

ALASKA ECONOMIC *TRENDS*

MAY 2024

Housing market continues to cool



ALSO INSIDE

*Abandoned
Alaska towns*

FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Task force recommendations boost our child care industry

By Catherine Muñoz, Commissioner Designee

Last April, Governor Dunleavy issued Administrative Order No. 346 establishing the [Governor's Task Force on Child Care](#). The availability of child care is critical for a robust workforce. As a task force member, I have had the privilege to engage with industry and government leaders on a plan to improve the affordability and availability of quality child care throughout Alaska.

In December, the task force released its first report, [The Governor's Task Force on Child Care 2023 Report #1](#). The report outlines several broad recommendations on wages, benefits, and workplace conditions and highlights career pathways and additional support for in-home providers.

Agencies have already begun to implement many of the recommendations, including improving the background check process for child care workers. The process has been burdensome for those without easy access to the necessary fingerprint services. Especially in rural areas, completing this process can take several weeks or months. The Division of Public Assistance Child Care Program Office plans to launch a digital fingerprinting pilot program in four locations this year. Digital fingerprinting will make it easier and more efficient for Alaskans to submit the information required to start the background check.

The Child Care Program Office is also implementing a new child care database to streamline the online licensing application process. The Division of Public Assistance and the University of Alaska Anchorage have partnered to support the professional development of those seeking to meet the requirements to work in the child care industry.



The Department of Health is working on two regulation packages that address many of the recommendations in the task force report. The regulation packages are in development now and will be available for public comment this summer.

These are just a few examples of the many task force recommendations being put into practice to support the child care industry and the Alaskans who dedicate themselves to this vital work.

Anchorage Rep. Julie Coulombe's House Bill 89 is also making its way through the Alaska Legislature. The bill, now in the Senate Finance Committee, would benefit the industry and working families by providing corporate tax credits for contributions to child care programs and expanding child care assistance eligibility for moderate-income families. This may also help employers recruit and retain their talent.

Child care workers are professionals who are investing in our future generations. I am eager to continue working with industry leaders and my government colleagues to support our child care workforce while addressing the key cost challenges this critical industry faces.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Muñoz".

Contact Commissioner Designee Catherine Muñoz at (907) 465-2700 or commissioner.labor@alaska.gov.



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ON THE COVER:

A Juneau neighborhood,
photo by Sam Dapcevic

Abandoned church at Pilgrim
Hot Springs. Pilgrim Hot Springs
served as a Catholic orphanage for
children who lost their parents in
the 1918 influenza epidemic, and it
operated until 1941. Photo by [Ber-
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ALASKA

DEPARTMENT of LABOR
and WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

Governor
Mike Dunleavy

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THE ECONOMY

Trends is a nonpartisan, data-driven magazine that covers
a variety of economic topics in Alaska.

ON THIS SPREAD: The background watermark for 2024 is an aerial view of the mountains around Anchorage.
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Home market continues to cool

In 2023, housing hit its least affordable level since 2006

By ROB KREIGER

Home sales prices edged higher in 2022 and 2023 and interest rates continued to rise, pushing housing to its least affordable level since 2006. That's unlikely to change any time soon.

According to data from Multiple Listings Services and our Quarterly Survey of Lending Activity, sales in Alaska's major markets settled back below their pre-pandemic levels last year and in many cases hit decade or record lows. Homes are still selling, and the market is by no means stalling, but limited inventory — a common theme in recent years — and dwindling affordability pushed some prospective homebuyers out of the market.

Why a quick return to historically average affordability is unlikely

While affordability is probably keeping many buyers on the sidelines as they wait for conditions to change, a major market shift is unlikely in the near future because none of the factors that can move the affordability needle are expected to change dramatically in the next few years.

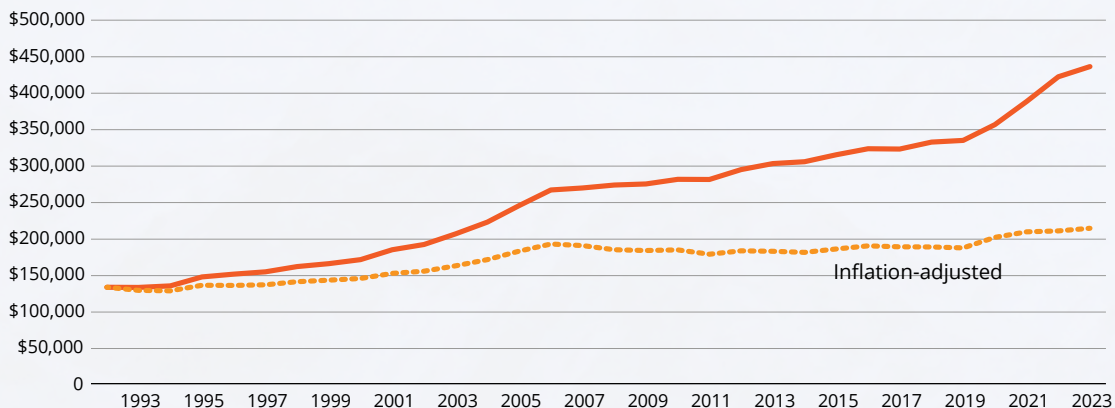
For example, interest rates, which have climbed in recent months, will not fall back to record lows absent a major economic shock. It's important to remember that rates dropped that low during the pandemic, 2020 and 2021, partly because policymakers took drastic measures to stabilize the economy. Low interest rates combined with higher wages and a limited supply of homes for sale created a frenzied buying market as housing reached its most affordable level on record.

If inflation continues to cool and market expectations about the future of inflation shift, rates for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages could decrease in the coming months or years. However, mortgage rates would need to fall about 170 basis points (a basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point) to reach affordability in line with the historical average, which is unlikely in the short term.

Absent that type of rate drop, the other two components of housing affordability — sales prices and monthly wages — would have to move significantly, which is equally unlikely in the near future.

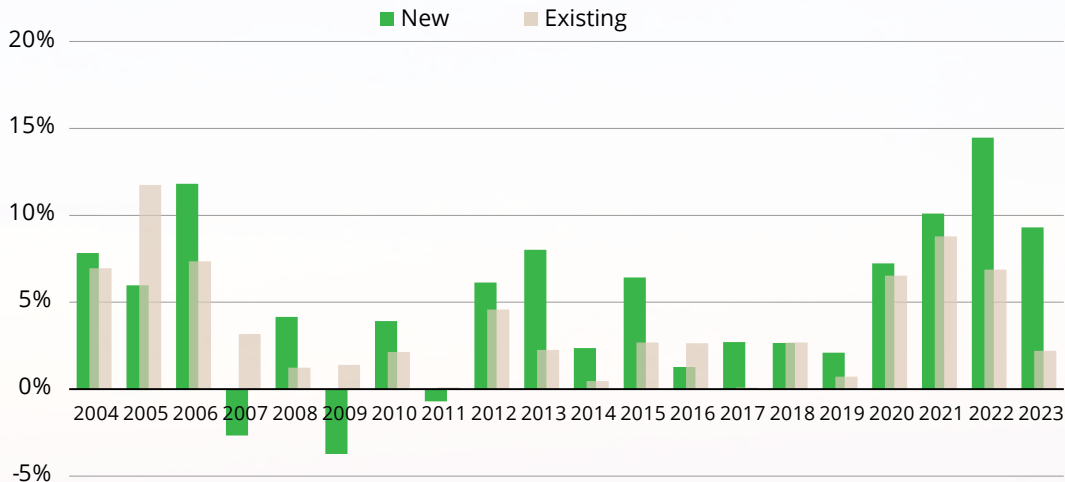
Sales prices may come down as affordability weighs on demand, but history shows that a price drop large enough to affect affordability is not likely. The last time prices soared, in both nominal and

Average sales price for a single-family Alaska home, 1992 to 2023



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

Prices for new home construction continue to outpace existing



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

inflation-adjusted terms, was 2003 to 2006. After that, prices leveled off and then rose much slower for many years after, even losing ground to inflation some years. In other words, prices can fall, but it usually happens gradually over many years.

Average wages have risen nearly 20 percent since 2019 and will continue to go up, but affordability returning to average would require another 20 percent wage increase. Pay will rise that much but over a longer period.

While we won't soon return to the super-affordability of the pandemic years, it is possible to return to average affordability with some combination of a drop in interest rates, a decline in prices, or a wage increase. Interest rates are the most likely of the three to move in an affordable direction in the coming months.

Rising rates and prices weighing on affordability

The average sales price for a single-family home in Alaska rose 3.3 percent in 2023, to \$436,407.

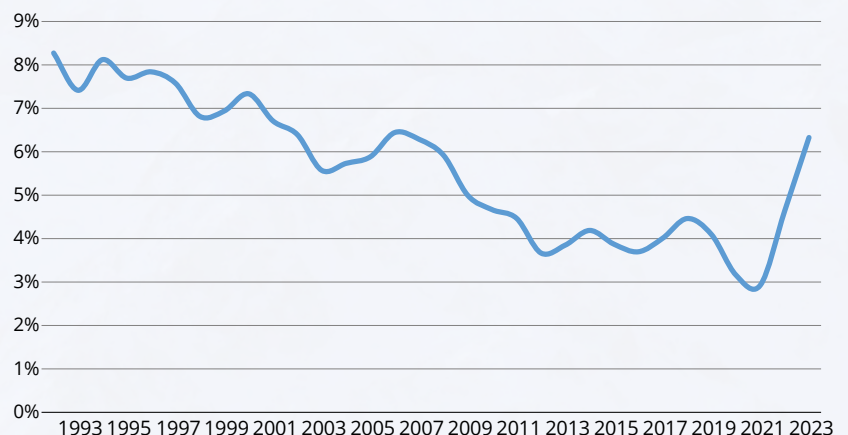
As was the case in 2022, the largest cost increase came in new construction, where buyers appear to be using larger amounts of cash and would therefore be less sensitive to interest rates. New home prices rose

9.3 percent from the previous year while existing construction rose 2.2 percent, putting the averages at \$612,745 and \$414,728, respectively.

At the same time, interest rates for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages moved up to an average of 6.33 percent, the highest since 2006. Since 2021, the average rate has risen an unprecedented 340 basis points.

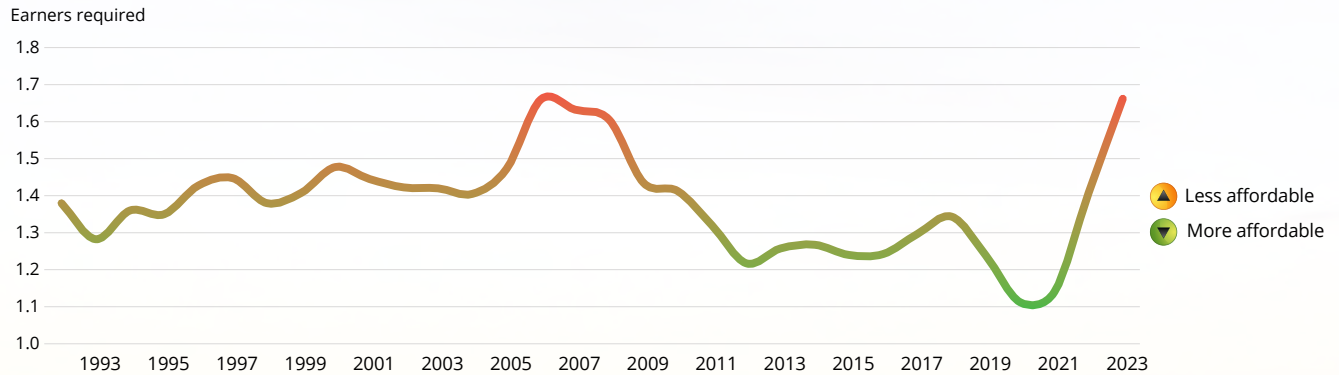
The Alaska Affordability Index, a measure we've produced since 1992, shows how many people earning the average wage it takes to make the payment on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage. (See the sidebar on the next page for how the index is calculated).

Mortgage interest rates continue steep climb



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

In 2023, housing hit its least affordable level in Alaska since 2006



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

About the Alaska Affordability Index

The Alaska Affordability Index is calculated by determining the monthly principal and interest payment for a 30-year fixed rate mortgage to buy the average priced single-family home, with a down payment using the average loan-to-value ratio — which comes out to about 20 percent.

The required monthly income for the mortgage is determined by dividing the monthly principal and interest payment by 24 percent, where 24 percent is the maximum amount of income a home buyer should spend on monthly mortgage payments. Using 24 percent is more conservative than the 30 percent commonly used in other home-ownership calculations.

The index values are then determined by dividing the required monthly income by the average monthly wage from our own data. When required monthly income and average monthly wages are the same, the value is 1.0. As the gap between required monthly income and average wages increases, the index value increases, showing housing is less affordable as higher wages are needed to meet the monthly income requirement. As the gap narrows, housing requires less in wages and is more affordable.

The average wage is based on wages employers report to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development when they submit their unemployment insurance tax reports each quarter.

The estimated average monthly mortgage payment is based on the loan amount needed to purchase the average-priced single-family home and the fixed interest rate Alaska mortgage lenders report to us each quarter in the Alaska Quarterly Survey of Lending Activity. We conduct this survey with Alaska Housing Finance Corporation.

The Alaska Affordability Index is available [on our website](#).

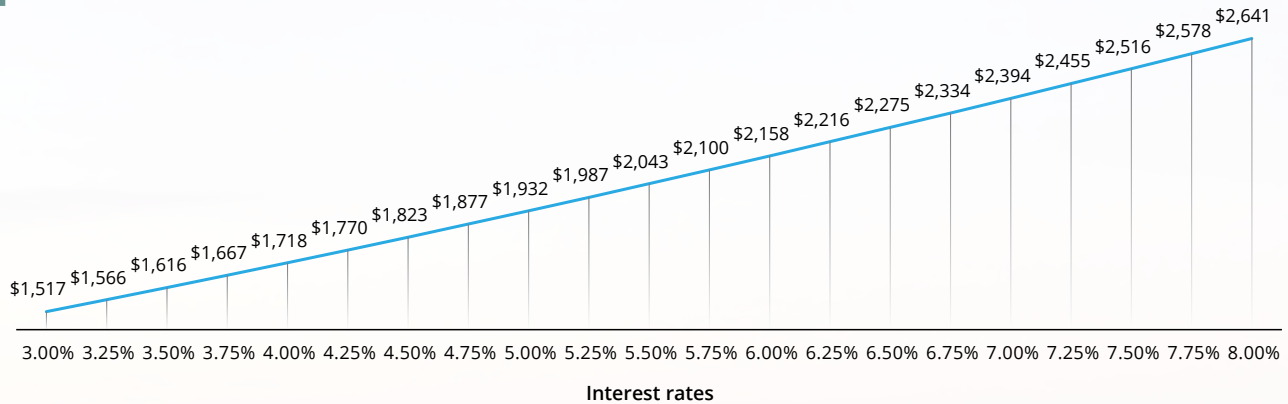
An index value of 1.0 means that one person's average monthly wages are sufficient. As the index value rises, it shows housing is becoming less affordable. Various market conditions can cause this number to change from year to year, and areas around Alaska have varying levels of affordability.

The index's strengths are that it shows how affordability differs across major housing markets and the direction it's moving. However, it considers only the mortgage payment, and the real costs of owning a home are much higher — property taxes, utilities, and insurance can easily add hundreds of dollars each month.

The index also doesn't consider any buyer-specific factors that can make housing more affordable than the index would suggest. For example, a larger down payment means a lower monthly mortgage payment. Buyers can also qualify for lower rates than the index uses depending on their credit history, and even a few basis points could make the difference in being able to afford a home.

In 2023, the average affordability for the year was 1.66 average earners, the same as in 2006. For historical context, average affordability going back to 1992 has been 1.38, and the record low, when housing was most affordable, was 1.11 in 2020.

What the payment would be at various interest rates for a \$436,407 home



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

The effects on different types of Alaska buyers and owners

There’s no ideal level of affordability nor a consensus definition of “unaffordable” housing, and the fact that homes have become less affordable recently is a problem for some, but not all.

For example, first-time homebuyers are having a harder time in the current market, and many may defer purchasing in the hope that something changes soon. Even if buyers have enough cash for the down payment, higher rates are making it harder for some to buy the homes they want, and what falls into their price range may not be desirable.

For some existing homeowners, especially those who have owned their homes outright for many years, there has never been a better market. After a long period of modest price growth from 2007 to 2019, existing homeowners saw the value of one of their largest assets jump 30 percent in just a few years, from an average of \$335,362 in 2019 to \$436,407 in 2022.

Affordability also matters to this group of long-term owners in the sense that they want prices to continue rising, but they need enough buyers in the market who can afford those prices when they’re ready to sell.

Another category of existing homeowner — one who bought in recent years and has less equity in their home — cares about affordability from the perspective that they might feel stuck in their current home. What they could afford a year or two

ago when rates were much lower may be unaffordable now, so these homeowners do not want to give up their current mortgage payment with a low rate because they would have a hard time upgrading to their next home.

If this type of owner does sell, depending on the equity they built up in the short time they owned the home, what they can afford next might be less of a house than the one they just sold.

The chart above shows the relationship between interest rates and monthly payments for a loan on the average-priced house in 2023, which was \$436,407. When rates were at 3 percent in 2021, the monthly principal and interest payment would have been \$1,517. In 2023, interest rates at 6.33 percent pushed the monthly payment above \$2,200.

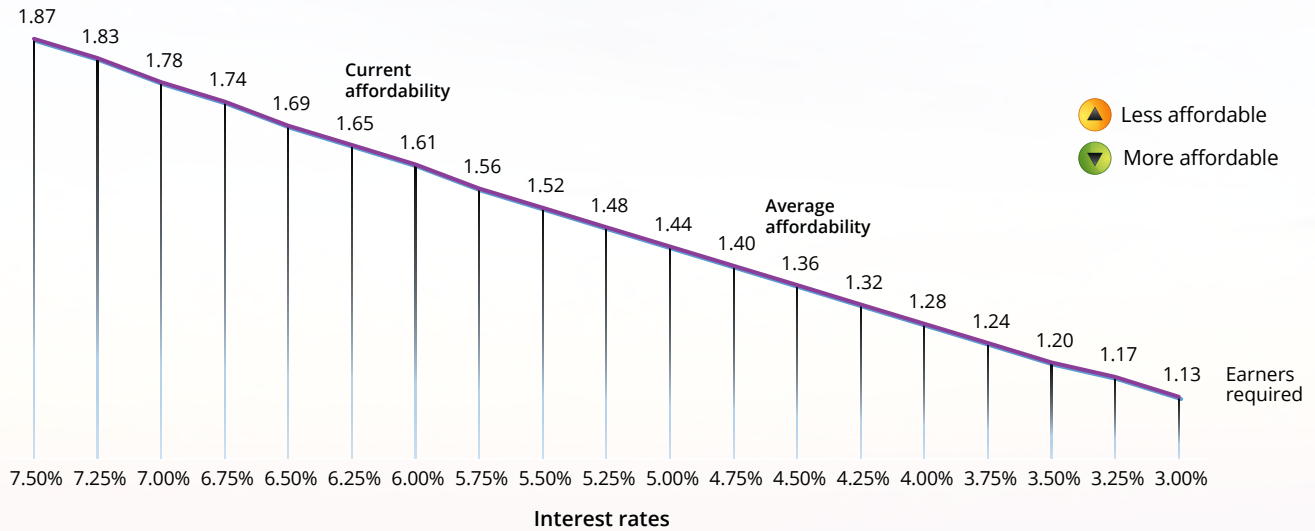
How movement in prices, rates, or wages would shift affordability

To the extent affordability is contributing to the current state of the market, as explained earlier, nothing big will change unless interest rates fall, sales prices fall, or wages rise.

While housing could realistically become more affordable from some combination of these factors, the following scenarios look at each individually to give a sense of how much they would need to move on their own to get housing back to average affordability (1.38).

Of all these scenarios, falling interest rates are the most likely to have an immediate effect on affordability while keeping the market stable.

How interest rate changes would shift home-buying affordability



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

What would it take to get back to average affordability if only one factor changed?

If only rates fell, they would have to drop to 4.6%

If prices and wages remained unchanged, rates would need to drop from the current rate of 6.3 percent to around 4.6 percent for housing to reach average historical affordability. This would be a big drop by historical standards and could happen over months or years, but not quickly.

If rates do trend downward while prices and wages remain stable, more buyers will return to the market, although not to the degree they did during the pandemic. This could push prices higher, but less than they've risen in the last few years.

If only prices fell, they would have to decrease by 17%

A prospective homebuyer may root for a decline in prices, but it's the last thing most homeowners would want. For housing to return to average affordability with stable wages and interest rates over the next few years, prices would have to drop about 17 percent.

Not since the housing crash of the 1980s have prices fallen that hard; it would likely take a massive increase in home inventory amid a collapse in demand. However, inventory could increase less dramatically in two major ways: overbuilding or people leaving the state in large numbers.

Overbuilding is less likely because the level of construction has been fairly consistent since 2008 with no indication of too many homes being built. People

leaving the state, on the other hand, is a risk and will be important to watch in the coming years.

Alaska has seen 11 straight years of negative net migration, or more people leaving the state than moving in. The biggest change has been fewer people moving to Alaska rather than more people leaving.

The working-age population is shrinking, and they are an important home-buying demographic. If the decrease continues, demand could slump even without more construction. The net out-migration trend continuing or accelerating could destabilize the housing market, so it will be critical to understand not just who is leaving Alaska or not coming in, but why.

If only wages rose, it would take a 20% increase

Affordability is determined in part by what percentage of monthly wages are used for mortgage payments. Since 2019, the average monthly wage has risen about 18 percent, not adjusted for inflation, and that wage growth combined with record low interest rates had kept housing at the most affordable level on record.

Wages will continue to grow, but in the short term, an increase that big tends to take years. Given that housing in 2023 was the least affordable since 2006 (at an average monthly wage of \$5,600), wages would need to rise 20 percent to reach average affordability if rates and prices remained where they are.

Rob Kreiger is an economist in Juneau. Reach him at (907) 465-6039 or rob.kreiger@alaska.gov.

Three very different ghost towns

The reasons towns end is a longer list than why they form

By SARA WHITNEY

When profiling any place in Alaska, the first question we ask is what drew people there in the first place, and then, why they stayed. The answer is typically tied to resources — rich hunting or fishing grounds, for example — augmented by cultural ties.

The flip side of that question, which has a longer list of answers, is why people settled but did *not* stay.

Alaska has more than 100 abandoned communities — from small encampments to towns that were once home to thousands — now devoid of physical evidence they ever existed or left as a collection of weathered buildings or ruins.

Settlements have always come and gone, a cycle

that continues today. Multiple villages on the coasts and riverbanks face devastating effects from climate change, with some flooding or sinking because of permafrost thawing or erosion. For example, Newtok, about 100 miles northwest of Bethel, is in the midst of a long-planned and costly move to a new village, Mertarvik. ([See the December 2020 issue of Trends.](#))

While climate change and a global rural-to-urban migration trend are the modern pressures, most communities that disappeared over the past 150 years in Alaska succumbed to economic changes, forced relocations, war, natural disasters, accidents, environmental shifts, or disease.

After a closer look at these causes, this article will detail the lifespans of three vacated historical Alaska towns that ended for very different reasons: Curry, York, and Portlock.



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section



Ghost Town: CURRY

At left, this railroad waiting area is one of the few structures left in Curry. Since this picture was taken in 2009, snow has caved in part of the roof. (Photo by Flickr user [McGeez](#) under [Creative Commons](#))

Below left, President Warren G. Harding and his entourage arrive at the Alaska Railroad depot in front of the Curry Hotel, where he stayed overnight on his way to drive in the golden railroad spike in 1923. Hotel staff members greet the party. Below right, a locomotive passes Curry train station buildings sometime between 1913 and 1939. (Alaska State Library, Margaret Bone Wilcox and Skinner Foundation Collections, P70-33 and P44-04-267)



The reasons towns disappeared

Starting in 1880, many villages disappeared with the appearance of whalers, miners, and trappers. Newcomers introduced a cash economy to the indigenous populations, and trading centers became more permanent settlements, pulling in residents from other communities. Similarly, some villages dwindled as residents moved to where schools were.

Others were forced out, such as the Unangan who were pulled from their Aleutian and Pribilof Islands villages — such as Attu, Biorka, Kashaga, and Makushin — during World War II and relocated to internment camps in Southeast or imprisoned by the Japanese, then prohibited to return to their villages when the war ended.

Similarly, on King Island/Ukivok in the Bering Sea, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs closed the school in the middle of the century and forcibly relocated the students to boarding schools on the mainland, leaving the elders and parents to gather food for themselves, something they had relied on the children to help accomplish. Some villagers left to fight in World War

II and those who remained battled tuberculosis. By 1970, the rest of the adults had left the island out of necessity, no longer able to make ends meet.

Some ghost towns were mining centers, or railroad depots that served them, withering as resources dwindled or golden opportunities popped up elsewhere. These included Chatanika near Fairbanks; Amalga and Treadwell near Juneau; the Kennicott Ghost Town; the copper mining town Sulzer on Prince of Wales Island; and the luxury railroad stop Curry, whose story the next section will tell.

Some villages were abandoned slowly because of erosion or other environmental hazards, or quickly after a disaster. Often, they relocated mere miles away. Examples of villages that moved include Mumtrak (which became Goodnews Bay) and Old Minto, both abandoned after continual flooding. Hoonah's residents originally lived in Glacier Bay, but the advancing glaciers pushed them out.

Chenega's original location in Prince William Sound was leveled by a tsunami after the 1964 Good Friday earthquake in Southcentral, and Portage, on Turnagain Arm near Anchorage, sank into the

ground after the quake.

Other disasters include the large fire that crippled the short-lived Flat City (formerly Otter) in the Interior in 1924; the Palm Sunday Avalanche of 1898 that killed 70 people in Dyea, eventually causing the town to fade as it lost its access edge to adjacent places such as Skagway; and the 1788 earthquake and subsequent tidal wave that destroyed the community at Three Saints Bay on Kodiak Island.



Ghost Town: CURRY

At left, children attend the Curry school around 1948. Above, the one-room schoolhouse in Curry, which was built in 1936 and had 11 students in the 1950 Census.

(Alaska State Library, Records of Alaska Schools 1931-1951 Manuscript Collection, MS146-03-11-1)

The eruption of Mount Katmai on the Alaska Peninsula in 1912 leveled the town of Katmai and delivered another blow to the beleaguered Afognak, just north of Kodiak Island, which it blanketed in three feet of ash.

Afognak had already weathered a series of tragedies. Many villagers died when Russians arrived from smallpox, mistreatment, and accidents while hunting otters for the Russians. Eventually, the town was hit by a tsunami after the 1964 quake. All but 11 of the remaining residents moved at the end of that year to a new community on the northeastern coast of Kodiak Island called Port Lions, in honor of the Lions Club, which helped build it. The last 11 people stayed in Afognak until 1980.

Some villages were wiped out by disease, such as those hit by the Spanish Flu of 1918. These include York (which this article will also profile in greater detail) and Pilgrim Hot Springs, where an orphanage was established to house children who survived the flu in other villages, then closed after the children grew up. The villages north of Nome were devastated by that epidemic; for example, 72 of 80 Brevig Mission residents died. The vast majority of influenza casualties in Alaska were Alaska Natives.

Finally, a few ended for more complicated or mysterious reasons, such as Portlock on the southern tip of the Kenai Peninsula, the third ghost town whose story we will tell.

When looking at these defunct communities, the circumstances of their abandonment tend to dominate the limited information available. What's harder to pinpoint but often germane to the story of loss is who lived in those towns, and the type of work that brought them there and sustained them.

CURRY was a short-lived, luxury railroad stop abandoned in 1957

Reason: Series of fires and explosions, and economic advancements in nearby places

Curry was a relatively short-lived but showy stop along the Alaska Railroad, 22 miles north of Talkeetna. For a brief time, it was not just a convenient halfway point between Seward and Fairbanks on a two-day trip but a luxury resort with a hotel, a school, a golf course, a ski area, and a massive suspension bridge that transported visitors to an ideal spot to view Mt. McKinley, now called Denali.

Named for Congressman Charles F. Curry of California, chairman of the Committee on Territories and a staunch advocate for the railroad, Curry hosted President Warren G. Harding in 1923. Harding stayed at the Curry Hotel on his way to drive in the golden spike at Nenana to mark the completion of the railroad.

Text continues on page 13

Curry's workers in 1949 and what their wages would be worth today

Reported occupation	Employer	1949 wage	In 2024 dollars
Median wage in Curry		\$3,500	\$46,320
Armed Forces	Armed Forces	unk	-
Armed Forces	Armed Forces	unk	-
Armed Forces	Armed Forces	unk	-
B and B Foreman	Railroad	unk	-
Boiler Maker	Railroad	unk	-
Boiler Maker Helper	Railroad	\$1,800	\$23,822
Brakeman	Railroad	\$7,400	\$97,935
Brakeman	Railroad	\$6,900	\$91,317
Brakeman	Railroad	\$8,700	\$115,139
Brakeman	Railroad	\$8,000	\$105,875
Brakeman	Railroad	\$6,900	\$91,317
Bulldozer Operator	Railroad	\$4,800	\$63,526
Car Inspector	Railroad	\$5,000	\$66,172
Car Operating Mechanic	Railroad	\$300	\$3,970
Carpenter	Railroad	\$4,000	\$52,938
Chainman	Railroad	unk	-
Clerical Work	Railroad	\$1,100	\$14,558
Clerk in Luggage Car	Railroad	\$1,200	\$15,881
Conductor	Railroad	\$6,000	\$79,406
Conductor	Railroad	unk	-
Conductor	Railroad	unk	-
Conductor	Railroad	\$7,000	\$92,641
Conductor	Railroad	\$7,300	\$96,612
Conductor	Railroad	\$9,000	\$119,110
Conductor	Railroad	\$8,000	\$105,875
Cook	RR Hotel	\$3,000	\$39,703
Cook	RR Hotel	\$5,000	\$66,172
Cook	Railroad	unk	-
Cook	Railroad	\$1,300	\$17,205
Cook	Railroad	unk	-
Cook	Railroad	unk	-
Cook and Baker	RR Hotel	\$4,100	\$54,261
Crane Operator	Railroad	unk	-
Desk Clerk	Railroad	\$1,000	\$13,234
Desk Clerk	RR Hotel	unk	-
Dishwasher	RR Hotel	\$2,100	\$27,792
Dishwasher	Railroad	unk	-
Dishwasher	Railroad	unk	-
Electrician	Railroad	unk	-
Elementary Teacher	School	\$3,000	\$39,703
Engineer	Railroad	\$4,000	\$52,938
Foreman	Railroad	\$2,000	\$26,469
Freight Car Carman	Railroad	\$3,700	\$48,967
Fur Trapper	Fur Trapping	unk	-
Fur Trapper	Fur Trapping	unk	-
Fur Trapper	Fur Trapping	unk	-
Fur Trapper	Fur Trapping	unk	-
Fur Trapper	Fur Trapping	unk	-
Fur Trapper	Fur Trapping	unk	-
Helper at Round House	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Hotel Clerk	RR Hotel	\$3,800	\$50,291
Hotel Desk Clerk	Railroad	unk	-
Hotel Helper	Railroad	unk	-
Hotel Janitor	Railroad	\$3,500	\$46,320
Hotel Manager	RR Hotel	unk	-
House Mother	RR Hotel	unk	-
Janitor On The Train	Railroad	\$2,900	\$38,380
Laborer	Railroad	\$2,400	\$31,763
Laborer	Railroad	\$4,600	\$60,828
Laborer	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Laborer	Railroad	\$1,900	\$25,145
Laborer	Railroad	\$4,800	\$63,526
Laborer	Common Work	unk	-
Laundry Man	Railroad	\$3,500	\$46,320
Laundry Man	Railroad	\$3,500	\$46,320
Lineman	Railroad	\$700	\$9,264
Locomotive Engineer	Railroad	\$7,000	\$92,641

Reported occupation	Employer	1949 wage	In 2024 dollars
Locomotive Engineer	Railroad	\$6,000	\$79,406
Locomotive Engineer	Railroad	\$6,000	\$79,406
Locomotive Engineer	Railroad	\$8,700	\$115,139
Locomotive Fireman	Railroad	\$7,000	\$92,641
Locomotive Fireman	Railroad	\$6,000	\$79,406
Locomotive Fireman	Railroad	\$6,400	\$84,700
Locomotive Foreman	Railroad	\$4,000	\$52,938
Locomotive Machinist	Railroad	\$4,600	\$60,828
Locomotive Mechanic	Railroad	\$1,000	\$13,234
Machinist	Railroad	\$2,700	\$35,733
Maid	Railroad	unk	-
Maid	Railroad	unk	-
Mechanic Helper	Railroad	unk	-
Mechanic Helper	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Night Railroad Foreman	Railroad	\$5,000	\$66,172
Nurse	Railroad	\$600	\$7,941
Painter	Railroad	unk	-
Passenger Car Inspector	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Pipe Fitter	Railroad	\$4,700	\$62,202
Placer Miner	Gold Mining	unk	-
Plumber	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Plumber	Railroad	\$2,000	\$26,469
Plumber	Railroad	\$4,900	\$64,849
Plumber	Railroad	\$4,800	\$63,526
Plumbing	Railroad	\$4,700	\$62,202
Post Mistress	Railroad	unk	-
Power Plant Engineer	Railroad	\$4,500	\$59,555
Power Plant Fireman	Railroad	\$1,000	\$13,234
Power Plant Fireman	Railroad	unk	-
Power Plant Foreman	Railroad	unk	-
Press Operator Foreman	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Radio Technician	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Railroad Telegraph Operator	Railroad	\$3,200	\$42,350
Road Gang Blaster	Railroad	\$4,500	\$59,555
Roadmaster	Railroad	\$6,900	\$91,317
Roadmaster	Railroad	\$5,300	\$70,142
Rodman	Railroad	unk	-
Rodman	Railroad	\$4,000	\$52,938
Section Foreman	Railroad	unk	-
Section Foreman	Railroad	\$4,100	\$54,261
Section Foreman	Railroad	\$6,000	\$79,406
Section Foreman	Railroad	\$6,000	\$79,406
Section Foreman	Railroad	\$1,000	\$13,234
Section Hand	Railroad	\$3,500	\$46,320
Section Hand	Railroad	\$3,800	\$50,291
Section Hand	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
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Section Hand	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Section Hand	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Section Hand	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Section Laborer	Railroad	\$2,500	\$33,086
Station Agent	Railroad	unk	-
Station Fireman	Railroad	\$2,500	\$33,086
Station Fireman	Railroad	\$2,700	\$35,733
Stationary Fireman	Railroad	\$1,700	\$22,498
Telegraph Operator	Railroad	unk	-
Telegraph Operator	RR Hotel	\$6,000	\$79,406
Telegrapher Clerk	RR Hotel	\$2,800	\$37,056
Telephone Line Repairman	Railroad	unk	-
Truck Driver	Railroad	\$1,800	\$23,822
Waitress	Railroad	\$600	\$7,941
Waitress	Railroad	\$2,300	\$30,439
Waitress	RR Hotel	\$1,800	\$23,822
Waitress	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Waitress	RR Hotel	\$5,000	\$66,172
Waitress	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Waitress	Railroad	\$3,000	\$39,703
Waitress	RR Hotel	\$300	\$3,970
Work In Laundry At Hotel	Railroad	\$2,400	\$31,763

Notes: Some respondents with entries marked unknown indicated they received income from sources other than a wage or salary job.
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Schedules, 1949 for the 1950 Census; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

The hotel, advertised as a “wilderness palace,” billed itself as a place where “accommodations are modern, inviting, and comfortable and the cuisine [is] of the highest order.” By 1925, Curry’s popularity was set.

Starting in 1926, though, a series of accidents set the town back, leading to its abandonment just a few decades later.

A timeline of Curry's misfortunes

- **1926:** Coal dust comes into contact with an overheated stack, sparking a fire that destroys the engine house and power plant and damages a snowplow and locomotive.
- **1933:** The rebuilt engine house and an older locomotive are destroyed by another fire.
- **1939:** A hotel bigger than Curry's is built in Denali National Park, drawing visitors away from Curry. However, the Alaska Railroad kept investing in the town, which included housing its employees there starting in 1945.
- **1945:** A boiler explosion destroys the power plant again after a hand-fired steam boiler ignites because of its low water level. The town rebuilds and adds a ski area.
- **1957:** The 75-room Curry Hotel catches fire and burns to the ground, killing three. At the time, the Railroad Reporter wrote, “All that remained of the historic structure were smoldering ashes, two tall chimneys, and a tangle of pipes.”

Citing safety issues, the railroad decided to raze what was left, leaving Curry a ghost town. With no roads in or out, Curry is still viewable from the railroad tracks, but all that remains are a large meadow, a crumbling waiting area for the train, and a few interpretive sign boards.

For more than 50 years, the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage has run an all-day ski train to Curry, once a year each March.

The population and economy of Curry

In 1930, 1940, and 1950, a few years before Curry took its final blow, the decennial census painted a picture of the town’s population and economy. Ninety-one people lived there in 1930, a few years after the first fire. In 1940, after the town’s economic light temporarily dimmed, the population had fallen to 45.

By 1950, Curry's population had climbed again, reaching 183. That year, the Census found that

About the data

Population, occupation, and wage details in this article come from handwritten archived U.S. Census Schedules (microdata) from the early 20th century, Alaska Territorial Department of Education records, and other government reports.

Federal documents from that time — Alaska was not yet a state — were of varying quality, with inconsistent categories and missing or indecipherable entries or codes. These numbers should be taken as a general snapshot of these places and a supplement to their other documented history.

nearly all of the permanent residents were working for the then-federally-owned Alaska Railroad, hotel, or both. Nearly all were white lodgers.

While a handful of the entries weren't legible, the Census recorded the occupations and reported earnings shown in the table on the previous page. Those not employed by the hotel or railroad were five fur trappers, one gold miner, and one laborer doing “common work.” Some who didn't list their wages drew income from elsewhere.

Curry workers made a median wage of \$3,500, which would be worth about \$45,550 today and was high for that time. Nationally, the median wage in 1949 was just \$2,016, or \$26,681 when adjusted for inflation.

YORK didn't meet mining hopes, was devastated by 1918 flu

Reason: The entire population died during the Spanish influenza epidemic

York sprang up in 1899 with the discovery that the area was rich in tin deposits. The mining town was established at the mouth of the Anikovik River at Cape York on the Seward Peninsula, 15 miles south of the village of Wales.

Like Wales, Cape York was named after British royalty, but the area was home to Inupiat who had lived in the region for millennia and already populated the surrounding villages.

Established with big plans for tin mining

In 1900, the U.S. Census counted 25 residents in



Ghost Town: YORK

This photo was taken sometime between 1903 and 1913 and is labeled "Cape York, Alaska, where tin mines were first discovered." Eight people pose for a photo with their dog teams in front of a wooden building on the tundra. Logs stand leaning together at left and in front of the door.

(Photo by Frank H. Nowell, Alaska State Library Historical Collection, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Perry D. Palmer Photograph Album)

York, including transient white mine workers and some Inupiat, although it's unclear whether the Native population lived in York proper or an outlying area. The jobs listed in the town at that time were farmer, miner, railroad conductor, cook, bookkeeper, maid, salesman, physician, telegrapher, and blacksmith. Nearly all said they worked just three months of the year.

The Native respondents were recorded as deer hunters, sealers, or domestics.

The town boomed that first census year, then grew more in 1901 when the post office opened. It continued growing in 1902 — but the post office closed abruptly later that year, for reasons not specified.

While stream tin was discovered in the area in 1901 and some gold placer mining took place as well, the town itself failed to reach expectations for tin production despite the broader region eventually becoming the No. 1 domestic supplier of tin in the United States, as noted by the U.S. Geological

Survey in 1922. York also proved relatively difficult to access and equip.

Influenza burns through the peninsula

There's a big gap in what we know about York between 1902 and 1918 when influenza struck. The Census was inexplicably absent in 1910, and while it's clear that the entire town died in 1918 when the Spanish flu arrived, it's unclear how many people had been living there at the time and who they were. Unlike the other villages in the area, York's death count was reported only as a percentage: 100.

IN THE SMALL VILLAGE OF YORK, ALL ARE DEAD

"At Igloo there have been 45 deaths, and at Teller Mission 60 Natives have died. In a small village at York, everyone has died. Grave fears are felt for Cape Prince of Wales and the most Western settlement on the mainland. Three dog teams have been sent for relief at Cape Prince of Wales."

Alaska Daily Empire, Dec. 7, 1918

According to the Nome Nugget, the pandemic called The Purple Death burned out on the Seward Peninsula, but not before the villages north of Nome "suffered terribly."

A boy from York reportedly died from the flu and his body was transported to Wales for burial — the implication being the boy's body spread the disease to Wales, where it then exploded "without warning."



Ghost Town: PORTLOCK

This photo at left, year unknown, provides an aerial view of Portlock and the salmon cannery. (Photo from the Alaska State Library Historical Collection)

Below, few structures remain in Portlock today. (From "In Search Of The Port Chatham Hairy Man," Extreme Expeditions Northwest, LLC, 2018, under 17 U.S. Code 107)



Within a few days, everyone in Wales was infected. Back in York, the boy's father fell sick quickly, and "every last person in York perished."

According to the Alaska Department of Health, the Nome Census Area was hit hardest in the state by far, with 63.7 percent of its population dying from the 1918 flu as most county-equivalents in Alaska reported death rates in the single digits. Death rates in villages close to York were as high as 90 percent, but only in York did all residents perish.

A handful of outsiders resettled in York a few years later, but it was short-lived

In 1920, the Census returned to York and reported a population of six white residents, mainly Danish: a family of four and a married couple. The two men were a mine superintendent and a miner, and one of the women was a housekeeper in a boarding house.

Just two years later, the U.S. Geological Survey, in a lengthy report on the area's mineral prospects, reported the only permanent York residents were a single white family of three. Surveyors also noted approximately 500 Natives lived in nearby Wales and Teller as well as one white U.S. Bureau of Education employee and a missionary, and summer typically brought in an additional 15 transient miners and winter about 50 or 60.

Mining (tin and gold) were the main industries listed as well as reindeer herding and fishing. The regional Inupiat population owned some reindeer and fished for salmon and white whales as well as herring in inland waters and hunted in the winter for walrus, seal, and polar bear, "but the takings at York [were] small compared to other parts of the peninsula."

USGS's report didn't mention the disease that killed

the entire settlement just four years earlier, but it did hint at why York's economy never took off as expected, noting how difficult access was, even relative to the other area communities, and how sparse resources were.

"The fuel problem of the area is a serious one," the report said. Coal delivered in 1918 cost \$50 or more per ton — \$1,115 in 2024 dollars — and was imported mainly from Seattle, nearly 3,000 nautical miles away.

Winters were severe, with heavy snow and temperatures of -50 degrees. At the time, a storm had taken out the only telephone line in York. Further, "land animals were once plentiful in the area but have been greatly reduced in recent years," the report said. Most streams were stocked with trout and grayling but contained little vegetation. Geological survey parties had to carry their own horse feed and oil.

The open season was June through September, with one steamship from Seattle providing regular service to Seward Peninsula ports, albeit erratically, so communication between York and Nome, about 100 miles to the southeast, was only by occasional freighter and small coastwise gas schooners. One schooner provided mail service once every two weeks and transported passengers and freight — weather permitting.

It's unclear when the last three people left, but York never again appeared in the Census.

PORTLOCK was a mostly Alutiiq cannery town deserted in 1949

Reason: It's complicated

There's no question that Portlock was a cannery

town on the southern tip of the Kenai Peninsula, established in the early 20th century, and that it was deserted in 1949 except for the postmaster, who left the following year.

From there, though, Portlock's story is largely unrecorded by official sources and the stories behind its demise vary, even among family members. The lore has also grown with time.

The Sugpiaq people, later called Alutiiq, had lived in the area for thousands of years, but the town was named for Captain Nathaniel Portlock of the British Royal Navy, who landed at the site, also called Port Chatham, in the 1780s.

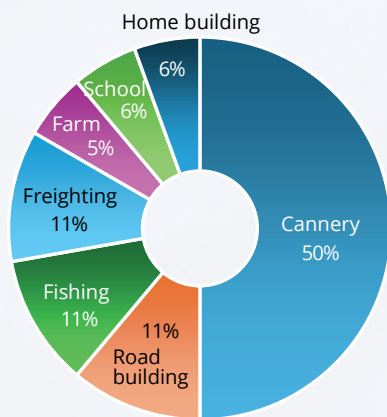
A salmon cannery opened around 1900, and according to the book "Ghost Towns of Alaska" by Mary G. Balcom, a group of halibut fishermen later built a cooperative cold storage there, doing most of their fishing on the Portlock bank. Portlock also had a chromite mine at some point, until chrome prices dropped. In 1921, the post office opened, an official milestone for the town.

All of that might sound like many Alaska communities during that time, but what ended up defining Portlock for the next century was the tale of a large, hairy half-man that stalked the villagers until they fled, some say overnight.

Whatever the truth was, the fear was real

While colloquially dubbed Bigfoot by some, Portlock residents called the creature "Nantiinaq," which means "giant hairy thing" or "half man, half beast."

The types of work people in Portlock did in 1939



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Schedules, September 1939 for the 1940 Census

Depression-era jobs and wages in Portlock, and today's equivalents

Reported occupation	1939 wage	In 2024 dollars
Teacher, Territorial School	\$1,450	\$32,119
Boatmen, Salmon Tender (2)	\$1,000	\$22,151
Laborers, Cannery (2)	\$900	\$19,936
Foreman, Road Building	\$800	\$17,721
Carpenters, Cannery (2)	\$700	\$15,506
Laborer, Road Building	\$600	\$13,291
Deckhand, Salmon Tender	\$500	\$11,076
Filler, Cannery	\$130	\$2,880
Fish Slimers (3)	\$100-\$190	\$2,215-\$4,209
Carpenter, Home Building	\$100	\$2,215

The following reported they made no wages but received income from other sources: Fishermen (2); Mariner, Freighting; Fox Farmer; Operator, Cannery; Helper, Cannery

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Schedules, September 1939 for the 1940 Census; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Some believed he had originally been just an antisocial man who hid in the woods and became bigger and hairier with time. You could smell him coming before you could see him, they said, and he was most dangerous in the fog, so they were taught not to hunt when it rolled in.

A retired school teacher who taught in Portlock during World War II told an Anchorage newspaper in 1973 that cannery workers had gone into the mountains to hunt Dall sheep and bear but never returned. Rumors spread of a mangled body washing up on shore and dozens going missing over 20 years, but there's no official record of any missing people from Portlock and only one such recorded death.

In 1931, logger Andrew Kamluck was killed in the forest by a large piece of equipment. (The 1940 Census confirms a family of four named Kamluck was still living there nine years later.) His death was recorded as an accident, but many insisted no human could have lifted and swung the equipment that struck him in the back of the head.

While residents disagreed on the details and Nantiinaq's nature — some said he wasn't malevolent, he just wanted to be left alone — they agreed that Nantiinaq was real.

The fear was definitely real. In 1905, according to Alaska Magazine, the cannery closed for the season, reporting a disturbance in the woods. Something was "bothering" the camp, and workers refused to return. But the cannery did reopen the next season.

By 1949, residents felt driven further and further from the woods, and all remaining families left,

mostly moving to Nanwalek, about a three-hour small boat ride up the peninsula. Whether they left over weeks or overnight, as the story goes, the exodus was fast, leaving only the postmaster. After a year alone, he closed the post office in 1950 and was the last-ever resident to leave.

Strange phenomena aside, people had other reasons to leave. According to an Anchorage Press interview with an elder whose family left Portlock in 1949, it just wasn't economical to stay anymore, as Nanwalek had more to offer. The article also noted that "the timing coincided with the extension of [the Sterling Highway] to Kenai and eventually Homer, diverting much of the traffic to the road system."

The site remains a seven-decade curiosity

Just a few dilapidated structures and rusting cannery equipment remain, and while the area has drawn fishermen, "monster hunters," and adventurers over the decades, the former residents never returned.

Many who stopped there over the years also reported Nantiinaq sightings or paranormal phenomena. Others just found it empty and eerie. A couple on a boat trip to Seward stopped there in the early 1970s and told the Anchorage Daily News there was little left, that even the linoleum had been pulled from the floors. The travelers stopped in Nanwalek next and said they were told Portlock was a cannery town where "something was off."

Nanwalek residents, however, kept their distance for decades. Then in December 2021 with the elders' blessing, a team of mostly Portlock descendants returned to the site, which is owned by the Chugach Corporation, to film a reality show for the Discovery Channel. The purpose, the team said, was to investigate the reports of Nantiinaq and make the island safe for descendants to return and, they hoped, eventually resettle Portlock.

Portlock had already been the subject of a 2018 documentary and several books.

Portlock's population before the exodus

A federal Alaska Territorial Department of Education report recorded Portlock's population as 58 in 1931. The Census didn't arrive until 1940, however, although the town had been established for decades. In February 1940, the Census enumerator for Portlock Village and Elizabeth Island counted:

- 31 people: 10 families living in nine households, seven owned and two rented.

- 20 males and 11 females; 14 were adults.
- 20 Alaska Natives (recorded as "Aleuts") and 11 whites, although people were categorized then by Native and white percentages.

The Census noted that 10 people were employed, six were self-employed, and an additional six were seeking work. Employment status at that time was for "persons 10 and older," but only two of the workers were under age 18.

The 72-year-old school teacher was the highest-paid person in Portlock. See the exhibits on the previous page for what workers did and how much they reported earning that year.

A well-built, one-room schoolhouse

The Portlock school was built in 1934 for \$4,589, which would cost \$108,583 today.

A territorial schools representative reported in the early 1940s that the school had a capacity for 30-35 students and that it was located on a small hill, 70 feet from the salt water, and was lit with gasoline lamps. It had a good playground, the report said, and drinking water was available from a pipeline or nearby spring.

The report also noted Portlock had a post office, a store, fishing, a cannery, a sawmill, logging, mining prospects, and fur farming that year. The town received one service boat per month but lighterage service was necessary.

The school had 19 students in 1931, even before the schoolhouse was built, a number that began to dwindle in the late 1930s. By 1940 it had 10 students, which dropped to seven by 1943.

A final ghostly error

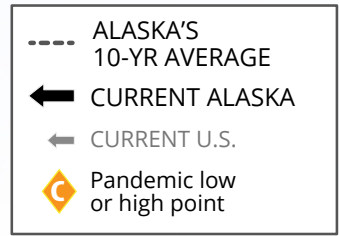
After 1940, Portlock fell out of the decennial census; after all, the town had been vacated before the 1950 Census. However, in 1980, Portlock made an erroneous yet somehow fitting cameo appearance.

The long-empty Portlock was reported as a census-designed place (an unincorporated community) with a population of 31 in 1980, noting it had zero people in 1960 and 1970. Portlock fell off again in 1990 and hasn't been seen since.

Sara Whitney is the editor of *Alaska Economic Trends*. Reach her in Juneau at (907) 465-6561 or sara.whitney@alaska.gov.

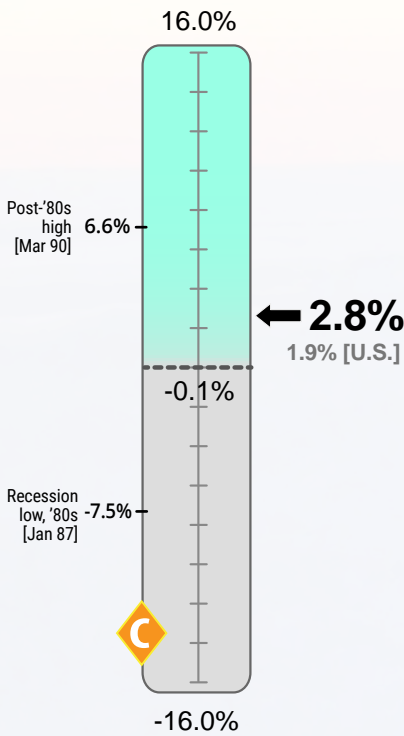
A special thank you to demographer Eric Sandberg for his additional research and Census data support for this article.

Gauging The Economy



Job Growth

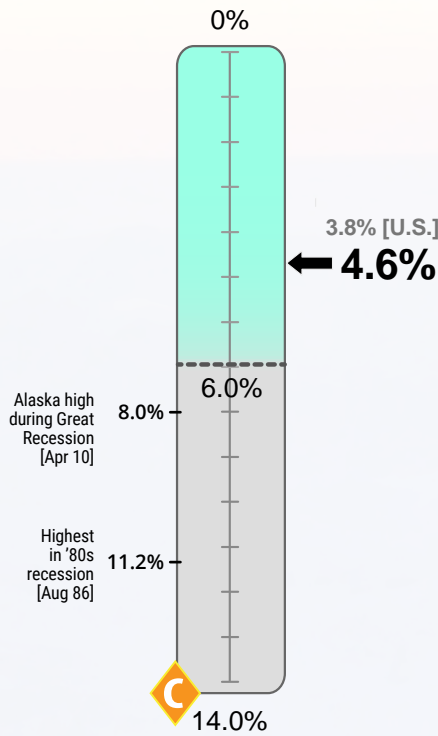
March 2024
Over-the-year percent change



Alaska's March employment was 2.8 percent above last March while national employment was up 1.9 percent over the same period.

Unemployment Rate

March 2024
Seasonally adjusted

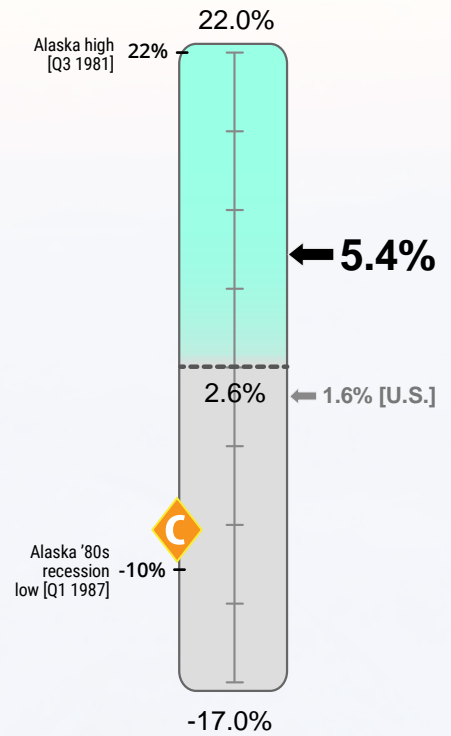


Alaska's unemployment rate has been less useful as an economic measure during the pandemic and its aftermath because of data collection difficulties.

It's clear, however, that unemployment rates in Alaska and the U.S. are historically low and that the shortage of workers is a bigger economic challenge than unemployment.

Wage Growth

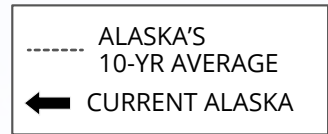
3rd Quarter 2023
Over-the-year percent change



After falling hard during the pandemic, total wages paid by Alaska employers have bounced back and show strong growth.

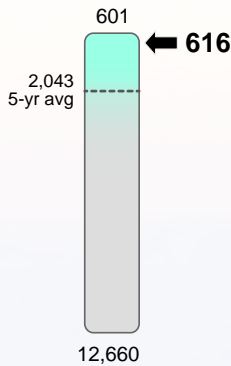
Wages were up 5.4 percent from year-ago levels in the third quarter of 2023 and 19.7 percent above third quarter 2019.

Gauging The Economy



Initial Claims

Unemployment, week ending April 13, 2024*

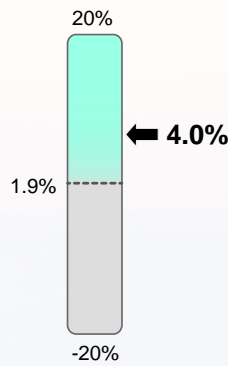


Unemployment claims jumped during the pandemic as many businesses shut down or limited services. Pandemic-driven claims loads have fallen, and new claims for benefits are well below their long-term average.

*Four-week moving average ending with specified week

GDP Growth

4th Quarter 2023
Over-the-year percent change*

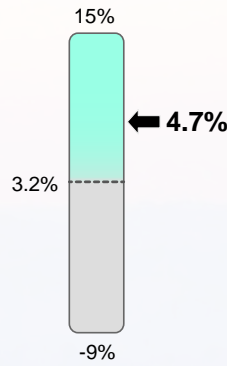


Gross domestic product is the value of the goods and services a state produces. It's an important economic measure but also a volatile one for Alaska because commodity prices influence the numbers so much — especially oil prices.

*In current dollars

Personal Income Growth

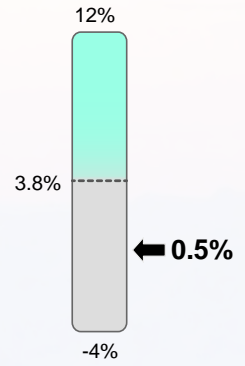
3rd Quarter 2023
Over-the-year percent change



Personal income consists of three main parts: 1) wages and salaries; 2) dividends, interest, and rents; and 3) transfer payments (payments from governments to individuals).

Change in Home Prices

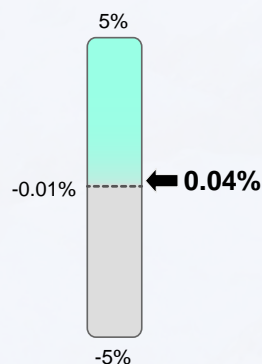
Single-family, percent change from prior year, Q3 2023



Home prices shown include only those for which a commercial loan was used. This indicator tends to be volatile from quarter to quarter.

Population Growth

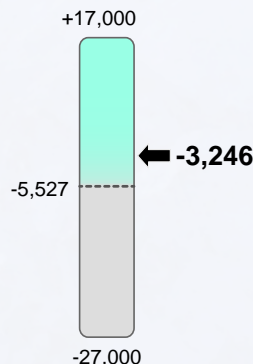
2022 to 2023



After four years of decline, Alaska's population has grown slightly in each of the last three years as natural increase (births minus deaths) has slightly exceeded migration losses.

Net Migration

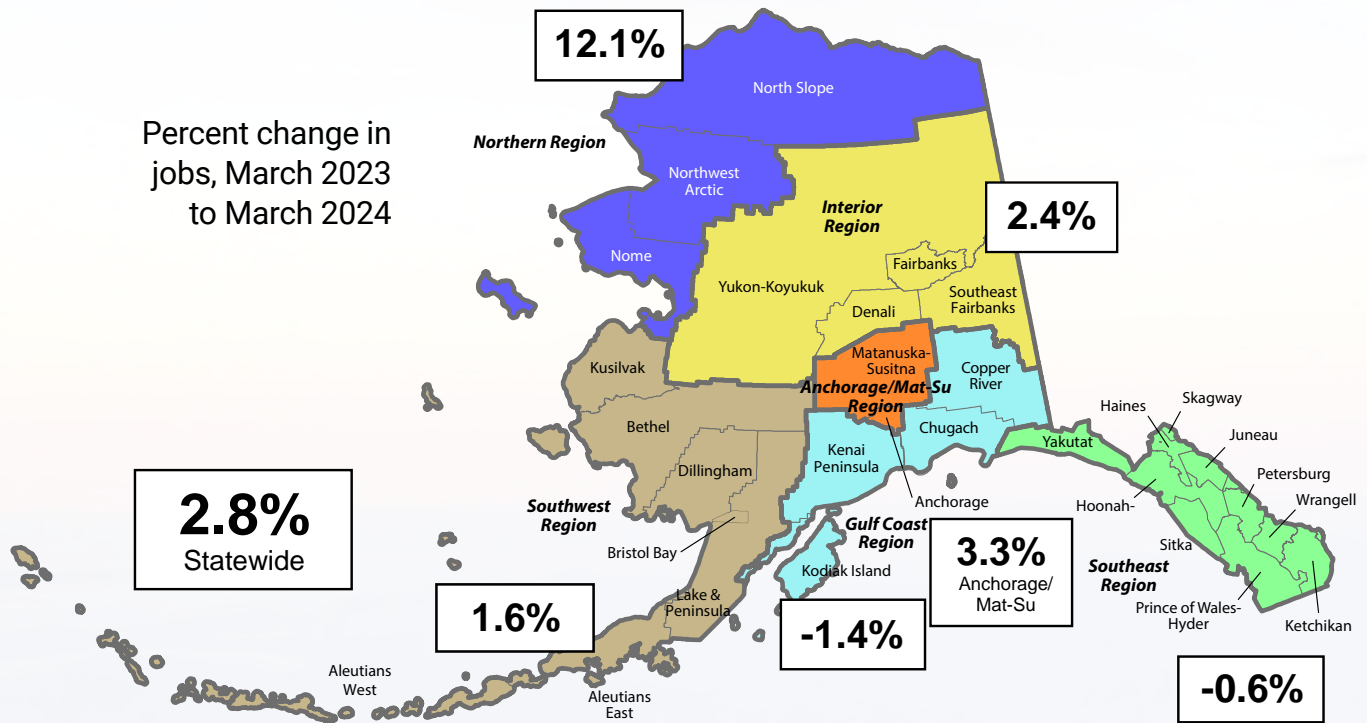
2022 to 2023



The state had net migration losses for the 11th consecutive year in 2023. Losses were larger than the previous two years but smaller than the late 2010s. Net migration is the number who moved to Alaska minus the number who left.

Employment Growth by Region

Percent change in jobs, March 2023 to March 2024



Unemployment Rates

Seasonally adjusted

	Prelim. Revised		
	3/24	2/24	3/23
United States	3.8	3.9	3.5
Alaska	4.6	4.6	3.8

Not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim. Revised		
	3/24	2/24	3/23
United States	3.9	4.2	3.6
Alaska	4.8	5.5	4.3

Regional, not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim. Revised				Prelim. Revised				Prelim. Revised		
	3/24	2/24	3/23		3/24	2/24	3/23		3/24	2/24	3/23
Interior Region	4.6	5.4	4.4	Southwest Region	7.8	8.6	6.5	Southeast Region	4.7	5.6	4.3
Denali Borough	13.0	13.9	12.9	Aleutians East Borough	2.5	2.6	1.4	Haines Borough	11.3	12.0	8.8
Fairbanks N Star Borough	4.1	4.9	3.9	Aleutians West Census Area	2.1	2.4	1.8	Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	9.7	11.8	11.1
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	6.5	7.3	5.5	Bethel Census Area	11.0	12.2	9.4	Juneau, City and Borough	3.3	4.2	2.8
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	10.8	12.1	10.0	Bristol Bay Borough	7.2	9.5	8.2	Ketchikan Gateway Borough	4.7	5.4	4.6
Northern Region	7.9	8.7	7.6	Dillingham Census Area	8.3	8.9	5.9	Petersburg Borough	7.0	6.6	5.7
Nome Census Area	8.8	9.2	7.7	Kusilvak Census Area	16.0	17.7	13.5	Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	8.5	9.2	8.3
North Slope Borough	4.6	5.4	4.3	Lake and Peninsula Borough	7.0	7.5	6.3	Sitka, City and Borough	3.0	4.2	3.0
Northwest Arctic Borough	10.4	11.6	10.9	Gulf Coast Region	5.9	6.9	5.3	Skagway, Municipality	15.4	17.0	10.2
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region	4.3	4.8	3.8	Kenai Peninsula Borough	5.9	6.9	5.3	Wrangell, City and Borough	5.4	6.9	5.2
Anchorage, Municipality	3.8	4.4	3.3	Kodiak Island Borough	3.5	5.0	3.3	Yakutat, City and Borough	8.2	11.0	7.2
Mat-Su Borough	5.7	6.2	5.4	Chugach Census Area	8.4	8.6	6.4				
				Copper River Census Area	10.7	11.6	9.9				

How Alaska Ranks

Unemployment Rate¹

1st
N. Dakota
2.0%

45th
4.6%

50th
California
5.3%

Job Growth²

1st
Idaho
3.9%

4th
2.8%

50th
Oregon
-0.5%

Job Growth, Private²

1st
Idaho
3.7%

3rd
3.2%

50th
Oregon
-1.1%

Job Growth, State Government²

1st
Idaho
8.5%

36th
1.7%

50th
Ohio
-1.8%

Job Growth, Leisure and Hospitality²

1st
South Carolina
4.7%

43rd
-0.6%

50th
North Dakota
-3.4%

Note: Government employment includes federal, state, and local government plus public schools and universities.

¹March seasonally adjusted unemployment rates

²March employment, over-the-year percent change

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Other Economic Indicators

	Current		Year ago	Change
Urban Alaska Consumer Price Index (CPI-U, base yr 1982=100)	262.806	2nd half 2023	260.576	+0.9%
Commodity prices				
Crude oil, Alaska North Slope,* per barrel	\$84.11	Mar 2024	\$76.86	+9.4%
Natural gas, Henry Hub, per thousand cubic feet (mcf)	\$1.75	Mar 2024	\$2.41	-27.4%
Gold, per oz. COMEX	\$2,346.40	4/22/2024	\$1,990.50	+17.9%
Silver, per oz. COMEX	\$27.52	4/22/2024	\$25.28	+8.9%
Copper, per lb. COMEX	\$4.51	4/22/2024	\$3.99	+13.0%
Bankruptcies				
Business	42	Q4 2023	44	-4.6%
Personal	6	Q4 2023	4	+50.0%
	36	Q4 2023	40	-10.0%
Unemployment insurance claims				
Initial filings	3,265	Mar 2024	3,418	-4.4%
Continued filings	24,826	Mar 2024	23,657	4.9%
Claimant count	6,416	Mar 2024	6,196	3.6%

*Department of Revenue estimate

Sources for this page and the preceding three pages include Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Energy Information Administration; Kitco; U.S. Census Bureau; COMEX; NASDAQ; Alaska Department of Revenue; and U.S. Courts, 9th Circuit

EMPLOYER RESOURCES

Use AlaskaJobs for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit

You can receive substantial federal tax credits — between \$1,200 and \$9,600 per new employee — when you hire eligible at-risk job seekers.

The Alaska Work Opportunity Tax Credit program will determine eligibility and issue certifications for you to submit to the Internal Revenue Service when you hire veterans, public assistance recipients and their families, people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, those with felony convictions, and some residents of Rural Renewal Counties and designated Empowerment Zones.

To apply for certification, Alaska employers can submit WOTC requests online via the AlaskaJobs labor exchange system. Whether your business is new to the program or has applied before, AlaskaJobs is your path to these tax credits and the most timely and efficient way to manage requests and communication.

Employers must establish an account to submit new requests or connect with their existing WOTC

portfolio in AlaskaJobs. [Click here for instructions.](#)

Once you have opened your AlaskaJobs account, you can also enlist a third party, such as your tax preparer or payroll processor, to submit tax credit requests and manage your portfolio. For information and ETA Form 9198 required for third-party representation, visit [ETA WOTC Resources](#). (Note that IRS Form 2848 will no longer be accepted after May 31, 2024.)

To activate your AlaskaJobs WOTC account or ask questions about the WOTC program, please email dol.wotc@alaska.gov.

For AlaskaJobs assistance as well as help identifying potential eligible job seekers for your positions, [contact your local Alaska Job Center](#) or call (877) 724-2539. Assisting employers is our first priority.

Employer Resources is written by the Employment and Training Services Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.