
St. George Tribal Council Local Economic Development Plan

Presented to the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association



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Location



Figure 1: Map of St. George, Alaska
Source: 1949 USGS Road Map

Saint George is located in the Aleutian Islands Recording District. It consists of 34.8 square miles of land and 147.6 square miles of water. Saint George is about 47 miles south of St. Paul Island, 750 air miles west of Anchorage, and 250 miles northwest of Unalaska. As of 2016, there are 72 people that reside in Saint George; however, that number that is declining. A great majority (88.24 percent) of the people are American Indian and Alaska Native. The cliffs of Saint George have over 210 species of bird's nest. The cold waters of the Bering Sea heavily influence the climate of Saint George. The southwest maritime climate zone causes high winds, cloudy skies, and cyclonic storms in Saint George. On average, Saint George receives 23 inches of precipitation and 57 inches of snowfall per year.

History and Culture

In 1786, Gavrill Pribilof of the Russian Lebedov Lastochkin Company came across Saint George while he was searching for the northern fur seals' breeding grounds. Shortly afterward, hunters from Siberia, Unalaska, and Atka were relocated to Saint George and enslaved to harvest the fur seal. From 1870 to 1920, the Pribilof Islands were leased by the U.S. government to private companies and Aleuts were required to work in a fur seal plant in exchange for living benefits. The city was incorporated in 1983 when the U.S government withdrew from the island, finally putting an end to the treatment of Pribilof Aleuts. The U.S. government, in an effort to compensate for the suffering, gave 8.5 million dollars to the Pribilof Aleuts to help expand the economy.

Infrastructure and Community Facilities Summary

St. George			
Asset	Present	Description	Ownership
Airstrip	Yes	Saint George Airport has a state-owned airport and a city-owned 4,982 ft. x 150 ft. runway that offers public use. The runway is in good condition.	State, City
Marine Highway Service	No	None	State
Community Hall	Yes	The Alaska Association considered the Community Hall in St. George one of the top endangered historic buildings for Historic Preservation in 2009.	City
Water/Sewer	Yes	A piped water and sewer system comprising 4 wells and 250,000 of storage serves all 60 residences. The sewage discharged into the harbor and was built in the 1950s.	State, City
Electricity	Yes	The community operates a diesel generator provided by the city of Saint George.	Tribal, City
Fuel Storage	Yes	One heating oil tank, with a total heating oil tank capacity of 105,000 gallons, is delivered by barge in the fall and spring.	City
Medical Services	Yes	Saint George has two primary and preventative care facilities: Saint George Health Clinic and Saint George Public Health Nursing. Saint George provides 8 beds of residential care at Unalaskans' Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence.	City
Dock/Harbor	Yes	There are 3 docks; the village corporation controls one of them. An inner harbor and dock that was recently completed lie 5 miles from the city in Zapadni Bay.	City, Tribal
Public Safety	Yes	Saint George has an Anchorage Alaska State Trooper Post with a village public safety officer.	City
Fire Protection	Yes	There is a volunteer fire department provides emergency medical services, structural firefighting, marine firefighting, airport fire and rescue, and industrial firefighting.	City
Telephone and Internet	Yes	Broadband internet is available, but there are no broadband cell phone services. Cell phone service is available.	Private
Post Office	Yes	The United States Postal Service operates a small postal office on Main St.	Federal
School	Yes	Pribilof School District, PK through 12	State

Table 1: St. George Infrastructure

Source: State of Alaska, Community Database Online

Demographics and Economy

The following information is from the Census Bureau’s American FactFinder database. Due to the small population in these areas, the most current information for many of these indicators is 2016, and these represent the 5-year averages from the American Community Survey. If these areas had larger populations, then the Census Bureau would have presented a 1-year average. The year of 2010 was selected as a benchmark year because the data is as authoritative as the Census Bureau can produce as it comes during the decennial census.

Indicator	2010	2016	Percent Change
Population	102	74	-27%
Tribal Members	90	66	-27%
Housing Units	61	46	-25%
Median Household Income	\$46,875	\$56,250	20%
Unemployment Rate	0	14.6	N/A

*Table 2: Demographic and Economic Indicators for St. George
Source: American FactFinder*

The recent Alaskan depression affects Rural Alaska in complex ways. There is a net migration out of Rural Alaska, but regional hubs are seeing a population increase. St. George is not a regional hub, so it is experiencing outmigration, with a population decline of 27% from 2010 to 2016 in both total population and the tribal population. Interestingly despite the recession and declining population, the median household income increased by twenty percent. One plausible (but unconfirmed) explanation is the less affluent could no longer afford the cost of living in St. George, and so they moved, leaving the more affluent in place, thereby increasing the median household income.

The increase in median income is especially curious as the State of Alaska information on fishing licenses reports that in 2018 there are no fishing licenses addressed to St. George. Commercial fishing is traditionally a higher income occupation. While there are no fishing licenses addressed to St. George there are 436 active business licenses with a physical address at St. George.

Community Development Quota (CDQ) groups

Western Alaska groundfish fisheries are managed under several federal programs. The Community Development Quota (CDQ) program reserves 10% of the catch for groundfish, pollock, and crab within a region to qualified Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) communities within 50 miles from shore. St. George is CDQ eligible community.



Figure 2: Map of CDQ Communities in the Aleutian Islands
 Source: North Pacific Management Council

Existing Workforce Competencies

In many rural villages that are not hubs, local government provides the economic base. In St. George about 67% of the workforce falls into this category with other minor employment in health and education, financial activities, and so forth.

2016 Workers by Industry	Number of workers	Percent of total employed
Local Government	26	67%
Financial Activities	4	10%
Educational and Health Services	4	10%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	2	5%
Construction	1	3%
Information	1	3%
Other	1	3%

Table 3: St. George Workers by Industry in 2016
 Source: Alaska Regional and Local Information

While the industry concentration in St. George is rather high, when it comes to local workers' experience there is more variety. Considering that most residents are employed in local government, jobs experience in the community is relatively evenly spread across the real estate, health care, transportation, and administration and waste management industries.

Industry	Experienced Workers	Percent of Population
Real estate and rental and leasing	8	15%
Health care and social assistance	7	13%
Transportation and warehousing	7	13%
Administration support and waste management	6	11%
Finance and insurance	5	9%
Trade	5	9%
Information	3	6%
Construction	2	4%
Management of companies and enterprises	2	4%
Educational services	1	2%
Mining	1	2%
Professional, scientific and technical services	1	2%
All Others	0	0%

Table 4: Number of Workers with Experience in an Industry from 2012 to 2016
Source: Alaska Regional and Local Information

Local Government/Community Stakeholders

Borough Government

St. George is within the Unorganized Borough of Alaska.

Municipality/Village

St. George was incorporated as a first-class city in 1983.

Native and Village Corporations

- **Tribal Governments (*Tanaq Tribe*):** Tribal governments have the status of federally recognized tribes. They have responsibility for specific local health and social service programs and have access to sources of federal funding.
- **ANCSA Village Corporations (*St. George Tanaq Village Corporation*):** Village corporations are the major surface landowners in St. George, and many residents are shareholders in these corporations.
- **ANCSA Regional Corporation (*Aleut Corporation*):** Regional corporations are the major subsurface landowner in the area and are a major partner in land and economic development.

Existing Community Plans

The Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association (APICDA) has worked on a harbor project since 1983 that assists in guiding the Pribilof Aleuts with the economic transition from fur sealing to commercial fishing. APICDA developed federal support to build a harbor for commercial fishing to sustain the community. In 2016, there were a series of meetings hosted by the APICDA in which 40 individuals spoke about the goals and challenges to bettering the harbor. Although there has been much progress on the harbor project, more funding is necessary for substantial work.

In addition to working on the harbor project, APICDA has also installed one wind turbine in Saint George as part of a wind energy project. In 2010, APICDA received matching funds from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to create a small fish handling plant. APICDA has future goals to make facilities for tourists.

The APIA fall 2016 newsletter announced that Saint George was awarded a one-million-dollar grant to improve the Saint George Health Clinic, a primary and preventative care facility. The project aims to expand emergency room space and overall space of the health clinic. The project is expected to be finished in April 2019.

Identification of Barriers to Community and Economic Development

- The region's economy is tied tightly to the fishing industry. The barriers to economic development are shortening fishing seasons, the types of fish being caught are changing and the rise of farmed seafood internationally, and an aging fishing fleet, put the existing economic base of Sand Point at risk. Management of fish stocks, revitalizing the fleet and seeking efficiencies in fishing and food manufacturing is essential to ensuring the economic base of Sand Point.
- Natural hazards and isolation provide a constant barrier to economic development. Weather-related hazards, such as cyclonic storms, can make transportation by land and air unreliable and unsafe. Volcanic and seismic activity pose a probable risk of property damage. The remote location and lack of agricultural land cause a high cost of living for all supplies, and food specifically.
- High dependence on government employment; many nearby villages turned into ghost towns when the village school or post office closed. If the state or federal government decreased the number of government jobs in St. George, it would lead to increased outmigration. Monitoring the state and federal staffing in St. George and nearby villages will assist the community in adapting to a fluid circumstance.
- The lack of physical infrastructure limits St. George's ability to host eco-tourism. The Alaska Marine Highway System ferry does not stop at St. George, limiting visitor traffic. St. George is well known for its migratory bird population and the Pribilof Islands are known as a location for

birding. Iterative improvements in hospitality infrastructure outreach to the outside travel industry could increase recognition of the birding and other wildlife viewing opportunities on the island.

SWOT Analysis



Figure 3: SWOT Analysis