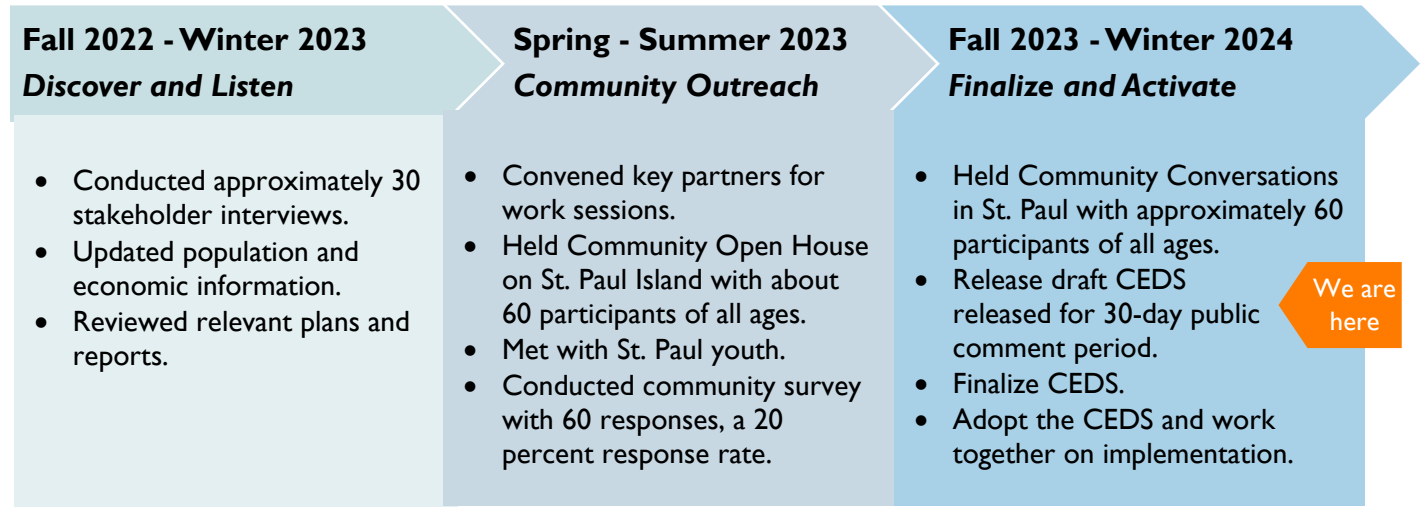


Pribilof School District



How was the CEDS developed?

The St. Paul CEDS planning process began in summer 2022. The appendices include a list of relevant background documents that were reviewed as part of the planning process and summaries from key outreach efforts including community survey results, April 2023 open house results, and October 2023 community conversation results. Key elements of the development process included:



We are here



Community Open House, April 2023



Community Conversations, October 2023

Chapter 2: Summary Background

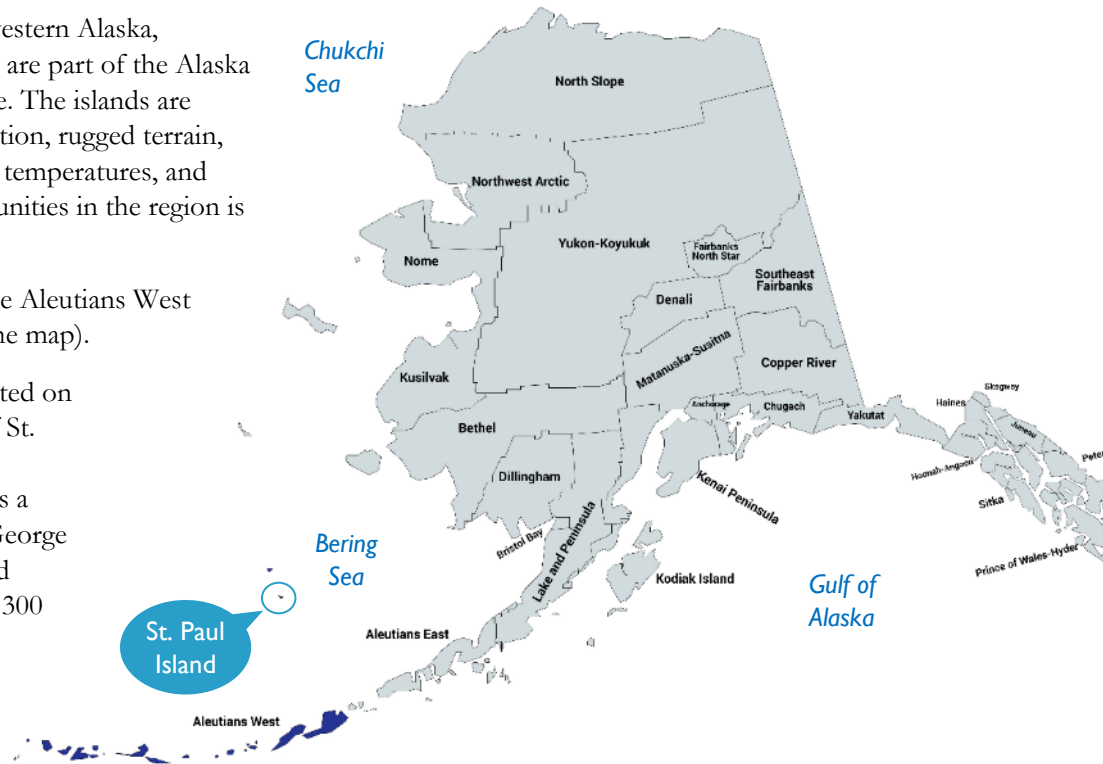
Where is St. Paul Island?

The Pribilof Islands are in southwestern Alaska, surrounded by the Bering Sea and are part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The islands are characterized by their remote location, rugged terrain, absence of trees, high winds, cool temperatures, and volcanic origins. Access to communities in the region is limited to air or sea transport.

St. Paul Island is located within the Aleutians West Census Area (shown in navy on the map).

The community of St. Paul is located on a peninsula on the southern tip of St. Paul Island, the largest of the five Pribilof Islands. St. Paul Island has a total area of 43 square miles. St. George Island is 47 miles to the south, and mainland Alaska is approximately 300 miles to the west.¹

Figure 1: Community Location



¹ Aleutian Pribilofs Island Association

Economic Indicator Updates

This section identifies a set of economic indicators to showcase community and regional baselines in key components of the economy, track progress and evaluate the overall economic picture of the St. Paul community. Indicators were selected that broadly capture the economic health and wellbeing of the community, are easily available from trusted state and federal sources, are available at a community scale, and are updated at least annually. Key indicators in the 2024-2028 CEDS are listed in Figure 1.

Community level information based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates have high error margins, and data should be considered approximate. Many population, economic, and social indicators, including some that were included in past St. Paul CEDS updates, are no longer available at the community level. As a result, this section is supplemented with census area information in some cases. St. Paul is part of the Aleutians West Census Area, which also includes St. George and Aleutian Island communities. Information about the Aleutians West Census Area is statistically more accurate than community level data and can help determine regional trends, but it aggregates eight different communities and is therefore not entirely representative of the conditions in St. Paul alone. For more information and background on St. Paul, visit the appendices.

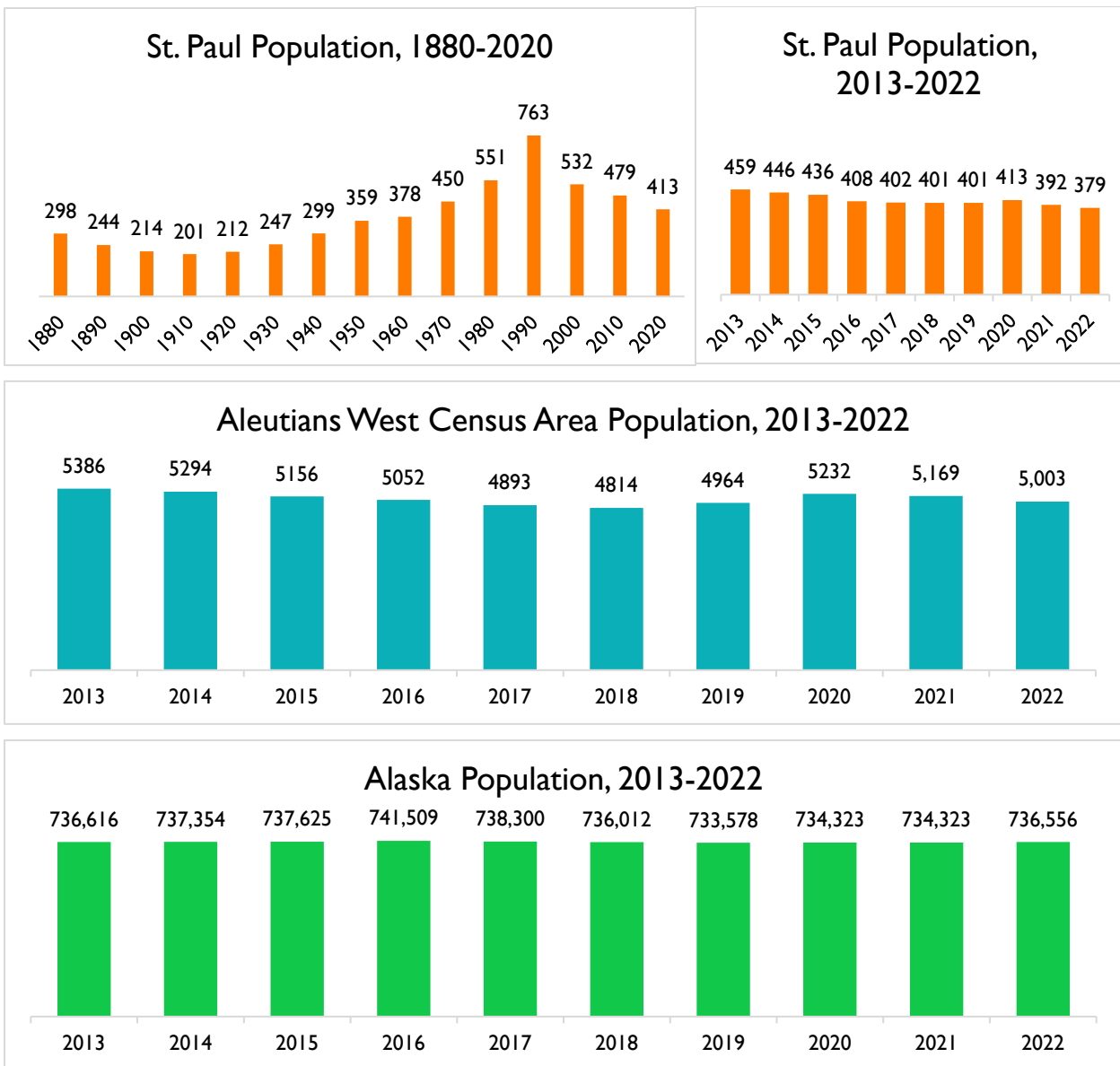
Figure 2: List of Indicators

Indicator	Source	Scale	Frequency
Demographic			
Population	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the U.S. Census	Community	Annually
Migration	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development	Community	Annually
School enrollment	Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Statistics and Reports, October School Counts	School	Annually
Economic			
Per capita income	Bureau of Economic Analysis	Community	Annually
Unemployment	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development	Census Area*	Monthly
Poverty	U.S. Census's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates	Community	Annually
Taxes	Bureau of Economic Analysis	Community	Annually
Educational attainment	U.S. Census's American Community Survey	Community	Annually

None of the indicators above contain sector-specific information. During the public review period, the project team will be working with community partners to identify sector specific performance measures that can help demonstrate positive or negative movement in different industries and evaluate the success of CEDS implementation.

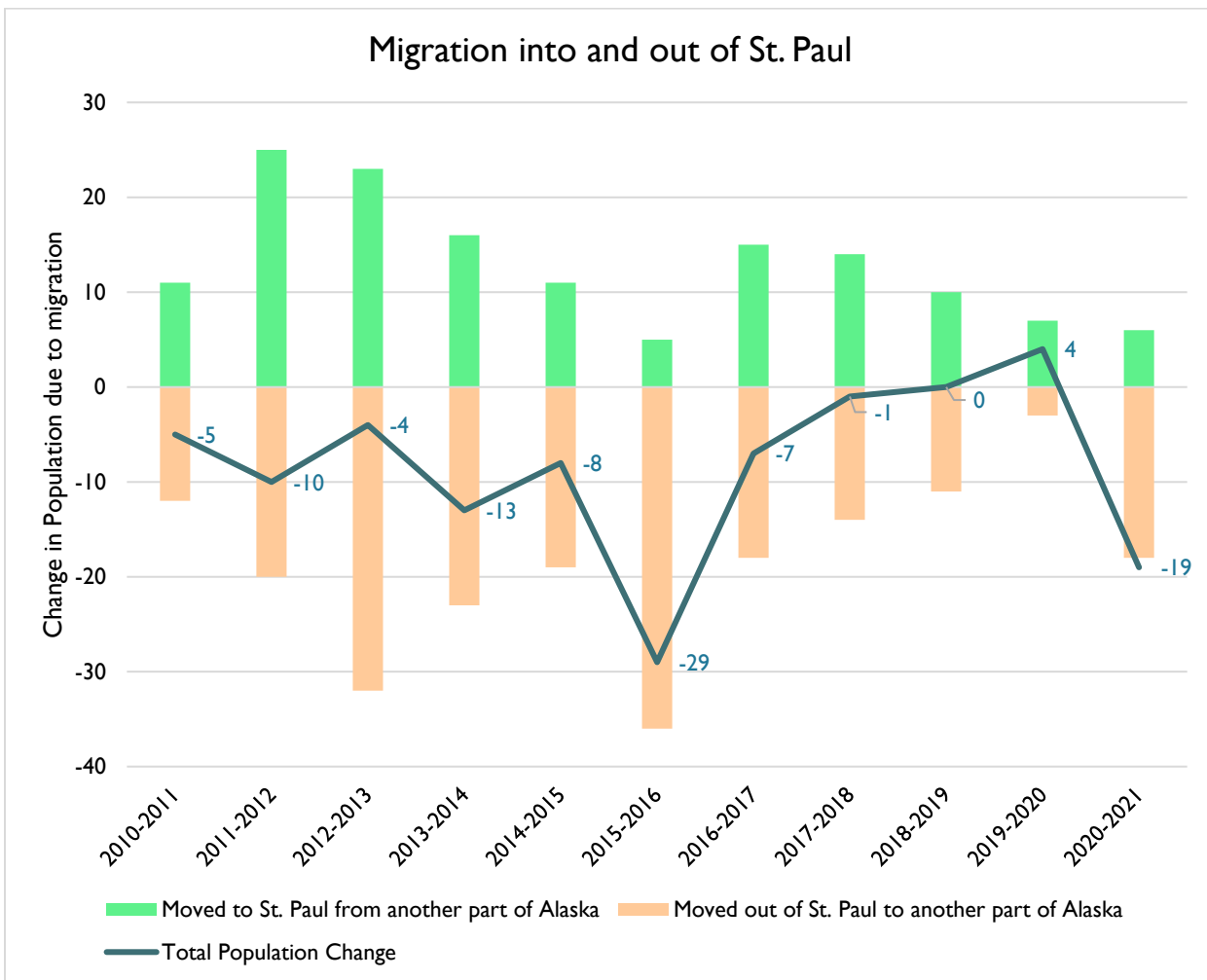
Population			
What it tracks	Target	Where it comes from	Limitations
Number of residents living full time in the community.	Increase	Decennial: U.S. Census Annual: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development	Does not include seasonal workers.
How has this indicator changed over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Paul's population peaked in the 1990s and has been declining since, with a six percent decline since the last CEDS was updated in 2017. Over the past five years, the population of the Aleutians West Census Area increased by two percent and the population of Alaska held steady. 		

Figure 3: Population of St. Paul, Aleutians West Census Area, and Alaska



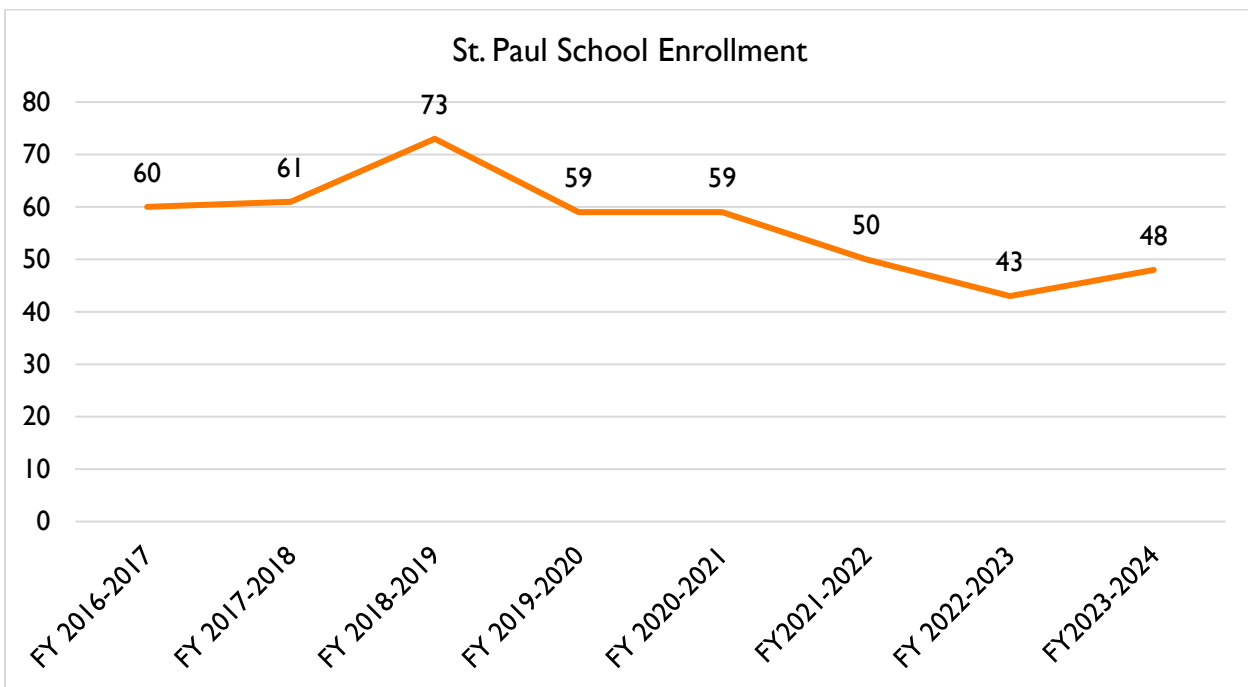
Migration			
What it tracks	Target	Where it comes from	Limitations
Migration trends of residents around the state based on Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) and Internal Revenue Service tax information. These numbers help explain what is driving community population changes.	Decrease outmigration	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development	The data only track PFD recipients. It does not capture seasonal workers or residents who are new to Alaska and ineligible for a PFD.
How has this indicator changed over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Paul: 19 fewer residents in 2020-2021 due net outmigration • Outmigration up 137.5% from 2014-2015 		

Figure 4: Migration Into and Out of St. Paul



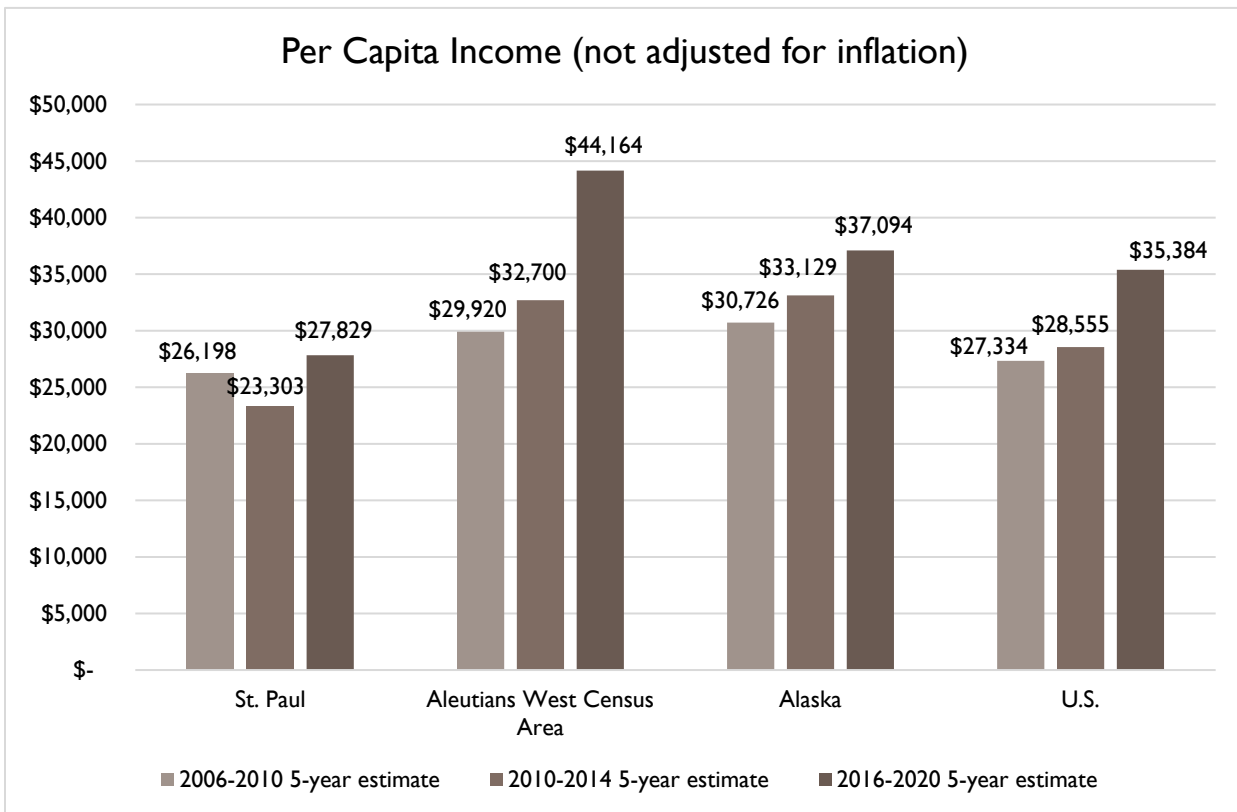
School Enrollment			
What it tracks	Target	Where it comes from	Limitations
Enrollment at St. Paul School/Pribilof School District for grades K-12.	Increase	Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Statistics and Reports and Pribilof School District.	May fluctuate during the year. Doesn't consider number of St. Paul students attending Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka.
How has this indicator changed over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease from 61 students enrolled in 2017 to 48 in 2023. The FY2023-2024 count includes four St. George Correspondence students. It does not include eight Preschool students. 		

Figure 5: Enrollment at the St. Paul School



Per Capita Income			
What it tracks	Target	Where it comes from	Limitations
Total personal income divided by total population, not adjusted for inflation. Personal income includes wages, retirement earnings, unemployment benefits, dividends, etc.	Increase	Bureau of Economic Analysis	A small number of high-income residents can skew the averages. It does not show the spectrum of incomes and does not capture the value of subsistence harvests.
How has this indicator changed over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Paul's per capita income has increased in the last five years but remains well below the regional, state, and national average. 		

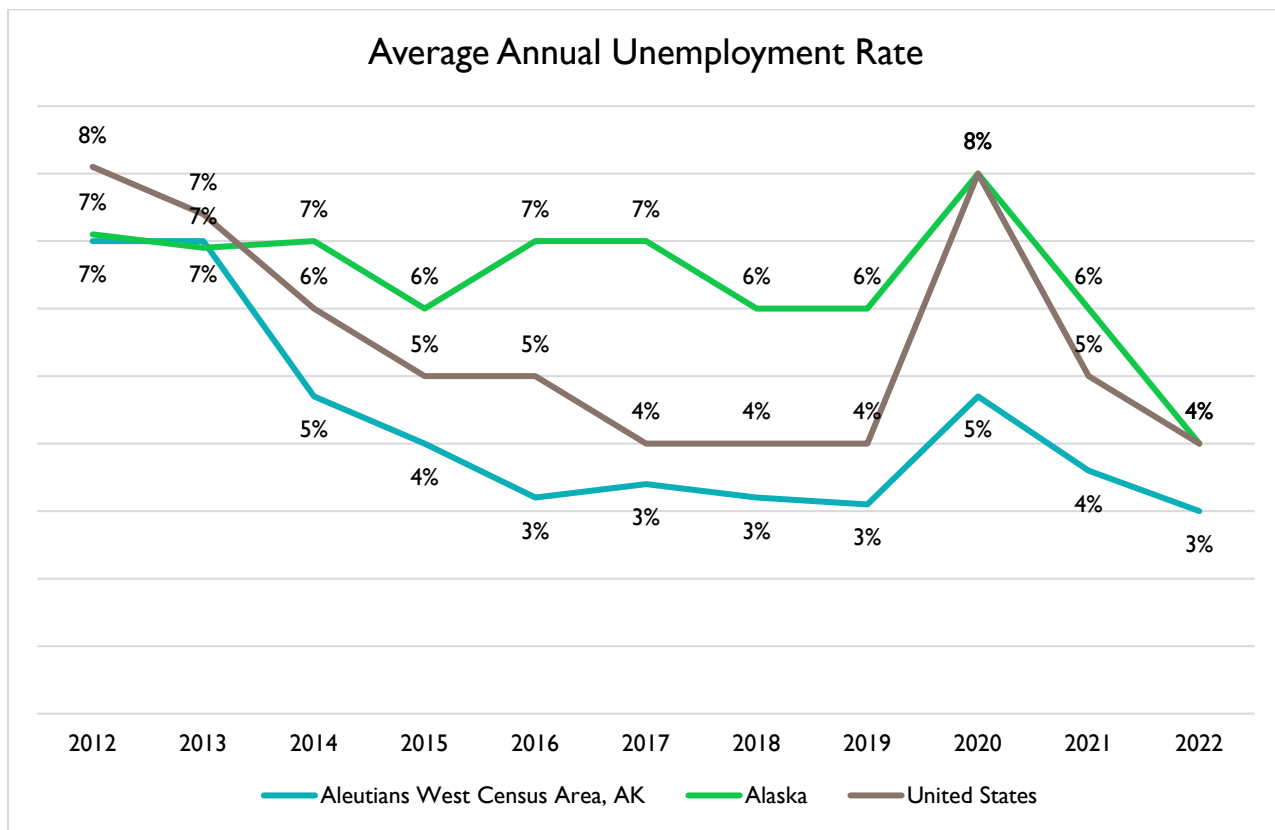
Figure 6: Per Capita Income for St. Paul, Aleutians West Census Area, Alaska, and the U.S.



Unemployment

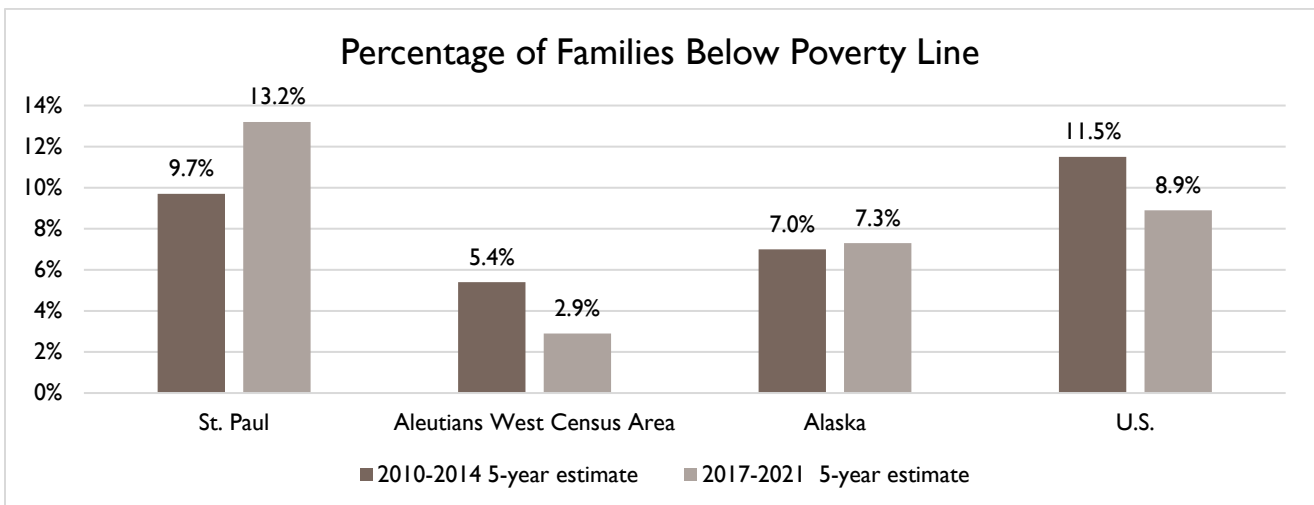
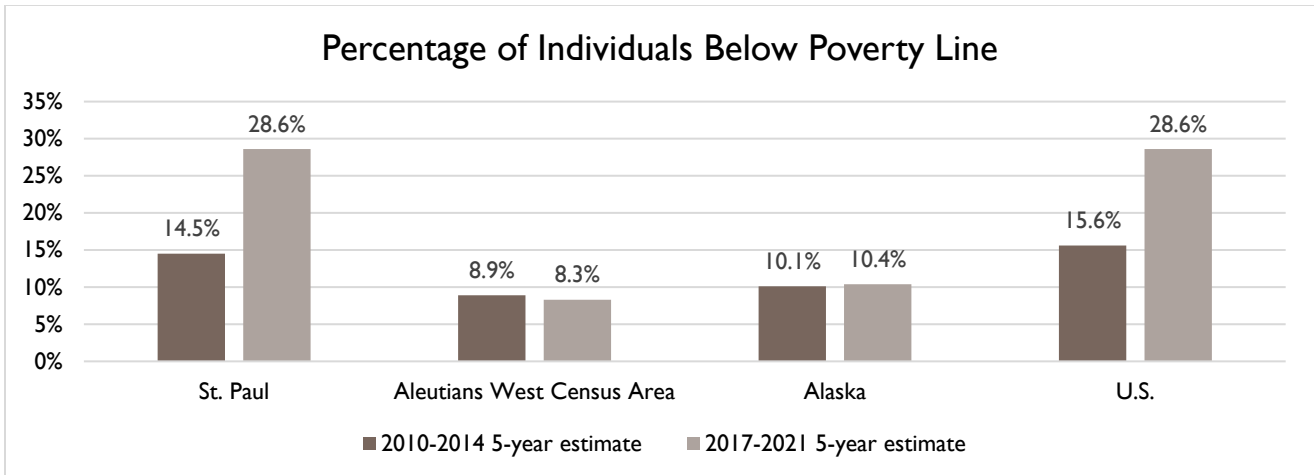
What it tracks	Target	Where it comes from	Limitations
The number of jobless civilians 16 and older who are seeking employment. It does not include retirees or those who choose not to work. While this number used to be available at the community level, it is now only available at the census area level.	Decrease	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development	Does not include people who want jobs but have not searched for work in the past four months. This data is no longer available from the state at the community level.
How has this indicator changed over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aleutian West Census Area: 3.1% (down 8.8% from 2017) • Alaska: 4.0% (down 38% from 2017) • United States: 3.5% (down 18% from 2017) 		

Figure 7: Average Annual Unemployment for Aleutians West Census Area, Alaska, and the U.S.



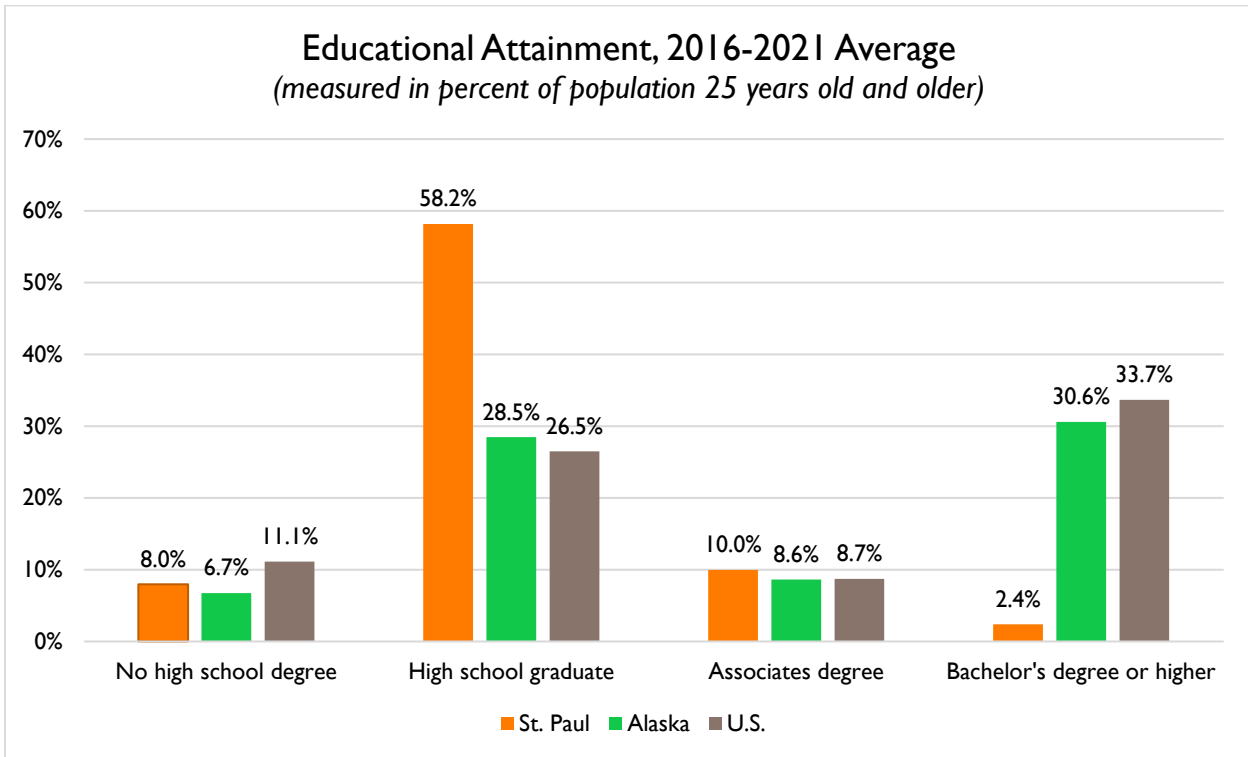
Poverty			
What it tracks	Target	Where it comes from	Limitations
Model-based estimates of poverty using state and county data from the American Community Survey, combined with other data such as federal income tax returns, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, etc.	Decrease	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-year estimates.	The estimates have high error margins in low-populated areas.
How has this indicator changed over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals below poverty: 10.4% (up from 10.1% in 2014) Families below poverty: 7.3% (up from 7% in 2014) Aleutians West Census Area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals below poverty: 8.3% (down 8.9% in 2014) Families below poverty: 2.9% (down from 5.4% in 2014) St. Paul <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals below poverty: 28.6% (up from 14.5% in 2014) Families below poverty: 13.2% (up from 9.7% in 2014) 		

Figure 8: Percentage of Individuals and Families Below the Poverty Line for St. Paul, Aleutians West Census Area, Alaska, and the U.S.



Educational Attainment			
What it tracks	Target	Where it comes from	Limitations
Educational attainment refers to the level of education completed by people 25 years and over in terms of the highest degree or the highest level of schooling completed.	Increase	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.	Certifications, licenses, and other technical education trainings are not included in this data.
How has this indicator changed over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Paul: change from 2010-2014 5-Year Estimates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No high school degree: 8% (down from 8.8%) High school degree or equivalency: 58.2% (up from 55.5%) Associate degree: 10% (up from 9.9%) Bachelor's degree or higher: 2.4% (up from 2.2%) 		

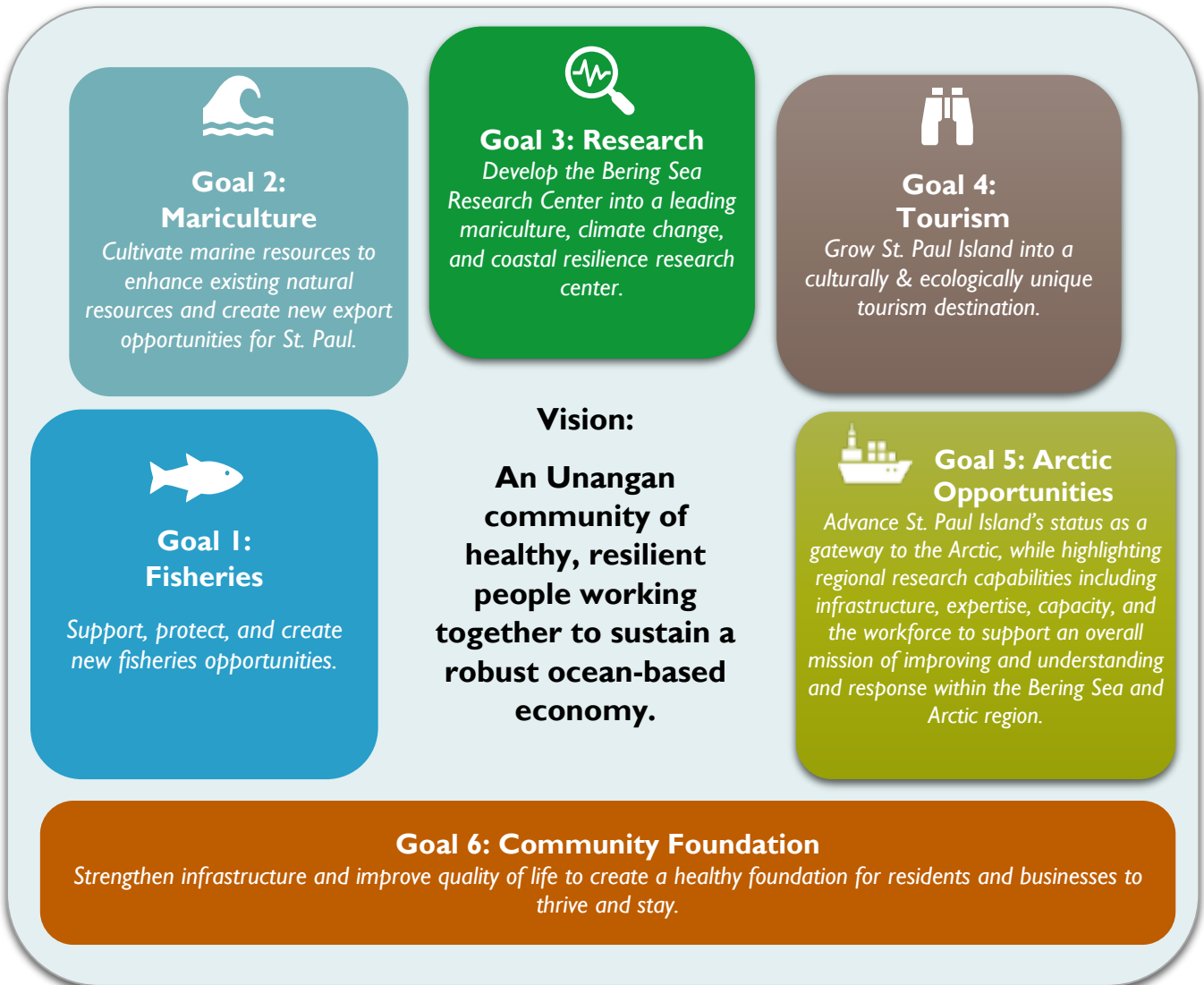
Figure 9: Educational Attainment for St. Paul, Alaska, and the U.S.



Chapter 3: Strategic Direction

This chapter identifies an economic vision for the St. Paul community along with a set of goals, strategies, and actions for each sector.

St. Paul Economic Vision and Goals



How and why these specific goals and strategies?

For this CEDS process, the goals and strategies focus on the sectors and projects that are the most viable and have the greatest potential for increasing community wealth over the next five years. Three sectors remain the same as the previous CEDS; fishing, research, and tourism. Based on emerging opportunities, two additional priority sectors have been added for the 2024-2028 CEDS: Mariculture and Arctic Opportunities.

These five industry sectors are present or emerging in the community today, with existing infrastructure and community leads that have the resources, expertise, momentum, and willingness to grow and strengthen the clusters. The CEDS also includes a community foundations goal, which identifies the basic community needs that help make St. Paul a great place to live and work. This goal focuses on infrastructure, land, cultural preservation and wellness, education, collaboration, and workforce development, all of which are critical components that set the groundwork for a thriving economy.

How is this information organized so you can understand it?

The CEDS Strategic Direction chapter includes summaries that capture key information for core sectors in the St. Paul community. The sector summaries include industry and community voices from the St. Paul CEDS stakeholder engagement process including interviews, the community survey, and open house and community conversation events. The overarching goal, a SWOT analysis, and strategies & actions are provided with each summary.

Cross references are provided when strategies overlap between core sectors.

Goals

What long term, aspirational improvement do we want to see?

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

What are the factors that contribute to, and those that threaten, the success of the sector?

Strategies & Actions

How will the goal be accomplished?



Fisheries



Mariculture



Research



Tourism



Arctic Opportunities

Community Foundation



Fisheries: Context & Strategic Direction

For decades, St. Paul Island has been home to a commercial fishing fleet that fishes for halibut and crab. In 1989, Trident Seafoods built a shore-based seafood processing facility on the island, the largest snow crab processor in the nation at the time. However, crab harvests have slumped in recent years, with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game closing the 2022-2023 season for Bering Sea snow crab and Bristol Bay red king crab in response to scientists’ concerns about poor stocks.

The closure of the snow crab fishery was the first in the 40-year history of the fishery and it was the second straight year of closure for the red king crab. The closure shocked St. Paul’s economy. The activities associated with the harvesting and delivery of crab to the Trident Seafoods shore-side plant for processing was an important source of municipal taxes and provided revenue for many other community organizations, including the Tribal government, the village corporation, and Central Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association’s programs. The crab fishery also underpins other fishery and business activities such as the local halibut fishery. Investments from the crab industry have sustained the harbor and other fisheries-related infrastructure built on the island at considerable federal, state, and local expense since the phase-out of the commercial fur seal harvest in 1984.

In response to the closures, the City Council declared a cultural, economic, and social emergency. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game opened the red king crab fishery for the 2023-2024 season, but the snow crab fishery will remain closed for a second year. The recommendations that follow explore how to address the effects of closures by introducing strategies and actions that seek to protect and diversify fisheries and help the community adapt to change.

St. Paul government declares emergency in attempt to get ahead of looming crab crash

By Maggie Nelson, KUHB - Unalaska - November 9, 2022



KUHB article, November 2022

Fisheries: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths *Internal attributes that contribute to success*

- Bering Sea location
- Subsistence
- Localized fleet
- Localized food and fishery harvest and processing
- Central Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association
- Multigenerational fishing families
- Passing along local and traditional knowledge

Weaknesses *Internal barriers to success*

- Distance from markets
- Trident closure
- Boatyard is dangerous and unsightly

Opportunities *External forces that contribute to success*

- New opportunities created by climate change
- Improving mariculture technologies and investment
- New fish species near the Island

Threats *External forces that could be barriers to success*

- Crab population uncertainty
- Climate change
- Overfishing
- Trawl fishing techniques result in both halibut and crab bycatch, affecting the Bering Sea ecosystem
- Regulatory changes take time

“We’re feeding the world and the nation with crab and halibut and salmon. That needs to be recognized – how important that is – and the contributions that our communities make to that.”

Phil Zavadil, Saint Paul City Manager, KUCB news story



Fisheries Strategic Direction: Goal, Strategies, and Actions

Goal: Support and protect existing fisheries and create new fishery opportunities.

Strategies & Actions

1. Support and protect important fisheries and diversify into new fisheries. (priority strategy) *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*

- a. Maintain active participation in key fishery management bodies.
- b. Explore opportunities for processing other species (cod).
- c. Protect subsistence use and activities.
- d. Explore establishing local Pribilof Red King Crab fishery.
- e. Secure additional halibut Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) or Community Quota for St. Paul fisherman to catch in Area 4c and 4d.
 - i. Explore Community Quota purchase programs.
 - ii. Explore expanding revolving loan programs.

2. Develop value added fisheries that build from current fisheries. *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*

- a. Explore viability of halibut processing and facilitate fresh or frozen export product development.
- b. Develop value added products (e.g., chitin) and arts and crafts from natural materials.
- c. Explore other value-added ideas like a local smokehouse and local fish company.
- d. Develop marketing and educational campaigns for Bering Sea fisheries and products.

3. Support residents in pursuing entrepreneurial fishing endeavors.

- a. Encourage St. Paul fishermen to develop guided maritime businesses including whale or wildlife watching tours, guided fishing, or eco tours.
- b. Provide St. Paul fishermen with business management and diversification resources.
- c. Explore vessel repair business incubator program.
- d. Continue to maintain local fleet support services.
- e. Create a marine trades vocational program that prepares interested high school and post-secondary students for job opportunities in marine trades (vessel repair, construction, and maintenance marine vocational tech programs).
- f. Explore partnership with Alaska Sea Grant and other organizations and mentorship models to provide youth training opportunities for commercial fishing and boat operations (navigation, safety, mechanical, and on-board processing techniques.)
- g. Include elements of fisheries, management, water and boat safety, and ecosystem health in school curriculum.
- h. Provide community education opportunities in subsistence fishing skills.

In 10 years, I'd like to see a sustainable, growing community with a diversified economy supported by our CDQ and IFQ fisheries and new value add fish and mariculture exports."

Community survey participant



Fisheries



Mariculture



Research



Tourism



Arctic Opportunities

Community Foundation

Mariculture: Context & Strategic Direction

Mariculture is the practice of growing aquatic plants and animals in the ocean. Many coastal Alaska regions, like the Pribilof Islands, have ideal environments for mariculture including clean waters, citizens with maritime experience, an existing seafood industry, and infrastructure.

As part of the EDA’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge, the Alaska Mariculture Cluster secured \$49 million in grants to support mariculture industry opportunities across the state. St. Paul can leverage this and other mariculture initiatives, like the Alaska Mariculture Alliance and Alaska Mariculture Cluster, as it works to harness its research development capacity to grow the mariculture industry locally and take advantage of the economic and ecological benefits of mariculture.

In St. Paul, pursuing mariculture opportunities could provide two key benefits: enhancing existing naturally occurring populations, such as bolstering crab and/or salmon populations, and to create new products for export.

White House announces \$49M grant for Alaska mariculture development

By Sabine Poux, KDLL - Soldotna - September 9, 2022



KDLL article, September 2022

“These grants will provide critical and historic funding directly to community coalitions to invest in new infrastructure, research and development, and workforce development programs while creating good-paying jobs, supporting workers, and prioritizing equity.”

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo on the Build Back Better awards

Mariculture: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths *Internal attributes that contribute to success*

- Harbor
- Renewable energy sources
- Trident processing facility
- Traditional knowledge and fisheries knowledge
- Proximity to Asian markets

Weaknesses *Internal barriers to success*

- Distance from U.S. markets
- Lack of processing facilities
- Unprotected waters

Opportunities *External forces that contribute to success*

- Alaska Mariculture Initiative and Alaska Mariculture Alliance
- Growing interest and funding opportunities in Alaska Mariculture projects

Threats *External forces that could be barriers to success*

- Threat of environmental harm and effects, e.g., ocean acidification
- Competition for funding and markets in other areas of the state



“Tribes representing rural communities, such as St. Paul, would greatly benefit from increased economic activity through hatchery efforts as well as fishing activity.”

Alaska Mariculture Initiative, Economic Analysis to Inform a Comprehensive Plan, 2017

Mariculture Strategic Direction: Goal, Strategies, and Actions

Goal: Cultivate marine resources to enhance existing natural resources and create new export opportunities for St. Paul.

Strategies & Actions

4. Invest in mariculture opportunities. (priority strategy)

- a. Continue to conduct research and development studies to repurpose existing facilities to support emerging mariculture efforts.
- b. Develop the old halibut plant building to support mariculture and research capabilities. *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*
- c. Investigate, further invest, and/or establish opportunities that could/do include multiple species, such as:
 - i. Blue and/or red king crab hatcheries *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*.
 - ii. A urchin hatchery *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*.
 - iii. A salmon enhancement operation or hatchery *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*.
 - iv. A kelp farm or operation *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*.
 - v. Other species (e.g., squid).

See also Goal 3 for recommendation to establish a Bering Sea Research Center.





Fisheries



Mariculture



Research



Tourism



Arctic Opportunities

Community Foundation



Research: Context & Strategic Direction

St. Paul Island is a research destination for federal agencies studying weather, fish, marine mammals, and birds. In addition, the Tribe’s Ecosystem Conservation Office (ECO) is an international leader in research, programming, and science education. These strategies seek to further build upon this growing research cluster in two primary ways: elevating the role of local entities and individuals in managing natural resources and attracting additional scientific exploration and research.

St. Paul falls within the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge and many of the existing research activities on island are related to its status as a refuge. Conducting research within the refuge brings opportunities, like resources and funding, but also challenges, including restrictions such as the prohibition of dogs to protect the vulnerable fur seal population.

In 2021, the Tribal Government of St. Paul Island established the Bering Sea Research Center (BSRC) to provide research facilities with access to the Bering Sea, an emerging strategic location for Arctic research relating to climate change, fisheries, wildlife, and more. BSRC has completed “Phase I” of its buildout, reflected by the creation of dry lab research capacity.

“The BSRC will help establish tribal-led and Indigenous-inclusive research and monitoring activities, further building capacity for entire organizations and regions to actively address data gaps and engage in landscape-level conservation and ecosystem management in the Bering Sea. The BSRC specializes in place-based science within the Arctic and Bering Sea, building a capacity in a vital developing and nationally important region.”

Tribal Government of St. Paul website

Research: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths <i>Internal attributes that contribute to success</i>	Weaknesses <i>Internal barriers to success</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of innovation on St. Paul • Sector growth could bring increased local knowledge, education opportunities, and more resource management jobs • Bering Sea Campus • Indigenous Sentinels Network • Youth engagement and education • More researchers means more total visitors spending money in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research that does not benefit the community, and/or data not shared with the community • Potential for research to disrupt daily or cultural activities • Limited housing • Internet limitations
Opportunities <i>External forces that contribute to success</i>	Threats <i>External forces that could be barriers to success</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location in the Bering Sea • Collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of airfare • Politics of research • Research is slow



“Certainly, in last five years (St. Paul) has made significant strides in the marine resources area and being more engaged, and in fact leaders, in research in the area.”

NOAA Fisheries representative interview

Research Strategic Direction: Goal, Strategies, and Actions

Goal: Develop the Bering Sea Research Center into a leading mariculture, climate change, and coastal resilience research center.

Strategies & Actions

5. Grow the community's role in natural resource management. (priority strategy) *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*

- a. Increase community voices in fishery management through participation and changes to fisheries policies where appropriate.
- b. Continue to strengthen local management of marine mammals, including transferring local monitoring and research activities (e.g., pup shearing, bull counts, drone surveys, tag resight) to TGSP.
- c. Expand co-management authorities to include facility maintenance and caretaking.
- d. Increase co-management funding to \$1 million annually to support expansion of activities through resources, workforce, infrastructure, etc.
- e. Create more resource management jobs on island including full time, part time, and seasonal/temporary roles, on-the-job training opportunities, culture camps, internships, and job shadowing.
- f. Ensure all on-island research is conducted in collaboration with the community, with results shared back with community partners. Involve traditional, Indigenous, and local knowledge holders in research design for all research projects.

6. Grow the community's role in natural resource management. *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*

- a. Establish a thriving and resilient ecosystem.
- b. Recover northern fur seal population.
- c. Recover seabird populations.
- d. Develop a thriving native plant garden.
- e. Continue to research and manage St. Paul's reindeer population, including establishing a local field to market meat processing program and a partnership program in Palmer.

See related food security strategy in Goal 6.





Fisheries



Mariculture



Research



Tourism



Arctic Opportunities

Community Foundation



Tourism: Context & Strategic Direction

St. Paul Island has a small tourism industry, with most tourism-related activities and facilities owned and operated by subsidiaries of TDX Corporation. Most birders travel to the community between May and September, with the highest level of activity in June and July. Visitors also travel to St. Paul Island to view the fur seal rookeries, go duck hunting, conduct scientific research and to visit friends and family. Despite these natural visitor draws, the community’s remote location, limited transportation options, small population and lack of amenities are all challenges that limit the size and success of the community’s tourism industry.

Between 2017 and 2019, between 250 and 305 visitors booked St. Paul Tour packages annually. St. Paul implemented COVID-19 protocols during the pandemic and there were no tours in 2020 and 2021. The tour reopened in 2022 but visitation was low due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and frequent flight cancellations, with 89 tour visitors. St. Paul Tours had 149 visitors in 2023, with a goal of 240 visitors in 2024.



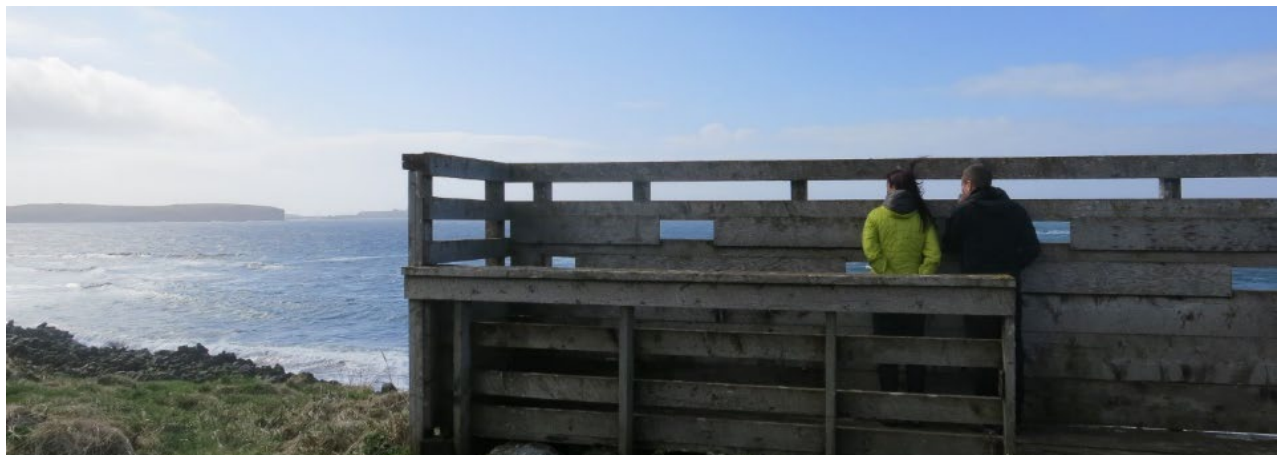
A 2020 St. Paul Island Visitor Development Study was commissioned to identify and address some of these challenges and propose viable ways for the community to increase visitation to St. Paul Island, creating new revenue and further diversifying the economy. However, most of the study’s recommendations were not addressed due to the pandemic. Many of the recommendations in this section build from recommendations in the Visitor Development Study. Fortunately, investments that increase the quality of the visitor experience, such as improved trails and signage, also generally benefit residents. The recommendations in this section also seek to increase opportunities for residents to economically benefit from visitors by providing goods, services, and increased employment in the visitor industry.

“There continues to be opportunities as part of the fur seal harvest to create handicrafts, both for cultural and subsistence activities as well as for tourism and the general market.”

Community survey participant

Tourism: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

<p>Strengths <i>Internal attributes that contribute to success</i></p>	<p>Weaknesses <i>Internal barriers to success</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respected visitor program • Reindeer herd • World class birding • Foxes, fur seals • Beautiful island • Thriving community with unique cultural heritage • Community events and activities that could be made available to visitors • Annual home beautification contest has created a more vibrant looking community • Recently renovated hotel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deteriorated buildings and abandoned cars • Unsightly boatyard • Ability to meet the health care needs of tourists • Hotel is isolated at the airport and not within walking distance of the center of town • Roads are not always passable in spring when the first visitors arrive • Lack of vehicle maintenance in the community to support fleet of tour vehicles • Limited data tracking regarding current demographics, interests, and spending habits for St. Paul travelers • St. Paul harbor not large enough to host large vessels/cruise ships
<p>Opportunities <i>External forces that contribute to success</i></p>	<p>Threats <i>External forces that could be barriers to success</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing Alaska tourism market • Increase in cruise ships in region • Increased travel demand could lower travel costs and increase frequency of flights • Increased partnership and engagement with Unalaska Convention and Visitor’s Bureau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget travelers that come but don’t use hospitality services (but want advice, internet, showers, etc.) • Seasonality of visitor season • Flight reliability and cost • Distance from mainland • Limited flight schedule • Climate change threats to birds, seals, and other wildlife



“St. Paul is on the radar from cruise companies and birders but there is also an interest from long term residents of Alaska, especially post pandemic. They have a desire to visit more places in state, like the Aleutians and Pribilofs. We are a jewel within our own state that residents want to explore.”

Alaska tourism representative interview

Tourism Strategic Direction: Goal, Strategies, and Actions

Goal: Grow St. Paul Island into a culturally & ecologically unique tourism destination.

Strategies & Actions

- 7. Increase local employment and participation in the tourism economy. (priority strategy)**
 - a. Provide small business support, resources, and incentives to residents interested in developing on-island services for visitors, e.g., eco-tours, arts and crafts, and transportation services, accommodations, and boating tours.
 - b. Offer workforce programs focused on guiding specialty reindeer and duck hunts; bird guiding; hospitality.
 - c. Identify barriers to local employment in tourism, including training needs, housing, etc.
- 8. Increase the range and quality of recreation and tourism activities for visitors. (carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)**
 - a. Partner with Museum of Aleutians and federal agencies for an on-island museum or visiting exhibits, including those that honor and educate others on the culture and history of the community.
 - b. Explore the market for reindeer trophy or specialty (e.g., disabled veteran) hunts.
 - c. Develop “wellness tourism” opportunities like a retreat center, yoga, biking, surfing, and hiking.
 - d. Create a cabin/yurt system along St. Paul’s north shore.
 - e. Increase opportunities for visitors to access existing recreation and fitness programs and community events, including hosting more events to draw visitors.
- 9. Expand marketing and grow relationships with other regional tourism partners.**
 - a. Promote multi-destination tours in partnership with Unalaska and St. George.
 - b. Increase information and resources (lodging, transportation) for independent travelers and Alaskans who want to visit St. Paul without signing up for a tour package.
 - c. Participate in joint marketing efforts to attract cruise ships.
- 10. Improve community infrastructure that supports tourism.**
 - a. Prepare a business plan for a new hotel.
 - b. Improve maintenance of roads outside of St. Paul townsite.
 - c. Improve access, signage, and wayfinding to wildlife viewing sites, cultural, and historical sites.
 - d. Improve air transportation – see specific action ideas in Goal 6.
- 11. Improve collection and consistent tracking of visitor data.**
 - a. Expand data collection on visitor demographics, interests, and types of activities.
 - b. Track the number of boats that visit St. Paul’s small boat harbor.



Fisheries



Mariculture



Research



Tourism



Arctic Opportunities

Community Foundation



Arctic Opportunities: Context & Strategic Direction

The U.S., by virtue of Alaska, has substantial interests in the Arctic region. In October 2022 the federal government published an updated Arctic strategy that serves as a framework for guiding its approach to addressing emerging challenges and opportunities in the Arctic. In recent years, the effects of climate change, technological advancements, and economic opportunities have driven increasing interest and activity in the Arctic region. There is also increased global competition and tension in the Arctic’s geopolitical environment. By nature of its location in the Bering Sea, increasing vessel traffic in the region, and existing infrastructure on the island, St. Paul stand to play a role in the county’s Arctic strategy. Residents have indicated that any new federal presence must involve community consultation and result in a commitment for economic sustainability and community benefit.



“Concerns about a viable economy in St. Paul have been around a long time. Now with the crab crash, and like fur sealing before that, the island must look toward a new role to capitalize on our strategic location in the middle of the Bering Sea.”

Stakeholder interview

Arctic Opportunities: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

<p>Strengths <i>Internal attributes that contribute to success</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing facilities including the harbor, airport, and vessel repair building • Renewable energy sources • Strategic western location in the middle of the Bering Sea • Former Coast Guard station 	<p>Weaknesses <i>Internal barriers to success</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and trauma of poor treatment by government entities • Limited/aging infrastructure
<p>Opportunities <i>External forces that contribute to success</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing disaster/spill response capabilities could have local benefit • Military interest in western Alaska 	<p>Threats <i>External forces that could be barriers to success</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of local context and identity with increased military presence • St. Paul may become a target • Ship noise for marine life • Threat of environmental harm



Arctic Opportunities Strategic Direction: Goal, Strategies, and Actions

Goal: Advance St. Paul Island's status as a gateway to the Arctic, while highlighting regional research capabilities including infrastructure, expertise, capacity, and the workforce to support an overall mission of improving and understanding and response within the Bering Sea and Arctic region.

Strategies & Actions

12. Develop the Bering Sea Research Center with designated staff, vessel(s), housing, and transportation for visiting researchers. (priority strategy)

- a. Explore partnerships with and/or replicate models of Indigenous-led research centers like the Barrow Arctic Research Center and Alutiiq Pride Marine Institute.
- b. Prioritize Tribal academic partners such as Iliisagvik College or other Tribal Colleges or other Tribally- led research systems and partnerships.
- c. Become a leader for climate change and resilience, marine heat waves, harmful algal blooms (HABs), availability of prey, habitat degradation, marine mammal health, and aquatic species recovery.

13. Expand research partnerships and research employment opportunities. (carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)

- a. Expand Indigenous Sentinels Network.
- b. Investigate and develop research partnerships with higher education institutions and state, federal, and international organizations.
- c. Pursue small pilot drone contracts with agencies for research.
- d. Lead climate change research in the region (e.g., water temperatures, ice coverage, benthic and habitat mapping, species distributions, etc.).
- e. Explore research and business opportunities around plastic marine debris recovery, recycling, and processing technologies.

14. Explore potential on-island partnerships and infrastructure investments with the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security (e.g., U.S. Coast Guard) and Department of Defense (e.g., U.S. Air Force, National Guard), in consultation with the community.

- a. Replace or renovate the airport hangar.
- b. Store and coordinate fuel spill response equipment.
- c. Establish St. Paul as a port of shelter.
- d. Invest in runway improvements and airport technology.



Fisheries



Mariculture



Research



Tourism



Arctic Opportunities

Community Foundation



Community Foundations: Context & Strategic Direction

To achieve St. Paul’s goals in fisheries, mariculture, research, tourism, and Arctic opportunities, the community needs to have a bedrock of crucial infrastructure, services, and supports. Likewise, when the community’s economy is thriving, there is greater community wealth and more funding available to re-invest into community foundations, programs, and services. This goal and associated strategies identify the cross-sectional opportunities for improvement that can make St. Paul a better place to live, visit and conduct business. For example, businesses and residents alike require critical basic needs such as affordable power, accessible transportation, and access to land. In addition, residents must be well and have access to quality education to seek gainful employment and positively contribute to the community.



Unlike the five previous goals, which are narrowly focused on individual industry clusters, this goal includes a broad spectrum of strategies and actions that seek to increase quality of life and the business environment.

“The best thing about St. Paul is the fact that everything is a huge community. It is my home, it’s peaceful, you can get your own food off the land.”

Community survey participant

Community Foundations Strategic Direction: Goal, Strategies, and Actions

Goal: Strengthen infrastructure and improve quality of life to create a healthy foundation for residents and businesses to thrive and stay.

Strategies & Actions

15. Develop and maintain a highly skilled, employment-ready workforce that supports and enhances the economic health and quality of life on St. Paul Island. (priority strategy) *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*

- a. Expand culturally and community-relevant Bering Sea Campus K-12 and post-secondary offerings and increase awareness of availability of field courses, vocational training, degree pathways, and certifications and case management services.
- b. Improve engagement with St. Paul students attending Mount Edgecumbe and Galena Interior Learning Academy.
- c. Increase collaboration and alignment between organizations providing educational training and resources.
- d. Expand early childhood development programs.
- e. Develop a 'train the trainer' program and onboard youth into education careers and opportunities.
- f. Establish St. Paul as a formal instructional site of the Ilisagvik College campus network.
- g. Increase internships, youth hiring programs, and mentorship options throughout the community.
- h. Better identify the employment gap and workforce needs/challenges of St. Paul employers (certifications, compensation, skills, retention, etc.).

See also Goals 1-5 for sector-specific workforce development recommendations.

16. Expand local food production and increase food security. (priority strategy) *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*

- a. Complete business plan and feasibility study for reindeer butchering/processing facility.
- b. Design and implement greenhouse and community gardening operations.
- c. Encourage responsible subsistence hunting practices.
- d. Continue to improve the reliability, quality, and affordability of goods at the Aleut Community Store.
- e. Encourage residents to raise farm animals for eggs and meat.
- f. Evaluate the feasibility of stocking local lakes with fish.

17. Continue to increase collaboration between island partners. (priority strategy)

- a. Coordinate quarterly meetings between City, Tribe, TDX, CBSFA, and the School District to better collaborate on shared priorities.
- b. Expand community partnership around emergency planning, response, and mitigation efforts to reduce vulnerabilities to hazards and increase response capabilities.
- c. Consider privatizing municipal services that could be operated by a privately-owned business (e.g., mechanic services, car rentals, apartment rentals).

Strategies & Actions, continued

18. Increase availability of affordable and quality housing. *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*

- a. Increase availability of affordable homes through renovation and new construction.
- b. Increase access to land for housing and businesses.
- c. Develop a small home improvement and construction supply area in the store.
- d. Conduct clean-up activities (including rehabilitating or demolishing dilapidated structures) and implement recycling programs to reduce waste on St. Paul Island.
- e. Establish home maintenance and improvement training programs so residents can become certified to meet community housing needs, such as heating and electrical services, basic home repair (door and window installation, flooring, roofing, siding), and other needed skills.
- f. Conduct home efficiency upgrades for older homes in the community.

19. Increase access, affordability, and dependability of essential utilities. *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*

- a. Upgrade internet infrastructure to improve connectivity, speed, and reliability.
- b. Plan for utility upgrades for communitywide utilities reaching the end of their life (e.g., water, sewer).
- c. Increase access to renewable energy and heating.
- d. Invest in improved landline and cell infrastructure.

20. Promote healthy lifestyles and offer resources to support wellness and healing. *(carried forward from previous St. Paul CEDS)*

- a. Establish an outpatient post-treatment after care and restorative justice center.
- b. Promote behavioral health programming.
- c. Expand recovery and treatment programs.
- d. Expand Elder supports, including improving elder care, senior housing, and a gathering place.
- e. Offer fun, healthy, year-round community activities.
- f. Address historical trauma through communitywide and individual training and programming.
- g. Attract mid-level medical professionals for the clinic and encourage residents to pursue careers in medicine.
- h. Expand childcare availability, especially certified providers.
- i. Establish facility-based/home-based childcare for 1.5 – three year olds.
- j. Continue to support language and cultural education programs through Tanax' Unaagim Maqaxsingin.

Strategies & Actions, continued

21. Support prospective entrepreneurs with launching and growing local businesses.

- a. Support entrepreneurs with business planning, creating small business spaces, financial/accounting/business and management courses, and supportive technical assistance.
- b. Develop agreements to help small business owners who want to provide services directly to residents; for example, using City utility service credits for non-paying customers.
- c. Establish small business incentive programs, such as lowering the sales tax rate for newly established local businesses.

See also fisheries-specific small business recommendations under Goal 1 and tourism specific small business recommendations under Goal 4.

22. Advocate for increased frequency and reliability of transportation to and from the island.

- a. Collaborate with air and water transportation providers and agencies to improve access to the community.
- b. Upgrade the Automatic Surface Observing System (ASOS) to improve weather monitoring capabilities at the airport.
- c. Expand fire and rescue response capabilities at the airport.
- d. Participate in regional efforts to improve transportation, including attending the annual Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (SWAMC) Economic Summit.
- e. Participate in the negotiation process for the Essential Air Service subsidy to advocate for a fourth subsidized flight when the next contract is renewed.

See also – remote road recommendation in Goal 4.



Chapter 4: Action Plan and Evaluation Framework

This section will be developed during the public comment period, to build upon the strategic direction outlined in the sector and community foundation chapters, with a focus on detailed action plans for each priority strategy.

The action plans will consider existing and anticipated resources and provide direction to community leadership and partners. The action plans will include the following information:

- **Capital Project:** Whether the action includes an infrastructure or facility component.
- **Actions:** Near-term steps that organizations, businesses, and partners can take to help move a strategy forward.
- **Lead (Support):** Lead organization responsible for the action, plus supporting partners, and community entities that can support implementation.
- **Estimated Resources:** Estimated costs to implement the action steps over the next five years, and/or estimated staffing resources (FTE = full time equivalent).
- **Possible Funding Sources:** List of potential funding sources that could be used to accomplish the action, including public, private, and nonprofit funding sources.
- **Target Completion:** Estimated year when the action will be complete.
- **Performance Measure(s):** How the region will measure progress for the sector, with quantifiable benchmarks/ targets. For example, for the tourism sector, performance measures could include measures and targets for the number of St. Paul Tour visitors annually, and number of locally owned businesses in the community that provide goods and services to visitors.