

# **YOUTH INVOLVEMENT PROJECT:**

## **Activities to Engage Youth in Visioning the Future North Slope Borough Comprehensive Plan Revision**

**Produced for the North Slope Borough  
Planning Department  
PO Box 69  
Barrow, AK 99723**

**Produced by URS Corp.  
2700 Gambell St., Suite 200  
Anchorage, AK 99503**

**Heather M. Coulehan, principal author  
Jon Isaacs  
Joan Kluwe**

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# **Youth Involvement Project: North Slope Borough Comprehensive Plan Revision**

*The future holds great possibilities for the North Slope region. The next 10 years will likely yield new oil fields, development of other natural resources, and improved services to residents. The North Slope Borough hopes to go through those years in partnership with public and private enterprises, with the wisdom of the past and the dream of tomorrow.*

-North Slope Borough School District website

## **Youth Involvement Project**

The original North Slope Borough Comprehensive Plan, developed in the early 1980's, has guided development in the Borough for the past 20 years. The revised plan, which is expected to be in effect for the next ten to fifteen years, will continue supporting development of villages and natural resources in a way that preserves the Inupiat way of life. Because this plan will be affecting changes in the Borough as today's high school students become part of the workforce and local leadership, the Borough is very interested in engaging youth in the revision process. The goals of the Youth Involvement Project include:

1. Increase students' awareness of their role in local government.
2. Raise students' knowledge of the Comprehensive Plan, the revision process, and its role in local government.
3. Incorporate students' visions for their communities into the Comprehensive Plan.
4. Promote a sense of community and commitment to the well being of the community.
5. Develop youth leadership capacity.

## **NSBSD Goals and Alaska State Content Standards**

The Youth Involvement Project supports both of the NSBSD school board goals for the 2004-05 school year. The project activities create learning opportunities in which students have the chance to increase their proficiency in reading and writing and are also an opportunity to integrate Inupiaq values into the regular school curriculum. The activities promote the values of cooperation, sharing, and respect for nature (Alaska Native Education Program Value Posters) and enable students to live these values as they envision the future of the North Slope Borough and contribute ideas to the Comprehensive Plan.

All of the project activities are based on the Alaska State Content Standards and will increase students' proficiency in English/Language Arts, Geography, and Government & Citizenship. Each activity specifies which content standard it supports. In addition to supporting the content standards, the project activities make learning relevant and meaningful. The students will be learning about and contributing to a local government process that directly affects their lives.

## Developmental Assets

As listed above, the fourth goal of the Youth Involvement Project is to promote a sense of community and commitment to the well being of the community. The project promotes a sense of community by building key developmental assets in youth. Assets are building blocks in children's lives that help them grow up strong, capable, and caring (see Appendix A for a list of the 40 developmental assets). The State of Alaska is a leader in the national youth developmental asset movement. The Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE) is the community outreach component of the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB). Alaska ICE compliments the AASB mission by giving Alaskans the information, tools, and assistance to work together and engage in shared responsibility for preparing Alaska's youth for the future (see Appendix A for Alaska ICE information).

By involving youth in the Comprehensive Plan revision process, the community will be building specific developmental assets in youth. These assets include:

- **Community values youth** (asset #7): Youth believes that community adults value young people.
- **Youth have useful roles** (asset #8): Youth are taught and given useful roles in community life.
- **High expectations** (asset #16): Parents, community members, and teachers encourage youth to do well.
- **Equality and social justice** (asset #27): Youth respects self and others; places high value on sharing and cooperation.
- **Responsibility** (asset #30): Youth accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- **Personal power** (asset #37): Youth feels in control over "many things that happen to me"
- **Positive view of personal future** (asset #40): Youth is optimistic about his or her personal future.

The project demonstrates to youth in a very concrete way that the Borough values them and their ideas, and encourages youth to take an active role in local government to shape the future. The project reinforces the high expectations the community has for youth as they accept their responsibility in creating a just future for all residents of the Borough.

## Project Activities

The Youth Involvement Project targets high school students and includes the choice of four main activities. The planning team for the North Slope Borough Comprehensive Plan is available to assist with implementing all of the project activities.

**Activity 1** Geography and Government & Citizenship lesson plan that could easily be integrated into existing curriculum as a relevant and meaningful example of local government in action.

- Activity 2** English/Language Arts lesson plan that could be integrated into existing curriculum as an opportunity to practice writing skills on a relevant topic.
- Activity 3** Focus groups that support the state content standards while gathering and recording students' visions for the future of their community.
- Activity 4** A public awareness campaign which celebrates and affirms the valuable role youth have in visioning the future of the North Slope Borough.

The planning team recommends implementing at least one of the first three activities (the lesson plans and the focus groups) and publishing the results through a publicity campaign. The publicity campaign is a way to involve parents and other community members in the project while also emphasizing that the community takes young people seriously and recognizes their important role in the future of the community.

The intent of the Youth Involvement Project is to provide relevant learning opportunities for students to actually apply the state content standards in their lives, not to create additional work for school personnel. Planning team members will be making site visits to Borough villages after the first of the year and can be a resource for teachers implementing project activities at that time. With prior arrangements, team members can:

- Act as guest speakers in classrooms while in the villages for draft plan presentation;
- Develop additional materials and guidance for teachers (newsletters, handouts);
- Work with teachers via email or phone prior to conducting class exercises;
- Provide project summaries and other ideas for the publicity campaign; or,
- Offer general technical assistance on all project activities.

Activities 1 through 3 (the lesson plans and focus) are flexible in terms of the time needed for implementation. A suggested minimum and maximum time is stated for each lesson activity; however, teachers or other school personnel could modify the times to best suit the particular situation. If time were limited and teachers needed to actually eliminate some of the activities, the most important or key activities are highlighted at the beginning of each lesson. The activities could be facilitated over the course of one or more class periods. A teacher could also facilitate the activities in a workshop format over several consecutive hours, depending on what worked best for the school.

## **Dream of Tomorrow**

Children ages 10-14 are statistically the highest population in the North Slope Borough and youth ages 15-19, the target audience for this project, are the second highest population (North Slope Borough 2003 Economic Profile and Census Report). It is these youth who will be tying together the wisdom of the past with their dreams of tomorrow as they become the community leaders and residents affected by the Comprehensive Plan. The Youth Involvement Project will help youth build the academic proficiency they will need to take on these roles and will help youth become strong, capable, and caring adults committed to the future of their community.



# **ACTIVITY 1: My Role in the Comprehensive Plan**

## **Geography, Government & Citizenship Lesson**

### **Content Standards:**

#### **Geography**

- A. A student should be able to make and use maps, globes, and graphs to gather analyze, and report spatial (geographic) information.
- B. A student should be able to utilize, analyze, and explain information about the human and physical features of places regions.
- D. A student should be able to interpret spatial characteristics of human systems, including migration, movement, interactions of cultures, economic activities, settlement patterns, and political units in the state, nation, and world.
- E. A student should understand and be able to evaluate how humans and physical environments interact.
- F. A student should be able to use geography to understand the world by interpreting the past, knowing the present, and preparing for the future.

#### **Government & Citizenship**

- E. A student should have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively as an informed and responsible citizen.
- G. A student should understand the impact of economic choices and be able to participate effectively in the local, state, national, and global economies.

#### **English/Language Arts**

- C. A student should be able to identify and select from multiple strategies in order to complete projects independently and cooperatively.

### **Objectives:**

Students will be able to...

1. Explain the Comprehensive Plan as a tool that interprets the past, understands the present, and prepares for the future.
2. Use charts and tables related to socioeconomic development in the North Slope Borough.
3. Describe how human and physical environments interact by identifying issues in the Comprehensive Plan.
4. Use the Comprehensive Plan to understand the past and present and to prepare for the future by identifying strengths and resources in the North Slope Borough.
5. Participate in the Comprehensive Plan revision process as informed and responsible citizens.

### **Materials:**

- Flip chart paper (or butcher block paper)
- Markers

- Tape
- “Figure 1: Population Growth” (Appendix B)
- “Figure 2: NSB Population by Ethnicity” (Appendix B)
- “Property and Sales Tax Revenues” (Appendix B)
- “Planning Issues for Comprehensive Plan” (Appendix C)

## **Activities:**

### 1. **Introduction:** Plans in Our Lives

Ask students these questions:

- What kinds of things do you plan for in your life?
- If you were planning a birthday party for a friend, what kinds of things would you need to include in your plan (resources, materials, people, money)?

### 2. **Mini-Lecture:** The North Slope Borough Comprehensive Plan

Just like planning for a birthday party, a Comprehensive Plan is a way to look into the future and think about how to get there. The word “comprehensive” means to look at the big picture. Why does a community like the North Slope Borough need a comprehensive plan? State law says that communities need plans to guide land management and many federal and state agencies require an approved plan before they give out grants and funds. A comprehensive plan shows needs and sets priorities. It is an opportunity for people in the community to say what is important and to identify actions that need to be taken.

The North Slope Borough’s first Comprehensive Plan was developed in the early 1980’s. It addressed issues such as boundaries and land status, subsistence, human resources, physical environment, transportation, petroleum and mineral development, government, and land use. Why should the North Slope Borough make a new and revised Comprehensive Plan? What has changed over the last 20 years? Today there are more oil and other facilities spreading west from Prudhoe Bay and more pressure on subsistence resources. Village populations are growing, creating a need for new housing and other services, while Borough revenues are shrinking.

### 3. **Socioeconomic Graphs:** Two Reasons for a New Plan

Distribute the bar graph titled “Figure 1: Population Growth”. Discussion questions:

- What information does this graph give us?
- What was the population when the old Comprehensive Plan was developed?
- What is the population now? What is the difference?
- How are people, the land, and the government affected when population increases?

Distribute the bar graph titled, “Figure 2: North Slope Borough Population by Ethnicity”. This graph shows the population of the Borough by age and ethnicity. Discussion questions:

- What age group has the highest number of people? Second highest? Third?
- How will having a young population affect the Borough?
- What does this mean for you as one of the young people?

Distribute the line graph titled “Property and Sales Taxes Revenues”. Discussion questions:

- How much money did the Borough make from property and sales tax in 1995?
- How much did the Borough make last year? What is the difference?
- What happens when a community has more and more people but the government has less and less money?

#### 4. **Large Group Brainstorm:** Community Strengths and Resources

Ask the class to answer this question, “What is the best thing about living in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of community)?” Record their answers on flip chart paper and continue the discussion with the question, “What are the strengths and resources of this community?”. Record all ideas.

#### 5. **Rotation Station Brainstorming:** Community Challenges (Issues in the Comprehensive Plan)

Do a quick large group brainstorm around the question “What challenges or weaknesses in our community should be included in the new Comprehensive Plan?”. Write each of the following headings on a separate piece of flip chart paper:

- Land Ownership and Use
- Subsistence (Fish, Wildlife, Vegetation)
- Human and Cultural Resources
- Hazards
- Socioeconomic Factors (Public Services, Facilities, Government)
- Petroleum and Mineral Development

Explain that these are the topics that will be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Refer to the document titled “Planning Issues for Comprehensive Plan” to explain each topic to the students. Adults in the North Slope Borough were discussing these exact issues during village meetings in July and August this past summer. Post each piece of flip chart paper somewhere in the room.

Divide the group into six or fewer small groups (or have students do this activity individually). Instruct each group to move around the room spending two minutes brainstorming the topic on each piece of flip chart paper. Questions to answer for each topic are:

- What thoughts, ideas, or issues do you think of when you see this topic?
- What is the status of this topic in your community?
- Who or what is impacting or affecting this topic in your community?
- What are your hopes and fears about this topic?

Groups should record their ideas on the flip chart paper so that each group’s ideas are recorded on the same piece of paper. Use a timer and after two minutes have each group move on to another issue. After the final round of brainstorming, have each group read all of the ideas from their last topic paper.

## 6. **Small Group Project:** Visioning Our Community

Explain to the small groups that they are going to participate in a community planning activity. They are actually going to come up with ideas that their own community could use to address the challenges from the last activity. Group members should look at all of the issues and challenges and decide on the two issues they feel are most important in their own community. Give each small group two pieces of flip chart paper. Instruct the groups to divide each paper into three columns with the following headings:

<b>Column 1</b>	<b>Column 2</b>	<b>Column 3</b>
<b>Community Strengths and Resources</b>	<b>Community Challenge or Weakness</b>	<b>Solutions: What can be done to solve the problem? Who could implement this solution?</b>

**Column 1:** Groups should look at the list of community strengths and resources from the large group brainstorming activity. For each challenge they picked, groups should write down in column one the strengths and resources their community could use to address the challenge.

**Column 2:** Groups should write one of their community challenges in the second column on each flip chart page.

**Column 3:** Groups should answer two questions for each challenge they picked. “What can be done to solve this problem?” and “Who would implement the solution?” Emphasize that their suggestions must be realistic ideas that could actually be implemented in their community. Students can use words and/or drawings to describe their ideas. Groups should write their solution ideas in column three.

## 7. **Conclusion:** Sharing the Vision

Ask each group to share one challenge and one solution from their visioning session. Debriefing questions:

- What similarities did you see among the groups, in terms of their ideas on challenges and solutions?
- What differences did you see?
- How do you feel about the future of your community? Why?

# ACTIVITY 2: We Dream of a Community

## English/Language Arts Lesson

### Content Standards:

#### English/Language Arts

- A. A student should be able to speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- B. A student should be a competent and thoughtful reader, listener, and viewer of literature, technical materials and a variety of other information.
- D. A student should be able to think logically and reflectively in order to present and explain positions based on relevant and reliable information.

#### Geography

- F. A student should be able to use geography to understand the world by interpreting the past, knowing the present, and preparing for the future.

#### Government & Citizenship

- E. A student should have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively as an informed and responsible citizen.

### Objectives:

Students will be able to...

1. Read and analyze technical materials in order to understand the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Compare and contrast current and past issues from the Comprehensive Plan.
3. Think logically and reflectively to develop and write a position statement describing their vision for the future.

### Materials:

- Blank paper
- Colored pencils or markers
- Comprehensive Plan Introduction (Appendix D)
- “Planning Issues for Comprehensive Plan” (Appendix C)

### Activities:

#### 1. Introduction: Plans in Our Lives

Ask students these questions:

- What kinds of things do you plan for in your life?

- If you were planning a birthday party for a friend, what kinds of things would you need to include in your plan (resources, materials, people, money)?

## 2. **Reading Technical Material:** Understanding the Comprehensive Plan

Distribute the handouts from Appendix D, Comprehensive Plan Introduction, and give the students time to read through the material. These materials are the introduction and the table of contents from the original Comprehensive Plan written in the early 1980's. A Comprehensive Plan is a way to look into the future and think about how to get there. The word "comprehensive" means to look at the big picture. Why does a community like the North Slope Borough need a comprehensive plan? State law says that communities need plans to guide land management and many federal and state agencies require an approved plan before they give out grants and funds. A comprehensive plan shows needs and sets priorities. It is an opportunity for people in the community to say what is important and to identify actions that need to be taken.

Reading comprehension and discussion questions:

- Who wrote the original plan in the early 1980's?
- Why is this plan unique?
- What is the function of the plan?
- Why was the original planning effort started?
- What kinds of information can you find in the plan?
- What forms the community view in the North Slope Borough?
- Look at the last paragraph on page 4 which starts with the words, "Policy development through the Comprehensive Plan". What does this paragraph mean in your own words?
- What kinds of issues or topics does the plan address?
- Which topics interest you the most? Why?
- Why should the North Slope Borough make a new and revised Comprehensive Plan?
- What has changed over the last 20 years?

Today there are more oil and other facilities spreading west from Prudhoe Bay and more pressure on subsistence resources. Village populations are growing, creating a need for new housing and other services, while Borough revenues are shrinking.

## 3. **Large Group Brainstorm:** Community Strengths and Resources

Ask the class to answer this question, "What is the best thing about living in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of community)?" Record their answers on flip chart paper and continue the discussion with the question, "What are the strengths and resources of this community?". Record all ideas.

## 4. **Reading Technical Material:** Community Challenges and Weaknesses

Distribute the handout titled "Planning Issues for Comprehensive Plan" and give the students time to read the material. Explain that this document describes the topics that will be addressed in the new and revised Comprehensive Plan. Adults in the North Slope Borough were discussing

this exact document and these issues during village meetings in July and August this past summer.

Reading comprehension and discussion questions:

- What were the sources of information used to prepare this document?
- What are challenges or weaknesses addressed?
- What similarities do you see with the issues addressed in the original plan?
- What differences do you see?
- What do you think accounts for the differences?

## 5. **Individual Writing Project**: We Dream of a Community Essay

Explain to the students that they will be working on a three-page assignment to describe their own vision for the future of their community. The first parts of the assignment will be a detailed essay about how the community can address their challenges. The last part of the assignment will be creating a drawing or symbol to illustrate their dreams for the future of their community.

Instruct students to choose one challenge or weakness that is most interesting to them, from either the original or the revised Comprehensive Plan. Students should answer these questions about the issue they chose:

- What resources or strengths does your community have to deal with this challenge?
- How would you describe this challenge to someone not from your community?
- Why is this issue interesting to you?
- Who or what is impacting or affecting this issue today?
- What are your hopes and fears or concerns about this issue?
- How could your community use its strengths and resources to deal with this challenge?
- Who would be responsible for implementing these ideas?

**Part 1**: Describe your community's strengths and resources. What do you like about living in your community? What is unique and special about your community?

**Part 2**: Define or describe your chosen challenge or weakness in detail. Explain your hopes, fears or concerns about the issue. How would you describe this issue to someone not from your community? Who or what is impacting or affecting this issue today? Why is this issue interesting to you?

**Part 3**: State how your community could use its resources and strengths to deal with this challenge. Who would be responsible for implementing these ideas?

**Part 4**: Create a symbol, drawing or abstract form to represent your hopes and dreams for the future of your community (reassure the students that it is okay if they can't draw well - a very simple symbol or an abstract form would be great!).

## 6. **Conclusion**: Sharing the Vision

In a go-around, invite each student to share one of their solutions or their drawing from the “We Dream of a Community” essay assignment.

## **ACTIVITY 3: Focus Groups**

### **Facilitators:**

Planning team members, teachers, or students themselves, could facilitate the focus groups. Training students as focus group facilitators is an opportunity to empower young people with the knowledge and skills to be active leaders in the community planning process. Planning team members would meet with identified student leaders prior to the focus groups to brief them about the Comprehensive Plan and to provide training on group facilitation skills.

### **Content Standards:**

#### **English/Language Arts**

- A. A student should be able to speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- D. A student should be able to think logically and reflectively in order to present and explain positions based on relevant and reliable information.
- E. A student should understand and respect the perspectives of others in order to communicate effectively.

#### **Geography**

- F. A student should be able to use geography to understand the world by interpreting the past, knowing the present, and preparing for the future.

#### **Government & Citizenship**

- E. A student should have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively as an informed and responsible citizen.

### **Objectives:**

Students will be able to...

1. Think logically and reflectively to verbally describe their position on the Comprehensive Plan and their vision of the future.
2. Listen and respect the perspectives of other students on the Comprehensive Plan.
3. Use the Comprehensive Plan as a means to understand the past and present while preparing for the future.
4. Participate as an informed citizen in the local government process of revising the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Materials:**

- Flip chart paper
- Markers
- “Planning Issues for Comprehensive Plan” (Appendix C)
- Blank paper

## Activities:

### 1. **Gathering and Introductions**: Me and My Community

Ask each participant to introduce themselves by giving their name, grade, and the answer to one of the following questions. Facilitators should choose one question for all of the participants to answer and should introduce themselves first to model the activity.

- The time I am most proud of is...
- The Inupiat value I most admire or see in myself is...
- One of my goals is...

### 2. **Group Brainstorm**: Community Strengths and Resources

Have the group finish this sentence, “The best thing about living in (community name) is...”. Record all answers on flip chart paper. Continue brainstorming a list of community strengths and resources.

### 3. **Mini-Lecture**: What is the Comprehensive Plan?

Explain that this focus group will be looking at the North Slope Borough’s Comprehensive Plan, which is a way the whole community to look at it’s values, strengths and goals and begin planning for the future. A Comprehensive Plan is a way to look into the future and think about how to get there. The word “comprehensive” means to look at the big picture. Why does a community like the North Slope Borough need a comprehensive plan? State law says that communities need plans to guide land management and many federal and state agencies require an approved plan before they give out grants and funds. A comprehensive plan shows needs and sets priorities. It is an opportunity for people in the community to say what is important and to identify actions that need to be taken.

The North Slope Borough’s first Comprehensive Plan was developed in the early 1980’s. It addressed issues such as boundaries and land status, subsistence, human resources, physical environment, transportation, petroleum and mineral development, government, and land use. Why should the North Slope Borough make a new and revised Comprehensive Plan? What has changed over the last 20 years? Today there are more oil and other facilities spreading west from Prudhoe Bay and more pressure on subsistence resources. Village populations are growing, creating a need for new housing and other services, while Borough revenues are shrinking.

### 4. **Discussion**: Community Challenges, Weaknesses and Solutions

Ask the participants to generate a list of community challenges and weaknesses they think should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Record their ideas on flip chart paper so the whole group can see and remember the ideas. Add the issues from the document titled “Planning Issues for Comprehensive Plan” if the group does not mention them. For each issue, discuss these questions:

- What thoughts, ideas, or issues do you think of when you see this topic?
- What is the status of this topic in your community?
- Who or what is impacting or affecting this topic in your community?
- What are your hopes and fears about this topic?
- How can your community solve these problems using it's strengths and resources?

5. **Closing**: Vision for the Community

Give each participant a sheet of blank paper and tell them to think about one issue or challenge mentioned in the discussion that is most interesting to them. How could the community solve this challenge? Ask students to write a word or phrase or to draw a symbol that illustrates their vision for the future of their community. When participants are finished, invite each person to share their vision.



# **ACTIVITY 4: Youth Visioning Publicity Campaign**

## **Content Standards:**

### **English/Language Arts**

E. A student should understand and respect the perspectives of others in order to communicate effectively.

### **Geography**

F. A student should be able to use geography to understand the world by interpreting the past, knowing the present, and preparing for the future.

### **Government & Citizenship**

E. A student should have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively as an informed and responsible citizen.

## **Goals:**

1. To educate students who did not participate in the Youth Involvement Project about the Comprehensive Plan and ways students can actively participate in local government.
2. To engage parents and other community members in students' learning opportunities.
3. To promote parent and school cooperation.
4. To help students understand and respect the perspectives of others.
5. To show youth that the community values their ideas and to affirm that youth have an important role in the community and in local government.

## **Activities:**

### **1. Student Project Display**

Display the "Visioning Our Community" project (activity 1) and the "We Dream of a Community" project (activity 2) in schools, the district office, or other places in the community to educate students who did not participate in the project.

### **2. Parent Newsletter**

Include students' artwork and visioning ideas in parent newsletters or other school publications to engage parents and families in the project.

### **3. NSBSD Website**

Include the students' visioning ideas on the NSBSD website page about the future. Their ideas would support and compliment the vision of the future described on the website.

#### **4. Speaking on the Issues**

Describe students' vision of the future in the Mayor's "Speaking on the Issues" monthly comments to highlight the valuable role youth have in the future of the community.

#### **5. Community Events**

Report on the Youth Involvement Project at the Elder and Youth Conference and other community events to encourage continued discussions by youth and elders on the future of the community.